

# Plato's Theory of Ideas

## An Introduction to Idealism

Edited with an introduction by Vasilis Politis  
 Translation by Vasilis Politis and John Connolly  
 Postscript by André Laks

2004. 484 pp. 68.50 EUR. 15.5 x 23 cm. Hardcover. ISBN: 3-89665-250-8  
 International Plato Studies, Vol. 18

Paul Natorp's monumental work, *Plato's Theory of Ideas. An Introduction to Idealism* (1903, 2nd ed. 1921), is a fascinating and highly original work which merits renewed study not only as a significant document of German Neokantianism, but as an important contribution to our understanding of Plato.

Natorp's interpretation, far from being an uncritical projection of Kant back onto Plato, is a remarkable attempt to dissociate the theory of ideas from its Aristotelian reception, still dominant today, which sees the ideas as transcendent substances, and to argue that Plato's theory is basically a theory of explanation. In particular, Natorp argues that Plato's ideas are simply explanations, or laws, rather than substances; and what the ideas explain is in the first instance the possibility and nature of thought and knowledge, and only as a consequence the nature of reality. Natorp emphasizes the broadly Kantian origins of his approach, but he takes issue with

Kant on a number of crucial points, and this not least is what allows him to defend a transcendental interpretation of Plato's theory of ideas. The current volume contains a complete translation of *Plato's Theory of Ideas*; an introduction which summarizes Natorp's interpretation of Plato, its relation to Aristotle and Kant, and its continued importance; along with a postscript which positions Natorp within German, and in particular Marburg, Neokantianism.

Vasilis Politis teaches at Trinity College Dublin. He was educated in Oxford University. He has just published *Aristotle and the Metaphysics* (Routledge).

John Connolly, has, with John Minahane, translated *Desiderius Lenz, The Aesthetic of Beuron and other Writings*, and contributed to the translation of Friedrich Waismann's *The Voices of Wittgenstein*.

