The Limits of Radical Openness: Gadamer on Socratic Dialectic and Plato's Idea of the Good[1]

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ABSTRACT: To what extent can the structure of dialogue be used to ground a theory of human understanding? In this paper, I examine Plato's Phaedo, Republic, *and* Philebus *with an eye toward challenging Gadamer's thesis that Socratic dialogue grounds a theory of hermeneutics that characterizes understanding as a factor within experience as "radical openness." I contend that there is a basic problem in Gadamer's historical appropriation of the dialectic. This is that the elenchtic ideal of most of the early dialogues of Plato, which underlies Gadamer's notion of privileging process over result in conversation, is fundamentally in tension with reaching an understanding of concepts, and ultimately reaching toward the Good.*

RÉSUMÉ: Dans quelle mesure la structure du dialogue peut-elle être utilisée pour fonder une théorie de la compréhension humaine? Dans cet article, je considère le Phédon, *la* République *et le* Philèbe *en vue de mettre en question la thèse gadamérienne selon laquelle le dialogue socratique fonde une théorie herméneutique qui définit la compréhension comme un facteur à l'intérieur de l'expérience entendue comme «ouverture radicale». Je soutiens qu'il y a un problème fondamental dans le projet gadamérien de l'appropriation historique de la dialectique. Ceci tient à ce que l'idéal élenchtique de la plupart des premiers dialogues platoniciens, lequel idéal sous-tend la notion gadamérienne qui privilégie le processus au profit du résultat de la conversation, se trouve dans une tension fondamentale avec le but qui consiste à accéder à une compréhension des concepts et, en définitive, à accéder au Bien.*

> "An essential point that gives Plato's dialectic as a whole its underlying meaning is that he demands justification in *logos* from the persona of Socrates. For this reason — and not for reasons of aesthetics and taste — it is vital to read Plato's dialogues not as theoretical treatises but as mimesis...of real discussions played out between the partners and drawing them all into a game in which they all have something at stake"
> — Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 97

Hans-Georg Gadamer's life-long project of interpreting the Platonic dialogues has served three major purposes in the broader themes of his thinking: first, it is a response to the "continuous challenge" posed by Heidegger's appropriation of the Aristotelian criticism of Plato's doctrine of Forms and Heidegger's own non-ethical reading of Plato, particularly the *Republic*[2]. Second, it serves the reconciliatory function of finding the common project in Plato and Aristotle, thereby bringing them into greater intellectual proximity; in particular, Gadamer is interested in the common theme of the Good in both thinkers. Third, Socratic dialogue as a way of life grounds Gadamer's hermeneutics as a theory of human understanding in general[3]. In Gadamer's programmatic *Warheit und Methode* (1960) and his interpretive work *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (1978), we find the juxtaposition of all three of these purposes in the service of resolving the ancient problem of the tension between theory and practice.

Multiple interpretations of Gadamer's project and its three purposes (and their successfulness as a response to Heidegger) have been advanced, but very little in the way of critique has been published in English on the force and applicability of Gadamer's arguments. In this paper, I propose an examination of segments of Plato's *Phaedo, Republic*, and *Philebus* with an eye toward challenging Gadamer's third purpose, namely that Socratic dialogue might ground a theory of hermeneutics which characterizes understanding as a factor within experience as "radical openness"[4]. I contend that there is a basic problem in Gadamer's historical appropriation of the dialectic. This is that the "elenchtic ideal" of most of the early dialogues of Plato, which underscores Gadamer's notion of privileging process over result in conversation, is fundamentally in tension with the procedure of reaching an understanding of concepts, and ultimately our movement toward the Good. Because these dialogues tend to end in *aporia*, and in particular because they say little about the relation of *arete* to the Good, Gadamer's attempt to connect his understanding of dialectic, one based on the *elenchus*, with the normative ideal for intersubjective agreement, as he interprets the Idea of the Good, is bound to run into problems[5]. I identify these problems, showing how they are not simply a victory for Heidegger's alternative interpretation, and suggest that Gadamer's hermeneutics may be able to retain its dialogical character through emphasizing one of its goals, that of consensus; unfortunately, this is at the cost of "radical openness" as a Gadamerian ideal which privileges the process of questioning itself as revelatory of truth[6]. The tension between Gadamer's use of Platonic dialectic and his interpretation of the Idea of the Good cannot be resolved, I note in the conclusion, by placing the epistemological and ethical weight of the theory on the process of divining knowledge as a means and discrediting the promise of consensus as an end.

1. Gadamer's divergence from Heidegger: The Recovery of Dialectic

Although Gadamer has repeatedly acknowledged his indebtedness to Heidegger, it seems uncontroversial that Gadamer would reject the latter's interpretation of Plato, particularly that of the Platonic *eide* as presented in the *Republic*[7], which distances the Forms from their obviously ethical dimension as drawing their being from the Good. Essential to Heidegger's approach is a re-appropriation of Aristotle's criticisms of Plato, many of which, as is now commonly acknowledged, over- or mis-state the positions of Plato in order to make Aristotle's own theory more clear[8]. What is clear is that Aristotle's criticism underscores a basic tension in Plato between theory and practice. "As it is well known," Georgia Warnke writes:

> Aristotle argues against Plato that ethical understanding is a form of knowledge distinct from metaphysics. To Plato's theoretical knowledge of the Form of the Good, Aristotle contrasts an understanding of 'the Good for man' that has to be concretized in practical situations. The peculiarity of ethical knowledge is thus that, on the one hand...agents must understand given situations in light of the general norms that are relevant to them. On the other hand, an intellectual or theoretical understanding of these norms is useless since one has to know in addition how to apply them[9].

But in fact, Aristotle's criticism is unfounded. Plato does not avoid the question of the "Good for man"; in fact, his analysis of the issue in the *Philebus* forms the basis for Gadamer's understanding of ethical knowledge as applied knowledge, but in a differing sense than that of a mere *techne* (I treat this distinction in more detail in section three below).

In fact, Gadamer finds it impossible to abandon an understanding of Plato that centers on virtue (*arete*); while he is clear that the Platonic theory of *eide* or Forms is of great epistemological relevance, he sees the ethical implications of those normative *eide* , like Justice or Courage, which serve as the perfect expression of virtues in practice, as of equal importance, particularily as a grounding for Socrates' anti-sophism[10]. This normative dimension of human life is, to be sure, not where Gadamer's own theory ends, but provides a starting point in the character of Socrates, "...as embodying the *arete* (excellence) of the philosophical way of life, dedicated to the 'care of the soul,' through understanding"[11]. The Socratic life of philosophizing is not only characterized by its concerns with ethical issues and norms underpinning its

inquiry, but it is also importantly *open-ended*, as is human life and inquiry in general: "...[I]n Socrates, Plato presents philosophy as the search for wisdom, never the possession of it"[12].

Gadamer's exploration of this characteristic open-endedness is another theme inherited from Heidegger who, like his pupil, held to the controversial claim that in Platonic philosophy, truth was communicated by language (conceived as a holistic network of interrelated meaning-structures) and not by *logos*[13], understood as the "divine word" signifying intelligible things beyond the world. Gadamer moves away from a simple correspondence theory of truth in this way, a move which mirrors his belief that, in dialogues like the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, the intelligible world of Forms was not a realm existing in complete separation from the world of our sense-percepts[14], or the sort of thing to which our percepts might correspond, albeit in a defective way. This move, made by Heidegger in both his interpretation of the *Republic*'s cave allegory and his treatment of the *Theaetetus*, equates truth with being present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*)[15]. On this view, truth is a *process* of disclosure (as the unconcealment of Being, in Heidegger's terms) and not merely the relationship of Form and thing[16]. For Gadamer, the questioning and searching that characterizes Socratic dialogue *warrants*, but does not *guarantee* truth; this is the essential character of the open-endedness regarding the truth-content of philosophical, or indeed any inquiry[17].

However, inquiry is always carried out within the context of a tradition, a fact of which both Gadamer and Heidegger are fully cognizant. This fact tells us that, at base, truth is not wholly dependent on the process of dialectical question-posing and answer-giving, but also "...emerges from the disclosure or presentation of being(s) in relation to one another in a world to a receptive or open human being"[18]. This idea is of particular importance to Gadamer in framing his hermeneutics for two reasons: first, the "situatedness" of interpreters of past texts constitutes an "historical horizon" which is the aggregate of prejudices (a term Gadamer uses without its contemporary pejorative connotation[19]); however, this horizon can be *expanded* through the "fusion of horizons."

Gadamer's "hermeneutical situation" is constrained, but not wholly determined by these prejudices (which are bound to change) because:

> In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no

> more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves*[20].

Second, inquiry, and by extension the process of understanding, is not only a recognition of our own position within a tradition and its concomitant philosophical, religious, and conventional prejudices but also a recognition of the situatedness of an originary text, its author, and the question which the text stands as an attempted response to. Inquiry thus stands as an attempt to bridge these two situations — of the interpreter and the interpretant — with a minimal loss of meaning in the process. Thus, interpretation is intrinsically dialogical: "If one is really to learn anything from a text or a person," Catherine Zuckert tells us, "and so expand one's own horizon, one has to be open to the possibility that the other view is correct and one's own is wrong"[21]. But perhaps more importantly for Gadamer's overall project, the interpretive act is also an act of practical judgment along the lines of Aristotle's conception of *phronesis*, a formulation that was to assist Gadamer in reducing the intellectual distance between Plato and Aristotle in his interpretations of both the *Philebus* and the *Statesman*. This also had the practical effect of deflating Heidegger's approach to Plato through Aristotle's criticisms, as mentioned above.

This divergence in theory of understanding implies that the fundamental difference between Heidegger's and Gadamer's interpretive stances, both of which reach back to their differing interpretations of the Greeks, is that while Heidegger insisted on an exploration and re-appropriation of our received tradition through an aggressive interrogation of its texts, Gadamer suggests that such a project is best served by the interpreter coming into dialogue with the text itself[22]. The concept of the "fusion of horizons" that he stresses thus becomes not only a "hermeneutical mediation between past and present" but a re-appropriation of the dialectic itself[23]. Socrates serves as the model for this method of achieving understanding, which Ambrosio calls "the discipline of dialogue," or:

> [...] an experiential structure in which those who seek understanding and access to the truth submit themselves to the power of language to call human existence originally into question and allow themselves to be led by that power into the play of question and answer which constitutes philosophical conversation, as exemplified in the virtue and integrity of Socrates' way of living[24].

Briefly unpacked, this complex claim can be read as accurately thematizing several of Gadamer's main concerns in drafting a theory of human understanding: first, understanding and access to the truth are both experiences, and are specifically processes, not actions or events. Second, the "leading" power of language which calls existence into question is identified, for Gadamer, with the privileged status of the question as that which defines the terms of the conversation in a dialogue[25]. Third, question and answer and, by extension, the process of understanding is a "playful" game in the Wittgensteinian mode which "...allow[s] us to linger leisurely in the neighborhood of truth, so that by passing continually back and forth among those means we may catch a glimpse of what is meant"[26]. Fourth, and perhaps most important to Gadamer's overarching desire to establish the proximity of Plato to Aristotle, Socratic dialogue is not simply a virtue or a means to pleasure, but a way of life. Conceived as a kind of *phronesis*[27], Gadamer's vision of the dialectic undermines several of Heidegger's key criticisms[28] and shows, in opposition to Aristotle, that *phronesis* can indeed carry a theoretical component through the philosophical approach to the Forms[29]. It is clear that Gadamer imports this Aristotelian concept for talking about the Platonic dialogues for a specific purpose: Socratic dialogue, an intrinsically ethical undertaking, is itself a kind of *phronesis*, an "intellectual virtue," an expression of practical judgment that combines his traditional concept of a capacity with a moral component. Gadamer writes:

> Although practicing this virtue means that one
> distinguishes what should be done from what should not,
> it is not simply practical shrewdness and general
> cleverness. The distinction between what should and
> should not be done includes the distinction between the
> proper and the improper and thus presupposes a moral
> attitude, which it continues to develop[30].

The ethical and open-ended character of Plato's philosophy leads Gadamer back into the dialogues themselves. It is not only the subject-matter that is characterized, through Plato's continual concern with *arete* and his early utilization of elenchtic structure and idealizations, but rather that the logical structure of dialectic itself shows these two characteristics as well. This is a theme best developed by Gadamer in the section of *Truth and Method* entitled "Analysis of Historically Effected Consciousness"[31], to which I now turn in order to develop the connections between dialectic and Gadamer's theory of understanding in general.

2. The model of Platonic Dialogue in *Truth and Method*

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer sees the recovery of the fundamental hermeneutic problem as starting from the concept of application [32]. As we have already seen in the previous section, Gadamer's modified understanding of *phronesis* is of particular use in understanding the philosophical background of this concept, particularily given Gadamer's treatment of understanding as a "special case of applying something universal to a particular situation"[33]. Because Aristotle responds to Plato's cognitive-metaphysical attempt to justify ethics by showing that equating virtue with knowledge is a much less satisfactory response to questions of morals than one based in practice and habituation, he is confronted with the problem of the nature of moral reflection, what Gadamer calls "the problem of the moral relevance of method." He explains this problem by saying:

> If man always encounters the Good in the form of the
> particular practical situation in which he finds himself, the
> task of moral knowledge is to determine what the concrete
> situation asks of him — or, to put it another way, the
> person acting must view the concrete situation in light of
> what is being asked of him in general. But — negatively put
> — this means that knowledge that cannot be applied to the
> concrete situation remains meaningless and even risks
> obscuring what the situation calls for[34].

Moral knowledge is characterized by Aristotle as action-guiding, not as the relationship of a "[...] knower standing over against a situation that he merely observes"[35] attempting to broach a more perfect relationship of correspondence with moral reality. Again we see Gadamer attempting to reduce the gap between Aristotle and Plato as he re-conceptualizes *phronesis* in terms of the process of the disclosure of moral truth in the process of self-construction; as we have already seen, Gadamer thinks that this process of disclosure need not exclude a theoretical component. Key to this process, which is equivalent to the dialectic in Gadamer, is the logical place of the question, conceived of as a move in the give and take of reasons in dialogue, which itself serves as a kind of suspension of prejudices. "The essence of the *question*," Gadamer writes,

> is to open up possibilities and keep them open. If a
> prejudice becomes questionable in view of what another
> person or a text says to us, this does not mean that it is
> simply set aside and the text or the other person accepted

as valid in its place....In fact, our own prejudice is properly brought into play by being put at risk. Only by being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself[36]

Challenging prejudices, as they are understood by Gadamer, is not something that can be done purely through the reflective activity of the isolated subject. What we learn from the "openness" of the question can equally be applied to dialectic — in order to pass from mere opinion to knowledge, there must be a transactional account of learning between two or more subjects.

This, taken together with the discursivity of the Socratic approach in general, leads Gadamer to the understanding that within language, there is an unchanging structure which is not also true of sensory impressions. And although Socrates admits, notably in the *Theatetus*, that there is a difference between names and things, Gadamer is keen to point out that due to the relative changeability of our sense-impressions, "[...] Socrates thought human beings had no choice, if they wanted to discover an intelligible order, but to investigate the soundness of their opinions by comparing their understanding of the meaning of things...with those of others"[37]. If we are to follow Gadamer, rather than Heidegger, in understanding Socrates' methodology, we will avoid attributing to the latter an attempt to *establish* a correspondence between word and thing. Far from sophistic contradictions, Socrates' desire to establish agreement with his interlocutors need not even be seen as "mere conventional agreement," as Zuckert puts it[38]. Rather, Gadamer wants to take Socratic dialectic as affirming that, insofar as things have an eidetic aspect, they appear to be mediated through language. "The turn to the *logoi*[...]," Kidder writes:

> is not a second best way, but is the way the world is given
> to us. That things appear as mediated through language
> rather than directly through the senses means that they
> appear eidetically, i.e., that out of the fluctuation of
> appearances, something relatively stable, unchanging, and
> universal emerges[39].

Indeed, as Gadamer points out, the beginning of Greek philosophy starts with the assumption that the word is *only* a name, and not that it has an ontological connection with being, or that it names being[40].

Gadamer's further analysis of Platonic dialogue continues to focus on the structure of the question: he distinguishes the "true question" from the merely pedagogical or rhetorical question[41]; defines a "slanted" question in terms of

the only "apparent indeterminacy" into which it leads us in making a decision about an answer[42]; and assures us that the openness of a given question is not boundless, but rather limited through the horizon of how the question is both framed and foregrounded[43]. More importantly, however, Gadamer accepts the priority of the question over the answer. In the context of connecting an account of the dialectic with the Arisotelian strategy of solving specialized logical problems, Gadamer says:

> Knowledge always means, precisely, considering
> opposites. Its superiority over preconceived opinion
> consists in the fact that it is able to conceive of possibilities
> as possibilities. Knowledge is dialectical from the ground
> up. Only a person who has questions can have knowledge,
> but questions include the antithesis of yes and no, of being
> like this and being like that. Only because knowledge is
> dialectical in this comprehensive sense can there be a
> "dialectic" that explicitly makes its object the antithesis of
> yes and no[44].

In short, the key task of the dialectician is differentiation (*dihairesis*), but to what end? In privileging the question, what can be said about what we should expect from an answer?

A good deal, if Gadamer is correct in his assumption that "...in Plato's dialectic the concern is still that Doric harmony of *logos* (word) and *ergon* (deed) that gives Socrates' refutational enterprise its particular *ethos* (character)"[45]. The ethical character that Gadamer imputes to Plato's idealist metaphysics implies that not only is there intrinsic, epistemic-based worth in the Forms, and thus in the pursuit of the Forms[46], but that in this dialectical pursuit, there is a practical-ethical goal as well. "The dialectical art of making distinctions," Gadamer says:

> allows us to distinguish the good from the bad or, as we
> might say with moral reserve, to distinguish the right thing
> to do from everything which would not be right. But in its
> full extent this art has to be applicable to knowing anything
> worth knowing[47].

It is the case that one of the products of dialogue is an increasing sense of *self-knowledge*; overcoming mere opinion in ourselves through the realization of its inferior status can be seen as the meta-level goal of any inquiry. "Plato's most abstract way of expressing this phenomenon," Gadamer notes, "is to say that we confuse *ta metechonta* (things which take part [in the truth]) with *ta*

auto ([truth] itself)"[48]. This internal change in the dialectician, to be intelligible at all, must take place in reference to some standard of truth, however. The dialectic must, in short, penetrate to some end beyond the mere edification of the philosopher.

For Gadamer, this priority of the question also puts essential limits on method as a tool for the acquisition of knowledge; indeed, these limitations may be seen as the overarching theme of *Truth and Method* as a whole. This view may seem to conflict with the entire idea of a "Socratic method" of questioning, as he realizes, but it seems that two aspects of Gadamer's interpretation if Plato defuse the conflict. The first of these is that while "...Socratic-Platonic dialectic raises the art of questioning to a conscious art"[49], this is not an art that can be understood in the typical sense of a *techne*. I deal with how dialectic can be understood, in a way faithful to Plato, in the following section, as well as treating the question raised above about the practical goals of dialectic. The second is Gadamer's special interpretation of the Idea of the Good, the goal of Socratic inquiry as formulated by Gadamer; this is the subject of section four below, where doubts will begin to be raised about the theoretical goal of dialectic.

3. Grounding the Forms: *Phaedo, Republic, Philebus*

Gadamer's understanding of the Idea of the Good revolves around an essential re-interpretation of Plato's purpose in the *Republic*. The first movement of this re-interpretation is to shift the focus from justice to the Good itself; Gadamer's liberal interpretation of the essential question of this piece is framed as, "Is the Good pleasure, as is commonly conceived, or is it *phronesis* "[50]? The challenge of the brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book II has ruled out pleasure as an option — Socrates' project has been delimited as a search for the intrinsic qualities which characterize justice and, by extension, the Good. And, as both Gadamer and C.D.C. Reeve[51] have noted, "...the Good cannot be understood using *techne* as a model...precisely because Socrates continually uses this *techne* model in his critique and refutation of the views of his partners in the discussion"[52]. This is simply to say that in the aporetic dialogues, which are also often characterized by the use of *techne* as examples or "craft analogies," the Good is defined only in a negative way. As has already been briefly indicated in the first section, the unsatisfactoriness of this meta-ethical position, coupled with Plato's desire to distance his philosophy from mere sophism, leads to Plato's turn to the *logoi*, a move which correlates with the abandonment of sense-perception as well as conventional understanding in the definition and determination of concepts[53]. Gadamer's appropriation of Socrates thus begins with the *Republic*, where the philosopher has been cast as "...a mythical figure in whom knowledge of the

Good ultimately coalesces with knowledge of the true and knowledge of being in a highest *theoria* as it were"[54]. Moving beyond everything else in the intelligible realm, as Plato's Socrates does in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, toward the transcendent Good, the link with the aporetic dialogues and their concern with *arete* is established. In the *Philebus*, Plato's project seems to be to secure the practical foundations of knowledge of the Good as *phronesis*, but of a kind that aims at self-sufficiency, and so undergirds the movement in the earlier dialogues toward the transcendent Good as the movement of a single mind rather than a group effort, such as the first book of the *Republic* might suggest.

Let us begin with the *Phaedo*, in which Socrates is concerned to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, along the way reiterating the doctrine of recollection central to the epistemological question of the *Meno* [55]. With the understanding that the only true virtue is wisdom[56], Socrates describes the dependence of epistemology on eschatology:

> It really has been shown to us that, if we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe things in themselves with the soul by itself. It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely wisdom, as our argument shows, not while we live; for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things are true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so after death[57].

Despite the paradoxical nature of this astounding claim, Socrates makes good on his promise to Simmias and Cebes to show how the only proper training for the attaining of knowledge is practicing philosophy in the right way, namely being "altogether estranged from the body and desir[ing] to have [one's] soul by itself"[58]. Although Socrates continues his derogation of the somatic throughout the dialogue, it is not until more than halfway through the *Phaedo* that he introduces the dialectic as a self-conscious recognition of the procedure that he has been following all along with Simmias, Cebes, and Phaedo. In comparing one's reliance on the perception of the senses with the "ruin to the eyes" posed by looking directly at an eclipse of the sun, Socrates admits that he "...must take refuge in discussions and investigate the truth of things by means of words"[59]. The particular sort of relativism posed by sophism's technique of "studying contradictions" pushes Socrates toward discourse itself — that is, discourse toward the end of understanding — as being intrinsically worthwile. He says:

We should not allow into our minds the conviction that
argumentation has nothing sound about it; much rather we
should believe that it is we who are not yet sound and that
we must take courage and be eager to attain soundness,
you and the others for the sake of your whole life still to
come, and I for the sake of death itself[60].

Further, for Socrates, the purpose of argumentation is not to get the better of
a disputant for the sake of agreement, but rather that Socrates himself should
"be thoroughly convinced that things are so"[61]. Truth, not consensus, is the
goal of the dialectic. Hypothetical reasoning, leading toward the definitional
kind of knowledge that is characteristic of the Socratic dialogues, exemplifies
this point. Socrates says, "If someone...attacked your hypothesis itself, *you
would ignore him* and would not answer until you had examined whether the
consequences that follow from it agree with one another or contradict one
another"[62]; this precisely must be done, he emphasizes, if the philosopher is
to discover any truth. While our understanding of the hypothetical character
of the dialectic can be sound, what is less clear is precisely what the character
of this knowledge (what is "free from hypothesis"[63]) as the goal of the
examination of hypothesis might be. From the perspective of the divided line,
as John Sallis has noted, our only standpoint for understanding this
knowledge as *episteme* is by analogy to the lower section of the line of
dianoia. He writes:

Like the upward-moving *dianoia*, [dialectic] begins with
hypotheses and, according to Socrates' account, attempts
to move upward so as to get "behind" the hypotheses. In
this respect, then, *episteme* is described as simply an
upward-moving *dianoia* carried through to completion.
From the viewpoint of *dianoia* it is, of course, difficult to
say very much about what this completion involves.
Nevertheless, in Book VII the completion is described in
various ways; yet in every case it is the analogy with
dianoia that is primarily operative[64].

What is clear is that Socrates insists that the "completion" of the definitional
procedure begun in *dianoia* and ending in *episteme* is the grasp of the Good
itself[65].

What is important here is that although dialogue is an inherently social
endeavor, the quality of self-directedness that Plato seems to be hinting at in
the *Phaedo* goes a long way toward understanding Gadamer's treatment of
phronesis. As something that transcends the mere distinction between

practical and theoretical knowledge, the process of dialectic (and its outcome)
is, as we have seen above, a "way of being," a disposition distinguishing
Socrates from the mere sophist. "The pivotal reason why dialectic is only
dialectic," Gadamer writes,

that is, a process of giving and receiving justification, and
not knowledge like that of a handworker or knowledge in
the so-called sciences — is plainly that talk which confuses
and confounds does not constitute a threat in both these
other realms in the same way that it threatens inquiry into
the Good[66].

This perspective reduces sophistic rhetoric to *techne* itself, a status which
disqualifies it from being true philosophical dialogue because the latter's self-
directedness (its aim toward truth, not necessarily for the disputant but for the
philosopher) means that it is only successful insomuch as it does not
"confuse and confound" the Socratic interpolator.

Moreover, the potential dangers of the use of language in attaining
philosophical understanding are revealed in the *Philebus*. In the course of
inquiring whether pleasure or knowledge is the primary Good for humankind,
Socrates tells Protarchus that discourse is a gift of the gods for learning and
teaching. Yet "clever ones among us" engaged in eristic discourse ply their
treatment of important issues, like the relationship of the one and the many,
with banalities that confuse the central point[67]; in particular, Gorgias the
sophist is representative of this technique. Socrates, however, seems to want
to make a stronger point here, namely that discourse itself can be an
impediment to knowledge. He says:

[...] it is through *discourse* that the same thing flits around,
becoming one and many in all sorts of ways, in whatever it
may be that is said at any time, both long ago and now.
And this will never come to an end, nor has it just begun,
but it seems to me that this is an "immortal and ageless"
condition [Homer] that comes to us with discourse[68].

Nonetheless, he maintains that dialectic, unlike all other sciences, is capable
of reaching "certainty, purity, truth, and what we may call integrity among the
things that are forever in the same state..."[69].

By turning toward a consideration of the quality of reflective self-
directedness that was mentioned in the context of the *Phaedo*, we may be able
to resolve this tension between discourse and dialectic. Although the
outcome of the debate between knowledge and pleasure, or as the argument

shifts (around 63 e), between reason and pleasure, firmly sides with reason, reason/knowledge is not found in the dialogue to be the *primary* good for humans; that place is reserved for the Good itself, introduced into the argument fairly late in the game (60 b) and weakly defined throughout. What is clear is that the superiority of the Good is established by its qualities of "autonomy and...the power of self-sufficiency and perfection"[70]. Socrates makes the argument for this to Protarchus when he says:

> SOCRATES: And are we also agreed on this point....[t]hat the difference between the nature of the Good and everything else is this?
> PROTARCHUS: What is it?
> SOCRATES: Any creature that was in permanent possession of it, entirely and in every way, would never be in need of anything else, but would live in perfect self-sufficiency. Is that right?
> PROTARCHUS: It is right.
> SOCRATES: But didn't we try to give them [pleasure and knowledge] a separate trial in our discussion, assigning each of them a life of its own, so that pleasure would remain unmixed with intelligence, and, again, intelligence would not have the tiniest bit of pleasure?
> PROTARCHUS: That's what we did.
> SOCRATES: Did either of the two seem to us self-sufficient at that time for anyone?
> PROTARCHUS: How could it?[71]

The standard by which the virtues are judged in the *Philebus* turns out to be self-sufficiency; the Good, as the only wholly self-sufficient thing, is judged to be the highest of them. If we link *phronesis* to the Good, as Plato wants, we admit that another standard of self-knowledge is self-sufficiency. Rational discourse must, in order that intelligence move toward the same standard of self-sufficiency as the Good itself, push beyond public reasoning to the private. In a certain sense, if this analysis is correct, Plato has created an ideal of reason opposing itself to the sophists. Whereas the sophists exploit wholly conventional (and therefore wholly societally-based) systems of concepts, Plato seems to want to move toward a perfected subjective understanding of the Good by one individual. In the *Republic*, this individual is the philosopher-king.

In the *Republic*, Plato's anti-sophistic crusade is widened to an extraordinary extent. Using a simple inquiry into the nature of justice as an entry point, Socrates intends, as he did in the *Protagoras*, to investigate the

nature of the virtues. But the diremption between Book I and the rest of the *Republic* gives us good cause to see that this investigation has the ulterior motive of showing that no sophistic account of justice can itself provide a theory of the unity of the virtues in its most practical instantiation: that of a working *politeia*. Gadamer sees the *Republic*'s inquiry into this "unity in multiplicity" as working on several levels. On the level of Socrates' stated intention, the parallel between the harmony of the elements of the soul and of the citizens of the ideal *polis* is to be established. On another, the essential linkage between the epistemological and ethical dimensions of the Platonic project is established by Book IV, where the "traditional" virtues of courage, moderation, and the like are re-interpreted by Socrates so as to emphasize their epistemic content. "The universal meaning of courage," Gadamer points out by way of example,

> [...] to which Plato is pointing, becomes plain if one places courage in a more general and comprehensive frame of reference, one that includes civil courage. Above all, courage is needed in response to the danger of conformism — courage, that is, which does not allow itself to be misled but 'knows'[72].

The idea of the virtues in Book IV now implies that they must be justified, not merely instatiated in a paragon and then imitated. In the *Republic*, Gadamer says, "*Arete* is not to be thought of at all as a unity or multiplicity of ways of behaving primarily presented to an observer. Rather, it is self-knowledge, *phronesis*"[73]. In the end, both unification and justification of the virtues is accomplished in reference to the Good.

In the *Republic*'s ideal city, "every soul pursues the Good and does whatever it does for its sake" and every soul is led by a guardian who knows the ways in which things are Good[74]. The means to this knowledge, characterized by Socrates as understanding rather than mere thought, is revealed in Book VI as the dialectic. There Plato describes the highest form of intellection as the treatment of hypotheses toward reaching the "unhypothetical first principle of everything," moving toward a resolution "from forms to forms," and "without making use of anything visible at all"[75]. The resolution is ultimately found in the Idea of the Good, which serves the ontological purpose for Plato of providing essential being and truth to all the other Forms:

> In the knowable realm, the form of the Good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that

is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it[76].

The epistemic aspect of the Good which makes it problematic for commentators on Plato is that, because of its status in the hierarchy of Forms, virtually nothing can be shared about its nature with others, once grasped. The Idea of the Good, presented in such a way, is another confirmation of the ultimate self-directedness of the philosophic enterprise: the essentially public quest for the Good of Socratic philosophers is turned, at its apex, into a private experience, only the practical implications of which can be shared with others[77].

What aspect, then, of dialectic, is primary on this Platonic characterization? Recall that Gadamer, particularily in *Truth and Method*, favors the dialectic virtue of openness in his theory of the understanding. In the representative dialogues examined above, all of which in one way or the other paradigmatically broach the subject of how philosophers are to come to the Idea of the Good, Plato seems to have taken a very similar stance toward openness as the virtue of dialogue which brings us to the highest level of understanding and intelligibility. However, as I maintain in the final section, Plato's internal argument in the *Phaedo*, *Philebus*, and *Republic* tells a very different story than the argumentative structure of the works themselves. To make this point, I will introduce the distinction between elenchtic and consensus-forming dialogue; the former of these is characteristic of Gadamer's theory of understanding, but the latter, never the former, is used by Plato to illustrate the path of the philosophy to the Good.

4. The Form of the Good: An Essential Tension

In the previous section, the point was made that part of dialectic's value is its self-directedness, or its ability to assist the truth in coming into being within philosophers. Dialogue is therefore a way of life and more than mere *techne*. For Gadamer, dialectic that reaches toward the Good is paradigmatic of true *phronesis*, since no body of knowledge is at one's disposal for the solutions of questions raised about the Good[78].

If we follow Sallis's visual metaphor for the structure of the *Republic* of an ascending, then descending line, we find the cave allegory at the centerpoint of Plato's argument[79]. In *The Idea of the Good*, Gadamer also treats the allegory centrally, but urges a certain distance from the metaphorical depth of

the allegory itself. As Sallis implicitly does by locating the cave image as the lynchpin of the work, Gadamer asks what the function of the allegory is in the dialogue as a whole. In answer, he writes:

> It is intended to dispel the illusion that dedication to philosophy and the theoretical life is wholly irreconciliable with the demands of political practice in society and the state. The theme is the blinding by the brightness that befalls those accustomed to the dark, and conversely, the blinding of those who leave the brightness and enter the dark[80].

The point of this theme is the superiority of those who know the Good over those who remains caught in mere conventions. For Gadamer, the Good as it is experienced by the philosopher-king who returns from the outside of the cave stands entirely outside the traditional opposition of theory and practice — in truth, it is of no interest to anyone save the one who was prepared for it, the philosopher. Thus the knowledge of the Good is posed analogously to knowledge of one's own advantage, insofar as the consensus of others is of no importance to an individual regarding either. "It is instructive that here," Gadamer writes, "the rationality in the relationship of means to ends suffices to illustrate the knowledge involved in knowing the Good — suffices, that is, to establish irrefragably that it transcends all conventions"[81].

Casting the rationality of knowing the Good in terms of knowledge of means and ends that transcends mere convention illuminates the telos that characterizes the Good as goal for the philosopher. But the nature of this telos is unclear: as it relates to the guardian struggling toward philosophic insight in the cave allegory, we can detect both an internalization of the virtues which give one a sense of this telos, as well as an inner struggle *against* the difficult work of reaching toward the Good. About this conflicted figure, Socrates tells us:

> And if someone dragged him away from there [the cave floor] by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight, wouldn't he be pained and irritated at being treated this way? And when he came into the light, with the sun filling his eyes, wouldn't he be unable to see a single one of the things now said to be true[82]?

Clearly, Socrates is here bringing into metaphor the technique of his own maieutic method, but it is startling how different this method is from

Gadamer's. The *Republic*, like the *Phaedo* and the *Philebus*, contains a moment of abdication of true dialogue (in the former, in Book II) in favor of the automatic gainsaying of Socrates' position by his interlocutors. And, as we have already noted, these are the dialogues in which this method, which is dialectic in form only, attains some conception of the Good.

It makes sense, then, to invoke the familiar distinction between the earlier dialogues which feature the technique of the *elenchus*, as opposed to middle and later dialogues which do not, in evaluating Gadamer's position on understanding. The model of Platonic dialogue sketched in section two is clearly oriented toward the elenchtic dialogues; Gadamer seems to treat this form of dialectic as paradigmatic in *Truth and Method* when he says that "a person skilled in the 'art' of questioning is a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion"[83]. The victor in the elenchtic works is always language: the definition of the concept in question is undetermined, and no opinion, even that of Socrates, is capable of ending the questioning and bringing consensus.

Because we do not see this structure in later dialogues, it makes sense to contrast the elenchtic dialogues with what I will provisionally call consensus-forming ones. Although there are many methods for the formation of consensus, I have indicated above that Socrates appears to be "leading the witnesses" through the testing of hypotheses, generally through the predetermined agreement of a common goal. Since to negate the position of his interlocutors in these dialogues as genuinely seeking understanding with Socrates (and therefore to treat them merely as straw men themselves) would be to negate the logical structure of the arguments themselves, we must assume that the dialectic of consensus is not *merely* a narrative tool of Plato's. Rather, the shift in the method of dialogue seems to indicate that Plato realized certain argumentative structures he had employed in his earlier dialogues were unsatisfactory both logical and in the service of the project of ethical justification; he thus abandoned them for another model[84].

This way of looking at Platonic dialectic, and Gadamer's appropriation of it, seems to indicate an paradox in Gadamer's own theory of understanding. The question raised is this: if the model of elenchtic dialogue, based on the virtue of radical openness and its concomitant possibilities for the fusion of horizons, cannot bring us to the Good, then how are we to reach consensus about the Good and how to reach it at all? It seems that we must either modify Gadamer's theory of understanding, if it is to be useful in answering this question, or accustom ourselves, like Richard Rorty, to the furtherance of the philosophical project as "merely conversation," ad infinitum[85]. In the final section, I offer a few Gadamerian suggestions as to a resolution.

5. The Erosion of Openness: Some Political Considerations

In his treatment of Plato's *Seventh Letter* [86], Gadamer makes it clear that he sees the proper reading of all the Platonic dialogues as being achieved through the lens of Plato's own autobiographical statements. In this letter, Plato expresses his disillusionment with the "incurable" state constitutions of his day and, in abandoning a political career, urges that state leaders be philosophically educated. The *Republic*, Plato's formal statement of this kind of education, is thus read by Gadamer not as an exercise in foundationalist justification for reflective philosophical practices, in morality as well as all areas of life, but as an idealization with a concrete purpose, namely reform of the cultural and political conventions of the *polis* [87]. Unquestionably, the *Republic* is a dialogue which asks critical questions about justification, particularily in Book I when various aspects of rationalized self-interest are laid bare (in the cases of Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus) through Socrates' questioning of commonly assumed conventions. Since Plato, in the continuance of the dialogue past the aporia at the end of the first Book, holds that traditional norms have come to need justification (which the sophists give only in terms of success), various permutations of the craft analogy are attempted in an effort to "...demonstrate the inadequacy of the *techne* concept for attaining a clear concept of knowledge of the Good and the nature of *arete*"[88]. Before Socrates leads us into his blow-by-blow exposition of the ideally just state, we are left with an *aporia* about the justification of justice itself, an important problem given *dikaiosyne*'s privileged place among other virtues.

For Gadamer, this kind of *aporia* demands not only further questioning, but self-questioning. In the *Meno*, the dialogue which thematizes this demand for Gadamer,

> [Plato]...shows that reaching the *aporia* in which Meno's attempts to determine the nature of *arete* as an end is the precondition for raising the question of *arete* in the first place. But here, raising the question means questioning oneself. The knowledge in question can only be *called forth*. All cognition is re-cognition. And in this sense it is remembrance of something familiar and known[89].

In questioning, the questioner also questions herself; this procedure can be, in Platonic terms, both eidetic and differentiating: "We always find ourselves in dialectical tension with the prejudices which take us in and parade themselves as knowledge but which really mistake the particularity and partiality of a given view for the whole truth," Gadamer notes. As we have

already seen, the key to transcending such prejudices through understanding is the personal position of the radical openness of the questioner, a factor of experience which Gadamer exemplifies through Socratic dialectic as a way of life.

But the *Republic*, read through Plato's *Seventh Letter*, also erodes the ideal of the openness of the philosophic lifestyle; indeed, Gadamer holds that since the preconditions for the ideal state would make it impossible to realize, Plato must either be demonstrating nothing more than the irretrievability of the conflict between theory and politics in the role of the philosopher-king, or he is telling us a "dialectical myth," full of "dialectical metaphors"[90]. Gadamer embraces the latter conclusion, embracing, with Strauss, an ironic rather than utopian interpretation of Socrates' argument, but with the notable difference that the irony is other-, rather than, self-directed and thus Socrates is not presenting an alternative to politics at all[91]. As such, the *Republic*'s meaning is to relate its utopian characteristics as sketched by Socrates to their opposites in order to find a middle ground for improvement of potentially "incurable" existing conditions. "Per se, the institutions of this model city are not meant to embody ideas for reform. Rather, they should make truly bad conditions and the dangers for the continued existence of a city visibile *e contrario*"[92]. On this view, Plato's philosopher-king is not an abstraction, but rather the living admission that both aiming at the Good and knowing the real pertain to the political actions of statesmen *as well as* to theoretical life. The idea of the philosopher-king stands as a paradigm of moderation between the extremes of power and knowledge, and is thus more than merely a negative point about the relation of politics and philosophy on Plato's part.

As I attempted to illuminate in the previous section, Gadamer's functional interpretation of the cave allegory and the Idea of the Good distance his Plato somewhat from the standard metaphysical picture of his project. Because the philosopher-king stands in the closest relation to the Good of any citizen in the state, I think it fair that Gadamer's revisionary understanding of the Good may illuminate what has hopefully, at this point, shown itself as an inherent tension between Gadamer's classical philosophy and his hermeneutics: that by modelling his theory of understanding on Socratic dialogue and the virtue of "radical openness," Gadamer undermines his own treatment of the philosopher-king's (or indeed any philosophically educated statesman's) role as the *practical, moderate, giver of laws* in a state. That is to say, Gadamer's understanding of understanding in *Truth and Method* privileges method over consummation, which in terms of Socratic dialectic means the elevation of questioning over consensus. This vision leads, as do the earlier dialogues on the nature of the virtues, to the *aporiai* of thinking.

From a perspective internal to the *Republic*, however, Gadamer's analysis of Socratic dialectic has been shown to be deficient in ways that favor

consensus. Gadamer's anti-metaphysical understanding of the Idea of the Good as a standard of ethic-political justification derives its normative weight from its status as an ideal for intersubjective agreement. In the third and fourth sections, I pointed to characteristic movements in the structure of the dialogues in the *Phaedo*, *Philebus* and the middle books of the *Republic* which indicate that the virtue of openness, the give-and-take of the elenchtic dialogues and Book I of the *Republic*, and the definitional perplexity common to both Socrates and his interlocutors is missing; it is replaced by an attempt, however forced and sometimes founded on faulty argumentation, to reach a consensus about substantive meta-ethical positions. This is not a problem for Plato, but it is germane to Gadamer's appropriation of Plato, for if my analysis is correct, the *process* for reaching understanding and its logical outcome, consensus, are the result of two very differenct dialectical structures.

Paulette Kidder's comments are instructive in this dilemma. The virtue of openness, she proclaims, is not the *only* virtue required for understanding, although it is the one stressed repeatedly by Gadamer. She writes:

> Is there not also a place for the virtue embodied in the *eidos* hypothesis, that is, for the steadfastness with which Socrates — guided by the *logoi* — defines terms and makes distinctions, sticking to the topic at hand while making is way through sophistic distinctions.... The Socratic practice of distinguishing the essential from the inessential, and of steadily pursuing a line of thinking, is indeed a central hermeneutic virtue[93].

Kidder is of course correct to suggest this, especially given that openness as a virtue is not *especially* prized in the consensus-forming dialogues, but seemingly given equal weight with clarity, consistency, and the formulation of definitions. In fact, in the dialogues we looked at above, radical openness is arguably only a trait of Socrates' interlocutors, who seem to display only one side of the Socratic demand for self-knowledge. While they are open enough to absorb Socrates' point of view, they fade into obscurity as each book progresses, and as Gadamer would say, each fails in "holding undisconcertedly to what lies before one's eyes as right, and in not allowing anything to convince one that it is not"[94]. The limits of radical openness that we may discern from Socratic method force us into the pragmatic consideration that any theory of understanding must be predicated toward understanding *of something*. If consensus is our ideal normative goal in communication, then our method of reaching understanding must presume in every case that open questions are to be resolved, and not merely prized for their theoretical purity.

Conclusion

"A reflection on what truth is in the human sciences must not try to reflect itself out of the tradition whose binding force it has recognized," Gadamer tells us in *Truth and Method*'s introduction[95]. This paper has attempted to address this thought from the perspective of attempting to determine, not truth itself or the truth of reflection, but what the constitution of binding force of a tradition might be, and when it might be legitimately overcome. Given Gadamer's reliance on a particular interpretive stance on Socratic dialectic and Plato's Idea of the Good, the reader of *Truth and Method* begins to realize that its author's view of this binding force is strongly oriented toward explanation in terms of the reflective, self-directed individual who experiences enlightenment in contemplation of the Idea of the Good. In Gadamer's sense, the Good is the normative ideal for intersubjective agreement. Yet this is not an enlightenment that we should assume, given his account, is available to everyone, or one that emerges equally for the partners in a dialectical exchange.

This paper has spent much of its time presenting two divergent perspectives — dialogue leading to self-sufficient contemplation and dialectical inquiry oriented toward consensus — which are both found within the Platonic corpus. I have been arguing that while Gadamer founds much of the basis of his theory of understanding in *Truth and Method* on the former, it is in fact the latter that (paradigmatically in the *Republic*) brings Socrates closer to the *eide*. Several reasons for this tension have suggested themselves, but I have favored a "political" solution to the tension which, using Gadamer's own analysis of Plato in his own social context through the *Seventh Letter*, attempts to show how idealizations such as the Good serve as "dialogical myths" oriented toward fusing theory and practice toward constructive change. The narrative of the *Republic*, an extended illustration of how such change might occur, is itself an exercise in reconciling the private search for truth with the need for public coordination and harmony. Each interpretation of that particular myth since Plato reveals many of our own sympathies as to how to strike a balance, and when we make that interpretation, it is the right one for us.

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Notes

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2 In particular, see Robert J. Dostal, "Gadamer's Continuous Challenge: Heidegger's Plato Interpretation," in Lewis Edwin Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Chicago, Open Court, 1997, p. 289-307.

3 See Gadamer, *Truth and Method* , Second Edition, New York, Continuum Publishing, 1989, p. 362 ff.

4 Francis J. Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 27, 1987, p 23.

5 Catherine Zuckert's analysis of the treatment of Socrates and the issue of correspondence in Gadamer's *Habilitationsschrift* "Plato's Dialectical Ethics" seems to concur with this emphasis on intersubjective agreement; see her *Postmodern Platos*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p 78.

6 This paper is not particularly an epistemological critique of the ontological approach to hermeneutics that Gadamer shares with Heidegger, but it can be read that way without affecting much of what I have to say. Because I am ultimately concerned only with the relationship of discursivity and consensus, I am not prepared to make any particularly substantive epistemological claims that might radically undermine Gadamer here. There is a certain sense in which Gadamer's approach, however, strongly differs from mine in that he seems to be more interested in what dialogue is *about* (at a meta-level) while I am interested in what it is *for*, or moving towards. Habermas seems to have an approach to the theory of understanding which avoids a simple epistemological critique of Gadamer; see his "On the Problem of Understanding Meaning in the Empirical-Analytical Sciences of Action," in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988.

7 See Adriaan T. Peperzak, "Heidegger and Plato's Idea of the Good," in John Sallis, ed., *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 258-60.

8 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 73.

9 Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1987, p 92.

10 Paulette Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic Eidos," *Philosophy Today* vol. 39, 1995, p 84.

11 Francis J. Ambrosio, "The Figure of Socrates in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics," in Lewis Edwin Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Chicago, Open Court, 1997, p 259.

12 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p 72.

13 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 85.

14 As Kidder points out, Gadamer considered the Platonic *eide* separate, but only in a highly qualified way (Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic *Eidos*," p. 84). I have more to say about this controversial idea as well, in section four below.

15 Dostal, "Gadamer's Continuous Challenge," p. 294.

16 In his "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger makes this contrast by saying that, "With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealment of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that cleared realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws"; in *Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell, San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1977, p. 177.

17 Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue," p. 30 ff.

18 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 86.

19 Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 269 ff. Gadamer characterizes prejudices in terms of Heideggerian fore-structure, the methodological and conceptual baggage that constitute the triad of fore-having (*Vorhaben*), fore-sight (*Vorsicht*), and fore-conception (*Vorgriff*).

20 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 306; italics original.

21 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 90.

22 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 90.

23 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 90.

24 Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue, pp. 19-20.

25 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 366 ff.

26 Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue," p. 29.

27 Dostal, "Gadamer's Continuous Challenge," p. 291.

28 Dostal, "Gadamer's Continuous Challenge," p. 291.

29 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 74.

30 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 22.

31 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 341 ff.

32 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 307.

33 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 312.

34 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 313.

35 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 314.

36 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 299.

37 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 77.

38 Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos*, p. 78.

39 Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic *Eidos*," p. 85.

40 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 405.

41 The former has a question without a questioner, the latter a questioner but no object; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 363.

42 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 364.

43 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 363.

44 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 365.

45 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith, New Haven, Yale Univesity Press, 1986, p. 44.

46 Really this is only an epistemological, not yet a normative claim.

47 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 59; italics mine.

48 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 59-60; Gadamer is referencing Republic 476 d.

49 Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*, p. 366.

50 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p 31.

51 C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 19-23.

52 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p 33.

53 Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic *Eidos*," p 85.

54 Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic *Eidos*," p 34.

55 Plato, *Phaedo*, 73 b ff.

56 Plato, *Phaedo*, 69 b.

57 Plato, *Phaedo*, 66 e. The proof of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* is of striking importance in establishing Socrates' demand for an understanding of the peculiar constraints of the philosophic lifestyle. "It is right to think then, gentlemen," he says there, "that if the soul is immortal, it requires our care not only for the time we call our life, but for the sake of all time, and that one is in terrible danger if one does not give it that care" (*Phaedo*, 107 c).

58 Plato, *Phaedo*, 67 e.

59 Plato, *Phaedo*, 99 e.

60 Plato, *Phaedo*, 90 e--91 a.

61 Plato, *Phaedo*, 91 a.

62 Plato, *Phaedo*, 101 d; italics mine.

63 Plato, *Republic*, 511 b; 533 c-d.

64 John Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1975, p. 441-42.

65 Plato, *Phaedo*, 532 b.

66 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 39.

67 Plato, *Philebus*, 16 e-17 a.

68 Plato, *Philebus*, 15 d.

69 Plato, *Philebus*, 59 c.

70 Plato, *Philebus*, 67 a.

71 Plato, *Philebus*, 60 b-d.

72 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p 65.

73 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 66.

74 Plato, *Republic*, 505 e.

75 Plato, *Republic*, 513 b.

76 Plato, *Republic*, 517 b-c.

77 Plato, *Republic*, 516 e- 517 a.

78 Plato, *Republic*, pp. 41-42.

79 Sallis, *Being and Logos*, p. 455.

80 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 74.

81 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 81.

82 Plato, *Republic*, 515 e- 516 a.

83 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 367.

84 See Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, p. 22 ff.

85 See Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

86 In Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980.

87 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 69 ff.

88 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 50-51.

89 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 52.

90 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 70-71.

91 See Mara's discussion of Strauss' ironic interpretation in his *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 108-09.

92 Mara, *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*, p. 71.

93 Kidder, "Gadamer and the Platonic *Eidos*," p. 88.

94 Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good...*, p. 41.

95 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. xxiv.