

Romano Guardini and the Austrian Moriz Enzinger (*Das Schweigen der Sirenen*, Stuttgart, 1968, 373–98). Politzer's analysis is also entirely text-focused (*werkimmanent*), but he rejects Staiger's concept of interpretation as subjective and creative, as an art (*Kunst*), and prefers to see interpretation as a craft (therefore his title "Das Handwerk der Interpretation").

I have published linguistic analyses of lyric poems (by Grillparzer, Rilke, Goethe), but as a nonspecialist I am, of course, quite reluctant to claim that all the distinguished literary-critical readers of "Auf eine Lampe" missed the basic meaning of the poem, that they did so principally because they seem to have mostly ignored the author of the text, Mörike. Can the poem be called a *Dinggedicht* when it has not even been established whether Mörike ever saw a *Ding* like our lamp anywhere? (This would not have happened to Goethe philologists interpreting a Goethe poem!) The intimate "du" (1) and "deiner" (4) that the poet uses in addressing the lamp implies contrastively an *ich*. Mörike did not want to make it clear to his readers that he sees in the lamp a symbol of his artistic work, because he stresses the lamp's beauty as one main motif in the poem: "schöne," "schmückest" (1), "zierlich" (2), "reizend" (7), "Ein Kunstgebild der echten Art" (9), "schön" (10). Another main motif, however, is an increasing neglect, a lack of appreciation: "Noch unverrückt" (1), "fast vergeßnen" (3), "Wer achtet sein?" (9). Here the autobiographical reference cannot be misunderstood: Mörike as an author was a tragic, unhappy failure with his contemporary public. In the last line, Mörike uses the semantic range of one word (*scheint* 'shines, glows,' linked to *Lampe* and to "gives the impression of") in a masterly way to combine the apparently impersonal description of an object with his personal conviction that an immortal (*selig*) distinction marks genuine, beautiful artifacts like his own work, regardless of its reception.

HERBERT PENZL
University of California, Berkeley

Reply:

I can agree with everything that Penzl says. Translations, whether of poetry or critical terms, rarely seem satisfactory—but the very untranslatability of which Penzl speaks can also tell us a thing or two about differences between cultures. For example, as I mention in my introduction (401), Berel Lang and Christine Ebel deliberately translated *Literaturwissenschaft* as "science of literature" to stress the affinities perceived in German-speaking countries between literary study and the natural and social sciences. Penzl also points out,

quite correctly, that I do not cite the essay on the controversy by my late acquaintance Heinz Politzer, who mediated the dispute on the meaning of *scheint* by invoking the New Critical concept of ambiguity, with the result that both readings debated by the three critics could seem valid at once. Those preferring to read Politzer's essay in English might note that it was originally published in this language ("The Gentle Craft of Interpretation," *Research Studies* 34 [1966]: 107–22).

HERBERT LINDENBERGER
Stanford University

The Political Truth of Heidegger's "Logos"

To the Editor:

In "The Political Truth of Heidegger's 'Logos': Hiding in Translation" (105 [1990]: 436–47), on Heidegger's maieutic handling of Heraclitus's Logos, Nicholas Rand (German, "edge, brink") displays a fulsome bit of brinkmanship by means of which, on political grounds, he attempts to hurl Heidegger over the edge of linguistic sanity into the Tartarus of "dreams and poetry" (443). Rand himself, in the manner of Poe's Montresor, leads us down to the "crypt"—"an original and forgotten German crypt" (444) at that—and placidly sets about walling us up in his foregone conclusion: "In 1951 Heidegger replaced the condemned ideology of national supremacy with the disguised promotion of German as a superior language" (445). Rand's basis for this wide-open assertion is that Heidegger claimed a pre-Socratic meaning for both *logos* and its cognate verb *legen*, a meaning, by the way, supported by the nineteenth-century lexicographer Alexandre, and, further, that Heidegger spoke of the German words *Lege* and *legen* as "sheltering" that pre-Socratic meaning. Rand builds his house of jokers on Heidegger's allusion to "our German."

To Heidegger, the pre-Socratic meaning of *logos* and *legen* pertains to gathering, to laying. When Heidegger identifies Logos with Being, he is, in fact, pointing to the Johannine Logos ("either the second person of the Trinity or God" [Chantraine; qtd. on 440]): the layer (as in *bricklayer*) or gatherer of Being as the *foundation* of things and the cause of their existence. Thus, in place of the Heraclitean notion that the element of fire is the Logos, he designates Christ the Logos qua enabling or existentializing Being—that is, qua both Creative Word and the pregrammatological Being that continues to sustain creation and to bestow on it referential meaning.

Just as Heidegger spoke of “our German” as “harvesting” Heraclitus’s sense of *logos*, a Roman or Italian might just as easily, without offense to Heidegger’s real thrust, point out that “our Latin” or “our Italian” shelters the Heraclitean sense as well. *Lego*, in both languages, means “I bring together, I gather, I read aloud.” Similarly, a speaker of English might refer to “the lay of the last minstrel,” “the lay of the land,” and “the way things lie.”

Far from being political, in Rand’s sense (or lay) of revealing Heidegger’s continuing addiction “to the impenitent perpetration of evil [Nazism]” (446), Heidegger’s *logos-legein* hermeneutics has nothing ulterior to or residual in it, unless it is his Roman Catholicism, which asserts that only Christ the Logos can make the world and existence itself intelligible (a word derived from Latin *inter* and *lego*): it is Christ who binds things together and who is their foundation. Christ himself spoke of the harvest and the dearth of laborers in the field.

As for Rand’s silly assumption that Heidegger was sympathetic to Nazism as it unfolded before his eyes, did not Heidegger refuse the presidency of the University of Berlin when it was offered to him by the Nazis?

The “crypt” to which Rand leads us contains the procrustean bed of his own doctoral thesis.

NATHAN A. CERVO
Franklin Pierce College

To the Editor:

In “The Political Truth of Heidegger’s ‘Logos’: Hiding in Translation,” Nicholas Rand wishes to point out that many—himself included, he is naturally careful to note—have been and continue to be slow, perhaps unduly slow, in weaning themselves from the seductiveness of Heidegger’s language. I happen to think that the matter of Heidegger is more complicated than that. Yet that is not the reason for my letter. While I may simply take exception to Rand’s version of Heidegger’s thought, I am aghast at the remarks made in the final paragraph of his essay. I quote in part:

A striking feature of the recent furor in Europe over the postwar status of Heidegger’s political convictions is that many of his defenders are Jewish. It is as though the victims could not bear the thought that a philosopher . . . might continue unperturbed to approve of the ideas of the Nazis. . . . Thus the victims close their eyes, suppress their questions, and undertake a rescue in the vain hope that he who refused to condemn death could somehow bring life. (446)

These words no longer touch on Heidegger at all. They are instead a bald and unconscionable affront to any Jewish intellectual who does not share the conclusions Rand has reached. How is it possible that an editorial board with a reputation for critical stringency like that enjoyed by the board of *PMLA* let this paragraph pass without demanding that the author explain himself? Is the reader supposed to accept this as an example of what the editor, in the editor’s column of the same issue, advertises as “the intensity and maturity of today’s theoretical discussions” (389–90)? I am dismayed that such unqualified ideological babble has passed muster at a publication that represents the institution of philology in America.

JOHN BAKER
Bryn Mawr College

Reply:

That the issue of the political and ethical dimensions of philosophical thought in the aftermath of World War II should be greeted with sarcasm merits reflection. A discussion of the Roman Catholic interpretation of “Logos” would be uneventful, as there is no support for that reading in Heidegger’s essay. Cervo passes judgment on a point that does not concern my argument: “Rand’s silly assumption that Heidegger was sympathetic to Nazism as it unfolded before his eyes. . . .” Whether this subject is “silly” or an “assumption” is not for me to decide. For quite some time the vast archival documentation assembled by historians has been seen as conclusive proof of Heidegger’s wartime sympathies for Nazism. The problem raised in my article is different: Do Heidegger’s thoughts (c. 1944–51) on language and specifically on the Greek *logos* imply that his stance may have been inherently nationalistic? Cervo’s remarks do not strip this question of its relevance.

Baker invokes the *PMLA* Editorial Board’s “reputation for critical stringency” as he reviles some brief thoughts on what I regard as the potential predicament faced by Jews who want to defend the ideas of a philosopher whose self-proclaimed sympathies with Nazism are beyond dispute. Scholars are free to question the appropriateness of my concern. Yet calling my expression of that concern “unqualified ideological babble” is perhaps not intended to engage one’s opponent in critically stringent discussion.

NICHOLAS RAND
University of Wisconsin, Madison