

# An untimely vocation: Gadamer's 'Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft in unserer Zeit' (1943)

Facundo Norberto Bey 

Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (DFBC-UNIVE),  
Dorsoduro 3484/D, Calle Contarini, Venice, Italy

Corresponding author. E-mail: [facundo.bey@gmail.com](mailto:facundo.bey@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

On 27 September 1943, Hans-Georg Gadamer published a brief but significant article in the conservative newspaper *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten und Handels-Zeitung*, entitled 'Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft in unserer Zeit' (Science as Vocation: On the Calling and Profession of Science in Our Time). The article, which addressed the problem of the value and status of science and philosophy in the midst of the Second World War, was never reprinted in Gadamer's work, neither in the ten volumes of his collected writings published by Mohr Siebeck, nor separately in books or journals. I offer here a critical introduction to the context and main contents of this text due to its philosophical, political, and historical relevance. In particular, the introduction analyses Gadamer's confrontation with his own time through explicit and implicit references to Max Weber's 1917 lecture, 'Wissenschaft als Beruf' (Science as Vocation), and traces echoes in Gadamer's later works that bear on contemporary challenges. Following that, I present the first English translation of Gadamer's original German text.

**KEYWORDS:** Gadamer, science, philosophy, values, vocation, profession

## INTRODUCTION

Whilst Hans-Georg Gadamer notably addressed the relevance of *paideia* for Plato's political thought and, in his mature works, gave a prominent place to the concept of *Bildung* (formation), he did not write much about education; rather, most of his ideas on the subject were principally expressed in talks. This is not a happenstance. In a presentation entitled 'Erziehung ist sich erziehen' (Education is Self-Education), convened at the Gymnasium Dietrich-Bonhoeffer in Eppelheim in 1999, Gadamer refused to call his address a 'lecture' and expressed instead that 'To lecture is not to speak, as these are two different things. When one speaks, one speaks to somebody, when one lectures, then the paper lies between the speaker and the audience' (2001a: 529; see also Cleary and

**Received:** November 29, 2022. **Revised:** April 14, 2023. **Accepted:** August 24, 2023

© The Author(s) 2024. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. All rights reserved. For permissions, please e-mail: [journals.permissions@oup.com](mailto:journals.permissions@oup.com)

Hogan 2001). Some years before, during the 1980s, Gadamer delivered a series of talks in which he addressed the relationship between vocation, education, science (*Wissenschaft*), and society. Two of them are particularly relevant for this introduction, one entitled ‘Beruf als Erfahrung’ (Vocation as Experience) (1990), held in 1988 at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, the other entitled ‘Die Idee der Universität: gestern, heute, morgen’ (The Idea of the University: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow) (1988)—recalling explicitly Karl Jaspers’ well-known piece—which was given in the winter semester 1985/6 as part of the lecture series promoted by the City of Heidelberg. In both speeches, Gadamer emphasizes the dangers of the increasing bureaucratization of industrial society in general and the educational system in particular. Specially, Gadamer stresses the consequences of scientific hyperspecialization with the advent of the mass university, namely, the decline of (bourgeois) *Bildung* and the alienation of the creative experience of wonder amongst young researchers, concerns that also preoccupied him in the immediate years after the Second World War (1946, 1948). Following Gadamer, this process of decline entails a continuous loss of courage to freely question one’s own established opinions and risk one’s own judgements, an actual threat to the human possibilities of (reciprocal) self-knowledge and self-education in the light of sociopolitical conformism and massive misinformation campaigns coming from the media and ideological indoctrination. In these academic speeches, he addressed both young students and teachers, as an independent—although not detached from the broader social life and its restrictions and needs—and questioning community of responsible ‘precursors of the grand universe of humanity, of all human beings, who must learn to create with one another new solidarities’ (1992a: 59) through a shared experience of both ignorance and knowledge (1990: 35, see also 1985: 44). For Gadamer, to unveil hermeneutically the hidden (although already existing and concrete) social solidarities demands that human beings break isolation, consciously discover and recover the common nature of *logos* and existence, and individually and collectively imagine true—and beautiful—futures for their communities (cf. also Gadamer 1981: 87, 1998: 101–22, 2007; Bernstein 1983: 264). I present here, for the first time in English, a brief and significant text from 1943, ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf<sup>1</sup> der Wissenschaft<sup>2</sup> in unserer Zeit’ (Science as Vocation: On the Calling and Profession of Science in Our Time) (1943a),<sup>3</sup> to which the roots of these timely Gadamerian reflections can be traced back.

<sup>1</sup> The German term ‘Ruf’ encompasses multiple meanings, including ‘reputation’, ‘call’, and inner ‘vocational calling’. Through a play on words, Gadamer aims to distinguish ‘vocation’ from ‘profession’ and he subsequently attempts to demonstrate dialectically their potential unity if the philosophical sense of science as originary knowledge is to be grasped. In addition, the German term ‘Beruf’ can have several translations: ‘calling’, ‘vocation’, ‘assignment’, and ‘profession’ are amongst them.

<sup>2</sup> The German word ‘Wissenschaft’ encloses a wider scope than its English counterpart, ‘science’. Whilst the English usage of ‘science’ primarily pertains to the natural sciences, ‘Wissenschaft’ also includes the ‘Geisteswissenschaften’ or humanities.

<sup>3</sup> Gadamer’s text inaugurated the *Akademischen Woche* (Academic Week), a programme of training courses for the Leipzig teaching community on the theme of ‘contemporary science’, organized on the initiative of the educational psychologist Erhard Lenk, at that time Director of Studies at the University of Leipzig (Heinze 2001: 92). The only existing commentaries on this very brief article belong to Teresa Orozco (1995a: 199–208) and Richard Pohle (2009: 102–3).

When Max Weber's lecture 'Wissenschaft als Beruf'<sup>4</sup> was published in 1919, Gadamer was amongst the several students who admired the already legendary intellectual power of the 'last polyhistor of the cultural sciences that the world has witnessed' (1995a: 394).<sup>5</sup> However, like many other young researchers, Gadamer was at the same time disappointed with the quixotic scientific asceticism that Weber represented and advocated, and particularly with the limits that his approach imposed on knowledge and reason in relation to the vital choices and value judgements incumbent on the individual.<sup>6</sup>

As Gadamer himself acknowledged on many occasions, the most prominent figure in German philosophy to assume the enormous weight of Weber's legacy was Karl Jaspers. Albeit with different nuances in his various works, Jaspers firmly confronted the fissure between the man who decides and acts and the man of science, and attempted to complement Weber's 'pathos towards objectivity', with the Nietzschean 'pathos of fertility' (Jaspers 1923: 14ff.; Mehring 1998: 375): first in his unpublished *Politische Stimmungen* (Political Attunements) [1917], then in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (The Psychology of Worldviews) [1919] and *Die Idee der Universität* (The Idea of the University) (1923), and finally in his famous three-volume work *Philosophie* (Philosophy) of 1932 (cf. also Heinrich 1988). Although he vindicated the Weberian legacy throughout his work, Jaspers rejected the neo-Kantian idea that the most crucial existential choices fall outside the realm of reason. In general terms, it is possible to affirm that whereas Weber insisted on the principle of freedom from value judgements (*Werturteilsfreiheit*) and the Rickertian concept of 'value relation' (*Wertbeziehung*)—although Weber's and Rickert's conceptions of values were very diverse (cf. Rickert 1902; Weber 1904)—Jaspers attributed to reason a central role in the clarification of existence, enquiring as to what kind of knowledge might guide human beings in making decisions as individuals.

Nevertheless, Jaspers was not Weber's most influential critic at the time. More globally, despite the significant changes that scholars like Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann introduced within the neo-Kantian movement as a result of the decisive revitalizing influence of phenomenology, neo-Kantianism was generally regarded by young university students as a philosophical current that lacked vitality. Furthermore, in the 1920s and 1930s, Ernst Robert Curtius (1920); Erich von Kahler (1920); Ernst Krieck (1920a, 1920b, 1921); Ernst Troeltsch (1921); Eduard Spranger (1921); Jonas Cohn (1922); Max Scheler (1922, 1960 [1923]);

<sup>4</sup> This lecture was delivered by Weber on the evening of 7 November 1917 in the Steinicke bookshop (Schwabing, Munich) to members of the liberal student association *Freistudentischer Bund* (Bavarian section), at the invitation of Immanuel Birnbaum (a prominent social democratic student activist). The lecture series at which Weber gave 'Wissenschaft als Beruf' and two years later 'Politik als Beruf' (Politics as a Vocation) (28 January 1919) was entitled 'Geistige Arbeit als Beruf' (Intellectual Work as a Vocation).

<sup>5</sup> All translations from German and Italian are my own unless otherwise indicated in the references section.

<sup>6</sup> In 1981, Gadamer explained: 'But this did not mean at all that a colorless and bloodless scholar pushed his spiel about methodology and objectification but that this was a man of powerful temperament whose boundless political and moral passion demanded of himself and others such self-restriction' (1994a: 6). Cf. Scheler (1926: 186).

and Heinrich Rickert (1926)<sup>7</sup> critically addressed Weber's views on the relationship between science and the values capable of orienting individual action (a subject Weber had already dealt with in 1904). In his famous lecture, Weber targeted not only so-called *ex cathedra* socialism but also, and more particularly, the vitalism and mysticism of the circle that had grown up around the poet Stefan George.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the increasingly intense enthusiasm that the *Georgekreis* sparked amongst students in two of the most important, although declining, neo-Kantian strongholds—Heidelberg and Marburg—helped to spread with exceptional effectiveness these critical responses, some of which, like those of Kahler and Kriek, were quite venomous.<sup>9</sup>

It was actually to Marburg, his hometown, that Gadamer was to return in 1919 to follow the career advancement of his father, the renowned chemist Johannes Gadamer. Hans-Georg Gadamer arrived in Marburg after attending Richard Hönigswald's seminars *Grundprobleme der Erkenntnistheorie* (Basic Problems of the Theory of Knowledge) (WS 1918/19) and *Einführung in die wissenschaftliche Philosophie* (Introduction to Scientific Philosophy) (SS 1919) in Breslau (now Wrocław). On 18 October, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy. In the dazzling

<sup>7</sup> A set of responses to Weber's lecture and his opponents can be added to this list, including those by Salz (1921); Wolf (1930); Landshut (1931); Radbruch (1932); and Wittenberg (1938). Although unpublished, it is also necessary to include here Edgar Salin's essay 'Nationalökonomie als Wissenschaft' (Political Economy as Science) (1920). A peculiar, and rather grotesque case is that of the National Socialist political economist Klaus Wilhelm Rath, who, starting from Weber's assertion that human values fundamentally collide with each other, concluded that only racial homogeneity could provide the basis for the community (Rath 1936). Sano Makoto suggested reading Carl Schmitt's literary satire *Die Buribunken* (The Buribunken) (1918) as another reaction to Weber's lecture (Makoto, 1996). Similarly, Domenico Losurdo (2001: 51–3) argued that Heidegger's critical review of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Heidegger 1976: 1–44), written between 1919 and 1921 and sent to Jaspers in June 1921, to which the latter responded in the preface to the third edition of his book in 1925—albeit without mentioning his name—entailed an indirect attack on Weber's lecture (especially at the end of the text). A close analysis of Werner Jaeger's lectures, 'Humanismus und Jugendbildung' (Humanism and the Formation of Youth) [1920] (1960: 41–67) and 'Stellung und Aufgaben der Universität in der Gegenwart' (The Position and Tasks of the University in the Present) [1923] (1960: 68–86), also reveals how Jaeger attempted to redefine the humanistic role of the university in the context of discussions involving both Weber's and George's positions. For more on the debates triggered by Weber's conference, see especially Ringer (1969: 352–6); Massimilla (2000, 2008, 2014); Pohle (2009); and Derman (2012).

<sup>8</sup> In 1965, Gadamer himself asserted that 'Stefan George's romantic esotericism' had been the target of a memorable and harsh critique in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (1966: 576).

<sup>9</sup> The debate between Weber and the George followers over the meaning of science seems to have begun after 1910—the same year in which Weber and George first met—as a consequence of the growing disagreements between Weber and Friedrich Gundolf (Gundolf 1911; Groppe 2001: 601ff.). Like Salin—who was more drawn to Alfred's artistic interests than Weber's analytic rigour—and Friedrich Wolters, Gundolf belonged to both the Weber and George circles. Despite his ambivalence regarding the figure of Weber, he had great admiration for him. The most notable antecedent to the continuing controversies between Weber and his Georgian disciples over the role of science and value judgements is mentioned by Salin himself. It involves a conference held in Heidelberg in 1917, attended by Alfred and Max Weber, Gundolf, and Jaspers. After Salin's opening remarks, which were intended to irritate Max Weber, the latter spontaneously took the floor and spent over two hours outlining the potentialities and limits of a scientific approach to history, anticipating the key ideas of 'Wissenschaft als Beruf'. The evening ended with a harsh exchange of words between master and disciple (Salin 1954: 110–11). Cf. also Weber's depiction by Wolters (1930: 471–7).

constellation of intellectuals orbiting the University of Marburg, two stars were shining brightly at that time: Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann. Both were Gadamer's first guides on the path of Platonic philosophy. Three years later, thanks to Hartmann's support and Natorp's supervision, Gadamer wrote his doctoral thesis, *Das Wesen der Lust nach den Platonischen Dialogen* (The Essence of Pleasure according to the Platonic Dialogues) [1922], which was awarded *summa cum laude*. In the following months, forced to isolate himself at his father's house because of his poliomyelitis, Gadamer received from Natorp a sixty-page typewritten text, now known as the *Natorp-Bericht* (Report to Natorp), authored by Martin Heidegger and preceded by the title *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* ('Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle') (cf. Gadamer 1989).<sup>10</sup> Gadamer compared reading this text to his first encounter with George's poetry at the age of eighteen, describing it as an 'electric shock' (Gadamer 1977a: 212). Enthused, he wrote a letter to Heidegger on 27 September which marked the beginning of one of the most fruitful intellectual relationships for his later development and thought.

However, Gadamer's accounts of Weber's impact on his life are less well known, despite the fact that he repeatedly expressed himself on the subject in various later interviews. Gadamer claimed that before his decisive encounter with Heidegger, Weber had been 'the greatest figure' in his youth (Boyne 1988: 31). In particular, recalling his early student years, Gadamer stressed that although at that time he had not yet read Weber's 'great works of historical sociology', 'obviously we all knew the lecture on "Science as a Vocation" and the lecture on "Politics as a Vocation"' (Gadamer 1992a: 140). Nonetheless, whilst Weber had been a leading referent for Gadamer and his generation, he was also the 'symbol of a kind of scientific life with which we could not identify' (140). As mentioned above, Gadamer and his colleagues considered the ideal of an 'inner-worldly asceticism of a value-free science, which is then perfected by a certain kind of decisionism' to be 'majestic but impossible' (140), namely, 'a type of mystical decisionism' (144). Precisely because Gadamer aspired 'to grasp in what way reason was incarnate in existence itself' (144), Weber's scientific fanaticism would become 'the great provocation' to take his first intellectual steps (Boyne 1988: 31). Weber was, in Gadamer's words, 'the great sociologist, perhaps the greatest scientist, who has stood before me as a giant throughout my life, precisely because we strove to go beyond him' (Gadamer 1992b: 184); and Weber's 'exaggerated differentiation between value-free science and ideological decisions' (Gadamer 1992a: 174) and the subsequent powerlessness of science to provide a criterion for choosing 'the god that you will follow' (Boyne 1988: 31), prompted Gadamer to turn to philosophy. As the author himself acknowledged, the original research path opened by Jaspers on the existential role of reason in making judgements and decisions 'determined' his 'entire philosophical work' (Gadamer 1992a: 144). Thus, Weber influenced Gadamer as much as his Marburger teachers, Heidegger's *Dasein*-Analytic and his interpretation of Aristotle, Scheler's phenomenological anthropology, and Paul Friedländer's philological insights on Plato.

<sup>10</sup> The full title of the work was *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation* (Phenomenological interpretations with respect to Aristotle: Indication of the hermeneutical situation). Gadamer lost his copy during the Leipzig bombings of 1943.

According to Gadamer, Weber was a crucial author ‘for such deeply disillusioned youth’ who witnessed ‘the last cracks ... of the mythologization of war through modern technology’ (Gadamer and Vietta 2002: 50). In common with many others, during these early years of apprenticeship and great political change, Gadamer felt intellectually disoriented. Amongst the several groups he frequented throughout the 1930s, there was that of Friedrich Wolters, the nationalist and conservative economic historian and poet, whose seminar on the French Revolution in the winter semester of 1920/1 Gadamer attended.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to the latter and, above all, to the friendships of Oskar Schürer and Max Kommerell, Gadamer became close to the most famous of these circles: the *Georgekreis*. However, he never took seriously the authoritarian cult around George, ‘the esoteric atmosphere surrounding this poet’, as he once wrote to Richard Bernstein (Bernstein 1983: 265).<sup>12</sup> As a result, he was never ‘officially’ part of the circle, although he was close to several of its members. Gadamer finally withdrew from the *Kreis* after Wolters—who, in turn, belonged simultaneously to the Weber circle—put pressure on him to associate with romantic–reactionary nationalist youth groups (Gadamer 1992a: 143–4).<sup>13</sup> In fact, the only time Gadamer retrospectively identified with Weber’s national–liberal position was in their shared rejection of both the Prussian establishment and the new radical antirepublican conservatives like Wolters (139–40) who, according to Gadamer’s close friend, Karl Löwith, ‘made it easier for National Socialism to follow the path that they themselves did not follow’ (Löwith 1986: 24).<sup>14</sup>

If classical philology was to be the path of emancipation from the brilliant and charismatic—though later disappointing—teacher Heidegger, first Aristotle and then Plato were to be the destinations from and to which that path was to be traced. After Easter 1925, Gadamer made his last trip back to Marburg and started taking classes in classical philology and rhetoric with Friedländer, who was at the time Wilamowitz’s youngest disciple. In 1929, under the joint guidance of Heidegger and Friedländer, Gadamer obtained his *venia legendi* in philosophy with a thesis entitled *Interpretation des Platonischen Philebos* (Interpretations of Plato’s *Philebos*), which was to form the basis of his first book, *Platos dialektische Ethik* (Plato’s Dialectical Ethics) [1931]. Beginning with the publication of his essay on the Aristotelian *Protrepticus* (1985: 164–86), his early studies focussed on the unity of the theoretical and practical character of knowledge, the dialectical experience of language, the relation between ethics, politics, and philosophy, and the communicative function of the Socratic–Platonic notion of *phrónēsis* in the facticity of language.

In the wake of his *Habilitationsschrift*, Gadamer was ready to begin his teaching activity as a *Privatdozent*. This new phase in his life was defined by persistent

<sup>11</sup> Recorded in the *Anmeldungsbücher* records available at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA).

<sup>12</sup> The letter, published by Bernstein, is dated 1 June 1982.

<sup>13</sup> On Wolters, George and Weber, see especially Gadamer’s *Der Dichter Stefan George* (The Poet Stefan George) (1993b: 213).

<sup>14</sup> Although some conservative former members of the *Kreis* later embraced National Socialism enthusiastically, like von Hildebrandt, many others, especially aristocratic and Catholic monarchists, took part in the right-wing resistance to Hitler.

financial difficulties. After years of temporary teaching, in 1939 he was finally appointed full professor of philosophy at the University of Leipzig, where he became rector in 1946. During the National Socialist dictatorship, Gadamer published three articles that deserve to be mentioned here for their relevance: ‘Plato und die Dichter’ (Plato and the Poets) [1934] (1985: 187–211), ‘Platos Staat der Erziehung’ (Plato’s Educational State) [1942] (1985: 249–62) and ‘Was ist der Mensch?’ (What is Man?) (1944). Whilst the first two were included in the fifth volume of his complete works, translated into several languages and widely discussed both for their content and political resonances, the third has not yet received sufficient critical attention. This, despite the urgent acknowledgement by its author, in the midst of the Second World War’s slaughter, that the polytheism of partisan world-views was simply annihilating humanity and suspending any opening to the question ‘What is a human being?’, the answer to which ‘will never be revealed without hiding again and again’, (Gadamer 2021: 266). In this short article, published in a Leipzig newspaper and never republished during his lifetime, Gadamer, through an outline of the transformations of Western thought, problematized what the historical role of reason might have been if the dominant model of science—epitomized in 1917 in the figure of Weber—continued to assume the rationalization of the world as an irreversible fate, which pushed all possible answers about the human essence into total irrationalism.<sup>15</sup>

Gadamer was evidently neither the first nor the most prominent German thinker who, on the basis of Weber’s illustrious lecture, attempted to reflect on the role of science in the twentieth century. However, this is also what makes his intervention special. On the one hand, this text is part of a generational struggle to overcome the sharp division between scientific knowledge and ethical–political knowledge. On the other hand, it is also part of Gadamer’s specific early research, which was coloured by his debates with neo-Kantianism, critical realism, positivist philology, phenomenology, existential analytics, and Sprangerian–Jaegerian Third Humanism.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> According to Grondin (2003: 259), Spranger was chosen originally by the *Leipziger Zeitung* to be the author of ‘an essay on this topic’. However, due to his involvement in the 20 July Plot, he was not allowed to publish this piece. As a result, Gadamer ‘at the last minute’ had to substitute Spranger ‘with a hurriedly composed piece of the same title’. ‘The Propaganda Ministry detected that it did not follow the “people’s” party line and demanded alterations in the last paragraph, where Gadamer was ordered to take into consideration certain principles of National Socialism. Gadamer felt obliged to alter the text accordingly; but anyone who examines it closely notices that he visibly distances himself from the National Socialist line.’ Spranger, along with Wolfgang Schädewaldt and Johannes Stroux, was part of the opposition’s private conservative intellectual circle, the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (Wednesday Society), where ‘four of its sixteen members suffered a violent death as a result of the 20th July’ (Zeller 1967: 404).

<sup>16</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, Gadamer, on the one hand, engaged in very relevant theoretical debates with Jaeger’s and Julius Stenzel’s ethico–political interpretation of Plato’s educational philosophy and, on the other hand, dialogued with distinguished Georgian interpreters of Plato, like Salin, Kurt Singer, Kurt von Hildebrandt, and Karl Reinhardt. In particular, Jaeger’s numerous philological and philosophical essays and talks on Plato and Greek culture throughout the Weimar era were emphatically and critically driven not only by the colossal legacy of his teachers, Hermann Diels and Ulrich Wilamowitz, but also by Spranger’s call for a ‘political humanism’ able to awaken, especially amongst the German political leaders, the collective, creative, and vital formative forces spiritually inherited

Only one page in length, ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft in unserer Zeit’, was published twenty-four years after Weber’s essay in a nonacademic (but university-related) regional newspaper, violently acquired several years earlier by the Nazi Party, and amidst the beginning of what would become Nazi Germany’s wartime defeat. In later years, except for an abridged version that appeared a month later (Gadamer 1943b),<sup>17</sup> the text, which anticipated many of the main ideas developed in the Leipzig’s 1946 presentation ‘Über die Ursprünglichkeit der Wissenschaft’<sup>18</sup> (1947, 1995a: 287–94, 1992a: 15–21), would not be reprinted, translated, or even mentioned by the author.

When Gadamer’s article was published, only seven months had passed since the decisive German military setback at Stalingrad, after 200 days of fierce fighting. As in 1917, when Weber’s lecture was delivered, the worsening military situation and the attrition of the home front began to have a direct political effect on the country. To counter the strengthening of the opposition, the *Wehrmacht* General Staff reacted by increasing its vigilance, especially amongst the academic youth (Gadamer 1992a: 51).<sup>19</sup>

from the ancient Greek and Roman cultures for the nation’s present, in opposition to the past aestheticism of Winckelmann’s rationalist classicism and the romantic apolitical and individualistic humanism of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s, as stated paradigmatically in *Das humanistische und das politische Bildungsideal im heutigen Deutschland* (The humanist and political ideal in education in contemporary Germany) [1916], *Der gegenwärtige Stand des Geisteswissenschaften* (The current situation of humanities) [1921], and *Die Antike und der Deutsche Geist* (Antiquity and German Spirit) [1925].

<sup>17</sup> The second version of the text displays specific omissions, with the most significant ones being the complete exclusion of the second paragraph of the ‘Ruf an die Besten’ (Calling on the best) section and approximately half of the first paragraph of the ‘Vom Wesen wahrer Wissenschaft’ (On the Essence of True Science) section. This second version of the text also employs a more limited use of the *Sperrsatz* or additional spacing between letters or words in Fraktur script as a substitute for italics.

<sup>18</sup> For Gadamer, the ‘originary’ (*ursprünglich*) character of science has its roots in the Ancient Greek beginning of *episteme*, ‘its unconditional involvement in the subject matter’ (1992a: 20), and in the Socratic common ground of *logos* and being: ‘only the Greeks turned the primitive impulse to know into the objective form of science and thereby changed the course of humanity’, says the author in 1946 (1992a: 18). Thus, Gadamer’s conception of science as ‘originary’ or ‘primordial’ stems from his recognition of the interpretive nature of human understanding. Drawing from Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* (Being and time) notion of *ursprünglich*—which can be applied to *Dasein*’s (fallen away) factual situation that already includes the Being-with-others—and his description of the hermeneutical circle (Heidegger 1986: 153), Gadamer emphasizes the existential role of interpretation in our everyday engagement with the world. In *Wahrheit und Methode* (Truth and Method), Gadamer states ‘that language is originarily human means at the same time that man’s being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic’ (2013: 459). This phenomenological–Heideggerian approach (1985: 159, 161) can be traced back to Gadamer’s early essay on the Aristotelian *Protrepticus* and, especially, to *Platos dialektische Ethik* (cf. 1985: 23, 33, 44, 47, 73).

<sup>19</sup> On 18 January 1943, Werner Krauss, a Marxist philologist and member of the resistance (with the *Schulze-Boysen-Harnack* faction), was arrested and sentenced to death on a charge of high treason. Thanks to the joint initiative of Doris Schumacher and Karl Vossler an application for a retrial was accepted in December 1943. Statements from other colleagues, including Gadamer and Curtius, together with two psychiatric reports, led to a new hearing due to the suspect’s alleged mental instability. On 14 September 1944, his death sentence was commuted to five years’ imprisonment. Krauss was eventually released by US troops shortly before the end of the war, and, in 1947, Gadamer sent him an invitation to become a professor in Leipzig (Grondin 2003: 251).



During the autumn, British bombing raids intensified around Leipzig. Within days of the publication of Gadamer's text, his friend Carl Friedrich Goerdeler,<sup>20</sup> together with Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg (a former member of the *Georgekreis*) and Major General Henning von Tresckow, began to plan the thwarted *Unternehmen Walküre* (Operation Valkyrie). In the early hours of 4 December 1943, Leipzig awoke to the overwhelming roar of almost 1,400 tons of explosives dropped from British bombers. The Royal Air Force offensive, known as 'Operation Haddock', left more than 1,800 dead, and destroyed almost every building in the city centre, including the *Augusteum*, the university's main historic building. Gadamer later recounted that his:

seminary then moved to a building without windows or electricity. There, in front of a crowd of stupefied students and by candlelight, we read Rilke's third elegy from Duino. It was our way of resisting history, Nazism,<sup>21</sup> war, and, in short, of thinking of a different world. (Filippini 2013: 290)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Gadamer recalls that, at a 1944 meeting at the home of a politician in Leipzig, he gave a lecture on Plato's *Republic* in an atmosphere which, if not a 'conspiracy', could rightly be regarded as opposition to an unbearable era (Gadamer 1977a: 118). Gadamer's friendship with Goerdeler—who in early 1940 began to lead an underground conservative resistance circle willing to conspire against Hitler—and connection with his entourage must have been close, possibly heightened by Gadamer's relationship with his own assistant and future wife, Käte Lekebusch. She was a close friend of Goerdeler's daughter, Marianne, with whom she attended Vossler's and Gadamer's seminars. Furthermore, following the failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler on 20 July 1944, Marianne and Käte were arrested by the *Volksgerichtshof* (People's Court), presided over by the infamous judge Roland Freisler, and confined in various concentration camps.

<sup>21</sup> Gadamer's relation to Nazism has been the subject of lively debate during the 1990s and 2000s. Teresa Orozco (1995a, 1995b, 2004a, 2004b) and Richard Wolin (2004) have accused Gadamer of endorsing the National Socialist regime through his interpretations of Plato's political thought in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in his works 'Plato and the Poets' and 'Plato's Educational State'. Both scholars cite select phrases from these texts to assert that Gadamer's conclusions on the relation between art and politics in Plato's dialogues and on the educational tasks of *kallipolis* align with fascist ideology. Additionally, they argue that Gadamer's decision to join the *Nationalsozialistischen Lehrerbundessigning* (National Socialist Teachers League) in August 1933, his endorsement of the *Bekennnis der Professoren an den deutschen Universitäten und Hochschulen zu Adolf Hitler und dem nationalsozialistischen Staat* and joining the *Bekennnis der Professoren an den deutschen Universitäten und Hochschulen zu Adolf Hitler und dem nationalsozialistischen Staat* (Vow of allegiance of the Professors of the German Universities and High Schools to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialistic State) in November 1933, and his acceptance of academic appointments during the Nazi era have tainted his intellectual legacy. By interpreting Gadamer's works from that era as *romans à clef*, Orozco and Wolin contend that the enigmatic ambiguity within his writings reflects a cunning strategy, whilst the absence of direct criticism of the regime negates any possibility of dissent. Thus, Gadamer is deemed guilty for not being an antifascist hero or martyr whilst also facing criticism for not openly aligning himself with the National Socialist Party. However, scholars such as Gabriel Motzkin (2001); Robert Sullivan (2001); Georgia Warnke (2001); Richard Palmer (2002); Jean Grondin (2003); Catherine Zuckert (2004); and Donatella Di Cesare (2007) have convincingly demonstrated that Gadamer held primarily mandatory and peripheral academic positions during the Nazi era, that he did not endorse fascism in his philosophical works, and, in fact, produced interpretations of Plato that opposed and contradicted not only Nazi ideology but also the racist and corporatist readings of Plato by philosophers and philologists that were aligned with the regime. Furthermore, the official documents are completely clear about Gadamer being viewed with suspicion and hostility by the regime (Leaman 1993: 40–1; Grondin 2003: 181). For a broader discussion, see Bey 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer refers here to the winter seminar 1943/4 *Philosophische Erklärung von Rilkes Duineser Elegien* (Philosophical Explanation of Rilke's Duino Elegies).

‘Undoubtedly, there is a danger in these circumstances,’ Gadamer writes in his ‘Science as Vocation’. That is, it will not be the best youth who will ‘join the scientific community of the future.’ Gadamer’s assessment of the present appears to be somewhat untimely in light of the horrors of the entire Second World War, but which specific experiences and facts make up the ‘circumstances’ to which the author refers?

The text starts with a number of assumptions and clichés suggesting continuities and ruptures concerning the role of the university and the social prestige and meaning of science. They are written in such an ironic tone that the reader is forced to detect for themselves both the ruptures within the continuities, and the continuities within such ruptures, as well as how they allow Gadamer to present academically relevant content whilst still distancing himself from Nazi ideology. On the one hand, Gadamer notes, there was ‘a new body of young people’ that had ‘passed through the *Nationalsozialistic* school, both externally and internally’, and that had to confront ‘the steadfast figure of science’ (whose reputation was visibly in doubt and will be substantially worse after the end of the war; [Gadamer 1992a: 15](#)). On the other hand, there were unmistakable continuities with the time when Weber contested the weakness of the idolaters of the vitalistic and pantheistic *Erlebnis* (lived experience) ([Weber 2004: 10](#)). From the point of view of Weber’s apocalyptic and resigned heroism—which, as Gadamer will remark, ‘simultaneously attracted and repelled young people’—they were ‘unable to look the fate of the age full in the face’ ([Weber 2004: 24](#)).

‘What must the nature of this science be, in its selection of the best, if it is to attract the most originally creative individuals?’ Gadamer’s question acknowledges an established lineage of discourses concerning the idea and goals of (German) university. In this regard, its originality may be questioned. Nevertheless, he boldly dares to recall, recover, and rediscover this question, aiming to apprehend the novel insights embedded within potential responses—namely, the emerging questions of his time.

First of all, Gadamer presents an image of a community of young people whose best exponents found no reason to approach a model of science that was both bureaucratized and ideologized. Moreover, the pool of new students was dwindling due to the impact of the war. Decimated by the state in times of peace and war, the vast majority of them were abandoning the university by the day to find social and economic recognition within the bourgeois machinery of National Socialist power: the *Wehrmacht* and business. In this regard, the state’s attempts to support young academics and control science policy in order to overcome the reduction in the number of students proved futile—if not counterproductive—in Gadamer’s eyes.

Secondly, this inevitably meant that only those with a certain wealth and social standing could pursue an academic career, regardless of whether or not they had merit or skills (with disparate results in very different fields such as teaching and research) (cf. [Weber 2004: 1–2, 4–7](#)). As a matter of fact, a long-standing trend was interrupted with a decrease in the number of students from middle- and lower-class families ([Noakes 1993: 396–7](#)). Additionally, and no less importantly, academic anti-Semitism, which was prevalent in German universities during Weber’s

time (Weber 2004: 7), had now evolved into a state doctrine and a planned extermination machine.

On the other hand, Gadamer insisted on an explicitly critical point: the situation he was analysing was evident in the emergence of the ‘fate of “bureaucratization”’, of which Weber spoke presciently.<sup>23</sup> The ‘statolatric’ legacy of the First World War (cf. Weber 1918: 86–8), the process of modernization unleashed by Nazi fascism, and the advent of the Second World War exponentially multiplied the further development of the repressive, productive, and administrative capacities of the German capitalist state. It is no accident that Gadamer stated that ‘this is linked to a general tendency of our time: it is a time in which the conscious control and utilization of the forces at the disposal of a people [*der einem Volke zur Verfügung stehenden Kräfte*] has become the general watchword’. Indeed, the ‘concentration, standardization, centralization, [and] planning’ that for years had increased state power in Germany, as well as the blind faith of political leaders that these organizational and technological skills alone would be able to solve all problems, were not the exclusive heritage of Nazi totalitarianism (cf. also Brüning 1932: 6).

Like Weber, Gadamer insisted that the external conditions of science could not fundamentally change the situation (Weber 2004: 7). What had changed in the ‘public consciousness’ was not the cause of this crisis of science but one of its effects, and this could not be countered by the utilitarian tones of political propaganda. Instead, it had to come from the science itself. However, for science to be able to transform itself and incorporate ‘people with originary [*ursprünglich*] productive talents’, it had to question itself; and it is precisely here that Gadamer begins to distance himself definitively from Weber. Thus, recalling the urgency of the Weberian question of how to enable the selection of the best individuals for research and teaching in times of war, through an anachronistic exercise that questioned the sovereignty of the linearity of time, Gadamer was ready to listen to the ‘future of Western culture’, trying to save the sense of such a future at a time when the darkness of the recent past was expanding and no culture or no ‘West’ then seemed possible or imaginable (Gadamer 1946). As Gadamer stated in his 1943 lecture ‘Hölderlin und das Zukünftige’ (Hölderlin and the Future):<sup>24</sup>

There is at least one thing that our own time is aware of: that it is the end of an age, and—because such belongs to the very nature of the historical process—that it is also the beginning of a new one. We can characterize the age now beginning in various ways: as the age of socialism, the age of admittedly self-conscious power, as the age of struggle for the domination of the earth, or even as the age of the world wars—or one can define the beginning of this age by the collapse of Idealism, that

<sup>23</sup> In his later writings, Gadamer would raise his concerns about the fulfilment of the fate of bureaucratization (cf. Gadamer 1981: 91ff, 1990: 32, 1993a: 348, 2000: 45–6).

<sup>24</sup> This lecture was delivered at the Technischen Hochschule in Darmstadt and was not published until 1947. Gadamer attempted to publish this meditation in the journal *Die Antike* (Antiquity), but this was not possible in 1944 because of the concluding lines: ‘Even though the poet, particularly in a poem of such intense and impressive power as, for example, *Der Frieden* (Peace), seems to express the experiences of his own battle-scarred and sorrow-laden generation. His poetic word does not, nevertheless, point to an expected event in the future; rather, he speaks his enduring word both as one initiated into the future as well as one experienced in all human destiny’ (1994b: 107).

is to say, by the disappearance of faith in the original and independent power of reason; or one can characterize it by the disappearance of education understood as an essentially middle-class formation of the human spirit. In each case what the self-consciousness of the present age lacks is the security of a stable structure on the basis of which earlier generations were able to understand themselves. A new insecurity, a new immediacy toward our impending fate, a vulnerable exposure to all that is uncertain is with us, even where the pathos of any kind of heroism is scorned, even that of a heroic nihilism. (1994b: 89–90)

Consequently, to the fate of the productivity of technoscience and military technology, as well as the prestige of power, Gadamer opposes the humble past- and future-laden creativity of philosophy, which is capable of playing a historical role in the present in preventing the reversion of all research (*Forschung*) to mere *doctrina* (*Lehre*) (cf. 1992a: 35). In the same vein, Gadamer remarked that ‘the spread of scientific “schools” and the training of capable students’ revealed itself to be insufficient as the exclusive mean to contribute to science’s growth. The uninterrupted trend towards specialization, set in motion by Humboldt’s university reform, inaugurated ‘in the industrial epoch’ the era ‘of the alienation of education’, as Gadamer recalled in the 1990s (1992a: 50). Thus, Friedrich Schelling’s concerns in 1803 about universities turned into ‘industrial training schools’ by the state (1966: 23) and Weber’s early resigned depiction of ‘this tremendous development’, an age featuring ‘specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart’ (Weber 2005: 124), were both confirmed. And whilst here Gadamer begins to demonstrate the originary character of science with respect to its contemporary understanding, he also paradoxically takes up one of the most significant ideas of the Weberian lecture: the value of the creative passion for knowledge.

In ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf’, Weber asserted that the only work of value is that which is carried out with passion, and in this regard, scientific activity is no exception. Passion, in turn, constituted for Weber ‘a precondition of the decisive factor, namely, “inspiration”, which ‘cannot be produced to order. And it has nothing in common with cold calculation’ (2004: 8). Thus, on the psychological level, inspiration takes hold in the worker, the tradesman, and the researcher in equal measure, albeit ‘only on a foundation of very hard work’ (8). This is the role of what Weber called ‘phantasy’ or ‘imagination’ (*Phantasie*): to provide nonrational imaginative access to an original idea that is fundamental to achieving one’s task. However, these ideas ‘come in their own good time, not when we want them’ (9). Hence, Weber equates imagination with poetic enthusiasm (*Eingebung*) ‘in the sense of Plato’s “mania”’ (10). Thus, the passionate “‘experience” of science’ must be combined with the work of specialization in such a way that the researcher can give life to a creative and methodical scientific question whilst resisting the ‘external’ devastation of tough academic life (8).

In his article, Gadamer revisited this argument in a different way, stating that ‘the will to know serves no purpose but is an originary human passion [*Leidenschaft*]’ (cf. also 1995a: 291). This insight appeared first in Heidegger’s preliminary remarks to the seminar of winter semester 1923/4 ‘Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung’ (Introduction to Phenomenological Research), when referring to the presuppositions of the course: ‘No acquaintance with philosophical notions is

presupposed ... [but] a passion for *questioning* genuinely and rightly [*Leidenschaft des echten und rechten 'Fragens'*]. The passion does not happen at will; it has its time and its tempo.' (Heidegger 1994: 2; 2005:1). According to Gadamer, the great discovery of the Greek philosophers, which enabled them to become 'fathers of the West', (cf. also 1995a: 290) is that the drive of curiosity (*Neugier*) can be turned into a 'scientific attitude', which 'includes the ability to think contrary to prevailing opinion, even contrary to one's own prejudice'—and this also entails, following early Heidegger's lesson, 'the idea of having no prejudice ... [is] itself the greatest prejudice' (Heidegger 1994: 2; 2005: 2; cf. also Gadamer 1986a: 34, 1992a: 43). In this regard, Gadamer explicitly refers to the Weberian call for teachers to 'teach his students to acknowledge *inconvenient facts*' (Weber 2004: 22), that is, 'the inconvenient thinking that reveals their validity', as the Marburgian philosopher rightly notes.

In fact, Gadamer condenses in this text some of the conclusions he arrived at in 'Platos Staat der Erziehung'. Gadamer emphasized in that piece that the Socratic–Platonic philosopher, who is fundamentally driven by a passion, must have the courage not to be swayed by the prejudices, threats, and temptations of power (1980: 91, cf. also 1995a: 292–3) and instead seek the same in each particular case: the totality of knowledge, just as the erotic finds beauty in all its manifestations without being influenced by predefined preferences. 'Thus it can be said that the philosopher is possessed by the passion to behold the truth' (not to be confused with the passion of mere curiosity, *Schaulust*) (Gadamer 1980: 90). Gadamer claims in his conclusion that, if the Socratic philosopher was an expert in anything, it was in eroticism rather than in governmental techniques (*Rep.* 474c–5a). In this sense, Gadamer's vindication of passion is proposed as a partial answer to the question of how to make visible the dignity of scientific knowledge itself, that is, not only the value of the object of investigation (Weber 1904: 46, 2004: 18–19), but of investigation as such. To know what is worth questioning, Gadamer will say several years later, it is not enough to master the methods, the means of science, which Weber had already accepted with bitter resignation (2004: 17–18), but it also demands 'hermeneutical imagination' (*hermeneutische Phantasie*), 'the creative imagination of the scientist' (Gadamer 2013: 576) or the capacity to sense the 'questionableness [*Fragwürdige*] of something and what this requires of us' (2001b: 42). This 'special sensitivity and sensitiveness', this sort of 'tact' (2013: 15) for that which 'is not immediately intelligible' (1977b: 98), the 'supreme virtue of the right interpreter' (1993b: 442) and 'decisive task of the researcher' (1986a: 227), involves a phronetic attitude that is also a political one, as Gadamer regarded it when he cautiously inserted the Goethean epigraph of his 1934 essay, 'Plato und die Dichter' (1980: 39; Goethe 1982: 244–9; cf. also Gadamer 1981: 81–2) and, decades later, when he characterized in 'Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles' (The Idea of the Good in Platonic–Aristotelian Philosophy) Platonic *andreia* as *Zivilcourage* (civic courage), or the ability to struggle against the danger of conformity (1991: 163).

As can be seen, 'Science as Vocation' possesses a distinct characteristic that aligns it with Gadamer's subsequent addresses on the mission of the university and the

essence of education. Notably, it exhibits a remarkable capacity subtly to illuminate and dialogue with diverse perspectives, as well as to show the need for such perspectives to attempt to reflect together on common concerns. Gadamer assumes multiple points of view, encompassing not only that of a philosopher and cultural critic but also that of a professor and a concerned citizen, grappling with the pressing questions that acquire greater urgency during times of peace and heightened intensity amidst war. Additionally, by opening with such a personal *incipit* centred around a critical period of his *Lehrjahre*, he adeptly recovers the students' vantage point, engaging with them directly whilst endeavouring to comprehend their motivations and obstacles in the asphyxiating and terrorizing context of a 'socially and economically totally organized community', and exposing the need that 'the scientific community of the future' has, in turn, for the sincere and immediate involvement of the youth.

The text presented here concludes with a particular translation of a passage from the Platonic *Phaedrus* that reads: 'There is something like philosophy in the essence of man.'<sup>25</sup> The 'best' individuals to which Gadamer refers are not yet born. Becoming one's best is a possibility for human beings that has nothing to do with the genetic inheritance of any people, as his fellow professors aligned with the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) claimed. In the play of Gadamerian allusions, the protreptic vocation to awaken humanity and provoke enlightening questioning is full of the promise and longing of bringing together creativity and experience, philosophy and politics, passion and reason, knowledge and ignorance.

In the years after the end of the Second World War and the horrific Nazi dictatorship, Gadamer emphatically insisted on the importance 'to establish anew the reason for the university's existence' (Gadamer 1992a: 16), reassessing the challenges that new conditions imposed on teaching and research, especially the challenge of joining 'together science and man's knowledge of himself in order to achieve a new self-understanding of humanity' (1981: 149). Over the decades, his continuous critical endeavour demanded not only demythologizing science and its culture of 'methodical' 'planning, making, controlling' (1967: 23), but also the very myths of vocation (*Berufung*)—as an inner daimonic voice capable of providing steadfast guidance to young students—and of free professional career choices (*Berufswahl*) (1990: 27ff) in a society in which the youth has to assert itself 'within an increasingly functional and bureaucratized social, economic and production system' that makes it more and more difficult to achieve any kind of 'recognition, satisfaction, and fulfilment through one's own spontaneity' (2000: 27). In this way, Gadamer attempted to confront the educational implications of the social exaltation of 'conformity' (*Konformismus, Anpassung*) as 'supreme virtue' (1981:

<sup>25</sup> Gadamer does not explicitly state the source of this quotation. However, it is plausible to attribute it to *Phdr.* 279a–b (φύσει γάρ [...] ἐνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρός διανοίᾳ). Heidegger interprets this passage in the same vein in 'Was ist Metaphysik?' (What is Metaphysics?) [1929] (Heidegger 1976: 122). As Socrates is referring to Isocrates in the dialogue, the actual translation would be, 'There is something like philosophy in the essence of this man.' Additionally, *Rep.* 485ff is worth exploring for further insights.

83, 1987: 226, 1990: 32–3), especially in an era in which ‘the authority of science and of experts adds up to relieving the responsibility that should be borne by the one acting, even though science often cannot give real security’ (1981: 148) and ‘the courage to ask questions’ seems to be blocked ‘in our education and teaching system by the curricula’ (1992c: 67, cf. also 1995b : 28). As Gadamer stated in ‘Über die Naturanlage des Menschen zur Philosophie’ (On the Natural Inclination of Human Beings Toward Philosophy) [1971]:

The Delphic demand ‘Know thyself’ meant, ‘Know that you are a man and no god’. It holds true as well for human beings in the age of the sciences, for it stands as a warning before all illusions of mastery and domination. Self-knowledge alone is capable of saving a freedom threatened not only by all rulers but much more by the domination and dependence that issue from everything we think we control. (1981: 150)

Just as Nietzsche claims is the case with true philology, self-knowledge requires a person ‘to read *well*, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate fingers and eyes’ (2005: 5; translation modified) the original questions hidden behind our own illusions in order ‘to regain [...] the closeness to those things that are really fundamental and central to what is really worth knowing’. For ‘reading is not just scrutinizing or taking one word after another, but means above all performing a constant hermeneutic movement guided by the anticipation of the whole, and finally fulfilled by the individual in the realization of the total sense’ (Gadamer 1986b: 28). For Gadamer, education means ending up ‘being pushed beyond one’s own model’ as a result of attempting ‘to find oneself in another’ (1990: 34). And this requires us to not only remember that we are not gods but also that we are neither machines nor mere beasts. To become human beings, ‘questioning beings’ (*fragende Wesen*), we must face ‘the onerous task’ of imagining what is possible and needful, and wish and will for what may seem impossible (1981: 81, 1990: 35). By recalling the ordinary human passion for true knowledge, this rare piece by Gadamer, patiently evokes an image of pathways to possible presents capable of challenging the ‘lack of imagination’ of technology (1981: 81)<sup>26</sup> and administration, the ‘irresponsibility’ of science (1981: 161), the ‘total functionalization of the individual’ (1990: 33), the threatening fates of conformity and adaptation ‘to the point of distorting human character’ (33), bureaucratization, domination, alienation, acceleration, war,

<sup>26</sup> In ‘Was ist Praxis?: Die Bedingungen gesellschaftlicher Vernunft’ (What is Practice?: The Conditions of Social Reason) [1974], Gadamer makes explicit reference to Ortega y Gasset’s thought: ‘I would even suggest that Ortega y Gasset was presumably right when he said, Technology will run aground on its lack of imagination, of the power to wish’ (1981: 81). It is possible to observe that Gadamer is taking into consideration for his own reflections Ortega y Gasset’s essay ‘Meditación de la técnica’ (Man and Technician) (the text is the product of a series of lectures held in 1933 and was first published in 1939), especially Ortega’s indication on how contemporary human beings suffer from a lack of imagination that prevents them from being the authors of the vital projects that should give content and purpose to intelligence and technology (Ortega y Gasset 1961: 137). Gadamer met Ortega y Gasset in person in 1944, during the Spanish philosopher’s exile in Lisbon (Gadamer 1977a: 121).

misinformation, overinformation (1995a: 219–20), and environmental destruction without giving in to ‘the prophets of catastrophe’ (1981: 85, 2000: 26–34).

It should also be noted that the reference here is not only to the two wars that marked the first half of the 20th century, but also, fundamentally to all the self-destructive acts that were waiting (and are still waiting) to ravage life on earth. After all, ‘profession as experience’ (1990: 26), science as vocation—‘as something not yet completely discovered and never completely discoverable’ (Humboldt 1960: 195)—is actualized only in its acting in a utopian, dialectical, practical, responsible, courageous (1992c: 67), and untimely way (1985: 197; Gadamer 1981: 80ff), that is, ‘counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come’ (Nietzsche 2007: 60), albeit, of course, an indomitably uncertain one.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to Professor David Bakhurst for his suggestions and extremely helpful advice on the preparation of this introduction and on the translation of Gadamer’s text. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Jean Grondin for his invaluable comments and insights on the translation.

### FUNDING

This study was conducted within the HUMANS project and received financial support from the European Union Next-GenerationEU – National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) – MISSION 4 COMPONENT 2, INVESTIMENT N.1.2 – CUP N.H73C22001330001. This manuscript reflects only the authors’ views and opinions; neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be considered responsible for them.

### REFERENCES

- Bernstein, R. (1983) *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bey, F. (2019) ‘El debate sobre *Plato und die Dichter* y su inscripción en el contexto de Alemania Nacional-Socialista: una discusión con lecturas de la teoría política’, *Ekstasis*, 8: 138–63. <https://doi.org/10.12957/ek.2019.42786>
- Boyne, R. (1988) ‘Interview with Hans-Georg Gadamer’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 5: 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327688005001002>
- Brüning, H. (1932) ‘Die Schicksalsfragen der Gegenwart’. *Tagblatt. Organ für die Interessen des werktätigen Volkes*, 13 May, 111, Linz, 6.
- Cleary, J. and Hogan, P. (2001) ‘The Reciprocal Character of Self-Education: Introductory Comments on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Address “Education is Self-Education”’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35: 519–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00242>
- Cohn, J. (1922) ‘Die Erkenntnis der Werte und das Vorrecht der Bejahung: Betrachtungen, angeknüpft an Max Webers Lehre von der Wertfreiheit der Wissenschaft’, *Logos*, 10: 195–226.
- Curtius, E. R. (1920) ‘Max Weber über Wissenschaft als Beruf’, *Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft: Monatsschrift für das gesamte Volkshochschulwesen*, 1: 197–203.



- Derman, J. (2012) *Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought: From Charisma to Canonization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Di Cesare, D. (2007) *Gadamer*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Filippini, E. (2013) 'Pane, cipolle e verità', in *Frammenti di una conversazione interrotta: interviste 1976–1987*, pp. 287–91. Rome: Castelvechi.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1943a) 'Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft in unserer Zeit'. *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten und Handels-Zeitung*, 27 September, p. 3.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1943b) 'Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft'. *Deutsche Presse-Korrespondenz*, 28 October, 43: 4–6.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1944) 'Was ist der Mensch?'. *Illustrierte Zeitung: Der europäische Mensch. Kultursonderausgabe*, 30–6 [Reprint: 'Was ist der Mensch?'. In: Vom Wahren, Schönen, Guten. Aus dem Schatz europäischer Kunst und Kultur, 1947: 31–6].
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1946) 'Die gemeinschaftsbildende Kraft der Kultur: Ein Beitrag zur Umformung deutschen Geisteslebens'. *Göttinger Universitäts-Zeitung*, 15 April, I. Jg. (1945–6), No. 8, 4–6.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1948) *Über die Ursprünglichkeit der Philosophie*. Berlin: Chronos. (1967: 11–38) ['Die Bedeutung der Philosophie für die neue Erziehung', talk of 1945–6; 'Das Verhältnis der Philosophie zu Kunst und Wissenschaft', talk of 1947].
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1966) 'Notes on Planning for the Future', *Daedalus*, 95: 572–89.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1967) *Kleine Schriften I. Philosophie: Hermeneutik*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1977a) *Philosophische Lehrjahre: Eine Rückschau*. Frankfurt: Klostermann.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1977b) *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Edited and translated by D. E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1980) *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by P. C. Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1981) *Reason in the Age of Science*. Translated by F. G. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1985) *Griechische Philosophie I. Gesammelte Werke*. Bd. 5. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1986a) *Hermeneutik 2. Wahrheit und Methode [II]: Ergänzungen. Register*. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 2. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1986b) 'The Relevance of the Beautiful', in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Translated by N. Walker, pp. 3–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1987) *Neuere Philosophie II (Probleme. Gestalten)*. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 4. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1988) 'Die Idee der Universität: gestern, heute, morgen', in M. Eigen et al. (eds) *Die Idee der Universität: Versuch einer Standortbestimmung*, pp. 1–22. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag. [Reprint and translation into English: 'The Idea of the University—Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow', 1992a: 47–59].
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1989) 'Heideggers 'theologische' Jugendschrift', *Dilthey-Jahrbuch*, 6: 237–69.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1990) 'Beruf als Erfahrung'. *Jahresbericht der Vereinigung von Freunden und Förderern der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität 1989*, pp. 26–36.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1991) *Griechische Philosophie III: Plato im Dialog*. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 7. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1992a) *Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*. Edited by D. Misgeld and G. Nicholson. Translated by L. Schmidt and M. Reuss. Albany: State University of New York.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1992b) 'Culture and Media', in A. Honneth, T. McCarthy, C. Offe, and A. Wellmer (eds) *Cultural–Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment*, pp. 172–88. Translated by B. Fultner. Cambridge/London: MIT Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1992c) 'Humanismus heute?', in *Die Wissenschaft und das Gewissen: Antike als Grundlage für Deutung und Bewältigung heutiger Probleme, (Die Humanistische Bildung, 15)*. *Württembergischer Verein zur Förderung der humanistischen Bildung*, pp. 57–70. Korb: Klett Druck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1993a) *Ästhetik und Poetik I (Kunst als Aussage)*. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 8. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1993b) *Ästhetik und Poetik II (Hermeneutik im Vollzug)*. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 9. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

- Gadamer, H.-G. (1994a) *Heidegger's Ways*. Translated by J. W. Stanley, with an introduction by D. J. Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1994b) 'Hölderlin and the Future', in *Literature and Philosophy in Dialogue: Essays in German*. Translated with an introduction by R. Paslick, pp. 87–108. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1995a) *Hermeneutik im Rückblick*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 10.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1995b) 'Without Poets There is no Philosophy', *Radical Philosophy*, 69: 27–35.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1998) *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*. Translated by C. Dawson. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2000) *Hermeneutische Entwürfe: Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2001a) 'Education is Self-Education', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35: 529–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00243>.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2001b) *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*. Edited and translated by Richard Palmer. Yale University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2007) 'Schönheit', *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*, 1: 99–101.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2013) *Truth and Method*. Translated by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2021) 'Was ist der Mensch?'/ 'What is Man?', *Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics*, 30: 255–80.
- Gadamer, H.-G. and Vietta, S. (2002) *Im Gespräch*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- Goethe, J. W. V. (1982) [1796] 'Plato als Mitgenosse einer christlicher Offenbarung', in E. Trunz and H. J. Schimpf (eds) *Goethes Werke, Schriften zur Kunst. Schriften zur Literatur. Maximen und Reflexionen*, pp. 244–9. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck.
- Grondin, J. (2003) *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Groppe, C. (2001) *Die Macht der Bildung: Das deutsche Bürgertum und der George-Kreis 1890–1933*. (Bochumer Schriften zur Bildungsforschung Vol. 3). Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.
- Gundolf, F. (1911) 'Wesen und Beziehung', *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung*, 2: 10–35.
- Heidegger, M. (1976) *Wegmarken (1919–1961)*. Edited by F. W. V. Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1986) *Sein und Zeit*. Edited by F. W. V. Herrmann. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer.
- Heidegger, M. (1994) *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*. Edited by F. W. V. Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann [Introduction to Phenomenological Research. Translated by D. O. Dahlstrom. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005].
- Heinrich, D. (1988) 'Karl Jaspers: Denken im Blick auf Max Weber', in W. J. Mommsen and W. Schwentker (eds) *Max Weber und seine Zeitgenossen*, pp. 722–39. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Heinze, C. (2001) *Die Pädagogik an der Universität Leipzig in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: 1933–1945*. Bad Heilbrunn/Obb: Klinkhardt.
- Humboldt, W. V. (1960) 'Über die innere und äußere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin', in W. Weischedel, W. Müller-Lauter, and M. Theunissen (eds) *Idee und Wirklichkeit einer Universität: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, pp. 193–202. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Jaeger, W. (1960) *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Jaspers, K. (1923) *Die Idee der Universität*. Berlin: Springer.
- Kahler, E. V. (1920) *Der Beruf der Wissenschaft*. Berlin: Georg Bondi.
- Kriek, E. (1920a) 'Die Revolution von innen', *Die Tat*, 12: 668–74.
- Kriek, E. (1920b) *Die Revolution der Wissenschaft: Ein Kapitel über Volkserziehung*. Jena: Diederich.
- Kriek, E. (1921) 'Vom Sinn der Wissenschaft', *Der Neue Merkur*, 5: 510–14.
- Landshut, S. (1931) 'Max Webers geistesgeschichtliche Bedeutung', *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung*, 7: 507–16.
- Leaman, G. (1993) *Heidegger im Kontext Gesamtüberblick zum NS-Engagement der Universitätsphilosophen*. Hamburg: Argument.
- Losurdo, D. (2001) *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death, and the West*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.

- Löwith, K. (1986) *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933: Ein Bericht*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersehe Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Makoto, S. (1996) 'Max Weber und Carl Schmitt—der Konflikt der Wissenschaftslehren', *浜松医科大学紀要. 一般教育*, 10: 1–26.
- Massimilla, E. (2000) *Intorno a Weber: Scienza, vita e valori nella polemica su Wissenschaft als Beruf*. Naples: Liguori.
- Massimilla, E. (2008) *Scienza, professione, gioventù: rifrazioni weberiane*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.
- Massimilla, E. (2014) *Presupposti e percorsi del comprendere esplicativo: Max Weber e i suoi interlocutori*. Naples: Liguori.
- Mehring, R. (1998) 'Universitätsidee und Philosophiebegriff bei Max Weber, Karl Jaspers und Martin Heidegger', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 105: 370–81.
- Motzkin, G. (2001) 'Comment on Richard Wolin's "Untruth and Method"', in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Schwerpunktthema: 'Hermeneutik und Politik in Deutschland vor und nach 1933', H. 1: 78–85.
- Nietzsche, F. (2005) *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Edited by M. Clark and B. Leiter, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (2007) 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*. Edited by D. Breazale and translated by R. J. Hollingdale, pp. 57–123. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Noakes, J. (1993) 'The Ivory Tower under Siege: German Universities in the Third Reich', *European Studies*, 23: 371–407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004724419302300401>
- Orozco, T. (1995a) *Platonische Gewalt: Gadamer's politische Hermeneutik der NS-Zeit*. Hamburg: Argument.
- Orozco, T. (1995b) 'Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophische Interventionen im NS', *Das Argument*, 209: 311–24.
- Orozco, T. (2004a) 'El arte de la insinuación: las intervenciones filosóficas de Hans-Georg Gadamer en el Nacionalsocialismo', *Laguna: Revista de Filosofía*, 14: 65–88.
- Orozco, T. (2004b) 'The Protection of the Philosophical Form: A Response to Zuckert', in B. Krajewski (ed.) *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 244–55. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ortega y Gasset, J. (1961) 'Man the Technician'. Translated by H. Weyl, in *History as a System and Other Essays toward a Philosophy of History*, pp. 87–161. New York: W. W. Norton, Co.
- Palmer, R. (2002) 'A Response to Richard Wolin on Gadamer and the Nazis', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 10: 467–82.
- Pohle, R. (2009) *Max Weber und die Krise der Wissenschaft eine Debatte in Weimar*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Radbruch, G. (1932) *Rechtphilosophie*. Leipzig: Quelle et Meyer.
- Rath, K. W. (1936) 'Review of Artur Mettler, *Max Weber und die philosophische Problematik in unserer Zeit*', *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, 96: 227–32.
- Rickert, H. (1902) *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung: Eine logische Einleitung in die historische Wissenschaften*. Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Rickert, H. (1926) 'Max Weber und seine Stellung zur Wissenschaft', *Logos, Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, 15: 222–37.
- Ringer, F. K. (1969) *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Salin, E. (1920) *Nationalökonomie als Wissenschaft*. Basel: UB, NSB B 367.
- Salin, E. (1954) *Um Stefan George: Erinnerung und Zeugnis*. Munich/Dusseldorf: Küpper vorm. Bondi.
- Salz, A. (1921) *Für die Wissenschaft: gegen die Gebildeten und ihren Verächtern*. Munich: Drei Masken.
- Scheler, M. (1922) 'Weltanschauungslehre, Soziologie und Weltanschauungssetzung', *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Sozialwissenschaften*, 2: 18–33.
- Scheler, M. (1926) *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft: Probleme einer Soziologie des Wissens, Erkenntnis und Arbeit, Universität und Volkshochschule*. Leipzig: Neue-Geist.
- Scheler, M. (1960) 'Max Weber Ausschaltung der Philosophie [1921–1923]', in *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*. Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 8, pp. 430–8. Bern: Franck Verlag.

- Schelling, F. W. J. (1966) *On University Studies*. Translated by E. S. Morgan and edited and with an introduction by N. Guterman. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Schmitt, C. (1918) 'Die Buribunken: ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch', *Summa. Eine Vierteljahresschrift*, 1: 89–106.
- Spranger, E. (1921) 'Wissenschaft als Beruf'. *Frankfurter Zeitung* (1 December, Abendblatt): 3.
- Sullivan, R. (2001) 'Gadamer and National Socialism: A Response to Richard Wolin', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Schwerpunktthema: 'Hermeneutik und Politik in Deutschland vor und nach 1933', H. 1: 55–65.
- Troeltsch, E. (1921) 'Die Revolution in der Wissenschaft: eine Besprechung von Erich von Kahlers Schrift gegen Max Weber "Der Beruf der Wissenschaft" (1920) und der Gegenschrift von Artur Salz "Für die Wissenschaft gegen die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern"', *Schmollers Jahrbuch*, 45: 1,001–30.
- Warnke, G. (2001) 'Pace Wolin', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Schwerpunktthema: 'Hermeneutik und Politik in Deutschland vor und nach 1933', H. 1: 69–77.
- Weber, M. (1904) "Die Objektivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 19: 22–87.
- Weber, M. (1918) 'Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften', *Logos, Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, 1: 40–88.
- Weber, M. (1919) 'Wissenschaft als Beruf', in *Geistige Arbeit als Beruf: vier Vorträge vor dem Freistudentischen Bund*, Erster Vortrag (Mit einem Nachwort von Immanuel Birnbaum) [With an epilogue by Immanuel Birnbaum]. Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot. ['Science as a Vocation'. In *The Vocation Lectures*. Edited and with an introduction by D. Owen and T. B. Strong, pp. 1–31. Translated by R. Livingstone. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004].
- Weber, M. (2005) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by S. Kalberg. London/New York: Routledge.
- Wittenberg, E. (1938) 'Die Wissenschaftskrisis in Deutschland im Jahre 1919', *Theoria*, 4: 235–64.
- Wolf, E. (1930) 'Max Webers Ethischer Kritizismus und das Problem der Metaphysik', *Logos, Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, 19: 359–75.
- Wolin, R. (2004) *The Seduction of Unreason, The Intellectual Romance with Fascism: from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wolters, F. (1930) *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst: Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890*. Berlin: Georg Bondi.
- Zeller, E. (1967) *The Flame of Freedom: The German Struggle against Hitler*. London: Wolff.
- Zuckert, C. (2004) 'On the Politics of Gadamerian Hermeneutics: A Response to Orozco and Waite', in B. Krajewski (ed.) *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 229–43. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## APPENDIX

### Science as vocation: on science as a calling and as a profession in our time

Hans-Georg Gadamer

In 1919, the famous political economist Max Weber delivered in Munich a lecture entitled 'Wissenschaft als Beruf' [Science as Vocation], in which he vividly described the external and internal conditions of the academic teaching profession. What simultaneously attracted and repelled young people about this lecture was its scientific ethos—an ethos of the ascetic restraint of science in the face of questions about value and purpose that young people deem essential. The chatter of the literati about *Erlebnis* found here a severe chastizer; yet to us who were young then, it seemed more like the chastizer was chastizing himself—an unhappy self-chastizer, who vehemently denied the knowledge that underpinned his values and his will. In truth, he had more to teach than he intended to.

### New youth and science

In the meantime, it is a new body of young people, those who have passed through the *National-socialistic* school, both externally and internally, that must confront the steadfast figure of science. It will be instructive to examine the situation in light of these changed conditions.

The fact that the call of the scientific profession [*der Beruf zur Wissenschaft*] always concerns only a small proportion of those who pass through our secondary schools and universities does not diminish the interest that the wider circles of our people must take in the external and internal situation of science and its disciples. It remains true here, as in any selection process, that only a chosen few can be selected from the wider group of those who are willing and who ‘feel the call’ of science. [However,] the enormous mobilization of all the forces of the people [*die ungeheure Anspannung aller Kräfte des Volkes*], a mobilization demanded of us both in the so-called time of peace as now in times of war—and above all the numerous victims of the war—combined with the fact that the curricula of instruction are becoming more and more incomplete as the war drags on, have already caused a reduction in the number of talented young people. In addition, the status and prestige of science, and of those who devote their lives to it, have declined considerably in the public consciousness. The political experiences of the present have led to a crisis of the pure expert, which is accompanied by a corresponding loss of confidence in the ideal of scientific education [*Bildung*] and training [*Vorbildung*]. Moreover, the armed forces [*Wehrmacht*] and the economic domain offer such attractive opportunities for advancement that all attempts by the political leadership [*Staatsführung*] to offer scientists an adequate compensation prove insufficient. Of course, the old *Privatdozent* no longer exists; the state provides for the next generation of scientists just as it does for the next generation of civil servants. However, such general measures are not enough to attract the best young people to science. Hence, it is possible to state unreservedly: *in today’s socially and economically totally organized community* [*durchorganisierten Gemeinwesen*], *science as a vocation cannot be adequately rewarded by any social or economic incentives.*

### Calling on the best

Undoubtedly, there is a *danger* in these circumstances: namely, that it will not be the best who join the scientific community of the future, but only those for whom its rewards still offer sufficient incentive. The fate of ‘bureaucratization’, of which Max Weber spoke presciently, is beginning to emerge more clearly. The best assistant is not always the best researcher. Even the best student in a high school [*Gymnasium*] does not always need to be destined for science; nonetheless, there is a danger that such pure academic talent could be taken as a sufficient sign of eligibility [*Erwähltheit*].

This is linked to a general tendency of our time: it is a time in which the conscious control and utilization of the forces at the disposal of a people has become the general watchword [*Losung*]. Almost every day, we realize with amazement what an enormous gain in energy can be obtained through concentration,

standardization, centralization, planning, in short, ‘organization’. Moreover, the pressing demands of war are driving us inexorably down this road. This is really almost [*fast*] like the new and revolutionary discovery that no further discoveries are needed, but only the unbridled use and ‘development’ of what has already been discovered in order to give an unimagined impetus to the advancement of the entire apparatus of civilization. Nevertheless, this discovery is not on the same level as the discoveries we owe to the *productive work of scientific research*. Successful organization certainly presupposes productive genius, but the productivity of science is of a different kind. It does not grow with institutes, nor does it necessarily grow with the means of work. Nor does it grow with the spread of scientific ‘schools’ and the training [*Heranbildung*] of capable students. All of this existed in Alexandria as well ...

The real urgency that arises from this is: to constantly retain for and attract to science [*der Wissenschaft zu erhalten oder zuzuführen*] those people [*Naturen*] who are truly productive, those to whom highly remunerative opportunities beckon in *the armed forces and the economic realm*. *The solution to this task, which basically arises in all sciences, be they natural or humanistic, is perhaps of epochal importance for the future of Western culture*. It has already been pointed out at the outset that the *external* conditions of a life of science can be of little help in this selection [*zu dieser Auslese*]. Even the state’s consciously assumed task of preserving and increasing science’s reputation amongst the people cannot really serve this noble mission of fighting for the souls of the best. Of all things [*vollends*], the strategy, that has become common today, of promoting understanding for the specificity and value of science by emphasizing its *völkisch usefulness* [*its usefulness for the Volk as a whole*] will not suffice here. Even if this reasoning is invoked to justify free research, unrestricted by any considerations of application and use (for example, when it is pointed out that many of our currently indispensable technical means and assets are the result of scientific discoveries that owe nothing to practical interest but only to a purely theoretical interest in truth)—even such a well-intentioned justification of purposeless research by appeal to its unintentional usefulness—will, as with all advocacy, not be persuasive. There is only one means to attract people with originary [*ursprünglich*] productive talents to science and *that is science itself*.

### On the essence of true science

What must the nature of this science be, in its *selection of the best*, if it is to attract the most originarily creative individuals? It must be *originary* and *creative* itself. Science is *originary* only when it is close to its own origin.

‘All humans by nature desire to know.’ So Aristotle, the teacher of the West, begins his lecture course on metaphysics [*die metaphysische Vorlesung*]. The will to know serves no purpose but is an originary human passion [*Leidenschaft*]. This is shown by the compulsive nature of curiosity [*Neugier*], even in its degenerate forms. It is to the eternal merit of the Greeks that they formed the scientific attitude out of this disposition [*Haltung*]. Thus, they became the fathers of the West. Yet the passion of the will to know includes the ability to think contrary to prevailing opinion, even contrary to one’s own prejudice [*Vormeinung*]. (Max Weber spoke of

inconvenient facts, but he meant primarily the inconvenient thinking that reveals their validity.)

This passion for knowledge does not align with the idea of science everywhere research activities are conducted. Science [it is thought] must rather be *creative*. However, in the field of knowledge the creative person is one who gains fundamental knowledge, that is, who finds a way (a method) to make visible many things worth knowing. Therefore, science must know that the knowledge it acquires is worth knowing. But how does it know that? Apparently, it is part of the very orientation of scientific research that new cognitive tasks are constantly being added, without the knowledge-worthiness of such things becoming problematic for science itself. It is an inherent law of scientific progress to remain absorbed in the affairs of science and to abandon altogether the question of what is worthy of being known. The ‘scientist’ has taken the place of the ‘researcher’ in the twentieth century, just as the ‘researcher’ took the place of the ‘scholar’ during the nineteenth century. This change of terms expresses a transformation in science’s self-consciousness: to know either a great deal or the whole corresponds to the idea of the ‘scholar’; to venture into the unknown by tried-and-tested means corresponds to the mission of the ‘researcher’; to keep up with the practice of science corresponds to the profession of the ‘scientist.’

### On the function of philosophy

Creative science will be distinguished by the fact that, despite this transformation, it will still manage to regain (often in surprising ways) the closeness to those things that are really fundamental and central to what is really worth knowing: it will be *philosophical*.

This is perhaps the noblest office of philosophy in academic life: philosophy knows how to lead the problems of the sciences back to the originary questions of the human. Thus, whilst it is incapable of contributing any knowledge or means of cognition to the work of science (science today does not even borrow logic from philosophy), it is instead able to pose questions of meaning [*Sinnfragen*] and thus trigger the impulse of questioning. This function of philosophy is exercised not only by the philosopher, but often also by research science and its leaders. At the same time, it is the only art of persuasion that science has at its disposal. But wherever it is practised, it has, today as always, success in attracting the best to itself. To them [the best], today as ever, Plato’s words apply: ‘There is something like philosophy in the essence of man.’

### Original German text

#### Wissenschaft als Beruf. Über den Ruf und Beruf der Wissenschaft in unserer Zeit

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Der berühmte Nationalökonom Max Weber hat unter dem Titel „*Wissenschaft als Beruf*“ im Jahre 1919 vor Münchner Studenten einen Vortrag gehalten, der die äußeren und inneren Bedingungen des akademischen Lehrberufes eindringlich zur Darstellung brachte. Was an diesem Vortrag die Jugend anzog und zugleich abstieß, war sein wissenschaftliches Ethos,—das Ethos einer asketischen

Zurückhaltung der Wissenschaft<sup>27</sup> vor den der Äugend wesentlichen Fragen der Wert- und Zwecksetzung. Das Literatengeschwätz vom „Erlebnis“ fand hier einen strengen Züchtiger, aber der Züchtiger selbst wirkte auf uns, die wir jung waren, dennoch fast mehr wie ein Gezüchtiger, wie ein unselig sich selbst Züchtigender, der die Erkenntnis, die sein Werten und Wollen trug, gewaltsam verleugnete. In Wahrheit wußte er mehr zu lehren, als er wollte.

### Neue Jugend und Wissenschaft

Inzwischen ist es eine neue Jugend, eine Jugend, die äußerlich wie innerlich durch die *nationalsozialistische* Schule gegangen ist, die der standhaften Gestalt der Wissenschaft zu begegnen hat. Es wird lehrreich sein, die Lage unter den veränderten Bedingungen zu überprüfen.

Daß der Beruf zur Wissenschaft immer nur einen kleinen Teil derer betrifft, die durch unsere höheren und hohen Schulen gingen, mindert nicht das Interesse, das die breitesten Kreise unseres Volkes an der äußeren und inneren Lage der Wissenschaft und ihrer Jünger nehmen müssen. Bleibt es doch, wie bei jedem Auslesevorgang, auch hier wahr, daß nur aus einer größeren Schar zur Wissenschaft Williger und „Berufener“ die wenigen Auserwählten, auf die es ankommt. Sich auslesen können. Die ungeheure Anspannung aller Kräfte des Volkes, die in der sogenannten Friedenszeit wie jetzt im Kriege von uns gefordert ist, vor allem aber die zahlreichen Opfer des Krieges, dazu der mit der längeren Dauer des Krieges immer lückenhafter werdende Studiengang bewirken an sich schon eine Minderung des Nachwuchses. Dazu kommt: Rang und Ansehen der Wissenschaft und derer, die ihr ihr Leben widmen, ist im öffentlichen Bewußtsein stark gesunken. Die politischen Erfahrungen der Gegenwart haben zu einer Krise des reinen Fachmannes geführt, die von einem entsprechenden Vertrauensschwund gegenüber dem Ideal wissenschaftlicher Bildung und Vorbildung begleitet ist. Wehrmacht und Wirtschaft gewähren überdies so bestehende Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten, daß alle Versuche der Staatsführung, dem angehenden Manne der Wissenschaft einen Ausgleich zu bieten, dagegen nicht auskommen. Gewiß, den Privatdozenten alten Stiles gibt es nicht mehr, der Staat sorgt für den wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs genau wie für den Nachwuchs des Beamtenkörpers. Um den besten Nachwuchs für die Wissenschaft zu gewinnen, sind solche allgemeinen Maßnahmen jedoch unzureichend. So darf es ohne Einschränkung ausgesprochen werden: *Wissenschaft als Beruf ist in unserem heutigen, sozial und ökonomisch durchorganisierten Gemeinwesen durch keine sozialen oder ökonomischen Prämien angemessen auszuzeichnen.*

<sup>27</sup> As mentioned in Note 3 above, the German term *Wissenschaft*, in particular in the nineteenth century, differs from the English ‘science’. Whereas ‘science’ refers primarily to the use of the methods of the natural sciences, *Wissenschaft*, also translated in English as ‘scholarly knowledge’, connotes not only the entirety of academic disciplines—including the humanities—and their common methods of investigation but also, since Humboldt’s neohumanist educational reform, the unity of research and teaching. This integration encompassed the subjective formation (*Bildung*) of individuals and the cultivation of their character. This insight, which also has its roots in Fichte’s and Schiller’s idealism, transcends the recollection of isolated facts, the achievement of only practical results, or mere professional training, and is guided by ideals of pure knowledge, academic freedom, excellence, and leadership.



### Ruf an die Besten

Zweifellos liegt in diesen Verhältnissen eine *Gefahr*: daß nämlich nicht die Besten in den Wissenschaftsbetrieb der Zukunft einrücken, sondern eben nur solche, für die diese Prämien noch Anreiz genug bieten. Das Schicksal der „Bürokratisierung“, von dem Max Weber vorausschauend sprach, beginnt sich schärfer abzuzeichnen. Der beste Assistent ist nicht immer der beste Forscher. Auch der beste Schüler eines Gymnasiums braucht nicht immer ein zur Wissenschaft wahrhaft Auserwählter zu sein,—und doch besteht die Gefahr, daß solche reine Schulbegabung als ausreichendes Zeichen der Erwähltheit in Geltung kommt.

Das hänge mit einer allgemeinen Tendenz unseres Zeitalters zusammen: es ist eine Zeit, in der die bewußte Lenkung und Nutzung der einem Volke zur Verfügung stehenden Kräfte zur allgemeinen Losung geworden ist. Was für ein gewaltiger Energiegewinn durch Ballung, Normung, Zentralisierung, Planung, kurz durch „Organisation“ erreichbar ist, werden wir fast täglich staunend gewahr. Überdies treiben die drängenden Forderungen des Krieges auf diesem Wege unerbittlich voran. Es ist wirklich fast wie eine neue, umstürzende Entdeckung, daß es keiner neuen Entdeckungen bedarf, sondern nur einer ungehemmten Nutzung und „Entwicklung“ des bereits Entdeckten, um der Fortbildung unseres gesamten Zivilisationapparates einen ungeahnten Auftrieb zu geben. Dennoch ist diese Entdeckung nicht von gleichem Rang mit den Entdeckungen, die wir der *produktiven Arbeit der wissenschaftlichen Forschung* verdanken. Erfolgreiche Organisation setze gewiß auch produktiv-geniale Begabung voraus, aber die Produktivität der Wissenschaft ist anderer Art. Sie wächst nicht mit den Instituten und nicht notwendig mit den Arbeitsmitteln. Auch nicht mit der Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher „Schulen“ und der Heranbildung tüchtiger Schüler. All das gab es in Alexandria auch ...

Die eigentliche Ausgabe, die sich hieraus ergibt, heißt: immer wieder wirklich produktive Naturen—denen in *Wehrmacht* und *Wirtschaft* heute so hoch prämierte Leistungsfelder winken—der *Wissenschaft* zu erhalten oder zuzuführen. *Die Lösung dieser Aufgabe*, die sich im Grunde in allen Wissenschaften—ob Natur- oder Geisteswissenschaften—stellt, *ist vielleicht von epochaler Bedeutung für die Zukunft der abendländischen Kultur*. Es wurde eingangs bereits angedeutet, daß die *äußeren* Lebensbedingungen der Wissenschaft zu dieser Auslese wenig helfen können. Auch die vom Staat mit Bewußtsein ergriffene Aufgabe, das Ansehen der Wissenschaft im Volk zu wahren und zu mehren, wird dieser vornehmsten Aufgabe des Kampfes um die Seelen der Besten nicht wirklich dienen können. Vollends die heute üblich gewordene Art, für die Eigenart und den Wert der Wissenschaft dadurch Verständnis zu wecken, daß man ihren völkischen *Nutzwert* betont, wird hier nicht ausreichen. Selbst wo diese Begründung gerade einer freien, von keinen Rücksichten der Anwendung und Verwertung beengten Forschung zur Rechtfertigung dienen soll—(so, wenn man etwa darauf hinweist, wie viele unserer heute unentbehrlich gewordenen technischen Mittel und Güter auf wissenschaftliche Entdeckungen zurückgehen, die keinerlei praktischem, sondern nur rein theoretischem Wahrheitsinteresse verdankt werden)—, selbst in solcher gut gemeinten Begründung und Rechtfertigung der zweckfreien Forschung aus ihrer absichtslosen Zweckhaftigkeit wird—wie in jeder Verteidigung—wenig

Werbendes liegen. Es gibt nur ein einziges Mittel, Menschen von ursprünglich produktiver Begabung für die Wissenschaft zu gewinnen: *das ist die Wissenschaft selbst.*

### Von Wesen wahrer Wissenschaft

Welcher Art muß sie sein, um bei der *Auslese der Besten* die ursprünglich Schöpferischen zu gewinnen? Sie muß selbst *ursprünglich* und *schöpferisch* sein. Wissenschaft ist *ursprünglich*, wenn sie ihrem Ursprung nahe ist.

„Alle Menschen verlangen von Natur nach Wissen“—so beginnt die metaphysische Vorlesung des Aristoteles, des Lehrers des Abendlandes. Wissenwollen dient keinen Zwecken, sondern ist eine ursprüngliche Leidenschaft des Menschen. Das beweist noch in der Entartung das Zwanghafte der Neugier. Es ist das unsterbliche Verdienst der Griechen, daß sie aus dieser Leidenschaft die Haltung der Wissenschaft herausbildeten. Sie wurden so die Väter des Abendlandes. Leidenschaft des Wissenwollens aber schließt ein: gegen die herrschende Meinung, ja gegen die eigene Vormeinung denken zu können. (Max Weber spricht von den unbequemen Tatsachen—im Grunde meint er das unbequeme Denken, das sie gelten läßt.)

Diese Leidenschaft des Wissenwollens erfüllt nicht überall dort schon die Idee der Wissenschaft, wo überhaupt Forschung getrieben wird. Die Wissenschaft muß vielmehr *schöpferisch* sein. Schöpferisch auf dem Gebiete der Erkenntnis heißt aber, wer eine grundlegende Erkenntnis gewinnt, d.h. einen Weg (eine Methode), findet, viele wissenschaftswürdige Dinge sichtbar zu machen. Die Wissenschaft muß also um die Wissenschaftswürdigkeit ihrer Erkenntnisse wissen. Woher aber weiß sie darum? Anscheinend liegt es in der Vollzugsrichtung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung selbst, daß ihr ständig neue Erkenntnisaufgaben zuwachsen, ohne daß die Wissenschaftswürdigkeit dieser Dinge der Wissenschaft selbst problematisch wird. Es ist das eigene Gesetz des wissenschaftlichen Fortschrittes, im Betrieb der Wissenschaft aufzugehen und sich der Frage der Wissenschaftswürdigkeit ganz zu entheben. Der „*Wissenschaftler*“ tritt im 20. Jahrhundert ebenso an die Stelle des „*Forschers*“,<sup>28</sup> wie im Zuge des 19. Jahrhunderts der „*Forscher*“ an die Stelle des „*Gelehrten*“ trat. Im Wechsel der Namen prägt sich ein Wandel im Selbstbewußtsein der Wissenschaft aus: viel oder das Ganze zu wissen: die Idee des „*Gelehrten*“,—ins Unbekannte mit erprobten Mitteln vorzustoßen: der Auftrag des „*Forschers*“,—im Betrieb der Wissenschaft seinen Mann zu stehen: der Beruf des „*Wissenschaftlers*“.

<sup>28</sup> Before Humboldt's reform, it was common practice for university teaching to consist of the repetitive transmission of canonical knowledge already prefixed in its content and without original contributions. Accordingly, 'reformed' professors were to become researchers: the *Gelehrter*, the solitary learned man, a figure associated with occasional inspiration and geniality, was to be replaced by the rigorous *Forscher*, who not only mastered *doctrina* but also pursued new knowledge collectively and developed teachable methodology. Gadamer's narrative in this context mirrors the critical sentiment prevalent in the Weimar era regarding the perceived deficiency of the *Wissenschaftler* or scientist as a narrow specialist or *Fachmann*. This deficiency entails an inability actively to provide guidance or address the prevalent loss of significance intertwined with the rapid advancement of modernity. This extends to the erosion of meaning not only within broader societal contexts but also within the realm of science as a whole.

### **Vom Amt der Philosophie**

Schöpferische Wissenschaft wird dadurch ausgezeichnet sein, daß sie diesem Wandel zum Trotz dennoch die Nähe zu denjenigen Dingen (oft auf überraschende Weise) wiederzugewinnen weiß, die wahrhaft grundlegend und für wahrhaft Wissenswürdiges grundlegend sind: sie wird *philosophisch* sein.

Das ist vielleicht das vornehmste Amt der Philosophie im akademischen Leben, daß sie die Probleme der Wissenschaften auf die ursprünglichen Fragen des Menschen zurückzuführen weiß. So vermag sie der Arbeit der Wissenschaft zwar keine Erkenntnisse oder Erkenntnismittel zu übergeben (nicht einmal die Logik entlehnt die Wissenschaft heute noch der Philosophie), aber sie vermag Sinnfragen zu stellen und dadurch Frageantriebe auszulösen. Dieses Amt der Philosophie wird nicht allein vom Philosophen, sondern oft auch von der forschenden Wissenschaft und ihren Führern ausgeübt. Es ist zugleich die einzige Überredungskunst, über die die Wissenschaft verfügt. Aber wo sie geübt wird, hat sie heute wie je den Erfolg für sich, die Besten an sich zu ziehen. Denn heute wie je gilt von ihnen das Wort des Plato: „Es ist etwas wie Philosophie im Wesen des Mannes.“