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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

the *Republic*, which makes more plausible the assumption that the Form of the Good is still present in the *Timaeus*.

I.

First of all we have to read what Plato says about Demiurge's purpose:

Now, let us state the reason why becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good, and what is good never has any particle of envy in it whatsoever; and being without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible. This indeed is the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos and as it comes from wise men one would be absolutely right to accept it. (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2)

It is worth focusing on two points in this passage: a) Plato calls the goodness of Demiurge 'the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos' (γενέσεως καὶ κόσμου [...] ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην); b) he also calls it 'reason' (αἰτία). However, there has been a debate whether this 'most proper principle' should be identified with the Form of the Good and so it should be considered as something separate from the Demiurge, or it should be taken as an inseparable attribute of the Demiurge. In the second case, either the Demiurge should be identified with the Form of the Good, or there is no such Form in *Timaeus* as the Form of the Good in *Republic*. This is a problem that was already been raised in antiquity, first by Thrasyllus and then by Gnostics and Neo-Platonists,⁴ and is still a matter of debate.

Wood, for example, adhering to the Middle-Platonist tradition, unites the Good, the

Demiurge, and the Paradigm into a single cause. He claims that the Demiurge is a mythical form of the Form of the Good we find in *Republic*, and that the Paradigm is identical with this Form as well.⁵ The first step of his argument is to identify the Paradigm with the Demiurge: Wood interprets the phrase '[the Demiurge] wished all things to be as like himself as possible' (29e3) as an important indication that the Paradigm of the Universe is the Demiurge himself. Moreover, the Paradigm is called an 'animal', which according to Wood means that the Paradigm must have a soul (based on 30b8).⁶ The second step is to identify the Demiurge with the Good based on *Phil.* 30c: according to this passage the Good is identical with the intellect and wisdom, but neither of them can exist without the soul.⁷

However, I think that *Phil.* 30c is not appropriate for understanding *Timaeus*. The dependence of goodness on the soul might be right for mortal animate beings, but not for Demiurge; nor is it right to assume that the Paradigm has a soul. Because it is referred clearly that Demiurge *creates* the world-soul (and every other soul) using specific ingredients. So if every soul is created, but the Paradigm is eternal and independent from any process of creation, it cannot have a soul.

Moreover, if the Demiurge (who by no doubt has to do with Intellect)⁸ is a mythical form of the Form of the Good that we find in *Republic*, how could such unification between the Good and the Intellect be compatible with the clearly distinctive roles the Good and the Intellect play in the *Republic*? Taking into account the simile of the sun in *Republic* VI where 'nous' (or the soul) is likened with an eye and the Good with the sun, if 'nous' were also likened with the Good, then the eye would be likened with the sun; but this is clearly wrong.⁹ Below I'll explain why the *Timaeus* itself doesn't support this interpretation.

Benitez sees in *Tim.* 29d7-30a2 Plato's attempt to put the causes of the universe under a single principle (in a way similar to the Form of the Good in the *Republic*, which is superior to everything else). He claims that the Good and the Demiurge are essentially one and the same thing, and that this is compatible with Plato's effort to harmonize Ethics with Metaphysics.¹⁰ Similar is also Strange's view: Since the Demiurge is Intellect, and Intellect always aims at good things, we could claim that Plato amalgamates two Aristotelian causes, efficient and final, into one.¹¹

However, this interpretation is not convincing. Having an intellect that always aims at good things doesn't mean that the Form of the Good becomes obsolete. Again, according to the simile of the sun in *Republic*, what the sun and the light are for the eyes, so the Good and the truth are for the intellect; and as an eye sees visible things clearly thanks to the light of the sun, so the intellect knows the Forms thanks to the Good. Thus in Plato the intellect is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the creation of good beings.

Johansen follows Frede's distinction between the notions 'αἴτιον' and 'αἰτία',¹² attributing the first one to the Demiurge, and the second one, 'the most proper principle of becoming', to the purpose of his creation.¹³ So he adopts an Aristotelian reading that interprets the cause-Demiurge as an efficient cause, and the cause-goodness as a final cause. Nonetheless, Johansen claims that what acts as a final cause is not the Good itself, but rather God's desire to make the world as good as possible. But even if Johansen admits that the purpose cannot be separated from the desire of God, he correctly rejects the explanation that this purpose could be reduced just to an aspect of the efficient cause, since 'the most proper principle of becoming' would remain inexplicable.¹⁴

Following this distinction it seems that the purpose of Divine Creation, namely goodness, must be dependent on something separate from Demiurge; it is associated with the notion of 'demiurge' (or 'craftsman'), but this association is not always the case. Plato hasn't excluded the possible existence of malevolent or vicious craftsmen. For example, in *Crat.* 431e1-2 there is a distinction between two craftsmen of names, one of them being good, while the other arguably is bad. And in the *Sophist*, the final (and correct) definition describes the sophist as the less valuable sort of demiurge.¹⁵ Therefore, 'the most proper principle of becoming' is not something self-evident; on the contrary, it is something that can be shown.

II.

A few lines after the beginning of Timaeus' narration there is a passage that dissociates the notion of 'demiurge' from the notion of 'goodness':

Let us return, then, and ask the following question about it: to which pattern did its constructor work, that which remains the same and unchanging or that which has come to be? If the world here is beautiful and its maker good, clearly he had his eye on the eternal; if the alternative (which it is blasphemy even to mention) is true, then on something that has come into being. Clearly he had his eye on the eternal: for the world is the fairest of all things that we have come into being and he is the best of causes. (*Tim.* 28c5-29a6)

This passage raises the question whether the model that is used for the creation of the universe is eternal or belongs to the realm of

becoming. So Plato initially keeps open both possibilities. Immediately after this, the choice of the model is associated with a specific attribute of Demiurge: If the Demiurge has chosen the eternal model, he is good. But if he has chosen a generated one, he is not good (even if such a claim would be a ‘blasphemy’). Nonetheless in both cases he remains a demiurge, a craftsman. Therefore, the notion of ‘demiurge’ does not presuppose the notion of ‘goodness’. Moreover, it seems that it is the very notion of ‘goodness’ that determines the choice of the model by the Demiurge. We’ll examine this claim in a while.

Now, the way that passage 30a is presented (after the distinction between true and reasonable account, and after the introduction of the notion of ‘goodness’) it might give us the impression that Plato regards the statement ‘the Demiurge is good’ as self-evident. Careful reading, however, shows that this statement is not a self-evident premise, but a conclusion that derives from two other premises, very familiar in Plato.

The first one has to do with the relation between cause and effect:

It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful. (*Tim.* 30a6-7)

This statement appears a few lines after the statement ‘the Demiurge is good’, so it might be considered as something that follows upon this statement. But this would be misleading. On the contrary, it is one of the firm platonic beliefs that a cause of a sort is highly related with an effect of a respective sort. This can be shown in a form of equivalence:

Something is the best cause if and only if something else is the most beautiful effect.

This means not only

if something is the best cause, then its effect is the most beautiful,

but also

if something is the most beautiful effect, then its cause is the best.

There is a similar claim in the *Phaedo*:

You’d be afraid, I imagine, of meeting the following contradiction: if you say that someone is larger and smaller by a head, then, first, the larger will be larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing; and secondly, the head, by which the larger man is larger, is itself a small thing; and it’s surely monstrous that anyone should be large by something small. (*Phaid.* 101a5-b2)

Here Plato says that if A is larger than B by a head, the reason why A is larger and B smaller cannot be ... a head! This is reasonable. But what is most interesting is the explanation Plato gives: If a head were the cause that A is larger than B (and B smaller than A), then a) a head would be the cause of two opposite effects (‘the larger will be larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing’), and b) a head, being small, would be the cause of something big (‘the head, by which the larger man is larger, is itself a small thing’). Both cases are rejected, and the second one is called ‘monstrous’.

The passage above might be presented in the following formal way:

If something is a cause of F, it cannot be also a cause of non-F, nor can it be non-F itself.¹⁶

If we apply this principle in the *Timaeus* and keep in mind that the notions ‘best’ (ᄁριστο) and ‘most beautiful’ (καλλιστο) refer always to the same object,¹⁷ then it is impossible for something best / most beautiful to create something non-best / non-beautiful, and impossible for something best / most beautiful to be a product of something non-best / non-beautiful.

There is a passage in *Timaeus* revealing that Plato remains firm in the above principle. In 41c Demiurge says to inferior gods that he cannot create mortal species, because he would equate them with gods; so they (the inferior gods) have to do the task. But why doesn’t Demiurge want to equate mortal species with gods? Doesn’t this fact contradict his goodness?

Cornford tries to answer it based on ancient Greek tradition. Recalling Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 76a14 Cornford observes that Sky and Sun are masculine and are called ‘father’, while Earth is feminine and is called ‘mother’. He also quotes a relevant passage in *Republic* (509b), where the sun provides generation and food and growth for visible things. Therefore, according to Cornford, Plato prefers here to be consistent with this tradition, so the divine entities that are created by Demiurge should play the role of demiurge too and create mortal species.¹⁸

This answer, however, does not cover the philosophical aspect of this problem: what kind of syllogism, if any, has led Plato to the conclusion that it cannot be the Demiurge that created mortal species, but that the inferior gods did? I think we could answer this if we take into account the rules of platonic cause that we have already seen above in *Phaid.* 101a5-b2.

It is manifest that mortal species are not perfect (see, e.g., *Tim.* 34c3), so the cause of their creation cannot be perfect either. As the Demiurge himself claims, if their cause were perfect, then mortal species would be perfect

as well, like gods. And as far as the creation of their soul is concerned, Plato makes it clear that the Demiurge creates the souls in a way that he is not responsible for any bad acts the mortals may subsequently do (*Tim.* 42d2-4). We see how firmly Plato holds on to his belief about the relation between cause and effect. So we can understand now the meaning of the phrase ‘It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful’ (*Tim.* 30a6-7).

Going back to *Tim.* 28c5-29a6 there seems to be an argument that ‘proves’ the world’s beauty; Plato seems to take the goodness of the Demiurge and the relation between cause and effect as premises, in order to prove that the world is beautiful. Such an argument would go like this:

If the Creator of the world is best, then the outcome of creation, the world, is the most beautiful (premise 1). The Creator of the world is best (premise 2). The outcome of creation, the world, is the most beautiful (conclusion).

The argument is valid, and Plato would hold it is sound as well. But we are wrong if we admit that the statement ‘The world is the most beautiful’ is *proved* by the above argument, as if someone doubted that the world is the most beautiful thing, and Plato ‘proved’ it by introducing an unwarranted premise, that the Creator is good. How much conviction would such an argument carry? On the contrary, the equivalence between cause and effect in the way we’ve seen it before allow us to infer that Plato begins from the premise that the world is beautiful and concludes that the Demiurge is good. So the phrase ‘It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful’ can be restated as: ‘The most beautiful generated being presupposes the best creator’.

But why should we infer that the world is 'the most beautiful' (κάλλιστον) compared to all the other created beings? The answer can be found in various passages in *Timaeus*. But perhaps the most convincing one is the passage where Plato describes the shape of the world:

The shape he gave it was suitable and akin to its nature. A suitable shape for a living being that was to contain within itself all living beings would be a figure that contains all possible figures within itself. Therefore he turned it into a rounded spherical shape, with the extremes equidistant in all directions from the centre, the figure that of all is the most complete and like itself, as he judged likeness to be *ten thousand times more beautiful than its opposite*. (*Tim.* 33b1-7)¹⁹

Thus Plato relies on the view that the world has the shape of a perfect sphere. This belief is also not unwarranted; it is based on the astronomical observations and conclusions by his time.²⁰ Compared to any other figure, sphere 'is the most complete and like itself' (ὁμοιότατόν τε αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ σχημάτων). Plato associates the notion of likeness with the notion of beauty, saying that likeness is 'ten thousand times more beautiful than its opposite' (μυρίω κάλλιον ὅμοιον ἀνομοίου). Therefore, as far as beauty is concerned, the world's shape is superior to beings of a different shape.

But what if we compare the world with other sensible spheres, planets for instance? The answer lies in another passage, where Plato compares the beauty of the whole with the beauty of a part. In 30c, where the discussion is about the Divine Paradigm, Plato says that any part is imperfect compared with the whole, and anything imperfect cannot be associated with the notion of beauty (30c5).²¹ Since any other

sensible being is part of the world (30c7-d1), any sensible being is imperfect compared to the world, therefore it is less beautiful as well. So the statement that the world is the most beautiful generated being derives from two assumptions: a) the world is spherical, and b) the world is a whole, while anything else is a part of it. Hence the argument goes like this:

The most beautiful generated being presupposes the best creator (premise 1). *The world is the most beautiful generated being* (premise 2). *The world presupposes the best creator* (conclusion).

We may now legitimately eliminate the superlatives (since they don't affect the argument), so we'll have the premise: *A beautiful generated being presupposes a good cause*. Therefore the argument can be restated:

A beautiful generated being presupposes a good creator (premise 1). *The world is a beautiful generated being* (premise 2). *The world presupposes a good creator* [i.e. the Demiurge] (conclusion).

Let us recall passage 29d7-30a2 in order to comprehend the close relation between cause and effect:

Now, let us state the reason why becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good, and what is good never has any particle of envy in it whatsoever; and being without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible. This indeed is the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos and as it comes from wise men one would be absolutely right to accept it. God therefore, wishing that all things should be good [...]. (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2)

What is notable here is the contrast between goodness and envy. According to Johansen, the definition of ‘envy’ that Aristotle gives in the *Rhetoric* B might help us understand this passage.²² Aristotle says that envy is the sadness someone feels because of the fortune other people possess (*Rhet.* 1387b23-5). Contrary to an envious man, a good man desires that other people enjoy goods as well.²³ Aristotle also observes that an envious man envies people similar to him (*Rhet.* 1387b25-6), which means that he does not desire other people to be similar in wealth, glory, or wisdom he thinks they possess. If Plato is in agreement with Aristotle about this concept of ‘envy’, then he’ll agree that a good man, i.e. the opposite of an envious one, desires always other people to become like him.

Plato is opposed to a then widespread belief that the gods are envious.²⁴ If it were so, then the Demiurge would be envious as well, and the beauty of the world would be left unexplained. On the contrary, the Demiurge’s benevolence means that there is no envy in him, and that’s why the world is good.²⁵ So I think that the phrase ‘he wished all things to be as like himself as possible’ (29e3) refers to the goodness of Demiurge. This view is also supported by the sentence ‘God therefore, wishing that all things should be good [...]’ which occurs as an explanation of the ‘as like himself’ (note the ‘γὰρ’ at 30a2). It is also important to see that the ‘the most proper principle’ refers to the word ‘cause’ (αἰτία) in d7. But if we ask what this cause is, the answer cannot be ‘the Demiurge’, because we ask to know why Demiurge created whatever he created. So ‘the most proper principle’ refers to Demiurge’s goodness.

Therefore, the reason why a sensible being is good is because its creator is good as well. But why the creator is good? In the *Phaedo* 105b-c we learn that any question of the form ‘why is x

F?’ can be answered either with the ‘safe cause’ explanation (i.e. ‘because x participates in the Form F’) or with the ‘elegant cause’ explanation (i.e. ‘because of y, and y’s essential attribute is F’).²⁶ Since we accept that Plato has not revised these two types of explanation in the *Timaeus* (and personally I haven’t found such evidence), we may assume that the premise below is presupposed in the *Timaeus* as well:

For any x, if x is F, the x’s F has a cause, and the cause of F is either an entity y, where y is F too (elegant cause), or it is the Form F (safe cause).

So far the argument goes like this:

For any x, if x is F, the x’s F has a cause, and the cause of F is either an entity y, where y is F too (elegant cause), or it is the Form F (safe cause) (premise 1). The Demiurge is good (premise 2). The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has a cause, and this cause is either an entity y, where y is good too (elegant cause), or it is the Form of the Good (safe cause) (conclusion 1).

But as we know for sure in the *Timaeus* there is no other entity that is good and that it caused the Demiurge’s goodness. This means that: *The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has no elegant cause (premise 3).* So it remains the safe cause: *The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has a cause, and this cause is the Form of the Good (conclusion 2, derived from premise 3 & conclusion 1).*

III.

At this point I think it is useful to compare the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* with the philosopher-king in the *Republic*. I believe

that the similarities that this comparison will reveal may convince us that the Form of the Good plays a major role in the *Timaeus*, which is exactly the same as in the *Republic*.²⁷

The introduction of the *Timaeus* reveals its close relation with the *Republic*, since it recapitulates basic claims of the latter work: the distinction between craftsmen/farmers and guardians (17c6-d3), the character of guardians (17d3-18a7), their upbringing and way of life (18a9-b7), the women's role and the concept of family (18c1-e3), and finally the separation of children to their appropriate class (19a1-5).

Two major issues are absent from this recapitulation: a) the metaphysical establishment of the Form of the Good in *Republic* VI-VII, and b) the division of guardians into kings and auxiliaries. According to Johansen, the reason of this absence lies in the different from the *Republic* purpose that the *Timaeus* serves: the *Republic* shows how justice functions internally in a man's soul and in the city, but it doesn't show how a just city would prevail against an unjust city.²⁸ The last one is Socrates' request after the above recapitulation in the *Timaeus*: he wants to see this ideal city in action (*Tim.* 19b3-c8).

Furthermore, the class distinction between only craftsmen and guardians in the introduction of the *Timaeus* is not an abandonment of the tripartite division of soul or classes.²⁹ *Tim.* 18a4-7 reminds us that the spirited and philosophical parts in a guardian's soul are superior to that of others. The notion of 'guardian' in the *Timaeus* is very close to that in *Republic* II.³⁰ So the fact that the Form of the Good doesn't appear in the *Timaeus* in the way it does in the *Republic* doesn't mean that it is not presupposed, and the same is true for the absence of any mention of the philosopher-king. On the contrary, we find many evidence associating the philosopher in the *Republic* with the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*.

Such evidence in the *Republic* is that the guardians are called 'craftsmen': we read in 421b7-c2 that guardians must become the best possible craftsmen in their work, which is the craft of guardianship.³¹ Also the work that a philosopher-king has to do has many similarities with that of the Demiurge; they both have to put in order (κοσμεῖν) the object of their craft. For the Demiurge it is the world in general, for the philosopher-king it is the parts of his soul and the city. For example, we read in *Rep.* 443d that a just man puts in order (κοσμήσαντα) and harmonizes (συναρμόσαντα) the parts of his soul. We find these two words (κοσμήσαντα and συναρμόσαντα) many times in the *Timaeus* describing the work of Demiurge or of inferior gods-craftsmen.³²

Furthermore, the philosopher

by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can (*Rep.* 500c9-d1)

and also

our constitution [will] be perfectly ordered, if a guardian who knows these things is in charge of it (*Rep.* 506a9-b1).

A similar point we also find in the *Gorgias*: after describing what 'craftsman' means, i.e. the one who puts in order the object of his craft (*Gor.* 503e-504a), and after giving a few examples about houses and ships, Plato mentions the case where the soul is put in order (*Gor.* 504b-d). Moreover, in the *Symposium*, whoever has in his soul wisdom and the other virtues he is called a 'craftsman', and the greatest one is whoever puts in order (διακόσμησις) his city (*Symp.* 209a3-8).

So we expect that a king, as any other craftsman, should do his work by following a model, a paradigm. And indeed this claim is supported by some passages in *Republic*; the ideal city described by Socrates can be used as a paradigm for the future philosopher-king, who will try to render a real city similar as much as possible to the ideal one. Already in *Rep.* 369a5-7 Socrates asks us to turn our attention towards a city made by words, in order to locate justice and injustice within it.³³ This point though, is made clearer in 472d9-e5: the ideal city, the description of which is already completed, plays the role of an ideal model, and even if it cannot be fully made in reality, this does not mean that the model is insufficient and its description wrong.

However, the most characteristic description occurs in 500d-501c. I copy here the whole passage because of its importance for our subject. The philosopher-king works clearly like a craftsman, and more specifically like a painter.³⁴ When we read these lines it is impossible to ignore the *Timaeus* and its description of the Demiurge:³⁵

And if he [the philosopher] should come to be compelled to put what he sees there into people's characters, whether into a single person or into a populace, instead of *shaping* [πλάττειν (d6)] only his own, do you think that he will be a *poor craftsman* [κακὸν δημιουργὸν (d6)] of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue?

He least of all.

And when the majority realize that what we are saying about the philosopher is true, will they be harsh with him or mistrust us when we say that the city will never find happiness until its outline is

sketched [διαγράψειαν (e3)] by painters who use the divine model [θείω παραδείγματι χρώμενοι (e3)]?

They won't be harsh, if indeed they realize this. But what sort of *sketch* [διαγραφῆς (a1)] do you mean?

They'd take the city and the characters of human beings as their sketching slate, but first they'd wipe it clean- which isn't at all an easy thing to do. And you should know that this is the plain difference between them and others, namely, that they refuse to take either an individual or a city in hand or to write laws, unless they receive a clean slate or are allowed to clean it themselves.

And they'd be right to refuse.

Then don't you think they'd next *sketch the outline of the constitution* [ὑπογράψασθαι ἄν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς πολιτείας (a9)]?

Of course.

And I suppose that, as they work, they'd look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice,³⁶ beauty, moderation, and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they're trying to *put into* [ἐμποιοῖεν (b4)] human beings, on the other. And in this way *they'd mix and blend* [συμμιγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες (b4)] the various ways of life in the city until they produced a *human image* [ἀνδρείκελον (b5)]³⁷ based on what Homer too called 'the *divine form and image*' [θεοεἶκελον (b7)] when it occurred among human beings.

That's right.

They'd erase one thing, I suppose, and draw in another until they'd made characters for human beings that the gods would love as much as possible.

At any rate, that would certainly result in the finest sketch. (500d4-501c3)

Like the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, so the philosopher-king follows the rules of crafting. On the one hand he looks toward his model, which is the realm of Forms, and on the other towards his 'material', which is human beings like him, and he tries to render it as similar to the model as possible. Two technical terms here describing the process of crafting (συμμειγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες) are repeated many times in the *Timaeus*, when the work of creator-gods is described.³⁸ And also the description above is called 'μυθολογία', a myth of a sort that is expressed in words, but it could be applied in reality (501e2-5).

Lastly, the same claim can be found also in *Rep.* 592a10-b5: The ideal city that has already been described is called 'a model in heaven'; I take it as an intelligible model,³⁹ based on which the philosopher is able to put in order firstly his soul, and after that, in some cases his city.

Now let's consider again the claim that there is no Form of the Good in the *Timaeus* because there is no clear mention of it. In *Rep.* 500d-501c the Good is absent as well, and based solely on this passage someone could infer that three principles are enough to make a perfect city: a) the intelligible model, b) the philosopher-demiurge, and c) his 'material', i.e. the citizens. But of course such an inference is wrong. The description of the Good comes only a few pages after, and we know its importance for the right interpretation of the above scheme. Let us recall 506a4-7, according to which no one will completely know what is beautiful and just and the like, without knowing the Form of the Good. Only then does one deserve to be 'a guardian'.

There is also another case where the model is clearly associated with the Good. In 540a8-b1 we read that philosophers-kings use the Good as their model for putting in order their souls and city. This means neither that we have two different models, the Good and

the ideal city, nor that these two are one and the same thing. So there is no reason to draw such conclusion in the *Timaeus* when we read something similar in 46c7-d1.⁴⁰

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NOTES

1 I use the words 'demiurge', 'craftsman' or 'creator' (with small 'c' or 'd') interchangeably as one and the same thing, with the same meaning. On the other hand, I use the words 'Demiurge' or 'Creator' (with 'D' and 'C' capital) both as a proper noun (of the God who created the universe according to *Timaeus*) and as that divine entity who has the same characteristics that every demiurge / creator shares. Similarly, when I refer to a platonic Form I use sometimes only the adjective with capital first letter (e.g. 'Good' instead of 'the Form of the Good').

2 All passages in quotes or in block quotations referring to Plato's text in this paper are translated by the following authors respectively: *Republic*: Grube 1992. *Phaedo*: Gallop 1990. *Timaeus*: Lee 2008. *Sophist*: White 1993. Many parts of the argumentation of this paper originate from chapters of my PhD thesis "The First Principles of the Sensible World in Plato's Philosophy" (Athens, 2014). I am grateful to my supervisor prof. Vassilis Karasmanis for his overall help. Also I would like to thank prof. Paul Kalligas and Pantazis Tselemanis for their useful comments.

3 Even in this case, scholars translate 'τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἰδέαν' in a way that mentions no Form of the Good. Cornford 1997, 157, e.g., translates: 'Now all these things are among the accessory causes which the god uses as subservient in achieving the best result that is possible'. See also Lee 2008, 37: 'All these are among the contributory causes which god uses as servants in shaping things in the best way possible'.

4 According to Vorwerk 2010, 88ff., Middle-Platonists like Alcinous assumed that the Demiurge, the Paradigm and the Form of the Good are one and the same cause. Their main argument was that Plato calls the Demiurge 'maker and father' (*Tim.* 28c3), later he calls the Paradigm a 'father', and in the *Republic* he likens the Form of the Good to the sun. In the *Republic*, as sun provides visible things with 'coming to be, growth and nourishment' (509b2-4), so the Form of the Good provides objects of knowledge with 'being and essence' (509b7-8); so the Form of the Good seems to play the role of the father as

well. Numenius is the first Platonist who distinguishes between 'maker' and 'father' assigning them to different principles. Numenius claimed that being good is not identical with the Good, and since the Demiurge is said to be good (at *Tim.* 29e1), he cannot be the Good, but is good only by participation in this particular Form. More specifically, Numenius claims that the Demiurge is to be seen as a genus divided into two kinds: one is the Demiurge-Maker who is identical with the Divine Craftsman of the universe; the other is the Demiurge-Father who is identical with the Form of the Good and with the Paradigm, is called 'Form of Demiurge' and 'First Intellect', and is the cause of Demiurge-Maker. Like Numenius, Plotinus separates the Good from Demiurge, but unlike Numenius he does not assign to the Good attributes of the Intellect, because he puts emphasis on the phrase 'beyond being' in *Rep.* 509b8-9. See also Armstrong 1966, 225; Opsomer 2000, 113; Benitez 1995, 114. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* II, 359ff. calls 'ridiculous' whoever identifies the Good with good God, and he identifies 'the most proper principle of becoming' with Aristotle's final cause. But who plays the role of final cause in this case? Is it the Form of the Good, or is it the goodness of Demiurge? Proclus, *ibid.*, 361, 2-14 seems to reply 'both, somehow', because on the one hand the final cause is attributed to the goodness of the Demiurge, but on the other hand the Demiurge as Intellect participates in the Form of the Good, that's why he is good. See also Opsomer 2000, 115.

5 Wood 1968, 255.

6 Wood 1968, 256-7.

7 Wood 1968, 257.

8 See, e.g., *Tim.* 47e3-4, which is a direct reference to the Demiurge: 'In almost all we have said we have been demonstrating what was crafted through intelligence'. For a more detailed analysis on the association between Demiurge and Intellect see Menn 1995.

9 In the *Republic* Plato mentions that the eye is 'the most sunlike', but this doesn't mean any strong association with the sun, and the same is true for the power of vision: 'Sight isn't the sun, neither sight itself nor that in which it comes to be, namely, the eye. – No, it certainly isn't. – But I think that it is the most sunlike of the senses. – Very much so.' (508a11-b6).

10 Benitez 1995, 119.

11 Strange 1999, 407-8.

12 Frede 1987, 129.

13 Johansen 2008, 473-4. In the *Philebus*, however, there is no such distinction, where the nature of a maker is called both 'αἴτιον' and 'αἰτία' (*Phil.* 26e6-8). But in the *Timaeus* this distinction seems to work.

14 Johansen 2008, 475.

15 See *Sophist's* last paragraph: 'Imitation of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknown sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that's marked off as human and not divine. Anyone who says the sophist is of this "blood and family" will be saying, it seems, the complete truth'. (268c8-d4)

16 'Non-F' is equal to 'the opposite of F', provided that F represents the attributes that their denial has only one candidate. See *Prot.* 332c-d. So for example 'non-beautiful' means 'ugly', 'non-fast' means 'slow' etc.

17 What is best, it is also most beautiful, and vice versa. The word 'best' (ἄριστος) is the superlative of the adjective 'good' (ἀγαθός). So it is useful to keep in mind that Plato follows the ancient Greek tradition and puts together the two adjectives 'beautiful and good' (καλὸς κἀγαθός) holding them interdependent. In *Tim.* 53b5-6, for example, the elements of the universe are called 'best and most beautiful' after Demiurge's intervention. See also *Tim.* 87c4-5: 'The good, of course, is always beautiful'. Also, *Lys.* 216d2: 'I claim that the good is beautiful'. See also *Rep.* 376c5 and 396c1. But even if both 'good' and 'beautiful' are always attributed to the same objects, it doesn't mean that the Form of the Good and the Form of the Beautiful are one and the same. For a more detailed defense of this claim see Barney 2010, 363-367. In a nutshell Barney supports that something good might function as a cause in a way that is impossible for something beautiful: a good X can make something or someone else good as well, while a beautiful X cannot function in an analogous way; so B becomes beautiful because its *efficient* cause A is good, not because it is beautiful too. I admit that Barney's interpretation raises many philosophical questions that demand a closer examination. But whatever the right answer is, it doesn't affect our current position: the notions 'good' and 'beautiful' refer always to the same objects, but they are not identical.

18 Cornford 1997, 141.

19 Words in *italics* are my own modification in Lee's translation, because this is the exact meaning of 'μυρίῳ κάλλιον'. Lee translates it as 'incalculably superior to', which I think is misleading.

20 Vlastos 1975, 38-40.

21 An indirect repetition of this claim can also be found in *Laws* 903b-d, where the part exists for the sake of the whole, and a demiurge looks at the whole. See also Solmsen 1963, 484.

22 Johansen 2008, 477.

23 See for instance in *Rep.* 421d onwards, where the philosopher-king desires the best possible for his people. The fact that he will not permit them the access to excessive wealth is not due to envy, but to knowledge about what is best for the city (keep also in mind that the lower class of craftsmen possesses more wealth than philosophers-kings, who have no private wealth). About the contrast between a philosopher and an envious person see also *Rep.* 500c1-5.

24 See, for example, Hdt., *Hist.* 2, 40, 6-7: 'τὸ θεῖον ἐπισταμένῳ ὡς ἔστι φθονερόν'. Similar cases we find in the myth of *Prometheus Vincitus*, who is punished because of his generosity towards human beings; also in Aristophanes' *Wealth*, where we learn that Wealth is a god blinded by Zeus because of Zeus' grudging. See also Vlastos 1975, 27-8 (especially note 7).

25 See Taylor 1928, 78. Also Crombie 1962, 376.

26 For a detailed analysis on this topic see Vlastos 1973,

81ff.; Gallop 1990, 176ff.

27 Many commentators make this claim; however they don't proceed into further analysis. Vlastos 1975, 28 mentions that the Demiurge's goodness 'opens the way to a radically new idea of piety for the intellectual which the traditionalists would have thought impious: that of striving for similitude to God. If I were in a apposition here to trace out the implications of this idea, I think I could show how inspiring it is and yet disquieting, for it connects with the ominous notion of the philosopher king in the Republic'. Santas 2001, 190-1 takes it for granted that in the *Timaeus* the Form of the Good is presupposed, and that the Demiurge totally grasps this Form in contrast to Socrates in the *Republic* who is afraid that he might look ridiculous had he tried to describe it. Also Silverman 2010, 76 holds that we have to admit the close relation and similarities between philosopher-kings and Demiurge in order to understand the Form of the Good. See also Rickless 2007, 14; Rowe 2007, 131; Seel 2007, 175; Khan 2013, 206.

28 This is the meaning of the myth of Atlantis and its war against Athens. See Johansen 2004, 9.

29 For the tripartite division of the soul in the *Timaeus* see 69d, 87a, and 89e. See also Johansen 2004, 10.

30 Johansen 2004, 10.

31 To be more specific, in *Rep.* 428d5-10 guardianship is called 'knowledge'. However, in this passage knowledge means 'craft'; this is obvious a few lines below, where the 'knowledge' of guardianship is compared with the other kinds of 'knowledge' (428e3), metal-work among them (428d11-e2). A similar example we find also in the *Statesman*, where kingship and policy are called 'craft', and a couple of lines below they are called 'knowledge' (*Polit.* 266e8-11).

32 See 24c4, 35a8, 37d5, 53a7, 53e8, 54c3, 56d5, 74c7, and 75d7. Similar cases can also be found in *Prot.* 320d5 and *Polit.* 273d4.

33 See also *Rep.* 427d.

34 '[...] the person we were praising is really a painter of constitutions' (*Rep.* 501c5-6).

35 Words in *italics* and in brackets in Grube's translation have been added by me.

36 I agree here with Adam 1929, 42 that 'τὸ φύσει δίκαιον is assuredly the Idea of Justice, as opposed to τὸ νόμῳ δίκαιον'.

37 Adam 1929, 42 pinpoints the double meaning of 'ἀνδρείκελον', which means a human image, but it also means in painting the color of the human skin. Plato seems to play here with both meanings. The second meaning fits with painter's task, which mixes and blends various colors in order to achieve the right tone. The first meaning is analogous to 'θεοείκελον', implying that the philosopher desires to make his citizens (and himself) as similar to gods as possible.

38 See for example *Tim.* 41d5, 68c7, 68d5, 57d4, 77a5, 83b6.

39 Guthrie 1975, 543 in his interpretation of 'in heaven', focuses on the religious character of the passage and he underestimates any connection with the theory of Forms.

Without questioning any literary and religious purposes of this passage, I do think that the connection with the theory of Forms is strong, especially when we compare it with *Rep.* 500d4-501c3.

40 It is worth mentioning that in both cases (*Rep.* 540a9 & *Tim.* 46c8) Plato chooses the verb 'χρῶμαι' (*use*): In the *Republic* philosophers-kings 'use' the Form of the Good for putting in order their soul, the citizens' souls and the city; in the *Timaeus* the Demiurge 'uses' the Form of the Good for putting in order the world. In none of these cases is the Good a substitute for the model.