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The Form of the Good in Plato's *Timaeus*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence that the Form of the Good (as we know it from the *Republic*) is still present in the *Timaeus* and is ontologically independent from the Demiurge and his Paradigm. This claim is supported by selected passages from *Timaeus'* text, but it is also based on *Phaedo's* theory of causation and on the simile of the sun in *Republic*. It is also highlighted after a detailed comparison between the philosopher-kings and the Demiurge, and after the emergence of their striking similarities.

Keywords: Plato, *Timaeus*, Good, Demiurge.

One of the many philosophical problems that we face in the *Timaeus* is raised by the claim that the God who created the world (from now on we shall call him 'Demiurge')¹ is good (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2). A satisfying explanation of Demiurge's goodness is far from easy, and different approaches have been proposed. However, in this paper I'll try to show that a clear, sufficient and relatively simple interpretation is possible, if we are based on the hypothesis that *Timaeus* follows the theory of causation in the *Phaedo* (including the distinction between 'safe' and 'elegant' cause) and the concept of the Form of the Good in the *Republic*.²

To be more specific, I'll try to show that the Form of the Good of the *Republic* is also presupposed in the *Timaeus* and it plays the same role, and we should consider it as a first principle of platonic cosmology, independent from the existence of Demiurge or even the Divine Paradigm (i.e. the model according to which the Demiurge creates the world). On first impression, this interpretation looks barely possible, since there is no direct reference in the text to this particular Form, with the possible exception of what is said at *Tim.* 46c7-d1.³ In my opinion, this absence has to do with specific purposes *Timaeus* serves, and not with the abandonment of the Good as a cause. A close examination of the text might lead us to this conclusion.

So let me schedule the structure of this paper. In the first part I set out briefly what Plato says in the *Timaeus* about the relation between Demiurge and goodness, and some different approaches among scholars. In the second part I construct the argument that proves the existence of the Form of the Good in the *Timaeus* based on Plato's theory of causation that we find in the *Phaedo*. Finally in the third part I bold the striking similarities between the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* and the philosopher-kings in

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