

PROJECT 2

- 1- Socrates says: "every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake" (505e). What does this mean? What is the form or idea of the good? Why does Socrates compare it to the sun? How can we be good?

Throughout the "Republic" by Plato, Socrates seeks to find the meaning of justice and definition of just city. For this reason, he uses the method of questioning "elenchus" to understand the meaning of justice and its associations with polis life. In this context, he explores how every soul is looking for good while the soul is unaware of it. According to Socrates, the goal of most important subject, the meaning of justice, is connected to learning the greatest exactness: "the form of the good". He implies form/ideas are perfect in their nature and they are beyond human understanding. Humanity can only come closer to perfection because being human is much closer to being imperfect since perfection is divine and godly. Thus, Socrates' exploration of the form of good is an attempt to understand the perfect and just city as he states, a guardian should know the form of the good before everyone else does (Plato, 506 a).

As Socrates says "every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake", he might be referring that the form of good is the ultimate object of the knowledge and foundation of all the other forms exist in both the sovereign of intelligible and visible. The idea of the form of good being source of every other form is supported as Socrates says "beauty itself and good itself, and so in the case of all things that we then set down as many, we turn about and set down in accord with single form of each." (Plato, 507b). In this context, it can be inferred that Socrates patterns and reshapes his soul after the form of the good since he is a philosopher (only a philosopher can come closer to perceiving the form of good). Moreover, the way he expects the guardians to learn the form of the good, foreshadows the idea of philosopher king and in this way, he evaluates the relationship between the form of good and just polis. According to him, philosophers are the ones who should rule because they are good at understanding forms more than anyone else does in the polis. In spite of his reasoning, he is aware that no one really knows the form of the good as he complains "They say that it is knowledge of the good as if we understood what they are really speaking about when they utter the word "good"." (Plato, 505c). Although he is not able to explain what is form of good, he is aware that the form of good is the reason of all things.

Since Socrates is not able to understand the form of the good but he thinks "opinions without knowledge are shameful and ugly things" (Plato, 506c), he prefers to discuss the offspring of the good. For this reason, Socrates analyzes how people form associations and meaning with parts of their bodies like ear helps us to sense voices. In his highest form of thought, he distinguishes eye since eye needs sunlight to see the sights of the visible realm. He defines sun as an offspring of good as "The many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible while the forms are intelligible but not visible." (Plato, 507b). In this statement, Socrates is arguing that good is intelligible and beyond

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Plato, Republic. Hackett Publishing, 1992.

human understanding and human understanding is linked to visible realm means of sight and sun. Thus, he concludes an analog of good is vital to help humans to partially access the knowledge of offspring of good. As the sun is the reason for understanding visible reality, it certainly becomes the offspring of the good that's why Socrates compares sun to the form of good. Within this context, Socrates even gives a new definition to the cosmos as he refers to the sun as "which of the gods in heaven would you name as the cause and the controller of (...) visible things to be seen?" (Plato, 507c). He defines the sun as a god beside Zeus and others. In this way offspring of good is still something linked to divine power.

Although Socrates is not able to give a definition about the form of good, he discusses the sovereign of intelligible and visible by saying "not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being to the good but their being is also due to it, although the good is not a being" (Plato, 509b). He explores the sovereigns means of discussing the dialectic (being superior to geometry) and the allegory of the cave. According to Socrates, geometry is quite related to accessing perfection since the sum of angles of a triangle is always 180 degrees or all sides of the square are equal. However, it is still not the highest form of thinking since geometers are "being intermediate between opinion and understanding" (Plato, 511d). Only a philosopher can tell you why the sides of the square are equal. Thus, Socrates discusses dialectic is superior to geometry to move from thought to understanding in the line which Socrates refers to. However, it is ironic that Socrates is a philosopher but still uses the allegory of line, an image, to understand intelligible. In this context, we can say Socrates is imperfect as a philosopher since he is human, not a divine god. Hence, it is proved only gods can be perfect in this sense. To conclude, it can be said that dialectic is the highest form of thought and it can be the method of good as one is not thinking with images when using the dialectic method. The allegory of the cave is another crucial example to understand how the offspring of good resonates with knowledge of good. The allegory implies the difficulty in reaching the form of good in the knowable realm. Once the sun illuminates the truth, "it governs everything in the visible world and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see." (Plato, 516b) . Hence, the allegory conveys sun is the reason of understanding all kinds of knowledge in visible realm and as an analog of good it implies the form of good changes, shapes and directs the essence of life both in two sovereigns since it provides truth and knowledge.

In spite of the fact that no one really knows the form of the good, we see its effect in our Daily life as the life cycle goes on. In other words, the good governs the world as human life is dependent on the sun. The sun, offspring of the good, governs time and seasons while providing the light the reveal forms of the visible world. Since life cycle has a continuity while it is hosting necessary changes, it implies the form of good translates itself into being good as it is timeless, placeless and it does not change its form because it's too perfect. In other words, the form of good can be contextualized explicitly in any situation without having any change. In this sense, It is discussed using dialectic can

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be a method of accessing good but this method can enlighten humans' vision to be good if three parts of their soul seek the knowledge and truth about the sovereign of the intelligible. To use dialectics as a method to access good, their spirit must form a balance between appetites and rational parts of the mind. The desire for honor and challenge, glory must correlate with human awareness to bring out moderation, courage, and wisdom to be a good man. Surrounding oneself with good people can be another option since their moral goodness and virtue can guide them to teach how to use dialectics as a method. In these ways, one can be a good man. I think that form of good is quite related to the Greek term *arete* as it governs the human soul to health, virtuousness and morals.

In conclusion, according to Socrates, the form of good is difficult to understand since it is too perfect and beyond human understanding. However, one, especially guardians, must seek to understand it even means offspring to know and understand the definition of just polis. Understanding the form of good is a tool to access this knowledge and even more.

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Plato, *Republic*. Hackett Publishing, 1992.