

A New/Resurrected Perspective to the Form of the Good

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At first I bring up reasonable readings on two passages of the Form of the Good (henceforth, <Good>) and the *dialektike*. Then I propose an original but ordinary understanding on the <Good>.

1 The passage at issue on the <Good> is *'hou katalampeí aletheia te kai to on'* (508d4-5). Almost all current translators interpret *katalampeí* to be a transitive verb taking *'aletheia te kai to on'* as its subject. Owing to this interpretation, the truth and Being become aspects of the <Good> and the relationship between the <Good> and the truth or Being is ambiguous. The transcendence of the <Good>, which is definitely declared a little later (509b), seems to be spoiled. Against this I conceive *katalampeí* to be literally an intransitive verb ('shine on *tinós*') and the truth or Being to be the effective appearances of things which are lighted up by the <Good>. The sun lights up colors, so the <Good> lights up the truth or Being as Forms. From this simile, we can conclude that "the <Good> founds the Forms" (Proposition A).

In fact, however, the older translators seem to have conceived *katalampeí* as an intransitive verb (I found out five instances, i.e. Schleiermacher, David & Vaughan 1882, Jowett 1892, Adam 1902 and Lindsay 1908). Owing to Adam's interpretation, the truth corresponds to the sunlight which he interpreted *helios*. I think this is a clear and easy-to-understand interpretation.

Judging from these, current translators seem to have the tendency of avoiding the transcendence of the <Good>. But, does this tendency really accord to the text and the actual understanding of the theoretical knowledge?

2 On the *dialektike* I focus my interest on the problem whether a dialectician can reach the <Good> or not. Owing to Grube's translation which is regarded as the typical interpretation of the usual understanding on the *dialektike*, 'reason grasps the first principle' (511b) and 'reaches the end of the intelligible' (532a). But, the original Greek word corresponding to 'grasp' is *'haptomai* (touch) and there is no word for 'reach' (only a phrase using preposition *epi* + dat.). These English words are too strong to convey the delicate nuance of these exceedingly complicated passages, which are composed of several complex clauses.

This kind of interpretations shows that the concrete system of the each theoretical science (for instance applied mathematics, astronomy or harmonic) must be founded on and deduced from the ultimate principle, the <Good>. In my opinion, they fall into the fixed idea that every theoretical science must be justified and deduced from the <Good> so far as the <Good> is the ultimate principle. This idea is, however, utterly mistaken about the property of the deductive system. Moreover, it is opposed to the literal understanding of Plato's text.

On the contrary, I think Plato does not claim here that we can reach or grasp the <Good>. The <Good> is not the target to be accomplished (reached or grasped), but is the sign which makes us know we are in a positive and meaningful 'good' state of a kind of so-called revelation. We feel really this state on the process of *dialektike*, which makes us be aware of the fact that we are in the world of meaning. And when we 'abandon (*anairousa*) the *hypothesis*', this state appears with the meaning of the *hypothesis* (533c).

Making one more comment on the phrase 'abandon the *hypothesis*', it is an abridged form of the

phrase 'make *hypothesis* not a principle but a literally hypothesis' (511b). So we can interpret its meaning as not 'throw out the *hypothesis*', but 'try to explain the *hypothesis* again'. With this treatment '*hypotesis* makes strong itself(533c), which I interpret '*hypotesis* becomes literally hypothesis making clear its meaning as a hypothesis'.

Now, going along with this idea farther from the viewpoint of modern philosophy of science and dividing the science into two, the so called objective science and the human science, Plato limited the sphere of his interest in the human science, differentiating it from the so called objective one (in his days Democritean atomism). The applied mathematics is also included for Plato in the human science although it is authorized by the divine spirit. Even in the so-called objective science, too, if *hypothesis* would be criticized with *dialectike*, *hypothesis* could be noticed to be under the <Good>.

From these examinations, it is evident that the <Good> is a transcendent principle which sets this experiential world (in a wide sense) in order and that it is differentiated from the truth and Being of the section one .

3 The <Good> cannot be depicted as an object placed before our eyes. Then how can we conceive it? We can only presume it from our ordinary experience of our genuine satisfaction. It is because we can interpret the passage 505d7-9 "where we satisfy genuinely (not seemingly) with something, there appears the <Good> in it" (Proposition B). From this point of view, we can go on along with ontological argument, interpreting the Proposition A in the first section.

In the ontological argument, a concept of artifact is useful to understand the effective faculty of the <Good>. In this situation, Proposition A is paraphrased : "A genuine good artifact (paradigm) sets the species (mode) of that artifact" (Proposition C). This is generally seen in the work of fine arts or antique, but in the case of an industrial artifact, Proposition C is approved as a matter of course.

Proposition C means definitely that we live in the world of meaning over the natural world. Under the concept of the Good, we do notice that it is indeed the case. In this meaning this concept of the Good will be said to be the appearance of the <Good>.

Prospect Proposition B, however, includes a dangerous meaning. It is because its meaning easily moves to "if we satisfy with something, it is genuinely good" (Plato's passage is rather this pattern, because this is the contraposition of the passage). It is the very proposition of hedonism.

Even if we don't say like this, the thought depending on the concept of the good is dangerous. It is in the end the utilitarianism itself and converse to the objective realism which Plato should have pursued with the theory of *idea*.

Of course Plato noticed this kind of danger. It is obvious from the fact that after the "*Politeia*" he did not directly mention the <Good> at all. Moreover the fact that Plato criticized the hedonism repeatedly in the later period's dialogue shows that he was afraid of his thought's leaning to the utilitarianism or hedonism against his will.

I think Plato departed from arguing for the concept of Good later. Alternatively Plato's focus of his interest is thought to have centered to the concept of Justice (of course, for Plato, Justice was also another main theme from the beginning), which has become the undercurrent of the "*Nomoi*".

(1142 words)