

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."

*Ilkka Valve*

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.

The book is divided into a preface and ten thematically organised chapters. Robson grounds his discussions on Aristophanes' plays, while taking into account earlier scholarship as well. Some plays receive more attention than others, as the writer himself admits (p. X), but this is a feature that is unavoidable unless one is writing "a concise history" of a specific poet. Robson cites the texts of Aristophanes in English, and, considering the target audience, giving the Greek texts would have been contrary to his purpose. Robson starts his discussion from the very basics by introducing in the first three chapters the literary genre of old comedy, Aristophanes as a drama poet, the theatre and its context in classical Athens, as well as ancient comedy performance, its theatrical space and costumes. In chapters four and five, Aristophanes' style as a humorist and different character types – like grumpy old men and lying, drunken tarts (the Athenian wives!) – are explained. Chapter six focuses on Aristophanes' use of tragic fragments in his texts and his relationship with the genre of tragedy. In chapter seven, Robson discusses in detail a notable feature of Aristophanes' language, namely, obscenities. Chapter eight looks into the choral songs of the plays, taking into account also the metrics. In chapter nine, Robson examines Aristophanes' political stances in the context of contemporary Athens, while the last chapter of the book is devoted to modern reception of Aristophanes' dramas, both as translations and performances. A short but useful bibliography and detailed indices supplement the work.

I found this book to be an excellent introduction to Aristophanes' poetry. Robson has a rare talent of writing both clearly enough to fulfil his aim of providing an introductory work on the poetry of one of the most complex writers of ancient Greek drama, yet without underestimating his readers' intelligence as possible future scholars of literature and/or philology. While for a more advanced reader of Greek drama it may seem axiomatic or even futile to explain all the key terms and contexts, it is precisely this treatment that makes this a book suitable for university courses not only of classical philology, but of comparative literature as well. Particularly worthy of praise is Robson's style of writing – rarely, if ever, have I found myself laughing heartily while reading a serious academic text (see, for example, pp. 65–6 *'Unnecessary' and 'stupid' questions and answers*). In this aspect as well, Robson has a rare ability to write with witty eloquence and wry humour (sometimes almost worthy of the ancient poet himself!), and yet maintain the high scholarly standard of his study. Actually, the only "faults" I traced in this book, were the misspelling of the title of chapter seven in the *Contents* page (*Taking Dirty* instead of *Talking Dirty*); but more importantly, in most of the cases, Robson does not explicitly name the authors of translations of Aristophanes' works. As I assume them to be his own, it certainly would have been a fact worth mentioning; for they are quite hilarious in their own right (see, e.g., p. 73, *Knights* 1375–81).

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CARL A. HUFFMAN: *Archytas of Tarentum. Pythagorean, Philosopher and Mathematician King*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2005. XV, 665 pp. ISBN 0-521-83746-4. GBP 95, USD 175.

Carl Huffman, l'autore di una monumentale opera su Filolao di Crotone (CUP 1993), questa volta ci ha regalato un ricchissimo volume su Archita di Taranto (435/410 – 360/350 a.C.), in