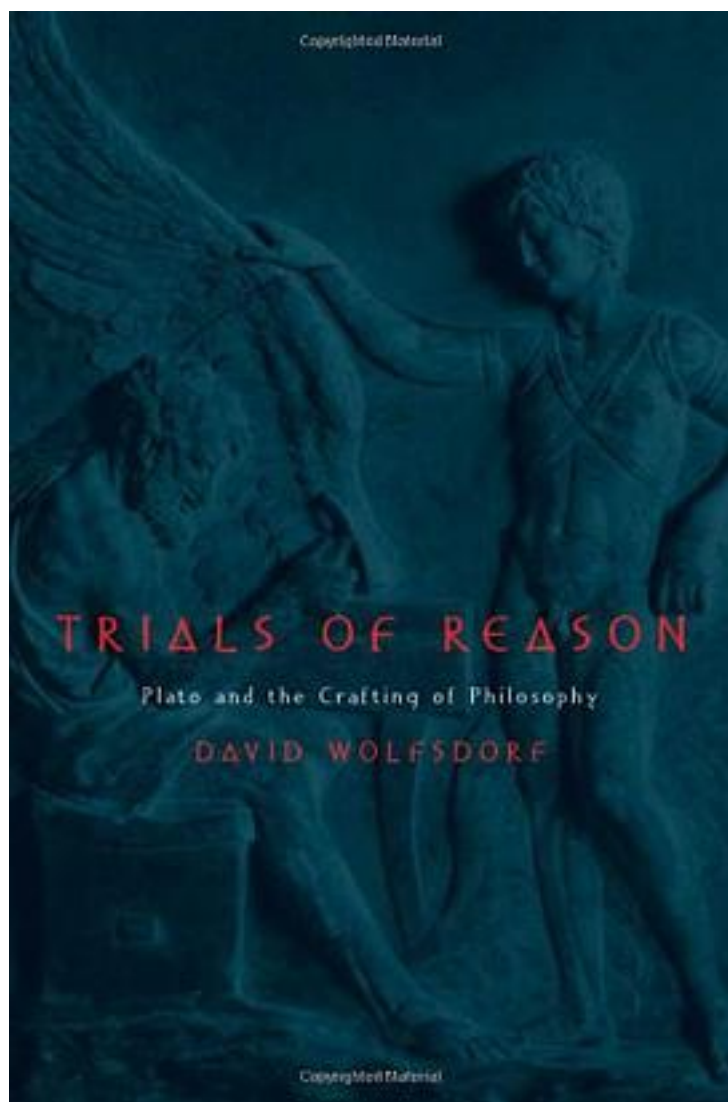# Trials of Reason

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Scholarship on Plato's dialogues persistently divides its focus between the dramatic or literary and the philosophical or argumentative dimensions of the texts. But this hermeneutic division of labor is naïve, for Plato's arguments are embedded in dramatic dialogues and developed through complex, largely informal exchanges between literary characters. Consequently, it is questionable how readers can even attribute arguments and theses to the author himself. The answer to this question lies in transcending the scholarly divide and integrating the literary and philosophical dimensions of the texts. This is the task of Trials of Reason. The study focuses on a set of fourteen so-called early dialogues, beginning with a methodological framework that explains how to integrate the argumentation and the drama in these texts. Unlike most canonical philosophical works, the early dialogues do not merely express the results of the practice of philosophy. Rather, they dramatize philosophy as a kind of motivation, the desire for knowledge of goodness. They dramatize philosophy as a discursive practice, motivated by this desire and ideally governed by reason. And they dramatize the trials to which desire and reason are subject, that is, the difficulties of realizing philosophy as a form of motivation, a practice, and an epistemic achievement. In short, Trials of Reason argues that Plato's early dialogues are as much works of meta-philosophy as philosophy itself.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Trials of Reason_下载链接1_](#)

标签

评论

[Trials of Reason_下载链接1_](#)

书评

[Trials of Reason_下载链接1_](#)