

Of Spirit

Jacques Derrida

Translated by Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby

In order better to present the context of our excerpt from *De l'esprit*, Jacques Derrida has asked us to include the following remarks, which originally appeared on the back cover of his book—ED.

"I shall speak of ghost, of flame and of ashes." These are the first words of a lecture on Heidegger. It attempts a new crossing: neither an "internal" commentary nor an indictment on the basis of "external" documents, however necessary they remain within their limits.

It again has to do with Nazism—of what remains to be thought of Nazism in general and of Heidegger's Nazism. But also with "politics of spirit," declarations on the "crisis of spirit" and on "freedom of spirit," which people thought then, and still want today, to oppose to the inhuman (Nazism, fascism, totalitarianism, materialism, nihilism, and so on). It is starting with the "Rectorship Address" (1933) that Heidegger raises a hymn to spirit. Six years earlier, he had decided to "avoid" this word, and then surrounded it with quotation marks. What happened? Why has no one ever noticed? Just like today, the invocation of spirit wanted to be a meditation on the destiny of Europe. This was the echo from the eloquence of the great European "spirits": of Valéry, Husserl, or others—whose "politics" are less innocent than is often believed.

At the very heart of their tradition, European philosophies, systems of morals and religions share their discourse, exchange it with that of Heidegger when he names spirit. What are we to do with this sharing and this exchange? Can we

Critical Inquiry 15 (Winter 1989)

"Of Spirit" is taken from Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press and used here by permission. © 1989 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. (*Of Spirit* was originally published as *De l'esprit* © 1987 Éditions Galilée.)

interrupt them? Should we? At stake here are Good and Evil, Enlightenment and Flame, spirit in its fiery tongue: Geist is Flame, says Heidegger.

This book has two focal points. If, in 1933, Heidegger celebrates the spirit whose name he had wanted to "avoid" until then, this first inflection does not have the form of the "turn" [Kehre] that fascinates the commentators. It is nonetheless decisive. Later, a second inflection displaces the privilege of the question held until then to be "the piety of thought." The question of the question remains suspended, held to the gauge of an acquiescence that must precede it. Yes, the gauge, the engagement or the wager before the abyss. What happens when this becomes "ethical" or "political"? To what and to whom does one say yes?

I shall speak of ghost [revenant], of flame and of ashes.
And of what, for Heidegger, *avoiding* means.

What is avoiding? Heidegger on several occasions uses the common word *Vermeiden*: to avoid, to flee, to dodge. What might he have meant when it comes to "spirit" or the "spiritual"? I specify immediately: not spirit or the spiritual but *Geist*, *geistig*, *geistlich*, for this question will be, through and through, that of language. Do these German words allow themselves to be translated? In another sense: are they avoidable?

Sein und Zeit (1927): what does Heidegger say at that time? He announces and he prescribes. He *warns* [avertit]: a certain number of terms will have to be avoided (*vermeiden*). Among them, spirit (*Geist*). In 1953, more than twenty-five years later—and this was not just any quarter-century—in the great text devoted to Georg Trakl, Heidegger notes that Trakl always took care to avoid (*vermeiden* again) the word *geistig*. And, visibly, Heidegger approves him in this; he thinks the same. But this time, it is not *Geist* nor even *geistlich* that is to be avoided, but *geistig*.

How are we to delimit the difference, and what has happened? What of this meantime? How are we to explain that in twenty-five years, between these two *warning* signals ("avoid," "avoid using"), Heidegger made a frequent, regular, marked (if not remarked) use of all this vocabulary, including the adjective *geistig*? And that he often spoke not only of the

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word "spirit" but, sometimes yielding to the emphatic mode, in the name of spirit?

Could it be that he failed to avoid what he knew he ought to avoid? What he in some sense had promised himself to avoid? Could it be that he forgot to avoid? Or else, as one might suspect, are things tortuous and more entangled than this? . . .

I will not rely for the essential justification of my topic on an introduction or preface. Here, nonetheless, are *three* preliminary arguments.

There is first the necessity of this essential *explanation*, the quarrel between languages, German *and* Rome, German *and* Latin, and even German *and* Greek, the *Übersetzung* as *Auseinandersetzung* between *pneuma*, *spiritus*, and *Geist*. At a certain point, this last no longer allows of translation into the first two. "Tell me what you think about translation and I will tell you who you are," recalls Heidegger on the subject of Sophocles' *Antigone*.¹ In this title, *De l'esprit*, the Franco-Latin *de* also announces that, in the classical form of the inquiry, and even of the dissertation, I wish to begin to treat *of spirit*—the word and the concept, the terms *Geist*, *geistig*, *geistlich*—in Heidegger. I shall begin to follow modestly the itineraries, the functions, the formations and regulated transformations, the presuppositions and the destinations. This preliminary work has not yet been systematically undertaken—perhaps not even, to my knowledge, envisaged. Such a silence is not without significance. It does not derive only from the fact that although the lexicon of spirit is more copious in Heidegger than is thought, he never made it the title or the principal theme of an extended meditation, a book, a seminar, or even a lecture. And yet—I will attempt to show this—what thereby remains unquestioned in the invocation of *Geist* by Heidegger is, more than a *coup de force*, force *itself* in its most out-of-the-ordinary manifestation. This motif of spirit or of the spiritual acquires an extraordinary authority *in its German language*. To the precise extent that it does not appear at the forefront of the scene, it seems to withdraw itself from any destruction or deconstruction, as if it did not belong to a history of ontology—and the problem will be just that.

On the other hand, and this is a second argument, this motif is regularly inscribed in contexts that are highly charged politically, in the moments when thought lets itself be preoccupied more than ever by what is called history, language, the nation, *Geschlecht*, Greek or German.

1. "Sage mir, was du vom Übersetzen hältst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist." Immediately afterward the matter is raised of the translation, which is itself "deinon," of the deinon: "Furchtbare," "Gewaltige," "Ungewöhnliche," and, in less "correct" but "more true" fashion, says Heidegger, "unheimlich." See Martin Heidegger, "Die Bedeutung des *δαιμόν* [deinon]. (Erläuterung des Anfangs des Chorliedes)," *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"*, ed. Walter Biemel, vol. 53 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), pp. 77–78. I invoke this passage because the *deinon* leaves its mark on all the texts we shall have to approach.

On this lexicon, which we are not justified in calling spiritualist or even spiritual—can I risk saying *spirituelle*?—Heidegger draws abundantly in the years 1933–35, above all in the “Rectorship Address” and *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, and also in a different way in *Nietzsche*. But during the following twenty years, and except for one inflection that I will try to analyze, this same lexicon gives direction, for example, to the seminars and writings on Schelling, Hölderlin, and especially Trakl. It even takes on a thematic value in them, which is not without a certain novelty.

Here, finally, is my third preliminary argument: if the thinking of *Geist* and of the difference between *geistig* and *geistlich* is neither thematic nor athematic, and if its modality thus requires another category, then it is not only inscribed in contexts with a high political content, as I have just said rapidly and rather conventionally. It perhaps decides the very meaning of the political as such. In any case it would situate the place of such a decision, if it were possible. Whence its privilege, still scarcely visible, for what are called the questions of the political or of politics that are stimulating so many debates around Heidegger today—doubtless in renewed form in France, thanks notably to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe—at the point at which they tie up with the great questions of Being and truth, of history, of the *Ereignis*, of the thought and unthought or, for I always prefer to say this in the plural, the thoughts and the unthoughts of Heidegger.

* * *

To my knowledge, Heidegger never asked himself, “What is spirit?” At least, he never did so in the mode, or in the form, or with the developments that he grants to questions such as: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”; “What is Being?”; “What is technology?”; “What is called thinking?”; and so on. No more did he make of spirit one of those grand poles that metaphysics is supposed to have opposed to Being, in a sort of limitation (*Beschränkung*) of Being, such as is contested by *An Introduction to Metaphysics*: Being and becoming, Being and appearance, Being and thinking, Being and duty, or Being and value. No more did he oppose spirit to nature, even dialectically, according to the most forceful and permanent of metaphysical demands.

What is called spirit? What does spirit call up? *Was heisst der Geist?*—so that is the title of a book Heidegger never wrote. When they have to do with spirit, Heidegger’s statements *rarely* take the form of a definition of essence. Rarely, that is to say, exceptionally, and we are interested in these exceptions, which are in fact very different and even opposed to each other. Most often, Heidegger will have *inscribed* the noun (*Geist*) or the adjective (*geistig*, *geistlich*): say in a linked group of concepts or philosophemes belonging to a deconstructible ontology, and most often in a sequence going from Descartes to Hegel, in other words, in propositions I will again risk calling axiomatic, axiological, or axiopoetic. The spiritual,

then, no longer belongs to the order of these metaphysical or ontotheological meanings. Rather than a value, spirit seems to designate, beyond a deconstruction, the very resource for any deconstruction and the possibility of any evaluation.

What then does he call spirit, *Geist*?

In *Sein und Zeit*, it is first of all a word whose meaning remains steeped in a sort of ontological obscurity. Heidegger recalls this and asks for the greatest possible vigilance on this point. The word relates back to a series of meanings that have a common feature: to be opposed to the thing, to the metaphysical determination of thingness, and above all to the thingification of the subject, of the subjectivity of the subject as supposed by Descartes. This is the series of soul, consciousness, spirit, person. Spirit is not the thing, spirit is not the body. Of course, it is from this *subjective* determination of spirit that a delimitation (*Abgrenzung*) must disengage, one could say liberate, the existential analytic of *Dasein*. *Dasein* finds itself given the task of preparing a philosophical treatise of the question "What is man?" It should be remembered that it *precedes* (*liegt vor*; Heidegger's emphasis) all biology, all anthropology, all psychology. One could say all *pneumatology*, this being the other name Hegel gives to *rational psychology*, which, further, he also criticizes as an "abstract metaphysics of understanding."² . . .

Now who are we? Here, let us not forget, we are first and only determined from the opening to the *question of Being*. Even if Being must be given to us for that to be the case, we are only at this point, and know of "us" only this: the power or rather the possibility of questioning, the experience of questioning.

We were speaking a moment ago of the question. Now precisely this entity which we are, this "we," which, at the beginning of the existential analytic, must have no name other than *Da-sein*, is chosen for the position of exemplary entity only from *the experience of the question*, the possibility of the *Fragen*, as it is inscribed in the network of the *Gefragte* (Being), the *Erfragte* (the meaning of Being), of the *Befragte der Seinsfrage*, that is, the entity which we are and which thus becomes the exemplary or privileged entity for a *reading*—Heidegger's word—of the meaning of Being. The point of departure in the existential analytic is legitimated first of all and

2. G. W. F. Hegel, "Introduction" to *The Philosophy of Spirit* in the *Encyclopedia*, sect. 378. In the same introduction, Hegel defines the essence of spirit as *liberty* and as the capacity, in its formal determination, to support *infinite suffering*. I think I must quote this paragraph to anticipate what will be said later about spirit, liberty, and evil for Heidegger: "This is why the essence of spirit is formally *liberty*, the absolute negativity of the concept as self-identity. According to this formal determination, it can abstract all that is exterior and its own exteriority, its own presence: it can support the negation of its individual immediacy, infinite *sufferance*: that is, conserve itself affirmative in this negation and be identical for itself. This possibility is in itself the abstract universality of spirit, universality which-is-for-itself" (sect. 382).

only from the possibility, experience, structure, and regulated modifications of the *Fragen*. Such is the exemplarity of the entity which we are, of the *ourselves* in this discursive situation of *Mitsein* in which we can, to ourselves and to others, say *we*. This exemplarity can become or remain problematical. But this ought not to dissimulate a still less apparent problematicity—which is, precisely, perhaps no longer even a *problematicity*. It could not even be determined as question or problem. For it depends on this point of departure in a reflection on the question (it's better to say the *Fragen*) and its structural components. How, without confirming it a priori and circularly, can we *question* this inscription in the structure of the *Fragen* from which *Dasein* will have received, along with its privilege (*Vorrang*), its first, minimal, and most secure determination? Even supposing that this structure is described properly by Heidegger (which is not certain, but I leave that to one side for the moment), any worry as to the legitimacy or axiomatic necessity of such a point of departure in a reflection on the Being-able-to-question would leave intact neither the principle, nor the order, nor finally the interest of the existential analytic: in three words, of *Sein und Zeit*. One would then turn against it what Heidegger himself says: however provisional the analysis, it always and already demands the assurance of a correct point of departure (*Sein und Zeit*, sect. 9).

I insist on this point of departure in the possibility of the *Fragen* not only for the reasons I pointed out at the start. A few years later, when the references to spirit are no longer held in the discourse of *Destruktion* and in the analytic of *Dasein*, when the words *Geist* and *geistig* are no longer avoided but rather *celebrated*, spirit itself will be defined by this manifestation and this force of the question. And therefore of the question *in the name of which* the same words are avoided in *Sein und Zeit*. When he says he must avoid them, Heidegger is right to emphasize that he does so not out of caprice, stubbornness, or concern for terminological oddness (sect. 10). The terms of this series: spirit, but also soul or *psyché*, consciousness, ego, reason, subject—and Heidegger adds on life and man too—block any interrogation on the Being of *Dasein*. They are all linked, as the unconscious would be as well, to the Cartesian position of the *subjectum*. And even when they inspire the modernity of eloquent discourses on the nonthingification or nonreification of the subject, they—and in particular the terms life and man—mark a lack of interest, an indifference, a remarkable “lack of need” (*Bedürfnislosigkeit*) for the question of the Being of the entity which we are.

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Should we close *Sein und Zeit* at this point? Do the many developments devoted to the heritage of the Cartesian graft add nothing to these premises? Is this the book's last word on the theme of spirit?

Yes and no.

Yes, insofar as the premises and the deconstruction will *never* be called into question again. Neither in *Sein und Zeit* nor later.

No, because the rhetorical strategy is displaced when a step is taken, already, in the direction of this analytic of *Gemüt*. As early as *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger takes up the value and the word "spirit," simply in quotation marks. He thus assumes it without assuming it, he avoids it in no longer avoiding it. To be sure, this un-avoidance now supposes and will henceforth maintain the earlier delimitation. It does not contradict but confirms and renews the necessity of avoiding (*vermeiden*), and it will always do so. And yet, along with the word, even surrounded by quotation marks, something of spirit—doubtless what signals toward *Gemüt*—allows itself to be withdrawn from the Cartesian-Hegelian metaphysics of subjectivity. Something that the word "spirit" still names between quotation marks thus allows itself to be salvaged. Spirit returns. The word "spirit" starts to become acceptable again. The catharsis of the quotation marks frees it from its vulgar, *uneigentlich*, in a word, Latino-Cartesian marks. There then begins, at the other end of the same book, the slow work of reappropriation that will merge, as I should like to demonstrate, with a re-Germanization.

* * *

It's the law of quotation marks. Two by two they stand guard: at the frontier or before the door, assigned to the threshold in any case, and these places are always dramatic. The apparatus lends itself to theatricalization and also to the hallucination of the stage and its machinery: two pairs of pegs hold in suspension a sort of drape, a veil or a curtain. Not closed, just slightly open. There is the time this suspension lasts: six years, the suspense of the spectator and the tension that follows the credits. Then, suddenly, with a single blow and not three, the lifting [*levée*] of the quotation marks marks the raising [*lever*] of the curtain. And there's a *coup de théâtre* immediately, with the overture: the entry on stage of spirit itself, unless it's delegating its ghost, its *Geist*, again.

Six years later, 1933, and here we have the "Rectorship Address": the curtain-raising is also the spectacle of academic solemnity, the splendor of the staging celebrating the quotation marks' disappearance. In the wings, spirit was waiting for its moment. And here it makes its appearance. It presents itself. Spirit *itself*, spirit in its spirit and in its letter, *Geist* affirms itself through the self-affirmation of the German university. Spirit's affirmation inflamed. Yes, *inflamed*: I say this not only to evoke the pathos of the "Rectorship Address" when it celebrates spirit, not only because of what a reference to flame can illuminate of the terrifying moment that is deploying its specters around this theater, but because twenty years later, exactly twenty years, Heidegger will say of *Geist*, without which it is impossible to think Evil, that *in the first place* it is neither *pneuma* nor *spiritus*, thus allowing us to conclude that *Geist* is no more heard in the

Greece of the philosophers than in that of the Gospels, to say nothing of Roman deafness: *Geist* is flame. Which would then be said, and thus thought, only in German.

How are we to explain this sudden inflammation and inflation of *Geist*? *Sein und Zeit* was all tortuous prudence, the severe economy of a writing holding declaration within the discipline of severely observed marks. So how does Heidegger get from this to the eloquent fervor and the sometimes rather edifying proclamation dedicated to the self-affirmation of the German university? What is the leap from the one to the other? And what in spite of this is confirmed and continued from the one to the other?

Each word of the title, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität*, is traversed, steeped, illuminated, determined (*bestimmt*)—I mean both defined and destined—called for by spirit. Self-affirmation, first of all, would be impossible, would not be heard, would not be what it is if it were not of the order of spirit, spirit's very order. The [English] word "order" designating both the value of command, of duction or conduction, the *Führung*, and the value of mission: sending, order given. Self-affirmation *wants* to be (we must emphasize this willing) the affirmation of spirit through *Führung*. This is a spiritual conducting, of course, but the *Führer*, the guide—here the Rector—says he can only lead if he is himself led by the inflexibility of an order, the rigor or even the *directive* rigidity of a mission (*Auftrag*). This is also already spiritual. Consequently, conducted from guide to guide, the self-affirmation of the German university will be possible only through those who lead while themselves being led, directors directed by the affirmation of this spiritual mission. Later we shall have to recognize a passage between this *affirmation* and a certain thinking of consent, of commitment in the form of a reply, of a responsible acquiescence, of agreement or confidence (*Zusage*), a sort of word given in return. Before any question and to make possible the question itself.

The *German* character of this university is not a secondary or contingent predicate, it cannot be dissociated from this affirmation of spirit. As the highest agency of the institution thus erected, of this "high school" (*hohe Schule*), directed upward from the heights, spirit can do nothing other than affirm itself—and this, as we shall hear, in the movement of an authentication or identification, which would *want themselves to be properly German*.

Right from the opening of the "Address," Heidegger himself emphasizes the adjective "spiritual" (*geistig*). It is thus the first thing he stresses. I shall emphasize it in my turn, reading Gérard Granel's [French] translation: not only because it is the first word to be stressed by Heidegger, but because this adjective, *geistig*, is the word that twenty years later will be opposed to *geistlich*. The latter would no longer have anything platonico-metaphysical or christo-metaphysical about it, whereas *geistig*, Heidegger will say then, in his own name and not in a commentary on Trakl, remains

caught in the metaphysico-platonico-christian oppositions of the below and the beyond, of the low and the high, of the sensible and the intelligible. And yet, in the "Rectorship Address," the *Geistigkeit* to which Heidegger appeals is already opposed to "the christo-theological interpretation of the world which came after" (*Die nachkommende christlich-theologische Weltdeutung*).³ But there is no *Geistlichkeit* yet. Is this simply a terminological incoherence, a verbal adjustment that takes a certain time? Up to a point, without doubt, but I do not think that things can be reduced to that.

Here, then, is the first paragraph of the "Rectorship Address," the lifting of the quotation marks that are carried off, the raising of the curtain on the first act, the inaugural celebration of spirit: cortege, academic procession—spirit is at the head, and in the highest, since it leads the very leaders. It precedes, anticipates [*prévient*], and gives the direction to be followed—to the *spiritus rector* (whose directives we know better today) and to those who follow him:

To take over the rectorship is to oblige oneself to guide this high school *spiritually* (*die Verpflichtung zur geistigen Führung dieser hohen Schule*). Those who follow, masters and pupils, owe their existence and their strength only to a true common rootedness in the essence of the German University. But this essence comes to the clarity, the rank and the power which are its own, only if first of all and at all times the guiders [*guideurs*] [*Führer*: I prefer "guide" to "guider," a rather rare and perhaps neologistic word, which runs the risk of making us forget that *Führer* was at that time very common in Germany.] are themselves guided—guided by the inflexibility of this spiritual mission (*jeunes geistigen Auftrags*), the constraining nature of which imprints the destiny of the German people with its specific historical character. [S, p. 9; "A," p. 5]

This final sentence speaks, then, of the imprint (*Gepräge*) marked in the destiny of the German people. A typographical motif, and even an ontotypological motif, as Lacoue-Labarthe would put it. Its recurrence in the "Rectorship Address" must be interrogated retrospectively in light of the letter to Ernst Jünger (*Zur Seinsfrage*) and what relates there to

3. Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität. Rede, gehalten bei der feierlichen Übernahme des Rektorats der Universität Freiburg i. Br. am 27. 5. 1933* (1933; Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 12; hereafter abbreviated S. As Jacques Derrida indicates, his reading of Heidegger's address proceeds by way of Gérard Granel's French translation. In order to reproduce, as closely as possible, the details of this reading, we have translated directly from the French text: "L'Auto affirmation de l'université allemande," *Editions Trans-Europ-Repress* (Toulouse, 1982), p. 10; hereafter abbreviated "A." An English translation by Karsten Harries is also available: "The Self-Assertion of the German University: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the University Freiburg" and "The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," *Review of Metaphysics* 38 (Mar. 1985): 467–502.

the modern accomplishment of subjectivity. Without being able to enter into this problem, I would point out that the figure of the imprint is associated here, regularly and essentially, with that of force. Heidegger sometimes says *Prägekraft* (S, p. 9) or *prägenden Kraft* (S, p. 18). Now force is just as regularly, just as essentially, associated with spirit in the sense that it is celebrated thereafter without quotation marks.

At the center of the “Address,” for the first time to my knowledge (subsequently he does so only twice, in texts on Schelling and on Trakl), Heidegger offers a definition of spirit. It is certainly presented in the form of a definition: S is P. And without any possible doubt, Heidegger takes it up for himself. He is no longer mentioning the discourse of the other. No longer speaking of spirit as in Descartes, Hegel, or later Schelling or Hölderlin, he links this predicative determination to a series of headings whose importance there is no need for me to stress. I will name *four* of them to prepare for the reading of this definition.

1. First there is *questioning, Fragen*, which manifests here—and manifests *itself*—as will: will to know and will to essence. Even before the definition of spirit, which reaffirms it, this will had been affirmed earlier in the “Address”:

To will the essence of the German university is to will science, in the sense of willing the spiritual historical mission of the German people (*Wille zum geschichtlichen geistigen Auftrag des deutschen Volkes*) as a people that knows itself to be in its State. Science and German destiny must, in this will to essence, achieve power (*Macht*) at the same time. [S, p. 10; “A,” p. 7]

2. Next there is the *world*, a central theme of *Sein und Zeit*. Like the renewed quest of *Fragen*, it marks the profound continuity between *Sein und Zeit* and the “Address.”

3. Further, and still linked to force, there is the theme of *earth and blood*: “erd- und bluthaften Kräfte als Macht” (S, p. 14).

4. Finally, and above all, still in essential and internal continuity with *Sein und Zeit*, there is *Entschlossenheit*: *resolution*, determination, the decision that gives its possibility of opening to *Eigentlichkeit*, the authentic property of *Dasein*.

Here now is this key paragraph, with these *four determinations of spirit*:

If we want the essence of science in the sense of *this manner of holding firm, questioning (fragenden) and exposed, in the middle of the uncertainty of entities in their totality*, then this will to essence creates for our people its most intimate and extreme world of danger, in other words its true *spiritual world* (*seine wahrhaft geistige Welt* [*geistige* is underlined]). For “spirit” [in quotation marks, but this time to recall in a still negative definition the spirit others talk of] is neither empty sagacity nor the gratuitous game of joking [*Spiel*

des Witzes: this distinction between spirit and the *mot d'esprit*, between *Geist* and *Witz*, recalls the Kant of the *Anthropology*, noting that a feature of the French spirit was marked by the fact that French has only one word, the word *esprit*, to designate *Witz* and *Geist*, nor the unlimited work of analysis of the understanding, nor even the reason of the world [probably an allusion to Hegel], but spirit is the being-resolved to the essence of Being (*ursprünglich gestimmte, wissende Entschlossenheit zum Wesen des Seins*), of a resolution which accords with the tone of the origin and which is knowledge [*savoir*]. And the *spiritual world* (*geistige Welt* [underlined]) of a people is not the superstructure of a culture, and no more is it an arsenal of bits of knowledge [*connaissances*] and usable values, but the deepest power of conservation of its forces of earth and blood, as the most intimate power of emotion (*Macht der innersten Erregung*) and the vastest power of disturbance of its existence (*Dasein*). Only a spiritual world (*Eine geistige Welt allein*) guarantees the people its grandeur, for it imposes the constraint that the constant decision between the will to grandeur on the one hand, and on the other the *laisser-faire* of decadence (*des Verfalls*), give its rhythm to the march our people has begun toward its future history. [*S*, p. 14; "A," pp. 13–14]

The celebration corresponds properly, literally, to an *exaltation* of the spiritual. It is an elevation. This is not only a question of the kerygmatic tone, of proclamation or declaration, but of an exaltation in which is declared and erected the most high. As always, the profound and the haughty are allied in the most high: the highest of what guides the spiritual guides of *die hohe Schule* and the depth of forces of earth and blood. For it is precisely in them that consists the spiritual world. As to what is clear in this exaltation, spirit has here no longer the sense of metaphysical subjectivity. There is no contradiction with *Sein und Zeit* in this regard. Spirit does not belong to subjectivity, *at least* in its psychical or egological form, for it is not certain that the massive voluntarism of this "Address" is not still caught up in the said epoch of subjectivity.

One other thing seems as clear: in a sense that would, to be sure, *like* to think itself not Hegelian, historicity is immediately and essentially determined as spiritual. And what is true of history is true of the world. On several occasions, Heidegger associates, with a hyphen, the adjectives *geistig* and *geschichtlich*: *geistig-geschichtlich* is *Dasein* (*S*, p. 16; "A," p. 17); *geschichtlich-geistig* is the world (*S*, p. 17; "A," p. 18). This association will be constant, two years later, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. But still in the "Address," and still in order to follow this trace of the question and its privilege, I shall insist on the following point: the union, the hyphen [*trait d'union*] between spirit and history plays a very significant role in a passage that makes of the *Fragen* the very assignment of spirit. The question is *of spirit* or it is not:

Such an original concept of science carries the obligation not only of “objectivity” (“*Sachlichkeit*”), but again and above all of the essentiality and simplicity of interrogation (*des Fragens*) at the center of the spiritual world, which is, historically, that of the people (*inmitten der geschichtlich-geistigen Welt des Volkes*). And even, it is solely from this that objectivity can receive its true foundation, in other words, find its genre and its limits. [S, p. 17; “A,” p. 18]

The Self-Affirmation of the German University: every word of the title is, as we said, steeped in the exalting celebration of this spirit. We have just seen how the force of its imprint marks the self-affirmation, signing in the *same stroke* the being-German of the people and of their world, that is its university as will to know and will to essence. It remains to confirm that the same spiritual imprint is inscribed in the academic organization, in the legislation of faculties and departments, in the community (*Gemeinschaft*) of masters and pupils:

The faculty is a faculty only if it deploys itself in a capacity for spiritual legislation (*geistiger Gesetzgebung*) rooted in the essence of science, so as to give to the powers of existence (*Mächte des Daseins*), which form its urgency, the form of the people’s unique spiritual world (*die eine geistige Welt des Volkes*). [S, p. 17; “A,” p. 18]

As for what is commanded or recommended of *spirit* in it, this “Address” calls for *at least* three readings, three evaluations, or rather three protocols of interpretation.

1. To the extent that he countersigns the assignment of spirit, the author of this “Address,” as such, cannot withdraw from any responsibility.

His discourse is first of all that of response and responsibility. Responsibility properly assumed, or even claimed before different authorities. These latter are always associated among themselves inasmuch as they are united with spirit. Spirit writes their hyphen, the hyphen between the world, history, the people, the will to essence, the will to know, the existence of *Dasein* in the experience of the question.

2. This responsibility is nonetheless exercised according to a strategy. Tortuous, at least double, the strategy can always hold an extra surprise in reserve for whomever thinks he controls it.

On the one hand, Heidegger thus confers the most reassuring and elevated *spiritual* dignity on everything in which and on all before whom he commits himself, on everything he thus sanctions and consecrates at such a height. One could say that he spiritualizes National Socialism. And one could reproach him for this, as he will later reproach Nietzsche for having exalted the spirit of vengeance into a “spirit of

vengeance spiritualized to the highest point" (*ein höchst vergeistigter Geist der Rache*).⁴

But, on the other hand, by taking the risk of spiritualizing Nazism, he might have been trying to absolve or save it by marking it with this affirmation (spirituality, science, questioning, and so on). By the same token, this sets apart [*démarque*] Heidegger's commitment and breaks an affiliation. This address *seems* no longer to belong simply to the "ideological" camp in which one appeals to obscure forces—forces that would not be spiritual, but natural, biological, racial, according to an anything but spiritual interpretation of "earth and blood."

3. The force to which Heidegger appeals, and again in conclusion when he speaks of the destiny of the West, is thus a "spiritual force" (*geistige Kraft*). And we will find this theme of spirit and of the West again, though displaced, in the text on Trakl.

What is the price of this strategy? Why does it fatally turn back against its "subject"—if one can use this word, as one must, in fact? Because one cannot demarcate oneself off from biologism, from naturalism, from racism in its genetic form; one cannot be *opposed* to them except by reinscribing spirit in an oppositional determination, by once again making it a unilaterality of subjectivity, even if in its voluntarist form. The constraint of this program remains very strong, it reigns over the majority of discourses that, today and for a long time to come, state their opposition to racism, to totalitarianism, to Nazism, to fascism, and so on, and do this in the name of spirit, and even of the freedom of (the) spirit,⁵ in the name of an axiomatic—for example, that of democracy or "human rights"—which, directly or not, comes back to this metaphysics of *subjectité*. All the pitfalls of the strategy of establishing demarcations belong to this

4. Heidegger, "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?" *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 2d ed. (Pfullingen, 1959), p. 121; hereafter abbreviated VA. This lecture has been published as "Who Is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" in *Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. David Farrell Krell, 4 vols. (San Francisco, 1979–82), 2:228; hereafter abbreviated *N*. [We have sometimes slightly altered the translation.] Of course, this is not a "reproach" nor even a refutation. Heidegger always denies doing this. He never criticizes nor refutes. This is, according to him, the "game of the small-minded" (*Kleingeisterei*), as he explains precisely after the passage I have just quoted and the question he asks in it (VA, p. 121; *N*, 2:229). He had first of all applauded Nietzsche for thinking revenge "metaphysically"—the dimension of revenge not being primarily "moral" or "psychological" (VA, p. 112; *N*, 2:221). Then he sketches the movement leading to the limit of Nietzsche's thought as the accomplishment of metaphysics, to the place where something appears in Nietzsche's thought that it can no longer think. And it is precisely the spirit of revenge (*Geist der Rache*), which would perhaps not be overcome (merely "spiritualized to the highest point") by this discourse on the imprint (*Aufprägen*) that Nietzsche talks about: "Dem Werden den Charakter des Seins aufzuprägen—das ist der höchste Wille zur Macht" (VA, p. 120; *N*, 2:228).

5. This liberty of spirit always runs the risk rigorously determined by the Hegel text quoted above (in footnote 2): that of a merely formal liberty of an abstract universality.

program, whatever place one occupies in it. The only choice is the choice between the terrifying contaminations it assigns. Even if all forms of complicity are not equivalent, they are *irreducible*. The question of knowing which is the least grave of these forms of complicity is always there, its urgency and its seriousness could not be overstressed, but it will never dissolve the irreducibility of this fact. This “fact” [*fait*], of course, is not simply a fact. First, and at least, because it is not yet *done* [*fait*], not altogether [*pas tout à fait*]: it calls more than ever, as for what in it remains to come after the disasters that have happened, for absolutely unprecedented responsibilities of “thought” and “action.” This is what we should have to try to designate, if not to name, and begin to analyze here.

In the “Rectorship Address,” this risk is not just a risk run. If its program seems diabolical, it is because, *without there being anything fortuitous in this*, it capitalizes on the worst, that is, on both evils at once: the sanctioning of Nazism and the gesture that is still metaphysical. Behind the ruse of quotation marks, of which there is never the right amount (always too many or too few of them), this equivocation has to do with the fact that *Geist* is always haunted by its *Geist*: a spirit, or in other words, in French [and English] as in German, a phantom, always surprises by returning to be the other’s ventriloquist. Metaphysics always returns, I mean in the sense of a *revenant* [ghost], and *Geist* is the most fatal figure of this *revenance* [returning]. Of the double that can never be separated from the single.

Is this not what Heidegger will never finally be able to avoid (*vermeiden*), the unavoidable itself—spirit’s double, *Geist* as the *Geist* of *Geist*, spirit as spirit of the spirit, which always comes with its double? Spirit is its double.

However we interpret this awesome equivocality, for Heidegger it is inscribed *in spirit*. It is *of spirit*. He will say so in speaking of spiritual evil in the text on Trakl. But he already notes it, in another mode, at the beginning of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, two years after the “Rectorship Address.”

In the same way that, in spite of the *coup de théâtre*, the raising of the curtain or the lifting of the quotation marks, the “Address” relauches and confirms the essential elements of *Sein und Zeit*, so the *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935) repeats the invocation of spirit launched in the “Address.” It even relauches it, explains it, extends it, justifies it, specifies it, surrounds it with unprecedented precautions.

The rhetoric is no longer, to be sure, that of a treatise, as in *Sein und Zeit*, nor that of an inaugural and emphatic speech, as in the “Rectorship Address.” Here we have a teaching language, which partakes of both genres simultaneously. No more than in 1933 does it rehabilitate the concept of spirit deconstructed in *Sein und Zeit*. But it is still in the name of spirit, the spirit which guides in resolution toward the question, the will to know and the will to essence, that the other spirit, its bad double, the phantom of subjectivity turns out to be warded off by means of *Destruktion*.

Is this duplicity the same as the equivocality or the ambiguity that Heidegger recalls right at the beginning of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, when he speaks of the *Zweideutigkeit* in which “every essential form of spiritual life” stands?⁶ The more singular a figure of spirit, the more tempted one is to be mistaken about it through comparison and confusion. Now philosophy is one of the essential forms of spirit: independent, creative, rare among the possibilities and the necessities of human *Dasein* in its historicity. Precisely because of its essential rarity, a singularity always inspires mistakes, just as *Zweideutigkeit* inspires *Missdeutung*. The first misinterpretation consists in demanding first of all—we are still very familiar with this program today—that philosophy procure for the *Dasein* and the age of a people the foundations of a culture, and then denigrate philosophy when it is useless from this point of view and is useless for that culture. Second expectation, second mistake: this figure of spirit, philosophy, ought at the very least to procure a system, synopsis, world-picture (*Weltbild*), map of the world (*Weltkarte*), a sort of compass for universal orientation. If philosophy cannot ground culture, then it should at least alleviate and facilitate the technicopractical functioning of cultural activities, and lighten the burden on science by taking off its hands epistemological reflection on its presuppositions, its concepts, and its fundamental principles (*Grundbegriffe*, *Grundsätze*). What is expected of the philosopher? That he be the functionary of the fundamental. These misunderstandings, more full of life today than ever, are sustained, notes Heidegger (and who will argue with him?), by teachers of philosophy.

Self-affirmation or self-presentation of spirit: all that the “Rectorship Address” announces in these terms is renamed in the *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. One could say from the title and name of *Einführung*. The assignment of the question is here immediately associated with that of the *Führung* said to be *spiritual*. The *Einführung* opens a meditation on the question, or more precisely, on the *introduction to the question*, on what introduces, induces, and conducts to within the question, the *Hineinführen in das Fragen der Grundfrage* (*E*, p. 22).

There is no questioning except in the *experience* of the question. Questions are not things, like water, stone, shoes, clothes, or books. The *Hineinführen* into the question does not conduct or induct *something*, it guides, conducts toward the experience, the awakening, or the production of the question. But as nothing ought to dictate the question nor precede it in its *freedom*, the *Führen* is *already* questioning. It comes before, it is an already questioning fore-coming of the question (*ein fragendes Vor-*

6. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, Conn., 1959), p. 9. The German sentence is: “Jede wesentliche Gestalt des Geistes steht in des Zweideutigkeit” (Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, ed. Petra Jaeger, vol. 40 of *Gesamtausgabe* [Frankfurt am Main, 1983], p. 11; hereafter abbreviated *E*).

angehen), a prequestioning, *ein Vor-fragen*. In this way, if nothing precedes the question in its freedom, not even the introduction to questioning, then the spirit of spiritual conduction (*geistige Führung*)—spoken of in both the “Rectorship Address” and *An Introduction to Metaphysics*—can be interpreted, through and through, as the possibility of questioning. It responds and corresponds to this possibility. Unless this latter already responds or corresponds to it, in the ties and obligations or even the alliances of such a correspondence, as also in the experience of this co-responsibility. This discourse on spirit is also a discourse on the freedom of spirit.

Given that nothing precedes it, spiritual duction remains itself uncondacted, and thus breaks the circle of empty reflection that threatened the question of being in its fundamental form: “Why are there entities and not nothing?” That was the first sentence of the book. There was a risk that the reflective machine would make it circle ad infinitum in the question of the question: why “why”? and so on. Heidegger speaks rather of a leap (*Sprung*) of the question. The leap makes the originary upsurge (*Ursprung*) surge, liberates it without having to introduce the question from anything other than an *already* questioning conduction: *and this is spirit itself*. Spirit wakes, awakens rather [*plutôt*]—earlier [*plus tôt*]—from the *Vor-fragen* of the *Führung*. Nothing anticipates this power of awakening in its freedom and its resolution (*Entschlossenheit*). What comes *before* and *in front*, what anticipates and questions before all else (*vor*), is spirit, the freedom of spirit. As *Führer*, it goes or comes on the way, in front, up in front, before any politics, any psychology, any pedagogy.

For in all honesty we must make clear the fact that at the very moment at which he runs the risk of placing this thematics of the *Führung* in the service of a determinate politics, Heidegger gives it to be understood that he is breaking in advance with any such service. In its spiritual essence, this free conduction should not give rise to any camp-following [*suivisme*], one should not accord it any following, any follower, any *Gefolgschaft*, any aggregation of disciples or partisans. One can naturally extend to the party what Heidegger says, to exclude them, of the school as academic study, technical apprenticeship, or professional training. Undoubtedly it will be difficult to understand what can be meant by a *Führung* that mandates, demands, or commands without being followed, obeyed, or listened to in any way. However spiritual it may be, one will say, it must surely guide. Certainly, Heidegger would say here, but if one finds it difficult to understand, that means that one remains imprisoned in a logic of the understanding and does not accede to this freedom of listening, to this fidelity or modality of following, which would have no relationship to the mindless following of *Gefolgschaft*. Perhaps. But it is also the case that, on the other hand, if it is not further reduced to its discursive modalities or to interrogative utterances, this questioning belongs

through and through, that is to say, essentially, to will and to will as the will to know. "Fragen ist Wissen-wollen" (*E*, p. 23).

All this conducts the *Einführung* back to the "Rectorship Address," and again to the thematics of resolution (*Entschlossenheit*). This last plays a decisive role, in fact, the role of decision itself in *Sein und Zeit*. The paragraph defining questioning as will to know (sect. 74) also reminds us that will itself is a being-resolved (*Entschlossensein*).

Although at least in appearance—the appearance of a less emphatic tone—the *Einführung* begins to mark a political retreat in relation to the "Rectorship Address"; in fact it proposes a kind of *geopolitical* diagnosis, of which all the resources and all the references return to spirit, to spiritual historicity, with its already tried and tested concepts: the fall or decadence (*Verfall*) are *spiritual*, so too force is *spiritual*.

Geopolitical, then: Europe, Russia, and America are named here, which still no doubt means just Europe. But the dimension remains properly geopolitical. Thinking the world is determined as thinking the earth or the planet.

Heidegger denounces, then, a "spiritual decadence" (*geistiger Verfall*). Peoples are in the process of losing their last "spiritual forces" because of this. This last expression returns often. The *Verfall* of spirit cannot allow itself to be thought other than in its relation to the destiny of being. If, in questioning, the experience of spirit appears proportional to "danger," the German people, "our people," this "metaphysical people" (*das metaphysische Volk*) par excellence, is at once the most spiritual (Heidegger specifies this clearly later on in speaking of language) and the most exposed to danger. For it is caught in a vice, in the middle (*in der Mitte*) (*E*, p. 41) between its European neighbors, Russia and America.⁷ On it devolves the "great decision" (*die grosse Entscheidung*), which will engage the destiny of Europe, the deployment of "new *spiritual* forces from this middle place" (*neuer geschichtlich geistiger Kräfte aus der Mitte*). Emphasis, *emphase*: the word "spiritual" is again *underlined* both to mark that the fundamental determination of the relation to being occurs there, and to ward off the possibility of a politics other than of *spirit*. A new commencement is called for. It is called for by the question: "Wie steht es um das Sein?" What about Being? And this commencement, which is first a recommencement, consists in repeating (*wieder-holen*) our historically spiritual existence (*Anfang unseres geschichtlich-geistigen Daseins*) (*E*, p. 42). The "we" of this "our" . . . is the German people. I referred overhastily to a geopolitical *diagnosis*, at the point where the discourse is neither that of

7. The indictment of America, its "pseudo-philosophy" and its "patent psychology," continues for a long time, no doubt reaching its apogee in 1941. See Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, ed. Freidrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, vol. 29/30 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

knowledge nor clinical or therapeutic. But geopolitics conducts us back again from the earth and the planet to the world, and to the world as a world of *spirit*. Geopolitics is none other than a *Weltpolitik of spirit*. The world is not the earth. On the earth arrives an obscuring of the world (*Weltverdüsterung*) (*E*, p. 48): the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the massification of man, the preeminence of the mediocre.