

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION.

*For as you begin, so you shall remain.*¹

1.1 Aims and Approaches

Martin Heidegger is one of the most significant philosophers to have made the age of technology central to his thought. The aim of this study is to gain a critical perspective on how Heidegger viewed man's forgetfulness of Being and the concomitant erosion of responsiveness in language and thinking induced by technology. An in-depth investigation of Heidegger's ideas on technology is irrevocably linked to his ideas on truth and language. One issue I will investigate in this study is whether this linkage is fruitful and tenable.

According to Heidegger, the major epochs in Western history are actually stages in the steady decline in Western man's understanding of what it means to 'be'. In the technological age, for something to 'be' means for it to be raw material - part of the endless process of production and consumption. For Heidegger, the horror of the technological age is that man is also seen as raw material. Thus, the 'question concerning technology' is ultimately a question about human dignity.

My main concern is whether Heidegger's ideas regarding technology, truth and language have any meaning or relevance for modern man. Are there not other, more plausible accounts of the origins of modern technology and of how to limit its destructive features? I explore Heidegger's ideas in this regard and contrast them with the ideas of his critics.

A focal point in this study will be Heidegger's notion of technology as *Gestell* (Enframing). According to Heidegger, Enframing is the mode in which Being manifests itself in the age of technology. Enframing allows man to reveal reality as standing reserve (*Bestand*). It reduces the metaphorical expressive powers of language and thinking, in order to make reality calculable and manipulable. For Heidegger, enframing is the supreme danger, because it causes the event of revealing (Being itself) to slip into oblivion. As a result, man is no longer Dasein as an open possibility, but rather a grounded actuality, a fixed identity. A human being fully adapted to the technological world would no longer be human, because of his

complete forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger claims that the *Heimatlosigkeit* (homelessness) of contemporary man is related to the 'dis-essencing' of language and thinking. The fixating of truth within the *Gestell* exiles man from his essence, namely to be Dasein. There is no longer a relation to the openness of Being, for the possible becomes identical to the real.

To counter this, Heidegger suggests an attitude of *Gelassenheit* (releasement), whereby thinking listens to language and allows it to move back into its element (Being). In the modern era, dominated by an increasingly technologised use of language, the caring for the word requires us to reach back into the abyss of silence, in search of a language capable of speaking Being in all its otherness and unpredictability. Heidegger suggests that by means of poetic thinking, the priority of logos over logic can be reaffirmed, in a time when the reign of a purely instrumental logic has reached dangerous proportions.

In this study, I investigate whether Heidegger's conclusion that all human activity is reduced to *Gestell* is plausible. Is this perhaps not just another form of totalising thinking? Even if one agrees with Heidegger, the question remains whether an attitude of *Gelassenheit* is an 'adequate solution' to this conclusion. Can one still retain ideas like human freedom and moral agency in terms of his philosophy? Many critics have voiced doubts as to whether Heidegger's thought concerning technology provides the resources for a genuine rethinking of action. I will investigate these and related questions drawing on the works of various critics, in the final chapter of this study.

1.2 Did Heidegger 'turn' far enough?

For the purposes of this study, I have aimed to concentrate on those works which I feel bear most closely upon my investigation, in order to open up fruitful avenues of enquiry. However, I presuppose an underlying unity and consistency of outlook in Heidegger's works, even if there are changes that are noticeable in his modes of characterisation, thought and insight. It is for this reason that I have felt it to be necessary to include references to works from both the so-called early and later Heidegger, in order to gain perspective on the basic tenets and the ruling orientation of mind out of which Heidegger thinks. According to David Farrell Krell:

Whether we subdivide Heidegger into two or three or even more parts, the problem remains that the moment we begin to think about any element of any part that element itself turns back and forth to all the remaining elements in Heidegger's thought.²

W.J. Richardson is well known for having first made the distinction between a Heidegger I and a Heidegger II, and ever since there has been controversy about what has been called the 'turn' (*Kehre*) in Heidegger's thinking. Heidegger himself speaks of a turn (*Kehre*) in his thought, which begins with the 1930 essay *On the Essence of Truth*. Several Heidegger scholars have debated various understandings of what this 'turn' is, and exactly at which point in Heidegger's work it occurs.

Many commentators have argued that in *Being and Time*, Heidegger remains wholly confined within the language and methods of traditional ontology, which the later Heidegger overcomes. They suggest that Dasein is simply another word for man, and that man is simply another being, whose pre-eminence in *Being and Time* derives from the tradition of Cartesian subjectivity which Heidegger has not yet overcome. They argue that the later Heidegger's pursuit of Being itself, abandons Dasein along with all other mundane things. As David Farrell Krell³ notes, the problem with such interpretations is whether they understand the difference that makes Dasein more than an artefact or a thing of nature. In Heidegger's view, Dasein is the very openness that allows the questioning of Being (*Sein*). I would therefore agree with David Farrell Krell when he states that claiming that the later Heidegger abandons Dasein is incoherent⁴.

Unquestionably, the perspective governing Heidegger's work did change after *Being and Time*, but during all the years of his later work, he never repudiated the fundamental formulations that he had given in this work. In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, for example, Heidegger tells us that this text belongs to a larger context, that is, 'It is the attempt undertaken again and again ever since 1930 to shape the question of *Being and Time* in a more primordial fashion.'⁵

Waterhouse⁶ claims that Heidegger's later work does presuppose the analysis of human existence in *Being and Time*, and the themes that emerge most predominantly are entirely consonant with the earlier text. In Heidegger's own words, the distinction drawn between the so-called early and late periods is '...justified only on the condition that this is kept constantly in mind: only by way of what Heidegger I

has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by Heidegger II.⁷ The ostensible *Kehre* therefore did not constitute a rejection of the concerns identified in *Being and Time*, but rather a progression and deepening of Heidegger's thinking about them. Perhaps, then, we can rather regard Heidegger's later thinking as a 'step back' to the fundamental experience of *Being and Time*.

John Sallis tells us that:

His questions offer a "contribution", not by asking new questions – Heidegger asks always only one question – but rather by giving directives for gaining access to and moving within the sphere of that essential thinking which thrives on its "limitation to one thought".⁸

Although the unity of Heidegger's thought remains striking, this is not to say that this unity is one-dimensional. Each element of Heidegger's thought turns, showing itself in various perspectives throughout his various works.

What does this mean for a study on Heidegger's conception of technology, truth and language? Hubert Dreyfus discusses to what extent the account of the being of equipment in *Being and Time* is a critique of the ontology of technology, and to what extent it is a contribution to the development of a technological understanding of Being.⁹ He concludes that 'Seen in the light of the relation of nature and technology revealed by later Heidegger, *Being and Time* appears in the history of the being of equipment not just as a transition but as *the* decisive step towards technology.'¹⁰

W.B. Macomber, in his investigation of Heidegger's ideas on truth also asserts that Heidegger's 'aim and method always remains the same', and claims that the two 'parts' of Heidegger's philosophy are 'unthinkable *except* in conjunction'¹¹.

In asserting the unity of Heidegger's thought, I am not, therefore, denying that such a reorientation took place. What I am saying is that the discontinuity that this reorientation involves can be understood only against the background of an even deeper continuity that runs through all the periods of Heidegger's thought. I will also try to show that the central concepts of *Being and Time* survive that reorientation instead of simply being replaced, as is now often assumed, and that it is the way the

relationship between certain of these concepts is reconstrued that accounts for the sharply different tonalities of the later writings.¹²

Olafson¹³, in his discussion of Heidegger's conception of language, also sees Heidegger's philosophy in this manner. Likewise, according to Sefler:

Heidegger's main philosophical purpose is to grasp ... Being. As a result, his approach to language centers around this concern; his encounters with language are always through ontological (and etymological) investigations; his expositions on language are always done for the sake of and subjugated to the primary task of revealing Being – or more properly, of allowing Being to reveal itself.¹⁴

I will therefore approach my investigation of Heidegger's ideas on technology, truth and language in a manner that presupposes the underlying unity of thought in Heidegger's works, and works from the assumption that there is no radical break among the plurality of ways traversed by Heidegger's long career of thought. Even the detours, false starts and dead ends (*Holzwege*) are all part of a single path from the very beginning of his first ways.

Of course, seeing Heidegger's work in this way does open the way for a radical critique of his ideas, following Lyotard. Lyotard's indictment of Heidegger has to do with what he thinks is the inadequacy of Heidegger's 'turn', in other words, with the implications of the persistence of the question of Being in his thinking. Lyotard implies that Heidegger has not 'turned' far enough from Being and by implication, from the confines of the Western philosophical tradition. I will discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 6.

Seeing Heidegger's work in this way also has major implications for a discussion on the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his involvement with National Socialism, since the attempt by some commentators to indict or 'save' Heidegger in this context depends on a division of his thought into separate periods. I will discuss this issue in detail in the section that follows.

1.3 Who was Martin Heidegger?¹⁵

Martin Heidegger was born in the little Catholic town of Messkirch in 1889, the first child of Friedrich and Johanna Heidegger. Heidegger grew up with his sister Marie and brother Fritz. At fourteen, he completed elementary school in Messkirch, and entered the 'Untertertia' (seventh or eighth year classes) at the grammar school in Constance. As a boarder at the archiepiscopal seminary, the Konradihaus, Heidegger was befriended by Dr Conrad Gröber, a man who would become an important figure in the young Heidegger's life. Their close personal relationship endured, even after Gröber took charge of a city parish in Constance and Heidegger moved to Freiburg in 1906.

Heidegger was deeply influenced by Gröber since he gave Heidegger a copy of Franz Bretano's *On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle* (1862), which Heidegger identified as the enduring inspiration for *Being and Time*.

At the end of the *Untersekunda* (the tenth school year), Heidegger began attending the highly prestigious Betholdgymnasium at Freiburg, and became a boarder at the archiepiscopal seminary of St. George. The intended aim of his studies was a theological career. In 1909, he began his studies in Catholic theology at the University of Freiburg. Heidegger later stated: 'Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking.'¹⁶

In the winter semester of 1910/11, Heidegger's health deteriorated and so was given a leave of absence for the whole summer semester of 1911. Later, on the advice of his superiors, he abandoned the study of theology completely. This was one of the most difficult periods in Heidegger's life, since he would lose the academic support he had been receiving if he discontinued his theological studies, and he would also have to choose a new path for his life. Heidegger decided to begin a study of mathematics at the University of Freiburg, starting in the winter semester of 1911/12. He attended classes in mathematics, physics and chemistry, but did not write final examinations in any of these subjects. His chief interest turned out to be philosophy, with Heidegger attending lectures by Arthur Schneider and Heinrich Rickert. He read widely in philosophy and the natural and human sciences and studied Hölderlin, Rilke, Trakl, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky.

On 26 July 1913, Heidegger took his doctoral examination before the Faculty of Philosophy and passed 'summa cum laude'.¹⁷ In his habilitation thesis, *The Categories of Meaning in Duns Scotus*, which he started working on from 1914 onwards, he laid the foundations of a particular interpretative approach, whereby scholastic patterns of thought were subjected to a phenomenological interpretation inspired by the work of Husserl. At the same time, this work also contains allusions to the thought of Rickert, who was in charge of the habilitation procedure. The First World War did not interrupt Heidegger's work on his habilitation thesis, because his heart condition excluded him from active service. In August 1915, the now qualified lecturer was called up, but after being treated for neurasthenia and heart disease, he was assigned to censorship duties at the Postal Control Office in Freiburg. From December 1913, Heidegger had been secretly engaged to 'Margaret', a young woman from Strasbourg. This engagement was beset with difficulties and was broken off in November 1915.

At this time, the faculty of Philosophy at Freiburg appointed the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl as a successor to Rickert. The young Heidegger had already encountered some of Husserl's work, but had had no personal contact with him. Heidegger was aiming towards the second chair of philosophy at Freiburg, but was not successful. The board declined even to recommend him for an associate professorship. Heidegger was crushed by these developments and felt that Husserl was prejudiced against him and failed to recognise his true merits.

In the summer of 1916, while Heidegger was still on military service at the Freiburg Postal control Office, he met Elfride Petri, a student of economics at Freiburg University. She came from the family of a high-ranking Prussian officer and belonged to the Lutheran faith. This undoubtedly had an important influence on Heidegger's progressive estrangement from Catholic circles. They were married on 21 March 1917 in the university chapel of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Freiburg. Two sons were born to the couple, in 1919 and 1920.

During the winter of 1917/18, the relationship between Heidegger and Husserl improved. They began to discuss philosophy on an informal, personal basis. Heidegger's thinking began to undergo a fundamental change under the influence of Husserl, which culminated in his decision to abandon the faith of his birth. He did, however, remain within the tradition of Christianity, but felt that he could no longer remain within the system of Catholicism. Protestant thinkers, most notably

Schleiermacher, had opened up new perspectives for him. In 1920, Husserl succeeded in obtaining a regular teaching post for Heidegger as an *Assistent*, until 1923 when Heidegger departed for Marburg, where he had finally succeeded in attaining a professorship. Husserl played a role here too, in his strong recommendation of Heidegger for this position.

Heidegger never felt at home in Marburg, and was drawn to his mountain cabin which his wife had had built for him in Todtnauberg¹⁸ at every possible opportunity. It was here that *Being and Time* was written. Heidegger found an excellent discussion partner in the person of Rudolf Bultmann during this time, and was also corresponding with Karl Jaspers. *Being and Time* appeared in the spring of 1927. Heidegger was appointed to a permanent chair at Marburg in October 1927, but it was only a matter of weeks before planning had begun in Freiburg, once again at Husserl's instigation, to offer him the chair there.

Heidegger's relationship with Husserl, the 'father of phenomenology', is a complex one. In the early stages of their acquaintance, Heidegger felt that Husserl was prejudiced against him, and failed to appreciate his true merits. Yet, even though their relationship was not particularly close to begin with, after 1918 their correspondence increased to a great extent, and Heidegger found himself turning to a greater extent to Husserl. As has been previously mentioned, it was Husserl who wrote a glowing testimonial for Heidegger in order to secure a professional post in philosophy at Marburg, as well as his efforts that aided Heidegger in attaining the post at Freiburg.

Despite the close friendship that developed between mentor and student, this relationship deteriorated to such an extent that Heidegger would later make a statement regarding his conduct towards Husserl to the chairman of the denazification commission:

The allegation that as rector I banned Husserl from the University and the library is a particularly vile calumny. I never ceased to look upon Husserl with gratitude and respect as my teacher and mentor. It is true that my philosophical studies moved away from his position in many respects, with the result that Husserl himself attacked me publicly in 1931 in his great speech in the Berlin Sportpalast. So the ties of friendship had begun to slacken long before 1933. When the first law against the Jews was passed in 1933, which deeply shocked both me and many others who

were favourably disposed towards the National Socialist movement, my wife sent a bouquet of flowers to Frau Husserl, together with a letter – in both our names – that expressed our undiminished respect and gratitude, and condemned the harsh measures against the Jews. When a later edition of *Being and Time* was in preparation, my publisher wrote to tell me that it could only be published if the formal dedication to Husserl was dropped. I agreed to this, on condition that the substantive dedication to Husserl on page 38 of the text was retained – which is what happened. When Husserl died I was ill in bed. When I recovered, however, I did not write to Frau Husserl; and in that I was undoubtedly remiss. The reason for this omission was the bitter sense of shame I felt about what was now being done to the Jews – far beyond the scope of that first law – and which one was powerless to prevent.¹⁹

Husserl, who took Heidegger under his wing in a fatherly fashion, was devastated by the increasing distance Heidegger put between them, especially after Heidegger was appointed as Rector of Freiburg. He writes:

Before this he broke off all relations with me (and very soon after his appointment) and in recent years has allowed his anti-Semitism to come increasingly to the fore, even in his dealings with his group of devoted Jewish students and his Faculty colleagues. That was hard to swallow. What was also hard to take was the way Heidegger and the other proponents of 'Eksistenz' philosophy – largely derived from caricatured versions of the ideas contained in my writings, lectures and personal teachings – twisted the radical scientific purport of my life's work into its very opposite, damming that work by praising it fulsomely as something that had been entirely superseded, something that was quite unnecessary to study any more...But the events of the past few weeks and months have struck at the deepest roots of my existence.²⁰

Husserl's mention of Heidegger's 'anti-Semitism' in the above quotation, points us towards an investigation of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism.

1.4 Heidegger and National Socialism

Heidegger's life is indelibly marked by his involvement with National Socialism, which he vigorously supported while serving a year as rector of Freiburg University, beginning in 1933. The ambivalence that seems to lie at the heart of Heidegger's life and work has triggered many heated writings, which, 'whatever the motivations on either side, the resulting debate has proven intense and generally less illuminating than one might wish.'²¹

The questions that I consider regarding this topic are: How are we to reconcile the man and the works? Is it possible to separate Martin Heidegger, the philosopher, from Martin Heidegger, the man of political action? If so, how and to what extent? Is the 'Heidegger affair', in the end, a philosophically worthwhile topic to pursue?

According to what has been called the 'official story'²²; Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism was a short-lived and hesitant response to the demands of the times in which he lived. Heidegger realised that Hitler's movement contained intolerable elements, but believed that these could be neutralised once a new political order had been established. He saw it to be vital that the German universities be reformed in order to play a revitalising role in the cultural life of the community as a whole. Heidegger also believed in the importance of protecting the university from political control by the Nazi state. He later claimed that he was obliged to take on the position of rector to protect the university from external control.²³ Thus, Heidegger accepted the unanimous vote of his colleagues and became the Rector of Freiburg University in 1933. He later wrote: 'With regard to 1933, I looked to National Socialism to bring a complete spiritual renewal of life, the healing of social differences and the salvation of Western culture from the dangers of communism.'²⁴

Heidegger's belief in the Führer's skilful ability to instantiate the people's historical destiny did not, however, last much beyond the rectorate. He resigned the rectorate in 1934, less than a year after assuming the position. Apparently, during his time as rector, Heidegger aimed to protect Jewish and anti-Nazi faculty members from oppression by the new regime. It seemed that his acceptance of this role at the university within the Nazi regime was an manifestation of his hope to 'lead the leader' - '*den Führer führen*', as Otto Pöggeler has put it.

Heidegger was later prevented from publishing, his lectures were shut down by the Gestapo, he was forbidden to travel abroad, and, in 1944, he was sent to work on the Rhine dykes as one of the university's most 'expendable' professors.

During the past decade, this 'official story' has been exposed as sometimes untrue, and as sometimes only a small part of the 'truth'. Due to the investigative work of scholars like Hugo Ott, we now know, for example, that Heidegger actually manoeuvred beforehand to acquire the post as Rector, and that the election was not unanimous, since Jewish professors were no longer allowed to vote. As Rector, Heidegger produced a large number of speeches and newspaper articles in support of the Nazi cause²⁵, which many commentators, after a correlation of the early Heideggerian philosophy with the political speeches of the 1930s, believe leave no doubt that Heidegger himself viewed his National Socialist activities as a concrete illustration of authentic existence. I will discuss this issue in more detail presently.

Heidegger also used his power as Rector in attempts to destroy the academic careers of colleagues of whom he disapproved (Herman Staudinger is the oft-quoted example). Heidegger was never forbidden to travel abroad, and in spite of his claim to have become an opponent of the regime in 1934, he remained a member of the party until 1945, and appeared in Rome in 1936 wearing a swastika in his lapel.

1.4.1 Heidegger's Silence

The controversy surrounding this period has been heightened by Heidegger's post-war reluctance to express remorse for his involvement with Nazism. Admitting only that his allegiance to Nazism constituted the greatest 'stupidity' of his life, Heidegger showed only remorse for an intellectual miscalculation and not for a moral or political transgression.

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe²⁶ has concluded that the 'crime' of Heidegger's politics rests not so much in Heidegger's embrace of National Socialism as rector of Freiburg, as in his silence on the extermination of the Jews. Jean-François Lyotard too refuses in any way to excuse Heidegger's 'leaden' silence, because what it forecludes is for him immemorial and thus essential to all thinking²⁷.

Lyotard's reading of Heidegger is decisive, provocative and at times angry and harsh. He clearly wants thought to have nothing more to do

with what in Heidegger makes possible or authorises a geopolitics, a geolinguistics, or a geophilosophy, whether it be Greco-Germanic or Eurocentric in form. He wants thought to move beyond and outside a philosophy that repeatedly turns back to the question of Being and its languages and traditions and turns short on questions that in Lévinas's terms are 'otherwise than being'.²⁸

Heidegger's silence was not, however, total. In the Club of Bremen lectures in 1949, he twice announced the equivalence of the extermination camps and the motorised food industry, the blockades of East Germany and the starvation of millions of people in China. The result of these comparisons was to diminish the significance of the Nazi atrocities. Heidegger was trying to say that fascism was really indistinguishable from modern democracy. Although Heidegger's comparisons do have some merit, since Nazism and his examples are all cases in which technological mastery overwhelms the relations that human beings might establish with the earth and each other, there is an important difference: one which comes down to intentions - between the pitiless, genocidal intentions of the Nazis and the negligent, profit-lusting intentions of the motorised food industry. Otto Pöggeler and others find Heidegger's comparison deeply disturbing because of the fact that Heidegger mourned the death of those German soldiers 'sacrificed before their time through two world wars', yet could not bring himself to utter a word of regret concerning the millions who died in the Nazi concentration camps.²⁹

Even at his hearing before the Verification Commission, Heidegger's statement was unrepentant:

The *apologia pro vita sua*, running to almost six single-spaced pages, is a masterpiece. By presenting himself as a victim, Heidegger included himself among the countless millions the Nazis had destroyed. He was always attuned to the mood of his people: when he joined the ranks of the Nazis and when he passed himself off as a victim – of the Nazis *and* the Allies. In each case he emerged triumphant, unrepentant, unyielding, unremorseful. He did not recant, he did not retract, nor did he ever publicly (or privately, as to Hannah Arendt or Karl Jaspers) condemn Nazi atrocities.³⁰

Emmanuel Levinas observes:

Does not this silence, even in peace-time, about the gas chambers and the death camps – something beyond the realm of ‘bad excuses’ – attest to a soul that is in its depths impervious to compassion, is it not a tacit approval of the horrifying.³¹

We know that Heidegger dissociated himself throughout his involvement with the National Socialist movement from the racist and biologist line, which became dominant at the time. For this reason, Gadamer and Harries readily accept that Heidegger understood himself to have no involvement in the persecution of the Jews, and so experienced no moral responsibility to say anything in this regard. Yet, Heidegger’s rejection of the Nazi’s biologically based racism has been downplayed because of his belief that Nazism would foster a national revival. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, for Heidegger, ‘...it was worth putting up with a little bit of racism to see the movement victorious: anti-Semitism was simply regarded as an incidental cost.’³² Lacoue-Labarthe notes that on the basis of this ‘compromise’ alone, Heidegger should have felt himself obliged to say something to the Jews.

1.4.2 Heidegger the Nazi vs. Heidegger the philosopher

If we accept the preceding, we must then ask, to what extent is Heidegger’s philosophy implicated in his ignominious life-choice of the early 1930s? Must we conclude that:

This theory of the ‘two Heideggers’ - the good philosopher and the bad politician - no longer seems tenable or adequate in the light of a contemporary sense of the entwinement of thinking and action and of knowledge and power.³³

Heidegger’s political involvement raises troubling questions about the connection between his philosophical thought and his political commitment. We can agree that Heidegger was far from being a ‘Nazi philosopher’, but it is very difficult to make a clear distinction and separation between his philosophical and political beliefs.

The debate of the ‘two Heideggers’ has so far been conducted in a divisive spirit, with Heidegger’s critics using the historical record to tear at the fabric of his philosophy,

and his defenders attempting to shield his philosophy from his 'unfortunate political engagement'.

Can we justify rereading Heidegger's philosophical texts in light of his political beliefs, as Thomas Sheehan admonishes us to do? Do such interpretive practices not risk attributing to Heidegger's philosophy a political content that only becomes clear later? Is there not a risk that we would judge the contributions of a great thinker exclusively on the basis of political motifs that are, strictly speaking, 'extrinsic to thought'?

It is true that to reject Heidegger's philosophy in its entirety as a result of his political choices would indeed be an act of bad faith, but we must take into account the evidence that Heidegger himself viewed his political commitments of the early 1930s as complementary to his philosophy, that he considered his engagement with National Socialism as a kind of political actualisation of the 'existentials' of *Being and Time*. In Heidegger's opinion, his 'existential decision' for National Socialism in 1933 signified a decision for authenticity. In the 1936 conversation with Karl Löwith, Heidegger agrees without reservation that 'his partisanship for National Socialism lay in the essence of his philosophy.'³⁴ Löwith's meditations on the philosophical bases of Heidegger's politics³⁵ has inspired rebuttals by Eric Weil and Alphons de Waelens, with both contending that Heidegger's Nazism had nothing to do with his philosophy.

From the mid-1930s Heidegger progressively more distanced himself from the realities of Nazism as a contemporary political movement. In his view, the 'inner truth and greatness' of its historical potential was perverted by usurpers and pretenders. This criticism of the movement notwithstanding, Heidegger continued to maintain his earlier conviction that the dawn of the movement itself contained the seeds of true greatness. Even after the German collapse of 1945, he continued to insist that if only the right pressures had been brought to bear on the movement in its early stages, everything might have turned out for the better.³⁶

Contemporary interest in Heidegger's association with Nazism was perhaps spurred on by the publication of Victor Farías's *Heidegger and Nazism* in 1987. Farías attempts to substantiate the rootedness of Heidegger's thought in Nazism using a twofold strategy. Firstly, he expounds upon Heidegger's dealings with the Nazi regime. Secondly, he argues that long before the Nazis came into power, Heidegger had exhibited a long-standing philosophic relation to fascist ideology. Farías' book, oft referred to as a 'bombshell' or a 'literary sensation', is, however, regarded by many

scholars as containing many errors and fallacies. In the words of Richard Wolin, 'The book is profoundly unjust and I even consider it - and I am weighing my words carefully here - dishonest.'³⁷ The strategy of unnuanced, wholesale condemnation leaves Fariás vulnerable to attacks from the Heideggerian faithful, who have been able to use the prejudicial character of his inquiry as a clever way of de-legitimizing his efforts.

Yet, despite the fact that Fariás' book has been largely discredited, there are others who agree that Heidegger's philosophy can be proven to be related to fascist ideology. Theodor Adorno, for example, claims that Heidegger's philosophy was fascist to the core³⁸ and Richard Wolin asserts that Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism was 'rooted in the innermost tendencies of his thought.'³⁹

On the other hand, Jean-François Lyotard claims that the deduction of Heidegger's Nazism from *Being and Time* is impossible. However, he notes that the claim that the work is apolitical is equally absurd, given the project that is associated with Dasein. He says:

It is difficult to attribute an apolitical quality to a work like *Sein und Zeit*, of which the entire second section is devoted to the *power* that *Dasein*, and notably that destiny called *Volk*, has to escape from inauthenticity and to open itself to the future-as-coming-toward of its fate by giving (delivering) to itself the knowledge of its "having-been" - what is called *historicality*.⁴⁰

In the end, Lyotard feels that in attempting to deduce Heidegger's Nazism from the text of *Sein und Zeit*, one succumbs to as sinister an antic as the 'investigations' at the Moscow trials.

Some commentators, like Karsten Harries⁴¹, feel that Heidegger's own notion of authenticity makes the separation of his politics from his philosophy impossible. Indeed, authenticity does require a holistic self-understanding and self-accounting which demands the integration of one's philosophic and political insights. Yet, the nature of authenticity is such that this integration will always remain plagued by uncertainty.

Two of the leading French Heideggerians, Jacques Derrida and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe have been at the head of the debate concerning the impact of the Farías controversy on Heidegger's philosophy. I believe that their contributions are significant, since both have been willing to confront Heidegger's troubling biography directly, and so will discuss them in some detail.

In his book, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question (Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question)*, Derrida attempts to overturn and reinscribe an inherited binary opposition – the binary opposition between Nazism and non-Nazism. This foundational deconstructive gesture ends up threatening to efface many of the essential differences between Nazism and non-Nazism. As a result, the specificity and the extent of Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism is severely relativised. Derrida criticises Heidegger's discourse for its logocentric fixation on 'spirit'. His strategy is to show that Heidegger's enthusiasm for Nazism is predicated on a discourse on spirit that Heidegger shares with many other contemporary European intellectuals. Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism is, according to Derrida, predicated on a metaphysical and voluntarist frame of reference. It is a part of the discourse of Western metaphysics and its logocentric reign.

Contrary to Derrida, Wolin asserts that it was not a combination of metaphysics and voluntarism that seduced the 'sage of Freiburg' into wearing the Nazi insignia and a brown uniform in 1933, but rather the reverse: insofar as Heidegger remained committed to the discourse on humanism and the heritage of Western philosophy, he was prevented from identifying wholesale with Nazi ideology as it was historically constituted – as a discourse of biology and race.

It was that very discourse on spirit, therefore, that allowed him to preserve an element of philosophical autonomy vis-à-vis the brutish apostles of racial-biological thinking with whom he had entered into a temporary, ill-fated, ignominious alliance.⁴²

Derrida argues that the frequent allusions to 'spirit' in the political speeches of 1933 indicate a sharp departure from *Being and Time*, where this category is systematically criticized. In Derrida's view, the utilisation of this outmoded philosophical rhetoric is by definition discontinuous with the philosophy of *Being and Time*.

I believe that Baudrillard is mistaken in relegating the 'Heidegger affair' to the realm of the insignificant, the futile, a feeble convulsive reaction. I agree to an extent with his thesis that today there is the tendency to scrutinise past events, to the detriment of imaginative discourse, but I think that an attempt to understand the past is a necessary part of the evolution of ideas. If we do not look to the past, how can we ever develop on those ideas and avoid the 'errors' that were made in the past? If we cannot know our history, are we not forever condemned to repeating it?

What I do find significant in Baudrillard's article is his mention of the 'media-led' character of the reconstruction of these past events. It is often said that today we live in the 'Information Age' where, by means of the Internet, satellite television, increased mobility of people due to transportation technology, and so on, human being's ability to access information has been greatly facilitated. There is an interesting paradox that emerges here - even though our technologies are designed to speed up and aid the transmission of information, today we have become so mired in the vast amount of information that is available to us, it seems that we know very little indeed.

According to Baudrillard, we are living in the era of the 'code'. The code is the binary code of computer technology: the DNA code in biology, or the digital code in television and in sound recording, as it is the code in information technology. The era of the code supersedes the era of the sign. This means that the natural object has become no longer credible, and the code has raised simulation to an unprecedented importance in social life. Baudrillard notes that the era of the code begins to permeate the whole of the social fabric and one of the symptoms of this is that opposites begin to collapse and 'everything becomes undecidable': the beautiful and the ugly in fashion, the left and the right in politics, the true and the false in the media - all these become interchangeable in the era of reproduction and simulation.

Much of what Baudrillard has written has raised heated debate - no more so when he wrote articles in the French daily newspaper *Libération*, apparently claiming that the 1991 Gulf War did not take place. The debate is often unproductive because people are talking past one another - Baudrillard starting from his position in relation to the implications of the code and developments in modern science and technology, and his opponents often from the humanist position of nineteenth century science. What Baudrillard does is demonstrate the very real costs of changes in symbolic and material forms, and this is crucial in a world increasingly dominated by media hype and obfuscation.

It is true that we are no longer part of the same 'mental universe' as the people involved in the Holocaust (or any other historical event, for that matter), and that we are living in a time when the clear distinction between opposites has collapsed, but does this necessarily make issues completely unintelligible? I think not. Of course, to gain access to these events, we are necessarily working from a particular perspective, one of situatedness in the present, and this will necessarily have an effect upon our understanding of those events, but I do not think that this should result in an abandonment of the attempt to understand the past. In line with Gadamer, I think that we necessarily begin with a pre-understanding of a certain matter, in order to gain an understanding of it (the hermeneutical circle). We cannot relegate our history to the realm of the insignificant, merely because we weren't there. In other words, I do think that raising the question of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism is justified because in our attempt to understand the past, we are attempting to understand our time and ourselves a little better. Given Heidegger's actions, and his own belief that those actions followed from his philosophy, there is no way to subscribe to his philosophy without reflecting upon its moral and political implications.

In treating Heidegger as a product of his times, we do run the risk of trivialising his thought by reducing it to its socio-historical causes or explaining away his actions as 'what everyone did.' Certainly, everyone did not do what he did in the thirties. Sluga, however, reminds us that Heidegger was by no means the only German philosopher who allied himself to the Nazis.⁴⁵

Hugo Ott's claims that '...the time has not come yet, I think, to pass final judgement on these matters. Only when everything that Heidegger wrote in those crucial years has finally been published will we be in a position to draw valid conclusions.'⁴⁶ Derrida too concludes that he prefers waiting, let us say, for another moment, before speaking about Heidegger's silence. This is one of the main differences in approach between Derrida and Lyotard, since Lyotard (like Lacoue-Labarthe) believes that the moment to address the issue directly cannot be deferred any longer. He says:

There is a pressing need to think the Heidegger affair. There are several states of urgency, and thus the affair is not the exclusive province of the political or of politics. There is an urgency of thought.⁴⁷

Hans Sluga perhaps gives us a hint of how perhaps to broach this issue:

Partisan bickering, anxious moralising, strenuous interpretation of texts and doubtful assumptions about the necessary unity of thought and person are of no use in this discussion. What is needed is a readiness to weigh the historical facts in a dispassionate manner, to bracket the tendency to pass judgement, to look not for hidden meanings but for manifest relations and structures, to acknowledge the possibility of fissures, boundaries, and disconnections in human living and thinking as well as distinctive linkages and relations.⁴⁸

Although there is no way to sweep the moral uncertainties that are raised by Heidegger's thought under the carpet, there is also no way to deny the massive impact his writings have had on philosophers that have followed in the lines of questioning that were opened up in his works. There are no straightforward political ramifications to a philosophy like his. We do a great disservice to philosophy and ourselves, if our horror for the Heidegger of National Socialism prevents us from exploring the full dimensions of his work.

Read Heidegger no more, or maintain faith in and admiration for him? Such options are false. The most rigorous interpreters have gone beyond them. The issue is rather to propose a reading of Heidegger from the perspective of the political question, which would bring the lancet onto the most sensitive points – those where truth and error, errancy and perhaps a certain greatness are at play.⁴⁹

What does all this mean for the reader of Heidegger's work? It would be shortsighted to insist that as a result of Heidegger's engagement on behalf of the Nazi regime that he should lose his standing as one of the most important contributors to Western philosophy. But, Heidegger's allegiance to the Nazis does always already force us to read his work *differently* - differently from the way in which we would read Heidegger's work if we had no inkling of his involvement with National Socialism.

After the war, Heidegger was banned from teaching at universities until 1951. During the 1950's and 1960's, Heidegger published much, especially on technology and language. He spent most of his time at Freiburg, Messkirch or at his cabin in

Todtnauberg during these years. Heidegger died at his home in Freiburg on 26 May 1976.

1.4.4 Philosophy and Politics

A discussion of the Heidegger 'affair' necessarily raises questions about the relation between philosophy and politics. Since Greek times, this connection has always been complex and precarious.

Philosophy cannot be said to be independent of politics, since, like all other disciplines, it is necessarily located within a political field. Politics determines, for example, which texts will be read in schools. In post-Apartheid South Africa, it is particularly interesting to observe that the 'rewriting' of set work history textbooks for scholars has become an urgent enterprise. It can also be said that politics affects philosophical thinking, since public opinion, manipulated by political forces affect the philosophical discourse both directly and indirectly. It is for this reason that authors like Hans Sluga⁵⁰ assert that it is crucial to investigate German philosophy in the 1930s in its political context, since we will not understand what philosophers said about politics unless we investigate how their ideas were shaped by the political conditions in which they arose.

Yet, despite the intimate connections that have been presupposed between philosophy and politics by many authors, Hannah Arendt has pointed out the gulf separating philosophy and politics.⁵¹ She claims that this separation was due to the death of Socrates at the hands of his fellow Athenians. In Arendt's view, the relation of politics and philosophy was intimate for Socrates, but that Plato steered philosophy away from politics as a result of his disillusionment over the death of Socrates. For Plato, according to Arendt, if politics were to be a concern for the philosopher in any way, it would have to be measured by absolute philosophical standards. Arendt believed that she saw the same apolitical condition in Heidegger, and that because of their separation from the actual world of men, both Plato and Heidegger proved vulnerable when they turned back to politics.⁵²

The relation between politics and philosophy cannot be described by means of any grand scheme which purports to be valid for all time, since that relation is intrinsically historical and can only be understood in its narrative uniqueness. The relation between philosophy and politics is fluid and unstable over time.

1.5 Overview

In this chapter, I have given a summary of the basic research questions to be addressed in this study. I then proceeded to give a brief exposition on Heidegger's biography, in order to introduce the issue of his allegiance to National Socialism. My aim in this section was neither to defend nor indict Heidegger, but rather to provide a brief overview of the polemic that has arisen as a result of this allegiance. I pointed out that on the basis of the 'Heidegger affair' we would always read Heidegger's works differently to the way we would read them had he had no involvement with National Socialism.

Chapter 2 of this study is devoted to a brief summary of the main insights of *Being and Time*, in order to prepare the way for an examination of the themes of technology, truth and language. In this context, I discuss Heidegger's conception of man as Dasein, as well as what he means by Being. Chapter 3 is an elucidation of Heidegger's thought on truth, tracing the development of Heidegger's thinking of this concept using various texts including *Being and Time*. Chapter 4 deals with Heidegger's ideas on language and Chapter 5 examines his views on technology. In each of these chapters, I will aim to show the development of Heidegger's thought through *Being and Time* into his 'later' works, in order to support my contention that his early and later works display a remarkable unity. I reserve Chapter 6 for a critical appreciation of the ideas expounded upon in the preceding chapters on technology, truth and language.

- ¹ F. Hölderlin. Rhine Hymn in *Selected poems / Friedrich Holderlin*, E. Morike (trans.) (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972).
- ² D.F. Krell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 105.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger. Revised and Expanded Edition*. D. F. Krell (ed.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 431.
- ⁶ R. Waterhouse, *A Heidegger Critique: A Critical Examination of the Existential Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger* (New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1981).
- ⁷ M. Heidegger, preface to *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* by W. Richardson (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. xxii.
- ⁸ J. Sallis, Towards the Movement of Reversal: Science, Technology and the Language of Homecoming in J. Sallis (ed.), *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 139.
- ⁹ H. Dreyfus, Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment in H. Dreyfus & H. Hall (eds), *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 173.
- ¹⁰ *Op. cit.* p. 182.
- ¹¹ W.B. Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 8.
- ¹² F.A. Olafson, The Unity of Heidegger's Thought in C.B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 98.
- ¹³ Olafson illustrates his claim using the example of language in Heidegger's thought. I will return to this idea in Chapter 4.
- ¹⁴ G.F. Sefer, *Language and the World: A Methodological Synthesis within the Writings of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1974), p. 132
- ¹⁵ This concise summary of Heidegger's life is based on information contained in H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994).
- ¹⁶ M. Heidegger, A Dialogue on Language in *On the Way to Language* P. D. Hertz (trans.) (London, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 10.
- ¹⁷ H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 74.
- ¹⁸ E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 13.
- ¹⁹ H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 172.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- ²¹ H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 5.
- ²² M. Zimmerman, The Thorn in Heidegger's side: The Question of National Socialism, *Philosophical Forum* 20(4), 1989, p. 326-365.
- ²³ M. Heidegger. Only a god can save us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger, *Philosophy Today* 20 (4/4), 1976, p. 268.
- ²⁴ H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 138.
- ²⁵ See for example: M. Heidegger, The Self-Assertion of the German University in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993).
- ²⁶ See P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- ²⁷ Lyotard's contribution to the debate is significant in that it establishes a paramount relationship between Heideggerian thought and 'the Jews'. In the history of the West, the Jews represent 'the other' – the dissimilar, which in its difference remains forever unassimilable to the prevailing *logos*.
- ²⁸ D. Carroll in J. Lyotard, *Heidegger and 'the Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. xxiv.
- ²⁹ See O. Pöggeler, Heidegger's Political Self-understanding in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/ Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993).

- ³⁰ E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 64.
- ³¹ E. Levinas, As if consenting to horror, *Critical Enquiry* 15(2), 1989, p. 485-488.
- ³² P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 33.
- ³³ F. Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger* (London, Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 2.
- ³⁴ K. Löwith, My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936 in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 142.
- ³⁵ K. Löwith, The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 167-185.
- ³⁶ O. Pöggeler, Den Führer führen? Heidegger und kein Ende, *Philosophische Rundschau* 32, 1985, p. 56.
- ³⁷ R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 127.
- ³⁸ R. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991), p. 81.
- ³⁹ R. Wolin, as quoted in L.P. Thiele, *Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 140.
- ⁴⁰ J-F Lyotard, *Heidegger and the 'Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 67.
- ⁴¹ K. Harries, Heidegger as a political thinker in M. Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), p. 305.
- ⁴² R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. xvii.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 288
- ⁴⁴ J. Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London, Verso 1993), p. 89.
- ⁴⁵ H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 7.
- ⁴⁶ H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 293.
- ⁴⁷ J-F Lyotard, *Heidegger and the 'Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 51.
- ⁴⁸ H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 6.
- ⁴⁹ D. Janicaud, *The Shadow of That Thought: Heidegger and the Question of Politics* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 11.
- ⁵⁰ H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 246.
- ⁵¹ See H. Arendt, Philosophy and Politics, *Social Research* 57, 1990.
- ⁵² Despite the complex relationship between Heidegger and Arendt, she remained one of his most ardent 'goodwill ambassadors'. See E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995) for a discussion of their relationship.