



Plato, Metaphysics and the Forms (Bloomsbury Studies in Ancient Philosophy)

Francis A. Grabowski III

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Few philosophical doctrines have been as influential and as widely discussed as Plato's theory of Forms; yet few have been as misunderstood. Most philosophers, following the recommendation of Aristotle, regard the Forms as abstract entities. However, this view is difficult to square with other aspects of Plato's thought, in particular his theory of knowledge.

Francis A. Grabowski aims to dissociate the theory of Forms from its Aristotelian reception, by interpreting it within the larger framework of Plato's philosophy. Grabowski notes that the theory emerged largely from epistemological concerns. He shows that the ancients conceived of knowledge almost exclusively as a perception-like acquaintance with things. He goes on to examine Plato's epistemology and shows that Plato also regards knowledge as the mind being directly acquainted with its object. Grabowski argues that, by modelling knowledge on perception, Plato could not have conceived of the Forms as Aristotle and others have claimed. He concludes that an interpretation of the Forms as concrete rather than abstract entities provides a more plausible and coherent view of Plato's overall philosophical project.

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