



Press Release

University of Freiburg

Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* and their Implications

Rectorate

The University of Freiburg grapples with the philosopher and former rector's legacy at a conference

Public Relations

Fahnenbergplatz
D -79085 Freiburg

It is very difficult to read the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger in isolation from his fascination for authoritarian politics and National Socialist thought, all the more so after the publication of the so-called *Black Notebooks*. Even more than in his private letters, Heidegger reveals in his philosophical journals an anti-Semitism that, although not biologicistic in nature, is indeed given a systematic philosophical basis – and this is no less problematic in its implications for our appraisal of the philosopher and his work. This was the general tenor of the conference “Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* – the Susceptibility of Intellectuals to Ideology,” held at the University of Freiburg from 9 to 11 December 2015. The conference was organized by the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), the Freiburg Religious Colloquies, and the Colloquium Phaenomenologicum of the University of Freiburg's Husserl Archive.

Contact:
Katharina Seibel
Tel. 0761 / 203 - 97194
katharina.seibel@friass.uni-
freiburg.de
www.pr.uni-freiburg.de

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“Heidegger and his philosophy are part of the history of our university, with all of their positive and negative aspects,” says Rector Prof. Dr. **Hans-Jochen Schiewer**. “The conference demonstrated that the University of Freiburg is not shying away from its historical responsibility but is grappling with Heidegger's legacy and with its own past.”

Martin Heidegger is considered one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. His work *Being and Time* belongs to the philosophical canon. Scholars and students from around the world come to the University

of Freiburg to conduct research on Heidegger. The debate on his involvement in National Socialism was reignited in 2014 with the publication of his *Black Notebooks*, his philosophical journals from the years 1931 to 1948. In addition to Heidegger himself, the conference dealt with the broader question of how it was possible for intellectuals of his time to be susceptible to the inhumane ideology of National Socialism. As an explanation, the participants proposed the skepticism towards modernism during the Weimar Republic, which is also reflected in Heidegger's criticism of technology. In addition, they discussed Heidegger's Catholic background, which influenced him throughout his life and found expression in his aversion to intellectualism.

The organizers were pleased with how the conference turned out. "Scholarship is not innocent; it takes part in the processes of societal and political understanding. A conference like this can of course not offer any final answers. However, it is important that we have initiated an open discussion on Heidegger's legacy that will certainly be continued," explained the two organizers, the philosopher Prof. Dr. **Hans-Helmuth Gander** and the theologian Prof. Dr. **Magnus Striet**. FRIAS Director Prof. Dr. **Bernd Kortmann** was impressed by how well attended the conference was. He says that FRIAS will continue to use the event format "Freiburg Horizons" to present to the public outstanding topics with significance for the university and for society as a whole.

The entire conference will soon be available as a podcast on the websites of FRIAS and the University of Freiburg.

Conference proceedings from FRIAS (in German):

www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/heidegger

Report from the student editorial team uniCross (in German):

www.unicross.uni-freiburg.de/2015/12/heideggers-schwarze-hefte

Contact:

The University of Freiburg achieves top positions in all university rankings. Its research, teaching, and continuing education have received prestigious awards in nationwide competitions. Over 24,000 students from 100 nations are enrolled in 188 degree programs. Around 5,000 teachers and administrative employees put in their effort every day – and experience that family friendliness, equal opportunity, and environmental protection are more than just empty phrases here.

Prof. Dr. Hans-Helmuth Gander

Husserl Archive Freiburg

University of Freiburg

Phone: +49 (0)761/203-2428

E-Mail: hans-helmuth.gander@philosophie.uni-freiburg.de

Prof. Dr. Magnus Striet

Institute of Systematic Theology

University of Freiburg

Tel.: +49 (0)761/203-2078

E-Mail: magnus.striet@theol.uni-freiburg.de

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