

## **One Hundred Years of Fractiousness: Disciplining Polemics in Nineteenth-Century German Classical Scholarship\***

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Gentlemen fight duels; scholars write reviews. On the one hand, the fact that nineteenth-century German classical philology was able to lay the foundation for the modern study of the ancient world was due in no small part to its having massively institutionalized a series of innovations that had certainly been adumbrated in the preceding centuries but did not begin to take widespread, lasting, and above all state-supported shape until the generation of Friedrich August Wolf and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Of these the three most important were probably (1) the systematic organization of large-scale research projects depending upon the long-term intense collaboration of numerous people; (2) the opening up of careers on the basis of merit rather than on that of class or (particular variety of Christian) confession; and (3) the restriction of hypothesis and refutation as far as possible to rational argument and historical evidence. Yet, on the other hand, at the very same time nineteenth-century German classical scholars (1) engaged in ferocious polemics with one another, (2) in which they defended outmoded aristocratic ideals of personal honor and reputation and (3) gave vent to deeply irrational aggressive instincts and bitter resentment.

To an extent, of course, the paradox is only apparent, for (1) nothing binds a group more closely together than an external menace, real or invented; (2) in every age the rising bourgeoisie has modeled itself upon the aristocrats it displaced, despised, and envied; and (3) the discipline of self-sacrifice and emotional abnegation, the usual prerequisite for a productive scholarly career, stores up over years the arid tinder of a latent anger ready to be ignited by the merest hint of any lack of the recognition the scholar is sure he so richly deserves. If vanity and resentment are the occupational illnesses of professors, it

\*The first and third sections of this paper, on Creuzer and on K. O. Müller, sketch out two lines of interpretation that I elaborate in greater detail and with a fuller scholarly apparatus in two articles to be published soon, entitled respectively "From Logos to Mythos" and "Karl Otfried Müller's Edition of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*."

need not surprise us, then, that people who spend so much of their professional lives passing unimpeachable judgment upon the performance of students will be liable to overreaction when criticisms are directed against themselves.

It is tempting to pursue the line of interpretation sketched out just now and to reduce the scholarly controversies of nineteenth-century German philology to the mere clash of personalities. Indeed, some contemporary historians of classical scholarship seem to be quite incapable of seeing these issues in any other light. And it must be admitted that in some cases (e.g., Welcker vs. Hermann on Greek tragic trilogies) it is hard (but in fact by no means impossible) to see much more at stake than the friction between two contrasting scholarly styles, while in other cases (e.g., Ritschl vs. Jahn) any substantial non-personal interpretation may well be impossible after all.

Nevertheless, a reductively biographical approach certainly does not do justice to these strange episodes. Of course, differences of background, class, temperament, age, and culture exasperated divergences in approach and result, and provided a dimension of personal irritation and satisfaction without which it is hard to explain why some controversies became so bitter and went on so long. But there have always been differences of this sort. Nonetheless, a large number of the most celebrated modern controversies in German classics were concentrated into a very short time, in the two decades after the final defeat of Napoleon brought peace to Europe and displaced national conflict from the battlefield to the classroom. This was the period during which the academic study of antiquity in Germany was receiving the institutional form whose basic structure it has maintained until this day; and these controversies were in fact one of the most important mechanisms that helped establish the shape of university research for the coming generations. For the structure of scholarship, like the landscape of nature, is altered not only by slow, largely imperceptible long-term processes like continental drift and erosion, but also by brief, spectacular cataclysms in which millennia of change are concentrated into paroxysms of violence. The controversies that marked German classics from 1815 to 1835 were both a symptom and a means of the rapid transformation that made the field what it is today.

Three of these controversies are particularly significant, not only because they were the most celebrated ones, but also because they clearly illustrate three of the ways in which even temporary spasms of violent disagreement can manifest or produce long-term and unresolvable structural tensions: (a) the polemic among Lobeck, Hermann, Voß, K. O. Müller, and Creuzer centering on Creuzer's *Symbolik* (1811ff.); (b) the dispute between Hermann and Boeckh concerning the corpus of Greek inscriptions (1825f.); and (c) the controversy

between Hermann and K. O. Müller arising from the latter's edition of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (1833f.).

**(a) Creuzer's *Symbolik***

In his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker besonders der Griechen* (1st edition 1810–12), Friedrich Creuzer blended together Romantically irrational elements and traditionally rationalizing ones in a way hard to disentangle or sometimes even to understand. Creuzer took over the ancient allegorists' notion that the speakers of myth were those few men of genius who understood their true meaning and who pronounced them as a deep mystery to the astonished populace—a view that by 1821 had already become so outdated that Karl Otfried Müller could effectively demolish it by comparing it to missionaries giving sermons to Greenlanders.<sup>1</sup> Hence Creuzer emphasized that myths were ultimately derived from a primeval revelation expressed in symbols that were not reducible to concepts and were accessible only to the intuition of those who were innately gifted with a spiritual sensitivity peculiarly adapted to them; yet in order to arrive at the contents of these symbols he usually ended up applying the traditional techniques and results of allegorical interpretation, especially those of the Neoplatonists of late antiquity. This inconsistency was so glaring that it permitted Gottfried Hermann, on the one hand, to attack Creuzer's intuitionism and to recommend, as a mode of doing real historical research into the myths, a bizarre mixture of etymologies of divine names and a highly rationalistic allegorical exegesis of the natural philosophical doctrines allegedly contained in them, and Christian August Lobeck, on the other, to sharply reject Creuzer's allegorism and to displace rational philological activity onto *Quellenforschung*, the study of the sources of our evidence for the ancient Greeks' understanding of their myths.

But the central issue was not so much the nature of the object that Creuzer's hypotheses sought to describe as, rather, the ultimate source of validation for all such hypotheses. As Creuzer himself wrote in 1822:

In general let it be remarked here that, if some people have recently called mythology a historical science and thought they were thereby defining its method, I myself am only willing to grant this *insofar as* with regard to the ancient peoples its *material* is *given* and one must get hold of this by means of historical studies and proofs. The main business that makes someone a mythologist is based upon a mental activity entirely different from the one involved in that historical operation—upon an apperception that one can neither teach nor acquire

<sup>1</sup>Ernst Howald, ed., *Der Kampf um Creuzers Symbolik. Eine Auswahl von Dokumenten* (Tübingen 1926 = Hildesheim/Zurich/New York 1984): 143.

by positive prescription, but that depends upon a mental capacity not dissimilar to the one that makes someone a poet.—Hence every cultured man should be familiar with the material contents of mythology; but not every one should wish to be authorized to discuss mythology.<sup>2</sup>

It was above all Lobeck and Ludwig Preller who recognized what was at stake: the scientific status of the new science of classical philology itself.<sup>3</sup> For what kind of valid science could possibly be based upon rare innate gifts and uncontrollable vatic pronouncements? Only evidence accessible to all—and this meant in the first instance the historical documentation provided by the collection, correction, and cautious interpretation of ancient texts and archaeological remains—and argumentation based upon rational procedures could widen the possibility of participation in scholarship to include not just poetic geniuses, but professors, ordinary human beings, and even schoolteachers.

The ultimate defeat of Creuzer meant that henceforth the professional study of classical mythology was obliged to demonstrate its scientific seriousness precisely by holding itself strictly outside any discussion of what the Greek myths could mean *for us*, and instead had to concentrate intensively and exclusively upon research into what scholars supposed that the Greek myths could have meant *for the Greeks*. Scientific respectability could only be purchased at the price of a rigorous refusal to make any claim to mediate the artistic or religious meaning of the Greek myths for our own time and culture: the study of Greek myths within the academic profession became a resolutely historical enterprise. That is why, after Creuzer's defeat, classicists reverted to slightly altered but still easily recognizable variants on the very same ways of dealing with myths that had been systematized during the Hellenistic period in Epicurean Euhemerism and Stoic physical allegoresis, and that remained typical until the eighteenth century: first, to a new Euhemerism in Karl Otfried Müller's explanation of the Greek myths as tribal legends that, properly interpreted, could provide invaluable information about the early history of the various

<sup>2</sup>Howald *op. cit.* 37–38: “Im allgemeinen sei hier noch bemerkt, daß, wenn man die Mythologie eine historische Wissenschaft neuerlich genannt und damit die Methode ausgesprochen zu haben glaubt, ich dieses nur *inso weit* zugebe, als in betreff der alten Völker ihr *Stoff* *gegeben* *er* ist, und man sich dessen auf dem Wege historischer Untersuchungen und Beweise bemächtigen muß. Das Hauptgeschäft, welches den Mythologen macht, beruht auf einer ganz andern geistigen Tätigkeit, als die jener geschichtlichen Operation—auf einer Apperzeption, die man weder lehren noch ersitzen kann, sondern die von einem geistigen Organismus bedingt ist, nicht unähnlich dem, welcher den Dichter schafft.—Sonach sollte jeder Gebildete den materiellen Inhalt der Mythologie kennen; aber nicht jeder sollte über Mythologie mitsprechen wollen.”

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Howald *op. cit.* 84, 146–49.

Greek peoples; then, to a new version of the old physical-allegorical explanation of the myths as references to natural phenomena in the Indo-European comparative mythology of the second half of the nineteenth century—a school of research that ended up reducing the myths to what Lewis Farnell called “a highly figurative conversation about the weather.” It is also why, on the one hand, though the philological approach to myths has indeed been repeatedly revitalized in the last century, the impetus has come each time not from within classics, but from without, through stimuli from such other sciences as psychology, structuralism, and above all anthropology—and why, on the other hand, in this same period it has been above all the great artists and writers, as well as popularizers often ignored or scorned by professional classicists, who have dedicated themselves to the task of exploring and communicating the aesthetic and religious aspects of Greek myth, aspects that even today continue to fascinate large numbers of people who may well have no interest whatsoever in the rituals of Brauron or the Athenian religious calendar but who evidently feel a deep-seated psychological need to find parallels, and perhaps even explanations, for their own personality structures and personal situations in the repertory of figures and stories Greek myth provides.

**(b) Boeckh's *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum***

In 1815 August Boeckh proposed that the Berlin Academy of Sciences undertake the publication of a corpus of ancient inscriptions, to be prepared by a team of specialists over a number of years.<sup>4</sup> Nowadays we are likely to think of a corpus of inscriptions as being based essentially upon a scholar's direct examination of the actual stones, and as including only reluctantly and doubtfully reports founded exclusively upon the unsupported transcriptions made by travellers. But it is clear from Boeckh's proposal that the original conception of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* was exactly the opposite: the collection was intended to bring together within the compass of a single work all those inscriptions that had already been published over the preceding centuries but were scattered in expensive, rare, or inconvenient books, and to complete these with the transcriptions of travellers already preserved as manuscripts in various European libraries. Only as a last resort, and by the way, is mention made of the possibility that a single (!) researcher could be sent out to inspect the inscribed (and not yet transcribed) stones still to be found throughout the Mediterranean. Hence the work of editing these inscriptions had to be based not at all upon the early nineteenth-century equivalents of squeezes

<sup>4</sup>Boeckh's proposal can be found in Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1900): 374–78.

and photographs—by which, at least in principle, a direct physical link between object and publication could be achieved—but rather upon a set of incomplete, largely nonsensical, and often contradictory transcriptions, among which the editor had to choose the fragile basis upon which to construct his own text, a text whose relation to any independently existing physical object (like a stone with letters carved into it) was obviously highly problematic. In the case of these inscriptions, his work was in certain regards less like that which we would expect nowadays an epigrapher to perform and more like that of a manuscript editor or papyrologist who must try to reconstruct a text on the basis of damaged, illegible, and faulty copies.

When, ten years after the proposal, the first fascicle appeared, edited by Boeckh and containing the most ancient Greek inscriptions, it was immediately reviewed by Gottfried Hermann. Hermann had no difficulty in demonstrating that in his speculations Boeckh had often gone far beyond the limits of the evidence provided by the inscriptions themselves, and that the Greek he had produced in his readings and reconstructions was sometimes faulty both grammatically and metrically. For Hermann, the conclusion to be drawn from these observations was obvious:

Inscriptions, the most difficult object of textual criticism, are also for that very reason the surest touchstone of the textual critic. One demands of the textual critic first of all the greatest impartiality in examining and reading an inscription, indeed all the more the more mutilated or obscure it is, so that he does not pursue over-hastily the very first idea that occurs to him and thereby overlook the truth; one demands discernment and deftness, which are required in order to discover the right reading out of often barely intelligible traces; one demands deliberation and caution, which are able to distinguish what is possible from what is impossible, in order not to leave in the text, or even to insert into it, absurd, inconsistent, clumsy thoughts; one demands knowledge of the language and of everything that belongs to it, which arises not out of superficial reading but out of thorough study, since any explanation or emendation is already worthless if it contradicts the laws of the language; finally one demands caution, dexterity, and practice, by means of which those emendations can easily be found that can make a claim to persuasiveness and do not consist of empty dreams or an undignified playing around. With regret we must confess that we miss all these characteristics in Mr. B. far too often, indeed almost everywhere...<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>G. Hermann, *Ueber Herrn Professor Böckhs Behandlung der Griechischen Inschriften* (Leipzig 1826) 24–25: “Inschriften, der schwierigste Gegenstand der Kritik, sind eben deshalb auch der sicherste Probirstein des Kritikers. Man verlangt von dem Kritiker zuerst die größte Unbefangenheit bey der Ansicht und dem Lesen einer Inschrift, und zwar in um so höherem

But Hermann was mistaken, not because Boeckh had in fact fulfilled the expectations Hermann had of him, but because those expectations themselves were at least in part the wrong ones to bring to judging such an enterprise. For the scholarly qualities that Hermann has listed here are the very ones that would be required of any philologist engaged in the edition of medieval manuscripts containing the texts of ancient authors. Hermann presupposes that the textual criticism of inscriptions and that of classical literary texts pose exactly the same kinds of challenges to the scholar and must be resolved in the same way and on the basis of the same capacities. But is this presupposition true? Boeckh's student M. H. E. Meier sprang to his teacher's defense in an "Analyse" that attacked Hermann's review at excessive length,<sup>6</sup> wherein he not only sprayed much vitriol but also did manage to make one crucial point, namely that Hermann's list of indispensable philological qualities contained one too many, which it had mistakenly included, and one too few, for it had mistakenly omitted another one:

For not inserting into the text, or not even leaving in it, what is clumsy, inconsistent, absurd is *not* the duty of the textual critic. Perhaps it may be so in the case of those great authors of antiquity who are a constant rule of beauty for us...: but surely it is only in the rarest of cases that public and private inscriptions and graffiti are composed by classical authors. Or are we to suppose that in ancient Hellas such matters were different from the way they are with us? The textual critic should produce or let stand only what is *true*; and he *must endure it*, if this truth also contains absurd and inconsistent thoughts. Mr. H. has omitted the comprehensive knowledge of all the relations of public and private life, of religion and cult, the knowledge of the most various sciences and arts, as and to what degree they were practiced in antiquity; without the most exact knowledge of all these relations every step in the treatment of inscriptions is full of danger; for that reason this is the *very*

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Grade, je verstümmelter oder dunkler sie ist, damit er nicht voreilig den ersten den besten Gedanken verfolge, und darüber das wahre übersehe; man verlangt den Scharfsinn und die Gewandtheit, deren es bedarf, aus oft kaum kenntlichen Spuren das Rechte aufzufinden; man verlangt die Ueberlegung und Besonnenheit, die das mögliche von dem unmöglichen zu unterscheiden weiß, um nicht widersinnige, ungereimte, ungeschickte Gedanken stehen zu lassen, oder wohl gar hinzustellen; man verlangt die Kenntniß der Sprache und alles dessen, was dazu gezählt werden kann, die nicht aus oberflächlichem lesen, sondern aus gründlichem Studium hervorgegangen ist, indem jede Erklärung oder Verbesserung schon an sich nichtig ist, wenn sie den Sprachgesetzen zuwiderläuft; man verlangt endlich die Vorsicht, Geschicklichkeit, und Uebung, mittelst deren auf dem leichtesten Wege solche Emendationen gefunden werden, die auf Ueberzeugung Anspruch machen können, und nicht in leeren Träumen oder einem unwürdigen Spielwerk bestehen. Mit Bedauern müssen wir bekennen, bey Hrn. B. alle diese Eigenschaften nur zu oft, ja fast überall zu vermissen..."

<sup>6</sup>Reprinted by Hermann himself in Hermann *op. cit.* 78–180.

*first characteristic*; the language itself is only sounding bronze and a ringing bell if one does not know what is signified through it.<sup>7</sup>

Meier's point is that the literary philologist's objects belong to a different category from the epigrapher's: the former are the works of authors of genius, and must therefore be able to measure up to the very highest standards for correctness, originality, profundity, logical stringency, and so forth, while the latter were composed by ordinary, often only partially educated, writers and stonemasons and were no freer from errors of all sorts than the work of their modern colleagues. The former kind of text must have been of sufficiently general interest and quality for it to have been laboriously copied out, from manuscript to manuscript, over the course of centuries, whereas the latter kind had been written down once, for the exigencies of a particular situation, and need not have been interesting or even intelligible to later centuries. In other words: the criteria of aesthetic, linguistic, and logical correctness, whose fulfillment had guaranteed the very survival of the canonical authors, and which therefore could be applied relevantly to the criticism of their texts, were not fully relevant in the case of the objects of epigraphy. Misled by the superficial similarities between epigraphy in its infancy and the traditional textual criticism with which he was familiar, Hermann was simply making a mistake in categorization.

Hermann's detailed objections to Boeckh's treatment of the inscriptions turn out in many cases to have been quite valid; but the fundamental point raised by Meier has consequences far beyond anything that Hermann himself could have imagined, for it implicitly establishes epigraphy as an autonomous scholarly discipline and restricts the canonical quality of antiquity to a small selection of its surviving works. In Hermann's preface to the volume in which

<sup>7</sup>Hermann *op. cit.* 100–101: “Denn Ungeschicktes, Ungereimtes, Widersinniges nicht hinzustellen oder gar nicht stehen zu lassen, ist n i c h t die Pflicht des Kritikers, sie mag dies vielleicht bey jenen großen Schriftstellern des Alterthums seyn, die uns beständige Regel des Schönen sind...: aber die In- und Aufschriften, öffentliche und private, sind doch wohl höchst selten von klassischen Schriftstellern verfaßt? oder soll es hierin im alten Hellas anders gewesen seyn als bey uns? Der Kritiker soll allein das W a h r e herstellen oder stehn lassen: und er m u ß e s e r t r a g e n, sollte dieses Wahre auch widersinnige und ungereimte Gedanken enthalten. Uebergangen hat Hr. H. die umfassende Kenntniß aller Verhältnisse des öffentlichen und Privatlebens, der Religion und des Cultus, die Kenntniß der verschiedensten Wissenschaften und Künste, wie und bis zu welcher Stufe sie im Alterthume getrieben wurden; ohne die genaueste Kenntniß aller dieser Verhältnisse ist jeder Schritt bey der Inschriftenbehandlung gefahrvoll; sie ist daher die a l l e r e r s t e E i g e n s c h a f t; die Sprache selbst ist nur tönendes Erz und klingende Schelle, wenn man das durch sie Bezeichnete nicht kennt.”



he gathered the documentation of the controversy, he returned over and over, compulsively, to the paradigmatic excellence of the classical authors, thereby showing how little he had grasped the basic point at issue—or else suggesting, perhaps, that he had indeed understood it after all, but wanted at all costs to suppress such a disturbing prospect.<sup>8</sup> As for epigraphy, it went on to become one of our most powerful tools for understanding ancient history, and to develop sophisticated and reliable methodologies that rendered obsolete not only Hermann's strictures, but also, in important regards, the very work of Boeckh's that had called it into existence.

### (c) Müller's *Eumenides*

Towards the end of the preface to his edition of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, published in 1833, K. O. Müller allowed himself a no doubt deeply gratifying gibe at the same Gottfried Hermann, Germany's leading authority on Greek tragedy, a man with whom he had once been friends but had gradually been taught by personal and scholarly differences to detest: "But there is already now probably also another race that directs deeper questions to antiquity than a scholarship consisting only in notes can answer."<sup>9</sup> Müller achieved his purpose. He provoked Hermann's wrathful reply, and his phrase went on to reverberate for years throughout what came to be celebrated as the *Eumenidenstreit* and to haunt German classical philology for the rest of the century. But Müller's point,

<sup>8</sup>Hermann *op. cit.* 4: "wenn vollends ein solches Volk Schriften aufzuweisen hat, die wegen ihres Inhalts höchst wichtig, und wegen ihrer Form für alle Zeiten musterhaft sind"; 8–9: "Die wahren Philologen...gehen einen andern Weg, und, indem sie die Geisteswerke der Alten für das vornehmste und wichtigste halten, sehen sie die Sprache als die schwerzuersteigenden Propyläen zu dem gesammten Alterthume an. Daher sie...auch die Sachkenntniß in Ehren halten, aber beides nur als Mittel zu dem Zwecke betrachten, den das klassische Alterthum schon durch diese seine Benennung ankündigt, als Quelle mancher Wissenschaft, und als Muster der Bildung und des Geschmacks zu dienen. Da dieser Zweck nur dadurch erreichbar ist, daß man die Schriften der Alten richtig versteht, dieß aber ohne Sprach- und Sachkenntniß nicht möglich ist, so belächeln sie eben sowohl den, welcher die eine, als den, der die andere gering achtet; die Sprache aber halten sie für das erste und unerlaßlichste [*sic*], weil durch sie erst das andere alles verstanden wird. Denn die Geisteswerke sind es ja erst, die jenen Sachen ihren Werth geben. Wären es die Sachen an und für sich selbst, die einen solchen Werth hätten, der mit ihrer Behandlung sich zu brüsten aufforderte, so wäre nicht abzusehen, warum z.B. die Baschkiren, ein uraltes Volk, Βέχαιρες bey den Griechen genannt, nicht eben das Recht hätten, für sich Baschkirische Sachphilologen zu verlangen"; cf. also *op. cit.*, 4–5, 7. It is not hard to imagine what Hermann would think of some contemporary justifications for the study of Greek and Roman antiquity.

<sup>9</sup>*Aeschylos Eumeniden; griechisch und deutsch, mit erläuternden Abhandlungen über die äussere Darstellung, und über den Inhalt und die Composition dieser Tragödie*, von K. O. Müller (Göttingen 1833) iv: "Doch giebt es jetzt auch wohl schon ein andres Geschlecht, welches tiefere Fragen an das Alterthum richtet, als Noten-Gelehrsamkeit beantworten kann."

then as now, was often misunderstood. His intention seems to have been to lodge a protest against a form of erudition that insisted upon hanging its arguments upon the pegs of specific textual difficulties identified in canonical literary texts, which thereby presented readers with incoherent fragments of knowledge they could not synthesize without both constant recourse to the text in question and profound knowledge of antiquity—certainly Hermann’s preferred mode of scholarship. For Müller, *Noten-Gelehrsamkeit* subordinated all its scholarly effort to the aim, presupposed as valid in itself, of elucidating bit by bit an ancient text whose value was only assumed, never questioned or demonstrated. In doing so, to be sure, it succeeded in focusing upon atomized fragments of that text and in resolving as best one could their linguistic or metrical difficulties. But it thereby became incapable of posing, let alone resolving, a whole set of other, certainly no less important questions, involving the text’s global meaning and the relations between its larger dimensions and various kinds of external context; and, in the specific case of a dramatic text, the concentration upon individual difficulties obstructed any coherent attempt to understand how the play had been (or could be) staged. Privately, no doubt, scholars like Hermann, who preferred to hide their aesthetic light under the bushel of textual annotations, often had perfectly clear ideas about such subjects—Hermann’s own love and sensitivity to fine literature in a number of languages is well attested. But a sort of philological *pudor* seems to have induced most such philologists to prefer to speak publicly—that is, to fellow scholars and to students—about other, perhaps more rigorously demonstrable matters and to leave these delicate questions to the realm either of tacit, because allegedly universal, consent, or of taste, about which gentlemen could agree to disagree.

The emphatically temporal dimension of Müller’s sentence (“Doch giebt es *jetzt auch wohl schon...*,” “But there is *already now probably also...*”) is perhaps the earliest example in the rhetoric of classics of a polemical strategy, well known in the history of modern science, designed to legitimate one group of scholars at the expense of others by appeal to the criterion of scientific progress: adopting the model of cumulative and irreversible progress familiar from the natural sciences and taking seriously the claims of *Altertumswissenschaft* (“the science of antiquity”) to *Wissenschaftlichkeit* (“scientificity”), Müller demands manifest signs of such progress in philology as well. What is new must be better; what is old is obsolete. For the next century and a half, this strategy was to go on to be repeated obsessively in numerous controversies concerning the identity and direction of classical philology, most famously perhaps in Nietzsche’s early writings (and in

Wilamowitz's exasperated rejoinder, significantly entitled "*Zukunftsphilologie!*," "Philology of the Future!"), and most recently in the discussions about the future of the discipline in the United States in the last several decades. Of course such legitimating techniques have by no means been limited to the field of classics during this period; indeed, in the first half of the nineteenth century they seem to have been particularly widespread in a number of fields, especially in Protestant North Germany (where innovation, even if rebellious, may have been prized earlier than in other parts of the country). But because classical philology was on the cutting edge of scientific scholarship in early nineteenth-century Germany, the stakes involved in these early legitimization attempts were particularly high in this discipline and the disputes in which they were articulated were especially acrimonious.

The dispute between Hermann and Müller is best understood, not in the obscure and polemical terms of *Sprachphilologie* ("philology of language") and *Sachphilologie* ("philology of things") as histories of classical scholarship usually describe it, but rather as part of a deeper tension within modern classical scholarship between what might be called classicizing and historicizing approaches to the understanding of the ancient world. Both approaches had been legitimated theoretically at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century by Humboldt and Wolf, and they continued to provide competing rationales for the study of antiquity throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and, indeed, even up to our own day. Should antiquity be studied more for the sake of the universally normative aesthetic quality of its very best artistic, literary, and philosophical remains, or more in terms of the unique, often odd, and sometimes repellent facts comprising the full totality of ancient culture? Two approaches—let us call them the "imitative" and the "antiquarian"—that had coexisted with one another, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not, since the Renaissance were brought into a suddenly prominent and much more uncomfortable proximity to one another by the institutionalization of *Altertumswissenschaft* as an instrument of state educational policy in German secondary schools and universities in the first third of the nineteenth century.

It is these two approaches that underlie the positions of Müller and Hermann. Hermann reads Aeschylus' *Eumenides* as a timelessly valid literary text and is interested in *Realia* only to the extent that they cast light upon the obscurities of its thought and language. Müller reads the play as the document of a unique theatrical performance and, despite his occasional protestations, is really most interested in how the play can be used to help explain the *Realia* of Greek law and religion. The rules to which Hermann is so attached in his mode of explication have a rigorous validity for him because he derives them from a

closed body of evidence whose value is unquestioned and whose limits are well-defined; the exceptions Müller is all too willing to admit express his sense of the openness and multiplicity in the relations between the text, which is only relatively fixed, and its various explanatory contexts, which on principle are innumerable and constantly modify one another by their interaction. In this sense, Hermann was one of the last of the pre-modern philologists, and he reacted so bitterly against Müller because he felt, rightly, that with Müller a new way of viewing antiquity had come about, to which his own vital concern for canonical texts and their textual criticism was a matter of indifference or even scorn; and Müller was one of the most committed of the new humanists, who saw in Hermann, rightly, a traditionally elitist way of dealing with the ancient texts that could scarcely serve the more revolutionary and popular aims of the Prussian educational reformers. The conflict between the two was inevitable, and irreconcilable. Thus the fault line that separated Müller from Hermann ran not only between two individuals, with their contingent personalities and interests, but also within the very heart of their profession. It marked a rift that has never healed.

In fact, this dispute was the last, and the most fundamental, of the great wave of controversies that marked the beginning of nineteenth-century German classical scholarship and helped define its problematic status as a university discipline of scientific research. The dispute about Creuzer's mythology excluded aesthetic and religious approaches to Greek myth from the realm of classical philology; the quarrel between Hermann and Boeckh about inscriptions had the ultimate effect of establishing the validity of the sub-discipline of epigraphy within the field of classics as a whole. These two controversies helped determine the shape of the field but did not put the field itself into question. But the questions raised in the *Eumenidenstreit*—and, above all, the evident impossibility of answering them to the satisfaction of the parties concerned—gnawed at the very heart of the field. They revealed tensions and self-contradictions that have never ceased to traverse it. Indeed, even today classics is defined as a discipline of scholarship not by its ever having succeeded in solving the dilemma of its fundamental orientation and identity and having finally decided whether it should be classicist or historicist, imitative or antiquarian, normative or descriptive—but by this dilemma itself. Understanding the spectacular dispute between Hermann and Müller helps us to see with particular clarity the subterranean structural tensions that subtend and disquiet our own work.

To be sure, there is much that one can say against scholarly controversies. They mislead scholars and the public into imagining that positions that are

merely different are in fact incompatible with one another; they favor reckless, speedy, and unscrupulous scholars at the expense of modest, thoughtful, and timid ones; they tend to focus upon small points where error can be demonstrated rather than upon large issues where truth is uncertain. Yet one can at least say in their favor that they are not only less bloody than duels, but also, viewed methodologically rather than personally, far more significant. Perhaps, in the end, it is a good thing after all that some scholars are not gentlemen.