Amihud Gilead offers an original study of Plato’s *Phaedo* which brings forth the contribution made to its arguments by the very presentation of the dialogue. Thus, the Socratic dialogues of Plato go beyond the reporting of doctrine and discussion to the depiction of philosophizing in action. Dialectic is engagement in living activity with others, even as Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, prepares for his death.

The challenge for Socrates is to bring forth reflection upon eternal values by those who visit him in his last days. The challenge for Plato is to keep alive in writing the living thought of those no longer present. The challenge for Gilead is to show how Plato succeeds in that task by exercise of artistic power. Gilead practices the art of interpretation. This unfolds in stages as if a journey of understanding. Plato practices a poetics of philosophizing. This is understandable in terms of Greek dramatic theory and practice. Socrates practices an ironic teaching. This reaches our understanding by the example of his life and death. Thus, when Gilead insists on the significance of the references in the *Phaedo* to Socrates’ legs, he is not pulling our leg: dramatic elements are a dimension of dialectical meaning.

Gilead has made accessible to the reader the enormous fleet of materials in the scholarly literature, offering astute appraisals as he steers his own course as interpreter. This study of the interrelationship between philosophy and literature makes far-reaching applications, including fresh discussions of Joyce and Proust. Gilead explores the history of classical philosophy in such a way as to revitalize deep thinking and humane letters. This is a work of beauty as well as of learning.

Robert Ginsberg
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