

NOTICES

MIKALSON (J.D.) *The Essential Isocrates*. Pp. xxii + 234. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2022. Cased, US\$45. ISBN: 978-1-4773-2552-0.

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M., a specialist in Greek religion, explains the choice of subject in the preface. After turning to Isocrates in order to explore the interaction of religion with moral, ethical, political ideas etc. in his works, he found out 'so much more of interest that was not readily accessible even to most classicists because of the nature and volume of Isocrates' writings and the current state of scholarship on him' (p. xix) (this latter part of the statement is rather curious, considering the revival of interest in Isocrates in the last 20 years, which has seen the production of a new critical edition and commentaries on several of his *logoi*, not to mention important books published in the last century in different languages, e.g. E. Mikkola [1954], G. Mathieu [1966], C. Eucken [1983]). Hence the idea of presenting Isocrates and his thought in his own words (p. 4) through an anthology of his texts translated into English by M. The book opens with preliminary information: a complete list of Isocrates' extant writings (pp. ix–x), terms requiring definition (pp. xi–xii), a selected list of persons 'not generally known but featured in Isocrates' writings' (pp. xiii–xiv, including one major Athenian institution, the Areopagus) and a useful chronology of the events mentioned by the orator (pp. xv–xvii). The introduction explains the nature and organisation of the book and includes some comments on recurrent themes: Isocrates as a teacher and as a philosopher, the idea of good reputation, Athenian politics and foreign affairs, and Greek foreign affairs. A final section, 'On how to read Isocrates', provides information about the nature, target and audience of Isocrates' works (rightly stressing the strong autobiographical character of many of them), including at the end a statement in support of the authenticity of the *Ad Demonicum*, which is generally rejected by contemporary scholars. Chapter 1 contains a new English translation of Ps.-Plutarch's *Life of Isocrates*, preceded by a brief account of the biographical tradition on the orator (the important so-called 'Anonymous Life' from late antiquity should be added to the list; Photius, *Bibliotheca* 260 is virtually dependent on Ps.-Plutarch). The other thematic chapters are made up of quotations or summaries from Isocrates' texts: (2) 'On Himself', (3) 'On Morality and Religion' (a starting point for exploring Isocrates from a different angle), (4) 'On Philosophy, Education, Rhetoric, and Poetry', (5) 'On Political Theory', (6) 'On Athenian and Greek History' (a useful basis for developing an insight into Isocrates' use of history; at the end it also touches on the wide reception of Isocrates across centuries). The closing pages include some notes (in n. 13 on p. 208 the information concerning Theopompus and Ephorus is misplaced and should be inverted), a select bibliography, a list of further reading, a general index and an index of Isocratean passages. On the whole, the book is an effective introduction to Isocrates especially for readers, students and scholars who are not familiar with ancient Greek and bibliography written in languages other than English.

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