

In short, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* is a valuable addition to the scholarly discussion on Aristophanes. Biles's argumentation is well researched and thought-provoking, and in general the book is highly recommended for any reader interested in Aristophanes and ancient comedy.

Kalle Knaapi

BABETTE PÜTZ: *The Symposium and Komos in Aristophanes*. Second edition. Aris & Phillips / Oxbow Books, Oxford 2007. ISBN 978-0-85668-772-3. XII, 243 pp. GBP 24.

Nella versione aggiornata della prima edizione del 2003 (pubblicata da Metzler, Stoccarda, nella serie "Drama. Beiträge zum antiken Drama und seiner Rezeption", vol. 22), Pütz studia le scene di simposio e il *komos* non solo nei drammi di Aristofane, ma anche in molti frammenti comici, per illustrare il processo di formazione della trama e la caratterizzazione delle figure introdotte nelle commedie (a beneficio del lettore, sono adesso o tradotti o parafrasati tutti i passi greci). Parallelamente, vengono discussi numerosi dati e dettagli concreti tratti dalle commedie per meglio capire alcuni aspetti pratici del simposio greco, dal quale erano di regola escluse le donne libere (cfr., da ultimo, S. Corner, "Did 'Respectable' Women Attend Symposia?", *G&R* 59 [2012] 34 sgg.). L'autrice fa osservare (cap. 1) che i momenti in cui si svolgono le scene di banchetto aristofanee sono di solito relativi ad almeno una delle seguenti circostanze: la pace (*Acarnesi*, *Lisistrata*, *Pace*), il successo (personale o di un gruppo; *Ecclesiastuse*, *Pluto*, *Rane*, *Uccelli*), l'invecchiamento e il maturare dell'uomo (*Nuvole*, *Vespe*). Nel secondo capitolo vengono analizzati i *komoi* in Aristofane, che spesso erano celebrativi e quindi tipicamente posti alla fine del dramma (in seguito ad una vittoria, un matrimonio, o sim.), ma potevano anche essere di carattere religioso (fallici) o del tutto violenti (come quelli in *Vespe* 1299 sgg. o in *Lisistrata* 370 sgg., 1216 sgg.).

Le varie manifestazioni della cultura simpotica con gli annessi *komoi* erano generalmente associate a concetti positivi quali la fortuna, la pace, la ricchezza, la vittoria e il senso di comunità (cap. 3). Tutti questi aspetti si riflettono, in un modo o un altro, in quelli che costituivano gli elementi concreti e indispensabili di un simposio tradizionale, cioè, il vino, il gioco di *kottabos*, gli enigmi e l'uso di profumi. Queste categorie sono presentate in quattro appendici (pp. 156–224) ricche di informazioni di grande interesse dal punto di vista della storia sociale e culturale. In confronto a tale abbondanza di lettura affascinante, a stento si capisce il motivo per cui gli indici alla fine del bel volume siano stati ridotti a poche pagine, in cui vengono ricordati solo i frammenti comici.

Mika Kajava

GERALD A. PRESS: *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum, London 2007. ISBN 978-0-8264-9176-3. VIII, 240 pp. GBP 12.99.

Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed by Gerald Press belongs to the series of *Guides for the Perplexed* on western philosophers published by Continuum. The book contains four parts, the

first of which is a background chapter on Plato's life and work in addition to short introductions to historical contexts. It is, for example, useful to discuss the function of Plato's writings in his own time as they were probably circulated in the Academy and were not published under his name (pp. 16–20). The second part, "Sources of Perplexity: Change", deals with the literary aspects of Plato's writings, namely dialogue form, argumentation in dialogues, fables, myths, stories, irony, play, seriousness and paradox. The third part, "Plato's Philosophy: Permanence", poses questions about Platonic anonymity, the nature of Plato's philosophy and the Platonic path to wisdom. The fourth part, "Help in Reading and Understanding Plato's Dialogues and Philosophy", offers an explicit guide containing recommendations and notices, with a summary of each dialogue. In addition, the book provides readers with an extensive glossary of Greek terms and a number of suggestions for further reading after each chapter.

What makes Press's guidebook special is not only the high level of awareness of the problematic nature of different approaches to the dialogues, but also his respectful attitude towards the reader attempting to deal with such problems. This attitude is apparent from the structure of the guidebook arranged into short introductory sections on problematic issues followed by discussions of the various approaches. Press refuses to make things easy for the beginner, but he helps the reader navigate through the difficulties.

The book is guided throughout by three principles: contextualism, holism and organicism. Press successfully highlights the importance of the political situation of Athens and the contemporary sophistic movement, which not only constitute the historical background for Plato's writings, but are also reflected in the characters and dramatic settings of the dialogues. Another interesting contextualisation relates old myths to what Plato writes in some of his dialogues; in *Phaedon*, for example, the myth of Theseus saving fourteen youths may be compared to Socrates talking about the immortality of the soul to fourteen named listeners.

The other two principles, holism and organicism, are less successfully applied. Instead of deepening the argumentation, their use remains fragmentary and repetitive. This concerns the question of Plato's philosophy being written in dialogues. Press tries to overcome the division between arguments as philosophical content and dialogic form as a literary device, though not totally successfully. This assumed division appears explicitly in the titles and content of the second and third parts and also at the end where Press adumbrates the different reading modes: the "logical" reading and the "literary and dramatic" reading and, as a solution to the division he offers lastly, the "integrative" reading which would be to "look for connections, relationship, or resonances between the logical and literary-dramatic aspects" (p. 192). The reading that Press gives of *Meno* does not enlighten the integrative reading mode with which he tries to overcome the true perplexity created by the relation between content and form. In the end, both the novice reader and the scholar might be convinced that Press thinks drama-dialogic "form" to be an "imaginative" and "emotional engagement" that supports philosophical argumentation.

Did Press think that taking the question of dialogic form far enough was too difficult in a guidebook? Or, did he believe that arguing that dialogues are open-ended discussions where "no final conclusion is drawn about the subject discussed" (p. 87) provokes enough thoughts and questions in the reader's mind so that (s)he is moved to ask the next question, namely, "What is the concept of knowledge and philosophy when it is transmitted as open-ended dialogues?" Press writes that for Plato "philosophia is not a set of doctrines but an activity" (p. 150), and importantly from the perspective of modern philosophy, he continues that the "propositional conception of knowledge is linked to a doctrinal conception of philosophy" (p.

159). The idea of philosophy being an activity and the problem of propositional knowledge are the main themes in Wolfgang Wieland's *Platon und die Formen des Wissens* (1982), which, surprisingly, is not referred to. Also in the chapter on "Platonism and Platonic interpretation", the author dismisses the importance of Plato's revival in German philosophy in the early 19th century, represented by Schleiermacher and his contemporaries, who explicitly asserted in the introduction to his translations of Plato that dialogic form should not be separated from philosophical content. The dismissal of an important Platonic scholarly tradition where the question of the dialogue is taken to its very end seems unintentional, because Press does not consider dialogue to be the key issue in Plato's philosophy. In fact, with regard to Plato's philosophy, Press is offering old solutions with new terminology: he does not want to talk about doctrines but is more concerned with Plato's vision, which means that the traditional theory of ideas is replaced by the concept of "Plato's two level vision".

However, the doctrinal conception of philosophy is not overturned by stating that instead of dividing reality into two realms, ideas and sensory world, Plato "envisions the world existing simultaneously at two levels" and "the ideal is there to be seen with the eyes of the soul through the real" (p. 163). In fact, this statement sounds very unPlatonic if we recall the famous cave allegory in the *Republic*, where one could state exactly the opposite, namely that the real is to be seen through the ideal. Plato was not interested in the ideal as such but in reality. He was interested, for example, in education which is impossible without the idea of the ideal, and in which the relation between the ideal and the real is always under consideration. This raises the question of the nature and function of the ideal in Plato's philosophy.

A good guidebook can remind us that Plato is trying to make us pose apt questions which show things in a different light. A better guidebook also applies this principle to reading Plato by including such questions in the book so as to make Plato topical even today. This indivisibility of theoretical and practical knowledge is the real challenge of Plato's philosophy, and this interconnection can only be transmitted by writing in a sufficiently applied way.

Salla Raunio

DAVID M. LEIBOWITZ: *The Ironic Defense of Socrates. Plato's Apology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-19479-2. IX, 194 pp. GBP 50, USD 80.

Leibowitz's interpretation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* pays special attention to Socrates' irony. Playful, humorous and ironical writing is naturally something that no reader of Plato can overlook. In addition, there is the question of specifically Socratic irony as a philosophical stance. Leibowitz discusses and criticises many earlier interpretations of irony in the *Apology*. For him the meaning of irony comes close to the pre-Aristotelian meaning of the Greek word *eirōneia*, namely "concealing by feigning" (see, e.g., Aristophanes, *Wasps* 174). Discussing the relation between the historical speech of Socrates and Plato's *Apology* Leibowitz argues that the dialogue contains clear hints that Plato had a desire to conceal some features of Socrates as a philosopher (p. 6).

Leibowitz's conception of irony is due to his openly Straussian framework. The numerous references to Strauss and his students enable an informed reader to contextualise the approach and the concept of irony. The Straussian approach might be called a branch of esoteri-