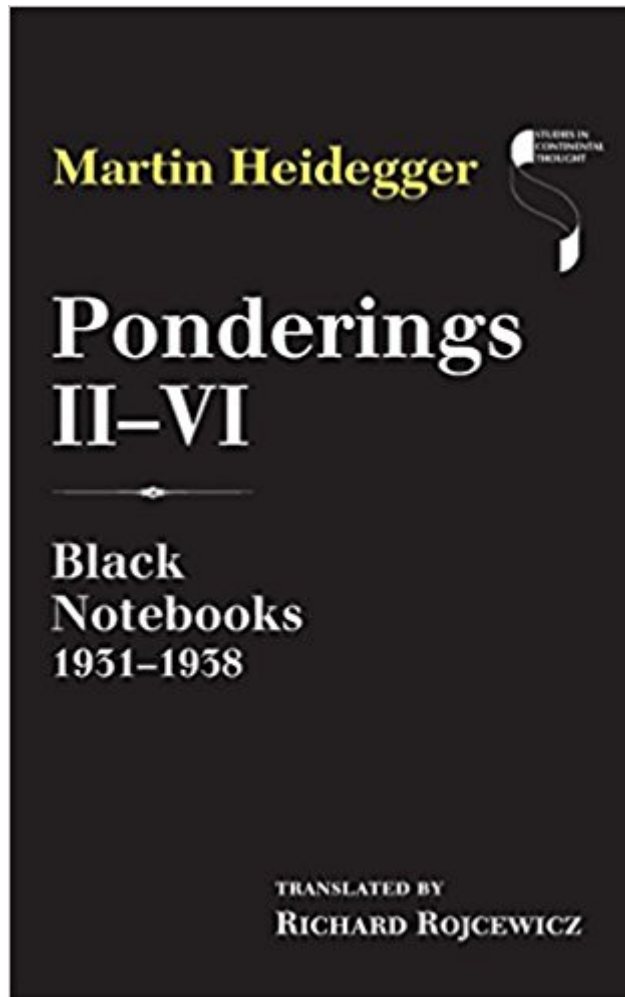


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Ponderings II-VI: Black Notebooks 1931-1938 (Studies In Continental Thought)



Synopsis

Ponderings IIâ “VI begins the much-anticipated English translation of Martin Heidegger’s “Black Notebooks.” In a series of small notebooks with black covers, Heidegger confided sundry personal observations and ideas over the course of 40 years. The five notebooks in this volume were written between 1931 and 1938 and thus chronicle Heidegger’s year as Rector of the University of Freiburg during the Nazi era. Published in German as volume 94 of the Complete Works, these challenging and fascinating journal entries shed light on Heidegger’s philosophical development regarding his central question of what it means to be, but also on his relation to National Socialism and the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1930s in Germany. Readers previously familiar only with excerpts taken out of context may now determine for themselves whether the controversy and censure the “Black Notebooks” have received are deserved or not. This faithful translation by Richard Rojcewicz opens the texts in a way that captures their philosophical and political content while disentangling Heidegger’s notoriously difficult language.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

These working notes are a fascinating supplement for Heidegger scholarship, providing enlightenment about the development of his thought. But they ARE supplementary to Heidegger’s development of monographic work, and should be read accordingly. The notebooks vastly deserve being read for their developmental merit. As an old scholar of Heidegger’s work, I gladly recommend purchasing these compilations of notes. The notebooks do NOT “as the back cover MIS-indicates” cast a dark shadow over Heidegger’s

legacy. That blurb quotes a gossip column by Peter Gordon in the usually-authoritative NY Review of Books. Gordon doesn't understand Heidegger (amply demonstrated by his breezy discussion) and gives little attention to the notebooks themselves. But exploiting aromas of scandal sells books. Framing Heidegger is just doing business. The notebooks are "much-anticipated" (publisher description) because the Editor of the German version, Peter Trawny, made his name claiming that the notebooks are scandalous (and Gordon relies on Trawny). In other words, the German Editor created the anticipation that the English publisher now cites, using a blurb on the back of the book by a writer relying on Trawny. But Heidegger's Private Secretary, who employed Trawny, argues that the Editor went his own way, in his own self-serving interest, with arguments that have no philosophical merit:[...]Gordon's reliance on gossip (which Indiana University Press evidently endorses) suggests a patheticness of academic historiography that is a common feature of Heidegger's notebooks. No wonder that historians want to find dark shadows: Heidegger's animus toward academic ideology targets the vacuousness of historiography during his times—and presently, too? The conceptual pretenses of intellectual historiography are in contest with their own shadows, now as then. Keep in mind that "national socialism" is a generic notion during Heidegger's times which preceded the assimilation of that rubric by the German Workers' Party in the 1920s. Heidegger has no sympathy for "Nazi" ideology and no interest in aligning university reform with Berlin. Exactly the opposite: He briefly wanted coordinated university-based reform efforts to determine Berlin policy. That seemed feasible in early 1933. It became clearly unfeasible to Heidegger by August of 1933 (letter to Carl Schmitt; the phrase "inner truth and greatness of the national socialist movement" is from Rudolf Bultmann, in a letter to Heidegger, 1932). But Heidegger's desire for university reform is evident in the 1920s (e.g., Heidegger's 1927 letter to Karl Löwith as well as the political character of Aristotle's rhetoric, so vital to Heidegger: [...] I have permission to post that manuscript.) Because Peter Gordon's gossip column "on which Indiana University Press marketing draws" is typical of historians' outsider views of Heidegger (outside of professional philosophy), I need to say that Gordon shows the same error as Peter Trawny: mistaking Heidegger's characterization of German ideology for a confession of belief, as if the notebooks are diaries, rather than workbooks. Gordon (like Trawny) doesn't suspect that he is in contention with German ideology, not Heidegger (who is sketching aspects of the "rationality" of German ideology). Gordon is battling a windmill, while Heidegger was disclosing conceptual roots of ideology. Gordon's broadstroke grabbing at straws about what Heidegger is doing shows as

the Quixotic character that he stories as "Heidegger," by way of gossip about Heidegger and sophomoric misreading of Being and Time. But his antipathy (his intellectual style of reading) is undermined by his own caveats, the upshot of which is that he has no good reason for his dismissiveness. Just-so stories aren't examples of scholarly reading. Trivialization of Heidegger through a distorting hermeneutic of gossip shows Gordon's sense of intellectual historiography tending to be vacuous. But BUY the notebooks! Gary E. Davis Berkeley[...]

Just a quick note, as I have not finished the book yet. The "limited edition binding" version of the book is plastic leather, but it is sewn, which is now a rarity with academic books as being becomes thrown away.... So i'm glad I bought it. As to the Nazi question it seems pretty clear to me, that Heidegger was attempting to cast his philosophy in Nazi terms, lots of stuff about german destiny, the volk and will etc. Does it compromise him or his philosophy. There will be long arguments here. What I have read in this books so far and elsewhere, certainly compromises him. He seems to become a "timely philosopher" aiming to get a position in the Reich and exert and influence on it. Obviously he failed. I don't know if failure means he turned away or was simply rejected. Anyway, there is much of interest here, and much that clarifies the turning and if you read lots of Heidegger you should probably get this. Buy this version to encourage the publisher to use sewn bindings again....

Pleas see Gary Davis' helpful reply to my post here. I'm sure the translation is fine and the material is important, but the editing for the Index is terrible. The Index, for example, says there is ONE occurrence of "Christianity," but lists around 26. Moreover, on the page numbers on the left of "Look inside" do not always give you the page where the word occurs. However, when you click on the sample on the left, the text on the right opens to the correct page. A difficult book made much harder for scholarship. And "race" is not even mentioned in the Index -- an important omission given the interest today in Heidegger's anti-Semitism.

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