

Heidegger's Mask:
Silence, Politics and the
Banality of Evil in the *Black Notebooks*

Adam Knowles

I. INTRODUCTION

“We’re going to get to the bottom of exactly what happened.”¹ These words were President Obama’s first reaction to yet another shooting spree, in this case the soldier Ivan Lopez’s murder-suicide at Fort Hood on April 2, 2014. The logic of the President’s remarks, made in the face of sparse details with the situation still unfolding, was well-suited to satisfy one of our most basic desires – the desire for an explanation, the desire to be alleviated of uncertainty. In the *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche labels this desire the error of imaginary causes, which he captures under the mantra that “some explanation is better than none.” As Nietzsche goes on to say: “Tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar alleviates us, calms us, pacifies us, and in addition provides a feeling of power.”² Setting aside any attempt to explain the causality of something as complex as a traumatized soldier opening fire on his comrades at Fort Hood, what interests me is the combination of natural common sense and dangerous simplicity that marks Obama’s logic – a logic that is, to borrow Nietzsche’s word, “customary.”

This shooting occurred as I, like many other Heidegger scholars, had just begun reading Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*.³ What struck me was that the very same customary logic behind Obama’s idea of “getting to the bottom of this” could also be found in early responses to the

Black Notebooks. The publication of the *Black Notebooks* was celebrated as a philosophical event, and the arrival in early 2014 of the first three volumes of the eventual eight notebooks was prepared for by a flurry of activity in the German, French and, eventually, English press.⁴ *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, among others, opened their pages to hastily written reviews of a journalistic bent.⁵ More serious, detailed reviews by philosophers and historians followed in the months thereafter, while a figure no less than Jean-Luc Nancy observed a self-declared six-month moratorium before publishing a short piece on the *Black Notebooks*.⁶ Both the early philosophical and journalistic responses were also dominated by two very different short books published in 2014 by Peter Trawny, the editor of the *Black Notebooks*, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* and *Irrnisfuge*.⁷

Leaving aside Trawny, whose work on the *Black Notebooks* has always been one step ahead of others due to his position as editor of the texts, one assumption has underpinned many of these early responses to the *Black Notebooks*: We were supposed to get to the bottom of these twelve hundred pages of fresh Heidegger covering nothing less than the period in which Heidegger joined the Nazi party, served as Rector of Freiburg University, withdrew from active political engagement, and commented on the early years of the Holocaust and the Second World War, all during a period of incredible personal and professional productivity. We were supposed to get to the bottom of this strange testament left by Heidegger, this compendium of thoughts, jokes, aphorisms, political venom and banally pieced together anti-Semitism. There are many reasons why the impression of a final verdict on Heidegger is justified, for the early responses to the *Black Notebooks* have not wanted for – to paraphrase Günter Figal – “shocking” material, especially because of Heidegger’s concern with “World Jewry” in the most platitudinous reformulation of the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁸ The anti-Semitism of the *Black Notebooks* is pungent, and though limited to less than three pages of twelve hundred, the forcefulness of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism is all the more troubling for its brevity.

We could appeal to Heidegger himself for a hermeneutic principle to address this brevity, drawing from his 1942 *Parmenides* lecture course: “The Greeks are often silent, especially about what is essential to them [*Die Griechen schweigen viel, wenn wir auf ihr Wesenhaftes denken*]. And when they do say the essential, they say it in a way that is simultaneously reticent [*in einer zugleich verschweigenden Weise*]” (GA 54: 116/79). Was Heidegger so silent about his anti-Semitism, even during the period when it clearly would have advanced his career, because it was so essential to him and to his thinking? This question becomes all the more forceful as one takes notice of the ubiquity of silence as a theme, concern, and practice in the *Notebooks*. The *Notebooks*, Heidegger writes early in the first volume, are “written from a great silence” (GA 94: 28). Was Heidegger, then, speaking his anti-Semitism through reticence? Was Heidegger speaking his anti-Semitism through his philosophy? Was Heidegger speaking his philosophy through anti-Semitism? And, if so, what manner of silence is this?⁹ Moreover, what does it mean that the overtly anti-Semitic remarks in the *Notebooks* begin in 1938, long after Heidegger distanced himself from National Socialism? I will suggest that answers to these questions can be found in Heidegger’s repeated use of the term “mask” in the first volume of the *Notebooks*, which is employed as a term of concealment and silence. “In reservedness,” Heidegger writes, “lies concealed audacity [*In der Verhaltenheit liegt die verschwiegene Kühnheit*.]” (GA 94: 284). Concealed beneath reticence and audacity, the *Black Notebooks* are a work of masking.¹⁰

Yet how do these hermeneutic principles culled from Heidegger help us deal with this immensely repetitive document? The *Black Notebooks* are not repetitive in the fugal cyclicity of a work such as the *Contributions to Philosophy* and the other *Ereignis* manuscripts written during the same period. The *Contributions* unfold through constant variations on a theme, much like an Aristotelian analysis that starts, stops and returns back to that which was left unsaid and may always remain unsaid, yet slowly becomes inscribed in its unsayability.¹¹ The repetition of the *Black Notebooks* does not enliven or quicken the things

touched upon and brushed against in passing successions, but instead calcifies them and hardens them. Their dominant tone is one of embitterment, and for this reason the repetition of the *Black Notebooks* is something far from the play and pliability of the *Contributions*, or even that of Heidegger's lecture courses.¹² The repetition is nothing short of banalizing – a term I invoke with the full force of the resonances lent to it by Hannah Arendt.¹³ What is most banal about the *Black Notebooks* is that they reflect not stupidity, but instead what Arendt called Eichmann's "reluctance [*Unwille*]," his unwillingness to understand.¹⁴ In Heidegger's case this reluctance involved a refusal to see not so much *difference*, but *differences*, which resulted in the grand gesture of leveling off difference within the narrative of the history of being that reached a point where – absurdly enough – the Nazis and the Jews were indistinguishable.¹⁵

This is the central claim of the remarks I would like to make in this essay: The *Black Notebooks* are banal. If they embody an evil, then that evil is no less banal. Moreover, this banality renders the *Black Notebooks* hard to read, and not merely because of the effect of the inevitable disappointment one feels when encountering in the second volume – some six hundred pages into reading – the first overtly anti-Semitic remark in the *Notebooks*: "One of the most secret forms of the *gigantic*, and perhaps the oldest, is the tenacious skillfulness in calculating, hustling, and intermingling through which the worldlessness of Jewry is grounded" (GA 95: 97). The remark is *not* stunning, for Heidegger has laid the groundwork for it so thoroughly with his rhetoric of race and people and his effusive praise for the potential of National Socialism as a spiritual moment in German history, especially during the rector period.¹⁶ Indeed, if anything is surprising about the first volume of the *Black Notebooks*, it is the *lack* of anti-Semitism in the text. There is nothing metaphysically sophisticated about this rhetoric, even despite the pseudo-metaphysics of spiritualizing the people in the Rectoral Address. Heidegger's anti-Semitism is – as Sander Gilman, a cultural and literary historian, analyzed in a brilliantly lucid paper at the Emory conference – entirely predictable.¹⁷ To put it in the briefest possible terms, Heidegger's anti-Semitism is no more profound than the anti-Semitism of any other run-of-the-mill Nazi.

Due to their banalizing force, the *Black Notebooks* are bad Heidegger and all too often they are bad Heidegger clothed in the costume of a bad Nietzsche. As David Krell writes in what will most likely be the first English-language book to appear addressing the *Notebooks* in detail, one reads the *Notebooks* “with a strong desire never to return to them.”¹⁸ Yet, as Figal stressed in an interview he gave to explain his resignation as director of the Heidegger-Gesellschaft in January 2015, essential work must still be done on the *Notebooks*, including a renewed focus on archival research to document Heidegger’s activities in the 1930s.¹⁹ We must continue to read the *Black Notebooks*.

What, then, is to be made of these curious *Notebooks*, so pseudo-Nietzschean in intent, if not execution? Whatever response we have to the *Black Notebooks*, we must equally be attentive to the *event* of the *Black Notebooks* in the press, in the philosophical world, and especially in the world of Heidegger scholarship. I will offer only tentative answers in this essay, and I will offer them with all due distance from the notion that we could or should be able to get to the bottom of the *Black Notebooks*. In other words, I read them with a healthy skepticism about the value of doing so, for every act of reading in this finite life, every act of engagement as a philosopher is a decision *not* to engage with other texts and, no less, with other tasks. It is for this reason that I will take the occasion of reading the *Black Notebooks* to formulate the preliminary sketch of an ethics of *not reading*.

In order to address some of the issues I just raised, I have divided this paper into four sections. Firstly, I will offer six observations that I, in part, elaborate on in what follows, but in part also leave as open questions. Secondly, I will introduce Peter Trawny’s thesis of Heidegger’s being-historical anti-Semitism and offer a critique of this thesis through Arendt’s notion of banality. Thirdly, I will focus on the concept of the mask and the closely related registers of silence associated with it within the *Black Notebooks*. I will conclude by reflecting upon the impact of the *Black Notebooks* on the future of Heidegger scholarship by developing an ethics of not reading.

II. OBSERVATIONS ON THE *BLACK NOTEBOOKS*

- 1) Heidegger *did not* invent a new form of anti-Semitism.
- 2) Saying that Heidegger invented a new form of anti-Semitism is a surreptitious defense of what is most indefensible about Heidegger.
- 3) Philosophers cannot read the *Black Notebooks* alone. If any essential work is to be done with the *Black Notebooks*, it must be done – as Figal suggests – in collaboration with historians and through a return to the archives.
- 4) The *Black Notebooks* do not diminish the value of Heidegger's thinking, nor its relevance to the current questions that philosophy faces. The *Black Notebooks* also do not contribute to the value of Heidegger's thinking. At best, they distract from it.
- 5) The *Black Notebooks* are but the culmination of a long process set into motion by the logic of production and expansion of the *Gesamtausgabe*, the quantity of which has set the conditions for producing a tradition of philology and commentary under the name of Heidegger scholarship.
- 6) Heidegger's fundamental questions are no longer our own fundamental questions.
- 7) It is possible to regard Heidegger's preservation and publication of the *Black Notebooks* as an act of philosophical and personal generosity as the document of an error.²⁰

III. PETER TRAWNY ON BEING-HISTORICAL ANTI-SEMITISM

Peter Trawny's short book *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* has set the tone for early responses to Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*. As the editor of the entire series of *Black Notebooks*, which will eventually stretch from the 1930s to 1970s, Trawny published his short book concurrent with the appearance of the second and third volumes. Since then, Trawny has been the public voice of the *Black Notebooks* in both Europe and North America, speaking with the authority gained from an unmatched familiarity with these specific texts and an unmatched

labor devoted to their publication. While Trawny's response is by his own admission ambivalent and tentative in some aspects, he has repeatedly defended the central thesis of his book, namely that Heidegger's anti-Semitism "can be more precisely characterized as *being-historical anti-Semitism*."²¹ For Trawny, the task of confronting the *Black Notebooks* involves "elucidating what can be understood under the term being-historical anti-Semitism."²² What, then, is being-historical anti-Semitism? In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to say something about Heidegger's history of being.

In Heidegger's history of being, written primarily in a number of posthumously published manuscripts composed during the 1930s concurrent with the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger diagnoses what he sees as the technological domination of the world through rational-calculative thinking that treats the earth as a standing reserve to be measured, mapped, dominated and exploited. In the process of this technological-rational total domination, the world ceases to be a world and humans become nothing more than another resource to exploited. As Heidegger writes in 1935 in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the public face of his thinking of that period: "The spiritual decline of the earth has progressed so far that peoples are in danger of losing their last spiritual strength, the strength that makes it possible even to see the decline and to appraise it as such" (GA 40: 41/42). Stated ontologically, this spiritual decline means nothing less than the complete removal of beings from any experience of being. The cause of his decline is the technological-rational thinking of what Heidegger calls "the machination" (*die Mchenschaft*), which enframes the world into a totalizing picture that can be calculated, measured and exploited.

Prior to the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, readers of Heidegger knew to associate this ontological story with the ontic entities America and Russia, or, as Heidegger repeatedly writes in the *Notebooks*, Americanism and Bolshevism. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger refers to these two entities as "the great pincers" which threaten to put Europe on the verge of "cutting its own throat." There Heidegger goes on to say: "Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same:

the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man” (GA 40: 40-41/41). Of course, this narrative has long been familiar to readers of Heidegger, though the full story of the complexity of the ‘pincer movement’ has been closely guarded by those in control of the Heidegger estate. This is shown most clearly in the posthumously published manuscript *The History of Beyng* (*Die Geschichte des Seyns*), composed between 1939-40, where Heidegger writes: “The planetary chief criminals of the most recent modern age, the age in which they first become possible and necessary, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.”²³ According to Trawny, Fritz Heidegger struck out from an early version of the manuscript (prior to the “last hand” version from which the published version was produced) the following sentence: “It remains to be asked in what the peculiar predilection of Jewishness [*Judenschaft*] for planetary criminality is grounded.”²⁴ The *Black Notebooks* provide an answer to the question of what the peculiar predilection of Jewishness for crimes of a planetary nature is grounded in, namely: the rootlessness and homelessness of a people without ground, a people who in Heidegger’s words, “*without any restraints*, can take over the uprooting of all beings from being as its world-historical ‘task’” (GA 96: 243).²⁵

Americanism – Bolshevism – Englandism – World Jewry – thus are the planetary criminals that we can count out on one hand – and by the time of Heidegger’s withdrawal from active public involvement in National Socialism, vulgar Nazism likewise joins the line-up of usual suspects. Americanism, Bolshevism and Englandism poison the German people from the outside in a pincer movement. The Jews and a degraded “*vulgar National Socialism*” (GA 94: 142) do so from the inside by spreading – as Heidegger writes – “an otherwise empty rationality and calculative skill, which in this way lodged itself in the ‘spirit’ without ever being able to grasp the concealed domains of decision on its own” (GA 96: 46-7). As the enemy from within, World Jewry helped to spur two world wars in order to pit Europe against Europe. In his paper entitled “Aliens vs. Predators: Cosmopolitan Jews vs. Jewish Nomads,” Gilman traces each one of these aspects of Heidegger’s supposed

being-historical anti-Semitism to common forms of anti-Semitism of the day.²⁶ Gilman convincingly argues that Heidegger does little more than reformulate common tropes of venerable anti-Semitic pedigree in metaphysical clothing. While the idea of a Jewish conspiracy setting into motion the wars of European self-destruction goes back to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the idea that Jews absconded in World War I while the Germans – in Heidegger's 1942 assessment – “sacrifice the best blood of the best of our own people” can be traced back to the so-called stab-in-the-back myth (GA 96: 261–2).

If Gilman's analysis rings true, a critical question must be posed to Trawny's thesis: What is behind the urge to label Heidegger's anti-Semitism something other than commonplace? Why not merely conclude that Heidegger's anti-Semitism was nothing more than the result of a set of nasty *ontic* entanglements and investments? Trawny's desire to defend Heidegger in a double-handed gesture is even more acute in the fifth chapter of the book, entitled “Life and Work.” After Trawny mentions that Heidegger had intimate and friendly contacts with Jewish friends and colleagues, he goes on to offer the following assessment of Heidegger's being-historical anti-Semitism:

After all, it is especially true of the being-historical anti-Semitism that it is very difficult to imagine that what it is directed against could be embodied by any particular individuals. That it does not show itself, that it hides itself, is precisely characteristic of being-historical anti-Semitism. What would it have looked like had it appeared? Any possible ‘image’ misses the point of being-historical anti-Semitism and cannot correspond to it. Is there an anti-Semitism without the concrete ‘image’ of a Jew targeted as the enemy? For Heidegger that seems to be the case.²⁷

Trawny does go on to mention the nameless emigrant Jews who – to quote Heidegger – “were let out of Germany” (GA 96: 262), yet he curiously does not mention Heidegger's invectives against Husserl, the

representative of a purported Cartesio-Jewish “race” (GA 96: 46–7) or against “the Jew Litvinov” (GA 96: 242), nor Heidegger’s dismissal of “the psychoanalysis of the Jew ‘Freud’” (GA 96: 133). Overlooking these references, the first two of which Trawny discussed in detail earlier in the book, Trawny concludes: “It was clear to Heidegger that ‘World Jewry’ had no face.”²⁸ For now we can ignore the obvious Levinasian response that, if World Jewry does not have a face, then that is precisely a problem. Instead, we can remain within Heidegger’s own thinking for the moment and respond from within that space.

The history of being is *never not* both ontic and ontological. It begins in the ontic and moves phenomenologically to the ontological, or it moves from the ontological back to the ontic. Or, as Heidegger puts it in the *Black Notebooks*: “He who observes the mindfulness of the thinker is not at all tempted to make philosophy ‘practical’ because it is the task of thinking to make ‘praxis’ philosophical” (GA 94: 324). If Heidegger makes the praxis of anti-Semitism in the 1930s philosophical, he does so by adapting it only to the most banal form of his thinking – a history of being told through a hasty concatenation of leveled-off figures and 7types which could be counted on one hand. To put this objection more generally, as Heidegger’s influence on the course of post-war philosophy has shown, the history of being makes it clear that, while we may continue to regard Heidegger as a profound thinker of difference, he was not a discerning thinker of differences.²⁹ The fact that Heidegger could sweep up this constructed image of the World Jew into his own world-historical thinking and, as it were, plug it into the line-up of planetary master criminals was possible only because we are dealing with a moment in Heidegger’s thinking that had deep faults and fissures.

We might find within the *Black Notebooks* a feeble apology for this move: “‘Popularizing’ what is highest and most essential doesn’t serve the ‘people’ in any way and even damages what is highest and most essential” (GA 94: 190). Were we to give in to this self-defensive gesture, we would be forced to say that Heidegger developed an ontologically higher form of anti-Semitism that was tainted by its ontic entanglements. However, were we to reject this self-defensive gesture and to

reject the second-hand defensive desire that comes along with following the Heideggerian logic of the gesture, then we could say that Heidegger brought to his philosophy a banal form of anti-Semitism and thereby banalized his own thinking.

I would like to conclude my remarks about Trawny's book, which I intend with all due respect to his philosophical labor, by remarking on one final point. Trawny notes that Heidegger kept silent about his anti-Semitism even during his period as Rector – in the precise period, in other words, when it would have furthered his career. Trawny explains this by saying that Heidegger “regarded his anti-Semitism as distinct from the anti-Semitism of the National Socialists.”⁵⁰ Even if this is the case, why does Heidegger's anti-Semitism begin to appear in the *Notebooks* in 1938? I would suggest a simple solution: *Kristallnacht* (Nov. 9–10th, 1938), the national pogrom that emboldened many Germans to more overtly adopt and express anti-Semitism. With *Kristallnacht*, Heidegger, like many other Germans, felt more leeway to express his anti-Semitism, and even though he did not take it public, he did at least embed it into a text that would have a certain public resonance. With *Kristallnacht*, Heidegger took off his mask.

IV. HEIDEGGER'S MASK

In this section I would like to focus on a term that has been overlooked in responses thus far to the *Black Notebooks*: the mask. In order to not overwhelm the material and to trace the movement of the work, I will limit my comments to the first volume of the *Black Notebooks*. I will attempt to argue that the *Black Notebooks* are most important not for what they reveal, but for what they occlude; not for what they say, but for what they do not say. Heidegger characterizes this movement of the text as occurring behind the mask, a term which is closely aligned with the cognate set of terms “silence” (*Schweigen*), “reticence” (*Schweigsamkeit*) and Heidegger's neologism *Erschweigen* – a transitivization of *Schweigen*. The importance of these terms is familiar to any reader of Heidegger, for if silence is not a central theme of Heidegger's thinking, it is nonetheless the medium of Heidegger's thinking, especially in the

1930s. That silence emerges already in the opening entry of the *Black Notebooks* is not surprising given the prominence of silence from *Being and Time* (1927) to the dialogue on silence in *On the Way to Language* (1952). In that dialogue Heidegger poses a question which is echoed in the *Notebooks*: “Who is capable of simply keeping silent about silence? [*Wer vermöchte es, einfach vom Schweigen zu schweigen*]?” (GA 12: 144/OWL 133).⁵⁴ In the *Notebooks*, Heidegger evidently is not, for he cannot resist the urge to flag his silences, to remind us that he is wearing a mask. In the *Black Notebooks* there is a persistent urge to vulgarize and banalize silence. This occurs through a grand gesture of *Selbstdarstellung* invoked via the figure of the mask.

As Trawny points out in his esoteric reading of Heidegger, the *Black Notebooks* have an addressee, that is to say they are written for a certain set of readers, a group given a number of pseudo-Nietzschean names: “the most solitary ones” (*die Einzigsten*), “the most futural ones” (*die Künftigsten*) (GA 94: 338), “the questioners” (*die Fragenden*), “the few” (*die Wenigen*), “the invisible ones” (*die Unsichtbaren*) (GA 94: 370), and “the race to follow” (*das übernächste Geschlecht*) (GA 94: 346). This solitary race of questioners are the ones who are capable of listening to and in silence, all the while keeping silent about silence. Heidegger addresses these listeners on the second page of the *Black Notebooks* by raising the question: “Must [the human] not have observed a long silence in order to find the strength and power of language again and to be borne along by language?” (GA 94: 6). He builds upon this question on the following page: “Must one take the great risk on one’s own, silently – into Da-sein, where beings have more being? Without any regard for the situation?” (GA 94: 10). What does it mean that Heidegger sets the stage of the *Black Notebooks* in this way?

A possible answer to this question can be found some one hundred pages later in the strange, troubling and disjointed section in which Heidegger narrates his entry into, participation in and retreat from party politics – his entry into the situation, so to speak. In contrast to the drudgery and repetition of much of what follows in the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger’s narration – replete with historical inaccuracies – of

his time as Rector is almost a page-turner. The entries are short, angry, disturbing, and at times oracular. Heidegger describes his entry into the Rectorate as follows: "Forced into taking over the Rectorate, I act for the first time against my innermost voice" (GA 94: 110). As readers of Division II of *Being and Time* will recall, this innermost voice, the voice of the call of conscience, is silent, saying nothing – saying, in fact, the nothing. At this moment we see Heidegger put on the mask – which does not mean to say that he was not already wearing another mask. He may have switched masks, or he may be wearing layers of them – in any case there is no 'real' Heidegger to be gotten to by pulling off these masks. To phrase this differently, under Heidegger's layers of silence – and this applies no less to his purported postwar silence – there is no 'real' Heidegger to be found, certainly not in the *Black Notebooks*. With the mask of the Rector we hear Heidegger make the following platitudinous pronouncements: "Relentless in the firm goal, malleable and transforming in the ways and weapons." And on the same page: "To emerge from every struggle more tractable and more certain. Whatever fails is a lesson; hold the reins tighter in the face of resistance" (GA 94: 111). Under the mask of the Rector, Heidegger descends from the mount like Zarathustra to be among the people; there he is loquacious, there he translates his thought.³¹ It is for this reason that he must, in Heidegger's words, "be ready, with a generous will, to fail in humdrum everyday affairs" (GA 94: 112).

The overall effect of this section is to remind the reader that this thinker does not belong in this realm of the everyday, in "the situation," and that he has descended down in the name of knowledge, and that he is saying something that the broad masses are incapable of hearing. Heidegger's remarks in this period argue that the university, though it has been degraded to a "boarding house" (GA 94: 116) and a "trade school" (GA 94: 193) and has been enslaved to the natural sciences (GA 94: 303), has an essential role in the revolution he regards himself as working toward – "*the metapolitics of 'the' historical people*" (GA 94: 124). The university would play an essential part in this metapolitics to the extent that it could inculcate knowledge through what Heidegger

calls *Wissenserziehung* – education to knowledge. While I do not have time to detail all the circumstances of this metapolitics of education to knowledge, the stakes of Heidegger’s investment in and eventual distancing from National Socialism can be succinctly demonstrated in a highly lucid passage, a passage that must be regarded as being written through the retroactive masking of self-representation, while also documenting the mask Heidegger wore during his Nazi period – both of which were inflected with their own peculiar forms of silence.

The fundamental failure of today’s ‘political education’ – a tautology – is not that too little is occurring or that it occurs too hesitantly and too uneasily, rather that too much is being done and everything is supposed to be made anew hastily in the blink of an eye. As if National Socialism were merely a veneer that could quickly be applied to us all.

When will we grasp something of the simplicity of the essence and the deliberate steadiness of its unfolding into races [Geschlechtern]? (GA 94: 133)

No doubt this must be read in terms of the infamous remark on the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. And then as Heidegger goes on to say in the following entry (GA 94: 69):

A popular saying: National Socialism was not first developed as a ‘theory,’ rather it began with action. Good. But does that mean that ‘theory’ is superfluous; does that mean that one dresses oneself up ‘elsewhere’ and ‘on the side’ with bad theories and ‘philosophies?’ [...]

The more originary and forceful the symbolic power of the movement and its work, the more necessary the knowledge. But not knowledge as its formulaic equivalence and calculability – rather as the power of the fundamental attunement of world superiority. (GA 94: 133-4)

These words are Heidegger's synopsis of what he calls "spiritual National Socialism" (GA 94: 135). By saying that Heidegger speaks here behind a mask, I do not mean to say that Heidegger did not mean his words. Instead, what I mean to say is that, if Heidegger's speech emerges out of a great silence and is always saying that which cannot be said – as Heidegger would have us believe – then the medium of Heidegger's thinking is the mask. Everything is said through the mask, and nowhere do we reveal a speech that is not masked. The possibility that Heidegger spoke through masks and registers of invisibility is all the more disturbing in the light of a remark he made as he approached the end of his Rectorate: "We will remain at the invisible front of the secret spiritual Germany" (GA 94: 155).³² I will say more about this in a moment, after I close the sequence of the Rector period.

On April 28th, 1934, in one of the few entries labeled with a precise date, Heidegger writes what he calls a farewell address. The university has not proven capable of what Heidegger called self-assertion in the "Rectoral Address." Heidegger does not bemoan this, for the university as it exists can only be measured based on quantitative differences. The *qualitative* shift to education to knowledge did not occur. The movement of National Socialism, from Heidegger's perspective, is in ruins; the university is likewise in ruins. Thus Heidegger writes: "I have reached the end of a very bad year...A failed year – a lost one – if failure were not the highest form of human experience..." (GA 94: 161).

In the ruins of the university Heidegger puts on another mask – the mask of the teacher working on the "the invisible front of the secret spiritual Germany" (GA 94: 155). Remember, as quoted in the introduction of this paper, that "[i]n reservedness lies concealed audacity." In closing this section I want to raise some questions about the *Black Notebooks* and their status vis-à-vis Heidegger's manuscripts and lecture courses at the time. Under the guise of the mask that Heidegger resumes after returning to the mount in solitude Heidegger describes his teaching in the following way:

The transition as leaping across; the preparation,
the attempts, the building up – all of that is alluded to

in the lecture courses from 1927–1936, although never consciously and immediately communicated.

The mask of “historical” interpretation. (GA 94: 243)

What is communicated through the “mask of historical interpretation”? The term transition (*Übergang*) is key here, for Heidegger, in his typical play on words, aligns it closely with downfall (*Untergang*).³³ Thus Heidegger asks later in the *Black Notebooks* the following question: “What form must a downfall take so that it can be a transition [*Wie aber muß ein Untergang sein, damit er ein Übergang werden kann?*]” (GA 94: 277). At this point, we return to themes from the previous section on World Jewry: in order for a downfall to lead to a transition, it must occur in the essential confrontation with an enemy. By 1942 at the latest, as Heidegger’s “stock-taking” of the state of the war reveals, he no longer thought that this would occur as a result of World War II.³⁴ Yet even after removing his Nazi mask and putting on the invisible mask of the secret warrior fighting on the invisible front of spiritual Germany, Heidegger still seeks to prepare the transition in his teaching. I will thus close this section with four quotes which will set up my final closing remarks on the *Notebooks* and the *Gesamtausgabe* as a whole:

My lecture courses...are all, even when they explicitly speak about themselves and their task, only and intentionally the foreground, indeed for the most part they are concealment. (GA 94: 257)

Then later in the same volume, at the height of the pseudo-Nietzschean performance:

A lecture about “Schelling” or about “Plato” is indeed what the name says, yet it “is” something else...transitional work. (GA 94: 287)

And, then, the final fragment from the third notebook, dated July 5th, 1936:

remain opaque; the mask. (GA 94: 305)

Finally, a quote from Heidegger's lecture course on 'Heraclitus' and 'Plato' held in 1933 while Rector at a moment, now notorious among Heidegger scholars, where unmasking the enemy from within is at stake:

The enemy can have attached itself to the innermost roots of the Dasein of a people and can set itself against this people's own essence and act against it. The struggle is all the fiercer and harder and tougher, for the least of it consists in coming to blows with one another; it is often far more difficult and wearisome to catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor no illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensify a constant readiness and to prepare the attack looking far ahead with the goal of total annihilation. (GA 36/37: 91/73)

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS: AN ETHICS OF NOT READING?

I wish that Derrida were here to help us read the *Black Notebooks*. Or, perhaps more precisely, I wish that Derrida were here to help us *not* read the *Black Notebooks*. Of course, I do not mean this in the vulgar form of Heidegger rejection defended by Emmanuel Faye or in the form of Richard Wolin's "one-drop" theory.⁵⁵ Instead, I turn to Derrida as a reader and non-reader of Heidegger, who harbored a suspicion against what he called the "machine" of Heidegger scholarship. In a 2001 response to Catharine Malabou's commentary on his co-authored book *Circumfessions*, Derrida asks the following question about whether or not Heidegger would have read his book:

we must ask, why it is that Heidegger could not read such a text, or would simply dismiss it as just so much exhibition, literature, narcissism? ... So I constantly try to counter him, to try to write what he's against, what is counter to or irreducible to Heidegger's machinery. Because there is a machinery interpretation of Heidegger.

There is a machine; there is a program. My question is: what could disappoint or disarm Heidegger's program?⁵⁶

What can we do to frustrate the Heidegger machine? Derrida demonstrates this beautifully in his final seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. II, where he turns back to well-worn terrain of one of the earliest volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe* (a volume that Heidegger apparently held dear), reading it together with *Robinson Crusoe*, to create what I believe is an overlooked masterpiece of teaching, writing, thinking and – no less – Heidegger scholarship.⁵⁷

So what is the Heidegger machine? The program of the Heidegger machine has long run on the following assumption: that to say something new about Heidegger we must first read something new from Heidegger. This essay is no doubt the result of the churning of that well-oiled machine. The proliferation of Heidegger's lecture courses, unpublished manuscripts and – soon enough – thousands of items of correspondence has kept this machine running and will provide enough fuel for it for a long time to come. John Updike wrote of Vladimir Nabokov in 1964, as Nabokov's fame led to the translation of his older Russian works even as Nabokov produced new ones in English, that “very curiously, his oeuvre is growing at both ends.”⁵⁸ Heidegger's oeuvre is afflicted with an even more extreme version of this curious growth. What this proliferation has led to is a flourishing tradition of philological and scholastic readings of Heidegger. This tradition flourishes by drawing links *between* texts by Heidegger, as if the task of reading Heidegger were but a giant jigsaw puzzle in which the pieces split as soon as they are put into the right place. As a result, references to questions which were not Heidegger's own are all too often regarded as a distraction to the philological task at hand.

Yet Heidegger's questions are not our own; our time is not Heidegger's and we cannot so willfully withdraw from the situation. I call instead for Heidegger to be read in a type of project of critical phenomenology developed by Lisa Guenther in her book *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* and by the legal theorist Marianne Constable in her book *Just Silences*, which draws on Heidegger's thinking

of silence to critically analyze the right to remain silent.⁵⁹ Projects such as these require the critical eye to stop reading a particular thinker, to turn from that thinker to the situation. In spite of this call to stop reading Heidegger, or at least to read Heidegger in the proper measure, I will give Heidegger the last word, spoken as the first volume of the *Black Notebooks* nears its end, reaching a crescendo of silence: “The strength of a work is measured by the extent to which it refutes its own creator” (GA 94: 438–9). If Heidegger’s work remains relevant, it is because of its immense capacity for self-refutation.

I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to Eduardo Mendieta, Richard Polt, and Greg Fried for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

NOTES

- 1 Dave Montgomery, Manny Fernandez and Ashley Southall, "Iraq Veteran Kills 3 and Himself in Rampage," *New York Times*, April 2, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/us/gunshots-reported-at-fort-hood.html?_r=0.
- 2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 33-4.
- 3 All translations from GA 94 are my own, translations from GA 95 and 96 are Richard Polt's. I would like to thank Richard for the service he did to Heidegger scholarship by preparing and distributing translations of all the passages from the *Black Notebooks* that address Jews either directly or indirectly.
- 4 This began with the two-page exposé and interview with Peter Trawny and Emmanuel Faye in *Die Zeit* on Dec. 27, 2013. Peter Trawny, "Eine neue Dimension," *Die Zeit*, December 27, 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/2014/01/heidegger-schwarze-hefte-herausgeber-peter-trawny>; Emmanuel Faye, "Die Krönung der Gesamtausgabe," *Die Zeit*, December 27, 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/2014/01/heidegger-schwarze-hefte-emmanuel-faye>; Georg Diez, "Heidegger ein Nazi? Meister Proper!," *Spiegel Online*, January 1, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/georg-diez-ueber-martin-heidegger-a-941646.html>; Peter Trawny, "Heidegger et l'antisémitisme," *Le Monde*, January 20, 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2014/01/20/heidegger-et-l-antisemitisme_4350762_3232.html.
- 5 Jennifer Schuessler, "Heidegger's Notebooks Renew Focus on Anti-Semitism," *New York Times*, March 30, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/31/books/heideggers-notebooks-renew-focus-on-anti-semitism.html?_r=0; Richard Brody, "Why Does it Matter if Heidegger was Anti-Semitic?," *The New Yorker*, March 27, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/why-does-it-matter-if-heidegger-was-anti-semitic>; Robert Zaretsky, "Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* Reignite Charges of Anti-Semitism," *The Jewish Daily*

- Forward*, February 21, 2014, <http://forward.com/articles/192664/martin-heideggers-black-notebooks-reignite-charges/>.
- 6 Highlights from these responses include Gregory Fried, "The King is Dead: Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*," *LA Review of Books*, September 13, 2014, <http://lareviewofbooks.org/review/king-dead-heideggers-black-notebooks/>; Judith Wolfe, "Caught in the Trap of His Own Metaphysics," *Standpoint*, June 2014, <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/5583/full>; Peter E. Gordon, "Heidegger in Black," *The New York Review of Books*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/oct/09/heidegger-in-black/>; Michael Marder, "A Fight for the Right to Read Heidegger," *New York Times*, July 20, 2014, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/a-fight-for-the-right-to-read-heidegger/>. The first edited collection on the *Black Notebooks* appeared in Italian in late 2014: Adriano Fabris, ed. *Metafisica e antisemitismo: I Quaderni Neri di Heidegger tra filosofia e politica* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2014). See also Jean-Luc Nancy, "Heidegger und Wir," *Faust-Kultur.de*, August 18, 2014, <http://faustkultur.de/1908-0-Nancy-Heidegger-und-wir.html#VHJGBIctpFQ>.
- 7 Peter Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, 3rd expanded ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015), first edition 2014, and *Irrnisfuge: Heideggers An-archie* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2014).
- 8 Günter Figal, "Vorsitzender der Heidegger-Gesellschaft zurückgetreten," January 16, 2015, radio interview on SWR2, <http://www.swr.de/unternehmen/kommunikation/16-vorsitzender-der-heidegger-gesellschaft-zurueckgetreten/-/id=10563098/nid=10563098/did=14892558/1q7w8xo/index.html>; on Heidegger's apparent references to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* see Trawny, *Mythos*, 45ff.
- 9 For a range of perspectives on Heidegger's political silence, see Babette Babich, "Questioning Heidegger's Silence: A Postmodern Topology," in *Ethics and Danger: Essays on Heidegger and Continental Thought*, ed. Arleen B. Dallery, Charles E. Scott, and

- P. Holley Roberts (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 85-106; Richard J. Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?: Éthos and Technology," in *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 79-141; Berel Lang, *Heidegger's Silence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Jacques Derrida, "Heidegger's Silence," in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, eds. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering (New York: Paragon House, 1990): 145-148; Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political: Dystopias* (New York: Routledge, 1998), esp. chap. 6 "And Into Silence..."; David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), esp. 138-141; Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), esp. 202-3; Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology - Schizophrenia - Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
- 10 For references to the mask see GA 94: 243, 245, 283, 305; cf. also Hannah Arendt's short fable entitled "Heidegger the Fox" drawn from a 1953 entry in her own *Denktagebuch* in which the fox character builds a trap for himself to hide in. Written in the spirit of a dark humor, the wily Heidegger now appears quite ominous. Hannah Arendt, "Heidegger the Fox," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 361-2.
- 11 For analyses of the performance of Heidegger's language in the *Ereignis* manuscripts as a performance of silence, see Daniela Vallega-Neu, "Heidegger's Poietic Writings: From *Contributions to Philosophy to Das Ereignis*," in *Heidegger and Language*, ed. Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 119-45 and Krzysztof Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
- 12 Richard Polt also speaks of Heidegger's embitterment upon withdrawing from the Rectorship in "Inception, Downfall, and the

- Broken World: Heidegger Above the Sea of Fog,” paper presented at the conference *Heidegger's "Black Notebooks": Philosophy, Politics, Anti-Semitism*, Emory University, September 5–6, 2014.
- 13 Arendt's definitive treatment of the term is in her controversial work, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1963).
- 14 Arendt expresses this in a 1964 radio interview with Joachim Fest, where she goes on to say: “Eichmann was perfectly intelligent, but he had this stupidity. It was the stupidity that was so enraging. And that's what I actually meant by banality. There is no depth there—it is not demonic! It is simply the reluctance to imagine what the situation of the other is like, isn't it?” Hannah Arendt und Joachim Fest, *Eichmann war von empörender Dummheit: Gespräche und Briefe*, ed. Ursula Ludz and Thomas Wild (Munich: Piper, 2011), 43–44, translation mine.
- 15 Eduardo Mendieta makes a similar point in his paper, “Metaphysical Anti-Semitism and the Animality of the Jew: On Worldlessness, World Poorness and World Forming,” presented at the conference *Heidegger's "Black Notebooks": Philosophy, Politics, Anti-Semitism*, Emory University, September 5–6, 2014.
- 16 Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) still remains decisive on Heidegger's use of “spirit” in his Nazi-era speeches and writings.
- 17 Sander Gilman, “Aliens vs. Predators: Cosmopolitan Jews vs. Jewish Nomads,” paper presented at the conference *Heidegger's "Black Notebooks": Philosophy, Politics, Anti-Semitism*, Emory University, September 5–6, 2014.
- 18 David Farrell Krell, *Heidegger-Ecstasy-Tragedy: From Being and Time to The Black Notebooks* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015 [forthcoming]), 4.
- 19 “Philosoph Günter Figal tritt als Vorsitzender der Martin-Heidegger Gesellschaft zurück: Kritische Forschung nötig,” radio

- interview on WDR3, accessed on January 20th, 2015, <http://www.wdr3.de/zeitgeschehen/guenterfigal106.html>.
- 20 Although I do not analyze the work in detail in this essay, Trawny defends a similar vision of Heidegger's ruthless self-documentation of errancy in *Irrnisfuge*.
- 21 Trawny, *Mythos*, 11.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 "Die planetarischen Hauptverbrecher der neuesten Neuzeit, in der sie erst möglich und notwendig werden, lassen sich gerade an den Fingern einer Hand abzählen" (GA 69: 78).
- 24 Trawny, *Mythos*, 53.
- 25 See also Polt's lucid analysis of Heidegger's definition of criminality in "Inception, Downfall, and the Broken World." Heidegger writes: "Criminality [*Verbrechen*]: that is no mere breaking up [*Zerbrechen*], but the devastation of everything into what is broken...Ordering is only the reverse of criminality, understood in terms of the history of be-ing (not in a juridical-moral way)" (GA 96: 26).
- 26 Gilman, "Aliens vs. Predators."
- 27 Trawny, *Mythos*, 96-97.
- 28 Ibid., 97.
- 29 Though not referring specifically to Heidegger, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick makes a similar point in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 23.
- 30 Trawny, *Mythos*, 16.
- 31 On the theme of Heidegger's descent, see Polt "Inception, Downfall, and the Broken World."
- 32 On the theme of a secret spiritual Germany, see Theodore Kisiel, "The Siting of Hölderlin's 'Geheimes Deutschland' in Heidegger's Poetizing of the Political," in Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus II: Interpretationen, Heidegger-Jahrbuch 5* (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2009), 145-54; Richard Polt, "The Secret Homeland of Speech: Heidegger on Language, 1933-34," in Powell, ed., *Heidegger and Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 63-85.

- 33 Cf. Polt, "Inception, Downfall and the Broken World."
- 34 See Heidegger's tabulation of the state of the war (GA 96: 261–2):
"At the start of the third year of the planetary war. — Common sense would like to calculate history, and longs for a 'balance sheet.' [...] World Jewry, spurred on by the emigrants who have been let out of Germany, is intangible everywhere and, as much as it develops its power, never has to take part in warlike activities, whereas the only thing left for us is to sacrifice the best blood of the best of our own people."
- 35 Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism Into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For Wolin's response to the *Black Notebooks*, see Richard Wolin, "National Socialism, World Jewry and the History of Being: Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*," *Jewish Review of Books*, Summer 2014, <http://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/993/national-socialism-world-jewry-and-the-history-of-being-heideggers-black-notebooks/>.
- 36 Jacques Derrida, "Derrida's Response to Catherine Malabou," in *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 139.
- 37 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. II, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- 38 John Updike, Review of *The Defense*, by Vladimir Nabokov, *New Republic*, September, 26 1964, 15.
- 39 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2013); Marianne Constable, *Just Silences: the Limits and Possibilities of Modern Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).