

## Anti-intuitional interpretation of dialectics in Plato's *Republic*

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The aim of this paper is to give a clear picture of the dialectics in Plato's *Republic* by tackling the problem whether the dialectical stage is epistemologically divided into two phases, the dialectical inquiring into the essence of things and the intuitional cognition of the Form of the Good. I agree with McCabe (2006) in opposing the intuitional interpretation because of the discrepancy between its bisectional idea and Plato's christening 'dialektikē', but I don't think it useful to refer to the passage of 'three fingers' (*Rep.* 523a–525b), as McCabe does, in order to prove that the end of dialectics is discursive, because McCabe's approach may blur one of the distinctive features of dialectics (using only *logos* instead of senses), and may be supportive of the intuitional interpretation.

I present another anti-intuitional interpretation. My argument is three points. First, as far as textual evidence goes, anti-intuitional interpretation is more advantageous than intuitional one. In *Rep.* 534b–d, Socrates gives such an explanation of dialecticians that presupposes definability of the Good (pace Broadie 2021), and stresses on the role of *elengchein* (534c1, 3: to examine), saying 'journey through all that with his account still intact' (trans. Reeve). Indeed, this passage only means that grasping the definition of the Good is necessary to the knowledge of it, and so may be open to the possibility of the intuitional interpretation, but then, what are the additional conditions essential to the knowledge of it? Socrates doesn't give any other conditions than the definition of it, here in the context which compares opinion with knowledge. So I think Kahn is right in commenting that the fundamental conception of the Forms is 'linguistic rather than visual' (1996, p. 355), in spite of criticism by Nightingale (2004, p. 108).

Second, two distinctive features of the dialectics compared with mathematics (not using the senses and going up from hypotheses to the un-hypothetical) can favor anti-intuitional interpretation, for these features indicate that dialectics is a method of indirect proof by *logos* (words, arguments, logics, or reason). Compared with geometry illustrated in the *Meno* 82b ff., dialectics goes up from square to figure, from figure to boundary (cf. *Meno* 76a) by *logos*, and such an examination will be done repeatedly in many ways. Thus dialectics can weave complex and consistent webs of concepts in which each concept is defined. Each definition in such a system can include such abundant and exhaustive information that one may compare grasping it to 'seeing' it.

Third, the intuitional interpretation has more theoretical problems than anti-intuitional one. Both interpretations may not resolve epistemological 'regress' problem, but besides that, intuitional one has two more problems. It doesn't have at hand any other means than articulation by *logos* in order to distinguish the cognitive state of knowing the Good from many other

cognitive states (of knowing the Beauty, etc.). It also leads to the privilege of the guardians in the ideal city, because of the lack of method of checking their intuition.