CONVERTING PHILOLOGY TO PHILOSOPHY
A PLATONIC MODEL AND ITS INVERSION IN *HOMER AND CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY*[*]

Convertir la filología en filosofía Un modelo platónico y su inversión en *Homero y la Filología Clásica*

Paulo Alexandre Lima
IFILNOVA/NOVA FCSH

ABSTRACT: This article intends to demonstrate that Plato is present in the young Nietzsche's thinking, particularly in the definition of philology that is proposed in *Homer and Classical Philology*. Indeed, Plato's *Sophist* makes it possible to comprehend a core aspect of Nietzsche's thinking on philology, that which is the starting point for all his thinking as it gets developed in the inaugural lecture: the contradiction between the two fundamental trends of philology (aesthetic classicism and historical criticism) and the paralyzing consequences for the practising of it if this contradiction is taken seriously. Furthermore, the *Sophist* makes it possible to point out an aspect relating to how Nietzsche, in his lecture, tries to overcome the paralyzing effect of the contradiction found in philology, namely through an inversion of Socratic-Platonic logic, according to which a contradiction cannot arise in a concept and has to be purged so as to clear the pathway towards obtaining true knowledge. Instead of adhering to this purging approach, he accepts the contradiction that, at the time, characterized philology. The result of his position is a completely different way of understanding the nature of concepts and truth.
Keywords: Nietzsche- Plato - classical philology - the Socratic *elenchus*

RESUMEN: Este artículo pretende demostrar que Platón está presente en el pensamiento del joven Nietzsche, particularmente en la definición de filología que propone Homero y la Filología Clásica. De hecho, el *Sofista* de Platón permite comprender un aspecto central del pensamiento de Nietzsche sobre la filología, que es el punto de partida de todo su pensamiento tal y como se desarrolla en la conferencia inaugural: la contradicción entre las dos tendencias fundamentales de la filología (el clasicismo estético y el criticismo histórico) y las consecuencias paralizantes

para su práctica, si se toma en serio esta contradicción. Además, el *Sofista* permite señalar un aspecto relativo a cómo Nietzsche, en su conferencia, intenta superar el efecto paralizante de la contradicción que se encuentra en la filología, es decir, mediante una inversión de la lógica socrático-platónica, según la cual una contradicción no puede surgir en un concepto y deben ser purgados para despejar el camino hacia la obtención del conocimiento verdadero. En lugar de adherirse a este enfoque depurador, acepta la contradicción que, en ese momento, caracterizaba a la filología. El resultado de su posición es una manera completamente diferente de entender la naturaleza de los conceptos y la verdad.

Palabras clave: Nietzsche – Platón - filología clásica - los elenchos socráticos.

> «My philosophy is *inverted Platonism*: the further from true being, the purer, more beautiful and better it will be».
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> NF 1870, 7 [156][1]

1. Introduction

On May 28th 1869, Nietzsche delivered his inaugural lecture at Basel University, entitled *On the Personality of Homer*. Later that same year, he would publish it with the title *Homer and Classical Philology*, in an author's edition destined for a circle of his closest friends[2].

Nietzsche starts out from the difficulty regarding the lack of a unifying idea of the identity and the practices of classical philology, which at the time was split between the two contradictory tendencies of classicism and the historical-critical method. He tries, through an astonishing analysis of the example of the Homeric question, to show that philology, in its different ways of considering the ancient world, involves assumptions the determination and examination of which oblige it to convert itself into a philosophical activity. All things considered, Nietzsche's reflection on the matter is this conversion already under way.

This was neither the first[3] nor the last[4] time that Nietzsche expressed the idea that philology is closely linked to philosophy, and that it has a fundamental philosophical dimension, on the awareness of which its fulfilment as a field of knowledge depends. But it is, without doubt, the first public manifestation of this idea—and, perhaps, the most radical one. In *Homer and Classical*

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1 All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
2 Cf. BVN 1869, 47.
3 Cf. NF 1967, 52 [30].
4 Cf. KGW II/3, 369-72; KGB II/2, 23.

Philology, Nietzsche does not limit himself to saying that philology has a philosophical dimension. More than this, he unequivocally asserts (this being the corollary of all his research) that it has to convert itself into philosophy.

The purpose of this article is to undertake a reading of the core aspects in Nietzsche's inaugural lecture in Basel based on the description of the Socratic *elenchos* («refutation») carried out by Plato in his attempt to define the figure of the sophist in *Sophist* 226a-31c. I do not intend to uphold that, when drafting the lecture, Nietzsche had the Socratic *elenchos* and, very particularly, the *Sophist* in mind (as there is no documentation to prove it, we will never be able to know). Nor am I going to try to demonstrate that the enormous complexity of *Homer and Classical Philology* is reducible to what can be found in the *Sophist* about the refutative method as Socrates would have practised it (it is known that Nietzsche was inspired by Schopenhauer's[5] thinking and—as we shall see shortly—the lecture seems to have some affinities with other dialogues by Plato). Here it is only a question of proposing that, on the basis of the *Sophist*, one can see decisive aspects of Nietzsche's lecture that would otherwise pass by unnoticed. Regardless of whether Nietzsche had in mind or not the *Sophist* when drafting *Homer and Classical Philology*, Plato's dialogue makes it possible to throw light on some fundamental aspects of the lecture's content. As Nietzsche maintains, Plato laid the foundations for the entire history of Western thought, and therefore for his own thought too[6]—not only on a conscious level, but also on an unconscious one[7]. In this sense, the establishing, based on the *Sophist*, of a Platonic model in *Homer and Classical Philology* corresponds to the identification of a Platonic unconscious in Nietzsche's reflections on the state and mission of philology.

According to a simplistic interpretation of his stance vs-à-vis Plato's thinking, Nietzsche has a totally negative view of Plato. To mention just some of Nietzsche's harshest pronouncements on the Athenian philosopher, Plato is the culprit for all the unhappiness in the modern world (BVN 1887, 790). He is the mainstay of Christian morality, which Nietzsche understands as a popularization of Platonism (JGB Preface). Nietzsche scholars have,

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5 Cf. BVN 1869, 32; NF 1867, 52 [30]; BVN 1868, 601; Landfester 1994: 375, 383; D'Iorio 2022: 8-9.

6 From early on, Plato was counted among the Greek authors preferred by Nietzsche (BAW 3, 68). In one of his posthumous fragments, Nietzsche upholds that reading Plato is the best form of introduction to philosophy (NF 1872, 19 [211]). And, at the beginning of his lectures on the Athenian philosopher, he says that it is with good reason that the latter has always been seen as the true philosophical guide for young people (KGW II/4, 7). As Anne Merker asserts, «Platon, adversaire que s'est choisi Nietzsche entre tous les philosophes, a certainement obsédé le philosophe allemande, parfois à la limite de l'identification» (Merker 2019a: 68). For the dossier about Plato's presence in the young Nietzsche, cf. *ibid.*, 7-8.

7 Cf. BVN 1883, 463: «My dear and old friend, when reading Teichmüller, I get ever more frozen by astonishment with *how little* I know Plato and how *much* Zarathustra *platônizei* ["platonizes"]».

nevertheless, tried to show that there are various aspects in his thinking that have a debt to Plato in a positive sense. In fact, Nietzsche's assessment of Plato's philosophy is ambiguous, since it entails at the same time negative judgements about and praise of Plato[8] (regardless of the question of knowing which way the scales tip in the end). In the context of research into the young Nietzsche, James Porter has a prominent position, given that he must have been one of the first to draw attention to the positive influence of Plato's *Symposium* on the drafting of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the writings orbiting around Nietzsche's first book[9]. Following in Porter's footsteps, Adam Lecznar extends the influence of Plato's *Symposium* to the «formation of Nietzsche's philosophical sensibility»[10]. As to the importance of Platonic thought for Nietzsche's understanding of the philosophical dimension of philology, two works deserve special attention. In her edition of Nietzsche's lectures on Plato, Anne Merker stresses that the philosophical vocation of philology is upheld in Nietzsche's teaching in accordance with the spirit of *thaumazein* («being astounded») as presented in the *Theaetetus* (155d). This is, for Nietzsche, the philosophical *pathos* («passion») par excellence, given that it has the critical ability to distance us from modernity and its dominance over our way of being. Apart from this, Nietzsche seems to show a Platonic concern for a synoptic eye over all particular fields of knowledge, which goes back to the description of dialectics in the *Republic* (532b-5a)[11]. But, as far as I know, the only scholar to find Plato present in the inaugural lecture was David Lachterman, for whom *Homer and Classical Philology* has the form of an apology structured in line with the *Apology of Socrates* model[12].

This article is intended to be another contribution to demonstrating that Plato is present in the young Nietzsche's thinking, and very particularly in the definition of philology that he proposes in *Homer and Classical Philology*. Without doubt, the *Sophist* makes it possible to comprehend (better than dialogues like *Apology of Socrates*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic* and *Theaetetus*) a core aspect of Nietzsche's thinking on philology, that which is the starting point for all this thinking as it gets developed in the inaugural lecture: the contradiction between the two fundamental trends of philology and the paralyzing consequences for the practising of it if this contradiction

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8 Cf. BVN 1887, 951: «[...] is perhaps this old Plato my true and great *opponent*? But how proud I am to have such an opponent!» Regarding Nietzsche's ambivalent assessment of Plato, cf. also Lampert 2004: 205-19; McNeill 2004: 260-75.

9 Porter 2000b: 111.

10 Lecznar 2017: 448. The *Phaedrus* is another of Plato's dialogues with an enormous impact on Nietzsche's philosophical thinking: cf. Merker 2019a: 65-8.

11 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

12 Lachtermann 1992: 24. Nietzsche had a great appreciation for the *Apology of Socrates*: cf. KGW II/5, 523-4; Merker 2019b: 237-44.

is taken seriously. It is not a question here of denying the importance of the results of an analysis of Nietzsche's thinking on philology based on the other dialogues by Plato mentioned above, but rather of a multiplying of the approaches that may be in the framework of such an analysis.

Additionally, the *Sophist* makes it possible to determine an aspect of Nietzsche's thinking in *Homer and Classical Philology* that the other Platonic dialogues perhaps do not make it possible to identify. It is an aspect relating to how Nietzsche tries to overcome the paralyzing effect of the contradiction found in philology through an inversion of the Socratic-Platonic logic, according to which a contradiction cannot arise in a concept and has to be purged so as to clear the pathway towards obtaining true knowledge. Instead of adhering to this purging approach, Nietzsche accepts the contradiction that, at the time, characterized philology. The result of his position is a completely different way of understanding the nature of concepts and truth.

2. The conversion of philology to philosophy

It is important to start with the end of the lecture, where all Nietzsche's analysis culminates in the assertion that «what was philology turned into philosophy» (*philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit*; KGW II/1, 268). This is a reversal of Seneca's thesis according to which «what was philosophy turned into philology» (*quae philosophia fuit, facta philologia est*; *Epistles* 108, 23). A consideration of the terms of Nietzsche's reversal of Seneca's statement can help in better understanding in what sense Nietzsche conceives the philosophical dimension of philology and the need to convert philology into philosophy. For this purpose, we need to briefly explain the Roman philosopher's statement.

Seneca's statement is preceded by a «Thus» (*Itaque*; *ibid.*). He is therefore presenting the final diagnosis of a situation previously described. The immediate antecedent of his statement is a condemnation both of those responsible for teaching philosophy and those aspiring to be philosophers. If, on the one hand, preceptors «teach debating, not living» (*ibid.*), on the other, their pupils try to perfect «not their soul [...], but their ingenuity» (*ibid.*).

In this way, Seneca points to the crucial distinction between words and actions, discourse and life. He associates mere words with philology and the way of living with philosophy, while ascribing more value to the latter than to the former. To be a philosopher and not a mere philologist, it is not enough to know how to discuss, to have the skill to understand and master words. It is necessary, rather, to acquire a certain «mental conformation» (*ibid.*, 7). In fact, all philosophical studies, including reading, should be carried out «with the aim of a happy way of life» (*ibid.*, 35). Reading philosophy is decisive because it consists in an espousal of words in such a way that they become

actions (*ibid.*; 39). The quality of words that leads one to want to follow them is the «attraction of the things» that they express and «not the sound of inane words» (*ibid.*, 7). It is this that attracts one to them and to the espousal of their meaning, in such a way that one lives in accordance with what one says. «It is not a question of speaking but of directing one's life» (*ibid.*, 37).

Through a comparison between a philosophical reading and a philological one of both Virgil's *Georgics* (3, 66; 284) and the beginning of Cicero's *Republic*, Seneca shows how philosophy is degenerating into mere philology (*Epistles* 108, 24-8; 29-32). The motivation of the people attending the philosophical school is to take note of words and not of the things themselves that they indicate (*ibid.*, 6). The adverse consequence of this is that these people end up using words that were not appropriated by them but are merely «of others» (*ibid.*, 38), in such a way that «they live in a different way to how they recommend one should live» (*ibid.*, 36). Words stop mattering for the moral beauty of the things they indicate and end up being limited to mere words devoid of the ability to modify life. What was philosophy thus becomes mere philology.

In reversing Seneca's statement, Nietzsche tries to call for the reversal of a situation that in a way resembles that described by the Roman philosopher. If the latter diagnoses a factual situation characterized by a degeneration of philosophy into philology, Nietzsche calls on the need to elevate philology to a philosophical level. Both value the aesthetic dimension of words, and their potential to transform individual and community life[13]. Seneca bears witness to the loss of this ability to transform, while Nietzsche attempts to mobilize philologists to recover it and, at the same time, goes on to criticize all the philology teaching and practice that ignores the classicality of the ancient authors[14]. In his lectures on the *Encyclopedia of Classical Philology*, the German philosopher points out that «the *birth of a philologist* is not, in general, glorious: in many of them there is a clear *impulse towards knowledge* that wants to assert itself, that is, they tend to become *scholars*. These scholars are not, in the majority, teachers, but have an aversion [to this] and are not at all *classical* philologists. Because they are non-aesthetic» (KGW II/3, 367)[15].

Nevertheless Nietzsche does not intend to, like Seneca, downgrade philology, not even in its most empirical tasks such as formulating conjectures about texts or counting the number of times certain terms occur in texts. In any one of the ways in which it is performed, philology is important and

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13 Cf. KGW II/3, 343: «Seneca, *Epistles* 108: *quae philosophia fuit, facta philologia est*. Mere knowledge, without an influence over ethical actions». Cf. also *ibid.*, 344-5.

14 Regarding the need for philology teaching to have the ideal of «the classical» as a reference point, cf. *ibid.*, 390, 391-2.

15 Cf. also *ibid.*, 340 n. 1.

possesses a philosophical dimension[16]. The question, for Nietzsche, is that this dimension needs to be identified, understood and adopted by philology itself. As Nietzsche says, «[...] a classical philologist has to continuously stick to philosophy, so that his aspiration to the classicality of antiquity vis-à-vis the modern world does not sound like a laughable audacity. Since with this he delivers an [aesthetic] judgement» (*ibid.*, 370). The philosophical dimension of philology is affirmed, above all, through a reflection of the latter about its own state, practices and foundations[17]—in short, through a conversion or turning towards itself. It is based on the idea of a turning towards oneself that Nietzsche, inspired by the Ancients, presents the distinction between a philosopher and a philologist: «*philologos* ["philologist"] is he who focuses on books; *philosophos* ["philosopher"] is he who focuses on himself» (*ibid.*, 342-3). Nietzsche's proposal is, consequently, that these two activities merge so that that which dedicates itself to the studying of books turns towards itself and reflects on the assumptions that sustain it.

If we consider what, in Nietzsche's inaugural lecture, immediately follows his reversal of Seneca's phrase, the philosophical dimension of philology seems to have to do exclusively with the fact that philological work needs to guide itself with a certain worldview or global conception of things. All things considered, this is the predominant view in almost all Nietzsche's texts on the relationship between philology and philosophy (like the above-cited passages from the lectures on the *Encyclopedia* and *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* allow to show through). What Nietzsche intends to uphold is that «every philological activity has to be encompassed and surrounded by a philosophical worldview, in which whatever is individual and isolated evaporates as something reprehensible and only the whole and the one remain» (KGW II/1, 268-9). This, however, is only the result of an entire process of verification by Nietzsche in his inaugural lecture. What is more, it constitutes a solution to the initial problem about the conceptualization of philology, and the possibility of reconciling the two contrary and apparently incompatible tendencies of classicism and the historical-critical method. The conversion of philology into philosophy carried out by Nietzsche regards, first and foremost, the perception of the conflicting or contradictory character of these two tendencies. It is here, above all, that philology starts to turn its gaze on itself.

To understand in what sense the becoming aware of these two contradictory tendencies and the conceptual crisis originating from this represent a conversion of philology into philosophy, we need to analyze the

16 Cf. KGW II/4, 234.
17 Cf. KGW II/3, 369.

sixth definition of the sophist presented by Plato in *Sophist* 226a-31c. In this passage, Plato describes a method corresponding, apparently, to Socrates' famous *elenchos* («refutation»), the aim of which is to make Socrates' listeners aware that the «judgements» (*doxai*) through which they direct their lives contain contradictions or inconsistencies. The clash between contradictory *doxai* revealed by Socrates' *elenchos*, by leading to a suspension of belief in such *doxai*, destroys the *oiesthai eidenai* («thinking one knows»)—or, as stated in the *Sophist*, the *dokein eidenai* («seeming to know»)—and clears the path for the search for truth and obtaining of knowledge. Through the *Sophist*, it becomes clear that Nietzsche is reflecting philosophically on philology based on a Platonic model or way of thinking. It is the crisis in the conceptualization of philology, as highlighted by Nietzsche in his inaugural lecture, that compels the German philosopher to have to choose between suspending both tendencies of philology and trying to reconcile them by promoting the dominance of the classical tendency over the historical-critical one. At the very end of *Homer and Classical Philology*, Nietzsche will opt for the latter possibility. But, as we shall see, this corresponds to a yielding to the Socratic-Platonic logic of the coherence of the concept and of truth as congruence. Nevertheless, the investigations that Nietzsche carries out throughout his inaugural lecture until its conclusion seek to respond to the challenge posed by the conceptual crisis of philology by means of an inversion of such a logic. For the German philosopher, as shall be pointed out, the contradiction between the main trends in philology pertains to the concept and practice of this discipline.

3. Socratic refutation in the *Sophist*

The refutation method (*elenchos*) is one of the most typical characteristics of the Platonic Socrates. The problem of determining what, in Plato's dialogues, belongs to the historic Socrates or constitutes the result of Plato's imagination is something that, on account of its breadth and complexity, has to be left aside here. But even if they do not examine it, all assessments of the *elenchos* in the Platonic dialogues presuppose a reply to this question. In the analysis that follows, Socrates is the Platonic Socrates—no matter whether this coincides with what was the historic Socrates or not—and refutation is the method carried out by the Platonic Socrates. It is, therefore, a method that—even if it was put into practice by the historic Socrates—is part of Plato's thinking and is in tune with other moments in the latter's philosophical reflections.

In the scholarship on Plato's *Sophist*, the sixth definition of the figure of the sophist, in which one finds the description of Socratic *elenchos* that I intend to explore, has been the subject of controversy. Is Plato thinking about Socrates or the sophists (more precisely, the *antilogikoi* or «contenders in arguments»)? It is not possible to discuss this problem fully here, as it would on its own

require at least the length of an entire article. It is important only to mention that I agree with the arguments of those who uphold that, in portraying the «noble sophistry» (231b) method, Plato is thinking of the Socratic *elenchos*[18]. It may seem more sensible to start out from a less polemical description of Socrates' method, but for me no other offers a picture that is at the same time so concise and so rich in content that makes it possible to effectively establish parallels with core aspects of Nietzsche's inaugural lecture.

After performing the sixth dialectical enquiry looking for a definition of the sophist, Theaetetus and the Stranger agree on the main stations in the path covered and the defining traits of the sophist defined along this path:

> Stranger: Then let it be agreed that part of the discriminating art is purification, and as part of purification let that which is concerned with the soul be separated off, and as part of this, instruction, and as part of instruction, education; and let us agree that the refutation of the empty conceit of wisdom, which has come to light in our present discussion, is nothing else than the noble art of sophistry. Theaetetus: Let us agree to all that.
>
> (*Ibid.*; Loeb translation with minor modifications)

The reference to noble sophistry shows that the Stranger is not pointing to what is usually associated with sophistry tout court (that is, refutation that does not have as a purpose the knowledge of truth), but rather to an exercise that aims precisely at reaching the true (that is, the Socratic *elenchos*). In fact, as the Stranger points out, calling the exercise described previously sophistry is to grant too much honour to sophists (231a) and one needs to be careful to not confuse things that are merely similar like a wolf and a dog (*ibid.*).

However, to highlight the aspects of the sixth definition of the sophist to be found in *Homer and Classical Philology*, it is necessary to untangle a little the ball of thread that is the distillation of results presented in the above-quoted passage. Although the terminus of the search ends up being the definition of *elenchos*, its starting point is the attempt to determine what the sophist consists of. In their sixth attempt at defining the sophist, the method used by the Stranger and Theaetetus is again dialectics, understood as the successive division of a common genus into two species. In the framework of this attempt, the research starts with the defining of the «separative art» (226c), common to activities such as filtering, separating, carding, unravelling, etc. (226b). The *diakritikê technê* can carry out the separation «between the similar and the similar» (226d) or «between the worst and the best» (226c-d). The method put into practice in the *Sophist* moves forward with the splitting of just one of

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18 Cf., for example, Cornford 1935: 177-82; Trevaskis 1955: 36-49. A more complete list can be found in Giannopoulou 2001: 114 n. 51.

the branches in the initial split, in this case with that relating to the separation between the best and the worst, which is rebaptized as «a purification» (226d). As confirmed by Theaetetus, there are «two kinds of purification»: «that regarding the soul [...], which is distinct from that regarding the body» (227c).

Considering the first mentioned species shifts Theaetetus and the Stranger's inquiry onto a moral level, which leads them to try to establish a difference between the two states of the human soul, vice and excellence: «Stranger: Do we say that vice is, in the soul, something different from excellence? Theaetetus: Certainly, why not?» (227d) The *ponêria* («vice») concept, and the *aretê* («excellence») one are used here by the Stranger in a broader sense, which is later going to be subjected to analysis and complexifying. At this moment, the purification of the soul seems simply to have to do with the split between vice and excellence, or more precisely with «throwing out everything that is poor» (*ibid.*). *Ponêria* is here identified with *kakia* («evil»), as shown by the reformulation of the definition of purification as the «suppression of evil» (*ibid.*), but is going to be depicted later as one of the forms of the latter: discord (228b). In this context, the analogy between the body and the soul is decisive: between ailments of the body and those of the soul, and between remedies for bodily ailments and those for ailments of the soul. Just as the body suffers from two types of ailment, which are «illness» and «ugliness», so too does the soul have its own form of illness—namely «discord»—and its own form of ugliness, understood as «dissymmetry» or «distortion» (227d-8a).

The focus is therefore going to be on this latter type of *kakia* of the soul. The Stranger sees ugliness in general as a dissymmetry between something in movement and its respective target (228c), and through this conception of dissymmetry he establishes the model for defining the ugliness of the soul as being ignorance: «[...] ignorance is when the soul, propelled towards truth, deviates from knowledge» (228c-d). One of the fundamental assumptions of this notion of ignorance is that all ignorance is involuntary (228d), otherwise there would be no generation of a movement in the direction of truth nor a fortiori a deviation from it. Owing to its deviation from the obtaining of the truth, «it must therefore be established that the soul without understanding is ugly and dissymmetric» (*ibid.*). The parallel with the body is again explored with a view to pointing out the remedies pertaining to the two ailments of the soul. If, in the case of the body, ugliness has a remedy in the «art of gymnastics» and illness has one in the «art of medicine», in the case of the soul, its illness—discord—has a remedy in the «corrective art» and its ugliness—ignorance—has one in the «teaching art» (229a).

The splitting of the species of ignorance leads us to the core meaning of the Socratic *elenchos*. Identifying the species of ignorance helps to determine

the respective arts of teaching that could cancel them out. If simply being ignorant of something can be overcome by instruction or «specialized teaching», «stupidity» (*amathia*)—the most extreme form of ignorance— can only be overcome by «education» (*paideia*; 229d). At this moment, the splitting method passes over to being applied to remedies for *amathia*, that form of ignorance that the Stranger defines as «thinking one knows something when not knowing it» and which is responsible for every error (229c). A first remedy, commonly used in the education of children by their parents, is the «art of admonition» (229d-30a). The need for another remedy is perceived through the ineffectiveness of admonition in supressing *amathia*, an ineffectiveness that is portrayed by the Stranger through a reflection on the involuntary character of stupidity: however much admonishers may try, «anyone thinking he is wise will never want to learn something about which he thinks he is skilled» (230a). What is at stake in *amathia* is not a simple lack of knowledge, which would naturally give rise to a desire to learn what one is ignorant about, but rather an judgement about the soul's cognitive effectiveness. Now, it is precisely this judgement that before any learning—and because it is blocking it—has to be subjected to a «purge» by another method than admonition (230b): that is, by the Socratic *elenchos*.

The Stranger describes the refutative method as follows:

> They [who practice it] question a man about the things about which he thinks he is talking sense when he is talking nonsense; then they easily discover that his judgements are like those of men who wander, and in their discussions they collect those judgements and compare them with one another, and by the comparison they show that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things and in respect to the same things.
>
> (*Ibid.*; Loeb translation with minor modifications)

Those who, like Socrates, carry out an *elenchos* question their listeners in order to test the validity of their «judgements» (*doxai*), demonstrating that these «contradict one another» with regard to the same thing. The inconsistency of judgements on the same matter reveals their deviation from the truth, which ought to exclude contradiction. It therefore reveals the dissymmetry and ugliness of the soul expressing them as if they were valid. The potential effectiveness of this method has to do with the fact that it hits the fundamental *doxa* of thinking one knows that constitutes stupidity[19]. When a certain speaker is devoid of this *doxa*, discontentment regarding himself and modesty towards others (*ibid.*) get generated inside him. He then stops having the pretence to

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19 Regarding Socrates' refutative method, cf., for example, Benson 1989: 591-9 (with a bibliographical list on the question in 591 n. 1); Vlastos 1994: 1-37.

be in possession of a piece of knowledge to which he aspires, as well as the belief of being for this reason superior to the others or the arrogance of trying to assert such superiority through, for instance, victory in debates.

It is important, nevertheless, to note that the pretence to knowledge we are speaking about here has a public nature. The Stranger refers to a *dokein eidenai* («seeming to know»), which is a thinking one knows that becomes obvious to the person in question and to others present at the refutation of his opinions by Socrates. This aspect is decisive, given that it makes it possible to understand the role played by social emotions both in the awakening of the awareness of the thinking that one knows as such and in the consistent nature of its effects from the point of view of the search for knowledge. As pointed out by the Stranger, a person refuted feels «shame» (230d) for the state of ignorance he is in, which means that he feels his social reputation is called into question in appearing ignorant to the eyes of his fellow citizens: more than this, in appearing as an ignorant person who considers himself a skilled one. This dissymmetry of the soul with itself is a form of ugliness that becomes socially effective through the shame that one feels about it before others[20]. The person refuted, through wanting to appear to others as someone characterized by the symmetry of his judgements regarding the cognitive status of his soul, starts endeavouring «to believe he knows only what he knows and nothing more» (*ibid.*).

After refutation, which carries out the job of purifying any false opinions, this cognitive state of the human soul corresponds, strictly speaking, to what Socrates says about himself in *Apology* 21d-e. This is a moment at which the soul stops being immersed in the content of its judgements and an absolute adherence to them, switching rather to being focussed on the question of the validity of these judgements and thus turning its gaze towards itself, or more precisely, its pretence to knowledge and its real cognitive state[21]. Through an analogy with medicine, according to which a patient is only able to draw benefit from the food he ingests after removing any internal obstacles, the Stranger points that a person aiming to learn will not draw any advantage from this learning without first having been subjected to refutation (230c-d). The attention that, after refutation, the soul proceeds to pay to itself does not materialize only at the moment at which the refutation peaks, but remains throughout all the learning process guaranteeing vigilance over the

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20 For an analysis of the role of shame in the description of the *elenchos* presented in the *Sophist*, cf. Candiotto 2018: 576-85.

21 Even if here it is not exactly a question of the conversion that is at stake in *Republic* 518d and 519b, the result of Socrates' *elenchos* represents a philosophical conversion phenomenon and constitutes a pre-condition for the conversion as described in the *Republic*. Regarding conversion in Plato's thinking, cf., for example, Nock 1933: 179; Delhey 1994: 44-54; Hadot 2002: 225; Chappell 2007: 320-7; Stump 2020: 1-19.

cognitive state of the new opinions acquired, which presupposes the ongoing disactivating of the thinking one knows. In his description of the beneficial effects of the *elenchos*, the Stranger suggests that such effects are not limited to the solidifying of the cognitive state of the individual soul directly refuted, since they can get extended to a solidifying, through indirect refutation, of the cognitive state of the individual souls of the listeners—and why not also the readers?—who happily bear witness to the refutation process (230b-c).

According to the Stranger, refutation is the most crucial of purifications. But if it constitutes something necessary for human life to flourish, the adverse consequences of avoiding such process include the minority arising from not having been educated and the ugliness resulting from the divergence between the judgement about the cognitive state of the soul itself and the reality of this state. Not even the King of Persia, the richest and most envied human being of all, could live in a really prosperous manner without submitting to the test of refutation and its effects:

> For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we must assert that refutation is the greatest and most efficacious of all purifications, and that he who is not refuted, even though he be the Great King, has not been purified of the greatest taints, and is therefore uneducated and deformed in those things in which he who is to be truly happy ought to be most pure and beautiful.
>
> (230d-e; Loeb translation with minor modifications)

4. The Platonic model of the Sophist in the inaugural lecture

This background to and description of the *elenchos* circumscribe the Platonic model on which Nietzsche's reflections on philology in the inaugural lecture are, primarily, based and which they, subsequently, try to reverse. The portrayal of the *elenchos* in the *Sophist* is not the only one that can be found in the Platonic corpus, nor is it the most typical. The advantage of its use in the present context is related, as previously mentioned, to its concise nature and the fact that it involves fundamental aspects making it possible to establish an important parallel between Plato and Nietzsche's conception of philology. I do not intend, therefore, to uphold that, in *Homer and Classical Philology*, Nietzsche had explicitly in mind what I have pointed out above regarding the refutative method in the *Sophist*. Nietzsche knew this dialogue well, as his lectures on Plato show, but he does not conduct any original interpretation of it. On the basis of the paraphrase of the dialogue that Nietzsche offers us in his lectures about the Athenian philosopher, it is possible to see that the sixth definition of the sophist is not even taken into consideration (cf. KGW II/4, 134-6). Moreover, Nietzsche goes as far as to suspect the authenticity of

the *Sophist* (*ibid.*, 136). If, in the reflections he carries out in the lecture on Homer, there is, at least unconsciously, a Platonic model, which ends up being reversed as the lecture progresses, this model is that of Socratic refutation in general, with its respective implications, and not only what is written about it by Plato in the *Sophist*.

Just like Socrates' *elenchos*, Nietzsche's considerations on classical philology in his inaugural lecture have a public character. They are, indeed, presented before the academic community in Basel and eminent classical philologists, among whom in particular his teacher Ritschl. Unlike Socrates, Nietzsche does not question any one individual. The target of his questioning is, all things considered, philology itself, but this only means that all philologists, including Nietzsche, are aimed at by this questioning. Socrates as well, in his refutative procedure, considered himself involved in the refutation, because the target of his examining was the contradictions inherent to the shared and unthought notions concerning basic values of community life and related actions like, to give just a few examples, «piety» in the *Euthyphro*, «courage» in the *Laches*, etc. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is the same type of self-examination or «self-appraisal» (*Selbstbeurtheilung*; BAW 5, 269) that Nietzsche tries to carry out in *Homer and Classical Philology*, namely one the result of which is, as we shall see better, the pinpointing of a contradiction between two different forms of philological practice represented by different groups of philologists. If, as I pointed out through the *Sophist*, Socratic refutation is a fundamental form of human «education» (*paideia*), Nietzsche's research into philology is centred, in the same way, on a concern for a true «education» (*ibid.*, 268) of the human being, namely the «classical education» (*klassische Bildung*; *ibid.*, 271). This concern, by virtue of the central role that classical philology plays in modern education and culture at Nietzsche's time[22], is inherent to any substantial reflection on the nature of this discipline.

Homer and Classical Philology can be divided into three main sections. A first one providing a framework for all the rest of the lecture on the question of conceptualizing philology and presenting a diagnosis of the contradiction between its two different fundamental ways of being practised (KGW II/1, 249-54). A second one that produces a reflection on the so-called Homeric question and its history based on the idea that there have been different notions of Homer's personality over time (*ibid.*, 254-66). And, finally, a third one which tries to draw consequences from the results of the reflection carried out in the second section with a view to establishing a harmonious relationship among the various philological trends identified in the first section (*ibid.*, 266-9). Let us see how this tripartition mirrors the dynamic between an inspiration

22 In this regard, cf., for instance, Latacz 2014: 5-7.

from the Platonic model of Socrates' *elenchus* and the subsequent inversion of such a model.

The first section of the inaugural lecture is where the model of Socratic refutation markedly informs Nietzsche's approach to classical philology. He performs a diagnosis of the situation of philology, the verdict of which is that the latter «lacks a conceptual unity» (*ibid.*, 249; cf. BAW 5, 272), that is, the consistent and harmonious unity inherent to a concept. This means, therefore, that philology is characterized by a certain divergence as to its practices and their respective presuppositions. For Nietzsche, this lack of a proper definition of philology does not only have effects within the discipline, but gets extended equally to the social perception of it. As Nietzsche maintains, there is «no unified public opinion» (KWG II/1, 249) about philology. More specifically, the lack of a harmonization of philological practice leads to conflicts among the supporters of the various conceptions of philology and philological practice and, at the same time, to reactions antagonistic to philology—Nietzsche speaks even of «ridicule» and «hatred towards philology» (*ibid.*, 251)—on a wider cultural level.

It is important, however, to understand better what these various conceptions and practices are. Strictly speaking, Nietzsche speaks of four distinct ways of carrying out philological activity. It can be performed as history, natural science, aesthetics or pedagogy[23]. But, in fact, Nietzsche ends up reducing these four modalities to two fundamental conceptions and practices: aesthetic classicism, on the one hand, and, on the other, historical criticism as a scientific concept and practice[24]. This becomes clear from the way in which Nietzsche, in the context of philology, contrasts science and art: «In this opposition emerges the inner contradiction, which manifests itself in such a heartbreaking way, in the *concept* [of philology] and, consequently, in the activity, guided by this concept, of classical philology» (*ibid.*, 252). It is a question of the contrast, which I will come back to later, between the ideal antiquity and the real one (cf. *ibid.*, 253).

It is crucial to understand that, for Nietzsche, the lack of an organic conceptualization of philology (cf. *ibid.*, 249), deriving from there being two unreconciled conceptions and practices, opens up an authentic conceptual crisis. All things considered, more than two different conceptions and practices of philology, what is at stake are two conflicting conceptions and practices. The conflict between them relates to the fact that both contest the same position within philology, that is, the status of dominant or hegemonic

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23 Cf. KGW II/1, 249: «[Philology] is just as much a piece of history as a piece of science or a piece of aesthetics. [...] philology was at the same time, originally and in all periods, pedagogy».

24 Regarding aesthetic classicism, cf., for instance, Emden 2004: 372-90; Siemens 2004: 391-410. With respect to historical criticism, cf., especially, Benne 2005; Zhavoronkov 2021.

conception and practice (cf. *ibid.*, 251). As a result, not only is there no precise concept of philology, owing to it being possible to define the latter as aesthetic classicism or historical-critical science, but also—given that classicism and historical criticism antagonize each other—the formulation of such a concept is seriously hampered. In any event, in its current state, philology is this inorganic aggregate of different interpretations of what philology is. This is why Nietzsche tries to characterize it not through a concept but images—and more than this, mythical images that symbolize hybridism, disharmony and ugliness, such as Proteus (BAW 5, 272), Medusa (KGW II/1, 251) and the Centaur (*ibid.*, 253). At least in the context of the first section of *Homer and Classical Philology*, this situation is portrayed by Nietzsche as the diagnosis of a problem preventing philology from adopting, first of all, a clear direction and, subsequently, its authentic disciplinary and social vocation.

Nietzsche seeks to speak, not in his own name, but as a representative of philology. He voices the contradiction within the discipline and perceives the public embarrassment due to this situation, of which the first result is the suspension of the unquestioned evidence that philology, in its current form, enjoys consistency. Nietzsche's diagnosis should not, nevertheless, affect only the pretence to solidity by philology as a whole, since the fragility of the latter spreads to each one of its conflicting tendencies. Because of this conflict, to affirm one of them is to deny the other—something which ought to compel each one of these tendencies to question its own validity and, as a result, that of the current state of philology as a whole. The parallel between this shifting of the gaze of philology towards itself and what was stated above about the disactivating of the pretence of knowledge as a consequence of Socrates' *elenchos* is evident. Just as it is evident that, like the search for truth that gets unleashed by the perceiving of ignorance fostered by the *elenchos*, the awareness on the part of philology that it is in a situation involving inconsistency and stalemate ought to spur it towards a solution for its crisis, which is simultaneously conceptual and existential. What seems essential is to try and establish a precise definition of philology that can guide philological practice—and this involves the rejection or «purge» (*Sophist* 230b) of one of its tendencies or even both. But, in fact, Nietzsche fails in his attempt to speak as a representative of philology and ends up speaking only in his own name, since only he perceives the Socratic-Platonic embarrassment concerning the conceptual disharmony of his discipline. The discomfort felt by the representatives of philology is, all things considered, with Nietzsche himself[25] and has in no way anything to do with the modesty that the Stranger

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25 It is known, through Nietzsche's memoirs in *Rückblick auf meine zwei Leipziger Jahre* (BAW 3, 305), that Ritschl disapproved of the intrusion of philosophy into philology. Nietzsche's letter to Sophie Ritschl, asking her not to show to his teacher the printed copy of his inaugural lecture in Basel

in says comes from the perception of one's own ignorance. This discomfort is, rather, related to these representatives' pretence to being in possession of knowledge about the true vocation of philology and the fact that they see their knowledge publicly challenged.

5. Nietzsche's inversion of the Platonic model

In the context of the first section of *Homer and Classical Philology*, therefore, Nietzsche thinks in the manner of the Platonic Socrates. After carrying out a diagnosis of the historical situation of philology, Nietzsche ascertains that there is an inner contradiction between its two fundamental trends. A suspension of the belief in the inner consistency of philology thus takes place and one perceives the need to elaborate a concept harmonizing the main tendencies in the discipline. In the framework of the second section of his inaugural lecture, however, Nietzsche seeks to diverge from the Socratic-Platonic conceptualization model, that is, from what—if Nietzsche continued to follow a Socratic-Platonic way of thinking—would have to be his next step, namely, the creation of a unified and consistent definition of philology. This would, in turn, involve the prior rejection of at least one of these contradictory trends in the discipline. What happens is that Nietzsche does not reject either of these trends, and instead tries to keep both of them despite their contradictoriness. This means that he tries to make them converge with each other, albeit aware of the illogical nature of his project (cf. KGW II/1, 253: *unlogische Forderung*) and the unreachability of such a convergence (cf. *ibid.*: *Unerreichbarkeit des Zieles*). Nietzsche's purpose is illogical because it violates the logic behind concept formation, according to which a concept has to be internally consistent. The two fundamental philological tendencies will never be able to fully converge, hence the unreachability of the project, which, if it were possible, would correspond to what Nietzsche calls «the final completeness of the most unique essence [of classical philology], the full coalescence and unification of the fundamental impulses initially hostile [to each other] and only violently combined» (*ibid.*). Given philology's actual situation, this final completeness is, however, utopian, because it has the nature of a dream to which, paradoxically, we are shackled by the Socratic-Platonic criteria regarding concept formation or, ultimately, by the need to form precise concepts instead of resorting to images, mythical figures or symbols. In his inaugural lecture, Nietzsche proposes a definition of philology as a hybrid figure that accepts the existence and the contradiction of the

(BVN 1869, 52), presupposes Ritschl's disapproval of Nietzsche's attempt to convert philology into philosophy. But, in this letter, not only Ritschl's disapproval but also that of the representatives of classical philology in general transpires.

two tendencies or impulses highlighted by him. As he says in the lecture, philology is a «strange centaur» (*sonderbarer Centaur*)[26], characterized by a «scientific-artistic movement» (*wissenschaftlich-künstlerische Bewegung*) of a «cyclopic slowness» (*cyklopische Langsamkeit*) towards the reconciliation of the «ideal antiquity» of aesthetic classicism with the «real antiquity» of historical criticism (*ibid.*). As Nietzsche recognizes, these two antiquities are separated by a «chasm» (*ibid.*) which makes them, ultimately, irreconcilable.

In proposing this solution for the conceptualization of philology, Nietzsche is not adopting a resigned attitude, given that, for him, the contradiction in the definition and practice of philology is productive and non-hegemonic. He situates philology outside the scope of the Socratic-Platonic opposition between truth as consistency and falsehood as inconsistency. Both science—historical criticism—and art—aesthetic classicism—are tendencies necessary for philology and the role it plays in modern culture. As he writes in the preparatory notes to his inaugural lecture, «Science has in common with art that everyday life seems something completely new and appealing: life is worthy of being lived, says art; the world is worthy of being known[, says science]» (BAW 5, 269; cf. KGW II/1, 251). It is exactly because they refer to one same thing—everyday life or world (in the case of philology, everyday life or world in classical antiquity)—that science and art can emerge as opposing attitudes and in mutual tension. When applied to philology, Nietzsche's assertion means, on the one hand, that antiquity is worthy of being emulated in modernity (consequently, it represents an aesthetic ideal) and, on the other, that it is worthy of being thoroughly analyzed as to what it consists in (and, as a result, deserves to be the subject of scientific research through the historical-critical method). It is not a question here so much of rendering compatible these two ways of approaching life as of contrasting them in such a way that they mutually monitor and restrain each other. This means that aesthetic classicism has to be countered by historical criticism in order to not degenerate into dilettantism[27], while historical criticism has to be curbed by aesthetic classicism so that antiquity does not get reduced to potsherds as a consequence of the dissecting and destructive impulse of the former. Nietzsche speaks, in terms evoking Goethe's *Faust*, of a «spirit of denial» and «a destructive and iconoclastic orientation» (*ibid.*, 252-3). Nietzsche's definition of the truth of philology, in the second section of *Homer and Classical Philology*, is that of the concrete existence of this discipline and

26   Concerning the paradoxical nature of philology according to Nietzsche, cf., for instance, Thouard 2000: 155-62; Porter 2014: 27-50.
27   Cf., for example, KGW II/3, 374.

of the need for it to maintain its two main tendencies as a way of achieving its paradoxical vocation[28].

Nevertheless, this divergence from the Socratic-Platonic model of truth as consistency, even if it involves respect for the factual situation of philology as a discipline with two fundamental opposing tendencies, does not aim to leave everything as it was. The nature of Nietzsche's inversion of the Socratic-Platonic model is only comprehensible, as was pointed out here, on the basis of the *elenchos*. The inversion as such is in fact connected with Nietzsche's response to the stalemate in which the diagnosis that there are two contradictory tendencies leaves philology. But there is something in the Socratic refutation method that gets maintained in the framework of Nietzsche's inversion, namely, the disactivating, within philology itself, of the *oiesthai eidenai* («thinking one knows») concerning its identity and role. In other words, through Nietzsche's reflections, philology becomes aware of its own paradoxical situation. By virtue of its starting point in an enquiry process that strongly resembles the Socratic refutation method, Nietzsche's inversion is characterized by a conscious acceptance of the concrete situation of philology—in other terms, it is based on a prior turning of philology's gaze towards itself. It is, indeed, the conscious nature of this acceptance that distinguishes Nietzsche from other classical philologists, given that it is precisely this that allows him to have a broader view over the concrete whole of his discipline and to rise above the closed viewpoint of other philologists, who only admit as the core of the discipline the tendency by which each one of them is guided by in their philological activity. From the point of view of how philology perceives itself, the effects of Nietzsche's inversion are enormously disruptive. The hegemonic logic of the predominance of only one tendency—a logic that, amongst other things, is in accord with the Socratic-Platonic demand for consistency in concept formation—is replaced by the acceptance of a discipline that is internally and productively split. The rejection (or, as the Stranger says in the *Sophist*, purge) of any one of these tendencies would mean a disregard for the historical heritage and situation of philology. Not only is there more than one tendency, but also the fact that there are two tendencies with their mutual surveillance and reciprocal tension is absolutely necessary for realizing the vocation of philology: the impossible reconciliation of the ideal antiquity and the real one.

That this reconciliation is impossible arises from the revelations carried out by Nietzsche's turning of philology towards itself, that is, by philology's self-

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28 This meaning of truth is close to that which Nietzsche, in his lectures on the *History of Greek Literature* §12, ascribes to Thucydides, who, in contrast with the moralizing dimension of the Platonic truth, develops a «sense of reality» (*Wirklichkeitssinn*; KGW II/5, 224) or «sense for the real» (*Sinn für das Wirkliche*; *ibid.*, 225).

awareness of its philosophical assumptions. These revelations regard the fact
that the purpose of attaining the real antiquity also involves presuppositions,
which relate to the value of knowledge—in such a way that the tension
between the ideal antiquity of aesthetic classicism and the real antiquity of
historical criticism does not get played out, ultimately, on the level of the
opposition between the presence and absence of philosophical assumptions. It
is precisely this that Nietzsche tries to demonstrate in the major part of what
constitutes the second section of *Homer and Classical Philology*, that is, in
his analysis of the famous Homeric question. In the context of this analysis, he
proposes to demonstrate that in the applying of the historical-critical method,
in which the fullest restriction to what is empirical is advocated, an ideality
is presupposed as well. Nietzsche intends «to clarify how the most significant
steps in classical philology never stray away from the ideal antiquity, but
rather lead to it; and how exactly there, where abusively the overthrow of the
temples is talked of, new and more worthy altars are, precisely, being built»
(*ibid.*, 254).

It does not matter contemplating here the intricacies of Nietzsche's
reflections on the Homeric question: the question of knowing whether it was
Homer or not who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*[29]. It is necessary to consider,
rather, the key moments of such reflections and the conclusions that Nietzsche
draws from them to highlight that the most rigorous textual analysis involves
orientation by an ideal antiquity. From the point of view of Nietzsche's
objectives in his lecture, the Homeric question is not merely one question
among others, but that which is at the heart of what is considered the seminal
moment of modern philology—Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer*, published in
1795[30]—and through the consideration of which the historical-critical method
claims to have asserted itself in its difference vis-à-vis aesthetic classicism.
Demonstrating the presence of an aesthetic judgement in whatever type of
approach to the Homeric question, as Nietzsche does in *Homer and Classical
Philology*, has a truly disturbing effect involving an absolute separation of the
two main tendencies in philology.

Nietzsche tries, especially, to establish a distinction between the two
decisive stages in the history of the comprehension of Homer, separated by
the transition to written form of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* under the orders of
Pisistratus (*ibid.*, 256). Before this, Homer was a generic name used to refer
to the epic genre as a whole, and therefore not only to poems like the *Iliad*
and the *Odyssey* but to all epic poetry (*ibid.*, 257). Homer was, thus, a way of

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29 Concerning Nietzsche and the Homeric question, cf., for example, Porter 2000a: 62-9; Porter
2004: 18-24; Zhavoronkov 2014: 139-55; Zhavoronkov 2021: 23-33.
30 As regards the significance of Wolf's work for philology, cf., in particular, Grafton 1981:
101-29.

referring to the mythical father of epic poetry—that is, the name of a mythical personality like other figures connected to Greek art like Orpheus, Eumolpus, Daedalus, Olympus, etc. (*ibid.*, 264, 266)—and, in addition, a group of poetical materials (*ibid.*, 263, 264, 266). Starting from then and in crescendo until the Alexandrian grammarians, Homer was the subject of an ongoing process of «humanization» (BAW 5, 279, 281) and individualization (KGW II/1, 256), in accordance with which an ever more rational view (BAW 5, 278; KGW II/1, 264) of his figure granted him a psychological personality, or rather, the quality of someone whose expressions display an «internal regularity and consonance» (*ibid.*). This process is, simultaneously, one involving the limitation of the scope of the figure of Homer and, consequently, its aestheticization (BAW 5, 278; KGW II/1, 264). Homer then shifts to denoting the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the epic poems considered the top exponents of poetry and the models to be imitated by all poets.

Nietzsche maintains that, in its research into whether Homer is or not the author of these two poems, modern classical philology operates on the basis of an «aesthetic judgement» (*aesthetisches Urtheil*; *ibid.*, 260, 263) in the terms of which the criteria for the ascribing of the poems to Homer have to do with to what point they are artistically outstanding (cf. *ibid.*, 258). All things considered, the very limiting of Homer to the author of the two poems presupposes «distinctions of aesthetic value» (*aesthetische Werthunterschiede*; *ibid.*, 264) between them and other epic poems, considered inferior from an artistic point of view. For this reason, in Nietzsche's rhetorical question— «*Was thereby a person made into a concept or a concept into a person?*» (*ibid.*, 257)—we should suppose an affirmative answer to the second part of the question. In fact, the concept of Homer, formerly the embodiment of all heroic poetry with its great diversity (cf. *ibid.*), progressively became the person of Homer, the exalted poet of the two greatest epic poems in literature. Nietzsche's position regarding the Homeric question directly originates from this verdict of his. If he upholds that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* arise from a plan organizing the original oral material (*ibid.*, 264-6), a plan drawn up by the poetic genius of the individual in whom the spirit of the Greek people materialized (cf. *ibid.*, 259-62), this poet cannot be Homer. The latter is, at its roots, the name of a varied set of poems of which the unifying criterion is not aesthetic but relating to the heroic topic. As Nietzsche asserts, «We believe in the one great poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—not, however, in Homer as this poet» (*ibid.*, 266). The core of the Homeric question is, therefore, understood by Nietzsche as the question of Homer's aesthetic personality. In this sense, it is the fact that the Homeric question and its various solutions rest on an aesthetic judgement that renders valid Nietzsche's thesis that they are based on philosophical presuppositions, and more precisely, ones that have to

do with an idealization of antiquity, as well as with the poet and the poems that most contributed to antiquity being, for us moderns, a model to be emulated.

By showing that there is an aesthetic judgement as the philosophical assumption of the historical-critical method, Nietzsche's considerations on the history of the Homeric question undermine the distinction between ideal and real antiquity which seems to be at the basis of the absolute split between the two tendencies in modern philology. Nietzsche thus undertakes such a harmonization between ideal and real antiquity that he seems to entirely cancel out the split between them. As a result of his analysis, both antiquities seem the same ideal antiquity, that is, both arise in the light of what seems to be the same aesthetic ideal. However, if Nietzsche achieves a harmonization between the two antiquities, this does not completely cancel out the difference, tension and irreconcilability that he defined between them during his inaugural lecture. There is, therefore, still a crucial distinction between ideal and real antiquity. But, to perceive it, we need to identify another meaning of «real» in the expression «real antiquity». In the opposition in question, «real» does not get distinguished from «ideal» because it does not involve any philosophical assumption. Nevertheless, the central philosophical assumption that it involves is not the same that is involved in ideal antiquity. The philosophical assumption in question establishes as ideal not the imitation of the aesthetic model that is ancient art, that which ideal antiquity strives for, but a thorough knowledge of the ancient world. Both antiquities are characterized by being based on an aesthetic judgement, on an ideality of an aesthetic nature, but in each case the judgement produces an orientation in a different direction, such an ideality is in its core one split into two. Nietzsche points clearly to this in the preparatory notes to his inaugural lecture, when he asserts: «life is worthy of being lived, says art; the world is worthy of being known[, says science]» (BAW 5, 269; cf. KGW II/1, 251). What is in question is the opposition between the two different goals of the artistic impulse of aesthetic classicism and the scientific impulse of historical criticism. If, on the one hand, historical criticism, through its research, constantly disturbs the stability and integrity of the ideal to be imitated, on the other, aesthetic classicism tends to set aside scientific investigations into antiquity, as its goal is the emulation of an ideal of beauty that is not subject to the deformations arising from a fragmentary view of the ancient world. Nietzsche's effort to preserve this concrete tension between the two fundamental impulses of philology shows through at various points of his lecture, both when he points to the fact that philology's friends rise up against the spirit of denial of philological criticism (*ibid.*, 252-3) and when he reminds these friends of philology that it was the science of antiquity that made available to them this «magical world» that is the ancient one (*ibid.*, 267-8). This splitting in the very heart of ideal antiquity between the ideal of

beauty to be imitated and the ideal of the historical knowledge of antiquity is something that becomes clear through Nietzsche's position on the Homeric question. In fact, in maintaining that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as aesthetic ideals, derived from the contribution of a poet who was not Homer (*ibid.*, 266) and who imposed an organizational plan on pre-existing poetical materials (*ibid.*, 264-6), Nietzsche undermines the very stability of the poetical ideal to be imitated, since the content and status of this ideal depend on an understanding of who their author was and the process through which it was formed.

6. CONCLUSION

In the concluding section of *Homer and Classical Philology*, Nietzsche ends up presenting a superficial version of the combining of the two central tendencies of philology. He upholds that a certain worldview—meaning an aesthetic worldview according to which modern culture should take as its model to be imitated the artistic creations of antiquity (in a word, the overall perspective governing aesthetic classicism)—should orientate scientific research into the details of the ancient world, that is, all the work carried out by applying the historical-critical method (*ibid.*, 268-9)[31]. This way of solving the problem of the conceptualization of philology (and, all things considered, of the opposition between the two main tendencies constituting its concrete reality) hides, however, the complexity of the question as spelled out by Nietzsche during the inaugural lecture. The corollary of the lecture, in fact, proposes a ranking of the two tendencies in philology, with aesthetic classicism at the top determining the direction to be taken by the applying of the historical-critical method to the cultural materials that have come to us from antiquity. This is a definition of philology that essentially follows the hierarchical model we find in the description of dialectics in Plato's *Republic* 532b-5a[32]. Nevertheless, this simplification of the problem of conceptualizing philology completely skirts the paradoxical nature of the concrete reality of the discipline. In fact, Nietzsche's letting be, during the lecture, of the opposition between philology's two fundamental tendencies—or rather, his letting be of the tensional relation between them in the terms of which they mutually limit each other—assumes that there should be no hierarchy totally subordinating the fulfilling of one of the tendencies to the fulfilling of the other, that is, a hierarchy in which only one of the tendencies determines the way of being of the other. If the conclusion of the lecture points to a compliance with the Platonic model in the *Republic*, it is because it does not do justice to the philosophical range of the analyses that constitute the core of the lecture.

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31 Concerning the final section of Nietzsche's inaugural lecture, cf. section 2 above.
32 In this regard, cf. sections 1-2 above.

Starting out from the problem of the conceptualization of philology and a diagnosis of its situation in a way that refers to Socrates' refutation method in the Platonic dialogues, these analyses present a definition of the truth of philology that breaks with the Socratic-Platonic model of the truth of the concept as consistency. The Socratic-Platonic model thus becomes insufficient for undertsnading the philosophical meaning and range of Nietzsche's proposal for the definition of philology and the steering of its activity. Consequently, in spite of its simplification at the end, Nietzsche's lecture shows us how, from very early on, he attempted to make his thinking correspond to an «inverted Platonism» (*umgekehrter Platonismus*; NF 1870, 7 [156])[33]. This, inevitably, involved him living always accompanied by that faithful adversary of his who was Plato (cf. BVN 1887, 951).

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33 With respect to the various stages in the inversion of Platonism during Nietzsche's philosophical career, cf., especially, Müller 2005: 221-44.

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