

Plato's Analogy between the Form of the Good and the Sun

In the simile of the Sun in the *Republic*, Plato declares that the Form of the Good gives intelligible objects intelligibility and being (οὐσία) and is superior to being in rank and power (509b5-9). Since ancient times, this striking passage has urged commentators towards the idea that the Form of the Good is located beyond the intelligible world of transcendent Forms. And such a twofold transcendence is, although not so extreme as the Neo-Platonic doctrine, still influential in various forms among many contemporary Anglo-American interpreters. Their basic opinion is, in a word, that the Form of the Good is a very abstract and formal entity, so does not possess any conceptually or ontologically independent character. In this presentation, against the strong current tendency, I would like to draw attention to Plato's sun analogy, which I suppose conversely suggests the belonging of the Form of the Good to the intelligible world as one independent Form. The relationship between the Form of the Good and other Forms is compared in the Cave to that between the sun and other stars or planets. Although the *Republic* does not give us further information about the latter, one passage of the *Timaeus* (39b2-c2) clarifies the guiding power of the sun over other stars or planets. This fact, which has not been adequately appreciated by commentators, suggests that Plato views the sun as the principle of the regulation of the other celestial bodies. In conclusion, on the basis of such an analogy with celestial bodies, I hope to show that the Form of the Good is the independent paradigm of goodness, just like the Form of the Beautiful is that of beauty, and plays a regulatory role in other Forms' essential nature.