

## **GOOD AS THE DELUDED WORSHIP IN PLATO'S ALLEGORY**

**Надія ІВАНЕНКО (Кіровоград, Україна)**

*У статті розглядається концепт добро з точки зору філософії, його невизначеність та об'єднуюча ідея щодо інших концептів. Аналізується теорія Платона, яка висвітлює добро як несправжній об'єкт поклоніння.*

*The article introduces the concept of Good from the philosophical point of view, its indefinability and unifying power of this idea. Plato's theory is analyzed which views good as the deluded object of veneration.*

The central explanatory image which joins together different aspects of the picture is the concept of *Good*. It is a concept which is not easy to understand partly because it has so many false doubles, jumped-up intermediaries invented by human selfishness to make the difficult task of virtue look easier and more attractive: freedom, purpose, reward, even judgment are irrelevant. Mystics of all kinds have usually known this and have attempted by extremities of language to portray the nakedness and aloneness of Good, its absolute for-nothingness.

Following a hint in Plato [3: 250] we shall start speaking of what is the most obvious thing in our surroundings what is popularly called *beauty*. Philosophers tend to avoid this term because they prefer to talk of reasons rather than of experiences [1; 4]. But the implication of experience with beauty seems to be something of great importance which should not be by-passed in favour of analysis of critical vocabularies.

Beauty is the convenient and traditional name of something which art and nature share, and which gives a fairly clear sense to the idea of quality of experience and change of consciousness. As Plato pointed out, beauty is the only spiritual thing which we love by instinct. When we move from beauty in nature to beauty in art we are already in a more difficult sphere. The experience of art is more easily degraded than the experience of nature.

A great deal of art actually is self-consoling fantasy, and even great art cannot guarantee the quality of its consumer's consciousness. However, great art exists and is sometimes properly experienced and even a shallow experience of what is great can have its effect. Good art, not fantasy art, affords us a pure delight in the independent existence of what is excellent. Both in its genesis and its enjoyment it is a thing totally opposed to selfish obsession. It invigorates our best faculties and, to use Platonic language, inspires love in the highest part of the soul [2: 142]. It is able to do this partly by virtue of something which it shares with nature: a perfection of form which invites unpossessive contemplation and resists absorption into the selfish dream life of the consciousness.

Art however, considered as a sacrament or a source of good energy, possesses an extra dimension. Art is less accessible than nature but also more edifying since it is actually a human product, and certain arts are actually 'about' human affairs in a direct sense. Art is a human product and virtues as well as talents are required of the artist. A good artist, in relation to his art, is truthful, patient, humble; and even in non-representational art we may receive intuitions of these qualities.

So arts, especially literature and painting, show us the peculiar sense in which the concept of virtue is tied on to the human condition. They show us the absolute pointlessness of virtue while exhibiting its supreme importance; the enjoyment of art is a training in the love of virtue. The pointlessness of art is not the pointlessness of a game; it is the pointlessness of human life itself, and form in art is properly the simulation of the self-contained aimlessness of the universe.

Good art reveals what we are usually too selfish and too timid to recognize, the minute and absolutely random detail of the world, and reveals it together with a sense of unity and form. This form often seems to us mysterious because it resists the easy patterns of the fantasy. Good art shows us how difficult it is to be objective by showing us how differently the world looks to an objective vision.

Plato held that beauty could be a starting-point of the good life, but he came to mistrust art and we can see the peculiarly distressing struggle between the artist and the saint. Plato allowed to the beauty of the lovely boy an awakening power which he denied to the beauty of nature or of art. He seems to have come to believe that all art is bad art, a mere fiction and consolation which distorts reality [5: 56-57].

Another starting-point, or road, which Plato speaks of more often is the way of the sciences, crafts, and intellectual disciplines excluding the arts. There is a way of the intellect, a sense in which intellectual disciplines are moral disciplines, and this is not too difficult to discern. There are important bridge ideas between morality and other at first sight different human activities, and these ideas are perhaps most clearly seen in the context of the art. And as when we use the nature of art as a clue we may be able to learn more about the central area of morality if we examine what are essentially the same concepts more simply on display elsewhere. We mean such concepts as *justice*, *accuracy*, *truthfulness*, *realism*, *humility*, *courage* as the ability to sustain clear vision, *love* as attachment or even *passion* without sentiment or self.

Art is the most ardent dream. In fact morality does actually display a sort of unity, though of a peculiar kind. Plato pictures the journeying soul as ascending through four stages of enlightenment, progressively discovering at each stage that what it was treating as realities were only shadows or images of something more real. At the end of its quest it reaches a non-hypothetical principle which is the form or idea of the Good, which enables it to descend and retrace its path, but moving only through the forms or true conception of that which it previously understood only in part [3: 510-514].

The mind which has ascended to the vision of the Good can subsequently see the concepts through which it has ascended (art, work, nature, people, ideas, institutions, situations, etc.) in their true nature and in their proper relationships to each other. The good man sees the way in which the virtues are related to each other. Plato never in fact expounds a systematic and unitary view of the world of the forms, though he implies that there is a hierarchy of forms. Truth and Knowledge, for instance, come fairly closely underneath Good [3: 509]. What he does suggest is that we work with the idea of a hierarchy so far as we introduce order into our conceptions of the world through our apprehension of Good.

Plato's image implies that complete unity is not seen until one has reached the summit, but moral advance carries with it intuitions of unity which are increasingly less misleading. As we deepen our notions of the virtues we introduce relationship and hierarchy. Courage, which seemed at first to be something on its own, a sort of specialized daring of the spirit, is now seen to be a particular operation of wisdom and love. We come to distinguish a self-assertive ferocity from courage. It would be impossible to have only one virtue unless it were a very trivial one such as thrift. Such transformations as these are cases of seeing the order of the world in the light of the Good and revisiting the true, conceptions of that which we formerly misconceived. Humility is not a peculiar habit of self-effacement, it is selfless respect for reality and one of the most difficult and central of all virtues.

Because of his ambiguous attitude to the sensible world and because of his confidence in the revolutionary power of mathematics, Plato sometimes seems to imply that the road towards the Good leads away from the world of particularity and detail. In any case, so far as goodness is for use in politics and in the market place it must combine its increasing intuitions of unity with an increasing grasp of complexity and detail.

False conceptions are often generalized, stereotyped and unconnected. True conceptions combine just modes of judgment and ability to connect with an increased perception of detail. This double revelation of both random detail and intuited unity is what we receive in every sphere of life if we seek for what is best. We can see this, once more, quite clearly in art and intellectual work. The great artists reveal the detail of the world. At the same time their greatness is not something peculiar and personal like a proper name. They are great in ways which are to some extent similar, and increased understanding of an art reveals its unity through its excellence. All serious criticism assumes this, though it might be wary of expressing it in a theoretical manner.

Art reveals reality and because there is a way in which things are there is a fellowship of artists. Plato, who is sometimes accused of over-valuing intellectual disciplines, is quite explicit in giving these a high but second place. A serious scholar has great merits. But a serious scholar who is also a good man knows not only his subject but the proper place of his subject in the whole of his life. The understanding which leads the scientist to the right decision about giving up a certain study, or leads the artist to the right decision about his family, is superior to the understanding of art and science as such.

We are admittedly specialized creatures where morality is concerned and merit in one area does not seem to guarantee merit in another. The good artist is not necessarily wise at home, and the concentration camp guard can be a kindly father. The scene remains disparate and complex beyond the hopes of any system, yet at the same time the concept *Good* stretches through the whole of it and gives it the only kind of shadowy unachieved unity which it can possess. The area of morals can now be seen, not as a hole-and-corner matter of debts and promises, but as covering the whole of our mode of living and the quality of our relations with the world.

*Good* has often been said to be indefinable for reasons connected with freedom. *Good* is an empty space into which human choice may move. The indefinability of the *good* should be conceived of rather differently. The ordinary person does not believe that he creates values by his choices. He thinks that some things really are better than others and that he is capable of getting it wrong. We are not usually in doubt about the direction in which *Good* lies. Equally we recognize the real existence of evil: cynicism, cruelty, indifference to suffering.

However, the concept of *Good* still remains obscure and mysterious. We see the world in the light of the *Good*, but what is the *Good* itself? The source of vision is not in the ordinary sense seen. As Plato says it is that which every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all that it does, with some intuition of its nature, and yet also baffled [3: 505]. He also underlines that *Good* is the source of knowledge and truth and yet is something which surpasses them in splendour [3: 508-509].

There is a sort of logical answer to the question but it is not the whole answer. Asking what *Good* is is not like asking what *Truth* is or what *Courage* is, since in explaining the latter the idea of *Good* must enter in, it is that in the light of which the explanation must proceed. If we say that *Good* is *Love* we have to explain that: there are different kinds of love. Even the concept of *Truth* has its ambiguities and it is really only of *Good* that we can say 'it is the trial of itself and needs no other touch'.

The idea of perfection can only be exemplified in particular cases in terms of the kind of perfection which is appropriate. So one could not say in general what perfection is, in the way in which one could talk about generosity or good painting. In any case, opinions differ and the truth of judgments of value cannot be demonstrated. This line of argument is sometimes used to support a view of *Good* as empty and almost trivial, a mere word, the most general adjective of commendation, a term which could with greater clarity be replaced by 'I'm for this'.

A genuine mysteriousness attaches to the idea of *goodness* and the *Good*. This is a mystery with several aspects. The indefinability of *Good* is connected with the unsystematic and inexhaustible variety of the world and the pointlessness of virtue. In this respect there is a special link between the concept of *Good* and the ideas of *Death* and *Chance*. A genuine sense of mortality enables us to see virtue as the only thing of worth; and it is impossible to limit and foresee, the ways in which it will be required of us. That we cannot dominate the world may be put in a more positive way. *Good* is mysterious because of human frailty, because of the immense distance which is involved. We are largely mechanical creatures, the slaves of relentlessly strong selfish forces the nature of which we scarcely comprehend. At best, as decent persons, we are usually very specialized. We behave well in areas where this can be done fairly easily and let other areas of possible virtue remain undeveloped. There are insuperable psychological barriers to goodness in the case of every human being. There are few places where virtue plainly shines: great art, humble people who serve others. And can we, without improving ourselves, really see these things clearly?

The world is aimless, chancy, and huge and we are blinded by self. There is a third consideration which is a relation of the other two. It is difficult to look at the sun: it is not like looking at other things. But it is easier to look at the converging edges than to look at the centre itself. There are false suns, easier to gaze upon and far more comforting than the true one.

Plato gave the image of this deluded worship in his great allegory. The prisoners in the cave at first face the back wall. Behind them a fire is burning in the light of which they see upon the wall the shadows of puppets which are carried between them and the fire and they take these shadows to be the whole of reality. When they turn round they can see the fire, which they have to pass in order to get out of the cave. The fire represents the self, that great source of energy and warmth. The prisoners in the second stage of enlightenment have gained the kind of self-awareness. They can see

in themselves the sources of what was formerly blind selfish instinct. They see the flames which threw the shadows which they used to think were real, and they can see the puppets, imitations of things in the real world, whose shadows they used to recognize. They do not dream that there is anything else to see.

This powerful thing is indeed an object of fascination, and those who study its power to cast shadows are studying something which is real. Recognition of its power may be a step towards escape from the cave; but it may equally be taken as an end-point. The fire may be mistaken for the sun, and taken for *goodness*. Any religion or ideology can be degraded by the substitution of self for the true object of veneration. There is a place both inside and outside religion for a sort of contemplation of the Good, not just by dedicated experts but by ordinary people: attention which is not just the planning of particular good actions but an attempt to look right away from self towards a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of new and quite undreamt-of virtue. This attempt, which is a turning of attention away from the particular, may be the thing that helps most when difficulties seem insoluble, and especially when feelings of guilt keep attracting the gaze back towards the self. This is the true mysticism which is morality, a kind of undogmatic prayer which is real and important, though perhaps also difficult and easily corrupted.

#### БІБЛІОГРАФІЯ

1. Feinberg J. *Moral Concepts*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. – 356 p.
2. Gould T. *Platonic Love*. – London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983. – 263 p.
3. Plato *Republic*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. – 1256 p.
4. Pope A. *An Essay on Man*. – London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. – 572 p.
5. Santas G. *Plato on Love, Beauty and the Good / The Greeks and the Good Life* / ed. by D. Depew. – Fullerton: California State University, 1980. – P. 33–68.

#### ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

**Надія Іваненко** – кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри практики германських мов Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Винниченка.

*Наукові інтереси:* когнітивна лінгвістика, порівняльна типологія.

## **КИРИЛО-МЕФОДІЇВСЬКА ТРАДИЦІЯ ТА *sacra lingua* СХІДНИХ СЛОВ'ЯН**

**Олена КЛИМЕНТОВА (Київ, Україна)**

*У статті розглянуто проблему збереження сугестивної спроможності першоджерела у трансформованому перекладом сакральному тексті.*

*The problem of the suggestive potential safety of original in the translated sacral text is investigated in this research.*

Як відомо, східні слов'яни – росіяни, українці, білоруси сповідували православ'я в його візантійській редакції; в їх церковно-книжній культурі у великій пошані була грецька мова, але мовою богослужіння і Писання, *sacra lingua*, стала церковнослов'янська мова. У зв'язку із цим постає питання, чи зберігає трансформований перекладом текст сугестивну спроможність першоджерела? Відомо, що в ареалі *Slavia Orthodoxa* розвиток писемності й літератури тривалий час відбувався у межах церковної традиції та йшов по шляху гібридизації церковнослов'янської і народної мови, яка «розмивала» консервативність норм вживання першої, хоча цих два мовних різновиди значний період й існували як різні стилі. За своїм походженням церковнослов'янська – це давньослов'янська мова, що завдячує появі свого письма братам Кирилу і Мефодію. У писемних пам'ятках є інформація про ці події, хоча самих текстів доби створення перших слов'янських азбук не збереглося. Так, у житті, присвяченому Клименту Охридському – одному з найбільш талановитих учнів братів Кирила і Мефодія, які славилися чистотою життя, досконало володіли учительним словом, вимовленим еллінською мовою, розповідається, що ці святі мужі дуже горювали через те, що не можуть донести скарби Святого Письма до словенського народу. Тому вони звертаються до того, «чий першим даром стали мови, і вдаються по допомогу Бога-Слова і просять у нього милості: допомогти винайти букви, що відповідають вибагливому болгарському