

Heidegger's case would appear to be but one instance of that widespread and very ordinary form of anti-Semitism that, precisely because it is blind to its own nature, is the most insidious kind of anti-Semitism.

"EVERYONE HAS TO TELL THE TRUTH": HEIDEGGER AND THE JEWS

Thomas Sheehan

In memory of
Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J.
Murdered, with his seven companions,
by the Salvadoran Armed Forces
November 16, 1989

"Of all whom we have known,
he was the wisest, the most just, the best."

I

Martin Heidegger had a real problem with truth.

Hannah Arendt, who was in a position to know (she had a passionate affair with him in the 1920s), remarked that Heidegger was "notorious for lying about everything."¹

Heidegger the philosopher struggled for over fifty years with the problem of truth. It was, he said, the "one and only" question of his thought — but not such allegedly derivative phenomena as truth-telling, honesty, or

1. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 247.

logical accuracy. No, he meant the *essence* of truth, a strange interplay of concealing and revealing in which concealing had the priority and was even responsible for human error and falsehood.

And Heidegger the man? Hannah Arendt was right. He managed to pull off a good deal of concealing in his day.

At the banal end of the spectrum he tended, according to historian Hugo Ott, to inflate his war record. Because of a heart condition, Heidegger spent most of the First World War in Freiburg as a university lecturer and a postal censor. (In the latter capacity, Ott suggests a bit unkindly, he had ample opportunity to read his colleagues' mail.) But in the last, disastrous months of the war, after the German army had begun crumbling at the Second Battle of the Marne, he was sent to the Ardennes Forest to serve as a weatherman, with the job of planning poison gas attacks on the American soldiers advancing toward Sedan.²

However, in 1934, when Heidegger supplied autobiographical information to a Nazi *Who's Who* his war activity shifted some fifty miles to the southeast and became military service "at Verdun"³ — and in an earlier document even "combat in the trenches at Verdun"⁴ — in order, thinks Ott, to cash in on the postwar aura of that protracted and bloody battle.

On more serious matters, Heidegger was not terribly forthright about the extent of his involvement with the Nazis.

Of course, he could not deny things that were a matter of public record — for example, that on May 1, 1933, two weeks after becoming rector of Freiburg University, he ostentatiously joined the Nazi party. Or that he saw fit thereafter to place his name and philosophy at the service of Hitler's policies, even after the Nazis had suspended the constitution, cancelled civil liberties, and filled the first concentration camps with Marxists, Jews, and labor leaders.

Nor could he deny that in the role of *Führer*-rector he enforced the Nazi "cleansing laws" on the Freiburg campus, thereby ending financial aid for "Jewish or Marxist students" and anyone else who fit the going description of a "non-Aryan" in Nazi law. Or that he told the students: "The *Führer* himself and he alone is German reality and its law, today and for the future."⁵

But Heidegger could and did lie about less public matters, such as how, when, and indeed whether he broke with the Nazis.

After the war, he told a de-Nazification committee that his entrance into the party "was only a matter of form" and that, in any case, after

2. Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1988), 151, 104f. For anecdotal accounts of the effects of these gas attacks on American soldiers see Elaine George Collins, ed., *If Not for War: Mildred and Will. The War Diary and Letters of W. T. George* (Redwood City, Calif.: David George Collins, 1989), 86f., 123f.

3. Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger* (Bern: Suhr, 1962), 237.

4. Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger's *Lehrjahre*," in John Sallis et al., eds. *The Colloquium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years* (Amsterdam: Kluwer, 1988), 21.

5. Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger*, 136f.

only ten months in office he angrily resigned from the rectorate in protest over a "conspiracy" that the Nazi minister of education was organizing against him.⁶

However, Professor Ott's research has demolished Heidegger's story that he dramatically signed off in February 1934. Ott has discovered that two months later, in April 1934, the Ministry of Education still fully expected that Heidegger would be continuing in office and that, far from resigning over an alleged Nazi conspiracy, Heidegger quit the job because he had made too many academic enemies in his dictatorial role as *Führer*-rector, in part by forcing deans of his own choosing on departments that did not want them.⁷

In any case Heidegger continued to support the Nazi regime even after he had left the rectorate. In the spring and summer of 1936 he declared his abiding faith in Hitler and his conviction that National Socialism was the correct path for Germany,⁸ and he spoke positively of the achievements of both Hitler and Mussolini.⁹ Moreover, to judge from his lectures, it seems Heidegger supported Hitler's war efforts at least up until the battle of Stalingrad.¹⁰

The lies tend to pile up. Did he or did he not wear Nazi paraphernalia? Heidegger to the de-Nazification committee: Never! Eyewitnesses and photographs: Yes, of course he did. Did he or did he not give the Nazi salute before and after lectures? Heidegger: Not after 1934. Professor James Luther Adams: As late as 1936. And so on. These matters may seem trivial, but in the years after the war they could cost a man his job. Perhaps that is why he lied.

But Heidegger also had truth-telling moments, albeit some of them in his role as a Nazi informer. Seven months after becoming rector, he had Max Müller, one of his most gifted Catholic followers, fired from a student leadership position because Müller was "not politically appropriate," and five years later he blocked him from getting a teaching job by informing the university administration that Müller was "unfavorably disposed" to the Nazi regime. When the young man pleaded with Heidegger to retract that charge, Heidegger calmly explained that the administration had asked him about Müller's politics and "I gave the answer that simply corresponded to the truth." And

6. Martin Heidegger, "The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," translated by Karsten Harries, *Review of Metaphysics* 38 (March 1985): 493, 496f.

7. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*, 234ff.

8. Karl Löwith, *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 57.

9. Heidegger's remark on Hitler's and Mussolini's efforts to counter nihilism was intentionally omitted from the first German edition of Heidegger's 1936 course, *Schellings Abhandlung "Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit" (1809)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971), and therefore is absent from the English translation by Joan Stambaugh, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985). It has been restored in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, II/42, 40-41.

10. Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," *New York Review of Books* 35, no. 10 (June 16, 1988): 43-46.

he added: "As a Catholic you must know that everyone has to tell the truth."¹¹

Heidegger also told the truth about Hermann Staudinger. It seems that Staudinger, who had been professor of chemistry at Freiburg University since 1926 (and who would be awarded a Nobel Prize in 1953), had been a pacifist during the First World War; and Heidegger, knowing full well that this could cost Staudinger his job, quietly leaked that information to the local minister of education (September 29, 1933). When the Gestapo confirmed Heidegger's tip, he then secretly urged the government to fire the man without a pension.¹²

Heidegger also told the truth about Professor Eduard Baumgarten. For a while the two had been very close friends — Heidegger and his wife were even the godparents of Baumgarten's son. But in 1931 they had a falling out over Baumgarten's interest in John Dewey's pragmatism, and Baumgarten left Freiburg to teach American philosophy at Göttingen.

But Heidegger stayed in touch. On December 16, 1933, in an effort to get Baumgarten fired, he secretly wrote a letter to the head of a Nazi organization at Göttingen, denouncing Baumgarten as a member of "the Heidelberg circle of liberal-democrat intellectuals around Max Weber" and for being "very Americanized" and "anything but a National Socialist." And referring to his colleague Eduard Fränkel, the noted professor of classics who had just been dismissed for racial reasons, Heidegger wrote that at Freiburg University Baumgarten had "frequented, very actively, the Jew Fränkel, who used to teach at Göttingen and just recently got fired from here."¹³

II

Martin Heidegger also had a problem with Jews.

In a book of reminiscences about Heidegger published in 1983, his close friend Heinrich Petzet wrote that Heidegger was a simple rural man who felt ill at ease with big-city life,

and this was especially true of that worldly and mundane spirit of Jewish circles, which is at home in the metropolitan centers of the West. But this attitude of his should not be misunderstood as anti-Semitism, although it has often been interpreted that way.¹⁴

Yes, it has been interpreted that way — for example, by Heidegger's mentor, Edmund Husserl, who was forced to retire from Freiburg University in April 1933 because he was a Jew. Two weeks later (May 4, 1933)

11. Bernd Marun and Gottfried Schramm, "Ein Gespräch mit Max Müller," *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 92 (June 1986): 25ff.

12. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*, 201ff.

13. Victor Farias, *Heidegger et le nazisme*, translated by Myriam Benarroch and Jean-Baptiste Grasset (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1987), 235; Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*, 186.

14. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Auf einen Stern zugehen* (Frankfurt: Societät, 1983), 40.

Husserl wrote his friend Dietrick Mahnke not only to lament that Heidegger, his former protégé, had long since broken off relations with him, but also to remark on

his anti-Semitism, which over the last few years he has come to express with increasing vigor, even against the coterie of his most enthusiastic students, as well as around the department. That was a hard thing to get over.¹⁵

And in fact Heidegger, who for years had a devoted following of gifted Jewish students (including his lover, Hannah Arendt), declined from 1934 onward to direct the doctoral dissertations of Jews: he sent all of them to his Catholic colleague Martin Honecker. (Yet in an interview that Heidegger gave in 1966 we find this exchange: "*Der Spiegel*: Even after 1933 you had Jewish students. Your relationship to some of these Jewish students is supposed to have been cordial. *Heidegger*: My attitude after 1933 remained unchanged."¹⁶)

When explaining himself before the de-Nazification committee, Heidegger correctly pointed out that in 1933, in his capacity as rector, he forbade the posting of the anti-Semitic "Jew Notice" in any university rooms. He also mentioned that in that same year he came to the defense of three Jewish professors (including the man he would later call "the Jew Fränkel") who were about to be fired from the university for racial reasons.

However, he neglected to tell the de-Nazification committee that, in appealing the firing of his colleagues, he had assured the Ministry of Education (July 12, 1933) of his own "full awareness of the necessity of implementing unconditionally" the anti-Semitic "cleansing laws" and that his only fear was that firing the Jewish professors might prove embarrassing to Germany's interests "in intellectually prominent and politically important non-Jewish circles abroad."¹⁷

Nor did he mention the letter he circulated to German professors on December 13, 1933, in an effort to drum up signatures of support for a forthcoming book of pro-Hitler speeches by German intellectuals, including himself. At the bottom of his letter Heidegger added the editor's assurance that "needless to say, non-Aryans shall not appear on the signature page."¹⁸

Some have argued that Heidegger's wife, Elfride, was a bad influence on him in this regard. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt's biographer, mentions the widely known fact that Mrs. Heidegger had a strong dislike for the Jewish students who flocked to her husband's courses in the 1920s. (Thus Arendt, who was having an affair with Heidegger at the time, had a double reason for keeping a low profile.) On the other hand, Young-Bruehl writes, "Young rightists occasionally came into the orbit of Heidegger's

15. Bernd Martin, ed., *Martin Heidegger und das "Dritte Reich": Ein Kompendium* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 149.

16. Thomas Sheehan, ed., *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker* (Chicago: Precedent, 1981), 50.

17. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*, 198f.

18. Farias, *Heidegger et le nazisme*, 176.

followers through his wife." But such was not the case with Günther Stern, a student at the University of Marburg.

Günther Stern recalled meeting Elfride Heidegger at a housewarming for [the Heideggers'] cottage in Todtnauberg in the spring of 1925. Full of good feeling after an evening of eating and singing around a bonfire, Elfride Heidegger asked Stern, who had made an impression on her, if he would like to join the National Socialist youth group in Marburg. When Stern informed her that he was Jewish, she abruptly turned away.¹⁹

After the war, Karl Jaspers was asked by the de-Nazification committee for his personal and professional opinion of Heidegger. Jaspers had first met Heidegger in April 1920, and the two became fast friends. Heidegger was frequently a guest at the Jaspers's home in Heidelberg. During the last such visit (June 30, 1933), when Jaspers dismissed the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as a forgery, Heidegger retorted, "Nonetheless there is a dangerous international alliance of Jews" — this to Jaspers whose wife was Jewish.²⁰

They never saw each other again. Then a few years later Jaspers was given a copy of Heidegger's secret letter about Baumgarten. In writing back to the de-Nazification committee on December 22, 1945, Jaspers revealed the contents of that letter for the first time, and added:

In the 1920s Heidegger was not an anti-Semite. That entirely uncalled-for phrase about "the Jew Fränkel" proves that by 1933 he had become an anti-Semite, at least in certain connections. He was not just practicing caution in this case. But this does not preclude that in other cases, as I am compelled to believe, anti-Semitism went against his conscience and was distasteful to him.²¹

But it seems that Jaspers was wrong, at least about Heidegger in the 1920s. Back in 1929, when Eduard Baumgarten was still his friend, Heidegger wrote to the Society for the Support of German Science (roughly equivalent to the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities), recommending Baumgarten's application for a grant to serve as Heidegger's assistant and thus continue his studies. Heidegger sent on a strong report for Baumgarten, but in his letter to the Society's deputy president, Victor Schwoerer, he went further.²²

Freiburg in Breisgau
October 2, 1929

Dear Councillor:

A grant application for Dr. Baumgarten is currently being sent to the Society.

In addition to my report I would like to make a further, personal request that you, Councillor, be kind enough to give this application your particular attention.

19. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 61.

20. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophische Autobiographie*, expanded edition (Munich: Piper, 1977), 101.

21. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*, 316.

22. Ulrich Sieg, "Die Verjudung des deutschen Geistes," *Die Zeit*, "Feuilleton," 52 (December 22, 1989): 50.

I would like to say more clearly in this letter what I could only hint at indirectly in my report: It is nothing less than the urgent consideration that we are faced with a choice, either to provide our *German* intellectual life once more with real talents and educators rooted in our own soil [*bodenständige*], or to hand over that intellectual life once and for all to the growing influence of the Jews [*Verjudung*] in the broad and narrow sense. We will find our way back only if we are able, without baiting and without useless arguments, to assist budding talents in the development [of their careers].

Regarding this important objective I would be especially grateful if Mr. Baumgarten, whom I have selected to be my assistant, could be helped with a grant.

We are now enjoying these beautiful autumn days in our new house, and each day I find myself happy to be growing in my work along with the homeland.

With highest regards, Councillor, I am

Most respectfully yours,

Martin Heidegger

The question of Heidegger's anti-Semitism is once again a hotly debated topic, especially since Ott, Farias, and several others began publishing the new and damning revelations that are cited above. On the one hand, the case can be made that Heidegger did not accept the Nazi ideology of biologism and racism either personally or in his philosophy. But on the other hand, Heidegger did not need the Nazis to teach him anti-Semitism. He had his own personal ideology about Jews, and he let the poison seep into his conversations, into his letters, and into the way he carried on academic politics.

The true believers among Heidegger's disciples continue to object to the word "anti-Semitism" to describe his personal attitudes toward Jews. Heinrich Petzet, as we saw, would have it that he was simply "ill at ease" with the "worldly spirit" and "metropolitanism" of Jews. But that position seems to be on the ropes, if not down and out, as the evidence to the contrary continues to mount. And so Heidegger's defenders have shifted to the safer ground of proving that, whatever its causes and extent, his *personal* anti-Semitism at least did not hemorrhage into his *philosophy*.

Whereas the question of possible links between Heidegger's support of Nazism and his philosophy is still very much open, there seems to be no evidence — from what we know at this point — that his philosophical works reveal any trace of his anti-Semitism, any more than one could learn about Gottlob Frege's hatred of Jews from his essay on sense and reference.

Heidegger's case would appear to be but one instance of that widespread and very ordinary form of anti-Semitism that somehow, perhaps even sincerely, has managed to convince itself that it is not anti-Semitic and which, precisely because it is blind to its own nature, is the most insidious kind of anti-Semitism.

In his philosophical works, especially *Being and Time*, Heidegger had a sharp and critical eye for the phenomenon of self-deception. But it seems his ability to recognize it in his personal life was another matter. The issue is complex, but perhaps we can shed some light on it by taking a brief detour via a different country and a different person, if only in an effort

to understand how much cultural baggage Heidegger was carrying, consciously or not, when he declared to Karl Jaspers, "Nonetheless, there is a dangerous international alliance of Jews."

III

On my desk are some old issues of *Civiltà Cattolica*, the influential biweekly journal of political and cultural affairs edited in Rome by the Italian Jesuits. From 1915 to 1931 Father Enrico Rosa, S.J. — a widely read commentator on public affairs and a man with considerable weight in the Vatican — was editor-in-chief of the journal. During that period he contributed many articles, both signed and unsigned, and continued to do so up until his death in 1938.²³

From 1922 to 1937 (that is, from the beginning of the Fascist era, up to the year before Mussolini's anti-Jewish code went into effect) Father Rosa, along with his collaborators at *Civiltà Cattolica*, published a number of patently anti-Semitic articles on the "Jewish question." These essays reveal how at least one man — by all accounts good-willed, sincere, and even saintly — tirelessly promoted a form of anti-Jewishness that never saw itself as anti-Semitic.

Yet Father Rosa's repudiation of anti-Semitism was explicit, categorical, and frequently repeated in his journal. He took as his beacon the statement of the Vatican's Holy Office, dated April 2, 1928:

The Apostolic See denounces all forms of hatred and animosity among peoples, but above all and in the strongest terms she condemns the hatred directed against the people once chosen by God, a hatred which today usually goes by the name "anti-Semitism."²⁴

23. On Enrico Rosa, see: D. Morone, "Il Padre Enrico Rosa d.C.d.G. *In memoriam Patris*," *Civiltà Cattolica*, 89, 4 (no. 2124, December 17, 1938), 481–96; and the unsigned obituary at 564–65. Also Ambrogio M. Fiocchi, *P. Enrico Rosa, S.I., scrittore della "Civiltà Cattolica" (1870–1938): Il suo pensiero nelle controversie religiose e politiche del suo tempo* (Rome: Edizioni "La Civiltà Cattolica," 1957); and Annibale Zambarbieri, *Il cattolicesimo tra crisi e rinnovamento: Ernesto Buonaiuti ed Enrico Rosa nella prima fase della polemica modernista* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1979). A bibliography of Rosa's publications appears in Fiocchi, *P. Enrico Rosa, S.I.*, 301–32, complemented by Zambarbieri, *Il cattolicesimo tra crisi e rinnovamento*, 450; see also the various "Indici Analitici" of *Civiltà Cattolica*, s.v. "Rosa, Enrico, S.J." None of the works here cited mentions Father Rosa's attitudes toward Jews.

24. "Cronaca contemporanea: 1. Soppressione della società detta 'Gli Amici d'Israele'" (unsigned), *Civiltà Cattolica*, 79, 2 (no. 1868, April 19, 1928): 171–72, here: 171. In the references to *Civiltà Cattolica*, I follow American conventions and provide, in this order: "l'anno," "il volume," then, in parentheses, "il quaderno" (which I indicate as "no."), followed by the month, the day, and the year; and finally, outside parentheses, the page(s).

However, the *Civiltà Cattolica* usually cites itself only by the year, plus "il volume" in Roman numerals, plus the page(s). (Thus the journal itself would cite the reference just given as: 1928, II, 171.)

Finally, in the references that I have given, the actual *day* of the month (and only that) is sometimes approximate, because the copies I have consulted are often missing their front cover.

In addition to the articles cited, I have consulted the following: "Il sionismo dinanzi all'opinione degli ebrei" (unsigned), in two parts: 73, 2 (no. 1726, May 18, 1922): 299–

No, of course, not anti-Semitism. Rather, the view expressed in *Civiltà Cattolica* was that anti-Semitism was an *exaggeration*, deserving to be condemned, but that the Jewish peril was nonetheless still very real. Yes, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was a crude forgery, as the journal often pointed out, but that did not lessen the fact that the Jews were poised to take over the world.

For example, in October 1934 Father Rosa published a signed two-part article, "'The Jewish Question' and National Socialist Anti-Semitism," in which he took it upon himself to lambaste the Nazis — in part because they erroneously linked the Catholic Church with what Father Rosa called "the Jewish peril," but also because Nazi anti-Semitism was failing to achieve its *legitimate* goal of "reducing Jewish preponderance and aggressiveness in all aspects and levels of social life."²⁵

In the course of critically reviewing Th. Fritsch's anti-Semitic *Handbuch der Judenfrage* ("Manual of the Jewish Question" [Leipzig, 1933]), Father Rosa found himself in agreement with much of the book. For example, he accepts it as a "notorious fact" that Bolshevism is "in large measure a creature of the Jews" and that "Jewish Marxist theory" has given rise to the "false democracy of the Social Democratic Party of the Jews." He agrees as well that the pacifist movement that gained momentum after the First World War is "Jewish and anti-national in inspiration and execution," indeed only a "palliative served up by freemasonry and modern Judaism."²⁶

Most importantly, he finds that, with some relatively minor reservations, Nazi anti-Semitism in general, and Fritsch's book in particular, contain elements that he can commend:

Catholic writers do not conceal the irreparable rift that divides Jewish from Christian thought. Rather, they study and document it as a historical fact, calmly, impartially, and with none of the hostility that is born of preconceived polemics — as is the usual method of professional anti-Semites like the Nazis of this *Manual*.

But we do not deny that these Nazis would appear justifiable, and perhaps even praiseworthy, if they would only keep their political opposition within the limits of a tolerable resistance to the intrigues of the Jewish parties and organizations —

312; and 73, 3 (no. 1730, July 13, 1922): 116–32; "Un episodio del sionismo in Palestina" (unsigned), 75, 4 (no. 1788, December 18, 1924): 487–98; "Il pericolo giudaico e gli 'Amici d'Israele'" (unsigned but probably Enrico Rosa), 79, 2 (no. 1870, May 17, 1928): 335–44; "La 'teoria moderna delle razze' impugnata da un acattolico" (unsigned but certainly Enrico Rosa), 89, 3 (no. 2113, July 2, 1938): 62–71; "La 'Civiltà Cattolica' e la 'Questione ebraica'" (unsigned), 89, 3 (no. 2118, September 15, 1938): 560–61; Enrico Rosa, "La questione giudaica e 'La Civiltà Cattolica'" (signed), 89, 4 (no. 2119, October 1, 1938): 3–16. The last two articles are to be taken with the following article, which was published before Rosa was associated with the journal: "Della questione giudaica in Europa" (unsigned but written by Father Raffaele Ballerini, S.J.), in *Civiltà Cattolica*, 41st year, 14th series, 8th volume, in three parts: "Le cause" (October 1890): 5–20; "Gli effetti" (November 1890): 385–407; and "I rimedii" (December 1890): 641–55.

25. Enrico Rosa (signed), "'La questione giudaica' e l'antisemitismo nazionalsocialista" (part 1), 85, 4 (no. 2024, October 20, 1934): 126–36, here: 126.

26. Enrico Rosa (signed), "'La questione giudaica' e l'antisemitismo nazionalsocialista" (part 2), 85, 4 (no. 2025, November 3, 1934): 276–85, here: 276f.

on which another long chapter in the *Manual* provides a good deal of important information, although not all of it equally researched and exact.²⁷

Such commendations aside, the point, according to Father Rosa, is that the Catholic Church — not the Nazis — got there first: "Whatever sad reality is to be found in this Jewish peril was exposed and denounced by Catholics long before [the Nazis came on the scene]."²⁸ Rosa proudly points out that Fritsch's *Manual* takes some of its evidence on the Jewish peril from *Civiltà Cattolica*, a journal, Rosa says,

that has been repeating for over eighty years now — but in a very different style and with moderation and precision — whatever there is of truth in the modern exaggerations of anti-Semitism.

Therefore, no one can interpret our public condemnation of this *Manual* by German anti-Semites as if we were offering an apology for Judaism and the Jews — or worse yet, extolling them. The Jews themselves declare that they have always been and still are the inveterate and implacable enemies of Christ and Christianity, particularly of the integral, pure Christianity that is the Catholicism of the Roman Church.²⁹

This enmity, continues Father Rosa, "is in fact the very essence of Judaism." However, he thinks that the Nazi effort to fight the Jews by means of a new form of paganism offers a "cure that is worse than the disease."³⁰

The anti-Semitism of the *Civiltà Cattolica* was not based solely on the "Christ-killer" myths of the past. Father Rosa and his collaborators were imbued as well with the modern ideology about the twofold threat posed by Jews today: "their domination of money and their preponderance in socialism and communism," that is, "Rothschild on the one side, balanced by Marx and Lasalle on the other."³¹ On the one hand, European Jews dominate capitalism — "Their prototype is the banker. All his real estate reduces to a strongbox and a billfold."³² — and on the other, Russian Jews control communism: "Yesterday they swarmed in the garbage of the ghetto, a target of common contempt. Today they engorge the avenues of power and impose their dictatorship on the nation."³³ But whether capitalism or communism, it is all part of the same Jewish plot to dominate the world:

The easiest way to get there is brutal, dictatorial communism. The final goal is to replace the capitalism of Europe and America, which is still limited and relatively uncoercive, with a world-wide pan-capitalism with absolute political power. Communism is the shortest path to that.³⁴

27. Rosa, "'La questione giudaica' e l'antisemitismo nazionalsocialista" (part 1): 136.

28. Rosa, "'La questione giudaica' e l'antisemitismo nazionalsocialista" (part 2): 283.

29. *Ibid.*, 284.

30. *Ibid.*

31. "La questione giudaica" (unsigned), 87, 4 (no. 2071, October 1, 1936): 37–46, here: 37.

32. *Ibid.*, 39.

33. "La rivoluzione mondiale e gli ebrei" (unsigned), 73, 4 (no. 1736, October 19, 1922): 111–21, here: 114.

34. "La questione giudaica" (unsigned), 87, 4 (no. 2071, October 1, 1936): 37–46, here: 40. Here the article is paraphrasing, approvingly, Léon de Poncins' *La mystérieuse Internationale juive* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936), 207–11.

What, then, is the solution to this Jewish "disease"? Certainly not anti-Semitism! — for that would be against Christian charity. Nonetheless, "it is abundantly clear that this Jewish mentality, as long as it remains such, constitutes a permanent danger to the world. We must find the means to change this ill-starred mind-set."³⁵

Only two solutions present themselves: segregating the Jews or eliminating them (the article is dated June 5, 1937). The cool and precise logic of the casuistic mind goes to work:

Elimination can be effected in three modes: totally hostile, i.e., extermination; hostile but less cruel, i.e., expulsion; or amicable and mild-mannered, i.e., assimilation. Of these three, the first two are contrary to Christian charity as well as natural law; the third has been shown to be historically unworkable. *Segregation* can be effected in two modes, hostile or friendly. The hostile mode does not take into account the conditions of the foreign body, only the interests of the invaded organism. This mode is not consonant with charity and in any case does not remove the disagreeable elements that cause irritation. The friendly mode takes into full account both the segregated element and the segregating organism, looking to the best advantage of both.³⁶

Father Rosa and his staff opted for the last of these modes — that is, they promoted, in its hardest form, the solution that the English anti-Semite Hilaire Belloc had advanced in his book *The Jews* (1922), a work that clearly was very much admired at the *Civiltà Cattolica*. As the journal paraphrased Belloc's proposal: Since changing the Jewish mentality by means of assimilation has proven unworkable, the only other acceptable solution is to restrain it

by means of the "ghetto," that is, coercive juridical restrictions, but without persecution and in a way adapted to our own times.³⁷

Or again:

Segregation or distinguishing (previously, the ghetto), but now adapted to our own times: a friendly arrangement that would aim at the good of both sides and might be called 'recognition.'³⁸

And what if this modern form of ghetto should fail to work? In that case, "We shall see at another time what the true solution might be."³⁹

Father Rosa did not live to see the "true solution" in its final form. He died in Rome on November 26, 1938, at the age of sixty-eight, just one month after the Fascist regime put into effect its anti-Semite code, which officially changed the status of Jews to "Italian Citizens of the Jewish Race," forbade them to marry Gentiles, barred them from military service, and prohibited them from either owning more than 130 acres of

35. "La questione giudaica e il sionismo" (unsigned), 88, 2 (no. 2087, June 5, 1937): 418-31, here 423.

36. *Ibid.*, 418f.

37. *Ibid.*, 423.

38. "La questione giudaica e l'apostolato cattolico" (unsigned), 88, 3 (no. 2089, July 1, 1937): 27-39, here: 38.

39. "La questione giudaica e il sionismo," 431.

land or running businesses that employed more than 100 persons. Exactly five years later, on October 16, 1943, deportation of Italian Jews to the death camps began.

IV

No, Martin Heidegger was not Enrico Rosa, any more than he was Alfred Rosenberg. The point of this detour is not to suggest that Heidegger would have advocated anything like the measures Father Rosa did. The point, rather, is simply to probe the "culture" that lay behind Heidegger's remark on the "dangerous international alliance of Jews" and to begin thinking about that form of anti-Semitism — the most common form — that sincerely believes it is not anti-Semitic.

In Hilaire Belloc's tract *The Jews*, which Father Rosa and his colleagues so much admired (and which Belloc himself used to call "my admirable Yid book"⁴⁰), the author spends an entire chapter denouncing and even ridiculing anti-Semitism as a "mania" and a "delusion" that thinks the Jews are responsible for every one of the world's ills, including "bad church furniture."⁴¹ But that did not stop this very Catholic and very urbane English bigot from proclaiming that Western civilization was fatally infected by the "disease" of this "alien minority" that has a "natural indifference to national feeling."⁴² Again, the double threat was Bolshevism and capitalism. Obviously Lenin is "controlled by the Jews,"⁴³ and closer to home, the First World War awoke Englishmen to

the staggering secret they had never suspected — the complete control exercised over things absolutely necessary to the nation's survival by half a dozen Jews, who were completely indifferent as to whether we or the enemy should emerge alive from the struggle.⁴⁴

The causes, for Belloc, were complex. Specifically there was the Jews' "reliance upon secrecy" and their persistent and grating "sense of superiority."⁴⁵ More generally there was "the presence of Jewish MONOPOLY," which is "connected with the Jewish character as a whole."⁴⁶

The Jew is international, tenacious and determined upon reaching the very end of his task. He is not satisfied in any trade until that trade is, as far as possible, under his complete control, and he has for the extension of that control the support of his brethren throughout the world. He has at the same time the international knowledge and international indifference which further aid his efforts.⁴⁷

But don't get Belloc wrong! He is *not* an anti-Semite. In fact, some of his best friends are Jews. And unlike Heidegger, he does not even feel "ill at

40. A. N. Wilson, *Hilaire Belloc* (New York: Atheneum, 1984), 258.

41. Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 149f.

42. *Ibid.*, 43, 303, 56.

43. *Ibid.*, 56.

44. *Ibid.*, 93.

45. *Ibid.*, 99, 108.

46. *Ibid.*, 91.

47. *Ibid.*, 94.

ease" with them: "As for me, I get on famously with them," he wrote during the Second World War.⁴⁸ And in the conclusion to *The Jews*, he remarked:

I have never found any difficulty in reaching and retaining intimate acquaintance with the Jews of my own circle — but I may have been fortunate. I know that with most of my fellows it is not so, and perhaps the Jew will always remain to the mass of those about him something strange and unapproachable, and I fear, repulsive.⁴⁹

V

After the war Heidegger seems to have had a great deal of trouble facing up to the devastating truth of it all. Times were hard. He was suspended from his university position. The French army was threatening to occupy his house and confiscate his library because of his Nazi past. And both his sons were prisoners of war in Russia, with no news from them in months. To make matters worse, Heidegger's wife refused the offer of Jacques Maritain (who at that time was France's ambassador to the Holy See) to use the offices of the Vatican to obtain information about the two young men.

"Useless, thank you," Elfride Heidegger replied coldly to Italian philosopher Ernesto Castelli when he conveyed Maritain's offer to the Heideggers in their Black Forest retreat on June 9, 1946. Only later that day, as he was accompanying Castelli down the mountain to see him off, did Heidegger quietly slip Castelli what little information he had on his sons' whereabouts in Russia, along with his thanks for the help. Heidegger was visibly moved. It was a brief moment of revelation that Ernesto Castelli never forgot.⁵⁰

In 1925, from his lectern at Marburg University, Heidegger had told his students: "We intellectuals are certainly conceited, some more than others. Even real philosophers often give this impression because they do not talk about the despair that haunts them."⁵¹ Twenty years later, his life in tatters, Heidegger suffered a nervous breakdown.

He seems to have come out of it resolved to keep a hermetic silence about the motives, responsibility, and concrete forms of his involvement with National Socialism. True, he did give a long interview to *Der Spiegel* in 1966 for publication after his death. But this explanation of his relation to the Nazi regime and his conduct toward Jews was so riddled with omissions, historical errors, and self-serving interpretations that it ended up hiding much more than it revealed.⁵²

Was it that Heidegger did not know how to speak the truth of those years?

When Professor Elisabeth Hirsch, during a conversation with Heidegger, suggested that he should come out and say something about it all, he responded, "*Ja, aber wie?*" ("Yes, but how?").

48. Wilson, *Hilaire Belloc*, 188.

49. Belloc, *The Jews*, 302.

50. Enrico Castelli, *Il tempo invertebrato* (Padova: CEDAM [Casa Editrice Dott. Antonio Milani], 1969), 51, n. 4.

51. Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit, Gesamtausgabe, II/21*, edited by Walter Biemel (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), 97.

52. Sheehan, ed., *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker*, 45–67.

At least once, however, he did try. When the de-Nazification committee learned about the Baumgarten letter of 1933 and told Heidegger they knew, he got up his courage and wrote to his former friend, apparently to apologize.

But the emphasis in his letter was on the concealing-dimension of truth, which closes off, covers over, makes one forget. In the face of the danger we presently face, he wrote to Baumgarten, the past seems to slip away, as if it meant nothing. And he quoted Sophocles: Some things time seals off forever; it takes them back into itself.⁵³ Did that mean "Let's let bygones be bygones"? Or: "The self-concealing of Being makes explanations impossible"? Was Heidegger even attempting to apologize? He chose to play the essence-of-truth game again, concealing rather than revealing, like the oracle at Delphi who "neither hides the truth, nor comes out and says it."

Or was it that Heidegger simply did not *want* to face up to the truth of those years?

After the war, quite out the blue, he called up his old friend and colleague from the 1920s, Rudolf Bultmann. "I would like to ask for your pardon," he said. They met at Bultmann's home, discussed the past, washed it down with a drink or two, and found that they were still the good friends and intellectual partners that they had been two decades before. Bultmann recalled:

And then, as we were saying good-bye, I returned once more to what he had said to me on the telephone. "Now," I told him, "you too must write your *Retractions*, just as St. Augustine did, ... not least of all for the sake of the truth of your own thinking." Heidegger's face became a mask of stone. He left without saying another word about it.⁵⁴

Heidegger finally opted not just for silence but, as he said in another context, even "silence about the silence."⁵⁵ And in that all-concealing silence, Martin Heidegger, still pursuing his one and only question about truth, was at last alone. In 1969, a few days before his eightieth birthday, he remarked quietly: "Loneliness is bound up with the relation of man and God ... Yes, that's the problem ... I am lonely. Just how lonely you will never know ..."⁵⁶

EPILOGUE

In *Being and Time* Heidegger argued that the truth of one's life is measured by how one faces death. In the half-light that is human finitude, the way we live with or run from the ever-impending fate of our dying determines how we manage the truth and error that we ourselves are. In the best case:

53. Wilhelm Schoeppe, "Heidegger und Baumgarten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 28, 1983, 7.

54. Günther Neske, ed., *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 95f.

55. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter Hertz and Joan Staumbaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 52.

56. Neske, ed., *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger*, 271.

Once you grasp the finitude of your existence, that finitude snatches you from the endless possibilities of an easy life — comfortableness, shirking your sluffing things off — and it brings your existence into the simplicity of its *fate*.

But like Kierkegaard's knight of faith, we shall never know who is living authentically — the editor at his desk in Rome? the philosopher at podium in Freiburg? the Jew in the camp at Auschwitz?

And we shall never know who dies authentically.

One month after Mussolini's anti-Semitic laws were passed, Father rico Rosa, influential writer on the Jewish question, died in the odor sanctity, slumped over in his easy chair.

Eight years after the Holocaust had ended, Hilaire Belloc, tireless J baiter, stumbled and fell into his own fireplace, burning himself fatally. died four days later in a rest home.

After years of receiving death-threats for denouncing U.S. policy El Salvador, Father Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of the Jesuit University, dragged out of his house at night and shot.

In May 1976, at the ripe old age of eighty-six, Martin Heidegger, one and only question still unanswered, died in his bed.

57. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 435.

Once you grasp the finitude of your existence, that finitude snatches you back from the endless possibilities of an easy life — comfortableness, shirking your duty, sluffing things off — and it brings your existence into the simplicity of its *fate*.⁵⁷

But like Kierkegaard's knight of faith, we shall never know who is living authentically — the editor at his desk in Rome? the philosopher at his podium in Freiburg? the Jew in the camp at Auschwitz?

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