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PLATO AND PROTAGORAS.

THE present controversy between the representatives of the loose body of opinion, variously known as 'pragmatism,' 'humanism,' or 'radical empiricism,' and the exponents of the belief in a science of reality, recalls the earlier combat between the Sophists and Plato. In a sense the grounds of disagreement are the same. The modern like the ancient Sophist has risen in revolt against the tyranny of an established creed, and in defence of the rights of the individual; and he displays a decided aversion from investigations into the ultimate nature of things — which he assumes to be incapable of solution — accompanied by a strong faith in the essential soundness of the common moral consciousness. His opponent, on the other hand, like Plato, insists upon the necessity of a reasoned body of truth, to which the individual must yield assent; and he maintains that no solid foundation can be found either for knowledge or morality unless it is possible to comprehend in principle the ultimate nature of things. An antagonism so vital and fundamental obviously admits of no compromise; but perhaps it is not beyond reasonable hope that a better understanding of the strength of each other's position will at least result in the elimination of irrelevant issues and prepare the way for a solution of the problem, if such a solution is possible at all. Partly as a small contribution in this direction, I propose to recall the attitude of Plato, the representative of what in a large sense may be called a rational idealism, towards Protagoras, whom a recent exponent of 'pragmatism,' or perhaps I