

Title Page

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

Author: Facundo Norberto Bey.

Institutional Affiliations: 1. Instituto de Filosofía "Ezequiel de Olaso" – Centro de Investigaciones Filosóficas / Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (INEO-CIF/CONICET). 2. Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (DFBC-UNIVE).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9449-0463>

Contact details

Address: Miñones 2073, C1428ATE, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Telephone (+54 11) 4787-0533 (INEO-CIF/CONICET).

Email: facundo.bey@gmail.com

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Conflict of Interest statement

I report no potential conflict of interest.

1 which was given in the winter semester 1985–86 as part of the lecture series promoted by the City of
2 Heidelberg. In both speeches, Gadamer emphasises the dangers of the increasing bureaucratization
3 of industrial society in general and the educational system in particular. Specially, Gadamer stresses
4 the consequences of scientific hyperspecialization with the advent of the mass university, namely,
5 the decline of (bourgeois) *Bildung* and the alienation of the creative experience of wonder among
6 young researchers, concerns that also preoccupied him in the immediate years after World War II
7 (1946; 1948). Following Gadamer, this process of decline entails a continuous loss of courage freely
8 to question one’s own established opinions and risk one’s own judgements, an actual threat to the
9 human possibilities of (reciprocal) self-knowledge and self-education in the light of sociopolitical
10 conformism and massive misinformation campaigns coming from the media and ideological
11 indoctrination. In these academic speeches, he addressed both young students and teachers, as an
12 independent—although not detached from the broader social life and its restrictions and needs—and
13 questioning community of responsible ‘precursors of the grand universe of humanity, of all human
14 beings, who must learn to create with one another new solidarities’ (1992a: 59) through a shared
15 experience of both ignorance and knowledge (1990a: 35; see also 1985: 44). For Gadamer, to unveil
16 hermeneutically the hidden (although already existing and concrete) social solidarities demands that
17 human beings break isolation, consciously discover and recover the common nature of *logos* and
18 existence, and individually and collectively imagine true—and beautiful—futures for their
19 communities (cf. also Gadamer, 1981: 87; 1998: 101–122; 2007; Bernstein, 1983: 264). I present
20 here, for the first time in English,¹ a brief and significant text from 1943, ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf.
21 Über den Ruf und Beruf² der Wissenschaft³ in unserer Zeit’ (‘Science as Vocation: On the Calling

¹ I am profoundly grateful to Prof. 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 Prof. Jean Grondin for his invaluable comments and insights on the translation.

² 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 among them.

³ The German word ‘Wissenschaft’ encloses a wider scope than its English counterpart, ‘science.’ While the English usage of ‘science’ primarily pertains to the natural sciences, ‘Wissenschaft’ also includes the ‘Geisteswissenschaften’ or humanities.

1 and Profession of Science in Our Time') (1943a),⁴ to which the roots of these timely Gadamerian
2 reflections can be traced back.

3 When Max Weber's lecture 'Wissenschaft als Beruf'⁵ was published in 1919, Gadamer was
4 among the several students who admired the already legendary intellectual power of the 'last
5 polyhistor of the cultural sciences that the world has witnessed' (1995a: 394).⁶ However, like many
6 other young researchers, Gadamer was at the same time disappointed with the quixotic scientific
7 asceticism that Weber represented and advocated, and particularly with the limits that his approach
8 imposed on knowledge and reason in relation to the vital choices and value judgements incumbent
9 on the individual.⁷

10 As Gadamer himself acknowledged on many occasions, the most prominent figure in German
11 philosophy to assume the enormous weight of Weber's legacy was Karl Jaspers. Albeit with
12 different nuances in his various works, Jaspers firmly confronted the fissure between the man who
13 decides and acts and the man of science, and attempted to complement Weber's 'pathos towards
14 objectivity', with the Nietzschean 'pathos of fertility' (Jaspers 1923: 14ff.; Mehring 1998: 375):
15 first in his unpublished *Politische Stimmungen* ('Political Attunements') [1917], then in his
16 *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* ('The Psychology of Worldviews') [1919] and *Die Idee der*
17 *Universität* ('The Idea of the University') (1923), and finally in his famous three-volume work
18 *Philosophie* ('Philosophy') of 1932 (cf. also Heinrich 1988). Although he vindicated the Weberian
19 legacy throughout his work, Jaspers rejected the Neo-Kantian idea that the most crucial existential
20 choices fall outside the realm of reason. In general terms, it is to possible to affirm that whereas
21 Weber insisted on the principle of freedom from value judgements [*Werturteilsfreiheit*] and the
22 Rickertian concept of 'value relation' [*Wertbeziehung*]—although Weber's and Rickert's

⁴ 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 (1995: 199–208) and Richard Pohle (2009: 102–103).

⁵ 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').

⁶ All translations from German and Italian are my own unless otherwise indicated in the references section.

⁷ 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).

1 conceptions of values were very diverse (cf. Rickert, 1902; Weber, 1904)—Jaspers attributed to
 2 reason a central role in the clarification of existence, inquiring as to what kind of knowledge might
 3 guide human beings in making decisions as individuals.

4 Nevertheless, Jaspers was not Weber's most influential critic at the time. More globally,
 5 despite the significant changes that scholars like Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann introduced
 6 within the Neo-Kantian movement as a result of the decisive revitalizing influence of
 7 phenomenology, Neo-Kantianism was generally regarded by young university students as a
 8 philosophical current that lacked vitality. Furthermore, in the 1920s and 1930s, Erich von Kahler
 9 (1920), Ernst Krieck (1920a; 1920b; 1921), Ernst Robert Curtius (1920), Ernst Troeltsch (1921),
 10 Eduard Spranger (1922), Jonas Cohn (1922), Max Scheler (1922, 1960 [1923]), and Heinrich
 11 Rickert (1926)⁸ critically addressed Weber's views on the relationship between science and the
 12 values capable of orienting individual action (a subject Weber had already dealt with in 1904). In his
 13 famous lecture, Weber targeted not only so-called *ex cathedra* socialism but also, and more
 14 particularly, the vitalism and mysticism of the circle that had grown up around the poet Stefan
 15 George.⁹ In fact, the increasingly intense enthusiasm that the *Georgekreis* sparked among students in
 16 two of the most important, although declining, Neo-Kantian strongholds—Heidelberg and
 17 Marburg—helped to spread with exceptional effectiveness these critical responses, some of which,
 18 like those of Kahler and Krieck, were quite venomous.¹⁰

⁸ A set of responses to Weber's lecture and his opponents can be added to this list, including those by Salz (1921), Landshut (1931), Wolf (1930), 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: 51–53) 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).

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ The debate between Max 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

1 It was actually to Marburg, his hometown, that Gadamer was to return in 1919 to follow the
 2 career advancement of his father, the renowned chemist Johannes Gadamer. Hans-Georg Gadamer
 3 arrived in Marburg after attending Richard Höningwald's seminars *Grundprobleme der*
 4 *Erkenntnistheorie* ('Basic Problems of the Theory of Knowledge') (WS 1918/19) and *Einführung in*
 5 *die wissenschaftliche Philosophie* ('Introduction to Scientific Philosophy') (SS 1919) in Breslau
 6 (now Wrocław). On 18 October, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy. In the dazzling
 7 constellation of intellectuals orbiting the University of Marburg, two stars were shining brightly at
 8 that time: Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann. Both were Gadamer's first guides on the path of
 9 Platonic philosophy. Three years later, thanks to Hartmann's support and Natorp's supervision,
 10 Gadamer wrote his doctoral thesis, *Das Wesen der Lust nach den Platonischen Dialogen* ('The
 11 Essence of Pleasure according to the Platonic Dialogues') [1922], which was awarded *summa cum*
 12 *laude*. In the following months, forced to isolate himself at his father's house because of his
 13 poliomyelitis, Gadamer received from Natorp a sixty-page typewritten text, now known as the
 14 *Natorp-Bericht* ('Report to Natorp'), authored by Martin Heidegger and preceded by the title
 15 *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* ('Phenomenological Interpretations of
 16 Aristotle') (cf. Gadamer, 1989).¹¹ Gadamer compared reading this text to his first encounter with
 17 Stefan George's poetry at the age of 18, describing it as an 'electric shock' (Gadamer 1977a: 212).
 18 Enthused, he wrote a letter to Heidegger on 27 September which marked the beginning of one of the
 19 most fruitful intellectual relationships for his later development and thought.

20 However, Gadamer's accounts of Weber's impact on his life are less well known, despite the
 21 fact that he repeatedly expressed himself on the subject in various later interviews. Gadamer claimed
 22 that before his decisive encounter with Heidegger, Weber had been 'the greatest figure' in his youth
 23 (Boyne, 1988: 31). In particular, recalling his early student years, Gadamer stressed that although at

Friedrich Gundolf (Groppe 2001: 601ff.; Gundolf 1911). Like Salin—who was more drawn to Alfred's artistic interests than Max'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 judgments 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 1951: 110–11). Cf. also Weber's depiction by Wolters (1930: 471–7).

¹¹ The full title of the work was *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation*. Gadamer lost his copy during the Leipzig bombings of 1943.

1 that time he had not yet read Weber's 'great works of historical sociology,' 'obviously we all knew
2 the lecture on "Science as a Vocation" and the lecture on "Politics as a Vocation"' (Gadamer 1992a:
3 140). Nonetheless, while Weber had been a leading referent for Gadamer and his generation, he was
4 also the 'symbol of a kind of scientific life with which we could not identify' (140). As mentioned
5 above, Gadamer and his colleagues considered the ideal of an 'inner-worldly asceticism of a value-
6 free science, which is then perfected by a certain kind of decisionism' to be 'majestic but
7 impossible' (140), namely, 'a type of mystical decisionism' (144). Precisely because Gadamer
8 aspired 'to grasp in what way reason was incarnate in existence itself' (144), Weber's scientific
9 fanaticism would become 'the great provocation' to take his first intellectual steps (Boyne 1988:
10 31). Max Weber was, in Gadamer's words, 'the great sociologist, perhaps the greatest scientist, who
11 has stood before me as a giant throughout my life, precisely because we strove to go beyond him'
12 (Gadamer 1992b: 184); and Weber's 'exaggerated differentiation between value-free science and
13 ideological decisions' (Gadamer 1992a: 174) and the subsequent powerlessness of science to
14 provide a criterion for choosing 'the god that you will follow' (Boyne, 1988: 31), prompted
15 Gadamer to turn to philosophy. As the author himself acknowledged, the original research path
16 opened by Jaspers on the existential role of reason in making judgements and decisions 'determined'
17 his 'entire philosophical work' (Gadamer 1992a: 144). Thus, Weber influenced Gadamer as much as
18 his Marburger teachers, Heidegger's *Dasein*-Analytic and his interpretation of Aristotle, Scheler's
19 phenomenological anthropology, and Paul Friedländer's philological insights on Plato.

20 According to Gadamer, Weber was a crucial author 'for such deeply disillusioned youth' who
21 witnessed 'the last cracks ... of the mythologization of war through modern technology' (Gadamer
22 & Vietta 2002: 50). In common with many others, during these early years of apprenticeship and
23 great political change, Gadamer felt intellectually disoriented. Among the several groups he
24 frequented throughout the 1930s, there was that of Friedrich Wolters, the nationalist and
25 conservative economic historian and poet, whose seminar on the French Revolution in the winter
26 semester of 1920–21 Gadamer attended.¹² Thanks to the latter and, above all, to the friendships of
27 Oskar Schürer and Max Kommerell, Gadamer became close to the most famous of these circles: the
28 *Georgkreis*. However, he never took seriously the authoritarian cult around George, 'the esoteric

¹² Recorded in the *Anmeldungsbücher* records available at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA).

1 atmosphere surrounding this poet,' as he once wrote to Richard Bernstein (Bernstein 1983: 265).¹³
 2 As a result, he was never 'officially' part of the circle, although he was close to several of its
 3 members. Gadamer finally withdrew from the *Kreis* after Wolters—who, in turn, belonged
 4 simultaneously to the Weber circle—put pressure on him to associate with romantic-reactionary
 5 nationalist youth groups (Gadamer 1992a: 143–4). In fact, the only time Gadamer retrospectively
 6 identified with Max Weber's national-liberal position was in their shared rejection of both the
 7 Prussian establishment and the new radical anti-republican conservatives like Wolters (139–40)
 8 who, according to Gadamer's close friend, Karl Löwith, 'made it easier for National Socialism to
 9 follow the path that they themselves did not follow' (Löwith 1986: 24).¹⁴

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

22 In the wake of his *Habilitationsschrift*, Gadamer was ready to begin his teaching activity as a
 23 *Privatdozent*. This new phase in his life was defined by persistent financial difficulties. After years
 24 of temporary teaching, in 1939 he was finally appointed full professor of philosophy at the
 25 University of Leipzig, where he became rector in 1946. During the National Socialist dictatorship,
 26 Gadamer published three articles that deserve to be mentioned here for their relevance: 'Plato und
 27 die Dichter' ('Plato and the Poets') [1934] (1985: 187–211), 'Platos Staat der Erziehung' ('Plato's
 28 Educational State') [1942] (1985: 249–62) and 'Was ist der Mensch?' ('What is Man?') (1944).

¹³ The letter, published by Bernstein, is dated June 1, 1982.

¹⁴ 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.

1 While the first two were included in the fifth volume of his complete works, translated into several
 2 languages and widely discussed both for their content and political resonances, the third has not yet
 3 received sufficient critical attention. This, despite the urgent acknowledgement by its author, in the
 4 midst of the Second World War's slaughter, that the polytheism of partisan worldviews was simply
 5 annihilating humanity and suspending any opening to the question 'What is a human being?', the
 6 answer to which 'will never be revealed without hiding again and again,' (Gadamer 2021: 266). In
 7 this short essay, published in a Leipzig newspaper and never republished during his lifetime,
 8 Gadamer, through an outline of the transformations of Western thought, problematized what the
 9 historical role of reason might have been if the dominant model of science—epitomized in 1917 in
 10 the figure of Max Weber—continued to assume the rationalization of the world as an irreversible
 11 fate, which pushed all possible answers about the human essence into total irrationalism.¹⁵

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

¹⁵ 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 Schadewaldt 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).

¹⁶ During the 1920s and 1930s, Gadamer, on the one hand, engaged in very relevant theoretical debates with Werner 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 Edgar 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 among the German political leaders, the collective, creative, and vital formative forces spiritually inherited 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

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

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

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].

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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 ‘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).

¹⁹ 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).

1 During the autumn, British bombing raids intensified around Leipzig. Within days of the
2 publication of Gadamer's text, his friend Carl Friedrich Goerdeler,²⁰ together with Colonel Claus
3 Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg (a former member of the *Georgekreis*) and Major General Henning
4 von Tresckow, began to plan the thwarted *Unternehmen Walküre* (Operation Valkyrie). In the early
5 hours of 4 December 1943, Leipzig awoke to the overwhelming roar of 1,400 tonnes of explosives
6 dropped from British bombers. The Royal Air Force offensive, known as 'Operation Haddock', left
7 more than 1,000 dead, and destroyed almost every building in the city centre, including the
8 *Augusteum*, the university's main historic building. Gadamer later recounted that his
9 seminary then moved to a building without windows or electricity. There, in front of a
10 crowd of stupefied students and by candlelight, we read Rilke's third elegy from *Duino*. It

²⁰ 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 1977 a: 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.

1 was our way of resisting history, Nazism,²¹ war, and, in short, of thinking of a different
2 world. (Filippini 2013: 290)²²

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

8 The text starts with a number of assumptions and *clichés* suggesting continuities and ruptures
9 concerning the role of the university and the social prestige and meaning of science. They are
10 written in such an ironic tone that the reader is forced to detect for themselves both the ruptures
11 within the continuities, and the continuities within such ruptures, as well as how they allow
12 Gadamer to present academically relevant content while still distancing himself from Nazi ideology.
13 On the one hand, Gadamer notes, there was ‘a new body of young people’ that had ‘passed through
14 the National-socialist school, both externally and internally,’ and that had to confront ‘the steadfast
15 figure of science’ (whose reputation was visibly in doubt and will be substantially worse after the
16 end of the war; Gadamer 1992a: 15). On the other hand, there were unmistakable continuities with

²¹ Gadamer’s relation to Nazism has been the subject of lively debate during the 1990s and 2000s. Teresa Orozco (1995a; 1995b; 1996; 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 *kallípolis* align with fascist ideology. Additionally, they argue that Gadamer’s decision to join the *Nationalsozialistischen Lehrerbund* (National Socialist Teachers League) in August 1933, his endorsement of the *Bekanntnis der Professoren an den deutschen Universitäten und Hochschulen zu Adolf Hitler und dem nationalsozialistischen Staat* and joining the *Bekanntnis 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 Socialist 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, while the absence of direct criticism of the regime negates any possibility of dissent. Thus, Gadamer is deemed guilty for not being an anti-fascist hero or martyr while also facing criticism for not openly aligning himself with the National Socialist Party. However, scholars such as Georgia Warnke (2001), Robert Sullivan (2001), Gabriel Motzkin (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 (Grondin 2003: 181; Leaman 1993: 40–41). For a broader discussion, see Bey 2019.

²² Gadamer refers here to the winter seminar 1943/44 *Philosophische Erklärung von Rilkes Duineser Elegien* (‘Philosophical Explanation of Rilke’s Duino Elegies’).

1 the time when Weber contested the weakness of the idolaters of the vitalistic and pantheistic
2 *Erlebnis* ('lived experience') (Weber 2004: 10). From the point of view of Weber's apocalyptic and
3 resigned heroism—which, as Gadamer will remark, 'simultaneously attracted and repelled young
4 people'—they were 'unable to look the fate of the age full in the face.' (Weber 2004: 24).

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

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

19 Secondly, this inevitably meant that only those with a certain wealth and social standing could
20 pursue an academic career, regardless of whether or not they had merit or skills (with disparate
21 results in very different fields such as teaching and research) (cf. Weber 2004: 1–2, 4–7). As a
22 matter of fact, a long-standing trend was interrupted with a decrease in the number of students from
23 middle- and lower-class families (Noakes 1993: 396–7). Additionally, and no less importantly,
24 academic anti-Semitism, which was prevalent in German universities during Weber's time (Weber
25 2004: 7), had now evolved into a state doctrine and a planned extermination machine.

26 On the other hand, Gadamer insisted on an explicitly critical point: the situation he was
27 analysing was evident in the emergence of the 'fate of "*bureaucratization*"', of which Max Weber

1 spoke presciently'.²³ The 'statolatric' legacy of the First World War (cf. Weber 1918: 86–8), the
 2 process of modernization unleashed by Nazi fascism, and the advent of the Second World War
 3 exponentially multiplied the further development of the repressive, productive, and administrative
 4 capacities of the German capitalist state. It is no accident that Gadamer stated that 'this is linked to a
 5 general tendency of our time: it is a time in which the conscious control and utilization of the forces
 6 at the disposal of a people [*der einem Volke zur Verfügung stehenden Kräfte*] has become the
 7 general watchword.' Indeed, the 'concentration, standardization, centralization, [and] planning' that
 8 for years had increased state power in Germany, as well as the blind faith of political leaders that
 9 these organizational and technological skills alone would be able to solve all problems, were not the
 10 exclusive heritage of Nazi totalitarianism (cf. also Brüning 1932: 6).

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

24 There is at least one thing that our own time is aware of: that it is the end of an age, and—
 25 because such belongs to the very nature of the historical process—that it is also the

²³ In his later writings, Gadamer would raise his concerns about the fulfilment of the fate of bureaucratization (cf. Gadamer, 1981: 91ff; 1990a: 32; 1993a: 348; 2000: 45–46).

²⁴ 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).

1 beginning of a new one. We can characterize the age now beginning in various ways: as the
2 age of socialism, the age of admittedly self-conscious power, as the age of struggle for the
3 domination of the earth, or even as the age of the world wars—or one can define the
4 beginning of this age by the collapse of Idealism, that is to say, by the disappearance of
5 faith in the original and independent power of reason; or one can characterize it by the
6 disappearance of education understood as an essentially middle-class formation of the
7 human spirit. In each case what the self-consciousness of the present age lacks is the
8 security of a stable structure on the basis of which earlier generations were able to
9 understand themselves. A new insecurity, a new immediacy toward our impending fate, a
10 vulnerable exposure to all that is uncertain is with us, even where the pathos of any kind of
11 heroism is scorned, even that of a heroic nihilism. (1994b: 89–90)

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

26 In ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf’, Weber asserted that the only work of value is that which is carried
27 out with passion, and in this regard, scientific activity is no exception. Passion, in turn, constituted
28 for Weber ‘a precondition of the decisive factor, namely, “inspiration”’, which ‘cannot be produced
29 to order. And it has nothing in common with cold calculation’ (2004: 8). Thus, on the psychological
30 level, inspiration takes hold in the worker, the tradesman and the researcher in equal measure, albeit

1 ‘only on a foundation of very hard work’ (8). This is the role of what Weber called ‘phantasy’ or
 2 ‘imagination’ [*Phantasie*]: to provide non-rational imaginative access to an original idea that is
 3 fundamental to achieving one’s task. However, these ideas ‘come in their own good time, not when
 4 we want them’ (9). Hence, Weber equates imagination with poetic enthusiasm [*Eingebung*] ‘in the
 5 sense of Plato’s “mania”’ (10). Thus, the passionate “‘experience” of science’ must be combined
 6 with the work of specialization in such a way that the researcher can give life to a creative and
 7 methodical scientific question while resisting the ‘external’ devastation of tough academic life (8).

8 In his article, Gadamer revisited this argument in a different way, stating that ‘the will to know
 9 serves no purpose but is an ordinary human passion [*Leidenschaft*]’ (cf. also 1995a: 291). This
 10 insight appeared first in Heidegger’s preliminary remarks to the seminar of winter semester 1923/24
 11 ‘Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung’ (‘Introduction to Phenomenological Research’),
 12 when referring to the presuppositions of the course: ‘No acquaintance with philosophical notions is
 13 presupposed ... [but] a passion for *questioning* genuinely and rightly [*Leidenschaft des echten und*
 14 *rechten ‘Fragens’*]. The passion does not happen at will; it has its time and its tempo.’ (Heidegger
 15 2005: 1; 1994: 2). According to Gadamer, the great discovery of the Greek philosophers, which
 16 enabled them to become ‘fathers of the West,’ (cf. also 1995a: 290) is that the drive of curiosity
 17 [*Neugier*] can be turned into a ‘scientific attitude,’ which ‘includes the ability to think contrary to
 18 prevailing opinion, even contrary to one’s own prejudice’—and this also entails, following early
 19 Heidegger’s lesson, ‘the idea of having no prejudice ... [is] itself the greatest prejudice’ (Heidegger
 20 2005: 2; 1994: 2; cf. also Gadamer 1986a: 34; 1992a: 43). In this regard, Gadamer explicitly refers
 21 to the Weberian call for teachers to ‘teach his students to acknowledge *inconvenient* facts’ (Weber
 22 2004: 22), i.e., ‘the inconvenient thinking that reveals their validity’, as the Marburgian philosopher
 23 rightly notes.

24 In fact, Gadamer condenses in this text some of the conclusions he arrived at in ‘Platos Staat
 25 der Erziehung.’ Gadamer emphasized in that piece that the Socratic-Platonic philosopher, who is
 26 fundamentally driven by a passion, must have the courage not to be swayed by the prejudices,
 27 threats, and temptations of power (1980: 91; cf. also 1995a: 292–3) and instead seek the same in
 28 each particular case: the totality of knowledge, just as the erotic finds beauty in all its manifestations
 29 without being influenced by predefined preferences. ‘Thus it can be said that the philosopher is
 30 possessed by the passion to behold the truth’ (not to be confused with the passion of mere curiosity,

1 *Schaulust*) (Gadamer 1980: 90). Gadamer claims in his conclusion that, if the Socratic philosopher
2 was an expert in anything, it was in eroticism rather than in governmental techniques (*Rep.* 474c-
3 475a). In this sense, Gadamer's vindication of passion is proposed as a partial answer to the question
4 of how to make visible the dignity of scientific knowledge itself, i.e., not only the value of the object
5 of investigation (Weber 1904: 46; 2004: 18–19), but of investigation as such. To know what is
6 worth questioning, Gadamer will say several years later, it is not enough to master the methods, the
7 means of science, which Weber had already accepted with bitter resignation (2004: 17–18), but it
8 also demands 'hermeneutical imagination' [*hermeneutische Phantasie*], 'the creative imagination of
9 the scientist' (Gadamer 2013: 576) or the capacity 'to sense the questionable [*Fragwürdige*] and
10 what this requires of us' (1995b: 17). This 'special sensitivity and sensitiveness', this sort of 'tact'
11 (2013: 15) for that which 'is not immediately intelligible' (1977b: 98), the 'supreme virtue of the
12 right interpreter' (1993b: 442) and 'decisive task of the researcher' (1986a: 227), involves a
13 phronetic attitude that is also a political one, as Gadamer regarded it when he cautiously inserted the
14 Goethean epigraph of his 1934 essay, 'Plato und die Dichter' (1980: 39; Goethe, 1982: 244–9; cf.
15 also Gadamer 1981: 81–2) and, decades later, when he characterized in 'Die Idee des Guten
16 zwischen Plato und Aristoteles' ('The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy')
17 Platonic *andreía* as *Zivilcourage* [civic courage], or the ability to struggle against the danger of
18 conformity (1991: 163).

19 As can be seen, 'Science as Vocation' possesses a distinct characteristic that aligns it with
20 Gadamer's subsequent addresses on the mission of the university and the essence of education.
21 Notably, it exhibits a remarkable capacity subtly to illuminate and dialogue with diverse
22 perspectives, as well as to show the need for such perspectives to attempt to reflect together on
23 common concerns. Gadamer assumes multiple points of view, encompassing not only that of a
24 philosopher and cultural critic but also that of a professor and a concerned citizen, grappling with
25 the pressing questions that acquire greater urgency during times of peace and heightened intensity
26 amidst war. Additionally, by opening with such a personal *incipit* centred around a critical period of
27 his *Lehrjahre*, he adeptly recovers the students' vantage point, engaging with them directly while
28 endeavouring to comprehend their motivations and obstacles in the asphyxiating and terrorising
29 context of a 'socially and economically totally organized community', and exposing the need that

1 ‘the scientific community of the future’ has, in turn, for the sincere and immediate involvement of
2 the youth.

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

11 In the years after the end of the Second World War and the horrific Nazi dictatorship,
12 Gadamer emphatically insisted on the importance ‘to establish anew the reason for the university’s
13 existence’ (Gadamer 1992a: 16), reassessing the challenges that new conditions imposed on
14 teaching and research, especially the challenge of joining ‘together science and man’s knowledge of
15 himself in order to achieve a new self-understanding of humanity’ (1981: 149). Over the decades,
16 his continuous critical endeavour demanded not only demythologizing science and its culture of
17 ‘methodical’ ‘planning, making, controlling’ (1967: 23), but also the very myths of vocation
18 [*Berufung*]—as an inner daimonic voice capable of providing steadfast guidance to young
19 students—and of free professional career choices [*Berufswahl*] (1990a: 27ff) in a society in which
20 the youth has to assert itself ‘within an increasingly functional and bureaucratized social, economic
21 and production system’ that makes it more and more difficult to achieve any kind of ‘recognition,
22 satisfaction, and fulfilment through one’s own spontaneity’ (2000: 27). In this way, Gadamer
23 attempted to confront the educational implications of the social exaltation of ‘conformity’
24 [*Konformismus, Anpassung*] as ‘supreme virtue’ (1987: 226; 1981: 83; 1990a: 32-33), especially in
25 an era in which ‘the authority of science and of experts adds up to relieving the responsibility that
26 should be borne by the one acting, even though science often cannot give real security’ (1981: 148)

²⁵ Gadamer does not explicitly state the source of this quotation. However, it is plausible to attribute it to *Phdr.* 279a-b (φύσει γάρ [...] ἔνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῆ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς 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.

1 and ‘the courage to ask questions’ seems to be blocked ‘in our education and teaching system by the
 2 curricula’ (1992c: 67; cf. also 1995c: 28). As Gadamer stated in ‘Über die Naturanlage des
 3 Menschen zur Philosophie’ (‘On the Natural Inclination of Human Beings Toward Philosophy’)
 4 [1971]:

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

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

²⁶ 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).

1 ‘irresponsibility’ of science (1981: 161), the ‘total functionalisation of the individual’ (1990a: 33),
 2 the threatening fates of conformity and adaptation ‘to the point of distorting human character’ (33),
 3 bureaucratization, domination, alienation, acceleration, war, misinformation, overinformation
 4 (1995a: 219–20), and environmental destruction without giving in to ‘the prophets of catastrophe’
 5 (1981: 85; 2000: 26–34).

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

14

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7

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 chastiser; yet to us who were young then, it seemed more like the chastiser was chastising himself—an unhappy self-chastiser, 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

1 experiences of the present have led to a crisis of the pure expert, which is accompanied by a
2 corresponding loss of confidence in the ideal of scientific education (*Bildung*) and training
3 (*Vorbildung*). Moreover, the armed forces (*Wehrmacht*) and the economic domain offer such attractive
4 opportunities for advancement that all attempts by the political leadership (*Staatsführung*) to offer
5 scientists an adequate compensation prove insufficient. Of course, the old *Privatdozent* no longer
6 exists; the state provides for the next generation of scientists just as it does for the next generation of
7 civil servants. However, such general measures are not enough to attract the best young people to
8 science. Hence, it is possible to state unreservedly: *in today's socially and economically totally*
9 *organized community (durchorganisierten Gemeinwesen), science as a vocation cannot be adequately*
10 *rewarded by any social or economic incentives.*

11

12 **CALLING ON THE BEST**

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

19 This is linked to a general tendency of our time: it is a time in which the conscious control and
20 utilization of the forces at the disposal of a people has become the general watchword (*Losung*).
21 Almost every day, we realize with amazement what an enormous gain in energy can be obtained
22 through concentration, standardization, centralization, planning, in short, 'organization'. Moreover, the
23 pressing demands of war are driving us inexorably down this road. This is really almost (*fast*) like the
24 new and revolutionary discovery that no further discoveries are needed, but only the unbridled use and
25 'development' of what has already been discovered in order to give an unimagined impetus to the
26 advancement of the entire apparatus of civilization. Nevertheless, this discovery is not on the same
27 level as the discoveries we owe to the *productive work of scientific research*. Successful organization
28 certainly presupposes productive genius, but the productivity of science is of a different kind. It does
29 not grow with institutes, nor does it necessarily grow with the means of work. Nor does it grow with

1 the spread of scientific ‘schools’ and the training (*Heranbildung*) of capable students. All of this
 2 existed in Alexandria as well...

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

21 **ON THE ESSENCE OF TRUE SCIENCE**

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

25 ‘All humans by nature desire to know’. So Aristotle, the teacher of the West, begins his lecture
 26 course on metaphysics (*die metaphysische Vorlesung*). The will to know serves no purpose but is an
 27 originary human passion (*Leidenschaft*). This is shown by the compulsive nature of curiosity (*Neugier*),
 28 even in its degenerate forms. It is to the eternal merit of the Greeks that they formed the scientific
 29 attitude out of this disposition (*Haltung*). Thus, they became the fathers of the West. Yet the passion of

1 the will-to-know includes the ability to think contrary to prevailing opinion, even contrary to one's own
2 prejudice (*Vormeinung*). (Max Weber spoke of inconvenient facts, but he meant primarily the
3 inconvenient thinking that reveals their validity).

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

18

19 **ON THE FUNCTION OF PHILOSOPHY**

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

23 This is perhaps the noblest office of philosophy in academic life: philosophy knows how to lead
24 the problems of the sciences back to the ordinary questions of the human. Thus, while it is incapable
25 of contributing any knowledge or means of cognition to the work of science (science today does not
26 even borrow logic from philosophy), it is instead able to pose questions of meaning (*Sinnfragen*) and
27 thus trigger the impulse of questioning. This function of philosophy is exercised not only by the
28 philosopher, but often also by research science and its leaders. At the same time, it is the only art of
29 persuasion that science has at its disposal. But wherever it is practiced, it has, today as always, success

1 in attracting the best to itself. To them [the best], today as ever, Plato's words apply: 'There is
2 something like philosophy in the essence of man'.
3

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

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 Wissenschaft²⁷ vor den der Jugend 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 Gezüchtigter, 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

²⁷ 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 neo-humanist 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.

1 einer Krise des reinen Fachmannes geführt, die von einem entsprechenden Vertrauensschwund
2 gegenüber dem Ideal wissenschaftlicher Bildung und Vorbildung begleitet ist. Wehrmacht und
3 Wirtschaft gewähren überdies so bestechende Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten, daß alle Versuche der
4 Staatsführung, dem angehenden Manne der Wissenschaft einen Ausgleich zu bieten, dagegen nicht
5 auskommen. Gewiß, den Privatdozenten alten Stiles gibt es nicht mehr, der Staat sorgt für den
6 wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs genau wie für den Nachwuchs des Beamtenkörpers. Um den besten
7 Nachwuchs für die Wissenschaft zu gewinnen, sind solche allgemeinen Maßnahmen jedoch
8 unzureichend. So darf es ohne Einschränkung ausgesprochen werden: *Wissenschaft als Beruf ist in*
9 *unserem heutigen, sozial und ökonomisch durchorganisierten Gemeinwesen durch keine sozialen oder*
10 *ökonomischen Prämien angemessen auszuzeichnen.*

11

12 **Ruf an die Besten**

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

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

33 Die eigentliche Ausgabe, die sich hieraus ergibt, heißt: immer wieder wirklich produktive Naturen —
34 denen in *Wehrmacht* und *Wirtschaft* heute so hoch prämierte Leistungsfelder winken — der
35 *Wissenschaft* zu erhalten oder zuzuführen. *Die Lösung dieser Aufgabe*, die sich im Grunde in allen
36 Wissenschaften — ob Natur- oder Geisteswissenschaften — stellt, *ist vielleicht von epochaler*

1 *Bedeutung für die Zukunft der abendländischen Kultur.* Es wurde eingangs bereits angedeutet, daß die
 2 *äußeren* Lebensbedingungen der Wissenschaft zu dieser Auslese wenig helfen können. Auch die vom
 3 Staat mit Bewußtsein ergriffene Aufgabe, das Ansehen der Wissenschaft im Volk zu wahren und zu
 4 mehren, wird dieser vornehmsten Aufgabe des Kampfes um die Seelen der Besten nicht wirklich
 5 dienen können. Vollends die heute üblich gewordene Art, für die Eigenart und den Wert der
 6 Wissenschaft dadurch Verständnis zu wecken, daß man ihren völkischen *Nutzwert* betont, wird hier
 7 nicht ausreichen. Selbst wo diese Begründung gerade einer freien, von keinen Rücksichten der
 8 Anwendung und Verwertung beengten Forschung zur Rechtfertigung dienen soll — (so, wenn man
 9 etwa darauf hinweist, wie viele unserer heute unentbehrlich gewordenen technischen Mittel und Güter
 10 auf wissenschaftliche Entdeckungen zurückgehen, die keinerlei praktischem, sondern nur rein
 11 theoretischem Wahrheitsinteresse verdankt werden)—, selbst in solcher gut gemeinten Begründung
 12 und Rechtfertigung der zweckfreien Forschung aus ihrer absichtslosen Zweckhaftigkeit wird — wie in
 13 jeder Verteidigung — wenig Werbendes liegen. Es gibt nur ein einziges Mittel, Menschen von
 14 ursprünglich produktiver Begabung für die Wissenschaft zu gewinnen: *das ist die Wissenschaft selbst.*

15

16 **Von Wesen wahrer Wissenschaft**

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

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

28 Diese Leidenschaft des Wissenwollens erfüllt nicht überall dort schon die Idee der Wissenschaft, wo
 29 überhaupt Forschung getrieben wird. Die Wissenschaft muß vielmehr *schöpferisch* sein. Schöpferisch
 30 auf dem Gebiete der Erkenntnis heißt aber, wer eine grundlegende Erkenntnis gewinnt, d.h. einen Weg
 31 (eine Methode), findet, viele wissenschaftswürdige Dinge sichtbar zu machen. Die Wissenschaft muß also
 32 um die Wissenschaftswürdigkeit ihrer Erkenntnisse wissen. Woher aber weiß sie darum? Anscheinend liegt
 33 es in der Vollzugsrichtung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung selbst, daß ihr ständig neue
 34 Erkenntnisaufgaben zuwachsen, ohne daß die Wissenschaftswürdigkeit dieser Dinge der Wissenschaft selbst
 35 problematisch wird. Es ist das eigene Gesetz des wissenschaftlichen Fortschrittes, im Betrieb der
 36 Wissenschaft aufzugehen und sich der Frage der Wissenschaftswürdigkeit ganz zu entheben. Der

1 „Wissenschaftler“ tritt im 20. Jahrhundert ebenso an die Stelle des „Forschers“²⁸, wie im Zuge des 19.
 2 Jahrhunderts der „Forscher“ an die Stelle des „Gelehrten“ trat. Im Wechsel der Namen prägt sich ein
 3 Wandel im Selbstbewußtsein der Wissenschaft aus: viel oder das Ganze zu wissen: die Idee des
 4 „Gelehrten“, — ins Unbekannte mit erprobten Mitteln vorzustoßen: der Auftrag des „Forschers“, - im
 5 Betrieb der Wissenschaft seinen Mann zu stehen: der Beruf des „Wissenschaftlers“.

6

7 **Vom Amt der Philosophie**

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

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

21

²⁸ Before Humboldt's reform, it was common practise for university teaching to consist in 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.