Gadamer and the Lessons of Arithmetic
in Plato's *Hippias Major*

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Abstract

In the *Hippias Major* Socrates uses a counterexample to oppose Hippias's view that parts and wholes always have a "continuous" nature. Socrates argues, for example, that even-numbered groups might be made of parts with the opposite character, i.e. odd. As Gadamer has shown, Socrates often uses such examples as a model for understanding language and definitions: numbers and definitions both draw disparate elements into a sum-whole differing from the parts. In this paper I follow Gadamer's suggestion that we should focus on the parallel between numbers and definitions in Platonic thought. However, I offer a different interpretation of the lesson implicit in Socrates's opposition to Hippias. I argue that, according to Socrates, parts and sum-wholes may share in essential attributes; yet this unity or continuity is neither necessary, as Hippias suggests, nor is it impossible, as Gadamer implies. In closing, I suggest that this seemingly minor difference in logical interpretation has important implications for how we should understand the structure of human communities in a Platonic context.

Keywords: Plato, Gadamer, Socrates, Hippias, Arithmetic, Parts, Wholes

While the *Hippias Major* is relatively understudied, Hans-Georg Gadamer always held the dialogue in high esteem.[1] Indeed, Gadamer developed important aspects of his own hermeneutics through his interpretation of this dialogue and others.[2] Generally, in his Plato scholarship Gadamer occupied a fragile interpretive zone between readings that render the written dialogues subordinate to the unwritten doctrines and those that claim to derive Plato's views (whether doctrinal or

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otherwise) from the dialogues alone.[3] Gadamer focused instead on the lesson to be drawn from the dialogue format itself, i.e. on the written dialogue as reflective of real, living discourse. "[It] is vital," he wrote, "to read Plato's dialogues not as theoretical treatises but as *mimēsis* (imitation) of real discussions played out between the partners and drawing them all into a game in which they all have something at stake" (1978/1986, 97).[4] The dialogues on the whole, he thought, point back to this living community of speech from which they emerged.

Gadamer took his interpretive strategy a step further in his 1968 essay "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic" (1968a/1980, 124-155). There he argued that in the dialogues a bond between knowledge and community appears in the form of a "structural parallel" that holds between dialogue and number. While some might argue that knowledge of number is quintessentially a private affair happening in the mind of mathematicians, Gadamer instead suggested that for Plato the very "structure" (*Struktur*) of numbers links them to the nature of a community's dialogue. Each number, such as "the two" or "the five," has an internally relational nature, or a one-many structure. For example, the number five is a unified multiplicity consisting of both wholeness (which allows it to serve as the unified measure defining certain groups) and internal diversity (insofar as it is itself a whole *of* five elements or units). This one-many structure of numbers provides a model for comprehending, by analogy, the internally relational structure of all Platonic ideas. The ideas have this structure because they reflect the structure of dialogue, where many thinkers come to share in the comprehension of an idea. Thus, in Gadamer's reading, all ideas, as one-many structures, are expressions of the living language of a community.[5]

In this paper, I will examine Gadamer's theory of number and community specifically in light of his detailed comments on one particular puzzle from the Platonic corpus, namely the puzzle presented by the arithmetical example in the *Hippias Major*.[6] Gadamer himself linked this puzzle to his own communal theory of *logoi* and *arithmoi*. First, I will offer an interpretation of the passage in question. Second, I will examine and explain Gadamer's suggestion that an analogy between *arithmos* and *logos* operates in Plato's dialogues and

that this parallel is exhibited in the *Hippias Major*. Third, I will argue that Socrates uses the arithmetical example in the *Hippias Major* for a purpose that is slightly—but importantly—different from the purpose Gadamer identifies. While Gadamer's interpretation implies that the properties of sum-wholes and the properties of their elements are necessarily different, my interpretation suggests that they may or may not have the same properties, depending on the nature of the whole-part relation in question.

This difference in our interpretations is important and interesting, as I will argue, because the lesson Gadamer draws from the *Hippias Major* passage is deeply related to the development of his own interpretation of human community. I will bracket the question of whether Gadamer developed his social philosophy from Socrates's example or imported it into his interpretation of the passage. However, I will offer two decisive claims about the significance of how one reads these passages: I will argue that a different interpretation of the passage can be offered; and I will offer evidence that Gadamer's social philosophy is significantly related to the lesson he draws from his reading of this puzzle.

I. An Initial Interpretation of the Text

I will begin by offering a reading of the *Hippias Major* passage. This reading will then ground the encounter with Gadamer's interpretation of the same text in part II.

Before examining the arithmetical puzzle itself, we should first recall the larger progression of the *Hippias Major*. In the first half of the dialogue Socrates refutes Hippias's persistent confusion of "what the fine [*kalos*] itself is" with mere examples of "fine things." Socrates, in typical fashion, shows Hippias that, by his own eventual admission, fine things are not in truth identical to the fine itself. For example, if "a fine girl" were the genuine account of the fine itself, then we could not explain why there are contexts in which "a fine girl" is comparatively not-fine. A fine goddess, Hippias admits, comparatively outshines a fine girl in beauty, thus showing that she, as a mere example, could not be the defining account of the fine itself. The refutation suggests that all such examples, since they are not definitive of beauty, are subject to being admixed

with opposite qualities.[7] All of Hippias's accounts of the fine thus fall into similar problems pertaining to the relationship between defining accounts and examples.

Soon, however, Socrates—or, rather, his so-called "friend" (i.e. perhaps his alter-ego)—attempts to give a proper account of the fine. He avoids Hippias's method of merely citing examples, and instead he tries to define the fine in terms of some other attribute or set of attributes.[8] Socrates makes several attempts to define the fine this way: the fine is the appropriate (293e ff); or the capacity to be useful and productive (295c ff); or the capacity to be useful and productive of the good (296d ff).

None of these efforts survives Socrates's own self-criticism. For instance, if the fine were merely a "power or capacity," then it could be the power to produce either good or evil. But the fine, all agree, never produces evil. One might try to solve this problem by redefining the fine as "the power to produce only good." Yet, the fine might then show up separately from the good (since, all agree, producers are independent of their products); but all agree that such a separation of beauty from goodness is impossible (297b ff). Thus, Socrates's first attempts all fail the test of the elenchus he generates against these views.

Despite these initial failures, the last among Socrates's definitions is special. The fine (F), suggests Socrates, is "what is pleasant through sight $[P_S]$ and hearing $[P_H]$" (299c1). That is, there is something in the "pair" of sight and hearing that "differentiates them from all the [other pleasures]." That differentiator, present in the pair, must be the fine itself (299e). This account leads Socrates to ponder the logical structure that concerns us in this essay: If the fine were differentiated from other things by the fact that it involves the togetherness of two (or more) things, such as P_S and P_H, then a serious dilemma arises. For, should the fine itself be defined by the togetherness of the two things ($[P_S$ and $P_H]$) but not by each of those two things independently ($[P_S]$ and $[P_H]$)? Or is the fine defined by each constituent separately? What is truly responsible for the presence of the fine, if we are saying that "P_S and P_H" is the *definiens*?

This question surely arises whenever we attempt to define "what F is" by appealing to what is other than F. Yet, it

seems that anyone who wishes to account for F must make such an appeal to a set of things other than F. The alternatives are either to give a purely circular account of F in terms of itself or to return to speaking in terms of F's examples ("fine girl"), with all the attendant problems.[9] A dilemma thus arises for Socrates here because, while we may rightly desire to give non-circular accounts of F (by using a term or set of terms other than F), all such accounts have their own problems. Shall we refer to *each* constituent of the *definiens*, or to *all* of them, as responsible for F's being what it is?

Hippias, however, sees no problem here at all; he cannot even envision the difficulty.[10] His answer is to state that because both pleasures together ([P_S and P_H]) are the fine, it must for that reason be the case that each-separately ([P_S] and [P_H]) is also the fine. "[Never] shall you find," he says, "what is attributed to neither me nor you, but is attributed to both of us" (300d8). His answer to the puzzle of "each and both" is to deny that the puzzle can ever arise. Hippias continues,

> If both of us were just, wouldn't each of us be too? Or if each of us were unjust, wouldn't both of us? Or if we were healthy, wouldn't each be? Or if each of us had some sickness or were wounded or stricken or had any other tribulation, again, wouldn't both of us have that attribute? Similarly, if we happened to be gold or silver or ivory, or, if you like, noble or wise or honored or even old or young or anything you like that goes with human beings, isn't it really necessary that each of us be that as well? (300e7-301a7)

Here, Hippias commits to the thesis that if both of a pair are fine, then each *must* be fine as well (and, further, that what each is, both must also be).[11] This must be so, he argues, because if one truly looks at the whole of nature, or "the entireties of things," one sees that they are "naturally continuous bodies of being [*dianekē sōmata tēs ousias pephukota*]" (301b).[12] As a result, parts can never exhibit an essence opposed to the whole they constitute, nor can the whole have an essence opposite its parts.

Socrates responds to Hippias's "continuity principle" by appealing to the counterexample that concerns us in this essay. Socrates introduces the example almost passingly and with an ironic reply:

> But now, we have been instructed by you [Hippias] that if two is what we both are, two is what each of us must be as well; and if each is one, then both must be one as well. The continuous theory of *being* [*dianekei logo tēs ousias*], according to Hippias, does not allow it to be otherwise; but whatever both [*amphoteroi*] are, that each [*hekateron*] is as well; and whatever each is, both are. (301d3-e3)

Pretending to be persuaded by Hippias's "continuous theory of being," Socrates quips ironically: "Right now, I sit here persuaded by you." Socrates then goes on the offensive: "First, however, remind me, Hippias. Are you and I one? Or are you two and I two?" Socrates's asks this question in order to clarify what *further* attributes he and Hippias must bear, if we accept that they are each one person and both two people. If both Hippias and Socrates are together "two," then shall we not attribute "evenness" to them both together? But, if so, then Hippias's "continuity principle" requires that we attribute evenness to *each* of them as well (302a5-b5). For the essence of the parts of a sum must, according to Hippias, be the same as the essence of the whole.[13] Making just this point again, now in terms of oddness, Socrates continues at 302a1 (my emphasis):

> Hippias: What do you mean, Socrates?
> Socrates: Just what I say. […] Isn't each of us one, and *that*—being one—is attributed to him?
> Hippias: Certainly.
> Socrates: Then if each of us is one, wouldn't he *also* be odd-numbered? Or don't you consider one to be odd?[14]
> Hippias: I do.
> Socrates: Then will both of us be odd-numbered, being two?

Hippias is rather embarrassed. Socrates has brought the continuity principle into troubled waters. If "both" implies being-two, then "both" must have the *further* essential attribute of being even. But the even is necessarily different from the odd. Thus, if "each" implies being one (and also the presence of the odd), then a contradiction arises with Hippias's "continuity principle."

In this way, Socrates decisively shows that we cannot universally apply Hippias's continuity principle. It fails in some mathematical cases, not to mention other cases such as strength.[15] Thus, Socrates ends with a summary of his own conclusion: "Then it's not entirely *necessary* [*ouk ara pasa*

anangkē], as you said it was a moment ago, that whatever is true of both is true of each, and that whatever is true of each is also true of both" (302b2-3, my emphasis). Socrates's example thus decisively refutes the universality and necessity of the continuity principle, given the set of agreements (e.g. that the even cannot be odd).[16]

Now, Socrates, I want to suggest, is not saying that there is never continuity between the whole and the parts, even in cases of number. In some cases, both and each of a pair might share the same *further*, essential attribute (like even or odd). For example, "each" may be two and "both" may be four; they share in evenness. Hippias, by contrast, is committed dubiously to the *necessary continuity* of wholes and parts. But this fact does not imply that Socrates is committed to an unconditional, *necessary discontinuity* of wholes and parts. He is not. Hippias, however, misunderstands Socrates and assumes that Socrates thinks the fine must be some kind of essentially "discontinuous property," and Socrates must correct Hippias's misunderstanding:

> Socrates: Then should we call both fine, but not call each fine?
> Hippias: What's to stop us?
> Socrates: This stops us, friend, in my opinion. We had things that come to belong to particular things in this way: if they come to belong to both, they do to each also; and if to each, to both—all the examples you gave. Right?
> Hippias: Yes.
> Socrates: But the examples I gave were not that way […]: when both of anything are even-numbered, each may be *either* odd- *or* possibly even-numbered (303a2-303c1, my emphasis).[17]

Socrates admits here that there are cases like the one above when "both" (i.e. the sum-whole) participate in an attribute that "each" (i.e. the part) participates in as well; but he also admits cases when this relationship does not hold.[18] Since he admits *both* kinds of cases, he is not saying that the whole and the part cannot share in the same further attribute (like even or odd). He is saying this continuity sometimes holds but does not necessarily hold.

Socrates's point here applies to mathematical cases well beyond the cases of even and odd. Indeed, he mentions times when "each of them is inexpressible, [but] both together

may be expressible, or possibly inexpressible" (303c2).[19] That is, inexpressibles can in certain combinations be combined to yield expressibles, though in other cases they cannot.[20] Thus, again we are left with two kinds of cases: first, cases of attribute-continuity between parts and whole; and, second, cases of attribute-discontinuity.[21]

The larger, logical point here is, I take it, the following: The argument shows that, when we define F in terms of a set of elements—say, P_S and P_H—then we can generate examples parallel to such constructions, some of which exhibit continuity, others of which exhibit discontinuity between whole and part. Thus, with the formula "F is P_S and P_H," we know that the mere formula, even if true in its parts, might be untrue in its whole, or the reverse. The harmony of the parts with the whole is not guaranteed by the sheer logical form, even if the account is sufficiently expressive of the beautiful at some level. Each element ($[P_S]$ and $[P_H]$) *may or may not* be fine by itself, even when, in combination, the "emergent" character is sufficiently expressive of the fine. Or, alternatively, the whole *may or may not* be fine, even if each element could otherwise—e.g. in some other combination—be fine. Attribute continuity is in this sense a dependent possibility; it depends on the case in question.

Now, Gadamer's interpretation will diverge from my interpretation of the lesson so far, for he will argue that Socrates's lesson hinges simply on the necessary difference between the parts and the whole in a sum. However, before looking at the very real merits of his alternative interpretation, I would like to show how the dialogue concludes and to draw out some additional themes that will bring us back, ultimately, to a comparison with Gadamer's reading of the example.

To continue, Socrates and Hippias eventually do agree that, were there to be a "once and for all" definition of the fine, it would guarantee that its elements will not contradict the harmony the whole attains with the *definiendum* (303c4-d1). And for this reason, they finally reject the idea that "F is P_S and P_H" meets *this* criterion.[22] However, Socrates does not say that the formula is for that reason insufficient as an account. He distances himself from the formula, I would argue, only because it does not provide a *necessarily sufficient* account, i.e., a sufficient expression that as a whole cannot be subverted by a

part, or the reverse. The preceding inquiry clearly did not discover an account *that* strong, for we are left with the puzzle that elements might conflict with the whole. Thus, the collective inquiry must continue because, for all we know, even an excellent and sufficient formula may be sufficient only for a time, e.g. for as long as an intuition of beauty secures the harmony between parts and the whole. Thus, Socrates does not simply reject the above formula. Rather, he tries to discern why and how—or in light of what—these pleasures of sight and hearing can indeed bear the fine, if they do so (303e-304a3). Hippias is, however, too annoyed to continue this discussion, and the dialogue abruptly ends.

Even so, there is a positive point in this conclusion that will ultimately bring us back to our conversation with Gadamer. Defining accounts of F always reference things other than F. For this reason a "definition" must contain a multiplicity of elements. A definition, even if it truly expresses F, may still include elements that can be contrary to the fine. Even then, the formula may reach a "moment of total sufficiency," if it attains harmony of whole and part at once. Yet, this "at once" is very different from "once and for all." For in a sufficient account an element may still have a power to be ugly apart from this whole while being fine as a part of this whole, or the reverse. Indeed, the possibility of this alienation is always present in any definition we might offer. All our accounts unify separable elements into a harmony, or manifest in these elements a whole expression of something that could also emerge elsewhere. This possibility to be discordant, however, does not take away from the *sufficiency* of a contingently attained harmony. Therefore, the lesson, I would argue, is that accounts are like songs to which many instruments or voices contribute. The harmonious whole is at no point *necessarily* harmonious. The harmony is continuously held in place by the individual instruments and musicians, each of whom, likewise, is guided and held in place by the way the whole expression of the piece is developing. As musicians know, this "flow" is not easy to attain. It is difficult but attainable.

Socrates is thus teaching us about the complexity and contingency of accounts (and, further, about the truths they express). Hippias's "continuity principle" by contrast would

overlook this complexity. Hippias demands that accounts be simply "continuous" because he thinks they reflect a reality that is itself a simply continuous whole. Hippias fails to see that true accounts—and realities—are more fragile and must place their hopes in a kind of "as-good-as-possible sufficiency," i.e. a contingent but sustainable harmony of all with each. But this sustainable harmony will not destroy the possibility of opposition or alienation. If we want our definition to be *guaranteed* against subversion, we will never stop searching; we will alienate ourselves in an eternal search. If, instead, we care to learn what it is that makes contingently true accounts true, when they are true, then we are asking not about an unattainable, unsubvertible whole but about an attainable but rare, fragile, and difficult harmony.

In this way, Socrates's lesson is insightful and helpful for an inquirer into beauty. He shows us that a constant commitment to the work of harmonizing will be required if the true account is to emerge and be sustained.[23] True accounts will inevitably have to be re-spoken and reformulated. Socrates, who lives this life of re-searching and re-saying—i.e. a life of inquiry—embodies the beauty of the discerning but harmonizing inquirer (as well as the beauty of the true statesman). For he expresses at once both the difficulty in accounts of the fine, due to the fragile sufficiency they can attain ("fine things are difficult" at 304e9); and yet he also maintains hope for the possibility of attaining and sustaining the sufficient account ("perhaps I may be benefitted by this inquiry" at 304e7). Hippias, however, does not fully recognize the lesson here, i.e. the lesson about inquiry itself. He simply reaffirms his Sophistical view that the fine is the ability to *appear* to be fine to the public, to win court battles, to persuade others to become allies, etc. (303a5-b4).

II. Gadamer's Interpretation of the Argument

Gadamer has seen, perhaps more than any recent reader of Plato, the way the problem of "defining accounts" is related to the problem of number theory in the dialogues. In this respect, he is willing to think analogically (or simply Platonically) about how a problem in arithmetic affects a different problem in

language or, by extension, community. We find a paradigm of Gadamer's breadth in "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic." Here, he argues that to express a form in language, for Plato, is to show it to be involved with other ideas. In other words, knowledge involves us necessarily in a *logos*. "[In] Plato," Gadamer argues, "the *logos* is thought of essentially as being-there-together, the being of one idea 'with' another. In that they are taken together, the two of two separate ideas constitutes the one of the state of affairs expressed" (1968a/1980, 148). Gadamer is thus greatly interested in the problem we have analyzed. His task in this essay is to elucidate this problem of the one-many and to draw out the nature of the "structural parallel" between language and number (1968a/1980, 149).

Importantly, Gadamer's interpretation of this *logos-arithmos* paradigm is linked directly to the way he reads our puzzling arithmetical example. "This puzzle [of the one and the two]," he writes, "if I view the matter correctly, is first presented in the *Hippias Major* without any positive conclusion being drawn from it" (1968a/1980, 135). Thus, in this section I will first show how Gadamer's interpretation of the *arithmos* structure is importantly linked to his reading of the *Hippias Major*. Then, I will expand on the implications he draws from his reading.

Gadamer directly engages with the *Hippias Major*'s arithmetical example in the following paragraph from "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic":

> Now that which a certain number or sum of things may be said to have in common, that in which their unity consists [i.e. S-structure], is quite distinct from that which unifies the members of a genus [i.e. G-structure]. For [in an S-structure] there are remarkable attributes which may be predicated of the sums of things but precisely not of the units, the things themselves of which the number is made up. The sum number is a specific type of number, e.g. even or odd, rational or irrational, and these attributes are properties of numbers which may be predicated of the unity of a number of things but not, in contrast, of the units which constitute that number (1968a/1980, 132).

Here, Gadamer is arguing that the notion of the S-structure expressed by the *Hippias Major* passage is not the notion of a G-structure wherein everything attributed to the

genus is necessarily also attributed to the participant. (For the G-structure, Gadamer seems to have in mind something like Aristotle's account, in *Metaphysics* VII, 12-15 and VIII, 6, of how the differentiations of the genus in a proper definition are all contained necessarily in the last differentiation, as "four-footed animal" implies "footed animal" as well as "animal." The last difference in a proper definition by genus-division implicitly refers to all prior differentiations. The genera "telescope" into the species.) Instead of this G-structure, Gadamer finds in the *Hippias Major* a model of defining based on the S-structure.[24] That is, Socrates's arithmetical example shows that there are "properties of numbers which may be predicated of the unity of a number of things but not, in contrast, of the units [*im Unterschied zu den Einsen*] which constitute that number." Or, again: "The number consists of units each of which by itself is one, and nevertheless the number itself, according to the number of units it includes, is not many but a definite 'so many,' the unity of a multiplicity bound together […]" (1968a/1980, 147).

Gadamer's reading of the S-structure would so far seem to accord with our initial interpretation of the passage, for it envisions Socrates's lesson as a lesson against Hippias's theory of "continuous being." Still, we should ask, what exactly does Gadamer mean when he interprets Socrates to be saying that there are properties of the whole that are not properties of the units in an S-structure? Does Gadamer interpret Socrates as saying (a) that the essential attributes predicable of the sum *can be or can not be* attributed to the constituents, as I interpreted the passage? Or, rather, does he mean (b) that they *cannot* be so attributed? In fact, in his interpretation of the S-structure, Gadamer clearly wants to suggest something approaching (b). He writes,

> Anyone can see, of course, that [in the case of the G-structure] the thing which unifies a genus may also be predicated of each of the examples of that genus and to that extent the one is many. […] But can this argument be advanced in support of the unity of an insight, that is, the unity of that which is said and meant in the *logos*? One suspects that the latter is more comparable to that other form of being in common [i.e. to the S-structure]: that it has the structure of the sum number [*der Struktur der Anzahl*] of things which precisely

> as that thing which all of them have in common cannot be attributed to them individually [*die nicht als das Gemeinsame allen ihren Summanden zukommt*]. And indeed the sum of what has been counted [*Summe von Gezählten*] is not at all something which could be predicated of each of the things counted. (1968a/1980, 133)[25]

Gadamer has interpreted Socrates's lesson differently than I understood it above. Whereas I claimed the example serves to refute Hippias through its demonstration that the *further* attributes (e.g. even or odd) of sums *may or may not* hold for the parts as well, according to Gadamer the example refutes Hippias by showing that what is proper to the sum-number *cannot* be attributed to the constituents (units). While in the G-structure the genus and participants necessarily agree, in the S-structure, for Gadamer, they cannot agree.[26]

Let us examine the implications Gadamer draws from his interpretation before comparing it more closely with my reading. First, Gadamer distinguishes the two distinct kinds of ideas—we might call them the necessarily continuous (i.e. the G-structure) and the necessarily discontinuous (i.e. the S-structure)—based on the intuitive point that, in numbers, the units must be different from the sum: e.g. the sum is eight but the units are not each eight.[27] Second, he concludes that there is thus a necessary discontinuity between whole and part in any S-structured whole, a point which Hippias misses.[28]

Third, Gadamer argues that account-giving must involve this S-structure. That is, the lesson to be drawn from the example is that the "complete definition" of any F—what Gadamer calls the "complete insight" into the *definiendum*—corresponds to a grand S-structure, not to a G-structure. The whole of any essential account is, he argues, *necessarily discontinuous* with the parts. Thus, he writes:

> The compatibility of all definitions in a genus with one another, or what is more, the necessity of their coexistence with the final determination common to all of them, is what constitutes the unitary nature of the thing. This means that the statement of the essence, the definitional statement, is the *collected sum number* of all the essential definitions which have been run through, and as such is has the structure of a number (1968a/1980, 149, my emphasis).

In other words, if we are trying to define F properly and completely, we will have to take the sum of the essential

accounts of F into account. But, as Gadamer understands the S-structure, for any sum the sum's essence *cannot* be found in the part. Thus, no particular account of F, but only the sum-whole of all the accounts of F, could sufficiently express F. "The very *logos* of the *eidos*, in other words, the very attempt to say what the unitary essence of any given thing is," claims Gadamer, "leads necessarily to a systematic combination of many eidetic determinations (definitions by essence) in the unity of a defining statement" (1968b/1980, 202). Many accounts must come together to give the whole account of any F.

Importantly, Gadamer extends this insight in a way that has enormous implications for his reading of Plato's forms. He writes, "Where the one *eidos* is, there must 'be' some other reality, and not only must that reality 'be' as the Many, but also it must 'be' as the determinations which are mixed into the individual phenomena. […] [The] participation of the many particulars in the one idea converts into the participation of ideas in one another" (1968a/1980, 138).[29] In other words, all the Platonic forms *themselves* are interrelated in a way that parallels the interrelation involved in our S-structured accounts of the forms. "*What is*," he argues, "is as the whole of the infinite interrelationship of things, from which at any given time in discourse and insight a determinate, partial aspect is 'raised up' and placed in the light of disconcealment" (1964/ 1980, 120, my emphasis).[30] In other words, for Gadamer, an *eidos* itself is essentially relational. Language does not simply multiply otherwise singular ideas; rather, "what is" is always already multiple and relational.[31] This inter-relational nexus is always already logical and numerological in structure because "logic" and "number" are reflections of a living community exhibiting a dialogical existence. In short, number—interpreted as a discontinuous S-structure—is for Gadamer the logical *and* the ontological "paradigm" for Plato. It is the "prototype of *the order of Being*" (1968a/1980, 151, my emphasis).

We should examine one last feature of Gadamer's interpretation before determining the significance of our difference of interpretation. For the most important aspect of the analogy with number, Gadamer suggests, is that the whole of an S-structure is ultimately *incompletable*. That is, just as

the number-line goes on indefinitely and there can always be a greater and greater sum-of-all-numbers, so too is every S-structured account of reality (or every essential definition) in essence incompletable:

> If we are indeed forbidden to seek a fixed system of deduction in Plato's doctrines and if, on the contrary, Plato's doctrine of the indeterminate Two establishes precisely the *impossibility* of completing such a system, then Plato's doctrine of ideas turns out to be a general theory of relationship from which it can be convincingly deduced that dialectic is *unending and infinite*. Underlying this theory would be the fact that the *logos* always requires that one idea be 'there' together with another. (1968a/1980, 152, my emphasis)

In other words, the complete account of any reality cannot be attained; we are left with an "endlessness" and "inconclusiveness" akin to the generation of numbers in an "endless process" (1968a/1980, 152). The very fact that the whole is bound necessarily to be this infinite, developing multiplicity confounds any attempt to arrive at the completeness of the whole. Or, said differently:

> One must consider Plato's real insight to be that *there is no* collected whole of possible explications either for a single *eidos* or for the totality of *eidē*. […] [For] if one really wanted to complete the demarcation of an *eidos* on all sides, one would have to mark it off [as different] from all other *eidē* as well, which is to say that one finds oneself in the situation […] where only the assembled whole of all possible explications would make the full truth possible. (1968b/1980, 203, my emphasis)

Hence, a "mystery" arises for Gadamer: we can only define a single, whole idea if we can voice the whole of the idea's relationships to other ideas; but to "raise" any idea in speech or thought *at all* is to raise it only partially and in a particular way, which is insufficient to the whole (1968a/1980, 138). Thus, Gadamer concludes that Plato's entire purpose has been to show that while the idea may be "mysteriously" expressed or intended in a particular account or part, nevertheless the complete definition can *never* be sufficiently manifest in an account (1968a/1980, 153).[32] The wholeness of the whole cannot be encompassed in a part; it simply cannot be expressed.[33]

For Gadamer, we should note, this principled *inexpressibility* of the whole is not lamentable (1968a/1980, 154).[34]

Rather, he thinks Plato uses it to show us that a *logos* is bound to a living community engaging actively in an ever-ongoing dialogue. We have a "felicitous experience of an advancing insight, the *euporia* which the *Philebus* says (15c) happens to the person who proceeds along the proper path to the One and the Many—the way of discourse which reveals the thing being discussed" (1964/1980, 119). Plato just wants to make evident the necessity of the *conversational* model of knowledge. And because knowledge is conversational, a complete singular intuition, or so-called "private insight" into essence, must likewise be closed off. For such a completion of an insight would end the conversation. Thus, we learn instead that the "interweaving of the highest genera" leads "only to the *negative* insight that it is not possible to define an isolated idea by itself" (1964/1980, 110). Indeed: "Insight into one idea per se does not yet constitute knowledge. Only when the idea is 'alluded' to in respect of another does it display itself *as* something. […] The being of the ideas […] consists in their displaying of themselves and being present in a *logos*" (1968a/1980, 152-3).

Thus, to conclude, according to Gadamer the same rule that makes it improper for properties of "both" to be attributed to "each" (in the case of number) also applies to the case of essential definitions: the essence of the complete account is never attained by any account. Thus any singular intuition or defining account of F is necessarily insufficient vis-à-vis its target, which is a larger, impossible-to-complete whole account of F. Yes, each partial insight will have its implicit order and relation to the whole; but the depths of the whole in which it develops can never be fathomed. For Gadamer this mystery is nothing to be overcome or avoided; the puzzle itself simply bespeaks the "wondrousness of the path of this human knowing, which, as human, is always directed into the open-ended […]" (1968a/1980, 154).[35]

III. The Significance of the Difference in Interpretations

As I have argued, for Gadamer the "unwritten dialectic" implies that the *logos ousias* is ultimately unfinishable because it is grounded in a structural analogy with the "*arithmos*

paradigm" conceived as an ever-growing sum-number. But Gadamer's understanding of a sum-number is, as I have shown, deeply tied to his specific interpretation of the kind of arithmetical example Plato "first" introduced in the *Hippias Major*. As Gadamer reads this example, it would suggest that the attributes of a sum-number (modeled on the notion of the pair of "both-together") are inapplicable to each constituent of the sum. This inability—or impossibility—is essential, for it ultimately grounds Gadamer's inference that any complete truth is unattainable by a single insight or definite account.

While I have given a somewhat different reading of the lesson of the example, it is important, in my view, to see that Gadamer does draw a plausible lesson from Socrates's refutation of Hippias: the sum of an account is something necessarily different from its parts. This truth is guaranteed, he argues, by the S-structure of the *arithmos* model. This much, I do not dispute. But Gadamer takes this model and uses it to infer that the whole, ongoing process of being-together cannot be something sufficiently present at any particular stage in the ongoing process. The part cannot sufficiently express the truth of the whole; the single definition is necessarily insufficient. The knower cannot escape being communal; and yet this communality of knowledge itself guarantees that any completable account is necessarily insufficient *just because it is completable*.

Another way to say this, in Platonic terms, is to say that for Gadamer a particular can never sufficiently instantiate the form it bespeaks. For this reason, Gadamer (quite self-consistently) infers that true Platonic participation (*methexis*) is strictly "between forms" and not between particulars and forms. "The participation of the individual in the idea is not even the true participation from which the Platonic dialectic of the one and the many gains its scope. This true participation, rather, is the relationship of the ideas to one another and what Plato has in mind with the *logos*" (1999/2001, 134).[36] Thus, from this perspective, no emergent (*gignomenon*)—i.e. no participant in the traditional sense—can ever be, in itself, sufficient to the whole(s) that it expresses (1968a/1980, 147). Stated again in terms of epistemology, Gadamer thinks that "the particular which participates in an *eidos* is of importance in an argument

only in regard to that in which it may be said to participate, i.e. only in regard to its eidetic content" (1973/1980, 34). And since "private insights" are themselves supposedly just momentary flashes in becoming, they—just like the so-called participants in forms—"do not belong to true reality but to becoming" (1964/1980, 103). We thus arrive at the paradoxical result that, in Gadamer's reading of Plato, only the whole, which is itself *inexpressible*, would be a sufficient expression of the whole.

While I take Gadamer's reading to present a truth, my interpretation of the *Hippias Major*'s arithmetical example supports a different understanding of the "*arithmos* paradigm." If we can retain Gadamer's valuable insight into the *logos-arithmos* parallel in general, we nevertheless might interpret differently the arithmetical example's implications. First, on textual grounds, I have argued that the example focuses on the lesson that what characterizes "both" of a pair *can or can not* characterize "each" in a pair. Thus, even if all knowledge is bound to language, and language is a communal whole as Gadamer suggests, it should follow that accounts (since they are harmonies of multiples) sometimes do and sometimes do not sufficiently manifest that which they "speak." Implied in the *arithmos* paradigm, then, is by no means a theory that participants cannot attain a sufficient, expressive harmony in and with a whole. We cannot infer directly from the bare fact of a necessary discontinuity between sum and part in an S-structure, to the claim that the part cannot manifest the essence of the whole. Necessary difference does not imply impossible continuity. Rather, the sum-whole's essence should be understood to consist in its *further*, essential participation-relations (e.g. even and odd).[37] And because there are such further, essential relations constituting the very essence of a number, it turns out that when a number is expressed, the parts can share in essence with the whole. The parts might be in essence even, just as the whole may be (e.g. four may be parsed as two and two). If this understanding of the sum-structure is applied by analogy to account-giving, therefore, then we learn not that singular accounts and insights are necessarily insufficient to that which they "bespeak" but rather

that they *can be or can not be* sufficient. My claim is thus that particular accounts or definitions necessarily differ from the form they intend or express; but they are not thereby prevented from sharing in this essence in a way that is sufficient to yield a complete, but perhaps temporary, whole-part harmony (or unity preserving distinctions).

Thus, the *arithmos* paradigm teaches that shared participation between the whole and the part is possible and *is* sometimes "contingently-sufficiently" attained. Hence, as I have argued, it makes sense that Socrates would remain optimistic about account-giving in general in the closing lines of the dialogue: "perhaps I may be benefitted by this inquiry" (304e7). He is not optimistic because the sufficient account of the fine is an unattainable, indefinite, Sisyphean goal. He has *hope* because he glimpses that the source of the harmony we seek can also emerge for us here and now. Again, if we are seeking an account that cannot be subverted, we will never stop searching. But if, instead, we are concerned to learn what it is that makes contingently true accounts true, then we are asking not about the unattainable whole but about the attainable harmony of a contingently-sufficient account.

In closing, I take it that what Gadamer draws from his reading of the lesson is something we need to learn. We must not take our particular, contingently-sufficient account to be "once and for all" the universal, irrefutable defining account. Yet, the fact that we must re-say and re-phrase anew any account does not, in my interpretation, imply that it was not sufficient in the first place. The manifestation of beauty and harmony in a "contingently true" account is difficult for us to attain but not impossible, just as the beautiful city in the *Republic* can come to be, though it is difficult.[38] The *Hippias Major* thus ends with Socrates realizing that "beauty is difficult" but not "beauty is impossible." There may be a harmony of this multiplicity, and this determination is partly up to us. For, since we are each wielders of language, we are each like the contributing musicians in the song of the whole account.

IV. Closing Suggestions about Community

At the heart of Gadamer's reading of the arithmetical example is his relational theory of the Platonic ideas: so-called "participants" are comprehensible only through an immanent whole of related ideas.[39] Gadamer's theory of the reflection of living dialogue thus implies that ideas in their relations are sufficiently accessible only to the community's reason, or to the individual qua communal, not to the individuals qua individuals. Indeed, the ideas are a communal whole and we cannot grasp them without grasping their relations. For Gadamer, this communal, linguistic whole is constitutive of the individual moments in it.[40] It is therefore constitutive of the human condition, both politically and individually.

I wish to suggest in closing—and the following is not intended as a rigorous conclusion but merely a suggestion—that Gadamer's vision of language, while drawn from Plato, really echoes Heraclitus above all. For, as Gadamer writes, "There is a saying of Heraclitus, the 'weeping' philosopher: The *logos* is common to all, but people behave as if each had private reason. Does this have to remain this way?" (1976/1981, 87). Gadamer's rhetorical question indicates that he shares this lament that we behave like beings with sufficient private insight when, in truth, we never have that insight. The *logos* speaks through us.

If my reading of the arithmetical example can be contrasted with Gadamer's reading—and if indeed Gadamer is right to posit an analogy between number and *logos*—then the convergences and divergences of our readings will have major implications for our respective understandings of what it is to be a *zōon logon echon*. For my reading suggests that, just as much as language speaks through us in the Heraclitean sense, so too must we remember that individuals and even private insights can play a part in actively constituting that language. Even if the *eidē* in their interrelations are never sufficiently accessible to a private individual living apart from some community or another—after all, I have argued that "contingently-sufficient" accounts do indeed harmonize parts in and with their *wholes*—it does not for that reason follow that *only* the community (or the individual qua communal) has access to the

Platonic ideas. In Plato's truly beautiful city, where the guidance of each by the idea of the whole makes possible the harmony of each with the other, the individuals' insights are also original contributions. They actively constitute the song of the whole.

NOTES

[1] The authenticity of the dialogue is still debated (see Grube 1926; Tarrant 1927; Sider 1977; Woodruff 1982; Thesleff 1982; Kahn 1985; Ledger 1989; Trivigno 2016). For the purposes of this paper's thesis, only the *relevance* of the dialogue for Platonic thought is required, not strict authenticity. Gadamer assumes its authenticity (1974/1980, 158), though his theory of the "unwritten dialectic" seems not incompatible with a more broadly Platonic origin of the dialogue. See notes 3, 4, and 5.

[2] See Gadamer's unpublished dissertation *Das Wesen der Lust nach den platonischen Dialogen* (with P. Natorp in 1922) and his *Habilitationschrift* on Plato's *Philebus* (with M. Heidegger in 1928). For Heidegger's effect on Gadamer's classical scholarship, see Grondin (2003, 71-127). The ancient influence was enduring. "Decades of teaching," Gadamer wrote later in life, "were devoted to elaborating and testing what I have called here the Platonic-Aristotelian unitary effect. But in the background was the continuous challenge posed for me by the path Heidegger's own thought took, and especially his interpretation of Plato as the decisive step toward 'metaphysical thought's' obliviousness to being (*Sein*). My elaboration and projection of a philosophical hermeneutics in *Warheit und Methode* bears witness to my efforts to withstand this challenge theoretically" (1978/1986, 5).

[3] Gadamer comments extensively on the indispensability of the written dialogues (1964/1980, 94-96). His view contrasts with readings of the dialogues as secondary in importance, given the Aristotelian and Academic testimonies (e.g. Robin 1908; Krämer 1982/1990; Reale 1984/1991; and Findlay 1974). Many remain skeptical of incorporating insights from the extra-dialogical tradition, which skepticism also contrasts with Gadamer's approach (see Cherniss 1944 and Press 2000). For an overview of a range of interpretive strategies, see Tigerstedt (1977).

[4] See also Gadamer (1968a/1980, 126): "I would hold that the essential core of Plato's doctrine was presented in ongoing didactic discussion which engage the participants for whole days at a time and establish a living community among them." For this reason, Gadamer does not speak of Plato's unwritten "doctrines" but rather of his unwritten "dialectic."

[5] Gadamer's claims are: (a) the written dialogues are expressions of a living dialogue; (b) the written dialogues manifest the structure of number; (c) but the core of the supposed "unwritten doctrines" resides in the interpretation of the forms as, or as analogous to, numbers (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 6). Thus, for Gadamer, (d) the core of the "unwritten doctrines" is the core of the written dialogues: number-structure and dialogue-structure are analogous.

[6] The example from *Hippias Major* 299e ff has loose parallels at *Republic* 476a ff; *Theaetetus* 185a-b and 201d ff; and *Parmenides* 143c-d. See also: *Topics* I, 5-6 and *Metaphysics* VII, 12-15 and VIII, 6 where Aristotle insists that definition is not attained by the mere grouping of otherwise distinct terms. All Plato quotations come from Cooper and Hutchinson (1997).

[7] The accounts of X formulated extensionally are subject to refutation, since, as Hippias and Socrates agree, the examples of X also manifest X's opposite to an extent. Socrates is thus working under the assumption that to account for X truly is to give an account of X that does not include what is essentially opposite X (because X itself, he assumes, is not opposite itself). See also Hyland (2008).

[8] Intentional or comprehensive definitions are often treated in textbooks as if the point were strictly to delimit the use of a *word*. Such a problem differs radically from those examined by both Plato and Aristotle, who were concerned with giving a true account of the form or substance (*logos ousias*). Here we find a manifestation of what Gadamer calls "the radical nominalism of the modern age" (1978/1986, 45).

[9] Extensional accounts, in addition to the problems raised above, raise the problem of definitional priority. See Wolfsdorf (2004).

[10] For an argument that this part-whole problem may relate to the historical Hippias as a mere *compiler* of others' ideas, see Sider (1992).

[11] Morgan is correct to note that the relation of both (i.e. the pair) to each (i.e. the unit) is, for Hippias, a subcase of a larger class of whole/part relations (Morgan 1983, 134 n. 6).

[12] For a thoroughgoing analysis of what Hippias means by "naturally continuous bodies of being," see Wolfsdorf (2006, 221-256) and Morgan (1983).

[13] For the Sophistical problems of one and many, see esp. *Philebus*, 14d and Aristotle, *Physics*, 185b25 (see also Garner 2017, 5-35). Here, Socrates frames this debate not merely at the level of one and two but at the *further* level of even and odd numbers. If Hippias thinks the even *can* be odd, then he cannot grasp that he is refuted. *Phaedo* 96e5-97b7 and 103e5-105b2 emphasize the importance of positing the two as a form *so that* we can then talk about its relations to other forms (e.g. even) in this way.

[14] The suggestion here that the unit is odd is controversial, since it is not usually considered an *arithmos* (see Annas 1976 and Wedberg 1955). The reference to one as odd, however, occurs also at *Laws* 818c. And *Phaedo* 105b-c, in turn, considers the unit to be the principle of oddness: if the unit is present (i.e. presumably a surplus unit, remaining "after" an even division), then oddness is present. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII, 8, 1084a33 ff.

[15] The refutation of Hippias depends decisively on Hippias's agreement to treat two as even and incapable of being odd. It is tempting, but wrong, to see the full refutation as occurring simply because Hippias identifies the whole with two and the part with unit. We must also posit that the two participates in a *further* form ("the even"), which is essentially incompatible with oddness, if we are to grasp the *necessity* of the refutation. See notes 17 and 27.

[16] I am therefore in complete agreement with Wolfsdorf that "[the] existence of discontinuous properties precludes [Hippias's] general conception of F and Ff relation in corporeal terms" (Wolfsdorf 2006, 253). However, I think the

problem with Hippias's theory is shown to be not simply its "materialism" (McNeil 2007, 435-458). Rather, the refutation is achieved with a more complex insight: (i) it is never absolutely *necessary*, simply because a participant (e.g. a "pair") necessarily participates in something (e.g. in the even or the beautiful), that each member of the pair necessarily will have that same participation-relation (or vice versa); (ii) there are indeed cases when continuity between the pair's participation-relations and each member's participation relations holds, as well as cases when it does not hold.

[17] Most readers assume Socrates is committed to the thesis that "each" always refers to the bare unit, and thus that each always is associated with "odd." Line 303c1, however, shows decisively that Socrates allows "each" part of a number to be even *or* odd: six can be divided into five and one *or* two and four; etc. Thus, by "each," Socrates can refer to bare, unstructured units *or* to non-bare, structured constituents. See notes 15 and 27.

[18] Morgan (1983, 145-7) is right to notice that Socrates himself will maintain, in the end, a "'qualified' continuity principle" (or, we might add, a "qualified" discontinuity principle). However, Morgan is wrong, I think, to bind "discontinuous" properties to mathematical entities, and to bind "continuous" properties to forms like beauty, strength, etc. Socrates is not erecting exclusive categories of entities here, some continuous in every instance, others discontinuous in every instance. Rather, here he is simply re-listing the examples that have been employed in the discussion. Both Ross (1951, 178) and Hoerber (1964, 149) suggest the misleading, exclusive-category view. See note 27.

[19] I.e. inexpressible as a simple fraction, or what we call an irrational number.

[20] Socrates may have in mind cases such as the following: $[n + \sqrt{2}] + [n - \sqrt{2}] = 4$. Here, each bracket is irrational, while both together yield a rational. I have found that only Benardete (1984, xlvi) notices this possibility. By contrast, Woodruff's footnote in his translation suggests that Socrates is confused: "By 'inexpressible number' is probably meant an irrational surd (square root of a non-square number). If so, the claim is false. The sum of two such numbers is irrational" (303c1 n. 14). If my reading is correct, Woodruff overlooks the above.

[21] Hence, Morgan is correct here: "Socrates's way of looking at properties makes it *possible* for him to find properties in parts that are not found in their whole and properties in a whole that are not found in its parts" (Morgan 1983, 144).

[22] Socrates states the criterion at 303c5: "I think it's a great absurdity for both of us to be fine, but each not; or each fine, but both not, or anything else like that." Or, as Socrates amusingly puts it, if the attribute that would make *both* "both" and "each" fine is explained by the presence of a kind of *both-ness* (i.e. the *both-ness* of "both" *and* "each"), then this account would fail to account for the necessary presence of a principle of *each-ness*, which would *also* be required if the account is to attain, with necessity, a total, once and for all harmony of both and *each* (303a7). Furthermore, the line at 303d3 ("'Through sight and hearing' makes both fine, but not each.") should be read, I think, to mean that that account only necessarily guarantees the *both-ness* required, but not the *each-ness* that would also be needed to make the account

necessarily sufficient. My paragraphs that follow are my interpretation of the significance of Socrates's quip. See also the view of Tarrant (1991, 120-123) which goes too far, I think, in finding a kind of "Socratic hedonism" in the dialogue. On the complexities of Socrates's relationship with truly good or fine pleasures, see Garner (2017).

[23] Gadamer agrees that Plato is making a point about the way accounts are ongoing and "always run the risk of miscarrying" (Gadamer 1968a/1980, 155). However, Gadamer eventually treats this task as infinite and impossible to achieve. Hyland is closer to Socrates, I think, when he defends not the impossibility of sufficient accounts, but the impossibility of sufficient accounts *without remainder* (see Hyland 2008, 25).

[24] Gadamer (1982/1991, 292) describes this as a difference between "enumerating characters" (S-structure) and "specifying characters" (G-structure).

[25] The *Gesammelte Werke* edition of this passage actually ends "[…] *ist sowenig etwas, das jedem der Gezählten zukäme, wie der Sinn einer Rede ihren Silben oder Buchstaben*" (1985, 136). Thus, Gadamer compares (a) the inapplicability of the sum's essence to the part with (b) the inapplicability of the meaning of a saying to its letters. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Christopher P. Noble with the rendering of this passage and the immediately following one in the next footnote.

[26] This reading is confirmed in Gadamer (1982/1991, 291): "What always perplexes Socrates is that there is something universal that does not belong to the individuals that are collected." Further: "Numbers have a peculiar being. It is not the kind of being possessed by those things which are counted by them […]. It remains mysterious how something can be produced in the numbers themselves which exerts on us a compulsion of reality" (Gadamer 1988/2000, 254-5). See also Risser (2002, 224-225). I suspect that number exerts its supposedly peculiar "mysteriousness" to Gadamer precisely *because* he believes that the sum's essence cannot be shared with its constituents. In my reading, by contrast, a number may achieve a whole-part harmony; and, furthermore, it may be the case that all wholes will exhibit the "bare difference" between whole and part that Gadamer attributes strictly to the S-structured wholes. Thus, numbers are not so much the mystery case as they are the rule, and the S-structure does not imply the impossibility of sufficient continuity between part and whole.

[27] Three points should be observed here. First, Gadamer considers the sum-number to be made up of bare units (following Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII, 1083a34). He assumes that Hippias is refuted because Hippias failed to see the difference between sum (nine) and the enumerated units (each is not nine). But, as we noted, Socrates's use of the term "each" need not refer strictly to bare units (see note 15). Second, while, contra Gadamer, Klein posits no parallel between a sum-number and a *logos*, nevertheless they agree on the "bare unit" interpretation. As Klein writes, "[Numbers] have this curious *koinon* character: every number of things belongs to these things *only* in respect to their community, while each thing taken by itself is one" (Klein 1934/1992, 81, emphasis changed). Klein's local point is of course correct: each bare unit of a group of nine units is not itself nine. However, his use of the term "only" here (as well as his subsequent interpretation), indicates broad

accord with Gadamer that the sum-number *excludes* the parts from sharing in its essentiality. (By contrast, I claim the sum-number's very essence must be understood through its *further* participation in even, or odd, or rational, or etc. If so, then we will realize that its essentiality *may or may not* be shared with its parts.) Third, Benardete also agrees with the Klein/Gadamer interpretation; but he at least notices that if this is the right reading, then it would be "unsound" to make the parallel between number and the fine (1984, xliv-v). My view is that we do not need to deny the analogy between arithmetic and beauty *if* we realize that the "bare difference" between sum and part in any number does not guarantee that the sum and part do not share their essence. Thus, the bare difference between sum and part cannot ground a categorical distinction between numbers and other forms, like beauty. See notes 15, 17, 26, and 28.

[28] Importantly, one can say that the whole bears *something* (e.g. nine-ness) that the parts do not each participate in, while also adding that the parts must be able to share in *some* common form that is essential to the whole and is more specific that just some generic class like "number" (e.g. specifically odd-ness or even-ness).

[29] At times, Gadamer is even more explicit, implying that the one is bound to the two (and thus unity is intrinsically diverse): we must grasp "how 'the two' is one" (1968a/1980, 135); and "number [...] is a unity and multiplicity simultaneously" (1978/1986, 16, 31). Interestingly, Paul Natorp had already defended a similar thesis, arguing that Plato is close in spirit to Heraclitus's *hen kai pan* (see Grondin 2003, 79-85).

[30] Plato does not, in my view, commit positively to such an idea of an "infinite interrelationship of all things." *Sophist* 252e9, for example, maintains that some of the "great kinds" relate to some others, and some *do not* relate to some others.

[31] On Plato's discussion of a "one-idea," see Garner (2017, 5-35).

[32] Gadamer (1982/1991, 291) describes the "indissoluble mystery [*unauflösliche Rätsel*]" of the entanglement of the general and the individual, the one and the many.

[33] Kidder suggests that this paradox is indicative of the way that, for Gadamer, "partial revelations are not random but ordered within an inaccessible whole. We are always within a hermeneutic circle in which the whole is out of reach but nevertheless is a real guiding force" (Kidder 1990, 158). It is unclear to me how this mysterious, inaccessible whole is supposed to be guiding the "order" of particular accounts for Gadamer. Rather, it appears to me that Gadamer merely states the puzzle or mystery but does not explain it. E.g. Gadamer writes: "It is a strange being numbers have. This leads finally to the fact that there exists something we cannot lay our hands on" (1988/2000, 255). Because of this mystery, Platonic dialectic "cannot be learned" (1988/2000, 259).

[34] Contrast with Hegel's disdain for the "bad infinite." See also the note on Agamben below.

[35] I am here reminded of Agamben's critique of hermeneutics: "According to this [hermeneutic] conception, 'every word, as the event of a moment, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning. [...]

All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out' [Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 458]. This infinity of sense is what all perception of speech must be attentive to: authentic interpretation is interpretation that, in sheltering the openness of the infinite historical community of messages, situates everything said within the historical unsaid that is destined to infinite interpretation. […] [Thus] hermeneutics transforms ideal language into the unsayable foundation that, without ever itself coming to speech, destines the infinite movement of all language." Instead of this vision of sheltering the infinite, Agamben argues, "If the interpreter looks toward the unsaid and the infinity of sense […] the purpose of doing so is certainly *not* to preserve them but rather to put an *end* to them […] so that it may cease pointing beyond itself in an infinite reference" (Agamben 1984/1999, 56-7, my emphasis).

[36] See also Gadamer's claim that all "three kinds of *methexis* [participation] are nothing but aspects of one and the same relationship [i.e. of forms to other forms]" (1978/1986, 88). Gadamer thus reduces the participant-form relation and the relations of forms to one another. In my view, these relations will be different in kind, just as, in the *Phaedo*'s final argument, the two's participation in even, and the two's difference from the odd, is a difference that is *different in kind* from the difference between the even and the odd themselves.

[37] See note 27 above. We should note also that, based on Aristotle's testimony, Gadamer denies that Plato ultimately maintains forms for numbers (see 1982/1991, 292). Ross argues, however, that Aristotle's remarks on this matter were probably only intended to suggest that Platonists denied that there is *the* form "number" (Ross 1964, 176-215, esp. 181-2).

[38] Gadamer argues that the *Republic*'s beautiful city "cannot be actualized" (1978/1986, 70). However, Gadamer's argument for this point is not very strong, since *Republic* 471d ff argues that the city's actualization into becoming is difficult but not impossible. Gadamer's argument is: "For a blind man would see that such a state is impossible, and precisely its *im*possiblility is underscored by the clumsy and circuitous demonstration of its possibility" (1978/1986, 70).

[39] Gadamer's argument against the unequivocal "separation" of the Platonic forms has many formulations. In terms of the *Philebus*, he argues that the limit and the unlimited are originally "abstracted aspects of this third thing called the 'mixed' [class]" (1978/1986, 113). In terms of the *Sophist*, he argues for the original interrelation of *all* the genera with each other (1968a/1980, 149-50). In terms of the *Republic*, he argues that the Good is "separated out from everything that appears good and distinction from it; but […] it is *in everything* and shines forth from it" (1978/1986, 116, my emphasis). Other thoroughly "relational" views of the forms (e.g. Robin 1954; Turnbull 1998; McCabe 1994; and Harte 2005) do not go as far as Gadamer in this direction of denying all separation.

[40] Gadamer's aim is to overcome the modern emphasis on the "subject" as wholly constituted *before* entering into relationships, which relationships would then be (wrongly) conceived as nothing but "inter-subjectivities," or mixings of already-completed individuals (see Vessey 2005, 65). Instead,

Gadamer argues that the relationships themselves are constitutive of the subjects as such. Gadamer refers to Aristotle here (see Brogan 2002) but also to Plato directly, who had the idea of "a constitution that rules out inner discord and binds all the members of the state together in solidary action" which thus "mirrors the human soul's ability to master its own internal divisions […]" (1996/1998, 111). That Gadamer's concept of solidarity here expresses his own view of the "hermeneutic circle" is defended by Zuckert (2002, 218): "Parts become manifest and understood as such only in the context of the whole of which they are the components." Gadamer is at times ambivalent about the terminology of part and whole (see 1988/2000, 262).

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