

Emmanuel Faye

Heidegger, The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935.

Trans. Michael B. Smith.

New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2009.

464 pages

US\$40.00 (ISBN 978-0-300-12086-8)

Shortly after Hitler's takeover of Germany in 1933, Martin Heidegger was elected rector of the University of Freiburg. For about a year, Heidegger lectured and agitated in favor of the new regime. He resigned in 1934 but continued with his professorial duties until the end of war. These events are well known, but their meaning remains controversial and elusive, even after several agitated controversies. For reasons that Tom Rockmore explains in a brief but useful Foreword, the bitterest of these controversies took place over more than fifty years in France. One of the more recent flare-ups was the publication of this book in French in 2005.

Faye claims that Heidegger was an enthusiastic adherent to the national socialist movement from early on. Even after his resignation as Rector, he continued in his teachings and public lectures to provide philosophical justifications for central notions of the ideology of the Third Reich. Being a late entrant to the discussion, Faye concentrates on issues which have been used to defend and, so to speak, launder Heidegger's reputation, such as whether Heidegger, who rejected a biological concept of race, could be considered a racist. Faye argues and that such a vision was not in contradiction with other authors of the time, or with National Socialistic doctrine.

Faye makes ample use of recently published materials, and in particular volumes 16, 36/37 (the seminars given in 1933 and 1934), and 38 (covering the seminar on Logics and the philosophy of language given in the summer semester of 1934) of Heidegger's collected works. He also discusses in detail Heidegger's interaction with other academics who supported National Socialism, such as Becker, Clauss, Rothacker, Beaumler, Junger and Schmitt.

Chapter 1 sets up the debate by dealing with Heidegger's thought in the years before Hitler's accession to power. Chapter 2 deals with the rectoral period (1933-1934) and with Heidegger's activities in the context of the Nazification of the University. Faye shows that Heidegger, far from being a reluctant participant, took initiatives that subverted the nature of the academic institution and made it totally pliant to the whims of the government. He also shows Heidegger's close association with the Nazi student organizations and his cooperation with their activities.

Chapter 3 deals with Heidegger's lectures, speeches and proclamations during

1933 and 1934. In this period Heidegger gave more than 20 speeches in which he used his philosophy to endorse the political program of the Nazi regime. He also worked actively to institute in the University of Freiburg a chair of ‘racial doctrine and hereditary biology’.

Chapter 4 covers Heidegger’s courses in 1933-1934. Faye shows that Heidegger’s teachings in general, and not only his occasional lectures and speeches, were permeated by his Nazi commitment. Chapter 5 is devoted to a seminar for advanced students given by Heidegger in 1933-1934 on ‘The Essence and Concepts of Nature, History and the State’. The text of this seminar is not included in Heidegger’s collected works, so Faye relies on available summaries and on manuscript sources deposited in the Archives of German Literature in the city of Marbach. This seminar was part of the academic curriculum, but was also presented at the time as a course in ‘Hitlerian political education’ (114). Faye claims that in the seminar Heidegger follows closely the party line, defining the ‘people’ in a racist and narrowly nationalistic sense. Heidegger also analyses the limitations of the Second German Empire, which he compares with the Nazi policies. According to Faye’s reading, Heidegger explains that Bismarck’s empire failed because it did not create a political elite and tradition, did not integrate the working class, and lastly, because it ‘kept to traditional patriotism, without being capable of founding a true *völkisch* state’ (141), i.e., Bismarck’s state was still a form of liberal state, not an organic one.

Chapter 6 analyses Heidegger’s ideas in relation to the doctrines of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt and the philosopher Alfred Baumler, and in Chapter 7 discusses the writings of Erik Wolf, a disciple and close associate of Heidegger in the university. Chapter 8 turns to Heidegger’s seminar on Hegel in 1935. The focus of this seminar is the question how to ensure the survival of the Nazi state in the future, a clearly political, not philosophical goal (211). In the same seminar Heidegger explains the central Hegelian concept of *Geist* (Spirit) as ‘what moves and transports a people and not as what brings enlightenment to human thought’ (211). Furthermore, the fact that Heidegger is concerned with the perpetuation of the Nazi state shows clearly that even in 1935 he did not renounce his engagement with Nazism. Chapter 9 finally covers the period of the war and the postwar period, including Heidegger’s lack of criticism of Nazism even after the war, and his refusal to confront the atrocities of the Third Reich.

Emmanuel Faye has produced a well-researched and painstakingly documented indictment of Heidegger’s work and life, making good use of the work of his predecessors in addition to his own original research. Nevertheless, the Heidegger-wars will not be settled any time soon. The question has for a long time not concerned Heidegger the individual but Heidegger the philosopher. For Faye, there seems to be little doubt that Heidegger’s work, at least after 1932, should be reclassified as Nazi ideology and that his books should be relocated to the history department, under the section ‘history of Nazism’. This claim is rejected vehemently by those who have been inspired by Heidegger to develop their own criticism of modernity and of western civilization. They

may accept the failings of the man, but never compromise on the greatness of the work.

Michael Maidan