

POVERTY AND MORTALITY UNDER THE DOMINANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

GUELFO CARBONE, independent scholar

CARBONE, G.: Poverty and Mortality under the Dominance of Technology
FILOZOFIA, 78, 2023, No 2, pp. 101 – 114

Relying on Heidegger's recently issued *Black Notebooks*, where the "shepherd of being" qua "mortal" is discussed as the "future man", this paper tackles poverty and mortality, along with their mutual bond, in light of the tension established by Heidegger between *Gestell* and *Ereignis*, namely, between the global dominance of technology and the liberation of earth from the despotic dominion of human beings. First, light is cast upon the dominance of technology, which "distorts" the *Ereignis* of the world, which is yet to arrive, by holding back its very arrival. Second, the focus shifts to the philosophical meaning of poverty, which relies on mortality understood as radical dispossession. Since poverty is the essential feature of the "future man", the "shepherd of being", as well as the basis for a different take on our use of technological devices, the innermost link between poverty and technology is also addressed. Furthermore, the comparison with Pope Francis's two recent encyclicals is established, in order to highlight the specific philosophical meaning conferred to poverty by Heidegger, especially with respect to our behavior toward technology.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger – Philosophy of Technology – Black Notebooks – Phenomenology and Politics – Jorge Maria Bergoglio

Today we are no longer farmers, instead, we are hunters. In search of prey, hunters of information, wandering through the web as if it were a digital battlefield.¹

1.

In *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis's recent encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, we are told that "we can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all" if we choose "the true path of peace", and that real peace is only possible "on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future

¹ South Korean advertising campaign.

shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family” (Bergoglio 2020, § 127).

The desire expressed by the current Pope is not merely the wish of a pastor of souls; rather, it is a concrete perspective based on a true political program of radical transformation, which has been clearly illustrated in the previous encyclical letter, entitled *Laudato si'*, which had “integrality” as its key notion, namely, a perspective on humanity as a whole, and, consequently, the purported program for “integral and shared development” (Bergoglio 2015, § 50).

As an example: when faced with “global inequality”, Pope Francis stresses that “today we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (Bergoglio 2015, § 49, author’s emphasis). The Pope reaffirms the same in *Fratelli tutti*:

My criticism of the technocratic paradigm involves more than simply thinking that if we control its excesses everything will be fine. The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities or institutions, but from the way that they are used (Bergoglio 2020, § 166).

Pope Francis’s criticism of the technocratic paradigm, which underpins his integral approach to the sustainability of our existence on this planet is addressed to the powers that govern the “current global system”: the economic powers, for instance, whose interests mainly lie in speculation and financial gain, and therefore, fail “to take the context into account”, let alone “the effects on human dignity and the natural environment” (Bergoglio 2015, § 56). Or the political elite, too, whereby the political representatives of the people neglect their public service; not to mention the powerful “new landlords” of the digital fields, who take advantage of novel technologies in order to accumulate huge amounts of private capital. One can find these themes in both letters addressed by Pope Francis to the entire human community, as concurring to establish an “unhealthy mindset”, which, more precisely, consists in neglecting “the common good”, and acting solely “for the benefits of power or, at best, for ways to impose [one’s] own ideas”. A silent, but progressively pervasive danger against which Pope Francis expresses his own hope:

The heroes of the future will be those who can break with this unhealthy mindset and determine respectfully to promote truthfulness, aside from personal interest. God willing, such heroes are quietly emerging, even now, in the midst of our society (Bergoglio 2020, § 202).

Despite the ideological limits one might find in Pope Francis's positions, which renders them conservative and impossible to fully embrace as they are, such as his stance on issues of bioethics, or social rights, especially with respect to gender, his take on the current global system is one of the most radical political perspectives available today. As it happens, this point is rather problematic, since the Pope, as both head of state and spiritual pastor at the same time, is also a global political actor, indeed one of the most influential on the planet. Therefore, if no substantial transformations in the social and economic conditions highlighted in his encyclicals took place after his eminent position had been stated and made public, which also means shared with other political leaders, then we have the umpteenth example of the ever weaker and more evanescent bond between word and action, between what is stated and what is done, which characterizes the political endeavors of our time. This goes back to a crucial philosophical problem concerning the peculiar impotence of language today, when rational communication tends towards babbling, as the spokespersons of social movements for climate justice are wont to point out.

In what follows, it is not this issue of the misfire of the performativity of political language that will be addressed; rather, an attempt is made to hint back to an important case study in the historical unfolding of such corrosion, a case study in which most of the essential causes for it are diagnosed.

2.

The case study in question is Martin Heidegger's *Letter on "Humanism"* addressed to his French correspondent, Jean Beaufret, at the end of 1946. As regards the method adopted here, it is important to clarify our take on the *Letter*, which has been charged by some readers with the sole and specific task of mitigating and diminishing Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi movement. As they have argued, such involvement is purposely not mentioned in the 1946 *Letter*, since the *Humanismusbrief* is a self-absolving statement and is part of an indirect strategy of denying responsibility for Heidegger's political error beginning with the 1933 – 1934 rectorship.²

Here, instead, the *Humanismusbrief* is taken as providing the summa of the reckoning both with the metaphysical tradition and with Heidegger's own path of thinking through and beyond the tragic dark decade that he philosophically faced in the so-called *Schwarze Hefte* (*Black Notebooks*), especially in those notebooks that date back to the period of European fascism. That was the same period in which, in the aftermath

² See, e.g., Pastore (2001, 174 and 179).

of the failure of the rectorate, acknowledged by Heidegger himself as a “great mistake” (2016, 118 – 119),³ the disempowerment (*Machtlosigkeit*) of human sovereignty and the related possibility of thinking beyond the dichotomy of power and impotence became a widely recurring theme in Heidegger’s 1939 – 1941 *Überlegungen* (*Ponderings*).⁴

Heidegger reports that right after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, in 1927, a young friend asked him when he would write “an ethics” (1998, 268). Indeed, as is well known, Heidegger neither wrote a treatise on ethics, nor ever planned to devote a specific contribution to this field of philosophical enquiry in a traditional fashion. In this respect, he is in good company: neither Ernst Cassirer, nor Walter Benjamin ever wrote “an ethics” in the traditional philosophical sense, nor did Emmanuel Levinas for that matter.⁵

However, the ethical issue is markedly present in the *Letter*, first of all, thanks to the connection established therein by Heidegger between what he calls “originary ethics”, which is the originary meaning of the ancient Greek “ethos”, namely, “abode”, “dwelling place” for human beings (1998, 269 and 271), and the “originary thinking” going back to the dawning of Western philosophical, and thus also scientific, culture (1998, 241).

Indeed, the *Letter* regains importance today particularly because of the take on the bond between ethics and technology unexpectedly suggested by Heidegger therein, which offers a possible comparison with some of Pope Francis’s arguments:

The desire for an ethics presses ever more ardently for fulfillment as the obvious no less than the hidden perplexity of human beings soars to immeasurable heights. The greatest care must be fostered upon the ethical bond at a time when technological human beings delivered over to mass society can attain reliable constancy only by gathering and ordering all their plans and activities in a way that corresponds to technology (Heidegger 1998, 268).

The starting point of Heidegger’s diagnosis is that we live under the dominance of technology, but our subordination, or dependence, does not prescribe how we should live under that dominance, or how we should deal with that dependence. Accordingly,

³ On this, see also Crowell (2016).

⁴ See, e.g., Heidegger (2017b, 14, 18 – 19, 23, 28, 32 and 36).

⁵ On this, see Ciaramelli (2006, 19).

“ethics” receives its meaning anew precisely from how we live, namely, how we dwell upon the earth under the global dominance of technology.

In this context, the role of humans shows an irreducible, tragic ambivalence. While they deem themselves to be sovereigns on earth and to control technology, being the “lord[s] of the earth”, the unfolding of the technological domain proves them wrong, and such an “illusion” distorts *ab initio* any possible relationship with technology (Heidegger 1977, 27). On the other hand, however, this historical development reveals the human being to be the “shepherd of being”, which is the key element of the originary ethics that Heidegger presents in the *Letter* in contrast with man understood as “lord of beings” (1998, 260).

3.

The originary meaning of ethics as “dwelling place” stems from an intense reflection on the crisis of the sovereignty of the human subject carried out by Heidegger throughout the 1930s in the wake of Nietzsche and Hölderlin, which originated a profound critique of modern philosophy. Particularly, the modern take on the role of the human being as it comes from Cartesian rationalism, which was methodologically marked by the proper use of reason to seek truth in the sciences, a kind of use that is conceived as an opportunity for humans to be “the masters and possessors of nature” (Descartes 2006, 51).⁶

The “shepherd of being” is intended so as to break with this tradition and to think beyond the idea of the human dwelling on earth. As a sort of later response to his young friend, then, the *Letter on “Humanism”* does, in fact, expound originary ethics as a “dwelling” that corresponds to the present historical condition. Nevertheless, here also lies a great difficulty, since the kind of ethics that we may find in the *Humanismusbrief* is not the normative one. The *Letter* speaks of the abode of the human being, but it does not explicitly advise how we should behave in this dwelling.⁷

Still, the pedagogical effect of this sort of modern epistle should not be underestimated, due to the precious indications that encourage us to autonomously think about the urgent issues of our time, particularly as regards the techno-ecosystem we are progressively building in the multifaceted correlation with digital devices and embedded artificial intelligence.

As indicated in the *Humanismusbrief*, the possible ethical bond for “technological human beings”, presents two preconditions: first, ethics should be conceived beyond the autonomy of a sovereign subject, both individually (the subject identi-

⁶ On Descartes’ subjectivism and its relation to the take on the human being “as nation”, “as people”, “as race” and, finally, “as lord of the earth”, see Heidegger (2002a, 80 – 84).

⁷ See especially Heidegger (1998, 269 – 271).

fied by faculties and rights) and collectively (humankind ruling over the other species on earth). Second, ethics should deal with the global dominance of what Heidegger calls *Gestell*, “Enframing” (1977, 19) or “Positionality” (2003, 60 and 2012b).

Under the dominance of *Gestell*, Heidegger argues, humans are pushed to make use of all beings as “standing-reserve” (1977, 27). However, the fact that technology “dominates” means that both users and what is used are caught in a particular kind of relationship – or “use” (*Brauch*), which was another key term for Heidegger⁸, – in which “to be” means nothing other than to be used in terms of unceasing availability.⁹

The complex order and balance that generates the *Gestell* implies that such an availability, namely, the presence needed in order to be used for a purpose, is both total and constant, so that modern technology in the *Gestell* “calls forth” a total mobilization of beings in which all that is, including animals and humans, is experienced, and consequently used, as “what can be positioned anywhere and at any time, to whatever use and function, independently of all spatial and temporal determinations” (Schuback 2011, 25).

It is easy to recognize in such a diagnosis our own present technological epoch, particularly with respect to logistics “as a means of synchronizing and coordinating movements of goods and people”, especially workers (Mezzadra, Neilson 2017), or even in the case of the daily social ab-use of digital devices for communication purposes. However, the involvement of humans in the technological domain is way more radical, since we are ourselves integrally embedded in the Enframing, which means that we are subordinated to a demand for constant presence.

Heidegger, in the 1949 conference entitled *Positionality*, tells us that human beings, in their own way, are “a piece of the standing reserve in the strictest sense of the words ‘piece’ and ‘standing reserve’”. Humans are, in other words, “exchangeable within the requisitioning of the standing reserve”, and the fact that humans conceive

⁸ See, e.g., in the recently issued *Schwarze Hefte*, the *Anmerkungen IV*, (Heidegger 2015, 326 – 327 and 339) and the *Anmerkungen VII* (2018a, 153). In cases where there is no English version available for the cited texts, all translations are this author’s own.

⁹ As the translator of the 1955 lecture entitled *The Question Concerning Technology* explains, Heidegger intended *Gestell* to mean a “calling-forth”, a “challenging claim” that gathers beings together so as to reveal them, i.e., to compel them to boundless availability. This claim “enframes in that it assembles and orders. It puts into a framework or configuration everything that it summons forth, through an ordering for use that it is forever restructuring anew” (Heidegger 1977, 19 footnote; see also 1977, xxix – xxxvii). For the same reasons, the French translations for *Gestell* have been rendered as *arrondissement* or *dis-positif*, while, in Italian, they are *impianto* or *dispositivo*. All the above-mentioned translations stress the core of the German term *Gestell*, that is, the verb “stellen” (“to place”, “to set upon”, but also “to order”, “to arrange”, “to furnish or supply”, see Heidegger 1977, 15, footnote), which is particularly emphasized by the decision to translate it as “Positionality”.

each other and themselves as pieces of the standing reserve remains the “presupposition” for the fact that they can become “the functionar[ies]” of such a requisitioning.¹⁰

“Functionary” here also gets a twofold meaning, both active and passive at the same time, since humans are functional to the *Gestell* as pieces of the reserve for the constant presence of all beings, but they also foster its functioning in terms of “requisitioning”, to ensure the availability “on demand”. So, as we have already noted, the “illusion” can force its way through so that humans are in control of the global technological Enframing, that they are “lord[s]” (Heidegger 1977, 27).¹¹

3.

In the 1969 seminar in Le Thor, many years later, but on the same line of reasoning, humans are said to be challenged forth, under the dominance of technology, to comport themselves “in correspondence with exploitation and consumption”. The relation to exploitation and consumption, Heidegger goes on, “requires the human to *be* in this relationship. Man does not hold technology in his hand. He is its plaything” (2003, 62 – 63, author’s emphasis).

The question might then be raised of what should be done in such a situation, what one must do and how one should behave. Briefly, the question concerning an ethics that corresponds to the global dominance of technology can be proposed, as we read in the 1946 *Humanismusbrief*. Still, we have also seen that we should not expect any normative indication by Heidegger’s diagnosis, which means that “ethics” goes back to the relationship with technology itself, namely, to its use, and that it is, by definition, “pre-normative”, or, using different phrasing, but with the same outcome, “proto-ethical” (Cohen 2011, 183).

Even if we do not get any normative regulation via this account of our possible new, ethically imprinted relationship with technology, nevertheless we get substantial indications. The “relation” with technology is discussed by Heidegger in terms of a “releasement toward things”, which is a “comportment” that “expresses ‘yes’ and at the same time ‘no’” as regards technology, and entails that “we let technical devices

¹⁰ See Heidegger (2012b, 35): “The human is exchangeable within the requisitioning of the standing reserve. That he is a piece of the standing reserve remains the presupposition for the fact that he can become the functionary of a requisitioning. Yet the human belongs in positionality in a wholly other way than the machine does. This way can become inhuman. The *inhuman*, however, is ever still *inhuman*. The human never becomes a machine. The inhuman and yet human is admittedly more uncanny, while more evil and ominous, than the human who would merely be a machine.”

¹¹ On this, see Giorgio Agamben’s archaeological research on slavery and technology (Agamben, 2016, 78, in particular). Similarly, in his book on *The Transparency Society*, Byung-Chul Han argues that we actively participate in building our own “digital panopticon” and, therefore, in increasing the grip of societal control (Han 2015, viii and 45 – 49).

enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher” (Heidegger 1966, 54). This peculiar relation says “yes”, insofar as it welcomes, or accepts the relation itself without fears and prejudices, and without establishing the relationship in terms of control. The “no”, in turn, flags the refusal to be absorbed in a relation of mutual consumption with devices to which our form of life on this planet is at this stage irreversibly bound. Far from being accommodating, or defeatist, thanks to this “comportment” our relation to technology “will become wonderfully simple and relaxed” (Heidegger 1966, 54).¹²

On this basis, namely, starting with this possible, yet to come, relation with technology, which remains at odds with the current global dominance of technology, we understand the notion of *Ereignis*, the “event of appropriation”, insofar as, for instance, we are told that the *Gestell* is the “photographic negative” of the *Ereignis* (Heidegger 2003, 60), or that the *Gestell* “distorts” the *Ereignis* of the possible future world (Heidegger 1993, 420), to the point that “in the essence and reign of positionality, the arrival of the worlding of world is withheld” (Heidegger 2012c, 50).

The current global dominion of technology distorts the event inasmuch as it challenges humans “to order everything that comes to presence”, included all living beings, “into a technical inventory”, which serves as a standing reserve for consumption. This is how the Enframing opens up a new historical perspective for humans, that is, the event of a coming or future world, but it does so by providing the illusion that the future world is already here, as “all ordering sees itself committed to calculative thinking and so speaks the language of enframing”. Therefore, our very language “is challenged to correspond to the ubiquitous orderability of what is present” (Heidegger 1993, 420).

Enframing, then, withholds “the arrival of the worlding of world”, and delays it, but the two are nonetheless “the same”. They are not two subsequent phases of a historical continuum; rather, Enframing already is, in a way, the world of the event of appropriation (Heidegger 2012c, 50).

¹² The topic of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) cannot be extensively discussed here. On this, see, e.g., Merwin, Wendland, Hadjioannou (2018). In their Introduction, the editors of the volume contrast *Gestell* and *Gelassenheit* as “opposing ideas in Heidegger’s analysis of technology whereby the releasement characteristic of *Gelassenheit* counters the dangers of our technological framing of the world via *Gestell*” (Merwin, Wendland, Hadjioannou 2018, 1 – 2). In the same volume, see also Crowell (2018) and Keiling (2018). However, if it is not assured that *Gelassenheit*, which is not an act of will, “releases us from the danger of technology” (Merwin, Wendland, Hadjioannou 2018, 9), the preliminary philosophical question is whether under the global dominance of technology called by Heidegger *Gestell* any releasement is possible, at all, and what should happen, or change, for that to be possible. The question, then, goes back to the subject of *Ereignis* and to the interplay between the event of the world and *Gestell*, as what follows tries to stress.

The “shepherd of being” is the name for the human being caught between Enframing and the Event of appropriation, or “Enowning”, caught in such a historical stalemate. To be sure, there is no redemption at stake, the *Ereignis* bears no salvific message, it is more an interregnum in which we can glimpse the “pre-appearing of enowning [*Ereignis*] under the veil of positionality” (Heidegger 2003, 61).¹³ So, what is the role of the “shepherd” in the interregnum of the dominance of technology, in which all alleged freedom tragically turns into subjugation to calculation and waste?

First of all, a caveat is in order: the existence of the “shepherd of being” has nothing to do with “bucolic idylls and nature mysticism” (Heidegger 2002b, 262). In the 1947 – 1948 *Anmerkungen IV*, published in the *Schwarze Hefte* series, Heidegger reflects in significantly more detail on the figure of the shepherd than what he had stated prior to the publication of the *Schwarze Hefte*. In these texts, we are told that to think of humans as the shepherd of being “has nothing in common with the shepherd of a pastoral idyll, not even the name” (Heidegger 2015, 371). Heidegger goes on to explain that we do not know anything about the shepherd if we think of it starting with the flock, “particularly if we intend the human flock” and that the shepherd is not a moral model (2015, 371 – 372). On this point, there is no possible ambiguity in Heidegger’s position, the “shepherd of being” is no herdsman. The aforementioned pages of the *Anmerkungen IV* are explicitly recalled in the private notes on the *Humanismusbrief* (Heidegger 2018b, 571), where he warns that the shepherd is not the shepherd of a flock, namely, is not the “slave” of the flock, and is not a “Kuhhirt”, a German word that indicates a cowherd. The fact that the shepherd has nothing to do with bucolic idylls is also reaffirmed in later *Schwarze Hefte*, such as the 1957 *Winke I*, where we can read that the true shepherd is not one who makes something or someone else “move” (Heidegger 2020, 66 – 67). Heidegger’s shepherd is considered as an isolated, lonely figure, exactly as it is in his two possible direct sources of such a figure of thought, namely, Nietzsche and Hölderlin (Carbone 2021). In both cases – but the same is for the Italian poet Leopardi and his *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell’Asia* – the shepherd is a restless and erratic figure, a *peregrinus*, without a homeland or a community.

Such is the essential feature of the “shepherd of being” mentioned in the 1946 *Humanismusbrief*. Against the tradition of Western metaphysics, Heidegger states that the human being is “more” than a rational living being, and that is “more than *animal rationale* precisely to the extent that he is less bound up with the human being conceived from subjectivity”. He goes on to explain that “[t]he human being is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of being”, and that “[h]uman beings lose

¹³ On this matter, see also the recently issued *Winke I*, in Heidegger (2020, 11).

nothing in this 'less'; rather, they gain in that they attain the truth of being. They gain the essential poverty of the shepherd" (Heidegger 1998, 260).

But why should poverty be a gain, at all? Are we dealing here with a complicated intellectual trick, or, rather, we are reminded of a dramatically present condition? Further, even if we wanted to assume poverty as a standard for comportment, what does Heidegger explicitly exclude, what would the possible global scenario be? One might, for instance, go back to Pope Francis's *Laudato si'*:

An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world. Often, what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our "dominion" over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship (Bergoglio 2015, § 116).

Now, besides the weakness of such a plea for responsibility that can only rely on willingness and good effort, and which we can also easily ignore, since it is not in any way binding, by what means are we getting ready to become "stewards" and to be "responsible" for a planet which is already globally dominated by technology? Or, in other words, what is the difference between the Pope's plea and the present situation, in which we are certainly not acting responsibly (even if we remain accountable), but we do act as mere "stewards", that is, in Heidegger's words, as "functionaries" of Enframing, in both the passive and active sense, as discussed above? Contrary to any moral intent, the poverty of Heidegger's shepherd has a strictly philosophical meaning, and serves as a clue to help us understand what remains for humans to do under the global dominance of technology, which also means what remains to do in the tension between *Gestell* and *Ereignis*.

5.

There is another expression introduced by Heidegger to designate the human being when faced with the historical destiny of the hegemony of technology, an expression that, at first sight, can be confused with "stewardship". Heidegger often states that the "shepherd of being" is a "placeholder for the nothing", that the two expressions mean

the same, and that the human being can become the shepherd of being only by remaining the “place-holder for the Nothing” (Heidegger 2002b, 262).¹⁴

Poverty, in the philosophical sense, goes back to the peculiar relationship of the human being with death. The human being is not a rational being, rather, it is a mortal being, claims Heidegger. Humans are then called “mortals” insofar as they can die, namely, as they can establish a relationship with death as such.¹⁵

Rational living beings should become “mortal beings”, first of all, as we read in the conference entitled *The Thing*, or in the *Vier Hefte I* from the same period.¹⁶ The poverty of the “shepherd of being” understood as “place-holder for the Nothing” is based on this essential feature of mortality. Humans are, literally, propertyless, or paupers, possessing nothing other than their own death, which is therefore called “the shrine of the nothing” (Heidegger 2012a, 18). Accordingly, in the *Schwarze Hefte*, Heidegger insists on the fact that the “shepherd of being” qua “mortal” is the “future man” (2015, 285 and 383)¹⁷, since poverty relies on mortality, and mortality is radical dispossession. So, in the late 1940s, the “shepherd of being” gradually gave way to the expression of “the mortals”, who dwell in the Fourfold, the world where earth and sky, divinities and mortals come together.¹⁸

We are pushed, then, to think of mortality from within the interregnum, namely, under the dominance of technology that distorts the world yet to come. But to think of humans as mortals can do nothing else than bring us closer to the world named in the *Ereignis*, without producing it, without being capable of realizing it. Nevertheless, it helps in acknowledging the very identity of *Ereignis* and *Enteignis*, which consists in the substantial foreshadowing of a future world entrusted to humans as mortals

¹⁴ On this, see also Heidegger (2006, 160; 2003, 63; 2015, 312, 372, and 403 f.).

¹⁵ See the 1949 conference, *The Thing*: “The mortals are the humans. They are called the mortals because they are able to die. Dying means: to be capable of death as death. Only the human dies. The animal comes to an end. It has death as death neither before it nor after it. Death is the shrine of the nothing, namely of that which in all respects is never some mere being, but nonetheless essences, namely as being itself. Death, as the shrine of nothing, harbors in itself what essences of being. As the shrine of the nothing, death is the refuge of being. The mortals we now name the mortals—not because their earthly life ends, but rather because they are capable of death as death. The mortals are who they are as mortals by essencing in the refuge of being. They are the essencing relationship to being as being” (Heidegger 2012a, 18).

¹⁶ See, respectively, Heidegger (2012a, 17; 2019, 62).

¹⁷ See also Heidegger (2019, 30; 2018b, 574, 580 – 583).

¹⁸ See, e.g., Heidegger (2012a, 17 – 19; 2015, 494; 2018a, 111 – 113). On the use of the plural “mortals” by Heidegger, borrowed “from the Greeks”, see Arendt (1994, 443), who explains that “[w]hat is important here is not the emphasis on mortality, but the use of the plural”. Since Heidegger “has never articulated the implications of his position on this point”, Arendt is careful to add that “it may be presumptuous to read too much significance into his use of the plural” (ibidem). However, the *Anmerkungen III – IX* recently issued in the series of the *Schwarze Hefte* are extremely helpful in clarifying the importance of shifting from “man” to the plurality of “mortals”.

based on radical dispossession. If we conceive the human being as a *Todes-Wesen*, as a “mortal being”, rather than a “living being” (*Lebewesen*) – as we read in the *Vier Hefte I* – we recognize in the essence of death the very essence of humanity, namely, we establish it “on the basis of the dispossession in the event of appropriation” (Heidegger 2019, 62), on the basis of the radical *Enteignis* that lies in the *Ereignis* of the world yet to come.

Hence, poverty is in no way either the indigence of the beggar, nor the “less” of degrowth, of the *décroissance sereine* (Latouche 2009). Again, poverty is not a normative indication, Heidegger’s hint is not that everyone must become poor, first of all, because poverty is not something that can be chosen. It would be self-deceiving with respect to the very meaning of poverty, which is related to mortality, to deem that poverty is a compartment or an attitude assumed on purpose, as we read in the *Schwarze Hefte* (Heidegger 2018a, 36). Poverty gains a much stricter philosophical meaning as it characterizes a specific historical condition, that is to say, our present historical condition. “We have become poor, in order to become rich”: such is the “dictum” by Hölderlin that Heidegger comments in mid-1945, during a conference in which poverty is pinpointed as the essential feature of our epoch, since poverty is “the overtone of the still hidden-sheltered ownmost of the Western people and their destiny” (Heidegger, Kalary, Schalow 2011, 8). An epoch in which, it should be stressed, essential poverty and mortality are willfully distorted and dressed up in the nastiest and gravest social injustices and disparity.

Bibliography

- AGAMBEN, G. (2016): *The Use of Bodies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804798617>
- ARENDT, H. (1994): Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought. In: *Essay in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*. New York – San Diego – London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 428 – 447.
- BERGOGLIO, J. M. (2020): *Fratelli tutti: On fraternity and social friendship: Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [Online]: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.
- BERGOGLIO, J. M. (2015): *Laudato si’: On care for our Common Home: Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [Online]: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.
- CARBONE, G. (2021): Der Hirt des Seins und die ursprüngliche Ethik. In: Seubert, H. – Neugebauer, K. – Massa, M. (eds): *Wo Aber Gefahr Ist: Heidegger Und Die Philosophie Der Planerischen Technik*. Freiburg im Breisgau – München: Verlag Karl Alber, 379 – 409.
- COHEN S. (2011): The Proto-Ethical Dimension of Moods. In: Kenaan H. – Ferber I. (eds): *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*. Dordrecht: Springer, 173 – 184. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1503-5_12

- CIARAMELLI, F. (2006): Prima della legge: Considerazioni su filosofia ed etica in Levinas e Heidegger. *Teoria*, 26 (2), 19 – 34.
- CROWELL, S. G. (2016): Reading Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*. In: Farin, I. – Malpas, J. (eds): *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks 1931 – 1941*. London – Cambridge: MIT Press, 29 – 44.
- CROWELL, S. G. (2018): The Challenge of Heidegger's Approach to Technology: A Phenomenological Reading. In: Wendland, A. J. – Merwin, Ch. – Hadjioannou, Ch. (eds): *Heidegger on Technology*. London – New York: Routledge, 74 – 95.
- DESCARTES, R. (2006): *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- HAN, B.-Ch. (2015): *The Transparency Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1966): Memorial Address. In: Heidegger, M.: *Discourse on Thinking*. New York: Harper & Row, 43 – 57.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1977): The Question Concerning Technology. In: Heidegger, M.: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essay*. New York: Harper & Row, 3 – 35.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1993): The Way to Language. In: Heidegger, M.: *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. New York: Harper & Row, 393 – 426.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1998): Letter on "Humanism". In: Heidegger, M.: *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 239 – 276. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812637.012>
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2002a): The Age of the World Picture. In: Heidegger, M.: *Off the Beaten Track*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 57 – 85.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2002b): Anaximander's Saying. In: Heidegger, M.: *Off the Beaten Track*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 242 – 281.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2003): Seminar in Le Thor 1969. In: Heidegger, M.: *Four Seminars: Le Thor 1966, 1968, 1969, Zähringen 1973*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 35 – 63.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2006): Brief an Takehiko Kojima (1963). In: Heidegger, M.: *Identität und Differenz. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 11. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 153 – 161.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2012a): The Thing. In: Heidegger, M.: *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 5 – 22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21pxkvh.6>
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2012b): Positionality. In: Heidegger, M.: *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 23 – 43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21pxkvh.7>
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2012c): The Danger. In: Heidegger, M.: *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 44 – 63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21pxkvh.8>
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2015): *Anmerkungen I – V (Schwarze Hefte 1942 – 1948)*. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 97. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2016): *Ponderings II – VI: Black Notebooks 1931 – 1938*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2017a): *Ponderings VII – XI: Black Notebooks 1938 – 1939*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2017b): *Ponderings XII – XV: Black Notebooks 1939 – 1941*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2018a): *Anmerkungen VI – IX (Schwarze Hefte 1948/49 – 1951)*. *Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 98. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2018b): *Zu eigene Veröffentlichungen*. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 82. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2019): *Vier Hefte I und II (Schwarze Hefte 1947 – 1950)*. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 99. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.

- HEIDEGGER, M. (2020): *Winke I und II (Schwarze Hefte 1957 – 1959)*. Gesamtausgabe, vol. 101. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- HEIDEGGER, M., KALARY, T., SCHALOW, F. (2011): Poverty. In: Schalow, F. (ed.): *Heidegger, Translation, and the Task of Thinking: Essays in Honor of Parvis Emad*. Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 3 – 10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1649-0_1
- KEILING, T. (2018): Letting Things Be for Themselves: Gelassenheit as Enabling Thinking. In: Wendland, A. J. – Merwin, Ch. – Hadjioannou, Ch. (eds): *Heidegger on Technology*. London – New York: Routledge, 96 – 114.
- LATOUCHE, S. (2009): *Farewell to Growth*. Cambridge – Malden: Polity.
- MERWIN, Ch., WENDLAND, A. J., HADJIOANNOU, Ch. (2018): Introduction: Heidegger's Thinking Through Technology. In: Wendland, A. J. – Merwin, Ch. – Hadjioannou, Ch. (eds): *Heidegger on Technology*. London – New York: Routledge, 1 – 12.
- MEZZADRA, S., NEILSON, B. (2017): On the multiple frontiers of extraction: Excavating contemporary capitalism. *Cultural Studies*, 31 (2 – 3), 185 – 204. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1303425>
- PASTORE, L. (2001): *Un'epistola dagli intenti assolutori*. In: Fistetti, F. (ed.): *La Germania segreta di Heidegger*. Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 171 – 242.
- SCHUBACK, M. S. C. (2011): Sacrifice and Salvation: Jan Patočka's Reading of Heidegger on the Question of Technology. In: Abrams, E. – Chvatík, I. (eds): *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology: Centenary Papers*. Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 23 – 37. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9124-6_3

Guelfo Carbone
Independent scholar
Via Nicolò da Pistoia 40
00154 Rome
Italy
e-mail: guelfo.carbone@uniroma3.it
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7696-6851>