

## **“Love of Words” – “Love of Wisdom” Philology and Philosophy from a Hermeneutical Perspective<sup>\*</sup>**

*István M. FEHÉR*

*Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest*

*Andrássy University, Budapest*

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**Abstract:** In Gadamer’s hermeneutics the relationship of philology to philosophy, viz., hermeneutics, often became a focus of his reflection. Thereby he underlined “the inner connection between the words ‘philology’ and ‘philosophy’”: philology is “the love of the *logoi*” and philosophy means “the love of the ‘sophos’.” Philology seems to precede hermeneutics, but the establishing of a text always involves necessarily interpretive work. It is a positivistic prejudice to believe that philology can do without interpretation, that is, hermeneutics. What Gadamer calls “conceptual history” [Begriffsgeschichte], and what he is pursuing as such, is precisely this inner interconnectedness of philology and philosophy, or philology and hermeneutics. This is in some sense Gadamer’s “method.” The first part of the paper argues that the interconnectedness of philology and philosophy, with each side referring to the other, is central to Gadamer’s work; it is the “element” in which Gadamer’s writings move. The second part investigates the relation of philology to history, concentrating on Gadamer’s thesis according to which philology is “Freude am Sinn, der sich aussagt”, while history is “Forschung nach Sinn, der verhüllt ist.” The third part centres around Gadamer’s characterization of the relation of philology to philosophy. Both share a love for the *logoi*, viz., wisdom expressing itself in words, and that constitutes their neighbourhood. But something such as “text” has a different meaning for philology or philosophy. It is the wording of a text that philology concentrates upon, whereas philosophy aims at “meaning.” Philosophy does not possess a language of its own, and that is why the effort of the philosophical concept does embody in ever newer linguistic forms. Philology tends to be true to (the wording of) the text, while philosophy is interested first and foremost in the sense or meaning of what is being said by the text. Philology is interested in the word, philosophy aims at understanding the matter. Philosophy is thus an unended conversation, where there is no first word any more than there is a last one. The lover of wisdom must be a lover of words, for there is no wisdom without words. Still, wisdom is not exhausted in words. Those who love words or speeches are not necessarily friends of wisdom. Wisdom is, for Plato, beyond the words. Love of words and love of wisdom, therefore, overlap, but do not totally coincide with one another.

**E-mail:** feher@ella.hu

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*The relationship* of philology to philosophy and the humanities (Geisteswissenschaften) is an object of frequent reflections in Gadamer's hermeneutics. In what follows, I should like to sketch some of the characteristic aspects of this relationship, and I wish to do so in a way appropriate for this relationship (very tight in Gadamer's conception): namely, both *textually*, by focusing on certain *loci* of Gadamer's works, and – inseparably from it – by concentrating also on their *interpretation*. I wish to comply with the methodological and knowledge claims of *philology* with the first attempt, and those of *philosophy* with the second, in so far as the research of textuality and the wording of the text is traditionally an interest of philology, while interpretation is an interest of philosophy. The (tight) relationship of the two will be discussed from a hermeneutical perspective, whereby it is to be taken into account that hermeneutics itself represents a specific philosophical perspective. There is hardly any reason to be puzzled by this claim since philosophy being the highest and most comprehensive perspective of all, the discussion of its relationship with any discipline can only take place from the point of view of one particular philosophy; it would be a superfluous and unproductive effort to attempt transcending philosophy towards a higher instance beyond philosophy (a kind of super-philosophy) or place it under the yoke of an instance which would not subsequently prove to be itself a philosophy. Every kind of super- or meta-philosophy is and remains philosophy in the last instance.

### I. “Philology” and “philosophy”: word and meaning – the meaning of the word

According to our initial definition, philology focuses its attention on textuality and the wording of the text – “a philologist is a friend of eloquence”,<sup>1</sup> philology is “the love of words”<sup>2</sup> – and its activity is centred on the discussion of authoritative texts. If philology

<sup>1</sup> GW 1, 343: “Freund der schönen Reden”. – Bibliographical note: Gadamer's complete works are cited with the abbreviation GW (*Gesammelte Werke*, vols. 1–10, Tübingen: Mohr, 1985–1995), Heidegger's complete works with the abbreviation GA (*Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975–), followed by volume number, comma, and page numbers. Other abbreviations: SZ = Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979; BT = Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962; TM = Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, revisions by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Crossroad, 1989, reprinted London/New York: Continuum, 1999 (the citations below refer to the 2006 reprint of the 2004 edition)

<sup>2</sup> Karl Otto Conrady: *Einführung in die neuere deutsche Literaturwissenschaft* (Hamburg, 1966), 27, cited by Gerhard Jäger: *Einführung in die klassische Philologie* (München: C. H. Beck, 1980, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1990), 11.: “Liebe zum Wort”. Now and in what follows I shall disregard what Jäger and other historians of philology do not fail to mention, namely, that at its beginnings philology most naturally included the problem of meaning (“Sinn”) in addition to the matter of wording (“Wortlaut”), i.e., that which we now call a hermeneutical dimension. (See e.g. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *Geschichte der klassischen Philologie. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Hellenismus* [München: C. H. Beck, 1982], 18.: “Philologie ist die Kunst, die literarische Tradition zu verstehen, zu erklären und wiederherzustellen.”) The removal of the problem of meaning from

focuses on textuality and the wording of the text (Wortlaut), then, seen from here, one can state in summary that the main concern of hermeneutics is meaning (*Sinn*), and its relationship with philology can be described with the following particular question: “*What is the meaning of that which (literally) sounds like this and this?*” Philology and hermeneutics therefore mutually complete each other and are strongly inter-referential, but the above description may still suggest that the two questions just formulated – concerning the wording of the text and the meaning of those words – make up some kind of a sequence: the *meaning* of the wording of the text (the successive series of words) can evidently only be tackled, the interpretation of the text can only be engaged once the wording of the text has previously been established with considerable certainty. In this case then philology would precede hermeneutics (philosophy), and hermeneutics would be parasitic upon philology.

Although there may be some – rare – cases in which this pattern might work, still, in the vast majority of philological-hermeneutic activity, and thus in most life-work and historical critical editions it fails, since text establishment itself takes place not under laboratory conditions, in a space void of interpretation. I have recently tried to argue for this point in a more detailed study.<sup>1</sup> If philology and hermeneutics are mutually intertwined, then any kind of philology exempt from philosophy can only seem to be possible and desirable from the perspective of a positivistic approach feeding on the illusion of a “pure” philology – however, this positivistic approach is itself a particular philosophy. A philosophy, let it be added, which is unaware of itself as philosophy or reluctant to acknowledge or identify itself as such; it is, as it were, an “anti-philosophical philosophy” in the strong sense, which of course occurs in the history of philosophy with certain – regretful – frequency.<sup>2</sup>

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philology, its so-called “dehermeneutization” is a historical development, more precisely one of modernity, primarily resulted from the influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism, which partly also explains why hermeneutics both as a denomination and as a discipline was formed in the period of modernity.

<sup>1</sup> “István Fehér M., Szövegkritika, kiadástörténet, interpretáció. A történeti-kritikai és az életműkiadások filológiai-hermeneutikai problémái” (Textual Criticism, Edition History, Interpretation. Philological and Hermeneutical Problems of Historical-Critical and Life-Work Editions), in Pál Kelemen, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, Attila Simon, György Tverdot, eds. *Filológia – interpretáció – médiatörténet* (Philology – interpretation – media history), (Budapest: Ráció, 2009), 56–151. Also in English: “Textual Criticism, Edition History, Interpretation. Philological and Hermeneutical Problems of Historical-Critical and Life-Work Editions,” *Philobiblon – Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities* vol. 17 no. 1 (2012): 114–181.

<sup>2</sup> For more on “anti-philosophical philosophy,” see my remarks in relation to Husserl and Fichte: István Fehér M., “Bevezetés” (Introduction) in Edmund Husserl: *A filozófia mint szigorú tudomány* (Philosophy as a Strict Science) (Budapest: Kossuth, 1993), p. 10f and note 20 on p. 19f. (Fichte wrote, among other things, that “you can not convince the Dogmatist by the proof just stated, however clear it may be, for you can not bring the proof to his knowledge, since he lacks the power to comprehend it”; and that dogmatism therefore “is no Philosophy at all, but merely an impotent assertion. Idealism is the only possible remaining Philosophy.” See *First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge*, trans. Adolf Ernst Kroeger, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Introduction\\_to\\_Fichte's\\_Science\\_of\\_Knowledge](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Fichte's_Science_of_Knowledge). I should now like to add one more consideration of Fichte’s which is probably an even more pertinent formulation of the matter; Fichte speaks here about an insight which denies the inner essence of any insight, “an insight into

Heidegger's recurrent observations offer a good description of the relationship of philology or any other discipline to philosophy. These observations span across decades (from the 1910s to the 1950s-1960s), and show a significant consistency and similarity both in formulation *and* in meaning. For a thinker formed in the intellectual climate and influence of neo-Kantianism and phenomenology it was evident from the very beginning that philosophy fulfils a basic, or rather foundational function in its relation to sciences – both natural, and historical or cultural disciplines. This is a self-

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that which by its very nature cannot admit of it" (Fichte, *Destination of Man*, trans. Percy Sinnett, London: Chapman Brothers, 1846, 68 ["etwas einzusehen, das gegen das innere Wesen aller Einsicht streitet"; *Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971, vol. 2, 246]). The same structure and problem appears in Sartre's concept of bad faith. For this, see István Fehér M., "Írónia és szolidaritás" (Irony and solidarity), in Miklós Nyíró, ed., *Filozófia a globalizáció árnyékában: Richard Rorty* (Philosophy in the shadow of globalization: Richard Rorty) (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010), 40.: "Bad faith is for Sartre primarily a kind of faith; and precisely such [...] that its very first act is nothing else than a decision (concealed even before itself) about the nature of faith itself – a decision [...] by which this faith *renders a non-convincing, non-evident evidence as the criterion of evidence*." See Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Édition corrigée avec index par Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, Paris: Gallimard (collection Tel), 1998, 103: "[...] la mauvaise foi est foi. [...] le projet de mauvaise foi doit être lui-même de mauvaise foi [...] Ce projet premier de mauvaise foi est une décision de mauvaise foi sur la nature de la foi". See also Heidegger's formulation: "Verständigkeit mißverstehet das Verstehen". (*Sein und Zeit*, § 63., Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979, 315; approximately: "Everyday understanding misunderstands understanding"). If any kind of "anti-philosophical philosophy" is also philosophy – even if it is such that is unaware or ignorant of itself as philosophy – then this implies that we cannot get rid of philosophy, and this is also expressed by the thesis shared by many philosophers that all people (and not only philologists) are philosophers, or all people philosophize. See e.g. Karl Jaspers, *Provokationen. Gespräche und Interviews*, ed. Hans Saner (München: Piper-Verlag, 1969), 176. "Philosophizing happens in every person. A professional philosopher can only lend it greater clarity." ("Philosophieren ist das, was in jedem Menschen geschieht. Der Philosoph von Beruf kann das nur zu grösserer Klarheit bringen".) Ibid. 186. "In fact everybody philosophizes without being aware of it, and without calling it philosophy" („In der Tat philosophiert auch jeder, ohne dass er sich dessen bewusst ist, ohne es selber Philosophie zu nennen"). In parallel with Jaspers, Heidegger also formulated this idea several times during his lifetime, one of the best known of these is found at the end of his inaugural lecture: "We cannot situate ourselves into metaphysics since – inasmuch as we exist – we are always already in it. [...] Inasmuch as man exists, philosophizing also happens in a certain way. Philosophy – what we call as such – is nothing else than the bringing in motion of metaphysics [...]" ("Philosophie – was wir so nennen – ist das In-Gang-bringen der Metaphysik") Heidegger: "Was ist Metaphysik?" in Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1967). 19. One of Heidegger's main concerns is that the introduction to philosophy is impossible because we are already within philosophy, that is, there is no place "outside" it from where this introduction could be started (see e.g. GA 27, 3.; GA 50, 90f), what can be achieved is that philosophy resting inside us may be woken. (cf. GA 27, 4), but the situation is in any case such that "philosophy is something that concerns everyone" (GA 29/30, 22), "being human is the same as already philosophizing" (GA 27, 3). For other places and thinkers (Kant, Hegel, Husserl) see note 30 of my study "Nemzet, filozófia, tudomány. A hazai filozófiai munkálgodás ágai és jelentősége" (Nation, philosophy, science. Branches and significance of domestic philosophical research), *Existentialia* II 1–4 (1992): 495–540; here 523f.

interpretation of the function or character of philosophy which goes back to Aristotle and played a particularly dominant role in the age of German Idealism. (That philosophy is a science about science, a *science of science* which cannot borrow its scientific character from any other science, but it plays a fundamental role concerning the founding of any science – with respect to the basic theses which can no longer be justified by the sciences themselves – is a view most clearly formulated by Fichte).<sup>1</sup> In the introduction of his magnum opus, Heidegger emphasizes that the philosophical research directed to the foundation of the basic concepts of sciences “must come before positive sciences.”<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-1910s, in his habilitation lecture on the concept of time Heidegger claims that “the research methods of various sciences operate with a determined basic terminology, and it is the job of the theory of science to reflect on the logical structure of these”; or, according to another formulation, “the clarification of the logical foundations of the research methods of individual sciences is the task of logic and the theory of science.”<sup>3</sup> In his lectures in the second half of the 1920s Heidegger argued in this respect that “mathematics can never be understood mathematically, and no philologist will explain the essence of philology philologically.”<sup>4</sup> Some ten years later, in the 1930s, he wrote: “Geology can be researched geologically just as poorly as philology can philologically.”<sup>5</sup> A particularly illuminating discussion with reference again to philology is contained in one of Heidegger’s lectures on Nietzsche: “What mathematics is can never be determined mathematically; what philology is can never be discussed philologically; what biology is can never be explained biologically. To ask what a science is, is to ask a question that is no longer a scientific question. The moment he or she poses a question with regard to science in general, [...], the inquirer steps into a new realm, a realm with claims and forms of proof and evidence quite different from those that are customary in the sciences.”<sup>6</sup> The commentaries formulated in an interview given

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<sup>1</sup> See first of all Fichte’s writing “Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie”, which is quite telling already in its title: what is commonly called philosophy, the “so-called philosophy” is claimed to be nothing else in fact than “the science of science” (Wissenschaftslehre) (*Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte [Fotomechanischer Nachdruck. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971], 27–81., in particular 43, 45, 48, 56.) That one of the primary tasks is the investigation and clarification of the “essence” of theory, that is, of all the possible types of theories, and as such, of “the ideal essence of science”, and that consequently philosophy is none other than the “theory of theories, the science of sciences”, appears with a compelling forcefulness at Heidegger’s master, Husserl; see Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, Vol. 1, *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, § 66. (Tübingen 1980; first ed. 1900), 241f. Cf. also § 71, *ibid.*, p. 254: “And if science constructs theories for the systematic solution of its problems, then the philosopher asks what is the essence of theory, what is it that makes a theory possible at all, etc.”

<sup>2</sup> “Solche Forschung muß den positiven Wissenschaften vorauslaufen; und sie *kann* es. Die Arbeit von Plato und Aristoteles ist Beweis dafür” (SZ 3. §., 10.)

<sup>3</sup> GA 1, 417.

<sup>4</sup> GA 27, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Die Bedrohung der Wissenschaft”, ed. H. Tietjen, in *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers*, ed. D. Papenfuß und O. Pöggeler, vol. 1: *Philosophie und Politik* (Frankfurt a. M., 1991), Vol. 1, 5–27, here 12.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell, vol. 1-2 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979–1987), 112.

by Heidegger in the 1960s can also be added to the considerations cited above, as a sort of explanation of these: „Physics works with the concepts of space, time, and motion. What space, time, and motion are cannot be decided by science as science. [...]. With the help of physical methods I cannot, for example, say what physics is”.<sup>1</sup> This is not less valid, besides philology, in relation to all other fields of the humanities, as formulated in the 1950s. “Historical science researches, for example, a specific epoch according to its most various aspects, but it never inquires into what history is. In a historical way one will never find out what history is, any more than a mathematician can, through mathematical methods, that is, by his own science, by mathematical formulae, show what mathematics is.”<sup>2</sup>

Heidegger’s considerations can be illuminated as follows. If, say, the essence or research method of geology is the excavation of rocks, then one would never be able to find out what geology was by the excavation of rocks, even if one were to find a steel case containing the definition of geology on an old, yellowed piece of papyrus. This is because one should also be able to read and understand what is written on that papyrus, and that is not a specifically geological operation. In mathematics, one operates with numbers, but it is impossible to elaborate the concept of mathematics by “counting” or “computing” based on numbers or mathematical operations; or one is never able to find out what physics is by physical experiments made in laboratories—the way, for example, in which, according to a famous Kant-citation, “Galilei experimented with balls of a definite weight on the inclined plane.”<sup>3</sup> One can never discover what history is by going to, and researching in, archives or libraries – while, obviously, one very often does just that kind of thing during historical research of a certain historical subject (just like in physics one very often pursues laboratory experiments) and has indeed to do so if one intends to obtain scientifically founded results. What philology is, we can never find out concentrating solely on how a text sounds – provided we proceed in a “purely” philological way (and not sneak in just a drop of philosophy or hermeneutics, as is often the case), that is, we deprive the text and all punctuation from their meaning, make it “senseless”, and only care for, and concentrate on, elements of form. If we proceed by suspending all kinds of understanding and meaning then we only see various patterns and cannot so much as even identify the letters: what we mostly “see” will then be intricate lines and senseless scribbling,<sup>4</sup> and we could not recognize mistaken or crossed-

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<sup>1</sup> *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch*, ed. Richard Wisser (Freiburg/München: Alber, 1970), 72. republished in; G. Neske, E. Kettering, eds., *Antwort. Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1988), 24. (see also GA 16, 705.)

<sup>2</sup> *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1984, 56.

<sup>3</sup> See Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Preface to the second edition), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4280/4280-h/4280-h.htm>

<sup>4</sup> In fact, the problem is even more complicated, and the presupposition taken here as a basis for sake of simplicity is only valid in this context, temporarily, while in other contexts it is not. Seen from here, the scribbles and senseless lines are not completely meaningless in fact; what is more, taking the argument further, the very concept of “senselessness” is not without any meaning: if it were, then we could not understand as meaningful statements such as “What you are saying is complete nonsense” (that we understand it as such, is proved by the fact that we can react to it appropriately, that is, sensibly, saying “Sorry”, “You are too strict,” etc., if the concept of “nonsense” would be meaningless, we obviously could not say anything like this). From a

out letters or words, misspelling or mistyping as such. How should we know if encountering “f” we had to do with a cross-out or a letter? And how do we know at all what “cross-out”, “deletion”, “correction” are?

In conclusion, the question of what philology is cannot be discovered philologically, since it is not a philological, but a philosophical issue. Nevertheless, the starting point of Gadamer’s seminal study about Wilamowitz-Moellendorff – to which I shall repeatedly return in the following – would seem to acknowledge the primacy of philology. Philologists are known to start with words, Gadamer writes, therefore it is natural to start the discussion of the relationship of philology and philosophy with the analysis of the *words* “philology” and “philosophy”.

This primacy is only apparent nonetheless, for the attention paid to the *word* is, as we shall see, none other – indeed, it cannot be other – than the attention paid to the *meaning of the word*. If philology means “Liebe zu den logoi” (“the love of words”) and philosophy is “Liebe zum »sophon«” (which I translate not quite literally as “the love of wisdom”), then these definitions are only worthwhile if – one way or another – we *understand* them. In this context, what Gadamer writes in the continuation of the text is quite remarkable: “Whoever knows something of the Greek language and tradition can *hear* it at once how near the two concepts are to each other, or more precisely, how they flow into one another and overflow from both sides.”<sup>1</sup> Now, whoever knows something about philosophical hermeneutics or hermeneutical philosophy is immediately aware that when we turn to the *words* “philology” and “philosophy”, we actually perform understanding and interpretation, that “hearing” has a special importance for hermeneutics, first in the sense of that “old recognition” that Gadamer speaks about in his main work, namely that “hearing has primacy over seeing” (“the hermeneutical phenomenon, as Aristotle had already recognized, is based on the priority of hearing”),<sup>2</sup> and second, because, in strong connection with the first, hearing is inseparably linked to understanding and interpretation. Heidegger rightly said in relation to the sometimes inseparable connection between hearing and understanding that “[i]f we have not heard 'aright', it is not by accident that we say we have not 'understood'.”<sup>3</sup> (For instance, when the phone is crackling, or the voice is distant and fading, and various noises are heard in the line, we often say – and often in a loud, shouting voice – “What? I can’t understand!” when in fact the case is such that “I can’t *hear*”, or rather I can’t hear it well enough to understand the words, the meaning of the words, for acoustically

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hermeneutical perspective then it can be questioned whether there is at all anything like a “space deprived of meaning”; and whether the concept of nonsense as a kind of strictly defined liminal concept is not located within this space. There is a certain similarity in this respect with Wittgenstein’s thesis: “Every sentence must *already* have a meaning” (*Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 4.064: „Jeder Satz muss *schon* einen Sinn haben”; emphasis in the original).

<sup>1</sup> Gadamer: “Philosophie und Philologie. Über von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff“, in: GW 6, 271–277., here: 272.: „Wer etwas von griechischer Sprache und Überlieferung weiß, *hört* sofort, wie nahe beide Begriffe einander sind, oder besser: wie sie ineinanderfließen und nach beiden Seiten überfließen” (my italics, I. M. F.)

<sup>2</sup> GW 1, 466.

<sup>3</sup> BT 206 (= SZ 34 §, p. 163.: “Wir sagen nicht zufällig, wenn wir nicht »recht« gehört haben, wir haben nicht »verstanden.«”). Cf. also: “Das Dasein hört, weil es versteht.”

speaking I did hear something – the way one hears noises). Therefore the proximity of philology and philosophy emphasized by Gadamer is shown already in the fact that hermeneutics, that is, philosophy is originally inherent in this apparently purely philological definition starting from, and based upon, the *word*, it has already been tacitly activated, consciously or unnoticed.

Gadamer explicitly claims however that the primacy of philology over philosophy is only apparent, and the positivistic scheme described above is merely an illusion. He writes that in classical philology seminars during his university years the following was customary: “First one had to reconstruct the text (and even had to translate it), then had to interpret it”. From his own hermeneutic viewpoint, Gadamer does not fail to add how naïve and doubtful this description is: “How a text should be reconstructed or what is more, even translated before the master strokes of interpretation had done their job – this question was never raised. This was of course a didactic simplification which does not mirror the true process of understanding. Obviously, one can only reconstruct a text once one understood it. This way we learnt that [...] interpretation is not only the central form of access to the world, but also that of access to the texts of tradition. We never find ourselves at a point where we should merely record an unquestionably given text [...] [...] It is not so, as if the text were an unquestionable givenness for us and interpretation a subsequent procedure that we undertake on the text.”<sup>1</sup>

It is true of course, Gadamer immediately adds, that “We want and must understand only what stands [written] there [in the text]. But do we know what stands there before we understand it?”<sup>2</sup> It is also true that “in debatable questions we always and again interrogate the text itself, and that in this respect the text has the last word. But we know at the same time that it is always already a text under interrogation that stands in the net of interpretive questions and that the voice of the text will now be listened to [not in general, but] with respect to the answers to be given to those questions.”<sup>3</sup>

The strong connection and interdependence of philology and philosophy (hermeneutics) can be recognized from other angles as well. Generalizing from what has been said above, one could say: if we ask what philology is, at a closer look we actually

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<sup>1</sup> GW 6, 276. : “Da hatte man erst den Text herzustellen (und sogar zu übersetzen), und dann hatte man ihn zu interpretieren.. Wie man einen Text herstellen und gar übersetzen soll, bevor alle Künste der Interpretation das Ihre getan haben, wurde dabei nicht gefragt. Das war natürlich eine didaktische Vereinfachung, die den wahren Prozeß des Verstehens nicht abbildet. Daß man einen Text erst herstellen kann, wenn man ihn verstanden hat, ist offenkundig. So lernten wir [...], wie sehr Interpretation nicht nur der zentrale Form des Weltzugangs. sondern auch die des Zugangs zu den Texten der Überlieferung ist. Wir befinden uns nie auf einem Punkte der bloßen Aufnahme des fraglos gegebenen Textes [...]. Es ist nicht so, als ob der Text für uns eine fraglose Vorgegebenheit wäre und die Interpretation eine nachträglich eingestellte Prozedur, die man an dem Texte vornimmt.”

<sup>2</sup> GW 6, 276.: „Nur was da steht, wollen und sollen wir verstehen. Aber wissen wir, was da steht, bevor wir verstehen?“

<sup>3</sup> GW 6, 276.: “Gewiß bleibt es dabei, daß wir in strittigen Fragen immer wieder den Text selber befragen, und daß insofern der Text das letzte Wort hat. Aber wir wissen zugleich, daß es immer schon ein befragter Text ist, der unter Interpretationsfragen gestellt wird und nun auf seine Antwort hin abgehört wird.”



dwell on the self-interpretation of philology, or rather (since it has more than one self-interpretations) the historical variations of its self-interpretation,<sup>1</sup> on how philology *understood* itself historically from time to time, and how, by which terms it accounted for its activity – and thereby we are engaged in doing hermeneutics. For we are not only interested in how the self-interpretations *sound*, but no less in what the words occurring

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<sup>1</sup> The statement that the question of what philology is refers in fact to the self-interpretation of philology, a possible objection may sound, seems to contradict that previously consentingly cited Heideggerian statement (to be re-quoted again some lines below) that “what philology is can never be discussed philologically [i.e., by philology’s self-interpretation]” This remark is, I think, fully legitimate, but at a closer look it seems that there is no contradiction after all, and there is no need to withdraw or reformulate the original formulation, only to make it more precise and contextualize it. First of all, one should differentiate the question “What is X?” Heidegger’s explanation in his late writing *Was ist das – die Philosophie?* is illuminating in this respect: The Greek equivalent of the “was ist das?”-type question, explains Heidegger, is *ti estin*. This question is ambiguous, that is, it can be asked in multiple ways. For example, we may ask: “What is that in the distance?”, to which the answer could be “a tree”. “The answer consists in naming something that we do not recognize very clearly”. However, we may ask further questions, such as: “what is it that we call a »tree«?” Now, “by a question asked like this we can get closer to the Greek *ti estin*. This is the form of questioning elaborated by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They ask for example: What is beauty? What is knowledge? What is nature? What is movement? („Was ist dies – das Schöne? Was ist dies – die Erkenntnis? Was ist dies – die Natur? Was ist dies – die Bewegung?”; see Heidegger: GA 11, 11.) – Now, in the statement “what philology is can never be discussed philologically” the question “what is philology” is asked in this latter, typically philosophical way, as an essential question (Wesensfrage) about the totality of the thing and its nature, to which philology cannot answer since the question – as it asks about the totality, the essence of philology – leaves the territory of philology (just as the questions “what is physics/history/mathematics?” leave the territory of physics/history/mathematics) behind, insofar as – to use an enlightening Heideggerian term – it “asks beyond” it (the expression occurs, e.g., in his inaugural lecture: “Metaphysik ist das Hinausfragen über das Seiende”; GA 9, 118.; the expression “Hinausfragen über” occurs also elsewhere, e.g., GA 24, 399). But the question “What is philology?” cannot only be asked *this way*. It can be posed to philologists simply as an inquiry: “What is philology all about?” “What do you philologists actually do?”, to which the answer could be: “we compare manuscripts”. In this sense there is no reason why we should not turn to philology itself to gain information about philology, and find out many relevant things about it, such as how they understood their own activity in various times (but we must *interpret* what we hear, and this is the most important thing here). There is one more point of view: in what has been said above the emphasis falls not on *self*-interpretation, but on *self-interpretation*; so, if it were about interpretation/explanation by a foreigner (this rather awkward expression tries to translate *Fremdbestimmung* on the pattern of *Selbsterfahrung–Fremderfahrung*), it would also change nothing, since interpretation by an alien is also interpretation. “We are not only interested in how self-interpretations sound, but in their meaning as well”, says the following sentence, and it would be so even if not self-interpretation but interpretation by an alien occurred in the sentence. One more clarifying remark: the text contains the phrase “at a closer look” (and I speak nevertheless about “self-interpretation”) because according to the hermeneutics of good will, which I advocate, one should ask first those who are primarily involved about their own affairs; they can supposedly say much more interesting and relevant things about themselves than “foreigners”, “outsiders”, let’s say physicians or geologists (even if they were not be able to have a comprehensive view over their discipline without stepping over to philosophy).

in the self-interpretations *mean*. That is why one cannot answer merely philologically (that is, through the positivistic self-interpretation of philology), as Heidegger remarked, what philology is. In other words, we could not even get, or have access, to philology (to the *meaning* of philology) without hermeneutics. The best question therefore that may be put when encountering people insisting on “pure” philology might sound as follows: “So do you *understand* philology as something in which *understanding and interpretation* have no role to play?”

## II. History of concepts as the hermeneutic unity of philology and philosophy in Gadamer’s work

If we digress a little and have a look at the *whole* of Gadamer’s work, apart from singular textual places, it is immediately apparent how strongly philology and philosophy are connected in it. What Gadamer calls, in accordance with a long and respectable tradition, “conceptual history” [Begriffsgeschichte], and what he is pursuing as such, is in fact nothing other than this strong interconnectedness of philology and philosophy, or philology and hermeneutics. Even if the opinion is formulated sometimes that the “and” in the title of Gadamer’s main work (*Truth and Method*) means not so much a connection, a conjunction as rather a separation which opposes truth and method, almost in the sense of “*either truth or method*”<sup>1</sup> (but at least in the sense that “truth is not given only and exclusively by or in method”), it is still legitimate to argue that Gadamer only opposed or criticized the method in a modern sense; or, to put it differently, in *its* modern sense,<sup>2</sup> and if we disregard this, Gadamer’s whole work does

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the review of Ernst Tugendhat “The Fusion of Horizons”, reprint in Tugendhat, *Philosophische Aufsätze*, (Frankfurt/Main, 1992), 428. See also Richard E. Palmer: *Hermeneutics. Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 163: “[...] the title of Gadamer’s book contains an irony: method is not the way to truth [...]”; also Richard Rorty: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 360. “[...] it would be reasonable to call Gadamer’s book a tract against the very idea of method [...]”. From more recent literature, see Günter Figal: “Philosophische Hermeneutik – hermeneutische Philosophie”, *Hermeneutische Wege. Hans-Georg Gadamer zum Hundertsten*, ed. G. Figal, J. Grondin, D. Schmidt, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 2000, 335–344., here 335. (“»Wahrheit und Methode« – der Titel ist eher im Sinne von »Wahrheit oder Methode« gemeint [...]”); Robert Sokolowski: “Gadamer’s Theory of Hermeneutics”, *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, The Library of Living Philosophers, vol. XXIV, ed. Lewis E. Hahn, (LaSalle, IL, Open Court Publishing, 1997), 223–232, here 227.: (“[...] of course, the title of *Truth and Method* is ironic: truth requires prudential application and evaluation, not just procedural methodology”)

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. GW 1, 13, 29, 463, 467 ff.; GW 2, 37 ff, 186 ff. The thesis that the Gadamerian critique of the method is based on a typically modern, even positivistic understanding of the method is thoroughly analyzed in: Joel C. Weinsheimer *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics. A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, see p. 2 ff). Weinsheimer rightly remarks that Gadamer “challenges the dominion of method through a history of the humanistic tradition”, *ibid.*, 2). To this, it could be added that Gadamer sketches the history of the humanistic tradition precisely by the reconstruction of the history of certain concepts characteristic for this tradition (*Bildung, sensus communis*, etc.). In a certain sense the *Begriffsgeschichte* can rightfully be called Gadamer’s “method” – not merely in the reconstruction of the humanistic tradition, but

have a kind of particular, well-defined method, that of the history of concepts. This means that Gadamer introduces his own philosophical concepts not by definitions for instance, but precisely by reconstructions and examinations of concepts, and uses (“understands”) these concepts afterwards in this reconstructed sense. The meaning and stake of the historical reconstruction of concepts is not to offer an “objectively correct” history of a concept – while of course it does not wish to ignore reality and knowledge claims are apparent in them – but rather the fact that philosophical analysis should clarify and legitimate beforehand the concepts it uses (and their definite meaning) precisely by the historical reconstruction of the meaning of these concepts. Gadamer’s concepts acquire their special meaning in virtue of these historical reconstructions, and this is the task they have to fulfil.

At first sight, the recourse to the history of concepts may seem pure philology, and it undoubtedly contains a good deal of it indeed. But this is a history interpreted and understood over again, one which becomes the object of reconstructing interpretation from the horizon of the present and by the effect of determined motifs. Apart from this, a concept hardly has any kind of final-ultimate history “in itself” which would stand on its own solidly and immovably, and which could be reconstructed “objectively”, as if from above. At a closer look, the method of introducing new meanings of concepts by way of the historical analysis of these concepts is determined by a well-defined philosophical conviction. According to this, the philosophical concepts gain “their determined meaning not by an arbitrary choice of description [willkürliche Bezeichnungswahl]”, but “starting from their historical origin”, and “it is part of a legitimate critical philosophizing that he tries to explain his own concepts in a historical way as well.”<sup>1</sup> The history of concepts understood correctly “is not one kind of historical method or a mere historical introduction to some systematic questioning [...], but an integrative instance of the philosophical movement of thought, a way on which we justify our own conceptuality.”<sup>2</sup>

In his afterword for the third edition of his main work, and also in reaction to the debates and criticisms formulated meanwhile, Gadamer returned to this point once more: “Against the historical elucidation of concepts that I advocate in my book and practice as well as I can,” he wrote, “Kamlah and Lorenzen object that the court of tradition can pronounce no sure and unequivocal verdict. Indeed not. But to be responsible before that court—that is, not to invent a language commensurate with new insights but rather to retrieve it from living language—seems to me a legitimate demand.

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because of its omnipresence and importance in the whole of his work, as I shall try to prove it in what follows.

<sup>1</sup> Gadamer: “Die Begriffsgeschichte und die Sprache der Philosophie”, GW 4, 78–94, here 79., 91.

<sup>2</sup> GW 4, 92. Such a perception of the history of concepts is very close to how the young Heidegger distanced himself from the perception of phenomenology as a pre-science (*Vorwissenschaft*). Just like the history of concepts for Gadamer, for Heidegger phenomenology was not merely a pre- (or auxiliary) science only meant to make preliminary conceptual clarifications which would serve as a basis for actual philosophical analyses in the second round. (see Heidegger: *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)*, hrsg. H.-U. Lessing, *Dilthey Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 6, 1989, 237–268, here: 247; see now GA 62, 365.) See also the quotation in footnote 1.

Philosophy can fulfill it only when the path from word to concept and from concept to word is kept open in both directions. It seems to me that, in defense of their own procedure, even Kamlah and Lorenzen appeal to the authority of linguistic usage. Of course it yields no methodical construction of a language through the gradual instauration of concepts. But making the implications of conceptual words conscious is a ‘method’ too—and, I think, one commensurate with the subject matter of philosophy”<sup>1</sup>

A retrospective reflection of Gadamer’s confirms the starting point. Indeed, Gadamer defined the aim of his main work at the beginning as follows: “The conceptual world in which philosophizing develops has already captivated us in the same way that the language in which we live conditions us. If thought is to be conscientious, it must become aware of these anterior influences. A new critical consciousness must now accompany all responsible philosophizing which takes the habits of thought and language built up in the individual in his communication with his environment and places them before the forum of the historical tradition to which we all belong. The following investigation tries to meet this demand by linking as closely as possible an inquiry into the *history of concepts* with the substantive *exposition of its theme*”.<sup>2</sup> The concept-historical questioning and analysis serves the exposition of the subject to be discussed, it does not need to be “true” “in itself”.

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<sup>1</sup> TM 565 (= GW 2, 460.) It is worth mentioning that Gadamer uses the concept of method in a completely positive sense from another point of view as well. Although he critically opposed the “ideal of method of modern science”, and therefore his explorations “started from his dissatisfaction with the modern concept of method”, so in this respect it is especially important that he emphatically mentions Hegel’s explicit reference to the Greek concept of method, as where his dissatisfaction with the modern concept of method derived from, and which can justify this dissatisfaction. (GW 1, 467) This method – or rather the method in this sense – is not “the activity that we do with the thing,” not “our own activity with the thing,” but “the activity of the thing itself” [nicht unser Tun an der Sache, sondern das Tun der Sache selbst]. He writes, “[Hegel] criticized the concept of a method that dealt with the thing but was alien to it, calling it ‘external reflection.’ The true method was an action of the thing itself. . [...] Certainly, the thing does not go its own course without our thinking being involved, but thinking means unfolding what consistently follows from the subject matter itself. It is part of this process to suppress ideas ‘that tend to insinuate themselves’ and to insist on the logic of the thought. Since the Greeks we have called this *dialectic*. In describing the true method, which is the activity of the thing itself, Hegel quotes Plato, who loved to show his Socrates in conversation with young men, because they were ready to follow where Socrates’ questions led, without regard for current opinions. He illustrated his own method of dialectical development by these ‘malleable youths,’ who did not parade their own ideas but rather avoided obstructing the path on which the subject matter led them. Here dialectic is nothing but the art of conducting a conversation” (TM 459f. = GW 1, 468). Gadamer’s resistance to method is only directed to that sense of method which became prevalent in modernity.

<sup>2</sup> GW 1, 5 (italics I M.F.). See also GW 2, 113: „So liegt aller philosophischen Arbeit des Begriffs eine hermeneutische Dimension zugrunde, die man heutzutage mit dem etwas ungenauen Wort ‚Begriffsgeschichte‘ bezeichnet. Sie ist nicht eine sekundäre Bemühung und meint nicht, daß man statt von den Sachen zu reden, von den Verständigungsmitteln spräche, die wir dabei gebrauchen, sondern sie bildet das *kritische Element im Gebrauch unserer Begriffe selbst*“ (italics I M.F.) Cf. also with Gadamer’s preface for the Italian edition, where he also emphasizes the importance of this “method”: Prefazione all’edizione italiana“, Gadamer: *Verità e metodo* (Milano: Bompiani, 1983), XLVIII.

The interconnectedness of philology and philosophy is in this respect that Hegelian “element” or “ether” in which Gadamer’s work moves.<sup>1</sup> It expresses the method or procedure of this philosophy, and thereby it forms the basis of related reflections. Therefore it is the praxis, the method which must be taken into account first, before turning to the analysis of the theoretical considerations. What Gadamer claimed about hermeneutics in general is also valid here: “praxis came first”.<sup>2</sup> Gadamer originally studied classical philology in addition to philosophy, and so he could say: “Actually I have become something of a classical philologist in the meantime”.<sup>3</sup> It was the “direct result” of his 1927 paper about the *Protreptikos*, which contained detailed critical remarks about Werner Jaeger, to have “presented Gadamer as a solid classical philologist”, writes Jean Grondin in his biographical work.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Philology and history

So far I have sketched the relationship of philology and philosophy starting from the meaning of the words, with a digression to Heidegger and on the basis of a view of

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<sup>1</sup> For Hegel, “ether” means “das reine Selbsterkennen im absoluten Anderssein” (pure self-knowledge in absolute other-being), which is at the same time “the basis and ground of sciences”, and for him, “the beginning of philosophy raises the presupposition or requirement that consciousness should be in this element”. (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Theorie Werkausgabe, ed. E. Moldenhauer, K.M. Michel, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), Vol. 3, 29. Similarly, with Gadamer – in order to correctly understand his message – we must always reside in the philological-hermeneutical “ether” or “element” of the history of concepts.

<sup>2</sup> Gadamer, GW 2, 492. Cf. *ibid.*, 493 ff.: „What I have taught, was primarily a hermeneutic praxis, the art of understanding and making understood.” (“Was ich lehrte, war vor allem hermeneutische Praxis. Hermeneutik ist vor allem eine Praxis, die Kunst des Verstehens und des Verständlichmachens.”) See also *ibid.*, 92., 301., 309., as well as the article „Hermeneutik“ in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, vol. III, column 1061–1073, here 1061. (Gadamer writes in relation to this: “That which must be practiced first of all is the ear, the sensitivity towards the preliminary determinations [...] hidden in concepts” (*ibid.*, 494), and this further enforces what we have said about hearing as a primarily hermeneutical ability; cf. footnotes 1 and 2. Gadamer writes in his masterwork in a historical retrospective: “Actually, the history of understanding has been accompanied, since the days of classical philology, by theoretical reflection. But these reflections have the character of a ‘technique’—i.e., they try to serve the art of understanding [...] But now understanding as such becomes a problem. The universality of this problem shows that understanding has become a task in a new sense, and hence theoretical reflection acquires a new significance. [...] It is no longer a set of techniques guiding the practice of philologist or theologian. Schleiermacher, it is true, calls his hermeneutics a technique, but in a quite different, systematic sense. He seeks the theoretical foundation of the procedure common to theologians and philologists by reaching back beyond the concerns of each to the more fundamental relation—the understanding of thought” (TM 179).

<sup>3</sup> GW 2, 488.: „In Wahrheit war ich inzwischen ein Stück klassischer Philologe geworden, schloß dieses Studium mit dem Staatsexamen ab (1927)”. See also GW 8, 375.

<sup>4</sup> J. Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer. Eine Biographie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1999), 146. The mentioned paper: „Der aristotelische *Protreptikos* und die entwicklungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung der aristotelischen Ethik”, *Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie* 63 (1928), 138–164., reprinted in GW 5, 164–186. See also H.-G. Gadamer: *Die Lektion des Jahrhunderts. Ein philosophischer Dialog mit Ricardo Dottori* (Münster – Hamburg – London: LIT Verlag, 2002), 29., 142.

Gadamer's work as a whole. In what follows, I shall focus on some aspects of this relationship as detailed or represented by Gadamer. The way in which Gadamer depicts this relationship is not independent of how he elucidates the relationship of philology and the humanities (*Geistwissenschaften*), primarily history, therefore I shall attempt to reconstruct first the way Gadamer viewed this relationship.

In the first place, it should be noted that the adjective "philological" often appears in the first parts of Gadamer's masterwork together with another adjective, "historical" ("historical-philological", or "historian-philologists", etc.)<sup>1</sup> In the beginning – that is, "historically" – philology was not restricted to historical studies. Referring back to Gadamer's above quoted definition, one could say: philology is not only the "love of words", and the philologist is not only "the friend of fine speech" insofar as he wishes to reconstruct those texts of the past which preserved these "fine speeches". Rather, he wants to produce these "fine speeches" himself, therefore – as Gadamer claims – he acts as an imitator, and that is precisely the importance of philology for Renaissance humanism.

Fine speeches are exemplary. "One must not forget", writes Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, that "that the highest aim of the humanist was not originally to 'understand' his models, but to imitate or even surpass them. Hence he was originally obligated to his models, not only as an expositor but also as an imitator—if not a rival."<sup>2</sup> In one of his writings preceding the *Truth and Method* he emphatically drew attention to the fact that the research of history is not merely motivated by the acquisition of knowledge, a simple reconstruction of the past, but also by a search for a model: "Denn unser Verhalten zur Überlieferung begnügt sich nicht damit, daß wir sie verstehen wollen, indem wir durch historische Rekonstruktion ihren Sinn ermitteln. [...] selbst der Philologe könnte sich eingestehen, daß das, was er in Wahrheit tut, mehr ist als dies. Wäre das Altertum nicht klassisch gewesen, das heißt vorbildlich für alles Sagen, Denken und Dichten, dann gäbe es keine klassische Philologie. Das gilt aber auch für alle andere Philologie, daß in ihr die Faszination des anderen, Fremden oder Fernen wirksam ist [...]. Die eigentliche Philologie ist nicht Historie allein, und zwar deshalb, weil auch die Historie selber in Wahrheit eine *ratio philosophandi* ist, ein Weg, Wahrheit zu erkennen."<sup>3</sup>

If we look at history *like this* – namely, not merely "historically", as something that used to be once, but now it is gone, exists no more, and about which we only want to acquire various pieces of information, while these pieces of knowledge leave us untouched and unchanged, but as something that has effect on us, sets models before us, and which is not contrary to truth so that it is directly "the way to the knowledge of the truth" – if that is the primordial way we relate to, and have to do with, history in the first place then we find essential parallels between philology and history: "philology and literary criticism on the one hand and historical studies on the other," "both perform an act of application that is different only in degree."<sup>4</sup> These essential parallels continue to the modernity as well, when both history and philology leave behind their particular

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<sup>1</sup> TM 193.

<sup>2</sup> TM 193.

<sup>3</sup> "Was ist Wahrheit?", GW 2, 55.

<sup>4</sup> TM 336.

normative-applicative aspect. The situation is now the following. “A person trying to understand a text, whether literary critic or historian, does not, at any rate, apply what it says to himself. He is simply trying to understand what the author is saying, and if he is simply trying to understand, he is not interested in the objective truth of what is said as such, not even if the text itself claims to teach truth. On this the philologist and the historian are in agreement.”<sup>1</sup> I must remark however that indifference towards the “objective truth of the message,” as something about which philologists and historians agree, separates both – as we shall see later on – from the philosopher, who is interested in precisely that issue.

The contemporary historian relates himself to the “texts of the past” in such a way that “he is trying to discover something about the past through them. He therefore uses other traditionary material to supplement and verify what the texts say,”<sup>2</sup> his access to texts is fundamentally different from the philologist’s. The historian “considers it as more or less of a weakness when the philologist regards his text as a work of art.”<sup>3</sup> The historian wants to see through his texts, not understand them; the text appears for him as the “expression” of something which is not expressed in the texts themselves, but remains in the background. The historian “will always go back behind [the texts] and the meaning they express to inquire into the reality they express involuntarily.”<sup>4</sup> In this respect, there is some tension emerging “between the historian and the philologist who [originally] seeks to understand a text for the sake of its beauty.”<sup>5</sup> “There is a fundamental conflict here between the historical and the literary consciousness, although this tension scarcely exists now that historical consciousness has also altered the orientation of the critic. He has given up the claim that his texts have a normative validity for him. He no longer regards them as models of the best that has been thought and said, but looks at them in a way that they themselves did not intend to be looked at; he looks at them as a historian. This has made philology and criticism subsidiary disciplines of historical studies;” and in parallel with this, classical philology became Antiquity research.<sup>6</sup> The philologist became “a historian, in that he discovers a historical dimension in his literary sources. Understanding, then, is for him a matter of placing a given text in the context of the history of language, literary form, style, and so on, and thus ultimately mediating it with the whole context of historical life. Only occasionally does his own original nature come through.”<sup>7</sup>

Gadamer tended to look upon this development of modernity with quite some resignation, due to his hermeneutical starting point and his hermeneutical sympathy about the original meaning of philology. Although the tension between historians and

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<sup>1</sup> TM 330f.

<sup>2</sup> TM 331.

<sup>3</sup> TM 331.

<sup>4</sup> TM 332.

<sup>5</sup> TM 332. The quote by Gadamer in footnote 4 seems to contradict this, but I think this contradiction can be dissolved by my explicative addition in square brackets. Gadamer alternately uses a – let’s say – ideal or classic self-interpretation of philology and a secondary, historically created one, which is adapted to history perceiving itself as positivistic. See the followings for more on this.

<sup>6</sup> TM 332.

<sup>7</sup> TM 333.

philologists has gradually disappeared, insofar as some sort of a historical perspective or approach turned out to have the upper hand, that is, the humanities were put “under the alien control of historical studies”.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not very clear whether this was indeed a welcome development, and the question can definitely be asked “whether the claim of historical consciousness to be universal is justified.” This legitimacy seems questionable for Gadamer, primarily with respect to *philology*.<sup>2</sup> Gadamer returns here to the original meaning and humanistic embeddedness of philology, so his conclusion reads: “The critic is ultimately mistaking his own nature, as a friend of eloquence, if he bows to the standard of historical studies. If his texts possess an exemplary character for him, this may be primarily in regard to form. The older humanism fervently believed that everything in classical literature was said in an exemplary way.”<sup>3</sup>

Inasmuch as the philologist’s job according to the original self-interpretation of philology is to “weave a little further on the great tapestry of tradition that supports us” it would seem plausible to ask whether “criticism and philology can attain their true dignity and proper knowledge of themselves by being liberated from history.”<sup>4</sup> However, this would be an ambiguous and hardly feasible solution. Therefore philology should free itself not so much from history, but – to be more precise – from a particular kind of self-understanding of history, namely, the one following the ideal of knowledge of the natural sciences. In fact, it is precisely this self-understanding of history that history itself had better get rid of (this state of affairs can be expressed by the following paradoxical formulation: the science of history must free itself from history, i.e., from the self-understanding of history prevalent in modernity). “Perhaps not only the approach of the critic and philologist but also that of the historian should be oriented not so much to the methodological ideal of the natural sciences”; in this case “the relation between literary criticism and historical studies suddenly appears quite different.”<sup>5</sup>

In summary, Gadamer recognizes the unity of history and philology, which he expresses by the thesis that I have previously quoted: “philology and literary criticism on the one hand and historical studies on the other,” “both perform an act of application that is different only in degree.”<sup>6</sup> The explanation connected to this thesis is also worth being quoted: “If the philologist or critic understands the given text—i.e., understands himself in the text in the way we have said—the historian too understands the great text of world history he has himself discovered, in which every text handed down to us is but a fragment of meaning, one letter, as it were, and he understands himself in this great text. Both the critic and the historian thus emerge from the self-forgetfulness to which they had been banished by a thinking for which the only criterion was the methodology of modern science. Both find their true ground in *historically effected consciousness*.”<sup>7</sup>

Two decades later, looking back self-critically on his masterwork, Gadamer refined his position. The opposition of historians that he met with made him realize, he wrote, that he approached too much the particular ways of historical understanding to

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<sup>1</sup> TM 334.

<sup>2</sup> TM 333.

<sup>3</sup> TM 333.

<sup>4</sup> TM 334.

<sup>5</sup> TM 334.

<sup>6</sup> TM 336.

<sup>7</sup> TM 336.



philological understanding. For the history as a whole, which is the subject of the historian's research, is not a text in the same sense as the subject of a philologist's research, written texts. "Texts" are not available to historians the same way as to philologists; the historian has to reconstruct first his basic text, "history". A historian must know of course literary and other kinds of texts, just as a philologist must often reconstruct and review his texts, so a historian must be a little bit of a philologist, and the philologist must be a historian to a certain extent. However, the meaning that one arrives at in the two cases is distinct. The meaning of a text is what the text wants to say. However, the meaning of an event is what the historian can make of it based on the texts and other documents, and often by reassessing the intention of these texts. In the light of these new considerations, philology could be defined, or its original Greek meaning could be rendered, as: "Freude am Sinn, der sich aussagt" (Joy over the meaning that utters itself), while history as: "Forschung nach Sinn, der verhüllt ist" (Search for the meaning which is hidden) – the difference between the two hints to two kinds of understanding.<sup>1</sup> One rejoices over the meaning, the other searches for it.

#### **IV. Philology and philosophy**

In the discussion above I only used the definitions of philology and philosophy given by Gadamer at the beginning of his study on Wilamowitz as a methodological starting point, from which I turned towards formulating general considerations, but did not go on with their content analysis. I now wish to continue with this, and in the conclusion take a closer look at some traits of the Gadamer's understanding of the relationship between philology and philosophy.

If philology means "Liebe zu den logoi" (the love of words), and philosophy is "Liebe zum »sophon«" (the love of wisdom), then – I quoted Gadamer – "Whoever knows something of the Greek language and tradition can *hear* it at once how near the two concepts are to each other, or more precisely, how they flow into one another and overflow from both sides."<sup>2</sup> Gadamer emphasizes the proximity of the two concepts starting from the counter-concept of philology, misology, as it appears in Plato. This latter concept is similar to that kind of hatred of men, misanthropy, which comes into being when someone trusts people imprudently, with no good reason, and after being disappointed several times because of this, "he ends by being in continual quarrels and by hating everybody and thinking there is nothing sound in anyone at all."<sup>3</sup> By analogy, someone becomes a misologist – hater of the *logos* (words, arguments, speeches) – by hastily trusting them first, believing their truth without having enough experience in this field, then later finds them false, and when this is repeated several times, he does not blame himself or his deficient knowledge, but comes to hate the *logos* and thinks he is the wisest, because he arrived to the conclusion that there is nothing healthy, nothing solid either in things or in speeches/arguments.<sup>4</sup> Gadamer writes in summary of this,

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<sup>1</sup> „Zwischen Phänomenologie und Dialektik. Versuch einer Selbstkritik", GW 2, 20

<sup>2</sup> GW 6, 272.

<sup>3</sup> See Plato, *Phaedo*, 89d,e. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D89d>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 90c. With regard to misology Kant's considerations are also important; see his *Logik. Ein Handbuch zu Vorlesungen*, ed. G. B. Jäsche, Kant, *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik*. 2,

“Die Gefahr ist, daß bei dem Scheitern der Suche nach Wahrheit die Liebe zu den Logoi, die die Liebe zum Denken ist, in Misologie, Skepsis, Verzweiflung am Denken umschlägt. Philosophie ihrerseits meint die Liebe zum ‚sophon‘, und das hat den weitesten Sinn der Liebe zu dem, was jenseits aller Berechenbarkeiten und aller Verheißungen von Nutzen und Gewinn anziehend ist – wie alles Schöne. Der Philologe, der die Logoi liebt, und der Mann, dessen theoretische Leidenschaft über den Nutzen und Nachteil des alltäglich Pragmatischen hinausstrebt, scheinen also fast dasselbe.”<sup>1</sup>

The proximity or community of philology and philosophy visibly feeds on the relationship between the love of words/speech and love of wisdom. For wisdom, the contemplation of ideas – as Gadamer argued in the third part of his main work<sup>2</sup> – lies for Plato in a realm beyond words, the soul’s conversation with itself remains “voiceless”, it has no “language” of its own. On Gadamer’s view, in virtue of the sophists’ abuse of words, Plato had to distinguish between linguistic correctness and objective truth, therefore being was to be known purely by itself, without the help of words. Since Plato also formulated strong reservations with respect to the ability to transmit philosophy

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*Werkausgabe*, ed. W. Weischedel, vol. 6. 449.: „Der die Wissenschaft hasset, um desto mehr aber die Weisheit liebet, den nennt man einen *Misologen*. Die Misologie entspringt gemeiniglich aus einer Leerheit von wissenschaftlichen Kenntnissen und einer gewissen damit verbundenen Art von Eitelkeit. Zuweilen verfallen aber auch diejenigen in den Fehler der Misologie, welche Anfangs mit großem Fleiße und Glücke den Wissenschaften nachgegangen waren, am Ende aber in ihrem ganzen Wissen keine Befriedigung fanden”.

<sup>1</sup> GW 6, 272.

<sup>2</sup> “That the true being of things is to be investigated ‘without names’ means that there is no access to truth in the proper being of words as such [...] thought is so independent of the being of words [...] that the word is reduced to a wholly secondary relation to the thing. It is a mere instrument of communication, the bringing forth (ekpherein) and uttering (logos prophorikos) of what is meant in the medium of the voice. It follows that an ideal system of signs, whose sole purpose is to coordinate all signs in an unambiguous system, makes the power of words (dunamis ton onomaton)—the range of variation of the contingent in the historical languages as they have actually developed—appear as a mere flaw in their utility. This is the ideal of a characteristic universalis” (TM 414 = GW 1, 418.) For more on this point, see István M. Fehér, „Wort und Zeichen: Die strukturalistisch-semiotische Sprachauffassung aus hermeneutischer Sicht,” *Hermeneutik und die Grenzen der Sprache. Hermeneutik, Sprachphilosophie, Anthropologie*, eds. Ulrich Arnsward, Jens Kertscher and Louise Röska-Hardy (Heidelberg: Manutius Verlag, 2012), 91–109; “Művészet, esztétika és irodalom Hans-Georg Gadamer filozófiai hermeneutikájában” (Art, aesthetics and literature in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics), *Az irodalmi szöveg antropológiai horizontjai. Hermeneutika és retorika* (Anthropological horizons of the literary text. Hermeneutics and rhetoric), eds. Gábor Bednics, László Bengi, Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (Budapest: Osiris, 2000), 15–67, especially note 261; Idem, “Kunst, Ästhetik und Literatur in der philosophischen Hermeneutik Hans-Georg Gadamer,” in *Epoche – Text – Modalität. Diskurs der Moderne in der ungarischen Literaturwissenschaft*, eds. E. Kulcsár-Szabó, M. Szegedy-Maszák (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 1–49. Idem, “Irodalom és filozófia – irodalmi szöveg és filozófiai szöveg” (Literature and philosophy – literary text and philosophical text), *Irodalomtörténet* 2 (2008): 155–187, here mainly part IV and following; Idem, “Szóbeliség, írásbeliség, hagyomány. A kommunikáció filozófiája és a hermeneutika” (Orality, literacy, tradition. The philosophy of communication and hermeneutics), *Pro Philosophia* 41 (2005): 3–56, here p. 34 ff. See online: <http://www.c3.hu/~prophil/profi051/feher.htm>

through writing,<sup>1</sup> it means for us that in the proper sense of the term, philosophy has no texts.

We have already seen that, for Gadamer, “[e]s ist nicht so, als ob der Text für uns eine fraglose Vorgegebenheit wäre und die Interpretation eine nachträglich eingestellte Prozedur, die man an dem Texte vornimmt.”<sup>2</sup> However, here it must be added: the “text” – which must be produced by both a philologist and a philosopher by way of interpretation – means something entirely different for the philologist and the philosopher. The history of the self-interpretation of philology – starting from the joy over fine words/speeches to the joy over thoughts and accounts to the later principle of “fidelity to the text” which lies at the centre of the Alexandrian and modern concept of philology – this history consistently shows that the way a text sounds, the establishment of the text is not only connected with the philologist’s interpretation, but in a sense it stands in the focus of his understanding. By contrast, the wording of the text has no primary importance for a philosopher (and hence, let me add, philosophers are notoriously prone to make philological omissions, since they are interested not in the words, but in the spirit of a text); for him, it is unambiguous that words and sentences stretch towards or reach for something and remain for ever distant from the realm of what the “effort of the concept” is being directed to.<sup>3</sup> When Gadamer characterized philology as defined in all its periods by the “fidelity to the text” (“Treue zum Text”), then it may be legitimate to add – completing the Gadamerian thought and hopefully being faithful to Gadamer’s intentions – that philosophy is characterized by “Treue zum Sinn”, “fidelity to the meaning”.

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<sup>1</sup> The meaning of writing is “to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written”, and “[...] the best of them really serve only to remind us of what we know” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275d, 278a, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhaedrus%3Asection%3D275d>,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhaedrus%3Asection%3D278a>) Words therefore do not automatically get to the thing, the objective truth of the thing. On the contrary: only he who already knows the thing can measure the truth of the words. See also Plato, *Letters*, VII, 341c-d: “There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.” (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0164%3Aletter%3D7%3Apage%3D341>)

<sup>2</sup> GW 6, 276.

<sup>3</sup> GW 6, 277.: “Der Wortlaut des Textes, die Herstellung des Textes ist für den Philologen mit seiner Interpretation nicht nur verbunden, sondern bleibt in gewissem Sinne im Zielbereich seines Verstehens. Dagegen hat für den Philosophen der Wortlaut des Textes kein primäres Interesse; für ihn steht allzusehr fest, da Worte und Sätze nach etwas hinlangen und von dem Bereiche dessen entfernt bleiben, dem »die Anstrengung des Begriffs« gilt.” I tried to render the *meaning* of the Gadamerian thought by paraphrasing his text, therefore I did not quote of literally for the sake of the meaning. The “effort of the concept” (Anstrengung des Begriffs) is Hegel’s expression: he writes in the preface to the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*: „Worauf es [...] bei dem Studium der Wissenschaft ankommt, ist, die Anstrengung des Begriffs auf sich zu nehmen” (Hegel: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Theorie Werkausgabe, Vol. 3, 56).

Obviously, meaning cannot be accessed without words, or language and text in general. Philosophy is also dependent on *logoi*, but for philosophy it takes the shape of an infinite conversation – one in which there are quite a lot of *words*, but in which the first and (especially) the last “word” – the word expressed in its unsurpassable perfection and philological beauty – does not exist. That is why there is no exemplariness and imitation in philosophy, but (instead) starting anew over and over again, a destruction or “repetition-recovery” (Wieder-holung) in a Heideggerian sense. If philosophers take their texts and “wie Pénélope ihr Gewebe immer wieder auftrennen, um sich für die Heimkehr ins Wahre aufs neue zu rüsten”,<sup>1</sup> then it requires indeed the “effort of the concept”.

Gadamer’s discussion of the relationship between philology and philosophy in his study on Wilamowitz is not unique in his *oeuvre*: thoughts and formulations akin to these in various forms and depths are found also in his masterwork, and other subsequently published papers. Gadamer examines in detail in his masterwork Schleiermacher’s famous thesis “that the aim is to understand a writer better than he understood himself”.<sup>2</sup> His final conclusion is as follows: “Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better, either in the sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas or in the sense of fundamental superiority of conscious over unconscious production. It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all*.” However, at an earlier stage of his investigations he manifested more “understanding” for Schleiermacher’s thesis, precisely because he drew a clear difference between how Schleiermacher and himself understood the concept of understanding. Gadamer’s own thesis, namely that “*we understand in a different way, if we understand at all*”, takes as its basis the hermeneutical, and therefore radically historical meaning of understanding going back to Heidegger, while he does not disregard the fact that Schleiermacher’s thesis is based on a completely different concept of understanding. He writes that Schleiermacher “sees the act of understanding as the reconstruction of the production. This inevitably renders many things conscious of which the writer may be unconscious.”<sup>3</sup>

Gadamer criticizes this romanticist concept of understanding, but he does not overlook the fact that from this perspective Schleiermacher’s thesis is utterly valid: “In fact, he writes, Schleiermacher’s “formula, understood in this way, can be regarded as a principle of all philology, insofar as the latter is regarded as the understanding of artful discourse. The better understanding that distinguishes the interpreter from the writer

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<sup>1</sup> "Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache", GW 8, 430. In context: “Philosophieren ist vielmehr eine beständige Selbstüberholung aller ihrer Begriffe, wie ein Gespräch eine ständige Selbstüberholung durch die Antwort des Anderen ist. Deshalb gibt es eigentlich keine Texte der Philosophie in dem Sinne, in dem wir von literarischen Texten sprechen - oder von Gesetzstexten oder von der Heiligen Schrift. So wahr sich die Erfahrung der Menschen unter den geschichtlichen Bedingungen ihres Lebens und ihrer Schicksale bildet, so formen sich die Worte und Antworten, die neue Fragen zu stellen erlauben. Daher ist die Geschichte der Philosophie ein durchgehender Dialog mit sich selbst. Die Philosophen haben keine Texte, weil sie wie Pénélope ihr Gewebe immer wieder auftrennen, um sich für die Heimkehr ins Wahre aufs neue zu rüsten.”

<sup>2</sup> TM 191.

<sup>3</sup> TM 191.

does not refer to the understanding of the text's subject matter [*Verständnis der Sachen*, von denen im Text die Rede ist], but simply to the understanding of the text [*Verständnis des Textes*],—i.e., of what the author meant and expressed.”<sup>1</sup>

“Understanding of the text's subject matter” and “understanding of the text” are not necessarily the same. The thing can only be accessed of course through the text – or, rather, the understanding of the thing can only be accessed through the understanding of the text –, but in spite of it the text does not become of interest *as a text* – not in its sounding form or composition, its grammatical-aesthetic quality, nor in the context of its historical embeddedness or the abundance of its explicit or implicit references.

“A person trying to understand a text, whether literary critic or historian, [...] is not interested in the objective truth of what is said as such, not even if the text itself claims to teach truth. On this the philologist and the historian are in agreement,” we quoted Gadamer in the third part,<sup>2</sup> noting that, as we shall see later on, the indifference about the “objective truth of the message” distinguishes both from the philosopher, who is interested in precisely that. At this point one can refer back to this quote, which tacitly acknowledges – twenty years in advance, still implicitly (the *Truth and Method* appeared in 1960, the Wilamowitz-study in 1982) – the philosopher's relationship with the text (not yet thematized specifically in Gadamer's masterwork), when stating that neither the historian nor the philologist “is interested in the objective truth of the message [...] as such”. At this point, we can also refine the formulation of the “understanding of the thing” as found in *Truth and Method* in the sense that “the understanding of the thing” is nothing else in fact that “the understanding of the objective truth of the thing”. The “understanding of the text”, by contrast – as “the understanding of what the author thought and expressed”, and in which respect it is very much possible to understand the author better than he understood himself – is something similar to understanding a text written in a foreign language (incidentally, the philologists' texts are often indeed written in foreign languages). As Gadamer writes: “A person who learns to understand a text in a foreign language will make explicitly conscious the grammatical rules and literary forms which the author followed without noticing, because he lived in the language and in its means of artistic expression. The same is true of all production by artistic genius and its reception by others.”<sup>3</sup> The interest of hermeneutics *as philosophy* is not directed towards “individuality and what it thinks but [towards] the truth of what is said.” Therefore, “a text is not understood as a mere expression of life but is taken seriously in its claim to truth,”<sup>4</sup> and this is what “understanding” (or its original meaning) lies precisely in: “understanding means, primarily, to understand the content of what is said, and only secondarily to isolate and understand another's meaning as such.”<sup>5</sup> This philosophical-hermeneutical interest dies

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<sup>1</sup> TM 191 (= GW 1, 196). (Italics mine, I. M. F.)

<sup>2</sup> TM 330f.

<sup>3</sup> TM 191 (= GW 1, 196).

<sup>4</sup> TM 296 (= GW 1, 302).

<sup>5</sup> TM 294 (= GW 1, 299). On the fundamental anti-psychologism of hermeneutics, according to which “the important thing for *understanding* [...] is [...] understanding the subject matter, the substantive insight”, and it is a question of “neither a historical nor a psychological genetic procedure,” see TM 183 (= GW 1, 186). This consideration is formulated in various contexts and

out or is left in the background in the understanding of the text *as text* – or in the understanding that thematizes the text as text.

Similarly to texts as objects of philology, philosophy is also “connected to language”, and it articulates its particular existence in the context of language. But “die Sprache der Philosophie überholt sich beständig selbst -- die Sprache des Gedichts [...] ist unüberholbar und einzig.”<sup>1</sup> The “beständige Selbstüberholung aller ihrer Begriffe”<sup>2</sup> is not merely incidental for philosophizing: it is in fact the very essence of philosophy. That is the reason why there are, properly speaking, no philosophical texts in the sense in which we speak of literary texts; “die Philosophen haben keine Texte, weil sie wie Penelope ihr Gewebe immer wieder auftrennen, um sich für die Heimkehr ins Wahre aufs neue zu rüsten.”<sup>3</sup> Philosophy is like a conversation which “eine ständige Selbstüberholung durch die Antwort des Anderen ist”;<sup>4</sup> philosophical “Denken ist dieses ständige Gespräch der Seele mit sich selbst.”<sup>5</sup> Philosophical texts are “nur Zwischenreden in dem unendlichen Gespräch des Denkens”,<sup>6</sup> “Interventionen in einem ins Unendliche weitergehenden Dialog”.<sup>7</sup>

As long as Gadamer organizes his entire concept of language around the notion of conversation and speech,<sup>8</sup> it is understandable why philosophy cannot possibly have “texts” in a philological or literary sense: namely, it cannot for the sake of the continuation of conversation, of the “Fortgang des denkenden Gesprächs der Seele mit sich selbst.”<sup>9</sup> If there should be philosophical texts in the precise sense that we speak about philological or literary texts, then this would mean at the same time the end of conversation.

The inner cohesion and mutual connection of philology and philosophy is admirably expressed by Gadamer at the end of his study on Wilamowitz: “Wir wissen

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places in Gadamer’s masterwork, see GW 1, 340, 378, 389, 398, the most important being probably the last one, where he writes: “the written word makes the understanding reader the arbiter of its claim to truth. The reader experiences what is addressed to him and what he understands in all its validity. What he understands is always more than an *unfamiliar opinion*: it is always *possible truth*” (TM 396, italics I.M.F.).

<sup>1</sup> “Philosophie und Literatur” (1981), GW 8, 240–257, here 256. Cf. “Schreiben und Reden” (1983), GW 10, 354–355; here 355.

<sup>2</sup> “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache” (1992), GW 8, 400–440, here 430.

<sup>3</sup> “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache”, GW 8, 430. See “Philosophie und Literatur”, GW 8, 237: “Die gemeinsame Voraussetzung allen Philosophierens ist, daß die Philosophie als solche keine Sprache hat, die ihrem eigenen Auftrag angemessen ist. Die Form des Satzes, die logische Struktur der Prädikation [...] ist zwar unvermeidbar [...]. Aber sie macht die irreführende Voraussetzung, als wäre der Gegenstand der Philosophie gegeben und bekannt wie die beobachtbaren Dinge und Vorgänge in der Welt. Die Philosophie bewegt sich jedoch ausschließlich im Medium des Begriffs [...]”.

<sup>4</sup> “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache”, GW 8, 430.

<sup>5</sup> “Philosophie und Literatur”, GW 8, 257.

<sup>6</sup> “Hermeneutik auf der Spur”, GW 10, 173.

<sup>7</sup> “Philosophie und Literatur”, GW 8, 256.

<sup>8</sup> See GW 1, 372 ff. See in particular 384: “Jedes Gespräch setzt eine gemeinsame Sprache voraus, oder besser: es bildet eine gemeinsame Sprache heraus“ (= TM 371: “Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language.”

<sup>9</sup> GW 8, 257.

alle, daß es auf das »sophon« ankommt, auf das, was eigentlich zu wissen not wäre, und wir wissen zugleich, daß wir Erben sind -- wir alle und von jeher -- und daß wir damit auf die Logoi verwiesen sind, auf die Teilhabe an einem Gespräch, das über uns hinweggeht und das allein uns die Sprache und die Sichtweite gibt, die uns leiten können.”<sup>1</sup>

## V. Possible conclusions

This paper has proposed to examine the views of an eminent 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher on the relationship of philology and philosophy by making use of and applying philology and philosophy alike. It has searched for related passages, and has tried to reconstruct their meaning, that is, interpret them – pursuing philology with the former, and philosophy/hermeneutics with the latter. It has questioned the relationship between philology and philosophy by initiating and putting in motion both from the very beginning – as living examples of “affiliation,” “belonging” to the object in the hermeneutical sense, that of the Gadamerian *Zugehörigkeit*. What we have questioned determined our way of questioning, and turned us into its questionees, those being interrogated. We could not really have proceeded otherwise. We can only hope that these interpretations have conveyed some relevant insights. At any rate, if nothing else, then this twofold activity, applying philology and philosophy alike, the fact that when questioning philology and philosophy any kind of answer can only be given with a simultaneous application of both, that is, strictly speaking, that neither of them can be “suspended” in an absolute sense – a practice which precedes reflection and subsequently makes it possible –: all these moments are appropriate to show that it is hardly possible to detach or isolate philology and philosophy.

“Love of words” – “Love of wisdom”: to conclude, I return to Gadamer’s definitions, which appear also in the title of this paper. Who loves wisdom, loves words as well, since there is no wisdom without words. But even if there is neither wisdom nor love of wisdom without words, love of wisdom – and this can be one of the possible conclusions and ongoing considerations of the above analyzed Gadamerian texts – is not confined to words or speeches made up of words. Who likes words and speeches, is not necessarily a friend of wisdom too. Wisdom for Plato is beyond words. “Love of words” and “love of wisdom” – of wisdom, as a love for something that is beyond words, for which there is (literally) no word – partly overlap, but do not coincide. If they should there would be no difference between philology and philosophy at all.

The friend of wisdom loves the word, and searches in words, speeches and texts that which is beyond them; as soon as he thinks he has found it he names it again with another word. Understandably, he does so by an imperfect word (since the thing is important, not the word), by which he offers his successors the possibility – and urges them as well – to reiterate their effort (the effort of the concept). At the end of this effort a new word is born – which is still not perfect and final. The philologist is a complementary member in this process, whose love of words and speeches becomes the love of “the sounding word”, which – once it is obtained – is final and unsurpassable. Therefore in the centre of the philologist’s range of vision there is nothing beyond the words. His

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<sup>1</sup> GW 6, 277.

eyes focus on the wording, and slips over the “thing”, the “objective truth of the thing”, or rather, such thing does not exist for him at all (while he continues to employ the concepts of “thing” and “truth” in a new sense); the philosopher focuses on the latter, and fails to see the “word” – his gaze slips over it – and in his conceptual effort he does not find the “word”, the final word (while he continues to talk, use words, and create new ones). It is by this displacement of emphasis and balance that the philologist and the philosopher complete and relate to each other.

Translated by Emese Czintos