

The role of philosophy in salvation according to Plato

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Abstract: Salvation has always been considered as an important matter by most religions and the thought schools. Plato as an original philosopher reflected on it. The result of his thought about salvation has been investigated in this essay. Thus, it was found out that salvation and philosophy have a strong relation in Plato's philosophy. Their relation has to do with the role of reason in his philosophy. Reason, according to him, is a part of soul which makes us human beings and also could finally make us divine creatures. It means that human being, according to Plato, could free themselves from the cycle of rebirth with the help of reason and thus become a mortal living thing. In the other words, living things, according to Plato, are of two types: immortal and mortal. An immortal living thing is a winged soul patrolling all of heaven. When the soul sheds its wings and wanders until it lights on something solid and descends to earthly existence and body, setting the body in motion, then it becomes a mortal living thing (human being). Therefore, whenever human being could come back to the heaven, they would be saved from the cycle of rebirth. In fact, salvation is only the result of life as a philosopher.

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Introduction: Salvation has been the main concern of all religions including Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic ones. For example, a Christian considers salvation as “the main aim of religious thought and practice” (Menn, 2013, p. 191). Likewise, Muslims and Jews define salvation according to the teachings of Islam and Judaism. However, belief in the afterlife is a common aspect of Abrahamic religions, i.e. salvation may be attained in the other world. According to non-Abrahamic religions like Indian ones, salvation is defined according to “mukti” or “moksa,” releasing from the cycle of rebirth” or at least “gaining a good rebirth”. In other words, salvation may be attained “through understanding the inner meaning of ritual practices, or through devotion to a god” (ibid). Plato also defines salvation as releasing from the cycle of rebirth. In *Phaedrus* (249a), he asserts that “the soul of a man who practices

philosophy without guile...after the third cycle of one thousand years” grows his or her wings back, and he or she departs in the three-thousand years.

According to the Myth of the Soul’s Cycles with gods, souls before coming into the bodies inhabit in heavens. When following gods to “go to feast at the banquet they have a steep climb to the high tier at the rim of heaven; on this slope the gods’ chariots move easily, since they are balanced and well under control, but the other chariots barely make it” and fall down into bodies (Phaedrus, 247b). Thus, their final goal is to come back there. However, it is not easy. “no soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of a man who practices philosophy” (ibid, 248e-249a). It seems that in Plato’s view, salvation has been considered as releasing from the cycle of rebirth through philosophy. In this study, the role of

philosophy in salvation according to Plato will be explained.

Methodology: The research method is descriptive and analytic and it has mainly been done by exploring the Myth of the Soul's Cycles with gods and the Allegory of the Cave.

Findings The Two factors playing an important role in salvation according to Plato are justice and philosophy. We become righteous when each part of our soul does its own work well, i.e., "it appropriates for the rational part to rule, since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to obey it and be its ally" (Republic, 441e). Just souls, according to the Myth of the Soul's Cycles with gods, "are lifted up by justice to a place in heaven" and live there for a thousand year. Then they have to return to another body and experience another life. Actually just souls can attain happiness and live happily

somewhere in heaven for a while but they cannot release from the cycle of rebirth for a period of ten thousand years. As previously stated, according to Plato, philosophy is the only path to salvation. Through dialectic, the philosopher will be able to see ideas again and achieve the knowledge of Good. Thus, he or she will become divine and naturally must be returned to the heavens.

Discussion and Conclusion:

According to Plato, living righteously and living as philosophers both lead to salvation, but living righteously leads to living happily for a limited time only until the next reincarnation, while the philosopher's soul is the only soul that is finally released from the cycle of reincarnation. The philosopher's soul is the only soul that truly saves because he will eventually return to the heavens where he has come from. For this reason, it seems to Plato that true salvation

could be the result of philosophizing.

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