

Abstract: Archaic Greek thought on language conceives the 'word/object' relation as responding to a sort of one-to-one principle of correspondence, which presupposes an ontological link between a name and denoted object. In this phase asymmetry (*i.e.* polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, etc.) is conceived as an exception to the regular correspondence between language and reality and is often justified by means of paretymology. The pre-Socratic reflection on language gradually leads to a new conception of the 'word/object' relation as a merely conventional one and of asymmetry as part of the convention itself.

The present article analyses some passages from Aristophanes' comedies in an attempt to shed light on how he took part in the new pre-Socratic conception of language. *Ec.* 256 f. is compared with *fr.* 68 B 26 DK by Democritus; *Ec.* 547-50 could be a case of *denotatio in absentia*; polysemy in *Av.* 1286-9 is similar to that of *fr.* 79 Kahn by Heraclitus; *Ran.* 683-684 is comparable with *fr.* 116 Kahn; ll. 1226-72 of the so-called 'battle of prologues' in *Ranae* could reveal some details on the analysis of synonyms from Prodicus.

The second aim of the present contribution is to demonstrate that the several common points between the Aristophanic passages considered here and their philosophical models reveal processes of circulation of written texts. This consideration leads to a detailed re-examination of all the traces of the circulation of theatrical texts amongst a chosen circle of intellectuals. In fact, several noteworthy pieces of evidence prove that at the end of the fifth century the circulation of βιβλία in Athens was increasing, which could also better explain the allusion to βιβλίον in Aristoph. *Ran.* 1114.

Keywords: Aristophanes, Pre-Socratics, Ancient Greek comedy and ancient Greek books, Ancient Greek linguistics, Aristoph. *Ran.* 1109-14,