



MARTIN HEIDEGGER, RUSSIA AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Posted on June 1, 2022 by Leonid Savin



Martin Heidegger's writings have recently attracted a great deal of interest in various countries. Interpretations of his texts differ. But what is interesting is the constant criticism of his legacy by liberals, no matter where it occurs, no matter what the object of this criticism is (whether his work as a university professor, his interest in ancient Greek philosophy and related interpretations concerning modernity, or his position on the German political regime before and after 1945). One gets the impression that liberals want to deliberately demonize Heidegger and his writings—the depth of thought of the German philosopher does not give them peace of mind. And it is clear why—his work contains a message to create a counter-liberal project that can be implemented in many different forms.

Dasein and the Political

This will be discussed in more detail below, but for now it is necessary to make a brief excursus into the history of the study of Martin Heidegger's ideas in Russia.

In the Soviet Union, Martin Heidegger's ideas were not known to the general public. First, because his activities peaked in the period when the Nazis were in power in Germany. Heidegger himself, like many ideologues of the conservative revolution in Germany, criticized many aspects of National Socialism, but in the Soviet era all philosophy that did not follow the Marxist tradition was considered bourgeois, false and harmful. The only exception is perhaps the work of Vladimir Bibikhin; but his translations of *Being and Time* and *On Time and Being* were published in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. In addition, these translations were repeatedly criticized for their simplistic approach, misinterpretation of terms, linguistic errors, etc. And the lecture courses on early Heidegger at Moscow State University were given by Bibikhin in 1990-1992—the time of late perestroika, when much was allowed in the USSR. Nevertheless, it can be noted that in Moscow, in the late 1980s, a circle of followers of Heidegger's ideas formed in the scientific community. There was a similar situation in St. Petersburg, which was later reflected in translation and publishing activities.

Since the late 1990s other works of the German thinker have been translated and published. The quality of the translation has improved considerably (other authors have been doing this), and Heidegger's legacy began to be taught at various universities in the country. For philosophy departments, Heidegger's basic concepts have become compulsory for students to know. However, the study of philosophical ideas does not mean that students will become philosophers or that they will refer to certain concepts in relation to political processes. Plato and Aristotle are studied in high school—but

who now seriously uses the various ideas of these philosophers of ancient Greece when discussing socio-political issues?

Interest in Heidegger's ideas, in the context of Russian politics, was stimulated by articles and speeches by the Russian philosopher and geopolitician Alexander Dugin in the mid-2000s; and later these ideas were systematized and presented in voluminous texts.

In 2010, Dugin's book, *Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning*, was published by the Academic Project; and the following year its logical sequel, *Martin Heidegger: The Possibility of Russian Philosophy*, was published. In 2014, the same publisher published both books in a combined volume entitled, *Martin Heidegger. The Last God*.

Dugin's interpretation of Heidegger's ideas is also linked to the history of Russian ideas, Orthodox Christianity, and the particular path of state development (including the theory of Eurasianism).

Of course, it makes no sense to retell Heidegger's philosophical teachings in a journal publication. About a hundred volumes have been published in Germany, including entire works, lectures and diaries. Let us dwell only on a few points which, in our view, are applicable to the political context.

First, Heidegger has many neologisms that he introduced to describe the unfolding of time and being. The key concept is Dasein, often translated as "Here-Being." The French philosopher Henri Corbin translated the term as "human reality." But to fully understand many terms, it is better not to translate, but to try to fathom in the original by finding something similar in the native language. For example, *das Man* expresses the inauthentic Dasein, which has fallen into the everyday. And in authentic existentialism, Dasein has the property of being to death, *Sein zum Tode*, which represents essential horror. Terror is the opposite of fear, which fills the world with external things and the inner world with empty experiences.

Interestingly, modern Western politics and liberalism as such are built on fear. This tendency goes back centuries and is directly linked to the formation of Western (European) philosophy.

Let us add that one of the properties of Dasein is spatiality, since space depends on Dasein. But on the other hand, it is not a function of time. Conditionally Dasein is between the external and the internal, the

past and the present; it is borderline and instantaneous.

And Dasein has existential capacities—being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*), being-in (*In-sein*), being-with (*Mitsein*), care (*die Sorge*), abandonment (*Geworfenheit*), disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*), fear (*Furcht*), understanding (*Verstehen*), discourse/telling (*Rede*), mood (*Stimmung*).

Another important element of Heidegger's philosophy is the theme of the fourfold (*Geviert*), which is Heaven, Gods, Earth and People. They are depicted in this way: Heaven at the top left; Gods (immortal) at the top right; People (mortal) at the bottom left' and Earth at the bottom right. There is an axis between the humans and the gods, as well as between Heaven and Earth. The bosom of the quadruped is the most authentic *modus vivendi* of Dasein existence.

It should also be noted that Heidegger separates the former from the past, the present from what is now, and the future from what is to come. Dasein, according to Heidegger, must make a fundamental choice—between the coming and the future, i.e., the choice of authentic existentialism and questioning of Being (*Seyn*) directly. Then the coming will become the future. If it chooses non-authentic existentialism, then the future will only be the future, and therefore it will not exist.

Describing all these elements of Heidegger's philosophy in detail, Alexander Dugin asks the question—Can we speak of a specifically Russian Dasein? What are its existential potentialities? How does it differ from the European Dasein? He comes to the conclusion that a specific Russian Dasein exists. And not only Russian. At the basis of every civilization there is a special "thinking presence," Dasein, which predetermines the structure of the Logos of that civilization. Consequently, each nation (civilization) has its own special set of existentials.

It is telling that in 2016 Heidegger's diaries *Ponderings II-VI*, known as the [*Black Notebooks, 1931-1938*](#), were published in Russia, and were issued by the Gaidar Institute, a liberal organization that in conservative circles in Russia is considered an agent of Western influence in the country (Yegor Gaidar was the author of liberal economic reforms in Russia under President Yeltsin. He was the Minister of Finance in 1992, and also served as Acting Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation and Acting Minister of Economy of Russia in 1993-1994. Because of his reforms, inflation started in the country, the process of privatization was launched, and many sectors of the economy were destroyed).

It is considered Heidegger's most politicized work, since in his diaries he speaks not only of the philosophical categories that troubled him, but also of the role of the Germans in history, upbringing and education, and the political project of National Socialism.

The Gaidar Institute was probably aiming at yet another attempt to discredit Heidegger's teaching; but it worked the other way around. The publication of the diaries was received with great interest.

It is also paradoxical that it was in this book that Heidegger criticized liberalism, noting that the "liberal" sees "connectedness" in his own way. He sees only "He sees only 'dependencies'—'influences,' but he never understands that there can be an influencing which is of service to the genuine basic stream of all flowing and provides a path and a direction" (45, 106, p. 28).

Here are a few more quotations from this work, which, in our opinion, are interesting in the framework of the topic under consideration:

"The metaphysics of Dasein must become deeper in accord with the innermost structure of that metaphysics and must expand into the *metapolitics "of" the historical people*" (22, 54, p. 91).

"The worthiness for power out of the greatness of Dasein—and Dasein out of the truth of its mission" (7, 22, p. 83).

"Education—the effective and binding realization of the power of the state, taking that power as the will of a people to itself" (17, 45, p. 89).

"At issue is a leap into specifically historical Da-sein. This leap can be carried out only as *the liberation of what is given as endowment into what is given as task*" (35, 98, p. 173).

As Dugin points out, while early Heidegger assumed that Dasein is something given, later Heidegger concluded that Dasein is something that must be found, justified and constituted. And in order to do this, a serious thought process must first be undertaken (see, Heidegger's [*What is Called Thinking*](#)).

It is important to understand that although Heidegger's ideas are considered a kind of completion of

European philosophy (which began with the ancient Greeks—and this is symbolic, since Heidegger built his hypotheses on an analysis of the texts of ancient Greek philosophers), he was often classified as a thinker who overcame Eurocentrism. For this reason, many of Heidegger's concepts were positively received during his lifetime in regions where a critical direction of philosophy was developing in relation to the European heritage as a whole.

In the twentieth century, for example, there was great interest in Heidegger's work in Latin America. In Brazil, Vicente Ferreira da Silva, in Argentina Carlos Astrada, Vicente Fantone, Henrique Dussel and Francisco Romero, in Venezuela Juan David García Bacca, and in Colombia Rubén Xierra Mejía turned to Heidegger's work.

The Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid's words that Heidegger can be perceived as a figure of world significance, and not just as a representative of European thought, also confirm this.

Since Fardid himself was a consistent critic of Western philosophy (his concept of *Gharbzadegi*—intoxication with the West—is well known), which he said contributed to the emergence of nihilism; this admission is quite revealing.

Not only in Iran, but also in other Asian countries, Heidegger had followers. In Japan, his student Nishida Kitaro founded the Kyoto School of Philosophy in the 1930s, although Heidegger himself was recognized in this country as a carrier of the European spirit (after the Meiji reforms in Japan, there was an excessive fascination with everything European, especially German culture and philosophy). However, it is interesting that the concept of "existence" applied by Heidegger was reinterpreted in Japan in the Buddhist spirit as "actual being" (*genjitsu sonzai*), and the Nothing was interpreted as "emptiness" (*shunya*). That is, the Japanese took Martin Heidegger's basic concepts as they understood them and often mixed his terms with those of European existentialists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Gabriel Marcel. Another Japanese philosopher, Nishitani Keiji, also adapted Heidegger's ideas to traditional Eastern models, as was often done in the East.

Parallels between Eastern traditional philosophy and Martin Heidegger's analysis have also been drawn in Korea (Hwa Yol Jung).

In this respect, Russia and the study of Martin Heidegger's legacy is a kind of bridge between Europe

and the East, between the rigid rationalism that began to consume European consciousness from the Middle Ages and the abstract contemplative thinking characteristic of Asian peoples.

To be blunt—Eurasianism and Heideggerianism are, in a sense, interrelated and spiritually close trends among contemporary ideological currents in Russia.

There can only be a profound understanding of the one when the other is understood; although separately the two schools can also be seen as independent philosophical teachings (which is often done by secular scholars and opportunistic political scientists).

Leonid Savin, is Editor-in-Chief of the [Geopolitika.ru](https://geopolitika.ru) Analytical Center, General Director of the Cultural and Territorial Spaces Monitoring and Forecasting Foundation and Head of the International Eurasia Movement Administration. This article appears through the kind courtesy of [Geopolitika](https://geopolitika.ru).

[Featured image](#): "Heidegger," by Fabrizio Cassetta; painted in 2012.

