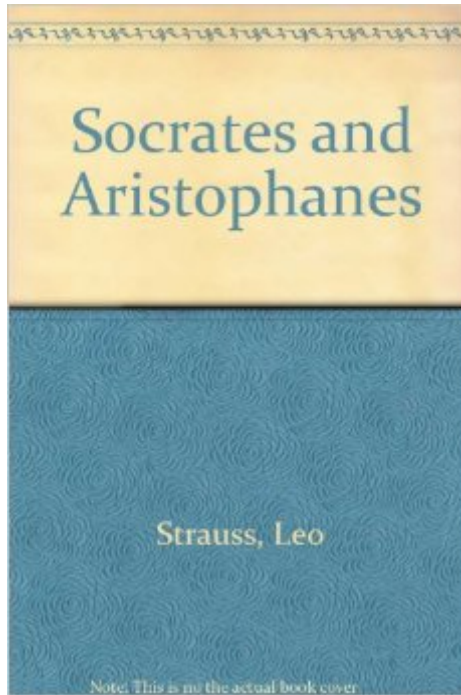


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Socrates And Aristophanes



Synopsis

In one of his last books, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, Leo Strauss's examines the confrontation between Socrates and Aristophanes in Aristophanes' comedies. Looking at eleven plays, Strauss shows that this confrontation is essentially one between poetry and philosophy, and that poetry emerges as an autonomous wisdom capable of rivaling philosophy. "Strauss gives us an impressive addition to his life's workâthe recovery of the Great Tradition in political philosophy. The problem the book proposes centers formally upon Socrates. As is typical of Strauss, he raises profound issues with great courage. . . . [He addresses] a problem that has been inherent in Western life ever since [Socrates'] execution: the tension between reason and religion. . . . Thus, we come to Aristophanes, the great comic poet, and his attack on Socrates in the play *The Clouds*. . . [Strauss] translates it into the basic problem of the relation between poetry and philosophy, and resolves this by an analysis of the function of comedy in the life of the city." âStanley Parry, *National Review*

--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

In this book Leo Strauss takes Aristophanes depiction of Socrates as a serious political attack. No longer is Aristophane's attack rationalized away as a mistake as it is usually done by many authors (e.g. that he mistook Socrates as a Sophist) or that Socrates was an easy target for ridicule because of his 'ugly' looks. Strauss, writes that Aristophanes personally knew Socrates (unlike for example Aristotle), and as seen in the Platonic dialogue 'The Symposium' he was also a good friend of Socrates. Thus, Aristophanes attack on Socrates is not done out of hate, rather it was done in friendship. The same kind of friendship that we also see in Plato's Republic, where Socrates attacks

Thrasymachus while at the same time becoming his friend. What Aristophanes depicts in his play 'The Clouds' is a "young" Socrates, one who does not know yet the wisdom of respecting a city's Gods. The Socrates that we all know and like, emerges much later and it is the Platonic Socrates, not the Socrates that Aristophanes knew. The Aristophenian Socrates had yet to learn his 'lessons'. Strauss is not biased against the profane language found in Aristophanes plays and does not view Aristophanes any less of a wise man for it. Indeed, Strauss seems to share some of the same convictions in regards to Aristophanes as Friedrich Nietzsche.

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