

THE MAGICIAN OF MESSKIRCH

Martin Heidegger

Hannah Arendt

Tribunal panel

Paul Celan

ACT 1 Heidegger's study at his home in Freiberg

ACT 2 The Trial conducted in a chamber at the University

ACT 3 The hut at Todnauberg and then Heidegger's study

The first 2 acts occur in 1945 and the 3rd around 20 and 25 years later. This is my second attempt at unravelling this intellectual ménage à trois, the first was with the playwright Ron Hart but at his death I was not party to the copyright, so I have begun again. Beginning again is what one has to do with Heidegger and Celan. I believe they are both saying something very important to modern man but saying can only point to a new direction.

(I am indebted to Rudiger Safranski's biography of Heidegger for the references in Act 2)

ACT 1

Martin.Thank god you've arrived, I'd nearly given up (crosses to kiss her).

Hannah.I must be mad to come.

Martin. The price of love?

Hannah.Yes-just like you fell in love with Hitler.Love affairs can be fatal.

Martin.And misleading-I was misled.

Hannah.You can leave that to the tribunal.

Martin. Did Jaspers write?

Hannah.Yes.

Martin.Well-did he help?

Hannah.His wife is half-jewish.

Martin.I did not visit him because of his wife.

Hannah.No-but it matters the way things look.

Martin.That was never my concern.

Hannah.That's why we're here today.

Martin. So?

Hannah.He recommended a five year suspension from teaching at the university.

Martin.The swine-I thought he was a friend.

Hannah.He is-just-on the philosophical level.

Martin.That's what I mean-that's the trouble with philosophy-they do not feel it on the pulse.

Hannah.You cannot just give up the Socratic approach,we owe it so much.

Martin.Ah, but don't you see I am your Jacob wrestling with the angel.We predate Socrates and all that.

Hannah.If you had applied a bit more logic you wouldn't be in the mess you now are.

Martin.And then withdrawn?

Hannah.Escaped ...like me to the States.Think what your influence would have been now,
a colossus, you would have Germany and the whole world kneeling at your feet.A
picture that you must admit appeals to you.

Martin.I did not even think of leaving.What, to the barbarism of America and all its
technology.No,right or wrong I had to be here .First for the love affair, as you
call it and then when the love affair went sour.

Hannah.Is that the light you will cast before the tribunal? It will be hardly worth my going.

Martin.Oh no.The affair was short-lived and I will stand my ground on the need to safeguard what I could by appearing to be one of them.

Hannah.But you were one of them!

Martin.I learned my political lesson with the failure of my rectorship.

Hannah.But you were a member of the party all the way through.

Martin.To stay in with them.

Hannah.But it looks so bad.

Martin.Looks again!

Hannah.They won't buy it and neither do I.

Martin.I didn't kill anybody why should I be singled out?

Hannah.Eichman, when they find him, will give the same excuse. It was perfectly true he had not himself shot or gassed anybody he had merely been the main efficient organiser of the transport of millions of jews to their death.

Martin.Surely you are not comparing him to me.

Hannah.No,but you gave succour and encouragement to the Reich and certainly did not oppose them.

Martin.Until the outbreak of war I hoped to make them see where they had gone wrong.

Hannah.Let's hope you can produce some evidence for that, I've seen none.

Martin.But if you say I had no influence, why then, I am not significant.

Hannah.Don't you see-your pre-eminent philosophical reputation,your succession to Husserl, made you number one in Germany and at the top of the worlds' thinkers.You carried much kudos for good or evil.

Martin.Nobody understands "Being and Time" I was harmless.

Hannah.Harmless but big ,most of the others were small,non-entities,they were only members to protect themselves and their families.Also it gave employment and for many status which they never had before.You had no need of all that.

Martin.And now I am reduced to begging my position,it's intolerable.

Hannah.Oh no,the french are already wooing you before the war ink is dry-Marcuse,Satre, the carpet is being laid out,this will not be popular with the tribunal.Whatever I say they will easily find incriminating words.At least say sorry .

Martin.Never!

Hannah.You don't change even since we were lovers.

Martin.Those wonderful far-off days,you,my work,my family everything flowed.

Hannah.For you, and now a little retribution is in order.

Martin.But I have still much to do,banning me is useless and what about my pension.

Hannah.Millions have died and you are worrying about your pension.

Martin.I can best serve by going on thinking.

Hannah.And saying sorry.

Martin.And loving you again?

Hannah.I am not your femme fatale now,behave!I've grown-up.

Martin.To grow up is only to become the usual adult.How disappointing maturity is.

Hannah.Suppose they ask me if there is anything personal.

Martin.In the present tense of course no that is only the truth.If they ask in the past tense-then lie.A small price for my philosophical freedom.

Hannah.Since nobody knows I must protect that secret,I have earned it.

Martin.Exactly-you are beginning to think like a party member.

Hannah.Please!

Martin.I treated everybody according to their merit.

Hannah.Some jews were denied positions when you were rector.

Martin.Only because they were not good enough.

Hannah.Your treatment of Husserl?

Martin.He was too old to carry on.

Hannah.Your speeches as rector were damning.

Martin.I did it for appearance.Of course at that time it was not clear where all this was leading.

Hannah.Other people,even philosophers saw it.

Martin.Who?

Hannah.Popper.

Martin.Who?

Hannah.Karl Popper,the open society

Martin.Oh yes,but we have heard it all before,it is boring.

Hannah.But true.

Martin.Truth? In another context I would reach for my gun.

Hannah.Here the awful reality is the truth.

Martin. There are many different realities it depends on the times and even in the same time they exist. They cannot be summed up by science.

Hannah. Yet millions died for no military reason.

Martin. Hiroshima- couldn't they have demonstrated the bomb first, the dead were mainly civilians.

Hannah. We are straying, look, why not just apologise, most have.

Martin. I will not apologise for a mistake.

Hannah. Why not.

Martin. Look, at one time perhaps 75% of the German people supported Hitler. It was irresistible. And who was to say "democratically" they were wrong.

Hannah. Well they were.

Martin. Oh yes--now.

Hannah. The tribunal want contrition.

Martin. They shall have it--in my form.

Hannah. Sometimes Martin I don't think you grasp the magnitude of what happened.

Martin. But pogroms occur throughout history and we have just lived through one.

Hannah. Yes but this one is not an illustration in a book. Surely it changes everything, above all oneself who have come through. Nothing, belief, thinking, acting can be the same again.

Martin. I have always been ready to die.

Hannah. But how have you changed.

Martin. A new break-out into Being.

Hannah. But that's just what you had and look where that led.

Martin. But I told you we were misled.

Hannah. It won't do, we packed our bags.

Martin. Even so to be at the heart of the maelstrom would tell me much about myself and philosophy. Didn't Wittgenstein go to the front on our side in the first while Russell practised his pacifism. I'm with Wittgenstein.

Hannah. Really?

Martin. Yes, it's a question of knowing or not knowing, you have to be there to know.

Hannah. You could have ended up in a concentration camp if you'd spoken up, that would have been knowing.

Martin. I would not have survived to tell the story.

Hannah. Very well then what next in your philosophy to justify your survival and tell us what these things mean.

Martin.I believe man is a mystery and his coming into civilised consciousness about 10,000 years ago is a sudden and unique event.Written language appears and Being which was there but not expressed comes like a new spirit.From that time forth we are spirit.And spirit is really the problem of freedom.So we are not very old and in evolutionary terms the biology of before is now superseded by the presence of Being.

Hannah.This sounds very close to the gods.

Martin.Yes, Being permits their appearance and this is what we are now losing.

Hannah OK this is all very well but will it wash with the tribunal.

Martin.To hell with the tribunal!

Hannah.What about the second volume "Time and Being" so the idyll is complete.

Martin.No, it cannot be done.

Hannah.But this was your major work.

Martin.You see I can only raise the right question,there can be no eschatological answers.

Hannah.What about your critique of science and technology.

Martin.This pure materialism will demoralise us.

Hannah.You neglect the facts,we live longer,live better,do not die so painfully, by nearly every standard we are better off than the past.

Martin.You and your liberal intelligentsia are better off but there are more people in the world,in poverty,disease and neglect than there ever was.

Hannah.But we have the means,the will, and the institutions which can change the world.

Martin.But I believe we will have less love,less courage,less care if we continue down this path.

Hannah.Then what is revealed in your new forest clearing?

Martin.I am not into crystal balls.

Hannah.But what is your main proposition?

Martin.A new recognition of Being but to understand that it cannot be analysed,it is a formally undecidable proposition,that is my proposition.

Hannah.The science world is dominant and will laugh at you.

Martin.It is they who have so mechanised war that we see all this destruction around us.They who could finally wipe us out altogether.They who have produced in the camps an industrial process of murder.

Hannah.Only your scientists.

Martin.No not only ours,the bolsheviks,the americans all are guilty.

Hannah. But scientists are only normal moral humans.

Martin. I wonder. On the question of care, feeling I think they measure a low IQ.

Hannah. What possible evidence do you have for that?

Martin. Where do you find them when the going gets tough? Always gone to greener pastures.

Do you find them working for the poor in Africa, no, that is left to the religious people who are largely scorned. Do you find them protesting in Russia, no, that is left to the artist who is a minor culture now. Where are they heard in China and so many other tyrannies.

Hannah. They could be philosophers.

Martin. We are minute in number compared to them, we do not produce anything and above all we are useless in any war effort.

Hannah. You are riding against the storm.

Martin. After all isn't science just opportunity backed by money. It should not be given exaggerated respect.

Hannah. Let's get back to today. I must make the case that your teaching asks the right questions of modern day orthodoxies. This habit is essential for the students and thus you must not be deprived of your teaching post.

Martin. Good. A better grasp of being is asking the right questions among so much information. The incisive question is so illuminating in itself because we are surrounded by pseudo-questions giving pseudo-answers. This will only get worse.

Hannah. When I think back at some of your scouting uniforms during lectures it was risible.

Martin. I am not faced by a fashion contest I hope. You will see that the only thing that matters in life will be the chic.

Hannah. You should have asked your questions of Hitler.

Martin. He cut through all the conventions and set a new stage that is why we were taken in.

It seemed almost refreshing after the endless arguments of Weimar and the humiliation of Versailles.

Hannah. He lied and lied and lied all the way.

Martin. What politicians don't.

Hannah. Ah, that is too simple. This was industrial lying leading to industrial murder. As somebody said at the time, and how could you not be aware of it, those who burn books will soon be burning people.

Martin. Against the bolsheviks there could be no quarter.

Hannah. So Stalin must take the blame for these "excesses".

Martin. You are giving me a practice run for the tribunal.

Hannah.Yes but your answers will not pass the exam.

Martin.Hannah,I am so grateful for your support.

Hannah.Please don't become maudlin,I couldn't take it.

Martin.You must be here out of love.

Hannah.Not now, but you do know something that no other thinking thinks.That is what I now love.

Martin.I am not yet old and you do not love your husband.

Hannah.Buyer beware.

Martin.What are you buying?

Hannah>Your ability to go on thinking at the highest level.

Martin.They call me a charlatan.

Hannah.It's not surprising given your past.

Martin.On the tribunal it is Lampe who is really against me.

Hannah.Why?

Martin.Oh ,I did not extend his temporary tenure at the university.

Hannah.Surely they will all be aware of that.

Martin.Maybe,but he will want a confession of guilt.

Hannah.Or sorry.

Martin.I am worried for my library and my pension.

Hannah.Small matters, you will probably have to go back to your monastery to speak.

Martin.Anyway what other hurdles are they likely to throw at me.

Hannah.You should not treat them as an enemy,they are all good Germans who survived partly
on the principle,there but for the grace of god go I,they will want to be lenient.

Martin.But how am I different.After 1935 I had nothing more to do with the party and in my
lectures spoke out against their total mobilisation and inauthenticity.

Hannah.Only from a metaphysical point of view.

Martin.The ongoing situation had not changed.

Hannah.Really! Have you already forgotten der Kristallnacht.

Martin.But we thought it was just a few hooligans.

Hannah.Oh yes, thousands of jewish shops smashed but the party were innocent.

Martin.This had nothing to do with me.

Hannah. But you did not speak up and of course it was soon forgotten as it was overtaken by the war and greater atrocities.

Martin. Are you not straying from the tribunal process?

Hannah. It is being guilty by omission.

Martin. But what I could not alter I cannot feel guilty about.

Hannah. Anyway it is all in my, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, which I suppose you have not read.

Martin. Yes I'm reading the manuscript- quite good.

Hannah. Thanks, let's hope it makes some money when it's published.

Martin. Ah, at least you are not indifferent to worldly success and money. You are halfway there.

Hannah. You mean we are all corruptible.

Martin. Yes. Even your Jewish elders were corrupt nearly everywhere.

Hannah. That got me into a lot of trouble and still the extent of the cooperation between them and the Nazis has not been fully told.

Martin. What fascinated me in your letters were the different countries' response to the orders from Hitler.

Hannah. Yes but the exceptions were depressingly small. There was a general moral collapse.

Martin. I loved the story of King Boris of Bulgaria having all the 400,000 Jews baptised and then remarking there were no Jews in Bulgaria.

Hannah. And he got away with it. I am more and more convinced that the lack of an alternative home for us played a big role. If we had a state then it would have made the legalistic challenge to send us there, even for Hitler, irrefutable.

Martin. But surely he didn't worry about a few legal rules.

Hannah. On the contrary the whole state was dressed up as legal that helped all the functionaries to carry out their crimes in the belief that they were orders of state.

Martin. I see.

Hannah. You should have seen all that at the time.

Martin. I just saw it as a break-out from the cave.

Hannah. Except it was the lunatics who had broken out.

Martin. But it is true I never believed in your plural democracy.

Hannah. I know that.

Martin. This mass culture, urbanisation, the media, the consumption of possessions had no meaning for me.

Hannah. Here we can agree.

Martin.It will lead to triviality,boredom and finally violence.

Hannah.These are soluble problems.

Martin.No,because we cannot re-engage with the Holderlin trust in Being as a conduit for the gods.

Hannah.Six million dead ,god has not saved us,only the British and Americans have.

Martin.Because they were still instruments of true Being and not mute as I acknowledge we had become.

Hannah.Still I do not think there is any new appetite for Christ.

Martin.But a new reality.

Hannah.May we be spared another one.

Martin.This was my obsession with the Greeks and Christian mystics and then the East,a
re-discovery of the poetic mission.This would awaken the people forever.

Hannah.You are going soft in the head.

Martin.Well I am older.

Hannah.My line will be you still have much to give philosophically,the past was a short
aberration after all it included most of the german people,are they to be excluded.

Martin.With my people right or wrong.A good slogan.

Hannah.Not good enough,as you would be expected to see a little further.

Martin.Over-enthusiasm?

Hannah.You better look at your rectorial speech again and see if you do not squirm.

Martin.But it's all they've got isn't it?

Hannah.There will be some individuals who have scores to settle and your silence on these matters.

Martin.Can we approach it lightly.

Hannah.Impossible,how would you feel if your mother had been shot in the back of the neck.

Martin.Who do you mean?

Hannah.I'm thinking of Paul Celan,the poet,he admires your work and he may be our poetic deliverance from
these horrors.

Martin.Yes I know his work,I have just read todesfugue though not yet published it was shown
to me by a student,a poem of genius.Would he speak for me ,for the younger generation.

Hannah.No he suspects your motives as I do.

Martin.We are all part of history.

Hannah.But we can resist our fate or die taking it with us.

Martin.Remember the days of me dressing up in uniform and you in that wonderful green dress submitting.

Hannah.Don't remind me I was only 18.

Martin.We loved each other.

Hannah.But not enough to give up Elfride.

Martin.The children....

Hannah.Oh yes....

Martin.Yes it might all have been different.

Hannah.In any case you said you would never leave...the fatherland.

Martin.In that hut at Todtnauburg surrounded by my mountains and the common people, this was my source for philosophy,where I could think away from the madding crowd.

Hannah.So it has turned out and you must pay the price.

Martin.How can I mitigate it?

Hannah.By being naive,and this is true of you politically.Even someone as clever as you can be taken in by that speech of 1939 (she assumes a Hitler pose)

"I overcame chaos in Germany,restored order,enormously raised production in all fields of our national economy....I succeeded in completely resettling in useful production those seven million unemployed who so touched our hearts....I have not only politically united the German nation but also rearmed it militarily,and I have further tried to liquidate that Treaty sheet by sheet whose 448 articles contain the vilest rape that nations and human beings have ever been expected to submit to. I have restored to the Reich the provinces grabbed from us in 1919.I have led millions of deeply unhappy Germans, who had been snatched from us back to the fatherland:I have restored the 1000yr old historical unity of German living space;and I have attempted to accomplish all this without shedding blood and without the sufferings of war on my people or any other.I have accomplished all this as one who 21 years ago was an unknown worker and soldier of my people,by my own efforts.

Martin.So there it is.Clever of you to remember it so well.

Hannah.We new the lie and so it was burnt into us.

Martin.Can Germany ever be forgiven?

Hannah.You must ask Celan.

Martin.If only he had stopped there.An experiment that went wrong.

Hannah.The seeds go a long way back.

Martin.Because humanism is not enough,even he used it early on--humanity for the Germans not humiliation was his theme.

Hannah.Of course everything is relative in the end.

Martin.No, that is really what he thought and so it could lead to the relative destruction of humans,
there has to be an absolute.That is why the past was so sure,God awards and disposes, oggi sempre.

Hannah.This is your Being then.

Martin.No,but as I said before Being permits the emergence of god.Was it Horace who said
these people do not know what virtue is and to them a sacred grove is just a collection of sticks.

Hannah.The pull of god is innate in some.

Martin.Like the pull of music,mathematics,painting,poetry,invention but you do not deny these things.
For them the analysis is of least concern since it has happened instinctively.So it is with god.

Hannah.The difference being we are still free to choose,unlike the god of religion.

Martin.Yes, it is the problem of freedom.

Hannah.Choice must be an evolutionary fact-it results in better adaption.

Martin.For me Being is everlasting,from it will come the everlasting reconciliation we yearn for.

Hannah.God by another name.

Martin.Oh no.It is a recognition that all those tears,that selfless hallowed love,is true and is all powerful.

Hannah.Nice words for the tribunal if you can fit them in.

Martin.The fact you have spoken for me is enough

Hannah.Humility is the right strategy.

Martin.Only remember I would not change what I have done,I did it-it seemed right at the
time, so there is nothing to apologise for.

Hannah.The old Martin flares up.

(the telephone rings,Martin answers it)

Martin.They will be ready for you at 2.

Hannah.Odd how they new I was here.

Martin.We are still under occupation.

Hannah.I must get ready,goodbye Martin,I will not stay behind afterwards.I will do my best
to persuade them you are not dangerous.... anymore. (kisses and exits)

Martin.(blows a kiss as she leaves turns to the gramophone and plays the opening theme of
Tristan und Isolde which continues for a few minutes before the curtain falls).

ACT 2

A panel of three philosophers faces Martin. Only one will speak.

Philosopher. Martin Heidegger you have been called to this tribunal, appointed by the French occupying power, to answer the charges;

1. As a member of the National Socialist Party you promoted their interest at the University of Freiburg while you were Rector.
2. That you publicly supported them and did not oppose their methods.
3. That you gave a philosophical and personal credence to their ideas given your pre-eminent position in the philosophical field.
4. That you are still a member of the Party and have not publicly renounced your allegiance to their ideas.

If one or more of these statements is considered true by the tribunal, and depending on your explanation, will determine whether you continue at the university as a teacher or researcher, whether in suspension or permanent dismissal. This may also effect your pension rights. We have had various letters of support and detraction and Professor Hannah Arendt gave a personal testimony in your support yesterday. You may now make an opening statement in reply to these charges before we examine them one by one according to the evidence provided to us.

Martin. Thank you. I first want to say that I do not understand why I have been singled out for punishment when many others more culpable have not been arraigned. I feel I am being made a scapegoat and a sacrificial lamb for the university to satisfy its conscience. My membership of the party was purely practical and did not entail any endorsement of the party. This was the elected ruling party in 1933, at the time of my one year rectorship, which by then was supported by the majority of Germans. As Rector and in order to gain access to the educational powers in Berlin party membership was necessary and so to gain influence on behalf of the university I was a member. Now we can see the horrors of the third Reich but in the middle thirties much of value happened. There was full employment, the country was economically vibrant, there was a sense of national purpose, the contrast from the Weimar days was startling. Also there was the bolshevik threat from Russia which only a strongly armed and determined Germany could resist. This threat had also to be dealt with in the university at the intellectual level. These ideas of which some belonged to the National Socialist Party I did promulgate but not at the expense of students or teachers. Their controversial methods in those days were not apparent to us except by gossip. It was true that the anti-semitism was clear but this appeared to relate to jewish support for bolshevism and we did not realise it was a form of racial bigotry. At the beginning I did think this was a breakthrough into a new spirit for Germany but I was quickly disillusioned. In particular I spoke out against the corrupting influence of technology and the Party's servitude to materialism. Anyone acquainted with my work will know that this has always been a fundamental position of mine. It is argued that I was not public enough in my opposition but by the time war broke out I had two sons serving in the German army and by then it was clear that perceived deviation from loyalty might also threaten them. A risk I could not take while the war lasted. Now the war has ended it is really a formality to give up party membership which I thought was dissolved by our defeat. You three are professors at universities and you survived, how come? No doubt by lying low. Can you be sure you made no compromises in order to support your family, protect yourself and even your country! That is the end of my opening statement.

Philosopher. We will now look specifically at the charges against you. First that you promoted the interest of the Party above that of the university of Freiburg while Rector. In your rectorial address you spoke of a new programme for the students-labour service, military service and then service to knowledge. Don't you think the first two are totally inappropriate.

Martin. On the contrary a revitalisation of the academic programme was necessary, it was becoming moribund under the old paternalistic and conservative regime. The students would benefit by a commitment to practical and social objectives in society, it would get them out of the ivory tower and realise how things worked for most people. The specialisation of courses was leading to narrowness and away from a university education.

Philosopher. In a speech soon after in Heidleburg you explicitly rejected the humanising Christian ideas in a very militaristic fashion.

Martin. Earlier in my life I thought I would be a catholic professor and so I had great insight into the danger of Christian thinking. I was anxious to be free of all sentimentality and to base the new struggle for Being on new thinking.

Philosopher. But you then introduced the Fuhrer principle into Freiburg. "the Fuhrer was the law of Germany" concept was being applied even before the authorities demanded it. You failed to call the Academic Senate into session for months. In one circular among many you said and I quote "we seek to cleanse our ranks of inferior elements and thwart the forces of degeneracy in the future." Is that the language of the head of the university?

Martin. I felt that by staying ahead of the coming reforms I would be in a better position to safeguard our independence. We had to impress the authorities that we knew our obligations and could be relied on to get ahead without their interference. Also I was saving everybody time by cutting out needless beurocracy and administration by taking most of the decisions myself. Most academics were not interested in university politics and those who were were awful. So I took on all this myself and there could be no excuse for wasted time.

Philosopher. So you were completely in agreement with the Baden proposals for a new type of university.

Martin. Yes.

Philosopher. This also leads on to the April 7th law, of the reestablishment of a Permanent civil service. Did you oppose the enforced leave of absence of Professor Husserl, your mentor, because he was jewish.

Martin. I was not Rector at that time.

Philosopher. But did you do anything to oppose it in some way or offer commiseration.

Martin. No.

Philosopher. Did you have anti-semitic feelings.

Martin. No.

Philosopher. Why in a letter to the ministry of education concerning the future employment of Professor Frankel and Professor Von Herg you used the phrase "jews of the better sort" in supporting them.

Martin. That was purely a tactical step. I knew the anti-semitic nature of the new rules and in order to keep my jewish colleagues I drew this distinction so that the authority would itself have an excuse to enact exceptions.

Philosopher. During the time you were Rector jewish academics, professors, doctors, were leaving Germany in large numbers including Professor Arendt. Jewish students had been brutally attacked, proscription lists were circulated but you took no action.

Martin. I defended my jewish colleagues as you can see from letters given to you.

Philosopher. We feel your defence was half-hearted and indeed that there is evidence of you shunning contact for example with Professor Husserl. In the end you did not even attend his funeral in 1938, your principal mentor and supporter, to whom you

had dedicated your great work "Being and Time" and later editions withdrawn it.

Martin. I was ill at the time of the funeral.

Philosopher. In a speech in Leipzig in November 1933 you concluded your observations on the new university as having the support of the I quote "eminent will of our Fuhrer" This appears to demonstrate your uncritical admiration of Hitler in an area where you of all people should have understood the dangers of this new concept.

Martin. Hitler was laying down the governing principles, we would address the details.

Philosopher. Well, we all know where the principles and the details led to.

Martin. But in 1934 things looked quite different.

Philosopher. Any observer of the scene with the least wit could tell it was wrong.

Martin. But there was still time to persuade through philosophy.

Philosopher. I think you are joking.

Martin. I was invited to take the Berlin chair in 1930 which would have made me the officially acknowledged leader of German philosophy.

Philosopher. When you discussed these issues with Professor Jaspers in 1933 he tells us he said to you "How can such an uneducated man as Hitler govern Germany" and your reply was "Education is quite irrelevant-just look at his wonderful hands". Is that correct?

Martin. I don't recall.

Philosopher. I am not surprised, the inanity of it beggars belief. In your appeal to German students in November 1934 when Germany left the League of Nations you said "let not axioms or ideas be the rule of your being. The Fuhrer himself and he alone is the present and future German reality and its law." This statement betrays a total submission and a total intellectual collapse.

Martin. By that I meant he had become the personification of our destiny. He would lead the breakout from Plato's cave.

Philosopher. Then you were in thrall to Hitler.

Martin. I admit in 1933-34 I admired his way out of the mess the Weimar parties had led us into. For the reasons I gave earlier.

Philosopher. So he was to be your new star in a godless world.

Martin. Then yes but.....

Philosopher. That explains much about your position during 1933-34....you became the Fuhrer-Rector! How do you explain your attempts to discredit Professor Staudinger subsequently a Nobel laureate in chemistry. First you informed Eugene Fehle, the Baden government official responsible for university affairs, of his political unreliability. He began investigations, the Gestapo then sent you a file for comment. There you objected to his Swiss citizenship, that he was against military activities and so on. You asked for his dismissal but fortunately for him higher officials protected him and you backed down. We have all the correspondence.

Martin. I merely pointed out that his current enthusiasm for the revolution was opportunistic given his previous position.

Philosopher. Ah you see even the Reich could distinguish the value of a professional scientist against the visionary philosophy you were hoping to spread.

Martin. Quite possibly-but this is when I began to part company with the party. Its insistence on precisely this scientific materialism changed my view for it was always in opposition to my fundamental philosophical attitude.

Philosopher.If only we understood it!

Martin. I will explain....

Philosopher.Not now!...We are not here for a tutorial on that.

Martin. A pity!

Philosopher.why?

Martin. Because my philosophy explains the content of my thoughts and actions from 1934 onwards and shows the independence of my thinking as regards the party.

Philosopher.So far the evidence confirms the compromises you made to satisfy the party around 1933-34.Indeed it shows your enthusiasm for the party and Hitler.If this became less so as the years passed do we see any stand by you before the war against the increasing violence,bigotry and moral collapse.

Martin. Did you or your colleagues?

Philosopher.We all became private citizens rather than fulfil a public role.

Martin. But it would have been madness to publicly oppose the party.

Philosopher.Exactly, none of us had the courage to do that but you remained a supporter to the end.We might have expected from you a more heroic stand.

Martin. I became totally disillusioned by the end.

Philosopher.why did you remain a party member -even now?

Martin. I did not really think about a formal resignation I thought it was extinguished by the defeat.

Philosopher.At least you could have made the gesture before the end.

Martin. There was no point,that would be opportunism.I supported an idea and now I must pay the price.

Philosopher.Is that an admission of guilt?

Martin. (hastily) Oh no!

Philosopher.The facts of your cooperation and sympathy with the third reich are evident in so much of the correspondence.The 1933-34 Rector period could be considered an aberration before the worst was known.Yes you began a process of correction largely by avoiding politics and playing safe.Before the war a condemnation by you could have had influence and your pre-eminence would have protected you being thoroughly German and not a jew.For a jew it would mean death.Were you not aware of that?

Martin. My wife my sons were too attached to the homeland and would not leave.My duty was to stand by them.

Philosopher.we do not take that as a sufficient reason and do not believe you had any wish to leave.

Martin. It is true I wished to see it through to the end whatever the consequences.

There is a pause in darkness implying a recession before the verdict.

Philosopher.After deep consideration it is concluded by us all that the charges are proven.You will be suspended from all employment at the university of Freiburg for five years at which time your case will be reviewed.

Martin. I protest,I will appeal!

Philosopher.There is no appeal system.

Martin. It will destroy me.

Philosopher. Your attitude makes it clear that you still do not understand, in your heart, the magnitude of what has happened. The descent by Germany into barbarism and the failure of the press, the judiciary, the legislature and the people to oppose

this appalling moral collapse will perhaps never be forgiven and certainly not forgotten. Leading intellectuals like you could have made some sort of stand or, as most did, leave. A protest such as you make now could well have led to death under the reich. Think of that. We now have gained again that most precious value, our freedom to think what freedom is. Before freedom would be decided for you which, of course, is no freedom at all. That is all.

CURTAIN

ACT 3

(Heideggers hut on the mountain at Todnauburg,they enter together with thick snow outside)

Martin.A good walk eh! I'm so glad you could see my little hut.It's where I do all my real philosophy.

Paul. No need for a speech.It's exactly as I thought.

Martin.Here I am safe and free from people.

Paul. Exactly.

Martin.Even from my wife.

Paul. I understand.

Martin.There are just a few peasant houses near by and they come in for a smoke.

Paul. It all ties in.

Martin.Up here one seems to breathe a different air and my brain responds.

Paul. Compared to Paris it seems idyllic.

Martin.Until I have to return down there and earn my living.

Paul. Here you could feel you were among the gods.They might appear at any moment as the snow closes in.

Martin.Sometimes there seems to be knocking at the door but when I open it,it is only the wind.

Paul. Perhaps a divine wind?

Martin Yes, that's it a divine source from which the world issues.

Paul. I too have tried to erase my guilt.

Martin.What do you mean?

Paul. When I was separated from my parents I could have sought them out, perhaps even saved them in some way.

Martin.It would be immoral of you to feel guilt on something you could not change.

Paul. Maybe.

Martin.Before I forget do write something in the visitors book before you go.

Paul. Did Hitler precede me in the book?

Martin.Rest assured I was never of any significance then.

Paul. I am so tired.

Martin.There is no need to stay long.

Paul. Very tired.

Martin.Sit here by the fire and have some Schnapps.

Paul. Thank you.

Matin. The reading was wonderful.

Paul. Was it?

Martin. Oh yes! You clip your lines just so and your tone ...perfect.

Paul. I find all this public appreciation difficult...and in Germany of all places.

Martin. We cannot make amends for what has happened but you are now famous.

Paul. Exactly.

Martin. I see.

Paul. Everything I have done has been in obscurity. Yes I have picked up a few prizes but nobody would recognise me...thank god.

Martin. Now is the time to come out and like a prophet give us the poetry we need.

Paul. Martin do I sense your heroic temptations?

Martin. I am thinking of a new beginning for you. Freed of teaching in Paris.

Paul. No, I work best alone and alone in my struggle with myself.

Martin. Your wife and child?

Paul. Thank you for reminding me, with them too.

Martin. But I fear you will be ill.

Paul. I've already had the electric therapy to my brain.

Martin. I'm sorry.

Paul. No, it produced some interesting poems which would never have come to light without it.

Martin. We cannot think of ourselves.

Paul. And if I may finish "for the holy image we are shaping".

Martin and Paul together. Holderlin!

Paul. They label me now, the holocaust poet, the jews try to appropriate me to their religion and none see that I am only trying to make sense of reality, my reality, but I am going downhill, my poetry will never find its upland.

Martin. "Grow strong again and shine
O star of ox-eyed heaven"

Paul. "And you, flying fish of chance
And you, O water saying yes".

Together. Mandelstam!

Paul. What a wonderful poet. We are not alone.

Martin. Exactly.

Paul. Well I must learn to live only figuratively like your Christ.

Martin. That yearning has never left me.

Paul. Could it be Being?

Martin. The messenger from another world, it seems impossible now.

Paul. Yes, we have evolution, logic, reason, DNA, quantum theory, why on earth should we need anything else?

Martin. May I add a sixth, the genius of Paul Celan.

Paul. I'm just a wordsmith.

Martin. We began with language and I believe it will see us through.

Paul. I can see nothing else.

Martin. Still a little success will give you independence.

Paul. It will block me.

Martin. The true artist.

Paul. No, it is just the way I work.

Martin. Blocked is how I felt after the war.

Paul. Yes but you supported a system which shot my mother in the back of the neck.
Silence.

Martin. From which we can never recover.

Paul. Exactly.

Martin. It is twenty years since the war..a long time to suffer.

Paul. In your ideas I felt a correspondence, that's why I'm here.

Martin. That is something.

Paul. As you know German is my tongue and at the same time it feels cut off.

Martin. Can you forgive us?

Paul. You will have to ask my mother.

Martin. Could you?

Paul. No, but if your sacred clearing does exist and is not just a collection of sticks,
we may find Being there.

Martin. I have tried to start there.

Paul. You succumbed to power but who is to say I would not have done so.

Martin. No, we are different animals.

Paul. *These contradictions have become too much.*

Martin. Out of them comes the masterpiece.

Paul. Let me not be confounded.

Martin. You are giving voice to these feelings that will live long after my Being and Time
has disappeared.

Paul. Modesty does not become you Martin. You are a man of power, it suits you. You love
powerful men, power came, it is perfectly understandable. In another era you might
have won.

Martin. If I had thought it would lead to this.

Paul. As Hannah Arendt said, the banality of it all.

Martin. We were lovers in 1924.

Paul. Dark is your horse.

Martin. She returned to defend me in the denazification trial in 1945.

Paul. True love, the Jewish community would be righteous.

Martin. We keep in touch.

Paul. This helps me as she knew your work perhaps better than anybody else.

Martin. Yes, I can say she was one of my star pupils and has become famous.

Paul. A great democrat.

Martin. It was when I first heard of you through Todesfugue.

Paul. That poem has followed me all my life.

Martin. Can I hear it again.

Paul. I adapted it again, as a variation for our meeting.....

"Now there's no way out
the longing shadows swarms like bees
without togetherness
what blessed times were those
when all our coins of happiness were free,
but that black milk of which I spoke
rises in my throat before our master
death from Germany.
why did the working class
look for that something
a god in tweeds!
o repulsive being
that any man of taste could see
mistake that smell for perfume?
trust your nose
not bleating intellect
and now your leafless forest
full of hobgoblin memories
raise strange statues in your mind
until a sign from Holderlin
companion of our dreams
grant you peace and absolution,
we meet in a forest clearing
the poem of past and future
grows beside us
the secret word among the people grows
distilled by me O Germany
a language saved by secrets spread
to keep them awake forever."

Martin. Bravo!

Paul. Yes, I have pinched a few lines, I'll leave you to find them.

Martin. I know already.

Paul. You know my work by heart.

Martin. A form of respect. My way not to say sorry.

Paul. Thanks.

Martin. We must arrange an outing when the weather is good, retrace the Neckar in Holderlin's footsteps?

Paul. Yes, but meanwhile I want to hear where you are taking Being.

Martin. There will be no second volume.

Paul. Pity I felt you were just getting into your stride.

Martin. So did I but the war changed things.

Paul. The fundamentals remain the same.

Martin. What is time?

Paul. Certainly it is our horizon, you were right there.

Martin. Since nature's reality can be changed into something more profound ie art, the clue must lie in that transformation.

Paul. Go on.

Martin. The interesting thing is this does not produce truth in any ordinary meaning of the word. It just uncovers new realities. Only we can do this. These new realities become immortal.

Paul. Yes somewhere I think the Buchner speech I talked of the eternalisation of our mortality.

Martin. That is a product of Being and only occurs because of our physical limitation in time. If we were immortal what would be the point.

Paul. In every day terms everybody would like to leave their mark.

Martin. Exactly.

Paul. How will we meet Kafka's objection, the assumption of the superior power of the objectivised world.

Martin. It is only one reality and from the personal point of view not the most important.

Paul. But the technology dominates all.

Martin. Yes and we both know where people as objects leads to.

Paul. Hitler was at least consistent—he had thought it through to the end.

Martin. We can return to our hexameters and within a structure make sense of it all.

Paul. Talking of hexameters which I long gave up I must read you a short postcard by Radnoti, the Hungarian jew shot at the end of the war, literally as he fell into the ditch.

"I fell beside his body, it turned over
and lay there tight in death as cord
'shot in the nape—you, too will end up like that'
I told myself 'just lie there calm and still'
Deaths flower opens in my patience here
'Der Springt nochauf' over me I hear
Blood mixed with dirt grew clotted in my ear"

Martin. This we cannot do in philosophy.

Paul. Through Being then.

Martin. Through Being.

Paul. It's snowing outside.

Martin. It happens here.

Paul. Should we go before it thickens?

Martin. Here is the visitor's book

Paul. I know we have not touched on many matters but there is one request.
(sits and writes)

Martin. Thank you.

Paul. There.

Martin. We must go it's getting thicker and affecting the light.

Pause in darkness as the scene changes to Heideggers study five years later.

Hannah (bursting in) Martin!

Martin.I've been expecting you.(rising to greet her).

Hannah.Have you heard!

Martin.Heard what?

Hannah.Celan was found in the Seine this morning.

Martin.(sinking back into his chair motionless)

Hannah.Are you alright?

Martin.(muttering) "And you,O water saying yes",

Hannah.What!?

Martin.I'm too late.

Hannah.He'd had some ECT but apparently had become very difficult.His wife had already moved out.

Martin.And the child?

Hannah.Quite safe.

Martin.We were due to take a holiday together.

Hannah.Your joking!

Martin.Not at all.Down the Danube in the footsteps of Holderlin.It was all arranged.

Hannah.Two most unlikely friends.

Martin.This is the joy of Being,it can overcome everything.

Hannah.I had no idea you were so close.

Martin.Not close but getting closer.A great poet.

Hannah.Was.

Martin.Is! O most definitely Is.

Hannah.I cannot understand it.

Martin.Really?

Hannah.He was becoming so well recognised.A Nobel would certainly be coming one day.

Martin.Awards awards they're meaningless.

Hannah.They give confidence.

Martin.Only in a capitalist age.

Hannah.Nobody refuses such an honour.

Martin.Sartre did,the only one I think,he went up in my estimation no end.

Hannah.BUT he admits he owes you and Husserl the inspiration.

Martin.Yes, in refusing he has learnt my lessons well.I feel vindicated, though I must admit I never cared for him personally.

Hannah.Why?

Martin.The sort of man who could only see a collection of sticks in what is a sacred grove.

Hannah.Horace.

Martin.Yes,I used the same line with Paul.

Hannah.That he should go before us.

Martin.How old was he?

Hannah.Forty-nine I think

Martin.I'm old enough to be his father.

Hannah.We are sounding banal.

Martin.A favourite word of yours.

Hannah.What can one say?

Martin.Certainly religions the last thing one thinks of at a time like this.

Hannah.Yes.

Martin.I will not go to the funeral.

Hannah.It's too much.

Martin.Yes,can you send something from me.

Hannah.Yes.

Martin.You're smoking far too many cigarettes.

Hannah.They keep me alive.

Martin.You'll go before me if you're not careful.

Hannah.You look well.

Martin.I'm not ready to go yet.

Hannah.It's true I'm not well

Martin.Look I can't have my pupils dying before me,it's in bad taste.

Hannah.What led to the holiday.

Martin."As on a holiday" do you know that late poem of Holderlins.

Hannah.No.

Martin.You really must get into him.

Hannah.I cannot take his religious alliance.

Martin.It is only figurative.

Hannah.The longing and the loss.

Martin.Exactly.

Hannah.I am constitutionally atheistic,it got me into trouble with my jewish compatriots.Another reason they dislike me.

Martin.You seem to be upsetting everybody.

Hannah.Except you.

Martin.I am beyond all that now.

Hannah.Beyond evil?

Martin.And beyond good.

Hannah.We were talking of the holiday.

Martin.Yes,I suggested and he agreed.

Hannah.So he has forgiven you.

Martin.No, but he was interested in my strength.After all he turned out to be in the right party and I in the wrong.It is I who should be on my right-angled knees.

Hannah.He never recovered from the murder of his mother.

Martin.Yes, you are right neither would I.

Hannah.Trying to make sense of all that through the language of your murderers,he admitted defeat.

Martin.No,I think it was biochemical,of course not helped by his preoccupations.I have seen him joyful.

Hannah.It is an immense blow.

Martin.Yes,I don't have many friends.

Hannah.You have me.

Martin.Thank you (kisses her).

Hannah.How is the family?

Martin.Elfride knew you were coming.The boys, well grown up of course ,teased me.

Hannah.They all know.

Martin.O yes they all know.

Hannah.And?

Martin.I couldn't care less now.

Hannah.You're beyond it all.

Martin.Exactly.

Hannah.I could not summon the courage to meet her again after last time.It completely drained me trying to be polite.She was much worse than you.

Martin.True.

Hannah.I think you went awry because of her,women have that effect.

Martin.You had the opposite effect.

Hannah.Still not enough to prize you away.

Martin.Let's not start on that again.By the way I told Paul about us.

Hannah.What was his reaction.

Martin.Amused,I would say.

Hannah.This was at the hut.

Martin.Yes,1965 where has the time gone?

Hannah.But Being remains.

Martin.Inviolable.

Hannah.And God?

Martin.well he will emerge through Being.In any case it is only a sliver,the difference

between that final E flat and middle C in Bach's fifth cello suite.

Hannah.The sarabande?

Martin.Ah! what a pupil!

(the bell rings and a letter is delivered)

Martin.It's from Paul! (opens it).

reads slowly: My dear Heidegger,

Though we were planning our little tour down the Ister
In the footsteps of Holderlin,our divine,
you knew in your heart
I would be on another journey.

I have reached my absolute
New poems need new light

More questions,more claims!

An'act of betrayal'I hear them say,
It is the fulfilment of a promise
To those departed
Of course it was beyond an 18yr old then
But now...given the prospect ahead.

The real reason you ask
I have lost confidence in my future
why?
I hardly know myself
My meridian has faltered
The heart no longer a place made fast.

The messages will wash up onto many minds
I have signalled another way
Prefigured a new freedom
But when! where!

Hannah carries the king a little further
How fortunate you are,
May you be free of the past
And help the free society of tomorrow.

Let the automaton chatter
I will not turn to stone.

My dear Martin,poems as I said somewhere
Are often desperate conversations
And with another awkward bow
I cannot say god bless you

Paul Celan.

Hannah.A suicide note.

Martin.No just a goodbye.

Hannah.So much talent.

Martin.Still he has left us work which will keep us occupied for ever.

Hannah.One human being can outweigh the whole world didn't your Christ say somewhere.

Martin.Yes, against nature, against all we know in reality lies the human tragedy.

Hannah.It brings us back to what is reality?

Martin. Yes, it was a discussion we had and we were agreed that art/religion/feeling were as valid as science but since they are played out in the arena of Being could not be analysed.

Hannah. Where did that brilliant observation come from 'that art is to reality what wine is to grapes'.

Martin. Perfect. And religion too. Here we see in a nutshell the antithesis. Science discloses nature as one reality and art reveals the infinite transformations to other realities. We do not ask of wine whether it corresponds to a truer view of reality, such a question is absurd. Wine in all its infinite variety has only one criteria, taste, and who can measure that. How many new realities can art create? Nowhere do they correspond with nature for they touch on all those other aspects of Being which is beyond nature.

Hannah. It solves the problem, there are many realities.

Martin. Exactly what I said to him.

Hannah. But it is absurd, his death.

Martin. In his Buchner speech he used that very absurdity to bespeak the presence of human being. He has now confirmed it.

Hannah. Surely he had a duty to deliver his message.

Martin. He just has. Like Holderlin he may be broken by the contradiction but out of it a phoenix rises from the ashes.

Hannah. I'm not convinced.

Martin. Oh Hannah, ever the analyst. I remember his line from Radnoti 'deaths flower opens in my patience here'

Hannah. Goodbye Martin I hope we meet again before we die. (they kiss).

Martin. (alone addresses the audience)

What depths will he go to and submit
Just as I so many times have thought
My life is over, finished
Yet with a will and tenacity I held
Something in me keeps aloft
From the worlds failures,
Work is art it rises above self
And takes on a life of its own
With one as a priest to its demands
It goes on expanding after death
Even as one fails, the horizon
Continues to beckon.
So I hope with Celan
My philosophy seeks to show the immanence
Of Holderlin and Celan
A formal prose of poetry
The world of you and me
The whole minute intercourse
The interplay of life and love
Which setting best serves our cause,
Poor or rich it is achieved
This inner authority
From where you can direct a real life
Your life,
My view enables the care of the world
Every tree speaks this language
The botany of purpose through silence
Freeing your mind for human tasks
Rinsing the mind
And a clear ever more clear vision
Of your own progress
A feeling once attained
Not even illness or death can thwart

Since you are already on the path
Of becoming finer
More unknowable
Moving with sovereignty
Into the unknown country
where Being and Time disintegrate
Leaving open every imagination
Choose that confidence escaping yourself
Let them do the praying
You are free.

FINIS