

BOOK REVIEW

How to Do Things with History: New Approaches to Ancient Greece. Edited by DANIELLE ALLEN, PAUL CHRISTESEN AND PAUL MILLETT. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xvi + 406. Hardback, \$85.00. ISBN 978-0-19-064989-0.

This is a deeply interesting edited volume that covers a wide range of perspectives and periods of history. “Contrary to the common view that the past is dead, (...) the object of an ancient historian’s inquiry is a living thing” (1): this sentence clearly sets out the methodology pursued by the editors. They view history as an interpretation of facts, not merely an exposition of them, thus capturing the dynamic rather than fixed nature of the past. As stated by the editors in the Introduction (3), *How to Do Things with History* is inspired by the methodology and the works of Paul Cartledge. After an explanatory introduction, which sheds light on the book’s methodological choices, the volume is divided into three parts. Part 1 contains five chapters, while Parts 2 and 3 contain four each.

Part 1 addresses the relationship between theory and practice in the study of history, and it opens with a chapter by Raaflaub. Titled “The ‘Great Leap’ in Early Greek Political Thought: A Comparative Perspective,” this chapter compares Greek and Near Eastern political thought. It focuses in particular on certain aspects of Greek political life, such as the process by which Greek communities would create their own laws through discussion and debate amongst the citizens. Raaflaub “emphasize(s) Greek particularism,” and comes to the conclusion that “nobody in the whole world of Iron Age antiquity except the Greeks entrusted the responsibility for enacting normative communal laws to a collective of citizens that met in a public assembly and determined in an open debate what the law of the town was to be” (45-46).

Chapter 2, titled “Pericles’ Utopia,” is written by E. Greenwood. Greenwood openly admits the difficulty of studying the concept of utopia in ancient Greek thought, since it was notoriously invented by Thomas More in 1516. Nevertheless, with some caveats, Greenwood applies the category of utopia to Pericles’ Athenian society. Greenwood sees Pericles’ utopia as a way to expand our

understanding of utopianism in ancient Greek political thought. Chapter 3, "How to Turn History into Scenario," is written by M. Lane. This chapter addresses Book 8 of Plato's *Republic* and its role of political office in constitutional change. Lane explains the complexities of Book 8 regarding the role of the office in Plato, which ties together different needs of the *politeia*.

C. Attack authored Chapter 4 ("Cyrus Appeared both Great and Good"), which tackles the subject of Xenophon and the performativity of Kingship. Attack maintains that, despite the *communis opinio* on Xenophon, his thought on kingship was "more complicated and subtle than many readers have thought" (131). Chapter 5, "Jurors and Serial Killers," is written by Blanchard and discusses the concepts of loneliness, deliberation and community in ancient Athens. Through the proxy of jurors, Blanchard reconstructs the complex series of negotiations that attended the operation of Athenian democracy.

Part 2 explores "Economy and Society: Violence, Gender, Class." Chapter 6, titled "The Sparta Game: Violence, Proportionality, Austerity, Collapse," is co-authored by J. Ober and B. R. Weingast. This innovative and clever essay applies a primitive form of the equilibrium theory (Adam Smith's, according to Ober and Weingast) to Sparta's regime stability. This analysis is based on the use of systemic violence, the public façade of material equality among citizens and the maintenance of austerity by the Spartan population.

The following chapter, "Marx and Antiquity," is written by W. Nippel. Nippel dissects many of Marx's texts to ascertain whether he has a correct view of Antiquity. Nippel comes to the straightforward conclusion that Marx never considered Antiquity a proper subject to be studied in its own right. This is despite the abundant scholarship that attempts to assess exactly the opposite, which Nippel seems to disregard. Nippel's only concession is that Marx understood capitalist economy "as being fundamentally distinct from all previous forms because it employed a labor force on formally free contract"; aside from that, Nippel states that all Marx's hints at ancient societies are not a systematic study of Antiquity.

Chapter 8 looks at "Marxism and Ancient History," and is written by K. Vlassopoulos. Vlassopoulos explores the conundrums faced by Marxist history-writings over the last thirty years in parallel to those faced in ancient history. Vlassopoulos notes that the fortunes of a Marxist approach to history are more dependent on the contemporary economic and social evolutions of its society, rather than on its own intrinsic strength and value. Vlassopoulos then goes on to enumerate the objective advantages of using a Marxist approach to the study of ancient history, like self-reflexivity (its challenge to the idea of objective, theory-

free history), the approach “from below” (the social and economic history of subaltern classes) and a holistic approach to History (linking together society, economy, culture and politics).

Chapter 9, “Building for the State,” is written by W. Scheidel. The key to analysing historic development is the use of global, comparative history. Starting from a concrete problem (a state needs to build something: how does it obtain the resources to do so?), Scheidel compares the solutions that determined how historical societies developed in the different continents. In doing so, Scheidel claims to find similar responses to practical needs among societies that share the same degree of democratic development.

Part 3 looks at “Source Pluralism.” Chapter 10, on “Picturing History,” is written by J. Tanner. It examines two series of images, both of which represent “tyrannicides,” that had an exemplary status in Classical Athens (480-323 BCE) and Han China (206 BCE-220 CE). The Greek image is the famous group of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, while the Chinese image is a carved frieze from an Eastern Han tomb of the second century CE, depicting the attempt of Jink Ke to assassinate the king of Qin, Qin Shihuangdi. Both images have a foundational status in the political and artistic culture of their own societies.

Chapter 11, on “Imaginary Intercourse,” written by R. Osborne, deals with the subject of Greek pederasty, analysing the depicted attestation of such practise. Chapter 12, on “The Boys from Cydathenaeum: Aristophanes versus Cleon again,” features E. Hall reconsidering Cleon and his representation in Aristophanes’ *Knights*. The impossibility of knowing the real Cleon is explained through an analysis of the play and of its later interpretations.

The final substantive chapter, “How to write Anti-Roman History,” is authored by T. Whitmarsh. He addresses a difficult topic: the existence of an anti-Roman historiography in the Roman Empire. Evidence for such a thing is scarce, and it is complicated to reconstruct the possible features of it. Through a careful analysis of the surviving evidence, Whitmarsh demonstrates that some traces of this anti-Roman historiography can appear in otherwise Rome-friendly accounts.

A short afterword by P. Cartledge ends the volume, thanking all the contributors and summarizing their methodology and perspectives. *How to Do Things with History* is a very interesting and well-designed book, featuring a multiplicity of approaches and methodologies. It provides many insights to all students of ancient history.

