Die ‘Ausgabe letzter Hand’ ist ein Familienunternehmen.

Martin Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe (= GA), Heidegger’s Collected Edition, posthumously given the honorific title of an “edition of the last hand,” is a “family business.” This recent characterization of Heidegger’s posthumous edition, by Reinhard Mehring, put forward in the first book-length analysis of the GA as a hermeneutical-philosophical problem, sums up in a “nutshell” phrase the source of all of the scholarly ills that have beset this massive edition since its inception in the last three years of Martin Heidegger’s life.

Mehring’s book goes on to characterize the economic-political character of such a family business in the distinctly “homey” terms of medieval feudalism, as a guild of apprentices and journeymen hand-picked by the master craftsman for training in the handicraft of thinking in a workshop sustained by “creative landscapes.” But this appeal to old-fashioned workmanship is belied by the shoddy error-ridden editions that the GA has in fact delivered to the public domain. To account for these poor-quality editions, we must note not just the economic (profit) motive, but also the more authoritarian side of this family organization, which claims to speak in the name of the Father long after his decease in every new contingency, and, from this, the insistence on a right of imprimatur that extends even to editor’s postscripts and translator’s introductions. Armed with the modern weapon of copyright deployed by a paramilitary command structure, this premodern family guild has proven to be a malicious anachronism wholly inappropriate and unresponsive to the postmodern requirements of late twentieth century scholarship, which of necessity is globally interlinked, international, and cosmopolitan in scope. Especially in this day and age, old family values and the new global scholarly values simply do not mix.

Ever since the advent of copyright laws, of course, family complicity in the work of archives and editions is not unusual, and at times such work has proceeded smoothly enough, without undue incidents, as in the case of the Fichte and Schelling editions. But in both the German and the American press, controversy over the Heidegger editions has occasioned recall of the antics of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. If this old scandal of German editions is evoked here to assist us in understanding the Heidegger case, let us also at once recall that Germany, that “nation of poets and thinkers,” up to the present day still leads the world, and so sets the example, in the care, scholarship, and funding that it invests in preserving and propagating its philosophical classics and in maintaining the highest standards in their edition.

In what way is the administration of the Heidegger papers akin to the case of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche? Not in the actual forgeries of texts, publicly exposed in detail in the fifties by Karl Schlechta, as in the mentality of forgery to which a family member can succumb in assuming total control over the papers by way of inheritance, and then presuming to speak with total authority.
in the philosopher’s name. Sister Elisabeth, abysmally ignorant of her brother’s thought-world, not to speak of the philology of editions, appointed herself high priestess of her brother’s philosophy and sole executor of his literary estate. In all matters legal and philosophical, she claimed that her brother had personally authorized her to speak in his name and to interpret his philosophy. More often than not, she clearly overstepped her competence. In Arthur Danto’s words, “she had barely a child’s competence of philosophical ideas, and would not have known one to distort it.” But monopolistic authority over the papers made her claims unimpeachable. To quote Walter Kaufmann, “Nobody could challenge her interpretations with any authority because she was the guardian of yet unpublished material—and developed an increasingly precise memory for what her brother had said to her in conversation.” Her assertion of absolute authority over her brother’s life and thought prompted her at one point to propose the suppression of Book Four of Zarathustra or, barring that, at least its mutilation. This was part of a concerted campaign to present a “hagiographical” image of “Nietzsche” to the world after her own image and likeness, which, on the one hand, involved covering up certain family secrets (hereditary illness) and, on the other, projecting her own political views through her brother’s thought. “By bringing to her interpretation of her brother’s work the heritage of her late husband, she prepared the way for the belief that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi.”

If we are to understand how analogous tendencies now beset the Heidegger editions, the following review of the genesis and growth of the GA as a “family business” must of course make allowances for somewhat different personalities, and for the change in family circumstances brought on by the Germany of the postwar years. The very fact that this historical review is forced to dwell inordinately on the mens auctoris (mind of the author), so much at odds with the “philosophical hermeneutics” of which Heidegger himself was the prime mover, is itself symptomatic of something that has seriously gone awry in the transmission of his thought. This is only because the mind of the author is now preempted by the mentality of the author’s family, which claims to speak the author’s mind in posthumum. The old Heidegger’s peculiar family setting thereby becomes implicated in the philosophical problem of the transmission and reception of what is posthumously purported to be “his” GA.

By all accounts, the aging Heidegger approached the very idea of a Collected Edition of all of his works, published and unpublished, at first with adamant opposition and then, in the last two years of his life, with extreme hesitation and reluctance. His first and overriding priority was focused simply on how to dispose of the “mountain” of papers accumulated over six decades of productive work that was now destined to become his literary “remains” (Nachlass). The tenor of this concern, for items of considerable value in more ways than one, was communicated as early as 1967 to Hannah Arendt and J. Glenn Gray, frequent visitors to the Heidegger household in their capacity as advisors on the English translations of Heidegger. Glenn Gray accordingly tendered a plan for some American institution to “photostat” (sic) the entire Nachlass “to protect it against destruction or loss,” a concern that had obsessed Heidegger ever since the war years. This “household” issue was finally resolved only in late 1973, coupled with the decision to begin a Collected Edition, with the completion of a new building at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar expressly designed to withstand a nuclear holocaust. (Natives and visitors alike sometimes call it “das Bunker.”) This decision was
finally implemented in December 1975, five months before Heidegger’s death, with the transfer of 100 cartons of papers from the family homestead to Marbach. In order to fund the building of a cottage for the “old folks” on their property in Freiburg-Zähringen, the Heidegger family in 1970 had already sold the autograph manuscript of *Sein und Zeit* to the German Literature Archive in Marbach for DM 100,000. After Heidegger’s stroke in April 1970, Frau Elfride Heidegger had placed many of the books in Heidegger’s personal library on the public auction market. The correspondence framing these decisions provides more than one insight into the family pressures to which the old Heidegger was subjected that ultimately forced him into the GA.\(^7\)

The first publisher’s prospectus outlining the “Plan of the GA” appeared in the Fall of 1974, on the occasion of Heidegger’s 85th birthday, the second in the Fall of 1975, and the third, the first of the posthumous prospectuses, which marks a radical change in editorial principles, appeared in March 1978. If there is an editorial principle that is to guide and govern the GA throughout its four parts, it is the “chronological principle,” which is underscored more than once in the only two prospectuses published during Heidegger’s lifetime. Strict adherence to this chronological principle is absolutely essential to fulfill the single philosophical goal of the GA, namely, to expose in full detail and depth the very movement of Heidegger’s *Denkweg*, his “path of thought in its sequence of steps” over nearly seven decades of plodding inquiry. To follow the dynamics of the single lifelong way in its multiplicity of particular ways and dead ends (Holzwge) according to “the chronological principle of the origin of the writings”: the almost obsessive tenacity with which Heidegger clung to this single principle of edition is poignantly recorded in a conversation he had with Hannah Arendt in August 1975, nine months before his death in May 1976. And in his Postscript to GA9, dated July 1976, F. W. von Herrmann himself underscores the thoroughgoing application of this chronological principle, even with regard to the difficult-to-date scattered marginal comments made by Heidegger over the years in his personal copies of the *Wegmarken* essays, as a final means of providing insight into the “way-character of his thought.”

All of this changes with the first posthumous prospectus of 1978, which for the first time announces the notoriously ahistorical “edition of the last hand” as the guiding principle of the GA. Such a principle makes Heidegger’s manuscript as he last left it canonical, with no attention being paid to distinguishing later emendations and marginal comments superimposed on the initial draft by Heidegger, sometimes over the course of years. It is in effect an “edition of the dead hand,” since it obscures and confounds the very dynamics of the course of thought that the GA had originally made its foremost goal to accentuate. One major casualty of such a confusion of chronological strata occurs in the story of Heidegger’s development toward his magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit* (SZ), published in 1927. The dozen instances of usage, for example, of the terminology of *Existenz* (*existenziell, Existenzialien*, etc.) in the edition of the course of Summer Semester 1925, which proves to be the penultimate draft of SZ, are in every instance actually handwritten insertions in Heidegger’s copy of the stenographic transcript of the course, and thus postdate the lecture course itself.\(^8\) But in none of these instances is the reader notified in any way. The reader is therefore left in the dark regarding Heidegger’s sudden and wholehearted plunge into the terminology of *Existenzphilosophie* only with the final draft of SZ itself, the draft of March 1926, and regarding his diligent avoidance
of this terminology in the preceding years. Thus, for lack of judicious editing, one of the results anticipated from the overall aim of the GA is not editorially cultivated, namely, that of overcoming once and for all "the crude misunderstanding of classifying Heidegger in existence-philosophy."^1

The crucial portion of the GA is its Second Part, which aims to lay out a seamless sequence of Heidegger’s hitherto unpublished lecture courses over twenty-five years of teaching. By 1974, Heidegger was puzzling over the enormously difficult editorial problem of how his extant course manuscripts, in varying stages of completeness, manuscript complexity, and (as it turned out) disarray, were in fact to be edited into printable texts in a way that would manifest the chronological path of his thought. Over the next year and a half, F. W. von Herrmann functioned as Heidegger’s secretary in composing several drafts of a typescript that outlined the Leitsätze or “Guiding Principles for the Edition of the Second Division (Lecture Courses) of the GA.” Heidegger himself never got around to signing a finalized typescript draft before his death. Accordingly, Frau Elfride Heidegger, for a series of grant proposals applying for financial support of the GA from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, had officially to “testify to Heidegger’s complete consent to the Guiding Principles.” Yet according to the same testimony, “at the beginning of May in 1976,” i.e., shortly before his death, Heidegger in his own hand also formulated a single-page statement of Directions (Anweisungen) “to supplement the Guiding Principles.” This is the only extant document directly from Heidegger’s own hand that provides direction for the editions of the GA. Moreover, as a “last hand” document, it does not merely supplement but in fact supersedes the five-page typescript of the Leitsätze. However, the Leitsätze and Anweisungen together make up the Richtlinien (Guidelines) distributed to editors of the GA from 1977 on, repeatedly referred to as “Guidelines” in their Postscripts.10

The first volume to be edited on the basis of these guidelines was Klaus Held’s edition of the “Leibniz Logik,” Heidegger’s lecture course of Summer Semester 1928, first published in 1978. It was the fourth lecture course to appear in print. In his editing praxis, Held immediately took exception to the explicit first directive from Heidegger to delete expletives, transitional and other “filler” words, deciding instead to leave them in precisely in order to preserve the lecture quality of the text. In his editorial decisions, moreover, Held felt the need to seek guidance from the precedent of “courses edited by Heidegger’s own hand” (GA26 289/224) during his lifetime (e.g., EM, N I & N II, WD). Such editorial resourcefulness was in fact granted by Heidegger himself who, in surveying the condition of his course manuscripts in his old age, was acutely aware of the enormously complex task he was transferring to the editors of his lecture courses, and the varying skills he was demanding of them in meeting the primary aim of displaying the precise chronological movement of his course of thought. Contrary to the posthumous nonsense and chronological confusion that resulted from a policy of rigid conformity by the narrow application of the Guiding Principles by an increasingly paramilitary GA administration, the handwritten Directions clearly reflect the hermeneutic good sense we would expect from Heidegger’s lifelong pan-hermeneutical orientation. The granting of discretionary leeway and flexibility to the skilled editor presumed to be equipped with the appropriate φρόνησις or prudent judgment, who is called upon to interweave a course manuscript full of addenda and often sketchy marginal comments with the extant student transcripts into

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a continuous readable text, occurs in the only phrase that is underlined in Heidegger's handwritten Directions. It is a phrase that can easily serve as an ultimate criterion for all the editorial decisions demanded of the GA: "das dem jeweiligen Text Gemäß.") Our skillful editor is called upon to make discretionary judgments of expanding, shortening, transposing, interpellating, including or excluding summary repetitions of the previous hour, and the like, all according to "das dem jeweiligen Text Gemäß," "whatever is appropriate for the particular text." This is the editor's main guide in fulfilling the prescribed task of constructing the text into a whole while "deconstructing" or articulating it into its parts, with an eye constantly fixed on the central goal of bringing out as fully as possible the precise dynamics of Heidegger's path of thought. Note that "Heidegger himself," in keeping with a lifelong antipathy to a psychologistic hermeneutics focusing on the mind of an author, diverts our attention away from himself to the matter of the text, to It and to wherever It leads. This is virtually the opposite to the advice that von Herrmann once gave to a GA editor, that "in critical cases each editor must ask herself how Heidegger himself would have decided the matter."11

With so much dependent on the judicious decisions of prudent and skillful editors of his lecture courses, it is small wonder that the old Heidegger felt himself at the mercy of his "tradition," as he looked with trepidation toward the time when the edition would be definitively "out of his hands." One sign of this trepidation is the remark he made to one of his old students shortly before his death, "I only hope that what happened to Hegel never happens to me."12 This reference to the notoriously unreliable Freundsvereinsausgabe of 1832–1845 points at least to the amateurishness to which a poorly administered, totally uncritical GA would be prone. It did not take long after his death for some of his worst fears to come to roost, precisely from within his own family circle.

The initial reviews of the first volumes of the lecture courses almost immediately began to raise serious doubts about the scholarly quality of the editorial work. But the crucial dispute over scholarly standards took place between the family and its publisher on the one side and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft on the other (DFG = our NEH & NSF combined). In return for financial support of the GA, the DFG wanted standards approaching a critical edition, but was willing to accede to some extent to the wishes of the author, if these could be documented. The documents produced, the aforementioned typescript of the Guiding Principles and the handwritten Directions as officially notarized by Frau Elfride Heidegger, were adjudged to be insufficient. Since no further documents were ever produced to support the alleged "Will and Testament of Martin Heidegger," repeated requests for funding were consistently denied. An early suggestion for getting beyond this documentary impasse was a proposal to form a scholarly committee (Walter Biemel, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Otto Pöggeler) to oversee the operational standards and scholarly decisions pertaining to the GA. The family and its publisher refused to share control over the GA even in its scholarly aspects, rejecting the idea of a committee on the basis of the claim that this was contrary to the wishes of Martin Heidegger.

The decisions of a family now under siege by the German academic community are reflected in the prospectus from the publisher Vittorio Klostermann issued in March 1978. For the very first time, it proclaims that what Heidegger wanted was not a historical-critical edition replete with a philological apparatus and an index but instead an "edition of the last hand." That Heidegger did not want
the hyperphilology of a historical-critical edition can readily be surmised from his critique, on the opening day of his second Nietzsche course in 1937 (N17f./9f.), of the Nietzsche Gesamtausgabe being edited during the Nazi years. That he wanted no critical edition at all is, however, extremely doubtful. And that an edition of the last hand has to be understood as contrary to a critical edition is belied by von Herrmann’s newspaper announcement of 1974, which speaks of the GA as a “critical Collected Edition of the last hand.” As with other claims, no document is at hand from Heidegger’s own hand stating that he wanted an edition of the last hand.

Within this polemically charged atmosphere, in December 1982, over six years after Heidegger’s death, von Herrmann as chief editor, now under the charge of the new family administrator, the son and recently retired Bundeswehr Colonel, Hermann Heidegger, issued a new statement of principle and practice regarding the edition now in full progress, a journal article divided into two parts: 1) “Heidegger’s Edition Directions” (the Anweisungen), and 2) “Edition without Interpretation.” This would have been the perfect opportunity—in keeping with the publication in 1978 of the motto of the GA, “Wege—not Werke [Ways—not Works],” in the old Heidegger’s quivering hand—to reproduce a facsimile of the single page autograph of Heidegger’s Anweisungen in this article. For by this time, reviewers and academics alike had repeatedly voiced the need for full and public disclosure of the principles and ground rules for editing the texts that they were purchasing and quizzically reading in a presuppositional void. Such requests for documentary substantiation of the family’s editorial claims are to this very day systematically ignored. Instead, the article presents the four handwritten “Directions” in piecemeal fashion, fragmentarily, and out of order, and so interprets them for us without the benefit of the whole in which they were originally cast. Indeed, the second part of the article for the first time invokes a new editorial principle, purportedly stemming from “Heidegger himself,” and introduced as a logical consequence of the first posthumously announced principle of an “edition of the last hand”: “The edition without interpretation gives the reader free access to the texts” without the mediating intervention of an editor’s interpretation, either by way of an introduction or an index. In fact, von Herrmann had the temerity to report this, six years after the voice had been stilled, as “Heidegger’s decision for an edition without interpretation.”

One would have to imagine that the panhermeneutical Heidegger had in his dotage lapsed into senility even to utter the words, let alone to express the wish, for an “edition without interpretation.” In the context of a lifetime of thought that began with a “hermeneutics of the facticity” of life itself and that is now to be gathered for a collected lectio in a Collected Edition, the slogan “Edition without Interpretation” is blatantly a square circle, a contradiction in terms. It would have been better to strive for an “Edition without Misinterpretation,” since it is precisely this ideal that many a GA-editor will fail to meet by an ever widening margin, as the increasing crop of error-ridden editions demonstrates. A better future fate for the GA calls for a detailed study of the different sources of errors of interpretation that have already prevented many an editor from delivering the “readable working text” promised to the subscriber of the GA: e.g., an inability to read the old German handwriting of Heidegger’s day, let alone Heidegger’s shorthand; a lack of the background knowledge requisite to interpret Heidegger’s frequent abbreviations correctly, etc. Consider, for example, the enormous background understanding needed to decide that Heidegger had made a
“slip of the pen” in one or another critical passage, which on occasion did occur. Already noted are the chronological distortions that arise from conflating various layers of marginalia upon marginalia without notification to the reader. The Guiding Principles by definition mandate an editor to interpret how to divide a seamless autograph into titled subsections, whether and where to insert Heidegger’s recapitulations of the previous lecture hour, omitting them only if they are a “pure” repetition, etc. In short, contrary to the new bogus principle of 1982, and truer to the hermeneutic art of edition, is the sober starting point laid down by the general editor of the issue of the Freiburg University Notes in which von Herrmann’s article first appeared, namely, that “edition is interpretation.” In retrospect, it would have been far more prudent to raise the hermeneutical consciousness of the editors in regard to their inevitable role as first interpreters of their particular text, by allowing them the freedom to elucidate their decisions and difficulties by way of an Editor’s Introduction as well as by annotation, and to examine and crosscheck the consistency of these decisions by way of a disciplined systematic index.

The regime of Hermann Heidegger began in the autumn of 1979, when he preempted the administration of the family business from his mother, who in 1977 identified herself as “sole heir of the literary estate.” He was first introduced to the scholarly world as the “estate administrator” (Nachlassverwalter) in the opening sentence of this 1982 article, an article whose basic aim was to justify and consolidate the family business against the intrusion of any “public committee” into its leadership or “the support of any institution” with a “staff of coworkers paid for from public funds.” This complete privatization of the family holdings is here solemnized and defined by the public announcement of transfer of the power of “Imprimatur” (sic!) from the philosopher father to the soldier son. “His scope of duties includes that of guarding over the maintenance and compliance to the guidelines and instructions laid down by Heidegger.” Such a command was after all not unfamiliar to the career-soldier son, who had served as a staff officer in Berlin during the war. After release from a Soviet prison camp in 1949, he managed to win a degree in military history from the University of Freiburg before the Wehrmacht was reactivated as the Bundeswehr in 1953. With prospects of becoming a general looking dim, he took an early retirement as colonel in the late seventies in order to take over the family business. His major qualification for his new scholarly duties was that he could read his father’s minuscule, “eye-grinding” handwriting.

The mind of the father is now delivered over to the mind of the son within the closed circle of the family. The mens auctoris now assumes a more military cast and more militant tone, much like the mind-set of a staff officer in a Berlin at war. The self-proclaimed right of Imprimatur is first applied to his wayward editors, where the rules and directives transmitted to them are understood with martial rigidity rather than the phronetic flexibility that his father had allowed for. This military impulse toward uniformity and conformity will soon wreak its devastation on the transmission of his father’s ideas beyond the borders of Germany to the entire world. For the paranoia of absolute control will now extend to the translations of the GA, which are just beginning to be contracted as Herr Oberst Heidegger assumes his rapidly burgeoning international command. Herr Heidegger will have no sympathy for variations in national customs of scholarship, translation, reception, and publication. In September 1981, Colonel Heidegger cuts his first marching orders, a “Directive to all Translators.”
its imperious tone, the directive announces all that "my father had clearly voiced" regarding the translation of his work, made known to us for the very first time five years after the fact of his death. New codicils will be added ad hoc to this initial Directive in 1982 and finally in 1984, on each new occasion again reinforced by appeals to the voice of the father—in phrases like "Nach dem Wunsch meines Vaters," "Mein Vater hat klar zum Ausdruck gebracht"—with new conversations with the deceased recalled and publicly announced for the first time six and eight years after the fact of his death.

In 1982, Albert Hofstadter's English translation of GA24 coincidentally appeared at the same time as Emmanuel Martineau's French translation of GA25. Hofstadter was blithely unaware of any restrictions on his activity as a translator, for Klostermann had in fact imposed none back in 1978 when the contract was signed. Hofstadter accordingly framed his annotated translation, as mandated by the scholarly guidelines of two NEH grants supporting the work with a substantial Introduction and an even more substantial Lexicon. This index has proved invaluable over the years for Anglo-American scholarship on Heidegger. Martineau on the other hand, following the more anarchic French ways of publication, provided no supporting framework whatsoever for his translation. Hermann Heidegger, upon being confronted virtually simultaneously with the two translations, opted for the latter pulp format against the American hardback and proceeded to supplement his "Directive to all Translators" to ban a recurrence of the American offence in presuming to introduce and index his father's texts.

In 1984, in view of the jeopardy to NEH funding that these new ex post facto restrictions on translations posed, Hermann Heidegger conceded to a translator's introduction of up to 15–20 pages in the American editions. This unfortunately proved to be a pseudo-concession. Exercising his presumed "right" of Imprimatur backed by the threat of cancellation of the press contract, Hermann Heidegger peremptorily dismissed my thirteen page Introduction to the translation of GA20, already in page proofs, and demanded a drastic shortening by deletion of the interpretive sentences, without, however, specifying which these were (he knows very little English). In my absence from the country, Indiana University Press proceeded to shorten the thirteen page Introduction for me down to a six page Foreword, and, without my authorization, forthwith sent that castrated version to Herr Heidegger for his approval. Shortly after, this Foreword written by several hands appeared in print, against my express wishes appended with my name, I repudiated its authorship and requested that it not be reprinted. It has since been replaced by an even more truncated "Publisher's Foreword" devoid of the most essential cautions to the serious English reader of this stretch of Heidegger's Denkweg in translation. As in the hardback edition, the reader of this paperback edition from Indiana University Press is once again not informed of Herr Heidegger's Imprimatur, let alone made aware of who the Censor Deputatis is and who intoned the Nihil Obstat ("Nothing stands in the Way—Let it be printed!"), as is the time-honored convention in such matters.

Up to the present day, the English translations of the GA continue to operate in a peculiarly perverted world (Hegel's verkehrte Welt), in which our Translator's Forewords are written primarily to please only two readers, Hermann Heidegger and Klostermann, neither of whom knows much English! Lest some American Heideggerians through inuring habit forget what a perverted world they inhabit, they might take note that scholars and presses new to the Heidegger
game (e.g., Blackwell, Northwestern, Yale) feel assaulted and insulted upon initial receipt of the “Hinweis für alle Übersetzer,” learning soon enough that Hinweis here does not translate as “hint or suggestion,” but as marching orders, the directives and mandates of a hard-line, military-minded administration. The posthumous “ipse dixit” appeal to endless conversations to suit ever new occasions has evoked the call for a definitive Ausgabe letzter Stimme, an “edition of the last voice” of Heidegger’s “table talks,” in order to fix once and for all for posterity and to complete all these criterion-setting events of the oral tradition of the Holy Family. When I first penned a few ironic lines to that effect, I actually had Luther’s table talks in mind, and by extension Jesus at the Last Supper. But an astute German observer steeped in the political thought of Carl Schmitt has associated them with Hitler’s table talks, which apparently were automatically taken as “acts of sovereignty” by his trusted henchmen seated at the “table of power.” The sheer fact of this privileged “access to the power-holder,” moreover, gave these underlings the power, simply on the purported “say of the Führer,” to rescind, not to say arbitrarily interpret, the written constitutional law. Could it be that the “wish of my father,” which through sheer repetition appears to assume the mythic authority of an eternal essence, assumes the role here of a thinly disguised Führerprinzip? In any case, there are some strange paradigms of command and obedience, authority and responsibility, alien to the American mind (I hope), that are at work in this incessant issuance of directives “in the name of the father.”

In the meantime, the de facto administration of the German editions themselves continues its amateurish and erratic ways; its errors are legion, and the quality control virtually non-existent, reminiscent of the rapid growth of a bad weed in the very haste to get volumes out onto the market. All signs indicate that the GA was ill-prepared for its public debut in 1975–76, and the latest sequence of prospectuses continues to bear the scars of hasty makeshift planning. Double volume numbers are but one indication that something has gone awry in the planning process; by the latest count there are four such doubles. Let us merely note the most glaring faux pas that has occurred to date in the planning of such volumes. In 1983, it was officially announced that “thorough research on the part of the estate administrator, Dr. Hermann Heidegger,” has shown that the course of Summer Semester 1929, “Introduction to Academic Studies,” slated to become GA29, “was not only not held, but also was never worked out in manuscript form.” GA29/30 (here citing p. 537) is thereby released to the scholarly market in 1983. But the very same year brought the publication of a letter dated May 1929 with Herbert Marcuse’s first-hand account of a Freiburg course bearing precisely that title. Soon after, a partial transcript of this course surfaced in the Marcuse Archive in Frankfurt, and more recently a complete transcript of it by way of Japan. It is to be hoped that further “thorough research” of the extant archives will produce at least one transcript of this important course that could be published as an appendix to GA28.

This is but one example of how the hegemonic tendency toward private monopoly and absolute control down to the archival sources has been repeatedly thwarted by the research impulse toward public exposure generated simply by the escalating scholarly interest in the “Heidegger case,” of which the Farias firestorm is a far too noisy example. Quieter archival examples will in the end probably generate more light on Heidegger’s life and thought, where the role of the scholarly community is to keep the Heidegger family honest by expanding the less biased

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and freer sources and channels of disclosure. Heidegger’s “paper trail” extends well beyond the “100 cartons” deposited in Marbach, being scattered in archives public and private throughout Germany and the world. This tendency toward public exposure has escalated with technological advances far beyond the “photostat” of Hannah Arendt’s day. In this day and age, such forces have combined to elicit the demand for virtually instantaneous translation of Heidegger’s works into a wealth of world languages. At the recent international Heidegger conference convened by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Bonn, in which Heideggerians from every continent, including Africa, were represented, there were papers dealing with the problems of translating Heidegger into Croatian, Slovakian, and various East-Asiatic languages, with one paper bearing the title, “Does Being Also Speak Estonian?” answered with a resounding “Ja wohl!” In view of this instant international dissemination of Heidegger’s thought, it is clearly all the more important to get the German editions of Heidegger’s works right in the first place, before translation. For better or for worse, Heidegger as a philosopher and German citizen living through the events of the twentieth century is now a foremost citizen of the world. There comes a point where narrow family interests brutally enforced by the triple threat of copyright, Imprimatur, and the withholding or cancelling of contracts must be abrogated, aufgehoben, declared obsolete and anachronistic. At the same international conference, I had occasion to rehearse some of the choicest examples of gross scholarly malpractice in the Collected Edition in an attempt to specify the inescapably interpretive labor of both editors and translators, in the process exposing the “apocryphal” character of the posthumously proclaimed editorial principles. In the spirit of the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution—it was 1989—I concluded my talk with an appeal to the scholarly Tricolor:

1) A thoroughgoing and systematic checking for errors (Überprüfung) in all GA-volumes, past, present, and future.

2) The freedom of all editors and translators, as the acknowledged first interpreters of their particular text, to explain in detail how they have had to cope with that text.

3) Openness, “glasnost,” on the part of the German redaction by publication of Heidegger’s handwritten Directions, the editorial Guiding Principles, and the entire set of notes for the fragmentary Foreword from which the motto for the GA, “Ways—not Works,” was drawn.

In the discussion that ensued, only the first of these cries from the barricades was addressed. Before this international audience, von Herrmann promised that such a quality control would indeed be carried out in all future editions before they went to press. But over a year later (November 1, 1990), I received a letter from Hermann Heidegger reneging on that promise: “A Collected Edition in the form that my father wanted it cannot be without error. Each individual editor, according to the will of my father, bears the responsibility. With the control and supervision of the GA charged to me, it would exceed my workforce to compare every nearly finished volume once again completely with the autograph.”

What are we to make of such a response to the most minimal of scholarly concerns, just getting the text right in the first place for its huge international readership, especially in the face of gross violations of that minimum desideratum? GA20 with over 100 errors, GA55 with 80, GA56/57 with 50, etc. It seems that Herr Heidegger is no scholar, infected with the sense and concerns of the scholar, despite his hand at editing a pair of

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volumes (mostly of previously published works). This is most unfortunate, since he claims to be in charge of an indigenously scholarly enterprise, a vast one at that, promising to yield some 120 scholarly volumes (not counting an increasing number being published outside of the GA). Moreover, he claims the right of Imprimatur over every last one of them, claiming to know and make the distinction (clearly a scholarly one) between fact and interpretation to the point of censoring the latter in favor of the former. For that vast enterprise, he must hire a horde of scholars to work for the family business. According to what criteria of selection? Who is responsible for deciding on the proper qualifications for the job, so that another error-ridden disaster does not occur? And when it does happen (as it undoubtedly will, without the requisite quality control)? Then it is the entire responsibility of the individual editor. No hint whatsoever of the Truman Doctrine of higher administration ("The buck stops here"); instead the Nuremberg Defence ("We are only following orders"). A committee of GA-insiders had been designated to select "suitable younger scholars" for the work. But if that scholar in the end stumbles, he or she is left on their own, out on the proverbial limb, as we say, "slowly twisting, turning in the wind." I was a first-hand witness to this fate with respect to the editor of GA56/57, as a committee insider publicly inveighed against his inability to read the old German handwriting or Sütterlin script—a not uncommon problem among younger Germans—as a source of many of the reading errors, with nary a hint of the fact that he himself had had a hand in selecting and employing that "suitable younger scholar" to begin with. There is thus no sense of responsibility at the top for the shoddy work delivered to them, which translators are then commanded, by a strange twist of "logic," to regard as impeccable and inviolable Holy Writ, in a topsy-turvy world of thought control without quality control.

I have had occasion more than once to point out to my German colleagues the blatant contradiction-in-terms of the phrase "edition without interpretation" dubbed posthumously onto Heidegger's pan-hermeneutical voice. "Natürlich ist das blödsinnig" was the typical reply. But no one said it publicly, like the "dirty little secret" that the Emperor was wearing no clothes. There is no such thing as an official Will and Testament of Martin Heidegger Regarding His Gesamtausgabe, as many have concluded from the statements emanating from the top. No such document exists... which naturally explains why it has never been produced in all these years in the face of repeated appeals for openness, glasnost. The sheer repetition of the phrase "Der Wille meines Vaters" is a smoke screen designed to create a tissue of protected constructs placed beyond the pale of open discussion and debate simply out of deference to the authority of the deceased Master. The ghostly presence of the Father has created the fiction of the Mind of the Author dominating his GA, like al-Farabi's agent intellect holding sway over the transmissions within its universe, or worse, like a Führerprinzip, vestigially lodged in the minds of subalterns in order to shield themselves from taking ultimate responsibility for their own deeds, and misdeeds. The screen, the tissue, has long worn thin. What is being insulated from scholarly critique and evaluation is a commercially minded family-run operation—somewhat like a "mom-and-pop store" selling "damaged goods" on a military base—conducted with amateurish incompetence and militant ignorance of scholarly standards and etiquette. Unfortunately, it has created the additional monstrosity of dragging our English translations down to the very same level of quality.

HEIDEGGER'S GESAMTAUSGABE
ENDNOTES


7. A thoroughgoing documentation of the history of the GA, including the earliest publisher's prospectuses and correspondence to be cited in what follows, is to be found in my essay, "Heidegger's Gesamttausgabe as a Philosophical Problem: Prolegomena," On Critical Editing in Philosophy and Science, ed. Jaakko Hintikka and Robert S. Cohen, forthcoming in the series Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science. The correspondence between Arendt and Gray between 1967 and 1975, readily accessible at the Library of Congress (Manuscript Division), provides a running account of the household's Mitbehöftlichkeit in the last decade of Heidegger's life: the family's financial straits accentuated by the debilitating illness of old age and the concomitant increasing dependence on others, the magnification of old phobias ("The Russians are coming!") bepredging division of his remaining energies between the disposition of old papers and the attempt to develop a final definitive statement of his thought. Arendt's letter to Gray on August 16, 1975, provides a particularly poignant description of the old Heidegger's "state of mind, health, being" (Befindlichkeit) on the occasion of what was destined to be her very last visit to the Heidegger household. On this occasion, which involved a discussion of his forthcoming GA, as if to underscore the traditional scholarly values that undergirded his conception of the GA, Heidegger presented Arendt with an autograph facsimile of his 1974 memoriam for his indexer, Hildegard Feick, with the following dedication: "Für Hannah - Martin - Frbg. am 12. August 1975." Scholarship was still on Heidegger's mind a few days later (August 18) when he sent birthday greetings to his old colleague, Rudolf Bultmann, by way of a picture post card: "With this picture of the scholar [Wilhelm Grimm], as we knew it in our days and years of common teaching and learning I greet you..."

8. This editorial devastation inflicted upon the original chronological principle was first reported in Theodore Kisiel, "On the Way to Being and Time: Introduction to the Translation of Heidegger's Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs," Research in Phenomenology 15 (1985): 197. This Translator's Introduction, mandated by NEH guidelines, was originally intended for publication with my translation of History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), but was forced to appear under separate cover because of the paramilitary assaults on scholarship by Heidegger's literary executors. The so-called "Publisher's Foreword" to the paperback edition (1992) is derelict in not conveying this warning regarding chronological distortion to the interested reader.

9. F. W. von Herrmann, "Ein Denkweg wird sichtbar gemacht," FAZ (26 September 1974). This newspaper article on the occasion of Heidegger's eighty-fifth birthday, containing the first public announcement of the publication of the GA, speaks of it as a "critical edition of the last hand." The first posthumous prospectus of March 1978, which for the first time introduces the GA as an "edition of the last hand," regards such an edition to be the contrary of a "historical-critical edition."

10. Full documentation is to be found in my "Heidegger's GA as a Philosophical Problem." To this day, the GA administration has not published these Guidelines, despite repeated appeals for openness from the start by readers, reviewers, and the general academic community.


13. See note 9 above.


15. Ibid., p. 102. The only evidence that von Herrmann provides for the claim that Heidegger wanted an “edition without interpretation” is the anecdote of presenting the three-page typescript of his Postscript to GA24 to Heidegger “for his appraisal and approval,” only to have the latter remark that “it was almost too long” (p. 101). As anecdotal evidence goes, however, Heidegger meant of course only the kind of postscript that von Herrmann had written. That it was made a precedent of all future postscripts goes against Heidegger’s long-standing sense of hermeneutic tact, as laid down in his fourth Anweisung. The recently published thoroughgoing Postscript to GA 19, the longest yet, portends, hopefully, a more enlightened future.


17. Freiburger Universitätsblätter 78 (Dezember 1982): 111, n. 6. The general editor of this issue, which bore the overall title “Edition und Interpretation,” was the Germanist Gerhard Neumann, who deserves a footnote in Heidegger’s biography: as a student he had chauffeured Paul Celan to and from Todtnauberg at the time of the latter’s visit to Heidegger’s cabin, and so is mentioned in Celan’s poem “Todtnauberg.”


21. “Monstrosity” here might fruitfully be understood in the philosophical senses that it has recently assumed, from the “most unbelievable miscarriages and insane specters” produced by Husserl’s more imaginary eidetic variations, to the “doublecrossings” of interests that John Sallis has generated in his ponderings on Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy. In the same vein, Bill Richardson has suggested “institutional errancy” as a doubling of Heidegger’s own terms back upon the attempt to understand the scandal of his editions. For more on this approach, see the conclusion to my “Heidegger’s GA as a Philosophical Problem.”

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