

Summary of the book “Freedom from the Shadows. Justice and Education in Plato's Dialogues” by Georgi Gochev

Written in the period 2020-2023, the book “Freedom from the Shadows. Justice and Education in Plato's Dialogues” (475 pages) consists of an introduction, eight chapters and a bibliography. The book is titled after Plato's famous myth of the cave in Book Seven of the “Republic”. The major themes of the book, indicated in the title, are two – justice and education. A third major theme is Plato's view of man and human existence.

In the first chapter, entitled “The Other Prisoner” and dedicated to Plato's dialogue “Phaedo”, the situation of Socrates' death is presented. The themes of investigation in this chapter are three: the concept of soul according to this dialogue, the concept of time, and the concept of freedom. The thesis is defended that, according to Plato, the soul is not only the center of vital energy, reason, memory, and desires, but also of human freedom, insofar as it allows one to live in other times than the time of the body and the social time of man. Another contribution of this chapter is the study of the dialogical situation – the death of Socrates, in relation to the Socratic/Platonic thesis that the soul is immortal. Although Socrates cannot prove his point verbally, he defends it dramatically by bravely facing death in the Athenian dungeon.

The second chapter is devoted to the early Platonic dialogue “Charmides”. The dramaturgical situation - Socrates' meeting with young Charmides and the behavior of the two during the conversation – is explored. The dramaturgical situation is related to the theme of the dialogue – what it means to be sane (*sophron*). The study demonstrates that as at the level of conversation the dialogue reaches an *aporia*, so that in the end there is no affirmative definition of reasonableness (*sophrosyne*), at the dramaturgical level it is clearly shown, through the behavior of Charmides, what it means to be reasonable. Here one of the main theses of the book emerges: that Plato skillfully uses dramaturgical situations to play out his theses when they cannot be sufficiently explored and defined verbally. The study concludes with the thesis that in “Charmides”, each of the participants in the conversation plays a part in one of the many aspects of reasonableness.

The third chapter, entitled “Freedom from the Cave”, is devoted to Plato's most famous dialogue, the “Republic”. This research proceeds along two lines. First, it examines how Socrates' thesis on justice is developed in the dramaturgy of the dialogue. Second, it examines how this thesis about justice and human life is presented through the complex metaphor of the cave. This metaphor is not only presented in the famous myth in Book Seven. There is a whole system of caves in the “Republic”: the cave that Gyges enters to retrieve the ring that makes him invisible; the cave in which the future citizens of the state grow up; the cave-vault under which Er's otherworldly journey takes place. These metaphors form a complex system. From this system is derived the thesis that, according to Plato, justice is not only internal order and

harmony in the soul, as defined in the fourth book of the dialogue, but also freedom from internal preconceptions of truth and knowledge.

The fourth chapter of the book is devoted to "Protagoras". Already raised in the analyzes of "Charmides" and "Republic", here the theme of education becomes central. The thesis is developed that for Plato, education is not just information, but also the formation of a person. However, the process of formation can proceed in two ways that are clearly distinguished: as instruction and domination over the educated by the educator (the "Protagoras" model); or as education "with the guard down", as communication between the educated and the educator, as a general search and change in the educator's soul as well (the "Socrates" model). A detailed study of the myth of the creation of humans by Prometheus is also presented. In this analysis, an analogy new to research is made with the myth of the cave.

The fifth chapter continues exploring the theme of education and knowledge. It is dedicated to Plato's dialogue "Theaetetus". As the research on "Charmides" explores the question of how a certain educational act takes place, and the research on "Protagoras" – what are the models of education, the dialogue "Theaetetus" explores the question of what knowledge is in general. Plato's attempt to separate the cognitive aspects of knowledge from the sensory is clearly shown, as well as the failure to define what knowledge is. However, on can find in the chapter

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The sixth chapter of the book is devoted to the dialogue "Symposium". The themes of the study are two: Plato's understanding of love and Plato's understanding of time. The dramaturgical situation of the conversation about love – the feast, is seen again not simply as a scene, but as a tool for playing out and clarifying views on the concepts being discussed. The individual utterances and speeches of the participants in the conversation about love are seen as one general speech with many parts, the purpose of which is to describe the many manifestations of love. The study also comes to the understanding of love as a kind of time, namely "time without time", that is, time without change, in which the person becomes part of a larger and sustainable whole.

The seventh chapter, entitled "Wandering Cause", is devoted to the dialogue "Timaeus". What Plato calls "wandering cause" is a metaphor for "chance." The subject of the analysis in the chapter is precisely chance and its role in the universe and in the human person. It shows that, according to Plato, chance is not only a negative force that opposes rationality, but also a force that complements rationality in a positive way. The analysis examines not only the view of chance presented in the "Timaeus", but also how the dramaturgy of the dialogue plays out this view through the role of Timaeus himself in the conversation and his verbal behavior.

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The last, eighth chapter of the book, is devoted to Plato's last dialogue, "The Laws". It corresponds to several chapters of the book, and especially to the chapter devoted to the "Republic". The title of this chapter – "The Other Cave" is inspired by a dramatic element of the conversation: that the participants, who are on the island of Crete, are walking towards a cave where, according to legend, Zeus grew up. This chapter demonstrates a shift in Plato's thinking on justice and human life. It is pointed out that as in "Republic" Plato tries to create a model of life which is harmonious, internally symmetrical and sustainable and which resembles the ideal wholeness of the idea of justice, in "Laws" the model of life steps not on wholeness but on fine distinctions between elements and practices of human life. This "good distinction" must, according to Plato, be ensured by law. Therefore, a significant part of the study is devoted to the questions: what does Plato mean by law and how does his understanding of law fit into that of the Greeks of the archaic and classical eras.

Finally, one can find two methodological contributions of the book.

First: all the major concepts, questions and research debates related to Platonism are presented, so the book can also be seen as an introduction to Plato's philosophy and its study. At the same time, however, Plato's philosophy is not seen as a complete system, but as a dynamic whole, which is accomplished not in the Platonic corpus, a product of secondary arrangement and selection by unknown editors, but in the individual dialogue.

Second: the main method of reading and studying the dialogue is to study the philosophical theses expressed in it in parallel with the dramaturgy of the dialogue. The dialogue is seen not only as a philosophical text, but also as a dramatic work and a play. This way of reading allows to bring out hitherto unknown aspects of the concepts, as well as to illuminate their sides that have been overlooked by researchers.