

reached between the readability of the text and the physical dimensions of the volume. Despite its nearly thousand pages the book is reasonably easy to handle.

As a whole, *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* gives a comprehensive and well balanced view of what is currently known about the historian, stressing the latest developments in Thucydidean scholarship. At the same time, it offers a wide range of methodological *exempla* applicable to the study of any genre of ancient literature. As such, it will be indispensable for those who want to acquaint themselves with Greek historiography, and useful reading for anyone interested in the study of classical literature in general.

Ilkka Valve

DARIEN SHANSKE: *Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History*. Cambridge University Press, New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-86411-4. IX, 268 pp. GBP 55, USD 73.

Darien Shanske, currently associate professor of law at UC Hastings College of the Law, University of California, has written a philosophical treatise on Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The title of this book, *Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History*, suggests that history as a literary genre is somehow inaugurated by Thucydides' work. Shanske poses anew the fundamental question about Thucydides: How does his text function as a literary piece of work?

According to Shanske, Thucydides disclosed, or rather founded, a "world", not a physical one but "a boundless sphere of significant engagement" (p. 9). The purpose of his book is to reveal how Thucydides does this, i.e., what exactly is the world-disclosing quality of his work. Shanske illustrates his task by referring to Wittgenstein's fly-bottle metaphor. As regards Thucydides' text, it is as if we were inside such a bottle, viewing a world which is complete but at the same time a restricted system. Revealing the world-disclosing power of Thucydides' text is like revealing how we have been caught up in this Wittgensteinian fly-bottle and showing the way out.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, "Thucydides's Vision", deals primarily with the first part of Thucydides' work, from the opening sentence to the passage about the causes of the war (Thuc. 1,23). Thucydides' relation to his literary predecessors as well as his method and goal are preliminarily discussed here. The second chapter deals with Pericles, the most central character in Thucydides' work. After discussing Pericles' speeches, Shanske discusses the strange "temporal loop" Pericles is caught in: the character seems to recur constantly both forward (Cleon, Diodotus etc.) and backward (Themistocles) in time. Thus, using the figure of Pericles, the author introduces the concept of temporality which proves to be crucial for his interpretation of the work. In the third chapter, this concept is preliminarily discussed in the context of Attic tragedy, specifically as a characteristic of the concept of *deinon*. *Deinon* is a distinctive feature of Attic tragedy, referring to "self-exceeding disasters that are intimately bound up with logos" (s. 71). Shanske suggests that what is novel about Thucydides is that he employs the tragic *logos* in dealing with contemporary events and that the concept of *deinon* characterizes the tragic logic of his work as well.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, Shanske proceeds to analyze the temporality characteristic of Thucydides' text. He illuminates the nature of Thucydides' work by contrasting it with Plato

and revealing the crucial differences between the two authors. The main point here is that while Plato presupposes another world (the world of ideas), Thucydides engages strictly with the one we are living in. Thucydides' way of revealing reality lies not in an abstract set of ideas but in the tragic temporality of logos. Shanske illuminates this fact further by analyzing a few fragments of Heraclitus and showing how Thucydides' logos functions essentially in the same way. Thus, interpreted with the aid of pre-Socratic texts, notably Heraclitus, Thucydides may serve as a "cure for Platonism."

This brief summary does hardly justice to Shanske's subtle treatment of Thucydides' work, but may have given an idea of what his book is about. It is a convincing philosophical interpretation of Thucydides' narrative, which goes down to the most fundamental questions concerning Greek historiography and calls into question its basic concepts. The philosophical considerations, with references to modern philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, may at times be a bit difficult to follow for a non-philosopher, but for these readers there are four appendices which discuss the most central philosophical issues at greater length. The use of the book is further facilitated by a detailed index at the end of the volume.

The one single critical remark I would like to make concerns the quotations from the original sources. These are only given in English, translated by the author himself, and he tries to translate as "literally" as possible in order not to obscure the original text. As a result, the language at times becomes a bit odd, and the reader finds himself trying to translate the translation back into Greek in his mind. It would have been helpful to give the Greek original along with the translation. Finally, I can only join in the author's wish, stated at the end of the acknowledgements, that this seminal work "becomes a vehicle for ongoing dialogue."

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JAMES ROBSON: *Aristophanes: An Introduction*. Gerald Duckworth & Co., London 2009. ISBN 978-0-7156-3452-3. XI, 244 pp. 8 ill. GBP 14.99.

In the Preface to *Aristophanes: An Introduction*, James Robson states that this is the book he himself wishes he had read when first encountering Aristophanes (p. IX), and, indeed, reviewing the work made me similarly wish that I had had this book to hand while I was beginning my studies in classical philology, and particularly in classical drama. As the title of the work reveals, this book is aimed for beginners in studies of Aristophanic comedy. The work introduces various sides of Aristophanes' poetry as well as main strands of research on old comedy. In his book, Robson presents the key issues of Aristophanes' style, techniques, what little we know about the poet, as well as the fifth and fourth century BC Athenian context of the plays, placing these within current scholarly discussion. Robson does not, however, seek to give ready answers to the various subjects he presents, but instead he aims to provide diverse views on Aristophanes' plays and different topics of the field of study, while encouraging the reader to "study the plays intelligently for themselves and make up their own minds about the scholarly debates and controversies that still rage about Aristophanic comedy" (p. IX), and further ask and consider their own questions about the poet and his works, but most of all, enjoy the plays as works of drama and poetry.