

**MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE THINKING OF EVIL:  
FROM THE ORIGINAL ETHICS TO THE BLACK  
NOTEBOOKS**

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RESUMEN:

Según algunas interpretaciones, la reciente publicación de *Los Cuadernos Negros* de Heidegger parece asegurar su responsabilidad hacia el Tercer Reich y hacia el Holocausto. Algunos estudiosos hacen hincapié en la banalidad del mal de Heidegger debido a sus convicciones antisemitas (Nancy), otros ponen de relieve la contribución de Heidegger a la filosofía del nazismo (Faye, Wolin). Las consideraciones entre diferentes concepciones de antisemitismo, como ontológico o metafísico (Trawny, Di Cesare) nos enfrentan a una nueva imagen de Heidegger: no sólo el filósofo vinculado al socialismo nacional, sino también un antisemita que ha contribuido a la formación de la teoría del mal. Los objetivos de este trabajo son: primero, mostrar cómo esas malas interpretaciones sobre *Los Cuadernos Negros* tan solo producen peticiones de principios sesgados; segundo, plantear una vuelta a la ética original que desde *Ser y Tiempo* permanece en el marco de la reflexión ontológica, y, tercero, mostrar cómo la relación de Heidegger con el nazismo jugó en realidad un papel muy limitado en su pensamiento muy alejado, además de la historia del Ser (Seinsgeschichte).

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Heidegger, Cuadernos Negros, Holocausto, Ética, Historia del Ser.

ABSTRACT:

According to some interpretations, the recent publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* seems to nail Heidegger to his responsibility toward the Third Reich and moreover toward Holocaust. On one hand we find some scholars that stress the banality of Heidegger's evil due to his anti-Semitic convictions (Nancy), on the other hand we find others that underline Heidegger's contribution to the

philosophy of Nazism (Faye, Wolin). Surfing between different conceptions of anti-Semitism, such as ontological or metaphysical (Trawny, Di Cesare), we face with a new imagine of Heidegger: not only the philosopher linked to the National socialism, but moreover an anti-Semite that has given his contribution to the theoretical ground of evil. The aims of this paper are on three levels: firstly, I will show how the mentioned interpretations regarding Black Notebooks ground on a series of fallacies and misinterpretations that produce only «petitio principii» and «confirmation bias»; in second place, I will be back to the original ethics that since «Being and Time» remains into the framework of the ontological interrogation; in third place I will show how Heidegger's relationship toward Nazism played a very limited role into his meditation and it is far from the entire history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*).

## KEYWORDS:

Heidegger, Black Notebooks, Holocaust, Ethics, *Seinsgeschichte*.

«I love those who do not know how to live unless by going under,  
for they are the ones who cross over»  
*F. Nietzsche*, Thus spoke Zarathustra

«We don't know purposes. We are only a passage (*Gang*)»  
*M. Heidegger*, Ponderings<sup>1</sup> – GA 96

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*<sup>2</sup> have been published, they have called the attention of the Academic world and the press. They have been delivered to the wide community of Heidegger's readers (but also of Heidegger's onlookers) as the *most scandalous* books of his entire production and, an expected consequence of this clamour, the name of Martin Heidegger is back in the media. The

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<sup>1</sup> Only the volume 94 of *Black Notebooks* is available in English till the present moment. The English translator has chosen to translate *Überlegungen* with the English word *Ponderings*. The following translation of the title *Überlegungen* will follow this choice. Where not specified, every translation from German into English and from Italian into English here are my own.

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, ed. Peter Trawny, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2014, in *Gesamtausgabe* 94 (GA 94); Id., *Überlegungen*

massive attention toward these notebooks, the amount of ink spilled on these books and on some interpretations, given in these last 28 months from their initial publication, have drawn an image of this debate that I do not hesitate to define as far from philosophy and more near to ideology: defined by the press as the most «scandalous» books of his collected works (*Gesamtausgabe*), that hold Heidegger to his responsibility toward Holocaust and the Third Reich, the *Black Notebooks* «have been taken by many to provide the «smoking gun» that definitively demonstrates Heidegger's Nazism and anti-semitism, and on this basis, also establishes the unacceptability of Heidegger's work within the canon of respectable thinking»<sup>3</sup>.

In this scenario, *Black Notebooks* seems to be the only theme on which every Heidegger's scholar is required to speak: no more attention to *Being and Time* or to Hölderlin, neither to *What is metaphysics?*, or to *Heraklitus* or *Anaximander*; no words on *Besinnung*, or on the lectures of Nietzsche, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte – to mention a few. The only books that need to be mentioned in public discourse are the recent *Überlegungen* and *Anmerkungen* and, as the trend wants, they must be mentioned as proof of Heidegger's antisemitism, with no need to stress the large amount of thoughts on other topics contained in these 1900 pages.

I cannot neglect to say that if the majority of Heidegger's scholars have spoken and are still speaking on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, only few of them have really read these four voluminous books, struggling to read a difficult form of German, since the German used by Heidegger, in these four voluminous books, is far from the formal, high German. If the style is the first difficulty, the second one is the limited availability of translations already published: not all four volumes have been translated and not all of them have been published. Maybe it is remarkable to say that there is a difference between who have fully read Heidegger's *Überlegungen* and *Anmerkungen* and who speak about them *without* any cognition<sup>4</sup>.

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VII–XI (*Schwarze Hefte 1938/39*) ed. Peter Trawny, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2014, in *Gesamtausgabe* 95 (GA 95); Id., *Überlegungen XII–XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, ed. Peter Trawny, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2014, in *Gesamtausgabe* 96 (GA 96); Id., *Anmerkungen I–V (1942–1948)*, ed. Peter Trawny, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2015, in *Gesamtausgabe* 97 (GA 97). From now on Heidegger's works will be quoted from *Gesamtausgabe*, quoted as GA and the roman number according to the edition plan published by Klostermann Verlag.

<sup>3</sup> J. Malpas, *On the Philosophical Reading of Heidegger: Situating the Black Notebooks*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, MIT 2016, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> In the framework of the congress on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* organised by Husserl Archive and FRIAS at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg on December 2015 the majority of the invited speakers have publicly declared, in the Q&A session, to have not read Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* even if their speeches were on this topic and, of course, they were an accusation against the Meßkirch's philosopher. The principle of *relata refero* seemed to be the motto followed by the majority of the speakers. All the speeches are available in the website of the University. <https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/de/mediathek/podcasts/freiburger-horizonte/heideggers-schwarze-hefte-ideologiefanfaelligkeit-der-intellektuellen-1>

Furthermore, some academics have endorsed the naïve idea to take excerpts from *Schwarze Hefte* –the ones that «prove» Heidegger’s antisemitism– as an interpretative lens with which to read all the entire production of Heidegger<sup>5</sup> and to assume that the mention anti-Semitism could also contaminate the ontological thinking of Heidegger<sup>6</sup>. Maybe this is the most dangerous part of all this clamour: the fact that some passages on which some scholars have insisted could become hermeneutical tools with which to read, understand and interpret all of the *Gesamtausgabe*, with a particular attention to the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) –in other words, *philosophically*. Some scholars have also assumed expelling Heidegger’s thought from the history of philosophy because of his Nazism and Anti-Semitism<sup>7</sup>. If we could take seriously into consideration this idea, we should expel from the history of literature people such as Arthur Rimbaud, because of his traffic of humans and arms in Africa and reject his entire literature production, just to name one among many others who did unspeakable actions in his life but, at the same, is one of the most important poets and writers in the XIX century.

The reaction of many Heidegger scholars to this scandal reminds me of what happened when Michael Dummett read Frege’s diaries and letters: he was shocked and astonished to know, for the first time, that his «teacher» was a strong anti-Semite. Perhaps one could say that if we could tolerate Frege’s antisemitism because he never talked about ‘authenticity of existence’, one could not do the same with Heidegger, whose philosophy is embedded into living life. It sounds as if we could allow an artist to be anti-Semite but not a medical doctor, only because of, in this second case, he handles human life and not painting, music, photography and so on. It seems to me quite clear that this position produces a fallacy: different terms of comparison are assumed to defend or accuse some personal ideas<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> This is the position held by Richard Wolin, Emmanuel Faye, Sidonie Kellerer and Marion Heinz.

<sup>6</sup> On this position I refer the reader to P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M., 2014 p. 14 and following; D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger & Sons*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2015, pp. 69-110. Günter Figal in the public Congress at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg held in January 2016, claimed that after the *Black Notebooks* we should re-read Heidegger with different interpretative lens and we need to distinguish what is anti-Semite in his meditation and what is not.

<sup>7</sup> See R. Wolin, *National Socialism, World Jewry, and the History of Being: Heidegger’s Black Notebooks*, in *Jewish Review of Books*: <http://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/993/national-socialism-world-jewry-and-the-history-of-being-heideggers-black-notebooks/>; E. Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, trans. Michael B. Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009; Id., *I fondamenti nazisti dell’opera di Heidegger*, in «Rivista di filosofia», 3/2006, p. 439-456; Id., *Soggettività e razza negli scritti di Heidegger*, in «Rivista di filosofia», 1/2012, p. 69-90; Id., *Essere e svastika. Heidegger, l’antisemitismo, l’affermazione dell’essenza tedesca, l’auto-annientamento del nemico*, in «MicroMega», 97, March 2015, p.98-115.

<sup>8</sup> See. J. Grondin, *The critique and Rethinking of Being and Time in the first Black Notebooks*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, pp. 98-99.

It is my conviction that the *Schwarze Hefte* need to be read and to be understood critically, entirely, and by comparing their topics with the other works (lessons, works for publication, letters, notes and so on) in which Heidegger was working on during the same years, given that the *Black Notebooks* have not had an interpretative feature broader than other Heidegger works<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, they need to be read apart from the rumors that the press and some scholars have produced: extrapolating a few sensationalistic sentences and putting them on the front pages of cultural magazines is an ideological operation far from the practice of philosophy. Heidegger himself was aware of this risk when he wrote on the dangers derived by journalism and public opinion as he wrote, not only in the *Black Notebooks*<sup>10</sup>, but also in the *Contributions to Philosophy*<sup>11</sup>. Mistranslations, misinterpretations, the wrenching of sentences from their context have shown a questionable way of exercising philosophy and understanding the original context and the delicate and problematic passages in which Heidegger talked about the Jews<sup>12</sup>. It is difficult to not agree with von Herrmann when he says that «the scandal is not to be found in these passages from the *Überlegungen* (*Considerations*); rather, the only scandal is the distorted and disparaging, deeply corrupt reading of these passages (...) without any accompanying proof»<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See F. Brencio, «Heidegger. Una patata bollente». *L'antisemitismo fra cristianità e Seinsgeschichtlichkeit*, in F. Brencio (ed.), *La pietà del pensiero. Heidegger e i Quaderni Neri*, Aguaplano – Officina del libro, Passignano s. T. 2015, pp. 107-186.

<sup>10</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen II*, in GA 97, p. 128: «Es gehört zum besonderen Glück der flachen Köpfe, daß sie das Unheil, das sie wegfegt, nicht als solches zu denken vermögen, daß sie vielmehr bei ihrem Rechnen nach schuldig und nicht schuldig immer abgeleiteten Erscheinungen die Schuld geben und sich am Schauspiel des öffentlichen Meinungsbetriebs beteiligen»; Id., *Anmerkungen II*, in GA 97, p. 158: «Verheerender als die Hitzewelle der Atombombe ist der »Geist« in der Gestalt des Weltjournalismus. Jene vernichtet, indem sie nur auslöscht; dieser vernichtet, indem er den Schein von Sein errichtet auf dem Scheingrund der unbedingten Wurzellosigkeit. Der absolute Journalismus betäubt die heute Stil gewordene Angst vor dem Denken und sorgt so für die gründlichste Ausrottung des Denkens. Wir müssen uns und die Kommenden darauf bringen, daß inskünftig für lange Zeit das Denken ein kostbarer Schatz bleibt, den man am besten hütet, wenn man ihn tief vergräbt. Mit »Pessimismus« hat das nichts, aber viel mit Nüchternheit zu tun»; Id., *Anmerkungen V*, in GA 97, p. 460: «Die Herrschaft der öffentlichen Meinung ist schon so diktatorisch, daß jede Überlegung dieser Art einfach als »nazistisch« erklärt und damit unwirksam gemacht wird».

<sup>11</sup> M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M., 1989, GA 65; *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowing)*, trans. by P. Emad and K. Maly, Indiana University Press 1999, pp. 26 and following, p 29 and following, pp. 62-65.

<sup>12</sup> On the issue of Heidegger's references to Jews and to the manipulation of some sentences in the *Überlegungen* and *Anmerkungen*, I refer the reader to F. Brencio, *La fuga dell'essere. Dalle Überlegungen alle Anmerkungen*, in F. Brencio (ed.), *La pietà del pensiero. Heidegger e i Quaderni Neri*, pp. 369- 387; F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2016, pp. 51-327.

<sup>13</sup> F.-W. von Herrmann, *The Role of Martin Heidegger's Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, p. 92.

My paper is aimed at exposing and discussing the following points: first, the main interpretation regarding the *Black Notebooks* –the one according to whom Heidegger’s antisemitism characterized the history of Being, which allows to speak about an ontological anti-Semitism (Trawny)– is grounded on a series of fallacies and misinterpretations that produce only «petitio principii» and «confirmation bias». Second, I will focus on the recent work of Jean Luc Nancy, *Banalite’ de Heidegger*<sup>14</sup> illustrating the limits of this work. Insisting on his initial brilliant interpretation on Heidegger’s original ethics as we know in his work *L’éthique originaire de Heidegger*<sup>15</sup>, I will show the misinterpretation which Nancy uses by following Trawny’s pathway, and I will stress how the original ethics built in *Being and Time* remain part of the framework for the ontological interrogation. Third, I will show how Heidegger’s relationship toward Nazism played a limited role in his meditation and it is far from the entire history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*): I will also underscore how the *Überlegungen* and *Anmerkungen* are full of Heidegger’s remarks against the National Socialism, Hitler and Nationalism, remarks that seem to be voluntarily ignored by some scholars. Finally, I will go through the topic that entitles this paper: the real responsibilities of Heidegger’s meditation (*Besinnung*) prior to the Holocaust.

Such as every work that has the will *to not handle* the truth, my paper should be read keeping in mind Tacitus motto: *sine ira et studio*. It is not an apology of Heidegger, not a defense against his own words, not a polemic towards some scholars, and moreover, this paper does not pretend to be an exhaustive examination of absolutely everything that is relevant in the «Heidegger affair»: rather, it is a simple attempt to investigate Heidegger’s thought. My pathway has been illuminated by Gadamer’s words: «When people claim to be «against» Heidegger –or even «for» him– then they make fools of themselves. One cannot circumvent thinking so easily»<sup>16</sup>. These words resonate in my mind as a compass among different interpretations I navigated in these last two years investigating Heidegger’s notebooks. As Kant’s lesson constantly invites us to consider, the *need of reason* is higher than the presumption to be right, but sometimes philosophy loses this pathway by following trends and book markets, and this can produce confusion: the ‘logic of consensus’ do not assure the accuracy of the assumptions and do not prevent mistakes.

<sup>14</sup> See J. L. Nancy, *Banalite’ de Heidegger*, Galilée, Paris 2015.

<sup>15</sup> See J. L. Nancy, *L’éthique originaire de Heidegger*, in *La pensée dérobée*, Galilée, Paris 2001.

<sup>16</sup> H. G. Gadamer, *Heidegger’s ways*, trans. by John W. Staley, Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1994, p. 112.

## II. WHAT ARE THE BLACK NOTEBOOKS?

The *Schwarze Hefte* are 34 notebooks in which Heidegger collected his thoughts and also his opinions from 1931 to 1976. Only after having accepted the decision to create a his collected works in 1973, Heidegger decided to let them be published at the end of the *Gesamtausgabe*. Under this respect, it is correct to claim that the *Schwarze Wachstumhefte* were not written to be published: we can figure that they were for Heidegger a set of work files on which he penciled thoughts and ideas. Heidegger stated three times that the *Black Notebooks* are «attempts»<sup>17</sup>. At the very beginning of the first volume of these books he writes: «The entries in the black notebooks are at their core attempts at simple designation - not statements or even sketches for a planned system»<sup>18</sup>; they are only attempts for a pathway of thinking (*Gedankengang*)<sup>19</sup>. On the meaning of these notebooks, we have some important indications from the Appendix of *Mindfulness (Besinnung)*, entitled *Looking Back on My Career* where, regarding the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger writes: «What is recorded in these notebooks, particularly in notebooks II, IV, V, reveals also, at least in part, the basic attunements [*Grundstimmungen*] of my questioning into and my indications of the most advanced horizons for my endeavors in thought. While these notebooks seem to be the product of circumstance, they display the unceasing endeavor concerning the one and only question»<sup>20</sup>.

Under this guise, the *Black Notebooks* have been erroneously delivered to into public discourse as the «hidden diary» or «philosophical last will»<sup>21</sup> in which there are Heidegger's confessions on Anti-Semitism. This has allowed some scholars to draw a portrait of Heidegger not only in terms of a person involved with Nazism, not only as a member of the Nazi party from 1933, but also as a convinced anti-Semite<sup>22</sup>. These ideas are not only incorrect, but tend to give an ideological portrait of Heidegger's thinking instead of understanding the controversy that originated the use of these passages and their peculiarity. The *Ponderings (Überlegungen)* and the *Remarks (Anmerkungen)* are not a diary or a philosophical testament, they do not have an intimate tone like diaries usually have, or give a

<sup>17</sup> See P. Trawny, *Nachwort des Herausgebers*, in M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, p. 530.

<sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, *Winke X, Überlegungen (II) und Anweisungen*, in GA 94, p. 1; *Ponderings, II–VI Black Notebooks 1931–1938*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz Indiana University Press 2016, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII*, in GA 95, p. 52.

<sup>20</sup> M. Heidegger, *Besinnung*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M. 1997, in GA 66; *Mindfulness*, trans. by P. Emad and T. Kalary, Continuum, 2006, p. 376.

<sup>21</sup> See P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M., 2014.

<sup>22</sup> See D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger e gli ebrei. I Quaderni Neri*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2014.

last disposition in political issues: rather, they join the stylistic form of notes or aphorisms embodying theoretical content and a few private ideas and remarks. In their stylistic form, they are similar to the writing of *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* because they recall the same tone, even though the contents are more complex. They are called by Heidegger himself «belated notes». The Notebooks published by Klostermann Verlag are those written from 1931 to 1941 (*Gesamtausgabe* 94, 95, 96 –called *Überlegungen*–) and from 1942 to 1948 (*Gesamtausgabe* 97 –called *Anmerkungen*–). The name «Black Notebooks» is derived from the book cover: a black wax leather.

With these books each scholar deals with Heidegger's thought in a new dimension that is the dimension of the thought that is constantly in dialogue with itself. This allows us to note how deeply Heidegger is involved in his meditation; as his brother Fritz Heidegger will write in a letter to Hugo Friedrich during 1950, «Heidegger is completely himself in his private notes (not in the teaching lectures or public conferences); these private notes are here almost untouched, only a few have been transcribed. In these notes that fundamental aptitude that should be the beginning and the aim of each philosophy shows itself; I have been calling it «humility» for a long time»<sup>23</sup>. The Notebooks are a precious tool to understand some passages and movements of Heidegger's thought, including some contradictions: they are a *work in progress* meditation that illuminate our understanding of the true theme that crosscuts Heidegger's philosophy as Ariadne's thread: the issue of Being (*Seinsfrage*).

These initial remarks help us to understand the topics addressed in these books. Despite what newspapers, blogs, interviews have said, the *Judenfrage* is not the main theme of *Black Notebooks*. The main theme of these books is only the question of Being and its oblivion, its consequences in modernity and the possibility to build a new thinking. These major topics are *attempts* with which Heidegger faces the need to overcome the Western Metaphysic and to inaugurate new movements of thought: *pathways (Wege)*, as he penciled at the very beginning of his *Gesamtausgabe*. Under this respect every interpreter that has insisted on the anti-Semite issue –pasting it in a context completely different from the original 14 passages in which the words *Jude*, *Jüdisch* and *Judentum* appear – has proposed a *personal* interpretation that cannot be considered as the interpretation *par excellence* and that, moreover, cannot be considered close in itself and defined as a *matter of truth*: we must remember every time and with the right distance that in philosophy *truth* and *meaning* are not the same thing and the misinterpretation of them can provoke confusion and devastating effects.

Only a few scholars have devoted their energies to underscore these points, and to stress themes that characterize Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* as a critique

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<sup>23</sup> Letter conserved in the University's Archive in Freiburg.



of Christendom or a critique of modernity, within which anti-Semitism –or *better*, anti-Judaism<sup>24</sup>– is merely the most eye-catching and delicate element, or a critique on the mechanization of the world, or of the University. My hermeneutical propose is to consider the framework of the anti-Judaism sentences not from an ontological point of view and neither from a metaphysical one, but rather to use the critique that Heidegger's elaborates concerning Christendom and Catholicism and, more in general, as a critique of modernity, a critique that arises from volume 94 and proceeds till volume 97 of *Black Notebooks* in a crescendo. Close to this topic are other essential themes, such as the oblivion of Being and its consequences in modernity, the considerations of the Rectorate in Freiburg which lasted 9 months, the violent critique of National socialism and Hitler, the critique of communism and the Americans, the considerations of Hegel's and Parmenides' philosophy, and so on. It is in this context that we may assume that the critique concerning Christendom and Catholicism is not merely a matter of education and distance from his original faith, but is an inner necessity of the history of being (*Seinsgeschichtlichkeit*). The well-known distinction between *Christentum* (Christendom) and *Christlichkeit* (Christianity) –as it had been developed in the conference of 1927 held in Tübingen entitled *Phenomenology and Theology*– is deepened in the *Black Notebooks* in light of the difference between the kerygma and the political organization dominated by the Christendom. This critique shows that the Jewish-Christian matrix of the Western society, grounded on the mentioned basis, is «the modern systems of total dictatorship stem from Judeo-Christian monotheism»<sup>25</sup>.

Nevertheless, this is not a novelty: those whom are familiar with Heidegger's meditation should remember that both in the *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowing)* and in the written memories and reports of Heidegger's students –such as Gadamer<sup>26</sup>, Biemel<sup>27</sup>, Müller<sup>28</sup>– Heidegger had in mind only one project during the period between 1930-1948, namely to dismantle the primacy of Christendom in philosophy, primacy that «corrupted» and «altered» Greek thought and that opened the pathway toward western metaphysics in terms of the oblivion of Being. In this respect, the German word *Judentum* means the

<sup>24</sup> On this distinction in the context of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, I refer the reader to J. Adrian Escudero, *Heidegger's Black Notebooks and the Question of Anti-Semitism*, in *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, 5 (2015), pp. 21–49.

<sup>25</sup> M Heidegger, *Anmerkungen V*, in GA 97, p. 438.

<sup>26</sup> See H. G. Gadamer, *Die Religiöse Dimension*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, Mohr-Siebeck Verlag, Tübingen 1987, pp. 399-390.

<sup>27</sup> See W. Biemel, *Martin Heidegger*, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973; Id., *Heidegger und die Phänomenologie in der Marburger Zeit*, in *Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger in der Sicht neuer Quellen*, Phänomenologische Forschungen, Bd. 6/7, Freiburg i. Br., München: Alber, 1978, 141–223.

<sup>28</sup> See M. Müller, *Ein Gespräch mit Max Müller*, in *Freiburger Universitätsblätter*, Heft 92, Juni 1986, Verlag Rombach, Freiburg, pp. 13-31, in particular, pp. 16-17.

typical Jewish feature that is linked to Christian tradition in Heidegger's meditation since his lecture in Freiburg.

In more than 1900 pages of *Black Notebooks* (*Gesamtausgabe* 94-97), Heidegger uses the words *Jude*, *jüdisch*, *Judentum* 14 times<sup>29</sup>; *jut* in 7 times these words are used with an anti-Judaic tone, the other times just in connection with the adjective «Christian», creating a linguistic plexus that indicates the Jewish-Christian matrix of the Western society which, according to him, is the beginning of the oblivion of Being and the beginning of nihilism, into which politics, secularism, society and Institutions are called. The words *Christianity*, *Christendom*, *Catholicism* are disseminated in all the 4 volumes, with a particular crescendo in *Gesamtausgabe* 96 and *Gesamtausgabe* 97. The word *Machenschaft* is used more than 200 times and usually in connection with the question of Being. In the 7 anti-Judaic passages of *Black Notebooks*, Jewish are described according the stereotypes typical of the early XX century, described also in Hannah Arendt's *The origins of Totalitarianism*: they are people who have a particular ability to calculate and to handle money, capacities that allow them to increase their power<sup>30</sup>. They are not involved in political affairs, because they are «without ground» and «without land» (*Bodenlose*)<sup>31</sup>: they are *Bondelose* not only due to their Biblical origins but more for their capacity to thrive without being attached to a given country. They are the first to live according the principle of race and this is why they live longer than other people<sup>32</sup>. Due to their ability to calculate and increase resources, Jewish contribute to the development of *Machenschaft* in the western society<sup>33</sup>.

From the third volume of *Black Notebooks* (*Gesamtausgabe* 96) to the last one (*Gesamtausgabe* 97) we can observe a switch in Heidegger's thought: he starts to use the word Jew in connection with Christendom and Metaphysics. Heidegger stresses the link between Jewish and Christendom as the ground of western society: both Jewish and Christendom cannot grasp the Being and both of them

<sup>29</sup> Even if the quantity is not philosophically important, however it shows the scarcity with whom Heidegger talks about Jew. In other words, the *Judenfrage* was not a priority for him and «let alone an essential part of his history of Being», J. Grondin, *The critique and Rethinking of Being and Time in the first Black Notebooks*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII*, in GA 95, pp. 96-97; Id., *Überlegungen XII*, in GA 96, p. 46, p. 56

<sup>31</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII*, in GA 96, p. 46. On the relationship between ground, land and roots, it would be remarkable remember that for Heidegger these concepts have not merely a negative meaning. See A. Rocha de la Torre, *I Quaderni Neri nel contesto della questione politica in Heidegger*, in A. Fabris (ed.), *Metafisica e antisemitismo*, ETS, Pisa 2014, p. 102 and following.

<sup>32</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII*, in GA 96, p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen VIII*, in GA 95, p. 97; Id., *Überlegungen XII*, in GA 96, p. 56; Id., *Überlegungen X*, in GA 95, p. 325.

opened the path to Nihilism and metaphysics, whose devastating effects are clear in the western society. The oblivion of Being, the development of *Machenschaft*, the concentration camps and the Holocaust are the more evident consequences of this matrix—the Jewish-Christian matrix—that opens the abyss of Nihilism, in which also secularism is embedded.

Heidegger uses the words *struggle* or *battle* (in German: *Kampf*) in relation to Christendom and to Catholicism: he writes that the battle against the Catholic Church is the battle against that kind of thinking that occupies western society<sup>34</sup>, namely western metaphysics. This is the battle against a way of thinking that is without grounds, without truth, that have not interrogated the issue of Being but only insisted what man is<sup>35</sup>: the thinking that derives from the Catholic Church is a metaphysical one and, as such, forgets the *Seinsfrage*<sup>36</sup>. Quite evident are echoes that come from these reflections: Franz Overbeck's and Luther's influence hang in the background of specific sentences, even if Heidegger's contribution proceeds in the direction of the history of Being.

The critique toward Christendom is articulated mainly on three levels: first, it is an *historical* critique, due to its historical development in which, through the contamination with *romanitas*, the Christendom loses its own content (the faith—the Christianity), in order to become a political system; second, it is a *speculative* critique, because Christendom falsifies Christ's message in the same

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<sup>34</sup> «The knowledge and indeed creation of these conditions require an excess of the surpassing of a people by itself, the liberation from all calculation of either particular or common usefulness. As pre-eminently necessary as this requirement is, so little does it touch upon the necessities of the proper Dasein of a people—necessities which are also not grasped by a mere appeal | to the Christian Churches, but are thereby only distorted», M. Heidegger, *Ponderings V*, p. 246.

<sup>35</sup> «The Catholic Church—it alone «is» Christianity—as always, eager to have its opponents—in order to measure itself against them and to remain alert and strong. It takes the opponents seriously, plants itself in them, learns from them up to the semblant disavowal of itself—keeps itself in this way flexible and clever, and constantly makes itself more secure and richer in experience. This cautious knowing and questioning, this listening to the opponents that apparently is accepting of them, produces at the same time the attractive semblance of spiritual freedom for confrontation, the semblance of being current and modern, and entails the entire sophistry that basically is as rigid as ever in crouching over the already accomplished truth and fitting itself into the presently most beautiful recommendation within the sphere of what one in the precise sense values and desires», M. Heidegger, *Ponderings and Intimations III*, p. 133-134.

<sup>36</sup> «The Christian «Churches» have passed over—already long ago—into the service of a world Christianity that smacks of the Enlightenment and thus also of romanticism and that decks itself out with everything Hölderlin and Nietzsche (and their successors) creatively suffered in thinking and poetizing. The goal is the complete suppression of questioning, the repression of all the question-worthiness of being into the unknown and negligible. And all this still under the aegis of a struggle against Bolshevism and every sort of «totalizing» claim—the trivialization of nihilism—as its most dangerous form», M. Heidegger, *Ponderings VI*, p. 330.

path as Metaphysics; finally, it is *political* critique, because Christendom (in terms of *Christentum*) is an outcome of the hegemony of the Roman Church, and is placed into the space of Metaphysics<sup>37</sup>. As Heidegger writes: «Great corruptors of the spirit are lacking –all the more numerous are the mediocre ones. The most serious and especially the cleverest example of these latter is the theologian Guardini. He traverses all the possibilities of the spirit in the great forms of the poets and thinkers, is never trivial and never crudely Catholic– always in tune with the modern «wrestling» with the truth and availing himself of all the means of contemporary thought and discourse. But nowhere does he venture an essential question or even attain a question not previously posed–; he merely serves up anew the already secure stock of answers for those who wish to flee all questioning. This even seems to be «creative» in the eyes of the average intellectually lazy person, and yet everything is only a very clever imitation of what the Church Fathers and apologists of the first Christian century already «practiced» in their own way. The current «spiritual life» is so lacking in direction and measure | that it not only finds such pen-pushing satisfactory but even considers it something superior in comparison to what preceded»<sup>38</sup>. And a bit further: «Those who today falsify the last remainder of philosophy by turning it into a scholasticism of worldview in order to make themselves up to date should at least summon up enough insight and enough rectitude of thinking that they make St. Thomas Aquinas their patron –the only patron saint appropriate to them– in order to learn from him how one can be uncreative in the great style and yet can place very astutely essential thoughts into the service of belief and give belief a decisive basic structure. Why is this not happening? Because even this extensive heteronomy of thinking lacks power, and above all lacks the certainty of craft. The confusion is so great that these «political» philosophies, ones «tied to the people,» are never recognized as wretched imitations of scholasticism. The grotesqueness is complete when all this confusion is joined by the «struggle» against the Catholic Church –a «struggle» which has still not at all found –and cannot find– its opponent as long as it thinks with too short a sight (and too narrow a mind) of that which constitutes the foundations of this Church: the adapted metaphysics of Western thinking in general, | in which these «worldview strugglers» are so inextricably entangled that they do not surmise how much they themselves participate with their «opponent» in the same brittle

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<sup>37</sup> «The impending concordat with the Catholic Church is «supposed to be a victory, for it is to drive the priests out of «politics.» That is an illusion; that incomparably well-coordinated organization will remain—and also the power of the priests; their power will merely be made more «sanctified» and will be wielded more slyly», M. Heidegger, *Ponderings and Intimations III*, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ponderings V*, p. 251-252.

foundations (unquestionability of being, groundlessness of truth, essential determination of the human being)»<sup>39</sup>.

Following these remarks we can understand why, according to Heidegger, the Jewish-Christian matrix of Western metaphysics must be overcome in order to achieve a new beginning of thought. Overcoming metaphysics means to break down with the legacy of Christendom and Jewish-Christian heritage. The leap (*Sprung*) of Being seems to be from Jena to the Jona – using Franz Rosenzweig’s words – jumping Rome and Jerusalem.

It is in this conceptual scenario that the sentence contained in the middle of the second notebook (*Gesamtausgabe* 95) needs to be considered carefully, in order to avoid any metaphysical interpretations of anti-Semitism: it is when Heidegger writes that the issue of the Jews (*Judenfrage*) and their position in the world is *not a racial one* but a *metaphysical one*<sup>40</sup>. With this sentence Heidegger is not claiming that the Jews *as Jewish* have a particular metaphysical characterisation, rather they are part of the modernity that has lost the meaning of the Being and, for this reason, they are in the space of Western Metaphysics such as Christians, Russians, Americans, Communists and so on. In other words, the role played by the Jews is the same role played by the mankind unable to consider the oblivion of Being and the nihilism.

Donatella Di Cesare has considered this sentence as the proof of Heidegger’s metaphysical anti-Semitism, creating a variation on Trawny’s interpretation of ontological anti-Semitism. I would stress that this kind of interpretation is the result only of a confirmation bias, because who considers the Jews *as Jewish* in terms of *metaphysical subject* is not Heidegger himself but every interpreter that follows this pathway. It has been the interpreter of this metaphysical anti-Semitism that have drawn the portrait of a *metaphysical Jew* that is not at the core of Heidegger’s interest and writings. The crafting of this portrait has not simply been the result of a cutting and pasting of quotations from *Black Notebooks*, but the logical and sentimental consequence of an image of Jews that the interpreter draws as metaphysical and that she ascribes to Heidegger. Under this respect, it has been the recent work of the Italian philosopher Leonardo Messinese<sup>41</sup> to clarify this point with accuracy. Messinese claims that Di Cesare’s remarks on Heidegger’s consideration of the Jews are the result of her consideration of metaphysical essence and are drawn also from the work written in 1932 by Waldemar Gurian in the book

<sup>39</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ponderings V*, p. 292-293.

<sup>40</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen XIV*, in GA 96, p. 243.

<sup>41</sup> See L. Messinese, *La «questione ebraica» nei Quaderni Neri considerata alla luce della «critica alla metafisica»*, in F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, pp. 386-391. On the same topic – the critique to the concept of Metaphysical anti-Semitism – see also M. Borghi, *Antisemitismo metafisico?* in *Eudìa*, vol. 9, 2015.

entitled *Um des Reiches Zukunft*<sup>42</sup>, in which the expression «methaphysical anti-Semitism» is present. Once the portrait of the metaphysical Jew is drawn, Di Cesare –according to Messinese– deepens this portrait building a series of metaphysical opposition, all of them characterising the Jews *as Jewish*, in a metaphysical meaning till arriving, through a crescendo, to confirm her idea of a metaphysical anti-Semitism and to advance the hypothesis that Heidegger's thought would be involved in the Holocaust.

Perhaps it is important to remember that in 1941, when Heidegger is writing his *Überlegungen*, the «final solution» for the «Jewish question» has begun. Heidegger, as every other contemporary of his time, cannot know or simply guess what kind of criminal atrocities are occurring in the concentration camps. Under this regard, the considerations pencilled in the first three volumes of *Black Notebooks* cannot be considered as an aware and explicit reference to the Holocaust. We know only from the last volume of *Black Notebooks*, the *Anmerkungen*, that Heidegger knew about the existence of concentration camps, since in these pages he writes specific remarks. As Françoise Dastur<sup>43</sup> pointed out, the *Überlegungen* cannot be read with the cognition and awareness of what happened after 1941, but they need to be read according to the events (historical and political) that happened in the period they were written (1931-1941). Her emphasis on the need for an accurate *historical contextualization* of Heidegger's *Überlegungen* is considered to be the real and effective involvement of Heidegger's thinking in the Holocaust and the consequent implication for ethics.

### III. ONTOLOGICAL ANTI-SEMITISM: IS IT ACCEPTABLE?

Before going through my remarks on the ontological anti-Semitism proposed by Peter Trawny, I would like to stress that with *Black Notebooks* we face an amount of issues that can be observed on two levels: a hermeneutical one and an ideological one.

Considering the hermeneutical level, it is necessary to ask ourselves what kind of books the *Schwarze Hefte* are, in which context they need to be situated and how we can approach them. These fundamental questions are generally valid for every book we want read and understand, moreover if this book has a particular structure, such as a non-systematic one, that can induce interpreters to defraud

<sup>42</sup> W. Gerhart (pseud. for W. Gurian), *Um des Reiches Zukunft. Nationale Wiedergeburt oder politische Reaktion?*, Herder, Freiburg i.Br. 1932.

<sup>43</sup> See F. Dastur, *Y a-t-il une «essence» de l'antisémitisme?* In P. Trawny, A. J. Mitchell (eds.) *Heidegger, die Juden, noch einmal*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M. 2015, p. 96 and following.

specific parts and decontextualize them as not original. As I have already claimed, perhaps it would be desirable for readers of Heidegger to understand the books critically, entirely, comparing their topics with the other works (lessons, works for publication, letters and so on) in which Heidegger was working in the same years on *Black Notebooks*. In this way one can see not only the intimate movements of Heidegger's thinking, but also find that the *Black Notebooks* do not have an interpretative feature broader than Heidegger's other works and, under some respects, their relevance is not only philosophical, because Heidegger also reports personal and private opinion are reported in these pages.

Due to the need of a consistent hermeneutical approach, it would be remarkable to find that every definition of Heidegger's anti-Semitism has been philologically proved and has been evidenced throughout the entire *Gesamtausgabe*. In order to claim that anti-Semitism is relevant in his works, this claim must *also* involve all the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) and the seven major works on the *Seinsgeschichte*<sup>44</sup>. However, this has not been done and the hermeneutical approach chosen by scholars who support anti-Semitism in Heidegger's thinking is very different. It reminds me of the way *petitio principii* usually work: a circular argument, a fallacy in assuming a premise in the same meaning as the conclusion. Before going through this point, I would like to look back at the relationship of the history of Being and the supposed anti-Semitism.

The sentences through which Heidegger has been accused of anti-Semitism, such as «groundlessness», «absence of history», «absence of world», «empty rationality», «the forgetfulness of being», «machination of beings», «absence of bounds as such», «the uprootedness of all beings from being» –just to quote some of them– are not what characterizes the spirit of «international Jewry» *as such*, but the *modernity in itself* with all its connection to the oblivion of Being. As Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann claims, «everyone who has carefully worked through the ontohistorical treatises –that is, the main texts of ontohistorical thinking– sees at once that the concepts listed are just ontohistorical concepts by means of which Heidegger characterizes the spirit of the newest new age and thus the present age, insofar as this age principally understands itself from out of the spirit of the mathematical natural science and modern technology. And this means that these concepts are not anti-Semitic as such (i.e., they do not refer to the Jewish spirit only but reflect the spirit of the present time). In other words, when Hei-

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<sup>44</sup> The major seven works on the history of Being are *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis* (1936-1938), in *Gesamtausgabe* 65, *Besinnung* (1938-1939) in *Gesamtausgabe* 66, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (1938-1939), in *Gesamtausgabe* 67, *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (1938-1940) in *Gesamtausgabe* 69, *Über den Anfang* (1941), in *Gesamtausgabe* 70, *Das Ereignis* (1941-1942), in *Gesamtausgabe* 71, *Die Stege des Anfangs* in *Gesamtausgabe* (1944) in *Gesamtausgabe* 72.

degger characterizes the spirit of «international Jewry» he includes it within the modern spirit of the present age. (...) The ontohistorical approach has its own conceptuality; it is not anti-Semitic in its essence and not the result of an anti-Semitic outlook. Instead, the ontohistorical approach arises from a phenomenological perspective that experiences the phenomena in their own historicity, making them visible and intelligible»<sup>45</sup>.

Under this respect, what has been considered as evidence of anti-Semite thinking has been *only and simply* a circular argumentation and –under some respects– a misrepresentation of the most important part of Heidegger's meditation - the history of Being. How has it been possible? And moreover: is it acceptable? To answer to these questions, one must face the ideological aspects of all these affairs and see how the hermeneutical approach drifts on the second level of the story: the ideological level.

Usually we consider the *introduction of ideology into philosophy* as one of the oldest practices in the history of thought and we are familiar with the effects of this contamination but not with the causes, or with the beginning. With the expression «ideology» I do not mean simply the collection of beliefs - conscious and unconscious ideas - held by a society and its normative role, but the vagueness of characterizations and ideas expressed in concepts that are manipulated to create and increase *social consensus*. The manipulation of the masses and public opinion, the tendentious rewriting of narratives, and image making are useful tools for ideological propaganda, and sometimes they are also used by philosophers or interpreters, not necessarily with conscious intentions. One could claim that we require philosophers to specify the difference between philosophy (in particular political philosophy) and ideology and to show how they work. Referring to Plato and to his discovery that «universal art of enchanting the mind by arguments» done by sophists (Phaedrus 261) has nothing to do with truth but it is aimed at opinions which by their very nature are changing, and which are valid only «at the time of the agreement and as long as the agreement lasts» (Theaetetus 112), Arendt writes: «The most striking difference between ancient and modern sophists is that the ancients were satisfied with a passing victory of the argument at the expense of truth, whereas the moderns want a more lasting victory at the expense of reality»<sup>46</sup>.

The history of western philosophy is rich with examples that can illuminate this understanding, starting from the Sophists to the Marxian critique of capitalism, or looking across Arendt's political writings or Ricouer's works on ideology, philosophy and common sense. However, unfortunately, this is not the right place

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<sup>45</sup> F.-W. von Herrmann, *The Role of Martin Heidegger's Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>46</sup> H. Arendt, *The origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace & Company, 3 ed., NY 1976, p. 9



to discuss this difference, I assume that the main difference between philosophy and ideology is grounded in the fact that philosophers, through critical and systematic approaches, usually use philosophical reflection that promotes autonomous and critical thinking, rather than neutralizing it beyond the ideological critique of false representations. Another point is that the ideological use of specific philosophical ideas is grounded by stressing *what* we have to think, instead of *how* we need to think – and that is the peculiarity of phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches (how, not what – *wie, kein was*). This stress on the *what* is often the most evident limit of the ideological use of philosophical concepts. In this framework the majority of our knowledge must be verified in terms of critical knowledge and not simply as a matter of shared assumptions, convictions, ideas or beliefs that cannot be questioned. In other words, philosophy should teach «how to think crudely», using Brecht's words, and it could be far from every attempt to oversimplify the reality or our representations of it.

Coming back to the topic of this paragraph, maybe it is even too simple to claim that some interpretations of *Black Notebooks* are just the right occasion to «square the circle»: some passages of *Black Notebooks* are evidence of Heidegger's anti-Semite ideas. However, the tricky fact is that these ideas are not *enough* to create a public image of Heidegger as a violent anti-Semite, or better, a metaphysical anti-Semite or to show that the core of his thought (the ontological thought) is anti-Semite in its essence. It is required more evidence to demonstrate a) that his meditation is anti-Semite; b) that this anti-Semitism is ontological; c) this ontological anti-Semitism pervades all his philosophical thinking. These steps are performed by some scholars that the German editor of *Black Notebooks* considers far from his point of view<sup>47</sup>; however, this distance, doesn't prevent the editor to fall into some unclarified issues that lead to a re-writing of Heidegger's thinking using a narration that acts as misrepresentation.

The ideological reading of Heidegger's works is not new to the philosophical scenario and maybe the wider public is not familiar with this approach. When the book written by Viktor Farias in 1987 *Heidegger et le nazisme* was circulated, the «Heidegger affair» has been reinforced. One cannot overlook that since Heidegger

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<sup>47</sup> Trawny writes in the third edition of his book: «[Es] drängt sich die weitere Frage auf, ob und inwiefern der Antisemitismus Heideggers Philosophie als ganze kontaminiert. Gibt es eine antisemitische Ideologie, die das Denken Heideggers so sehr besetzt, das wir von einer «antisemitischen Philosophie» sprechen müssten? So dass wir dann Abstand von dieser Philosophie nehmen müssten, weil es eine «antisemitische Philosophie» nicht gibt und nicht geben kann? Dass wir - nach Jahrzehnten - erkennen müssten: bei Heideggers Denken kann es sich in der Tat nicht um «Philosophie» handeln, auch nicht um ein «Denken», sondern nur um eine unheimliche Verirrung? Die Fragen müssen verneint werden. Doch ist es kein leichter Weg bis zu dieser Antwort», P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M., 2015, 3rd edition, p. 13.

was alive there were many attempts to manipulate and misrepresent his work – a very well detailed reconstruction of these attempts are also contained in Petzet's book<sup>48</sup> and De Towarnicki's memories<sup>49</sup>, just to name a few. Maybe one can also remember Medard Boss' words: «In all these inquiries Heidegger very clearly seemed to be the most slandered man I had ever encountered. He had become entangled in a network of lies by his colleagues. Most of the people, who were unable to do serious harm to the substance of Heidegger's thinking, tried to get at Heidegger the man with personal attacks. The only remaining puzzle was why Heidegger did not defend himself against these slanders publicly. The astonishing fact of his defenselessness gave me the incentive to stand up for him to the best of my ability»<sup>50</sup>. However, with Farias' book the debate acquires different connotations, since his ability to manipulate Heidegger's quotations promoted a wave of anti-heideggerianism, from which a new generation of thinkers, such as Wolin or Faye, contributed to an ideological reading of Heidegger's works. As Farias himself has admitted in a public interview<sup>51</sup>, his use of Heidegger's texts is not scientific and, with a kind of irony, he has admitted the limits of his work.

Gadamer, perhaps, has been the first one to discover the risks of the tendency to read Heidegger in an ideological way, and the conference he organised in Heidelberg from February 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> 1988 with Derrida and Labarthe was aimed at dissolving the fog around these aspects and positions<sup>52</sup>. Moreover, Gadamer's initial position<sup>53</sup> on the «Heidegger case» was that the conference should help us in understanding how things have been developed during these last 30 years. Recently, some unpublished letters, exchanged with von Herrmann, have proved how Gadamer was aware of the risk of interpretations and manipulations made by media. In a letter dated November 30<sup>th</sup> 1987, Gadamer writes: «Dear Herr von Herrmann, you have certainly no idea how much this Farias' affair irritates me. Naturally, from a higher point of view, we could think that this shallow and mediocre book does not contain anything really new for the German readers and certainly nothing that can be used against Heidegger. However, the mass media's reality forces us to coming out from that discretion in which we conformed our-

<sup>48</sup> See H. W. Petzet, *Auf einen Stern zugehen. Begegnungen und Gespräche mit Martin Heidegger, 1929 bis 1976*, Societäts Verlag, 1983.

<sup>49</sup> I refer the reader to F. de Towarnicki, *A la rencontre de Heidegger. Souvenirs d'un messenger de la Forêt-Noire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

<sup>50</sup> M. Boss, *Preface*, in M. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars. Protocols- Conversations-Letters*, trans. by R. Askay & F. Mayr, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Illinois 2001, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> I refer the reader to F. Volpi, A. Gnoli, *Le conseguenze di Heidegger*, in *La Repubblica*, 20 ottobre 2008.

<sup>52</sup> J. Derrida, H. G. Gadamer, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *La conference de Heidelberg*, textes réunis, présentés et annotés par Mireille Calle-Gruber, note de Jean-Luc Nancy, Ed. Lignes-Imec, Paris 2014.

selves till now, at least as far as it concerns me. The huge effect that Farias's book is provoking in France shows how superficially things are handled in the world nowadays (...). At this point I become sceptic. The modern mass-media are insatiable and they also know how to create any form of need even if it would not have been required; the case would be even better when the foreigner countries are already furious (on this issue). So after having studied the book, I have not seen any other pathway than to devote myself to this issue in the most careful way I can. However, this challenge is as delicate as difficult. Of course, there are ongoing foolishnesses in this situation, as when one choses to interpret *Sein und Zeit*'s style as pre-Nazism. Unfortunately, the world history suggested us this kind of deductions. The 20's era, which was at the same time so desperate and full of life, is part of the development of Nazi-socialism movement. The enthusiastic expectations of a part of the youth and of a part of intellectual class were not so different from what Heidegger and his friends in Freiburg hoped in the framework of University life (...). My only hope is that the «Heidegger affair» will be exaggerated so much that it will be not the chance not to take any longer into consideration the National Socialism from a vulgar point of view (...). Probably Heidegger's mistakes and weaknesses are not very different or worst from those that every human being would have been in risk to do in emergence conditions. It is always a bit pharisaic to talk about this, and I do not like it»<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> See H. G. Gadamer, *Comme Platon a Siracuse*, in J. Derrida, H. G. Gadamer, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *La conference de Heidelberg*; Id., *L'imbroglio di Farias*, in *Espresso*, 24 aprile 1988.

<sup>54</sup> «Verehrter Herr von Herrmann, Sie glauben gar nicht, wie mich die Angelegenheit Farias aufregt. Natürlich könnten wir uns in der überlegenen Haltung fühlen, daß dieses oberflächliche und miserable Buch für deutsche Leser im Grunde nichts Neues enthält, jedenfalls nichts, was man gegen Heidegger ausspielen kann. Aber die Wirklichkeit der Massenmedien nötigt einen, aus der bisher befolgten Reserve, soweit ich selbst in Frage komme, herauszutreten. Der Rieseneffekt, den das Buch von Farias in Frankreich macht, zeigt eben, daß man so oberflächlich in der Welt mit den Dingen umgeht. (...) Aber ich bin skeptisch geworden. Die modernen Massenmedien sind unersättlich und wissen auch Bedürfnisse zu erzeugen, wo keine bestehen, und vollends, wenn das Ausland bereits in Rage ist. So habe ich nach dem Studium des Buches keinen anderen Weg mehr gesehen, als die Sache gründlicher anzupacken. Das ist nun freilich ein ebenso heikles wie schwieriges Unternehmen. Natürlich ist das alles Unsinn, wenn man etwa die Stilgebung von 'Sein und Zeit' als Pränazismus interpretiert. Leider hat uns aber die Weltgeschichte genau solche Schlüsse suggeriert. Die ebenso verzweifelte wie doch auch lebensvolle Zeit der zwanziger Jahre ist zugleich ein Stück Lebenszeit in der Entstehung der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung gewesen. Die enthusiastischen Erwartungen eines Teils der Jugend und der jüngeren Intelligenzschichten war damals nicht so gänzlich verschieden von dem, was Heidegger und seine Freiburger Freunde auf dem Gebiete des Universitätslebens sich erhofften. (...) Meine einzige Hoffnung ist, daß sich der Fall Heidegger zum Anlaß ausweiten wird, das Phänomen des Nationalsozialismus nicht länger aus der Vulgärperspektive anzusehen (...). Die Fehler und Schwächen von Heidegger sind vermutlich keine anderen und keine größeren, als jeder andere Mensch in exponierten

It is possible that the accusation of anti-Semitism is the main point of the *damnatio memoriae* – and perhaps is prone to feed doubts: that is, to understand critically Heidegger's passages where he discusses the Jews, but also the interpretation of the German editor of his notebooks. To understand critically means to have strong enough arguments to prove the validity of the editor's interpretation and to confirm (or not) Heidegger's ideas. In his work entitled *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*<sup>55</sup> Peter Trawny sketches a remarkable personal interpretation of Heidegger's *Seinsgeschichte* that has many contradictions. My remarks to this book are on two levels: a logical one and a metaphysical one.

From a logical level, his approach proceeds through inference, conjectures and deductions that are fed through rhetorical questions and circular ideas – typical of a *petitio principii*. These ideas and the accompanied rhetorical questions reach a *climax* when the author leads the readers to the discovery of the ontological anti-Semitism. The book –and consequently the interpretation it promotes– swings constantly between claiming overt assumptions and hinting at others. Moreover, what has caught my attention is the usage of the adjective «ontological», it is never clarified and explained: it is assumed that every reader knows what «ontological» means in the context of heideggerian conceptuality. The most evident misunderstanding is when Trawny leads the reader to consider the history of mankind *as* synonymous to the history of Being. Allowing such an overlapping is dangerous: Heidegger himself has clarified, many times, that the history of mankind distinct from the *Seinsgeschichte*, for example, within the Nietzsche lectures: «The history of Being is not the history of man, neither the history of mankind or the history of the human reference to the being. The history of Being is the Being itself and only this»<sup>56</sup>.

One of Trawny's main arguments is that Heidegger would have contaminated his onto-historical thinking with the collections of stereotypes and prejudices circulated about the Jews during the 20's and 30's: this argument allows the German editor of the *Black Notebooks* to support the idea of contamination, provoked by anti-Semitism, but does not provide the reader with a *philosophical* explanation of how this anti-Semitism influences the ontological aspect of Heidegger's meditation. This last issue is left open even if some passages of his books seem to

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*Lagen zu begehen in Gefahr ist. Davon reden zu müssen, ist immer etwas pharisäerhaft, ab und ich hasse das»,* letter published in F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, pp. 347-352.

<sup>55</sup> P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 2014.

<sup>56</sup> «Die Seinsgeschichte ist weder die Geschichte des Menschen und eines Menschentums noch die Geschichte des menschlichen Bezugs zum Seienden und zum Sein. Die Seinsgeschichte ist das Sein selbst und nur dieses», M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, Hrsg. von Brigitte Schillbach, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M. 1997, GA 6.2, p. 489.

invite the reader to consider that there could be a kind of implication between Heidegger's antisemitism and his philosophy.

This discussion about the logical level moves us to the metaphysical level, even if they are inextricably linked. Discussing ontological antisemitism requires an accurate clarification of what «ontological» means, but, as mentioned above, is totally absent in Trawny's book – we only deduce its meaning. First, the absence of this clarification in the framework of Heidegger's thinking makes every reference to the *Seinsgeschichte* problematic, because it does not illuminate an understanding of what the history of Being is, rather we are allowed to hypothesize Heidegger's meaning of an ontological antisemitism and, guess at how this anti-Semitism is at work in Heidegger's philosophy. Second, the German editor of the *Black Notebooks* does not enter into the ontological dimension of Heidegger's thought, he only introduces assumptive interpretations into this thought, emphasizing those features that Heidegger attributes to the status of the Jews as part of the modern world. The missed clarification of the *Seinsgeschichte* and the insistence on Jews as *Jewish* are the only evidence provided to convince the reader of the correctness of the editor's position, some concepts are taken for granted and not clarified as to how they are related to the ontological features of the history of Being. By not clarifying these assumptions and deductions the editor inspires reasons to believe the Anti-Semitism, but these assumptions are not good *enough* to demonstrate the antisemitism, because they are not arguments, but only assumptions with no philosophical clarification. In the end, through a «cherry picking» procedure (the fallacy of an incomplete evidence), Trawny's interpretation shows its circularity and its inaccuracy. Third, the notion of Anti-Semitism is used without any definition of what Semite means: the German editor of the *Black Notebooks* is accurate in his description of the «Jewish character» (*Judentum*) according to Heidegger but, it is not my role to remind the reader to clarify that the expression of anti-Semitism is usually defined as a behaviour against every Semite group, among which the Jews are only one social group. It is possible that it would be more accurate to use the expression anti-Judaic instead of Anti-Semite.

It is exactly in this context that Heidegger himself gives us a clarification about the use of every definition of anti-. In the *Remarks I (Anmerkungen I)* Heidegger writes: «The anti-Christian [*der Anti-christ*], like every «anti,» must stem from the same essential ground as that against which it is «anti»—that is, the same essential ground as «the Christian» [*der Christ*]. The Christian stems from Jewry [*Judenschaft*]. In the timeframe of the Christian West, that is, of metaphysics, Judaism is the principle of destruction»<sup>57</sup>. Like every opposition grounded on

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<sup>57</sup> «Der Anti-christ muß wie jedes Anti- aus dem selben Wesensgrund stammen wie das, wogegen es anti- ist – also wie »der Christ«. Dieser stammt aus der Judenschaft. Diese ist im Zeitraum des christlichen Abendlandes, d. h. der Metaphysik, das Prinzip der Zerstörung. [...] Von

opposing itself (A) to an another element (anti-) (B), the first element (A) must be grounded on the same essence to which it opposes itself to the other (B), in order to be defined as anti-. In this passage Heidegger is talking about what opposes itself to Christian, the *anti*-Christian, but this *anti*-Christian must have the same essential fundamental self to which it opposes. In this passage Heidegger is claiming two important things: first, everything we consider anti- is grounded essentially on the *same principle* it is going to oppose. It means that the anti-Semitism is grounded essentially on the same fundamental premise it wants to negate and oppose. Second, Heidegger is claiming that the Western Metaphysics is the space of destruction in which both Christendom and the Jewish community are both part of the Western Metaphysics and responsible for the oblivion of the Being, resulting in the reduction of the Being (*Sein*) to being (*Seiende*) among other beings (*Seienden*). The Jewish community is also the last historical moment of Western Christianity, the last age of metaphysics, also called principle of destruction. The oblivion of ontological difference is the beginning of the destruction and of nihilism, into which the Western world is falling.

In another passage in *Remarks II (Anmerkungen II)* Heidegger writes: ««Prophecy» is the technique for fending off what is destinal in history. It is an instrument of the will to power. That the great prophets are Jews is a fact whose secret has not yet been thought through. (Note for jackasses: this comment has nothing to do with «anti-Semitism,» which is as foolish and abominable as Christianity's bloody and, above all, non-bloody attacks on «heathens.» The fact that Christianity even brands anti-Semitism as «un-Christian» is part of its highly developed and refined power technique)»<sup>58</sup>. In this passage Heidegger is claiming his distance from every form of Anti-Semitism, which is defined as vulgar, and

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*hier aus ist zu ermessen, was für das Denken in das verborgene anfängliche Wesen der Geschichte des Abendlandes das Andenken an den ersten Anfang im Griechentum bedeutet, das außerhalb des Judentums und d. h. des Christentums geblieben», M. Heidegger, Anmerkungen I, in GA 97, p. 20. This English translation has been done by R. Polt, References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1938-1948 Gesamtausgabe vols. 94-96 (2014) and 97 (2015), in: [https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References\\_to\\_Jews\\_and\\_Judaism\\_in\\_Martin\\_Heidegger\\_s\\_Black\\_Notebooks\\_1938-1948](https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References_to_Jews_and_Judaism_in_Martin_Heidegger_s_Black_Notebooks_1938-1948)*

<sup>58</sup> ««Prophetie» ist die Technik der Abwehr des Geschicklichen der Geschichte. Sie ist ein Instrument des Willens zur Macht. Daß die großen Propheten Juden sind, ist eine Tatsache, deren Geheimes noch nicht gedacht worden (Anmerkung für Esel: mit) Antisemitismus« hat die Bemerkung nichts zu tun. Dieser ist so töricht und so verwerflich, wie das blutige und vor allem unblutige Vorgehen des Christentums gegen »die Heiden«. Daß auch das Christentum den Antisemitismus als »unchristlich« brandmarkt, gehört zur hohen Ausbildung der Raffinesse seiner Machttechnik)», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen II*, in GA 97, p. 159. For the English translation of this passage, R. Polt, *References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1938-1948 Gesamtausgabe vols. 94-96 (2014) and 97 (2015)*, in: [https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References\\_to\\_Jews\\_and\\_Judaism\\_in\\_Martin\\_Heidegger\\_s\\_Black\\_Notebooks\\_1938-1948](https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References_to_Jews_and_Judaism_in_Martin_Heidegger_s_Black_Notebooks_1938-1948)

he is claiming that the issues concerning the power and the machination need to be addressed from the point of view of Metaphysics, and this occurs within the space of Western metaphysics - in which the question of Being is forgotten - and the space of Western technical rationality<sup>59</sup>. He is stressing the link between anti-Semitism and Christendom: even though Christians have never endorsed anti-Semitism because it opposes the Gospel, they have forced conversions to Christianity, e.g. genocide of the pagans. Once again Heidegger sees into the political and historical development of Christendom as one of the devastating effects of western metaphysics and the oblivion of Being. Christendom is the more evident outcome of the metaphysical space: it is the *obstinacy* and the *shelter* of metaphysics of the Catholic German Church, in terms political organization of faith<sup>60</sup> that embodies the same organization of Metaphysics. As he writes in *Remarks I (Anmerkungen I)*: «On this basis one must assess what it means, for thinking that enters the concealed, initial essence of the history of the Western, to meditate on the first beginning among the Greeks, which remained outside the Jewish character and thus outside the Christian one»<sup>61</sup>.

The German editor of *Black Notebooks* does not provide any elucidations of the exact meaning of the *Seinsgeschichte* in the context of Heideggerian conceptuality, but as pointed out by Elad Lapidot, «his often use of the adjective *seinsgeschichtlich* thus effects deep estrangement. In fact, the historical dimension to which Heidegger's *seinsgeschichtliche* thought opens up Trawny understands as a «narrative», a story. And wasn't it Heidegger himself that, quoting Plato, pronounced that the first principle of philosophy is «not to tell stories?»<sup>62</sup>. If we assume that philosophy is storytelling, or better, a *narration* and not a *systematic investigation*, story can become a myth or allegory. In this respect «for Trawny, reading world history as the unfolding of a philosophical intrigue is mythology. Equally mythological is ascribing philosophical values to historical collectives, such as the Greeks, the Germans – and the Jews»<sup>63</sup>. Within this story there is space for mythology and for assumptions, some of them concern Heidegger, others concern the Jews, others concern the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the «world Jewry conspiracy». The goal of the storyteller is to sew up these elements and provide a narration that perfectly complies with the above mentioned features,

<sup>59</sup> On this topic, I refer the reader to S. Vietta, «*Etwas rast um den Erdball...*». *Martin Heidegger: Ambivalente Existenz und Globalisierungskritik*, Fink, Paderborn 2015.

<sup>60</sup> M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen III*, in GA 94, p. 186.

<sup>61</sup> «*Von hier aus ist zu ermessen, was für das Denken in das verborgene anfängliche Wesen der Geschichte des Abendlandes das Andenken an den ersten Anfang im Griechentum bedeutet, das außerhalb des Judentums und d. h. des Christentums geblieben*», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I*, in GA 97, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> E. Lapidot, *Heidegger's Teshuva?*, in «Heidegger Studien», 32, 2016, p. 39.

<sup>63</sup> Ivi.

in which the philosophical dimension and systematic clarification of what is meant by Heidegger in the history of Being finds *no place*.

It is very difficult to not agree with von Herrmann when he claims: «A proper companion book to the *Überlegungen (Considerations)* by the editor would have had to have a totally different conception and content. If such a book were to contain an explanation of the offending passages by the author, the explanation would have to work out and present the philosophical dimension of the «*Überlegungen*» (*Considerations*) and the sundry critical statements in this context (...). Only this would have done justice to the three volumes of the *Black Notebooks*. Instead, the editor leaves out the philosophical dimension of the *Black Notebooks* entirely, and pursues his purely ideological-political agenda by completely ignoring the philosophical content of the *Überlegungen (Considerations)* and their relation to other manuscripts featuring Heidegger's onto-historical thinking. In this way he misleads readers»<sup>64</sup>.

Even if the third reprint of his book is different from the others, trying to adjust previous ideas with new critiques, Trawny is quite convinced of his interpretation and extends it to the role played by Heidegger's thinking on the Holocaust, when he claims: «How should we proceed with Heidegger's being-historical antisemitism in relation to the Shoa? It is no longer open to debate whether Heidegger's «political error» ought to be defended (if that is possible) against a «politically correct» and thus intentionally or unintentionally distorting public debate. There is antisemitism in Heidegger's thinking that –as corresponds to a thinker– receives a (impossible) philosophic ground. But this antisemitism of Heidegger's does not go beyond two or three stereotypes. The being-historical construction makes it however worse. The being-historical construction can lead to a contamination of Heidegger's thinking»<sup>65</sup>. It is not my intention to find the «straw man» of this debate; perhaps it is better to repeat it again, my aim is only to understand *philosophically* the *Black Notebooks* and trying to consider if they have implications for one of the most devastating events of the European XX history: the Holocaust.

To be back to the topic of this paragraph, I would also add some words on the widespread interpretation of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* and the use of media in this context. Every narration that is grounded on a circular argument, inferences and on confirmation bias, requires a massive wave of consensus, that crosses over the academic world all the way to people that are not familiar with Heidegger. I cannot overlook the use of media in the «Black Notebooks scandal»,

<sup>64</sup> F.-W. von Herrmann, *The Role of Martin Heidegger's Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, p. 92.

<sup>65</sup> P. Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of Jewish World Conspiracy*, trans. by A. Mitchell, The University of Chicago Press 2015, p. 93.



such usage has been done with one clear aim that I do not hesitate to define *ideological*, that is to create a public image of these books, of their topics as reduced only to an accusation of anti-Semitism and Martin Heidegger as racist. Ultimately, this usage has produced a false assumption: now that the *Schwarze Hefte* have been published we can «prove» that Heidegger identified with Nazi ideals because he has been also proven to be an Anti-Semite, *but* we are open to discuss – on the condition that *this conclusion* is the only topic on which one can discuss, all the rest is irrelevant.

In this naïve scenario, in which many congresses have been held, every scholar that has given another interpretation of these books has been labelled as «conservative», «defending», «guardian». If one cannot agree with the idea that the *Black Notebooks* prove Heidegger's antisemitism, they are immediately accused of being considered «Heidegger's guardian»: *tertium non datur*. However, Heidegger's ideas are a bit more complex than they appear and perhaps we need more critical understanding of Heidegger's thinking versus supporters of different positions. Moreover, the exercise of philosophy should not be confused with narrations that offer tendentious rewriting finalised to ideological propaganda.

#### IV. THE BANALITY BETWEEN HEIDEGGER AND SOME SCHOLARS

On the pathway inaugurated by Trawny, we found Jean-Luc Nancy's interpretation of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*. The book entitled *Banalite' de Heidegger* was published in 2015 and it illustrates a lecture held at the Wuppertal University in October 2014. In his lecture, but also in his book, Nancy uses the word *banality* in trying to connect with Hannah Arendt's work on Eichmann's process, *The banality of evil*. Nancy stresses from the first page of his book that «banality» affirms the incapacity to judge, which was the way of acting of Nazi criminals. Nancy sees this banality in Heidegger when he claims that Heidegger would have appropriated the national socialist «doxa» typical of 20's and 30's in Germany, France and Greece<sup>66</sup> –the collections of stereotypes and prejudices that circulated at that time about the Jews– and integrated with his conception, in particular with the history of Being<sup>67</sup>. In other words, according to Nancy, Heidegger would have shared the historical anti-Semitism as an effort to contaminate his meditation (the *onto-historical* thinking) with anti-Semite elements, a thesis that is shared with the German editor of *Black Notebooks*. On this assumption, Nancy claims that this contamination has legitimised Heidegger's idea of the *necessary*

<sup>66</sup> J. L. Nancy, *Banalite' de Heidegger*, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

*sacrifice of Jews*<sup>68</sup> during the Holocaust as a necessary metaphysical condition<sup>69</sup> for the new beginning of thought<sup>70</sup> (*Der neu Anfang*) since the Jewish character (*Judentum*) has specific peculiarities (such as «groundlessness», «absence of history», «absence of world», «empty rationality», «absence of bounds as such», «the uprootedness») that don't belong to the history of Being<sup>71</sup> and to the pureness of thought that began with the old Greek meditation<sup>72</sup>. Nancy follows the idea proposed by Trawny of Heidegger's knowledge of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, affirming that, even if Heidegger himself hadn't read these papers, he would have received the typical Nazi's propaganda that contained false documents<sup>73</sup>.

Nancy claims that Heidegger was the first author to describe, philosophically, the historical features of the progressive model of development, from Kant to Marx, using an approach grounded, on both the beginning investigation of the original philosophical «place» (*archéotropie*) and the aims of this development (*téléotropie*)<sup>74</sup>. Moreover, Nancy adds, Heidegger sees the beginning of Christianity as an inner modification of Judaism in Israel that leads to anti-Semitism as an initial feature of the history of Christianity<sup>75</sup>; in other words, according to Nancy's interpretation of excerpts from the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger has absorbed the anti-Semitism typical of the initial Christian view of the Jews that we see in other German thinkers such as Hegel and Nietzsche. In the «Jewish», according to Nancy, Heidegger would see what is metaphysical as *par excellence* and, due to the inner need of *Seinsgeschichte*, what is metaphysical must under every respect be destroyed and overcome<sup>76</sup>: the Jewish as a metaphysical essence must be eliminated.

More than evident in Nancy's interpretation is that we face the same fallacy we found in Di Cesare's one: those who consider the Jewish feature as a metaphysical essence *as such* is not Heidegger who –maybe it is better to repeat– consider the Jewish feature (*Judentum*) inscribed into the space of western metaphysics as well as the Christian feature (*Christentum*), the Russian feature (*Russentum*), the American feature (*Amerikanertum*), the Chinese feature (*Chinesentum*), the Slavic feature (*Slaventum*) and so on. Heidegger is not interested in founding the «straw man» as part of mankind. He is only interested in understanding what the western metaphysics has provoked as a consequence of the

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 18, 32 and following.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, p. 20-21.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, p. 26-30, 34.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, p. 30-31, 43-44, 84-85.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, p. 50-51.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, p. 52-54.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, p. 62, 74 and following, 81 and following.

oblivion of being and his critique toward the above mentioned features is a critique toward modernity as a consequence of a broader instance: the meditation (*Besinnung*) of what does the Being mean is not any longer hosted in the western philosophy. It is in this space that we find his claims «the catastrophe of Being is its escatology»<sup>77</sup>.

Nancy ends his book claiming that the Heideggerian presumption of the pureness of thinking and the return to the old Greek meditation should be abandoned since the *Black Notebooks* demonstrates the danger of a thought that stops to think of its own contents and drifts to the banality of thinking. What Nancy saves in Heidegger's meditation is only the existential analytic, even if he stresses that this should be re-thought from a political approach, that is Nancy's focus on philosophy. Some ideas published in the book on the banality of Heidegger sound close to an old project Nancy had in mind some years ago, to rewrite Heidegger's *Being and Time* due to the political fate of the project on fundamental ontology and the existential analytic of *Dasein*: «*Being and Time* must be rewritten without the autarkic telos and tragic-heroic pathos of the thematic of authenticity, where, in Paragraph 74, *Mitsein* is determined in terms of «the people» and its «destiny». (...) *Being and Time* (...) must be rewritten from the perspective of the inauthenticity of the *Mitsein*-analytic. Nancy would appear to be claiming (...) that the genuine philosophical radicality of *Being and Time* lies in the existential analytic of inauthenticity. What has to be recovered from the wreckage of Heidegger's political commitment is his phenomenology of everyday life, the sheer banality of our contact (*cotoiment*) with the world and with others, what Nancy calls «the extremely humble layer of our everyday experience» (Nancy 1996, 27)»<sup>78</sup>.

My comments on Nancy's interpretation can only be regarding his approach to the general and widespread (by media) «taste» of the *Black Notebooks*. His work on these books, at the present moment, is general and generalised: a scarce work on Heidegger's *Schwarze Hefte*, an absent consideration of all seven of the ontological treatises and of the *Seinsgeschichte* in general. My impression is that Nancy follows Trawny's interpretation without checking if it is correct and acceptable. However, if *thinking* is the constant dialogue that every human being entertains with itself *preventing* from the *banality*, perhaps Nancy has for a moment suspended this attitude, in which he has always been a master, and he has jumped into considerations that are not far to be evaluated as *banal*. Every engagement with a philosophical work that does not consider it in its totality and depth but focuses only on the tip of the iceberg without considering the huge amount of issues that are under the tip, risks to be a banal engagement that simply repeats

<sup>77</sup> M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen IV*, in GA 97, p. 331.

<sup>78</sup> S. Critchley, *With-being-with? Notes on Jean-Luc Nancy's Rewriting of Being and Time*, in «Studies in Practical Philosophy», 1, 1999, p. 54.

what has already been said. Moreover, this way of proceeding stresses the general aptitude I have observed since *Black Notebooks* have been published, that is the general tendency to do not verify, check, investigate the anti-Semite interpretation on *Schwarze Hefte* only because this has been released from the editor of these books: it sounds like Andersen's tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*: no one dares to say that he doesn't see any suit of clothes until a child cries out «But he isn't wearing anything at all!».

Those that are familiar with a systematic and critical interrogation cannot dismiss the attitude to exercise philosophy and to ask if an interpretation is valid or not, *philosophically* and far from storytelling. Moreover, and perhaps it needs to be remarked, one cannot stop exercising the attitude toward philosophical judgement. Of course it is necessarily an inconvenience: being the voice of out the choir risks to be a jarring noise in the middle of a concert. But understanding without preconceived categories and judging without the set of ideological rules is the first step to think «without a bannister» and philosophy should remain «the enterprise of questioning that leaves no room for anathemas of any kind»<sup>79</sup>.

The reception of *Black Notebooks* can be considered under this respect; many of Heidegger's scholars have devoted a huge amount of papers in this direction, that is confirming the anti-Semite interpretation, basically choosing two approaches: on one hand, there have been scholars that *trusted* the interpretation of German editor of *Black Notebooks* only because of his position of «editor», and not necessarily reading these materials – for example, in Italy famous interpreters and translators of Heidegger, after having publicly admitted that they hadn't read the *Black Notebooks*, supported the anti-Semite interpretation due to the *excerpts* they read in other books and in newspapers (the web is full of interviews, congresses and debates where one can listen to these words) and due to the *trust* in the editor (since the editor of these volumes has written this, *this* is true). We can consider this way of proceeding very similar to the way in which the cognitive bias noted as «halo effect» works. On the other hand, there have been scholars that for political reasons (or more exactly: ideological reasons) have found the «smoking gun» to accuse Heidegger of what has been always waited, his anti-Semitism and, even if some of them have been through the *Black Notebooks* in their original language, they have chosen to remain in silence, omitting all the huge amount of passages and notes in which Heidegger publicly attacks and condemns the National socialism's race ideology. To my eyes this chosen silence is harder to understand than the trust toward the editor's interpretation. However, as far as *philosophy is not a matter of trust neither of ideological positions* but only a matter of understanding,

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<sup>79</sup> F. Dallmayr, *Heidegger's Notebooks: a smoking gun?*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, p. 23.

both the approaches based on these characteristics seem to me deceptive. Trust and ideology, as well as silence, will to accuse or to defend, *are not arguments*: they are only part of a circular fallacy that doesn't demonstrate anything.

Perhaps, more than re-read Heidegger's works through the lens of anti-Semitism, one could re-read Heidegger *Black Notebooks*' interpretations with distance, with no trust and with no ideology, and keeping in mind that these notebooks are only work in progress thoughts on the history of Being. Perhaps this could lead to understanding that the *banality* is not merely to be assigned to some personal opinion of Heidegger, but also to some of his scholars. Oversimplifications, accusations, absolves are not the task of philosophy, whose aim should be –among many others– to look into complications and ambiguities. Using Jeff Malpas' words, «the claim that Heidegger's thinking is anti-Semitic at its core cannot be supported merely by showing that Heidegger expressed or held anti-Semitic views – and this would remain the case even if it were Heidegger himself who made that claim (...). What needs to be shown is that anti-Semitism is indeed at work in the thinking, and that means showing where and how anti-Semitic attitudes are actually present in, and operative on, that thinking»<sup>80</sup>.

## V. HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF BLACK NOTEBOOKS

Heidegger's relationship with National socialism is known: as many other Germans, after the Treaty of Versailles (1919) Heidegger lived and assisted to the desperation and hope of those years, before Nazism that had revealed its criminal face. Defined by economist J. M. Keynes as a «Carthaginian peace» due to the harsh reparations considered too excessive and counter-productive, the treaty forced Germany to disarm, make substantial territorial concessions, and pay high reparations to certain countries that had formed the Entente powers. Heidegger, as many others Germans, believed in the National Socialism for a period, a very short one. From the end of 1933 his distance toward the party is clear also in the *Black Notebooks*, fact that has its own importance due to the position of Rector of the University of Freiburg. The faith in this movement has been compared by Karl Jaspers to the believes that a «dreaming boy has in his dreams», comparison that Heidegger himself found appropriate<sup>81</sup>. Perhaps it could be useful also to

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<sup>80</sup> J. Malpas, *On the Philosophical Reading of Heidegger: Situating the Black Notebooks*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> The correspondence between Heidegger and Jaspers is very important to illuminate the understanding of the different positions that Heidegger fed toward the National Socialism: to the initial enthusiasm, the awareness of the criminal proposes arises, till arrived to see

remember a mere historical data: the arise of National Socialism was welcomed by the International political scenario, at the very beginning, as a hope for the fate of Germany, after the terrible economic and social conditions in which the country was, soon after the I World War. Some of Hitler's supporters, between 20's and 30's, came also among the lines of British and American industrialists: only after the Danzig's crisis (1939) and the invasion of Poland by Hitler's troupes, diplomatic relationships between UK and Germany were ruined<sup>82</sup>.

In the letter the student Hans Peter Hempel on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1960 sent to Heidegger, he asked «how it has been possible» that a man like him has believed in Nazism. Heidegger reply was very clear: «Your conflict remains unresolvable so long as you read, for instance *The Essence of Reason* one morning and the same evening see reports and documentary film clips from the later years of the Hitler regime, so long as you are viewing National Socialism solely in retrospect from today and judging it with regard to what gradually came to light after 1934. At the beginning of the 1930s the class differences in our nation had become intolerable for any German with a sense of social responsibility, as had also Germany's economic throttling by the Treaty of Versailles. In 1932 there were 7 million unemployed, who, with their families, saw before them nothing but hardship and poverty. The confusion stemming from these circumstances, which today's generation can no longer even imagine, also spread to the universities»<sup>83</sup>.

In the letter to the Rector of Freiburg University dated November 4<sup>th</sup> 1945, he writes: «In April 1933, I was unanimously elected Rector (with two abstentions) in a plenary session of the university and not, as rumour has it, appointed by the National Socialist minister. It was as a result of pressure from my circle of colleagues that I consented to be a candidate for this election and agreed to serve. Previously I neither desired nor occupied an academic office. I never belonged to a political party, nor maintained a relation, either personal or substantive, with the NSDAP or with governmental authorities. I accepted the rectorship reluctantly and in the interest of the university alone (...). A short while after I took control of the rectorship the district head presented himself, accompanied by two func-

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clearly the terror in all the country. See M. Heidegger/K. Jaspers, *Briefwechsel mit Karl Jaspers (1920-1963)*, Hrsg. von W. Biemel und H. Saner, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a. Main 1992.

<sup>82</sup> On this topic I refer the reader to D. S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of Jews: American and the Holocaust*, Pantheon, NY 1984; H. L. Feingold, *Bearing Witness: How America and its Jewish Responded to the Holocaust*, Syracuse Press, NY 1995; J. R. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, NY 2005; Id., *The Third Reich in Power 1933-1939*, Penguin, NY 2005.

<sup>83</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter to Hempel*, in R. Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit*, Hanser Verlag. München Wien 1994; *Martin Heidegger. Between God and Evil*, trans. by E. Osers, Harvard University Press 1998, p. 228.

tionaries in charge of university matters, to urge me, in accordance with the wishes of the minister, to join the Party. The minister insisted that in this way my official relations with the Party and the governing organs would be simplified, especially since up until then I had no contact with these organs. After lengthy considerations, I declared myself ready to enter the Party in the interests of the university, but under the express condition of refusing to accept a position within the Party or working on behalf of the Party either during the rectorship or afterward. These conditions were accepted (...). After my resignation from the rectorship<sup>84</sup> it became clear that by continuing to teach, my opposition to the principles of the National Socialist world-view would only grow (...). It sufficed for me to express my fundamental philosophical positions against the dogmatism and primitivism of Rosenberg's biologism (...). Since National Socialist ideology became increasingly inflexible and increasingly less disposed to a purely philosophical interpretation, the fact that I was active as a philosopher was itself a sufficient expression of opposition (...). I also demonstrated publicly my attitude toward the Party by not participating in its gatherings, by not wearing its regalia, and, as of 1934, by refusing to begin my courses and lectures with the so-called German greeting [Heil Hitler!]<sup>85</sup>.

It is not my aim to rebuild the history of Heidegger's initial support of National Socialism and the reasons for this choice, since Heidegger himself has already done<sup>86</sup> and the literature on this topic is very broad<sup>87</sup>. Rather, I would

<sup>84</sup> Heidegger's rectorate lasted only 9 months.

<sup>85</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University*, in *Political texts*, in R. Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 1993, pp. 61-66

<sup>86</sup> I refer the reader to M. Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges (1910–1976)*, Hrsg. von H. Heidegger, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 2000, GA 16; Id., *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 1975; M. Heidegger/K. Jaspers, *Briefwechsel mit Karl Jaspers (1920–1963)*, hrsg. v. W. Biemel u. H. Saner, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a. Main 1992; M. Heidegger/ H. Arendt, *Briefe 1925 bis 1975 und andere Zeugnisse*, Hrsg. von U. Ludz, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.

<sup>87</sup> The critical literature on this topic is very broad. I refer the reader to some publications that can illuminate this topic in different ways: F. Fédier, *Heidegger, Anatomie d'un scandale*, Paris, Robert Laffont 1988; Id. (éd.), *Heidegger; à plus forte raison*, Paris, Fayard, 2007; T. Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991; Id., *The Heidegger case. On Philosophy and politics*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1992; E. Nolte, *Heidegger: Politik und Geschichte im Leben und Denken*, Propyläen, Berlin 1992; R. Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 1993; J. Young, *Heidegger; Philosophy, Nazism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997; G. Fried, *Heidegger's Plemos. From Being to Politics*, Yale University Press, Yale, CT 2000; B. Taureck, *Politische Unschuld? In Sachen Martin Heidegger*, Wilhelm Fink, München 2008; A. Denker, H. Zaborowski, *Heidegger-Jahrbuch 4. Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*, voll. 2, Alber Verlag, Freiburg/München 2009; H. Zaborowski, «Eine Frage von Irre und Schuld?» *Martin Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 2010; F. Grosser, *Revolutionen Denken. Heidegger und*

like to focus on those parts of *Black Notebooks* in which Heidegger refers to National socialism because providing the reader with other dowels perhaps can be useful in understanding different parts of the scandal grounded in the *Schwarze Hefte*. In *Ponderings XI* he writes: «Following a thought purely «metaphysical» (that is, according to the history of Being), in the years 1930-1934 I've considered the National Socialism as the chance to another passage toward another beginning and in this meaning I've interpreted it. Thus, I've misunderstood and underestimated this movement in its true forces and in its inner necessities, as well as in its measure and type»<sup>88</sup>. In *Remarks I* we read: «The real mistake in the 1933 Rectorate was not the fact that I, as other more intelligent people than me, haven't recognised «Hitler» in its «essence» and that, lately, together with them, I put myself aside full of rancour, in the sphere of the absence of will (...), rather that I have believed *that* moment as *the* moment in which becoming historical, initial, not through Hitler, but through the people's awaking in their western destiny»<sup>89</sup>. And again: «The mistake was not «political», in the mere sense that one failed into mistake regarding the «party»; from a political point of view, in a world-history meaning, the decision was not a mistake; because it was not expected to be faithful to the National Socialism as Institution, for the eternity; this last one (the National Socialism) was thought as the end of metaphysics, as a passage that could be overcome only through the beginning»<sup>90</sup>. Heidegger never omits to talk about his initial conviction in the National Socialism as a mistake (*Irrtum*) and never omits to explain the reasons. As pointed out in *Remarks V*, «I don't claim this to defend myself, rather only as mere information (...), I wanted

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*das Politische*, Beck Verlag, München 2011; A. Xolocotzi Yáñez, *Heidegger y el Nacional-socialismo. Una crónica*, Plaza y Valdes Editores, Colonia San Rafael 2013; F. Brencio (ed.), *La pieta' del pensiero. Heidegger e i Quaderni Neri*, Aguaplano – Officina del libro, Passignano s. T. 2015; F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2016.

<sup>88</sup> «Rein »metaphysisch« (d. h. seyns geschichtlich) denkend habe ich in den Jahren 1930-1934 den Nationalsozialismus für die Möglichkeit eines Übergangs in einen anderen Anfang gehalten und ihm diese Deutung gegeben. Damit wurde diese »Bewegung« in ihren eigentlichen Kräften und inneren Notwendigkeiten sowohl als auch in der ihr eigenen Größengebung und Größenart verkannt und unterschätzt», M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen XI*, in GA 95, p. 408.

<sup>89</sup> «Der eigentliche Irrtum des »Rektorats 1933« war nicht so sehr, daß ich, wie andere Klügere, nicht »Hitler« in seinem »Wesen« erkannte und mit jenen in der Folgezeit grollend daneben stand, im Bereich der Willen-losigkeit (...) sondern daß ich meinte, jetzt sei die Zeit, nicht mit Hitler, aber mit einer Erweckung des Volkes in seinem abendländischen Geschick anfänglich – geschichtlich zu werden», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I*, in GA 97, p. 98.

<sup>90</sup> «Der Irrtum war nicht ein bloß »politischer« in dem Sinne, daß man sich in der »Partei« versah; politisch im weltgeschichtlichen Sinne war die Entscheidung kein Irrtum; denn es sollte im vorhinein nicht beim National-sozialismus als solchem bleiben, als einer Einrichtung für die Ewigkeit; er war gedacht als Ende der Metaphysik, als Übergang, der selbst nur aus dem Anfang zu überwinden sein wird», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen II*, in GA 97, p. 148.



to do this clarification not for the public, not for defending me, but only as a simple observation»<sup>91</sup>.

The National Socialism is defined through the vulgarity and banality of its slogan, grounded on the barbarity of its principles and on its will to satisfy and control the masses: it is a «coat of paint that is now quickly spread over everything»<sup>92</sup>. As Heidegger notes: «National Socialism is a barbaric principle. That is its essential character and its possible greatness. The danger is not National Socialism itself— but, rather, its trivialization into a sermon on the true, the good, and the beautiful (as in an indoctrination session). And the danger is also that those who want to form its philosophy are able to base the latter on nothing other than the traditional «logic» of common thinking and of the exact sciences, instead of realizing that precisely now «logic» is newly coming into urgency and necessity and must spring forth as new»<sup>93</sup>. On these basis, we can figure why Heidegger claims that «a «National Socialist» philosophy is neither a «philosophy» nor a service to «National Socialism» –but instead simply runs behind it as burdensome | pedantry– an attitude which is already sufficient to demonstrate its incapacity for actual philosophy. To say a philosophy is «National Socialist», or is not so, means the same as to say a triangle is courageous, or is not so—and therefore is cowardly»<sup>94</sup>.

The distance toward this political movement and toward its ideology and principles is a constant element in all the 1900 pages of *Black Notebooks*: this aspect underlines as Heidegger was an attentive observer of his historical and political age and, moreover, it stresses its distance from the racial prejudices and ideology that were the ground of the historical anti-Semitism of those years. However, one could say that it is not *enough* to prove that Heidegger was not an anti-Semite since we found in the *Schwarze Wachstuchhefte* some passages in which he talks about the Jews. However, one could also remember the letters and other notes in which Heidegger talks about the Jews defining them as «the best among my students», such as the letter to Hannah Arendt or to his wife. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that the *quantity principle* is not a good one in order to address the anti-Semitism issue from a philosophical point of view. This engagement risks to be far from the aim of this paper, that is to discuss if Heidegger had any kind of responsibilities in the Holocaust – both private and moreover philosophical. In other words, if any kind of anti-Semitism is at work in his thinking till to arrive

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<sup>91</sup> «Ich nenne dies nicht zur Verteidigung, nur als Feststellung (...) sei dies noch einmal vermerkt, nicht für die Öffentlichkeit, nicht zur Verteidigung, sondern als Feststellung», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen V*, in GA 97, p. 462-463.

<sup>92</sup> Heidegger, *Ponderings and Intimations III*, p. 97.

<sup>93</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ponderings and Intimations III*, p. 142.

<sup>94</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ponderings V*, p. 254.

to claim philosophical responsibilities toward the criminal atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis in the concentration camps and to consider his meditation so dangerous till to propose the expulsion from the history of philosophy.

To move forward my aim it is requested to be back to a precise point of Heidegger's meditation, that it the ethical issue.

## VI. THE ORIGINAL ETHICS: BEING AND TIME AND THE LETTER ON HUMANISM

One of the most brilliant essays written by Nancy is the one entitled *L'éthique originaire de Heidegger*<sup>95</sup>, published in the volume *La pensée dérobée*, criticizing who thinks that it is possible «to deny that there is any ethical dimension to Heidegger's thinking, basing their claim on his own objection to ethics as a «discipline» on the corresponding absence of a «moral philosophy» in his work, and on his refusal of any moral interpretation of the analytic of Dasein»<sup>96</sup>, Nancy affirms that «there is no «morality» in Heidegger if what is meant by that is a body of principles and aims for conduct, fixed by authority or by choice, whether collective or individual. But no philosophy either provides or is by itself a «morality» in this sense. Philosophy is not charged with prescribing norms or values: instead, it must think the essence or the sense of what makes action as such, in other words, of what puts action in the position of having to choose norms or values»<sup>97</sup>. Nancy's main thesis is that the «thinking of Being» is nothing other than a thinking of what Heidegger called «original ethics» in all of its developments and with the so called *Kehre* («turning») we face with an accentuation, a reinforcement or a «folding» of the ethical motif<sup>98</sup>. This thesis is skilfully demonstrated in his essay.

However, it is not possible to not remark a contradiction with what we have read in the *Banalité de Heidegger* and what Nancy is claiming here: while in the book published in 2015 he claims that Heidegger's thinking receives, through the contamination of the historical anti-Semitism, anti-Semite elements that enter into his ontological thought till to allow the French author to talk about an ongoing banality in Heidegger's meditation, here his position is to stress an original ethic that is at work in Heidegger's thought, the same one that in accused of banality. One could say that the new thesis, the one held in 2014 in Wüppertal and then

<sup>95</sup> J. L. Nancy, *Heidegger's «Originary Ethics»*, in F. Raffoul, D. Pettigrew (eds.) *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, SUNY, NY 2002, pp. 65-86.

<sup>96</sup> J. L. Nancy, *Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics'*, p. 65.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

<sup>98</sup> *Ivi*.

published in 2015, is grounded on those excerpts that at the time of *Heidegger's Original Ethics* were not known and, since the *Black Notebooks* have put on the surface these new elements, this is the new thesis. According to the ordinary thought this position has its own validity, but according to philosophical thought this has no consistence because Nancy in the *Banalité de Heidegger* never mentions his previous work admitting a presumption of mistake due to the different conceptual scenario: he never enters into the comparison of these two different thesis, rather he still remains on the doorway of a missed clarification. It seems to me that the absence of comparison is finalised not to penetrate the real «attempts» toward the history of Being –the *Black Notebooks*– but to confirm Trawny's interpretation using the revolutionary concept of banality of evil clarified by Hannah Arendt – student, lover and friend of Martin Heidegger. In other words, *duplex est quaestio*: or Heidegger's meditation is banal because of his antisemitism, or his meditation remains in the framework of original ethics and, as such, it cannot be banal, assuming Arendt's definition of what «banality» means.

How can we address this dilemma? Are we allowed to consider only the point of view of ordinary sense or, since we exercise philosophy, do we expect a different clarification?

It seems to me that the dilemma between the banality and originality can be illuminated by the «thing in itself»: Heidegger's thinking. In the *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger arises the issue of an original ethics that is at work in *Being and Time*: «Soon after *Being and Time* appeared a young friend asked me, «When are you going to write an ethics?» Where the essence of the human being is thought so essentially, i.e., solely from the question concerning the truth of being, and yet without elevating the human being to the centre of beings, a longing necessarily awakens for a peremptory directive and for rules that say how the human being, experienced from ek-sistence toward being, ought to live in a fitting manner. The desire for an ethics presses ever more ardently for fulfillment as the obvious no less than the hidden perplexity of human beings soars to immeasurable heights. The greatest care must be fostered upon the ethical bond at a time when technological human beings, delivered over to mass society, can attain reliable constancy only by gathering and ordering all their plans and activities in a way that corresponds to technology»<sup>99</sup>. Heidegger focuses, in the following couple of pages, on the relationship between ethics and ontology, defining not only the singular peculiarities of these two different areas, but also the point of affinity. This is why he claims that «if the name "ethics", in keeping with the basic meaning of the word,

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<sup>99</sup> M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus*, in *Wegmarken*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am M. 1976, in GA 9; *Letter on Humanism*, in *Pathmarks*, ed. by W. Mc Neill, Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 268.

should now, say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being, as one who exists, is in itself originary ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance because it is ontology»<sup>100</sup>.

Which relationship is between thinking and practical behaviour? «Thinking is a deed. But a deed that also surpasses all *praxis*. Thinking permeates action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment»<sup>101</sup>. However, «we measure deeds by the impressive and successful achievements of *praxis*. But the deed of thinking is neither theoretical nor practical, nor is it the conjunction of these two forms of comportment»<sup>102</sup> and this requires, above all, «rigor of meditation, carefulness in saying, frugality with words»<sup>103</sup>. The «deed» is not a «producing», rather it is an acting or conducting oneself. Conduct is the accomplishment (*Vollbringen*) of Being. As sense's conduct, or the conduct of sense, it is essentially «thinking» and this is the reason why ontology –in terms of the thinking of being– is not far from ethics, rather it is essentially an original ethics.

This is not the adequate space to deepen all the themes that are addressed in the *Letter on Humanism* and to put this letter, born as a reply to the French philosopher Jean Beaufret, in relation with other Heidegger's texts. However, what I would like to remark is that in these passages we face with the main theme that crosses Nancy's and Arendt's works on banality: *deed is always a thinking, and thinking is always a deed*, in the meaning that Heidegger has already shown us. In the Winter Semester Lecture 1951-52 and in the Summer Semester Lecture 1952 entitled *What is called thinking?* Heidegger will develop this strong relationship between deed and thinking. It is easy to see how Arendt's meditation on thinking is rooted also in these reflections and it is easy to stress that maybe one of Heidegger's merits has been to never stop thinking along these pathways. As Nancy points out in his work on Heidegger's original ethics, the sense of deed is thus identical and coextensive with all action. Under the word «ethics» we do not consider the effect of a distribution of disciplines that would distinguish the order of moral significations (values) from the order of cognitive or natural significations. Ethos needs to be thought of as «abode» that is the «there» (*Da*) of the being-there (*Dasein*), and that is open. «The abode is thus much more a conduct than a residence. The thinking of this conduct is thus the «original ethics», because it thinks of ethos as the conduct of/according to the truth of Being. This thinking

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<sup>100</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, p. 271

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 274.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, 275.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, 276.

is thus more fundamental than an ontology: it does not think «beings in their Being» but «the truth of Being» »<sup>104</sup>. Following Nancy remarks, original ethics is the more appropriate name for fundamental ontology and ethics properly is what is fundamental in fundamental ontology.

What are we «doing» when we do nothing but think? – asks Hannah Arendt at the very beginning of *The life of the mind*? This is Heidegger's question in the context of the relationship with acting and thinking. If thinking is a deed, when we think we are doing something that, nevertheless, has not to be confused with the urgency to know: «To expect truth to come from thinking signifies that we mistake the need to think with the urge to know. Thinking can and must be employed in the attempt to know, but in the exercise of this function it is never itself; it is but the handmaiden of an altogether different enterprise»<sup>105</sup>.

If it works from a philosophical point of view, what can we do with values? If the thesis assumed in Nancy's book of 2015 is correct, we face with anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism is a matter of values. Once again it is Heidegger himself to indicate the pathway, when he writes about values, God, humanism and human dignity. If the thinking of Being is not a thinking toward values, a meditation on God or on human dignity, «people immediately assume that what speaks against something is automatically its negation and that this is «negative» in the sense of destructive»<sup>106</sup>. To think against «values» is not to maintain that everything interpreted as «a value is valueless; rather, «it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as «a value» what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for human estimation. But what a thing is in its being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. (...) The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. When one proclaims «God» the altogether «highest value,» this is a degradation of God's essence. Here as elsewhere thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against being. To think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means rather to bring the clearing of the truth of being before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects»<sup>107</sup>.

Thinking is always *thinking against values* – whatever they are. This sentence cannot be interpreted as Heidegger has been one of the latest nihilists of the XX century, but in a meaning completely different: thinking against values means

<sup>104</sup> J. L. Nancy, *Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics'*, p. 78.

<sup>105</sup> H. Arendt, *The life of mind*, Harcourt Press, NY 1978, p. 61.

<sup>106</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, p. 264.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 265.

thinking in a non subjectivizing (and objectiving) way, that is far from the Cartesian dichotomy of thinking, far from the materialism of our contemporary society but also far from the religious transcendence. If God becomes a value, it loses what makes God as God. In this framework, thinking is against also the values of National Socialism and of Anti-Semitism once again.

## VII. HEIDEGGER AND THE HOLOCAUST

After these remarks and considerations, is it possible to ascribe any philosophical responsibilities to Heidegger's thinking in the context of Holocaust? This is a very delicate question that involves many elements: the passages in which Heidegger talks about Jews, the context in which some of them are inscribed, Heidegger's initial faith into National Socialism, his silence on the Holocaust. On this last point, I would like to remind that only in the frame of his 1949 Bremen lecture did Heidegger refer publicly to the gas chambers in the concentration camps. The context was the becoming of the world as a disposable object, a picture, an idea for producing, where both agriculture and deaths have the same fate: «Agriculture is now a mechanized food industry, in essence the same as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of countries, the same as the production of hydrogen bombs»<sup>108</sup>. In this context Heidegger does not say that the Holocaust is *identical* to modern agriculture, rather that they share the same 'essence', that is the essence of technology, what in German is called *Gestell*. This is the reason why in his speech entitled *The question concerning technology* he will say that «technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing»<sup>109</sup>, that is the possibility of all productive manufacturing - human being included. «The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging (*Herausfordern*), which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supplies energy that can be extracted and stored as such. But does this not hold true for the old windmill as well? No. Its sails do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind's blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it. (...) Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be released either for destruction or for peaceful use»<sup>110</sup>. On this pathway we have to consider his words with *der*

<sup>108</sup> M. Heidegger, 'Positionality', in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. by A. J. Mitchell. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 27.

<sup>109</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by W. Lovitt, Harper & Row, NY 1977, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Idem, p. 13 and following.

*Spiegel* in his 1966 interview: «Everything is functioning. This is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning and that the functioning drives us more and more to even further functioning, and that technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them»<sup>111</sup>.

Those interpreters that have considered Heidegger's words on gas chambers and agriculture as an *equivalence of facts* are quite irresponsible, since they «tententiously scandalize Heidegger's comment when the obvious comparison to be drawn is with the industrial approach to animals and the precursors to factory farms which were already in evidence. Even then Heidegger would never suggest that there are no differences between the conveyor belts of death that secure our meat and the Nazi death camps, rather what he wants to examine is the way people's understanding of the world around them led them to proceed with various objectives as they did. It is not so much factory farming that Heidegger wants to compare with Auschwitz. Rather, I would submit, Heidegger is interested in how what is operative here is indicative of a manner of understanding and revealing the world, animals and indeed other human beings which we do not in fact control but rather are controlled by»<sup>112</sup>.

Perhaps it is even too easy claiming that his thought is involved in the philosophical implications toward the Shoah due to his initial belief in the Nazism, even if the *man* Heidegger has always had good relationships with Jewish students and friends, helping many of them to go outside Germany during the terrible madness of Nazism. Some slanders have been said on his relationship with Husserl. I use the word «slanders» aware of the criticism it will arise, but also remind me Heidegger's notes both in *Remarks*<sup>113</sup> where he states that he had never forbidden

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<sup>111</sup> M. Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us', in R. Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>112</sup> M. O'Brien, *Heidegger, History and the Holocaust*, Bloomsbury 2015, p. 24. O'Brien remarks on Heidegger and Holocaust are important in the framework of the meditation on technology but they do not enter into the consideration of *Black Notebooks*. Since the author quotes only a passage from these books in footnote 2 of chapter 5, p. 152, perhaps we may assume that the main focus of his work is not on these books and their general reception.

<sup>113</sup> «Husserl. Seitdem Husserl von 1930/31 öffentlich in Vorträgenae, die schon eher Kundgebungen waren (Berlin und Frankfurt), gegen mich Stellung nahm und meine Arbeit als Unphilosophie zurückwies (vgl. das Nachwort zu seinen »Ideen« (1930/31)), bin ich an ihm vorbeigegangen. Ich habe nie das Geringste gegen Husserl unternommen. Man lügt, ich hätte ihn aus der Universität vertrieben und die Bibliothek verboten. Husserl war seit 1928 emeritiert auf eigenen Wunsch; er hat seitdem nie mehr gelesen oder eine Übung gehalten; er hat nie die Universitätsbibliothek benutzt, von wenigen Ausnahmen in den Jahren 1920 ff. abgesehen. Was gab es da zu vertreiben? Seine Werke sind niemals aus der Seminarbibliothek entfernt worden, wie das für jüdische Autoren vorgeschrieben war; | sowenig wie je ein nationalsozialistisches Buch, z. B. Rosenberg und dergleichen, angeschafft oder, wie vorgeschrieben und auch in den übrigen Seminaren befolgt war, ein »Führerbild« aufgehängt wurde. Ich nenne dies nicht zur Verteidigung, nur als Feststellung, wozu auch dieses gehört,

the entrance to his master Husserl at the Philosophy Faculty and in its Library, as instead the anti-Semites laws promulgated by the party forced – and some others on his behaviour toward some colleagues.

However, I would invite to step outside from the logic of accusation and defence and enter into the *philosophical* space. The widespread interpretations on this point, those proposed by Trawny and Di Cesare seem to be prone to consider Heidegger philosophically responsible for the Holocaust. Trawny, starting from his interpretation on ontological anti-Semitism, doesn't lose the chance to remark on a couple of points: first one, Heidegger's antisemitism is aggravated by his long lasting relationships with Jews. It means that his anti-Semitism has been hidden also to those were considered friends and intimate by Heidegger himself<sup>114</sup>. The second point he stresses is the role played by silence in Heidegger's meditation, as a clear sign, according to the German editor, of his code of silence regarding the Holocaust. Trawny, of course, quotes expressions that come from Heidegger's meditation on language and on its relationship with silence, a broad theme that crosses his philosophy from *Being and Time* till his work on poetry, but without stressing this link – again, another example of a fallacy of an incomplete evidence. In other words, he evokes the suspects that this silence and the constant invitation to «keep silent in speaking» is not far from a conspiracy of silence chosen by the Meßkirch philosopher with regard to the Holocaust. He writes: «“Keeping silent” – after *Being and Time* it plays a constant, if changing, role in Heidegger's thought. In the *Überlegungen (Considerations)* and *Anmerkun-*

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*daß ich zwischen 1933 und 44 genau wie früher in der gleichen Sachlichkeit auf die Bedeutung der Phänomenologie Husserls und die Notwendigkeit des Studiums der »Logischen Untersuchungen« hingewiesen habe. Es ist nie ein Wort der Kritik, was ja möglich und berechtigt und kein Verbrechen gewesen wäre, gefallen, weder in den Vorlesungen noch in den Übungen. Ich bin an Husserl vorbeigegangen; das war eine schmerzliche Notwendigkeit. Man hätte auch jede andere Haltung von mir nur als höfliche Geste ausgelegt. Wer aber von verabscheuungswürdigem Verrat redet, weiß nicht, daß er nur Rache redet und von dem, was früh geschah, nichts weiß: daß mein eigener Weg des Denkens als Abfall ausgelegt wurde, daß man zur Propaganda die Zuflucht nahm, als mein Weg anders nicht aufzuhalten war. Man inszeniert jetzt eine große Geschichtsfälscherei. Mir scheint aber: daß meine Versuche seit »Sein und Zeit« das würdigste Zeugnis für das sind, was ich Husserl verdanke – daß ich von ihm lernte und für seinen Weg zeugte dadurch, daß ich nicht sein Anhänger blieb, der ich auch nie war. Aber genau dieses verstieß gegen die Hausordnung, lange vor dem, daß von Nationalsozialismus und Judenverfolgung die Rede war. Weil auch noch im Jahre 1948 die Verunglimpfungen und Schmähungen im Schwange sind, niemand sich die Mühe nimmt, sachlich aus Sachkenntnis zu urteilen oder gar auf meine Schriften einzugehen und die sonst viel benutzten Vorlesungen als Zeugnisse meines Denkens anzuführen, sei dies noch einmal vermerkt, nicht für die Öffentlichkeit, nicht zur Verteidigung, sondern als Feststellung», M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen V*, p. 462-463.*

<sup>114</sup> I refer the reader to P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, pp. 9-11; Id., *Heidegger and the Shoah*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, pp. 169.



gen (*Remarks*) of the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger frequently talks about “keeping silent” – of “keeping silent” in speaking, of “reserved silence” (*Verschwiegenheit*), of “taciturnity” (*Schweigsamkeit*) – and emphasizes that one must “keep silent” about silence. (...) Therefore, with some justification one can say that keeping silent about the Shoah could be discussed and assessed with reference to Heidegger’s own ideas about silence. Keeping silence about the Shoah has distinctive implications (...) in other words, the things hinted at by his suggestive remarks about “keeping silent”<sup>115</sup>.

Di Cesare remarks are grounded on the assumption (that I do not hesitate to define tendentious) that the Jews exterminated themselves: her idea is based on the passage in *Remarks I*, when Heidegger uses the word self-extirpation (*Selbstvernichtung*<sup>116</sup>) in the context of western metaphysics in which also the Jews are inscribed<sup>117</sup>. This interpretation has been drawn with very sensationalistic tones and published on the first pages of newspaper (both Italian, German and Jewish) as the *concrete* prove of Heidegger’s desire of extermination of the Jews. Overcoming the ethical posture that calls every intellectual to act and write with responsibility and philosophical judgment, however what it is remarkable is the fact that the misrepresentation of a collection of three passages in which Heidegger talks about metaphysics and the destiny of western society as land of the sunset (*Abend-land*). Heidegger writes: «When what is “Jewish” in the metaphysical sense fights against what is Jewish, the high point of self-extirpation in history has been attained - supposing that the “Jewish” has everywhere completely seized mastery, so that even the fight against “the Jewish”, and it above all, becomes subject to it. On this basis one must assess what it means, for thinking that enters the concealed, initial essence of the history of the Occident, to meditate on the first beginning among the Greeks, which remained outside Judaism and thus outside Christianity»<sup>118</sup>. In this passage Heidegger is claiming that «what is «Jewish»

<sup>115</sup> See P. Trawny, *Heidegger and the Shoah*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931-1941)*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>116</sup> This expression, deliberately provide to the public opinion and to Heidegger’s readers as a peculiarity related to Jewish, is however common in Heidegger’s writings and it is referred to different topics, such as the destiny of western society, the essence of technology, the space of politics, the consequence of Journalism. In order to map, philologically the word and its meaning in the *Black Notebooks*, I provide the reader with the following reference: *Überlegungen XIII*, pp. 154-155; *Überlegungen XIV*, pp. 181-182; *Überlegungen XV*, pp. 259-260; *Anmerkungen I*, pp. 18-21; *Anmerkungen I*, pp. 83-85; *Anmerkungen II*, pp. 152-158.

<sup>117</sup> See D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger e gli ebrei. I quaderni neri*.

<sup>118</sup> «Wenn erst das wesenhaft »Jüdische« im metaphysischen Sinne gegen das Jüdische kämpft, ist der Höhepunkt der Selbstvernichtung in der Geschichte erreicht; gesetzt, daß das »Jüdische« überall die Herrschaft vollständig an sich gerissen hat, so daß auch die Bekämpfung »des Jüdischen« und sie zuvörderst in die Botmäßigkeit zu ihm gelangt.

Von hier aus ist zu ermessen, was für das Denken in das verborgene anfängliche Wesen der Geschichte des Abendlandes das Andenken an den ersten Anfang im Griechentum bedeutet,

in the metaphysical sense» are not Jews *as such*, but the result of the western rationality based on technology, machination (*Machenschaft*), objectivising of the world and of human beings, in other words the result of the metaphysics and of the oblivion of Being, the consideration of man in terms of *ens creatum*, and of the Being in terms of God. «What is «Jewish» in the metaphysical sense» is what it is not original and initial, such as the Greek thought, that was the only one to think the Being in adequate terms, such as *aletheia* and *physis*. Moreover, with the expression «what is «Jewish» in the metaphysical sense» Heidegger is included also the National Socialism itself as the more evident consequence of the perverted relationship of thinking and producing, thinking and calculating, thinking and technology. These considerations are written by Heidegger both the *Ponderings VI*, in *Beiträge zur Philosophie (von Ereignis)* and in *Besinnung* – all works written some years before the *Anmerkungen (Remarks)*. In order to provide the reader with a strong hermeneutical hypothesis we have to consider what Heidegger has written in his previous work, since it is not possible to isolate some thoughts without rebuilding all the conceptual scenario that is beyond. Under this respect, if we are allowed to read the sentence «When what is «Jewish» in the metaphysical sense fights against what is Jewish, the high point of self-extinction in history has been attained» *as* when the metaphysics fights against what is inscribed into the metaphysics itself –that is the Jewish– we face with the collapses of its origins and of our world, an implosion and annihilation of what we have known as western world, western metaphysics and so on. The *Selbstvernichtung* is not the self-extinction of Jewish, in terms that they killed themselves (Di Cesare) or as a necessary sacrifice (Nancy) for a new beginning or of the pureness of thought. These are tendentious and ideological rewritings of Heidegger’s thought that don’t grasp what he is claiming – tendentious because they have to respond to an idea of Heidegger that every interpret has in mind (confirmation bias); ideological, because they respond to a precise aim, to re-write Heidegger’s meditation in terms that are far from his intentions and from his ontological thoughts, as his works show. At last, it is the second part of the above mentioned passage that illuminate our understanding of what Heidegger is writing, when he does clear reference to Christian and to Judaism. I would remark that the Jewish-Christian conception of human being as *ens creatum* who has been created by a Creator (God) has nothing in common with what Heidegger pencilled in his Natorp-Bericht: human being is living life (*das Lebende*). The Jewish-Christian consideration of human being has changed from the very beginning the conception of philosophy and the relationship between man and Being, modifying it into the relationship between man and God (Scholastic philosophy), man and Nature (Renaissance), man and science

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*das außerhalb des Judentums und d. h. des Christentums geblieben», M. Heidegger, Anmerkungen I in GA 97, p. 21.*

(Enlightenment): «As long as the essence of humanity remains predetermined by animality (*animalitas*), one can only ask what man is. The question of who man is, is never possible. For this who-question, as a question, is already the originally other and unique answer to the question about man - this question itself establishes man in his essence as the insistence in the truth of being. It is that question about man that does not just ask beyond him, about his cause and the like, but which does not ask about him at all, does not ask for the sake of man but for the sake of being, for this displaces into the encounter with man as the grounder of truth. Only this question overcomes the modern anthropological determination of man, and with it, all previous anthropology - Christian Hellenistic-Jewish and Socratic-Platonic»<sup>119</sup>. It is precisely in the *Ponderings VI* of the first volume of Black Notebooks that Heidegger writes: «Even all doctrines (e.g., the Judeo-Christian) of the human being which determine him immediately on the basis of the relation to a «God» are anthropological— | whereby indeed in non-Christian anthropology, and in ones that would be such and cannot, Christian anthropology and its doctrinal content must play an essential role, even if only by being inverted»<sup>120</sup>. The Christianisation of the Greek world has been provoked by the Jewish-Christian matrix of western society that has instituted the tyranny of monotheism<sup>121</sup>.

Is Heidegger *philosophically* responsible for the Holocaust? Has his thought a philosophical relevance for the Shoah? I assume that the answer is - no. There are no evidences in his meditation of a thought that is the philosophical ground for the «final solution», neither that this thinking has somehow influenced the National socialism and any form of antisemitism. It is my conviction that Heidegger felt a personal responsibility toward the Holocaust only as every German that for a period of his life believed in this political movement, however without knowing what was happening in the concentration camps. It is a letter to Karl Jasper dated April 8<sup>th</sup> 1950 that illuminates on this point: Heidegger writes that as years went by, the horror of Nazis crimes perpetrated in the concentration camps started to come out. More the horror shown its power, more the shame was pervading his soul because, somehow, his belief into the National socialism was lived as an indirect responsibility toward those atrocities. The solitude lived in the frame of the «denazification» procedures (1945-46) was devastating as well as the procedures: «I was then struck all the harder by what was undertaken against me in 1945-48 and, actually, to this hour» and he adds: «Since then I have learned

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<sup>119</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ponderings X*, in GA 95, p. 322. This English translation has been done by R. Polt, *References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1938-1948 Gesamtausgabe vols. 94-96 (2014) and 97 (2015)*, in: [https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References\\_to\\_Jews\\_and\\_Judaism\\_in\\_Martin\\_Heidegger\\_s\\_Black\\_Notebooks\\_1938-1948](https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References_to_Jews_and_Judaism_in_Martin_Heidegger_s_Black_Notebooks_1938-1948)

<sup>120</sup> M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen VI*, in GA 94; *Ponderings VI* in *Ponderings II-VI Black Notebooks 1931-1938*, p. 345.

<sup>121</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen V*, in GA 97, p. 369.

something from the equivocal notoriety of «existentialism». The guilty of the individual remains, and all the more, the more individual he is. But the affair of evil has not reached its end. It is only entering upon its world stage»<sup>122</sup>.

The affair of evil is what remained open in his meditation: with the foresight typical of his thought, Heidegger has been able to see all the issues that characterized our age, as European and, more in general, as human beings. As pointed out by Zimmerman, «in speaking of the Holocaust in the same breath with the hydrogen bomb, Heidegger was making an important point. Mass extermination in the Nazi camps was possible only because of developments within industrial technology. Moreover, the Nazis spoke of the Jews as if they were little more than industrial ‘waste’ to be disposed of as efficiently as possible. Officials in charge of planning strategic use of nuclear weapons must be trained to conceive of the enemy populace in wholly abstract terms. Heidegger argued in several places that the hydrogen bomb—an instrument of mass extermination—was not the real problem facing us. Instead, the problem is the perversion and constriction of humanity’s understanding of being itself in the technological era. Extermination camps and hydrogen bombs, from Heidegger’s viewpoint, were both symptoms of humanity’s conception of itself and everything else as resources to be produced and consumed, created and destroyed, at will»<sup>123</sup>.

Under this respect, «*Black Notebooks* affair» underline the limit of our age, still unable to get in confrontation with a philosophical thinking that face evil with no way out. Our need of «bannisters» —the majority of them ideological— don’t allow us to see that the peculiarity of philosophy is not in re-write or misrepresents some thoughts, but a critical engagement with every author that has been able to foresee the great questions for mankind. Maybe the time for a «self-defence» of philosophy<sup>124</sup> is ended at all and every interpreter is invited to step outside the lines of a legacy that is not always ready to answer to the challenge of our time, unable to generate a new history and to prevent from other humanitarian crisis. I would like to conclude recalling Jean Baudrillard’s words that seem to me very important after all the clamour provoked by some interpretations of *Black Notebooks*: «The futile quarrel over Heidegger has no specific meaning within philosophy. It is merely symptomatic of a weakness in current thinking. Unable to find any new energy, philosophical thought keeps going back obsessively over its origins, over the purity of its references; it is now painfully reliving, in this *fin-de-siècle* period, its own primal scene of the early part of the century»<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> W. Biemel, H. Saner (eds.), *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920-1963)*, trans. by G. E. Aylesworth, Humanity Book, 2003, pp. 139 and following.

<sup>123</sup> M. E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity*, Indiana University Press 1990, p. 43.

<sup>124</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Necrospective around Martin Heidegger*, in *Screened Out (Radical Thinkers)*, Verso Publ. 2014, p. 18.

<sup>125</sup> Idem, p. 16.

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