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RESPONSE

THE PRINCIPLE OF REASON: THE UNIVERSITY IN THE EYES OF ITS PUPILS

JACQUES DERRIDA

Today, how can we not speak of the university?

I put my question in the negative, for two reasons. On the one hand, as we all know, it is impossible, now more than ever, to dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work. Such a reflection is unavoidable. It is no longer an *external* complement to teaching and research; it must make its way through the very objects we work with, shaping them as it goes, along with our norms, procedures, and aims. We cannot not speak of such things. On the other hand, the question "how can we not" gives notice of the *negative,* or perhaps we should say *preventive,* complexion of the preliminary reflections I should like to put to you. Indeed, since I am seeking to initiate discussion, I shall content myself with saying how one should not speak of the university. Some of the typical risks to be avoided, it seems to me, take the form of a bottomless pit, while others take the form of a protectionist barrier.

Does the university, today, have what is called a *raison d'être?* I have chosen to put my question in a phrase — *raison d'être,* literally, "reason to be" — which is quite idiomatically French. In two or three words, that phrase names everything I shall be talking about: reason and being, of course, and the essence of the University in its connections to reason and being; but also the cause, purpose, direction, necessity, justification, meaning and mission of the University; in a word, its destination. To have a *raison d'être,* a reason for being, is to have a justification for existence, to have a meaning, an intended purpose, a destination; but also, to have a cause, to be explainable according to the "principle of reason" or the "law of sufficient reason," as it is sometimes called — in terms of a reason which is also a cause (a ground, *ein Grund*), that is to say also a footing and a foundation, ground to stand on. In the phrase *raison d'être,* that idea of causality takes on above all the sense of final cause, in the wake of Leibniz, the author of the formulation — and it was much more than a formulation — "the Principle of Reason." To ask whether the University has a reason for being is to wonder why there is a University, but the question "why" verges on "with a view to what?" The University with a view to what? What is the University's view? What are its views? Or again: what do we see from the University, whether for instance, we are simply in it, on board; or whether, puzzling over destinations, we look out from it while in port or, as French has it, *"au large,"* on the open sea, "at large"? As you may have noticed, in asking "what is the view from the University?" I was echoing the title of the impeccable parable James Siegel published in *Diacritics* two years ago: "Academic Work:

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The View from Cornell" [Spring, 1981]. Today, indeed, I shall do no more than decipher that parable in my own way. More precisely, I shall be transcribing in a different code what I read in that article — the dramatic, exemplary nature of the topology and politics of this university, in terms of its views and its site: the topolitics of the Cornellian point of view.

Starting with its first words, Metaphysics associates sight with knowledge, and knowledge with knowing how to learn and knowing how to teach. I am referring of course to Aristotle's Metaphysics. I shall return presently to the political import of its opening lines; for the moment, let us look at the very first sentence: "All men, by nature, have the desire to know." Aristotle thinks he sees a sign of this in the fact that sensations give pleasure, "even apart from their usefulness." The pleasure of useless sensations explains the desire to know for the sake of knowing, the desire for knowledge with no practical purpose. And this is more true of sight than of the other senses. We give preference to sensing "through the eyes" not only for taking action, but even when we have no praxis in view. This one sense, naturally theoretical and contemplative, goes beyond practical usefulness and provides us with more to know than any other; indeed, it unveils countless differences. We give preference to sight just as we give preference to the uncovering of difference.

But is sight enough? For learning and teaching, does it suffice to know how to unveil differences? In certain animals, sensation engenders memory, and that makes them more intelligent and more capable of learning. But for knowing how to learn, and learning how to know, sight, intelligence and memory are not enough. We must also know how to hear, and to listen. I might suggest somewhat playfully that we have to know how to shut our eyes in order to be better listeners. Bees know many things, since they can see; but they cannot learn, since they are among the animals that lack the faculty of hearing. Thus, despite appearances to the contrary, the University, the place where people know how to learn and learn how to know, can never be a kind of hive. Aristotle, let us note in passing, has ushered in a long tradition of frivolous remarks on the philosophical commonplace of the bee, the sense and senses of the bee, and the bee's reason for being. Marx was doubtless not the last to have overworked that topos, when he insisted on distinguishing human industry from animal industry, as exemplified in bee society. Seeking such nectar as may be gathered from the vast anthology of philosophical bees, I find a remark of Schelling's, in his Lessons on the Method of Academic Studies,[1] more to my taste. An allusion to the sex of bees often comes to the aid of the rhetoric of naturalism, organicism, or vitalism as it plays upon the theme of the complete and interdisciplinary unity of knowledge, the theme of the university as an organic social system. This is in the most classic tradition of interdisciplinary studies. I quote Schelling:

> The aptitude for doing thoughtful work in the specialized sciences, the capacity to work in conformity with that higher inspiration which is called scientific genius, depends upon the ability to see each thing, including specialized knowledge, in its cohesion with what is originary and unified. Any thought which has not been formed in this spirit of unity and totality [der Ein- und Allheit] is empty in itself, and must be challenged; whatever is incapable of fitting harmoniously within that budding, living totality is a dead shoot which sooner or later will be eliminated by organic laws; doubtless there also exist, within the realm of science, numerous sexless bees [geschlechtlose Bienen] who, since they have not been granted the capacity to create, multiply in inorganic shoots the outward signs of their own witlessness [ihre eigne Geistlosigkeit]. [Philosophies de l'université, p. 49]

(I don't know what bees, not only deaf but sexless, Schelling had in mind at the time. But I am sure that even today such rhetorical weapons would find many an eager buyer.

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[1] In regard to this "naturalism" (a frequent, but not general phenomenon that Kant, for example, eludes at the beginning of the Conflict of the Faculties), and also to the classic motif of interdisciplinarity as an effect of the architectonic totality, see, for example, Schleiermacher's 1808 essay "Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn, nebst einem Anhang über ein neu zu errichtende." A French translation of this text appears in a noteworthy collection, Philosophies de l'université, l'idéalisme allemand et la question de l'Université, ed. Ferry, Pesron, Renault [Paris: Payot, 1979].

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One professor has recently written that a certain theoretical movement was mostly sup-
ported, within the university, by homosexuals and feminists – a fact which seemed very
significant to him, and doubtless a sign of asexuality.)

Opening the eyes to know, closing them – or at least listening – in order to know how
to learn and to learn how to know: here we have a first sketch of the rational animal. If the
University is an institution for science and teaching, does it have to go beyond memory and
sight? In what rhythm? To hear better and learn better, must it close its eyes or narrow its
outlook? In cadence? What cadence? Shutting off sight in order to learn is of course only a
figurative manner of speaking. No one will take it literally, and I am not proposing to
cultivate an art of blinking. And I am resolutely in favor of a new university Enlightenment
[*Aufklärung*]. Still, I shall run the risk of extending my figuration a little farther, in Aristotle's
company. In his *De anima* (421b) he distinguishes between man and those animals that have
hard, dry eyes [*tôn sklerophtalmôn*], the animals lacking eyelids, that sort of sheath or
tegumental membrane [*phragma*] which serves to protect the eye and permits it, at regular
intervals, to close itself off in the darkness of inward thought or sleep. What is terrifying about
an animal with hard eyes and a dry glance is that it always sees. Man can lower the sheath,
adjust the diaphragm, narrow his sight, the better to listen, remember, and learn. What
might the University's diaphragm be? The University must not be a sclerophthalmic animal, a
hard-eyed animal; when I asked, a moment ago, how it should set its sights and adjust its
views, that was another way of asking about its reasons for being and its essence. What
American English calls "the faculty," those who teach, is in French *le corps enseignant*, the
teaching corps (just as we say "the diplomatic corps") or teaching body. What can the
University's body see or not see of its own destination, of that in view of which it stands its
ground? Is the University the master of its own diaphragm?

Now that I have opened up this perspective, allow me to close it off quick as a wink
and, in the twinkling of an eye, let me confide in you, to make what in French I could call a
confidence but in English must call a confession.

Before preparing the text of a lecture, I find I must prepare myself for the scene I shall
encounter as I speak. That is always a painful experience, an occasion for silent, paralytic
deliberation. I feel like a hunted animal, looking in darkness for a way out where none is to
be found. Every exit is blocked. In the present case, the task seemed triply impossible.

In the first place, this was not to be just a lecture like any other; rather, it had to be
something like an inaugural address. Of course, Cornell University has welcomed me
generously many times since I first came to speak here in 1975. I have many friends here,
and Cornell is in fact the first American university I ever taught for. That was in Paris, in
1967–68, as David Grossvogel will undoubtedly remember: he was in charge of a program
that had also been directed by Paul de Man. But today, for the first time, I am taking the floor
to speak as an Andrew Dickson White Professor-at-Large. In French, "Au large" is the expres-
sion a great ship uses to hail a small craft about to cross her course: "Wear off. Give way." In
this case, the title with which your university has honored me at once brings me closer to
you and adds to the anguish of the cornered animal. Was this inaugural lecture a well-
chosen moment to ask whether the University has a reason for being? Wasn't I about to act
with all the unseemliness of a stranger who in return for noble hospitality plays prophet of
doom with his hosts, or at best eschatological harbinger, like Elijah denouncing the power of
kings or announcing the end of the realm?

A second cause for worry is that I find myself involved already, quite imprudently, that
is, blindly and without foresight, in an act of dramaturgy, writing out the play of that view in
which Cornell, from its beginnings, has felt so much to be at stake. The question of the view
has informed the writing-out of the institutional scene, the landscape of your university, the
alternatives of expansion and enclosure, life and death. From the first it was considered vital
not to close off the view. This was recognized by Andrew Dickson White, Cornell's first presi-
dent: may I pay him this homage? At a moment when the trustees wanted to locate the
university closer to town, Ezra Cornell took them to the top of East Hill to show them the
sights, and the site, he had in mind. "We viewed the landscape," writes Andrew Dickson
White. "It was a beautiful day and the panorama was magnificent. Mr. Cornell urged *reasons*
on behalf of the upper site, the main one being that there was so much more room for

expansion."[2] Ezra Cornell gave good reasons, and since the Board of Trustees, reasonably enough, concurred with them, reason won out. But in this case was reason quite simply on the side of life? Drawing on K. C. Parsons' account of the planning of the Cornell campus, James Siegel observes (and I quote) that

> for Ezra Cornell the association of the view with the university had something to do with death. Indeed Cornell's plan seems to have been shaped by the thematics of the Romantic sublime, which practically guaranteed that a cultivated man in the presence of certain landscapes would find his thoughts drifting metonymically through a series of topics—solitude, ambition, melancholy, death, spirituality, "classical inspiration"—which could lead, by an easy extension, to questions of culture and pedagogy. [p. 69]

A matter of life and death. The question arose once again in 1977, when the university administration proposed to erect protective railings on the Collegetown bridge and the Fall Creek suspension bridge to check thoughts of suicide inspired by the view of the gorge. "Barriers" was the term used; we could say "diaphragm," borrowing a word which in Greek literally means "partitioning fence." Beneath the bridges linking the university to its surroundings, connecting its inside to its outside, lies the abyss. In testimony before the Campus Council, one member of the faculty did not hesitate to express his opposition to the barriers, those diaphragmatic eyelids, on the grounds that blocking the view would mean, to use his words, "destroying the essence of the university." What did he mean? What *is* the essence of the university?

Perhaps now you can better imagine with what shudders of awe I prepared myself to speak to you on the subject—quite properly sublime—of the essence of the University. Sublime in the Kantian sense of the term: in the *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant averred that the University should be governed by "an idea of reason," the idea of the whole field of what is presently teachable [*das ganze gegenwärtige Feld der Gelehrsamkeit*]. As it happens, no experience in the present allows for an adequate grasp of that present, presentable totality of doctrine, of teachable theory. But the crushing sense of that inadequacy is the exalting, desperate sense of the sublime, suspended between life and death.

Kant says, too, that the approach of the sublime is first heralded by an inhibition. There was a third reason for the inhibition I myself felt as I thought about speaking to you today. I was resolved of course to limit myself to preliminary, preventive remarks—propedeutical remarks, to use the word German took over from Greek to designate the teaching that comes before teaching. I would speak only of the risks to be avoided, the abyss, and bridges, and boundaries as one struggles with such fearful questions. But that would still be too much, because I wouldn't know how to pick and choose. In my teaching in Paris I have devoted a year-long seminar to the question of the University. Furthermore, I was recently asked by the French government to write a proposal for the establishment of an International College of Philosophy, a proposal which for literally hundreds of pages considers all of the difficulties involved. To speak of such things in an hour would be more than just a challenge. As I sought to encourage myself, daydreaming a bit, it occurred to me that I didn't know how many meanings were conveyed by the phrase "at large," as in "professor at large." I wondered whether a professor at large, not belonging to any department, nor even to the university, wasn't rather like the person who in the old days was called *un ubiquiste*, a "ubiquitist," if you will, in the University of Paris. A ubiquitist was a doctor of theology not attached to any particular college. Outside that context, in French, an *ubiquiste* is someone who travels a lot and travels fast, giving the illusion of being everywhere at once. Perhaps a professor at large, while not exactly a ubiquitist, is also someone who, having spent a long time on the high seas, *"au large,"* occasionally comes ashore, after an absence which has cut him off from everything. He is unaware of the context, the proper rituals, and the changed environment. He is given leave to consider matters loftily, from afar. People indulgently close their eyes to

[2]*James Siegel, "Academic Work: The View from Cornell,"* Diacritics 11:1 [Spring 1981], 68–83; the quotation, on page 69, is taken from Kermit Parsons, The Cornell Campus: A History of Its Planning and Development [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968].

the schematic, drastically selective views he has to express in the rhetoric proper to an academic lecture about the academy. But they may be sorry that he spends so much time in a prolonged and awkward attempt to capture the benevolence of his listeners.

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As far as I know, nobody has ever founded a university *against* reason. So we may reasonably suppose that the University's reason for being has always been reason itself, and some essential connection of reason to being. But what is called the principle of reason is not simply reason. We cannot for now plunge into the history of reason, its words and concepts, into the puzzling scene of translation which has shifted *logos* to *ratio* to *raison, reason, Grund,* ground, *Vernunft,* and so on. What for three centuries now has been called the principle of reason was thought out and formulated, several times, by Leibniz. His most often quoted statement holds that "Nothing is without reason, no effect is without cause." According to Heidegger, though, the only formulation Leibniz himself considered authentic, authoritative, and rigorous is found in a late essay, *Specimen inventorum:* "There are two first principles in all reasoning, the principle of non-contradiction, of course . . . and the principle of rendering reason." The second principle says that for any truth — for any true proposition, that is — a reasoned account is possible. "*Omnis veritatis reddi ratio potest.*" Or, to translate more literally, for any true proposition, *reason can be rendered.*[3]

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[3]*Translator's Note. About national idioms and idioms which, like Latin, aspire to greater catholicity: Leibniz's rationem reddere — a phrase by no means his exclusive property, but common to philosophy at large — is easily carried over into ordinary French as* rendre raison, rendre raison de quelque chose; *but in English, today, "render reason" sounds outlandish. The Oxford dictionary shows that English had the idiom at one time; setting aside a willfully archaic and dialectical sentence from Walter Scott, the most recent example adduced is from An exposition of the Creed, by John Pearson, bishop of Chester, published in London in 1659, and it is an example not without interest for our purposes. "Thus," says Pearson as he expounds Article IX, "the Church of Christ in it's [sic] primary institution was made to be of a diffusive nature, to spread and extend itself from the City of* Jerusalem, *where it first began, to all the parts and corners of the earth. This reason did the ancient fathers render why the Church was called Catholick." [An Exposition . . . , (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1968), p. 697]. He then goes on to say that for a second reason the church is called catholic because it teaches everything, or at least everything necessary to Christian faith. Apparently, there was a whole teaching of diffusion and dissemination well before our own time. To judge from the quotations given by OED, to render reason (to give it back, as it were) worked in exchange and concert with to yield reason and to give reason; any one of the three could mean to give grounds for one's thoughts and assertions, but also, to give an*

Beyond all those big philosophical words – reason, truth, principle – that generally command attention, the principle of reason also holds that reason *must be rendered*. (In French the expression corresponding to Leibniz's *reddere rationem* is *rendre raison de quelque chose;* it means to explain or account for something.) But what does "render" mean with respect to reason? Could reason be something that gives rise to exchange, circulation, borrowing, debt, donation, restitution? But in that case, who would be responsible for that debt or duty, and to whom? In the phrase *reddere rationem, "ratio"* is not the name of a faculty or power (*Logos, Ratio, Reason, Vernunft*) that is generally attributed by metaphysics to man, *zoon logon ekon,* the rational animal. If we had more time, we could follow out Leibniz's interpretation of the semantic shift which leads from the *ratio* of the *principium reddendae rationis,* the principle of rendering reason, to reason as the rational faculty – and in the end, to Kant's definition of reason as the faculty of principles. In any case, if "reason" in the principle of reason is not the rational faculty or power, that does not mean it is a thing, encountered somewhere among the beings and the objects in the world, which must be rendered up, given back. The question of this reason cannot be separated from a question about the modal verb "must" and the phrase "must be rendered." The "must" seems to cover the essence of our relationship to principle, it seems to mark out for us requirement, debt, duty, request, command, obligation, law, the imperative. Whenever reason can be rendered (*reddi potest*), it must. Can we, without further precautions, call this a moral imperative, in the Kantian sense of pure practical reason? It is not clear that the sense of "practical," as it is determined by a critique of pure practical reason, gets to the bottom of the "must," or reveals its origin, although such a critique has to presuppose such a "must." It could be shown, I think, that the critique of practical reason continually calls on the principle of reason, on its "must" which, although it is certainly not of a theoretical order, is nonetheless not simply "practical" or "ethical" in the Kantian sense.

A responsibility is involved here, however. We have to respond to the call of the principle of reason. In *Der Satz vom Grund [The Principle of Reason],* Heidegger names that call *Anspruch:* requirement, claim, request, demand, command, convocation; it always entails a certain addressing of speech. The word is not seen, it has to be heard and listened to, this apostrophe that enjoins us to respond to the principle of reason.

A question of responsibility, to be sure. But is answering *to* the principle of reason the same act as answering *for* the principle of reason? Is the scene the same? Is the landscape the same? And where is the university located within this space?

To respond to the call of the principle of reason is to "render reason," to explain effects through their causes, rationally; it is also to ground, to justify, to account for on the basis of principles or roots. Keeping in mind that Leibnizian moment whose originality should not be underestimated, the response to the call of the principle of reason is thus a response to the Aristotelian requirements, those of metaphysics, of primary philosophy, of the search for "roots," "principles," and "causes." At this point, scientific and technoscientific requirements lead back to a common origin. And one of the most insistent questions in Heidegger's meditation is indeed that of the long "incubation" time that separated this origin from the emergence of the principle of reason in the seventeenth century. Not only does that principle constitute the verbal formulation of a requirement present since the dawn of Western science and philosophy, it provides the impetus for a new era of purportedly "modern" reason, metaphysics and technoscience. And one cannot *think* the possibility of the modern university, the one that is re-structured in the nineteenth century in all the Western countries, without inquiring into that event, that institution of the principle of reason.

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account of one's acts or conduct, when summoned to do so: to be held accountable and to speak accordingly. In 1690, writing not of reason but only of understanding, Locke argued that we rank things under distinct names "according to complex ideas in us," as he says, "and not according to precise, distinct, real essences in them." We cannot denominate things by their real essences, as Locke puts the matter, for the good reason that "we know them not." Even the familiar objects of our everyday world are composed we know not how; they must have their reason, but we cannot give it back to them. Thus, for all his practical bent, Locke is drawn to say, and I quote him once again, "When we come to examine the stones we tread on, or the iron we daily handle, we presently find that we know not their make, and can give no reason of the different qualities we find in them" [An Essay concerning Human Understanding, III, vi, 8–9]. In English, as in French or Latin, at one time people could give reason, or render it, or not be able to render it. – E.P.M.

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But to answer *for* the principle of reason (and thus for the university), to answer *for* this call, to raise questions about the origin or ground of this principle of foundation (*Der Satz vom Grund*), is not simply to obey it or to respond *in the face of* this principle. We do not listen in the same way when we are responding to a summons as when we are questioning its meaning, its origin, its possibility, its goal, its limits. Are we obeying the principle of reason when we ask what grounds this principle which is itself a principle of grounding? We are not — which does not mean that we are disobeying it, either. Are we dealing here with a circle or with an abyss? The circle would consist in seeking to account for reason by reason, to render reason to the principle of reason, in appealing to the principle in order to make it speak of itself at the very point where, according to Heidegger, the principle of reason says nothing about reason itself. The abyss, the hole, the *Abgrund*, the empty "gorge" would be the impossibility for a principle of grounding to ground itself. This very grounding, then, like the university, would have to hold itself suspended above a most peculiar void. Are we to use reason to account for the principle of reason? Is the reason for reason rational? Is it rational to worry about reason and its principle? Not *simply*; but it would be over-hasty to seek to disqualify this concern and to refer those who experience it back to their own irrationalism, their obscurantism, their nihilism. Who is more faithful to reason's call, who hears it with a keener ear, who better sees the difference, the one who offers questions in return and tries to think through the possibility of that summons, or the one who does not want to hear any question about the reason of reason? This is all played out, along the path of the Heideggerian question, in a subtle difference of tone or stress, according to the particular words emphasized in the formula *nihil est sine ratione*. This statement has two different implications according to whether "*nihil*" and "*sine*" are stressed, or "*est*" and "*ratione*." I shall not attempt here, given the limits of this talk, to pursue all of the reckonings involved in this shift of emphasis. Nor shall I attempt — among other things, and for the same reasons — to reconstitute a dialogue between Heidegger and for example Charles Sanders Peirce. A strange and necessary dialogue on the compound theme, indeed, of the university and the principle of reason. In a remarkable essay on "The limits of Professionalism," Samuel Weber quotes Peirce who, in 1900, "in the context of a discussion on the role of higher education" in the United States, concludes as follows:

> *Only recently have we seen an American man of science and of weight discuss the purpose of education, without once alluding to the only motive that animates the genuine scientific investigator. I am not guiltless in this matter myself, for in my youth I wrote some articles to uphold a doctrine called pragmatism, namely, that the meaning and essence of every conception lies in the application that is to be made of it. That is all very well, when properly understood. I do not intend to recant it. But the question arises,* what is *the ultimate application; and at that time I seem to have been inclined to subordinate the* conception to the *act,* knowing to doing. *Subsequent experience of life has taught me that the only thing that is really desirable* without a reason for being so, *is to render ideas and things reasonable. One cannot well demand a reason for reasonableness itself.*[4]

To bring about such a dialogue between Peirce and Heidegger, we would have to go *beyond* the conceptual opposition between "conception" and "act," between "conception" and "application," theoretical view and praxis, theory and technique. This passage *beyond* is sketched out briefly by Peirce in the very movement of his dissatisfaction: what might the ultimate application be? What Peirce only outlines is the path where Heidegger feels the most to be at stake, especially in *Der Satz vom Grund*. Being unable to follow this path myself here in the way I have attempted to follow it elsewhere, I shall merely draw from it two assertions, at the risk of oversimplifying.

1. The modern dominance of the principle of reason had to go hand in hand with the interpretation of the essence of beings as objects, an object present as representation

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[4]*In this quotation from Peirce's* Values in a Universe of Chance *[(Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 332], in addition to the last sentence, I have italicized the allusion to* desire *in order to echo the opening words of Aristotle's* Metaphysics. *Weber's article appeared in a double issue of* The Oxford Literary Review *5: 1–2 (1982), pp. 59–79.*

[*Vorstellung*], an object placed and positioned *before* a subject. This latter, a man who says "I," an *ego* certain of itself, thus ensures his own technical mastery over the totality of what is. The "re-" of *repraesentatio* also expresses the movement that accounts for — "renders reason to" — a thing whose presence is *encountered* by *rendering* it present, by bringing it to the subject of representation, to the knowing self. This would be the place, if we only had the time, to consider the way Heidegger makes the language do its work (the interaction between *begegnen, entgegen, Gegenstand, Gegenwart* on the one hand, *Stellen, Vorstellen, Zustellen* on the other hand).[5] This relation of representation — which in its whole extension is not merely a relation of knowing — has to be grounded, ensured, protected: that is what we are told by the principle of reason, the *Satz vom Grund*. A dominance is thus assured for representation, for *Vorstellen*, for the relation to the ob-ject, that is, to the being that is located *before* a subject that says "I" and assures itself of its own present existence. But this dominance of the "being-before" does not reduce to that of sight or of *theoria*, nor even to that of a metaphor of the optical (or indeed sklerophthalmic) dimension. It is in *Der Satz vom Grund* that Heidegger states all his reservations on the very presuppositions of such rhetoricizing interpretations. It is not a matter of distinguishing here between sight and non-sight, but rather between two ways of thinking of sight and of light, as well as between two conceptions of listening and voice. But it is true that a caricature of representational man, in the Heideggerian sense, would readily endow him with hard eyes permanently open to a nature that he is to dominate, to rape if necessary, by fixing it in front of himself, or by swooping down on it like a bird of prey. The principle of reason installs its empire only to the extent that the abyssal question of the being that is hiding within it remains hidden, and with it the question of the grounding of the ground itself, of grounding as *grunden* (to ground, to give or take ground: *Boden-nehmen*), as *begrunden* (to motivate, justify, authorize) or especially as *stiften* (to erect or institute, a meaning to which Heidegger accords a certain pre-eminence).[6]

2. Now that institution of modern technoscience that is the university *Stiftung* is built both on the principle of reason and on what remains hidden in that principle. As if in passing, but in two passages that are important to us, Heidegger asserts that the modern university is "grounded" [*gegrundet*], "built" [*gebaut*] on the principle of reason, it "rests" [*ruht*] on this principle.[7] But if today's university, locus of modern science, "is grounded on the principle of grounding," that is, on reason [*grundet auf dem Satz vom Grund*], nowhere do we encounter within it the principle of reason itself, nowhere is this principle thought through, scrutinized, interrogated as to its origin. Nowhere, within the university as such, is anyone wondering from where that call [*Anspruch*] of reason is voiced, nowhere is anyone inquiring into the origin of that demand for grounds, for reason that is to be provided, rendered, delivered: "*Woher spricht dieser Anspruch des Grundes aus seine Zustellung?*" And this dissimulation of its origin within what remains unthought is not harmful, quite the contrary, to the development of the modern university; indeed, Heidegger in passing makes certain laudatory remarks about that university: progress in the sciences, its militant interdisciplinarity, its discursive zeal, and so on. But all this is elaborated above an abyss, suspended over a

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[5] *Here is but one example: "Rationem reddere heisst: den Grund zurückgeben. Weshal zurück und wohin zurück? Weil es sich in den Bewisgängen, allgemein gesprochen im Erkennen um das Vor-stellen der Gegenstände handelt, kommt dieses zurück ins Spiel. Die lateinische Sprache der Philosophie sagt es deutlicher: das Vorstellen is re-praesentatio. Das Begegnende wird auf das vorstellende Ich zu, auf es zurück und ihm entgegen praesentiert, in eine Gegenwart gestellt. Gemäss dem principium reddendae rationis muss das Vorstellen, wenn es ein erkennendes sein soll, den Grund des Gegegnenden auf das Vorstellen zu un d.h. ihm zurückgeben (reddere). Im erkennenden Vorstellen wird dem erkennenden Ich der Grund zu-gestellt. Dies Verlangt das principium rationis. Des Satz vom Grund is darum für Leibniz der Grundsatz des zuzustellenden Grundes" [Der Satz vom Grund (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1957), p. 45].*

[6] *In "Vom Wesen des Grundes,"* Wegmarken [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976], pp. 60–61.

[7] *"And yet, without this all powerful principle there would be no modern science, and without such a science there would be no university today. The latter rests upon the principle of reason [Diese gründet auf dem Satz vom Grund]. How should we represent that to ourselves [Wie sollen wir uns dies vorstellen], the university founded gegründet on a sentence (a primary proposition: auf einen Satz)? Can we risk such an assertion [Dürfen wir eine solche Behauptung wagen]?" [Der Satz vom Grund, Dritte Stunde, p. 49].*

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"gorge" – by which we mean on grounds whose own grounding remains invisible and unthought.

Having reached this point in my reading, instead of involving you in a micrological study of Heidegger's *Der Satz vom Grund* or of his earlier texts on the University (in particular his inaugural lesson of 1929, *Was ist Metaphysik,* or the Rector's Speech of 1933, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universitat)* – a study which I am attempting elsewhere, in Paris, and to which we shall doubtless refer in the discussions that come after this talk – instead of meditating at the edge of the abyss – even if on a bridge protected by "barriers" – I prefer to return to a certain concrete actuality in the problems that assail us in the university.

The framework of grounding, or foundation, and the dimension of the fundamental impose themselves on several counts in the space of the university, whether we are considering the question of its reason for being in general, or its specific missions, or the politics of teaching and research. Each time, what is at stake is the principle of reason as principle of grounding, foundation or institution. A major debate is under way today on the subject of the politics of research and teaching, and on the role that the university may play in this arena: whether this role is central or marginal, progressive or decadent, collaborative with or independent of that of other research institutions sometimes considered better suited to certain ends. The terms of this debate tend to be analogous – I am not saying they are identical – in all the highly industrialized countries, whatever their political regime, whatever role the State traditionally plays in this arena (and, as we all know, even the Western democracies vary considerably in this respect). In the so-called "developing countries," the problem takes shape according to models that are certainly different but in all events inseparable from the preceding ones.

Such a problematics cannot always – cannot any longer – be reduced to a problematics centered on the nation-state; it is now centered instead on multinational military-industrial complexes or techno-economic networks, or rather international technomilitary networks that are apparently multi- or trans-national in form. In France, for some time, this debate has been organized around what is called the "orientation" [*finalisation*] of research. "Oriented" research is research that is programmed, focused, organized in an authoritarian fashion *in view of* its utilization (in view of *"ta khreia,"* Aristotle would say), whether we are talking about technology, economy, medicine, psychosociology, or military power – and in fact we are talking about all of these at once. There is doubtless greater sensitivity to this problem in countries where the politics of research depend closely upon state-managed or "national-

ized" structures, but I believe that conditions are becoming more and more homogeneous among all the technologically advanced industrialized societies. We speak of "oriented" research where, not so long ago, we spoke – as Peirce did – of "application." For it is growing more and more obvious that, without being immediately applied or applicable, research may "pay off," be usable, "end-oriented," in more or less deferred ways. And what is at stake is not merely what sometimes used to be called the techno-economic, medical, or military "by-products" of pure research. The detours, delays and relays of "orientation," its random aspects as well, are more disconcerting than ever. Hence the attempt, by every possible means, to take them into account, to integrate them to the rational calculus of programmed research. A term like "orient" is preferred to "apply," in addition, because the word is less "utilitarian," it leaves open the possibility that noble aims may be written into the program.

You may wonder what is being advocated, in France, in opposition to this concept of oriented research. The answer is basic, "fundamental" research, disinterested research with aims that would not be pledged in advance to some utilitarian purpose. Once upon a time it was possible to believe that pure mathematics, theoretical physics, philosophy (and, within philosophy, especially metaphysics and ontology) were basic disciplines shielded from power, inaccessible to programming by the pressures of the State or, under cover of the State, by civil society or capital interests. The sole concern of such basic research would be knowledge, truth, the disinterested exercise of reason, under the sole authority of the principle of reason.

And yet we know better than ever before what must have been true for all time, that this opposition between the basic and the end-oriented is of real but limited relevance. It is difficult to maintain this opposition with thoroughgoing conceptual as well as practical rigor, especially in the modern fields of the formal sciences, theoretical physics, astrophysics (consider the remarkable example of the science of astronomy, which is becoming useful after having been for so long the paradigm of disinterested contemplation), chemistry, molecular biology, and so forth. Within each of these fields – and they are more interrelated than ever – the so-called basic philosophical questions no longer simply take the form of abstract, sometimes epistemological questions raised after the fact; they arise at the very heart of scientific research in the widest variety of ways. One can no longer distinguish between technology on the one hand and theory, science and rationality on the other. The term techno-science has to be accepted, and its acceptance confirms the fact that an essential affinity ties together objective knowledge, the principle of reason, and a certain metaphysical determination of the relation to truth. We can no longer – and this is finally what Heidegger recalls and calls on us to think through – we can no longer dissociate the principle of reason from the very idea of technology in the realm of their modernity. One can no longer maintain the boundary that Kant, for example, sought to establish between the schema that he called "technical" and the one he called "architectonic" in the systematic organization of knowledge – which was also to ground a systematic organization of the university. The architectonic is the art of systems. "Under the government of reason, our knowledge in general," Kant says, "should not form a rhapsody, but it must form a system in which alone it can support and favor the essential aims of reason." To that pure rational unity of the architectonic, Kant opposes the scheme of the merely technical unity that is empirically oriented, according to views and ends that are incidental, not essential. It is thus a limit between two aims that Kant seeks to define, the essential and noble ends of reason that give rise to a fundamental science versus the incidental and empirical ends which can be systematized only in terms of technical schemas and necessities.

Today, in the orientation or "finalization" of research – forgive me for presuming to recall such obvious points – it is impossible to distinguish between these two sets of aims. It is impossible, for example, to distinguish programs that one would like to consider "worthy," or even technically profitable for humanity, from other programs that would be destructive. This is not new; but never before has so-called basic scientific research been so deeply committed to aims that are at the same time military aims. The very essence of the military, the limits of military technology and even the limits of its accountability are no longer definable. When we hear that two million dollars a minute are being spent in the world today for armaments, we may assume that this figure represents simply the cost of weapons manufacture. But military investments do not stop at that. For military power, even police power, and

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more generally speaking the entire defensive and offensive security establishment benefits from more than just the "byproducts" of basic research. In the advanced technological societies, this establishment programs, orients, orders, and finances, directly or indirectly, through the State or otherwise, the front-line research that is apparently the least "end-oriented" of all. This is all too obvious in such areas as physics, biology, medicine, biotechnology, bioprogramming, data processing and telecommunications. We have only to mention telecommunications and data processing to assess the extent of the phenomenon: the "orientation" of research is limitless, everything in these areas proceeds "in view" of technical and instrumental security. At the service of war, of national and international security, research programs have to encompass the entire field of information, the stockpiling of knowledge, the workings and thus also the essence of language and of all semiotic systems, translation, coding and decoding, the play of presence and absence, hermeneutics, semantics, structural and generative linguistics, pragmatics, rhetoric. I am accumulating all these disciplines in a haphazard way, on purpose, but I shall end with literature, poetry, the arts and fiction in general: the theory that has these disciplines as its object may be just as useful in ideological warfare as it is in experimentation with variables in all-too-familiar perversions of the referential function. Such a theory may always be put to work in communications strategy, the theory of commands, the most refined military pragmatics of jussive utterances (by what token, for example, will it be clear that an utterance is to be taken as a command in the new technology of telecommunications? How are the new resources of simulation and simulacrum to be controlled? And so on . . .). One can just as easily seek to use the theoretical formulations of sociology, psychology, even psychoanalysis in order to refine what was called in France during the Indochinese or Algerian wars the powers of "psychological action" — alternating with torture. From now on, so long as it has the means, a military budget can invest in anything at all, in view of deferred profits: "basic" scientific theory, the humanities, literary theory and philosophy. The compartment of philosophy which covered all this, and which Kant thought ought to be kept unavailable to any utilitarian purpose and to the orders of any power whatsoever in its search for truth, can no longer lay claim to such autonomy. What is produced in this field can always be used. And even if it should remain useless in its results, in its productions, it can always serve to keep the masters of discourse busy: the experts, professionals of rhetoric, logic or philosophy who might otherwise be applying their energy elsewhere. Or again, it may in certain situations secure an ideological bonus of luxury and gratuitousness for a society that can afford it, within certain limits. Furthermore, when certain random consequences of research are taken into account, it is always possible to have in view some eventual benefit that may ensue from an apparently useless research project (in philosophy or the humanities, for example). The history of the sciences encourages researchers to integrate that margin of randomness into their centralized calculation. They then proceed to adjust the means at their disposal, the available financial support, and the distribution of credits. A State power or the forces that it represents no longer need to prohibit research or to censor discourse, especially in the West. It is enough that they can limit the means, can regulate support for production, transmission, and diffusion. The machinery for this new "censorship" in the broad sense is much more complex and omnipresent than in Kant's day, for example, when the entire problematics and the entire topology of the university were organized around the exercise of royal censorship. Today, in the Western democracies, that form of censorship has almost entirely disappeared. The prohibiting limitations function through multiple channels that are decentralized, difficult to bring together into a system. The unacceptability of a discourse, the noncertification of a research project, the illegitimacy of a course offering are declared by evaluative actions: studying such evaluations is, it seems to me, one of the tasks most indispensable to the exercise of academic responsibility, most urgent for the maintenance of its dignity. Within the university itself, forces that are apparently external to it (presses, foundations, the mass media) are intervening in an ever more decisive way. University presses play a mediating role that entails the most serious responsibilities, since scientific criteria, in principle represented by the members of the university corporation, have to come to terms with many other aims. When the margin of randomness has to be narrowed, restrictions on support affect the disciplines that are the least profitable in the short run. And that provokes, within the professions, all kinds of effects, certain ones of which seem to have lost

any direct relation to that causality — which is itself still largely overdetermined. The shifting determination of the margin of randomness always depends upon the techno-economic situation of a society in its relation to the entire world arena. In the United States, for example (and it is not just one example among others), without even mentioning the economic regulation that allows certain surplus values — through the channel of private foundations among others — to sustain research or creative projects that are not immediately or apparently profitable, we also know that military programs, especially those of the Navy, can very rationally subsidize linguistic, semiotic or anthropological investigations. These in turn are related to history, literature, hermeneutics, law, political science, psychoanalysis, and so forth.

The concept of information or informatization is the most general operator here. It integrates the basic to the oriented, the purely rational to the technical, thus bearing witness to that original intermingling of the metaphysical and the technical. The value of "form" is not foreign to it; but let us drop this difficult point for now. In *Der Satz vom Grund*, Heidegger locates this concept of "information" (understood and pronounced as in English, he says at the time when he is putting America and Russia side by side like two symmetrical and homogeneous continents of metaphysics *as* technique) in a dependence upon the principle of reason, as a principle of integral calculability. Even the principle of uncertainty (and he would have said the same thing of a certain interpretation of undecidability) continues to operate within the problematics of representation and of the subject-object relation. Thus he calls this the atomic era and quotes a book of popularization entitled "We shall live thanks to atoms" with prefaces both by Otto Hahn, Nobel prize-winner and "fundamentalist" physicist, and Franz Joseph Strauss, then minister of national defense. Information ensures the insurance of calculation and the calculation of insurance. In this we recognize the period of the principle of reason. Leibniz, as Heidegger recalls, is considered to have been the inventor of life insurance. In the form of information [*in der Gestalt der Information*], Heidegger says, the principle of reason dominates our entire representation [*Vorstellen*] and delineates a period for which everything depends upon the delivery of atomic energy. Delivery in German is *Zustellung*, a word that also applies, as Heidegger points out, to the delivery of mail. It belongs to the chain of *Gestell*, from the *Stellen* group [*Vorstellen, Nachstellen, Zustellen, Sicherstellen*] that characterizes technological modernity. "Information" in this sense is the most economic, the most rapid and the clearest (univocal, *eindeutig*) stockpiling, recording and communication of news. It must instruct men about the safeguarding [*Sicherstellung*] of what will meet their needs, *ta khreia*. Computer technology, data banks, artificial intelligences, translating machines, and so forth, all these are constructed on the basis of that instrumental determination of a calculable language. Information does not inform merely by delivering an information content, it gives form, *"in-formiert," "formiert zugleich."* It installs man in a form that permits him to ensure his mastery on earth and beyond. All this has to be pondered as the effect of the principle of reason, or, put more rigorously, has to be analyzed as the effect of a dominant interpretation of that principle, of a certain emphasis in the way we heed its summons. But I have said that I cannot deal with the question of such stress here; it lies outside the scope of my topic.

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What, then, is my topic? What do I have in view that has led me to present things as I have done so far? I have been thinking especially of the necessity to awaken or to resituate a responsibility, in the university or in face of the university, whether one belongs to it or not.

Those analysts who study the informative and instrumental value of language today are necessarily led to the very confines of the principle of reason thus interpreted. This can happen in any number of disciplines. But if the analysts end up for example working on the structures of the simulacrum or of literary fiction, on a poetic rather than an informative value of language, on the effects of undecidability, and so on, by that very token they are interested in possibilities that arise at the outer limits of the authority and the power of the principle of reason. On that basis, they may attempt to define new responsibilities in the face of the university's total subjection to the technologies of informatization. Not so as to refuse them; not so as to counter with some obscurantist irrationalism (and irrationalism, like

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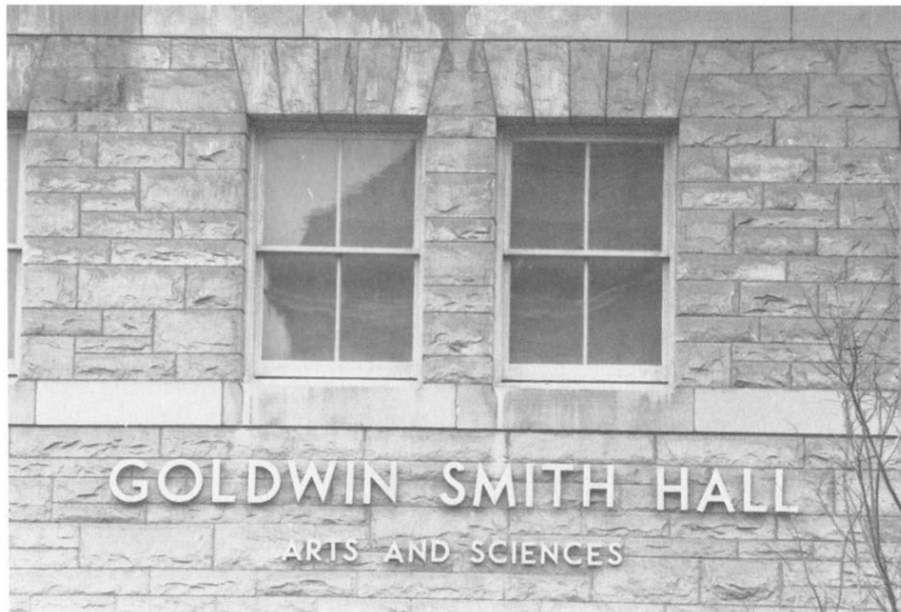
nihilism, is a posture that is completely symmetrical to, thus dependent upon, the principle of reason). The theme of extravagance *as* an irrationalism — there is very clear evidence for this — dates from the period when the principle of reason was being formulated. Leibniz denounced it in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*. To raise these new questions may sometimes protect an aspect of philosophy and the humanities that has always resisted the influx of knowledge; it may also preserve the memory of what is much more deeply buried and ancient than the principle of reason. But the approach I am advocating here is often felt by certain guardians of the "humanities" or of the positive sciences as a threat. It is interpreted as such by those who most often have never sought to understand the history and the system of norms specific to their own institution, the deontology of their own profession. They do not wish to know how their discipline has been constituted, particularly in its modern professional form, since the beginning of the nineteenth century and under the watchful vigilance of the principle of reason. For the principle of reason may have obscurantist and nihilist effects. They can be seen more or less everywhere, in Europe and in America among those who believe they are defending philosophy, literature and the humanities against these new modes of questioning that are also a new relation to language and tradition, a new *affirmation,* and new ways of taking responsibility. We can easily see on which side obscurantism and nihilism are lurking when on occasion great professors or representatives of prestigious institutions lose all sense of proportion and control; on such occasions they forget the principles that they claim to defend in their work and suddenly begin to heap insults, to say whatever comes into their heads on the subject of texts that they obviously have never opened or that they have encountered through a mediocre journalism that in other circumstances they would pretend to scorn.[8]

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[8]*Among many possible examples, I shall mention only two recent articles. They have at least one trait in common: their authors are highly placed representatives of two institutions whose power and influence hardly need to be recalled. I refer to "The Crisis in English Studies" by Walter Jackson Bate, Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard [*Harvard Magazine*, Sept./Oct. 1982], and to "The Shattered Humanities" by Willis J. Bennett, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities [*Wall Street Journal, Dec. 31, 1982]. The latter of these articles carries ignorance and irrationality so far as to write the following: "A popular movement in literary criticism called 'Deconstruction' denies that there are any texts at all. If there are no texts, there are no great texts, and no argument for reading." The former makes remarks about deconstruction — and this is not by chance — that are, we might say, just as unnerved. As Paul de Man notes in an admirable short essay ["The Return to Philology,"* Times Literary Supplement, *December 10, 1982], Professor Bate "has this time confined his sources of information to* Newsweek *magazine. . . . What is left is a matter of law-enforcement rather than a critical debate. One must be feeling very threatened indeed to become so aggressively defensive."*

It is possible to speak of this new responsibility that I have invoked only by sounding a call to practice it. It would be the responsibility of a community of thought for which the frontier between basic and oriented research would no longer be secured, or in any event not under the same conditions as before. I call it a community of thought in the broad sense — "at large" — rather than a community of research, of science or philosophy, since these values are most often subjected to the unquestioned authority of a principle of reason. Now reason is only one species of thought — which does not mean that thought is "irrational." Such a community would interrogate the essence of reason and of the principle of reason, the values of the basic, of the principial, of radicality, of the arkhe in general, and it would attempt to draw out all the possible consequences of this questioning. It is not certain that such thinking can bring together a community or found an institution in the traditional sense of these words. What is meant by community and institution must be rethought. This thinking must also unmask — an infinite task — all the ruses of end-orienting reason, the paths by which apparently disinterested research can find itself indirectly reappropriated, reinvested by programs of all sorts. That does not mean that "orientation" is bad in itself and that it must be combatted, far from it. Rather, I am defining the necessity for a new way of educating students that will prepare them to undertake new analyses in order to evaluate these ends and to choose, when possible, among them all.

As I mentioned earlier, along with some colleagues I was asked last year by the French government to prepare a report in view of the creation of an International College of Philosophy. I insisted, in that report, on stressing the dimension that in this context I am call- ing "thought" — a dimension that is not reducible to technique, nor to science, nor to philosophy. This International College would not only be a College of Philosophy but also a place where philosophy itself would be questioned. It would be open to types of research that are not perceived as legitimate today, or that are insufficiently developed in French or foreign institutions, including some research that could be called "basic"; but it would not stop there. We would go one step further, providing a place to work on the value and mean- ing of the basic, the fundamental, on its opposition to goal-orientation, on the ruses of orien- tation in all its domains. As in the seminar that I mentioned earlier, the report confronts the political, ethical, and juridical consequences of such an undertaking. I cannot go into more detail here without keeping you much too long.

These new responsibilities cannot be purely academic. If they remain extremely difficult to assume, extremely precarious and threatened, it is because they must at once keep alive the memory of a tradition and make an opening beyond any program, that is, toward what is called the future. And the discourse, the works, or the position-taking that these respon- sibilities inspire, as to the institution of science and research, no longer stem solely from the sociology of knowledge, from sociology or politology. These disciplines are doubtless more necessary than ever; I would be the last to want to disqualify them. But whatever conceptual apparatus they may have, whatever axiomatics, whatever methodology (Marxist or neo- Marxist, Weberian or neo-Weberian, Mannheimian, some combination of these or something else entirely), they never touch upon that which, in themselves, continues to be based on the principle of reason and thus on the essential foundation of the modern univer- sity. They never question scientific normativity, beginning with the value of objectivity or of objectivation, which governs and authorizes their discourse. Whatever may be their scien- tific value — and it may be considerable — these sociologies of the institution remain in this sense internal to the university, intra-institutional, controlled by the deepseated standards, even the programs, of the space that they claim to analyze. This can be observed, among other things, in the rhetoric, the rites, the modes of presentation and demonstration that they continue to respect. Thus I shall go so far as to say that the discourse of Marxism and psychoanalysis, including those of Marx and Freud, inasmuch as they are standardized by a project of scientific practice and by the principle of reason, are intra-institutional, in any event homogeneous with the discourse that dominates the university in the last analysis. And the fact that this discourse is occasionally proffered by people who are not professional academics changes nothing essential. It simply explains, to a certain extent, the fact that even when it claims to be revolutionary, this discourse does not always trouble the most conservative forces of the university. Whether it is understood or not, it is enough that it does not threaten the fundamental axiomatics and deontology of the institution, its rhetoric, its

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rites and procedures. The academic landscape easily accommodates such types of discourse more easily within its economy and its ecology; however, when it does not simply exclude those who raise questions at the level of the foundation or non-foundation of the foundation of the university, it reacts much more fearfully to those that address sometimes the same questions to Marxism, to psychoanalysis, to the sciences, to philosophy and the humanities. It is not a matter simply of questions that one *formulates* while submitting oneself, as I am doing here, to the principle of reason, but also of preparing oneself thereby to transform the modes of writing, approaches to pedagogy, the procedures of academic exchange, the relation to languages, to other disciplines, to the institution in general, to its inside and its outside. Those who venture forth along this path, it seems to me, need not set themselves up in opposition to the principle of reason, nor need they give way to "irrationalism." They may continue to assume *within* the university, along with its memory and tradition, the imperative of professional rigor and competence. There is a double gesture here, a double postulation: to ensure professional competence and the most serious tradition of the university even while going as far as possible, theoretically and practically, in the most directly underground thinking about the abyss beneath the university, to think at one and the same time the entire "Cornellian" landscape — the campus on the heights, the bridges, and if necessary the barriers above the abyss — and the abyss itself. It is this double gesture that appears unsituatable and thus unbearable to certain university professionals in every country who join ranks to foreclose or to censure it by all available means, simultaneously denouncing the "professionalism" and the "antiprofessionalism" of those who are calling others to these new responsibilities.

I shall not venture here to deal with the debate on "professionalism" that is developing in your country. Its features are, to a certain extent at least, specific to the history of the American university. But I shall conclude on this general theme of "professions." At the risk of contradicting what I have been urging here, I should like to caution against another kind of precipitous reaction. For the responsibility that I am trying to situate cannot be simple. It implies multiple sites, a stratified terrain, postulations that are undergoing continual displacement, a sort of strategic rhythm. I said earlier that I would be speaking only of a certain rhythm, for example that of the blinking of an eye, and that I would only be playing one risk off against another, the barrier against the abyss, the abyss against the barrier, the one with the other and the one under the other.

Beyond technical goal-orientation, even beyond the opposition between technical goal-orientation and the principle of sufficient reason, beyond the affinity between technology and metaphysics, what I have here called "thought" risks in its turn (but I believe this risk is unavoidable — it is the risk of the future itself) being reappropriated by socio-political forces that could find it in their own interest in certain situations. Such a "thought" indeed cannot be produced outside of certain historical, techno-economic, politico-institutional and linguistic conditions. A strategic analysis that is to be as vigilant as possible must thus with its eyes wide open attempt to ward off such reappropriations. (I should have liked to situate at this point certain questions about the "politics" of Heideggerian thought, especially as elaborated prior to *Der Satz vom Grund,* for example in the two inaugural discourses of 1929 and 1933.)

I shall limit myself, however, to the double question of "professions." First: does the university have as its essential mission that of producing professional competencies, which may sometimes be external to the university? Second: is the task of the university to ensure within itself — and under what conditions — the reproduction of professional competence by preparing professors for pedagogy and for research who have respect for a certain code? One may answer the second question in the affirmative without having done so for the first, and seek to keep professional forms and values internal to the university outside the market place while keeping the goal-orientation of social work outside of the university. The new responsibility of the "thought" of which we are speaking cannot fail to be accompanied at least by a movement of suspicion, even of rejection with respect to the professionalization of the university in these two senses, and especially in the first, which regulates university life according to the supply and demand of the marketplace and according to a purely technical ideal of competence. To this extent at least, such "thought" may, at a minimum, result in reproducing a highly traditional politics of knowledge. And the effects may be those that

belong to a social hierarchy in the exercise of technopolitical power. I am not saying that this "thought" is identical with that politics, and that it is therefore necessary to abstain from it; I am saying that under certain conditions it can serve that politics, and that everything thus comes down to the analysis of those conditions. In modern times, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger and numerous others have all said as much, quite unmistakably: the essential feature of academic responsibility must not be professional education (and the pure core of academic autonomy, the essence of the university, is located in the philosophy department, according to Kant). Does this affirmation not repeat the profound and hierarchizing political evaluation of Metaphysics, I mean of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*? Shortly after the passage that I read at the beginning (981b and following), one sees a theoretico-political hierarchy being put into place. At the top, there is theoretical knowledge. It is not sought after in view of its utility; and the holder of this knowledge, which is always a knowledge of causes and of principles, is the leader or *arkhitekton* of a society at work, is positioned above the manual laborer [*kheiroteknes*] who acts without knowing, just as a fire burns. Now this theoretician leader, this knower of causes who has no need of "practical" skill, is in essence a *teacher*. Beyond the fact of knowing causes and of possessing reason [*to logon ekhein*], he bears another mark [*semeion*] of recognition: the "capacity to teach" [*to dunasthai didaskein*]. To teach, then, and at the same time to direct, steer, organize the empirical work of the laborers. The theoretician-teacher or "architect" is a leader because he is on the side of the *arkhe,* of beginning and commanding. He commands — he is the premier or the prince — because he knows causes and principles, the "whys" and thus also the "wherefores" of things. Before the fact, and before anyone else, he answers to the principle of reason which is the first principle, the principle of principles. And that is why he takes orders from no one; it is he, on the contrary, who orders, prescribes, lays down the law (982a 18). And it is normal that this superior science, with the power that it confers by virtue of its very lack of utility, is developed in places [*topoi*], in regions where leisure is possible. Thus Aristotle points out that the mathematical arts were developed in Egypt owing to the leisure time enjoyed by the priestly caste [*to ton iereon ethnos*], the priestly folk.

Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger, speaking of the university, premodern or modern, do not say exactly what Aristotle said, nor do all three of them say exactly the same thing. But they *also* do say the same thing. Even though he admits the industrial model of the division of labor into the university, Kant places the so-called "lower" faculty, the faculty of philosophy — a place of pure rational knowledge, a place where truth has to be spoken without controls and without concern for "utility," a place where the very meaning and the autonomy of the university meet — Kant places this faculty above and outside professional education: the architectonic schema of pure reason is above and outside the technical schema. In his *Lectures on the Future of our Educational Establishments,* Nietzsche condemns the division of labor in the sciences, condemns utilitarian and journalistic culture in the service of the State, condemns the professional ends of the University. The more one does [*tut*] in the area of training, the more one has to think [*denken*]. And, still in the first Lecture: "*Man muss nicht nur Standpunkte, sondern auch Gedanken haben!*"; one must not have viewpoints alone, but also thoughts! As for Heidegger, in 1929, in his inaugural lesson entitled "What is Metaphysics," he deplores the henceforth technical organization of the university and its compartmentalizing specialization. And even in his *Rector's Speech,* at the very point where he makes an appeal on behalf of the three services (*Arbeitsdienst, Wehrdienst, Wissensdienst,* the service of work, the military, and knowledge), at the very point where he is recalling that these services are of equal rank and equally original (he had recalled earlier that for the Greeks *theoria* was only the highest form of *praxis* and the mode, par excellence, of *energeia*), Heidegger nevertheless violently condemns disciplinary compartmentalization and "exterior training in view of a profession," as "an idle and inauthentic thing" [*Das Mussige und Unechte ausserlicher Berufsabrichtung . . .*].

Desiring to remove the university from "useful" programs and from professional ends, one may always, willingly or not, find oneself serving unrecognized ends, reconstituting powers of caste, class, or corporation. We are in an implacable political topography: one step further in view of greater profundity or radicalization, even going beyond the "profound" and the "radical," the principial, the *arkhe,* one step further toward a sort of original an-archy risks producing or reproducing the hierarchy. "Thought" requires *both* the principle of reason

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and what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhe* and an-archy. Between the two, the difference of a breath or an accent, only the *enactment* of this "thought" can decide. That decision is always risky, it always risks the worst. To claim to eliminate that risk by an institutional program is quite simply to erect a barricade against a future. The decision of thought cannot be an intra-institutional event, an academic moment.

All this does not define a politics, nor even a responsibility. Only, at best, some negative conditions, a "negative wisdom," as the Kant of *The Conflict of the Faculties* would say: preliminary cautions, protocols of vigilance for a new *Aufklärung,* what must be seen and kept in sight in a modern re-elaboration of that old problematics. Beware of the abysses and the gorges, but also of the bridges and the barriers. Beware of what opens the university to the outside and the bottomless, but also of what, closing it in on itself, would create only an illusion of closure, would make the university available to any sort of interest, or else render it perfectly useless. Beware of ends; but what would a university be without ends?

Neither in its medieval nor in its modern form has the university disposed freely of its own absolute autonomy and of the rigorous conditions of its own unity. During more than eight centuries, "university" has been the name given by a society to a sort of supplementary body that at one and the same time it wanted to project outside itself and to keep jealously to itself, to emancipate and to control. On this double basis, the university was supposed to *represent* society. And in a certain way it has done so: it has reproduced society's scenography, its views, conflicts, contradictions, its play and its differences, and also its desire for organic union in a total body. Organicist language is always associated with "techno-industrial" language in "modern" discourse on the university. But with the relative autonomy of a technical apparatus, indeed that of a machine and of a prosthetic body, this artifact that is the university has *reflected society* only in giving it the chance for reflection, that is, also, for *dissociation.* The time for reflection, here, signifies not only that the internal rhythm of the university apparatus is relatively independent of social time and relaxes the urgency of command, ensures for it a great and precious freedom of play. An empty place for chance: the invagination of an inside pocket. The time for reflection is also the chance for turning back on the very conditions of reflection, in all the senses of that word, as if with the help of a new optical device one could finally see sight, could not only view the natural landscape, the city, the bridge and the abyss, but could view viewing. As if through an acoustical device one could hear hearing, in other words, seize the inaudible in a sort of poetic telephony. Then the time of reflection is also an other time, it is heterogeneous with what it reflects and perhaps gives time for what calls for and is called thought. It is the chance for an

event about which one does not know whether or not, presenting itself *within* the university, it belongs to the history of the university. It may also be brief and paradoxical, it may tear up time, like the instant invoked by Kierkegaard, one of those thinkers who are foreign, even hostile to the university, who give us more to think about, with respect to the essence of the university, than academic reflections themselves. The chance for this event is the chance of an instant, an *Augenblick,* a "wink" or a "blink," it takes place "in the twinkling of an eye," I would say, rather, "in the twilight of an eye," for it is in the most crepuscular, the most westerly situations of the Western university that the chances of this "twinkling" of thought are multiplied. In a period of "crisis," as we say, a period of decadence and renewal, when the institution is "on the blink," provocation to think brings together in the *same* instant the desire for memory and exposure to the future, the fidelity of a guardian faithful enough to want to keep even the chance of a future, in other words the singular responsibility of what he does not have and of what is not yet. Neither in his keeping nor in his purview. Keep the memory and keep the chance — is this possible? And chance — can it be kept? Is it not, as its name indicates, the risk or the advent of the fall, even of decadence, the falling-due that befalls you at the bottom of the "gorge"? I don't know. I don't know if it is possible to keep both memory and chance. I am tempted to think, rather, that the one cannot be kept without the other, without keeping the other and being kept from the other. Differently. That double guard will be assigned, as its responsibility, to the strange destiny of the university. To its law, to its reason for being and to its truth. Let us risk one more etymological wink: truth is what keeps, that is, both preserves and is preserved. I am thinking here of *Wahrheit,* of the *Wahren* of *Wahrheit* and of *veritas* — whose name figures on the coat of arms of so many American universities. It institutes guardians and calls upon them to watch faithfully — truthfully — over itself.

Let me recall my *incipit* and the single question that I raised at the outset: how can we not speak, today, of the university? Have I said it, or done it? Have I said how one must not speak, today, of the university? Or have I rather spoken as one should not do today, within the University? Only others can answer. Beginning with you.

— Translated by Catherine Porter and Edward P. Morris