

[1952. Review of *Réalisme et Idéalisme Chez Platon*, by Joseph Moreau. *The Philosophical Review* 61, No. 3 Jul.]

REALISME ET IDEALISME CHEZ PLATON. By Joseph MOREAU. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951. Pp. 136. 300 francs.

This work, in appearance but a pamphlet, does honor to the distinguished body of French scholarship. With close and consecutive argument the author interprets Plato, particularly his later dialogues, as having escaped the pitfalls of both realism and idealism. Realism says, "Being is"; but it fails when it makes the object a thing in itself. Idealism say, "I think"; but it fails when it forgets objectivity. Yet somehow being and thought must meet.

The *Parmenides* shows that the Idea cannot be a thing in itself. The apparent realism of the Idea in the earlier dialogues is only a symbolic expression for the transcendence of the true. The *Parmenides* also denies that the Idea is a mode of the mind; but in so doing it repudiates psychologism only, not idealism. And Idea is essentially a relation, and not a species. Ideas are not real. (The obvious objections to these paradoxical statements – that Ideas are most real, and that they are species, even of mud, hair, and filth – are carefully discussed later.) Yet the Ideal theory is not indifferent to reality.

Neither the sensible nor the intelligible is real. Knowledge is in Being, and Being with the knowledge in it is both at rest and in motion. In fact, motion and rest exhaust the whole extension of Being and are its primary differentiae. Same and other are not on the same level – they are not attributes of Being, but relations. "Rien ne saurait exister sans être en quelque lieu et occuper quelque place." (p. 57)

The key to the understanding of the Platonic theory lies in the fact that Plato had a twofold problem: epistemology and ontology. The Ideas must be interpreted so as to provide solutions for both problems. A one-sided attention to epistemology, with its requirement of objectivity, has led to the erroneous hypostatization of the Ideas. "Ni l'absolu ni les relations ne se laissent hypostasier; celles-ci sont, immanentes à l'intelligence, les instruments d'une activité transcendente; celui-là est ... une exigence transcendent à toute représentation" (p. 78). The picture in the *Timaeus* of the Ideas existing apart from the divine mind is simply "une façon imaginative de se représenter la genèse de l'univers" (p. 90). The immanent soul of the world, also pictured as making the world, is a more accurate account. "Aucun modèle, pas même une représentation intermédiaire, ne s'interposerait de la sorte entre l'activité de l'Intelligence et ses réalisations concrètes; l'Intelligence... serait immédiatement organisatrice, non point fabricante, mais naturante" (p. 91). This immanentism at once avoids the third man dilemma and saves nominalistic science from skepticism. The precise way in which idéalisme gnoséologique" is to be completed by "ontologisme finaliste" is explained in the *Parmenides* and the *Philebus*. The *Parmenides* is not simply a game; its antinomies parallel those of Kant. The fourth antinomy in the *Parmenides* is the one Plato accepts in the *Philebus*, for its contradictions are only apparent. In the eighth hypothesis of the *Parmenides* Plato analyzes a nonontological, statistical theory of science. Because this (modern) view does not grasp objects, it must be repudiated.

Not "Man is the measure of all things"; but "God is the measure of all things" (Laws IV 716 c). Thus realism, idealism, ontology, and criticism are reconciled.

The excellent textual studies which support these theses, so summarily enumerated in this review, are to be found partly in the author's previous publications. Neither they nor the close argumentation can be evaluated except line by line. The author concludes with an appendix of seventeen pages, "Plotin et la Théorie Platonicienne de la Matière." The whole is a solid philosophical delight.

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