

Modernization: for Heidegger, it has been, since Descartes, the expression of what he called the 'metaphysics of subjectivity,' of the will-to-will, of the insistence on truth as correct 'representations' for the 'subject,' of the calling-to-attention of both history and nature (even when it 'environmentalizes' the latter), of the 'en-framing' (*Gestell*) of nature that makes it little more than a cupboard out of which we pull whatever canned goods we intend to put to our own use. Or, as Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut describe it: 'in Heidegger's view metaphysics as the search for a supreme reality (a "primary being") who is the foundation and model for all of reality, has been realized since Descartes in the form of an "anthropology" or, in other words, in the form of a philosophy in which it is man as "master and possessor of nature" who confers on every being its real substance and assigns it its real place in a world he organizes for his own purposes' (Ferry and Renaut, 20). In Heidegger's term, this metaphysics is 'humanism' in action.

Even if he be an earnest scientist, a busily consulting economist, or a utilitarian engineer, Research Man is always a humanist-in-residence. Of course, Research Man is also found everywhere in the humanities. No longer much interested in using the quaint word 'scholar' to define his activity, humanities Research Man busily reproduces himself by training newly arrived PhD students in the first law of the *researcher*: 'the prevalence of methodology over whatever is.' Professors enframe poems, novels, plays, stories, and paintings, calling them before the bar of whatever 'methodology' currently interests them and insisting that these cultural 'productions' display their social and political credentials. 'Tell me, Shakespeare/Kant/Wordsworth, where did you stand on the gender/race/class/colonization question?' That not all currently active critical enframers may have read Heidegger is neither here nor there. This is merely a question of who they are. Undoubtedly, they have read Barthes or Derrida, Foucault or Rorty, Althusser or Cixous. These (or others) will do. The children of Heidegger are legion.

However, as Bernard-Henri Lévy likes to say, 'Attention!' When it comes to 'enframing' literature, post-1970 critical theory is scarcely unique. It can be found in all the earlier schools of modernized academic criticism. Given the strange manner in which Heideggerian Being itself seems to have set us on the road to the 'metaphysics of subjectivity' – which has completed what Heidegger calls the West's 'forgetfulness of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) – it is difficult to name a critic who might *not* have 'enframed.' Heidegger is cagey on the degree to which blame can be laid for the metaphysical mess in which we find ourselves. For example, in a discussion of what he calls 'the crisis of the sciences' (*Wissenschaften*) he objects to attempts to date this from the crisis years 1918 or 1933 – 'and not even from the much-criticized nineteenth century.' His preferred date is

'from the beginning of the modern age, which was not a mistake but a fate, and only a fate will overcome it' (*Basic Questions*, 49).

There is a more general version of this problem, arising from the changing direction of Heidegger's thought in the 1930s, away from 'existentialist' concerns and towards a 'history of Being' itself (*Seinsgeschichte*). Did *Dasein* ('Being-there,' Heidegger's preferred way of referring to human beings) forget Being or did Being somehow make it possible that it would be forgotten by *Dasein*? When *Dasein* engages in 'idle talk' (*Gerede*) or has an insufficiency of 'resoluteness' are these failings of the person or are they fated by the manner in which the *Seinsgeschichte* has unfolded? He dreaded offering merely 'ontic' – narrowly individual – readings of *Dasein* which might open the door to 'anthropology' (via history, psychology, sociology). Because this is not a discussion of Heidegger's thought – about which even great commentators on Heidegger disagree – these matters cannot be taken up here. Nevertheless, it is impossible to read the great passages in *Being and Time* on 'curiosity' or 'idle talk' or 'inauthenticity' and not to feel that these often reveal failings of *Dasein*. Indeed, the infamous speeches of the 1933–34 period, urging a new outlook on the university or urging students to recall their Germanic destiny and to support, for example, the Führer's new emphasis on 'work,' suggest that the time had come for *Dasein* to get a grip on itself, become 'resolute,' and make a heroic effort to support the New Order ('Political Texts, 1933–1934').

Off campus, and whether blameworthy or not, Research Man has analogues in all areas of Western activity. He can be found damning rivers, commanding electrons, mining the earth, and manipulating entire economies. Focus groups permit politicians, film moguls, and recording companies to 'en-frame' voters and audiences. Loggers enframe forests, agribusinesses enframe vast tracts of land comprising what had once been dozens of small farms, and modern commercial fleets do the same for entire species of fish. Not for nothing is Heidegger sometimes a hero to 'deep ecologists.'

Martin Heidegger: most influential philosopher of the past century.
Martin Heidegger: Nazi.

In William Faulkner's *The Mansion*, Mink Snopes remarks that 'Old Moser jest punishes; He don't play jokes.' I am not so sure about this. Is it not grimly funny that the contemporary Western academy, especially in the humanities and social sciences, is so profoundly leftist and yet so deeply indebted to a member of the Nazi party? It is bad enough when some poor soul in these domains is discovered to have voted for Margaret Thatcher, Brian Mulroney, or Ronald Reagan, but to have a genealogy that can be traced back to National Socialism is unthinkable.

Each of the books under review ponders what we may call the 'Heidegger question': how is it possible for the intellectual – in this case the philosopher – to become so indifferent to, or unaware of, the consequences