

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

### PLATO AND THE RULE OF LAW\*

THE name of Plato has been figuring rather prominently in our recent warfare of ideologies. Hardly had the National Socialists come into power when academic apologists in Germany began pointing out the similarities between Plato's state and the program of the Third Reich.<sup>1</sup> A famous philosopher at the University of Berlin is reported to have announced that now for the first time the Platonic idea of the state was about to be realized. There is evidence that in Russia also official thinkers like to consider Plato as their ideological ally. A story in the *New York Times* of October 18, 1938, reported that a Professor Skatkin of the Moscow Electrical Institute had aroused the indignation of his students by his declaration that Plato was the founder of Fascism. A week later the same newspaper reported the dismissal of Professor Skatkin because of his declarations concerning Plato (and related assertions). "This action", the story continues, "was followed by a full faculty meeting at which both the Communist Party and the Young Communist organization were represented. . . . The directorate of the Institute was rebuked for not exercising better control over the faculty."<sup>2</sup> The inference is clear that Moscow will not allow the name of Plato to be taken in vain. On this side of the Atlantic, however, a contrary phenomenon has been taking place. Whether because of the adoption of Plato by the totalitarians, or for independent reasons, there has been something like a revulsion

\* The presidential address to the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association, Ohio State University, April 26, 1940.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bannes, Joachim, *Hitlers Kampf und Platons Staat*, 1933; Hildebrandt, K., *Platon, der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht*, 1933; Scheliha, Dion, 1934; Grunsky, *Seele und Staat*, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Professor Ronald B. Levinson for this interesting item.