

Reason and Emotion in the Heidegger Case

—For the Coming 70th Anniversary for the Victory of Anti-Fascism War

Zhao Dunhua

Peking University

Email: zhaodunhua@gmail.com

Abstract

“The Heidegger case” is a special phrase referring to the case of Heidegger and Nazi. The case is concerned not only with the philosopher’s involvement of Nazi politics in 1930’s, but also with the debates between him or his defenders and his detractors from 1945 to nowadays. For the interest of our theme, this paper deals with different philosophical views underlying Heidegger’s apologia for Nazism and his critics who were intolerant with Auschwitz. Heidegger’s apologia is interpreted with so called “eastern German” text, “agriculture” text and “the Chinese” text. His contemporary critics, Luckcs, Adorno, Marcus, Jaspers and Habermas are selected to represent views on reason and emotion in relevance with the guilt for anti-humanist crimes. An historical lesson drawn from the ongoing debate is what and how to accommodate historical resources of philosophical discussion concerning reason and emotion should be activated for the sake of true humanity in our global age.

海德格尔事件中的理性与激情

——为即将来临的纪念反法西斯战争胜利 70 周年而作

赵敦华

北京大学

Email: zhaodunhua@gmail.com

摘要

“海德格尔事件”特指海德格尔参与纳粹的罪案。关于此事件长期和深入的讨论不只查清了海德格尔 1933-34 年间参与纳粹活动的事实，而且涉及到他的哲学是否与纳粹思想有必然联系这个对当代哲学具有重要意义的问题。本文用海德格尔 1945 年战后在哲学上为奥斯维辛进行辩护的文本确证其哲学术语的纳粹含义，并用卢卡奇、阿多诺、马尔库塞、雅斯贝尔斯和哈贝马斯对他的批评表明，在理性的限度内表达和使用激情对于维护人性有极其重要的意义，这是“二战”留给人类的一个历史教训，我们处在全球化时代必须记住这个教训。

Reason and Emotion in the Heidegger Case For the Coming 70th Anniversary for the Victory of Anti-Fascism War (Draft only)

Zhao Dunhua

Peking University

Email: zhaodunhua@gmail.com

Why do we talk of Heidegger's involvement in Nazism in a philosophical meeting on the issue of emotion and reason? Our talk will be relevant for two matters. First, Heidegger has re-written history of philosophy in terms of the history of Being so that every issue in traditional binary relations (reason-emotion has been a prominent one) can be rephrased, and accordingly de-constructed by the Heideggerian point of view. And secondly, the Heidegger's case in the strict sense (i.e., that his philosophy was committed deeply to the ideology of National Socialism) can help us understand the on-going significance of doing philosophy in a traditional way to the living age. This paper is to deal with the second matter firstly, and then to select

briefly his critics (Lukacs, Adorno, Marcuse, Jaspers and Habermas) for a proper understanding of reason-emotion vis-à-vis Heidegger's deconstruction.

Part One

Recent publication of Heidegger's *Schwarze Hefte* (1931-1941) has raised the controversy on the Heidegger's case again. For many the Black Notebooks merely reconfirm the well-known fact that Heidegger was a stubborn Nazi in lifetime. Nevertheless, the key problem whether his philosophy was contaminated by Nazism has remained unsolved as in previous times when new evidences were revealed.

Those who are familiar with Heidegger's thought and historical context are not surprised by the Black Notebooks, for his anti-Semitism has already fully proved since the publication of volume 79 of the *Gesamtausgabe* in 1994. That volume contains four lectures in Bremen given in 1949. Heidegger in two places of those lectures gave apologies for Nazi genocide which had been more and more exposed to the light by that time. In one place, Heidegger said,

Agriculture today is a motorized industry of alimentation, the same thing in essence as the fabrication of corpses in the gas chambers and death camps, the same as blockading and reducing of countries to famine, the same as the fabrication of hydrogen bombs. (HI 304)

In another place apologia is more "philosophical", it reads,

Hundreds of thousands die en masse. Do they die? They perish. They are put down. Do they die? They become supply pieces for stock in the fabrication of corpses. Do they die? They are liquidated unnoticed in death camps. And also, without such – millions in China sunken in poverty perished from hunger.

But to die means to carry out death in its essence. To be able to die means to be able to carry out this resolution. We can only do this if our essence likes the essence of death.

But in the middle of innumerable deaths the essence of death remains unrecognizable. Death is neither empty nothingness, nor just the passage from one state to another. Death pertains to the Dasein of the man who appears out of the essence of Being. Thus it shelters the essence of Being. Death is the loftiest shelter of the truth of Being, the shelter that shelters within itself the hidden character of the essence of Being and draws together the saving of its essence.

This is why man can die if and only if Being itself appreciates the essence of man into the essence of Being on the basis of the truth of its essence. Death is the shelter of Being in the poem of the world. To be able to toward death in its essence means to be able to die. Only those who can die mortals in the apposite sense of the word. (HI 305)

Emmanuel Faye, after quoting the texts comments. In the first text,

By uttering such a sentence, Heidegger excludes himself from philosophy and shows that he has lost all humanity.” (HI 304)

And in the second,

This text surpasses anything the National Socialists could assert. (...) We must bring our mind to focus on the absolute insanity of those words. We are no longer just in revisionism but in total negationism, and even in something beyond words – something that is properly unspeakable. (...) whereas several millions of human beings were exterminated by Nazis, he gives us to understand that no one died in the death camps because none of those who were liquidated were able to die there.(HI 305)

In my opinion, Heidegger's loss of all humanity is neither an absolute insanity nor a total negationism beyond words, but can be traced to his philosophy since *Being and Time* on. Faye last comment that according to Heidegger several millions killed in Nazis genocide were not able to die there, however, rightly catches hold of precisely what those texts are meant both to audience then and to readers by now.

The crucial point is the distinction between anonymous ones whose essence is not able to die and Dasein whose essence of Being enjoys the essence of death. For the former, the three questions "do they die" spoke that the anonymous "they (Sie)" unmistakably referees to those who didn't die simply because they can't die, but merely "decease in mass (sterben in Massen)", "perish (umgelegt)", "put down (kommen um)", "liquidated (liquidiert)", "Verenden (verenden)". Heidegger chose words carefully to avoid using words such as "Tod" and "Menschen" which are preserved only for the essence of Dasein and Dasein as such. It is quite clear that words in the first text and in the first paragraph of the second text spoke of corpses of Jews and Chinese in the same manner as supply pieces for stock. In other words, they were not considered as human beings in the metaphysical sense of Being.

It is only after the turning word "but (aber)" that "Tod", "Austrag", "Dasein", "Menschen", "Wessen /Wahrheit des Seyns" all appear in the remaining paragraphs of the second text. To whom those words spoke of? It is clear enough that the theme in context is for the "innumerable deaths". Since they are those beings whose "essence of death remains unrecognizable", Heidegger dedicated mystical and beautiful words to the truth of their Dasein, praying for their lives under "the loftiest shelter of the truth of Being", i.e., "the shelter of Being in the poem of the world", the shelter that "draws together the saving of its essence". Obviously, the shelter was supposed to be a poetic monument for thousands German soldiers killed in the Second World War. They are no doubt worth mourning even if the offering of their lives were worthless sacrifices

toone of the most evil regime in the history. However, it should be always condemnable that millions innocents murdered by that regime were “liquidated unnoticed” simply by denying their human death.

At the beginning of his lectures, i.e., in the first lecture titled *The Thing*, Heidegger made a distinction between humans and animal. Humans are mortal in the sense that of being able to die, while animals cannot die but simply come to end, “Die Sterblichensind die Menschen (...) Das Tier verendet”, thus says Heidegger (CA 79, SS. 17-18).

If it is unbelievable that the most influential philosopher in the 20th century could be so inhuman, it would be useful to take Habermas assessment seriously,

Three aspects must be distinguished: (a) the development of critique of reason through the history of metaphysics; (b) the essentially unchanged, nationalistic estimation of the Germans as the “heat of all peoples”; (c) the position with regard to National Socialism. Only from this third aspect is the significant reconfiguration revealed, through which the concept of a “history of Being” first gains its definitive form. (NR 153)

Heidegger’s apologia for Auschwitz climaxes the “significant reconfiguration” of dark aspects of his philosophy. In view of Heidegger’s treatment of death in the second part of *Being and Time*, his philosophy didn’t undertaking a radical “turning” as he himself claimed. The difference is only changes from Dasein to the German Dasein, from “Das Man (they)” to animals, from the historicity of destiny to unpredictable “Ereignis”, from Sein to Syen, and from the meaningful concealment of Being to “Geviert” of Heaven, Earth, Gods and Mortals. In addition, following changes considered by Habermas need be quoted again,

The leaders are sublimated into poets and thinkers; the philosopher achieves an immediate relation to Being. What once held for political adherence is now generalized for all into obedience to the destiny of Being; only such submission“is capable of supporting and obligating.(NR 159)

Part Two

Even though Heidegger’s critics didn’t know about Bremen lectures, their criticisms of his Nazism fit the issue of reason-emotion relation. Speaking briefly, early critics were of two groups. The first was opposed to his emotionalism, while the second found fault with his degenerate rationalism.

The first group was represented by Lukacs who criticized the fascisms supported by Heidegger abandoned rationalism of the Hegelian tradition to a reactionary irrationalism (RR Ch. 4, VI), and by Jaspers who characterized “Heidegger’s manner of thinking” as being “in its essence unfree, dictatorial and incapable of communication” (HC 149) .

The second group includes representatives of the Frankfurt School. Marcus said 1948 to Heidegger, a philosopher should condemn publically “a regime that has killed millions of Jews – merely they were Jews” (HC 161). Heidegger replied,

I can merely add that if instead of “Jews” you had written “East Germans”, then the same holds true for one of the allies. (HC 163)

Marcus was upset by confusing Nazis genocide with Red Army’s occupation, and retorted,

[W]ith this sentence don't you stand outside of the dimension in which a conversation between men is even possible – outside of Logos? (HC 164)

Horkheimer and Adorno treated Anti-Semitism as primitive feelings of religion and a new form of religious rite. In a remarkable note on “Man and Animal”, they emphasized,

In the European history, the idea of man is expressed by contrast to animal (...) Only man possesses ruthless reason. Animals know only the existence of an irrational terror, running away at the moment of being slaughtered” (DE, IV, Note 22).

Needless to say, Jews were not only denied to be human, but even worse, also being deprived of the animal instinct of survival.

The above critics are different in philosophical and political standpoints. The difference mixed with Heideggerian inheritance obscured the distinction between humanity and inhumanity or anti-humanity in values and life-world. Faye said that the military victory of the Second World War was but the winning of a first battle.

Today a different battle, more protracted and sinister, is unfolding: a contest in which the future of human race is at stake. It calls for a heightened awareness in all areas of thought, from philosophy to law and history.(HI xxiii)

Whether this warning be appropriate or excessive, the human conscience calls us to speak out loudly our response at our Forum.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

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RR Lukacs, *The Ruin of Reason*, London, 1980