

“The Form of the Good as the Unhypothetical First Principle of Everything in the *Republic*”

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Plato discusses the unhypothetical first principle of everything - at least in so many words - in only two places, *Republic* 510b7 and 511b6. Both of these passages are contained in Plato's famous image of the Divided Line. This image is the second of three images aimed at explaining the Form of the Good which Plato identifies as the greatest *mathêma*. Plato concludes his extended discussion of the Form of the Good by describing the final stage of the philosopher-ruler's education as dialectic in which the philosopher-ruler finally comes to know the Form of the Good. Plato describes this final stage of the philosopher-ruler's education as the *mathêma* we have been looking for. Many scholars have in my view rightly identified the unhypothetical first principle of everything as the Form of the Good which surrounds it in the text. Nevertheless, the consequences of this identification have not always been sufficiently appreciated. After providing a brief argument for the identification of the unhypothetical first principle of everything (found at 510-511) with the Form of the Good discussed at 504e-506d and then again at 534b-535a, I argue that two features commonly associated with the unhypothetical first principle of everything - self-evidence or incorrigibility (see, for example, Bailey *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2006) and having a contradictory negation (see, for example, Baltzly, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1996) - are difficult to square with what Plato says about the Form of the Good. In brief and very roughly, I argue that the self-evidence or incorrigibility of the unhypothetical first principle of everything cannot be squared with Plato's commitment to the necessity of testing one's cognitive grasp of the Form of the Good by means of an elenchus-like procedure; (see 534b8-d2). I then argue that the view that the unhypothetical first principle of everything is a proposition whose negation is self-contradictory cannot be squared with a Santas-like view of the Form of the Good according to which (roughly) the Form of the Good is the theory of the nature of Forms (Santas, *Philosophical Inquiry* 1980). I conclude (time permitting) by suggesting a number of features of the unhypothetical first principle of everything which are required by its identification with the Form of the Good.