

Heidegger on World Jewry in the Black Notebooks

Martin Heidegger

by Greg Johnson

“The locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks.” — Proverbs 30:27.

The following is a draft translation of the five passages (so far) in Martin Heidegger’s Black Notebooks mentioning Jews. They appear in the third volume of the Black Notebooks, published as vol. 96 of Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe. Also included are the German originals.

This translation is presented for discussion, and I would be delighted with constructive criticism. Our regular commentator Petronius has already made some significant corrections, for which I am grateful.

The talk of “decision” (Entscheidung), “decision regions” (Entscheidungsbezirke), and “Be-ing” (Seyn) belong to Heidegger’s “being-historical” thinking, which tries to get outside the metaphysical tradition and grasp the transformation of hegemonic interpretations of Being down through history, eventuating in the modern scientific/technological interpretation of Being as transparent to human understanding and available for manipulation, which here Heidegger calls “calculation” (Rechnung) and “machination” (Machenschaft). In his later writings he refers to this interpretation of being as the “essence” of technology.

Heidegger’s account of world Jewry is consistent with his overall “anti-humanism.” Humanism is the idea that human consciousness is “behind” history, meaning that history and culture can ultimately be understood as the products of conscious thought and deliberate action. For Heidegger, however, history is “behind” human consciousness, meaning that human consciousness is shaped by forces like language, traditions, and practices that we can never fully make conscious and thus remain inscrutable and outside of our control.

Thus for Heidegger, the origin of modernity is ultimately a contingent “Ereignis” — which in ordinary German means “event” and for Heidegger also has the sense of “enthrallment” — which can neither be comprehended or controlled. It simply seizes us as a historical destiny.

A crude form of humanism is the conspiratorial theory of history, which is based on the assumption that whatever happens is intended to happen, i.e., it is the result of conscious planning and deliberate action. Since Heidegger rejects this premise, he also rejects such anti-Semitic conspiracy theories as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as naively humanistic in their understanding of history.

Heidegger does not, however, deny that human thought and action play important roles in history. But he believes that they are not the ultimate forces. Thus Heidegger does not deny that the Jewish community world-wide actively pursues its perceived collective interests. But he does believe that Jewish policies are not the cause or explanation of modernity, but instead that modernity arises from deeper, broader, and ultimately inscrutable forces.

Heidegger sees the rise of Jewish power — in both Anglo-American capitalism and Bolshevism — as a product of the Jews' unique adaptation to the spirit of modernity, which is an age of rootlessness and calculation. Jews, therefore, appear to be both subjects and objects of the modernization process. Primarily they are objects, since history is ultimately outside of human control. But since world Jewry is already characterized by rootlessness and calculation, it is capable of accepting the "world-historical task" of driving modernity toward its consummation: a rootless, homogeneous, technological mass society, which will ultimately ensnare and destroy the Jews as well. So, in the end, they are objects as well.

Heidegger's anti-humanist interpretation of the historical role of Jewry is similar in some respects to Savitri Devi's. Although Savitri Devi adhered to the Traditionalist cyclical view of history, while Heidegger did not, they agree that the historical process is outside human control. Like Heidegger, Savitri Devi also believes that organized Jewry is, in a sense, the people chosen by history to bring about the consummation of the modern age, which is the Dark Age (Kali Yuga) in the Traditionalist cycle, and that the Jews as well will ultimately be liquidated by the forces they seek to control.

Translation

Jewry's temporary increase in power is, however, grounded in the fact that Western metaphysics, especially in its modern development, furnishes the starting point for the diffusion of a generally empty rationality and calculative ability, which in this way have taken up residence in the "spirit," without being able grasp the hidden decision realms on its own [rationality and calculative ability are not able to grasp these realms by their own means]. The more originary and primordial the prospective decisions and questions, the more they remain inaccessible to this "race." (Thus Husserl's writing on phenomenological observation while dismissing psychological explanation and historical settlement of opinions is of lasting significance — and yet it goes

nowhere near the regions of essential decisions, but rather presupposes the historical tradition of philosophy throughout; the necessary consequence is reflected immediately in the swing to neo-Kantian transcendental philosophy that eventually makes a progression to a Hegelianism in formal sense inevitable. My “attack” against Husserl is not directed against him alone and indeed inessentially — my attack goes to the neglect of the question of Being, i.e., the essence of metaphysics as such, on the ground of which the machination of beings can determine history. The attack grounds a historical moment of the highest decision-making between the primacy of beings and the grounding of the truth of Be-ing.)

The Jews, with their marked talent for calculation, “live” longer than anyone by the principle of race, which is why they are resisting its consistent application with utmost violence. The establishment [Einrichtung] of racial breeding [eugenics] does not stem from “life” itself, but from the overpowering of life through machination [technology]. What it pushes forward with such a plan is the complete deracialization of all peoples by clamping them into a uniformly constructed and tailored establishment [Einrichtung] of all beings. At one with de-racialization is the self-alienation of peoples – the loss of history – i.e., the decision regions of Be-ing.

Thus, both [the imperialistic-bellicose and humanitarian-pacifistic way of thinking] can be used by “international Jewry” to proclaim and accomplish one as a means for the other [their common end of a rootless, leveled, homogeneous, technological mass civilization] — this machinational “history”-making entangles all players equally in their webs —

The idea of an understanding with England in terms of a distribution of imperialist “prerogatives” misses the essence of the historical process, which is led by England within the framework of Americanism and Bolshevism and at the same time world Jewry to its final conclusion. The question of the role of world Jewry is not racial, but the metaphysical question of the type of humanity that can accept the world-historical “task” of uprooting all beings from Being.

World Jewry, incited by emigrants allowed to leave Germany, is pervasive and impalpable, and even though its power is widely spread, it doesn’t need to participate in military actions, whereas all th