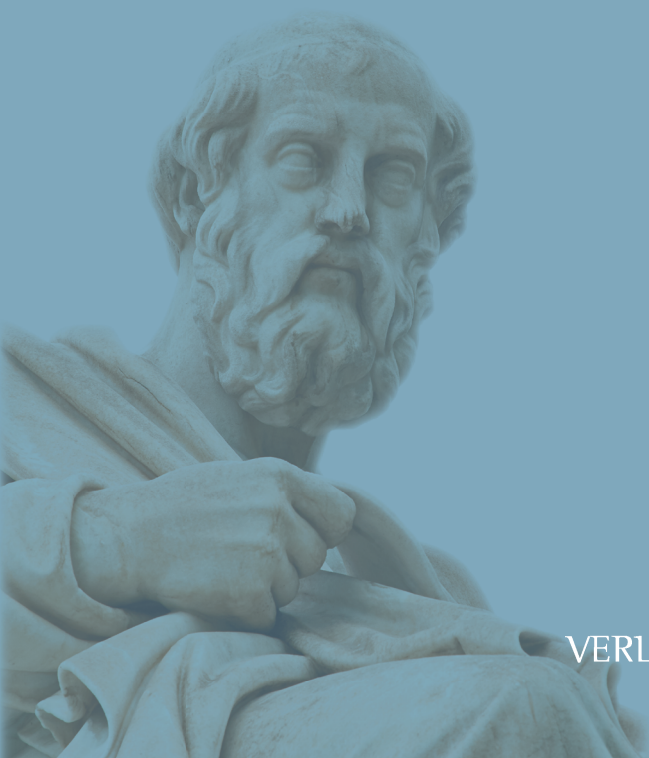


Luc Brisson | Edward C. Halper | Richard D. Parry [Eds.]

Plato's Sophist

Selected Papers of the Thirteenth Symposium Platonicum



VERLAG KARL ALBER



International Plato Studies

Published under the auspices of the
International Plato Society



Series Editors:

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Volume 42

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1st Edition 2024

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Published by
Verlag Karl Alber – within
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden
www.verlag-alber.de

Production of the printed version:
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN 978-3-495-99135-0 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-495-99136-7 (ePDF)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783495991367>



Online Version
Nomos eLibrary



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Introduction

It is a testimony to the ongoing interest in Plato and to the strength of Platonic scholarship that the thirteenth *Symposium Platonicum* took place in July 2022. Not a year had passed since the twelfth *Symposium* when the world was plunged into pandemic in March 2020. We debated whether to postpone *Symposium XIII*, but at that point and for some time afterwards it was unclear how long a postponement would need to be. So, when we issued the call for abstracts a year later, we announced that the meeting would be hybrid. Papers could be presented either in-person or online to an audience that would be both online and in person. By the time the *Symposium* took place, the incidence and toxicity of covid was substantially diminished, and many people were indeed able to attend in person. However, a nearly equal number attended the meeting remotely by Zoom. Excellent facilities at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business and the assistance of a number of philosophy students allowed the in person and the remote audiences to interact. The result was an excellent *Symposium*. It was, therefore, difficult to select the limited number of papers that we could include in this volume. The editors ranked and discussed the papers at some length. There was disagreement about many, but in the end a selection had to be made.

Each *Symposium Platonicum* is devoted to a single dialogue or a small group of dialogues. *Symposium XIII* was dedicated to the *Sophist*. This dialogue constitutes an essential landmark in Plato's work and a key reference for Platonism in general. As its title indicates, the *Sophist* seeks to define the sophist. It uses a method that understands itself as scientific: dialectic. Yet, finding the sophist means distinguishing him from the philosopher as Plato conceives of him. This requires a review of previous positions on the question of being. Thus, the dialogue contains the oldest doxography in the history of philosophy. Plato marshals this doxography to propose *dynamis* as the essential mark of all beings. However, he cannot find a common character without also discovering marks that distinguish beings from each other, and so the dialogue arrives at the five 'greatest kinds': Being, Rest, Motion, Same and Other. The kind of the Other allows Plato to leave behind the Parmenidean opposition between being and not-being; hence, the famous parricide that sets the history of philosophy in motion once again. Not-being is no longer defined exclusively by non-existence: it can also be considered as Difference, that is, the Other. Thus, an image is itself an instance of Being,

but it is Other than that of which it is an image, which is itself also a Being. This makes it possible to take false discourse into account. Error is no longer eliminated as a non-discourse, that is, as a discourse on what does not exist; it is a discourse that says something other than that which really exists, even while having its own Being. This enables a definition of the sophist who takes pleasure in error by producing simulacra.

This dialogue has provoked a wide range of readings. Many scholars working in the Analytic tradition have focused on the dialogue's treatment of language and truth. Other scholars have been more concerned with the ontological significance of the definitions of Being and Non-Being. There has been quite a bit of discussion of the method of division as well the definitions of the 'noble sophist' and the concluding definition. Then, the dialogue makes reference to and invites comparison with a number of other philosophers. All of these dimensions and others were represented at the *Symposium Platonicum*, and we wanted them to be represented in the volume. One achievement of the International Plato Society's triennial *Symposia* is that they bring together scholars from a wide variety of perspectives. As readers of Plato, we appreciate the value of dialogue among these various perspectives, we believe that we succeeded in fostering dialogue in our *Symposium*, and we offer this volume as a way to continue this dialogue and to grow from it.

The *Symposium* as well as this volume of selected papers was made possible by the generous support of many. We are grateful to the University of Georgia and especially to its Terry College of Business for making its facilities available to the IPS. In addition, the Provost's Office, through its 'State of the Art' conference support program, covered the travel expenses of our plenary speakers. The President's Office, Vice President for Research, and the University's Willson Center for Humanities and Arts provided essential support. The Department of Philosophy supported our web site development, the student assistants who were essential for the Symposium, and the graduate students who helped with the editing. Finally, we thank the Cornelia de Vogel Foundation for travel support.

We are grateful for Jonathan Greig's help with the IPS website, for Amin Amouhadi's setting up the conference website, and for Danielle Kotria's help with early editing. Thanks are also due to Quentin Murphy for his work editing this volume. Of course, we are most grateful to the Symposium's contributors and participants whose papers provoked discussions and whose discussions improved the papers. We all came away from the Symposium with new insights and a deeper appreciation of the *Sophist*.

Finally, we note the sad loss of Maurizio Migliori after the *Symposium*. Maurizio was a fine scholar and a stalwart contributor to our Society who is dearly missed. His paper was edited by us for style.

Luc Brisson
Edward C. Halper
Richard Parry

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