

Book reviews

Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). ISBN 0-226-06664-9. 208 pp. \$25.00 (cloth).

Giovanna Borradori separately interviewed Habermas and Derrida in Manhattan within months of September 11, 2001, and the resulting text speaks to the state of both Continental philosophy and the world. In the mere eighteen pages of dialogue with Habermas and fifty-one pages with Derrida, Borradori uncovers something important and surprising: the usually opposed thinkers share a commitment to Enlightenment principles, believe these principles should underwrite international legal institutions, and denounce current U.S. foreign policy as dangerous folly. We cannot help but wonder if these interviews finally make explicit the kinship of Habermas and Derrida, or if the correct response September 11 is so obvious that it provides the one thing they can agree on. Either way, Habermas and Derrida continued the conversations begun here in a joint declaration for European resistance to American unilateralism titled “After the War: The Rebirth of Europe,” which appeared in major German, French and Italian Newspapers.

As in her *The American Philosopher*, Borradori’s theoretical diplomacy allows her to pursue fundamental and contentious questions.¹ Although we are all now “post-Holocaust philosophers,” Habermas and Derrida appeared to divide contemporary thought into two possibilities (p. 10). Against Adorno’s claim that instrumental rationality had overtaken Enlightenment, Habermas argues the Holocaust was not a necessary conclusion of modernization but was rather a misstep in its incomplete development. Derrida, on the other hand, rejected the Enlightenment because of the endemic violence resulting from rationalization’s domination of difference. Habermas devoted his 1986 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* to defending Enlightenment principles against Derrida and others, and the lines were drawn.² Or so it seemed. Borradori, a savvy European-trained philosopher, confesses her own mis-

perception: “Like many philosophers who came of age in the 1980s, I grew up convinced that Habermas and Derrida expressed sharply opposed views with regard to the Enlightenment: Habermas defended it, and Derrida rejected it.” She now believes that “the predominant claim of those years that Derrida is a counter-Enlightenment thinker is simply mistaken” (p. 15). Was Derrida pro-Enlightenment all along, or did he lose this argument and change his mind?

Militant religious fundamentalists explicitly reject secularization and modernity. Because of this, Borradori claims, “philosophy is called to arms” (p. xi) and the thesis of the book is that an analysis of 9/11 must “reach as far as a critical reassessment of the validity of Enlightenment projects and ideals” (p. 1). She presses Derrida on this issue, and he responds with candor. Even beyond the specifics of “the cruelty, the disregard for human life, the disrespect for law, for women, [and] the use of what is worst in technocapitalist modernity for the purpose of religious fanaticism,” Derrida finds the agendas advanced by the likes of bin Laden unacceptable primarily due to their offense to the most abstract Enlightenment principles: “If we are to put any faith in the perfectibility of public space and of the juridical-political scene. . . then there is . . . nothing good to be hoped for from that quarter” (p. 113). Given a choice between Enlightenment and fundamentalism, Derrida sides with Kantian cosmopolitanism:

[I]f I had to take one of the two sides and choose in a binary situation, well, I would. Despite my very strong reservations about the American, indeed European, political posture . . . I would take the side of the camp that, in principle, by right of law, leaves a perspective open to perfectibility in the name of the ‘political,’ democracy, international law, international institutions, and so on (p. 113).

Philosophy itself appears to have become Habermasian for Derrida, as he states that the task of a philosopher is now to “distinguish between ‘comprehending’ and ‘justifying’” and to “reflect in a responsible fashion on these questions and demand accountability from those in charge of public discourse, those responsible for the language and the institutions of international law” (p. 106).

With Derrida joining Habermas in defense of the Enlightenment tradition, both advocate strengthening and broadening the reach of international rule of law in order to administer global cosmopolitanism founded on secular human rights. Habermas has expounded his system of international law at length elsewhere, but here he notes in particular the unjustifiable delay in instituting

a legitimate international criminal court.³ Spoken well before the U.S. invaded Iraq without a second U.N. resolution and Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the U.N. as “irrelevant,” Habermas’ warnings are prescient:

If the Security Council is blocked in its decisions . . . and if in its place a regional alliance like NATO acts without a mandate, it reveals the fatal power differential that exists between the legitimate but weak authority of the international community and the actual strength of nation-states capable of military action but pursuing their own interests (p. 39).

Derrida agrees that such institutions currently hold little authority and are “nowhere respected” because of the precedent set by the U.S. to disregard them at will. This abuse, combined with the lack of enforcement mechanisms against the U.S. and the “aporias confronting all laws” renders the idea of international courts of justice with autonomous authority a utopian dream for Derrida (p. 114).

Given these shared views, neither Habermas nor Derrida approve of the United States’ immediate response to the attacks. To begin with, both admit sensing a shift away from what Habermas describes as “the impressive American liberality toward strangers” and toward mistrust (p. 26). Both felt as if they could not speak freely about the events while in the U.S., and Habermas takes particular offense at this apparent demand to “stand by [the U.S.] unconditionally.” “Even those who had an unquestionable record, as I do among my American friends,” Habermas admonishes, “needed to be cautious with regard to criticism” (p. 26). These obstacles to critique run contrary to the very spirit of communicative action.

Neither withholds his assessment of the Bush administration as politically obtuse, inappropriately religious, and driven by greed. Habermas finds the decision to declare war on terrorism a “serious mistake” that has elevated terrorists to politically legitimate adversaries that cannot be defeated because of their rhizomatic nature. This leaves the U.S. embroiled in an interminable war with an insuperable enemy. More importantly, American overreaction to this shadowy enemy threatens its liberal democratic rule at home and sullies its international relations abroad, playing into the hands of terrorists’ hopes to undermine and vilify the United States.

The self-interest motivating U.S. foreign policy makes it an easy target for demonization. Habermas and Derrida agree that international institutions of justice will merely treat the symptoms of the underlying disease of poverty that causes terrorism. Until some sustainable level of global material equality is achieved, American talk of human rights is disingenuous and transparent.

Habermas explains frankly: "Let's admit it – the West presents itself in a form deprived of any normative kernel as long as its concern for human rights only concerns the attempt at opening new free markets. . ." (p. 33). "Without political taming of unbounded capitalism," he continues, "the devastating stratification of world society will remain intractable" and the West will be perceived as a repressor (p. 36). In order to pull up terrorism by its root, "the disparities in the dynamic of world economic development would have to at least be balanced out regarding their most destructive consequences – the deprivation and misery of complete regions and continents comes to mind" (p. 36). Derrida emphasizes this point, going so far as to claim that globalization itself is a "simulacrum, a rhetorical artifice or weapon that dissimulates a growing imbalance" because "there have never been in the history of humanity, in absolute numbers, so many inequalities, so many cases of malnutrition, ecological disaster, or rampant epidemic. . ." (pp. 121–123). Beneath the illusion that material equality and human rights will spread with unfettered capitalism, Habermas finds that the "Bush administration seems to be continuing, more or less undisturbed, the self-centered course of a callous superpower" (p. 27).

Habermas and Derrida further agree that Bush makes matters worse by responding to terrorism with a religious tenor. Not only did the U.S. take the bait by declaring war against terrorism, but Bush waged a holy war of good against evil where "God is not neutral between them."⁴ While according to Derrida the religious rhetoric may seem to be laughable, "childish. . . obscurantist mystifications," the rest of the world perceives a nation with the death penalty, an increasingly thin separation of church and state, and "fundamental biblical (and primarily Christian) reference[s] in its official political discourse. . ." (pp. 99, 117). For Habermas, this "neoconservative division of labor between religious fundamentalism and a kind of evacuating depleting secularization" leaves the United States without international normative authority (p. 33).

In order to bridge this credibility gap, both call for Europe to become the preeminent force in international justice because, as Derrida claims, Europe has an "absolutely original" understanding of "the relation between the political and the theological" due to its cultural history of facilitating the transition to secular forms of political justification (pp. 116–117). They emphasize this need for a unified European identity and response to American unilateralism in their "After the War," but numerous questions remain unanswered even in that refined account. While they identify the protestors that took to the streets on February 15, 2003, as the spirit of Europe to be mobilized, do

these individuals really represent a unified Europe? Would Britain, Spain, or Italy be included under this conception? Although perhaps less so than the U.S., Europe is also divided, and Habermas and Derrida speak for Schröder and Chirac but not for Blair and Berlusconi. Rumsfeld's dismissal of opposition to the war in Iraq from German and French "old Europe" also does not bode well for the future of European significance. Derrida notes in the interview that European relevancy will not increase until it raises a formidable unified military force, but surely he does not intend for Europeans to increase military spending and cut social services in order to compete with the U.S. in a new arms race. This may explain why they call on Europe to "balance" rather than reject or refuse American policy, but Chirac, Schröder, and Putin already attempted such countervailance through the U.N., I.M.F., and the World Bank.

The interviews also provide a platform for Habermas and Derrida to advance their individual arguments. Based on what he describes as a shift in the "modality of belief," Habermas provides a compelling explanation for the revival of fundamentalism. While all religion is "based on a dogmatic kernel of belief," modernization required religious doctrine to undergo an epistemological transformation and privatize its claims to political universality in order to allow for secular public reason within a pluralistic culture (p. 31). In Borradori's words, "religion has to face the complex challenge of relativizing its position vis-à-vis other religions without relativizing its own dogmatic core" (p. 72). According to Habermas, premodern fundamentalism relinquished its absolute authority and underwent the "violent uprooting of traditional ways of life" because the liberatory promises of Enlightenment made this a risk worth taking. Now, however, globalization has accelerated this process but those asked to abandon their ways of life realize that they stand to gain only abject poverty under capitalism. "What was experienced in Europe as a process of *productive* destruction," Habermas explains, no longer offers "the promise of compensation for the pain of the disintegration of customary ways of life in other countries" (p. 32). Holdouts thus respond defensively and "ignore the epistemic situation of a pluralistic society and insist – even to the point of violence – on the universally binding character and political acceptance of their doctrine" (p. 31). If the West hopes to reverse this return to the "exclusivity of premodern beliefs," it cannot entice the resisters with unattainable and spiritually empty consumerism (p. 32). Although international institutions for justice may help, Habermas understands that the "desired transformation of mentality happens, rather, through the improvement of living conditions, through a sensible relief from oppression and fear" (p.

36). In other words, in order for the Enlightenment to be motivating, its promises must be kept.

Many have asked Habermas if September 11 demonstrates the failure of communicative action, but he remains steadfast: "The spiral of violence begins as a spiral of distorted communication that leads through the spiral of uncontrolled reciprocal distrust, to the breakdown of communication" (p. 35). He claims that along with the possibility of material and intellectual liberation, "[t]rust must be able to develop in communicative everyday practices," and "[o]nly then can a broadly effective enlightenment extend into media, schools, and homes" (p. 36). The theories of discourse ethics and charges of performative contradictions against those refusing to acknowledge better arguments, however, only have traction with those committed to living after the Copernican turn and evaluating choices with logical consistency rather than arguments from authority. Even with perfectly clear communication between the West and militant fundamentalists, the resolute believers will most likely not be swayed by the infidels' godless arguments. Habermas' account of the fundamentalists' reluctance to join the process of modernization because they lack incentive may be accurate, but if these resisters have not yet been won over by the power of Enlightenment arguments then they remain outside of the domain of secular political argumentation itself. Even if fundamentalists will hear out the arguments, such reasoning will not be persuasive until it convincingly demonstrates that modernization does indeed offer a good life. Even Westerners must admit that, under current social and economic conditions, this will not be true for most Middle-Eastern Arabs in the foreseeable future.

Derrida provides several insights into the meaning of September 11, first asking why it apparently holds so much meaning. He notes that the body count was comparatively low, even considering that "one does not count the dead in the same way from one corner of the globe to the other" (p. 92). The World Trade Center had been attacked only a few years prior, and, while spectacular, the destruction of these obvious targets was utterly predictable. As Habermas notes that the novelty of the events lies in "the symbolic force of the targets struck," (p. 28) Derrida explains that the collapse of the World Trade Center literally destabilized the entire world: "[S]ince the 'end of the cold war' what can be called the world order depends largely on the solidity and reliability, on the *credit*, of America power." Because American authority secures economic, scientific, military, media, legal, and even discursive order, "to destabilize this superpower . . . is to risk destabilizing the entire world, including the declared enemies of the United States (pp. 92–93). Considering the unprecedented global power of the United States, one strike at its heart caused the whole world to

buckle. In addition, Derrida identifies September 11 as a lingering trauma, due to both the media's unwitting repetition of the events and our inability to properly mourn because the events signified a new beginning rather than a discrete loss. For most of us, the trauma was anticipatory:

One day it might be said: 'September 11' – those were the ("good") old days of the last war. Things were still of the order of the gigantic: visible and enormous! What size, what height! There has been worse since. Nanotechnologies of all sorts are so much more powerful and invisible, uncontrollable, capable of creeping in everywhere. . . . Yet our unconscious is already aware of this; it already knows it, and that's what's scary (p. 102).

The worst was yet to come, the doomsday scenarios multiplied, and bookstores in Manhattan displayed signs declaring: "We do NOT have Nostradamus in stock."

Derrida did not let the interview pass without problematizing the concept of terrorism. He reminds readers that the French Revolution itself and the French repression in Algeria – which was retroactively described as a war in order to confer benefits to its veterans – demonstrate how easily terror can be inflicted in the name of a sovereign. Because the U.S. wields ultimate power in international law, it has been able to opportunistically appropriate the slippery term for its own rhetoric. As used by the militant fundamentalists, however, terrorism is simply self-defense against another terrorism. "I am resorting to terrorism as a last resort," Derrida understands the terrorist to claim, "because the other is more terrorist than I am; I am defending myself, counterattacking; the real terrorist, the worst, is the one who will have deprived me of every other means of responding before presenting himself, the first aggressor, as a victim" (p. 107). Exploring this claim that the attacks were self-defense against the greater American terrorism, Derrida asks: "Can't one terrorize without killing?" "Can't 'letting die,'" he continues, "'not wanting to know that one is letting others die' – hundreds of millions of human beings, from hunger, AIDS, lack of medical treatment, and so on – also be a part of a 'more or less' conscious and deliberate terrorist strategy?" He then considers whether terrorism requires individual intentionality or whether willful negligence regarding the automated consequences of U.S. foreign policy suffices to establish American complicity in terror:

We are perhaps wrong to assume so quickly that all terrorism is voluntary, conscious, organized, deliberate, intentionally calculated: there are historical and political "situations" where terror operates. . . as if by itself, as

the simple result of some apparatus, because of the relations of force in place, without anyone. . . being really conscious of it or feeling itself responsible for it (p. 108).

According to this theory, we make individual intentionality a necessary condition of terrorism because this exonerates most Americans, which only exemplifies our ability to shape the normative discourse.

Two of Derrida's claims are less convincing. First, he argues that the U.S. is in the throes of a suicidal process of "autoimmunization" where it "works to destroy its own protection" against external aggression (p. 94). As he claims, during the Cold War the U.S. did indeed train many of those now attacking it, and September 11 does provide an example of American technology commandeered from its airports by those trained in its schools. According to Derrida, the hijackers therefore accomplished "two suicides in one: their own . . . but also the suicide of those who welcomed, armed, and trained them" (p. 95). In addition, the subsequent war on terrorism will "regenerate, in the short and long term, the causes of evil they claim to eradicate" because our war machine will only fuel hatred for us and spin a vicious cycle of repression (p. 100). Derrida does not distinguish, however, between suicide and imprudent, shortsighted, and counterproductive policy. Intentionality should again be the operative distinction, and these events lack suicidal deliberateness unless conspiracy theorists are correct and September 11 was orchestrated to justify adopting the Project for a New American Century.⁵ But even this would describe a sacrifice and change in strategy rather than suicide.

In light of the role international law plays in his cosmopolitanism, Derrida also repeats his claims regarding the impossibility of justice because of the finitude and relativity of law and the transcendental infinity of justice.⁶ While acknowledging that he lives "as if" he "subscribe[s] to the as if's of Kant," he claims that we must be "dutiful beyond duty" because otherwise we subordinate ethical action to cognition (pp. 133–135). Such "calculation" reduces law to a debt economy and fails to honor the infinite justice due to the other. All of this dogmatically presumes, however, a form of transcendental justice predicated on an ethically charged notion of human alterity without engaging the debates over natural versus positive law. He also does not explain how something like Levinasian justice would translate into law except to note that any legalization of what he describes as "unconditional hospitality" would destroy it (p. 129). Here Derrida preaches to the converted.

It should be noted that the majority of the book consists of Borradori's uncritical essays relating the life's work of the interviewees to their thoughts

on September 11, which is unfortunate considering the wealth of material here ripe for criticism. And, given the timing of the interviews, the interlocutors could not discuss the extraordinary events that have occurred since the attacks which are arguably of greater global importance than the attacks themselves. Habermas has subsequently, for example, stated that “America’s normative authority lies shattered” because of the war in Iraq.⁷ In addition to Habermas and Derrida’s collaborative rallying of European dissent in “After the War,” Slavoj Žižek contributed to the discussion in *Lettre*, describing U.S. policy as absolutely morally bankrupt,⁸ and in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Richard Rorty beseeched Europe to “save the world” from the “disastrous” Bush administration. As a result, Borradori’s interviews are already somewhat dated in these frenzied political times. Despite these shortcomings, Borradori has created an important work in which the giants of contemporary Continental philosophy take steps together toward confronting the Leviathan of the neoconservative United States.

Notes

1. *The American Philosopher: Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
2. *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1986).
3. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 55. See *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1996).
4. “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” September 20, 2001.
5. See, for example, Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, *The War on Freedom: How and Why America was Attacked, September 11, 2001* (Joshua Tree, CA: Tree of Life Publications, 2002).
6. See “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority,” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992).
7. “Was bedeutet der Denkmalsturz?” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 17, 2003; see also Danny Postel, “Letter to America: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas,” in *The Nation*, December 16, 2002.

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Heidegger and Practical Philosophy, edited by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press [Sunny Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy], 2002). 384 pp. ISBN 0-79145-343-X, US\$73.50 (cloth), ISBN 0-79145-344-8, US\$24.95 (paper).

It may be the case that, decades from now, we will be able to discern a practical turn in philosophy back at the turn of the 21st century, a turn motivated by the desire to (again) have philosophy happen in the world and have it relate to the world where our existence takes place. In this remarkable volume of essays we see such a turn happening specifically after Heidegger, which means that practical philosophy as it is understood here is quite unlike either the established American tradition of pragmatic philosophy or the more recent positivistic endeavours of applied philosophy. A Heideggerian or, more accurately, given that this work is not presented as an act of pious Heideggerianism, a *post*-Heideggerian practical philosophy must be a more radical event. A practical philosophy that shows us what to do or how to do it is a philosophy that has come to rest, more or less dogmatically, on certain answers. For it to function as an ethics or a political theory or as a guide to life it must set aside questioning and hide from itself the abyssal nature of action, which is precisely what Heidegger cannot allow.

This, of course, is the philosophical source of the frustration experienced by those who try to find an ethical or political doctrine, even a nascent one, in Heidegger's work. Add to this his political engagements of the 1930s and the situation seems hopeless. As Jean-Luc Nancy so succinctly puts it in "Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics,'" one finds oneself wanting to say, on the one hand, that Heidegger has no morality and, on the other, that he has a bad morality. The solution, Nancy will argue, is in conceiving Heidegger's thinking, throughout, as a fundamental ethics.

What, then, is practical philosophy? Judging by the structure of this collection, it includes ethics, political philosophy, and social philosophy, these being the themes for the three central sections of the volume. It is a division that indicates a larger question: how are ethics and social and political philosophy to be distinguished and how are they related, after Heidegger? If Heidegger's fundamental ontology is a fundamental ethics (Nancy) or if ethics is for Heidegger primordial (Françoise Dastur), it should be remembered that *Mitsein*, and therefore social philosophy, is also primordial. Does this mean that ethics and social philosophy coincide? And if social then why not also political philosophy? This volume does suggest a certain demarcation; the social involves community, empathy and responsibility as addressed in

Sein und Zeit and the *Beiträge*, while the political involves state, *stadt* or at least *polis*, the fateful destiny of Dasein and Dasein's natality as addressed in a range of texts including *Sein und Zeit*, lectures on Hölderlin, and the *Beiträge* but, above all, in the *Rektoratsrede*. But several essays also make the point that the distinction is fluid. Nevertheless, to collapse all three fields would be at best unhelpful, at worst dangerous, and this is what is acknowledged by the structure – and indeed the fact – of this book, even though it is not explicitly addressed in the text. That is to say, to think practical philosophy itself as the distinctness and relation of social philosophy, political philosophy and ethics (and more?) remains a task.

The volume opens with a section devoted to Heidegger and practical philosophy, a section that might have been better named “Heidegger and the History of Philosophy”. The achievement of John Sallis's lyrical “Free Thinking” is to broach the question of Dasein's acting, an acting that is always a questioning beyond theory and practice. We are not concerned here with practice as it is traditionally understood. In Chapter 2, Jacques Taminiaux deals with “The Interpretation of Aristotle's Notion of *Aretê* in Heidegger's First Courses,” aptly situating Heidegger by looking backward to Aristotle but also looking forward to Heidegger's early students – Arendt, Gadamer, Hans Jonas and Leo Strauss – and their responses, explicit and implicit, to his appropriation of *aretê*. In Chapters 3 and 4 respectively, Frank Schalow and Jacob Rogozinski both write on Heidegger and Kant's practical philosophy, the former on the “destructive retrieval of the practical self” (p. 39), the latter on the deconstruction of ethics.

Rogozinski's contribution is the most piercingly critical of Heidegger, asking whether Heidegger, after the *Kehre*, ends up using Kant as the figure that must bear the burden of his own “nihilism of 1930.” Indeed, does Heidegger, by making ethics ontological and having Being itself be the battlefield of fury and salvation, deprive existents of responsibility? Several of the contributions that follow end up trying to respond to these hard questions, often by means of replies to Levinas' challenge to Heidegger. Schalow claims that Heidegger's best response is in his attention to the voice of the other and suggests that the call indicates “a disposition [of Dasein] to act in behalf of the other” (p. 38). Schalow stops short, however, of explaining how this might be. Later, Dastur's “The Call of Conscience: the Most Intimate Alterity,” asks if the other and Being must stand opposed as Levinas suggests. Drawing on the “Letter on Humanism,” she claims that in fact they must not; rather, ethics is ontology itself, leaving for the philosopher the task of “remaining silent on the subject of ethics, for such a silence is perhaps exactly what makes possible an opening to a practical ethics” (p. 96). Meanwhile, Jean

Greisch's contribution, "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics" engages Levinas in a slightly different vein, letting the nature of exteriority be the crucial issue and arguing that how we read Heidegger's and Levinas' respective concepts of the outside determines if and how Heideggerian ontology and Levinasian ethics can encounter one another.

Greisch does not close off the possibility that this may occur, and in that he finds himself in tune with the remark from Nancy's "Heidegger's Originary Ethics" that places Heidegger *and* Levinas along with such unexpected bed-fellows as Wittgenstein and Bergson as belonging to an epoch when philosophy "understood itself (once again) as 'ethics' . . . rather than as 'knowledge' (p. 66)". Together, these contributions are persuasive on the point that for Heidegger, as for Levinas, philosophy is again ethics, and, while they do not dispose of Rogozinski's specific question regarding responsibility, they do show that still richer conversations will take place when the two thinkers' common ground is acknowledged.

Perhaps, as we pursue the question of practical philosophy, it will become possible to say that philosophy is political philosophy, but we cannot do so yet, and the volume preserves Part III for the question of the political. The latest episode of the Heidegger controversy (the episode that began with Farias' *Heidegger et le nazisme*) has generated much noise in the past 15 years, but also much careful and thoughtful work on the question of Heidegger and the political (Miguel de Beistegui, John McCumber, Derrida and Nancy come to mind), and the fact that this volume takes much of that work for granted is an encouraging sign. It is not that we can ever leave the fact of Heidegger's Nazism behind; rather we can and must think it in ever less superficial ways.

The process is clearly under way here as far as the *Rektoratsrede* is concerned. In "In the Middle of Heidegger's Three Concepts of the Political" Theodore Kiesel locates that text at the centre of Heidegger's second concept of the political, the metaontological, which succeeded the phenomenological and preceded the archaic or *seynsgeschichtlicher* concept. In "The Baby and the Bath Water: on Heidegger and Political Life" Dennis Schmidt takes it up more deliberately, making the connection with a long tradition of German writings on the University. The *Rektoratsrede* is, he says, about academic politics, and it can, after all, be read without the nationalistic element that is introduced to it with no philosophical justification. This makes me uneasy. To set the address in its philosophical context is a responsible thing to do; to do so at the expense of the political context is dangerous. Shearing off its nationalist element may allow the address to make more sense in the tradition of Kant, Schelling and Nietzsche, but does that shearing away not amount to

a reification of the limit between philosophy and the political, the limit that Heidegger's fundamental ontology implicitly undoes?

Meanwhile, Charles Scott, in "Heidegger's Practical Politics: of Time and the River," reads the address alongside Heidegger's 1942 lectures on Hölderlin's poem, *Der Ister*. In those lectures, he cultivates of a myth of German-ness and a romanticization of German language and culture when what he needs to acknowledge – and what he should have seen in his reading of *Der Ister*, of all things – is the river-ness of such myths. Scott writes, in his beautiful way:

The exaggeration and romanticizing could be mitigated if one were clear that the myths compose part of a specific lineage, and that they are subject to the river's vanishing aspect. . .if one could think without their invocation, could let go of their "call" and think in gratitude for their crowning achievement of flying away and leaving room for things without their benefit (or curse) (p. 186).

This is the first signal of the thought I find most interesting and provocative in this collection, the thought of practical philosophy as concerned with Dasein's temporality experienced as renewal, or birth, or development, or becoming. It is a movement propelled by Peg Birmingham in "Heidegger and Arendt: the Birth of Political Action and Speech," furthered in François Raffoul's "Heidegger and the Origins of Responsibility" and then carried by David Wood and Lawrence Hatab into an engagement with new fields. It is a radical movement that seeks to show that our being is indeed becoming, that fundamental ontology must finally shed any of its glamour as a matter of accomplishment or foundation, that being-in-the-world is a movement not towards a death that is exterior to us, but between birth and death, with both birth and death making up our being as becoming beings, just as birth and death make the human world a changing world. That is, our world is one where no responsibility is acknowledged once and for all, but rather constantly, and that responsibility, like resolution and decision, are essential to the being of the world.

Birmingham acknowledges Arendt's importance in revealing this theme but argues that we must return to Heidegger in order to resolve the most profound difficulties in Arendt's ontology. Specifically, Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's being-toward-birth *and* being-toward-death (Section 72, *Sein und Zeit*), along with the thought of *Raumlichkeit* [embodiment] and *Ent-fernung* [deseverance] together offer a solution to Arendt's *zôê/bios* distinction. One reason, Birmingham suggests, that Arendt remained so committed to the distinction may have been her desire to maintain the political as

a space immune to any “organic or naturalistic fantasy that allows for the totalitarian attempt to make this fantasy present” (p. 197). Heidegger, by maintaining “the place of embodiment as the whereat (*Wobei*). . . a region given in the body’s directionality. . . the place of difference and dislocation” (pp. 197–198), in fact holds open the possibility of preserving the public realm as a space always open to something other than itself.

But this is just one possible reason for the distinction, and perhaps not the most pertinent one for us. Arendt was also clearly concerned that the public realm could be simply evacuated in favor of the social, and the example she had in mind was not so much Germany suffering under totalitarianism and the fantasy of national glory as the United States besotted with the fantasy of universal prosperity. (See *On Revolution*.) Thus, while Birmingham produces what will certainly be a productive account of Dasein’s embodiment, and while her attention to birth as the signal of loss, along with her treatment later in the essay of repetition and the *Augenblick*, may pave the way for an understanding of Dasein’s temporality that is inflected by Arendt’s work on revolution, this hope for the public realm is in the end just part of the point.

Raffoul focuses his thought on the fact that Dasein is a “radically finite existence” that comes to itself from ground that is always “other;” our coming into being remains inappropriable (p. 209). This opens the question of birth. He writes: “I am thus each time beginning, each time coming into being anew (p. 210),” a formulation that comes to mind later when he makes his central point about responsibility: “the call [of conscience] is said to come from the being ‘which each time I am’” (p. 214). Natality begins to take on its ethical import. Pursuing the thought in these terms would help elucidate the temporality of facticity and would put Raffoul in a fruitful conversation with an essay he mentions briefly, Giorgio Agamben’s fascinating “The Passion of Facticity: Heidegger and the Problem of Love,” where *facticus* – what is made – is *opposed* to *nativus* – what is born (p. 211).

As the title to his contribution – “The Community of Those Who Are Going to Die” – indicates, Walter Brogan devotes his attention to mortality rather than natality, and David Wood’s contribution, “Reading Heidegger Responsibly: Glimpses of Being in Dasein’s Development,” never explicitly makes birth a theme. Nonetheless, it is in this latter essay that the thought of renewal is most fully developed. Wood argues for the transcendental significance of childhood development, where the phenomenon in question is constituted precisely by what is most deeply constitutive of Dasein, that is, temporality. A Heideggerian approach could show that individual development has some of the same kinds of traumatic transformations that we find in human history, and that our own memories give us access to the difficulty of

access to the past, and indeed that philosophy itself is born from the pain of transition and renewal. All of this moves to the point indicated by psychoanalysis: “that structural transformations are inherent in human development, that humans are essentially developmental creatures, and that these developments are incomplete (p. 229).” As Birmingham argued, Dasein’s thrownness, its stretching between birth and death, is an experience permeated by loss. This turns out to be what gives us the intimation that transitions are potentially abyssal; this is why we experience them as angst; this is how they give us a lived experience of extinction and indeed death. Wood concludes: “human development is a fundamentally incomplete ontological journey. . . . [T]his permits us to stage again the whole question of the relation of the ontic to the ontological” (p. 232).

When Hatab writes on “Heidegger and the Question of Empathy” he draws together these insights. The essay is explicitly devoted to elucidating the role of empathy in ethics, but making his argument relies on treating Dasein’s being as social *and* developmental and thereby also re-working the ontological-ontic distinction. Social psychology is, he argues, an appropriate place to turn for research that reinforces Heidegger’s phenomenology and that suggests “developmental roots of an ekstatic in/there/with structure” (p. 257).

The volume concludes with a collection of essays on “Heidegger and the Contemporary Ethos,” with pieces by Thomas Sheehan on nihilism, Pierre Jacerme on ethics in the atomic age, Andrew Mitchell on praxis and *Gelassenheit*, and William Richardson on psychoanalysis. However, I would also have hoped, at this point in the book, to have seen some elaboration of the thought of practical philosophy as such. Is there not scope – is there not indeed a demand – for a consideration of aesthetics or at least the work of art under the heading “Heidegger and Practical Philosophy”? If politics counts as practical philosophy, and if Heidegger can write, in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” that “the act that founds a political state” and “truth setting itself into work” are both essential ways in which truth establishes itself, is it possible to leave all though of the work of art out of practical philosophy? It could be argued that the term is still determined by its Kantian root, and, given that Kant defers his treatment of aesthetics until after his *Critique of Practical Reason*, that is, until the *Critique of Judgment*, the treatment that I am looking for must be deferred to some volume-to-be entitled *Heidegger and Judgment*. Yet the authors in this volume have not felt constrained in any way to think only the themes of Kant’s second critique, so the absence of aesthetics requires another explanation. Perhaps aesthetics is not sufficiently practical in some other sense. Or perhaps beginning to think about aesthetics would upset the boundaries that, for now, give practical philosophy its shape.

The value of this book is, I am convinced, precisely in its capacity to make a reader think further, to suggest upsets. The contributions may be uneven in terms of polish, ranging from Hatab's well crafted piece to Kisiel's unresolved exposition and including Nancy's very tight thinking of action as well as Wood's scattered but immensely provocative thoughts. Nevertheless, they are, without exception, rewarding. And I may have an editorial wish list having to do with consistency of heading and sub-headings, consistency in the form of references to Heidegger's works, and the small but frequent gaps in the index (the addition of which, it should be remembered, is already supererogatory). Nevertheless, this is an elegant volume. Pettigrew and Raffoul have gathered exceptional essays from some of the most rigorous thinkers in the field, and that gathering is itself a valuable work that effectively holds open the question(s) of Heidegger and (the question of) practical philosophy.

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