

The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Aristote et l'Idéalisme Platonicien *Aristote et l'Idéalisme Platonicien*. Par Charles Werner, Docteur ès lettres. 8vo. One vol. Pp. 370. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910.

Marie V. Williams

The Classical Review / Volume 25 / Issue 03 / May 1911, pp 78 - 80

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00046436, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00046436

How to cite this article:

Marie V. Williams (1911). The Classical Review, 25, pp 78-80 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00046436

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

and the *Republic*. Natorp, as Herr Ritter notes, felt this difficulty so keenly that he put forward the hypothesis of a second edition of the *Phaedrus*, published after the *Phaedo*—a hypothesis which, as Herr Ritter rightly shows, finds no support in the text. When all is said and done, the most one can do at present is to sum up for oneself the balance of evidence, gained from stylometric and other considerations, and assign to the dialogues an approximate order.

Herr Ritter next proceeds to a most thorough *résumé* of the dialogues of the early period (among which he includes the *Gorgias*, *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*), and then presents his verdict regarding the doctrine of ideas as expressed therein. Zeller's proposition: '*nur das Allgemeine als solches ein Wirkliches sein könne, und dass es mithin ausser der Erscheinung als etwas Substantielles für sich sein müsse*,' he regards as fundamentally false, preferring the view of Lotze that the theory of ideas, as represented by the *Phaedo*, has merely a methodological significance. Therefore, when Plato asserts that there exist certain *αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτὰ εἶδη*, and that a thing gains a certain character by participation in these Ideas, he simply means that the connotation of general terms does not vary according to individual prejudice, but that they are fixed and unchangeable, and thereby endow general propositions with a certain validity. The so-called process of *διάνοια*, in the same dialogue, whereby any hypothesis may be certi-

fied by being made subservient to one hypothesis after another of a more general scope until a *ἰκανόν τι* is reached, is nothing else than the fixing of the inevitable dependence of any conclusions upon the axiom of the irreconcilable opposition of Yes and No—an axiom which Eristics, like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, entirely ignored. This *ἰκανόν τι*, says Herr Ritter, cannot be the Idea of Good, because the *Phaedo* does not present us with any teleological demonstration. One must say that this seems to be a very arbitrary reason to assign against a view that has found favour in so many quarters, and no one can deny that there is a very close connexion between the *διάνοια* of the *Phaedo* and the dialectic of the *Republic*.

So far Herr Ritter's exegesis has not called up much that will be seriously disputed by scholars. However, one cannot but feel that to make the *εἶδη* merely methodological, and to assign to terms like *παρρησία*, *μέθεξις* a purely metaphorical significance is to ignore that mystical side of the Platonic doctrine so clearly set forth in Prof. Stewart's recent book, *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas*. As yet, however, Herr Ritter has given us too little reason for his faith to make satisfactory criticism possible, and we shall look forward to the publication of his second volume, which will give us his pronouncement on the Ideal Theory of the later dialogues.

MARIE V. WILLIAMS.

Huguenot College, Wellington,
Cape Colony.

ARISTOTE ET L'IDÉALISME PLATONICIEN.

Aristote et l'Idéalisme Platonicien. Par CHARLES WERNER, Docteur ès lettres. 8vo. One vol. Pp. 370. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910.

THIS work of Dr. Werner consists of a singularly clear and felicitous exposition of the Aristotelian doctrines of Reality, the Soul, the Good, and God, undertaken with a view to showing, on the one part, that Aristotle, though vehemently protesting against the folly of

idealism, presents us throughout his philosophy with a virtually idealistic scheme, and, on the other part, that in certain exceptional cases he has diverged remarkably from the point of view of Plato and followed principles very different from idealism. '*S'il est toute la philosophie de Platon, l'idéalisme n'est pas toute la philosophie d'Aristote.*'

The author has been particularly happy in exposing the inconsistencies

into which Aristotle fell through declaring war against idealism. In Chapter II. he points out that Aristotle, though he was unable, consistently, to predicate *οὐσία* of anything divorced from the sensible world, by a *tour de force* of which philosophers are not infrequently guilty, admits, without realising it, the very opposite thesis. Reality, considered as the object of knowledge, is one and permanent, and cannot be found in the changing and multiple world; it must, therefore, be identified with form—form, however, not transcendent, but immanent in the thing. Hence '*l'essence d'Aristote, c'est l'idée de Platon, mais l'idée ramenée du ciel sur la terre, l'idée existant dans les choses sensibles elles-mêmes.*'

Another insuperable contradiction in Aristotle's scheme is to be found in his assertion that, although form is the only principle of determination, a great deal of determinate reality must find its explanation in the indeterminate substrate, matter, alone. The characteristics of things that do not enter into the form, or *specific* determination, are classed as accidents inherent in the matter, but these accidents often—*e.g.*, in the case of 'man'—take the form of extremely important determinations, and as such deserve some serious explanation.

Aristotle, in fact, has adhered so closely to the 'idealist' or 'intellectualist' rule laid down by Plato that it dominates, or, according to Dr. Werner, biases his treatment of almost every subject that comes under discussion. Dr. Werner has been at special pains to bring out this uniformity of procedure in the Aristotelian investigations, and has demonstrated very clearly that the classification into form and matter represents an opposition that penetrates to the very foundations of Aristotelian doctrine. Thus *φύσις*, the principle of movement, the principle working in view of an end, is in the last analysis nothing but form, since it is form only that calls motion into being, and causes things to exist in actuality (*ἐνεργεία*). This makes form in the end both movent and final cause. Similarly, the opposite principle, *τύχη*, a blind force that may or may not collaborate with

φύσις, is simply the negation of positive determination, the indeterminate *ὕλη* of things.

In the domain of psychology the same method is pursued. Soul is form and body is matter, the two component elements of a living thing. (We remark here that Dr. Werner has failed to point out one other inconsistency on the part of Aristotle in saying that soul is the *οὐσία*, not of the animal, but of the *body*.) Sensation, similarly, is the apprehension of the form of things without their matter, that is, it is constituted by the realisation of the sensible form in the matter, or potentiality, furnished by the animal organs. Intellectual activity consists in the realisation of the intelligible form in the intellect, when the subject, by assimilating the object, becomes one and the same with it, and is concentrated on its own activity. The subject is *δυνάμει* the form of the object, and so intellectual activity is resolved finally into form.

In the region of ethics, too, actions and passions represent, as it were, the matter of virtue, whereas the mean, the proportion or determination that limits them, is the form. Just as the determination which puts an end to the movement of production or generation is no other than form, the object of knowledge, so virtue, the mean that limits, that introduces order into the disordered, is simply form.

In his treatment of desire and pleasure, however, Dr. Werner believes that Aristotle has broken the bonds of idealism for once, and caught a gleam of the true light. His reproduction of Aristotle here is interesting, and has been worked out with considerable originality. Soul in Aristotle is the cause, not merely of sensation and thought, but of all movement whatsoever, which makes it responsible for the psychical state of desire. Now the soul in the phenomenon of desire has two aspects; it is both moved and movent, both subject and object. As subject it possesses an intellectual element and works out the so-called practical syllogism that is too often set up contrary to that of the Reason. As object it is affective, it is soul in the phase of pure activity, it is, in short, pleasure, which

Aristotle regards as the 'completion' of every activity.

According to this view, pleasure is, first, a criterion set up freely by man, a criterion that is not subject to the control of Reason, and hence belongs rather to the category of the Spontaneous described by Bergson in *L'Évolution Créatrice*; secondly, it is the supreme criterion of action, and the Human Good, or Well-Being of Man, is in the last resort found not in *ἀπέρη*, nor even in *θεωρία*, but in the pleasure that accompanies the activity of *ἀπέρη*. '*C'est la valeur de l'activité qui dépend de la valeur du plaisir.*' One is bound to say at once that the first half of this thesis is really incompatible with the second. There is, doubtless, much in Aristotle's language concerning *ἡδονή* that reminds one of the descriptions of the spontaneous character of Reality to which Dr. Werner refers. Pleasure is the *ἐπιγυρόμενόν τι τέλος*, an utterly additional joy, like the bloom on the cheeks of youth, it is the drop that overflows from the cup of happiness, the blessing that comes unasked and unsought. However, this very characteristic of *ἡδονή*, its casual, incalculable quality, precludes the notion that it should in any sense represent an end or aim of action, even if Aristotle had not expressly told us that he found *ἡδονή* particularly unsatisfactory as an end of conduct.

When it comes to Aristotle's theology, Dr. Werner thinks he finds the categories of Reality, Spirit, and Value (categories rendered distinct by modern thought) fused, or rather confused, into one entity, God, who is the prime unmoved movent of all things, and who,

being both object and subject of Thought and Desire, is both Thought perpetually thinking itself and Desire perpetually enjoying and taking pleasure in itself. In God, too, the fundamental division into matter and form is to be found, for God is the soul, of which the first heaven is the body, and by which that heaven is supplied with an internal principle of movement. This view of God as being a composite of matter and form is, as Dr. Werner himself acknowledges, contrary to the traditional view, and to Aristotle's asseveration that the prime movent must be devoid of *ὕλη* (*Met.* *Λ* 1071b 20); moreover, Dr. Werner has not succeeded here in persuading us to renounce our ancient faith. The following description of the *ὕλη* of God: '*Elle n'implique aucun devenir, aucune virtualité, aucune indétermination, ni relative, ni absolue, aucune contingence, aucune multiplicité, aucun changement, aucun accident,*' shows that the term 'matter' is quite out of place in this connexion. Further, the endeavour to override Aristotle's statement that God is pure form by the explanation: '*Cela signifie seulement que la forme divine, étant la forme complètement achevée, impose à la matière dans laquelle elle est réalisée une détermination telle que l'intelligible ne comporte plus aucune espèce de restriction,*' fails to give satisfaction.

Though Dr. Werner has not been convincing in his attempt to read some modern philosophical views into Aristotle, we cannot but admit that he has provided us with a very stimulating study of Aristotelian doctrines.

MARIE V. WILLIAMS.

*Huguenot College, Wellington,
Cape Colony.*

DIE ILIAS ALS DICHTUNG.

Die Ilias als Dichtung. By CARL ROTHE.
Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
1910.

THE author of this book is foremost (Hennings, who holds the opposite creed, says 'easily so') among the increasing band of Homeric Unitarians in Germany, and his qualifications for

writing it are such as few living men possess. For more than thirty years he has prepared reports on the literature of the Homeric Question, first in Bursian's *Jahresbericht* and latterly in the *Zeitschr. f. d. Gymnasialwesen*, which are models of lucid and impartial exposition of the points in the great controversy. Anyone who is fortunate