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MAKING PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT DANGEROUS AGAIN: HEIDEGGER'S ATTACK ON JOURNALISTIC WRITING

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Abstract: When it comes to questions about alternative visions for philosophical engagement, Heidegger's work makes for an interesting case study, especially if we focus on his texts from the turbulent 1930s. As a shortcut into this contested territory, it is instructive to examine Heidegger's anti-journalistic gestures, centered on the question whether this animosity is bound to drive a wedge between, or rather prompt a re-approximation of, philosophy and public scholarship. To render this programmatic concern more specific, the present essay aims to reassess Heidegger's profile by considering his account of language as the "most dangerous of goods" bestowed on humans. This theme can serve as an expedient starting point for scrutinizing philosophers' self-understanding as daring explorers in pursuit of profound insights into the human condition, and their (in)ability to balance excitement and sobriety.

Keywords: philosophical style; poetic prophecy; authoritarianism; historical attunement; journalism; feuilleton; fascist discourse; political affect.

> *To make itself understandable is suicide for philosophy. The idolizers of "facts" never realize that their idols shine only in a borrowed light.*
>
> Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936-1938)[1]

Introduction

Heidegger's legacy remains controversial in contemporary philosophy. To a large degree, this is due to his various political missteps especially during the time of the Weimar Republic's unraveling when intellectuals inside and outside German academia had to choose a stance toward the mercurial rise of National Socialism (Feldman, 2005; Morat, 2007; Mehring,

[1] Heidegger (GA65, p. 435 / CP, p. 344). Here and below, "GA" refers to the *Gesamtausgabe* (Collected Works) followed by numerals to indicate the volume before the page number. On occasion, an additional abbreviation is provided for the title of the English translation (e.g., CP for *Contributions to Philosophy*, HH for *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"*, and LEL for *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*).

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2018; cf. Herf 1986). Heidegger's affiliation with the Hitler regime went through different phases ranging from endorsement to resignation, without ever renouncing Nazism *tout court* (Duff, 2015; Fried, 2000; Wolin, 1993). Moreover, the longstanding debate over Heidegger's imbroglio with Nazi politics has been rekindled as well as complicated by the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, a massive philosophical diary (with the first three published volumes covering the years 1931–1941)[2] which testifies to an anti-Semitic sentiment in Heidegger's thought that strikes some commentators as even more pervasive than they previously assumed.[3]

According to Richard Brody (2014), the underlying question that can be gleaned from this textual situation is the following: "Why does this philosophical strain," namely, the one represented by Heidegger's work, "seem strangely central to the conception of modern criticism, even as it recedes in influence?" In other words, why do Heidegger's texts continue to be oddly attractive and repulsive, at the same time, to a broad group of readers? As a tentative answer Brody submits: "Heidegger happens to have been—a blessing and a curse—a brilliant writer, whose serpentine, spellbinding prose was both an argument against the traditional authority of logical reasoning and a performative undermining of that authority." Brody's point is well taken, for it signals three key features of Heidegger's philosophical writing style:

1. the *paradoxical* effort of presenting arguments against the utility of arguments
2. the *performative* aspect of undermining the accustomed forms of philosophical writing through textual gestures at "freeing" language from logic and rationalist constraints
3. the *authoritative* mannerism with which the authority of the Western philosophical tradition is unseated in the name of a new authority whose source and scope remains to be clarified

What makes Heidegger's prose "serpentine" is that these signature traits are all intertwined in the textual persona that he creates for himself, and the way he moves and shifts the emphasis among these three aspects can be seen as both seductive and elusive (Mehring, 1992). Still, by focusing on the nexus of paradox, performativity, and authority, we can begin to illuminate how the 1930s Heidegger re-envisioned the relation between philosophical thought and its modes of delivery, at a clear distance from any ready-made distinction of form and content. Inspecting the different facets of Heidegger's initiative remains an important exercise in our current situation where authoritarianism has (re) emerged as a powerful political currency around the globe, making inroads even in countries like the United States whose democratic tradition no longer appears impervious to taking an unabashedly illiberal turn (Brown et al., 2018; Illing, 2017).

[2] A fourth volume contains further entries by Heidegger written from 1942 to 1948. For editorial details and publication dates, see Nelson (2016, p. 484).

[3] For a good overview of the different positions on this topic, see Heinz & Kellerer (2016) next to Mitchell & Trawny (2017); cf. Homolka & Heidegger (2016), the *Preface* in Wolin (2016), and Fried & Polt (2018).

Paradox: Climbing the "Ladder" of Language

On a preparatory note, we can say that Heidegger was certainly not the only one who looked for philosophical alternatives along unorthodox lines. The paradoxical quality of his style, in particular, connects Heidegger's project to thinkers as different as Søren Kierkegaard (Carlisle, 2013) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (Egan et al., 2013; Eilenberger, 2020). Other important differences notwithstanding, one thing these thinkers all have in common is a pronounced sensitivity to the limitations of language in capturing the experiential richness of human existence. In this regard, commentators often point to Wittgenstein's famous "ladder" metaphor to illustrate the philosophical challenge that is posed by humans' dependence on language (Perloff, 1996; Ware, 2015). Crucially, language is viewed as a revelatory power (rather than a medium) which cannot be instrumentalized for the purpose of spelling out transparently and without residue what's going on in our own minds, in the world, or in between people and the environment they share. Thus Wittgenstein (1974, p. 74) wrote in a famous passage at the end of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

This dictum implies that human language use and the constitution of ultimate reality are not a match made in heaven, that is, they will never mirror each other in direct or unproblematic ways. At the same time, the image of climbing and then kicking away a ladder conveys a sense of hope that language can provide indirect access or a jump-off point to what's really real, and this is where Heidegger puts his special twist on the issue. While the phrase "what's really real" may sound redundant, it intimates a philosophical distinction which in German is conveyed through the terms *Realität* and *Wirklichkeit*.[4] The former term is most frequently used in scientific contexts where someone aims to offer a comprehensive account of the cosmos as a blueprint for physical reality and its dynamic structure; the latter term is more phenomenological in character, insofar as it is used to describe how certain phenomena show up and affect us within the historical horizon of our experience and practical involvements. For example, in his 1934 lecture on "Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language," Heidegger distinguishes between the physical object of an airplane propeller and its rotation, on the one hand, and an airplane carrying the *Führer*, i.e., Adolf Hitler, from Munich to Venice for a meeting with the leader of fascist Italy, Benito Mussolini, on the other hand (GA38, 82-83; cf. GA38A, 81-82). In this case, the rotating propeller represents a *physical object* in motion which belongs to *Realität* and its

[4] In the late 1920s Heidegger had already touched on the "problem of reality" in ¶ 43 in *Being and Time* (1962, pp. 244-256), yet without clearly laying out the philosophical pedigree of this problem, which can be traced from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and the critical response by "Hegel and the whole generation of *Naturphilosophen* [philosophers of nature] in the 1790s" (Beiser, 2005, pp. 95–107; present quote from p. 100) up to Wilhelm Dilthey's (2002 [1910]) conception of *Wirkungszusammenhang* (nexus of influence, productive system) and Ernst Cassirer's further development thereof (1996, pp. 153–167).

mechanical processes, whereas Hitler's flight to Mussolini marks a *historical event* which is of special significance to the German and the Italian peoples and so belongs to the unfolding of a politically charged *Wirklichkeit*. -

Poetic Prophecy: Performativity and Authority

Under the heading "The Free Use of the National," Miguel de Beistegui (1998) has proffered some keen observations concerning Heidegger's philosophical merger of political initiative and a people's historical self-understanding, and this brings us to the performative as well as the authority-demanding aspects of his writing style. As Beistegui notes, the year 1934 marks Heidegger's entry into a protracted engagement with the poet Friedrich Hölderlin whose work he heralds as an epochal occasion for the Germans to either heed their true calling and find their place in history, or miss their chance and slip into historical self-forgetfulness. "The poetry of Hölderlin reveals Germany's situation to itself: abandoned by the gods, the country sinks ever deeper into the prosaism of its busy everydayness, and no longer has an eye for what is essential" (Beistegui, 1998, p. 88). This approach culminates in Heidegger's central claim that "Poetry is the primordial language of a people" (HH, p. 67) [translation modified].[5] In this manner, Heidegger presents Hölderlin as a poet-prophet whose texts convey a unique message to the German people, if only they are willing to receive it.

Heidegger insists that such featuring of Hölderlin must not be confused with Old-Testament-style prophecy (GA4, p. 114). He is at pains to emphasize that the spiritual authority he claims for the body of Hölderlin's writings retains a certain resemblance to religious prophecy broadly conceived, without being reducible to the familiar forms of (mono)theism. Rather, what Heidegger is after is a piety that comes after organized religion—a new unchurched, national faith devoted to Germany's historical destiny (Wolfe, 2019; Weidler 2020). In terms of performativity, then, what we find in his texts is a layered mode of messaging, as Heidegger strikes the pose of a hermeneutical trailblazer riding on the coattails of a poetic trailblazer, namely, Hölderlin (Wolfe, 2014, p. 144; cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 1989). At the same time, Heidegger wants to ensure that neither his philosophical voice nor Hölderlin's poetic voice be mistaken for enunciating anything close to theological or quasi-theological dogma, since poems are no "papal documents" (GA39, p. 19 / HH, p. 21). Instead, what Heidegger's German target audience is supposed to gain from engaging with Hölderlin's *oeuvre* is a special sensibility to the risks of the historical present, associated with the dual threat of godforsakenness and everyday prosaism. Heidegger unpacks this threat in terms of language as the "most dangerous of goods" (GA39, pp. 61-62 / HH, pp. 57-58) granted to humanity.

> The dangerousness of language is thus essentially double, and each of these dangers is fundamentally different: On the one hand, there is the danger of supreme proximity to the gods and thereby to being annihilated by their excessive character; at the same time, however, there

[5] The original reads: "Dichtung ist die Ursprache eines Volkes" (GA39, 74). In HH, the translators render *Dichtung* as "poetizing" to reflect how Heidegger sets his approach to Hölderlin's *poetic work* apart from poetry in its ordinary sense or as treated in literary studies. However, "poetizing" sounds more stilted in English than *Dichtung* does in German. Cf. the *Translators' Foreword* (HH, p. xv).

> is the danger of the most shallow turning away and of becoming entangled in worn-out idle talk and the semblance that goes with it. (GA39, pp. 63-64 / HH, p. 59)

This passage is key because it announces the spiritual stakes of Heidegger's vision for a new national faith. According to the last block quote, the main challenge is to achieve the difficult midway position between a self-destructive posture of over-proximity to the gods, and a decadent posture of "shallow" distancing from them. We already observed that the authority Heidegger ascribes to Hölderlin is conceived as independent of any familiar (mono) theistic creed. Hence, Heidegger's mentioning of "the gods" may seem like an unexpected foray into polytheism. However, throughout his long career, Heidegger's diction keeps sliding between numerically fuzzy references to "a god," "the gods," and "the godhead" (Wolfe, 2014, pp. 139–142; Weidler, 2018, pp. 28–69). Since Heidegger's noncommittal attitude in this regard is so pervasive throughout his texts, it is sensible to assume that he intends his philosophical commentary on the new Hölderlin-guided piety to be so fundamental that traditional distinctions between polytheism and monotheism become secondary or irrelevant (McGrath, 2008, pp. 102–103, 116–117). As Heidegger puts it in *Contributions to Philosophy*: "The multiplicity of gods is not subject to enumeration but, instead, to the inner richness of the grounds and abysses in the site of the moment for the lighting up and concealment of the intimation of the last god. The last god is not the end; the last god is the other beginning of the immeasurable possibilities of our history" (GA65, p. 411 / CP, p. 326).

Accordingly, for Heidegger, every people faces the epochal challenge to redraw the contours of the divine vis-à-vis the human anew. In confronting the spiritual currents of their respective age, some peoples will opt for a monotheistic perspective, while others will embrace a polytheistic outlook, and still others will acknowledge traces of the holy in their surroundings without specifying any god-figure.[6] What's decisive in all this is not the number of gods, but whether a people's construal of the relation between the human and the divine is properly attuned to the "moment" or *Augenblick* (blink of an eye; instant; moment of vision) in all its historical, future-pregnant significance.[7]

Historical Attunement: In the Mood for Destiny

Heidegger weaves an intricate terminological web by linking *Bestimmung* (determination, stipulation, destiny) and *Stimmung* (mood, atmosphere, attunement), using the expression *Bestimmtheit* (determinateness; definiteness) as a bridge term between the two.

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[6] For Heidegger's complex conception of the holy, see Sikka (1998), Young (2001, pp. 42–46, 107–111), Weidler (2018, pp. 129, 164).

[7] For an early and incisive criticism of Heidegger's religiously inflected rendering of the present moment, see Cassirer (1996, pp. 200-211). On page 211, Cassirer quotes a telling passage from Heidegger's opus magnum: "But if fate constitutes the primordial historicality of Dasein, then history has its essential importance neither in what is past nor in the 'today' and its 'connection' with what is past, but in that authentic historizing of existence which arises from Dasein's *future*" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 438). For Heidegger's express comments on the "moment of vision," see (*ibid.*, pp. 437–438). Heidegger deploys *Dasein* (lit. "being-there") as a flexible term of art to describe how human existence, individually and collectively, is subjected to historical trends and events that exceed our efforts at planning and controlling things. For further details, see Bambach (1995, p. 230).

> The present as *determinateness* [*Bestimmtheit*] of the determination [*Bestimmung*] *is* only as crossing from beenness into the future. As crossing, it shows itself in the execution, that is, in the moment. That becomes clearer, insofar as we experience time out of our determination in an original sense: as determination in mandate and mission. (GA38, 128-129 / LEL, 107)

> Moods [*Stimmungen*] are no mere infusion in our mental life, but are fundamental events of the power of time in which our *Dasein* is *original*. (GA38, 130 / LEL, 108)

The battle over such destined attunement unfolds in and through language, starting with interpretive clashes over the very meaning of the word *Bestimmung*. At this juncture in the discussion, journalistic writing becomes one of Heidegger's chief targets. In preparation for this central criticism, he now goes so far as to assert that his philosophical account of a people's historicality aims at "a completely different understanding of time in its temporality/temporalizing," which "goes beyond that which is moral and religious" and which can never be grounded in a "merely verbal understanding" (GA38, 125 / LEL, 104). Here, the reader (or the listener of the original lecture) may already worry that this philosophical version of poetic prophecy is on the brink of morphing into free-floating oracular intuition, but Heidegger's diction becomes even more disconcerting when he comments on the violent side of philosophy:

> We want to give the word "determination" ["*Bestimmung*"] a fuller, more original sense. The word can be applied at will in everyday usage. We rape [*vergewaltigen*] it. However, this violence [*Gewaltsamkeit*] with which philosophy uses words and determines words belongs to its essence. Only in the eyes of the philistine [*Spießbürger*] and columnist is word-determination arbitrariness and violence. One does not see that precisely the veiling of language and the random use of words is a much greater violence than a regulation of the meaning of a word arising from inner necessity. (GA38, 127 / LEL, 106). [translation modified][8]

This statement is symptomatic of Heidegger's effort to vest philosophy with renewed authority. In crass phraseology, he gives philosophy license to exercise violence through and upon language, even to the point of "raping" words like *Bestimmung*.[9] Rhetorically, Heidegger carries out a preemptive strike against any potential critic who would reject his way of fitting this term into a nationalist agenda of German destiny as an arbitrary

[8] Here, the translators render the third sentence "We violate it" instead of "We rape it." This can be justified as a means to reproduce the similar appearance of the verb *vergewaltigen* and the noun *Gewaltsamkeit* used in the next sentence. However, this rendering omits the connotation of rape which the verb *vergewaltigen* is bound to have for German readers or listeners.

9 Note that this abrasive formulation is taken from a probable oral addition on Heidegger's part, based on student notes and brought forward in the 1998 edition (GA38, 127), but which is not contained in the 2020 edition, based on the original manuscript (cf. GA38A, 125). The 2020 edition leaves my previous observations about Heidegger's exposition of *Bestimmung*, *Stimmung*, and *Bestimmtheit* fully intact. See (GA38A, 126-128). Also, in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), Heidegger confirms his commitment to "violence-doing" [*Gewalt-tätigkeit*] as keyed to "poetic projection" and the "inception of history" in ways that remain troubling (Heidegger, 2000, pp. 160-179). For astute comments on this segment, see Fried (2000, pp. 141–146). Heidegger's damning verdict of the press is repeated in *Contributions to Philosophy* (GA65, esp. pp. 153, 158) and other texts from the 1930s and beyond. For further examples, see the reference to David Dwan and Lutz Hachmeister, below.

usurpation, a willful exercise in politicized semantics. Turning the tables on this anticipated objection, Heidegger suggests that it is not his philosophical language use that is capricious. Instead, it is the shallow common-sense perspective of the *Spießbürger* (a derogatory label for parochial middle-class citizens) and of newspaper scribblers that "veils" the true meaning of words and thus papers over the "inner necessity" which propels Heidegger's Hölderlin-inspired account of national belonging within history.

Philosophical Journalism: Writing in the "Small Form"

While this unfiltered criticism of the press recurs in many of Heidegger's texts throughout his career (Dwan, 2003; Hachmeister, 2014, pp. 52-60), his sweeping dismissal of journalistic writing in the 1930s is of special importance, for it can be seen as a frontal attack on "Weimar criticism" which included a newly emerging genre of public literary engagement, namely, the art of writing in the "small form" tailored to the feuilleton as its medium. As Michael Jennings (2013, p. 208) explains:

> The feuilleton had been introduced in French political journals and newspapers in the nineteenth century. Although the feuilleton was in some ways the forerunner of the arts and leisure sections of today's newspapers, there were significant differences: … it consisted mainly of cultural criticism and of serial publications of longer literary texts, but also included significant quantities of other material, including gossip, fashion commentary, and a variety of short forms—aphorisms, epigrams, quick takes on cultural objects and issues—often referred to as "glosses." In the course of the 1920s, a number of prominent writers shaped their writing practice in order to accommodate it to the feuilleton; the "kleine Form" or "little form" that resulted came rapidly to be identified as the primary mode of cultural commentary and criticism in the Weimar Republic.

Among Heidegger's contemporaries, two notable representatives of this new brand of philosophical journalism, as we might call it, were Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin both of whom owed a great deal to the pioneering work of Georg Simmel. In contrast with Heidegger's grand gestures at Germany's national destiny as exposed to the "power of time" (LEL, p. 108; cited above), these writers sought to open up the present historical moment through a critical examination of social settings animated by novel cultural practices that altered the "inner rhythmic" (Simmel, 1996, p. 196) of people's life. By tracking trends that grew out of the aftermath of the Great War, from the "roaring" 1920s into the economically unstable 1930s, these writers experimented with different techniques of witty provocation to alert the reading public to the ideological undertow of an ongoing societal transformation whose breathtaking speed appeared to defy scrutiny. Exemplary in this regard are Simmel's essay "The Philosophy of Fashion" which was later included in the anthology *Philosophical Culture*, Kracauer's pieces "Travel and Dance," "The Mass Ornament," and "Cult of Distraction," alongside the essays collected in Benjamin's *One-Way Street* as well as select passages from his unfinished *Arcades* project.[10]

[10] As Jennings notes: "Many of the pieces in *One Way Street* [published in 1928] first appeared in the feuilleton section of newspapers and magazines" (2013, p. 208). For Benjamin's *Arcades*, see Susan Buck-Morss' study *The Dialectics of Seeing*, including her comments on Benjamin's take on the "task

In his commentary on "travel addiction" as a social craze, Simmel (1996) diagnosed modern life as beset by an "'impatient' pace" that engendered novel forms of desire and pleasure manifest, for example, in people enjoying the transitory moments of departure and arrival more than the actual stay at their travel destination (p. 197).[11] The motif of accelerated movement punctuated by abrupt stops or sudden turns was picked up by Benjamin who emphasized, in Uwe Steiner's (2010) words, that "[s]peed alters not only perception but also the function and self-understanding of the writer" (p. 83). This leads to Benjamin's programmatic statement that "literary effectiveness can come into being only in a strict alternation between action and writing" for which "the inconspicuous forms" are better suited than "the pretentious, universal gesture of the book." Besides the feuilleton, such unassuming forms could include "leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards" (Benjamin, 1996, p. 444). In this place, Benjamin's hint at an "alternation between action and writing" can be clarified as a plea for the writer's going back and forth between phenomenological immersion and critical extraction. As Steiner (2010) notes, this amounts to a risky "balancing act between consent and criticism" (p. 83), since to a certain degree such an approach will fight fire with fire, that is, it will embrace the speed of the new media while trying not to get swept along unreservedly.

In this sense, philosophical journalists cannot help but get implicated in the cultural and political currents of social change, even as they try to stem the tides of ideologically charged desires and dangerous political affects as they see them. Such readiness to include oneself in the phenomenological target area of one's criticism became the signature trait of Benjamin's conception of "the critic" as "the strategist in the literary struggle" (Benjamin, 1996, p. 460). The latter puts his work in the vicinity of similarly strategic writers like the Viennese counter-journalist Karl Kraus and the essayist Alfred Polgar, who emerged as masters of the small form in their own right, with special emphasis on the subversive capacity of political satire (Linden, 2013; McBride, 2020; Timms, 2005). Heidegger, I submit, was also a very strategic writer, but his stylistic strategy is diametrically opposed to the small form championed by Benjamin, Kracauer, and company. Some of Kracauer's formulations, in particular, effectively capture the moral stakes of this opposition. For Kracauer as for Benjamin, immersion in the fast-paced cultural currents of modern life does not work through psychological introspection; it is not focused on the thought contents of an individual. Instead, it is a matter of bringing about an honest confrontation of particular audiences and the displays enticing them, in specific artistic milieus and within the materiality of a historical *constellation* (Arens, 2007, p. 48). In "Cult of Distraction," Kracauer (1995, p. 326) thus comments on the "surface glamor of the stars, films, revues, and spectacular shows" with which audiences in metropolitan Berlin were showered in the 1920s:

> Here, in pure externality, the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions. Were this reality to remain hidden from the viewers, they could neither attack nor change it; its disclosure in distraction is therefore of *moral* significance. … This emphasis on the external has the advantage of being *sincere*.

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of the politically committed intellectual" and his endorsement of a "frank style" (1991, p. 291).

[11] For details and illustrations pertaining to Simmel's insights into the ""impatient" pace" of modern life, in relation to Heidegger's work, see Weidler (2012, pp. 499–504).

However, this statement does not amount to the flat-footed suggestion that philosophical journalists qua strategic writers can simply "act" by taking a group of people to a dance revue featuring the Tiller Girls, for example, and then comment laconically: See, all this sexually charged commotion of synchronized limbs on stage is but a reflection of your collective social nervousness and disorientation. Not only would this put the critic in the position of prematurely claiming the moral high ground by telling everyone around them to wake up from their hedonistic misgivings; it's also not clear what the recipients of such potentially patronizing advice are supposed to wake up *to*. Accordingly, strategic literary criticism via small-form writing cannot just present people with a snapshot from social life and hold it up like a mirror to effect some sort of moral catharsis. Rather, any critical effect of "disclosure in distraction" can only be stimulated by twisting certain perceptual tendencies in a different direction, so that in witnessing their own resistance toward any such change in perspective people can become aware of their previous investments and passional attachments, to begin with.

Conclusion: Fascist Discourse and Political Affect

To illustrate this pivotal point, let us conclude by revisiting Heidegger's literary use of the image of an airplane carrying Hitler to Mussolini. While this image was presented as a phenomenon indicative of historical reality as imbued with a summoning of the German people to meet their destiny, it is also fairly cliché. In the context of the crisis-ridden 1930s, the observation that the meeting of two state leaders *may* have significant political consequences appears both vague and trivial. But then, what is it that makes Heidegger's prose "spell-binding" as Brody suggested? In this instance, the answer would have to be: Heidegger's invocation of *German aviation* as a theme complex that was laced with multiple symbolic meanings and emotional triggers, which participants in fascist discourse sought to appropriate as the Weimar Republic was about to give way to Nazism.[12] In one of the best commentaries on the subject, Fernando Esposito observes: "What conservative-revolutionary intellectuals such as Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt shared with the fascists was a rejection of liberal progress and a longing for a stable, definitive order with a suprahistorical basis" (Esposito, 2015, p. 38). In this context,

> the airplane and the aviator served them [the fascists] as a symbol of the aspiration to an eternal order, which highlighted the dynamism of their movements. Airplanes aroused admiration and surrounded those who flew them with a bold, vital and youthful aura of impetuosity [*Aura des Aufbruchs*]. (Esposito, 2015, p. 2) [translation modified][13]

The traumatizing experiences of the First World War followed by different stages of social upheaval and disintegration during the Weimar Republic created an atmosphere

[12] For different attempts at discerning the constitutive features and organizing principles of fascism construed variously as an ideological construct, discursive practice, or social movement see Griffin (1995), (2002); and Stefan Breuer (2008).

[13] It is worth noting that the German term *Aufbruch* generally refers to a sudden departure in the context of traveling where people embark on a journey, or in the context of epochal change where a new age is opening up or "breaking forth."

of permanent crisis and an implicit public demand for new ways of coping with the semi-chaotic conditions that pervaded people's everyday life, especially during the years surrounding the Wall Street Crash of 1929 (Balderston, 2002; Evans 2004, pp. 109–117, 264–265). This crisis consciousness spawned an array of desires for order in the face of contingency. Kracauer (1971 [orig. 1922]) aptly summarized this situation by noting how it congealed into a felt need "to lead a cast-out humanity back into the new-old spheres of God-filled reality" (quoted from Esposito, 2015, p. 357). In his 1930s texts Heidegger acknowledged as much. Yet, as a poetic-prophetic commentator and self-declared enemy of journalistic writing, Heidegger's stratagem rides on *allusion to the divine* as opposed to Benjamin's and Kracauer's stratagem of *illumination through the profane*. So considered, Heidegger's writing style works analogously to Leni Riefenstahl's cinematic style, especially in her movie *Triumph of the Will* (1935) featuring Hitler as a savior descending by plane onto the Nazi party rally at Nuremberg in 1934 (Kracauer, 2004, pp. 257-259, 290; Sontag, 1975; Schickel, 2007; Ebert, 2008). Thus, Heidegger is at his most serpentine when he mobilizes political affect (including the adventurous flair of aviation) without the sincerity that Kracauer expected from responsibly conducted "disclosure in distraction."[14] And that's what makes Heidegger's philosophically framed presentation of language as the "most dangerous of goods" dangerous in itself.

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[14] A propos political affect, Ronald Beiner (2018, pp. 130–131) draws attention to one of George Orwell's central insights into the emotional appeal of Hitler's type of fascist politics: "fascism is "psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life." Socialism and capitalism convey the following message: "I offer you a good time"; Hitler's message, by contrast, is "I offer you struggle, danger, and death." "We ought not to underrate [the latter's] emotional appeal.""

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