

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

NOTES ON THE THEORY OF IDEAS¹

EVERY age has its own Plato, a Plato viewed from the standpoint of its own preoccupations. The recent interest in what is unfortunately called "symbolic" logic has opened our eyes to the significance of much in the *Charmides*, the *Theætetus* and the *Sophist*, which not long ago seemed to be either sublimely mysterious or stupidly perverse. The *Theætetus*, in particular, tantalizes us with its hints of a feverish activity in logical research, into which we should dearly love to enter, but of which only the most fragmentary records remain. Plato, the mathematician, has during the last generation become a familiar figure. Plato, the logician, will be no less familiar to the generations to come.

Plato, the logician, is interesting, not only because of his great powers, but because of his limitations—limitations which were more or less felt by Aristotle, and even by Plato himself, but which could not easily become clear to one who had not profited by the labors of Boole and his successors. Yet they are very plain and obvious when once they are perceived—like that lady's profile in the moon, which may be seen a thousand times, without our being aware of it, but which, once noticed, is forever there.

The "theory of ideas" is a well-connected body of doctrines with regard to certain universals, that is to say, with regard to certain qualities (or classes) and relations. The exact range of the theory is left undetermined. Suggestive lists conclude with an "and so forth". In the *Parmenides* this comes in for some

¹ At the time of his death Theodore de Laguna was working on what he intended to be a series of studies on Plato. The article which appears here was among the uncompleted drafts and fragments contained in a notebook. He had intended to rework the material and to publish it in different form. The pages here printed formed a whole as they stood, however, and I have ventured to publish them with this word of explanation under the title *Notes on the Theory of Ideas*.—GRACE A. DE LAGUNA.