Martin Heidegger’s Anti-Semitism: Philosophy of Technology and the Media in the Light of the "Black Notebooks". Implications for the Reception of Heidegger in Media and Communication Studies

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Abstract

“Heidegger is the petty bourgeois of German philosophy, the man who has placed on German philosophy his kitschy night-cap […] When I see that even super-intelligent people have been taken in by Heidegger, […] I feel sickened to this day. […] Heidegger used to hold court at Todtnauberg and at all times would allow himself to be admired on his philosophical Black Forest plinth like a sacred cow. […] They made their pilgramages, as it were, into the philosophical Black Forest, to the sacred Martin Heidegger and knelt down before their idol”

--- Thomas Bernhard

Abstract:
In spring 2014, three volumes of the Schwarze Hefte (Black Notebooks), Heidegger’s philosophical notebooks, were published in the German edition of his collected works. They contain notes taken in the years 1931-1941 and have resulted in public debates about the role of anti-Semitism in Heidegger’s thought.

This article asks: What are and should be the implications of the publication of the Black Notebooks for the reception of Heidegger in the study, theory, and philosophy of media, communication, and technology? It discusses Theodor W. Adorno’s and Moishe Postone’s contributions to the critical theory of anti-Semitism and applies these approaches for an analysis of Heidegger’s Black Notebooks.

The analysis shows that the logic of modern technology plays an important role in the Black Notebooks. The paper therefore also re-visits some of Heidegger’s writings on technology in light of the Black Notebooks. There is a logical link between the Black Notebooks’ anti-Semitism and the analysis of technology in Being and Time and The Question Concerning Technology. The first publication provides the missing link and grounding for the second and the third.

Heidegger’s works have had significant influence on studies of the media, communication, and the Internet. Given the anti-Semitism in the Black Notebooks, it is time that Heideggerians abandon Heidegger, and instead focus on alternative traditions of thought. It is now also the moment where scholars should consider stopping to eulogise and reference Heidegger when theorising and analysing the media, communication, culture, technology, digital media, and the Internet.
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Does the recent publication of Heidegger’s Black Notebooks require a re-evaluation of his thought? In the present text we will deal with this question and reach the conclusion that a change of theoretical perspective on Heidegger’s work is indeed justified. The franker and less cautious style of the Black Notebooks puts in the foreground stances that were already known, but were previously relegated to the background: it becomes possible thereby to establish that Heidegger’s philosophical views host a significant lot of unwarranted prejudices, which are incorporated in his picture of the ‘hist Implications for the Reception of Heidegger in Media and Communication Studies. 

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Introduction. Wikimedia Commons. In spring 2014, three volumes of the Schwarze Hefte ( Black Notebooks ),