Sabbatical Leave Report
Rodney Coltman, Ph.D. Professor of Philosophy
Division of Communications and Humanities
Spring Creek Campus, Collin College

Sabbatical Term: Spring 2008

My sabbatical consisted of two main parts: 1) The organization and hosting of the 26th North Texas Heidegger Symposium (NTHS), which was held at the University of Dallas on April 25th and 26th, 2008, and 2) researching, writing, and presenting a talk for the conference.

My responsibilities for NTHS (which actually began in the Fall) included the following:

• Arranging for a meeting space
• Identifying (in conjunction with the NTHS Executive Committee) and inviting participants
• Composing a publicizing the Call for Papers
• Arranging hotel accommodations and transportation for conference participants
• Arranging on-site catering for breakfast and lunch during the conference and dinner reservations for the evening banquets
• Coordinating the blind review of submitted papers
• Coordinating, designing, and publishing the conference program
• Designing and arranging signage for the conference
• Arranging for student help in manning the registration desk
• Handling all financial issues, including the collection of conference fees and sponsorship moneys and arranging payment of vendors and keynote speakers
• Serving as host for the conference

(In conjunction with the NTHS, I also arranged for Prof. Daniel Dahlstrom of Boston University to deliver a public lecture in the conference center of the the Spring Creek Campus on the afternoon of April 24th entitled “The Development of Freedom: A Phenomenological Approach.”)

The paper I wrote and presented at the conference was entitled, “Gadamer’s Voices: Speaking of/as Heidegger.” Subsequently, I reworked and expanded the paper for publication in a volume edited by Andrej Wiercinski entitled Sprache ist Gespraech: Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation (The Hermeneutic Press, forthcoming). The title of the expanded paper is “Gadamer’s Voices: A Protreptic Pedagogy of Platonic Polyphony.”

I have attached copies of the conference program and the two essays.
26th North Texas Heidegger Symposium

Program

Friday, April 25th

9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Maureen Melnyk, DePaul University
Scattered into the Many*: The Dispersion of Factual Life in Heidegger's Reading of Augustine

10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Ingo Farin, University of Tasmania
"The Neo-Kantians and Heidegger on History"

11:15 a.m. to 12:15 a.m.
Robert Wood, University of Dallas
"The Play of the Fourfold: Heidegger and Plato"

12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Lunch (on site)

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Welcome

The Third Richard Owsley Memorial Address
Dan Dahlstrom, Boston University
"The Truth of Philosophy's History: Heidegger's Contribution"

3:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.
Luann Frank, University of Texas at Arlington
"A Page from the Possible Pre-History of Being and Time: Hamann and Herder"

4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Rod Coltman, Collin College
"Gadamer's Voices: Speaking off/as Heidegger"

7:00 p.m.
Dinner at "I Fratelli"
(transportation from UD to the restaurant will be available for those who require it)

9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Michael Bowler, Michigan Tech
"Dreyfus on Heidegger: Dasein, Disclosure, and World"

10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.
Lauren Freeman, Boston University
"Hegel's Legacy: A Heideggerian Account of Recognition"

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Dale Wilkerson, University of North Texas
"Behold the Man: Heidegger's Historical Reflections in the 'Nietzsche's Word' Essay"

12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.
Lunch (on site)

1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.
Keynote Address
Will McNeill, DePaul University
"The Descent of Philosophy and the Thinking to Come: On the Radicality and Legacy of Heidegger's Phenomenology"

3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Holger Zaborowski, Catholic University of America
"A Metaphysics of Human Freedom: Heidegger on Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man"

4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Panel Presentation on Heidegger and Materialism

Jeffrey Gower, Villanova University
"Between Sovereign Power and Pure Potentiality: Agamben's Appropriation of Heidegger"

Alexi Kukuljevic, Villanova University
"Is Heidegger an Aleatory Materialist?"

Sid Littlefield, Georgia College and State University
"Lucretius Contra Heidegger: Toward a Non-Tragic Thought"

6:00 p.m.
Banquet and Cash Bar (on site)

Saturday, April 26th
Gadamer's Voices:
A Protreptic Pedagogy of Platonic Polyphony

Rod Coltman
Collin College

Preamble

Hans-Georg Gadamer's personal, academic, and philosophical encounters with Martin Heidegger are quite well known and well-documented,¹ his interpretations of Plato are extensive and readily available, and he openly confesses his indebtedness to G. W. F. Hegel in many places. So, to some extent, what I wish to explore here is nothing radically new or groundbreaking. In my view, however, the breadth and subtlety of Gadamer's encounters with his three main interlocutors have yet to be sufficiently explored. This, however, is not the place to carry out such a grand scheme, but I would like to offer a kind of propaedeutic that could be developed into a number of separate but closely related book-length projects, not the least of which would probe the hermeneutic depths of his philosophical relationships with each of the above-mentioned thinkers (although the observations below could apply as much to Gadamer's encounters with a long list of other figures, including, most notably, Aristotle). And, in spite of the singular (and, some might argue, overwhelming) influence of his philosophical and academic mentor, the overarching relationship that constitutes the Fragestellung or framework of this project is not the obvious one between Gadamer and Heidegger, but a rich, multifaceted, and extremely subtle conversation between Gadamer and Plato --- one that actually predates the Gadamer-Heidegger relationship and one that permeates Gadamer's entire corpus and Wahrheit und Methode, in particular. Consequently, I will focus most of my remarks here on the philosopher who, I would argue, functions as Gadamer's real hermeneutical mentor, that is to say, Plato.

The impetus for this project came in Atlanta in 2001 at the meeting of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, where I was fortunate enough to hear a wonderful talk by Prof. Claudia Baracchi, from the New School for Social Research in New York. Her paper, entitled "Words of Air: On Breath and Inspiration,"² essentially took on Jacques Derrida's

¹Of course, given Gadamer's frequent invocations of and open admiration for his mentor, it is hardly difficult to establish a relationship here. Gadamer himself wrote and talked about how he and his fellow students at Marburg had become "Heideggerized," and he often spoke of his trepidation about Heidegger's reception of Wahrheit und Methode. Heidegger reportedly thought that it was good but ultimately too epistemological. As the story goes, Gadamer was finally relieved to hear that, walking through the streets of Marburg one day with a visiting Jacques Lacan, Heidegger is said to have spied Gadamer's tome in a bookstore window whereupon he immediately dragged the psychologist inside and purchased it for him. It is also well known that Gadamer's fundamental idea for philosophical hermeneutics derives as much from Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity as anything else. And perhaps the best known quip about Gadamer is Habermas' characterization of him as the "urbanizer of the Heideggerian landscape."

reading of the *Phaedrus* in his essay “Plato’s Pharmacy.”

Against Derrida, she argues for the flexibility of the spoken over the written word as embodied by the multiplicity of voices speaking through Socrates in the dialogue - - for example, the rhetorician’s rhetorician (Socrates with his head covered) who outdoes Lysias’ speech on love, which Phaedrus has memorized, or the muse whom Socrates says speaks through him in his dialectical examination of love, even the cicadas singing overhead in the ‘Plato’ trees, and, at one point (as he does in many of the dialogues) Socrates actually attributes the source of his own voice to his interlocutor as he blames Phaedrus for forcing him to give the speech.

Socrates’ polyphony, Baracchi reminds us, is evident throughout the Platonic corpus (or perhaps I should say ‘across the Platonic landscape,’ given her emphasis on the crucial significance of the topology and dramatic situations of the dialogues - - an emphasis that Gadamer, of course, would be quite sympathetic too, and one with which I, too, am fascinated). But she did not enunciate in her talk (though she was clearly aware of it) the role that Plato himself plays in these dialogues - - not as a character in his own philosophical dramas (in which he never appears, of course - - at least not as a direct interlocutor), and certainly not in terms of the simplistic identification of Plato with the dramatic Socrates that plagues so many traditional readings as well as many otherwise quite sophisticated contemporary analyses of the dialogues. Rather, Socrates’ polyphony, I would argue, actually reiterates or perhaps instantiates what I will refer to as Plato’s polyphonic pedagogy: all of the voices in the dialogues, that is - - from Socrates and the Eleatic stranger, to Glaucon and Phaedrus, to Callicles and Thrasymachus, and even Euthyphro and Meletus - - all of the voices are Plato’s. All of them are literally Plato’s voices, of course as he wrote all of the words, but they are also his voices in that each interlocutor’s interactions with Socrates not only determine the direction of the conversation, but the ideas presented (even by Socrates’ apparent adversaries) are frequently not simply undermined or destroyed, but, in a sense, aufgehoben (to mix dialectics), sublated only to re-emerge as crucial facets of a later dialectical construct. (Polemarchus’ idea, in Book I of the *Republic*, of justice as doing good to friends and harm to enemies comes to mind. Socrates, we

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4 One need only peruse the texts of such luminary Plato scholars as Gregory Vlastos or Martha Nussbaum, or (more recently) Julia Annas to see how many times they invoke the phrase ‘Plato says.’ Even continental thinkers such as Heidegger and Jacques Derrida seem to be addicted to ascribing doctrines or at least philosophical positions to Plato. Part of what I will argue for here is that such attributions to Plato himself tend to ring hollow given the enigmatic status of this author who never makes any claims of his own - - except perhaps in his letters, an important exception that I address below.
5 Or perhaps a ‘de-construct’ would be more appropriate (were it not so awkward) insofar as, in spite of the by now commonplace idea that there are two kinds of dialogue in the Platonic corpus (an early Socratic form operating almost entirely in the mode of the negative dialectic in which little is produced but aporias, and a later form constituting the bulk of the texts in which Plato’s own doctrinal and less Socratic self emerges), I would also argue that Plato remains quite Socratic throughout even the latest of the dialogues - - even the most apparently didactic ones - - and that careful attention to the context and wording reveals a constant dialectical dismantling (or at least undermining) of any and all potential doctrines that appear - - including those proposed by Socrates himself. I will address this again in a slightly different context below.
recall, undermines this view by asking how one knows who one’s friends and enemies really are. Later, of course, we find that the guardians of the ideal polis must be natural philosophers - - like the dog. Why? Because dogs know who their friends and enemies are.) Plato, that is, never wastes an idea, he never introduces anything in a text that is not somehow crucial to the development of the dialogue. Each character enunciates an integral part of the overall project.

I am not suggesting that this idea of Platonic polyphony constitutes Gadamer’s interpretation of the dialogues per se, though it would certainly resonate with the literary reading of Plato that he gleaned from Paul Friedländer in the late 1920s - - even as he was becoming “Heideggerized.” I am suggesting, however, that Gadamer’s profound understanding of Platonic dialogue does permeate and inform his entire corpus (as he himself acknowledges), but not simply in the usual ways that one might detect one philosopher’s influence upon another. Gadamer may not be the literary genius that Plato was, but we could perhaps think of him as something of a ‘hermeneutical genius,’ and Wahrheit und Methode, a text that many people find rather plodding and didactic, functions as the primary evidence of what I mean by this. That is, even before he has gotten around to explicating each of his many famous ideas, such as wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein, or the so-called “fusion of horizons,” or the rehabilitation of prejudice, or the fundamental linguisticality of human Dasein, or the living virtuality of language, or the hermeneutic priority of the question, or the universality of the hermeneutic phenomenon, he is always already enacting these ideas in the very text in which he theorizes about them. In other words, just as every conceptual element of a Platonic dialogue (including the refuted ones) is subsumed by but somehow preserved in and developed through the course of the discussion, each philosophical element that Gadamer introduces in Wahrheit und Methode in the course of his various and wide-ranging, but historically situated discussions of (among many others) Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Herder, Dilthey, Schleiermacher, Husserl, and, of course, Heidegger, Hegel, and Plato, is in some way subsumed by and further developed in his ensuing elaborations of the historical development of philosophical hermeneutics. In some ways, of course, this notion of historical development might remind us more of Hegel than Plato, but, then again, my reading of Plato is perhaps more Hegelian than most (probably even than Hegel’s own), and I hope to show that this actually bolsters my argument about Gadamer’s voices.

Apples and Oranges?

Gadamer’s voices, however, are not, like Plato’s, those of contemporary figures placed into mostly fictional contexts for pedagogical and philosophical effect; instead, they are those of historical figures placed into hermeneutical context for pedagogical and philosophical effect. As I noted at the outset, and as most readers of his texts are aware, Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger function as Gadamer’s primary muses, his central voices, his triple Socrates, if you will. His Heideggerian voice is expressed (or brought to language - - zur Sprache gebracht, as the almost poetic German locution goes) in his historical, phenomenological, and ontological understanding of consciousness (or being conscious - - “Bewußt-sein,” as he himself was careful to enunciate in light of Heidegger’s concerns about Wahrheit und Methode being too epistemological). His

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6I say ‘so-called’ because I don’t think it a good translation of Horizontverschmelzung. Although ‘fusion’ is a perfectly acceptable rendering of die Verschmelzung in many contexts, it has a connotation of fixity and permanence that misses the dynamic sense of Gadamer’s expression. Something like ‘melding’ or ‘blending’ of horizons would perhaps work better.
Hegelian voice expresses itself in his historical and speculative / dialectical understanding of the self-movement of die Sache selbst (thinking of die Sache in much the way that Hegel thinks of the self-movement of the concept) and in the occurrence of the phenomenon of understanding as an Aufhebung (albeit a non-teleological one) that arises, not in logic per se, but in the living event of conversation; dialogue, therefore, is very much a speculative occurrence for Gadamer. And, finally, his Platonic voice comes to language both in his dialogical/dialectical approach to the other - - be it a person or a text - - and in the hermeneutical pedagogy that occurs in the process of dismantling and retrieving certain philosophical themes and ideas from the work of various historical philosophical figures. And this hermeneutical paideia, if you will, becomes crucial for understanding not just the big three, but Gadamer’s other voices as well.

In other words, unlike biblical and juridical hermeneutics, for example, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics does not function as a theory of interpretation waiting to be applied to specific texts. Rather, his central ideas of the play of conversation, historically-effected consciousness, and the fundamental linguisticality of human Dasein, and so on, play themselves out historically and philosophically in his texts in such a way that the very ideas he is developing are simultaneously operative in that very development, which, I admit, sounds circular. The hermeneutic circle, however, the play among and dependency upon one another of whole and part, of tradition and language, is not a vicious one; rather it is the very necessity and foundation of understanding itself. And Gadamer’s hermeneutical genius is to not simply teach us about these ideas didactically, but to allow them to unfold for us on their own from out of a coherent and insightful Destruktion and Wiederholung of key ideas and figures in that history. He is not just regaling us with his theories or even just explicating them; he is showing us how they are already operative (if rarely thematized) in the last places that a good Heideggerian like Gadamer would ordinarily be wont to look for them - - in the work of those who are most intimately involved in that very “history of metaphysics” that Heidegger attempted so scrupulously to skirt.

Plato’s pedagogy or paidagogia (literally, a leading or turning of the child), on the other hand, is not essentially historical, and it takes the form of a psychagogia (a leading or turning of the soul) which gets expressed in various places (most notably the Meno) as anamnesis (literally, ‘un-forgetting,’ which, once again, puts us in mind of Heidegger). And, as such, this Socratic / Platonic paideia is not only not didactic in the usual sense, but positively eschews the Sophistic notion of, as Socrates puts it to Glaucon and Adiemantus in Book VII of the Republic, “transplant[ing] the power of knowledge into a soul that has none, as if they were engraving vision into blind eyes.” Instead, it allows that which is forgotten (or concealed, but nonetheless always already present) to reveal itself to us once more in the process of dialectical engagement. And, in spite of those interpreters who would prefer to simply do away with Socrates’ weak

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7 Which, of course, is also a Heideggerian motif, which, in turn, suggests that none of these voices operates entirely discretely.
8 Including many other figures both historical and literary not mentioned above, a number of whom, especially the Presocratics, he focuses on elsewhere than Wahrheit und Methode.
9 I say ‘Plato’s’ here for the sake of convenience. One could just as easily say ‘Socrates’ pedagogy’ or perhaps more properly ‘Plato’s Socratic pedagogy,’ given our secondhand acquaintance with the Athenian gadfly.
10 See Republic 518c-e.
11 Republic 518c
conversation partners ('Yes, Socrates . . . No, Socrates . . . I don't know, Socrates'), if we attend to more than just the sheer logic of Plato's dialogues, we can begin to see how he allows the dramatic setting and the personalities of the interlocutors to determine the course of the conversation. Socrates, of course, thematizes this attitude repeatedly - - in nearly every dialogue - - both in terms of his rare but important explanations of the dialectic itself and his frequent and almost commonplace references to allowing the logos to determine the path of the discussion.  

Plato is even capable of suffusing an entire dialogue with metaphorical references to how the circumstances and the logos and not the intentions of the speakers themselves determine how one comes to an understanding. We only have to think of how allusions to the Odyssey suffuse the Republic. Socrates, for instance, begins his long recollection by telling us that he "went down to Piraeus,"13 echoing Odysseus' recollection to the Penelope in Book XXIII of the Odyssey, that he "went down to [Hades] to learn our best route home"14; in Book III Socrates suggests to Adeimantus that they "let the wind blow; it will set the course for the argument"15, and in Book VI he speaks of taking the "more difficult and much longer path"16; in Book VII, he even refers to the dialectic itself as a "journey";17 even the above-mentioned reference to the philosophical canine evokes the pathetic scene in Book 17 of Odysseus' old dog Argos recognizing the long-absent King of Ithaca as he makes his way back into his palace - - in spite of his divine disguise. As I see it, and if we are to accept the authenticity of the Seventh Letter, in which he directly denies it as a possibility18 (not to mention the Phaedrus, in which he perhaps does so indirectly19), then these dialogues are not, in fact, examples of philosophy done in writing. Instead, if we take Plato at his word (at least to the extent that we can determine what his 'word' is), then perhaps we can view them less as didactic than 'protreptic,' less, that is, like instances of Plato's doctrinal philosophical pronouncements than exhortations to philosophize and examples of how one would go about it if one were to heed the call. In other words, perhaps they function as a kind of substitute Socrates. Now that Socrates - - that paragon of the dialectical paideia - - is dead, the dialogues, which, unlike Aristotle's lecture notes, may well have been written for the Athenian public to read,20 act as a sort of stand in for Plato's great mentor. We may not be able to follow Socrates around any more and learn by his example to

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12And, yet again, we can detect philosophical parallels, this time with Hegel's notion of the self-movement the concept and the Gadamerian / Heideggerian phenomenon of the movement of die Sache selbst.
16Republic 435d.
17Republic 532b-c.
18Letter VII, 341b-e.
19Through Socrates' various statements to that effect, that is.
20Though, admittedly, there may only be circumstantial evidence for this. It is also possible that they were written only for the benefit of his students at the Academy, several of whom, including Aristotle, attempted to imitate them.
behave philosophically, learn how to live a philosophical life by imitating him directly, but we can read Plato’s illustrations of Socratic behavior and learn much the same thing. Plato’s texts, as Gadamer points out in several places (most notably in his 1934 essay “Plato and the Poets”\(^2\)) function protreptically rather than didactically; they are exhortative rather than pedantic; they are not Plato’s philosophy per se; instead they merely (though perhaps this is no mere thing) invite us to philosophize and serve as literary examples of how to live the examined life.

I would submit that Gadamer, too, is a pedagogue of this stripe. Just as Odysseus learns only by following the tortuous path dictated to him by Moira, Gadamer teaches us by tracing the tortuous trajectory of ‘die Sprachvergessenheit,’ the ‘forgetfulness of language,’ (echoing Heidegger’s Seinsvergessenheit) throughout the history of philosophical discourse. But, of course, what is forgotten is not only covered over, and Gadamer’s discussion in Part III of Wahrheit und Methode of Augustine’s *verbum interius* as an ontological understanding of the word is important in this respect precisely because it is one of the few moments in history that prevents “the forgetfulness of language in Western thought from being complete.”\(^2\)2 However, what I would caution against (and this is crucial to my reading and, I would argue, any truly hermeneutical reading of Wahrheit und Methode) is taking Gadamer’s analyses of Augustine (or Plato, or Hegel, or Heidegger, for that matter) as constituting his own understanding of the linguistic phenomenon any more than Parmenides’, or Theaetetus’, or even Socrates’ deliberations on a topic constitute Plato’s own thinking.\(^2\)3 Rather, we should see the *verbum interius* as one speculative moment of remembrance in the history of the forgetfulness of language that reflects or mirrors - - or perhaps refracts - - one crucial aspect of Gadamer’s overall approach to the question of philosophical hermeneutics, just as the Kantian sublime, the Heideggerian work of art, Aristotle’s *phronesis* and the Platonic idea of the beautiful are all helpful (perhaps even crucial) analogies or counter-examples for illustrating the question, but none of them by itself constitutes or embodies the entire question. And, just as the dialogues function both theoretically and ethically, both as explications of philosophical ideas (though not, I would argue, an elaboration of a particular doctrine) and as an exhortation to live a good life, which is to say an examined life, Wahrheit und Methode functions theoretically insofar as it describes a fundamental phenomenon of human existence - - the occurrence of understanding - - and ethically in that philosophical hermeneutics contains within it an implicit (and frequently quite explicit) appeal to an anti-dogmatic comportment toward the other. Gadamer essentially exhorts us to maintain an attitude of hermeneutical openness that would require that we try to make ourselves aware of our own most deeply held presuppositions and prejudices and knowingly put them at risk in order to allow for the possibility of a better understanding to emerge.\(^2\)4


\(^{2}\)3 Wahrheit und Methode: Grunzuege einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, Gesammelte Werke Band 1 (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990), 422.

\(^{2}\)4 I would argue that even Socrates’ voice in the dialogues ought not be heard as though Plato himself were speaking. In some sense, Socrates functions as just another of Plato’s characters - - albeit usually the most important one.

\(^{2}\)5 Now, I would maintain that one could infer from Gadamer’s hermeneutic phenomenology that we are in *always* affected ontologically by *every* encounter with the other, even if we both
‘But,’ one might ask, ‘Can we really compare the text of two thinkers at opposite ends of the history of philosophy? Isn’t this really an ‘apples and oranges’ situation?’ To this I would reply that at least apples and oranges are both fruit, and as such they both grow on trees and have seeds and skin and meat. I am not even sure that Plato’s dialogues and Gadamer’s Gesammelte Werke should even be considered parts of the same genre of writing. After all, Plato wrote extremely literary works, plays of a sort, in which he never says anything in his own voice, and Gadamer wrote very straightforward and, by now, very traditional philosophical narratives, and very much (or at least predominantly) in his own voice. One would think that the more apt comparison here would be to Aristotle, that great progenitor of all philosophical didacticism, who basically says, ‘here’s what I think, and here’s why I think it.’ Gadamer’s ideas may resonate with Plato’s, but can one possibly compare their ‘voices’ when they don’t even speak the same rhetorical language? This is why we need to distinguish among what I see as three different levels of discourse in these two bodies of writing, three different sets of voices in each writers work.

The Narrative, The Active, and the Operative

We have already been speaking of the first of these voices - - that is, their respective narrative voices. Gadamer, obviously, except when he attributes ideas to someone else, writes in his own first person narrative voice throughout. He basically says (à la Aristotle), ‘here’s what I think, and here’s why I think it.’ Plato, however, as we have already mentioned, never speaks in his own voice (at least not in the dialogues), and when there is an overarching narrative voice, it is usually that of a somewhat fictionalized Socrates, and even that is often presented at a remove in the form of a recollection. 25 Let us not forget, however, that the Platonic corpus itself has a thing or two to say about narrative, and that, ironically, the Socrates of Book III of the Republic might be seen to suggest that Gadamer’s narrative style, insofar as it is direct and not mimetic, would fare better in the ideal state than Plato’s own, which, of course, consists of nothing but imitation. One might be tempted to say, then, that, in some strange way, Gadamer’s writings are more properly Platonic than Plato’s. But, of course, were this to be the case, one would have to assume two things: first, that the prohibition against mimetic poetry that Book III expounds represents Plato’s actual attitude, and, second, that Plato is entirely unaware of the mimetic nature of his own texts, both of which I take to be highly unlikely. 26

No, the comparison does not really get going until we move to a second level of discourse that I will refer to as the two thinkers’ active voices. By this I mean the voices that they explicitly mention by name, the voices that we can readily identify in the texts as overtly participating in the discussion, perhaps even propounding arguments or theories of their own.

remain dogmatically entrenched in our views, but Gadamer himself will insist upon the so-called “anticipation of agreement” in order for any interaction to count as properly hermeneutical.

25 As in the beginning of the Republic, etc.

26 As I have been arguing, most of Plato’s own views remain necessarily enigmatic. He obviously had to think through each of the ideas presented in his texts, but to which ones he actually subscribes must remain a matter of speculation. Besides, as I will suggest below, there seems to be a real element of comedy (even satire) and a certain exaggeration for effect that permeates the very form of the dialogues.
For Plato, this would obviously mean Socrates, but also Glaucion, Adeimantus, Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Parmenides, Gorgias, Protagoras, Critias, the list goes on and on. But I would also include certain voices that do not speak in the first person, such as specific Sophists who are mentioned (and usually sarcastically), but certainly Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Sappho, and many other rhapsodes and writers whom the speaking characters invoke and often quote directly for one reason or another. These are the voices that Plato employs to illustrate how a philosophical idea might be painstakingly uncovered through live dialogical and dialectical engagement.

Gadamer’s active voices would include an equally extensive list, many of whom I have already mentioned: Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Herder, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and so on, but, most importantly, the big three, Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger. These are the myriad voices that Gadamer invokes directly throughout Wahrheit und Methode to illustrate the dialogical and dialectical development of various historical threads of philosophical thought that culminate in his own hermeneutic phenomenology -- dialogical because Gadamer will argue that any genuine hermeneutical encounter with a text is every bit as dialogical as a live conversation, and dialectical (though as much in the Hegelian sense than in the Platonic) because he sees every moment of understanding as a moment of understanding differently, which is to say that we are changed by the extent to which our opinions are negated by those of the other, and not annihilated but subsumed by a new and different yet related understanding -- in other words, aufgehoben. And it is this very notion of Aufhebung that brings us to the third and subtlest but, I would argue, most significant level of discourse in these two bodies of work, the operative voices, the implicit voices that permeate these texts by functioning subterraneanly, as it were, driving the ideas, shaping their forms of expression, and determining the very development of the writer’s thought, even as the reader may be almost entirely unaware of them and attentive only to the two explicit levels at which the narrative and active voices can be heard.

This notion of the operative voice, however, while it really only brings me to the precipice of the potentially endless series of projects suggested herein, is where my own propaedeutic narrative must come to a close. I will conclude, then, by merely introducing several of the main voices that I see operating subliminally in these two sets of works, many of whom will come as no surprise.

Unsung Songs

For Plato, the most obvious operative voice would, of course, be Socrates’, but unlike some commentators, I would maintain that Plato’s texts remain thoroughly Socratic, even throughout the later dialogues, after the easily recognizable ‘negative dialectic’ of the early works all but disappears as the masterful and seemingly more didactic discourse of a more ‘Platonic’ Socrates begins to take over. I have also already mentioned an implicit Homeric voice operative in Plato, what with his constant allusions, at least in the Republic, to the Odyssey. But, beyond that, I think one could make the case that the very nature of the relationship between the spoken and written word that suffuses the dialogues owes a great deal to the very orality of the culture itself and, by implication, to the tradition of rhapsodic recitation, which I imagine

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27 The Phaedrus being only the most explicit example.
28 See Eric Havelock, The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences
would only enhance the exhortative nature of Plato’s work. If, unlike Aristotle, Plato did indeed make his writings available to the public, then an image springs to mind of an average Athenian browsing through the agora, picking up a copy of Plato’s latest, and rather than hiding away in some secluded spot and devouring it silently as we might do, gathering a group of friends together and reading it out loud — perhaps even taking parts. Suddenly, Socrates is no longer dead but present in the room eliciting definition after definition from a beleaguered young Euthyphro. Perhaps, then, the seemingly ironic nature of the Platonic condemnation of the written word is somehow redeemed or recuperated in the orality of the very act of reading. This last point, alas, must probably remain speculative. To demonstrate its efficacy would likely require a Herculean effort of textual hermeneutics, philology, and even archeology or cultural anthropology.

Another great challenge would be to take into consideration Plato’s Pythagorean voice, which surely operates as forcefully throughout Plato as anyone’s, save perhaps Socrates, though I’m not even convinced of that. In addition to Pythagoras, one might also attempt to trace a Parmenidean voice and perhaps even a Heraclitean one at work beyond those texts in which Parmenides and Heraclitus are invoked explicitly. But I also see other voices at work in Plato, including a sophistic one that shows itself on more than just those occasions, such as in the Phaedrus and the Apology, when Socrates deliberately displays a mastery of rhetorical techniques that outstrips even the Sophists themselves. (Perhaps he doth, indeed, protest too much.) Then there are other ironic voices that one might discern -- a Periclean one, for instance. Pericles and Socrates, after all, may have fundamentally disagreed about the efficacy of democracy, but can one think of two more loyal and patriotic Athenians? One might even argue that, without the Periclean attempt to negotiate the conflicting demands of maintaining a powerful and thriving democratic polis in the midst of a still very Homeric and decidedly undemocratic world and the subsequent gradual and ignominious decline of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, Socrates and, by implication, Plato might not have emerged to have the intellectual, cultural, and historical effect that they did. Nietzsche, at least, seems to think that Socrates’ appeal to logic was, at bottom, an attempt to offer a cure for the disease of Sophistic rhetorical excess that infected Athens upon the advent of the plague and the precipitous death of Pericles shortly after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (a cure, in Nietzsche’s view, that itself became a disease). One could argue that both Pericles and Socrates saw the misuse of language as the great enemy of political unity and that the Peloponnesian war served as the

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29 Can there be any real doubt that Plato was an initiated Pythagorean (mathematikos), given the extent to which Pythagorean ideas operate in his texts? I am even inclined toward the (historically unestablished) claim that some have made that the Pythagorean philosopher by the name of Perictione and Plato’s mother (also named Perictione) may well be one and the same person. One wonders, at least, where Plato’s original Pythagorean connections came from if not his mother. For an interesting explication of many Pythagorean themes throughout the dialogues, see Ernest G. McClain, The Pythagorean Plato: Prelude to the Song Itself (Lake Worth, Fl: Nicolas-Hays, 1984).


31 Or, at least, Thucydides’ Pericles and Plato’s Socrates, that is.
watershed moment at which Pericles’ positive rhetoric gave way to Socrates’ negative dialectic. One could also argue, as Nietzsche does,\(^{32}\) that Plato found himself in competition with the tragedians. I might suggest, however, that his real competition as a playwright were the comedians, and especially Socrates’ pal Aristophanes. For if tragedy was about high born historical or mythological figures brought down by their own flaws (most notably a lack of hermeneutic openness\(^{33}\)), then comedy was about contemporary Greeks, mostly Athenians, who were perceived by the playwrights to be full of themselves and in needed of deflation. And what are Plato’s dialogues about if not (mostly) contemporary Greeks living in and around Athens, many of whom Socrates deflates with his dialectically-honed razor sharp wit? But, ironically, in spite of the long history of scholarship that simply assumes it, the toughest question for me is whether or not one can really identify anything like a genuine and distinctive Platonic voice operating in these amazing texts. I suspect so - - after all, Plato did write them. But, given the above considerations, it seems to me that this voice would have to amount to something far more subtle and nuanced than the simple assertion that whatever Socrates says is what Plato means.

In the present context, however, the point of teasing out these Platonic voices is to try to demonstrate the extent to which Gadamer’s own texts - - especially Wahrheit und Methode - - participate in this Platonic literary ethos in spite of their radically different styles. And to that end we need to at least identify some of the various operative voices that one can discern in Gadamer’s work. Once again, the identities of these subterranean voices will come as no surprise. What is of interest to us here is not simply that they are present in the texts but the depth and subtlety with which they function beyond the levels at which they are thematized. There is Gadamer’s Platonic voice, of course, which is, in effect, exactly what we are attempting to elaborate here. This voice, as we have been suggesting all along, reveals itself in the dialogical, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions of philosophical hermeneutics.\(^{34}\)

A pronounced Hegelian voice also suffuses the Gadamerian corpus, and to get a raw sense of this, all one would have to do is count up the total number of times he employs the word ‘aufheben’ or the phrase ‘es hebt auf’ in Wahrheit und Methode, and I do not mean in the ordinary idiomatic senses of canceling or suspending or lifting something up, but in that distinctive Hegelian sense, the best English approximation of which is probably ‘sublating.’\(^{35}\) But, insofar as philosophical hermeneutics claims to function both historically and dialectically,

\(^{33}\)E.g., in Sophocles’ Antigone.
\(^{34}\)Aristotle also operates in Gadamer, primarily through the notions of phronesis and the experiential ethos of philosophical hermeneutics, though to a somewhat lesser extent than Plato.
\(^{35}\)I don’t suggest, by the way, that one consult Truth and Method (New York: Continuum, 1989) in this regard, because the Hegelian sense of the word has been almost completely obliterated in translation. The translators of the Second, Revised Edition (Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall) did the English-speaking world a great service by correcting and supplementing the horrendous original version of Truth and Method, and, as translations go, it is an eminently readable one that flows very nicely throughout. Unfortunately, insofar as it was beyond their purview to do a complete re-translation, there are several important philosophical turns of phrase, including Aufhebung, but also Sprachlichkeit (‘linguisticality’) and a few others, that remain concealed by the English.
Hegel’s voice also operates at the deepest levels of Gadamerian thinking.

And, finally, Gadamer’s Heideggerian voice, though patent and frequently quite obvious, shows itself to us at times in completely unexpected and seemingly ironic ways. The simple fact, for instance, that Gadamer is willing to entertain a wide variety of philosophical figures who fall well within the confines of Heidegger’s history of metaphysics — even to the extent of embracing Plato and Hegel, perhaps the two most metaphysical of them all — seems at first glance to be fundamentally anti-Heideggerian. However, it is precisely through a willingness to engage ruthlessly in the very mode of Destruktion and Wiederholung that he learned from Heidegger himself that allows Gadamer to dispense with the idea that there is a ‘language of metaphysics’ in the first place, venture boldly into the very heart of the history of western philosophy, and find operating within these thinkers’ texts that which is phenomenologically worthy of retrieval.

The thesis of this prospective project, then, (i.e., that Plato rather than Heidegger is Gadamer’s true hermeneutical mentor) would clearly entail a great hermeneutical endeavor, one that would be twofold at root but ultimately manifold. A preliminary but major task would be to make a case (through detailed textual analysis and thoroughgoing contextual research encompassing philological, cultural, political, and archeological sources) for the polyphony of the Platonic corpus, with particular attention to what I have argued constitute the operative voices within it. As the ephemeral nature of some of these voices (not to mention the sheer number of them) would render a complete analysis of this sort prohibitive (at least in my lifetime), I envision several paths of exploration that could serve as illustrations of the overall point.

The first and foremost path would be to try to show that the Socratic dialectical voice does indeed operate at even the most apparently didactic moments and in the least obviously Socratic dialogues such as the Laws and the Statesman. One would do this by attempting to demonstrate 1) that no single idea proposed in any of these texts constitutes a final doctrinal word that one could attribute unequivocally to Plato himself and 2) that rarely is an idea that is put forward by a character and subsequently undermined or negated ever completely dispensed with but reemerges dialectically (albeit in a modified form) at some later point in the dialogue.

A second path might be to trace the Pythagorean elements of Plato’s thinking throughout as many dialogues as possibly (though I suspect that the earliest ones will demonstrate these elements the least). A third might be to educe some of the many ironically operative Sophistic voices from the dialogues. (One might go on to do the same for a Parmenidean and a Heraclitean voice, but these would perhaps be of less significance or our purposes.) What I would find most fascinating, however (but perhaps ultimately too difficult), would be a thoroughgoing study of the Homeric and Periclean (or perhaps Thucydidean) voices in Plato. At any rate, the first two or three of these might suffice to demonstrate the principle of the operative Platonic voice sufficiently for purposes of illustration.

The second major task of the project, however, is where a certain circularity reveals itself — a hermeneutic circularity that, in peculiar a way, enacts the very point of the entire endeavor. The point of the project is to show how various voices operate within Wahrheit und Methode (in particular, but not exclusively) in much the same way that the voices mentioned above operate throughout Plato’s dialogues. But the very functioning of these voices — including Plato’s — is exactly what would constitute the operative Platonic voice itself in Gadamer’s work. So the idea here would be to show that the Platonic hermeneutical ethos functions unthematisized within the
Gadamerian corpus by showing how various thinker’s voices (especially Heidegger’s, Hegel’s, and Plato’s) can be seen to be functioning unthematised in Gadamer. Ironically, then, to elicit the profound Heideggerian and Hegelian voices operating below the surface of Wahrheit und Methode would amount to revealing the Platonic nature of Gadamer’s texts, thereby demonstrating my overall thesis that Plato rather than Heidegger operates as Gadamer’s true hermeneutic mentor.
Gadamer’s Voices: Speaking of/as Heidegger

Rod Coltman
Collin College

(26th North Texas Heidegger Symposium)

To claim that Martin Heidegger influenced Hans-Georg Gadamer would be about as earthshattering as claiming that Plato influenced Aristotle, that Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche, that Russell influenced Wittgenstein, that Bentham influenced Mill, that Cheney influenced Bush—though I suppose that’s more of a Edgar Bergen/Charlie McCarthy kind of thing, or maybe Edgar Bergen/Mortimer Snerd would be more appropriate (those of you under fifty can Google it later). However, even though the most obvious analogue to this teacher/student relationship would seem to be the one between Plato and Aristotle, the analogy that I wish to draw here (though hardly less obvious on the surface) is one between Heidegger and Gadamer, on the one hand, and Socrates and Plato, on the other.

Now, of course, given Gadamer’s frequent invocations of and open admiration for his mentor, it is hardly difficult to establish a philosophical relationship here. In fact, Gadamer himself wrote and talked about how he and his fellow students at Marburg had become “Heideggerized,” and he often spoke of how trepidatious he was about Heidegger’s reception of Wahrheit und Methode. Heidegger reportedly thought that it was good but ultimately too epistemological. As the story goes, Gadamer was finally relieved to hear that, walking through the streets of Marburg one day with a visiting Jacques Lacan, Heidegger is said to have spied Gadamer’s tome in a bookstore window whereupon he immediately dragged the psychologist inside and purchased it for him. It is also well known that Gadamer’s fundamental idea for
philosophical hermeneutics derives as much from Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity as anything else. And perhaps the best known quip about Gadamer is Habermas’ characterization of him as the “urbanizer of the Heideggerian landscape.”

But the connection I want to explore between Gadamer and Heidegger is, I hope, a bit more subtle than these—though I must confess that this discussion is but a portion of a larger project and that these observations will apply as much to Gadamer’s encounters with several other important figures, including Plato, Hegel, and, to a slightly lesser extent, Aristotle. In fact, the overarching relationship that constitutes the Fragestellung or framework of my project is not the one between Gadamer and Heidegger, but a rather complicated and somewhat sublimated conversation between Gadamer and Plato—one that actually predates the Gadamer/Heidegger relationship and one that, I would argue, permeates Gadamer’s entire corpus, and Truth and Method, in particular.

The impetus for my project came in 2001 at the IAPL meeting in Atlanta, where I served on a panel entitled “Gadamer at 101.” Being as prepared as I usually am, I was still floundering around for something to talk about when I was fortunate enough to hear a wonderful talk by Claudia Baracchi, from the New School. Her paper, entitled “Words of Air: of Breath and Inspiration,” (subsequently published in The Origins of Deconstruction, edited by Martin McQuillan and Ika Willis, Clinamen Press, 2007) essentially took on Derrida’s reading of the Phaedrus in his essay “Plato’s Pharmakon.” Against Derrida, she argues for the flexibility of the spoken over the written word as embodied by the multiplicity of voices speaking through Socrates in the dialogue—for example, the rhetorician’s rhetorician (Socrates with his head covered) who outdoes the Lysias speech on love that Phaedrus has memorized, or the muse
whom Socrates says speaks through him in his dialectical examination of love, even the cicadas singing overhead in the “Plato” trees, and, at one point (as he does in many of the dialogues) Socrates actually attributes the source of his voice to his interlocutor (“You are making me say this, Phaedrus,” he says).

Socrates’ polyphony, Baracchi reminds us, is evident throughout the Platonic corpus (or perhaps I should say “across the Platonic landscape,” given her emphasis on the crucial significance of the topology and dramatic situations of the dialogues). But what she did not mention in her talk (though she was clearly aware of it) was the role that Plato himself plays in these dialogues—not as a character in his own philosophical dramas (in which he never appears, at least not as a direct interlocutor), and certainly not in terms of the simplistic identification of Plato with the dramatic Socrates that plagues so many traditional readings as well as many otherwise quite sophisticated contemporary analyses of the dialogues. Rather, Socrates’ polyphony, I would argue, actually reiterates or perhaps instantiates Plato’s own polyphonic pedagogy: all of the voices in the dialogues—from Socrates and the Eleatic stranger, to Glaucon and Phaedrus, to Callicles and Thrasymachus, and even Euthyphro and Meletus—all of the voices are Plato’s. All of these are literally Plato’s voices, of course, insofar as he wrote all of the words, but they are also his voices in that the interlocutor’s interactions with Socrates not only determine the direction of the conversation, but the ideas presented, even by Socrates’ apparent adversaries, are frequently not simply undermined or destroyed, but, in a sense, aufgehoben (to mix dialectics), sublated, only to re-emerge as crucial facets of a later dialectical construct. (Polemarchus’ idea, in Book I of the Republic, of justice as doing good to friends and harm to enemies comes to mind. Socrates, of course, undermines this view by asking how one knows
who one's friends and enemies really are. Later, of course, we see how the guardians must be natural philosophers—like the dog. Why? Because dogs know who their friends and enemies are.) Plato, that is, never wastes an idea, he never introduces anything in a text that is not somehow crucial to the development of the overall dialogue. Each character enunciates an integral part of the overall project.

I am not suggesting that this idea of Platonic polyphony constitutes Gadamer's interpretation of the dialogues per se, though it is certainly consonant with the literary reading of Plato that he learned from Paul Friedländer in the late 1920s—even as he was becoming "Heideggerized." I am suggesting, however, that Gadamer's profound understanding of Platonic dialogue does permeate and inform his entire corpus (as he himself acknowledges). Gadamer may not be the literary genius that Plato was, but we could perhaps think of him as something of a "hermeneutical genius," and Truth and Method, a text that many people find rather plodding and didactic, functions as the primary evidence of what I mean by this. That is, even before he has gotten around to explicating his most famous ideas, such as wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein, or the fusion of horizons, or the rehabilitation of prejudice, or the fundamental linguisticality of human Dasein, or the living virtuality of language, or the hermeneutic priority of the question, or the universality of the hermeneutic phenomenon, he is always already enacting these ideas in the very text in which he theorizes about them. In other words, just as every conceptual element of a Platonic dialogue (including the refuted ones) is subsumed by but somehow preserved in and developed through the course of the discussion, each philosophical element that Gadamer introduces in Truth and Method in the course of his various and wide-ranging, but historically situated discussions of (among many others) Aristotle, Augustine, Kant,
Hegel, Herder, Dilthey, Schleiermacher, Husserl, and, of course, Heidegger and Plato, is in some way subsumed by and further developed in his ensuing elaborations of the historical development of philosophical hermeneutics. In some ways, of course, this notion of historical development might remind us more of Hegel than Plato, but, then again, my reading of Plato is perhaps more Hegelian than most (probably even than Hegel’s own), and I hope to show that this actually bolsters my argument about Gadamer’s voices.

Gadamer’s voices, however, are not, like Plato’s, those of contemporary figures placed into mostly fictional contexts for pedagogical and philosophical effect; instead, they are those of historical figures placed into hermeneutical context for pedagogical and philosophical effect. As I have already suggested, and as most readers of his texts are aware, Gadamer’s primary muses, his central voices, his triple Socrates’, if you will, are Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger. His Heideggerian voice is expressed (or brought to language—zur Sprache gebracht, as the almost poetic German locution goes) in his historical, phenomenological, and ontological understanding of consciousness (or being conscious—“Bewusst-sein,” as he himself was careful to enunciate in light of Heidegger’s concerns). His Hegelian voice expresses itself in his historical and speculative/dialectical understanding of the self-movement of die Sache selbst (thinking of die Sache in much the way Hegel thinks of the concept) and in the occurrence of the phenomenon of understanding as an Aufhebung (albeit a non-teleological one) that arises, not in logic per se, but in the living event of conversation; dialogue, therefore, is very much a speculative occurrence for Gadamer. And, finally, his Platonic voice comes to language both in his dialogue/dialectical approach to the other--be it a person or a text--and in the hermeneutical pedagogy that occurs in the process of dismantling and retrieving certain philosophical themes and ideas from the work
of various historical philosophical figures. And this hermeneutical *paideia*, if you will, becomes crucial for understanding not just the big three, but Gadamer's other voices as well (including many other figures both historical and literary not mentioned above, a number of whom, especially the Presocratics, he focuses on elsewhere than *Truth and Method*).

In other words, unlike biblical and juridical hermeneutics, for example, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, does not function as a theory of interpretation waiting to be applied to specific texts. Rather, his central ideas of the play of conversation, historically-effected consciousness, and the fundamental linguisticality of human *Dasein* play themselves out historically and philosophically in his texts in such a way that the very ideas he is developing are simultaneously operative in that very development, which, of course, seems circular. The hermeneutic circle, however, the play among and dependency upon one another of whole and part, of tradition and language, is not a vicious one; rather it is the very necessity and foundation of understanding itself. And Gadamer's hermeneutical genius is to not simply teach us about these ideas didactically, but to allow them to unfold for us on their own from out of a coherent and insightful *Destruktion* and *Wiederholung* of key ideas and figures in that history. He is not just telling us his theories or even just explaining them; he is showing us how they are already operative (if rarely thematized) in the last places that a good Heideggerian like Gadamer would ordinarily be wont to look for them—in the work of those who are most intimately involved in that very "history of metaphysics" that Heidegger so excoriated.

Plato's pedagogy or *paidagogia* (literally, leading or turning the child), on the other hand, is not essentially historical, and it takes the form of a *psychagogia* (a leading or turning of the soul) which he expresses in various places as *anamnesis* (literally, "un-forgetting," which, of
course, puts us once again in mind of Heidegger). And, as such, Plato’s paideia is not only not didactic in the usual sense, but positively eschews the Sophistic notion of, as Socrates puts it to Glaucon and Adiemantus in Book VII of the Republic, “transplant[ing] the power of knowledge into a soul that has none, as if they were engrafting vision into blind eyes” (Republic 518c). Instead, it allows that which is forgotten (or concealed, but nonetheless always already present) to reveal itself to us once more in the process of dialectical engagement. And, in spite of those interpreters who would prefer to simply do away with Socrates’ weak conversation partners (“Yes, Socrates . . . No, Socrates . . . I don’t know, Socrates”), if we attend to more than just the sheer logic of Plato’s dialogues, we can begin to see how he allows the dramatic setting and the personalities of the interlocutors to determine the course of the conversation. Socrates, of course, thematizes this attitude repeatedly—in nearly every dialogue—both in terms of his rare but important explications of the dialectic itself and his frequent and almost commonplace references to allowing the logos (Heidegger and Gadamer would say die Sache selbst) to determine the path of the discussion. Plato is even capable of suffusing an entire dialogue with metaphorical references to how the circumstances and the logos and not the intentions of the speakers themselves determine how one comes to an understanding. We only have to think of how allusions to the Odyssey permeate the Republic. Socrates, for instance, begins his long recollection by telling us that he “went down to Piraeus,” echoing Odysseus’ recollection to the Phaeacians in Book IX of the Odyssey, that he “went down to Hades”; in Book VI, he speaks of taking the “longer way around,” and “letting the wind blow us where it may”; in Book VII, he even refers to the dialectic itself as a “journey”; even the above-mentioned reference to the philosophical dog evokes the pathetic scene of Odysseus’ old dog Argos recognizing the long-
absent King of Ithaca as he makes his way back into his palace—in spite of his divine disguise. As I see it, and if we are to accept the authenticity of the "Seventh Letter," in which he directly denies it as a possibility (not to mention the *Phaedrus*, in which he perhaps does so indirectly), then these dialogues are not, in fact, examples of philosophy done in writing. Instead, if we take Plato at his word, then perhaps we can view them less as didactic than protreptic, less like instances of Plato's doctrinal philosophical pronouncements than exhortations to philosophize and examples of how one would go about it if one were to heed the call. In other words, perhaps they function as a kind of substitute Socrates. Now that Socrates—that paragon of the dialectical *paideia*—is dead, the dialogues, which, unlike Aristotle's lecture notes, seem to have been written for the Athenian public to read, act as a sort of stand in for Plato's great mentor. We may not be able to follow Socrates around any more and learn to behave philosophically, learn how to live a philosophical life, by imitating him directly, but we can read Plato's illustrations of Socratic behavior and learn much the same thing. Plato's texts, as Gadamer points out in several places (most notably in his 1934 essay "Plato and the Poets") function protreptically rather than didactically, they are exhortative rather than pedantic, they are not Plato's philosophy per se, they are invitations to philosophize and examples of how to live the examined life.

I would submit that Gadamer, too, is a pedagogue of this stripe. Just as Odysseus learns only by following the tortuous path dictated to him by *Moira*, Gadamer teaches us by tracing the tortuous trajectory of the "forgetfulness of language" (echoing Heidegger's forgetfulness of Being) throughout the history of philosophical discourse. But, of course, what is forgotten is not gone, only covered over, and Gadamer's discussion in Part III of *Truth and Method* of Augustine's *verbum interius* as an ontological understanding of the word is important in this
respect precisely because it is one of the few moments in history that prevents "the forgetfulness of language in Western thought from being complete." What I would caution against, however, is taking Gadamer’s analyses of Augustine (or Plato, or Hegel, or Heidegger, for that matter) as constituting his own understanding of the linguistic phenomenon any more than Parmenides’, or Theaetetus’, or even Socrates’ deliberations on a topic constitute Plato’s own thinking. (I would argue that even Socrates’ voice in the dialogues ought not be heard as though Plato himself were speaking. In some sense, Socrates functions as just another of Plato’s characters—albeit usually the most important one.) Rather, we should see the *verbum interius* as one speculative moment in the history of the forgetfulness of language that reflects or mirrors—or perhaps refracts—one crucial aspect of Gadamer’s overall approach to the question of philosophical hermeneutics, just as the Kantian sublime, the Heideggerian work of art, Aristotle’s *phronesis* and the Platonic idea of the beautiful are all helpful (perhaps even crucial) analogies for illustrating the question, but none of them by itself constitutes or embodies the entire question. And, just as the dialogues function both theoretically and ethically, both as explications of philosophical ideas (though not, I would argue, an elaboration of a particular doctrine) and as an exhortation to live a good life, which is to say an examined life, *Truth and Method* functions theoretically insofar as it describes a fundamental phenomenon of human existence—the occurrence of understanding—and ethically in that philosophical hermeneutics contains within it an implicit (and occasionally quite explicit) appeal to an anti-dogmatic comportment toward the other. Gadamer essentially exhorts us to maintain an attitude of hermeneutical openness that would require that we try to make ourselves aware of our own most deeply held presuppositions and prejudices and knowingly put them at risk in order to allow for the possibility of a better understanding to emerge. Now, I would
maintain that one could infer from Gadamer’s hermeneutic phenomenology that we are in some way always affected by every encounter with the other, even if we both remain dogmatically entrenched in our views, but Gadamer himself will insist upon the so-called “anticipation of agreement” in order for any interaction to count as properly hermeneutical.

By now, those of you who are still awake may be wondering just what the hell I’m talking about. Isn’t this really an ‘apples and oranges’ situation? I would reply that at least apples and oranges are both fruit, and as such they both grow on trees and have seeds and skin and meat. I’m not even sure that Plato’s texts and Gadamer’s should even be considered part of the same genre of writing. After all, Plato wrote extremely literary dialogues, plays of a sort, in which he never says anything in his own voice, and Gadamer wrote very straightforward and, by now, very traditional philosophical narratives, and very much in his own voice. One would think that the more apt comparison would be to Aristotle, that great progenitor of all philosophical didacticism, who basically says, “here’s what I think, and here’s why I think it.” Gadamer’s ideas may resonate with Plato’s, but how on earth can you compare their “voices” when they don’t even speak the same rhetorical language? This is why we need to distinguish among what I see as three different levels of discourse in these two bodies of writing, three different sets of voices in each writers work.

I’ve already been speaking of the first one—that is, their respective ‘narrative’ voices. Gadamer, obviously, except when he attributes ideas to someone else, writes in his own first person narrative voice throughout. He basically says, “here’s what I think, and here’s why I think it.” Plato, however, as we’ve already mentioned, never speaks in his own voice (at least not in the dialogues), and when there is a narrative voice at all, it is usually that of a somewhat
fictionalized Socrates, and even that is often presented at a remove in the form of a recollection. Let us not forget, however, that the Platonic corpus itself has a thing or two to say about narrative, and that, ironically enough, the Socrates of Book III of the Republic might be seen to suggest that Gadamer’s narrative style, insofar as it is direct and not mimetic, would fair better in the ideal state than Plato’s own, which, of course, consists of nothing but imitation. One might be tempted to say, then, that, in some strange way, Gadamer’s writing are more properly Platonic than Plato’s. But, of course, were this to be the case, one would have to assume two things: first, that the prohibition of mimetic poetry that Book III expounds represents Plato’s actual attitude, and second that Plato is entirely unaware of the mimetic nature of his own texts, both of which I take to be highly unlikely.

No, the comparison doesn’t really get going until we move to a second level of discourse that I will refer to as the two thinkers’ ‘active’ voices. By this I mean the voices that they explicitly mention by name, the voices that we can readily identify in the texts as a overtly participating in the discussion, perhaps even propounding arguments or a theories of their own. For Plato, this would mean Socrates, of course, but also Glaucon, Adeimantus, Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Parmenides, Gorgias, Protagoras, Critias, the list goes on and on. But I would also include certain voices that do not speak in the first person, such as certain Sophists who are mentioned, but certainly Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Sappho, and many other writers whom the speaking characters invoke directly for one reason or another. These are the voices that Plato employs to illustrate how a philosophical idea might be painstakingly uncovered through live dialogical and dialectical engagement. Gadamer’s active voices (besides his own, that is), would include an equally extensive list, many of whom I have already
mentioned: Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Herder, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, etc, but, most importantly, the big three, Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger. These are the voices that Gadamer invokes directly throughout *Truth and Method* to illustrate the dialogical and dialectical development of various historical threads of philosophical thought that culminate in his own hermeneutic phenomenology—dialogical because Gadamer will argue that any genuine hermeneutical encounter with a text is every bit as dialogical as a live conversation, and dialectical (though more in the Hegelian sense than in the Platonic) because he sees every moment of understanding as a moment of understanding differently, which is to say that we are changed by the extent to which our opinions are negated by those of the other, and not annihilated but subsumed by a new and different understanding—in other words, *aufgehoben*. And it is this very notion of *Aufhebung* that brings us to the third and subtlest but, I would argue, most significant level of discourse in these two bodies of work, the ‘operative’ voices, the implicit voices that permeate these texts by functioning subterraneanly, as it were, driving the ideas, shaping their forms of expression, and determining the very development of the writer’s thought, even as the reader may be almost entirely unaware of them and attentive only to the two explicit levels at which the narrative and active voices can be heard.

This, however, while it really only brings me to the beginning of my larger project, is where my own narrative needs to wind down, lest I infringe on time available to us for serious drinking. I will conclude, then, by merely introducing you to the some of the main voices I see operating subliminally in these works, many of whom will come as no surprise. For Plato, the most obvious operative voice would, of course, be Socrates, but unlike some commentators, I would maintain that Plato’s texts remain thoroughly Socratic, even throughout the later
dialogues, after the easily recognizable "negative dialectic" of the early works all but disappears as the masterful and seemingly more didactic discourse of a more "Platonic" Socrates begins to take over. I have also already mentioned an implicit Homeric voice operative in Plato, what with his constant allusions, at least in the Republic, to the Odyssey. But, beyond that, I think one could make the case that the very nature of the relationship between the spoken and written word that suffuses the dialogues owes a great deal to the very orality of the culture itself and to the tradition of rhapsodic recitation, which I imagine would only enhance the exhortative nature of Plato's work. If, unlike Aristotle, Plato did indeed make his writings available to the public, then an image springs to mind of browsing the agora, picking up a copy of Plato's latest, and rather than hiding away in some secluded spot and devouring it silently as we might do, gathering a group of friends together and reading it out loud—perhaps even taking parts. Suddenly, Socrates is no longer dead but present in the room eliciting definition after definition from a beleaguered young Euthyphro.

One of the greatest challenges, however, would be to take into consideration Plato's Pythagorean voice, which surely operates as forcefully throughout Plato as anyone's, save perhaps Socrates, though I'm not entirely convinced of that. (I'm also not entirely convinced that I am equipped to tackled this aspect of my project with any real alacrity.) But I also see other voices at work in Plato, including a sophistic one that shows itself on more than just those occasions when Socrates displays a mastery of rhetorical techniques that outstrips even the Sophists themselves. I think perhaps he doth indeed protest to much. Then there are other ironic voices that one might discern—a Periclean one, for instance. After all, Pericles and Socrates may have fundamentally disagreed about the efficacy of democracy, but can you think of two more
patriotic Athenians? One could even argue that, without the Periclean attempt to negotiate the conflicting demands of maintaining a powerful and thriving democratic polis, in the midst of a still very Homeric and decidedly undemocratic world, and its gradual and ignominious decline during the Peloponnesian War, Socrates and, by implication, Plato might not have emerged to have the intellectual, cultural, and historical effect that they did.

One could also argue, as Nietzsche does, that Plato found himself in competition with the tragedians. I might suggest, however, that his real competition as a playwright was his pal Aristophanes. If tragedy was about high born historical or mythological figures brought down by their own flaws (most notably a lack hermeneutic openness), then comedy was about contemporary Greeks, mostly Athenians, who were perceived to be full of themselves and in needed of deflation. What are the dialogues about if not (mostly) contemporary Greeks living in and around Athens, many of whom Socrates deflates with his dialectically-honed razor sharp wit? But, ironically, in spite of the long history of scholarship that simply assumes it, the toughest question for me is whether or not one can really identify something like a genuine and distinctive Platonic voice operative in these amazing texts. I suspect so—after all, Plato did write them. But, given the above considerations, it seems to me that this voice would have to amount to something far more subtle and nuanced than the simple assertion that whatever Socrates says is what Plato means.

For Gadamer, too, there are a number of these subterranean voices operative in his work: There is Plato, of course, as evinced by the dialogical, ethical, and pedagogical features of philosophical hermeneutics, although the depths and breadth of this Platonic voice have, so far as I know, yet to be plumbed. Aristotle also operates in Gadamer, primarily through the notions of
phronesis and the participatory ethos of the texts, though to a lesser extent than Plato. A Hegelian voice also suffuses the Gadamerian corpus, and to get a raw sense of this, all one would have to do is count up the total number of times he employs the word “Aufheben” or the phrase “es hebt auf” in Wahrheit und Methode, and I don’t mean in the ordinary idiomatic senses of canceling or suspending or lifting something up, but in that distinctive Hegelian sense that we often inadequately translate as “sublating.” I don’t suggest, by the way, that you consult Truth and Method in this regard, because the Hegelian sense of the word has been almost completely obliterated in translation. But, insofar as philosophical hermeneutics claims to function both historically and dialectically, Hegel’s voice also operates at the deepest levels of Gadamerian thinking. And, finally, we come back to Heidegger.

One is tempted to offer something pithy at this point, like the claim that, just as Plato might really be more Socratic than Socrates himself (after all, where do we get our real idea of Socrates the dialectician if not from Plato?), perhaps Gadamer could be said to be more Heideggerian than Heidegger—at least to the extent that he is not afraid to carry Heidegger’s own project of Destruktion and Wiederholung deep into that Heideggerian no-man’s land of the history of metaphysics. But, of course, such a claim would be reductive and glib, and as such could never do justice to the complex subtleties of Gadamer’s Heideggerian voice, which is deeply ontological, phenomenological, at times even etymological, and grounds itself in the fundamental situatedness and finitude of human Dasein.