



Research Paper

The Form of the Good as the greatest God in Plato's Republic

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[10.22080/jre.2024.28103.1227](https://doi.org/10.22080/jre.2024.28103.1227)
Received:

September 19, 2024

Accepted:

November 24, 2024

Available online:

December 1, 2024

Keywords:

Plato, Republic, essential-rational goodness, the Forms or Ideas, the Form of the Good

Abstract

The present essay studies the natural philosophy of Plato in *Republic* from the perspective of the Form of the Good. The question is this: why and how in *Republic* the Form of the Good proposed as the greatest god or the first principle? Some subjects in this dialogue are related with natural philosophy; for example, essential-rational goodness of the virtues, critique of the mythology, psychology, eschatology and the Form of the Good. It is worth to mention that Plato is studying some of these subjects in the previous dialogues and others in *Republic*. In order to examine the mentioned question in the realm of *Republic*, I am studying some of those subjects that immediately concern with the subject matter. At this dialogue Plato through accepting the ethical virtues as essential goodness and their being reasonable, goes on to the critique of the mythological theology; then Plato founds three laws of the theology and eschatology for his utopia. Finally, he proposes the Form of the Good as the greatest god. The Form of the Good is not a hypothesis but a reasoned principle. A part of the present essay tries to recovery and report a reasoning for this principle. In *Republic* we encounter an implicit reasoning that proceeds from the gradations of perfections to the most perfect or absolute perfection.

Extended Abstract

At the present essay I study the natural philosophy of Plato in *Republic* from the perspective of *the Form of the Good*. Our question is this: why and how in *Republic* the Form of the Good proposed as *the greatest god* or the first principle at top of the other Forms or Ideas? Some of the subjects in the dialogue that are related with natural philosophy are these: the essential-rational goodness of the ethical virtues, the critique of the mythological theology, the theory of the soul (psyche), the eschatology and the Form of the Good in Plato's allegories of the books VI and VII in *Republic*. Plato studied some of these sub-

jects in *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* and some of them in *Republic*. The phrase of *the greatest god* is mentioned by Plato in *Republic* 388c.

In order to examine the mentioned question in *Republic*, I am inquiring some of those subjects that immediately are related with the subject matter. Essays or books on introducing Plato's natural philosophy generally focus on the dialogues of his late period as *Timaeus* and *Laws*. But in *Republic* as a finish of his middle period, Plato establishes the foundations of his natural theology. Plato through accepting the ethical virtues as essential goodness and rational beings goes on to the critique of the mythological theology; then founds three laws on the theology and eschatology as regards his utopia. He in the II and III books of *Republic* criticizes the anthropomorphic theology of Homeric, Hesiod's and some other poets' theology. At the same time Plato establishes a negative theology with three laws: 1- A god is good and the cause of only good things that occur to men. 2- A god is perfect in virtue and beauty and never changes from his Ideal condition; and 3-The other world is not bad and we ought not to afraid from death. These laws is necessary for the paideia of utopia's inhabitants. But in all those laws there is a



shortcoming: in spite of the related descriptions, Plato has no reason or proof for his hypothesized principle; i.e. goodness and immobility of a god or the greatest god that is the cause of good affairs.

Plato in the book VI of *Republic* goes on to the allegorical explanation of the Form of the Good as the first principle. Allegory of the sun likens the Form of the Good to the sun as a celestial god. By means of this allegory Plato purports that the Form of the Good have some specifications: 1- The Good is existential principle of the other Forms and souls; 2- It is the epistemic principle of souls' knowledge of the Forms and 3- It is *hyper ousia* (beyond being) in dignity and power. For the Form of the Good is the first principle and cause of all beings that fall under it. 4- The Form of the good is the final end of the all beings.

Again, in the VI and VII books of *Republic* we encounter with some explanations and descriptions without an explicit reason for the existence of the Good itself. If this was all the work of Plato, then his natural philosophy and his criticism of Greek mythological theology in *Republic* were a baseless and endless structure. But the Form of the Good, is not a hypothesis but a reasoned principle. In one part of this essay, I'm going to reconstruct and report Plato's implicit reasoning which proves the existence of the Form of the Good as the greatest god. In *Re-*

public we encounter an implicit reason that proceeds from the gradations of perfections to the most perfect or absolute perfection.

Existential, ethical or aesthetical gradations of perfection are varied that by which we can rewrite some reasons of the Form of the Good as the first principle and the greatest god. For example: 1- The gradations of non-absolute beauties require an absolute Beauty. 2- The gradations of virtues as good beings require an absolute Good. 3- The Forms as beings and the objects of the knowledge (episteme) require an absolute Form. 4- The gods as privileged and perfect beings in comparison to the worldly things require an absolute or greatest god. It is not necessary to mention that Plato presupposes some principles such as the causality, the compatibility between effect and cause and the real existence of some possible facts or beings. Therefore, Plato implicitly was proved the existence of the Form of the Good as the first and greatest god.

Funds

There is no funding support.

Contribution of authors

This article is an independent study by the author.

Conflict of interest

Author declared no conflict of interest.



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