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Ivan Strenski, in his article titled "Heidegger Is No Hero" (May 19), raises a number of important points about the complex relations between the life and thought of Martin Heidegger. I certainly agree with Strenski's skepticism about the moral quality of Heidegger's life. The project of Sein und Zeit calls for the resolute gathering of the thrown self in such a way that it can become the founder of a new, saving polis. In Heidegger's 1935 lectures, Einführung in die Metaphysik, he states that a renewal of the spirit of true questioning (die Seinsfrage) can save the German nation from the world darkening brought about by America and Russia. Only the Thinker can save the people. Some have suspected that Heidegger has set himself up as a spiritualized Hitler in these lectures.

Yet questioners of Heidegger's moral authenticity must probe more deeply into the years between 1936 and 1946, when he was wrestling with the metaphysics of Friedrich Nietzsche. As is well known, Heidegger saw Nietzsche as the last great metaphysician of the West, the thinker who gathered together the threads of the history of Being into the expression of the Will to Power and the Eternal Return. Nietzsche had brought expression of the Will to Power and the theatrical structures within which we exist. Theology, in its quest for radical theonomy, should now be understood as the celebration of this clearing. From the freeing power of the Open comes the radiance which brings us our true homecoming.

By way of a final warning, however, we should remember the danger of the type of thinking presented by Heidegger. The most detailed warning is still that of Hans Jonas, who spoke at Drew University in 1964 to a large group of theologians. In his talk (reprinted in the Review of Metaphysics in 1964) Jonas warned us about substituting Heideggerian notions for our own Christian categories. In particular, we should be cautious about substituting the Heideggerian notion of the "history of Being" for the Christian notion of revelation. Such an equation places too much emphasis on the individual Thinker who is responsible for the presentation and preservation of the deposits of this history. Further, said Jonas, we must not equate God with Being.

Jonas is certainly correct, yet he fails to see the need to put our very ideas of God into question. The question of Being allows us to do this. Of course, the very term "Being" (das Sein) is itself questionable. The Open, as the ultimate clearing away of that-which-closes, is that which is sought by any theology sensitive to the Heideggerian revolution. It is this insight which remains Heidegger's greatest legacy to those of us who labor in the fallow fields of theology.

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I am teaching a seminar on Rudolf Bultmann's theology; thus I'm mindful of a statement of Ludwig Marceuse's about Heidegger that I strongly suspect (as Bultmann also did) comes a good deal closer to the truth than Strenski's article. I pass it on in my own translation from a letter to the editor of Der Spiegel in 1966.

There can be no talk of defending Heidegger "against the charge of fascism." For who can cover up for what he did then? All those who know of those distant events merely through hearsay ought to consult the documentary book by Guido Schneeberger, Supplement to Heidegger (Bern, 1962) [excerpts from which are available in English translation in The Worlds of Existentialism, edited by Maurice Friedman], which was barely noticed in Germany. But this fall into sin has nothing whatever to do with the extraordinary book Being and Time (1927). Again and again, the attempt has been made effectively to eliminate this important work ex post Heidegger's later development. . . . Right up to today the whipping boy Heidegger has diverted attention from many of the crimes committed by German "poets and thinkers" in the 1930s. The primitive claim, "But he was always a Nazi" (also applied to Knut Hamsun and