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Heidegger and Gadamer on Aristotle: The Facticity of Phronēsis and the Phenomenon of Application

Even though, as both Heidegger and Gadamer would tell us, every hermeneutical engagement is thoroughly conditioned and mediated by its historical circumstances and so, in a sense, is always already underway, any specific conversation (even a counter-turning dialogue) must have a beginning—or at least our discussion of it must begin somewhere. Though by no means the beginning of either of their respective academic lives, the ongoing dialogue between these two men gets its start in the summer of 1923 at the University of Freiburg when Gadamer sits in on one of Heidegger's Aristotle seminars. But it is not so much the biographical circumstances of their meeting that I find valuable for my project but the fact that this pedagogical encounter establishes a point of near identity in their respective philosophical journeys: Gadamer adopts Heidegger's reading of Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* seemingly without hesitation or alteration and carries it almost entirely intact into the very heart of his own hermeneutic theory. And yet, when it comes to Plato, the two phenomenologists will definitely not see eye-to-eye. Perhaps because of his classical philological training, Gadamer seems to have a natural affinity for Plato. Heidegger, on the other hand, finds the dialogues less helpful than Aristotle's treatises and effectively places the blame for the correspondence theory of truth squarely in Plato's lap. In fifth-century Athens, therefore, we find the site within which the first major turn of our counter-turning dialogue can show itself—a site at once

of intense nearness and striking remoteness. As a way of entering into this hermeneutical location, I would like to frame my initial discussion in terms of a response to Robert Bernasconi's insightful 1989 essay, entitled "Heidegger's Destruction of *Phronēsis.*"[7]

Heidegger's Phronetic Retrieval of Aristotle

Responding to the recently rediscovered text of Heidegger's 1922 article, "*Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Anzeige der Hermeneutischen Situation*" (the so-called "Aristotle *Einleitung*"),[1] and relying on a fragmented typescript of Helene Weiss's notes from Heidegger's 1924–1925 lecture course on Plato's *Sophist*, Robert Bernasconi offers a coherent and valuable reading of how Heidegger retrieves Aristotelian *phronēsis* for the project of *Being and Time*. He locates this retrieval generally in sections 15-18 in which Heidegger discusses the worlding of the world and equipmentality and more specifically in the word "*Umsicht*" or "circumspection" as a direct translation of *phronēsis*.

Of course, as Bernasconi himself points out,[2] this reading is clearly at odds with a number of other interpreters, including Jacques Taminiaux, who sees *phronēsis* in *Entschlossenheit*, John Caputo, who opts for *Verstehen*, and the anecdotal evidence of Gadamer and Oskar Becker (by way of Otto Pöggeler), who independently report Heidegger, during a particularly difficult moment in the 1924 seminar, announcing bruskly, "*Das ist das Gewissen!*" And, indeed, in the now published *Platon: Sophistes* lectures[3] we find Heidegger himself declaring explicitly that "it is indeed clear from this context that here Aristotle has hit upon the *phenomenon of conscience. Phronēsis* is nothing other than conscience put in motion . . ." All of this would seem to militate directly against Bernasconi (not to mention Taminiaux and Caputo)—especially since the sections on conscience fall squarely in Division Two of *Being and Time*. As it turns out, however, Heidegger had indeed been translating *phronēsis* as something like "circumspective insight" or, as Bernasconi indicates, "solicitous looking around oneself" (*fürsorgliches Sichumsehen*)[4] even up to the 1924 "would-be journal article" called "The Concept of Time," which Theodore Kisiel identifies as "the very first draft of [*Being and Time*]."[5] In fact, in the early going of the *Platon: Sophistes* lectures Heidegger repeatedly identifies *phronēsis* as "*die Umsicht*" and even "*Einsicht.*"[6] But whether or not *Umsicht* or *Gewissen* or perhaps *Entschlo-*

ssenheit is the proper way to interpret the Heideggerian *phronēsis* of 1927, I am more interested in examining Bernasconi's insistence upon locating "Heidegger's debt to Aristotle in the . . . distinction between *technē* or craft and *phronēsis* or practical wisdom"[7] and how his overall reading might help us to flesh out a series of al-most off-hand comments made by Kisiel in the course of his in-valuable survey of the early Heidegger.

In his introduction to *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'*, Kisiel explains that "The project of BT [*Being and Time*] thus takes shape against the backdrop of an unrelenting exegesis of Aristotle's texts, especially *Nicomachean Ethics Z*, from which the manifestly *pre*theoretical models for the two Divisions of BT, the *technē* of *poiesis* for the First and the *phronēsis* of *praxis* for the Second, are derived."[8] And later in the text, referring to how in 1922 "*alētheia* already understood as a process of unconcealing disclosure enters into the Heideggerian thematic" through the understanding of *phronēsis*, he asserts that "This influence lasts into BT, for the *phronēsis* into [*sic*] human action constitutes the exemplary paradigm of its Second Division, just as the other nontheoretical 'dianoetic virtue,' *technē*, concerned with making and using, is the basic example of the First."[9] And, yet again, in a personal conversation in February of 1995, Kisiel explained how three distinct moments of the text constitute, as he put it, the "Aristotelian insight of *Being and Time*" by elaborating ontologi-cal transpositions of *technē*, *phronēsis*, and *nous*, respectively: in Division One, the concern for the "tool-world" corresponds to *technē*; in Division Two, the phenomena of coming to terms with life as a whole, being toward death, and the call of conscience all allude to aspects of *phronēsis*; and, throughout the book, the unity of temporality expressed in terms of *Lichtung* and all of the atten-dant "light" metaphors, Kisiel sees as expressions of *nous*. On the face of it, it would appear that both Bernasconi and Kisiel (and Taminiaux before them), despite any differences with regard to the Heideggerian word for *phronēsis*, wish to see *Being and Time* in terms of the two nontheoretical modes of Aristotelian "being true." The subtler distinction here, however, is that Kisiel does not seem to follow Bernasconi in stressing the difference between the two as the *real locus* of Heidegger's debt to Aristotle. Admittedly, Kisiel does not elaborate on this point, and Bernasconi did not have ac-cess to all the materials that Kisiel did, but I think if we read Bernasconi to some degree against himself, with the aid of Kisiel's vast archival insights, we can begin to get a picture of Heidegger's

Destruktion and *Wiederholung* of Aristotle that will allow us a glimpse into not only how *Gadamer's* reading of *phronēsis* gains its phenomenological thrust but how, in his very appropriation of his teacher's interpretation, Gadamer begins to depart from Heidegger's path of thinking. As we shall see, by specifically distinguishing *phronēsis* from *technē*, Gadamer manages to dismantle and then rehabilitate the notion of "application" [*Anwendung*] that lies at the heart of all prior conceptions of hermeneutics and traditional epistemology as well.

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Bernasconi finds a moment of tension in Heidegger's presentation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI when Heidegger identifies *sophia* as the unexpected *aretē* (excellence) of *technē* (an identification, incidentally, which Gadamer will follow some forty years later). The issue here turns on the basic schema of the five modes of *alētheuein*. In the Aristotle *Einleitung*—in line with his famous interpretation of *alētheia* as unconcealment and against the traditional rendering of "to attain or to seize hold of truth"—Heidegger defines *alētheuein* as "to take the being which is intended, and which is intended as such, as uncovered in truthful safe-keeping."[10] Thus the verb form of the noun, *alētheia*, attains an appropriately active character as well as a sense of preserving (*verwahren*). Kisiel renders *alētheuein* for us with the neologistic "trueing." Aristotle separates the five primary habits or *hexeis* of trueing along an axis, the symmetry of which one does not expect to be breached: *sophia* and *epistēmē*, as belonging to *epistēmonikon* (the scientific faculty of the soul), each apprehend that which "always is" (*aei*), whereas *phronēsis* and *technē*, as belonging to *logistikon* (the "estimative" or deliberative faculty), apprehend that which can also be other than it is. *Sophia* (which Heidegger translates as "authentic, observing understanding") and *phronēsis* (at this point, still "solicitous circumspection" [*fürsorgende Umsicht*]) are described in the Aristotle *Einleitung* as "the authentic ways of the actualizing of *nous*, of pure beholding as such" [*"die eigentlichen Vollzugsweisen des reinen Vernehmens als solchen"*],[11] hence their designation as the *dia-noietic* virtues, the excellences or perfections attained by way of or in association with *nous*. This leaves the two lesser modes of being true, *epistēmē* and *technē* apparently on opposite sides of a clear axiological distinction, and yet, as Heidegger sees it in section 8 of *Platon: Sophistes*,[12] although *sophia* is clearly the virtue or perfection of *epistēmē*, it also turns out to be the perfec-

tion of *technē* precisely when one would expect *phronēsis* to fill that role. For how could a disposition that apprehends that which changes have for its perfection a virtue that contemplates the eternal? According to Bernasconi, Heidegger relies too heavily here on the first part of Book VI, Chapter 7, in which Aristotle explicitly characterizes *sophia* as the *aretē* of *technē*, but this passage, as Eduard Zeller had already pointed out some years before, seems to refer to a popular usage of the word *sophia* rather than the technical/philosophical way in which Aristotle wishes to employ it himself. I would contend, however, that this passage would not be atypical of Aristotle's very un-Platonic tendency to use popular consensus as evidence of philosophic truths (cf., for example, the first book of the *Metaphysics*). But Heidegger does invoke a passage from Chapter 5 (1140b 24) where Aristotle points out that "*phronēsis* is an *aretē* but not a *technē*" as evidence of a severing of the *technē-phronēsis* relationship in regard to *aretē*, although there is perhaps no pressing syllogistic necessity for drawing this conclusion. Nevertheless, as Bernasconi is quick to point out, Heidegger does not completely separate the two, either in *Being and Time* or in the *Sophist* lectures.

Bernasconi looks to an earlier passage in the *Ethics* in which Aristotle explains the significance of the *hou heneka*, the "for-the-sake-of," which ultimately governs both *poiēsis* or making and *praxis* or doing. This common governance derives from the notion that *eupraxia* ("doing well" or "good action") is the end of all desire (NE 1139a 35–b 4).[13] Presumably, if one desires to make something, one does so for a reason, for the sake of something; and if the ultimate goal of every desire is some good action, then making can be said to have the same end as any human action, albeit deferred. And since *technē* is concerned with *poiēsis* and *phronēsis* with *praxis*, this would amount to an understanding of *technē* as being, as Bernasconi puts it, "piloted by *phronēsis*."[14] (One might hasten to point out, however, that the specific *hou heneka*, the immediate end in each case, is quite different. The *eupraxia* of *phronēsis* is the perfection of the individual "self," whereas that of *technē* is the accomplishment of the work at hand.) Although unable to find a direct reference to the above-mentioned passage in the *Sophist* lectures, Bernasconi suggests that Heidegger's accounts of equipmentality and the worldhood of the world in *Being and Time* bear a striking parallel to Aristotle's discussion of the common *hou heneka* of *poiēsis* and *praxis*. Not only does Heidegger use the word "*Umsicht*" here—the very word he had used many times in

the early 1920s to translate *phronēsis*—to describe that special kind of nontheoretical sight that comes into play when one manipulates a hammer or makes something, but he also invokes the notion of the "for-the-sake-of-which" (*das Worumwillen*), the same word with which he translates *hou heneka* in 1924–1925.

Although I am not entirely compelled by Bernasconi's argument here (which I have truncated somewhat for the sake of brevity), it does seem to complicate Kisiel's view of Part 1 of *Being and Time* as an ontological transposition of *technē* and Part 2 as similarly transposing *phronēsis*. But, of course, Kisiel makes no claim, as far as I can see, that this scheme is either a pristine or an exclusive one. So long as we bear in mind the one essential commonality of *technē* and *phronēsis* that Aristotle himself is quite clear about—that they both apprehend that which can be otherwise—then there is no reason to assume that Heidegger could not have found it quite appropriate to include aspects of both habits of the soul in *both* sections of *Being and Time* and still keep the overall scheme intact. For if nothing else, *Being and Time* is a phenomenological investigation, and what are phenomena but things or events that can be (or at least appear) other than they are at a given moment. In other words, both *technē* and *phronēsis* are concerned with temporal, factical phenomena. Indeed, although he never refers to Heidegger's identification of *phronēsis* with conscience, even Bernasconi acknowledges that his reading of sections 15 to 18 "needs to be continued into the Second Division . . . When Heidegger in contrast to the tradition emphasizes the primacy of the ecstasis of the future he is developing his account, already latent in the 1922 Introduction to Aristotle, of the temporality of *phronēsis.*"[15]

But what intrigues me here is that Bernasconi's Heidegger sees the two deliberative dispositions as intimately related to one another, and I want to suggest that by stressing this intimacy, Bernasconi is tending to undermine his own thesis that this particular distinction is the location of Heidegger's debt to Aristotle. The difference between *technē* and *phronēsis* is unquestionably an important one for Heidegger, especially if one follows Kisiel's rough sketch. But I would suggest that the real location of Heidegger's debt to Aristotle comes more clearly into focus with the aid of *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'*, where Kisiel gives us an unprecedented bird's-eye view of the early lecture courses leading up to the 1927 publication.

The picture that Kisiel draws for us establishes Aristotle as a pivotal figure for Heidegger. The *Nicomachean Ethics* and the

Metaphysics presented Heidegger with a fork along the path of philosophy. The more heavily trodden and well-worn route bore the sign *"Epistēmonikon"* and led proudly down the royal road to metaphysics and the ascendency of science and technology. The other way, somewhat unobtrusive and seldom traveled, was labeled *"Logistikon"* and held the promise, as only Heidegger could have seen, of a radically different way of thinking about both being and human being. By and large, the metaphysical tradition, in its great respect for Aristotle, kept traveling dogmatically down the path of *epistēmē* and *sophia*, those habits of the soul whose lofty goal was to contemplate the eternal, the path which Aristotle himself identified as the high road to the best life a man can live—the life that the scholastics would later refer to as the *vita contemplativa*.[16] Heidegger, however, saw *phronēsis* (which for Aristotle happened to run a very close second to *sophia*) as embodying some very particular advantages for a phenomenological project that wished not only to rethink being and temporality, but thinking itself and human existence as well.

The most important of these advantages, I would argue, is what Heidegger sees as the inherent facticity of this practical mode of being true. "The *alētheia praktike*," writes Heidegger, "is nothing other than the uncovered, full moment-of-insight (*Augenblick*) into factical life in the How of its decisive readiness for dealing with its own self, and it is such within a factical relationship of concern with respect to the world which is thus encountered."[17] We can discern here a distinct foreshadowing of fundamental ontology in the references to "factical life"—which Kisiel identifies for us as a Heideggerian precursor to *Dasein*[18]—as well as the circumspective concern of factical life with itself and the world that becomes a hallmark of *Dasein's* hermeneutical comportment in section 34 of *Being and Time*. But, of more immediate importance for the present discussion, we see implied in this passage a sharp distinction from *sophia* in the sheer practicality and facticity of *phronēsis*.

Although Heidegger does read Aristotelian *epistēmē* and *sophia* phenomenologically rather than epistemologically and therefore against the tradition, this does not entirely obviate all those aspects of the two scientific ways of being true that metaphysics found so valuable. For instance, in their orientation toward the eternal, there is obviously little room for a consideration of temporality or the concrete situatedness of human *Dasein*. In other words, unlike *phronēsis*, and to a lesser extent *technē*, *sophia* and *epistēmē*

are by definition incapable of accounting for the facticity of the world and human being-in-the-world. And it is in this more fundamental distinction, I would argue, that the location of Heidegger's true debt to Aristotle is to be found. This is not to suggest, however, that the difference between *technē* and *phronēsis* is an insignificant one for Heidegger or for *Being and Time*—just that it does not strike me as the essential Aristotelian catalyst for fundamental ontology.

For Gadamer, on the other hand, whom Heidegger's Aristotle *Einleitung* had affected "like an electric shock,"[19] the whole problematic is inverted. To a certain extent, one could characterize philosophical hermeneutics as attempting to do with traditional epistemology what Heidegger did with ontology. Aristotelian *epistēmē*, therefore, would seem like a natural target for a destructive hermeneutic, and *Truth and Method* does indeed operate, generally speaking, as an elaboration of deliberative over against scientific modes of being true. However, we must not forget that Gadamer has had the peculiar advantage of being able to take his teacher's deconstruction of metaphysics as an already accomplished task. Thus he can almost blithely state that "the distinction that Aristotle took up between the ethical knowing of *'phronēsis'* and the theoretical knowing of *'epistēmē'* is simple [!], particularly if one considers that for the Greeks science is represented by the figure of mathematics, knowledge of constants, a knowing that calls for proof and which anyone can learn."[20] The so-called theoretical ways of knowing, in other words, are modeled on the objectivity of mathematics and thus would seem to fall outside of the realm of *ethos* or behavior, which, as we have already indicated, brings us within the realm of *praxis* and hence facticity. And it is precisely this practical aspect of deliberative knowledge that Gadamer finds valuable for the project of interpretation in the human sciences. Ironically, however, it is only with the recognition of a *similarity* between *technē* and *phronēsis* that we reach "the point at which the analysis of ethical knowing in Aristotle can be placed in relation with the hermeneutical problem of the modern *Geisteswissenschaften.*"[21] That is to say that they are both forms of knowing something in advance, and they each seek to determine and guide some kind of action; therefore, they both must contain within themselves, as Gadamer says, "the application [*die Anwendung*] of knowledge to the concrete task in each case."[22]

And with this notion of *Anwendung* (literally "turning toward") we also find ourselves at our first noticeable *Gegen-wendung*

or counter-turning: Insofar as the traditional theories of truth and most traditional ethical doctrines have been concerned with the application or correspondence of *a priori* principles to *a posteriori* "facts," Gadamer turns boldly toward an area of metaphysics (i.e., epistemology) that Heidegger intentionally circumvents by drawing on the preplatonic idea of *a-lētheia*, truth as dis-closure or unconcealing. But, as we shall see, Gadamer turns away from Heidegger only by turning toward him at the same time—that is, by engaging in a Heideggerian *Destruktion* and *Wiederholung* of the traditionally epistemological concept of application.

Gadamer's Appropriation of Heideggerian Phronēsis

In the middle third of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer discusses how historical consciousness and the epistemology of the human sciences both share with human being the fact of being determined by tradition. Tradition, in turn, reveals itself hermeneutically in these modes of understanding as prejudice. That is to say that prejudice, in the positive form of critical self-understanding, makes historical consciousness both possible and meaningful by locating the self in the concrete context of historical experience. Aristotle's concept of *phronēsis*, though lacking this explicitly historical dimension, offers Gadamer, as he says, "the only methodological model for self-understanding of the human sciences if they are to be liberated from the spurious narrowing imposed by the model of the natural sciences."[23] In other words, in looking to the example of *phronēsis*, the *Geisteswissenschaften* can find their proper sphere over against Dilthey's attempt to find room for them within the purview of scientific method. But, of course, this merely constitutes an adaptation—albeit an extremely important one—of Heidegger's original insight, which we have discussed above. As we have already pointed out, however, what Gadamer really finds interesting is the slightly more subtle difference to be discerned between *technē* and *phronēsis*.

An important aspect of the *technē/phronēsis* distinction is whether one can be taught moral knowledge in the same way that one can be taught a technical skill. Gadamer balks at this idea, and points to the priority of being-situated: "We learn a *technē* and can also forget it," Gadamer writes,

But we do not learn ethical knowing [*sittliches Wissen*; i.e., *phronēsis*], nor can we forget it. We do not stand over against

it, as if it were something that we can acquire or not, as we can choose to acquire an objective skill, a *technē*. Rather, we are always already in the situation of having to act . . . and hence, we must already possess and apply ethical knowing.[24]

Phronēsis, in other words, is not in the least objective in the sense of something that stands apart from a subject. Rather, we always already (echoing the Heideggerian *"immer schon"*) find ourselves in possession of moral knowledge. But given that moral knowledge is supposed to be an intellectual virtue, and, as Aristotle himself states, "Intellectual virtue owes both its inception and its growth chiefly to instruction, and for this reason needs time and experience,"[25] how can Gadamer argue that "we do not *learn* moral knowledge"? For that matter, have we not already alluded to the fact that *phronēsis* can involve (at least implicitly) previously learned knowledge of general principles?[26]

The question at this point reveals itself as a matter of translation and interpretation. Witness the following passage from Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Although the young develop ability in geometry and mathematics and become wise in such matters, they are not thought to develop prudence [*phronēsis*]. The reason for this is that prudence also involves knowledge of particular facts [presumably as well as universals], which become known from experience, and a young man is not experienced, because experience takes some time to acquire . . .

Again, error in deliberation is with reference either to the general principle or to the particular fact . . .[27]

Should we understand from this that moral knowledge, as Gadamer claims, cannot be taught, but that general principles nevertheless have a bearing on it? One could perhaps conclude, without fear of contradicting either Gadamer or Aristotle, that general knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for *phronēsis*. (If this is the case, however, one might wish to modify Gadamer's claim that we *"always* already possess moral knowledge" with the qualification that *adults*, those who have already become experienced, possess such knowledge and can apply it.) This question has significant ramifications for hermeneutics. For central to *Truth and Method* is the idea that hermeneutics cannot be reduced to a method or a technique (either in the modern scientific sense or the sense of a craft to

be learned)—hermeneutics is not something that is taught per se, but is a process in which we are always already engaged. For Gadamer's analogy to cohere, the application of *phronēsis* must be similarly immediate and processual—*unterwegs immer schon.*

Aristotle is less than clear on this point, but Gadamer's reading becomes plausible if we follow his distinction between "ethical consciousness" (*phronēsis*), and what he calls the "ethical sciences." In "The Problem of Historical Consciousness," he explains how

> it is essential to the phenomenon of ethics not only that the agent knows in general how to decide and what to prefer, but also, he must know and understand how he ought to act in the given occasion, a responsibility that he can never evade. Thus it is essential that ethical sciences—while they may contribute to the clarification of the problems of the ethical consciousness—never usurp the place properly belonging to concrete ethical consciousness.[28]

The ethical sciences, of which Gadamer sees the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself as a prime example, provide only general outlines or schemata that may help guide the moral person. But, he argues, even the teacher of ethics "always already stands within an ethical-political restriction from out of which he acquires his image of the matter [*die Sache*; i.e., the moral ideal to be achieved]."[29] The guiding principles that are taught by the ethical sciences cannot predict or determine the end result of a particular moral decision the same way that an artisan employs a plan or blueprint (the *eidos*) that determines (albeit contingently) the end product of the craft.[30] Instead, as Gadamer says, "They concretize themselves always only in the concrete situation of the person acting,"[31] and this means that *phronēsis* is a process wherein the application of a specific act of intellection cannot be divorced either from the particular circumstances that give rise to it or from the particular person who is engaged in it. But this raises yet a further implication.

If, as Gadamer argues, *phronēsis* is at once both an intellectual capacity and a mode of being, then the means-ends distinction becomes blurred and the traditional dichotomy between knowledge and experience begins to collapse. Gadamer correctly points to the fact that Aristotle's definitions of moral knowledge, especially with reference to means and ends, are sometimes uncertain. He explains in a footnote that generally for Aristotle, "*phronēsis* has to do with the means (*ta pros to telos*) and not with the *telos*."

He goes on to conclude, however, that *"phronēsis* is no mere ability to correctly choose the means, but is itself an ethical *hexis* [a fully developed habit or comportment] that also sees the *telos* toward which the person acting is oriented through his ethical being."[32] *Phronēsis,* in other words, is an experiential phenomenon in which the means of acting and the "product" of the act (i.e., ethical being) occur simultaneously within the situation itself. Hence, in contrast with *technē,* wherein the means (the *eidos* and the materials of production) and the ends (the finished work) are patently separate and distinguishable, the means and ends of *phronēsis* are both subsumed in experience (and perhaps become distinguishable only on subsequent reflection). Gadamer even goes so far as to suggest that *phronēsis* becomes thereby "the fundamental form of experience [*Erfahrung*], which, over against all other experience, represents an alienation, if not to say a denaturing [*eine Verfremdung, um nicht zu sagen Denatierung darstellt*]."[33] That is, *phronēsis* becomes what he calls "genuine" or "real" experience, insofar as its application both participates in and reflects upon the immediate human situation. By "real experience" Gadamer means "that in which humanity becomes conscious of its finitude. In it the ability to make (*das Machenkönnen*) and the self-consciousness of its planning reason find their limits."[34] *Phronēsis,* in other words, not only distinguishes itself from *technē* but also acts as a critique of all purely cognitive reasoning by partaking in what Gadamer refers to as the "experience of human finitude."[35] He thereby reiterates the radical facticity of Heideggerian *phronēsis* in opposition to the systematic and teleological modes of *epistēmonikon* (i.e., *epistēmē* and *sophia*) that Aristotle himself stresses and the tradition embraces.

This insight into the situational, factical, and therefore ontological aspect of what might otherwise be construed as an epistemological concept becomes decisive for Gadamer's interpretation of *phronēsis* in that, so far as it is both immediate and situationally dependent, application and cognition remain undifferentiated. That is to say that *knowing* (at least in the sense of practical knowledge, but ultimately, for Gadamer, all knowing) does not precede and is not something other than either *doing* or *being.* As Gadamer sees it, following Heidegger, these ontological and self-referential aspects of Aristotelian practical knowing clearly distinguish it from theoretical knowledge, which objectively contemplates only the invariable and universal.[36] For Aristotle, however, technical knowing is objective as well, at least insofar as its acquisition and its application are separate moments. But *phronēsis,* says Gadamer,

"is clearly no objective knowing. The knower does not stand over against a situation that he simply observes; rather, he is immediately confronted with what he perceives. It is something he has to do."[37] This nonobjective quality of *phronēsis* (and the fact that it always grounds itself in a particular situation) allows for a direct analogy with Gadamer's view of hermeneutics: *Phronēsis* reveals itself to be a form of being-conscious (*Bewußt-sein*) rooted in its own concrete *ethical* circumstances, while hermeneutics consciously interprets texts within the overlapping horizons or concrete *historical* circumstances of both the text and the interpreter. Situationally determined application, therefore, becomes the common feature that allows for the analogy: *Phronēsis* applies itself as *ethically*-effective understanding and hermeneutics applies itself in the form of *historically*-effective understanding or being conscious (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). Gadamer thereby deconstructs the traditional role of application in ethical situations and retrieves it as a phenomenologically viable occurrence. In other words, rather than coming from the outside and involving a theory or rule such as Kant's categorical imperative, which is often seen as standing prior to and existing independently of any particular circumstance of action that one identifies as ethical, application becomes the name for a central aspect of the phenomenon of understanding as it occurs in every human situation. To say, however, that "*phronēsis* applies itself" amounts to little more than saying "*phronēsis* occurs"—it amounts, that is, to a merely formal indication of the hermeneutical occurrence. But by formally indicating application in this way as an inherent element in all human interaction and not just an occasional technical procedure, Gadamer hopes to illuminate the universality of his philosophical hermeneutics. We can thus see how Gadamer's approach to Aristotle is at once Heideggerian—in his leaning on Heidegger's already accomplished retrieval of *phronēsis*— and uniquely Gadamerian insofar as re-injects *phronēsis* right back into its traditional role as a dimension of ethics while at the same time redescribing ethics itself as a universal hermeneutical phenomenon rather than a specialized scientific or technical scheme. And he does this precisely by retrieving the central moment of ethics— application, *Anwendung*—and interpreting it directly against its usual employment throughout the history of philosophy.

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If *phronēsis*, then, provides Gadamer with a Heideggerian/Aristotelian model for interpretation in the human sciences and in human

life, one might well ask how this phronetic mode of being actually occurs. How, in other words, does the *Wirkung* in *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* carry itself out? One can begin to answer this question by looking to Gadamer's primary interlocutor from the ancient world, Plato, and the way in which philosophical hermeneutics revivifies the long passé notion of the dialectic. His hermeneutical dismantling and retrieval of Plato marks perhaps the most dramatic point in which Gadamer turns away from his great teacher, and yet this, too, would have been unthinkable without his also turning back toward the factical insight of Heidegger's Aristotle interpretations. Gadamer's Plato studies, in fact, while predating even his visits to Freiburg in 1923 to hear Husserl and Heidegger lecture,[38] came to their first real fruition under Heidegger at Marburg in 1928 with his *Habilitationsschrift*, entitled *Platos dialektische Ethik*.[39] Gadamer, however, specifically credits Heidegger's Freiburg readings of Aristotle with providing the phenomenological orientation for his own Plato studies.[40]

But what of Heidegger's own reading of Plato? His most famous Plato piece, after all, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," though not published until 1947, was written in the early thirties, not long after publication of Gadamer's *Habilitationsschrift*. One might have expected Heidegger to deconstruct and retrieve at least some aspect of Plato here in much the same way that he did with Aristotle, and to a certain extent this is so. What separates his readings of the two Greek figures, however, is that he opts out of the *Wiederholung* of Plato at a hermeneutically earlier point than he does with Aristotle. That is, whereas he reads both Plato and Aristotle brilliantly against the metaphysical tradition, he goes so far as to read Aristotle against Aristotle himself, thereby salvaging, among other things, the notion of *phronēsis* as a productive aspect of his own phenomenological project. He attempts no such reading of Plato against Plato, however, and if he can be said to appropriate anything specific, it would be a kind of historical delimitation rather than a positive hermeneutical notion. Leaning heavily on one particular aspect of the so-called "doctrine" of ideas, he detects the first traces that the originary Greek conception of truth as dis-closing has become distorted. If we are to understand Gadamer's profound debt to Plato, therefore, and begin to see how it serves as our second point of simultaneous proximity to and departure from the Heideggerian thought-path, we should look at Heidegger's own limited engagements with Aristotle's master. But let us first examine the intellectual and scholarly soil out of which Gadamer's unique brand of Platonism grew.