

Understanding Gadamer: Understanding 'Otherwise'

Babette Babich
Fordham University

philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit
—Nietzsche, “Homer und die Klassische Philologie” (1869)

I: διαδοχαι

We are approaching the end of an era, that of a generation of Gadamer’s last students¹ together with those who knew him in the last quarter of the last century and two years into the present century (Gadamer kept his faculties almost until the end—a subject of some mythologization),² quite as he, for his own part, also wrote about his own teachers, Paul Natorp (by far perhaps the most important to him) and more proximally to my mind, if perhaps not utterly to his,³ about Martin Heidegger. To some extent,

¹ I often reflect that this is a faint distinction as Gadamer’s academically advanced past students may be counted by the hundreds or thousands.

² Just casually, and this is hardly comprehensive, one may note those who have written on Gadamer, like Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), Paul Fairfield and Saulius Geniusas, eds., *Relational Hermeneutics: Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Fred Lawrence, *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences* (Berkeley: California Scholar’s Press, 1984); Jim Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Dennis Schmidt, *Between Word and Image: Heidegger and Klee and Gadamer on Gesture and Genesis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Gianni Vattimo, “The Story of a Comma: Gadamer and the Sense of Being,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 54/213 (2000): 499-513, etc.

³ It will not do to overstate this: Gadamer weaves his engagement with the world-historical Heidegger into his *Philosophische Lebrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), and how could he not given

this is of the nature of both mortality *and* the academic lifeworld: one learns a great deal from one's teachers, if one is lucky. If one is even luckier, one comes to recognize—this is never a given—just how much one has learned.

Bearing witness to this recognition/discovery typically serves as occasion for notes of acknowledgment, gratitude, or commemorative notices (Gadamer wrote several of these and I will draw upon some of these below),⁴ including festive occasions, such as the current virtual assembly of *Profesores honoris causa*, thanks to the invitation of Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wierciński, President of the International Institute for Hermeneutics. We can wonder about the collective term of choice for those so named: should it be “rookery,” as if we, the invited “friends, esteemed colleagues and professors,” were part of an array of Joycean Jesuits, courtesy of Father Joseph Flanagan, S.J., who offered Gadamer the opportunity to spend many years at Boston College, living with those same Jesuits in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts (conveniently able to walk to university teaching obligations), or might we speak of a ‘pride’ of scholars, or is this a “collect” of philosophers, here to borrow Wallace Stevens’s word, in another context, as Stevens was a poet who read Heidegger and engaged with the French Heideggerian, Jean Wahl (although analytic philosophy, which was already all there was in the *Review of Metaphysics* at the time, summarily rejected Stevens’ contributions as poorly, “embarrassingly,” conceived).⁵

When, beginning in 1980, I studied with Gadamer at Boston College, I came to study hermeneutics.⁶ And Gadamer was indeed teaching philosophical hermeneutics but I would find that he very soon switched his course offerings to ancient philosophy, most specifically Plato’s dialogues, which left me, keen as I was and remain on philosophy of science and Heidegger, “perplexed.” Still, I took all his

his life as he lived it, and thus including (page 33) a full reproduction, of Heidegger inscribed and sent Gadamer on the occasion of his 75th birthday, dated from 1923. See further, Robert Bernasconi, “Bridging the Abyss: Heidegger and Gadamer,” *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 16 (1986): 1-24. See too, for context, trumping mortality a tiny bit (Gadamer would die in 2002), Jean Grondin, *Von Heidegger zu Gadamer: Unternwegs zur Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001).

⁴ It is worth reading, as Dan Dahlstrom is always worth reading, Dahlstrom’s “In Memoriam,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Jun., 2002): 905-907.

⁵ I begin to discuss this in a text written in honor of Richard Cobb Stevens who long hosted Gadamer at his house in Carlyle Massachusetts. See Babich, “Wallace Stevens, Heidegger, and the ‘Virile Hölderlin.’” *Borderless Philosophy* (2020): <https://www.cckp.space/single-post/bp3-2020-babette-babich-wallace-stevens-heidegger-and-the-virile-h%C3%B6lderlin-1-31>.

⁶ This is also where I would meet a fellow student, some years ahead of me, Dennis Schmidt as well as the veritable *Inbegriff* of hermeneutic kindness that is Fred Lawrence.

courses until I left in the Summer of 1984 for Göttingen and Tübingen and Berlin (and to visiting Gadamer at his home in Heidelberg).⁷

Apart from a subtle emphasis on conversation which Gadamer elevated to something like an “art of living,”⁸ I remain absorbed by the hermeneutic challenge crystallized in Gadamer’s insight that understanding to be understanding, that is, given that one has understood just to begin with, would always be “otherwise”:

it suffices to say, one understands *otherwise*, *if one understands at all*, [es genügt zu sagen, daß man *anders* versteht, *wenn man überhaupt versteht*].⁹

This “understanding otherwise,” that is: the ‘*anders*’ in Gadamer’s expression was advanced in context contra the romantic ideal of “understanding an author better than himself” but not less in contrast to the “real” or “actual” to be heard in Ranke’s ‘*wie es eigentlich gewesen*.’ Gadamer’s reference to this “otherwise” or “different” [*anders*] was articulated in the transforms and complexities of 19th century hermeneutics in which tradition Gadamer was formed, trained as he was as *Altphilolog*, i.e., as a classicist. To be sure, and like almost every other claim when it comes to hermeneutics, this claim requires its own hermeneutic not least because most have forgotten the philological complexities of the hermeneutic tradition [*ars interpretandi*] interior to specifically Classical Philology.¹⁰

Indeed, one will need to pay close attention to this tradition quite to the extent that we tend to notice the hermeneutic per se more than we notice or can notice the legacy that is Classical Philology as such. To this extent, the late Werner Hamacher (1948-2017), whom I met in 1985 along with Jacob Taubes who disposed over his own eschatologically minded “hermeneutics”—Taubes had his own institute—was moved

⁷ Today Gadamer may be “visited” via his video presence, which may even prove valuable for those who did not know him.

⁸ For theoretical readings of this theme, see the collective volume edited by Andrzej Wierciński, ed., *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 2011). See too: David Tracy, “Is There Hope for the Public Realm? Conversation as Interpretation,” *Social Research*, Vol. 65, No. 3, (Fall 1998): 597-609.

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Garrett Barden, trans. (New York: Continuum, 1975), 264. Translation modified. Cf. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1975), 280.

¹⁰ See, from one side of a complicated tradition: Michael Ermarth, “The Transformation of Hermeneutics: 19th Century Ancients and 20th Century Moderns,” *The Monist*, Vol. 64, No. 2, *Nineteenth-Century Thought Today* (1981): 175-194 as well as very broadly, Hellmut Flashar, Karlfried Gründer, und Axel Horstmann, eds, *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert: Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Geisteswissenschaften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

to write *Minima Philologica*,¹¹ in a patent echo of Adorno's pitch in his influential *Minima Moralia*,¹² without overmuch influence on Anglophone readers who tend to be innocent of the meaning of "philology" to begin with. It makes all the difference that Hamacher was a modern philologist [*Neuphilolog*] by contrast with Gadamer's classicist's formation which he shared with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who died the same year Gadamer was born, quite as Gadamer himself often noted with some pride. Both were Graecists and for both what would matter (as for Heidegger) would be the sound of Greek.¹³ Later I raise the question of Nietzsche's discoveries with respect to the thinkers he named "Pre-Platonic Philosophers" which I read against Heidegger's contention that Nietzsche never made decisive contributions (the word Heidegger refuses is "discovery"). And in the same way, it is no accident that Gadamer would himself edit in the heady year of 1968 a collective volume on the conceptual world of the same disputed Pre-Socratics.¹⁴

There is another parallel beyond ancient philosophical thought to the extent that both Gadamer and Nietzsche are celebrated for their contributions in their own right and as philosophers quite as opposed to being, although both were, scholars of Classical Philology. Yet I argue that one may not understand their *philosophical* contributions apart from their *philological* formation. At stake is more than a matter of training just insofar as both made significant contributions to the discipline of Classics, in Nietzsche's case and in addition to his study of his Pre-Platonic Philosophers quite in addition to his work on the sources of Diogenes Laërtius, Nietzsche made key discoveries concerning the way we pronounce ancient Greek to this day¹⁵ quite in

¹¹ Werner Hamacher, *Minima Philologica*, Catharine Diehl and Jason Groves, trans. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015). See too his earlier contribution to hermeneutics in contemporary philology, *Entferntes Verstehen. Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998).

¹² Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1951). This book remains inaccessible to hermeneutically challenged readers as most literary scholars and philosophers tend to be analytically formed and this blocks access to both Adorno's style and his content as well as the phenomenological and hermeneutic overtones of his work. I read between Adorno and Heidegger in an effort to illuminate some of this complexity in Babich, „Überlegungen nach Heidegger. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben“ in: Michael Medved and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Heidegger Jahrbuch 13. Zur Hermeneutik der Schwarzen Hefte* (Freiburg im Briesgau: Alber, 2021), 118-131.

¹³ Thus Sheldon Pollock writes with obligatory reference to Nietzsche (although citing Wilamowitz), "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer 2009): 931-961 but it is crucial to note that he is largely concerned with philology broadly speaking.

¹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, ed., *Um die Begriffswelt der Vorsokratiker* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlicher Buchgesellschaft, 1968).

¹⁵ Nietzsche, "On the Theory of Quantifying Rhythm," *New Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 1/2, *Companion to The Birth of Tragedy*, Part I (Spring/Summer 2016): 63-71.

addition to his better known discoveries regarding ancient tragedy (out of the ‘spirit’ of music, a discovery related to his work on the sound of ancient Greek which he claimed, a striking formula for Nietzsche as founded not on “interpretation” but “unvarnished truth”).¹⁶ Less well known, Nietzsche criticized the foundations of Classical Philology—thus the force of his “Attempt at a Self-Critique,” along with that of classical history in terms of what he called the “Alexandrian,” as I cite this term as Gadamer takes it up for his own part in speaking of our understanding of ancient history, both its “uses” [*Nutzen*] and its “negatives” [*Nachteile*].¹⁷

Significantly and impressively, Gadamer’s contribution to Classical Philology along with his extensive readings of Plato’s dialogues was his discovery adding a new fragment by Heraclitus to those otherwise attested. Here it is crucial to underline that Gadamer’s studies of ancient Greek thought correspond to rather more than a third of his collected works.¹⁸ Concerning Gadamer’s Heraclitus discovery we know because he writes about it several times, including one locus in conversation with Ricardo Dottori after casually qualifying Heidegger’s exegesis of the Anaximander saying as “absolutely barbarous.”¹⁹ Here Gadamer continues to recall his 1974 text *Vom Anfang bei Heraklit*, explaining his “discovery,” referencing his Reclam volume,²⁰ as this concerns ancient collections of sayings attributed to Heraclitus by the ancients and assessed by contemporary scholarship as authentic and not, specifically the last one in the list of Hippolytus, the Cynic. Heraclitus’ statements were very much in

¹⁶ Nietzsche, “On the Theory of Quantifying Rhythm,” 63.

¹⁷ I discuss Nietzsche on prosody in Babich, “Who Is Nietzsche’s Archilochus? Rhythm and the Problem of the Subject” in: Charles Bambach and Theodore George, eds., *Philosophers and their Poets* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 85-114 as well as, sustainedly, in *Nietzsches Antike*. See too Babich, “Nietzsche’s Philology and Nietzsche’s Science: On the ‘Problem of Science’ and ‘fröhliche Wissenschaft.’” 155-201.

¹⁸ See Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vols. 5-7, *Griechische Philosophie I-III*.

¹⁹ Gadamer in: *A Hans Georg Gadamer in Conversation with A Century of Philosophy: Hans Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Ricardo Dottori* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 132-133.

²⁰ „So mochte ich diesen kleinen Beitrag einem Versuch widmen, aus Hippolytos ein neues Fragment zu gewinnen, das bisher in den Sammlungen fehlt. Nicht etwa, daß es unbekannt geblieben wäre. Denn die lange Reihe von Heraklit-Zitaten, die Hippolytos im 9. Buche zusammenstellt und seiner apoletischer Absicht dienstbar macht, zeichnet alle zitierten Worte unmißverständlich als angeblich Herakliteisch aus. In der Einleitung dieser Zitatensammlung, die wir als Fragment 50 bei Diels lesen, wird eine Serie von Gegensatzpaaren aufgezählt, denen dann die folgenden Zitate offenbar entsprechen sollen. Unter diesen Gegensatzpaaren begegnet auch Vater-Sohn. Das wird schon an dieser Stelle von Diels als christlicher Zusatz angesehen. Aber das letzte Zitat in der Reihe begegnet tatsächlich ein (angebliches) Heraklitwort, das die Einheit von Vater und Sohn, also eine Art Vorstufe des Inkarnationsdogmas ausspricht: ... „Solange der Vater nicht ins Werden eingegangen war, kann er mit Recht Vater genannt werden. Als er aber sich herabließ, Werden auf sich zu nehmen, gezeugt, wurde der Sohn, er selbst von sich selbst und nicht von jemand anderem.“ Gadamer, „Vom Anfang bei Heraklit [1974],“ GW 6, 232-241; here: 234-235.

circulation at the time and Hippolytus collected them. But his last one was always left out because it was considered bogus since it echoes the trinity too much. The statement reads “The father only becomes a father in that he produces a son.”²¹

Gadamer points out, and note here that Classical Philology is nothing if it is not a matter of fine and even finer points, that it is Hippolytus himself who already makes the reference to the trinity such that quite for this reason it is discounted. Hence, as Gadamer mentions here, the fragment is not included in Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*. But, key to Gadamer’s discovery: “it is perfectly Heraclitean: ‘The father only becomes a father in that he has a son ...’ We now have one more magnificent statement from Heraclitus.”²²

If we turn to Gadamer’s original 1974 text, everything will depend on the word and indeed as heard, just to the extent that what at issue in Gadamer’s reading is a specific tonality. The tone is *heard*, so Gadamer tells us, as a Heraclitean “*Wortlaut*”: *δικαίως πατήρ προσηγόρευτο γεννηθεὶς υἱὸς ἑαυτοῦ* »*Mit Recht heißt einer Vater erst dann, wenn er es geworden ist (und nicht nur gilt daß er der Erzeuger ist); Sohn seiner selbst (und nicht der eines anderen)*.”²³ Gadamer adds the parenthesis to catch the Heraclitean co-incident that is a perfect reflex of father and son, quite to the extent that the father thereby comes to be and is thus become, in this sense, his own son *qua* “becoming” a father.²⁴

It is the sounding out of the Hippolytus’ fragment, reading the Greek through the tradition of transmission and Heraclitean resonance that forms the basis for Gadamer’s discovery. Years later, Catherine Osborne in an analytic mode would take up the more general question of the status of these fragments transmitted via commentary, less any reference to Gadamer but quite on the topic of Hippolytus in her *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*.²⁵

²¹ See Gadamer in conversation in *A Century of Philosophy*, cited above, 132-133.

²² Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy*, 132-133.

²³ Gadamer, „Vom Anfang bei Heraklit [1974],“ GW 6, 236. See for a discussion of Gadamer’s *The Beginning of Knowledge*, A. A. Long pointing out that matters are compounded, as unfortunately in Gadamer’s case they tend to be by poor translators who, as Long says, do not “serve” him well, making it challenging to evaluate his claims: in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 217 (Oct., 2004): 614-615, here: 615.

²⁴ Gadamer, „Vom Anfang bei Heraklit [1974],“ GW 6, 237. Cf. broadly on father-son succession/replacement, Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 228f.

²⁵ Catherine Osborne [Rowett], *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). If Osborne does not refer to Gadamer this is common for analytic philosophers. Instructive, although likewise without reference to Gadamer is Malcolm Schofield’s review of her book pointing to the need for hermeneutics without using the word: *Isis*, 79: 3, 298 (1998): 537-538

Articulating the ‘concentricity’ of the hermeneutic circle in a reflection on “how hermeneutics sets about its work,”²⁶ Gadamer reminds us of the specifically *philological* ambit of the project, a matter of understanding the text “in terms of itself,”²⁷ and which, set within Heidegger’s project of hermeneutic phenomenology, in intentional/anticipatory terms, would be distinguished from a literally and fancifully ‘romantic fusion’ of minds, qua ‘reproduction,’ as Gadamer puts it, of an “original production.” It is this ‘romantic’ vision—here Gadamer references Karl Joël who writes on this thematic²⁸—contra Gadamer’s innovative reflection on horizons and on limits, via Heidegger and Husserl and offering in the process a hermeneutic of the antecedent (i.e., “romantic”) tradition’s claim to be able to say “that one should be able to understand an author better than he understood himself.”²⁹

This ideal persists even without the ‘romantic’ label to this day (and I will return to Joël’s sense of ‘romantic’ in my conclusion below) in our ongoing confidence that something like an “objective” understanding of whatever is to be understood, the poem to be read, the statue to be seen, the musical piece as interpreted or performed and as *heard* and here there is a parallel to Günther Anders, Heidegger’s other student, likewise a student of Max Scheler, and Anders’ notion of “being-in-music”³⁰), as Gadamer argues in his reflections on musical improvisation in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*.³¹

The interpreter is always involved for Gadamer, and this remains key to his insight into prejudice as such but also to what he called, borrowing from Hölderlin, “conversation” [*Gespräch*] The intersection is ineliminable: “Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author.”³² As Andrzej Wierciński points out, this has an open-ended dimensionality for Gadamer: “A dialogue with the text,

²⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 258.

²⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 261.

²⁸ Karl Joël, *Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik. Mit Anhang Archaische Romantik* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1906). Here it is relevant quite in addition to the extraordinary title image and frontispiece featuring the Star of David growing out of a tree of life, that Joël begins by underscoring that his book had “already been published” in 1903 as part of the „Programm zur Rektoratsfeier der Universität Basel.” (v). As Joël foregrounds the transition from the principle of water to that of the unlimited (252f), citing Anaximander as “Prophet des Unendlichen, ein königlicher Richter des All” (257), Nietzsche’s influence seems plain.

²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 263.

³⁰ I explore some of Anders’ thinking on this in Babich, *Günther Anders; Philosophy of Technology: From Phenomenology to Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

³¹ Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, Nicholas Walker, trans., Robert Bernasconi, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 264.

which is for Gadamer never something completed, means that a reader is in dialogue with him- or herself in the act of reading.”³³

Gadamer’s quotation from Hölderlin’s hymn, *Friedensfeier*,³⁴

Seit ein Gespräch wir sind / Und hören von einander
[Since a conversation we are / and hear from one another]

Among others, this also inspires both Martin Heidegger *and* Martin Buber.

Friedensfeier is a long poem which Hölderlin begins with an epistolary address to the reader invoking the aura of a beautiful day on which, “*ja fast jede Sangart*” [nearly every mode of song] may be heard. Elsewhere I have taken some care to argue that Hölderlin prized this range of song, as a matter of types or modes, a versatility attributed in antiquity to Archilochus, the Ancient Greek lyric poet, celebrated for this same achievement in Plutarch’s *De Musica*.³⁵ What connected these otherwise seemingly affectively different poets was the poetic device of tonal variation, *Wechsel der Töne* that Archilochus was famed for having been the first to devise. It is this focus on tone, music, modality that belongs to the line Gadamer takes over, when he writes of hermeneutic conversation as the watchword of his own thought.

One can almost hear as the first verse closes, a word for the philologist across time:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Denn ferne kommend haben</i> | For, from afar have come |
| <i>Hieher, zur Abendstunde,</i> | from thence to here, at evening’s hour, |
| <i>Sich liebende Gäste beschieden.</i> | Loving guests welcome each other. |

I read between Gadamer and Hölderlin inspired by the genius of bringing, by invitation, a community (virtual) of minds, thanks to Wierciński’s initiative in a

³³ Wierciński, “*Sprache ist Gespräch*: Gadamer’s Understanding of Language as Conversation,” in: Wierciński, ed., *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*. 37-58, here: 38. Wierciński’s lead chapter (and see also his initial remarks: “The Primacy of Conversation in Philosophical Hermeneutics”) rewards careful review.

³⁴ Buber himself cites: *Versöhnender der du Nimmerglaubt*, the third version from Beisner’s 1969 edition. Buber, „Seit ein Gespräch Wir Sind“ *Sprachphilosophische Schriften*, Vol. 4., Asher Biemann, ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003), 83-86. Buber footnotes, there is an evident overlap or resonance with Gadamer, as Buber cites Heidegger’s *Erläuterung an Hölderlins Dichtung*, „Seit die Götter uns in das Gespräch bringen. In the context of *Friedensfeier*, Heidegger’s claim can seem descriptive but Gadamer highlights the move from the first person to the collective ‘we.’

³⁵ See, again, Babich, “Who Is Nietzsche’s Archilochus?”, here: 90ff.

venture, the founding of the International Institute for Hermeneutics, on which Gadamer himself congratulated him. I do not claim to have been part of this venture, apart from its periphery over the years where, by contrast, many others have been part of it from the outset.

In addition to the above personal reflections of a student, I propose to recall a point Nietzsche makes as a reader of Homer and not less as Nietzsche also read Archilochus alongside Homer, reading the 2nd Century CE Lucian at the end of “*Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*,” in his *Human, All too Human*, entitled, thus the patent reference to Lucian (it is his title): “The Descent into Hades’ [*Die Hadesfahrt*]. I have already borrowed Nietzsche’s language, as I also borrow from Hölderlin, for my *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*,³⁶ here to cite Nietzsche himself: “and not only rams have I sacrificed [*nicht nur Hammel habe ich geopfert*] in order to be able to talk with a few of the dead, but I have not spared my own blood.”³⁷

The “grace”—what Ivan Illich names *Umsonstigkeit* (there is a complex resonance in Hölderlin’s “*So ist schnell / Vergänglich alles Himmlische; aber umsonst nicht;*”) or the *pneuma* as we shall see that Gadamer takes some care to note this—speaks in Hölderlin’s *Friedensfeier*, and it is useful to add that this is the same unguarded, *ecstatic* choice Rilke offers Heidegger in *What Are Poets For?* where Hölderlin reflects on divine passage

*Denn schonend rührt des Maases allzeit kundig
Nur einen Augenblick die Wohnungen der Menschen
Ein Gott an, unversehn, und keiner weiß es, wenn?*

Arguably, at least I would like to argue, this will lend us all the theology we need, were we able to countenance what is said here, complete with any number of gods. It is Nietzsche who will take us to task by asking, remonstrating, “two thousand years, and not a single new God?”³⁸ And, in advance of Nietzsche’s query, the poet yields the rest: “the still god of time” *and* “the law of love”:

³⁶ Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers, Words in Blood, Like Flowers: Philosophy and Poetry, Music and Eros in Nietzsche, Hölderlin, Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, KSA 2, 533-534. I take this further in the same titular (and substantive) spirit in a hermeneutics of paleo-anthropology in Babich, “Blood for the Ghosts: Reading Ruin’s *Being With the Dead* with Nietzsche,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (June 2020): 255-269.

³⁸ See for a discussion of this point, Babich, “Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*: The Birth of Modern Science out of the Spirit of Religion” in: Markus Enders & Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* (Freiburg i. Briesgau: Alber, 2014), 134-154.

...So dünkt mir jetzt das Beste,
 Wenn nun vollendet sein Bild und fertig ist der Meister,
 Und selbst verklärt davon aus seiner Werkstatt tritt,
 Der stille Gott der Zeit und nur der Liebe Gesez,
 Das schönausgleichende gilt von hier an bis zum Himmel (Hölderlin, *Friedensfeier*)

For this reason, in addition to his other concerns in *Broken Hegemonies*, Reiner Schürmann tells us that Heidegger's *Beiträge* must be read (note that the argument is contra a tendency not to read it at all, thus this is an argument for the importance of a text judged ancillary by some) in terms of the temporal crucible in which Heidegger wrote (likewise relevant, as I also argue for reading his so-called Black Notebooks),³⁹ taking his point of departure, as Schürmann notes, under "the most intense combined influence of Hölderlin and Nietzsche."⁴⁰ But these same "influences," along with Rilke to be sure, are part of Gadamer's hermeneutics.⁴¹

I began by noting that I draw attention to Nietzsche's expressly *hermeneutic* formation as Classicist.⁴² This is not a matter of word-frequency in Nietzsche—as some scholars imagine and as if Nietzsche would use the term "hermeneutics" as a catchword as we do today—but his substantive formation via Ritschl who defines philology precisely in terms of the two "elements" of "critique and hermeneutics,"⁴³ but as Nietzsche was one of the foremost minds of his generation but also as he was swept from intellectual attention by an all-too-human, far-too familiar kind of academic *ressentiment*—and *ressentiment* has never lacked for virtues: the less credited to Nietzsche, the more for today's classical philologists to discover in their own waters

³⁹ Babich, "Heidegger's Black Night: The *Nachlass* and Its *Wirkungsgeschichte*" in: Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas, eds., *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks: 1931-1941* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 59-86.

⁴⁰ Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Reginald Lilly, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 515.

⁴¹ See also for reading Gadamer together with Heidegger (and critically), Andrzej Wiercinski, "The Lingual Mediation of Being and the Infinite Process of Understanding: Gadamer's Radicalization of Heidegger's Question of Being," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, 50/1 (2014): 249-275. See too Bernasconi, "Bridging the Abyss: Heidegger and Gadamer," *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 16 (1986): 1-24.

⁴² See for example, and quite pointedly in addition to the arguments made by the philosophers and classicists, Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Jonathan Barnes, Johann Figl, "Hermeneutische Voraussetzungen der philologischen Kritik," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 13 (1984): 111-128.

⁴³ See the final volume of Ritschl's collected works edited by his son-in-law, Curt Wachsmuth, *Friedrich Ritschl's Kleine Philologische Schriften. Fünfter Band: Vermischtes* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879), particularly „Ueber die neueste Entwicklung der Philologie (1833),“ 1-18, here: 8.

and on their own terms.⁴⁴ Similarly, Gadamer would remain absorbed by what he named the beginnings of philosophy, along with his readings of Plato and of Aristotle. Specifically what is crucial are the so-called Pre-Socratics, especially Heraclitus, so-named “obscure,” the Presocratic who most of all seems to demand a hermeneutic approach, more than any other ancient Greek thinker before Plato, precisely as it is Heraclitus who says, just according to Plato from whom we have the sole attestation we happen to have, “everything flows.” (*Crat.*, 402a)⁴⁵

Crucial to Nietzsche’s hermeneutic methodology is a generosity he learnt from Ritschl and which emerges in an aphorism on the art of interpretation, as Nietzsche tells us, seriatim, how to read a human being, an event, a text: *Liebe als Kunstgriffe*, “Love as Technique.” Elsewhere I underline that this interpretive breadth takes hermeneutics beyond the text, a move crucial for the philosophy of science both natural and social, as I have argued following in the spirit of Patrick Heelan and Joseph Kockelmans as well as Ted Kisiel and the late Bulgarian hermeneutic philosopher, Dimitri Ginev (1956-2021).⁴⁶

It was Gadamer’s interpretive art that allowed him to assume that anyone who begins a dialogue has already conceded an openness in a Rilkean hermeneutic of love as interpretive tactic or “method” as we might say in Gadamer’s terminology, presupposes a specific holding in abeyance, a careful, preliminary generosity: bracketing advance critique. Thus, and above all it depends on what Gadamer and Anders call “listening,” here again: following Hölderlin, on what we are, that to the extent that what we are is being-a-conversation—“*ein Gespräch wir sind*.”

To say: *a-conversation-we-are* entails, as Hölderlin continues, expanding: “*und hören von einander*.” Earlier we read: it is a “law of fate [*Schicksaalgesetz*],” that “everyone shall know all others, [*daß alle sich erfahren*].” Gadamer catches this law, a law of learning and experience, in his discussion of conversation and understanding but where Gadamer’s generosity assumes this as a *given*, Nietzsche methodically details the didactic effort

⁴⁴ See my first chapter, “*Entstehungsgeschichte. Die Vorplatoniker*” in Babich, *Nietzsches Antike* (Berlin: Nomos/Academia, 2020), 17-48. See, too, Christian Benne’s arguments in *Nietzsche und die historisch-kritische Philologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

⁴⁵ See for example, Gadamer, *Der Anfang des Wissens* (Stuttgart: Reklam, 1999), in English as *The Beginning of Knowledge*, Rod Coltman, trans. (London: Bloomsbury, 2003) (and see, again, Long’s review on Coltman’s translation, cited above), and, for convenience the chapter, “Heraclitus Studies” in David C. Jacobs, ed., *The Presocratics After Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) and for discussion, Hans Ruin, “Unity in Difference—Difference in Unity: Heraclitus and the Truth of Hermeneutics,” *Hermeneutik och tradition: Gadamer och den grekiska filosofin*, Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 13 (2003): 41-61.

⁴⁶ See, for illustration, the contributions to Babich and Ginev, eds., *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology* (Frankfurt am Main: Springer, 2014).

needed to effect the trick involved as it is neither tolerance, nor forbearance, nor sainted kindness but, for the sake of understanding, in order to enable the person, the event, the book (note the listed cadence) to achieve or fulfil their promise or potential or end as opposed to (note the prayer of the devout, reflecting on praying) fainting or stumbling.

Nietzsche and Gadamer share an ideal project, call it a presumption, presupposition, *prejudice* as Nietzsche will also say, for the sake of learning or discovery. But this is not common as mostly we take ourselves already to know what we need to know in advance and in most cases we do not think to question this “conviction” (this was Nietzsche’s favoured term). Note too that this is different from today’s take-no-prisoner’s style of contemporary analytic critique as this tends to revel in mocking opponents (and sometimes calling this mockery an “argument”), a *habitus* endemic to university philosophy. For Nietzsche, by contrast, only the methodological generosity of love *as* technical tactic [*Kunstgriff*], could allow one to understand, whatever one’s ultimate conclusion might in the end, depending on one’s scholarly or interpretive project, turn out to be.

Thus Nietzsche explains *as* invaluable for hermeneutic utility, in Gary Handwerk’s recent translation “*Love as trick,*” or as Hollingdale translates, “*Love as artifice,*”

Whoever really wants to learn to understand something new [*etwas Neues*] (be it a person, an event, a book) such a one will do well to take it up with all possible love [*aller möglichen Liebe*] and swiftly avert his eyes from everything inimical, repellent, false, even to forget it: so that one, for example, giving the author of a book the longest head-start, almost to the point that, as in the case of betting on a race, one desires with beating heart that he might attain the goal. With this procedure [*Verfahren*] one in effect penetrates to the heart of the new object, the point that moves it: and just this means getting to know it. (MA I, §621; KSA 2, 250)

Note that one may lack inclination, even be repelled. The point is that one must adopt a tactic, that is to say: *love*, for Nietzsche, when it comes to what one does not know, just to avoid judging everything by the reductive standards of what one knows. In this Nietzsche appeals, as Gadamer does, to “love” as we can hear this in the word *philology*: love of words, love of language. For his part, Gadamer writes in 1982, in an encomium directed to Nietzsche’s school colleague, Wilamowitz,

Die Philologie ist die Liebe zu den *Logos*. So begegnet etwa in Platos *Phaidon* an einer berühmten Stelle der Gegenbegriff der Misologie. Die Gefahr ist, daß Scheitern der Suche nach der Wahrheit die Liebe zu den *Logoi*, die die Liebe zum Denken ist, in Misologie, Skepsis, Verzweiflung am Denken umschlägt.⁴⁷

In the same way, Gadamer argued more informally (here to his own students and seemingly echoing Ritschl on critique and hermeneutics): there would/should be no difference between philosopher and philologist unless they fell short of his/her task. I have argued that this reflects Nietzsche's word on the "uselessness" of the philosopher in antiquity inasmuch as the concerns of the philosopher would be non-banaisic, i.e., other-than worldly concerns (Nietzsche's reference is to Anaxagoras).⁴⁸ For Gadamer,

Der Philologe, der die *Logoi* liebt, und der Mann, dessen theoretischer Leidenschaft über den Nutzen und Nachteil des alltäglich Pragmatischen hinausstrebt, schienen also fast dasselbe.⁴⁹

If Gadamer's parallel is part of an encomium, Nietzsche, closer to the question and the subject, scattered his remarks about his colleagues whom he regarded as so many ivy-wreath munching sheep—here it is helpful to explain that this is again a reference to Wilamowitz, who would dominate the tradition of classics in the 20th century much as Ritschl in the 19th century⁵⁰—and not less the *ressentiment* between scholars.

Andrzej Wierciński addresses us in the first place as "friends." Thus we are called, as André writes, to "hermeneutic hospitality toward the Other and otherness."⁵¹ This is our task, as friendship is essential to the life of the mind. But *genuine* friendship is *rare*.

For the most part there is either utter ignorance or indifference, which is often related to the former or as already suggested, *ressentiment*, typically petty, sometimes major. Thus as Gadamer points out, one can more easily see scotosis and limitation in

⁴⁷ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie. Über Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff," (1982) GW 6, *Griechische Philosophie II*, 271-277, here: 272.

⁴⁸ See for discussion, Babich, "Nietzsche's Anaxagoras" in *Nietzsche Handbuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022).

⁴⁹ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie. Über Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff," (1982) GW 6, *Griechische Philosophie II*, 271-277, here: 272.

⁵⁰ See for a discussion of this influence, Gadamer's: "Philosophie und Philologie" and see too Nietzsche's reflection on the conceit of philology in *The Gay Science*, "Ein Wort für Philologen." (FW §102)

⁵¹ See Wierciński, Letter of 28 November 2021. International Institute for Hermeneutics.

historical as opposed to more proximal contexts. By contrast, Nietzsche foregrounded the self-presumption that blinds most scholars, and in his own day, his inaugural lecture in Basel highlighted the scholastic tendency to simply impose a given scholar's judgment (or taste) as if the individual authority's judgment decided anything (except for the individual himself). Nietzsche's problem was the "person" of Homer as such, just given the lack of a text which famously, qua "Homer question," hindered no one in his day and has hindered no one to this day from determining sources: one can, when it comes to a blind poet (an epithet that tells us that he does not write), quite as in the case of a Thales/Socrates (both of whom, as Nietzsche reminded his students, do not write), invent as one likes.⁵²

Elsewhere I explore Nietzsche's hermeneutics as "ubiquitous,"⁵³ antecedent to Herbert Butterfield's apprehension of the tendency he named "whiggish," which today's scholars, call "presentism." We tend to judge the past, and what we take to be "the past," by the standards of the present, partly because, as Heidegger reminds us already in *Being and Time*, in his reflections on history, here most pointedly with reference to the origination of the working of history (and the work of art), the past we know (and can know) is what is present to us:

Thus the past has a remarkable double meaning; the past belongs irretrievably to an earlier time, it belonged to the events of that time and in spite of that, it can still be present-at-hand "now"—for instance, the remains of a Greek temple. With the temple, a "bit of the past" is still "in the present." (BT 430/SZ 378)

Beginning with the same word 'Zeug' that Heidegger will use in his later lecture on the origin of the work of art, varied, as Jacques Taminiaux always liked to remind us, on three occasions, we encounter household implements, here Heidegger speaks of *Hausgerät*, as preserved "antiquities," whereby the same preserved artifacts have the "aura" of antiquity:

⁵² In Nietzsche's expression of the point as it had already become a routine practice in his day: *Den Inbegriff von ästhetischer Singularität, die der Einzelne nach seiner künstlerischen Fähigkeit anerkannte, nannte er jetzt Homer.*] Nietzsche, *Frühe Schriften. 1854-1869* (Munich: Beck, 1994), Vol. 5, 299. See for a discussion of Nietzsche's notion of (and critique of) taste, Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, 188ff.

⁵³ Babich, "The Ubiquity of Hermeneutics" in: Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 85-97 as well as "Friedrich Nietzsche" in: Niall Keane and Chris Lawn, eds., *Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Wiley, 2015), 366-377.

The gear [*Gerät*] has become fragile and worm-eaten ‘in the course of time.’ But that specific character of the past which makes something historical does not lie in this trans-ience, which continues even during the Being-present-at-hand of the equipment in the museum. ...What is ‘past’? Nothing else than that that *world* within which they be-longed to a context of equipment and were encountered as ready-to-hand and used by a concerned Dasein who was in-the-world. That *world* is no longer. (BT 432/SZ 380)

Gadamer makes a distinction for his own part by speaking in the context of Droysen’s hermeneutics of the difference between “sources [*Quellen*] and vestiges [*Überresten*].” The relevance of Gadamer’s observation as a meditation on Heidegger’s reflection on the work of art is clear as Gadamer raises the further question in 1964, concerning “the archaic image of a god,” to remind us to ask whether this archaic image can be understood as “a vestige, like any tool. Or is it a piece of world-interpretation, like everything that is handed on linguistically?”⁵⁴ Note that Heidegger engages the question of the perdurance of the past: “what was formerly *within-the-world* with respect to that world is still present at hand.” How, for a historian, is this to be determined?

A cliché reports that history is “a foreign land.”⁵⁵ In this thus alien vein, Friedrich Kittler cites the cliché of cliché concerning the fragment as such:

Literature, Goethe wrote, is the fragment of fragments; the least of what had happened and of what had been spoken was written down; of what had been written down, only the smallest fraction was preserved.⁵⁶

Kittler’s citation from Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is a reminder that everything unmarked was as if it had never been.⁵⁷ At the same time, as Nietzsche reminded his students, the only thing available for understanding antiquity, including what one might take oneself to know of the archaic “person,” was the texts and these alone.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, David Linge, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 99.

⁵⁵ The reference derives from the first line of L. P. Hartley’s 1953 novel, *The Go-Between* which was adopted as title (and *Leitmotif* for) a textbook by David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁵⁶ Friedrich Kittler, “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter,” Dorothea von Mücke and Philippe L. Simolon, trans. *October* 41 (Summer 1987): 101-118, here: 105.

⁵⁷ Anders picks up this point in his reflections, given our planetary-scale capacity for annihilation, of a future of never having been.

For his part, exemplar of source scholarship, Nietzsche counts off his “four ‘great’ errors,” via psychological metonymy: tracing an “unknown” something “back to something known,” a circular project,⁵⁸ is to explain the unknown in terms of the known: the essence of research. Thus we “discover” what Heidegger hyphenates as the “always-already-knowns,”⁵⁹ For Heidegger, what is at stake is the matter of law, laws of nature, and *ceteris paribus*, historical laws:

Methodology, through which a sphere of objects comes into representation, has the character of a clarifying on the basis of what is clear—explanation. Explanation is always twofold. It accounts for an unknown by means of a known and at the same time it verifies that known by means of that unknown.⁶⁰

Here the reference to philology is patent, the same holds for the “historical human sciences.” As Heidegger proceeds to explain:

... “source criticism” designates the whole gamut of the discovery, examination, verification, evaluation, preservation, and interpretation of sources. Historiographical explanation, which is based on source criticism, does not, it is true, trace facts back to laws and rules. But neither does it confine itself to the mere reporting of the facts. In the historical sciences, just as in the natural sciences, the methodology aims at representing what is fixed and stable and at making history an object. History can become objective only when it is past.⁶¹

What renders the issue complicated Heidegger articulates in terms of an effective “making present” of the past [*Vergegenwärtigung*], requiring a hermeneutic phenomenological supplement, given the attention to the life-world and what both Heidegger (and Anders and Adorno) and Gadamer call the given “situation” of the time in which the researcher, scholar, thinker find themselves together with the object, be it a work of art, museum display item (this is nearly impossible, so “framed” in Heidegger’s language is this *qua* artifact) or *in situ* and, as Heidegger famously concludes his *Origin of the Work of Art* essay, to the great dismay of many of his readers,

⁵⁸ „*Psychologische Erklärung dazu*.—Etwas Unbekanntes auf etwas Bekanntes zurückzuführen, erleichtert, beruhigt, befriedigt, giebt ausserdem ein Gefühl von Macht.“ Nietzsche, KSA 6, 93.

⁵⁹ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt, trans. (New York: Harper, 1977), 115-154, here: 119.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” 121.

⁶¹ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” 123.

not even then. Arguably, Gadamer closes his reflections on *The Relevance of the Beautiful* with a moment of interpretive encounter/engagement: a festive, *communal* revelation among adepts of museal antiquity,⁶² in correspondence with the more explicitly epochal, aletheic point Heidegger advances.

Nietzsche is closer to Heidegger on the problem of the canon, as I already recalled Nietzsche's original "Homer problem."⁶³ Nietzsche emphasized what today's scholars in both philosophy and philology might overlook in the production of canonic editions (including editions of ancient Greek thought, i.e., thinkers traditionally named, since Hermann Diels, "Presocratic Philosophers" and for Nietzsche, more technically named: "Preplatonic Philosophers").⁶⁴ This is a historical sensibility, including the understanding that the "texts" thereby engendered, edited, commented, validated as authoritative, texts thereby set up as classical or standard works of philology for scholars today and of the future, are not thereby engendered or constituted as "original works." The "text," as Nietzsche famously puts it, disappears under "interpretation." (JGB §38)

This might seem an aphoristic conceit, words on words about words but in addition to Ritschl who also writes about philological method with specific respect to fragments and aphorisms,⁶⁵ Nietzsche was formed by Otto Jahn, expert in material hermeneutics: reading monuments, herms, statues, in addition to gems/seals/inscriptions, "archaeologically." Thus Nietzsche could underline that apart from the damage done by the scholars of antiquity, by the "scientists" themselves, he had no objection to philologists. The terminological distinction is already to be found in Ritschl but as Gadamer emphasizes is Wilamowitz' legacy, as he substituted "the more comprehensive notion of "*Altertumswissenschaften*" for the traditional, "*Klassischer Philologie*."⁶⁶ For Nietzsche, this same science of philology had

⁶² Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*. I discuss Heidegger's complex discussion of the possibility of an interpretive encounter with the ancient cult (the working preservation) of the ancient work of art as such, in his reflections on the temple in an essay included in Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers* in the chapter "The Work of Art and the Museum," as I argue that this is very much a matter of museum consciousness, and see for a different reading, foregrounding Kant, Ingrid Scheibler, "Art as Festival in Heidegger and Gadamer," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 9/2 (2001): 151–175 and Nicholas Davey, foregrounding Dilthey and Habermas, as opposed to Heidegger, in Davey's "Baumgarten's Aesthetics: A Post-Gadamerian Reflection," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 2, No 2, (Spring 1989): 101-115.

⁶³ The Homer problem is the problem concerning the "person" of Homer (as a specific or individual poet as opposed to a collective assemblage or folk tradition). Nietzsche, *Frühe Schriften*, Vol. 5, 290.

⁶⁴ See for discussion the first chapter of Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*.

⁶⁵ Ritschl, "Zur Methode des philologischen Studiums (Bruchstücke und Aphorismen)," *Friedrich Ritschl's Kleine Philologische Schriften. Fünfter Band*, 19-37.

⁶⁶ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie," 271.n

its scientific “objects,” whereby that same “antiquity [*Alterthum*] breaks into pieces at the hands of the philologists.”⁶⁷ So far from a matter of hyperbole, given the damage wrought by philological reconstitution, as in the case of philosophical significance, specifically the case of Derveni papyrus, or more materially and more dramatically, the British Museum’s Silver Lyre of Ur,⁶⁸ not to mention other artifacts including musical instruments,⁶⁹ Nietzsche’s reference to striding amidst antiquity’s “shards [*Trummerfeld*],”⁷⁰ here to be sure also an echo of Schleiermacher, is no figure of speech.

Gadamer would suggest that there is always already “more.” Part of that “more” is what the interpreter brings, understanding *otherwise*. If Heidegger reminds us that the Rankean ideal, once again, “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” is a fantasy born of the bootless desire to fix the flowing river of the past, to make it stay, to use Goethe’s beautiful epitomizing beauty (never mind its masculinist conceit—as Faust counts himself out of the context *ab initio*), which Gadamer updates for the purposes of his reflection on the beautiful via Rilke, the “conversation” is not merely one between scholars and texts but reader and poet: the poem, the person, along with the informed audience who share in (as witnesses to) a new exhibit of an ancient work of art, thereby offering Gadamer’s own ekphrasis of Rilke’s *Torso of Apollo* and its standing imperative: *Du mußt dein Leben ändern* [*you must change your life*]. For Gadamer the very fact that you bring something to the encounter does not relieve you of liability for misunderstanding or misinterpretation as it brings you under the claim of the work, in dialogue with the work and its effects, perhaps for the first time.

II: Coda

I return to Heidegger’s point on source scholarship along with my claim that, like Gadamer, Heidegger is already in dialogue with Nietzsche as we may recall Nietzsche’s work on his own sources (of Diogenes Laërtius). To understand this source research

⁶⁷ The point bears on nothing less than the future of “our” (by which he means to refer to same “we” that he invokes in “Wir Philologen”) “educational institutions” as he writes in *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, KSA 1, 703.

⁶⁸ See for further references and literature on the Derveni Papyrus, including Richard Janko and his own engagement with the exclusions practiced by certain schools within philology, the whole of the last chapter, and on the lyre, specifically the section, “Nietzsches materielle Hermeneutik: Archäologie,” in Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, 306ff. And for a dedicated discussion of the lyre as such, see the archaeomusicologist responsible for the reconstruction of the same, Richard Dumbrell, *The Silver Lyre of Ur* (London: Iconea, 2015).

⁶⁹ See the cover illustration and, again, the closing chapter of Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*.

⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Frühe Schriften*, Bd. 5, 385.

requires attention to Ritschl, Nietzsche's teacher and not less to lists and such, not unlike Gadamer's reference to Hippolytus, but in Ritschl's case, fitting for a Sallust scholar: bio-bibliography, the sort of thing Nietzsche arguably, so I argue, as Sarah Kofman does, offers us in his *Ecce Homo*, by way of the books an author writes, in this case, *Pinakography*, a term that follows Kallimachus' roster of titles in the library at Alexandria.

Nietzsche offered a lecture course on the *διαδοχαί* in Basel in 1873/74, dedicated to the theme of the doctrine of teacher-student succession. In the Anglophone tradition even in transliteration *diadoché* is unfamiliar. This is not because anyone disputes the idea of teacher-student succession, inasmuch as the entirety of what is regarded as ancient philosophy depends on the relationship as transmitted from Aristotle. For his part, Gadamer writes on the notion we trace back to the middle ages and the scholastic tradition of Aristotle's biography in his 1968 reflection, "*Amicus Plato magica amica veritas*,"⁷¹ using the same phrase Nietzsche uses, truncatedly: "*Plato amicus sed*," as his title page for his Basel courses on Plato's dialogues (Nietzsche gave four of these over ten years), "*Plato und sein Vorgänger*,"⁷² conceived for those, as Nietzsche put it, who were of a mind to understand Plato and also thought it useful to prepare to that end. Thus, Nietzsche can speak of Plato's antecedents as the *Pre-Platonic* tradition.⁷³

The value of Gadamer's reminder that we understand *otherwise* whenever we attain to understanding takes what occurs in any case—this is the fusion of our prejudices, presumptions, preoccupations, concerns, with the material we seek to understand—and makes this into a virtue. Where Gadamer differs from others (it tends to be the preferred methodology of analytic philosophy, for a scholar to deflect a charge of misreading by asserting that one was more interested in one's own thought than the text misread), is in his reminder to be mindful. This mindfulness is on offer even as Gadamer offers a reading of Wilamowitz-Möllendorff who sets Plato and his followers in an all-too contemporary holiday setting, as Gadamer recounts, giving us a picture, shades of Mortimer Adler, of a Socrates wandering on the outskirts of Athens, out for a daytrip together with Phaedrus along the Ilisos, or other readings that speculate on the wall décor illuminating the ill-fated conversation between

⁷¹ Gadamer, GW6, 71-89.

⁷² Nietzsche, KGW II₄, 3.

⁷³ This means that scholars can protest the very idea (and in Gadamer's case his use of the word '*diadoché*' elicits not merely a translation 'succession,' but a translator's footnote explaining what that notion, traditionally entails). See Gadamer, *The Beginning of Knowledge*, Rod Coltman, trans. (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 77.

Euthyphro and Socrates. Gadamer underlined that he, along with his cohort at the time, could not but find Wilamowitz something of an object of sport, quoting Wilamowitz' title, "A Happy Summer Day [*Ein glücklicher Sommertag*]." ⁷⁴ For Gadamer, we have no basis for any of this and to this extent Wilamowitz betrayed "an astonishingly anachronistic position." ⁷⁵

Philosophically, philologically speaking, what is at issue is *Wirkungsgeschichte*, understood in the more conventional sense of reception. Here we might quote Jaap Mansfeld who reminds us that "Interpretations come and go, but the sources remain. Yet even a source may undergo change as more or better evidence becomes available." ⁷⁶ At issue is a hermeneutic deficit, but as Nietzsche never failed to underline for his students, the sources are themselves interpretive legacies. The philological concern for Mansfeld (and others) turns on the rhetorical spin of a word or a descriptor attached to a reading, in this case concerning the "mystical" in Anaximander, thereby to redress the notion of transgression (and restitution/debt) as a matter of existent being contra extant being and no more. This is a literal, philological reading, not unrelated to complaints that Nietzsche's *werde, der du bist* falls short of Pindar as it falls short of complete translation. ⁷⁷ It falls on deaf ears to those who make this objection that Nietzsche might have known this and that this might have made a difference in what he wrote and in the way that he wrote it.

Mansfeld's claim is offered with respect to Nietzsche's Anaximander (and we may note as Gadamer does a parallel with Heidegger's Anaximander), asserting that the text Nietzsche reads, his "source," was "different." The claim is problematic as it is in need of both disambiguation and qualification. It is common to read Nietzsche, the author who effectively invents source scholarship single-handedly (this would be the basis for Ritschl's over-the-top declaration on behalf of his student that he could do anything he set his mind to), as many readings tend to assume Nietzsche based his own reading of his Preplatonic Philosophers on the *textbooks* he owned and just those alone, like Zeller, taking these (and this is a philological solecism), to have been his "sources." Thus, like many readers, Mansfeld quotes the Nietzsche of the popularly conceived Beyreuth lecture series: *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, not least because the full presentation of the Anaximander lecture Nietzsche presented to his students Basel would have to wait for publication until 1995 of the KGW edition,

⁷⁴ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie," 274.

⁷⁵ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie," 274.

⁷⁶ Mansfeld, "Bothering the Infinite," 9.

⁷⁷ See Babich, "Become the One You Are: On Commandments and Praise — Among Friends" in Thomas E. Hart, ed., *Nietzsche, Culture, and Education* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 13-37.

more than a hundred years after Nietzsche's collapse into writerly silence in 1889 (and the KGW, notably, is not the source Mansfeld quotes).⁷⁸ There is more to say here and I try to take this up elsewhere, given almost a century of responses to Nietzsche's reading of Anaximander, including Heidegger already in 1932, "*Der Spruch Anaximanders.*"⁷⁹

In his *Black Notebooks* Heidegger disputes Nietzsche's influence when it comes to ancient philosophy,⁸⁰ predicting, with some plain indignation, that

the fable that Nietzsche rediscovered "pre-Platonic philosophy" will one day come to light in its fabulosity [*Fabelhaftigkeit*]; for Nietzsche has indeed bequeathed the most superficial interpretation of these thinkers, i.e., of what they thought, due to his very great obliviousness regarding what is reserved for essential thinking as that which is to be thought.⁸¹

Elsewhere I call attention to the oddity of the "fable" in question, intensified, as Heidegger speaks of "fabulosity." Gadamer uses a related term "*wissensfremde Fabuliererei*" in his 1964 essay on "Plato and the Presocratics,"⁸² to emphasize the standard force of the standard reception of what makes philosophy philosophy—as we have already had occasion to note in Gadamer's reflections on Wilamowitz.⁸³ The point is that a Platonic myth (and Gadamer is a master at describing the myth of the eros and the soul, combining the inspiration of love and the course of the soul's migration through metempsychosis over the course of a Heraclitean "great year") is not quite a fable.

After the discovery of the Derveni papyrus, to put a more materially substantive reference to Mansfeld's more readerly point regarding putatively "new" sources, the Orphic tradition requires more not less attention and Nietzsche who engaged this tradition is thereby more rather than less interesting. Heidegger would seem to be polemicizing contra a view he takes to be common and possibly dominant,

⁷⁸ Note that I am hardly contending that Mansfeld is altogether unaware of this, he makes a passing reference without citing it. Nevertheless we are indebted to Mansfeld and David Runia's *Aëtiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer—Volume I: The Sources* (Vol. 73) (Leiden: Brill, 1997) for reminding us that Diels himself acknowledged that Nietzsche was meant to have worked with him on what became *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. That Mansfeld follows Aristotle more than Plato and certainly more than Nietzsche is clear enough as we may note from his *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author, or a Text* (Vol. 61) (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

⁷⁹ Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," 13. The lecture was published in 1946.

⁸⁰ Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 515.

⁸¹ Heidegger, *Überlegungen XIV*, GA 96, 227.

⁸² Gadamer, "Platon und die Vorsokratiker," 61.

⁸³ Gadamer, "Philosophie und Philologie," 271f.

notably that of *Bildung*, education, culture. Thus what is specifically at issue is the notion in terms of a certain nostalgia, a “comparison of the present with ‘earlier’ ages.”⁸⁴

The problem is a matter of engaging the pre-context: that is everything we leave out because we do not know it when it comes to our engagement with the past. In this fashion, Gadamer refers to Nietzsche where he invokes, and this is rare among classicists, what Nietzsche called the “Alexandrian” character of “modern historical science,”⁸⁵ drawing a parallel between the tendency to whiggishness and the limits of historical methodology which might be supposed to enable us to avoid such pitfalls, the trouble for Gadamer is that we can recognize, unerringly he suggests, the political tendencies of past works of history but without being able to sidestep the same in our own day.

Thus Gadamer cites Schleiermacher’s definition of hermeneutics as “the art of avoiding misunderstanding.”⁸⁶ Charmed by this, Gadamer takes care to remind us to worry just a little more: “Is it not, in fact, the case that every misunderstanding presupposes a ‘deep common accord.’”⁸⁷ Thus we are in shaped and formed by our prejudices, which Gadamer also epitomizes as “biases of our openness to the world.”⁸⁸ The claim is a radical one—I remember seeking to explain it to the modern Thomist theologian, the Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan to almost apoplectic consequences, a revelatory experience for me as I immediately walked back the notion to prevent fainting on the spot (his not mine).

Here, I return to my point of departure above, concerning understanding. This is the point from which we begin for Gadamer and this is the presupposition against which we as scholars can begin to see the past, a text, a poem, a work of art, a person, with new eyes, if ever we do (and I would add that this is rare). In this way, Gadamer describes the lifeworld as he learned this from Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler:

There is always a world already interpreted, already organized in its basic relations, into which experience steps as something new, upsetting what has led our expectations and undergoing reorganizations itself in the upheaval.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Heidegger, *Überlegungen XIV*, GA 96, 227.

⁸⁵ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem“ in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 5.

⁸⁶ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem,“ 7.

⁸⁷ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem,“ 7.

⁸⁸ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem,“ 9.

⁸⁹ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem,“ 15.

The point is the one Gadamer continues to make, contra Schleiermacher, it is the description of prejudice as precondition for philosophy:

Misunderstanding and strangeness are not the first factors, so that avoiding misunderstanding can be regarded as the specific task of hermeneutics. Just the reverse is the case. Only the support of familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien, the listing up of something out of the alien, and thus the broadening and enrichment of our experience of the world.⁹⁰

In this way, Wierciński reminds us, our “understanding is always historically situated. The central notion of prejudice represents the link with our tradition. We can never fully escape from our prejudices.”⁹¹ Thus, as Wierciński emphasizes, Gadamer’s project raises a question and a challenge to the traditional Enlightenment Project and this to be sure, as Gadamer argues as Heidegger argued and indeed as Anders and Adorno also argued, turns to an uncritical dependence on analytic philosophy which they typically associated with “positivism,” logical and linguistic.

But what about the fabulous? There is a common horizon of reference, common to Gadamer and to Heidegger and as Gadamer himself cites Karl Joël, Heidegger may have been referring to Joël’s 1906, *Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik*.⁹² Given Joël’s 1905 book, *Nietzsche und die Romantik*,⁹³ this might account for the language of the “fabulous.” By the same token, it may be significant then that Gadamer, thereby treads on Heidegger’s effort to banish the term “romantic,” especially with reference to Hölderlin.

In part, this is why I thought it necessary to call attention as I began above by noting the significance of the Classical Philological tradition for Gadamer.⁹⁴ Here, as

⁹⁰ Gadamer, „Universality of the Problem,“ 15.

⁹¹ See also for reading Gadamer together with Heidegger (and critically), Wierciński, “The Lingual Mediation of Being and the Infinite Process of Understanding: Gadamer’s Radicalization of Heidegger’s Question of Being,” *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, 50/1 (2014): 249-275.

⁹² Joël, *Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik. Mit Anhang Archaische Romantik. Here it is relevant quite in addition to the extraordinary title image and frontispiece featuring the Star of David growing out of a tree of life, that Joel begins by underscoring that his book had “already been published” in 1903 as part of the „Programm zur Rektoratsfeier der Universität Basel.“* (v). As Joël, who in his text foregrounds the transition from the principle of water to that of the unlimited (252f), cites Anaximander as “Prophet des Unendlichen, ein königlicher Richter des All,” (257) it can be hard not to hear Nietzsche’s influence.

⁹³ Joël, *Nietzsche und Romantizismus*.

⁹⁴ See for a critical discussion, Holger Schmid, “Sprache, Gebilde und Applikation: Die Grundentwürfe von Kunst und Sprache in Gadamer’s Selbstkritik” in: *Kunst des Hörens. Orte und Grenzen philosophischer Spracherfahrung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 32ff. and see too François Renaud, though here focussing rather

Holger Schmid reminds us Gadamer undertakes his own retrospective review in his 1985 “*Zwischen Phenomenologie und Dialektik*,” whereby Gadamer exoterically alludes to Nietzsche’s late written preface to his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Schmid’s critical emphasis emerges from the theoretical orientation of his own study, as he contends that Gadamer remains caught within a script culture as opposed to an acoustic culture like Anders (this, to be sure, is not Schmid’s reference) Heidegger’s other student, who himself also emphasized music *and* listening. Schmid argues that “*Gespräch-Charakter, Gebilde des inneren Ohrs, Schriftlichkeit sind die Momente des hermeneutischen Werk-Konzepts als Literatur.*”⁹⁵ Thus, and this is hardly to be denied although Gadamer favours Aristotle’s metaphors, Schmid can argue that Gadamer remains first and foremost a Platonist. If Joël is fairly forgotten today, he had a successor’s identification with Nietzsche, as he himself was also professor at Basel as of 1902. Thus Joël refers to Nietzsche’s Basel lecture courses on his Preplatonic Philosophers in his 1921 study of ancient philosophy. Indeed, accustomed as one can be to read one discovery of the wheel after another, Joël cites already in his preface, a paragraph of predecessors, of distinguished alternatives and so on, including the miraculous year, 1903 when Joël’s own book, so he informs his reader, originally appeared but also the 20th century in those first few years and on the terms of the century before.⁹⁶ In fact, it can seem that if we had not forgotten Joël, as we have, we would not need to rediscover, thanks to Bernabé and others, a certain Orphic tradition that is not less relevant for Nietzsche.

After Heidegger, Gadamer contrasts the scholarly philological perspective with that of physics, reflecting that we do not find ourselves in possession of an “unquestionably given text.”⁹⁷ To just that extent, a kind of mechanical philology seemed out of the question for Gadamer. We are, he wrote, so permeated by the riskiness of interpretation “that we have to smile” (here we might remember the response to Wilamowitz and his summer day), “whenever one says ‘But that’s how it

more on the ‘classic’ as such as opposed to classical philology *per se*, “Classical Otherness: Critical Reflections on the Place of Philology in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, T. 56, Fasc. 3/4, *Alidade Hermenêutica da Filosofia (The Age of Hermeneutics): Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Jul.-Dec., 2000): 361-388.

⁹⁵ Schmid, *Kunst des Hörens*, 38.

⁹⁶ Joël, *Geschichte der Antiken Philosophie*, viii-x and so on. I cite Joël because it can do to note that we might do well to catch the distinctions and insights he offers: “Nietzsche, dieser feinfühligste geistige Wetterprophet, stachelte erst recht das tiefgehende Zeitinteresse gerade für jene fernsten Denker, deren Stimmen wir heute doch näher zu vernehmen glauben — ein Zeichen, daß wir allen Pessimisten zum Trotz wieder in einer geistigen Werdezeit aufstreben. Dieses Interesse für die Vorsokratiker fand seine wissenschaftliche Stütze vor allem in Diels’ nicht bloß mustergültiger, sondern für uns notwendiger Ausgabe ihrer Fragmente mit Uebersetzung, biographischem und doxographischem Material und noch in besonderen Arbeiten gegebenen Erläuterungen.” Joël, *Geschichte der Antiken Philosophie*, x.

⁹⁷ Gadamer, “Philosophie und Philologie,” 276.

is' [*Aber das steht doch da.*]⁹⁸ By contrast, for Gadamer, hermeneutics “bridges the distance between minds and reveals the foreignness of the other mind.”⁹⁹

If understanding is always understanding otherwise, we are inevitably condemned to interpret: creators of texts as we are, as philologists, as scholars, we have to do with “*Interpretation, nicht Text,*” as Nietzsche reminds us is the always constant objection, whereby we are abandoned to whatever intentions we bring to an issue as to whatever “*Interpretationskunst*” we possess (JGB §22). If some scholars (I think of Jean Grondin) opt to exclude Nietzsche from hermeneutics, it can be because Nietzsche seems antithetical to the interpretive ideal of fixing meaning. But even here there is a parallel to Gadamer as he highlights a certain inexhaustibility that counters any sense of *imprimatur*.

This is, at least in part, Gadamer’s reason for praising the *pneuma*, a way to sidestep, perhaps the Hegelian absolute, in order to attend to the consequence of a certain reflection on the shifter, that is also key to the dialogical, the conversational, the other-referredness, which Gadamer also calls the “self-forgetfulness of language, the “I-lessness” which can take us, at least it takes Gadamer, to a thou. This, what Wierciński calls the “*spiritus movens,*” exceeds or goes beyond the specific intentions of two given interlocutors.¹⁰⁰ This for Gadamer emerges or comes to stand in the word as articulated in the span of a conversation, in the speaking, which “does not belong in the sphere of the ‘I’ but in the sphere of the ‘We.’”¹⁰¹ The dialogue or conversation is thus characterized by a supervenient spirit, as Gadamer writes, “a bad one or a good one, a spirit of obdurateness and hesitancy or a spirit of communication and of easy exchange between I and Thou.”¹⁰²

I have indicated already that Gadamer is echoing Hölderlin, especially as he invites us to listen to the text and indeed to the other and Gadamer’s specific contribution is his attention to what he calls “the universality of language.”¹⁰³ Here the point of such universality is the infinite:

There is nothing that is fundamentally excluded from being said, to the extent that our act of meaning intends it. Our capacity for saying keeps pace

⁹⁸ Gadamer, “Philosophie und Philologie,” 276.

⁹⁹ Gadamer, “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Wierciński, “*Sprache ist Gespräch,*” 44 and ff., esp 57f.

¹⁰¹ Gadamer, “Man and Language” in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 65. Gadamer is referring to Ferdinand Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten: Pneumatologische Fragmente* (Innsbruck: Brenner, 1921).

¹⁰² Gadamer, “Man and Language” in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 65.

¹⁰³ Gadamer, “Man and Language” in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 67.

untiringly with the universality of reason. Hence every dialogue also has an inner infinity and no end.¹⁰⁴

The hermeneutic circle for Gadamer, the circle Heidegger tells us is crucial to enter (rather than to avoid), is all about the complicated dynamic between our knowing the how of things as we assume or take them to be, which is what we need to know in order to begin to understand or interpret any text, and the indispensability of understanding, whereby as Gadamer reminds us, and because everything depends on philology, “the text always has the last word.”¹⁰⁵

The mindfulness Gadamer brings is found and practiced (because this is about what we do and about how we read) in recognizing that the text is one that is *already* in question, that *already* has a history of being in question, *already* represented in the light of new questions to which, the reader, the questioner, the interpreter *listens*—this is a conversational move—thereby attending to the answers the text gives. This is what it is for Gadamer, a very great Heraclitean, to remind us that

we are heirs, all of us and from the start—and that we are thus referred to the *logoi*, to taking part in a conversation that exceeds us and is alone able to give us the language and that vision that could guide us.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Gadamer, “Man and Language,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ Gadamer, “Philosophie und Philologie,” 276.

¹⁰⁶ Gadamer, “Philosophie und Philologie,” 277.