

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Metaphysical Society of America  
74th Annual Meeting  
New York City, NY  
March 7-10, 2024

**Due Date: September 30, 2023**

Send abstracts to: [secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org](mailto:secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org).

Decisions on submissions will be made by **December 1, 2023**.

### *Identity, Difference, and the Difference that Metaphysics Makes*

Ideas about “identity” and “difference” proliferate in the news media, in higher education, in political disputations, and in critical theories of society. Claims about “identity” and “difference” can readily be found at work in a wide variety of typologies, including those of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, political affiliation, ability and disability, animality and humanity, etc. But what exactly do we mean when we speak of “identity” or “difference”? And if we achieve greater clarity about the metaphysical presuppositions and implications of “identity” and “difference,” what difference would that make?

A serious metaphysical examination of “identity” and “difference” will expectedly generate a wide variety of questions. Is discourse about what is “identical” reducible to discourse about what is “the same”? Is discourse about what is “different” reducible to discourse about what is “other”? Can something be “the same” without being “identical,” and can something be “other” without being “different”? When we speak about “being,” does our speaking about it have many different senses (is it spoken of analogically), or instead does our speaking about being always have the same sense (is it spoken of univocally)? Does the “identity” of a thing depend mainly on the thing’s status as an individual, or does it depend instead on the thing’s membership in a general kind? Does an understanding of identity depend on some reference to what is different? Or does an understanding of difference depend on some reference to identity? What is the relation of knowing to being: is it one of identity, or difference, or some combination of both? Is it possible for a knower to discern real differences between things without discerning intelligible differences, or does the indiscernibility of intelligible differences imply that there are no real differences at all but rather an identity? Does difference depend on negation, or can one assert that there is difference without having to assert that something is “not”? Does it make sense to speak of an ontological difference, i.e., a difference between Being and beings, or is it senseless – maybe even useless – to speak of a difference between Being and beings? Is “being” different from “nothing,” or is it possible for differences to exist only among beings (in which case there apparently cannot be a difference between “being” and “nothing”)?

In spite of the virtual ubiquity of discourses about identity and difference, there is a dearth of discourse about the metaphysical presuppositions and implications of “identity and difference.” With its choice of conference theme for 2024 (“Identity, Difference, and the Difference that Metaphysics Makes”), the Metaphysical Society of America wishes to provoke deeper thinking about the metaphysics of identity and difference, with the hope that such deeper thinking will make a meaningful difference in both theory and practice.

Proposals for papers on the conference theme are especially encouraged, but papers on other metaphysical topics are also welcome. Please note: when selecting which submissions to accept for this conference, the Program Committee will regard “relevance to theme” as one important criterion among others.

## **Guidelines for the Submission of Abstracts, and for Aristotle and Plato Prize Candidates**

Abstracts of approximately 500 words should be submitted electronically by **September 30, 2023**, to: [secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org](mailto:secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org).

Aristotle Prize: Those wishing to be considered for the Aristotle Prize of the Metaphysical Society should submit full papers along with their abstracts. Eligibility for the Aristotle Prize extends only to persons who have not yet earned a Ph.D.. Those wishing to be considered for the Aristotle Prize should express this wish clearly in the email note that accompanies their submission. Papers submitted for the Aristotle Prize are subject to a 3,750 word limit; this word limit applies to the body of the text to be read at the meeting, and not to footnotes or other supporting material. The Aristotle Prize carries a cash award of \$500, inclusion in the program, and assistance with the costs associated with attending the meeting. To be considered for the Aristotle Prize, full papers and abstracts must be submitted by **September 30, 2023** to: [secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org](mailto:secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org).

Plato Prize: Those wishing to be considered for the Plato Prize of the Metaphysical Society should submit full papers along with their abstracts. Eligibility for the Plato Prize extends only to persons who received a Ph.D. degree within six years of the conference submission date (i.e., persons who hold a Ph.D. degree which was conferred after September 30, 2017). Those wishing to be considered for the Plato Prize should express this wish clearly in the email note that accompanies their submission. Papers submitted for the Plato Prize are subject to a 3,750 word limit; this word limit applies to the body of the text to be read at the meeting, and not to footnotes or other supporting material. The Plato Prize carries a cash award of \$500, inclusion in the program, and assistance with the costs associated with attending the meeting. To be considered for the Plato Prize, full papers and abstracts must be submitted by **September 30, 2023** to: [secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org](mailto:secretary@metaphysicalsociety.org).

Travel Grants: Thanks to the generous support of past presidents of the MSA and a grant from the Hocking-Cabot Fund for Systematic Philosophy, the Metaphysical Society is pleased to be able to offer reimbursements for travel expenses up to \$350 to graduate students whose papers are selected for the conference program (those wishing to receive such reimbursements must provide the Metaphysical Society with all relevant expense-receipts).

Those who submit abstracts, and those who submit full papers plus abstracts for the Aristotle Prize or Plato Prize, will receive notice of the Program Committee's decision on their submission no later than **December 1, 2023**.