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**Heidegger and Marx: A Phantasmatic Dialectics**

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**Abstract:** What is so different in “Jewish thought”? What is “Jewish” in “Jewish thought”? Or otherwise put: What is so “Jewish” in “Jewish thought” that it is not German, not European? Or is there something in “Jewish thought” that is European, but not German? This article aims to think the anti-Marxian matrix of Heideggerian thinking, the difference between a thinking of Being itself and a thinking of beings. For Heidegger the “history of Being” provides the context for interpreting and understanding Marx’s thinking – also or especially in his assumed Jewish roots.

**Key-words:** Heidegger; Marx; Jewish thought

Let me briefly meditate the title of this conference: The other thinking, in German, is: “Das andere Denken”, “Denken” is the substantive. The question is, how the otherness of this thinking is to be understood. Which thinking? Obviously “Jewish thought”. “Jewish thought” as the “other thinking”, that is the otherness of this thinking would be “Jewishness”. What is so different in “Jewish thought”? What is “Jewish” in “Jewish thought”? Or otherwise put: What is so “Jewish” in “Jewish thought”, that it is not German, not European? Or is there something in “Jewish thought”, that is European, but not German? Probably not.

Are Spinoza, Marx, Levinas – “Jewish” thinkers as opposed to thinkers like Leibniz, Nietzsche, and Heidegger as “German” thinkers? What does “Jewish” and “German” signify here? Do these terms represent a restriction? If so, is thinking not always and everywhere – thinking? Does not thinking have a universal matrix? Can we accept a German thinking in opposition to, for example, a French one?

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The otherness of thinking to philosophy is a subject of Heidegger's thinking, the "other thinking" is a Heideggerian way of speaking, it is a poetizing thinking, a thinking, which dwells in the rhizome of poetry. But what is otherness for this thinking? Is there another thinking for thinking (not for philosophy)? What is the rhizome of this thinking? Or does it have not a rhizome, but a root? *Is there a rooted and an uprooted thinking?* Or is "roots" a senseless metaphor for thinking?

Otherness is an excessive phenomenon. It transgresses its logical significations. This excess influences my relations to otherness, especially if it appears as the Other (der/die Andere). Excessive signification can shatter an organized attitude to it. In this sense, otherness can become fantastic, a phantasma, a phantom, a phantasmatic ascription – and in becoming a phantasma the attitude towards it becomes unpredictable and even dangerous.

I would like to indicate a certain anti-Semitism as such a phantom, as a phantasmatic ascription, as an excessive reaction to a phantasmatic otherness. At the end of my paper I will interpret Heidegger's anti-Semitism in this sense as a German anti-Semitism, as an excessive ascription of a phantasmatic, groundless otherness, an otherness as the expression of an identity, of a discourse about an identity, which in itself also is phantasmatic.

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In the following I want to interpret only one of Heidegger's anti-Semitic ascriptions, a passage about Marx. Seen philologically, there are only a few Heideggerian references to Marx in the "Letter on Humanism", and in the Le Thor seminars. One day we will have a series of Heidegger's notes from his reading of the 1932 edition of Marx's early writings by Landshut and Mayer.<sup>1</sup> It is clearly the most extensive manuscript dealing with Marx. Landshut's and Mayer's edition includes Marx's "On the Jewish Question" – but Heidegger does not refer to it. Although the mentioned manuscript frequently quotes Marx, it cannot be said that Heidegger deals with Marx like he deals with Nietzsche, or even with Hegel. Marx is a thinker on the margins of Heidegger's thinking, which does not mean that Marx's thinking is without

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx: Der historische Materialismus. Die Frühschriften. Ed. by Siegfried Landshut and Jakob Peter Mayer. Alfred Kroener Verlag: Leipzig 1932.

significance for understanding and interpreting Heidegger. On the contrary – maybe Marx is one of the best perspectives from which to read Heidegger ...

In this sense, I want to speak about an anti-Marxian matrix of Heideggerian thinking. (An anecdote:<sup>2</sup> Jacob Taubes once called Adorno a “protesting Left Heideggerian” with a talent for writing – I can agree with this on one condition: that a “Left Heideggerianism”, a reading of Heidegger influenced by Marx is at the same time a reading of Heidegger against Heidegger. By the way: Adorno called Taubes a person who obviously has difficulties with his productivity.)

The passage I want to interpret is one of the two remarks about the Jews in “Anmerkungen I”, written around 1942, a time, in which Germans could have known and knew, what happened to the deported Jews in the east. (I refer with this to Peter Longerich’s book “Davon haben wir nichts gewusst”,<sup>3</sup> where Longerich analyzes the Nazi-propaganda of this time. For instance, the *Völkische Beobachter* spoke in some articles quite clearly about the massive measures taken against the Jews.)

The passage reads:

“The Anti-christ must, like every anti-, come from the same ground of the essence (Wesensgrund) as that, against which it is anti- – thus like ‘the Christian’ (‘der Christ’). This Christian stems from *Judenschaft* (a German expression I have also found in Martin Buber texts, it is not a neologism by Heidegger). This *Judenschaft* is in the time-space of the Christian west, i.e. of metaphysics, the principle of destruction. What is destructive in the overturning of the achievement of metaphysics – i.e. of the metaphysics of Hegel by Marx. The spirit and the culture become the super-structure (Überbau) of ‘life’ – i.e. of economics, i.e. of organization – i.e. of the biological – i.e. of the ‘people’.”<sup>4</sup>

Immediately after this passage Heidegger speaks of the “peak of self-annihilation in history” where, what is essentially ‘Jewish’ in the metaphysical sense

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Philipp Felsch: *Der lange Sommer der Theorie. Geschichte einer Revolte 1960-1990*. Ch. Beck: 2015, 54-63.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Longerich: “Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!” *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945*. Siedler Verlag: München 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger: *Anmerkungen I*. In: *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948)*. GA 97. Hrsg. von Peter Trawny. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 2015, 20.

fighters “the Jewish”. This means, that there must be a specific relation or connection between the two passages.

The first phrase of the first passage begins with a remark on the “Anti-Christ” and the whole passage finishes four phrases later in an interpretation of “metaphysics.” What is the connection between these two parts? The “Anti-Christ” belongs to Christianity, because it has the same “Wesensgrund.” The “Wesensgrund” of Christianity is “Judenschaft”. The consequence is that the “Anti-christ” stems from “Judenschaft”. “Metaphysics” here represents “the time-space of the Christian west”, i.e. that “metaphysics” also unfolds from the identical “Wesensgrund” of “Judenschaft”, which finally appears as the “principle of destruction” in the history of “metaphysics” coming from “Judenschaft” itself.

Why then Heidegger does begin this consequence (without a doubt a kind of a *salto mortale* of thinking) with a remark on the “Anti-Christ”? In my view, the only possible interpretation is that there is a connection between the “anti-” and the “principle of destruction”. This must be because “Judenschaft” – as the “principle of destruction” – is the origin of the “Anti-Christ” (and of “the Christian”). Christianity, then, as a form of “metaphysics”, namely, here of Hegelianism, must be the “anti-” to the “anti-”, the “spirit and the culture” in opposite to “life” (Engels speaks of “the realities of life”<sup>5</sup>, at the beginning of “The Condition of the Working Class in England” (1844)). Marx represents the “overturning” in between the opposite of “spirit” and “life”. This “overturning” is an effect of the “principle of destruction”, i.e. Marx is the incarnation of this “principle”. And if this “principle of destruction” represents the “anti-” of the “Anti-christ”, Marx is the “Anti-christ.”

In this narrative, Judaism – in the form of the beginning of monotheism and the idea of a creating God – would be the origin of metaphysics, the origin of what Heidegger later called “onto-theo-logics”<sup>6</sup>. In the “history of being” then Judaism would not be, as Donatella Di Cesare indicates<sup>7</sup>, the other to the “history of being”, but the

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<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Engels: *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*. Ed. by Walter Kumpmann. DTV: München 1973, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger: *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik*. In: *Identität und Differenz*. GA 11. Ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 2006, 31-80.

<sup>7</sup> Donatella Di Cesare: *Heidegger, die Juden, die Shoah*. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 2016, 263-266. Of course, Di Cesare does not accept Heidegger’s reduction of Judaism to the monotheism of the *creating* God, of this proto-technician, which is how Heidegger seems to see him.

decline of the first beginning of the Greeks (the chronology would here not be a problem, because Christianity is a form of Judaism).

(It should be remembered that two times in the “Anmerkungen”<sup>8</sup> Heidegger designates his own thinking as the “anti-Christian” (das “Antichristliche” und das “Anti-Christentum” – which he identifies with the Greek beginning. This would force us to speak of two forms of anti-Christianity – of the pre-Socratics and Marx (i.e. of Judaism).)

Marx is a representative of *Judenschaft*, which is in the history of “the christian west, i.e. of metaphysics, the principle of destruction”. This concept sounds almost like a quotation from Hitler’s “*Mein Kampf*”, where Hitler speaks of the “destructive principle of the Jews”<sup>9</sup>. For Hitler “the Marxist” and “the Jew” are the same. But what is “destructive” for Heidegger? Obviously something which happens in history. It refers here to what Heidegger calls “the turning in the accomplishment of metaphysics”. This “turning” is basically the “turning” of Platonism, which is also to be found more prominently for Heidegger in Nietzsche’s thinking. The domination of the idea over the body in Platonic metaphysics becomes the domination of the body over the idea in Nietzsche – and Marx. (In this sense Heidegger can call Nietzsche and Marx “Platonists”).)

The destruction or the destructive character of this “overturning” is for Heidegger – especially in the “Black Notebooks” – the domination of beings about Being, this “being-historical” inventory is again and again repeated there. In this sense Heidegger inscribes the history of metaphysics into the “history of Being” – this is not surprising, because the history of metaphysics is part of the “history of Being”, the history of metaphysics in Heidegger’s sense can only be in “history of Being”.

The total domination of the beings about Being finds its most characteristic phenomenon in the destructive event of the second world war. For the philosopher the war is actually the event of the total domination of beings about Being. Exactly this destructive character – the total domination of beings over Being – is recognized in Marx. Heidegger understands Marx as a materialist who understands history as a history of production and the means of production.

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<sup>8</sup> Heidegger: *Anmerkungen II*. In: Ders.: *Anmerkungen I-V*. A.a.O., 193, 199.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*. Two Volumes in One Volume. 815.–820. Edition. Franz Eher Nachfolge GmbH: München 1943, 498.

But the passage has not yet come to the end. Heidegger tries to give a short introduction to what he thinks Marx' thinking does. The difference between *Unterbau* and *Überbau* (base and super-structure) undermines the meaning of "spirit" and "culture" by emphasizing the meaning of "life". "Life" is the same as "economics" as "organization," "the biological," and "the 'people'". This sequence or con-sequence is important, because it confirms a strategy that Heidegger pursues in all his statements on Judaism. The "being-historical" con-sequence from "economics" to the "biological" and to the "'people'" is concentrated in the National Socialist understanding or ideology of "life". With other words: If Marx' thinking signifies the "principle of destruction" in the history of metaphysics by overturning the relation between idea and bodily beings, by understanding the *Überbau* as an epiphenomenon of the *Unterbau*, he, as a Jew, prepares the ground for the National Socialist ideology. Marx is then a pre-Hitler, Hitler a post-Marx.

In this "being-historical" strategy of claiming that *Judenschaft* and National Socialism are "essentially" the same, we could find an echo of a certain anti-Semitic figure in National Socialist propaganda, namely that WW II was caused by "world-Judaism", and that all measures taken by the Germans against the Jews are only reactive measures to those measures taken by the Jews against Germans. (Cf. Hitler's speech of January 30, 1939.)

If Heidegger thinks that the "peak of self-annihilation" in "history" is reached, when what is "essentially 'Jewish'" fights against the "Jewish", then he thinks of the Jewish "principle of destruction" in "metaphysics" as finally itself directed against the Jews. In the background to this interpretation, Heidegger sees the Jewish understanding of God as a jealous creator, i.e. as a God, who is then supposed to have an intrinsic relation to revenge and to technology<sup>10</sup>. Technology as such would have the character of the "spirit of revenge".

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I spoke in my book of a "being-historical anti-Semitism", because Heidegger's narrative of a "principle of destruction" in the "achievement of metaphysics" is for him part of the "history of Being". Only if you take into consideration the of course

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger: *Anmerkungen IV*. In: *Anmerkungen I-V*. A.a.O., 369.

problematic “being-historical” presupposition that the history of metaphysics is dominated by a Jewish beginning where God as the creator is a super-technician and take into consideration Marx’ understanding of the importance of “labor” and “production” as referring to this beginning, which then is somehow intertwined with the history of Platonism, can you understand Heidegger’s claims here. And, again, Heidegger can only speak of metaphysics, because he is in a way already thinking beyond metaphysics. (Another question is whether this beyond, this beyond metaphysics falls back in metaphysics – when the “history of Being” becomes the history of a topology of specific significations, which Heidegger inscribes in the course of history.)

If it is legitimate for me to think like this, I would also claim that Heidegger’s “history of Being” is the attempt to overcome Marx’s understanding of history as formations of “class struggles”. With his understanding of history, Heidegger attempts to outrun Marx – this is, by the way, the main feature of the manuscript on Marx, which I mentioned earlier. For Heidegger the “history of Being” provides the context for interpreting and understanding Marx’s thinking – also or especially in his assumed Jewish roots.

The concept of “being-historical anti-Semitism” has been criticized (in many ways), also by Jürgen Habermas in an interview with the French *Revue Esprit*<sup>11</sup> (without mentioning my name, but he used this concept by criticizing it). The characterization “being-historical” would be a kind of sublimation. Here I would like to finish my paper with accepting this critique under certain conditions. I accept this critique, because there is a possibility of understanding being-historical anti-Semitism as an old German anti-Semitism, which now indeed inscribes itself in the phantasmatic dialectics, in the phantasmatic otherness of thinking as such.

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Let me finally try to explain this: Anti-Semitism is, for David Nirenberg,<sup>12</sup> not a reaction to factual phenomena. Anti-Semitism does not refer to “real” Jews,<sup>13</sup> but is an

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2015-09-23-habermas-de.html>: “I think that it is totally absurd that today the *Black Notebooks* are considered as news – and that some colleagues even make the attempt to sublimate Heidegger’s anti-Semitism and the whole inexpressibly rest of his dull resentments being-historically (!).” (My translation.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. David Nirenberg: *Anti-Judaism. The Western Tradition* W.W. Norton: New York 2013.

expression of a certain self-interpretation in reference to a certain otherness. In this sense anti-Semitism says something about the anti-Semites, not about the reference of the anti-, of the other. Here I want to recall us a problem, which was at stake for Heidegger and, interestingly, also for Adorno. In his short text “on the question: what is German”<sup>14</sup> he refers to a definition by Richard Wagner.

For Wagner, what is German means “to do something for its own sake” (“deutsch sein heißt, eine Sache um ihrer selbst willen tun”, eigentlich: “die Sache die man treibt, um ihrer selbst willen und der Freude an ihr willen treiben”<sup>15</sup>). Wagner refers in the context of this saying to the plays of Schiller and Goethe, i.e. to art and aesthetics. For him the Germans are the people of the useless, of art – the real heirs of the Greeks (of course). For Wagner it is immediately obvious that the Jews represent the opposite, namely only to do something for the sake of the business, of capital. He explains this very clearly in his article “What is German?”

Could the otherness of a thinking then be the source of a self-interpretation by constructing this otherness as a phantasma of what is own? Yes, “Jewish thought” is different, because it is – I take Marx *pars pro toto* – a materialist thinking of “production,” a thinking of economy and being successful in economy by making money, or, better, in accumulating capital by technological means, a thinking of the super-structure as epiphenomenon of the base. German thought – and Heidegger in this sense is definitively a German thinker – is – like Greek thought, like *theoria* in the Aristotelian sense (to be free of labor ...) – a thinking for its own sake, it is a thinking for the sake of Being itself, not for the sake of beings.

The anti-Marxian matrix of Heideggerian thinking then is based on a phantasma, even on a specter – however a stubborn icon of a suffering consciousness. This suffering is the experience of a loss, namely of the loss of a thinking, which only thinks for the sake of its own. It is a thinking which only circles around this loss (you can call this loss perhaps – *Heimat*). It is the thinking of a phantom, of a phantom pain – as if thinking ever was a thinking for the sake of its own.

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<sup>13</sup> What is a “real” Jew, a “real” German, a “real” Human Being? The question does not doubt that there are “realities of life,” that there are human beings living their life with all their needs and cravings, but what is the reality of a Jew, of a German, even of a human being, is not easy to say. Maybe it is impossible to say.

<sup>14</sup> Theodor W. Adorno: »Auf die Frage: Was ist deutsch.« In: Ders.: *Stichworte. Kritische Modelle 2*. In: Ders.: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*. Suhrkamp Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 2003, 693.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Wagner: *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*. *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*. Bd. 8. Verlag von E. W. Fritsch: Leipzig 2/1888, 96-97.

In this perspective Heidegger's words in the "Letter of Humanism", that Marx has a specific relation to history, "because he experiences the estrangement of man"<sup>16</sup> receives a certain intonation. Did Marx experience the "estrangement", or did he develop a theory of it? Why could Marx "experience the estrangement"?

Because he was the thinker of a state of the human being which is forced to do things for a purpose that does not lie in the doing as such. Because he is the thinker of wage labor, where people are working for a life, for "making a living", where thinking strives for the revolution as a liberation from such a life, where thinking finally becomes a revolutionary praxis. For Wagner – and for Heidegger too –, this is not the condition for the Germans, for the German thinking, for thinking as such.

And here we have reached the phantasmatic dialectics of Heidegger and Marx, of a thinking that thinks only and uniquely for the sake of thinking and another thinking, which understands itself as wage labor, which thinks for something, which does not lie in this thinking as such – a thinking, which at the end does not want to "interpret" the world anymore, but to "change" it. Here we are at point of the difference and the otherness between the base and the super structure, the difference between a thinking of Being itself and a thinking of beings, of a German and a Jewish thinking.

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger: Letter on Humanism. In: Basis Writings from Being and Time (1972) to the Task of Thinking (1964). Ed. by David Farrell Krell. Routledge: London 1993, 243.