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**Foundation and Anarchy: a double bond in M. Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks***

There are many reasons for asking the question ‘How is one to read the *Schwarze Hefte* of Martin Heidegger?’ Not because there are *a priori* methods (whether right or wrong) for going through an historical and philosophical document as important as this; but because one thing is clear: the earliest reception of the first notebooks, as they were being printed by the German publisher Klostermann, produced such diverse results that it is fair to ask oneself what was behind this multiplicity of responses. Can a series of texts, even if it is as extensive as those we have available so far, really generate such discordant reactions – from dismissiveness to annoyance, from mockery to caricature, from scandal to to excommunication? Evidently so, because this is indeed what happened. Therefore it will be useful to search within the *Black Notebooks* for the root (or better, roots) of the fragmentation which we find before us, both in European and American discussions of the subject. In the following pages I intend to support the thesis that the actual structure and contents of these texts contain a sort of ‘double bond’ between the anti-metaphysical project and the ‘falling back’ into a metaphysics of secondary strength: an internal contradiction within the structure of Heidegger’s journals, which produces two forms of thought incompatible with each other – a frontstage and a backstage, as it were – which is arguably the most valuable philosophical content of this document.

1. ‘Despite having wagered on discontinuity in thinking, Heidegger ends up contributing to the institutionalized apogee of self-consciousness’: it is in these words that Reiner Schürmann comments on the publication of the *Contributions to* *Philosophy* in 1989. One might be tempted to re-use the same words today to summarize the first impression that the *Black Notebooks* give to the reader. This comparison is not inappropriate from a bibliographic prospective. Firstly, because at least the *Black Notebooks* published in volume 94 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1931-1938) cover a period of years to which the *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936-1938) partly correspond. Secondly, because the reference to Schürmann brings into play one of the interpreters who, from the early 1980s, set out with great lucidity the problem of Heidegger’s adherence to National Socialism. He does this against the mainstream that would be established in France during the course of the decade, by carefully avoiding two opposite oversimplifications: that of the posthumous judgment of Heidegger and his philosophy, and that of the denial of the problem – as if it were an insignificant biographical accident. Schürman chooses another path. His interpretation confronts the heart of the connection between philosophy and politics in Heidegger’s thinking (always a thorny subject in Heideggerian reception) and in his investigation he throws new light on the much more classical theme of the end of metaphysics.

In his model, one question is central: is it not necessary to attribute to Heidegger’s thinking (particularly that of the 1930s) a significant ambiguity with regard to metaphysical foundationalism? Is it not necessary to recognize that the principal axis of the discourse (represented by what Schürman calls ‘anarchy’ – that is, the articulation of a thought free from the domination of *archai*) is interwoven with a second argumentative (or rhetorical) level, in which the search for a new and more stable foundation predominates? […] Here we have Schürman’s problem, which allows him to reconsider the entire project of *Verwindung*, the surpassing of metaphysics.

2. This is how Schürman responds in *Broken Hegemonies* (his most far-reaching work, published posthumously in 1996) to Heidegger’s project of destroying the history of western metaphysics, or rather to the hypothesis of his conclusion, which would be consummated in late modernity: a project that Heidegger never brought to completion, but to which he contributed several revivals – at first with lectures about phenomenological interpretations of specific points in western philosophy, from Plato to Kant, followed by turning his attention to poetical thought, and lastly, by philosophical digging into the mystical tradition, or rather the pre-Socratic beginnings of thought.

Next to this hypothesis and its articulations in Heidegger’s texts, Schürman stresses a less central aspect, which nevertheless serves as the engine of his project: that history is articulated in eras, each of which depends on a different linguistic paradigm – Greek, Latin, and vulgar languages. Because of this, the destruction of metaphysics in founded on the idea that each paradigm of western philosophy is a sort of code – in the double sense of a codified language and a collection of laws: a code that becomes increasingly clear for the project of destruction, the weaker its ultimate guiding principle is. […]

The destruction of which Heidegger speaks, and which Schürman reinterprets, is a sort of x-ray of the crisis of an era, which reveals its conflictual structure. And in addition it is an x-ray that reads the foundational and destituting texts of metaphysics as signs of the contradictions that define the limits of their validity. But Schürman goes farther, because in his works he applies the same interpretative hypothesis – that of a conflict that needs to be revealed – to the Heidegger of the 1930s: we are thus dealing with a sort of workroom of Heideggerian thought, in which different plans and projects coexist; a thought that is in progress, first and foremost in the sense of being constrained between different paradigms. This is something very similar to a ‘speculative laboratory’ – the expression of Alessandra Iadicicco, the Italain translator of the *Black Notebooks* – with the difference of course that Schürman’s attention is concentrated on the *Contributions to Philosophy*, with respect to which he writes, for example: ‘In their strategic leaps the *Contributions* not only focus on the colossal crossing of normative limits, but also bring it to completion.’ And, again, asking *from whence* the author of the *Contributions* speaks, he adds: ‘Heidegger does not leave the terrain where the substitutes for the Platonic sun continue to rule – and how could one? Instead he speaks from that blank space that has been gaping in consciousness from the time of its referential institution. He speaks from the place of the innermost rent in the modern theticism of the same, […] where night erupts into the obviousness of the blazing midday sun.’ It is precisely here that his project of the destruction of metaphysics cannot be thought of as a leap outside the paradigms, but as the discovery of a double connection – a contradiction between principles that produce the story of an era in decline: which, Schürman explains, ‘is something quite different from declaring cheerfully that metaphysics has ended and that one has only to decide to change terrain by abruptly placing oneself outside.’

3. Seen from this prospective, the chronological proximity of the *Contributions to Philosophy* to the *Black Notebooks* of the 1930s effectively constitutes a similarity of motives and styles of thought. The *Black Notebooks* *1931-1938* (though the same subject can also easily be tested in the following volumes) are certainly a game between theatrical backdrops, that puts on stage tensions and contradictions, things textual and non-textual, thrusts and counter-thrusts. Their most evident storyline is the substantial overlap between philosophical discourse and political metaphor: a connection that is also crucially original in Heideggerian thought. It is precisely in these inter-connections that we find unravelled the theoretical tension between the two necessities, which have been described as: that of a *liberating anarchy*, which is directed at overcoming metaphysics, and that which we might define as *all-embracing*, articulated in the search for a new foundation on which to base thought.

Political metaphor produces a genuine ontology of current events, to use the expression of Michel Foucault: that is, as a reading of the signs of the present in the light of philosophical categories with which the Heidegger of the 1930s has already made us familiar, and which here undergo a sort of re-semanticizing. Moreover, the historical reference is not irrelevant. If the reflections that Heidegger consigns to his journals cover nearly forty years, the first volume occupies a span of years whose most characteristic element, for Heideggerian thought, is the first articulation of the ‘turning’, that is, the idea of an anti-metaphysical renewal of thought. But, as has been noted, the most biographically relevant moment of his political activity also takes place in the same period: his public adherence to the regime and his assumption of the position of Rector at Friburg. To this period belong the texts in which Heidegger plans liberation by a notion of truth that he interprets as objectifying and violent; and also the pages of *The Self-assertion of the German University* and the pro-Hitler contents of its appeal to German students (1933).

It is in short a period that signals a sort of watershed for Heidegger: years of remarks and interviews which, even more than the homonymous collection, deserve the metaphor of the *Holzwege*, paths – sometimes labyrinths – for which it isn’t easy to find a common pattern. Or in which different and contrasting patterns in fact coexist. So how is one to proceed? The *Black Notebooks* – in particular those of the 1930s – don’t function so much as a compass as, if anything, a geographical map of the double bond: a map that doesn’t succeed in – nor is it intended to – reorganize or urbanize the problems but, on the contrary, emphasizes the protean character of Heidegger’s reflections. The two tendencies of the discourse are easily organized: the overcoming of metaphysics is expressed in many ways, but all with reference to the notions of ‘end’ (*Ende*), of ‘completion’ (*Vollzug*), and, sometimes, of ‘dismantling’ (*Abbau*); opposing this the semantic galaxy of the new terrain speaks of the ‘foundation’ (*Gründung*, *Begründung*), of the ‘beginning’ or the ‘new beginning’ (*Anfang*), of the rootedness that combats uprooting (*Verwurzelung*/*Entwurzelung*), of the empowerment (*Ermächtigung*) of Being or Essence. The watershed that governs both of them is, without doubt, that of the ‘event (*Geschehnis*) of Being’: a key concept that one reads as early as volume 94 of the *Complete Works* in its fragile – sometimes hectic – elaboration.

4. The question, ‘Why does Being occur?’ thus becomes, from the first pages, one of the fundamental themes from which philosophizing proceeds. And it is a subject that rapidly takes the form of the ‘*Wesung*’ – or simply the verb ‘*wesen*’ – that is, the ‘essential development’ of things starting from the event. Therefore, the end of metaphysics coincides with the decision to abandon the terminology of substance – and sometimes ‘Being’ as a substantive – in order to define metaphysics itself as ‘the history of the essential development of Being’. It is the classical movement of *Verwindung*, not understood as a step beyond metaphysics, but as its acceptance and its working out – its *Durcharbeitung*, as Schürman says. Nonetheless it is also a ‘self-reflexive’ *Verwindung*, which Heidegger puts in the same categories. So, for example, he can write about the notion of existence, in the years when the re-elaboration after *Being and Time* is in full swing: ‘*Gegen* den Anthropologismus *für* den Menschen – *gegen* das ‘Existenzielle’ *für* die Ex-sistenz (Aus-stand qua hinausstendes Ausstehen [Bestehen] des Seienden) – *gegen* die Existenz für das Da-sein, “gegen” das Dasein für das Sein, gegen das Sein für das Wesen. Im wesenden Wesen zur *Einzigkeit* der *Vereinzelung* des Seins im Nichts.’

This is thus one of the important directions in which the ‘speculative laboratory’ of which we have spoken is orientated. The fact that *Being and Time* was not completed, the necessity to change the coordinants and the terminology of philosophy, the awareness of (or the claim that) all this is related to that same oblivion of Being from which *Being and Time* actually moved: are all elements that travel through the journals of the 1930s – and this is not at all surprising. What will instead surprise is the overturning of the interpretative models which traditionally mark the two phases of Heidegger’s thinking, before and after the ‘turning’. In these pages it is difficult to readily identify a single point of crossover: in the sense that there are quite a lot more than one – or better, it seems to be a matter of a continual redifining of problems, which accelerate the evolution after *Being and Time*, but which at the same time make it elusive, irreducible to a single transition. So, for example, in the passage cited above, we can clearly see not one but two breaks with the book of 1927: the saying ‘ “against” *Dasein* for Being, against Being for Essence’ makes reference to a model that, in the first instance, closes the matter of existential analysis and the primacy of ‘There Being’ as a way of access to ontology; but in the second place, it also calls for the re-semanticizing of the word ‘being’ in the direction of ‘event’, not understood as an ‘essence’ but rather – as is seen in the reference to *Nichts* – as a development of something against the background of nothing.

In this uninterrupted evolution, which cultivates the terminology, there emerges repeatedly a cross-reference to poetry, which we already know from the published works of Heidegger. Poetry is first and foremost the linguistic vehicle that sets out, more than any other, the transition from metaphysics to its surpassing. So that for Hölderlin the book of the *Überlegungen VI* contemporaneously supports the place of metaphysics in idealism and the *first surpassing of the whole of metaphysics*: ‘So sehr Hölderlin selbst sich noch in der “Metaphysik” des deutschen Idealismus zu bewegen scheint, so wesentlich ist seine Dichtung die erste Überwindung aller “Metaphysik”.’ In the second place, this is *poetry of Being*, not therefore language in verses (*Dichtung*), but rather the concentration of a fixed order of being, as the German word *Dichte*, density, means: Die Dichtung des Seins früher als das Seiende (für uns) und doch nur dazu, um das Seiende als älter vorzudrängen. Der Ausbruch des Seins in der Dichte seiner Dichtung.’ In short, the stress placed on the poetry of Being carries with it the idea that reality isn’t objectivity, rather it is equivalent to the ‘letting-be’ of things through the *Dasein*, ‘das Seiende einlassen – durchlassen ‘durch’ das Da-sein.’ And that poetry, rather than being *Dichte*, is that which lays foundations.

5. If we insist on *poetical foundation* it is because it demonstrates so well the coexistence of a theoretic-political strategy and its counter-strategy: the smaller the ‘substance’ is of the poetry that ‘founds’, the stronger instead becomes the *other foundation* that flashes out in these pages and which outlines an entirely different solution. The metaphor of the root illustrates this context. The foundation to be recovered equates in fact to a call to rootedness, the ‘Wieder-auf-einen-Boden-kommen-wollen’, and to the stigmatization of uprootedness. The very presence of antisemitic statements – which in the pages of the *Black Notebooks 1931-1938* is still difficult to see, as opposed to what will happen in the following volumes – is anticipated with precision by this formal structure: ‘metaphysical antisemitism’, as Donatella Di Cesare has rightly termed it, will be directed along the tracks of this metaphor.

To grasp the new beginning that Heidegger plans for philosophy, we are therefore called to root ourselves: ‘Wir werden gesonnen, alles, was sie verlangt, zu übernehmen und in ihr Stand zu nehmen – boden-ständig zu werden.’ It remains to understand where and how we ought to root ourselves. As we know from the published works of Heidegger, the new beginning coincides with the ‘original beginning’ (*ursprünglich Anfang*) of Greek thought. But in these pages, almost unexpectedly, we can follow his re-semantization word for word. Thus, if the word ‘beginning’ doesn’t yet say anything about the alternative between metaphysics and its surpassing – and if, on the other hand, the combination with the adjective ‘original’ usually returns to a pre-metaphysical beginning – here ‘beginning’ seeks instead for the enabling of foundation. Thus Heidegger can ask himself what the pre-metaphysical foundation (*Grund*) might be: ‘Welche Gänge muß ein Übergang gehen, um auf jenen wachsende gewachsenen Grund zu kommen, von dem der Absprung in den anderen Anfang möglich wird?’ A foundation that, unexpectedly, the Greeks don’t seem to be able to guarantee. The ideal Greek philosophy is in fact transformed into the rootedness of another people on its own soil: the German people, of whom a note of autumn 1932 says that it wants to capture ‘the reawakened reality’ (*die erwachende Wirklichkeit*), which is also a philosophical reawakening, since only German man ‘can speak and poetically articulate Being’ (‘kann das Sein ursprünglich neu dichten und sagen’) and ‘create *the logic* (‘*die Logik* schaffen’). So, in a note shortly afterwards, the call will be to collaborate in a new spiritual world, to facilitate its *coming*: ‘Zwar über Nacht und auf Bestellung entsteht keine geistige Welt. Wir dürfen aber auch nicht versäumen, an ihrem Kommen mitzuarbeiten, indem wir den Übergang schaffen.’

This strategy of the people and rootedness – of the *rooting of a people*, to put it simply – really has nothing more to do with the first theoretic argument: that of Being as *Wesung* or as verb, which in the later texts of Heidegger will take the form of ‘letting-be’. The reference to essential development demolishes the philosophy of substance, because it doesn’t give a name – a substantive – to Being. Against this, in these pages the strategy of rootedness is powerefully overdetermined by the search for a principle of the ‘establishment of Being rooted in a foundation laid down by itself’. On the one hand, therefore, we have Being without a name, Being as *Wesung.* On the other hand, we have Being that has a very precise name, that of a new beginning that doesn’t substitute metaphysics with a renewed capacity of thought, but rather repeats the most ancient and constant *ethos* of western philosophy: the establishment of a first principle.