

Christopher Gill · François Renaud (eds.)

Hermeneutic Philosophy and Plato

Gadamer's Response to the *Philebus*

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Illustration on the cover:
Fragment of a marbled shield
from the Parthenon Frieze, Athens
at the British Museum

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Foreword

This volume of new essays is based on a panel on Gadamer and Plato's *Philebus* organised by François Renaud at the Eighth Symposium Platonicum held at Dublin in 2007, the overall theme of which was Plato's *Philebus*. Half of the twelve chapters in the volume were originally papers given as part of this panel; the others were written especially for the volume. We are grateful to all the contributors for their readiness to participate in this exploration of the engagement of a major twentieth-century philosopher with the ideas of Plato, especially in the *Philebus*. Like many other scholars of ancient philosophy we were much saddened by the untimely death of John Cleary in 2009, whose contribution has been included in this volume with the permission of his estate.

We would also like to thank, very warmly, Julie Bérubé for her meticulous and thoughtful work in preparing the volume for publication. We also owe thanks to Flavia Loscialpo and Ulrike Meitzner for the linguistic revision of some of the papers. We are grateful to the Université de Moncton (Canada) and the University of Exeter (UK) for their financial support towards the costs of publication. We are grateful also to the Editorial Committee of the series International Plato Studies for their advice, and to Hanz Richarz and his staff at the Academia Verlag for their efficiency and support for the publication of new scholarship on Plato.

The volume follows the normal conventions of volumes published in the International Plato Studies series. In general, contributors follow the stylistic conventions normal in scholarship in their language. References to secondary scholarship are given by author and date: bibliographical details are given at the end of each chapter.

Christopher Gill and François Renaud

Christopher Gill & François Renaud

Introduction

Gadamer is one of the very few philosophers of the twentieth century to have studied and published on Plato extensively and throughout his life.¹ As he writes, “Hermeneutics and Greek philosophy remained the two principal subjects of my work ... [and] Plato remained at the centre of my studies”.² Gadamer’s writings on Greek thought fill up three of the ten volumes of his *Gesammelte Werke* (henceforth GW), vols. 5-7, and his studies of Plato extend from his unpublished dissertation on pleasure in Plato (1922) and his first book *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations relating to the Philebus* (1931) to *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (1978) and his collection of essays *Plato in Dialogue* (1991). In his major theoretical work, *Truth and Method* (1960/1985), he develops his views on dialogue, dialectic and the beautiful with explicit reference to Plato.³ As for the *Philebus*, it is the Platonic dialogue on which Gadamer devoted most exegetical work, notably in the second part of his first book (1931), and in important portions of his 1978 study. The *Philebus* contains in his view the central Platonic claim that the Good is not a separate, transcendental Idea, but constitutes an immanent good in human life and that it is inseparable from the indeterminacy that is an inevitable aspect of reality, an indeterminacy which is also embodied in a different but correlated way in Socratic, open-ended dialectic.

The essays in this volume explore Gadamer’s response to Plato in general, and the *Philebus* in particular, and the significance of this response for contemporary interpretation of Plato and for continuing philosophical debate on the questions Gadamer raises. Although all the essays engage in various ways with these core questions, there are certain distinctive focuses and emphases in the different essays, which have been underlined by subdividing the volume into three parts. The volume begins with four essays (by Dostal, Lafrance, Trabattoni and Di Cesare), which examine Gadamer’s overall response to Plato, especially the *Philebus*, viewed in the context of his own emerging philosophical thought. The influence of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* on Gadamer’s reading of Plato is a recurrent theme in this part of the volume, and elsewhere; but the contributors

¹ See the detailed intellectual biographies of Gadamer by Grondin (1999) and Di Cesare (2007).

² GW 2, 494, 487 (trans. F.R.).

³ See GW 1, 478-494, as well as “Die Zeitlichkeit des Ästhetischen” (GW 1, 126-133); “Das Vorbild der platonischen Dialektik” (GW 1, 368-375).

also show how Gadamer's reflections on Platonic ideas and method helped him to evolve his own ideas on ontology and dialectic, stated in their most distinctive form in *Truth and Method*. In the second part of the volume, the focus shifts to Gadamer as an interpreter of Platonic philosophy and to the question how valid these interpretations seem to us, as contemporary readers of Plato. Two essays (Delcomminette and Mesch) discuss Gadamer as a reader of Platonic dialogues, especially the *Philebus*, while two more (Grondin and Szlezák) treat Gadamer's views on Plato's unwritten doctrines. The third part of the volume brings together Gadamer's thought and his response to Plato, focusing on a theme which was central for Gadamer's discussion of the *Philebus*, that of dialogue and dialectic, seen as the fundamental modes of expression of philosophy and human discourse more generally. Two essays (Gonzalez and Cleary) treat this topic in general terms, while two more (Ferber and Zilioli) show how Gadamer's interest in this theme was taken up, and taken further, by Donald Davidson, responding directly to Gadamer's discussion of Plato, especially the *Philebus*. Taken as a whole, the volume provides the material both for close examination of Gadamer's interpretative and conceptual response to Plato and for appraising in a reflective way the value and significance of this response for current Plato scholarship and philosophical enquiry.

1. Gadamer's Response to Plato and his own Philosophical Approach

Robert Dostal's opening essay stresses the centrality of the *Philebus* for Gadamer's thinking about Plato and for the development of his own philosophy. However, unlike most of the other contributions, he does not examine in detail Gadamer's writings on this dialogue, but aims to place Gadamer's response to the *Philebus* in the context of his thought as a whole. He stresses, in particular, the influence of Werner Jaeger's account of Aristotle's development (seen as a linear continuation of Platonic thought, including that of the *Philebus*), on which Gadamer wrote an early essay (1927),⁴ an influence which underlies much of Gadamer's mature thought. Another very important influence, examined fully in other contributions, is that of Martin Heidegger, who led Gadamer to formulate an account of Plato which is in sharp contrast to that of most scholarly discussions in his day and today. As Dostal brings out, Gadamer (as one might put it) "Socratizes" Plato, stressing the importance of exploratory dialogue and dialectical interchange even in later dialogues which are often seen as more doctrinal in character. Regarding the content of Plato's thought, Gadamer can also be seen as "Aristotelianizing" Plato, presenting him as holding a more immanent concep-

⁴ "Der aristotelische Protreptikos und die entwicklungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung der aristotelischen Ethik" (GW 5, 164-186).

tion of the Forms (including that of the Good) than Plato is usually supposed to hold.⁵ Thirdly, Gadamer “aestheticizes” Platonic ethics, conceiving the good as in a crucial sense equivalent to the beautiful. All three features can be found in the *Philebus*, as Dostal shows. Gadamer stresses here that Socrates’ dialogue with Protarchus represents a genuine form of intellectual interchange, and also a means of carrying forward the linkage between theory and practice that is central to Plato’s conception of dialectical ethics. A key outcome of this dialectical collaboration is the idea of good as mixture or as the structure immanent in the best human life, an idea which is derived from the combination of the four-fold schema relating to mixture introduced in 23c-27c and the final specification of the best life by the use of the “mixing bowl” (59e-67b). The aesthetic quality (or manifest beauty) of the best human life⁶ also illustrates how, for Gadamer’s Plato, the idea of good is to be understood as an immanent, and in some sense perceptible, quality of lived human experience.

Yvon Lafrance’s study, by contrast, is focused more specifically on the interpretative assumptions and conceptual terminology of Gadamer’s study of the *Philebus* in his 1931 book and elsewhere. Lafrance initially highlights – as does Delcomminette, though in a different way – a paradox that Gadamer himself defends: true faithfulness to the text requires that one distances oneself from it by using one’s own terminology and concepts to uncover its full significance. Gadamer himself characterizes his approach to Plato as philosophical, hermeneutical and phenomenological. Broadly speaking, his view is that to interpret Plato hermeneutically is to open up the meaning of his philosophy by engaging directly with it – which, for Gadamer, means engaging with it from a phenomenological standpoint. Lafrance then offers a detailed analysis of five important phenomenological categories employed by Gadamer in his exegesis of the *Philebus*: namely, *Dasein* (being-in-the-world), the ontological difference between *Sein* and *Seiende* (being and beings), *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding), *Sprache* (language) and *Wahrheit* (truth). On the face of it, as Lafrance points out, Gadamer translates Platonic thought into Heideggerian language which derives from a quite different thought-world. However, Gadamer maintains that this mode of interpretation brings out features that are genuinely part of the Platonic thought but which are not recognized by more conventional types of interpretation. For instance, the use of the idea of *Dasein*, rather than the more standard categories of body or soul, highlights the insight (which Gadamer sees as Platonic) that the human condition is that of the person as an embodied and localized psychological agent, who seeks to understand the good that unifies and grounds his or her being and does so in and through the complexity of lived experience. Gadamer sees this reading of the *Philebus* as justified especially by

⁵ On the Aristotelianizing and especially the Socratizing aspects see e.g. Renaud (2008a).

⁶ See e.g. *Philebus* 64c: the good “takes flight into the beautiful”.

the fact that this dialogue presents the best human life as a “mixture” of (in conventional terms) psychic and bodily aspects, shaped and structured by the immanent presence of the good. Analogous interpretative claims are made or implied about the other phenomenological notions that Gadamer deploys to analyse the argument of the dialogue. Although Lafrance is not himself inclined to adopt the Gadamerian style of interpretation, he presents it as meriting scholarly consideration, because it highlights aspects of Platonic thought that we might not otherwise recognize, as well as because it throws light on the development of Gadamer’s own philosophical standpoint.

Franco Trabattoni also offers a general analysis of how Gadamer’s response to Plato is shaped by his own philosophical concerns, but does so in a rather different way. Trabattoni examines how Gadamer in his dissertation *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics* (1931, completed in 1928) conceives the relation between ethics and dialectic. Deeply influenced by his recent reading of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Gadamer, on the basis of certain passages in the *Phaedo*, identifies the formal cause in Plato (that is, the ideas), with the final cause, while also accepting the Heideggerian interpretation of the idea of the good. Indeed, the idea of the good is considered by Gadamer, along with Heidegger, both as the cause of the intelligibility of reality (in this respect like light) and as an expression of finality, or of what Heidegger calls *worumwillen*, “that in view of which”. It is precisely in this sense that ethics, which is linked to finality, and dialectic, which is linked to being and intelligibility, can be seen as identical. This identification, moreover, seems to favour dialectic, as it rejects, again in agreement with Heidegger, a conception of finality understood in technical terms, which assumes a clear-cut distinction between the sphere of being (the realm of ideas) and the sphere of action (the acting subject). Dialectic so conceived is already ethics, without further preconditions, that is, without a free will that plans, judges or evaluates. These ideas are also found in Gadamer’s analysis of the *Philebus*. In this dialogue the ontic dimension of the cause of mixture, which (if identified with the demiurge) might restore the technical notion of finality, is in the end reintegrated into the transcendental dimension. What is, ultimately, at stake in this identification of ethics with dialectic is that it opens up the way to the “fatal” conception of being which is peculiar to Heidegger and consequently to the marginalization of ethics.⁷

Donatella Di Cesare, in a conceptually wide-ranging contribution, argues that, although Gadamer was greatly influenced by Heidegger, his engagement with Plato’s *Philebus* was also very important for the development of his thought. What Gadamer finds in Plato is not the metaphysical thinker criticized by Nietzsche and Heidegger but the author of an aporetic dialectic based on an unusual conception of limit. Gadamer’s Plato is not a “Platonist”, in the usual

⁷ For a new, comprehensive account and critical assessment of Heidegger’s reading of Plato, see Gonzalez (2009).

sense, since he remains faithful to the exploratory and collaborative spirit of Socratic dialogue. Gadamer interprets Socrates' turn to the *logoi* in the *Phaedo* (99e) as reflecting this view of dialogue as the indispensable medium by which we understand the world. Gadamer's interpretation of the Dyad in the *Philebus* leads him, Di Cesare suggests, to develop his own philosophical hermeneutics of finitude and dialogue. While the notion of the limited is normally viewed positively in Greek philosophy, as being complete and perfect, and the unlimited is rejected as being incomplete and imperfect, Plato's *Philebus* is seen by Gadamer as abandoning the opposition between the limited and the unlimited. Gadamer's Plato maintains the positive value of the limit, while also rehabilitating the unlimited. The novel character of the *Philebus* is seen by him as inhering in the idea of the limited as the mixed, and in an ontological theory based on a mixture of indeterminacy and determinacy. This conception of the relationship between the limited and unlimited is adopted by Gadamer himself in his hermeneutic philosophy. For instance, he sees dialectic as involving a combination of finitude and infinity. Despite the finitude of the individual, dialectic involves self-transcendence through dialogue with the other and thus embodies a combination of finitude and infinity. This aspect of Gadamer's philosophy marks a point of distinction, Di Cesare argues, from Heidegger, whose conception of finitude involves the rejection of the infinite, and also from Hegel, whose "bad infinity" corresponds to the Platonic Dyad. Hence, Gadamer's approach can be understood as a direct response to Plato (as Gadamer interprets him), in spite of the strong influence of phenomenology on shaping his understanding of the meaning of Plato's thought.

2. Gadamer as an Interpreter of Platonic Philosophy

In the second part of the volume, the focus shifts to analysing Gadamer's reading strategy, in his response to Platonic philosophy, and also to appraising the validity of his Platonic interpretations, both in connection with the dialogues and the unwritten doctrines. Like Lafrance, but in a more positive spirit, Sylvain Delcomminette shows how Gadamer's reading methods reflect the paradoxical thesis that the use of modern terminology is compatible with, or indeed indispensable for, a faithful reading of an ancient philosophical text. According to *Truth and Method*, the major defect of a purely historical, supposedly neutral, interpretation of a philosophical text consists in disregarding the latter's truth-claims and thus negating its specific otherness and value for us. True faithfulness consists, on the contrary, in reading a philosophical text philosophically, that is, in taking seriously the truth-claims of Plato's text, and in reading it as an aid to a better understanding of problems that would be unavailable without its guidance. To understand Plato's text means, for Gadamer, to read it as an answer to real – and still open – questions and thus to re-appropriate the answer in one's own lan-

guage. This is, in fact, what many historically minded scholars do without being fully aware of it, when they use concepts alien to Plato's thought-world such as "conceptual system", "epistemology" or "aesthetics". In order to understand a text, one should retranslate – consciously – its terminology into one's own language. This modification is the price one has to pay to let the text speak for itself for us. The great interest of Gadamer's approach to Plato, Delcomminette claims, lies in the way that it breaks down the dichotomy between historical scholarship and philosophical debate and offers the chance of a fruitful alliance of philology and philosophy.

After offering a positive account of Gadamer as an interpreter of Platonic dialogue, Delcomminette concludes by illustrating this feature of Gadamer's reading of Plato by reference to *Philebus* 35d-36c. Here, Plato illustrates the psychological dimension of pleasure and pain by the example of a mixed state, which combines physical pain with mental pleasure by anticipating the cessation of the pain, for instance, that of hunger. Gadamer interprets this passage as embodying a characterization of our phenomenological state as human beings, in which our sensations of mixed pleasure and pain express the typically human attitude of mixed hope and fear towards the future. Strictly speaking, Delcomminette concedes, this represents an oblique or partial interpretation of the passage. But, from a broader philosophical standpoint, it brings out an implication of the passage that is consistent with the overall picture of human life offered in the dialogue, and one that could have been expressed in other terms, less obviously shaped by Heideggerian concerns.

Walter Mesch's appraisal of Gadamer as an interpreter of Plato takes the form of a detailed examination of Gadamer's discussion of Plato's argument in the *Philebus* that there can be true and false pleasures, as well as beliefs (37a-41b). After underlining the importance of this argument within the structure of the dialogue as a whole, Mesch analyses closely the stages by which Plato's Socrates mounts the claim that we can speak appropriately of true and false pleasures and pains as well as true and false judgements linked with pleasures and pains. As Mesch notes, this claim is (and is marked in Plato's text) as an innovative and problematic one, and a number of recent scholarly discussions have maintained that Plato fails to prove his case. For instance, Plato's Socrates seems to move without justification from the idea that expectations are false because they are (in the event) unfulfilled to the claim that the correlated pleasures are false because they are morally wrong (39d-41b). Gadamer, however, does not find the argument problematic. This is partly because, as Mesch suggests, he presupposes the Heideggerian conception of emotions (such as fear) as being, like beliefs, valid responses to the world which express the concrete being or identity (*Dasein*) of the agent. Mesch examines the way in which this conception informs Gadamer's analysis of Plato's argument, leading him to supply the connection between mistaken expectation and (morally) misguided pleasure that

is, at most, implicit in Plato's text. Although Mesch shows that Gadamer's account is a reconstruction, rather than an interpretation in the conventional sense, he thinks it is an instructive one. It is a reading that appeals to a conception of emotions as both cognitive and ethically laden which one can recognize as valid even if one does not share the Heideggerian standpoint from which Gadamer starts.

This is followed by two chapters which explore Gadamer's relationship to the so-called "Tübingen School". Both discussions bring out, from different standpoints, that, although Gadamer showed a definite interest in this approach, his own position was in fact very different. Jean Grondin draws on his own personal experience as a student both of Gadamer and the founders of the Tübingen School (Hans Joachim Krämer and Konrad Gaiser) to explain the nature of the relationship. He sets out the core claim of the School: that Plato's dialogues are underpinned by a systematic (mathematico-ontic) philosophy which was taught by oral methods to Plato's students in the Academy but is only partially disclosed in the dialogues themselves. Gadamer, certainly, does not accept this claim, at least in the form maintained by the School; but he shares some common ground with the Tübingen School and was to some degree attracted to this approach.⁸ He too is impressed by the Platonic comments on the inadequacy of writing as a medium for philosophy, though this stems in his case from the conviction that exploratory dialogic interchange is the primary mode of philosophy, a conviction which is not shared by members of the School. Gadamer also accepts (what some Platonic scholars have questioned) that Aristotle's reports of the unwritten doctrines are essentially accurate and that they represent a central part of Platonic thinking. However, Gadamer interprets the significance of these teachings as being that reality consists in an inseparable mixture of unity and plurality, symbolized in the notion of number which is at once a unity and a plurality of units. Dialectical enquiry (which is the indispensable mode of philosophizing) can and should explore this combination of unity and plurality; but human beings will never achieve definitive and complete knowledge of the true nature of this combination. This is a very different conception of the nature of Plato's unwritten doctrines from that presupposed in the Tübingen School, and one which has a strong resemblance, as Grondin points out, to Gadamer's own philosophical position, as set out in *Truth and Method*. Which of these two conceptions, if either, corresponds to Plato's own view of the nature and function of his oral teachings is, as Grondin suggests, hard to determine; but at any rate, Grondin's account defines very clearly the points of difference between them.

Thomas Szlezák writes as a committed adherent of the Tübingen approach. He too, while pointing out Gadamer's interest in the unwritten doctrines and

⁸ For instance, he organised a conference on Plato's unwritten doctrines, in Heidelberg in 1967, published as Gadamer and Schadewaldt (1968); at his request another meeting took place in Tübingen, thirty years later, in 1996, published as Girenti (1998).

some other ideas held in common with the School, goes on to highlight the substantively different character of Gadamer's view of Platonic philosophy, both in his earlier and his later writings. Gadamer holds in common with the School the belief that Platonic interpretation should make reference both to the written dialogues and the evidence for the unwritten doctrines and that the dialogues hold back from offering a definitive account of the truth. Gadamer also, like the School, rejects the developmentalist approach to Plato, maintaining that Plato's theory of ideas underlies both early and late dialogues. However, although he draws on ideas which are regarded by the Tübingen School as fundamental for Platonic philosophy, including the identification of the Good with the One, as distinct from the indeterminate Dyad, he treats these in a quite different way, as Szlezák illustrates by a detailed commentary on Gadamer's discussion of the final pages of the *Philebus*. Points which Szlezák accentuates include the idea that the *Philebus* itself, if properly interpreted, rather than the unwritten teachings, offers material for understanding the nature of the good. Szlezák also challenges the idea that it is reasonable to expect that the true nature of the good can result from shared dialectical enquiry between Socrates and Protarchus. Dialogue with such partners can only offer a non-technical preparation for the kind of knowledge-based teaching that Plato provided in the Academy. A further point that Szlezák sees as inadequately understood by Gadamer is Socrates' comment (*Philebus* 64c), that they are now standing on the "threshold of the good", a comment which signals both the scope and the limits of the kind of discussion being represented there. Hence, overall, according to Szlezák, Gadamer's approach, despite its superficial resemblance to that of the Tübingen School, exhibits, on closer inspection, typical features of modern thinking about the text as the sole source of meaning and about dialogue as shared search that have their roots in Schleiermacher's way of reading Plato.

3. Gadamer (and Davidson) on Dialogue and Dialectic

The four chapters in the last part of the volume are centred on the significance for Gadamer of the linked notions of dialogue and dialectic, conceived as the fundamental mode of philosophy and ethics. This side of Gadamer's thought has a special contemporary interest. A significant strand in current Platonic scholarship, especially in English-language writing, shares with Gadamer an emphasis on the idea that dialectical dialogue is fundamental for philosophy, and that it serves as the vehicle of an ongoing (and in some sense ethical) quest.⁹ The presence of this strand underlies the essays by Gonzalez and Cleary, in which they probe what Gadamer means by dialogue and dialectic. Also, as Ferber and

⁹ See further on this strand in current Platonic scholarship Gill (1996), (2002b), 153-161, (2006), 143-147.

Zilioli bring out, Gadamer's stress on the fundamentally dialogic character of human thought is the main feature that attracted the interest of Donald Davidson, who develops this idea into an explicitly intersubjectivist account of knowledge. Davidson saw this account as being implied in the Socratic conception of the function of elenchus, as analysed by Gregory Vlastos, a method which Davidson saw as still operative in the *Philebus*. Hence, there are a number of important points of contact between this aspect of Gadamer's response to Plato and more recent scholarly and philosophical debate.¹⁰

What does Gadamer mean by "Plato's dialectical ethics" – this is the question raised by Francisco Gonzalez. The first chapter of the 1931 book claims to address the question "if and how far Platonic dialectic *is* ethics"; but this question is not obviously answered either in that chapter or in the "phenomenological" reading of the *Philebus* in the second chapter. Part of the answer to the question derives from the special sense that Gadamer gives to (real) dialogue, namely as a fundamentally interpersonal or social act, expressing the participants' concern with their substantive being (*Dasein*) and directed at understanding what matters for this concern. Dialectic, for Gadamer, is a form of (real) dialogue characterized first by reflectiveness, and second by a quest for the unifying ground of human existence as such. In this sense, in the first instance at least, dialectic is *ipso facto* ethical. Gonzalez shows that, for Gadamer, the *Philebus* constitutes a classic expression of ethical dialectic, in that it applies the dialectical categories outlined in the first part of the dialogue to the determination of the best kind of human life in the latter part of the dialogue. However, Gonzalez underlines a problem in Gadamer's account of the outcome of the *Philebus* in the 1931 book: namely, the stress on the ideal of a purely contemplative existence (that of *nous*), characterized by an intuitive grasp of the real (present) being of truth. As Gonzalez stresses, this account is at odds both with much in the argument of the *Philebus* itself and with Gadamer's own account of dialectic as an unceasing quest to determine the full significance of a fundamentally human (not divine) life. The presence of this element is attributed by Gonzalez to the influence of Heidegger's picture of Platonic thought, which is in sharp contrast to Heidegger's own ideal. In Gadamer's subsequent (1978) essay on the *Philebus*, his views are restated in a more consistent form, which combines an account of dialectic as shared, ongoing quest with a more immanent conception of good and a more thoroughly human picture of the good life.

John Cleary is also concerned with the question of Gadamer's self-consistency in his conception of dialogue and dialectic; he also seeks to relate Gadamer's approach to that of recent English-language scholarship on the philosophical significance of Plato's use of dialogue form. In general, as stressed also by Gonzalez, Gadamer sees dialogue (including dialectic) as the primary

¹⁰ For a discussion on various kinds of dialogue in general as well as for a comparison between dialogue as practised in Plato and Xenophon, see respectively Renaud (2009) and (2008b).

mode by which human beings seek to understand how to make sense of their nature and well-being. Plato's adherence to dialogue form is interpreted by Gadamer as implying a similar view; and the *Philebus*, in particular, is seen as a strikingly well-articulated and self-conscious expression of this view. To specify the precise character of Gadamer's approach, Cleary compares with some other recent treatments Gadamer's discussion of the methodological schemas introduced early in the *Philebus* (the one-many contrast and the four-fold analysis of factors involved in mixture).¹¹ These schemas are sometimes seen (for instance, by the Tübingen School) as signalling the underlying presence of a doctrinal, systematic basis for the enquiry. But Gadamer interprets them rather as instrumental in enabling Plato's Socrates to carry forward his dialectical shared search with Protarchus. As Cleary brings out, two recent analytic accounts, those of Dorothea Frede and Kenneth Sayre, interpret these passages in ways that are also compatible with the idea that the *Philebus*, like other Platonic dialogues, represents shared search and promotes this in its readers.¹² However, Cleary suggests that there is a tension in Gadamer's thinking on this question, and that he attaches a significance to Plato's unwritten doctrines, which he sees as underlying the methodological passages in the *Philebus*, that is not compatible with his general view of the Platonic dialogue as an expression of (Gadamerian-style) dialectical shared search. Cleary also questions whether Gadamer ever really clarifies whether the conception of knowledge of truth he presupposes should be understood as objective or intersubjective (or objective-participant). Despite these reservations, Cleary sees Gadamer's stress on the significance of Platonic dialogue form, understood as an expression of the broader role of dialogue in human life, both as prefiguring the concern with this idea in some recent Platonic scholarship and as a statement of this idea that still merits close examination.

The two final essays in the volume examine the connections between Gadamer and Donald Davidson in their thinking about dialogue and dialectic. The key element of common ground, as Rafael Ferber stresses at the start of his discussion, is the idea that our sense of objectivity arises out of a kind of triangulation, in which two participants in dialogue establish a shared world, an idea which Davidson sometimes presents as implying an intersubjectivist conception of knowledge. Like other contributors, though with fuller documentation and conceptual analysis, Ferber traces the origin of Gadamer's view of dialogue and dialectic in Heidegger's idea of dialogue as the shared expression of *Dasein's* concern for itself. This leads Gadamer to what he himself at one point characterizes as an intersubjectivist account of discourse, which is correlated with the idea that our understanding of the world should also be conceived in intersubjectivist

¹¹ *Philebus* 14b-20a and 23c-27c; on the question whether these schemas are compatible with a reading of the dialogue as shared search, see also Gill (2010).

¹² For a parallel discussion of analytic treatments of the dialogue form, including the *Philebus*, see Gill (1996), 299-310.

terms.¹³ As Ferber brings out, Davidson was aware of Gadamer's ideas about dialogue and dialectic, and of their significance for reading the *Philebus*, from the time that he wrote his Harvard doctoral thesis (1947), and he continued to acknowledge their intellectual common ground until his death in 2003. A shared feature of their philosophical thought, which informs their interpretation of Platonic dialogue, is the idea that the meaning and understanding of core ethical notions are established by collaborative dialogue (or intersubjective exchange). Davidson spells out this idea more explicitly than Gadamer normally does, and links it with the mode of Socratic elenchus as analysed by Vlastos, which he sees as still operative in the last part of the *Philebus*. This is a striking case, as Ferber shows, where two major twentieth-century thinkers converge both in their philosophical ideas and in their reading of the significance of Plato's use of dialogue form, especially in the *Philebus*. Ferber closes his essay by transcribing the three written reports on Gadamer's *Habilitationschrift* (published as his 1931 book), by Martin Heidegger, Paul Friedländer and Erich Jaensch.

Ugo Zilioli also examines the relationship between Gadamer and Davidson in their responses to Plato's *Philebus*; but his focus is more on Davidson's reading of the dialogue and his explicit comments on Gadamer in the light of that reading. Zilioli examines in some detail the way in which Davidson's adoption of Vlastos's analysis of the method of elenchus in Plato enables him to attribute to Socrates (and Plato) a version of the coherence theory of truth that Davidson himself formulated. Unlike Vlastos, however, Davidson saw the elenchus as being still deployed by Plato in the *Philebus* and not simply in the early dialogues. He also found an innovation in the *Philebus*, a "double elenchus", by which the original positions of Socrates and Protarchus about the relative value of knowledge and pleasure, are both revised. Hence, for Davidson, the *Philebus* became the classic expression of Plato's pre-Davidsonian insight, that truth is established by intersubjective agreement achieved through collaborative dialogue. This forms the background for Davidson's commentary on Gadamer's reading of the *Philebus*, notably in Davidson's 1997 lecture on this topic. Davidson's comments are partly critical, though they also reflect an underlying agreement about some key ideas. Davidson suggests (rather like Gonzalez in this volume) that Gadamer's "phenomenological" reading of the *Philebus*, in the second half of his (1931) book does not bring out the conception of dialectic as shared search presented in the first half. Davidson also regrets that Gadamer does not recognize the special kind of double refutation in the *Philebus* that gives a new dimension to the Platonic representation of dialectic as a common enterprise. Nevertheless, Davidson also registers the common features in their thinking, brought out most plainly in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, above all, the idea that knowledge and truth are realised in the consistency established by agreement

¹³ Gadamer GW 5, 1931, 53, cited by Ferber on p. 221 below.

between participants in shared and committed dialogue. Hence, for Davidson, Gadamer essentially shares his intersubjectivist conception of truth, even if he only partly recognizes the features of Plato's *Philebus* that also reflect this conception.

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