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James Leshner, Debra Nails, and Frisbee Sheffield, editors. *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006. Pp. xi + 446. Paper, \$29.95.

Plato's *Symposium* has been a fertile source of philosophical, literary, and artistic inspiration for more than two thousand years. It continues to inspire debates amid the changing fashions in contemporary Plato interpretation. This volume of papers, which grew out of a conference at the Center for Hellenic Studies in 2005, is divided into four parts. Most of the papers are richly rewarding, but there is space here to do little more than hint at their main points.

Part I, "The *Symposium* and Plato's Philosophy," has three chapters. Christopher Rowe ("The *Symposium* as a Socratic Dialogue") implicitly challenges the old consensus about the *Symposium* as a "middle" dialogue, arguing that it is "early" or "Socratic" in its moral psychology, in part because he doubts that Forms (whose presence have supported the idea that the dialogue is "middle") are very important to the "Socratic-Platonic project" (18). He provocatively—and, I think, correctly—suggests that Forms were imposed on Plato as his signature view by Aristotle. In "The Role of the Earlier Speeches in the *Symposium*," Frisbee Sheffield argues that the earlier speeches serve as Aristotelian *endoxa*, stating claims that are reasonable and "disputes worth solving," as Socrates in fact does. Lloyd Gerson's "Platonic Reading of Plato's *Symposium*" is elegant and substantive in its first (theoretical) section, but plainly Neoplatonic in its interpretation of the dialogue.

Part II, "Interpreting Plato's *Symposium*," has six chapters. Mark McPherran's deeply informed "Medicine, Magic, and Religion in Plato's *Symposium*" shows how Plato "used his symposiasts to reveal a new vision of piety through an ascending sequence of speeches—offered like the talismanic objects of an Eleusinian initiation—capped by Diotima's concluding protreptic" (94). Perhaps he will later explain why Diotima's speech is not the end of the dialogue. G. R. Lear ("Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's *Symposium*") wants to explain the "alien" (97) idea that beauty is central to Plato's ethical theory by showing that beauty is connected to immortality and thence to happiness. The Greeks' attachment of moral value to beauty is well known to classical scholars, however. C. D. C. Reeve's paper on "Alcibiades in the *Symposium*" takes on the question why Plato had Diotima's transcendent description of the Beautiful interrupted by Alcibiades' drunken entry and speech. Recurrent terms for disorder suggest that this disorderly, but to us fascinating, scene reproduces the very problem to which Diotima's theory was presented as a solution; and hidden within it, as in a bust of Silenus, Alcibiades' speech presents an image of Socrates that is "uncannily correct" (146). Ruby Blondell ("Where is Socrates on the 'Ladder of Love'?") solidly documents her claim that Socrates is not to be conceived as resting in contemplation atop the ladder but as moving up and down, as "[s]omeone who repeatedly ascends and descends, like the *daimon* Eros" (177). Debra Nails argues that the dialogue sets up a "Tragedy Off-Stage," seeing the tragic deaths of half the symposiasts and Socrates within weeks after the dramatic date of the frame dialogue as being due to the ignorance of the Athenians. The paper well illustrates how knowing the historical facts Plato deploys in the dialogues may profoundly affect their meanings. In "The Virtues of Platonic Love," Gabriela Carone claims, not very surprisingly, that Socrates' speech not only describes an ideal spiritual love, but also helps us understand "ordinary love in our practical lives" (208).

There are three papers in part III, "The *Symposium*, Sex, and Gender." Luc Brisson ("Agathon, Pausanias, and Diotima in Plato's *Symposium: Paidierastia and Philosophia*") persuasively argues that the dialogue criticizes a transmission picture of education within a critique of a sexual model of *paidierastia*. Angela Hobbs ("Female Imagery in Plato") reinterprets spiritual pregnancy in the context of female images, including midwifery and weaving, and in contrast with "male" images of war, hunting, and athletics. She claims, no doubt correctly, that in Plato's higher level view each image can be employed of the other gender, and that he does so playfully but with some philosophic seriousness. Jeffrey Carnes ("Plato in the Courtroom: The Surprising Influence of the *Symposium*") discusses the surprising role interpretations of the dialogue have played in some recent appellate cases.

Part IV, "The Reception of Plato's *Symposium*," includes four papers. Richard Hunter ("Plato's *Symposium* and the Traditions of Ancient Fiction") shows how the *Symposium* informed Apuleius and Petronius. James Leshner examines "Some Notable Afterimages of Plato's *Symposium*" in the visual art of Rubens, Gérôme (accents strangely missing in the book), Canova, Inigo Jones, David, Botticelli, and others. Diskin Clay's "The Hangover of Plato's *Symposium* in the Italian Renaissance" sketches the reception of the dialogue "from Bruni (1435) to Castiglione (1528)," with Ficino and Bembo in between. David O'Connor analyzes the estranged "Platonic Selves in Shelley and Stevens" that, he argues, reflect their encounters with the *Symposium*.

A few minor criticisms can be made. Parts I–III contain strong papers that make clear contributions to major areas of study of the *Symposium*. The papers in part IV, while intrinsically interesting and excellent, seem rather arbitrary examples of reception. A serious reception history of the dialogue that would include its role in ancient, medieval, and modern Neoplatonism and mysticism, in the construction and dissemination of the "great chain of being," and the lineage of modern theories of erotic love remains something to be desired. Finally, taken as a whole, the volume represents less diversity of interpretive principles and orientations than actually characterizes Platonic scholarship at present.

All in all, however, this is an excellent volume providing challenging and original interpretations of important issues in the *Symposium*. The level of scholarship is very high; the Works Cited list (378–98) is a valuable resource; and the papers by Rowe, McPherran, Blondell, and Nails are particularly impressive.

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Kenneth Sayre. *Metaphysics and Method in Plato's Statesman*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xii + 265. Cloth, \$75.00.

In his most recent book on Plato, Kenneth Sayre argues that the *Statesman* is, first and foremost, a dialogue on dialectical division, the aim of which is to produce better dialecticians (*Statesman* 285d5–7). The author guides the reader through a rigorous analysis of several dialectical instruments (collection, division, paradigm) deployed in Plato's late dialogues (part I, "Method"), before turning to a scrupulous examination of the Stranger's remarks concerning the two kinds of measurement by which length and brevity, and Excess and Deficiency in general, are to be determined (*Statesman* 283c3 ff.) (part II, "Metaphysics").

In what is often considered a digression, the Stranger divides the art of measurement into two parts: first, that in which Great and Small are compared to one another; second, that in which they are assessed relative to "due measure." Observing the infrequency of the expressions 'hyperbolē kai elleipsis' and 'to mega kai to mikron' in the Platonic corpus, and the paucity of recent commentary on these expressions (140), Sayre provides evidence from ancient sources (Aristotle and the Greek commentators) that 'the Great and the Small' is, in fact, an equivalent expression for 'Excess and Deficiency' (149–53). According to his interpretation, both expressions refer to a general form of contrariety (143). This would shed light on Aristotle's references (in particular, in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*) to Plato's dual principle of Great and Small. Sayre also furnishes a catalogue of equivalent expressions (the Indefinite Dyad, the Unlimited, etc.) for the Great and the Small in Aristotle and his commentators (Appendix). It is no mere accident, Sayre convincingly argues, that the discussion of due measure—that standard between excess and deficiency on which all arts depend—occurs in the exact middle of the dialogue. Rather, the structure of the *Statesman* reflects one of its important themes: "the precise marking of beginning, middle, and end in the conversation of the *Statesman* symbolizes its central concern with Limit in the second kind of measurement" (183).

Sayre considers that the enigmatic reference to the part of measurement said to be "according to the being necessary for generation" (283d8–9)—the same part which is identified