

Tell Prodicus to Go to Hell! Aristophanes and Myth Rationalization Parody

The large number of extant comedies from Aristophanes allows the opportunity to find mythographic / rationalistic parodies. Scholars have focused on Aristophanes' parodying of different genres in any given comedy or scene. Some have commented on comic myth rationalization in the *Birds* and Aristophanes' parody of the 5th c. BCE sophist Prodicus. In the *parabasis* of the birds the Chorus tells a ludicrous cosmology and theogony setting the race of birds as older than the gods and as the original kings and benefactors of mankind. Besides Prodicus, this scene parodies myth rationalistic methods employed by early Greek historiographers like Hecataeus, Herodorus, and Hellanicus. Hecataeus wrote that the Greek myths were laughable and Aristophanes takes no exception. He parodies these 5th c. rationalistic approaches in three other comedies - *Peace* (parodying Ion of Chios), *Acharnians* (Herodotus), and *Clouds* (Prodicus). The following talk will analyze these parodies in Aristophanes. This approach was used by other ancient Greek comic poets and I will briefly discuss this tendency.

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