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ABSTRACT

This paper defends a ‘perspectivist’ reading of Plato’s dialogues. According to this reading, each dialogue presents a particular and limited perspective on the truth, conditioned by the specific context, aim and characters, where this perspective, not claiming to represent the whole truth on a topic, is not incompatible with the possibly very different perspectives found in other dialogues nor, on the other hand, can be subordinated or assimilated to one of these other perspectives. This model is contrasted to the other models that have been proposed, i.e., Unitarianism, Developmentalism, and ‘Prolepticism’, and is shown to address and overcome the limitations of each. One major advantage of ‘perspectivism’ against the other interpretative models is that, unlike them, it can do full justice to the literary and dramatic character of the dialogues without falling into the opposite extreme of turning them into literary games with no positive philosophical content. To say that Plato’s dialogues are ‘perspectivist’ is not to say that they contain no ‘doctrines’ on the soul, for example, but, on the contrary, to stress the plurality of doctrines, with the observation that each is true within the limits of the argumentative function it is introduced to serve and of the specific dialogical context.

Keywords: perspectivism, developmentalism, soul, Forms, truth, division, phantasma, eikôn, Neoplatonism.

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