

Goodness and the Division of Goods in *Republic II*

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For presentation as 20-minute paper in a parallel session

## Goodness and the Division of Goods in *Republic II*

In Book II of the *Republic* Glaucon proposes that we recognize three types of goods: those we welcome for themselves and not for their results, such as harmless pleasures (Class 1 goods); those we welcome for themselves and for their results, such as seeing, being healthy, and understanding (Class 2 goods); and those we welcome only for their results and not for themselves, such as physical training, undergoing medical treatment, and moneymaking (Class 3 goods). This division of goods exhibits a simple formal structure. There are two ways of welcoming or valuing goods, for themselves and for their consequences. The first type of good (Class 1 goods) and the third type of good (Class 3 goods) each contain the sort of good for which one way of valuing goods is appropriate, but not both. The second type (Class 2 goods) consists of those for which both ways of valuing are appropriate. This essay will focus on the examples given for the different types of goodness in order to determine what sort of goodness is being attributed to justice if we say that it belongs to the second type of good.

Several questions arise from reflection on the division of goods, questions which cannot be answered merely by an analysis of the formal structure of the division. First, why does Socrates speak of the second class of goods as the best of the three? If the intrinsic value of a harmless pleasure is great enough, it could qualify as a greater good than any Class 2 good. Second, are the harmless pleasures mentioned by Glaucon the only sort of pleasures in Class 1? Some pleasures have harmful results but are welcomed for themselves as pleasant and so could formally qualify as Class 1 goods. Third, can the three different classes of goods be unified in some way as goods? Answers to these questions are found by considering the discussion in the

*Republic* of the examples given of the different classes of goods. These examples allow us to characterize Class 2 goods as measures for the value of the other types of goods. Class 2 goods such as seeing, being healthy, and understanding are functions, characteristic activities which constitute the good condition of the agent in some respect. Class 1 goods such as harmless pleasures are produced by Class 2 goods. Class 3 goods are valuable because they produce or serve Class 2 goods. Class 2 goods are what we may refer to as activating goods. Being healthy, seeing, and understanding are ways in which humans exercise their vital powers in the world. Being healthy ensures that we can use our other bodily and psychic powers, which are perfected by such activities as seeing and understanding. These two activities give us access to visible and intelligible objects respectively. This conception of activating goods is contrasted with two contemporary conceptions of value, final value and intrinsic value, as set forth in Christine Korsgaard's paper, "Two Distinctions in Goodness".