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Paradise Lost. Why Classical Philology Has to Rethink  
its Standards and Norms

This statement describes current classical philology, as it presents itself in the German-speaking countries in particular, as a subject that has entered a crisis almost without noticing it. Never before since World War II have the philologies of ancient Greece and Rome experienced such popularity, and yet there is no sign that

the subject has secured its position in the canon, of the university disciplines at least, to such an extent that it would be ready to meet future challenges. Above all, we have no indications that it has properly reflected on the categories and methods of modern approaches to language and literature. Instead of advancing confidently to meet the great demands of modern scholarship, it has, in repeated apologetic episodes, drawn attention to the timeless significance of the ancient texts. All too often, this philology has failed to provide a philological demonstration of that significance. There are several indications that modern literary studies and linguistics have accepted the conservative self-image of classical philology without any pause for thought. At any event, they do not appear to expect scholarly innovations from it.

Ancient philology today is reminiscent of a land that, though rich in resources, has given up the right to rule over its own kingdom, has mislaid or lost the keys to the storehouse of cultural *memoria*. If this philology is to move beyond the role of an outsider, the guardian of a store of pan-European motifs and subject matter, it needs to undergo a fundamental renewal in decisive fields of academic competition: it must interrogate itself and find ways and means of presenting the supposed excellence of its objects of study in a manner that is appropriate to them. It must fully explain how it contributes to the expansion of knowledge – of the ancient as well as the modern world. And it must do so in a searching engagement *with the texts*, which only then, when they are treated on the level of *our* time, will reveal why they have not long since ceased to be part of time *at all*. In the end, this philology has to organize itself in a way that its structures of teaching and research converge with the structures of scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) in other subjects to such a extent that cross-subject dialogue is no longer the exception but the rule.

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