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# Heidegger on Ontotheology

## *Technology and the Politics of Education*

Heidegger is now widely recognized as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, yet much of his later philosophy remains shrouded in confusion and controversy. Restoring Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics as "ontotheology" to its rightful place at the center of his later thought, this book explains the depth and significance of his controversial critique of technology, his appalling misadventure with Nazism, his prescient critique of the university, and his important philosophical suggestions for the future of higher education. It will be required reading for those seeking to understand the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and National Socialism as well as the continuing relevance of his work.

Iain D. Thomson is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico, where he received the Gunter Starkey Award for Teaching Excellence. His articles on Heidegger have been published in *Inquiry, Journal of the History of Philosophy,* the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies,* and the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology.*

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## *Technology and the Politics of Education*

IAIN D. THOMSON
*University of New Mexico*

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*For my mother, father, and (in memoriam) Gutcher,*

*Poets of public policy, healers of human being, teachers.*

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Time will bring to light whatever is hidden; it will conceal and cover up what is now shining with the greatest splendor.

Horace, *Epistles*

An unlimited text is one that every time gives rise to a new reading while partly escaping it.

What still remains to be read is its one chance of survival.

Edmond Jabès, *The Little Book of Unsuspected Subversion*

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# Acknowledgments

*Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* brings together and develops much of the thinking I have been doing on Heidegger over the past five years, and I owe considerable debts to the individuals and communities who, by supporting and guiding my work during this time, helped to improve it in innumerable ways. I would like to acknowledge them here, thanking them for their insight and critique without claiming to have resolved all the differences between our views. I hope these differences will prove to be productive, but where they turn out merely to reflect the limits of my views, the responsibility, of course, is entirely my own.

Many of the hermeneutic theses at the heart of *Heidegger on Ontotheology* were tested and refined at annual meetings of the International Society for Phenomenological Studies, and my work benefited immensely from these small but intense gatherings of continental philosophers in serene Asilomar, California. For helpful criticisms and suggestions on these memorable occasions, I would like to thank Steve Affeldt, Ed Boedecker, Taylor Carman, Dave Cerbone, Drew Cross, Steve Crowell, Béatrice Han, Alastair Hannay, John Haugeland, Randall Havas, Piotr Hoffman, Stephan Käufer, Sean Kelly, Cristina Lafont, Jeff Malpas, Wayne Martin, Alexander Nehamas, Mark Okrent, John Richardson, Joe Rouse, Ted Schatzki, Hans Sluga, Julian Young, and – for extremely incisive and valuable critiques of the whole book – Bill Blattner, Bert Dreyfus, Charlie Guignon, and Mark Wrathall.

I also owe thanks to the other philosophical communities before whom I presented my work on Heidegger, including the American Philosophical



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Association, the Parliament of Philosophers, the Society for Philosophy and Technology, and the University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy in the 21st Century, and so to such inimitable philosophical interlocutors as Anne Margaret Baxley, Keith Brown, Joseph Cohen, Adrian Cussins, Michael Eldred, Andy Feenberg, Matt George, Peter Gordon, Kevin Hill, David Hoy, John Hughes, Yumiko Iida, Hide Ishiguro, Shunsuke Kadowaki, Ted Kisiel, Ed Lee, Kenn Maly, Junichi Murata, Michael Peters, Robert Pippin, Bill Richardson, Chris Rickey, Richard Rorty, Raj Sampath, Charles Spinosa, Tracy Strong, David Stump, Mungo Thomson, Gianni Vattimo, Samuel Weber, Gideon Yaffe, and Holger Zaborowski. Here Jerry Doppelt deserves special mention for wise counsel and steadfast support.

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Of course, I might never have developed my own interpretation of Heidegger if I did not have great teachers who disagreed profoundly with one another, among whom I gratefully acknowledge Taylor Carman, Jacques Derrida, Fred Olafson, and Richard Wolin. Here, however, my deepest thanks go to Bert Dreyfus, not only for introducing me to

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Heidegger in the 1980s and encouraging my work ever since with thoughtful critiques but also for helping to inspire this work by exemplifying the virtues of the Heideggerian teacher. Finally, I would like to recognize the loving support of my wonderful wife and family, without whom this book could never have been completed.

Given all the help I have received, I feel a bit less embarrassed by my more than occasional use of the royal hermeneutic "we."

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# A Note on the Notes

Some of us are footnote people, but many are not. For those who find that copious footnotes disrupt the flow of the text, my (perhaps obvious) suggestion is: Do not feel compelled to read every note as you go. If you want the reference or have an unanswered question, then you should read the surrounding notes; with any luck your question will be answered there (and if it is not, then you will see that in fact I do not have *enough* notes). Otherwise, I would invite you to read through the notes at your leisure; some supplemental and specialized argument is done in the notes, and a number of *Holzwege* are preserved there as well. (The received view that by *Holzweg* Heidegger means "dead-end" is mistaken. In the prefatory epigraph to the collection of essays he titled *Holzwege*, Heidegger explains these as forest paths made by backwoods loggers and known to backcountry hikers, thus implying that a *Holzweg* is a path leading to a place in the forest from which trees have been removed – that is, a *clearing*.)



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# Abbreviations Used for Works by Heidegger

(*Translations frequently modified*)

| | |
|---|---|
| A | *Antwort: Martin Heidegger im Gespräch.* Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, eds. Pfullingen: Neske, 1988. |
| Auf | *Aufenthalte.* Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1989. |
| B&T | *Being and Time.* J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. |
| CP | *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning).* P. Emad and K. Maly, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. |
| DBW | "Die Bedrohung der Wissenschaft." In Dietrich Papenfuss and Otto Pöggeler, eds., *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers.* Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989. |
| DDP | "Documents from the Denazification Proceedings Concerning Martin Heidegger." M. Brainard and F.-A. Dorner, trans. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–15 (1991): 528–56. |
| DT | *Discourse on Thinking.* J. Anderson and E. Freund, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. |
| EHF | *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy.* T. Sadler, trans. London and New York: Continuum, 2002. |
| EP | *The End of Philosophy.* J. Stambaugh, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1973. |
| ET | *The Essence of Truth.* T. Sadler, trans. London and New York: Continuum, 2002. |
| FCM | *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude.* W. McNeill and N. Walker, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. |
| FD | *Die Frage nach dem Ding.* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953. |



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| | |
|---|---|
| G | *Gelassenheit*. Pfulligen: Neske, 1959. |
| GA3 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 3: *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1991. |
| GA5 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 5: *Holzwege*. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1977. |
| GA7 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 2000 |
| GA9 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 9: *Wegmarken*. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1976. |
| GA10 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 10. *Der Satz vom Grund*. Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann: 1997. |
| GA12 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 12: *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1985. |
| GA13 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 13. *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*. Hermann Heidegger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann: 1983. |
| GA15 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 15: *Seminare*. Curd Ochwadt, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1986. |
| GA16 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 16: *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges, 1910–1976*. Hermann Heidegger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 2000. |
| GA19 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 19: *Platon: Sophistes*. Ingeborg Schüßler, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1992. |
| GA20 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 20: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*. Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann,1979. |
| GA26 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 26: *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1978. |
| GA27 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 27: *Einleitung in die Philosophie*. Ina Saame-Speidel, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1996. |
| GA29–30 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 29–30: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit*. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1983. |
| GA31 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 31. *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. Second edition. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1994. |
| GA34 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 34. *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*. Hermann Mörchen, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1988. |

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|---|---|
| GA39 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 39. *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein."* Susanne Ziegler, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1980. |
| GA40 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 40. *Einführung in die Metaphysik.* Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1983. |
| GA41 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 41. *Die Frage nach dem Ding.* Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann: 1984. |
| GA50 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 50. *Nietzsches Metaphysik; Einleitung in die Philosophie: Denken und Dichten.* Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann: 1990. |
| GA53 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 53. *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister."* Walter Biemel, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1984. |
| GA54 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 54: *Parmenides.* Manfred S. Frings, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1982. |
| GA56–57 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 56–57: *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie.* Bernd Heimbüchel, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1987. |
| GA59 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 59: *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks.* Claudius Strube, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1993. |
| GA61 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 61: *Phänomenologische Interpretaionen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forshung.* Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, eds. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1985. |
| GA63 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 63: *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität).* Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1988. |
| GA65 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis).* Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1989. |
| GA66 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 66: *Besinnung.* Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1997. |
| GA79 | *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 79: *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge.* Petra Jaeger, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1994. |
| H | *Holzwege.* Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1994. |
| HB | "Selected Letters from the Heidegger–Blochmann Correspondence." F. Edler, trans. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–15 (1992): 559–77. |
| HBC | Heidegger, Martin, and Elizabeth Blochmann. *Martin Heidegger–Elizabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918–1969.* J. W. Storck, ed. Marbach: Deutsche Literaturarchiv, 1989. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| HC | *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. Richard Wolin, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. |
| HCE | *Hegel's Concept of Experience*. K. R. Dove, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. |
| HCT | *History of the Concept of Time*. T. Kisiel, trans. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985. |
| HHI | *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister."* W. McNeill and J. Davis, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. |
| HJC | *The Heidegger–Jaspers Correspondence*. Walter Biemel and Has Saner, eds. G. E. Aylesworth, trans. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003. |
| I&D | *Identity and Difference*. J. Stambaugh, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. |
| IM | *Introduction to Metaphysics*. G. Fried and R. Polt, trans. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. |
| KPM | *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. R. Taft, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. |
| KTB | "Kant's Thesis About Being." T. E. Klein and W. E. Pohl, trans. (In P.) |
| MFL | *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. M. Heim, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. |
| N1 | *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*. David Farrell Krell, ed. and trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. |
| N3 | *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*. David Farrell Krell, ed. J. Stambaugh, D. F. Krell, and F. Capuzzi, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1987. |
| N4 | *Nietzsche: Nihilism*. David Farrell Krell, ed. F. Capuzzi, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1982. |
| NI | *Nietzsche*, vol. I. Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1961. |
| NII | *Nietzsche*, vol. II. Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1961. |
| OET | "On the Essence of Truth." T. Sheehan, trans. (In P.) |
| OHF | *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. J. van Buren, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. |
| OWL | *On the Way to Language*. P. D. Hertz, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. |
| P | *Pathmarks*. William McNeill, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. |
| PAR | *Parmenides*. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| PDT | "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." T. Sheehan, trans. (In P.) |
| PLT | *Poetry, Language, Thought.* A. Hofstadter, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. |
| PR | *Principle of Reason.* R. Lilly, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. |
| PT | "Phenomenology and Theology." J. G. Hart and J. C. Maraldo, trans. (In P.) |
| Q&A | Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, eds. Lisa Harries, trans. *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers.* New York: Paragon House, 1990. |
| QCT | *The Question Concerning Technology.* W. Lovitt, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. |
| S | *Plato's* Sophist. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. |
| S&Z | *Sein und Zeit.* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1993. |
| T&B | *On Time and Being.* J. Stambaugh, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. |
| TDP | *Towards the Definition of Philosophy.* T. Sadler, trans. London: Athlone Press, 2000. |
| TPOA | "Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics." J. Protevi, trans. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–15 (1991): 496–501. |
| TTL | "Traditional Language and Technological Language." W. T. Gregory, trans. *Journal of Philosophical Research* 23 (1998): 129–45. |
| USTS | *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache.* Hermann Heidegger, ed. St. Gallen: Erker, 1989. |
| WCT | *What Is Called Thinking?* J. G. Gray, trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. |
| WHD | *Was Heißt Denken?* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1984. |
| WIM | "What Is Metaphysics?" D. F. Krell, trans. (In P.) |
| WIP | *What Is Philosophy?* J. T. Wilde and W. Kluback, trans. New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1958. |
| WIT | *What Is a Thing?* W. B. Barton and V. Deutsch, trans. South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions, 1967. |
| WT | *What Is a Thing?* W. B. Barton Jr. and V. Deutsch, trans. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1969. |
| Z | *Zollikoner Seminare.* Medard Boss, ed. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1987. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| ZS | *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters.* Medard Boss, ed. F. May and R. Askay, trans. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001. |
| ZSD | *Zur Sache des Denkens.* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1969. |

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