

## *Preface to the English Edition*

With its new title, *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology*, the subject matter and thrust of this work, which was written between 1974 and 1975 as my doctoral thesis and published in 1978, is highlighted much more pointedly than by its initial title, *System and Metaphoricity in the Philosophy of Georges Bataille*. Indeed, this work is not only an attempt to understand Bataille's mythical anthropology, and critique of humanism, in a philosophical light by situating his thought within the fourfold marked by the names of Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Freud. It is above all a study on how Bataille's materialist approach, or, to apply an expression by Carlo Michelstaedter to this thinker, his systematic "hunger for what is lower," which instructs his reverse reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, or step back from absolute knowledge to sense-perception, lays the abyssal groundwork for the spectral and phantasmatic other, or double of phenomenology that the latter inevitably co-produces in its steady speculative process toward self-certain knowledge.

With respect to the German edition I consider this English translation of the book its definitive version. Indeed, it is in a way a new original. Because of the time constraints, and special conditions under which the book had to be produced in 1978, the original contained many formal mistakes that have now been corrected. But, in addition, I have taken the opportunity of making some slight changes to improve the flow of the argument, thus making this also a more readable book than the first edition.

I would like to take the opportunity of this translation and republication to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Klaus Heinrich, who at the extremely difficult moment when for reasons of illness Prof. Dr. Jacob Taubes could no longer serve as my supervisor, generously offered to take over the project. I also wish to thank all the students, who in 1971–72

participated in a workshop on Bataille that I conducted at the Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft at the Freie Universität Berlin in which I sketched out the outlines of the present work. Most special thanks go to Werner Hamacher, Bernard Pautrat, Steffen Stelzer, and Samuel Weber, on whom, in almost daily conversations, whether in Paris or Berlin, I tested the main ideas of this work and whose searching criticism and comments were invaluable in shaping the argument in this book.

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