

MARTIN  
HEIDEGGER

*Between Good and Evil*

RÜDIGER SAFRANSKI

*Translated by Ewald Osers*

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts

London, England

FOR GISELA MARIA NICKLAUS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my friends who helped me  
with their sympathy, their curiosity, and their own research:  
Ulrich Boehm, Hans-Peter Hempel, Helmuth Lethen,  
Cees Nooteboom, Peter Sloterdijk, Ulrich Wanner.

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Printed in the United States of America

Second printing, 1998

Originally published as *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit*, copyright by  
Carl Hanser Verlag, München Wien 1994.

The publisher acknowledges the financial assistance of Inter Nationes e.V., Bonn.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Safranski, Rüdiger.

[Meister aus Deutschland. English]

Martin Heidegger : between good and evil / Rüdiger Safranski ; translated by Ewald Osers.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-674-38709-0 (alk. paper)

1. Heidegger, Martin, 1889-1976. 2. Philosophers—Germany—Biography. I. Title.

B3279.H49S32413 1998

193—dc21

[B] 97-40754

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## PREFACE: A MASTER FROM GERMANY

Heidegger's story is a long one—whether the story of his life or of his philosophy. It covers the passions and disasters of a whole century.

In terms of philosophy, Heidegger came from a long way back. He treated Heraclitus, Plato, and Kant as if they were his contemporaries. He came so close to them he could hear and put into words what remained unuttered by them. In Heidegger we still find the whole wonderful metaphysics, albeit at the moment of its falling silent—or, to put it differently, at the moment when it opens out into something else.

Heidegger's passion was asking questions, not providing answers. That which he asked questions about and that which he was seeking, he called Being. Throughout a philosophical life he continually asked this one question about Being. The meaning of this question is nothing more and nothing less than giving back to life the mystery that threatened to disappear in the modern world.

Heidegger began as a Catholic philosopher. He accepted the challenge of the modern age. He developed the philosophy of a *Dasein* that finds itself

thrown under an empty heaven and in the power of all-devouring time, endowed with the ability to design its own life. A philosophy that addresses the individual in his freedom and responsibility and takes death seriously. The question about Being in Heidegger's sense means to release "*Dasein* the way one weighs anchor to sail out, liberated, to the open sea." It is a sad irony of the history of philosophical effect that Heidegger's question about Being has very largely lost this liberating, lightening aspect, and that, if anything, it has tended to intimidate and cramp thinking. It would be important to relax this cramp. Then, perhaps, one might also be free enough to let the laughter of the Thracian maid—who laughed when her master, the philosopher Thales of Miletus, fell into a well while gazing at the stars—reply to many a miscarried profundity of this philosophical genius.

A good deal of uneasiness persists to this day about Heidegger's political involvement. On philosophical grounds he became, for a while, a National Socialist revolutionary, but his philosophy also helped him to free himself from the political scene. He learned a lesson from what he had done, and his thinking subsequently focused on the problem of the seducibility of the spirit by the will to power. Heidegger's philosophical way leads from resoluteness, via the metaphysics, to the great historical moment, to composure at the end, and to thinking that is a provident, stewardly intercourse with the world.

Martin Heidegger—a master from Germany.

He truly was a "master" from the school of the mystic Master Eckhart. More than anyone else, he kept open the horizon for religious experience in a nonreligious age. He found a way of thinking that remains close to things and avoids a crash into banality.

He really was very "German," as German as Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn. The history of Heidegger's life and thought is, yet again, a Dr. Faustus story. What emerges is the lovable, the fascinating, and the abysmally profound element of a specifically German road in philosophy, one that was to become a European event. And finally, through his political activity he also had about him something of that "master from Germany" that Paul Celan's poem refers to.

Thus Martin Heidegger's name represents the most exciting chapter in the history of the German spirit in our century. It has to be told, the good and the evil, and beyond good and evil.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1889      September 26: birth of Martin Heidegger, son of Friedrich Heidegger (August 7, 1852–May 2, 1924), master cooper and sexton in Messkirch, and Johanna Heidegger, née Kempf (March 21, 1858–May 3, 1927).
- 1903–1906      Gymnasium in Constance on a scholarship. Accommodation in the Catholic boarding school, the Konradihaus. Preparation for a clerical career.
- 1906–1909      Gymnasium and archiepiscopal convent in Freiburg.
- 1909      Heidegger enters the novitiate with the Jesuits in Tisis near Feldkirch (Vorarlberg, Austria). Discharged on October 13 because of heart problems.
- 1909–1911      Study of theology and philosophy at Freiburg. Antimodernist articles in Catholic periodicals.
- 1911–1913      Clerical training discontinued. Study of philosophy, the humanities, and natural sciences at Freiburg. Scholarship for the study of Catholic philosophy. Friendship with Ernst Laslowski. Study of Edmund Husserl. Logic as a transcendent value of life.

- 1913 Doctorate, with a thesis on “The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologyism.”
- 1915 Habilitation (title of *Dozent*), with a dissertation on “Duns Scotus’s Doctrine of Categories and Meaning.”
- 1915–1918 Enlisted for military service (limited fitness; postal censorship and meteorological service).
- 1917 Marries Elfride Petri.
- 1919 Birth of his son Jörg.
- 1919 Break with the “system of Catholicism.”
- 1920 Birth of his son Hermann.
- 1918–1923 *Privatdozent* and assistant to Husserl in Freiburg. Friendship with Elisabeth Blochmann.
- 1920 Start of friendship with Karl Jaspers.
- 1922 Heidegger’s interpretations of Aristotle excite much attention in Marburg.
- 1923 His ontology lectures establish his reputation as the “secret king of philosophy.”
- 1923 Appointment to Marburg. Moves to his cabin at Todtnauberg. Friendship with Rudolf Bultmann.
- 1924 Beginning of love affair with Hannah Arendt.
- 1925 Arendt leaves Marburg.
- 1927 *Being and Time* published.
- 1928 Appointment to Freiburg as Husserl’s successor.
- 1929 Inaugural lecture, “What Is Metaphysics?” March: lectures in the Davos university courses. Debate with Ernst Cassirer.
- 1929–30 Lectures on “The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics.”
- 1930 First invitation to Berlin declined.
- 1931–32 New Year’s Eve at the cabin: Heidegger supports National Socialism.
- 1933 Election to rectorate. May 1: joins the Nazi Party. May 27: rectorial address. Organization of the scholarship camp. Propaganda appearances in Leipzig, Heidelberg, Tübingen. Cooperation in Baden university reform (introduction of the *führer* principle). October: second invitation to Berlin declined. Summer: last visit to Jaspers.
- 1934 Faculty squabbles and differences with governmental and party authorities result in his resignation from the rectorship in April. Summer: preparation of plans for a *Dozentenakademie* in Berlin.
- 1936 End of correspondence with Jaspers. Lecture in Zurich on “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Lecture in Rome on “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.” Meeting with Karl Löwith.
- 1936–1940 In several Nietzsche lectures Heidegger critically discusses the power thinking of National Socialism. Under surveillance by the Gestapo.
- 1936–1938 Writes his “*Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*” (Contributions to Philosophy [On the Event]), intended for later publication.
- 1937 Heidegger declines participation in the International Philosophical Congress in Paris.
- 1944 Called up for the Volkssturm (People’s Militia).
- 1945 January–February: in Messkirch to sort out and securely store his manuscripts.
- 1945 April–June: Philosophical faculty evacuated to Wildenstein Castle (near Beuron, Danube Valley). July: Heidegger before the denazification committee. Philosophically interested French occupation officers make contact with Heidegger. A planned meeting with Jean-Paul Sartre does not materialize. Correspondence with Sartre. Beginning of friendship with Jean Beaufret.
- 1946 Jaspers’s expert opinion on Heidegger presented to denazification committee. Heidegger banned from teaching (until 1949). Beginning of friendship with Medard Boss. Letter to Beaufret: *On Humanism*.
- 1949 December: four lectures to the Club zu Bremen (“The Thing,” “The Framework,” “The Danger,” “The Turn”).
- 1950 Repeated lectures at the Bühlerhöhe spa and to the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts.
- 1950 February: Arendt visits Heidegger. Their correspondence and friendship resume. Correspondence with Jaspers also resumes.
- 1951–52 Heidegger resumes his university lectures.
- 1952 Arendt’s second visit.
- 1953 Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts lecture in Munich: “The Question of Technology.” Beginning of Heidegger’s postwar career. Friendship with Erhart Kästner.

- 1955 "Gelassenheit" (Composure) address at the Conradin Kreutzer celebration in Messkirch. March 21: lecture in Cérisy-la-Salle.
- 1957 Lecture in Aix-en-Provence. Acquaintance with René Char.
- 1959 Beginning of the Zollikon Seminars with Medard Boss.
- 1959 Appointed honorary citizen of Messkirch on September 27.
- 1962 First trip to Greece.
- 1964 Theodor Adorno's pamphlet against Heidegger, *Jargon of Authenticity*, published.
- 1966 First seminar at Le Thor; continued 1968, 1969, and 1973 in Zähringen.
- 1966 The *Spiegel* interview (published after Heidegger's death).
- 1967 Arendt visits Heidegger. From then on she visits him every year.
- 1975 The first volume of his *Collected Works* appears.
- 1976 Heidegger dies on May 26 and is interred in Messkirch on May 28.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Following are the works by Heidegger cited in the text. The abbreviations shown have been used for citations from the German works and the published collections of correspondence. They follow the abbreviations used by the author in the German edition. A translation of each German title appears here in parenthesis; where a corresponding published English translation has been cited, that bibliographic information is also given.

GA 1 ff *Gesamtausgabe: Ausgabe letzter Hand* (Collected Works: Author's Final Revision), series ed. Hermann Heidegger, Frankfurt.

## INDIVIDUAL WORKS BY MARTIN HEIDEGGER

- A *Aufenthalte* (Sojourns). Frankfurt, 1989.
- BZ *Der Begriff der Zeit*. Tübingen, 1989. (*The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.)
- D *Denkerfahrungen* (Thought Experiences). Frankfurt, 1983.
- DJ *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation* (Phenomenological Interpretations to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation). In *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für*

EH *Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften*, vol. 6. Göttingen, 1989.

EH *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Explications of Hölderlin's Poetry). Frankfurt, 1981.

EM *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Tübingen, 1987. (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. R. Manheim. New Haven, Conn., 1987.)

FS *Frühe Schriften* (Early Writings). Frankfurt, 1972.

G *Gelassenheit*. Pfullingen, 1985. (*Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*. Trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York, 1969.)

H *Holzwege* (Wrong Paths). Frankfurt, 1950.

HK "Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens" (The Origin of Art and the Mission of Thinking). In Petra Jaeger and Rudolf Lütke, eds., *Distanz und Nähe: Reflexionen und Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Distance and Proximity: Reflections and Analyses on Present-Day Art). Würzburg, 1983.

K *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Frankfurt, 1991. (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. Richard Taft. Bloomington, Ind., 1990.)

L *Logik* (Logic). Lectures, summer semester 1934, anonymous notes. Ed. Victor Farías. Madrid, 1931.

N I, N II *Nietzsche*, 2 vols., Pfullingen, 1961. (*Nietzsche*, 4 vols. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco, 1987.)

R *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität: Das Rektorat*. Frankfurt, 1983. ("The Self-Assertion of the German University." In Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. New York, 1991.)

SuZ *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, 1963. (*Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco, 1962.)

TK *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen, 1962. ("The Question Concerning Technology." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)

ÜH *Über den Humanismus*. Frankfurt, 1981. ("Letter on Humanism." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)

VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Lectures and Essays). Pfullingen, 1985.

VS *Vier Seminare* (Four Seminars). Frankfurt, 1977.

W *Wegmarken* (Track Markings). Frankfurt, 1978.

WHD *Was heisst Denken?* Tübingen, 1984. (*What Is Called Thinking?* Trans. Fred D. Neick and J. Glenn Gray. New York, 1968.)

WM *Was ist Metaphysik?* Frankfurt, 1986. ("What Is Metaphysics?" In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)

WW *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Frankfurt, 1986. ("On the Essence of Truth." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)

Z *Zur Sache des Denkens* (On the Matter of Thinking). Tübingen, 1984. (*On Time and Being*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York, 1972.)

ZS *Zollikoner Seminare* (Zollikon Seminars). Frankfurt, 1987.

CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS BY HEIDEGGER

BwHB Martin Heidegger and Elisabeth Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Joachim W. Storck. Marbach, 1989.

BwHJ Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner. Frankfurt and Munich, 1990.

BwHK Martin Heidegger and Erhart Kästner, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet. Frankfurt, 1986.

S Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Denken* (Late Gleanings on Heidegger: Documents on His Life and Thought). Berne, 1962.

OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

BwAJ Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Lotte Köhler and Hans Saner. Munich, 1985.

OTHER ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS BY HEIDEGGER

*The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington, Ind., 1982.

*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington, Ind., 1995.

*History of the Concept of Time, Prolegomena*. Trans. Theodore Kisiel. Bloomington, Ind., 1985.

*Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Athens, Ohio, 1995.



## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Heidegger literature in English, both primary and secondary, is still expanding, with hitherto untranslated works being translated, existing translations being revised and reissued, and new critical work being published both in America and in Britain. Therefore some of the more recent publications may not yet be listed in library catalogues or available to researchers. While I made every effort to verify the English texts of the numerous references in libraries on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in online catalogues, it was sometimes, because of the fluidity of the situation, unavoidable that a quotation be attributed to an edition that is not the most recent.

In-text page citations are to the German editions of Heidegger's works and correspondence. When a published English translation is quoted, the reference appears in the notes; all other translations are my own.

The gale that blows through Heidegger's thinking—like that which still, after thousands of years, blows to us from Plato's work—is not of our century. It comes from the primordial, and what it leaves behind is something perfect which, like everything perfect, falls back to the primordial.

HANNAH ARENDT

A truth must be able to depart this world, as one used to put it; otherwise it remains worldless. The world has become so barren because so many manufactured ideas are drifting around in it, placeless and imageless.

ERHART KÄSTNER

Without man, Being would be mute; it would be there, but it would not be the True one.

ALEXANDER KOJÈVE

# I

## CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL

In 1928 Martin Heidegger, by then famous, wrote to the former prefect of the clerical seminary in Constance where, for some years, he had been a student: "Perhaps philosophy shows most forcibly and persistently how much Man is a beginner. Philosophizing ultimately means nothing other than being a beginner."

Heidegger's commendation of beginning is open to many interpretations. He wishes to be a master of beginning. It was to the beginnings of philosophy in Greece that he looked for a past future, and it was in the present that he hoped to find the spot where, in the middle of life, philosophy is always born anew. This occurs in "mood." He criticizes any philosophy that professes to have its beginning in thought. In reality, Heidegger argues, it begins with a mood, with astonishment, fear, worry, curiosity, jubilation.

To Heidegger, mood is the link between life and thought, and there is some irony in the fact that in his own case he was much opposed to any investigation of the connection between the two. He once began a lecture on Aristotle with the lapidary sentence: "He was born, he worked, and he died." That is

how Heidegger hoped that people would talk about him. This, no doubt, was his great dream—to live for philosophy and perhaps disappear within his own philosophy. That, too, is related to mood, which, perhaps all too quickly, discovers in the present that which is importunate and therefore searches for what is hidden. Life itself can be importunate. Heidegger's mood makes him state that "*Dasein* is thrown" and Being has "become manifest as a burden," for "Has *Dasein* as itself ever decided freely whether it wants to come into '*Dasein*' or not, and will it ever be able to make such a decision?" (SuZ, 228).<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger was fond of the grand gesture, and in consequence one can never be sure whether he is speaking of Western civilization or himself, whether Being as such is being discussed or merely his own Being. But if the principle is valid that philosophy springs not from thought but from mood, then ideas should be at home not only in skirmish with other ideas but also on the elevated plateau of tradition. Of course, Heidegger linked up with tradition, but for reasons which lead back to his own life. These evidently do not allow him to experience his own entry into the world as a gift or a promising arrival. It must have been a crash—that is what his mood demands.

But the world into which he felt "thrown" was not that of Messkirch at the end of the last century, where he was born on September 26, 1889, where he passed his childhood, and where he was always fond of returning. He felt "thrown" only when he was ejected from this domestic world that had shielded him from the presumptions of modernity. It should not be forgotten that coming into the world is not completed by being born. Several births are necessary during a human life, and it may well be that one never fully arrives in the world. But let us, for the moment, stay with his first birth.

Martin Heidegger's father, Friedrich Heidegger, was a master cooper and a sexton at St. Martin's Catholic church in Messkirch. He died in 1924. He was to see his son break with Catholicism, but he did not live long enough to see his philosophical breakthrough. His mother died in 1927, and on her deathbed Martin Heidegger placed his own copy of *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*).

His mother came from the neighboring village of Göggingen. Whenever the cold winds sweep down from the plateaus of the Swabian Alb, the Messkirch people say: "It's blowing from Göggingen." Heidegger's maternal ancestors had lived there for generations on a fine farmstead, the Lochbauernhof. In 1662 an ancestor, Jakob Kemp, had received the farm in fief from the Cistercian monastery in Wald, near Pullendorf. In 1838 Heidegger's grandfather

redeemed it for a price of 3,800 guilders. In spiritual matters, however, the family continued under the guardianship of the Church.

His paternal ancestors were small peasants and craftsmen. They had come from Austria in the eighteenth century. Local historians have established the existence of extensive relationships with the Mägerle and Kreutzer families. From one of these emerged the most famous preacher of the seventeenth century, Abraham a Sancta Clara, and from the other Konstantin Kreutzer, the composer. There was also a distant connection between the Heideggers and Conrad Gröber, Martin's spiritual mentor at the Constance seminary and a future archbishop of Freiburg.

Messkirch is a small town situated between Lake Constance, the Swabian Alb mountains, and the Upper Danube—a barren, previously poor region along the boundary between Alemannia and Swabia. The Alemannic character tends to be ponderous, melancholy, and brooding, while the Swabian character is more cheerful, more open, and also more dreamy. The former inclines toward sarcasm; the later toward emotionalism. Heidegger had something of each in him, and the figures he chose for his patrons were the Alemannic Johann Peter Hebel and the Swabian Friedrich Hölderlin. He saw both as molded by the region while towering in the great world. This was how he also saw himself: he wished to "open up to the vastness of the sky and at the same time be rooted in the dark of the earth" (D, 38).

In a 1942 lecture Heidegger interpreted Hölderlin's Danubian hymn "Der Ister." Attached to the lecture manuscript was a note that was not subsequently included in the printed text: "It was perhaps inevitable that the poet Hölderlin should become the determining influence on the critical thought of one whose grandfather was born at the very time when the 'Ister' hymn . . . [was] written—born, according to the records, *in ovili* (that is to say, in a sheepfold on a farm), which lies near the bank of the river in the valley of the Upper Danube, beneath the lofty crags."<sup>2</sup>

Self-mythicizing? Certainly an attempt to give himself a background he would have wished to have—the splendor of Hölderlin over the Donauhaus at the foot of Wildenstein Castle below Messkirch. There the Heideggers lived in the eighteenth century. The house still stands, and its occupants report that the professor with the Basque beret repeatedly visited the place.

Situated near the Donauhaus and Wildenstein Castle is Beuron with its famous Benedictine abbey, at one time an abbey of Augustine canons. This

quiet monastic world, with its large library, its cowsheds and barns, attracted Martin Heidegger even after he had separated from the Church. In the 1920s, during breaks between semesters, he occasionally spent a few weeks there in a monastic cell. Between 1945 and 1949, when he was under a teaching ban, Beuron Abbey was the only place he appeared in public.

At the end of the nineteenth century Messkirch had some two thousand inhabitants, most of them engaged in agriculture and the crafts. There was also a little local industry—a brewery, a bobbin factory, and a dairy. In the town were the administrative offices of the district, commercial schools, a telegraph office, a railroad depot, a second-class post office, a district court, cooperative headquarters, and the administrations of the local castle and its estates. Messkirch was part of Baden, a circumstance of significance to its cultural atmosphere.

There had been a vigorous liberal tradition in Baden since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1815 it saw the enactment of a representative constitution, and in 1831 the abolition of press censorship. Baden was a bastion of revolution in 1848. In April of that year Hecker and Struve called for an armed rising from nearby Constance. The revolutionary contingents assembled at Donaueschingen. They were defeated, but a year later they briefly seized power. The grand duke fled to Alsace, and it was only with the help of Prussian troops that the old conditions were restored. The mood in Baden was not friendly toward Prussia, and after 1871—when Germany, under Prussia's leadership, was united as the German Reich—anything relating to the Reich retained an unpleasant Prussian taste. In the end, Badensian liberalism came to terms with the Reich, partly because it had found another adversary—the Catholic Church.

Ever since 1848 the Church, while otherwise fiercely opposed to it, had skillfully used the spirit of liberalism for its own ends. It demanded a free Church in the free state, abolition of state supervision of schools and universities, independent appointment to ecclesiastical benefits, and independent administration of Church assets. It held that obedience should be to God rather than to men. The conflict was exacerbated in 1845 when the Baden government ordered the arrest of the archbishop of Freiburg. Eventually the government yielded, realizing that the Church was evidently too firmly rooted in the customs and attitudes of the population, especially in the countryside and the smaller towns. This Catholic populism in southwest Germany was supportive of the Church and hostile to the state, hierarchical but demanding

autonomy in relation to state power. It was anti-Prussian, more regionalist than nationalist, anticapitalist, agrarian, anti-Semitic, locally rooted, and particularly widespread among the lower social strata.

The conflicts between Church and state intensified once more when the Council of Rome in 1870 decreed the dogma of the infallibility of the pope. If, in the age of nationalism, it was impossible to restore the universal rule of the Church, then at least the Catholic world was to be effectively screened off against the state and secularized society.

Against this view there arose an opposition, the so-called Old Catholic movement, which had its social roots mainly in the national-liberal, Catholic, educated middle class of southern Germany. These circles did not wish to become too “Roman” and instead strove to combine Catholic and nationalist tendencies. Some Old Catholics went even further, hoping for an entire modernization of the Church—abolition of celibacy, limitation of the veneration of saints, self-determination of communities, election of priests.

This movement created its own ecclesiastical organization and elected a bishop but remained small numerically; at no time did it have more than 100,000 members, even though it enjoyed support from the governments, especially in Baden, where the Old Catholic movement developed vigorously. In the 1870s and 1880s Messkirch was one of its strongholds. At times almost half its population was Old Catholic.

Conrad Gröber, a committed champion of Roman Catholicism, has painted a gloomy picture of the Messkirch Kulturkampf period, which extended into Martin Heidegger's childhood:

We know from our own bitter experience how much youthful happiness was destroyed in those years, when the wealthier Old Catholic children rejected the poorer Catholic children, applied nicknames to their clergy and to them, beat them up and immersed them in fountain-basins to rebaptize them. Unfortunately we also know from our own experience how even Old Catholic schoolmasters divided the sheep from the goats, pinned the nickname of “black sick” on Catholic students and, using their fists, made them realize that they could not tread Roman paths with impunity. Indeed, all but one defected and they were obliged to join the Old Catholics if they wished to get a definitive post in Messkirch. Even much later it was still clear that only by changing one's religion could one obtain a minor official post in the town on the Ablach.<sup>3</sup>

Among the steadfast was Heidegger's father. He remained with the "Romans," even though at first he derived only disadvantages as a result.

The government had granted the Old Catholics the right of codetermination in the town church of St. Martin. To the Romans this was a desecration of the building, and therefore they moved out. In 1875, with the active help of the Beuron monks, they converted an old fruit warehouse into an "emergency church" not far from the town church. There the cooper's workshop of Friedrich Heidegger, the sexton, was also accommodated, and there Martin was christened.

The clash between Romans and Old Catholics divided the town community into two camps. The Old Catholics were the "good families," the "liberals," the "modern" people. From their point of view the Romans were a drag on progress; they were blinkered, backward little people clinging to outdated ecclesiastical customs. When the Romans processed out into the fields for the spring and fall blessings of the crops, the Old Catholics remained at home, and their children threw rocks at the monstrosities.

In these conflicts young Martin first experienced the clash between tradition and modernism, and he felt the hurtful aspect of that modernism. The Old Catholics belonged to "those at the top," and the Romans, though superior in numbers, were bound to feel vanquished. This made their community rally together all the more closely.

When, toward the end of the century, the number of Old Catholics declined drastically in Messkirch and the religious conflict abated, the Romans had the town church, with all its assets and lands, returned to them. The Heideggers moved back into the sexton's house on the church square. On December 1, 1895, a solemn divine service celebrated this victory over the "apostates." On this occasion little Martin unexpectedly found himself playing a leading part. The Old Catholic sexton found it embarrassing to hand over the church keys to his successor, and so he simply handed them to the sexton's small son, who happened to be playing in the square.

The world of Martin Heidegger's childhood was the sexton's small, cowering house on the church square, opposite the towering Church of St. Martin. The square opens toward the sixteenth-century Fürstenberg Castle. Through its great portals the children were able to penetrate to the inner courtyard and on into the castle park, as far as the garden gate at the distant end, where open country began with a farm track: "He runs from the princely garden gate to

the Ehnried. The ancient lime trees of the castle park gaze after him over the wall, no matter whether at Easter time he shows up brightly among the sprouting crops and awakening meadows or at Christmas disappears under snowdrifts behind the next hill" (D, 37).

The "sexton's lads," Martin and his younger brother, Fritz, had to help with the church services. They were servers, they picked flowers to decorate the church, they ran errands for the priest, and they rang the bells. There were—as Heidegger recalls in *On the Secret of the Bell Tower (Vom Geheimnis des Glockenturms)*—seven bells in the tower, each with its own name, its own sound, and its own time. There was the "Four," to be rung at four in the afternoon; the "Alarm Bell," which roused the town's sleepers from their slumber; and the "Three," which was also the knell. The "Child" rang for Sunday school and for rosary worship; the "Twelve" marked the end of morning lessons at the school; the "Klanei" was the bell struck by the hour hammer; and the one with the most beautiful ring was the "Big One"; it would ring on the eve and on the morning of high holidays. Between Maundy Thursday and Easter Saturday the bells were silent; instead there were rattles. A cranking handle set in motion a number of little hammers that struck against hard wood. A rattle stood in each of the four corners of the tower, and the boy bell ringers had to work the handles in turn to ensure that the harsh sound went out in all four directions of the compass. The most beautiful time was Christmas. Toward half past three in the morning, the boy ringers would come to the sexton's house, where mother Heidegger had laid the table with cakes and milky coffee. After this breakfast, lanterns were lit in the front-door passage, and everyone went out through the snow and the winter's night to the church opposite and up into the dark bell tower to the frozen ropes and ice-covered clappers. "The mysterious fugue," Martin Heidegger wrote, "in which the church feasts, the days of vigil, and the passage of the seasons and the morning, midday, and evening hours of each day fitted into each other, so that a continual ringing went through the young hearts, dreams, prayers, and games—it is this, probably, that conceals one of the most magical, most complete, and most lasting secrets of the tower" (D, 65 and 66).

Such was life under the Church's care in a small provincial town at the beginning of the century. In *Feldweg* Heidegger recalls sailing a little boat he had whittled in the school fountain: "The dreamlike quality of such voyages was enveloped in a splendor then hardly visible, which lay on all things. Their

realm was encompassed by mother's eye and hand . . . Those voyages of our games knew nothing yet of wanderings during which all shores were left behind" (D, 38).

This splendor then hardly visible lies on all Heidegger's memories of his childhood in Messkirch. And this is probably not just the transfiguration of memory, because his brother, Fritz, experienced those years in a similar way. "Thus most of us, despite all rascally behavior, enjoyed the bliss of a permanent weightlessness not experienced since."<sup>4</sup> Fritz spent all his life in the place of his childhood; there he worked as an official of the local credit bank, and there he died.

To the Messkirch folk, Fritz Heidegger was a "card." He was so popular that even in later years the world-famous philosopher was invariably described as "Fritz's brother." Fritz Heidegger had a stammer, but only—according to Messkirch accounts—when he was "serious." Then Heidegger's term *Dasein* (existence) would come out as "*Da-da-dasein*." But he spoke without a stammer when he was clowning, as in his popular carnival speeches. On those occasions he knew no shyness. During the Hitler era he even picked a quarrel with well-known local Nazis; his popularity protected him. Fritz did not attend any university. The bank official sometimes called himself a "searchlight." For his brother he typed 30,000 pages of manuscript and kept them in his bank's strongroom during the war. In any case, he observed, they could be read with comprehension only in the twenty-first century, "when the Americans have long set up a huge supermarket on the moon."<sup>5</sup> He had, he said, helped with the collating and revising of the texts. He would not allow two ideas in one sentence. You've got to tear them apart, he told his brother. Through a narrow door things could pass only one at a time. In this case, therefore, Fritz favored clarity, though otherwise things could not be obscure enough. One of his favorite phrases was "Let people overlook me, but they are not to regard me as overseenable!" He appreciated the crazy aspects of philosophy and deplored philosophers' taking themselves too seriously. Anyone preserving his sense of the crazy can manage quite well with this *Da-da-dasein*, he used to say. "Within us, in the innermost corner of our hearts, there lives something that survives all hardship—joy, that last remnant of that original craziness that we scarcely surmise any longer."<sup>6</sup> Fritz Heidegger had a self-irony that his brother, Martin, lacked. His comment on his own birth, five years after Martin's, was "Life-pain begins for one person today and for another tomorrow. For the little earthworm in Schloss-Strasse it began on Ash

Wednesday—vomiting, tanning, terrible deviation. As is customary on Ash Wednesday."<sup>7</sup>

Martin Heidegger later dedicated a book in gratitude to his brother. "For my unique brother," he wrote with fine ambiguity.

Their parents were believers, but without fanaticism or rigid confessionality, according to Fritz. Catholic life had so much become part of their flesh and blood that they had no need to defend their faith or assert it against others. They were all the more aghast when their son Martin turned away from the "right road," the one that was simply the most natural to them.

Their mother was a cheerful woman. "She would often say," Fritz Heidegger reports, "that life was so neatly arranged that there was always something to look forward to."<sup>8</sup> She was resolute, at times proud, and did not conceal the self-assurance of her well-to-do farming origins. She had a reputation for being hardworking, and she was almost never seen without an apron or a head scarf. The father was an introverted person, capable of being silent for days on end, inconspicuous, hardworking, honest. A man of whom the sons had little to say later.

The Heideggers were not affluent, but neither were they poor. Two thousand marks in immovable assets and a 960-mark income tax assessment (in 1903) put them in the lower middle class. This was enough for a family to live on, but not enough for the children to receive expensive higher education. At that point the Church lent a hand. It was the Church's usual practice to support gifted youngsters and at the same time recruit future priests, especially in rural regions.

The parish priest, Camillo Brandhuber, suggested to the parents that, after Martin's completion of the Messkirch *Bürgerschule* (a kind of junior high school)—there was also a gymnasium (senior high school) in the town then—they might wish to send their gifted elder son to the Catholic seminary in Constance, a residential institution for young priests. Brandhuber had given Martin Heidegger Latin lessons free of charge, thereby enabling him to go on to senior high school. The prefect of the Constance seminary was Conrad Gröber. Brandhuber and Gröber obtained a grant for Martin from a local foundation, and in 1903 he entered the Constance seminary and the local gymnasium. The Heideggers were proud that the Church was going to look after their son. For Martin, however, this was the beginning of a time of financial dependence on the Church. Now he owed it a debt of gratitude.

This dependence was to continue over a thirteen-year period, until 1916.

After his Weiss Grant for the Constance seminary (1903–1906), Martin received for his final high school years and the first four semesters he studied theology in Freiburg an Eliner Grant that was tied to training for the priesthood. His studies between 1913 and 1916 were financed by the Schätzler Donation, which imposed on recipients the obligation of preserving the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. Heidegger remained dependent on the Catholic world beyond the time when, in his mind, he had already begun to break clear of the Church. He had to adapt, and that made him ashamed; it was an affront for which he could not forgive what he called the “system of Catholicism.” This institutional system, with its policy of interest in public life, became so distasteful to him that one of the reasons he later sympathized with the Nazi movement was its declared anticlericalism.

In 1903 Messkirch was still a closed world, even though echoes of the conflict with the Old Catholics lingered on. In Constance, however, only thirty miles away, the modern age was clearly perceptible.

Constance was a mix of religions. Its great history as a “free Reich city”—a city not subject to any local prince or ruler, but coming directly under the emperor—was still reflected in its architectural monuments. There was the old Merchant Hall, where in the sixteenth century the Council of Constance had sat, as well as the house where Jan Hus, the Czech reformer, had awaited his trial. The Dominican monastery where the “heretic” was imprisoned had meanwhile been turned into a hotel, the Insel-Hotel, or Island Hotel, whose assembly rooms were the center of the city’s cultural life. It was the venue for concerts and lectures, which the students enjoyed attending. There homage was paid to the “modern spirit.” There were discussions about Nietzsche, Ibsen, atheism, Hartmann’s philosophy of the unconscious, Vaihinger’s “as if philosophy,” and even psychoanalysis and the interpretation of dreams. There had long been a progressive spirit in Constance; from the days of Hecker in 1848 the city had remained a bastion of Badensian liberalism. Günther Dehn, who attended the Constance gymnasium at the same time as Heidegger, recalled in his memoirs the thrill he and his classmates had experienced when they discovered that the attendant at the men’s bathing establishment was a veteran of 1848 who had actually fought on the barricades. The local paper with the highest circulation, the *Abendzeitung*, was democratic, anticlerical, and cautiously anti-Prussian, despite (or perhaps just because of) a Prussian infantry regiment’s being stationed in the city and the fact

that officers came from all over Germany to enjoy their furloughs in the city on Lake Constance.

The seminary, Studienhaus St. Konrad, known simply as Konradihaus, had been closed during the years of the Kulturkampf and only reopened in 1888. The gymnasium, formerly a Jesuit college, was under state supervision. The seminarists, in consequence, attended a “temporal” school inspired by a moderately liberal, anticlerical, educational humanism. The modern languages teacher, for instance, Pacius, was a democrat, a freethinker, and a pacifist, much liked by the students for his forceful remarks. He annoyed the seminarists—who, as budding theologians, were supposed to revere Aristotle—with his assertion: “Aristotle—who was he, anyway, compared to Plato, that giant spirit?” But Protestants, too, did not escape his sharp tongue. “Astrology,” he was fond of saying, “according to my researches this superstition goes back to Melanchthon.” As for the German and Greek master, Otto Kimmig, Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*—an eighteenth-century play preaching religious tolerance—was the only sacred text he accepted. The influence of these schoolmasters on their students, including Martin Heidegger, must have been considerable. “It was not until later that I realized the extent to which these two teachers led me, as it were unnoticed, out of the Christian world of ideas—which for them did not exist at all,” concluded Günther Dehn.<sup>10</sup>

The seminarists in the Konradihaus were, as far as it was possible, immunized against the freethinking they encountered at school. They were equipped with apologetic polish; they were prepared for argument with the “secular.” They were forever writing essays to show themselves well armed. There was, for instance, the question of whether man was really capable, by his own efforts, of attaining humanity and where the limits of tolerance lay; there was discussion of freedom and original sin; there was examination of the problem of whether Goethe’s Iphigenie was a pagan Christian or a Christian German or only a pagan character. As a relief from such controversial topics there was local history: the history of Reichenau monastery, the customs and usages of the Hegau—the region north of Lake Constance—and the prehistoric pile-dwelling folk on the lakeshore. Now and again the seminarists behaved like other young people in Germany; on sunny days they would set out with guitars, singing as they marched, to the Mainau, to the Grafengarten in Bodman, or to the vineyards on the Lower Lake. They rehearsed dialectal plays, they made music; if their secular classmates boasted of their visits to the



artistes of the theater, they could report about their latest nativity play. The seminarists certainly were no wimps. They elected—how else could they act in Baden?—their own representative body, which had a consultative vote in the running of their house, and they published a paper which at regular intervals recalled that Baden had been the first German state to abolish press censorship.

The seminarists lived under careful, but evidently not intolerant, supervision. Certainly Martin Heidegger looked back on his years in Constance without anger. To Matthäus Lang, then spiritual prefect of the younger students, he wrote in 1928: “I think back with pleasure and gratitude to the beginnings of my student career at the Konradihaus, and I become ever more aware of how closely all my efforts are bound up with my native soil. I can still remember clearly the trust I came to feel for you as the new prefect, a trust that has endured, and that made my time in the seminary one of joy.”<sup>11</sup>

Less of a pleasure for the seminarists was their contact with their “free” fellow students at the gymnasium, especially when they came from better-off families. These sons of lawyers, officials, and merchants felt superior to the seminary “capons,” as they called them. After all, the seminarists mostly came from rural areas and, like Martin Heidegger, from modest or even poor backgrounds. Dehn, the son of a chief postal director, recalled: “We always treated the ‘capons’ with some condescension. They were poorly dressed and, as we thought, also rather unwashed. We regarded ourselves as superior. But that did not prevent us from thoroughly exploiting them. They were made to execute their homework most meticulously. During break they then had to translate for us, which they always did willingly.”<sup>12</sup>

The seminarists kept to themselves, so they could better assert themselves; they were a community rather smiled at by the others. They were barred from various pleasures of their “secular” classmates, either for lack of pocket money or because of outright prohibitions. They remained onlookers when for three days the carnival raged in the crooked little streets and taverns of the city, with the students representing their own crazy guild, and when summer vacationers poured into the city and the amusement boats with their colorful pennants sailed out to Meersburg, returning at nightfall with a reeling mass of humanity that streamed, singing and roaring, through the lanes of the Old City, the gymnasium students with their colored caps invariably among them. The day following such events, the boasting would begin: during the breaks between lessons there were accounts of experiences and conquests that made the semi-

narists’ ears ring. At grape-picking time the slightly intoxicating *Sausser* was served everywhere. The gymnasium students were allowed to attend certain bars until ten o’clock. There they would meet their teachers over a jug of wine—a good opportunity for fraternizing, intimacy, and social advantage that was denied to the seminarists.

When all was said and done, the seminary students belonged to a different world and they were made to feel it. They had to fight against a sense of inferiority. Defiance was some help, however, for the outsiders could also see themselves as the elect.

It is possible that this tension between seminary and cheerful city life, between the Catholic world and the liberal civilian environment, gave rise even then in the student Martin Heidegger to a vision of two worlds—here the strict, persistent, slow world, and out there the fast-living, superficial one, indulging in momentary stimulations; here painful effort, and out there mere activity; here the striking of roots, and out there untrammelled behavior; the ones making things too hard for themselves, with the others seemingly taking the more comfortable path; the ones being profound, the others being frivolous; the ones remaining faithful to their own ego, while the others lose themselves in dissipation. This pattern would later become famous in Heidegger’s philosophy under the concepts of “authentic being” and “inauthentic being.”

In the autumn of 1906 Martin Heidegger switched from the Konradihaus in Constance to the archiepiscopal seminary of St. George in Freiburg, where he attended the renowned Bertold gymnasium. The grant from the Messkirch local foundation no longer covered the cost of the Constance institution. But Conrad Gröber and Camillo Brandhuber, those enterprising mentors of the sexton’s son, had opened up another source of funds—the Eliner studentship. This grant had been established in the sixteenth century by Christoph Eliner, a theologian from Messkirch. Local candidates in theology were to be sponsored by it, the condition being that they attended the gymnasium and the university of Freiburg.

The move from Constance to Freiburg had the character of a promotion. Without rancor Martin left Constance, which he always held in fond memory. Even in later years he would attend the reunions of the Konradihaus alumni. He developed no similar feelings of attachment for the Freiburg seminary. As he was to spend nearly all his life in that city, he would have to create some distance between the seminary and himself. Here he would turn away from Catholicism, which in Freiburg cast a particularly massive shadow. The min-