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978-0-521-80114-0 - Martin Heidegger: Off the Beaten Track

Edited and Translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes

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Off the Beaten Track

This collection of texts (originally published in German under the title *Holzwege*) is Heidegger's first post-war book and contains some of the major expositions of his later philosophy. Of particular note are "The Origin of the Work of Art," perhaps the most discussed of all of Heidegger's essays, and "Nietzsche's Word: 'God Is Dead,'" which sums up a decade of Nietzsche research. Although translations of the essays have appeared individually in a variety of places, this is the first English translation to bring them all together as Heidegger intended. The text is taken from the last edition of the work, which contains the author's final corrections together with important marginal annotations that provide considerable insight into the development of his thought. This fresh and accurate new translation will be an invaluable resource for all students of Heidegger, whether they work in philosophy, literary theory, religious studies, or intellectual history.

Julian Young is Honorary Research Associate at the University of Auckland. His publications include *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (1992), *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (1997), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (2001), and *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (2002).

Kenneth Haynes is Assistant Professor of Classical Studies at Boston University, and writes on the classical tradition in modern European literature and philosophy. He is the author of a translation of Hamann's philosophical writings (forthcoming).

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“Wood” is an old name for forest. In the wood there are paths, mostly overgrown, that come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden.

They are called *Holzwege*.

Each goes its separate way, though within the same forest. It often appears as if one is identical to another. But it only appears so.

Woodcutters and forest keepers know these paths. They know what it means to be on a *Holzweg*.

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Translators' preface

Holzwege – here translated as *Off the Beaten Track* – is the title Heidegger gave to this collection of six essays and lectures which was first published in 1950. The essays and lectures themselves span a little more than a decade, from 1935 to 1946. The text used for this translation is taken from the seventh edition of *Holzwege*, which is itself based on volume V of the *Gesamtausgabe*. The notes at the foot of the page are Heidegger's own, generally marginalia or other notes in his working copies of the texts (see the "Editor's epilogue," translated below, for further bibliographical information). Where these notes refer to works that have been translated into English, references to the original texts have been replaced by references to these translations. Where no such translations exist, references to the German texts remain. The notes at the end of the volume are the translators' and are limited to identifying the sources of quotations and otherwise providing a minimum of information that seems helpful to readers of Heidegger in English.

In entitling his work *Holzwege*, literally, "Timber Tracks," or "Forest Paths," Heidegger chose a term that carefully balances positive and negative implications. On the one hand, a *Holzweg* is a timber track that leads to a clearing in the forest where timber is cut. On the other, it is a track that used to lead to such a place but is now overgrown and leads nowhere. Hence, in a popular German idiom, to be "on a *Holzweg*" is to be on the wrong track or in a cul-de-sac. A translation of Heidegger's note on the title appears at the beginning of the book, where it is found in most German editions. It is in order to capture something of Heidegger's dual meaning that we have adopted the title "Off the Beaten Track."

Each translator bears primary responsibility for three of the six essays: Julian Young translated "The Origin of the Work of Art," "The Age of the World Picture," and "Anaximander's Saying"; Kenneth Haynes translated the others. Each read the other's work closely, and translated in awareness of the other; nonetheless, in our collaboration we did not aim to eliminate all differences in style.

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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

We have translated “*Sein*” as “being,” preferring a lower-case “b” to a capital. This choice has not been made in order to take a stand in the controversy over the possible religious or quasi-religious implications of Heidegger’s vocabulary. In fact, both translators agree with Julian Young’s description of a fundamental ambiguity in Heidegger’s use of the word *Sein*, which refers sometimes to presence, the ground of beings, the fundamental horizon of disclosure; and sometimes to this disclosure along with what is not disclosed or made intelligible (*Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, chapter 1). That is, like the word “day,” which may refer either to the period of daylight or to the period of both daylight and night, Heidegger’s use of *Sein* must be read in context. However, it would have been unduly intrusive to translate sometimes with a capital “B” and sometimes without. Since some passages require the lower-case “b,” we have translated *Sein* in this way throughout.

We have not generally attempted to reproduce Heidegger’s word-play, since such attempts usually require very unidiomatic writing, which would give a false impression of the way Heidegger writes, in addition to obscuring his sense. However, rather than lose the word-play, we have often included the key German words in square brackets. The German has been included at other instances, when it seemed important to alert the reader to recurrences of crucial German words, when the German was particularly rich in meaning, or on the few occasions when we required some latitude in the English translation. The glossary has been kept short since the German has often been included in the main body of the translation; it is mainly concerned with words translated in several ways.