

Nietzsche and Philology as “A Style of Thinking”¹

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1. Philology as “A style of thinking”

A great Italian classical scholar of the last century, Manara Valgimigli (1876-1965), wrote the following while reviewing a book by an equally great scholar of the ancient world, Giorgio Pasquali:

There is a philological style and there is a poetic style, and just as there are few great poets, there are few great philologists. It is senseless to curse philology because a few people think they are philologists but aren't, and it is senseless to curse poetry because a few people think they are poets but aren't.²

In the sense used by Valgimigli, “philological style” is understood as an aptitude for sifting through and expounding the results of research in an extremely rigorous and consequential manner, making sure that every single statement is supported by textual evidence or ascertainable and verified sources. In other words, the philologist who possesses and knows how to practice a “philological style”—the true philologist—follows a method of study and argumentation that is extremely severe, systematic, and intransigent.

Well, this is certainly not the case with Friedrich Nietzsche: he did not adopt the style of philology, except in his first writings for the scientific journal *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (essays on the composition of the Theognidean sylloge, on the sources of Diogenes Laertius, on certain critical points of the text of the so-called *Lament of Danae* by Simonides of Ceos).³ The style of the classical philologists consists in a rigorous writing practice, a swampy and detached form of

exposition, the necessity of exhibiting the sources for each assertion made by filling the essays with footnotes and learned quotations, the precise verification of the sources, etc. This approach hardly belongs to Nietzsche. Even *The Birth of Tragedy*, his first monograph, written in 1872 when he had just become a professor in Basel and published at the age of 28, although it follows in the wake of the tradition of classical studies (much more so than is commonly believed), nevertheless on a formal stylistic-explanatory level marks a strong break with that tradition.⁴

One cannot, therefore, speak of a “philological style” for Nietzsche’s philosophy, but one can certainly speak of a very strong influence that his training as a classical philologist had on his way of thinking. Nietzsche, moreover, never denied his background in classical philology, even though he had shown a certain unease with the discipline from the outset. In a page of *The Dawn of Day*, written between 1879 and 1881, precisely in paragraph 5 of the Preface, he writes a revealing sentence about himself: “I have not been a philologist in vain—perhaps I am one yet.”⁵ This is followed by a famous definition of philology as the praise of slowness, to which we will return. We can say that Nietzsche certainly continued to feel like a philologist right up to the end, and not only because the writings of his maturity up to those of his final years are steeped in themes that can be traced back to ancient Greek culture, on which he had been massively nourished since he was a boy, but because philology had imprinted itself on him like a mental *habitus*, an unavoidable and inescapable *forma mentis*.

Even after he renounced his university professorship, philology continued to play an important role for Nietzsche. It remains for him an instrument of reference, although he was aware of its shortcomings and ambiguities. What matters the most, philology for Nietzsche also took on the contours of a “style of thinking,” i.e., a basic condition from which to develop thinking.⁶ Above all, on the methodological level Nietzsche retrieves from philological practice a series of tools and procedures in order to apply them beyond philology itself, to the extra-textual dimension of reality. Philology is thus transformed into a methodology necessary for exercising the art of “reading well,” that is, of establishing, translating, and

interpreting in an honest and rigorous manner not only written texts, but also and foremost the phenomena of the real world. As a methodology for analyzing reality, philology teaches us to adopt a series of attitudes that go beyond the strictly scientific dimension, involving also the ethical dimension. Nietzsche associates this practice of 'philological reading of the world' with a whole series of potential virtues such as patience, courage, rigor, justice, and intellectual honesty.

In short, one can rightly consider philological activity as an archetypal value for Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche went far beyond the usual horizons of philological practice, transforming philology into an explicit *Kulturkritik*, a refined instrument for critiquing civilization. It is above all in these terms that the persistence of philology in its style of thinking should be understood, becoming a methodology and a *forma mentis*: the aptitude to dig deeply and patiently into phenomena, without the haste and superficiality of modern times. The idea that follows from this is the possibility of working on cultural phenomena as if they were the pages of a text to which one can apply analysis and verify the correct interpretations while discarding erroneous ones, just as the textual philologist selects the variants to be included in the text and those to be eliminated.

2. How to become a classical philologist

It is worth reflecting on what classical philology was in Nietzsche's time and what it meant for a bright young schoolboy from Naumburg to devote himself to this discipline. Above all, one must ask oneself what Nietzsche's conception of classical philology was, how he intended to practice such studies, and in what way and to what extent his conceptions were at odds with the methods of study practiced at the time. It has to be said that Nietzsche never dealt with this question organically. He had thought of doing so in an "untimely meditation" to be entitled *We Philologists*, but he never completed it. All that remains are some haphazard notes.⁷ We have, however, a large number of notes, brief memos in notebooks, and passages from his correspondence in which he reflects on this. Above all, the concept of philology takes a central role in

the conference he gave on Homer (*Homer and Classical Philology*) when he inaugurated his academic activity in Basel.⁸

To begin, we can examine certain autobiographical pages in which Nietzsche reflects on his intellectual training. From these pages we know how deeply aware he was of the reasons that motivated him, for example, to become a classical philologist. What he wrote in the spring of 1869, in an outline of a *curriculum vitae* that he wanted to submit to the academic authorities in Basel with a view to his appointment to the professorship, is especially significant. In this note, the aspiring professor retrospectively reconstructs his path to philology:

It has always seemed interesting to me to observe the different ways in which an individual today comes to classical philology [...]. When, as a boy, I went to school in Pforta, I knew only a substitute for my father's education, the uniform discipline of a well-ordered school. But it was precisely this almost military constraint, which, having to act on the masses, treats the individual with coldness and superficiality, that brought me back to myself. Faced with the uniformity of the rules, I put my private inclinations and aspirations in reserve, I clandestinely cultivated certain arts and forced myself, in the overwrought search for universal knowledge and fruition, to break the rigidity of a timetable and use of time governed by rules. Some chance circumstances of an external nature did not occur; otherwise I would have ventured to become a musician then. For from the age of nine years I had felt the strongest attraction to music; in that happy condition in which one does not yet know the limits of one's faculties and considers everything one loves to be attainable, I had written innumerable compositions, and had studied music theory in a non-amateurish manner. [...] It was only in the last period of my life in Pforta that I renounced any plans for an artistic

life, knowing myself well enough by then; from then on philology entered the vacuum thus created. I mean that I was looking for a counterbalance to the restless and changeable inclinations that had dominated me until then, a science that could be cultivated with cold reflection, with logical detachment and uniform industriousness, without immediately touching the heart with its results. I thought I would find all this in philology.⁹

These (and similar) considerations on one's autobiographical journey, on the oscillations and circumstances through which one "becomes what one is," to put it in Nietzschean terms, are very interesting. What emerges from them is the image of a boy who—in Pforta's time—was nourished by multiple aspirations, both scientific and artistic, but was still very confused, searching for his own path. The school of Pforta, with its excellent teachers and iron strictness, offered him philology as a rigorous discipline that could temper his character and curb his artistic inclinations. It was then in Bonn and Leipzig, at the time of his university studies, that his philological vocation took on more precise contours, leading to his first scientific successes.

It is not important to ask to what extent Nietzsche's retrospective reconstruction corresponds to the truth of the matter. What is important is the way in which the author's retrospective gaze interprets the early 'conversion' to a harsh and rigorous science: it was not the convinced and enthusiastic choice of someone who saw philology as the ideal instrument for penetrating the world of Greek antiquity, but almost a self-imposed constraint, a resigned abdication. In the many autobiographical notes of that period, the emphasis is mainly on "renunciation" and "counterbalance." Philology presented itself as an effective brake with which to control the attitudes and anxieties of adolescence, forcing the unpredictable anxieties of a young schoolboy into self-discipline. Nietzsche also speaks of philology as a "second nature" that he had given himself by suppressing his most genuine inclinations. These inclinations were artistic ones: it is no coincidence that Nietzsche's artistic vein waned as he approached

philology in his last years at Pforta and his first semesters at university. He did not compose poetry or write any music at that stage, although he retained a great interest in the art of music.

During his studies the first symptoms of dissatisfaction and crisis occurred. On the one hand, the attention given to him by his teacher Friedrich Ritschl was very important to him. This father figure had a great impact on the young boy, insofar as he showed him appreciation and stimulated his pride.

A few days later [Ritschl] invited me to his house. He looked at me doubtfully and told me to sit down. "For what purpose," he asked me, "have you intended this work?" I answered the most obvious thing, namely that the work, which had been used as the basis for a conference of our association, had already fulfilled its purpose. He then asked my age, my university seniority, etc., and when I had given him all the answers, he declared that he had never seen such methodical rigor, such combinatorial confidence in the work of a third-semester student. He then warmly invited me to revise the lecture in pamphlet form and promised to help me get some collations. After this episode my pride soared [...] For some time I went around as if stunned; those were the days when I was born as a philologist and felt the stimulus of the fame I could gather there.¹⁰

On the other hand, Nietzsche autonomously developed at that time a philosophical interest that pushed him toward a totally different direction. In a letter written almost simultaneously to his friend Erwin Rohde (dated February 1868) Nietzsche speaks of his research on Democritus and makes clear the new and original perspective he pursues:

I have a mad desire to tell the philologists a lot of bitter truths in my next article [...] on Democritus' literary activity. So far I am very optimistic about this work: it has acquired a philosophical background, something I have never managed to do in any of my works. Moreover [...]

all my works take a certain direction and all point, like so many telegraph poles, to a goal of my studies, which I do not now want to lose sight of. That goal is a history of literary studies in antiquity and the modern era. For the time being, I am not interested in the details; what attracts me now is the universally human element, to see how the need for a literary-historical investigation arises and how it takes shape in the shaping hands of the philosopher.¹¹

The study of the apocryphal writings handed down under the name of Democritus and the attempt to put the ethical sphere (the theme of the pursuit of happiness) in the Abdera philosopher in the foreground as opposed to that of physics, was thus part of a bigger plan. This was the "history of literary studies in antiquity and the modern era" [*Geschichte der litterarischen Studien im Althertum und in der Neuzeit*] that Nietzsche mentions to Rohde in the letter. The statement that only a perspective on the "universally human element" [*das Allgemein-Menschliche*] can make sense of philological studies is also interesting. This is the starting point for a long series of notes Nietzsche writes about philology and its limits, above all the fact that this discipline is unable to penetrate the spirit of antiquity in depth. Nietzsche judges classical philology of his time as a limited, epigonic, degenerate practice that has completely lost touch with the object of its studies, namely classical culture. Nietzsche contests the intention of philology to become autonomous with respect to a superior cognitive horizon. The road that would later lead him to delegitimize historical knowledge in favor of an aesthetic understanding of the world is already well marked out. Nietzsche confesses he feels himself held "in the snare of Lady Philology"¹² by Ritschl's skill.

Nietzsche acknowledges that nineteenth-century classical philology has the main merit of having developed the appropriate tools for methodically establishing texts, but he criticizes it for the widespread attitude of skepticism toward tradition, which leads to the discarding of those aspects of literary and cultural tradition that are considered less suitable and relatable to a pre-established model of the classical world. While continuing to work as a

philologist, publishing new articles and giving lectures for the Leipzig Philological Association, Nietzsche began to outline a program for the renewal of the discipline. For example, in a note he writes:

It is time to stop bending over individual letters. The next generation of philologists must try to arrive at conclusions and take on the great heritage of the past. This science, too, must serve progress [...] In philology there is a lack of great thought, and that is why there is not enough impetus in university studies. Workers have become factory workers. They lose sight of the movement of the whole. It is time to find the right criteria for evaluating the writings of classical antiquity and to throw away unnecessary ballast. Our philologists must learn to judge more broadly in order to devote themselves to the great philosophical considerations, instead of haggling over individual passages. If you want new answers, you have to be able to ask new questions.¹³

Now, in spite of all the mental reservations that mark his relationship to classical philology, of which I have given a few scanty examples, Nietzsche never ceased to feel that he was a classical philologist from the day he entered the Pforta School as a fourteen-year-old (1858) until he resigned his professorship in Basel (1879). For twenty-one years, he devoted most of his time to the subject (studying, teaching, and researching). He had trained in the discipline to the point of becoming an expert representative of it. He mastered the fundamentals with a direct knowledge of ancient texts and the various methodologies, from textual criticism to metrical analysis. Even when his polemics were at their most acute, he never felt that he was a stranger to the discipline. The already mentioned title *We Philologists* given to an “untimely meditation” that he wanted to publish clearly indicates that he felt he was one of them. And from none of his phrases is it possible to think that he wanted to liquidate philological science altogether. If anything, he was thinking (perhaps in a utopian and naive way) of a re-foundation of antiquarian studies by saving what could be saved.

3. German Classical Philology in the Nineteenth Century

At this point it is necessary to open a short parenthesis on how classical philology studies were characterized in mid-nineteenth-century Germany and what role they played. Nowadays, the term "classical philology" refers to one discipline among many, to a scientific and subject area of our academic system. It is understood as a specialized and technical discipline within the curriculum of ancient literature. There is a general tendency to confuse classical philology with textual criticism, which is a fundamental but not the only part of it.¹⁴ Classical philology is certainly a niche discipline, cultivated by a few passionate scholars. But if we look at today's German universities, the label *Klassische Philologie* covers a much wider field and coincides *tout court* with the study of the ancient world, at least as far as the textual dimension is concerned. Studying *Klassische Philologie* means studying ancient literature, in short. And this is a centuries-old tradition: in Nietzsche's time, but actually already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, classical philology was one of the most important and prestigious academic disciplines. It had been founded by the classical scholar Friedrich August Wolf, the father of the Homeric question, with his *Presentation of the Science of Antiquity* (1807), a true theoretical manifesto of the discipline that claimed its total autonomy from other fields of study and research as well as its secularity, i.e., its independence from the so-called sacred philology, which applied to the sacred Scriptures.¹⁵ And with the establishment of the new university in Berlin in 1810, classical philology had found its consecration. The founder of the Berlin university, Wilhelm von Humboldt, had in fact placed classical philology as one of the pillars on which academic activity was based, alongside medicine, law, philosophy, history, and a few others. Moreover, as a result of the theoretical reflections of Wolf, Humboldt, and the so-called New Humanism in general, classical philology had established itself as the ideal science to guarantee the *Bildung* of the young. The careful study of Greek and Latin had an educational potential that no other discipline could boast of. This was also the origin of the Humanistic Gymnasium project, the archetype of modern classical high schools, another important invention of Humboldt.¹⁶

Not only that: the study of classical philology also presented under the label of the “science of antiquity” [*Altertumswissenschaft*], had been defined in Germany along the lines of the natural sciences. By virtue of the so-called historical method—based on the aseptic study of the sources, on the myth of the objectivity of the results, on no aesthetic or philosophical evaluation, etc.—there had been enormous progress that had transformed classical philology from a purely erudite level into a discipline of considerable methodological depth. But in this process of maturation and development, there had been no shortage of contrasts, sometimes fierce and violent. I refer in particular to the dispute between Gottfried Hermann and August Boeckh, following the latter’s publication in 1824 of the first volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*. Hermann’s formal approach considered the understanding of ancient literary works as the aim of philology and linguistic research as the primary and indispensable means of achieving it. It was the so-called *Wortphilologie*, or “philology of the word,” i.e., of concrete historical data. In other words, Hermann looked at language as the universal element capable of overcoming the particularity of the empirical datum represented by the single text, resolving it in the linguistic complex in which it was inscribed and from which it was possible to deduce formal interpretations. All this resulted in a criticism that was much more attentive to the understanding of the text as a linguistic product than of the author as an historical subject. This school had its strongholds mainly in Leipzig and Bonn. Nietzsche’s teacher, Ritschl, was precisely one of the leading exponents of this trend.¹⁷

On the other side, August Boeckh, professor at the University of Berlin, advocated a different, more modern perspective, which was referred to as *Sachphilologie*, “philology of the thing.” His conception of the study of the ancient world—presented in the *Encyclopädie und Methodenlehre der philologischen Wissenschaften*, which appeared posthumously in 1877 and was edited by Ernst Bratuscheck, who brought together the Berlin lectures on philology given between 1809 and 1865—encompassed areas other than linguistic-textual competence and aimed to

reconstruct antiquity as a whole. For Boeckh, philology is understood as the integral study of antiquity, explored in all the material and ideal aspects in which the spirit manifested itself. Philology is totally and integrally history, that is, the understanding of thought through its manifestations; the science, therefore, of everything that is the creation of the human mind, the only field that is truly knowable as human and therefore knowable by humans. Boeckh's doctrine found a synthesis in the definition of "knowledge of what has been known" [*Erkenntnis des Erkannten*]. Philology is history insofar as it knows the phenomena in which the spirit manifests itself. Philology recognizes antiquity as otherness, as an "object" of knowledge and becomes aware of its nature as a reconstructive activity, which through the continuous study of both the particular and the universal, by means of successive approximations, attempts to fully understand the inner life of people of the past and at the same time the forms in which they expressed themselves.¹⁸

Nietzsche is well aware of these internal disagreements within his discipline and records the unease and impasse that the nineteenth-century model of classical philology had reached. One need only think of what he said in the already mentioned lecture on *Homer and Classical Philology* in 1869:

At the present day no clear and consistent opinion seems to be held regarding Classical Philology. We are conscious of this in the circles of the learned just as much as among the followers of that science itself. The cause of this lies in its many-sided character, in the lack of an abstract unity, and in the inorganic aggregation of heterogeneous scientific activities which are connected with one another only by the name "Philology." It must be freely admitted that philology is to some extent borrowed from several other sciences, and is mixed together like a magic potion from the most outlandish liquors, ores, and bones. It may even be added that it likewise conceals within itself an artistic element, one which, on aesthetic and ethical grounds, may be called imperatival—an element that acts

in opposition to its purely scientific behavior. Philology is composed of history just as much as of natural science or aesthetics.¹⁹

4. Nietzsche's critique of classical philology

If we follow Nietzsche's reflections on the status and function of classical philology, before and after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, we can see how the Basel professor continually raises doubts and criticisms, but never leaves the discipline's path; if anything, the intention is to propose a radical renewal. The new approach Nietzsche sought to apply in his research was based on the distinction of philosophical relevance as a criterion on the basis of which to identify what in classical culture could be significant and topical for moderns. On this latter ground he developed a whole series of considerations that found various outlets: partly in the academic course of the 1871 summer semester entitled *Encyclopaedia of Classical Philology*,²⁰ partly in the series of lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* in 1872,²¹ and partly in the unfinished "untimely meditation" he wanted to call *We Philologists*.

In the lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, the attack on the German educational system, from the classical Gymnasiums to the universities, also concerned above all the misleading and moralistic view of antiquity that was propagated there through pedagogical models that were judged to be deteriorating. This was accompanied by criticism of the very conception of science in general as it had developed in Germany during the Bismarck era (excessive specialization and the postulate of the practical and social function of scientific endeavor).

In the unfinished *We Philologists*, a perspective emerges whereby the distance separating the moderns from the ancient world is completely unbridgeable on the cognitive level. The possibility that through philological erudition one can bridge that distance and achieve an objective reconstruction of the past is a pure illusion. The extreme specialization of the philologist is a symptom of impotence as well as a parody of authentic wisdom. It is not useful for understanding anything

about the past, not even the present. "What does Greek particle theory have to do with the meaning of life?" asks Nietzsche sarcastically.²²

The attack on the guild of philologists is carried out harshly. The classical philologist is characterized as a scientist working in the service of academic or scholastic institutions, thus as a salaried official: this social status alone makes him a caricature of what a sage should be. And his extreme specialization is a symptom of impotence as well as a parody of authentic wisdom. Nietzsche does not want to demolish philology as such, but rather thinks of a "new beginning." In a fragment of *We Philologists* he writes, "It is believed that philology has come to an end, but I believe that it has not yet begun."²³ The author also blames a basic attitude among scholars of the classical world, according to which ancient culture tended to see an ideal world in which to find shelter in order to escape present reality. But this view was based on a blatant falsification of classical antiquity: an artificial 'humanistic' interpretation was constructed, so that elements characterizing Greek civilization such as immensity, violence, and cruelty were completely removed. Nietzsche's approach, on the other hand, is to start from today's reality and in the light of this understand antiquity. Only in this way does the work of the philologist acquire meaning:

If the philologist is given the task of better understanding his epoch by means of antiquity, this task is eternal—this is the antinomy of philology: in reality, one has always understood antiquity from the present, and now one must understand the present from antiquity? Or rather: antiquity has been explained on the basis of what has been experienced in life, and on the basis of the antiquity thus obtained, the experience of life has been estimated and evaluated. In this way, life experience is undoubtedly the unconditional prerequisite for a philologist. [...]. In general, however, it is only from knowledge of the present that one can receive the impulse toward classical antiquity. Without this knowledge, where can the impulse come from? If one looks at how few philologists there are, apart from those

who make their living from philology, one can judge what this impulse toward antiquity is in essence: it hardly exists, since there is no disinterested philologist.²⁴

It is clear that the critique of classical philology involves a critique of the kind of *Bildung* practiced in German schools. The idealized view of the classical world is actually a falsification, a way of escaping the reality of the present. With their methods of study and research, philologists have ended up by moving completely away from the ideal of complete humanity found in the ancient world. And proceeding along this path, Nietzsche's *We Philologists* went so far as to contrast today's philologist with an alternative model of the philologist-poet, which he found embodied in the figure of Goethe and, more thoroughly, in the Italian humanist tradition (Petrarch, Boccaccio, Poliziano), and in Giacomo Leopardi: "Leopardi is the modern ideal of the philologist; German philologists can do nothing."²⁵ These are examples of the philologist-centaur—capable of reconciling artistic creativity and science as well as of judging from an aesthetic point of view—which Nietzsche was pursuing in contrast to the mole-philologists, as he called them, who delve into the past but are blind and see only insignificant details.

5. The "inactuality" of philology

As we have seen, Nietzsche's critique of his own discipline is radical and sometimes extreme, but always conducted within it. The fascination with that science remained ever-present, even in the years of full maturity, even in late Nietzsche. He did not free himself from this "second nature" until it became a method for him, a "style of thinking," as we said at the beginning. In conclusion, I will try to indicate some aspects in Nietzsche in which philological science acts precisely as a "style of thinking."

First of all, philology stands out for Nietzsche as the art of reading texts well, slowly and thoroughly. This may sound trivial, but it is worth examining the famous definition found in the Preface to *The Dawn of Day*, written between 1879 and 1881, i.e., immediately after he left his university post:

For philology is that venerable art which exacts from its followers one thing above all—to step to one side, to leave themselves spare moments, to grow silent, to become slow—the leisurely art of the goldsmith applied to language: an art which must carry out slow, fine work, and attains nothing if not *lento*. For this very reason philology is now more desirable than ever before; for this very reason it is the highest attraction and incitement in an age of “work”: that is to say, of haste, of unseemly and immoderate hurry-skurry, which is intent upon “getting things done” at once, even every book, whether old or new. Philology itself, perhaps, will not “get things done” so hurriedly: it teaches how to read well: i.e., slowly, profoundly, attentively, prudently, with inner thoughts, with the mental doors ajar, with delicate fingers and eyes ... my patient friends, this book appeals only to perfect readers and philologists: learn to read me well.²⁶

Here Nietzsche indirectly clarifies the importance that philological training had for his theoretical thinking. Philology as the art of reading properly rises to the rank of absolute epistemic model for every critical science. One must be able to read “texts” correctly, and by texts he means not only texts in the proper sense, but also texts as phenomena of the real world. In a certain sense, Nietzsche aims to apply the classic conjectural method of philologists, whereby they amend or reconstruct the corrupted passages of texts, to the critique of culture, so as to be able to decipher the relations of meaning in the phenomena of socio-cultural reality. To read philologically is to produce endless interpretations and comments, because the critical gaze of a philologist during reading continually questions all hermeneutic perspectives. I would go further: insofar as Nietzsche does not see philology as an end in itself, but rather as a means of engaging in a critique of culture and his own time, he can certainly be seen as a representative of a rationalistic and enlightened worldview.²⁷

I would add that this art of reading well, deeply, slowly, and delicately stands as a positive pole in antithesis to the demands of the modern world, to the world of work, based on haste and superficiality. Philology is an “inactual” art, one might say, knowing full well how crucial this adjective is for Nietzsche. Indeed, Nietzsche says so explicitly in the Preface to his second “untimely meditation,” *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* (1874):

But I will first relieve my mind by the confession that the experiences which produced those disturbing feelings were mostly drawn from myself,—and from other sources only for the sake of comparison; and that I have only reached such “unseasonable” experience, so far as I am the nursling of older ages like the Greek, and less a child of this age. I must admit so much in virtue of my profession as a classical scholar: for I do not know what meaning classical scholarship may have for our time except in its being “unseasonable,” that is, contrary to our time, and yet with an influence on it for the benefit, it may be hoped, of a future time.²⁸

Classical philology is an instrument of inactual action, acting against present time and for future time. Classical philology offers Nietzsche, who is nevertheless a “child of this age,” a different perspective to that of actuality. In other words, Nietzsche sees the profession of philologist as the condition that makes his own critical topicality possible. This is the operation that he attempted to a large extent in works such as *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873): his hypothetical reconstruction of the original tragic is the instrument for criticizing the Alexandrianism of his time, just as his interpretation of the pre-Socratics is a point of reference for evaluating and judging the tendencies of his own time.

6. Philology and the “genealogical method”

A further element to be taken into consideration concerns the so-called “genealogical method” used by Nietzsche especially in writings

such as *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *The Dawn of Day* (1881), *The Gay Science* (1882), and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887). What I mean is that genealogical criticism is in some respects a derivation of philological activity. The philologists of textual criticism, following a method that Karl Lachmann had perfected in the mid-nineteenth century by first editing the New Testament and then Lucretius, aimed then, as now, at the genealogical reconstruction of the text by studying the stages of its transmission through the centuries and highlighting the relationships of affiliation between the surviving witnesses, their kinship and descent verified on the basis of separative and conjunctive errors, the eventual presence of forgeries, corruptions, etc.²⁹ Using a diagram called the *stemma codicum*, philologists graphically represented the family tree of the text in question, going backwards to the virtual archetype from which the tradition originated. Nietzsche learned this method from Ritschl and he applied it, for example, in the critical edition of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*.³⁰ Although Nietzsche challenged such a method on account of its mechanics and presumed objectivity, he took it as a model for his genealogical method, which consists in the reconstruction of the genesis of human thought and above all of morality: a reconstruction of the path taken by humanity through an unmasking of errors and illusions.

In the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*, moreover, there is no shortage of references to his own philological training (par. 3)³¹ and, as Christian Benne and Carlotta Santini write, one might think that this work is basically "an attempt at a comparative *recensio* of those decisive statements and pieces that have constituted the historical development of the 'text' of (Western) 'morals,' not to reveal its origin, but to reveal its relationships."³² In short, genealogy as a method of philosophical investigation certainly comes to him from philological practice. On this basis Nietzsche goes in search of the falsifications, manipulations, interpolations that have become part of the secular tradition of theological, metaphysical, and moral thought, among other things.

7. Facts and interpretations

Finally, for Nietzsche classical philology also plays a fundamental role with regard to the famous statement “there are no facts, only interpretations,” a much quoted and much misunderstood phrase. As Carlo Gentili has explained very clearly on several occasions,³³ the basic error is to decontextualize that phrase by exalting it as a universal formula, a statement in the sense of absolute relativism, whereby the world is made up of countless interpretative acts that refer, each one for itself, to a different interpreting subject. The formulation appears in an 1866 posthumous fragment, but it is not my intention to examine and discuss it.³⁴ The same concept, in similar terms, is also expressed by Nietzsche in other passages, and what he states in a passage from *The Antichrist* (1888) is of particular interest for the present discussion, precisely because philology is involved:

Another characteristic of the theologian is his *unfitness for philology*. What I here mean by philology is, in a general sense, the art of reading with profit—the capacity for absorbing facts *without* interpreting them falsely, and *without* losing caution, patience and subtlety in the effort to understand them. Philology as *ephexis* in interpretation: whether one be dealing with books, with newspaper reports, with the most fateful events or with weather statistics—not to mention the “salvation of the soul.”³⁵

Nietzsche here polemicizes against the interpretations that theologians give of sacred texts, often in an allegorical key, without any real philological competence. But it is precisely philology, once again defined as “the art of reading with profit” (art in the Greek sense of τέχνη, “technique”), that for Nietzsche plays the role of a guarantor against falsifying interpretations. The key point is when he writes “philology as *ephexis* in interpretation.” The Greek term ἔφεξις comes from the verb ἐπέχω, which properly means “to hold back, to withhold, to suspend,” and is synonymous with the more common ἐποχή (which also comes from ἐπέχω). In short, it is a “suspension of judgement,” an “indecision in interpretation.” Philology

acts, then, as *ephexis*, as containment/restraint/ reduction in interpretation; it is the means by which we learn to protect ourselves both from falsification and from the frenzy that leads us to abandon all caution, patience, or subtlety in the effort to understand. But Nietzsche's discourse is not limited only to reading the Greek or Latin classics; rather, it encompasses all social and cultural phenomena, from news reports to sacred Scriptures.

Here Nietzsche is obviously not saying that facts do not exist, nor that all interpretations are equally valid; he is saying that facts need to be interpreted and that only philology is the discipline with which it is possible to interpret them correctly and grasp their true meaning. Once again—and it was 1888, a long time since his studies and teaching activities in Basel—philology proves to be Nietzsche's weapon against preconceived interpretations, against truths taken for granted, which reject the patient work of analysis and research. Adherence to the principles and methods of philology is a "style of thinking" that accompanies Nietzsche from his youth to the last phase of his thought.

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Notes

¹ This text is a re-elaboration of a lecture given on 24 March 2021 at the University of Turin as part of the series of seminars "Sotto il cappello dello stile—Incontri su F. Nietzsche" organized by Paolo Babbioni, Susanna Zellini and Paola Rumore. I would like to thank the organizers and all those who took part in the discussion with questions, insights, and suggestions.

² "C'è uno stile filologico come c'è uno stile poetico; ed è di pochi e grandi filologi codesto, com'è di pochi e grandi poeti questo; ed è insensato imprecare contro la filologia per i molti che si credono filologi e non sono, come sarebbe insensato imprecare contro la poesia per i molti che si credono poeti e non sono." The review appeared in the journal *Pégaso*, Vol. II, No. 4 (April 1930), 496-98, qtd 496f. The book reviewed by G. Pasquali is *Domenico Comparetti e la filologia del secolo XIX* (Rieti, Biblioteca Editrice, 1929).

³ “Zur Geschichte der theognideischen Spruchsammlung,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* XXII (1867), 161-200 (KGW II/1, 1-58); “De Laertii Diogenis fontibus,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, XXIII (1868), 631-53 and XXIV (1869), 181-228 (KGW II/1, 75-167); “Analecta Laertiana,” *Rheinische Museum für Philologie* XXV (1870), 217-31 (KGW/II 1, 169-190); “Beiträge zur Kritik der griechischen Lyriker. Der Danae Klage,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* XXIII (1868), 480-89 (KGW II/1, 59-74); “Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, Ihr Geschlecht und Ihren Wettkampf,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* XXV (1870), 528-40 and XXVIII (1873), 211-49 (KGW II/1, 273-337).

⁴ On the tormented reception of *The Birth of Tragedy* among classical philologists, see G. Ugolini, *Guida alla lettura della Nascita della tragedia di Nietzsche* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2007), 148-60. The texts of the polemic (Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Erwin Rohde, Richard Wagner) are collected in the volume *Der Streit um Nietzsches “Geburt der Tragödie,”* ed. K. Gründer (Hildesheim-Zürich-New York: Olms, 1969). A very important essay is J. Latacz, “Fruchtbare Ärgernis: Nietzsches Geburt der Tragödie und die Gräzistische Tragödienforschung,” in *Nietzsche und die Schweiz*, ed. M. Hoffmann (Zürich: Offizin Strauhof, 1994), 30-45, rpt in J. Latacz, *Erschließung der Antike. Kleine Schriften zur Literatur der Griechen und Römer* (Stuttgart/Leipzig: Teubner, 1994), 469-98.

⁵ F. Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, trans. John M. Kennedy in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2015), 925. German Text: “Man ist nicht umsonst Philologe gewesen, man ist es vielleicht noch” (KGW V/1, p. 9).

⁶ The concept of *Denkstil*, “style of thinking,” was only coined at the beginning of the twentieth century in the scientific sphere; see Claus Zittel’s essay, “Ludwik Fleck und der Stilbegriff in den Naturwissenschaften. Stil als wissenschaftshistorische, epistemologische und ästhetische Kategorie,” in *Sehen und Handeln*, ed. H. Bredekamp and J.M. Krois (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2011), 171-205, which traces the history of the concept of *Denkstil*. I do not mean the syntagm “style of thinking” in a specific sense, as is done in the

field of psychology and pedagogy; more banally, by "style of thinking" I mean a specific and preferential way of relating to the study and analysis of facts.

⁷ *Wir Philologen*, in KGW IV/1, 87-206.

⁸ *Homer und die klassische Philologie*, inaugural lecture at the University of Basel, delivered on 28 May 1869 (KGW II/1, 247-69).

⁹ "Es hat mir immer der Beachtung werth geschienen, auf welchen individuellen Wegen jemand heutzutage gerade zur klassischen Philologie kommt [...]. Als ich im Knabenalter nach Schulpforta kam, lernte ich nur ein Surrogat der väterlichen Erziehun<g> kennen, die uniformierende Disciplin einer geordneten Schule. Gerade aber dieser fast militärische Zwang, der weil er auf die Masse wirken soll, das Individuelle kühl und oberflächlich behandelt, führte mich wieder auf mich selbst zurück. Ich rettete vor dem einförmigen Gesetz meine privaten Neigungen und Bestrebungen, ich lebte einen verborgenen Kultus bestimmter Künste, ich bemühte mich in einer überreizten Sucht nach universellem Wissen und Genießen die Starrheit einer gesetzlichen bestimmten Zeitordnung und Zeitbenutzung zu brechen. Es fehlte an einigen äußern Zufälligkeiten; sonst hätte ich damals gewagt, Musiker zu werden. Zur Musik nämlich fühlte ich schon seit meinem 9t Jahre den allerstärksten Zug; in jenem glücklichen Zustand, in dem man noch nicht die Grenze sein[er] Begabung kennt und alles, was man liebt, auch für erreichbar hält, hatte [ich] unzählige Composition<en> niedergeschrieben und mir eine mehr als dilettantische Kenntniß der musikalischen Theorie erworben. [...] Erst in der letzten Zeit meines Pfortner Lebens gab ich, in richtiger Selbsterkenntniß, alle künstlerischen Lebenspläne auf; in die so entstandene Lücke trat von jetzt ab die Philologie. Ich verlangte nämlich nach einem Gegengewicht gegen die wechselvollen und unruhigen bisherigen Neigungen, nach einer Wissenschaft, die mit kühler Besonnenheit, mit logischer Kälte, mit gleichförmiger Arbeit gefördert werden könnte, ohne mit ihren Resultaten gleich ans Herz zu greifen. Dies alles aber glaubte ich damals in der Philologie zu finden." 1869 autobiographical note; German text in KGW I/5, 44-47. Translation mine.

¹⁰ "Einige Tage darauf wurde ich zu ihm [Ritschl] gerufen. Er sah mich bedenklich an und hieß mich Platz nehmen. 'Zu welchem Zwecke, fragte er,

haben Sie diese Arbeit bestimmt?’ Ich sagte das Zunächstliegende, daß sie, einem Vortrage unseres Vereins zu Grunde gelegt, schon ihren Zweck erfüllt habe. Jetzt fragte er nach meinem Alter, meiner Studienzeit usw und als ich ihm Bescheid gegeben, erklärte er, noch nie von einem Studierenden des dritten Semesters etwas Ähnliches der strengen Methode nach, der Sicherheit der Combination nach gesehen zu haben. Darauf forderte er mich lebhaft auf den Vortrag zu einem kleinen Buche umzuarbeiten und verhiess mir seine Hülfe, um einige Collationen mir zu beschaffen. Nach dieser Scene gieng mein Selbstgefühl mit mir in die Lüfte. [...] Einige Zeit gieng ich wie im Taumel umher; es ist die Zeit, wo ich zum Philologen geboren wurde, ich empfand den Stachel des Lobes, das für mich auf dieser Laufbahn zu pflücken sei.” 1869 autobiographical note; German text in KGW I/4, 515. Translation mine.

¹¹ “Ich habe erstaunliche Lust, in meinem nächsten [...] Aufsatz (über Demokrits Schriftstellerei) den Philologen eine Anzahl bitterer Wahrheiten zu sagen. Bis jetzt habe ich für denselben die schönste Hoffnung: er hat einen philosophischen Hintergrund bekommen, was mir bis jetzt bei keiner meiner Arbeiten gelungen war. Außerdem bekommen alle meine Arbeiten [...] eine ganz bestimmte Richtung; sie weisen alle wie Telegraphenstangen auf ein Ziel meiner Studien, das ich nächstens auch fest ins Auge fassen werde. Es ist dies eine Geschichte der litterarischen Studien im Althertum und in der Neuzeit. Es kommt mir zunächst wenig auf die Details an; jetzt zieht mich das Allgemein-Menschliche an, wie das Bedürfniß einer literarhistorischen Forschung sich bildet und wie es unter den formenden Händen der Philosophen Gestalt bekommt.” Letter to Erwin Rohde, dated 1-3 February 1868; German text in KGB I/2, 248. Translation mine.

¹² “Im Netz der Dame Philologie.” *Ibidem*.

¹³ “Es wird allmählich Zeit nicht mehr über den Buchstaben zu hocken. Das Bestreben der nächsten Philologengeneration muß endlich sein abzuschließen u. das große Vermächtniß der Vergangenheit anzutreten. Auch diese Wissenschaft muß dem Fortschritt dienen. [...] Es fehlt in der Philologie an großen Gedanken und daher in dem Studium an hinreichende[m] Schwung. Die Arbeiter sind Fabrikarbeiter geworden. Der Betrieb des Ganzen schwindet ihnen aus den Augen. Es ist an der Zeit die rechten

Werthgrade für die Schriften des Alterthums zu finden u. den unnützen Ballast herauszuwerfen. Unsre Philologen sollen lernen mehr im Großen zu urtheilen um das Feilschen zu vertauschen. Man muß neue Fragen stellen können, wenn man neue Antworten haben will." Note dated spring 1867-autumn 1868; German text in KGW I/4 397f.

¹⁴ In the work *Einleitung in die griechische Philologie*, ed. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (Stuttgart/Leipzig: Teubner, 1997) the field of "textual criticism" is only one among many that are presented ("history of the Greek language," "history of Greek literature," "Greek religion," "Greek philosophy and science," "Greek art").

¹⁵ "Darstellung der Alterthumswissenschaft nach Begriff, Umfang, Zweck und Wert," "Museum der Alterthums-Wissenschaft," I (Berlin, 1807, 1-145; rpt in F.A. Wolf, *Kleine Schriften*, Vol. 2, ed. G. Bernhardt (Halle, Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1869), 808-95. On the figure of Wolf and his role in the history of classical studies cf. G. Ugolini, "Friedrich August Wolf and the Birth of the Altertumswissenschaft," in *History of Classical Philology. From Bentley to the 20th Century*, ed. D. Lanza and G. Ugolini (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 57-89.

¹⁶ Cf. G. Ugolini, "Alle origini del Ginnasio Umanistico Prussiano," *Quaderni di storia* 78 (2013), 5-53.

¹⁷ On the methodological principles of the "Bonn School of Philology" cf. C. Benne, *Nietzsche und die historisch-kritische Philologie* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 56-95.

¹⁸ On the dispute between the two different directions (*Wortphilologie* and *Sachphilologie*) cf. G. Ugolini, "Hermann contra Boeckh: Formal Philology and Historical Philology, in History of Classical Philology," cit., 133-62. See also E. Vogt, "Der Methodenstreit zwischen Hermann und Böckh und seine Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Philologie," in *Philologie und Hermeneutik*. Bd. 1: *Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Geisteswissenschaften*, ed. H. Flashar, K. Gründer, A. Horstmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 103-21.

¹⁹ *Homer and Classical Philology*, trans. John M. Kennedy, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (cit., 11); German text: "Ueber die klassische Philologie giebt es in unseren Tagen keine einheitliche und

deutlich erkennbaren öffentliche Meinung. Dies empfindet man in den Kreisen der Gebildeten überhaupt ebenso als mitten unter den Jüngern jener Wissenschaft selbst. Die Ursache liegt in dem vielspältigen Charakter derselben, in dem Mangel einer begrifflichen Einheit, in dem unorganischen Aggregatzustande verschiedenartiger wissenschaftlicher Thätigkeiten, die nur durch den Namen 'Philologie' zusammengebunden sind. Man muss nämlich bekennen, dass die Philologie aus mehreren Wissenschaften gewissermassen geborgt und wie ein Zaubersrank aus den fremdartigsten Säften, Metallen und Knochen zusammen gebraut ist, ja dass sie ausserdem noch ein künstlerisches und auf aesthetischem und ethischem Boden imperativisches Element in sich birgt; das zu ihrem rein wissenschaftlichen Gebahren in bedenklichen Widerstreite steht. Sie ist ebenso wohl ein Stück Geschichte als ein Stück Naturwissenschaft als ein Stück Aesthetik" (*Homer und die klassische Philologie*, in KGW II/1, 249).

²⁰ *Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie*, in KGW II/3, 339-437.

²¹ *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, in KGW III/2, 133-257.

²² German text: "was hat die griechische Partikellehre mit dem Sinne des Lebens zu thun?" *Wir Philologen* 3 [62], in KGW IV/1, 108.

²³ German text: "Man glaubt es sei zu Ende mit der Philologie—and ich glaube, sie hat noch nicht angefangen?" *Wir Philologen* 3 [70], in KGW IV/1, 110.

²⁴ German text: "Stellt man dem Philologen die Aufgabe, seine Zeit vermittelt des Alterthums besser zu verstehen, so ist seine Aufgabe eine ewige.—Dies ist die Antinomie der Philologie: man hat das Alterthum thatsächlich immer nur aus der Gegenwart verstanden—and soll nun die Gegenwart aus dem Alterthum verstehen? Richtiger: aus dem Erlebten hat man sich das Alterthum erklärt, und aus dem so gewonnenen Alterthum hat man sich das Erlebte taxirt, abgeschätzt. So ist freilich das Erlebniss die unbedingte Voraussetzung für einen Philologen [...] Überhaupt aber: nur durch Erkenntniss des Gegenwärtigen kann man den Trieb zum klassischen Alterthum bekommen. Ohne diese Erkenntniss—wo sollte da der Trieb herkommen? Wenn man zusieht, wie wenige Philologen es ausser denen, die davon leben, giebt, kann man schliessen, wie es im Grunde mit diesem

Triebe zum Alterthum steht, er existirt fast nicht; denn es giebt keine uneigennützigen Philologen," *Wir Philologen* 3 [62], in KGW IV/1, 107f.

²⁵ German text: "Leopardi ist das moderne Ideal eines Philologen; die deutschen Philologen können nichts machen," *Wir Philologen* 3 [23], in KGW IV/1, 98.

²⁶ *The Dawn of Day*, trans. John M. Kennedy in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (cit., 925); German Text: "Philologie nämlich ist jene ehrwürdige Kunst, welche von ihrem Verehrer vor Allem Eins heischt, bei Seite gehn, sich Zeit lassen, still werden, langsam werden—als eine Goldschmiedekunst und—kennerschaft des Wortes, die lauter feine vorsichtige Arbeit abzuthun hat und Nichts erreicht, wenn sie es nicht lento erreicht. Gerade damit aber ist sie heute nöthiger als je, gerade dadurch zieht sie und bezaubert sie uns am stärksten, mitten in einem Zeitalter der 'Arbeit,' will sagen: der Hast, der unanständigen und schwitzenden Eilfertigkeit, das mit Allem gleich 'fertig werden' will, auch mit jedem alten und neuen Buche:—sie selbst wird nicht so leicht irgend womit fertig, sie lehrt gut lesen, das heisst langsam, tief, rück—und vorsichtig, mit Hintergedanken, mit offen gelassenen Thüren, mit zarten Fingern und Augen lesen" (KGW V/1, 9).

²⁷ On rationalism in Nietzsche's thought see L. Cataldi Madonna, *Il razionalismo di Nietzsche. Filologia e teoria della conoscenza negli scritti giovanili* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983), and the essays included in the volume *Nietzsche. Illuminismo. Modernità*, ed. C. Gentili, V. Gerhardt, A. Venturelli (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), in particular R.T. Gray, "Filologia critica: la via di Nietzsche alla critica della cultura," 175-89.

²⁸ *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, trans. A. Collins (New York: Dover Publications, 2019), 4); German Text: "Auch soll zu meiner Entlastung nicht verschwiegen werden, dass ich die Erfahrungen, die mir jene quälenden Empfindungen erregten, meistens aus mir selbst und nur zur Vergleichung aus Anderen entnommen habe, und dass ich nur sofern ich Zögling älterer Zeiten, zumal der griechischen bin, über mich als ein Kind dieser jetzigen Zeit zu so unzeitgemässen Erfahrungen komme. So viel muss ich mir aber selbst von Berufs wegen als classischer Philologe zugestehen dürfen: denn ich wüsste nicht, was die classische Philologie in

unserer Zeit für einen Sinn hätte, wenn nicht den, in ihr unzeitgemäss— das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit—zu wirken” (*Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, KGW III/1, 242f).

²⁹ On the so-called “Lachmann method,” its origin and its limitations, see S. Timpanato, *La genesi del metodo del Lachmann* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1963; rpt Torino: UTET, 2004); English trans. G.W. Most, *The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). For a synthetic overview see S. Fornaro, “Karl Lachmann: Method and Science, in *History of Classical Philology*,” cit., 117-31.

³⁰ *Certamen quod dicitur Homeri et Hesiodi e codice florentino post Henricum Stephanum denuo edidit Fredericus Nietzsche Numburgensis*, “Acta Societatis philologicae Lipsiensis” (Leipzig, 1871 rpt in KGW II/1, 339-64).

³¹ *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, KGW VI/2, 261.

³² C. Benne and C. Santini, “Nietzsche und die Philologie, in *Handbuch Nietzsche und die Wissenschaften*,” ed. H. Heit, and L. Heller (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2014), 173-200, cit. 194. It should be pointed out that the practice of reconstructing the kinship relationships between manuscript witnesses of a given text corresponds to a precise cognitive metaphor, that of the family tree, which was widespread and widely used in nineteenth-century culture in various fields of knowledge, including the natural sciences. Cf. C. Ginzburg, “Somiglianze di famiglia e alberi genealogici. Due metafore cognitive,” in *Ai limiti dell’immagine*, ed. C.-C. Harle (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2005), 227-50.

³³ C. Gentili, *Introduzione a Nietzsche* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017), 120-28.

³⁴ Cf. fr. 7 [60]: “In opposition to Positivism, which halts at phenomena and says, ‘These are only *facts* and nothing more,’ I would say: No, facts are precisely what is lacking, all that exists consists of interpretations. We cannot establish any fact ‘in itself’: it may even be nonsense to desire to do such a thing. ‘Everything is subjective,’ ye say: but that in itself is interpretation. The ‘subject’ is nothing given, but something superimposed by fancy, something introduced behind.—Is it

necessary to set an interpreter behind the interpretation already to hand? Even that would be fantasy, hypothesis. To the extent to which knowledge has any sense at all, the world is knowable: but it may be interpreted differently, it has not one sense behind it, but hundreds of senses.—'Perspectivity.' It is our needs that interpret the world; our instincts and their impulses for and against. Every instinct is a sort of thirst for power; each has its point of view, which it would fain impose upon all the other instincts as their norm" (F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. A.M. Ludovici, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, cit., 2589). German text: "Gegen den Positivismus, welcher bei dem Phänomen stehen bleibt 'es giebt nur Thatsachen,' würde ich sagen: nein, gerade Thatsachen giebt es nicht, nur Interpretationen. Wir können kein Factum 'an sich' feststellen: vielleicht ist es ein Unsinn, so etwas zu wollen. 'Es ist alles subjektiv' sagt ihr: aber schon das ist Auslegung, das 'Subjekt' ist nichts Gegebenes, sondern etwas Hinzu-Erdichtetes, Dahinter-Gestecktes.—Ist es zuletzt nöthig, den Interpreten noch hinter die Interpretation zu setzen? Schon das ist Dichtung, Hypothese. Soweit überhaupt das Wort 'Erkenntniß' Sinn hat, ist die Welt erkennbar: aber sie ist anders deutbar, sie hat keinen Sinn hinter sich, sondern unzählige Sinne 'Perspektivismus.' Unsre Bedürfnisse sind es, die die Welt auslegen: unsre Triebe und deren Für und Wider. Jeder Trieb ist eine Art Herrschsucht, jeder hat seine Perspektive, welche er als Norm allen übrigen Trieben aufzwingen möchte" (KGW VIII/1, 323). See also aphorism 22 in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), KGW VI/2, 31.

³⁵ *The Antichrist* 52, trans. H.L. Mencken (*The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, cit., 2250f.); German text: "Ein andres Abzeichen des Theologen ist sein Unvermögen zur Philologie. Unter Philologie soll hier, in einem sehr allgemeinen Sinne, die Kunst, gut zu lesen, verstanden werden,—Thatsachen ablesen können, ohne sie durch Interpretation zu fälschen, ohne im Verlangen nach Verständniß die Vorsicht, die Geduld, die Feinheit zu verlieren. Philologie als Ephexis in der Interpretation: handle es sich nun um Bücher, um Zeitungs-Neuigkeiten, um Schicksale oder Wetter-Thatsachen,—nicht zu reden vom 'Heil der Seele'" (KGW VI/3, 231).

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