

The background is a solid teal color with a slightly textured appearance. There are several faint, white, curved lines scattered across the page, some in the top-left and bottom-right corners, and some in the middle-right area. The lines are thin and vary in curvature, some resembling arcs or partial circles.

A First Assault

A Series of Goods

Some Background Theses I

* The FOG is:

* A Form

* Necessarily co-extensive with Being

* Univocal

* A mind- and language-independent entity which has all of its intrinsic properties essentially:

* It is beyond or apart from (παρά) sense particulars.

* Indeed, it is separate from them (χωριστά) (*Met.* 1078b16, 1086a25).

* A paradigm, in which non-paradigmatic instances can participate (it is μεθεκτή; *Met.* 1040a26–27)

* Something definitive; it provides (or *is*) the answer to a What-is-F-ness question for Goodness: it provides (or is) an essence-specifying definition (ὄρισμός)

* Context-invariant

* A (formal) cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of other good things (*EN* 1095a26–28).

Some Background Theses II

* The FOG is non-indexed:

* ϕ is an *indexed good* if ϕ is essentially:

* (i) personal, as opposed to impersonal;

* or (ii) agent-relative as opposed to agent neutral;

* or (iii) sortal-dependent vs. sortal-independent;

* or (iv) kind-dependent vs. kind-independent;

* (v) functional vs. non-functional;

* or (vi) attributive vs. predictive.

* N.b. Fairly clearly some of these distinctions overlap, in the sense of being at least co-extensive, but they might yet be differently explicated.

* Thus, for instance, if all kinds are functional kinds (iv) an (v) will be co-extensive; but we do not know, merely by drawing these distinctions, whether all kinds are functional kinds.

The FOG

- * The FOG is a simple, univocal, non-natural (?), indefinable, irreducible, non-indexed property.
- * The FOG is goodness *simpliciter*.

Aristotle's Dominant Objection

- * According to Aristotle, 'it is clear [goodness] could not be something common, universal and single' (*EN* 1096a28).
- * δῆλον ὡς οὐκ ἂν εἴη κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἓν.
- * How do we arrive there?

First Objection: No Forms for Series

- * ‘Those who introduced this view did not posit Ideas in cases in which they recognized the prior and the posterior— this is the very reason they did not establish an Idea of numbers; but something is called good both in [the category of] what it is [*scil.* substance, or *ousia*] and in that of quality and in that of relation, and that which is *per se*, i.e. substance, is prior in nature to the relative (for the latter seems like an offshoot co-incident with what is); so that there could not be some common Idea set over all these goods.’ (*EN* i 6, 1096a17-23)
- * οἱ δὲ κομίσαντες τὴν δόξαν ταύτην οὐκ ἐποίουν ἰδέας ἐν οἷς τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἔλεγον, διόπερ οὐδὲ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἰδέαν κατεσκεύαζον· τὸ δ’ ἀγαθὸν λέγεται καὶ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν τῷ ποιῶ καὶ ἐν τῷ πρὸς τι, τὸ δὲ καθ’ αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ οὐσία πρότερον τῇ φύσει τοῦ πρὸς τι (παραφυάδι γὰρ τοῦτ’ ἔοικε καὶ συμβεβηκότι τοῦ ὄντος)· ὥστ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴη κοινὴ τις ἐπὶ τούτοις ἰδέα.

Closest Reconstruction

1. Where things F_1, F_2, \dots, F_n are related as prior and posterior (πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον), there is no Form F -ness set over them.
2. Good things are related as prior and posterior.
3. So, there is no Form Goodness set over good things.

Two Questions

- * What can be said on behalf of (1)?
- * And what can be said on behalf of (2)?

On behalf of (2)

* Good things are related as prior and posterior.

1. Beings in the category of substance (οὐσίαι) are called good.
2. Beings in the categories of (a) quality (ποιός) and (b) relative (πρὸς τι) are called good.
3. Substances (οὐσίαι) are prior in nature (πρότερον τῇ φύσει) to qualities and relatives.
4. If substances are prior to the other categories of being, and if ϕ is predicated of substances and beings in the other categories of being, then the ϕ substances are prior to the ϕ non-substances.
5. So, good things are related as prior and posterior (=2).

An Obvious Platonic Rejoinder

- * ϕ -entities can be ordered as prior and posterior, without being prior and posterior *qua* ϕ .
 - * A human and a slave are prior and posterior (as an οὐσία and a πρὸς τι); but they are not therefore prior and posterior as white things—or good things.
- * If so, they may yet be univocal *qua* ϕ .
 - * ‘Or is nothing good in its own right beyond the Idea (ιδέα) <of the Good>? If the latter, the Form (εἶδος) <of the Good> will be otiose. If the former, and these are counted as among things good in their own right, then the account of goodness (τὸν τἀγαθοῦ λόγον) in all of them will need to be shown to be the same, just as the account of whiteness is the same in snow and in white lead.’ (EN 1096b19-24)
 - * ἢ οὐδ’ ἄλλο οὐδὲν πλὴν τῆς ιδέας; ὥστε μάταιον ἔσται τὸ εἶδος. εἰ δὲ καὶ ταῦτ’ ἐστὶ τῶν καθ’ αὐτά, τὸν τἀγαθοῦ λόγον ἐν ἅπασιν αὐτοῖς τὸν αὐτὸν ἐμφαίνεσθαι δεήσει, καθάπερ ἐν χιόνι καὶ ψιμυθίῳ τὸν τῆς λευκότητος.

On behalf of (1)

- * First observation: the Platonists (reportedly) *agree* with this claim. So, it is *ad hominem*.
- * Second observation: the reason they refrain from posting a Form in such cases is precisely the same reason they refrain from positing a Form of number.
- * So, what reason is that?

Lloyd

* 'We might now ask what grounds were given by Platonists for refusing an Idea to a P-series. About this we have no direct evidence. Naturally it is quite possible that they gave the same grounds as Aristotle would have given for denying that the supposed genus could be predicated un-equivocally of the series's terms. (His silence both when stating their thesis and when acknowledging it as his own is possibly to be explained by saying that the argument was familiar in and from the Academy.) —Lloyd (1962, 67)

Any sources?

- * Aristotle's point about Ideas over series is an occasional complaint of his.
- * He advances similar considerations regarding:
 - * the better and the worse (*EN* 1096a19-35; *EE* 1218a1-8);
 - * the capacities of the soul (*DA* 414b19-415a11);
 - * citizens and constitutions (*Pol.* 1275a34-38);
 - * and, in a passage to which he here draws our attention, to numbers (*Met.* 999a6-10).

Priority in nature?

- * ‘Those things are called prior in nature and substance whenever they can be without other things, while the others cannot be without them—Plato used this distinction.’ (*Met.* 1019a-4)
- * τὰ μὲν δὴ οὕτω λέγεται πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα, τὰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν, ὅσα ἐνδέχεται εἶναι ἄνευ ἄλλων, ἐκεῖνα δὲ ἄνευ ἐκείνων μή· ἢ διαιρέσει ἐχρήσατο Πλάτων.
- * A thing is said to be prior to other things when, if it is not, the others will not be, whereas it can be without the others (πρότερον οὐ τε μὴ ὄντος οὐκ ἔσται τᾶλλα, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων); and there is also priority in time and priority in substance (κατ’ οὐσίαν). (*Phys.* 260b17-19)
- * x is prior in nature to y *iff* (i) x can exist without y; and (ii) y cannot exist without x
- * So, presumably, substances can exist without qualities and relatives; but qualities and relatives cannot exist without substances.
 - * Call this the existential understanding of priority in nature.
 - * If so, (3)—on the condition that οὐσία meet the relevant condition.

An Obvious Platonic Rejoinder

- * If we grant that substances are prior in nature to (say) relatives, then it will follow that there might be substances without there being relatives and *vice versa*.
- * But if that suffices for making *every* instance of a property of substance prior in nature to every instance of a property of a relative, then *every* property will form a series—and we will never have univocity.
- * If not, then we are left wondering why goodness is special.
- * So, either the argument proves too much or it proves much too little.

A Response to this Obvious Rejoinder

- * The Platonists did—but should not have—acceded to this argument.
- * That is, it is so obvious that it cannot have been the argument agreed upon in the Academy.
- * We should look harder.

Parallel Passage *EE* i 8

- * Further, in things having an earlier and a later, there is no common element beyond, where this is separable from them, for then there would be something prior to the first; for the common and separable element would be prior, because with its destruction the first would be destroyed as well; e.g. if the double is the first of the multiples, then the universal multiple cannot be separable, for it would be prior to the double . . . if the common element turns out to be the Idea, as it would be if one made the common element separable: for if justice is good, and so also is bravery, there is then, they say, a good *per se*— for which they add *per se* to the general definition; but what could this mean except that it is eternal and separable? But what is white for many days is no whiter than that which is white for a single day; so the good will not be more good by being eternal. Hence the common good is not identical with the Idea, for the common good belongs to all (*EE* 1218a1-15).
- * ἔτι ἐν ὅσοις ὑπάρχει τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, οὐκ ἔστι κοινόν τι παρὰ ταῦτα, καὶ τοῦτο χωριστόν. εἴη γὰρ ἂν τι τοῦ πρώτου πρότερον· πρότερον γὰρ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ χωριστόν διὰ τὸ ἀναιρουμένου τοῦ κοινοῦ ἀναιρεῖσθαι τὸ πρῶτον. οἷον εἰ τὸ διπλάπρωτον τῶν πολλαπλασίων, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὸ πολλαπλάσιον τὸ κοινῇ κατηγορούμενον εἶναι χωριστόν· ἔσται γὰρ τοῦ διπλασίου πρότερον. **. —** εἰ συμβαίνει τὸ κοινὸν εἶναι τὴν ἰδέαν, οἷον εἰ χωριστόν ποιήσειέ τις τὸ κοινόν. εἰ γὰρ ἔστι δικαιοσύνη ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἀνδρεία. ἔστι τοίνυν, φασίν, αὐτό τι (ιο) ἀγαθόν. τὸ οὖν αὐτὸ πρόσκειται πρὸς τὸν λόγον τὸν κοινόν. τοῦτο δὲ τί ἂν εἴη πλὴν ὅτι αἰδίων καὶ χωριστόν; ἀλλ' οὐθὲν μᾶλλον λευκὸν τὸ πολλάς ἡμέρας λευκὸν τοῦ μίαν ἡμέραν· ὥστ' οὐδὲ <τὸ ἀγαθὸν μᾶλλον ἀγαθὸν τῷ αἰδίῳ εἶναι· οὐδὲ> δὴ τὸ κοινὸν ἀγαθὸν ταῦτό τῃ ἰδέᾳ· πᾶσι γὰρ ὑπάρχει <τὸ> κοινόν.

Additional Data

- * Here the Idea is described as (i) something common, and (ii) as something beyond or beside, where (iii) this is something separable (ἔστι κοινόν τι παρὰ ταῦτα, καὶ τοῦτο χωριστόν).
- * Perhaps these features play a role?

Two Approaches

- * Lloyd's Take
- * A Closing Conjecture

Lloyd

* The *Eudemian Ethics* too argues against an Idea of the good from the premiss that a P-series has no universal separable from its terms. Here the premiss is asserted categorically. The argument is not expressly *ad hominem*. It is radically elliptical since it omits the whole step of asserting, let alone arguing, that the good forms a P-series. (A previous argument had used a proof that the good falls under several categories but not in connection with their being prior and posterior.) . . . Moreover we are provided with what the *ad hominem* argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics* did not and did not formally need to provide, a demonstration of the general premiss about P-series. It is this. In such a series one of the terms is first in the order of priority (for example, the double in a series of multiples); but if there were a separate Idea (say, multiplicity) which embraced this series it would be prior to all the terms, so that what had *ex hypothesi* been first would no longer be first. The simplicity of this demonstration must not make us suspect it: it is perfectly valid, since according to the theory of Ideas the Idea would have to rank as one of the terms of the series.

But I do suspect it.

- (1) If $a, b, c \dots n$ are arraigned as prior and posterior, then there is a ϕ set over them only if it is prior to the entire series.
- (2) If ϕ is prior to the entire series, then it is also prior to each of its members.
- (3) If (2), then ϕ will be prior to a .
- (4) If ϕ is prior to a , then a is not the first member of the series $a, b, c \dots n$.
- (5) So, if there is a Form ϕ over the series $a, b, c \dots n$, a will and will not be the first item in that series.
- (6) So, there is no Form ϕ set over the series $a, b, c \dots n$.
- (7) The categories of being form a series arraigned as prior and posterior.
- (8) So, there is no Form ϕ set over the categories.
- (9) So, there is no single Form, Goodness, set over the series of goods predicted across the categories.

An Obvious Platonic Rejoinder

- * One might even say, again, a *too obvious Platonic rejoinder*:
 - * The argument equivocates on the notion of priority (πρότερον):
 - * The Idea, if there is an Idea, will be prior in being (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) or in nature (κατὰ φύσιν), or in account (κατὰ τὸν λόγον).
 - * If so, the first item in the series, like every item in the series, will be posterior along one (or two or all) of these dimensions.
 - * It will not be prior to the Idea in any of these ways. So, it will not be prior and posterior to the Idea in any objectionable way.
- * In short, there will be nothing both prior and posterior to anything in the same respect; hence, there will be no contradiction.

A Conjecture: ASG

- (1) If $a, b, c \dots n$ ϕ -things are arraigned as prior and posterior, then there is a ϕ set over them only if (a) it is prior to the entire series and (b) it is itself ϕ .
- (2) If ϕ is itself ϕ , then ϕ is a member of the series of ϕ -things.
- (3) So, if $a, b, c \dots n$ ϕ -things are arraigned as prior and posterior and there is a ϕ set over them, then ϕ is a member of the series prior to the first member of the series.
- (4) OM.
- (5) So, if ϕ is a member of the series prior to the first member of the series, then there is a ϕ^* over the series $\phi, a, b, c \dots n$.
- (6) If ϕ^* is itself ϕ , then it is a member of the series $\phi, a, b, c \dots n$ prior to the first member of the series.
- (7) By repeated application of (6), there is no first member of the series.
- (8) So, there is an Idea ϕ set over the series of ϕ -things only if there is no first member of the series.
- (9) Every series has a first member.
- (10) The categories of being form a series of good things arraigned as prior and posterior.

Altogether then. . .

- * Either (a) ASG yields an easily refuted argument or (b) it yields an argument with a genuine Academic pedigree but which invokes premisses the Academics will wisely reject.
- * If either case, then, ASG yields an argument whose work is not yet done.