Brief Description of “_Only A God Can Save Us_”

Martin Heidegger is considered by many to be the most profound thinker of the 20th Century. His _magnum opus_, _Being and Time_, was published in 1927 and had the equivalent impact on philosophy that Einstein’s theory of relativity, published in 1906, had on physics; and Freud’s theories of personality, published in 1902 had in the field of psychology.

What Heidegger did was to overturn the whole history of philosophical thought that went back 2,500 years to the Greeks and re-examine the question of being and to challenge the whole of Western Metaphysics that prevailed up to his time. He went back to the Pre-socratics, specifically Heraclites, to begin to redirect the path of thinking, to redirect the years. You are invited to a showing of the Film “Only A God Can Save Us” by Jeffrey Van Davis. The film concerns relations between Heidegger’s Philosophy and Nazi ideology.

The film will be shown at 7pm in the Teleconference Lecture Hall, Alexander Library, College Avenue Campus. The film will be introduced by its creator Jeffrey Van Davis and will be followed by a discussion panel consisting of Richard Wolin (CUNY Grad Center), Andreas Kalyvas (The New School), and Jason Stanley (Rutgers) and discussion from the audience.

Sponsored by the Rutgers departments of Philosophy, History, German, the Center for Cultural Analysis, and the Dean of Humanities.

For more information contact:

Barry Loewer, Chair of Philosophy, loewer@rci.rutgers.edu

of philosophical inquiry in order to put us back “on the right track.”

A student of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, at the University of Freiburg Germany, Heidegger would break with his great mentor and charge forth into a new direction, building on phenomenology, but going his own quite original way. His wish was to make philosophy the Queen of the Sciences. Heidegger’s monumental task would have a powerful impact on 20th Century philosophy and influence some of the century’s most important thinkers -- Jean Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, Jacques Derrida, Karl Löwitz, Hans Jonas, Michel Foucault, Hans Georg Gadamer, Richard Rorty, Herbert Marcuse, and Hannah Arendt.

In May of 1933, Germany’s most famous philosopher, joined the Nazi Party and became the first Nazi Rector of a German University. He enthusiastically supported the new revolutionary movement in Germany and made known his admiration for Adolf Hitler and his desire to be the philosopher of the Nazi revolution, to be the Führer of the Führer.

Although one of the most influential thinkers of our time, much of Heidegger’s philosophy
is shrouded in confusion and controversy. His support for National Socialism poses some serious questions about Heidegger’s thought in particular and philosophy in general. Was he a profound thinker or was he a petty bourgeois from the province whose thought sprang from the Blut und Boden of the humble origins of his arch-conservative Catholic youth? Or both?

We now know that Heidegger’s “flirtation” with Nazism was actually a life-long commitment propelled by ideas in his own philosophy. In his “Introduction To Metaphysics” published in 1953, one cannot fail to notice his incriminating insistence on the intrinsic “saving power and greatness” of National Socialism. More scandalous than his backing of Hitler, however, was his silence about the Holocaust. Karl Jaspers and Herbert Marcuse made attempts to get Heidegger to refute his Nazi past. In 1947, like the poet Paul Celan, Marcuse travelled to Heidegger’s hut in Todtnauberg in the Black Forest, against the advice of his fellow German-Jewish émigrés, in search of a “single word” of repentance. Heidegger refused to respond.

Many scholars have displayed dangerous failures of political judgement by promoting uncritically Heidegger’s thought. This film offers an extraordinary response and radical challenge to Heidegger’s rejection of democracy and his support of Nazism. At stake is the future of democracy and the successful opposition to the resurgent nazisms of our own time.

In the 1976 interview with Der Spiegel, Heidegger reiterated his distaste for democratic society, his aversion of things modern, his complaint about hardships he had to suffer, yet he was able to live in a villa in Freiburg from 1945 till his death in 1976 in relative peace and comfort under the protection of the new democratic Germany. One only has to think about the millions who died in World War II, a war started by the Nazi regime he openly supported, and one’s patience with his petulance begins to grow thin. His final words of despair in Der Spiegel interview make it clear that he had no faith in democracy or for that matter liberal democratic government of any kind. The only hope? There is none. “Only a God can save us.”

__________________________
Director : Jeffrey van Davis
Producer : Terrance E. Davis
Camera : Carl Herse
Marco Meyer-König