

Elfride Petri Heidegger: relentless “custodian” of Heidegger's thought. An examination of several unpublished documents

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ABSTRACT: From research conducted at Herman-Leo Van Breda's legacy and Heidegger's two private libraries in Freiburg-Zähringen, as well as from direct acquaintance with the philosopher's descendants, I have been able to reconstruct, through a number of unpublished documents, some essential traits of Mrs. Elfride Petri Heidegger. A decisive figure who was able to initiate Heidegger's Gesamtausgabe and to preserve with determination her husband's thought over time.

Keywords: Van Breda; Fink; Baumgarten; Gertrud Heidegger; Heinrich Heidegger.



Photo

This photograph of Elfride Petri Heidegger (3.7.1893 - † 21.3.1992) was taken in 1953 and comes from the archive of her granddaughter Gertrud Heidegger, eldest child of the late Jörg Heidegger (21.1.1919 - † 22.2.2019)¹, who was the philosopher's eldest son.

During my periods of study in Freiburg, the late Prof. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann wanted me to get to know members of the Heidegger family. On July 10, 2016² we visited one of the philosopher's two residences in Freiburg-Zähringen, the house the Heideggers bequeathed to their granddaughter Gertrud and which contains one section of the philosopher's private library. The remaining portion is located in the residence in Filibachstraße which was inherited by Detlev Heidegger, third born child of the late Hermann Heidegger (20.8.1920 - † 13.1.2020) who was the philosopher's second son.

In this second residence, which is next door to the first and separated by a small garden, Heidegger furnished a new study where he kept the books he needed on a daily basis, and it was here that he spent the final years of his life. When I met Gertrud she kindly showed me her family photo album and I was particularly struck by the photograph above because it is the first time Frau Elfride is shown "smiling", a woman whom I had always heard described as surly, austere, or even worse (according to her detractors) an unrepentant Nazi. So I asked Gertrud if I could use this photograph should I ever find the time to write a contribution about her grandmother and she immediately consented. I still remember the great impression this picture made on Prof. von Herrmann. He had often frequented the Heideggers but could not recall ever seeing Frau Elfride with a smile on her face. Instead he often told me that every decision always needed to be arranged with her in advance and it was only after her prior approval that one was allowed to access Heidegger and propose any kind of project to him. In other words, Frau Elfride was a kind of gatekeeper in the Heidegger family and it is a well-known fact that anyone seeking to gain admittance to Martin needed first to obtain his wife's permission. According to Prof. von Herrmann this highly protective behavior of hers stemmed out of a wish to shield her husband and ensure that he had all the leisure he required for his studies and to spare him pointless wastes of time.

From my own perspective, after long periods of study spent in the archives, pouring over documents, Frau Elfride always seemed a controversial figure because of the very headstrong and protective attitude she took vis-à-vis her husband. An example of this is the fact that her two sons, Jörg and Hermann (from what they told me themselves during our meetings) were not allowed free access to their father without their mother's permission. During the Heidegger family's summer vacations in their cottage in Todtnauberg, the two boys were often shunted off to friends who lived in the neighborhood and with whom they would stay, so the philosopher might have time to pursue his studies without distractions. It was Jörg himself who often told me "we saw our father studying from a distance, but we couldn't ap-

¹ Allow me to refer the reader to my brief article on Heidegger's eldest son written after his death: ALFIERI, Francesco. Il mio "eterno ricordo" di Jörg Heidegger (21 gennaio 1919 - 22 febbraio 2019). In *Humanitas*, 2019, vol. 74, iss. 1, pp. 130 - 139.

² ALFIERI, Francesco. *Das Buch der Erinnerungen*, Bd. I, p. 42, private edition (Archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò).

proach him as our mother didn't allow this". The fact remains that Elfride's protective spirit represented security for Heidegger and this is the reason he was so ready to defer to her judgment and to her instructions.

To this day Frau Elfride remains a highly *controversial* figure and her destiny was linked to her husband's when the shadow of alleged antisemitism fell over him. I was able to realize how controversial she was when, on June 29, 2022, I was reading a paper at the International Congress *Thinking in Crisis* – at the European Humanities University of Vilnius. My lecture was a homage to Frau Elfride Petri Heidegger in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of her death (1893 – †1992)³ and I suddenly found I had to defend myself from the onslaughts of several scholars who were convinced that Frau Elfride was an "unrepentant Nazi". I then had to unpack all the documents I had brought with me to explain how matters were actually much more complex; indeed, one needs a good deal of patience to counter arguments like this.

So where did my decision come from to write this contribution? I have recently been in the process of reorganizing certain sections of my archive which is located in Nardò, and while I was going through some papers from the *Husserl-Archief* section, I came across a number of documents donated to me by the archivist P. Baetens Jozef who, way back in 2007, was working on the *Nachlaß* of the Franciscan priest Herman-Leo Van Breda⁴, preserved in the provincial archives of Sint-Truiden in Belgium. The summer of that year I happened to be in Leuven working in the *Husserl-Archief*, when I received an invitation to visit the Herman-Leo Van Breda archive since this entire *Nachlaß* was soon going to be handed over to a state archive and would no longer be administered by the Franciscans. This was an excellent opportunity for me to study part of Van Breda's *Nachlaß*, not only because Van Breda was the founder of the *Husserl-Archief*⁵, he had also personally rescued Husserl's documents, had frequented Malvine Husserl and had managed to bring Eugen Fink and Ludwig Landgrebe to Leuven along with their respective families⁶.

³ ALFIERI, Francesco. What is the role of the intellectual today? How to overcome the *Machenschaft* we find ourselves in. In *Thinking in Crisis*. Vilnius : European Humanities University 2023, pp. 27 - 40.

⁴ Today the only work that covers the most important stages in the life of the Franciscan priest Herman-Leo van Breda and which documents the pivotal role he played in creating the *Husserl-Archief* and the phenomenological movement that revolved around Husserl in Freiburg is HORSTEN, Toon. *De pater en de filosoof. De avontuurlijke redding van het Husserl-archief*. Antwerp : Uitgeverij Vrijdag, 20214; tr. German: *Der Pater und der Philosoph. Die abenteuerliche Rettung von Husserls Vermächtnis*, translated from the Dutch by M. Müller-Haas. Berlin : Galiani, 2021.

⁵ VAN BREDA, Herman, Leo. *Die Rettung von Husserls Nachlass und die Gründung des Husserl-Archivs*, translated from the French by R. Bernet. in Husserl-Archiv Leuven. In *Geschichte des Husserl-Archivs. History of the Husserl-Archives*. Dordrecht : Springer, 2007, pp. 1 - 37. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5727-4_1 A very interesting account of the work done by Van Breda between Freiburg and Leuven to save Husserl's manuscripts and the countless difficulties he faced to create the archive, may be found in the following study : VAN BREDA, Herman, Leo. *Sauver les phénomènes. Le sauvetage de l'héritage husserlien et la fondation des Archives-Husserl*. Paris : Éditions Allia, 2018.

⁶ On April 2, 1971 Fink and Landgrebe were awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* from the Catholic University in Leuven and Van Breda gave a famous speech to thank them for all the hard work they had done in the archive, as well as for their courage when on May 10, 1940 the Germans invaded Belgium and they were deported to a camp in the south of France: Ibid., *Laudatio für Ludwig Landgrebe und Eugen*

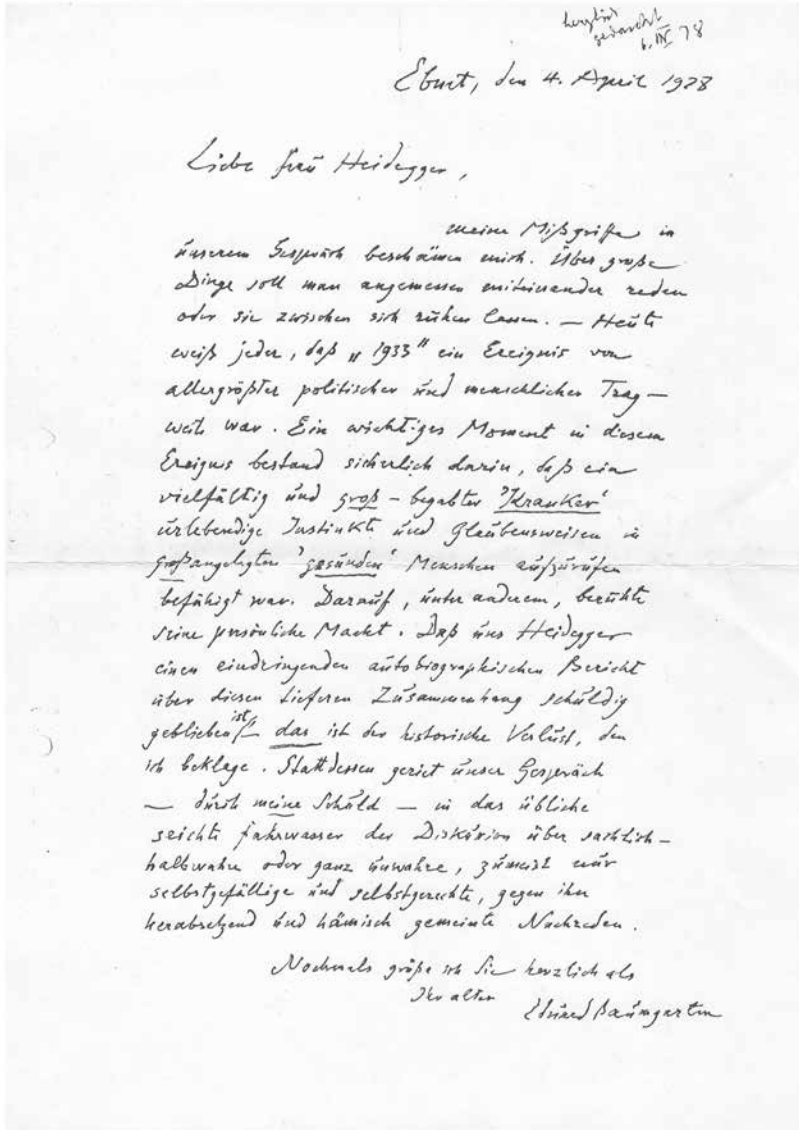
Husserl's two private assistants were working at the *Husserl-Archief* from the spring of 1939. Van Breda had met Fink on September 2, 1938 at Husserl's home along with Husserl's widow Malvine (Husserl had died earlier that year on April 27) and around two weeks later in the same residence, Van Breda met Landgrebe. As Malvine was arranging to transport her husband's manuscripts and private library to Leuven she was always in the company of his two assistants. Landgrebe, after completing his studies in Vienna, had gone on to Freiburg and it was here that he was able to attend Husserl's courses for one semester. Husserl, who spotted his abilities, offered him the position of private assistant which he occupied until 1928 when Fink assumed the role. Landgrebe and Fink were the only two people close to Husserl at a time when National Socialism had completely isolated him, though Fink was the only one who was in physical proximity to the master and became his working colleague. For this closeness to Husserl, he was often referred to as Husserl's Jewish servant (*Judenknecht*). In spite of these insults Fink always remained on intimate terms with the Husserls and was a great aid to Malvine in arranging for the manuscripts to be transported to Leuven.

For his part, Van Breda was also a frequent visitor to Freiburg and had come into contact with the Heidegger family, most of all with Frau Elfride. To be able to consult Van Breda's papers was for me, a young student working on his doctorate, an opportunity to study the phenomenological movement of which Breda was not only a contemporary witness but *the* protagonist. While I was consulting this *Nachlaß* I found an interesting set of documents between the Franciscan and Edith Stein and I learned of the attempt (unfortunately a failed one) to remove Stein from the Carmel of Echt and bring her to Leuven. It was Van Breda's intention that Fink, Landgrebe and Stein should work full time on transcribing Husserl's manuscripts as they were the only ones able to decipher his handwriting in *Gabelsberger* stenography. But in spite of Van Breda's discussions with Stein in Echt and all his urging, she was adamant in her refusal and he had to make do with Fink and Landgrebe.

It is a well-known story that Van Breda often went to Freiburg to organize work on the *Husserl-Archief* and that during these trips he was meeting Malvine Husserl and Eugen Fink, but he was also thinking of establishing links with the Heideggers for the reason that this would help him recover useful material for the archive he was setting up in Belgium. And it was while I was on this "trail" that I happened to come across a letter from the philosopher and sociologist Eduard Baumgarten addressed to Elfride Heidegger in 1938. Van Breda was aware of the *Gerede* swirling around Heidegger and how trying this talk had been for the couple. He also knew about Frau Elfride's efforts to shield her husband from the hostile climate that was pervading Freiburg, especially in academic circles. It is quite telling that Van Breda had kept this letter among his papers, which very likely had been donated to him by Frau Elfride and which was given in turn to me by the archivist of Van Breda's *Nachlaß*, along with other material that I am preserving in my own archive.

Fink, in *Phänomenologie Heute. Festschrift für Ludwig Landgrebe (Phaenomenologica, 51)*. Den Haag : Martinus Nijhoff, 1972, pp. 1 - 13. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2838-7_1

Here I am providing the reader with a digital reproduction of the originals and the German transcription of the texts followed by an English translation. In the texts, I have inserted the page numbers in square brackets (and indicated where necessary r= recto and v = verso)



Letter n. 1. Eduard Baumgarten to Elfride Heidegger, Ebnat April 4, 1938
 (archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardö)

herzlich gedankt 6.IV.38
Ebnet, den 4. April 1938

Liebe Frau Heidegger,
meine Missgriffe in unserem Gespräch beschämen mich. Über große Dinge soll man angemessen miteinander reden oder sie zwischen sich ruhen lassen. Heute weiß jeder, dass „1933“ ein Ereignis von allergrößter politischer und menschlicher Tragweite war. Ein wichtiges Moment in diesem Ereignis bestand sicherlich darin, dass ein vielfältig und groß-begabter „Kranker“ urlebendige Instinkte und Glaubensweisen in großangelegten „gesunden“ Menschen aufzurufen befähigt war. Darauf, unter anderem, beruhte seine persönliche Macht. Dass uns Heidegger einen eindringenden autobiographischen Bericht über diesen tieferen Zusammenhang schuldig geblieben ist, - das ist der historische Verlust, den ich beklage. Stattdessen geriet unser Gespräch - durch meine Schuld - in das übliche seichte Fahrwasser der Diskussion über sachlich-halbwahre oder ganz unwahre, zumeist nur selbstgefällige und selbstgerechte, gegen ihn herabsetzend und hämisch gemeinte Nachreden.

Nochmals grüße ich Sie herzlich als Ihr alter
Eduard Baumgarten

With many thanks 6.IV.38
Ebnet, April 4, 1938^a

Dear Frau Heidegger,
My missteps in our conversation embarrass me. Of great things one should either speak in an appropriate manner or leave them be. Today, everyone knows that “1933: was an event of the greatest political and human magnitude. One important moment in this event was certainly that a multifaceted and highly gifted “sick person” was able to stir up primal instincts and modes of belief in highly placed “healthy” people. His personal power was also based in no small way on this. That Heidegger did not leave us a detailed autobiographical report of these profound connections - this is the historical loss that I regret. Instead, our conversation - through my own fault - ended up in the usual shallow channels of discussion about factually half-true or completely untrue, mostly only smug and self-righteous, derogatory and maliciously intended slander against him.
Once again, I greet you warmly as your old

Eduard Baumgarten

^a The year is not easily legible as the writing has faded over time, but in the list of material contained in folder 357 and edited by Van Breda, he reports the year as 1938.

During the years I was working on the volume *Martin Heidegger and the Truth About the Black Notebooks*⁷ from 2014 to 2016 together with the late Prof. von Herrmann, we amassed a great deal of documentation, part of which we included in the above mentioned volume. But, due to time constraints, we decided not to publish much of what we had collected. Otherwise, if we had continued to obsessively study further material we would never have managed to conclude our research and finish the volume. Now in what follows I am publishing a series of documents that were given to me by the late Hermann Heidegger and which show something of the decisive role his mother, Frau Elfride, played in the troubled months of Heidegger's rectorate. We need to remember that Heidegger's rectorate lasted a little less than a year: from April 21, 1933 when he was unanimously elected Rector of the University of Freiburg - his official investment with the post took place on May 27, 1933 - until the day he tendered his resignation, on April 24, 1934 which was accepted on the 27th of the same month.

Since Hermann Heidegger knew about my studies of the first public speech his father gave after being elected rector in the Aula Magna of the University of Freiburg, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität*⁸, he wished to let me have this documentation so that I might emphasize how much his mother, as long as she lived, had always sought to shield his father from the *Gerede* that circulated around his compromise with the party and how during his rectorate Heidegger had tried to distance himself from the party's meddling, which, unfortunately, was becoming more and more insistent, so much so that it ultimately led him to resign from his post.

It is enough to look at the term "self-assertion" (*Selbstbehauptung*) in order for us to understand that for Heidegger this was attained if one was ready to defend with

⁷ Ibid.; VON HERRMANN, Friedrich, Wilhelm - ALFIERI, Francesco. *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni neri (Filosofia, 72)*, Premessa di A. Heidegger. Brescia : Morcelliana 2016; tr. tedesca: *Martin Heidegger. Die Wahrheit über die Schwarzen Hefte (Philosophische Schriften, 94)*, deutsche Übers. von P. David. Berlin : Duncker & Humblot GmbH, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.3790/978-3-428-55124-8>; tr. français: *Martin Heidegger. La vérité sur ses Cahiers noirs (Collection L'Infini)*, traduit de l'italien et de l'allemand par P. David. Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.14375/NP.9782072730115>; tr. español: *Martin Heidegger. La verdad sobre los Cuadernos negros (Filosofía Hoy, 63)*, traducción del italiano y del alemán realizada por P.J. Teruel, revisión de la traducción llevada a cabo por D. Hereza. Albolote (Granada) : Editorial Comares, 2019; tr. română: *Martin Heidegger. Adevărul despre Caietele Negre (Epoché)*, Prefață de A. Heidegger, Postfață de Hermann Heidegger, traducere de P. G. Sandu, D. Grusea, A. Bejinariu, Oradea (România) : Ratio et Revelatio, 2021; tr. English: *Martin Heidegger and the Truth About the Black Notebooks*, translated by B. Radloff, Foreword by A. Heidegger, Series Co-editor D. Verducci, Postface by H. Heidegger, in *Analecta Husserliana CXXIII*. Heidelberg: New York; Dordrecht; London : Springer, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69496-8>; tr. Chinese: 论海德格尔, by D. Yan (严登庸), H. Che (车浩驰), Shanghai : East China Normal University Press Ltd, 2023.

⁸ HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität. Rede, gehalten bei der feierlichen Übernahme des Rektorats der Universität Freiburg i.Br. am 27.5.1933*, Breslau : Verlag Wilh. Gottl. Korn, 1934; for my research I have always used this edition published in 1933. The Nazis later banned this edition from being sold when Heidegger resigned from his post as rector. Later this speech was republished in HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges, Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 16, Abt. 1: *Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910 - 1976*, hrsg. v. H. Heidegger. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 2000, § 51, pp. 107 - 117; tr. it. *L'autoaffermazione dell'università tedesca*, edited by C. Angelino. Genova: Il Melangolo, 1988, pp. 17 - 52.

extreme vigor the “autonomy” (*Selbstverwaltung*) of one’s university. It is obvious, even to those who are *blind* that Heidegger intended to free the university and the administration of its internal structure from the “vice grip” of the “movement”. Thus, when he realized that he was not in the position to exercise the office of rector and that the outside interferences from the “movement” could no longer be managed, he decided to resign.

“Autonomy only acquires meaning on the basis of self-reflection”⁹. Only “true” knowledge can take root in the university and with it lies the source of our every capacity for self-reflection leading the human being to embark on the road towards the unseen: the roots of our being-there (*Da-sein*). The university no longer has the strength to “assert itself”, instead it has lost sight of this need since it is merely engaged in the maintenance of its activities. Thus, it no longer sees the “way” leading to that place where it experiences the need for knowledge in an original manner and out of which it makes its “tasks” flow. Heidegger was aware that “self-affirmation” should mean the fundamental confrontation with the great German historical-spiritual tradition, while instead the university has chosen to turn itself into a “scientific enterprise” (*Wissenschaftsbetrieb*) subservient to a certain kind of political education. The current situation of the university, as Heidegger perceived it, might well be oriented in *another* direction, if one were ready to allow oneself to be forged by the power of the *beginning*. It is only from here that there springs the foundational “knowledge” that makes us aware of the great and difficult future of being a “people”. But this is not the place to undertake an analysis of Heidegger’s rectorate speech and of the *drift* of the university system, a very relevant topic for our own times, also because in *Martin Heidegger and the Truth About the Black Notebooks* as well as in my other studies¹⁰, I have already examined this speech and its current impact¹¹.

To return to the documents I am sharing here, in 1980 Frau Elfride felt the need to describe a recreational afternoon that was held at the university while her husband was rector. She organized the event herself which took place on December 16, 1933. It is of no small importance her emphasis on the fact that “there was no type of national socialist emblem to be seen anywhere”. Given that at various times ever

⁹ HEIDEGGER, Martin. Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität. Rede, gehalten bei der feierlichen Übernahme des Rektorats der Universität Freiburg i.Br. am 27.5.1933, cit., p. 6 [tr. it. p. 18].

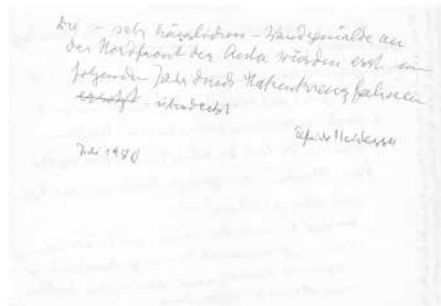
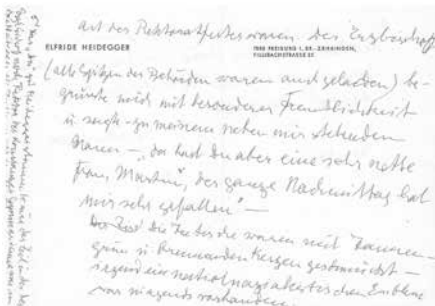
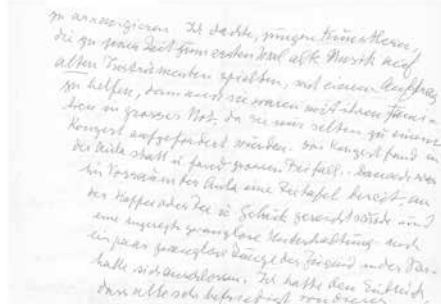
¹⁰ ALFIERI, Francesco. *Martina Heideggera piezīmju burtnīcas. Domāt viņpus aklas polemikas*, tr. Latvian by G. Lo Bello, L. Dakša. In *Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti*, 2017, vol. 22, pp. 11 – 23; ALFIERI, Francesco. *Kdo má Černého Petra v případě Heideggerových Černých sešitů? Zpráva o hlavních aktech aktuální kontroverze*, Přeložil A. Novák. In *Filozofia*, 2018, vol. 73, iss. 4, pp. 329 – 337; ALFIERI, Francesco. *Notwendige Klärungen über die “Schwarzen Hefte”. Die vom deutschen Herausgeber ausgelöste blinde Polemik wendet sich dem Ende zu*. In *Heidegger Studies*, 2018, vol. 34, pp. 237 – 243. <https://doi.org/10.5840/heideggerstud20183413>; ALFIERI, Francesco. *La franqueza que proviene de un pensar a contracorriente. Análisis del actual «sistema» post-dictatorial*, translation from the Italian by F. Santos. In *Diálogo Filosófico*, 2019, vol. 105, pp. 369 – 380; ALFIERI, Francesco. What is the role of the intellectual today? How to overcome the *Machenschaft* we find ourselves in. In *Thinking in Crisis*, cit.

¹¹ ALFIERI, Francesco. The University “System” Has Long Been “Dead”. Who Were The “Perpetrators” of Its Demise?. In BORBONE, G., BRZECHCZYN, K. (eds.). *From Scientific Philosophy to Myth: An Unquiet Philosophical Journey*, vol I: *Studies Inspired by Francesco Coniglione (Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities)*, Leiden-Boston : Brill (Forthcoming).

new insinuations would arise about Heidegger's rectorate, Frau Elfride decided to intervene personally¹² with some remarks. We need only recall the controversies that arose around Heidegger's fraught relationship with Husserl and not forget that Edmund Husserl in April 1933 had been dismissed when Sauer was rector and that it was under Heidegger's rectorate that Husserl was informed that he could return to teaching. One ought to go back and look at *Ponderings V* in Heidegger's notebooks and *reflect* on what he spontaneously declares there, to get an idea of how much the historical events of "public opinion" between these two thinkers have been distorted.¹³ The slander and insults levelled against Heidegger were an occasion for Frau Elfride to bring back the objectivity of the facts that had really happened.

¹² We should remember that, immediately after the rectorate speech, a pamphlet was circulating at the University of Freiburg by the philosopher BALLMER, Karl. *Aber Herr Heidegger! Zur Freiburger Rektoratsrede Martin Heideggers*, Foreword by F. Eymann. Basel : Verlag von Rudolf Geering, 1933. Today the book is very hard to find and I possess a copy that was donated to me by the reverend Heinrich Heidegger, whom I will discuss a little later in this paper. Frau Elfride, after reading this completely *banal* and *imprecise* pamphlet, wanted to meet Karl Ballmer in person and there remains a trace of their dispute in the archive. Every time Frau Elfride was faced with *specious* and especially *fanciful* accusations she felt the need to intervene personally, also because she knew very well how doubtful Heidegger had been before accepting the post of rector, in troubled times, a position that would require him to sacrifice much of the free time he needed for his studies. Elfride knew very well that for her husband the university could renew itself on the basis of its own essence, that is, beginning with the essence of "truth". Instead, the university's hierarchical structure continued to insist on false institutional and organizational problems. Furthermore, when Heidegger realized that the party was continuing to interfere politically, pressing him to replace the heads of the medical and law faculties with persons of the party's own choosing, he took the *wise* decision to resign from the rectorate, to which he had been elected in 1933 by unanimous consent in a *plenary session* of the university. The effect of his resignation was immediately visible: the party prohibited publication of his writings and their sale in bookshops. Heidegger's experience in this matter and his speech were well known to Elfride which was why she felt obliged to intervene, especially when Heidegger, as was his custom, refused to allow anyone to broach the matter with him, since "silence" was his only reply to the rumors circulating about him. Over the years it was this "silence", his refusal to defend himself that generated misunderstanding about his work. That Heidegger wished to distance himself from the all the din and clamor surrounding him and that "silence" was a weapon he could use to stifle his detractors is well known to anyone who, like Prof. von Herrmann, was in constant touch with him. Prof. von Herrmann often said to me: "no one dared to ask any questions that didn't pertain to his writings, and if they did, an icy, breathtaking *silence* would descend on the room". It is my view, even if various people at various times have attempted to fill that silence with innuendo, that we should respect Heidegger's silence.

¹³ VON HERRMANN, Friedrich, Wilhelm - ALFIERI, Francesco. *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni neri*, cit., *Annotazioni V* [52-54]. pp. 283 - 287.



Document n. 1. Elfride Heidegger, Freiburg July 1980
(archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò)

[1r] Zu der Einladung auf beiliegender Karte

Es war Sitte, dass der Rektor im Winter zum „Rektorball“ einlud u. zwar alle Professoren und Dozenten (Exordinarien u. -<->dozent) mit Frauen, Töchter, Söhnen. Zur Verfügung stand kaltes Buffet u. Tisch mit Getränken (Wein, Bier, Saft, Sprudel). Der Ball wurde von der Frau des Rektors geplant u. ausgeführt u. bot auch einige humoristische oder gesangliche Einlagen.

Ich entschloss mich, keinesfalls in dieser Notzeit einen Ball mit teurem kaltem Buffet [1v] zu arrangieren. Ich dachte, jüngeren Künstlern, die zu jener Zeit zum ersten Mal alte Musik auf alten Instrumenten spielten, mit einem Auftrag zu helfen, denn auch sie waren mit ihren Familien in großer Not, da sie nur selten zu einem Konzert aufgefordert wurden. Das Konzert fand in der Aula statt u. fand großen Beifall. Danach war in verräumter Aula eine Teetafel bereit, an der Kaffee oder Tee u. Gebäck gereicht wurde und eine angeregte belanglose Unterhaltung, auch ein paar belanglose Tänze der Jugend in der Vorhalle sich anschlossen. Ich hatte den Eindruck, dass alle sehr befriedigt von dieser [2r] Art des Rektoratsfestes waren. Der Erzbischof (alle Spitzen der Behörden waren auch geladen) begrüßte mich mit besonderer Freundlichkeit u. sagte - zu meinem neben mir stehenden Mann - „da hast Du aber eine sehr nette Frau, MartinX, der ganze Nachmittag hat mir sehr gefallen“.

Die Teetische waren mit Tannengrün u. brennenden Kerzen geschmückt - irgendein nationalnazistisches Emblem war nirgends vorhanden.

XDas „Du“ (?) Heidegger stammte aus der Zeit, in der der Erzbischof noch Rektor des Konstanzer Gymnasiums war, in das Heidegger als Jugendllicher [...].

[2v] Die sehr häuslichen Wandgemälde an der Nordfront der Aula wurden erst im folgenden Jahr durch Hakenkreuzfahnen ersetzt überdeckt.

Elfride Heidegger
Juli 1980

[1r] Concerning the invitation on the attached card
It was customary for the rector to invite all the professors and lecturers (full and (–^a)) with their wives, daughters and sons to the “rector's ball”. A cold buffet was made available and a table with drinks (wine, beer, juice and mineral water).The ball was organized and executed by the rector's wife and also included several comic or vocal interludes.

I decided that in these hard times I would not organize a ball with an expensive buffet. [1v]. I thought I would help younger artists who were in those days the first to play early music on period instruments as they and their families were also in great distress since they were only very seldom hired to play concerts. The concert took place in the Aula and was received with great applause. Afterwards, a tea table was set up in the cleared auditorium, where coffee or tea and sweets were served, followed by lively, informal conversation and a few informal dances by the young people in the vestibule. I got the impression that everyone was very pleased with this [2r] kind of rectorate party. The Archbishop (all the leading authorities had also been invited) greeted me with particular friendliness and said - to my husband standing next to me - “You have a very nice wife, MartinX, I really enjoyed the whole afternoon”.

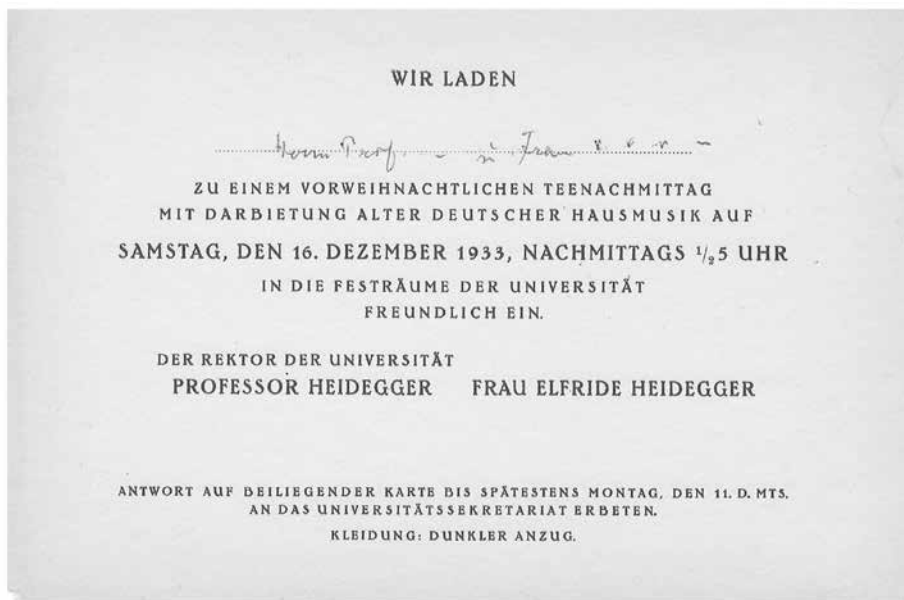
The tea tables were decorated with fir greenery and burning candles - there was no Nazi emblem to be seen anywhere.

X The “du” (?) addressed to Heidegger stems from the time when the archbishop was rector of the gymnasium in Konstanz where as a youth [...]^b.

[2v] The very homely murals on the north front of the assembly hall were only covered up the following year by swastika flags.

Elfride Heidegger
July 1980

^a Word is hard to decipher; ^b Hand writing is illegible.



Attachment n. 1a. Martin and Elfride Heidegger, Freiburg December 16, 1933 (archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò)

WIR LADEN

Herrn Prof. u. Frau v.v.r

ZU EINEM VORWEIHNACHTLICHEN TEENACHMITTAG MIT DARBIETUNG
ALTER DEUTSCHER HAUSMUSIK AUF SAMSTAG, DEN 16. DEZEMBER 1933,
NACHMITTAGS 1/2 5 UHR
IN DIE FESTRÄUME DER UNIVERSITÄT
FREUNDLICH EIN.

DER REKTOR DER UNIVERSITÄT

PROFESSOR HEIDEGGER

FRAU ELFRIDE HEIDEGGER

ANTWORT AUF BEILIEGENDER KARTE BIS SPÄTESTENS MONTAG, DEN
11. D. MTS.

AN DAS UNIVERSITÄTSSEKRETARIAT ERBETEN

KLEIDUNG: DUNKLER AZUG.

You are cordially invited
Prof and Frau v.v.r
to a pre-Christmas afternoon tea with early German chamber music,
Saturday, December 16, 1933 at 4:30pm
In the university ceremonial halls

The Rector of the University
Professor Heidegger Frau Elfride Heidegger

Kindly confirm with the attached card by Monday the 11th of this
month and send to the university secretariat.
Dress: black suit.

As a final document I would like to point to the decisive role Frau Elfride played in completing the publication of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*. From research done in the archives it is clear how much Heidegger did not want a *Gesamtausgabe* and he often repeated to his wife and two sons that they should "lock up his archive because Germany was not yet ready to accept his thought". But it was Frau Elfride's tenaciousness, and also an intervention on the part of Fink that convinced Heidegger in 1972 to hire a private assistant to help him. And so from 1972 until the philosopher's death in 1976 the late Prof. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann became Heidegger's assistant. This was possible thanks to the close alliance between Elfride and Fink because it was they who convinced Heidegger that the time had come to look for help.

But Frau Elfride was still of the opinion that a complete edition of Heidegger's works should begin in Germany and in the end Heidegger gave in to his wife's insistence. In accordance with Heidegger's own wishes Prof. von Herrmann was appointed scholarly director of the *Gesamtausgabe*, which began appearing in 1975 and is still underway. We also need to remember that Frau Elfride initially thought to entrust this task to the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, but then decided against him because, as Prof. von Herrmann often told me, Frau Elfride said to him "I first thought of Gadamer for this job, but in the end I decided in favor of you because Gadamer is too concentrated on his own philosophy and we risk considerably slowing down the publication of my husband's writings". In my opinion Frau Elfride made a very wise choice, also because Fink had assured her of the loyalty Prof. von Herrmann had shown him when he was Fink's private assistant from 1961 to 1970, a loyalty that von Herrmann would transfer directly to Heidegger after Fink freed him from his post as his assistant.

Thus once again Frau Elfride's role proved pivotal in launching Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* while the philosopher was still alive. After Heidegger's death in 1976 it was again Elfride who took the reins in hand and oversaw the work of publishing her husband's writings, in order that his wishes be carried out "to the letter". And Elfride's partnership with Prof. von Herrmann was necessary for Heidegger's wishes and instructions to be meticulously implemented. From the documents below we can see the role played by Frau Elfride after Heidegger's death as sole heir of his *Nachlaß*:

Weitere Bestimmungen Martin Heideggers über die Veröffentlichung der Vorlesungen innerhalb der Gesamtausgabe seiner Schriften

Heidegger hat bei allen Besprechungen über die Veröffentlichung der Vorlesungen innerhalb der Gesamtausgabe seiner Schriften betont, daß dafür kein Gremium gebildet, kein Co-Editor ernannt, keine wie immer geartete Vorzensur für die Veröffentlichung eingerichtet werden dürfe.

Die Veröffentlichung soll so geschehen, daß in gemeinsamer Beratung zwischen mir als Alleinerbin und nach meinem Tod zwischen dem Vertreter der Erben Herr v. Herrmann und den Verlegern Klostermann sen. und jun. geeignete jüngere Gelehrte zu suchen seien, die die Veröffentlichung einer Vorlesung unter eigener Verantwortung vorzunehmen bereit wären.

Der Vertrag darüber sei zwischen dem Herausgeber und dem Verleger zu schließen. Die Verteilung des Autorenhonorares ist festgelegt : 1/3 den Erben, 2/3 dem Herausgeber.

Es sollten den Einzelherausgebern zur Bearbeitung der Vorlesungsbände jeweils aus Marbach die Fotokopien der Urschrift der Vorlesung, der Abschrift der Vorlesung und aller Nachschriften (falls vorhanden) zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Das druckfertige Manuskript sei dann ohne jede Vorzensur von irgendeiner Stelle dem Verleger zu übergeben, und die als Unterlagen gegebene Fotokopien seien umgehend nach Marbach zurückzusenden.

Heidegger war sich durchaus dessen bewußt, daß durch die Vergabe der Vorlesungsbände an Einzeleditoren trotz der gegebenen Richtlinien keine streng einheitliche Bearbeitung möglich ist. Er sah darin kein Übel, weil auch die Hörerschaft seiner Vorlesungen das gesprochene Wort unterschiedlich aufnahm.

Herr v. Herrmann wird von mir als Alleinerbin gebeten, auch weiterhin wie bisher eine ordnende Übersicht über laufende und beabsichtigte Arbeiten für die Herausgabe der Vorlesungen zu behalten.

10. I. 1977 Elfride Heidegger.

* und gleichzeitig dem Nachlassverwalter und Herrn Prof. Dr. v. Herrmann Nachricht davon zu geben

Document n. 2. Elfride Heidegger, Freiburg January 10, 1977
(archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò)

Weitere Bestimmungen Martin Heideggers über die Veröffentlichung der Vorlesungen innerhalb der Gesamtausgabe seiner Schriften

Heidegger hat bei allen Besprechungen über die Veröffentlichung der Vorlesungen innerhalb der Gesamtausgabe seiner Schriften betont, dass dafür kein Gremium gebildet, kein Co-Editor ernannt, keine wie immer geartete Vorzensur für die Veröffentlichung eingerichtet werden dürfe.

Die Veröffentlichung soll so geschehen, dass in gemeinsamer Beratung zwischen mir als Alleinerbin und nach meinem Tod zwischen dem Vertreter der Erben u. Herrn v. Herrmann und den Verleger Klostermann sen. und jun. geeignete jüngere Gelehrte zu suchen seien, die die Veröffentlichung einer Vorlesung unter eigener Verantwortung vorzunehmen bereit wären.

Der Vertrag darüber sei zwischen dem Herausgeber und dem Verleger zu schließen. Die Verteilung des Autorenhonorars ist festgelegt: 1/3 den Erben, 2/3 dem Herausgeber.

Es sollten den Einzelherausgebern zur Bearbeitung der Vorlesungsbände jeweils aus Marbach die Photokopien der Urschrift der Vorlesung, der Abschrift der Vorlesung und aller Nachschriften (falls vorhanden) zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Das druckfertige Manuskript sei dann ohne jede Vorzensur von irgendeiner Stelle dem Verleger übergeben, und die als Unterlagen gegebene Photokopien seien umgehend nach Marbach zurückzusenden.X

Heidegger war sich durchaus dessen bewusst, dass durch die Vergabe der Vorlesungsbände an Einzeleditoren trotz der gegebenen Richtlinien keine streng einheitliche Bearbeitung möglich ist. Er sah darin kein Übel, weil auch die Hörerschaft seiner Vorlesungen das gesprochene Wort unterschiedlich aufnahm.

Herr v. Herrmann wird von mir als Alleinerbin gebeten, auch weiterhin wie bisher eine ordnende Übersicht über laufende und beabsichtigte Arbeiten für die Herausgabe der Vorlesungen zu behalten.

10. I. 1977 Elfride Heidegger

X und gleichzeitig dem Nachlassverwalter und Herrn Prof. Dr. v. Herrmann Nachricht davon zu geben.

Further instructions of Martin Heidegger on the publication of the lectures within the complete edition of his writings.

In all discussions about the publication of the lectures within the complete edition of his writings, Heidegger always emphasized that no committee should be formed for this purpose, no co-editor appointed, no pre-censorship of any kind instituted for the publication.

The publication is to take place in the following manner: in joint consultation between myself as sole heir and after my death between the representative of the heirs and Mr. v. Herrmann and the publishers Klostermann sen. and jun., suitable young scholars are to be sought out who would be prepared to publish a lecture under their own responsibility.

The relevant contract is to be concluded between the editor and the publisher. The distribution of the author's fee is fixed as follows: 1/3 to the heirs, 2/3 to the editor.

For the purpose of editing the lecture volumes, the individual editors are to be provided in each case with photocopies of the original of the lecture, the transcript of the lecture and all transcripts (if available) from Marbach. The print-ready manuscript should then be submitted to the publisher without any pre-censorship on the part of any authority, and the photocopies that were provided as documents should be returned to Marbach immediately X.

Heidegger was well aware that despite the given guidelines, assigning the lecture volumes to individual editors would not result in strictly uniform editing. He did not see this as a problem because those who heard his lectures also interpreted his spoken words in different ways.

Mr. v. Herrmann is hereby requested by me as his sole heir to continue to maintain an orderly supervision of current and planned work for the publication of the lectures.

10.I.1977 Elfride Heidegger

X and at the same time to inform the administrator of the estate and Herr Prof. Dr. v. Herrmann.

Erklärung

Die "Leitsätze" für die Edition der II. Abtly
der Gesamtausgabe (Vorlesungen) stünden in
vielen Besprechungen zwischen Heidegger und
Herrn v. Herrmann festgelegt. Die endgültige
Fassung dieser Leitsätze durch Herrn v. Herr-
mann wurde Heidegger vorgelegt und von
ihm nach mehrwöchiger Prüfung ausdrücklich
billigt. Ich war bei allen vorbereitenden
Besprechungen und der erteilten Billigung
der formalierten Leitsätze zugegen und be-
zeuge hiermit das volle Einverständnis
Heideggers mit diesen.

Anfang März 1976 hat Heidegger die mir in sei-
ner Handschrift vorliegenden Hinweise ge-
müht und damit die Leitsätze ergänzt.

Freiburg /B. 10. Jan. 1977

Elfride Heidegger, geb. Nardi
als Alleinvertreter des Nachlasses.

Erklärung

Die "Leitsätze" für die Edition der II. Abtlg der Gesamtausgabe (Vorlesungen) wurden in vielen Besprechungen zwischen Heidegger und Herrn v. Herrmann festgelegt. Die endgültige Fassung dieser Leitsätze durch Herrn v. Herrmann wurde Heidegger vorgelegt und von ihm nach mehrtägiger Prüfung ausdrücklich gebilligt. Ich war bei allen vorbereitenden Besprechungen und der erteilten Billigung aller formulierten Leitsätze zugegen und bezeuge hiermit das volle Einverständnis Heideggers mit diesen.

Anfang Mai 1976 hat Heidegger die nur in seiner Handschrift vorliegenden Anweisungen formuliert und damit die Leitsätze ergänzt.

Freiburg/Br. 10. Jan 1977

Elfride Heidegger geb. Petri

Als Alleinerbin des Nachlasses

Declaration

The "Guidelines" for the edition of the second section of the Complete Edition (Lectures) were defined in many meetings between Heidegger and Herr. v. Herrmann. The final version of these guidelines drafted by Herr v. Herrmann was presented to Heidegger who expressly approved it after several days of review. I was present at all the preparatory discussions and when all the formulated guidelines were approved and I hereby testify to Heidegger's full agreement with them.

At the beginning of May 1976, Heidegger formulated the instructions, only available in his own handwriting, and thus supplemented the guidelines.

Freiburg /Br, January 10, 1977

Elfride Heidegger née Petri

As sole heir to the estate

I was already aware that Frau Elfride had a strong-willed, slightly surly character from what I had heard from Prof. von Herrmann and her sons Jörg and Hermann Heidegger as well as from other members of the philosopher's family. But one constant theme that continued to come up in our talks was Frau Elfride's unwavering determination, as sole heir of the *Nachlaß*, that all Heidegger's instructions for the publication of his writings should be respected and carried out to the letter. This responsibility always made Frau Elfride very firm in her decisions and not very flexible when it came to accepting any kind of changes.

Prof. von Herrmann himself was always compelled to *obey* Frau Elfride even when sorting the material that was to be deposited at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv*

Marbach (DLA Marbach), where Heidegger's Nachlaß is "housed". In the wake of Heidegger's funeral Frau Elfride received many letters of condolence, not only from philosophers but also from people who had come into contact with Heidegger and who wanted to show their sympathy. Frau Elfride handed over all these letters to Prof. von Herrmann for him to make an inventory of them since she wanted this material to be housed in Marbach. Prof. von Herrmann duly performed this task and then gave the package of letters back to Frau Elfride as both would soon be going to Marbach to deliver this material. But upon arriving in Marbach Prof. von Herrmann noticed that missing from the package was the letter sent by his own father Wilhelm von Herrmann¹⁴, a protestant pastor to Frau Elfride to express his condolences. When Prof. von Herrmann drew Frau Elfride's attention to the missing letter she replied in a preemptory tone: "I removed that letter myself because its content is too catholic and I don't want it to be kept in Marbach"¹⁵. Naturally Prof. von Herrmann was initially a little upset given that the letter in question was from his own father, but then he realized that it was better for him not to react to this situation since once Frau Elfride had made a decision, there was no way to contradict her. Prof. von Herrmann told me this anecdote with a tinge of sadness and it made me understand how determined Frau Elfride's character was.

But Frau Elfride's *modus operandi* never surprised me, also because during the years I was working on *Martin Heidegger and the Truth About the Black Notebooks* I came into contact with the late Reverend Heinrich Heidegger from Meßkirch (31.3.1928 - † 30.3.2021). From 2016 to 2021 we wrote frequently and our correspondence comprised 101 letters from which I learnt many details about the Heidegger family¹⁶. Heinrich, the second born son of Martin's brother, Fritz Heidegger (1894 - † 1980), was the *memoria vivente* of the Heidegger family and was very often present during meetings between the philosopher and his father Fritz, a relationship that was so close it can only be understood from a study of the correspondence between the two brothers¹⁷.

¹⁴ For a look at the role played by Wilhelm von Herrmann as a protestant pastor and his opposition to National Socialism please see: Redaktion, Dank für Pflichttreue und langjährige Tätigkeit. Sechs Mitarbeiter der Firma Miele geehrt, in *Aus Stadt und Land* 228 (1. Oktober 1966); Ibid., 40jähriges Ordinationsjubiläum. Pfarrer von Herrmann seit sechs Jahren in Sudbrack, in *Aus Stadt und Land* 228 (1. Oktober 1966).

¹⁵ I was able to reconstruct these memories because it was my practice to take notes of all our conversations in a copy book. They usually took place at 5pm at the end of the working day. Professor von Herrmann liked to schedule our discussions around that time, because it reminded him of how he used to go and meet Heidegger at 5pm in his home. During our meetings he would usually talk to me about his experience with Heidegger and Fink and normally afterwards we would organize the work for the next day. Prof. von Herrmann always preferred that hour and even when we were extremely busy with work we had to drop everything and sit down in the living room for a talk and then summarize the work done that day. This was a duty that had to be performed with extreme diligence for whoever was Professor von Herrmann's guest and it was one I observed for the years I was his private assistant.

¹⁶ *Heinrich Heidegger und Francesco Alfieri. Briefwechsel 2016 - 2021*, private edition (Archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò).

¹⁷ ALFIERI Francesco - VON HERRMANN Friedrich, Wilhelm (eds.), *Martin Heidegger - Fritz Heidegger. Carteggio 1930 - 1949 (Filosofia, 92)*, tr. it. di F. Alfieri, Premessa di A. Heidegger. Brescia : Morcelliana, 2018.

In Heinrich's letters whenever the topic of Frau Elfride came up he always emphasized her "Prussian character", very stubborn and tough in all the decisions that needed to be taken for her family and above all for preserving her husband's manuscripts. To be fair, when I asked Heinrich for information about Elfride's alleged closeness to the Nazi party he replied in a letter of August 10, 2017: "I'm not in a position to say much. Hermann says that his parents advised him against joining the party. I think Hermann listened more to his mother than to his father. Because of her social work in Zähringen, she was probably viewed as a convinced woman of the party". He returned to the topic in a letter of August 21, 2017: "People were sometimes annoyed because Elfride often blocked visits to her husband as sometimes there would be a crowd. It appears that even J.P. Sartre was sent away in 1945/46 because Uncle Martin had (apparently) a cold. This was probably why theologians, for example, found it harder to get permission to see him. For that reason Max Müller advised Karl Lehmann to go with his brother Fritz and so he was successful.

That Frau Elfride decided the times when her husband was available and who would be allowed to meet him is a fact well-known to anyone acquainted with the family and this was always very annoying, especially to those who tried, in vain, to wring out even one brief encounter with the philosopher. And yet, in spite of this, as Heinrich stressed, we should remember that Elfride was a wise and far-sighted woman and in a letter to me dated March 17, 2020 Heinrich writes: "In April 1933 Elfride advised her husband against becoming rector after Möllendorf because she did not consider him suitable. Martin Heidegger, however, gave in to pressure from his colleagues and was elected unanimously". The experience of being rector proved harmful for Heidegger and for Frau Elfride, who led an intense social life, this was not difficult to foresee.

There was only one occasion when Frau Elfride did not comply with her husband's instructions: for his funeral in Meßkirch Heidegger wanted the Mass to be celebrated entirely in Latin, but his wife opposed this. Being a German she wanted the German language to be used, and though everyone knew what Heidegger's wishes were, no one opposed his wife's new instructions. As Prof. von Hermann and Heinrich Heidegger often told me: "no one dared to contradict Frau Elfride". The reigning climate was one of total obedience to a woman who had sacrificed her entire existence at Heidegger's side and "absolute respect" was required.

In my opinion, after spending a long time studying in the archives, I have come to a realization that much remains to be pieced together about Heidegger and his historical period and that one avenue to be explored is that of Frau Elfride Petri. She decided to leave to her niece Gertrud her entire correspondence with her husband as well as the publication rights of these letters. Frau Elfride had a special liking for her niece who was a nurse and also because Gertrud took care of her, especially during the years of her blindness. As a token of her gratitude she bequeathed this important correspondence to Gertrud, only part of which has appeared in print¹⁸.

¹⁸ «Mein liebes Seelchen!». *Briefe Martin Heideggers an seine Frau Elfride 1915 - 1970*, hrsg. v. G. Heidegger, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, München 2005; tr. it. «Anima mia diletta!». *Lettere di Martin Heidegger alla moglie Elfride 1915 - 1970*, di P. Massardo e P. Severi, Genova : il Melangolo, 2007.

Many of these letters have yet to be published and I am convinced that when Gertrud makes them available for scholars for publication, many of the doubts and insinuations about Heidegger's antisemitism will be completely dispelled.

I would like to conclude here with a statement made by the reverend Heinrich Heidegger, which will give the reader an idea of how challenging research on Heidegger can be and how many difficulties one can encounter. Heinrich was always trying to recover documents on the period of his uncle's rectorate and in a letter to me dated January 24, 2018 he wrote: "some 30 years ago I heard (from persons inside the university) that in Freiburg a number of documents on Heidegger had vanished; unfortunately, it is practically impossible to prove this". This contribution of mine is only intended to be a reconstruction, the result of all my years spent in the archives of Martin Heidegger, Eugen Fink and Herman-Leo van Breda. But I wouldn't have been able to collect and study so much material had I not been introduced into these archives by the late Prof. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann and had it not been for the trust always shown to me by Heidegger's descendants and by Fink. And last but not least I owe a debt of gratitude to the late philosopher François Fédier (1935 - † 2021), himself a direct disciple of Heidegger's, for having enlightened me through our correspondence on several aspects which proved to be useful in my study periods in Heidegger's archives, especially with regard to the two private libraries in Freiburg. The trust in me shown by all these people is a reminder for me to be continually animated by that interior movement of what it means to be a researcher: the quest for Wahrheit, understood in the Heideggerian sense as "not covering" and "not counterfeiting". It is in this spirit that I have written my contribution which I now consign to the reader.



Elfride and Martin Heidegger, Freiburg 26 September 1974
(archive Francesco Alfieri - Nardò)

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