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A Dual Language Edition  
translated by Ian Johnston

ἈΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ARISTOPHANES'

Νεφέλαι *Clouds*

A Dual Language Edition

*Greek Text Edited (1907) by*  
F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart

*English Translation and Notes by*  
Ian Johnston

*Edited by*  
Evan Hayes and Stephen Nimis

FAENUM PUBLISHING  
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*Aristophanes Clouds: A Dual Language Edition*  
First Edition

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for Geoffrey (1974-1997)

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.  
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη  
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὄρη:  
ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Generations of men are like the leaves.

In winter, winds blow them down to earth,

but then, when spring season comes again,

the budding wood grows more. And so with men:

one generation grows, another dies away. (*Iliad* 6)

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## EDITORS' NOTE

This book presents the Greek text of Aristophanes' *Clouds* with a facing English translation. The Greek text is that of F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart (1907), from the Oxford Classical Texts series, which is in the public domain and available as a pdf. This text has also been digitized by the Perseus Project ([perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)). The English translation and accompanying notes are those of Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC. This translation is available freely online ([records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/](http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/)). We have reset both texts, making a number of very minor corrections, and placed them on opposing pages. The English translation has a line-formatting and numbering system that is different from the Greek text. To avoid confusion, we have eliminated those line numbers and indicated only the equivalent Greek line numbers in brackets in the English translation. The English translation sometimes assigns choral passages to different members of the chorus, which we indicate by introducing dashes into the Greek text. Otherwise we have followed the formatting of the OCT, regardless of the translation formatting. We hope these choices will make it easier to go back and forth between English and Greek.

## ON SATIRE IN ARISTOPHANES' *CLOUDS*

*by Ian Johnston*

*The following is the text of a lecture by Ian Johnston, delivered in part in the main lecture for Liberal Studies 111 at Malaspina College (now Vancouver Island University) in November 1998. References to the text are to the Arrowsmith translation in *Four Plays by Aristophanes*, Penguin, 1962.*

### *Introduction*

Today I want to begin by considering a curious topic: What is laughter and why do we like to experience laughter, both in ourselves and others? This will, I hope, serve as something of an entry point into a consideration of the social importance and uses of laughter in cultural experience. And this point, in turn, will assist in an introduction to the importance of humour and laughter in an important form of literature, namely, satire. All of this, I trust, will help to illuminate what is going on in the Aristophanic comedy we are studying this week, *The Clouds*.

To cover all these points is a tall order, and as usual I'm going to be skating on thin ice at times, but unless we have some sense of the social importance of humour and group laughter, then we may fail fully to understand just what Aristophanic satire is and what it sets out to do.

### *Laughter as a Shared Social Experience*

Why do people laugh? And what is laughter? I don't propose to answer this very complex psychological problem, but I would like to make some observations about laughter and humour which may help to clarify the issues usefully.

When you think about it, laughter is a curious phenomenon. People momentarily lose their poise, screw their faces up into funny expressions, often rock their bodies back and forth, and emit strange animal like noises which in almost any other circumstance would be considered socially quite unacceptable--snorting, wheezing, and so on. This odd behaviour is usually accompanied by feelings of emotional satisfaction so strong that the first impulse after a good laugh is to see if one can experience it again.

Also, the best laughter appears to be a group phenomenon. That is, we laugh best when we are with others and when they are engaging in the same

sort of behaviour. That which occasions laughter, the joke, is above all a social phenomenon. It requires a teller and an audience. We don't tell jokes to ourselves, or if we do, they may prompt a modest chuckle. But when we get to the pub, we tell the same joke to a group and laugh uproariously along with all the others. When we hear a good joke, we normally don't immediately want to run away and ponder it alone in the woods; we think about what fun we're going to have telling it to a group of people who don't know it and thus repeat the experience we have just been through. For it's a curious fact that, even if we know the joke, we can derive considerable pleasure and laughter from hearing it or telling it again in the right context. In other words, the group response is, I would suggest, one key to understanding why laughter matters.

That's why a laugh track is an important part of TV comedy. After all, watching television is not really a group experience, so if we are to enjoy the laughter a group has to be manufactured for us, so that we have the impression of participating in a group experience. In a tense TV drama, we don't have a "gasp" track or anything that might put us in imaginary touch with a group undergoing the same experience. That's not necessary, because in such situations we are very alone in some ways. But anything that we are supposed to laugh at is just not as funny if we are very conscious that there's no one else participating with us. As the old saying has it, "Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone."

Now, this on the face of it is odd. Human beings seem to derive great pleasure in sitting around listening to stories or seeing behaviour which then reduces them to a state in which they momentarily lose control of themselves and revert to strange animal-like behaviour, totally unbecoming to anyone who has any concern for self-control or a normal reasonably dignified appearance.

And this I think offers an important insight into the nature of laughter. When we laugh we are acknowledging that a good deal of what we do in life is rather silly, that human life is full of aspirations to be something better than we really are. A joke, and our shared response to a joke, deflates the dignity and self-control and self-imposed value that human beings place on themselves. When we laugh we are, in a sense, acknowledging that by our temporary loss of self-control and dignity.

For example, to take the simplest and commonest form of a joke. We spend a lot of time trying to walk upright in a graceful and well coordinated manner, and an important part of our self-identity is that we, well, are worth looking at: cool, dignified, and coordinated. Yet, nothing is funnier to us than to see someone take a well-staged pratfall, to slip on the banana peel, to lose the equilibrium we try so hard to maintain, which is such an important part of our individual dignity. Similarly, when someone is trying to reach up

to the stars and his pants fall down (often as a reaction to the effort of reaching upward), we see that as funny, because it's a sudden and unexpected reminder of the ambivalence of being a human being, a creature who aspires to great things in search of nobility but who has to cover his rather silly looking backside. The temporary and unexpected loss of control over ourselves registers as a shared agreeable experience.

### *A Sense of Humour*

We talk about people having a sense of humour. What we mean, I think, by this phrase is the ability to perceive a certain discrepancy between the normal behaviour and the unexpected deflation of it. When a joke presents itself in language, responding to it with a sense of humour depends upon being able to see the ways in which language may be manipulated in unexpected ways to produce a curious effect, contrary to what we might have expected.

The most obvious example of this is the pun, which depends upon the audience's ability to recognize the way in which a particular word can be unexpectedly manipulated to produce an effect contrary to our expectations. Some people have great difficulty appreciating puns--they don't see the humour of treating language that way, either because they don't see the multi-layered meanings of words or because they see them but they don't think it's very funny to treat language that way or because they find the pun just too common and obvious a form of comic surprise.

Possessing a sense of humour is a complex business. It's not just a matter of rational understanding. We all know how lame it is to have a joke explained. The source of the humour may be exposed, but the joke is not funny any more. In other words, if the punch line doesn't have a punch, a sudden and instantaneous effect, then the joke doesn't do its work properly.

Another point here, of course, is that a sense of humour is something often unique to a particular cultural group. That's clear enough, given that humour has to draw upon the shared experiences of the group in order to contradict them or surprise them. Listening to Bill Cosby's story about Noah makes little sense to anyone who is quite unfamiliar with the story, who has never wondered exactly what a "cubit" is, or who has no knowledge of what modern suburban living really is. That's one reason perhaps why one can learn the language of a country very well and yet still find much of its humour incomprehensible or unfunny (e.g., American Jewish humour, Chicano humour, and so on).

*The Joke: Some Thoughts About Structure*

The things that make us laugh, I would suggest, are often of this nature. They are out of the blue reminders that, for all our pretensions to greatness, nobility, value and what not, we are curious animals, whose body parts and behaviour can often reveal that we are quite ridiculous, no matter how hard we try to avoid that truth. When we laugh together, we are sharing an insight into our common human nature.

Hence, the common observation that the most basic joke is one that contradicts our expectations (this is a standard Aristophanic device). In telling a joke, we set up certain expectations, which are then violated or altered in some unexpected way. The humour comes from a shared recognition that we've been had, that our human natures are somehow rather different from what we had imagined. Telling a joke well thus often requires two things: the ability to set up the expectation and then the ability to deliver the punch line which contradicts or deflates that expectation in an unexpected manner.

We all know people who are very poor joke tellers. They have no sense of structure or they blow the punch line too early. And few things are more frustrating to listen to than someone who tells jokes badly. Presenting a joke requires a certain sophistication, either in physical presentation or in the verbal telling, and if it's not done right, then the shared group experience doesn't take place. Setting up the joke is probably the more difficult part of the exercise, a fact which may be the reason why in a comedy twosome, like Abbott and Costello, the straight man, the set up artist, usually gets more pay than the deliverer of the punch line.

The ability to tell jokes well, however, is an enormous social asset, primarily because it's the quickest way to get the group's attention, to consolidate the feeling of a group as a group, and to transform any disunity or irritation into a pleasant, non-threatening, shared social experience. Many people, like myself, learn early in life that telling jokes or transforming potentially threatening situations into jokes is an enormously powerful survival tactic. If you can make someone who is threatening you laugh with you, then you have transformed the situation from one of danger to yourself into one of a shared moment of understanding of your common humanity.

The Greeks themselves had a favorite story about this phenomenon. It featured their most popular folk hero, Hercules. On one of his adventures he captured two nasty brothers, the Cercopes, and was carrying them off to do away with them. As they lay hanging down Hercules's back they started making jokes about his hairy, ugly rump. They were so funny that they got Hercules laughing so that he couldn't stop, and he had to let them go. After

all, it's difficult to feel hostile towards someone who is constantly making you laugh together.

*The Two-Edged Nature of the Joke*

I have tried to stress the social basis for the humour which arises from sharing a joke in order to bring out the first key point of this lecture, that laughter and the presentations of jokes which bring it about, is above all else a social experience which has to be shared in order to be effective. Someone who is incapable of participating in a joke, for whom there is no laughter of the sort I have been describing, is in some important ways cut off from full participation in many of the most important ways in which groups consolidate their identity and learn together.

It's important to stress that not all jokes work in the same ways. There are, for example, at least two common effects of jokes--those which reinforce a group's identity by excluding others and those which educate the group into a new awareness of itself. For instance, a good deal of the most common colloquial humour is what we might call "locker room" laughter, the shared experience which comes from making fun of someone whom the group wishes to exclude. For it's clear that one of the most powerful ways in which a group of people can repel any outsiders or deal with the threat of unwelcome intrusions by outsiders is to make fun of such outsiders, to, in effect, dehumanize them, so that what we are sharing in our laughter is the shared awareness that we are better than such people.

Such "exclusionary" humour is the basis for a good deal of humour which these days we consider unacceptable--racist jokes, sexist jokes, ethnic jokes (The Andrew Dice Clay school of comic performance). While we disapprove of such humour often for the very Platonic reason that it corrupts our understanding of others not immediately like ourselves, we have to recognize that it is amazingly popular, no where more so than on the Internet. If we need any evidence of the importance many people place on using jokes and shared laughter as a means of maintaining a sense of exclusionary solidarity in the face of constant threats of intrusion, we have only to dial up an appropriate "hate" address on the Internet.

But humour can also be educational, that is, it can transform our understanding of the group, and by doing that in a way that we all share it can effect a pleasant, yet very effective transformation of the situation. To listen to Bill Cosby, for example, is to be reminded through laughter, that the life of a black child or parent is, for all our particular racial stereotyping, a shared human experience. In laughing at what we share together, we are unconsciously transforming our understanding of our mutual relationship in a common



group. That why, in a sense, one of the surest ways to educate a group into a new awareness of something is through comedy.

And that's the reason perhaps why often we find stand up comedians in the forefront of those who are pushing hardest at our understanding of ourselves, frequently in very painful ways. When Lenny Bruce used to stand up and chant the word "Nigger" at his audience or make jokes about dope addicts and prostitutes he was, in effect, pushing at the envelope of what that group accepted as normal. For many people, his jokes were offensive, that is, the shock or the punch line was too unexpected to overcome the built-in habits of the group. But for those who found themselves laughing at the humour, the experience was, in a small but important way, a means of reminding them of the limits of their understanding and thus, to a certain extent, an expansion of their knowledge of what the group was and what it might include. When we laugh at Bill Cosby's humour, for example, we are ignoring or forgetting the fact that he is an Afro-American different from white folks and are acknowledging our common human identity.

#### *Satire: A General Definition*

The mention of the name Lenny Bruce brings me to the main point of the first part of this lecture, the particular form of humour which we call satire. We are all more or less familiar with what satire is, since we are exposed to it a good deal, but its precise literary sense may not be quite so clear.

Formally defined, satire is "A composition in verse or prose holding up vice or folly to ridicule or lampooning individuals. . . . The use of ridicule, irony, sarcasm, etc., in speech or writing for the ostensible purpose of exposing and discourage vice or folly."

In other words, satire is a particular use of humour for overtly moral purposes. It seeks to use laughter, not just to remind us of our common often ridiculous humanity, but rather to expose those moral excesses, those corrigible sorts of behaviour which transgress what the writer sees as the limits of acceptable moral behaviour.

Let me put this another way. If we see someone or some group acting in a way we think is morally unacceptable and we wish to correct such behaviour, we have a number of options. We can try to force them to change their ways (through threats of punishment); we can deliver stern moral lectures, seeking to persuade them to change their ways; we can try the Socratic approach of engaging them in a conversation which probes the roots of their beliefs; or, alternatively, we can encourage everyone to see them as ridiculous, to laugh at them, to render them objects of scorn for the group. In doing so we will probably have at least two purposes in mind: first, to effect some changes in

the behaviour of the target (so that he or she reforms) and, second, to encourage others not to behave in such a manner.

In that sense, what sets satire apart from normal comedy (and the two often shade into each other in ways which make an exact border line difficult to draw), is that in satire there is usually a clear and overt didactic intention, a clear moral lesson is the unifying power of the work. Whereas in normal comedy, we are being asked to laugh at ourselves and our common human foibles, in satire the basis of the humour is generally some corrigible unwelcome conduct in a few people or in a particular typical form of human behaviour. Normal comedy, if you will, reminds us of our incorrigible human limitations; satire focus rather on those things which we can correct in order to be better than we are (or, if not better, at least not as bad). This is no doubt a somewhat muddled distinction at this point, but it should become clearer as we proceed.

At the basis of every good traditional satire is a sense of moral outrage or indignation: This conduct is wrong and needs to be exposed. Hence, to adopt a satiric stance requires a sense of what is right, since the target of the satire can only be measured as deficient if one has a sense of what is necessary for a person to be truly moral. And if this satire is to have any effect, if it is to be funny, then that sense of shared moral meaning must exist in the audience as well. Satire, if you like, depends upon a shared sense of community standards, so that what is identified as contrary to it can become the butt of the jokes.

This moral basis for satire helps to explain why a satire, even a very strong one which does nothing more than attack unremittingly some target, can offer a firm vision of what is right. By attacking what is wrong and exposing it to ridicule the satirist is acquainting the reader with a shared positive moral doctrine, whether the satire actually goes into that doctrine in detail or not. Aristophanes in the *Clouds* may be taking a harshly critical view of Socrates (and others, as we shall see), but there may well be an important positive moral purpose behind that.

[I should note here that it is possible to write satire in the absence of any shared sense of moral standards, but the result is a curious form of "black" satire. This genre is particularly common today. Modern satire typically makes everything look equally ridiculous. In such a satiric vision, there is no underlying vision of what right conduct is and the total effect, if one tries to think about it, is very bleak indeed--a sense that we might as well laugh at the ridiculousness of everything because nothing has any meaning. Whether we call this *Monty Python* or *Saturday Night Live* or *This Hour Has Twenty-two Minutes* or whatever, it seems to add up to an attitude that since there's no significant meaning to anything, we might as well laugh at everything. That will enable us to retreat with style from the chaos. Such an attitude is very

much at odds with traditional satire, which tends to work in the service of a moral vision which is being abused by particular people or particular conduct]

*Satire: Some Comments on the Range*

Given that central to what we call traditional satire is some underlying moral vision, so that the “negative” portrayal of the target works in the service of a “positive” vision, it is clear that satire can take on a wide range of tones. That is, the moral indignation at the heart of the satirist can lead him to something really vicious and savage, an unrelenting and unforgiving attack on what he sees as extreme moral corruption in what he is ridiculing, or, alternatively, the indignation of the satirist may temper itself with some affection for the target, so that the satire is much more good natured, less abusive and aggressive, even to the point where we are not sure just how much the comic portrait is really satiric or simply comic (as in, say, a celebrity “roast,” where a group of people attack one of their friends, but do so in an affectionate way, so that the target really has nothing to complain about, even if some of the jokes hit a tender nerve at times).

Satire thus can come in many forms, from savage to gentle, but it remains satire so long as we feel that the writer’s main purpose is making us laugh at conduct which he believes ought to be corrected. Whether we see Aristophanes’s portrayal of Socrates as aggressively vicious or as much more affectionately funny, the satiric purpose remains clear so long as we sense that Aristophanes intends us to see the Thinkery as something we should not place our faith in, as something ridiculous. To the extent that Socrates and the Thinkery become attractive to us (say, because of the energy and humour of the place), the satiric purpose is diminished. More of this later.

*Satire: Some Basic Techniques*

How does a satirist set about ridiculing the vice and folly she wants the audience to recognize as unacceptable? Remember that the challenge to the satirist is to get the moral point across with humour, so that the audience or the reader laughs in the appropriate manner. Put another way, the challenge is to put across serious matters in humorous ways.

Let me restate this point because it is crucial. The central message of satire is often very simple and can be stated quickly. Satire is, for reasons we shall consider in a moment, not a genre which encourages complex explorations of deep psychological issues in the characters. It’s much more like a repetitive insistence on the foolishness of certain kinds of behaviour. So the problem for the satirist is to make his treatment funny, that is, to keep the jokes coming quickly and with sufficient variety so that the audience stays

interested in what is going on. Nothing is staler in art than a satire which runs out of steam or which starts to repeat itself in predictable ways. That’s why the staple form for modern satire is the short skit--set up, punch line, fade out. In a longer satire, like an Aristophanic play or Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* the problem is to keep the reader interested through one’s technique.

Well, there are a number of basic strategies. I list them here in no particular order.

I.

First, the satirist sets up a target--either a person like Socrates or Strepsiades or Pisthetairos or a group like the Thinkery--which will symbolize the conduct he wishes to attack. Satire, in other words, has a clear target. Setting up the target in a way that can generate humour in a variety of ways is an important talent. The Thinkery, for instance, is not just a one-line joke about the nature of Socratic inquiry; in the play it becomes the source for a number of other jokes, verbal and visual, e.g., Socrates hanging in a basket, the pot bellied stove (always emitting strange smoke), the students gazing at the ground with their bums in the air, all sorts of strange quasi-philosophical mumbo jumbo, and so on. On the stage, the Thinkery is a fertile source for humorous variety; the initial message may be simple and repetitive, so to keep the audience interested the theatrical presentation has to be varied and funny. Nothing is duller than a humorless satire.

But in *The Clouds* the target is not just Socrates. Another target is clearly the middle-aged Athenian male, Strepsiades, full of energy and crudity, desperate to sort out the difficulties of his personal life (the problems of belonging to a litigious, imperialistic society from which traditional systems of order have disappeared). And this Groucho Marx like character is put into hopelessly exaggerated situations, where he has to deal with the Thinkery. His reasons for wanting to have anything to do with Socrates and his manner of dealing with his trouble (in all its variety) is the source of most of the satire and identifies for us Aristophanes’s main target--the average Athenian citizen. Clearly, most Athenians are not exactly like Strepsiades, but there’s enough connection between him and the average citizen to make the satiric point clear enough.

2.

Second, the satirist will typically exaggerate and distort the target in certain ways in order to emphasize the characteristics he wishes to attack and, most importantly, to provide recurring sources of humour. Such exaggeration and distortion are key elements in the humour. The target must be close enough to the real thing for us to recognize what is going on, but

sufficiently distorted to be funny, an exaggeration, often a grotesque departure from normality. *The Clouds* still can provide an amusing and provocative evening's entertainment for someone who has never heard of Socrates, but obviously the person who does have some familiarity with that figure is going to derive a great deal more from the play.

The example of a political cartoon is instructive here. When we laugh at the cartoon of, say, Clinton, we are responding to two things: a recognition of the original and of what the satirist has done to distort the original so as to make it ridiculous for a particular purpose. The cartoon may still be very funny for someone who doesn't know Clinton, but some of the immediate edge will clearly be lost.

In that sense, all satire is, of course, unfair, if by that we mean that the depiction of the target is not life-like, not a true copy, not naturalistic. Of course, it's not. There would be no cartoon if all we had was a photograph of Clinton. Making the targets ridiculous means bending them out of shape (as in a distorting mirror), not beyond recognition but certainly far from their normal appearance. The point of the satire often lies in the nature of the distortion. Much of the best satire depends, in other words, on a skillful caricature or cartoon, rather than on any attempt at a life-like rendition of the subject.

So to complain that Socrates in *The Clouds* is nothing like the real Socrates is to miss the point. Aristophanes is setting up his Socrates to symbolize in a ridiculously distorted manner certain ways of behaving which he wishes his audience to recognize as absurd. At the same time, the portrait has to have some recognizable connection to Socrates if the play is to make a connection with the audience. But it's important, too, to recognize that the main satire may not be directed so much at Socrates, ridiculous as he is, but at Strepsiades for his desire to believe in Socrates for his own self-interested purposes.

Such distortion obviously involves setting up a certain distance between the target and the audience. That is, we are not in a satire invited to consider the inner feelings of the targets or to speculate on any complex psychological motives for why they behave the way they do. The satirist focuses his ridicule on external behaviour, not on speculating about possible complex psychological motivation for that behaviour. To do the latter is to bring the audience into the inner workings of the target's heart and mind, and once one has done that, it is difficult to respond to the target satirically. As the old French saying has it, "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner" ["To understand everything is to forgive everything"]. For that reason it's difficult to satirize anyone whose inner psychological troubles are well known. Richard Nixon was easy to satirize until he broke down on national television and bared his truly desperate feelings to the world.

Once the target is delineated in an appropriately distorted way, the satire proceeds by an unrelenting attack. Here the satirist has a variety of weapons, ranging from rude direct insults and a lot of robust physical humour (pratfalls, misunderstandings, mock fights, farting, waving the phallus in the air) to more complex assaults parodying various forms of language and belief. *The Clouds* is justly famous as a very robust satire featuring a wide variety of satiric techniques, some very corny, some rude, some very physical, some sophisticated parody (in language), some pointed personal references to members of the audience, a direct address to the audience, some lyrical interludes, lots of dancing and singing and music, and a wealth of technical detail in the stage design and costumes, and so on, a whole arsenal of techniques designed above all else to keep the attack varied and funny (with no concessions to political correctness). The audience doesn't have time to pause, because something new and unexpected is about to happen at almost every moment.

This emphasis on the variety of an unremitting attack may help to explain the structure of Aristophanic comedy, which at first glance seems to suffer from the lack of any complex plot. In a sense it is a very linear form of drama in which one incident follows hard upon the heels of another, more like a series of skits held together by a common central character, than a carefully crafted story in which a lot of the interest comes from curious twists and turns in the plot.

This form of play, the Aristophanic comedy, is technically called Old Comedy, and it is, as I have observed, marked by a continuing variety in what goes on, more like an old style pantomime than the sorts of situation comedies we are used to (which derive from what we call New Comedy). The story, such as it is, focuses on one person's attempts to cope with the complexities of Athenian life in the face of very odd circumstances marked by all sorts of interruptions. As a vehicle for dramatic variety it is unsurpassed, but it certainly won't answer the needs of those who demand the consistent depiction of a naturalistic slice of life drama with an intricate plot.

A good many of these attacks are going to draw upon the shared cultural milieu of the playwright and the audience (names of particular people and events, excerpts from particularly well known speeches or plays, references to current affairs, and so on). The aim of the satirist is to deliver an unremitting attack on the target which the audience can laugh at, so that the audience's shared response, its laughter, can effectively deal with the behaviour which the satirist wishes to correct.

In this connection, the notion and use of satiric irony is important. This is a technique which, as its name suggests, confronts the audience with the discrepancy between what characters say and do and what we fully understand by their actions. To appreciate satire, that is, we have to have a sense of where

the satirist is coming from, so that we recognize the distortion and the ridiculous behaviour for what it is. If we fail to see the satiric irony at work, then our response may defeat the purposes of the satirist, because we will be tempted to say one of two things: (a) well, life's not like that so I don't see the point (e.g., there is such place as the Thinkery and that portrait of Socrates is just stupid, because he's not like that in real life) or (b) hey, I think that action by the target is just great; maybe we should all be more like that (e.g., Hey that's a great idea. I think I'll enroll my son at the Thinkery).

If we fail to see the function of the satiric irony, in other words, we may dismiss the fiction as mere stupidity, or we may embrace it as something admirable. So the challenge of the satirist is to make the satiric intention clear but not overly obvious, so that the audience derives a certain pleasure from participating in the in-joke, in seeing what the writer is getting at through the humour.

That quality of satire makes it, for all its frequent crudity and knock-about farce, a much more "intellectual" genre than many others. To appreciate satire one has to be able to recognize the continuing existence of different levels of meaning (that is, of irony), and the more sophisticated the satire the more delicate the ironies. Or, put another way, satire requires a certain level of education and sophistication in the audience. People can still respond to the fun of Aristophanes, to the dramatic action and the crude fun, but with no sense for satiric irony, the point of the piece will get rather lost.

## 4.

In assaulting the target in this way, the satirist is going to be pushing hard at the edge of what the audience is prepared to accept. If the satirist wants really to connect with the audience, then the writer is going often to be pushing language at the audience in new ways, taking risks with what they are prepared to accept. After all, if the purpose is to wake people up to the moral realities of their daily situation, then often some fairly strong language and surprising imagery is going to be in order. That, of course, presents the risk of offending the audience's taste. If an audience turns away from the work in disgust, then they are not going to attend to whatever important moral lesson the satirist is striving to call attention to. Hence the more aggressive the satirist, the more delicately the writer has to walk along the line of what is acceptable and what is not. It's no accident that expanding the envelope of what is acceptable on the stage or in prose is often the work of our satirists.

This point is worth stressing, because if a satirist is really touching a nerve in the audience, then a common response is to find ways to neutralize the satire. I have sketched out four of the common methods one can use to do that: (a) take the satire literally and dismiss it as absurd or embrace it as a

good idea (the satiric irony is thus lost and the point of the satire evaporates), (b) reject the satire because it is too rude or crude (it offends my taste); (c) reject the satire because it is "unfair" or not sufficiently true to life (this is very similar to point a above); (d) reject the satire by failing to respond to the ironies.

*Is Satire Ever Effective?*

How effective is satire at realizing its objective, that is, the moral reformation of the audience? I suppose the short answer is not very often, especially nowadays, when being laughed at is often a sign of celebrity rather than something one is automatically ashamed of. I suspect that in closely knit groups, where one's status and dignity are important, becoming a laughing stock is something one worries about. Under these circumstances, the satirist may indeed really connect with the target. That, however, may prompt extreme hostility to the writer rather than a reformation of the target's character.

Swift observed that satire is like a mirror in which people see everyone's face except their own. That, I suspect, is a very accurate observation, and to that extent the satirist is probably engaging in something of a vain endeavour: to get people to recognize their own ridiculousness and to avoid it in the future. Still, there may be some other, more useful point. For satire is not just a matter of attacking the target; it's also a matter of attacking or at least challenging those who believe in the target, who do not see, that is, the moral imperfections at the basis of a particular social or political stance.

So it may be the case that satire works most effectively at educating an audience to see through the pretensions and folly of people whom it takes much more seriously than they ought to be taken. If it does that, then it has used laughter in a very constructive way, as mentioned above: it has helped to show us that too often our sense of what we are, as individuals and as groups, is too limited by delusions of grandeur. Too often we become enamored of false idols. Satire is one means of educating us against the practice.

*The Clouds*

If we acknowledge, then, that *The Clouds* is a satire, what does Aristophanes wish us to learn from witnessing the play? I take it that many of his satiric techniques are obvious enough from the text, although one needs to affirm that we are most unlikely to realize the full satiric potential of this wonderful play without witnessing a first-class production of it. There are few dramas that proffer such an invitation to use the full resources of the stage to keep the audience constantly involved in the action: all sorts of amazing stage devices, pyrotechnics, amusing costumes (including phalluses), repeated

physical conflict, and so on. We gather only a small and insufficient sense of the dramatic potential of the work by reading it.

Still, we do get some sense of how this play might appear, so we are in a position to explore what Aristophanes wants us to think about. I would maintain that the satire here goes through at least three distinct stages and that, in going through these stages, the tone of the satire changes from something very amusing and distant from us to something much closer to us, more potentially disturbing, and perhaps apocalyptic. By the end of the play we may well have moved beyond satire; we are, in any case, a long way from the opening scenes of the play.

In the opening scenes of the play, the butt of the satire is clearly Socrates. This may be (indeed, is) an unfair portrait of the Socrates we know from the *Gorgias* and the *Apology* (for one thing in those works Socrates is not concerned with physical science and expressly repudiates the notion that he wants to make the weaker argument the stronger). But the satire is very vigorous and funny. As an audience we can laugh good humouredly at a familiar face and place a considerable distance between us and what seems to be the major target of the satire.

One point to stress here is that in the opening of the play, the satire is (for an audience) quite comfortable. The laughter is (if we discuss it in terms of a distinction I introduced earlier) exclusionary. The variously silly things about the Thinkery and Socrates invite that audience to laugh *at* him as a charlatan and humbug. This is comfortable for an audience, because the satire is apparently directed at a single person, not at them, and since they are not Socrates, they are clearly not implicated in Aristophanes's ridicule.

However, Socrates does not remain the sole (or even the most important target of Aristophanes's satire), for the main aim of the satire changes somewhat when Strepsiades decides to enroll in the Thinkery himself. Strepsiades, after all, is a representative Athenian, and it is made clear to us that for him the attraction of Socrates's school (which he has told us is humbug) is naked self-interest. He wants to defraud his fellow citizens out of the money he owes them. He wants, as he makes clear to us, to learn the art of breaking his promises at the expense of his fellow citizens.

At this point, Aristophanes is casting his satiric net more widely: this is no longer an attempt merely to expose Socrates to ridicule but to include the self-serving greed of Athenians, including, of course, some of those in the audience. In some respects, at this point Strepsiades becomes a more serious and uncomfortable target than Socrates--and the moral tone becomes potentially somewhat more serious. After all, Socrates is in some sense better than Strepsiades. He may be silly, but at least he believes in what he is doing and devotes all his energies to doing that. Strepsiades, by contrast, is not at all interested in learning anything about what Socrates is up to; he simply

wants to be equipped to escape his obligations. The satire here is just as funny, especially Strepsiades's stupidity. But his willingness to corrupt language to serve his own interests is something more serious than Socrates's wild speculations.

And this is reinforced by the sense that Strepsiades is not just a single particular Athenian known to the audience (like Socrates). Strepsiades is also a social type: a man who married above his station and has a son whose spending he cannot control. He is, in a sense, representative of a certain kind of citizen, many of whom may well be sitting in the audience. Thus, holding his self-interested greed up to ridicule is clearly implicating, not just one local weirdo, but a certain social type or social attitude. In other words, increasingly numbers of the audience who were laughing so comfortably at Socrates only a few minutes before are now being forced to laugh at themselves or their neighbours.

A similar shift occurs soon afterwards. Once we come to the debate between the Old and the New Philosophy, the satire changes its emphasis (or, rather, enlarges its concerns). This debate makes it clear that what is at stake here is not just a silly thinker or a greedy social type. What Aristophanes is after is an indictment of an entire way of life, especially of the modern trends which are eroding traditional values. The debate (especially if we see it on stage with the magnificent costumes and the ritualized combat) is very funny, but the moral concerns are coming much closer to home. The willingness to dispense with proven values in education and conduct brings with it the loss of something which the playwright clearly sees as something valuable.

It may be the case that Aristophanes is a staunch defender of the old values. But that need not be so. After all, the old philosophy comes in for some satiric jibes, especially for his prurience and rather simple indignation, which might well be presented as a sort of naive stuffiness. But there can be no doubt, I think, of the seriousness of the issues at stake here, the erosion of old values enshrined in a shared tradition and a communal respect for that tradition.

In this connection, the decision of the narrator to label the disputants Philosophy and Sophistry may be somewhat misleading. Traditionally, these debaters have been called the Just (or Major or Better) Logic and the Unjust (or Minor or Weaker) Logic (as Arrowsmith's long endnote on p. 153 indicates). Arrowsmith is right, I think, when he claims (in the same note) that "Aristophanes is talking, not about systems of formal logic, but about whole system of Reason, discursive and nondiscursive alike," which he characterizes later (on p. 154) as an argument between "the rational guidance of Custom ... , the corrective rightness of traditional experience as against the restless

innovations and risky isolation from experience and history of the pure intellect.”

To frame the dispute that way may be fair enough, but the labels Philosophy (for traditional values) and Sophistry (for innovation) may mislead, especially if we come to this play (as many readers do) fresh from dealing with Socrates's definition of his endeavour as philosophy (rather than as oratory), for it would appear to load the scales somewhat on behalf of what Arrowsmith calls Philosophy, when, in fact, the point of the satire may well be that both disputants are, for different reasons, equally foolish. The comic dispute, in other words, may be a funny dramatic symbol for a serious social problem which lies at the heart of this satire: the traditional ways of valuing have broken down, not because they have been “defeated” by some newer and more sophisticated form of valuing, but rather because the old traditions have become stuffy, pretentious, ungrounded, and silly. Aristophanes, in other words, may not be celebrating traditional values, so much as satirizing the vain glory of those values, now without power in a transformed world, forced to defend itself with indignant comparative spluttering about the penis length.

It's clear, too, just what is eroding that tradition: the ability to manipulate language. The New Philosophy (Sophistry) wins the day because the form of linguistic analysis it uses can, the face of the weakness of traditional beliefs, undermine the value of anything. We are seeing here (in satiric comic form) something of the same thing that Herodotus is doing to traditional stories, subjecting them to rational analysis. Here, of course, the exercise is a parody of such analysis, but the effect is the same: calling the old story (and the values which it expresses) into question. The mistake of the Old Philosophy (or the fatal weakness) is a simple uncritical trust in a shared system of meaning in words and of the importance of certain old stores as enshrining permanent values. Having nothing intelligent to counter the New Philosophy's demolition of that shared meaning, the Old Philosophy can only acknowledge the loss.

What has contributed to developments of this method which lead to the loss of traditional value? The end of the debate between the two Philosophies makes that very clear. The responsibility lies with the audience of Athenian citizens, the “buggers,” who are indicted by the Old Philosophy as he concedes defeat. By this point the easy satire of the opening of the play, where the audience member could feel a comfortable distance between himself and the ridiculous figure of Socrates, has altered significantly. Now, Socrates and his Thinkery are no longer the issue. The central concern is the neglect by the Athenians themselves of their old traditions and their love of novelty in the service of self-interest. The theatrical action is still very funny (the style has not changed), but the target is now all-encompassing.

The dramatic point is worth stressing. The play begins by inviting the audience to laugh at the ridiculousness of one particular person for his outright humbuggery. As mentioned above, such satire poses no threat to members of the audience and draws them into the story with reassuring ease and much fun. But in the course of the play, the members of the audience are pressured to extend their understanding of humbuggery so that it now includes themselves. It's as if Aristophanes is asking very pointedly: All right, you found certain conduct in Socrates hilarious. How about that same conduct in yourselves? What's the difference?

The consequences of this attitude emerge in the quarrel between Strepsiades and his son. Again, there's a lot of humour in the exchange and the physicality of the staging, but the seriousness of the issue is made explicit. If we abandon traditions to serve only our individual self-interest, then we are left with a situation in which the only basis for human relationships is power. In such a world, why should a son not beat up his father and his mother? There is no particular reason not to. Since laws are only human conventions invented by the stronger party, they can be changed once power shifts, and people can now do more or less as they want. Pheidippides makes the case that human beings are just like animals, and in the animal world, the barnyard, power is the basis of all relationships.

It may be all very well for Strepsiades to yell at his son that if we want to live as a barnyard animal he can go and shit on a perch. But Pheidippides's case has, in fact, been endorsed by Strepsiades earlier in the play when he puts his own self-interest ahead of anything else. After all, if, in the interests of one's personal advancement, one wants to cheat one's neighbours of what one owes (and has promised), then what defense does one have against the son who wants to beat his parents? The principles that one might want to invoke to prevent the latter are the same as those which should prevent the former. As Pheidippides demonstrates, once an old tradition grows too feeble and one sets about undermining tradition with the new linguistic analysis, anything is possible.

Here, of course, Aristophanes is touching a really sore point in Athenian social life (and in ours). How do we keep the good will of our children on whom we are going to depend? What is it that keeps children from exerting their superior physical power to abuse their parents when they don't get their way? In Athenian times, and even today, this is a significant concern, especially since the continuing health and peaceful life of the elderly requires the benevolent co-operation of the children (much more so then than now). Once that goes, then something very basic to the fabric of our immediate family life breaks down. The members of Aristophanes's audience would have no trouble seeing in that issue something of direct importance in their lives (no more than members of a modern audience).

At this point in the play, I am suggesting, the satire, while still very robust and funny, is a lot more uncomfortable. The action is pushing us to the recognition that the real issue here is not Socrates (silly as he may be), but rather a self-interested greed which will rebound on us. Strepsiades's initial motivation is to serve his self-interest in any way possible; without realizing it, he initiates a course of action which leads inevitably to his physical abuse. The responsibility for this lies, not with Socrates, nor even with Strepsiades, but with the members of the audience, the "buggers." And this issue is now something with which all members of the audience will be fully involved, since they have parents and children and they certainly have a fear of family abuse. Aristophanes is pointing out that the very behaviour which makes Socrates so funny earlier in the play and which they, like Strepsiades, engage in out of self-interest, may well unleash behaviour of which they are all afraid (or ought to be).

### *The Chorus*

That such a concern about the Athenian population generally is the major satiric thrust of the play is made more explicit by the single most important dramatic presence in the play: the Chorus of Clouds, in many ways the most ambiguous element in the play.

The Chorus is made up of seductive female singers and dancers (just how seductive the staging will determine), divine presences bringing with them the promise of rain and fertility. But it's quickly made clear that they are primarily the divine personalities who answer to the desires of those who wish to create something in words, "goddesses of men of leisure and philosophers. To them we owe our repertoire of verbal talents; our eloquence, intellect, fustian, casuistry, force, wit, prodigious vocabulary, circumlocutory skill. . . ." Hence, they are defined as the patrons of all those who manipulate others with words. And this function is mirrored in their characteristic of having no definite shape, but taking on the form in accordance with what the perceiver wishes to see.

That may be the reason they come through in this play as having no consistent point of view, no easily assignable meaning. Socrates can hail them as his patron, and so can the figure of Aristophanes. They can celebrate Strepsiades's decision to enroll in the Thinkery and berate the Athenian audience for its silliness about the lunar calendar—all the time dominating the stage with their singing and dancing. The "meaning" of the Chorus of Clouds (if that is the right word) is as protean as their shape: like the language the Athenians use for various purposes they have no firmness, no determinate form. To the extent this play has a cosmic divine presence, that's brought to us by the Clouds themselves.

That comic business about the Clouds controlling everything for which the traditional gods are given credit, all that stuff about the cosmic convection principle, thunder as farting, and so on, may be funny, but the issue lies at the heart of the play's moral indignation at what is happening in Athens, where the possibilities for a significant life are being systematically corrupted by the seductive power of words, of language itself, which is now being shaped to human beings' desires, rather than directing those desires. The fact that the Clouds spend so much time singing and dancing (and this, one would hope, would be done beautifully on stage) enacts the very point the play is making about the issues they represent.

This point about the corruption of language applies to everyone in the play. For it's not the case, I think, that Aristophanes is privileging the older ways. That figure of Philosophy (or the Just Argument) is as self-serving and silly in his language as is Sophistry (or the Unjust Argument). Indeed, the similarity between the two in this respect makes them both servants of the Clouds and conveys a potentially disturbing irony to all the comic business.

### *The Ending of The Clouds*

That irony I refer to helps to make the ending of this play potentially so ominous. Of course, a great deal is going to depend upon how the play is staged. But it's no accident that Aristophanes ends this comedy with a wanton act of destruction, the burning down of the Thinkery. Why does Strepsiades do this? Well, one immediate cause appears to be the frustration he now finds himself in, when he realizes that he has been trapped by his own silliness and corruption. Instead of resolving the comedy in a peaceful way, with, for example, an acknowledgment of his errors and some form of reconciliation with his son, Aristophanes has him lash out with an action that indicates his loss of restraint, his decision to abandon thought, and to channel his confused feelings into violence.

There's an interesting difference here between this work and the *Odyssey*. You will recall that the final act of Odysseus in that work is restraint. The destructiveness of the civil war is averted when the gods persuade Odysseus to hold back, to restrain his desire for revenge on the suitors. And the re-establishment of civic harmony in Ithaca requires that. This is a common end of a comic plot, where the sources of social disruption have been punished, killed, expelled, or forgiven, and there is a general sense of a restored social harmony. Similarly, the end of *Oedipus* is marked by restraint. Oedipus inflicts a horrific punishment on himself and is about to set out into self-imposed exile. But the community is still intact, still trying to absorb the significance of what has happened. And Thebes has been saved and will endure.

The ending of *Clouds* is not like this. The final vision we have in this play is of destruction. The script does not move us beyond that act. And if we see, as we might, that this destruction has involved some real human suffering and perhaps even death, then we have clearly moved into a world beyond the easy, distant comedy of the opening of the play. In a sense, we might say that we have moved well beyond satire in the closing moments, because we are no longer laughing. What we are seeing might be interpreted as an ominous warning: «What I have shown you is something silly and ridiculous, but the consequences of that are far from amusing.» This ending will be all the more powerful if we see in Socrates, as we might, an attractive energy and tolerable weirdness, so that his defeat registers as something of a loss.

I stress that this interpretation of the ending is one of many possibilities. It would be easy enough through the staging to take much of the sting out of it and to make the destruction of the Thinkery something relatively trivial and funny, perhaps even therapeutic. Much would depend upon the presentation of the destruction and the response of the people involved. But the fact that there is no prolonged choral closure after the burning, no final comic celebration of a reinstatement of a communal solidarity does raise the possibility that this ending is something more ironically serious than much of the rest of the comedy might suggest. It is a vision of mob violence.

And the role of the Chorus at this point in the play is significant. The Leader of the Chorus incites Strepsiades and Pheidippides on, urging them to give Socrates and his followers a good thrashing. This, of course, is the man whose labours they encouraged at the start of the play, a man who regarded them as his patron saint. There's a strong sense here that the Clouds themselves are applauding and enjoying the destruction we are witnessing, and they justify their encouragement with appeals to the "gods of heaven," an appeal which has revealed itself as empty during the course of the play, because no one manifests any sense of what a belief in such gods might mean.

In this matter of the tone at the ending of the play, there's an important ambiguity over Pheidippides' last exit. Does he go back into his house or return to the Thinkery? He has not achieved any reconciliation with his father, so the latter is a distinct possibility that he goes into the school (a suggestion made by Martha Nussbaum and passed on, with strong reservations, in Alan Sommerstein's notes to the play). If a particular production chooses the latter possibility and includes Pheidippides among the victims of Strepsiades' homicidal rage, then obviously the comedy at the end has become much more ironically bitter. More than that, too, because Pheidippides' return to the school is a direct insult to his father, and thus one might well see it as the key event which triggers Strepsiades' final outburst. I'm not insisting on this view of the ending, but the possibility is certainly there.

If you see that this powerfully ominous ending as a persuasive possibility, then you can recognize how Aristophanes has significantly shifted his tone throughout the play and perhaps get a sense of why he does this. In a sense, he traps the audience. First, we get us engaged in the work by inviting us to laugh at a ridiculous stranger with whom we share nothing in common: the satire is funny but safe, because we are not like Socrates. But then, by bringing the satire closer and closer to us, Aristophanes, through our own laughter, brings us face to face with the recognition that what we are really laughing at is not Socrates but our own conduct, our own foolishness arising out of self-interest. And then the work takes us into the consequences of that foolishness, both in the present and, more ominously, into the future. By the end of the play, we are no longer dealing with Sophists and greedy debt-ridden farmers; we are dealing with ourselves and a vision of what we may well become if we don't recognize what's at stake in the promises we make and the words we use.

This all comes about with great theatrical panache and lots of humour; but those features should not obscure the fact that Aristophanes is in deadly earnest in getting across his moral concerns about Athens. There may well be a sense here of tragic inevitability. The satire has gone beyond any sense of ridiculing behaviour which we can correct into an exploration of the inevitable destructiveness of the Athenian character: we were laughing at the particular foolishness of human beings; now we are invited to see that as an inherently self-destructive impulse which threatens the survival of the community. The Chorus of *Clouds* may promise life-giving rain, but what they represent is the process of destroying the city (and we are not permitted to forget here that Athens is at war).

We don't have to know much history to see that, if the ending here is an ominous warning, then it turned out to be prophetic. The Athenians did turn against Socrates and they did lose their traditional virtues in the course of the war. Along with those, of course, they also forfeited what they were most proud of: their political independence. In burning down the Thinkery, Strepsiades is pointing forward to much of the self-destructiveness which brought the Athenians, and countless other cultures proud of their values but increasingly consumed with self-interest, to grief.

#### *Short Postscript on The Birds*

Given what has been said above about satire, how are we to make sense of *The Birds*? Part of the satiric intention is clear enough, but in some ways there are complexities in this play which might lead us to wonder about the full satiric intentions.



The play sets up a typical middle-aged Athenian as its main target. Pisthetairos and Euelpides have left the city ostensibly to find a better place, one free of the legal, economic, and political troubles of Athens. They are fed up with life in the city, and the birds, they think, will help them locate a more peaceful haven.

By the end of the play, of course, all this original intention has been subverted. Pisthetairos and Euelpides have become rulers of the birds and are, it seems, about to supplant the gods themselves. In the process they have persuaded the birds to surrender their freedom in the name of increasing their power and riches, and so what started out as a quest for a peacefully independent life for two Athenians ends up with an extension of their empire, a triumph which is to be celebrated by eating a couple of birds, the very creatures to whom they came at the start for advice about how to live.

On a fairly basic level the satiric intention here is clear enough: Aristophanes wants to hold up to ridicule the Athenian habit of aggressive interference, their innate imperialistic tendencies which make it impossible for them to live life without seeking domination. It is something bred into them, no matter how much they may want to escape its consequences. Arrowsmith makes this point in the long note on p. 317:

For if Aristophanes shows us in *Pisthetairos* here an Athenian exhausted by years of national restlessness and in search of *apragmosune* [a life of relaxed leisure] among the Birds, it is precisely his point that no Athenian can escape his origin. And once arrived among the Birds, Pisthetairos promptly exhibits the national quality from which he is trying to escape. He is daring, acquisitive, ruthlessly energetic, inventive, and a thorough-paced imperialist. And finally, in the apotheosis that closes the play, he arrives at his logical destination--divinity. For *polupragmosune* [the combination of these Athenian qualities], as Aristophanes ironically observed, is moved by nothing less than man's divine discontent with his condition, and the hunger of Athenians to be supreme, and therefore god.

The way in which Aristophanes presents this transformation suggests that it comes almost by instinct. Pisthetairos is, it seems, genuine in his desire to escape from the corrupting world of Athens, but he is incapable of repressing his urge to take charge, to urge the Birds to use whatever tactics are in their power to increase their dominion. He never expresses a particular reason for doing this, other than the idea that somehow power is good for its own sake--if one has an opportunity one should seize it. It is in one's self-interest to do so.

So in the play we see Pisthetairos expend a lot of energy to keep conventional civilization away from Cloudcuckooland--for his success is attracting settlers. But at the same time his very nature drives him to seek imperial

control, which will, of course, threaten the very thing he originally sought to attain.

He succeeds in his imperial urges, and this is particularly significant, because of his linguistic skill, because of his ability to persuade, to use language to shape people to his own ends:

But my words are wings. . . . How else do you think mankind won its wings if not from words?. . . . Through dialectic the mind of man takes wing and soars; he is morally and spiritually uplifted. And so I hoped with words of good advice to wing you on your way toward some honest trade. (290-291)

But the play invites us to contemplate, through a very exaggerated scenario, the ironic consequences of this view. How spiritually uplifted is Pisthetairos at the end? Through the most brutal tactics, which again and again remind the audience of what Athens is doing to others during the Peloponnesian War, Pisthetairos succeeds in elevating himself to god-like status, deceiving even the traditional deities and heroes.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Clouds was first produced in the drama festival in Athens—the City Dionysia—in 423 BC, where it placed third. Subsequently the play was revised, but the revisions were never completed. The text which survives is the revised version, which was apparently not performed in Aristophanes' time but which circulated in manuscript form. This revised version does contain some anomalies which have not been fully sorted out (e.g., the treatment of Cleon, who died between the original text and the revisions). At the time of the first production, the Athenians had been at war with the Spartans, off and on, for a number of years.

NEΦΕΛΑΙ

CLOUDS

## ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

ΜΑΘΗΤΑΙ ΣΩΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ΧΟΡΟΣ ΝΕΦΕΛΩΝ

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ ΔΑΝΕΙΣΤΗΣ

ΜΑΡΤΥΣ

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ ΔΑΝΕΙΣΤΗΣ

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

STREPSIADES: a middle-aged Athenian

PHEIDIPPIDES: a young Athenian, son of Strepsiades

XANTHIAS: a slave serving Strepsiades

STUDENT: one of Socrates' pupils in the Thinkery

SOCRATES: chief teacher in the Thinkery

CHORUS OF CLOUDS

THE BETTER ARGUMENT: an older man

THE WORSE ARGUMENT: a young man

PASIAS: one of Strepsiades' creditors

WITNESS: a friend of Pasion

AMYNIAS: one of Strepsiades' creditors

STUDENTS OF SOCRATES

## Νεφέλαι

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ιοὺ ἰοῦ·

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὸ χρέμα τῶν νυκτῶν ὅσον·

ἀπέραντον. οὐδέποθ' ἡμέρα γενήσεται;

καὶ μὴν πάλαι γ' ἀλεκτρούνοσ' ἦκουσ' ἐγώ·

οἱ δ' οἰκέται ρέγκουσιν· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν πρὸ τοῦ. 5

ἀπόλοιο δῆτ' ὦ πόλεμε πολλῶν οὔνεκα,

ὅτ' οὐδὲ κολάσ' ἔξεστί μοι τοὺς οἰκέτας.

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ χρηστὸς οὔτοσὶ νεανίας

ἐγείρεται τῆς νυκτός, ἀλλὰ πέρδεται

ἐν πέντε σισύραις ἐγκεκορδυλημένος. 10

ἀλλ' εἰ δοκεῖ ρέγκωμεν ἐγκεκαλυμμένοι.

ἀλλ' οὐ δύναμαι δείλαιος εὔδειν δακνόμενος

ὑπὸ τῆς δαπάνης καὶ τῆς φάτνης καὶ τῶν χρεῶν

διὰ τουτονὶ τὸν υἱόν. ὁ δὲ κόμην ἔχων

ἰππάζεται τε καὶ ξυνωρικέεται 15

ὄνειροπολεῖ θ' ἵππους· ἐγὼ δ' ἀπόλλυμαι

ὀρώων ἄγουσαν τὴν σελήνην εἰκάδας·

οἱ γὰρ τόκοι χωροῦσιν. ἄπτε παῖ λύχνον,

κάκφερε τὸ γραμματεῖον, ἕν' ἀναγνώ λαβῶν

## Clouds

*Scene: In the centre of the stage area is a house with a door to Socrates' educational establishment, the Thinkery.<sup>1</sup> On one side of the stage is Strepsiades' house, in front of which are two beds. Outside the Thinkery there is a small clay statue of a round goblet, and outside Strepsiades' house there is a small clay statue of Hermes. It is just before dawn. Strepsiades and Pheidippides are lying asleep in the two beds. Strepsiades tosses and turns restlessly. Pheidippides lets a very loud fart in his sleep. Strepsiades sits up wide awake]*

STREPSIADES

Damn! Lord Zeus, how this night drags on and on!

It's endless. Won't daylight ever come?

I heard a cock crowing a while ago,

but my slaves kept snoring. In the old days,

they wouldn't have dared. Oh, damn and blast this war—

so many problems. Now I'm not allowed

to punish my own slaves.<sup>2</sup> And then there's him—

this fine young man, who never once wakes up,

but farts the night away, all snug in bed,

wrapped up in five wool coverlets. Ah well,

[10]

I guess I should snuggle down and snore away.

*[Strepsiades lies down again and tries to sleep. Pheidippides farts again.*

*Strepsiades finally gives up trying to sleep]*

I can't sleep. I'm just too miserable,

what with being eaten up by all this debt—

thanks to this son of mine, his expenses,

his racing stables. He keeps his hair long

and rides his horses—he's obsessed with it—

his chariot and pair. He dreams of horses.<sup>3</sup>

And I'm dead when I see the month go by—

with the moon's cycle now at twenty days,

as interest payments keep on piling up.<sup>4</sup>

*[Calling to a slave]*

Hey, boy! Light the lamp. Bring me my accounts.

ὅπόσοις ὀφείλω καὶ λογίσωμαι τοὺς τόκους. 20  
 φέρ' ἴδω τί ὀφείλω; δώδεκα μνᾶς Πασία.  
 τοῦ δώδεκα μνᾶς Πασία; τί ἐχρησάμην;  
 ὅτ' ἐπριάμην τὸν κοππατίαν. οἴμοι τάλας,  
 εἴθ' ἐξεκόπην πρότερον τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν λίθῳ.  
 ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ  
 Φίλων ἀδικεῖς· ἔλαυνε τὸν σαυτοῦ δρόμον. 25  
 ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 τοῦτ' ἔστι τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν ὃ μ' ἀπολώλεκεν·  
 ὄνειροπολεῖ γὰρ καὶ καθεύδων ἵππικὴν.  
 ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ  
 πόσους δρόμους ἔλα τὰ πολεμιστήρια;  
 ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 ἐμὲ μὲν σὺ πολλοὺς τὸν πατέρ' ἐλαύνεις δρόμους.  
 ἀτὰρ τί χρέος ἔβα με μετὰ τὸν Πασίαν; 30  
 τρεῖς μναὶ διφρίσκου καὶ τροχοῖν Ἀμυνία.  
 ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ  
 ἄπαγε τὸν ἵππον ἐξαλίσας οἴκαδε.  
 ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 ἀλλ' ὦ μέλ' ἐξήλικας ἐμέ γ' ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν,  
 ὅτε καὶ δίκας ὄφληκα χᾶτεροι τόκου  
 ἐνεχυράσεσθαί φασιν. 35  
 ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ  
 ἐτεὸν ὦ πάτερ  
 τί δυσκολαίνεις καὶ στρέφει τὴν νύχθ' ὄλην;  
 ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 δάκνει μὲ δῆμαρχός τις ἐκ τῶν στρωμάτων.

[Enter the slave Xanthias with light and tablets]

Let me take these and check my creditors.  
 How many are there? And then the interest— [20]  
 I'll have to work that out. Let me see now . . .  
 What do I owe? "Twelve minai to Pasiās?"  
 Twelve minai to Pasiās! What's that for?  
 O yes, I know—that's when I bought that horse,  
 the pedigree nag. What a fool I am!  
 I'd sooner have a stone knock out my eye.<sup>5</sup>  
 PHEIDIPPIDES [talking in his sleep]  
 Philon, that's unfair! Drive your chariot straight.  
 STREPSIADES  
 That there's my problem—that's what's killing me.  
 Even fast asleep he dreams of horses!  
 PHEIDIPPIDES [in his sleep]  
 In this war-chariot race how many times  
 do we drive round the track?  
 STREPSIADES  
 You're driving me,  
 your father, too far round the bend. Let's see,  
 after Pasiās, what's the next debt I owe? [30]  
 "Three minai to Amynias." For what?  
 A small chariot board and pair of wheels?  
 PHEIDIPPIDES [in his sleep]  
 Let the horse have a roll. Then take him home.  
 STREPSIADES  
 You, my lad, have been rolling in my cash.  
 Now I've lost in court, and other creditors  
 are going to take out liens on all my stuff  
 to get their interest.  
 PHEIDIPPIDES [waking up]  
 What's the matter, dad?  
 You've been grumbling and tossing around there  
 all night long.  
 STREPSIADES  
 I keep getting bitten—  
 some bum bailiff in the bedding.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔασον ᾧ δαιμόνιε καταδαρθεῖν τί με.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

σὺ δ' οὖν κάθειυδε· τὰ δὲ χρέα ταῦτ' ἴσθ' ὅτι  
ἔς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἅπαντα τὴν σὴν τρέψεται. φεῦ. 40

εἴθ' ὄφελ' ἢ προμνήστρι' ἀπολέσθαι κακῶς,  
ἦτις με γῆμ' ἐπήρε τὴν σὴν μητέρα·  
ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἦν ἄγροικος ἠδιστος βίος  
εὐρωτιῶν, ἀκόρητος, εἰκῆ κείμενος,  
βρύων μελίτταις καὶ προβάτοις καὶ στεμφύλοις. 45

ἔπειτ' ἔγημα Μεγακλέους τοῦ Μεγακλέους  
ἀδελφιδῆν ἄγροικος ὦν ἐξ ἄστεως,  
σεμνὴν τρυφῶσαν ἐγκεκοισυρωμένην.  
ταύτην ὅτ' ἐγάμουν, συγκατεκλινόμην ἐγὼ  
ὄζων τρυγὸς τρασιᾶς ἐρίων περιουσίας, 50  
ἢ δ' αὖ μύρου κρόκου καταγλωττισμάτων,  
δαπάνης λαφυγμοῦ Κωλιάδος Γενετυλλίδος.  
οὐ μὴν ἐρῶ γ' ὡς ἀργὸς ἦν, ἀλλ' ἐσπάθα.  
ἐγὼ δ' ἂν αὐτῇ θοιμάτιον δεικνὺς τοδὶ  
πρόφασιν ἔφασκον, ᾧ γύναι λίαν σπαθῆς. 55

## ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

ἔλαιον ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔνεστ' ἐν τῷ λύχνῳ.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἴμοι· τί γάρ μοι τὸν πότην ἠπτες λύχνον;  
δεῦρ' ἔλθ' ἵνα κλάῃς.

## ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

διὰ τί δῆτα κλαύσομαι;

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅτι τῶν παχειῶν ἐνετίθεις θρυαλλίδων.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Ease off, dad.  
Let me get some sleep.

## STREPSIADES

All right, keep sleeping.  
Just bear in mind that one fine day these debts  
will all be your concern. [40]

[Pheidippides rolls over and goes back to sleep]

Damn it, anyway.  
I wish that matchmaker had died in pain—  
the one who hooked me and your mother up.  
I'd had a lovely time up to that point,  
a crude, uncomplicated, country life,  
lying around just as I pleased, with honey bees,  
and sheep and olives, too. Then I married—  
the niece of Megacles—who was the son  
of Megacles. I was a country man,  
and she came from the town—a real snob,  
extravagant, just like Coesyra.<sup>6</sup>  
When I married her and we both went to bed,  
I stunk of fresh wine, drying figs, sheep's wool—  
an abundance of good things. As for her,  
she smelled of perfume, saffron, long kisses,  
greed, extravagance, lots and lots of sex.<sup>7</sup>  
Now, I'm not saying she was a lazy bones.  
She used to weave, but used up too much wool.  
To make a point I'd show this cloak to her  
and say, "Woman, your weaving's far too thick."<sup>8</sup>

[The lamp goes out]

## XANTHIAS

We've got no oil left in the lamp.

## STREPSIADES

Damn it!  
Why'd you light such a thirsty lamp? Come here.  
I need to thump you.

## XANTHIAS

Why should you hit me?

## STREPSIADES

Because you stuck too thick a wick inside.

μετὰ ταῦθ', ὅπως νῶν ἐγένεθ' υἱὸς οὐτοσί, 60  
 ἔμοι τε δὴ καὶ τῇ γυναικὶ τὰγαθῇ,  
 περὶ τοῦνόματος δὴ ἔντευθεν ἐλοιδορούμεθα.  
 ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἵππον προσετίθει πρὸς τοῦνομα,  
 Ξάνθιππον ἢ Χαριππον ἢ Καλλιππίδην,  
 ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦ πάππου ἑπιθέμην Φειδωνίδην. 65  
 τέως μὲν οὖν ἐκρινόμεθ'. εἶτα τῷ χρόνῳ  
 κοινῇ ξυνέβημεν καθέμεθα Φειδιππίδην.  
 τοῦτον τὸν υἱὸν λαμβάνουσ' ἐκορίζετο,  
 ὅταν σὺ μέγας ὦν ἄρμ' ἐλαύνης πρὸς πόλιν,  
 ὥσπερ Μεγακλῆς, ξυστίδ' ἔχων.' ἐγὼ δ' ἔφην, 70  
 ὅταν μὲν οὖν τὰς αἴγας ἐκ τοῦ φελλέως,  
 ὥσπερ ὁ πατήρ σου, διφθέραν ἐνημμένος.  
 ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπίθετο τοῖς ἐμοῖς οὐδὲν λόγους,  
 ἀλλ' ἵππερόν μου κατέχεεν τῶν χρημάτων.  
 νῦν οὖν ὄλην τὴν νύκτα φροντίζων ὁδοῦ 75  
 μίαν ἠῦρον ἀτραπὸν δαιμονίως ὑπερφυᾶ,  
 ἦν ἦν ἀναπέισω τουτονί, σωθήσομαι.  
 ἀλλ' ἐξεγείραι πρῶτον αὐτὸν βούλομαι.  
 πῶς δῆτ' ἂν ἦδιστ' αὐτὸν ἐπεγείραμι; πῶς;  
 Φειδιππίδην Φειδιππίδιον. 80

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ὦ πάτερ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κύσον με καὶ τὴν χεῖρα δὸς τὴν δεξιάν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰδού. τί ἔστιν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἰπέ μοι, φιλεῖς ἐμέ;

[The slave ignores Strepsiades and walks off into the house]

After that, when this son was born to us— [60]  
 I'm talking about me and my good wife—  
 we argued over what his name should be.  
 She was keen to add *-hippos* to his name,  
 like Xanthippos, Callipedes, or Chaerippos.<sup>9</sup>  
 Me, I wanted the name Pheidonides,  
 his grandpa's name. Well, we fought about it,  
 and then, after a while, at last agreed.  
 And so we called the boy Pheidippides.  
 She used to cradle the young lad and say,  
 "When you're grown up, you'll drive your chariot  
 to the Acropolis, like Megacles,  
 in a full-length robe . . ." I'd say, "No— [70]  
 you'll drive your goat herd back from Phelleus,  
 like your father, dressed in leather hides . . ."  
 He never listened to a thing I said.  
 And now he's making my finances sick—  
 a racing fever. But I've spent all night  
 thinking of a way to deal with this whole mess,  
 and I've found one route, something really good—  
 it could work wonders. If I could succeed,  
 if I could convince him, I'd be all right.  
 Well, first I'd better wake him up. But how?  
 What would be the gentlest way to do it?

[Strepsiades leans over and gently nudges Pheidippides]

Pheidippides . . . my little Pheidippides . . .

PHEIDIPPIDES [very sleepily]

What is it, father? [80]

STREPSIADES

Give me a kiss—

then give me your right hand.

[Pheidippides sits up, leans over, and does what his father has asked]

PHEIDIPPIDES

All right. There.

What's going on?

STREPSIADES

Tell me this—do you love me?



ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

νή τὸν Ποσειδῶ τουτονὶ τὸν ἵππιον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὴ μοί γε τοῦτον μηδαμῶς τὸν ἵππιον·  
οὗτος γὰρ ὁ θεὸς αἰτιός μοι τῶν κακῶν. 85  
ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας μ' ὄντως φιλεῖς,  
ὦ παῖ πιθοῦ.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τί οὖν πίθωμαι δητὰ σοι;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔκστρεψον ὡς τάχιστα τοὺς σαυτοῦ τρόπους,  
καὶ μάθθαι ἐλθὼν ἂν ἐγὼ παραινέσω.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

λέγε δὴ, τί κελεύεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καί τι πείσει;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

νή τὸν Διόνυσον. 90  
πέισομαι

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

δεῦρό νυν ἀπόβλεπε.  
ὄρας τὸ θύριον τοῦτο καὶ τῶκίδιον;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὄρω. τί οὖν τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐτέον ὦ πάτερ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ψυχῶν σοφῶν τοῦτ' ἐστὶ φροντιστήριον.  
ἐνταῦθ' ἐνοικοῦσ' ἄνδρες, οἱ τὸν οὐρανὸν 95  
λέγοντες ἀναπειθουσιν ὡς ἔστιν πνιγεύς,  
κάστιν περὶ ἡμᾶς οὗτος, ἡμεῖς δ' ἄνθρακες.  
οὔτοι διδάσκουσ', ἀργύριον ἦν τις διδῶ,  
λέγοντα νικᾶν καὶ δίκαια κᾶδικα.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰσὶν δὲ τίνες;

PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, I do, by Poseidon, lord of horses.

STREPSIADES

Don't give me that lord of horses stuff—  
he's the god who's causing all my troubles.  
But now, my son, if you really love me,  
with your whole heart, then follow what I say.

PHEIDIPPIDES

What do you want to tell me I should do?

STREPSIADES

Change your life style as quickly as you can,  
then go and learn the stuff I recommend.

PHEIDIPPIDES

So tell me—what are you asking me?

STREPSIADES

You'll do just what I say?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, I'll do it—  
I swear by Dionysus. [90]

STREPSIADES

All right then.  
Look over there—you see that little door,  
there on that little house?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, I see it.  
What are you really on about, father?

STREPSIADES

That's the Thinkery—for clever minds.  
In there live men who argue and persuade.  
They say that heaven's an oven damper—  
it's all around us—we're the charcoal.  
If someone gives them cash, they'll teach him  
how to win an argument on any cause,  
just or unjust.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Who are these men?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδ' ἀκριβῶς τοῦνομα·  
μεριμνοφροντιστὰι καλοὶ τε κἀγαθοί.  
100

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

αἰβοῖ ποιηροὶ γ', οἶδα. τοὺς ἀλαζόνας  
τοὺς ὠχριῶντας τοὺς ἀνυποδήτους λέγεις,  
ὧν ὁ κακοδαίμων Σωκράτης καὶ Χαιρεφῶν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἦ ἦ σιώπα· μηδὲν εἴπης νήπιον.  
ἀλλ' εἴ τι κήδει τῶν πατρῶων ἀλφίτων,  
τούτων γενοῦ μοι σχασάμενος τὴν ἵππικὴν.  
105

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἂν μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον, εἰ δοίης γέ μοι  
τοὺς φασιανοὺς οὓς τρέφει Λεωγόρας.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἴθ' ἀντιβολῶ σ' ὧ φίλτατ' ἀνθρώπων ἐμοὶ  
ἐλθὼν διδάσκου.  
110

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ τί σοι μαθήσομαι;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῖς φασι ἀμφω τῶ λόγῳ,  
τὸν κρείττον', ὅστις ἐστί, καὶ τὸν ἥττονα.  
τούτῳ τὸν ἕτερον τοῖν λόγῳ, τὸν ἥττονα,  
νικᾶν λέγοντά φασι τὰδικώτερα.  
ἦν οὖν μάθης μοι τὸν ἄδικον τούτῳ λόγῳ,  
ἂ νῦν ὀφείλω διὰ σέ, τούτων τῶν χρεῶν  
οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην οὐδ' ἂν ὀβολὸν οὐδενί.  
115

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἂν πιθοίμην. οὐ γὰρ ἂν τλαίην ἰδεῖν  
τοὺς ἵππέας τὸ χρῶμα διακεκναισμένους.  
120

STREPSIADES

I'm not sure [100]  
just what they call themselves, but they're good men,  
fine, deep-thinking intellectual types.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Nonsense! They're a worthless bunch. I know them—  
you're talking about pale-faced charlatans,  
who haven't any shoes, like those rascals  
Socrates and Chaerephon.<sup>10</sup>

STREPSIADES

Shush, be quiet.  
Don't prattle on such childish rubbish.  
If you care about your father's daily food,  
give up racing horses and, for my sake,  
join their company.

PHEIDIPPIDES

By Dionysus, no!  
Not even if you give me as a gift  
pheasants raised by Leogoras.<sup>11</sup>

STREPSIADES

Come on, son— [110]  
you're the dearest person in the world to me.  
I'm begging you. Go there and learn something.

PHEIDIPPIDES

What is it you want me to learn?

STREPSIADES

They say  
that those men have two kinds of arguments—  
the Better, whatever that may mean,  
and the Worse. Now, of these two arguments,  
the Worse can make an unjust case and win.  
So if, for me, you'll learn to speak like this,  
to make an unjust argument, well then,  
all those debts I now owe because of you  
I wouldn't have to pay—no need to give  
an obol's worth to anyone.<sup>12</sup>

PHEIDIPPIDES

No way.  
I can't do that. With no colour in my cheeks  
I wouldn't dare to face those rich young Knights.<sup>13</sup> [120]

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἄρα μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα τῶν γ' ἐμῶν ἔδει,  
οὔτ' αὐτὸς οὔθ' ὁ ζύγιος οὔθ' ὁ σαμφόρας·  
ἀλλ' ἐξελῶ σ' ἐς κόρακας ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐ περιόψεται μ' ὁ θεῖος Μεγακλῆης  
ἄνιππον. ἀλλ' εἴσεμι, σοῦ δ' οὐ φροντιῶ. 125

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐγὼ μέντοι πεσῶν γε κείσομαι,  
ἀλλ' εὐξάμενος τοῖσι θεοῖς διδάζομαι  
αὐτὸς βαδίζων ἐς τὸ φροντιστήριον.  
πῶς οὖν γέρων ὦν κάπιλήσμων καὶ βραδὺς  
λόγων ἀκριβῶν σχινδαλάμους μαθήσομαι; 130  
ἰτητέον. τί ταῦτ' ἔχων στραγγεύομαι,  
ἀλλ' οὐχὶ κόπτω τὴν θύραν; παῖ παιδίον.

## ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

βάλλ' ἐς κόρακας· τίς ἐστ' ὁ κόψας τὴν θύραν;

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Φεῖδωνος υἱὸς Στρεψιάδης Κικυννόθεν.

## ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἀμαθῆς γε νῆ Δεῖ ὅστις οὕτως σφόδρα 135  
ἀπεριμερίμνως τὴν θύραν λελάκτικας  
καὶ φροντιῶν ἐξήμβλωκας ἐξηυρημένην.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

σύγνωθί μοι· τηλοῦ γὰρ οἰκῶ τῶν ἀγρῶν.  
ἀλλ' εἰπέ μοι τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦξημβλωμένον.

## STREPSIADES

Then, by Demeter, you won't be eating  
any of my food—not you, not your yoke horse,  
nor your branded thoroughbred. To hell with you—  
I'll toss you right out of this house.<sup>14</sup>

## PHEIDIPPIDES

All right—  
but Uncle Megacles won't let me live  
without my horses. I'm going in the house.  
I don't really care what you're going to do.

[Pheidippides stands up and goes inside the house. Strepsiades gets out of bed]

## STREPSIADES

Well, I'll not take this set back lying down.  
I'll pray to the gods and then go there myself—  
I'll get myself taught in that Thinkery.  
Still, I'm old and slow—my memory's shot. [130]  
How'm I going to learn hair-splitting arguments,  
all that fancy stuff? But I have to go.  
Why do I keep hanging back like this?  
I should be knocking on the door.

[Strepsiades marches up to the door of the Thinkery and knocks]

Hey, boy . . . little boy.

## STUDENT [from inside]

Go to Hell!

[The door opens and the student appears]

Who's been knocking on the door?

## STREPSIADES

I'm Strepsiades, the son of Pheidon,  
from Cicyna.

## STUDENT

By god, what a stupid man,  
to kick the door so hard. You just don't think.  
You made a newly found idea miscarry!

## STREPSIADES

I'm sorry. But I live in the country,  
far away from here. Tell me what's happened.  
What's miscarried?

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
ἀλλ' οὐ θέμις πλὴν τοῖς μαθηταῖσιν λέγειν. 140

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
λέγε νυν ἐμοὶ θαρρῶν· ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐτοσὶ  
ἦκω μαθητῆς ἐς τὸ φροντιστήριον.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
λέξω. νομίσαι δὲ ταῦτα χρὴ μυστήρια.  
ἀνήρετ' ἄρτι Χαιρεφῶντα Σωκράτης  
ψύλλαν ὀπόσους ἄλλοιτο τοὺς αὐτῆς πόδας· 145  
δακοῦσα γὰρ τοῦ Χαιρεφῶντος τὴν ὀφρῦν  
ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τὴν Σωκράτους ἀφήλατο.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
πῶς δῆτα διεμέτρησε;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
δεξιότατα.  
κηρὸν διατήξας, εἶτα τὴν ψύλλαν λαβὼν  
ἐνέβαιψεν ἐς τὸν κηρὸν αὐτῆς τῶ πόδε, 150  
κᾶτα ψυχεῖση περιέφυσαν Περσικαί.  
ταύτας ὑπολύσας ἀνεμέτρει τὸ χωρίον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τῆς λεπτότητος τῶν φρενῶν.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
τί δῆτ' ἂν ἕτερον εἰ πύθιοιο Σωκράτους  
φρόντισμα; 155

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
ποῖον; ἀντιβολῶ κάτειπέ μοι.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
ἀνήρετ' αὐτὸν Χαιρεφῶν ὁ Σφήττιος  
ὀπότερα τὴν γνώμην ἔχοι, τὰς ἐμπίδας  
κατὰ τὸ στόμ' ἄδειν ἢ κατὰ τοῦρροπούγιον.

STUDENT  
It's not right to mention it, [140]  
except to students.

STREPSIADES  
You needn't be concerned—  
you can tell me. I've come here as a student,  
to study at the Thinkery.

STUDENT  
I'll tell you, then.  
But you have to think of these as secrets,  
our holy mysteries. A while ago,  
a flea bit Chaerephon right on the eye brow,  
and then jumped onto Socrates' head.  
So Socrates then questioned Chaerephon  
about how many lengths of its own feet  
a flea could jump.

STREPSIADES  
How'd he measure that?

STUDENT  
Most ingeniously. He melted down some wax,  
then took the flea and dipped two feet in it. [150]  
Once that cooled, the flea had Persian slippers.  
He took those off and measured out the space.

STREPSIADES  
By Lord Zeus, what intellectual brilliance!

STUDENT  
Would you like to hear more of Socrates,  
another one of his ideas? What do you say?

STREPSIADES  
Which one? Tell me . . .

[The student pretends to be reluctant]

I'm begging you.

STUDENT  
All right.  
Chaerephon of Sphettus once asked Socrates  
whether, in his opinion, a gnat buzzed  
through its mouth or through its anal sphincter.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δητ' ἐκείνος εἶπε περὶ τῆς ἐμπίδος;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἔφασκεν εἶναι τοῦντερον τῆς ἐμπίδος 160  
στενόν· διὰ λεπτοῦ δ' ὄντος αὐτοῦ τὴν πνοὴν  
βία βαδίζειν εὐθὺ τούρροπυγίου·  
ἔπειτα κοῖλον πρὸς στενῶ προσκείμενον  
τὸν πρωκτὸν ἡχεῖν ὑπὸ βίας τοῦ πνεύματος.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

σάλπιγξ ὁ πρωκτός ἐστιν ἄρα τῶν ἐμπίδων. 165  
ὦ τρισμακάριος τοῦ διεντερεύματος.  
ἦ ῥαδίως φεύγων ἂν ἀποφύγοι δίκην  
ὅστις δίοιδε τοῦντερον τῆς ἐμπίδος.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

πρώην δέ γε γνώμην μεγάλην ἀφηρέθη  
ὑπ' ἀσκαλαβώτου.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τίνα τρόπον; κάτειπέ μοι. 170

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ζητούντος αὐτοῦ τῆς σελήνης τὰς ὁδοὺς  
καὶ τὰς περιφορὰς εἶτ' ἄνω κεχηνότος  
ἀπὸ τῆς ὀροφῆς νύκτωρ γαλεώτης κατέχεσεν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἦσθην γαλεώτη καταχέσαντι Σωκράτους.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἐχθές δέ γ' ἡμῖν δεῖπνον οὐκ ἦν ἐσπέρας. 175

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἶεν· τί οὖν πρὸς τᾶλφιτ' ἐπαλαμήσατο;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

κατὰ τῆς τραπέζης καταπάσας λεπτὴν τέφραν  
κάμφιας ὀβελίσκον εἶτα διαβήτην λαβὼν  
ἐκ τῆς παλαιστρας θοῖμάτιον ὑφείλετο.

STREPSIADES

What did Socrates say about the gnat?

STUDENT

He said that the gnat's intestinal tract [160]  
was narrow—therefore air passing through it,  
because of the constriction, was pushed with force  
towards the rear. So then that orifice,  
being a hollow space beside a narrow tube,  
transmits the noise caused by the force of air.

STREPSIADES

So a gnat's arse hole is a giant trumpet!  
O triply blessed man who could do this,  
anatomize the anus of a gnat!  
A man who knows a gnat's guts inside out  
would have no trouble winning law suits.

STUDENT

Just recently he lost a great idea—  
a lizard stole it!

STREPSIADES

How'd that happen? Tell me. [170]

STUDENT

He was studying movements of the moon—  
its trajectory and revolutions.  
One night, as he was gazing up, open mouthed,  
staring skyward, a lizard on the roof  
relieved itself on him.

STREPSIADES

A lizard crapped on Socrates!

That's good!

STUDENT

Then, last night we had no dinner.

STREPSIADES

Well, well. What did Socrates come up with,  
to get you all some food to eat?

STUDENT

He spread some ashes thinly on the table,  
then seized a spit, went to the wrestling school,  
picked up a queer, and robbed him of his cloak,  
then sold the cloak to purchase dinner.<sup>15</sup>

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δῆτ' ἐκείνον τὸν Θαλῆν θαυμάζομεν;  
 ἄνοιγ' ἄνοιγ' ἀνύσας τὸ φροντιστήριον,  
 καὶ δείξον ὡς τάχιστα μοι τὸν Σωκράτη.  
 μαθητιῶ γάρ· ἀλλ' ἀνοιγε τὴν θύραν.  
 ὦ Ἡράκλεις ταυτὶ ποδαπὰ τὰ θηρία;

180

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

τί ἐθαύμασας; τῷ σοι δοκοῦσιν εἰκένας;

185

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοῖς ἐκ Πύλου ληφθεῖσι τοῖς Λακωνικοῖς.  
 ἀτὰρ τί ποτ' ἐς τὴν γῆν βλέπουσιν οὗτοι;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ζητοῦσιν οὗτοι τὰ κατὰ γῆς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

βολβοὺς ἄρα

ζητοῦσι. μὴ νυν τουτογὶ φροντίζετε·  
 ἐγὼ γὰρ οἶδ' ἵν' εἰσὶ μεγάλοι καὶ καλοί.  
 τί γὰρ οἶδε δρῶσιν οἱ σφόδρ' ἐγκεκυφότες;

190

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

οὗτοι δ' ἐρεβοδιφῶσιν ὑπὸ τὸν Τάρταρον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δῆθ' ὁ πρωκτὸς ἐς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέπει;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτὸν ἀστρονομεῖν διδάσκεται.  
 ἀλλ' εἴσιθ', ἵνα μὴ 'κείνος ὑμῶν ἐπιτύχη.

195

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μήπω γε μήπω γ'. ἀλλ' ἐπιμεινάντων, ἵνα  
 αὐτοῖσι κοινώσω τι πραγματίον ἐμόν.

STREPSIADES

And we still admire Thales after that?<sup>16</sup> [180]  
 Come on, now, open up the Thinkery—  
 let me see Socrates without delay.  
 I'm dying to learn. So open up the door.

[The doors of the Thinkery slide open to reveal Socrates' students studying on a porch (not inside a room). They are in variously absurd positions and are all very thin and pale]

By Hercules, who are all these creatures!  
 What country are they from?

STUDENT

You look surprised.  
 What do they look like to you?

STREPSIADES

Like prisoners—  
 those Spartan ones from Pylos.<sup>17</sup> But tell me—  
 Why do these ones keep staring at the earth?

STUDENT

They're searching out what lies beneath the ground.

STREPSIADES

Ah, they're looking for some bulbs. Well now,  
 you don't need to worry any longer,  
 not about that. I know where bulbs are found, [190]  
 lovely big ones, too. What about them?  
 What are they doing like that, all doubled up?

STUDENT

They're sounding out the depths of Tartarus.

STREPSIADES

Why are their arse holes gazing up to heaven?

STUDENT

Directed studies in astronomy.

[The Student addresses the other students in the room]

Go inside. We don't want Socrates  
 to find you all in here.

STREPSIADES

Not yet, not yet.  
 Let them stay like this, so I can tell them  
 what my little problem is.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐχ οἶόν τ' αὐτοῖσι πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα  
 ἔξω διατρίβειν πολὺν ἄγαν ἐστὶν χρόνον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πρὸς τῶν θεῶν τί γὰρ τάδ' ἐστίν; εἰπέ μοι. 200

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἀστρονομία μὲν αὕτηί.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τουτὶ δὲ τί;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

γεωμετρία.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' οὖν τί ἐστὶ χρήσιμον;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

γῆν ἀναμετρήσαι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πότερα τὴν κληρουχικήν;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τὴν σύμπασαν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀστειὸν λέγεις.

τὸ γὰρ σόφισμα δημοτικὸν καὶ χρήσιμον. 205

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

αὕτη δέ σοι γῆς περίοδος πάσης. ὄρᾱς;  
 αἶδε μὲν Ἀθῆναι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί σὺ λέγεις; οὐ πείθομαι,  
 ἐπεὶ δικαστὰς οὐχ ὀρῶ καθημένους.

STUDENT

It's not allowed.

They can't spend too much time outside,  
 not in the open air.

[The students get up from their studying positions and disappear into the interior of the Thinkery. Strepsiades starts inspecting the equipment on the walls and on the tables]

STREPSIADES

My goodness,  
 what is this thing? Explain it to me. [200]

STUDENT

That there's astronomy.

STREPSIADES

And what's this?

STUDENT

That's geometry.

STREPSIADES

What use is that?

STUDENT

It's used to measure land.

STREPSIADES

You mean those lands  
 handed out by lottery.<sup>18</sup>

STUDENT

Not just that—  
 it's for land in general.

STREPSIADES

A fine idea—  
 useful . . . democratic, too.

STUDENT

Look over here—  
 here's a map of the entire world. See?  
 Right there, that's Athens.

STREPSIADES

What do you mean?  
 I don't believe you. There are no jury men—  
 I don't see them sitting on their benches.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ὡς τοῦτ' ἀληθῶς Ἀττικὸν τὸ χωρίον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ ποῦ Κικυννῆς εἰσὶν οὐμοὶ δημόται; 210

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἐνταῦθ' ἔνεισιν. ἡ δέ γ' Εὐβοί, ὡς ὀρᾶς,  
ἡδὲ παρατέταται μακρὰ πόρρω πάνυ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἶδ'· ὑπὸ γὰρ ἡμῶν παρετάθη καὶ Περικλέους.  
ἀλλ' ἡ Λακεδαίμων ποῦ 'σθ';

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ὅπου 'στίν; αὐτήϊ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὡς ἐγγὺς ἡμῶν. τοῦτο πάνυ φροντίζετε,  
ταύτην ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἀπαγαγεῖν πόρρω πάνυ. 215

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐχ οἶόν τε.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ Δι' οἰμώξεσθ' ἄρα.  
φέρε τίς γὰρ οὗτος οὐπὶ τῆς κρεμάθρας ἀνήρ;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

αὐτός.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τίς αὐτός;

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ

Σωκράτης.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ Σώκρατες.  
ἴθ' οὗτος, ἀναβόησον αὐτόν μοι μέγα.

STUDENT

No, no—this space is really Attica.<sup>19</sup>

STREPSIADES

Where are the citizens of Cicynna,  
the people in my deme?<sup>20</sup> [210]

STUDENT

They're right here.

This is Euboea, as you can see,  
beside us, really stretched a long way out.

STREPSIADES

I know—we pulled it apart, with Pericles.<sup>21</sup>  
Whereabouts is Sparta?

STUDENT

Where is it? Here.

STREPSIADES

It's close to us. You must rethink the place—  
shift it—put it far away from us.

STUDENT

Can't do that.

STREPSIADES [*threatening*]

Do it, by god, or I'll make you cry!

[*StrepsiaDES notices Socrates descending from above in a basket suspended from a rope*]

Hey, who's the man in the basket—up there?

STUDENT

The man himself.

STREPSIADES

Who's that?

STUDENT

Socrates.

STREPSIADES

Socrates! Hey, call out to him for me—  
make it loud. [220]



ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ  
αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν σὺ κάλεσον· οὐ γάρ μοι σχολή. 220

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
ὦ Σώκρατες,  
ὦ Σωκρατίδιον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ  
τί με καλεῖς ὠφήμερε;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
πρώτον μὲν ὅ τι δρᾶς ἀντιβολῶ κάτειπέ μοι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ  
ἀεροβατῶ καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον. 225

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ ταρροῦ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑπερφρονεῖς,  
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, εἴπερ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ  
οὐ γὰρ ἄν ποτε  
ἐξηῦρον ὀρθῶς τὰ μετέωρα πράγματα,  
εἰ μὴ κρεμάσας τὸ νόημα καὶ τὴν φροντίδα  
λεπτὴν καταμείζας ἐς τὸν ὅμοιον ἀέρα. 230  
εἰ δ' ὦν χαμαὶ τᾶνω κάτωθεν ἐσκόπουν,  
οὐκ ἄν ποθ' ἠῦρον· οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ἡ γῆ βία  
ἔλκει πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν ἰκμάδα τῆς φροντίδος.  
πάσχει δὲ ταυτὸ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ κάρδαμα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
τί φῆς;  
ἡ φροντίς ἔλκει τὴν ἰκμάδ' ἐς τὰ κάρδαμα;  
ἴθι νυν κατάβηθ' ὦ Σωκρατίδιον ὡς ἐμέ,  
ἵνα με διδάξης ὡνπερ οὐνεκ' ἐλήλυθα. 235

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ  
ἦλθες δὲ κατὰ τί;

STUDENT  
You'll have to call to him yourself.  
I'm too busy now.

[The Student exits into the interior of the house]

STREPSIADES  
O Socrates . . .  
my dear little Socrates . . . hello . . .

SOCRATES  
Why call on me, you creature of a day?

STREPSIADES  
Well, first of all, tell me what you're doing.

SOCRATES  
I tread the air, as I contemplate the sun.

STREPSIADES  
You're looking down upon the gods up there,  
in that basket? Why not do it from the ground,  
if that's what you're doing?

SOCRATES  
Impossible!  
I'd never come up with a single thing  
about celestial phenomena,  
if I did not suspend my mind up high,  
to mix my subtle thoughts with what's like them— [230]  
the air. If I turned my mind to lofty things,  
but stayed there on the ground, I'd never make  
the least discovery. For the earth, you see,  
draws moist thoughts down by force into itself—  
the same process takes place with water cress.

STREPSIADES  
What are you talking about? Does the mind  
draw moisture into water cress? Come down,  
my dear little Socrates, down here to me,  
so you can teach me what I've come to learn.

[Socrates' basket slowly descends]

SOCRATES  
Why have you come?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

βουλόμενος μαθεῖν λέγειν.  
 ὑπὸ γὰρ τόκων χρηστών τε δυσκολωτάτων 240  
 ἄγομαι φέρομαι, τὰ χρήματ' ἐνεχυράζομαι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

πόθεν δ' ὑπόχρεως σαυτὸν ἔλαθες γενόμενος;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νόσος μ' ἐπέτριψεν ἵππικὴ δεινὴ φαγεῖν.  
 ἀλλά με δίδαξον τὸν ἕτερον τοῖν σοῖν λόγῳ,  
 τὸν μηδὲν ἀποδιδόντα. μισθὸν δ' ὄντιν' ἂν 245  
 πράττει μ' ὁμοῦμαί σοι καταθήσειν τοὺς θεούς.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ποιούς θεούς ὁμεί σύ; πρῶτον γὰρ θεοὶ  
 ἡμῖν νόμισμ' οὐκ ἔστι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τῷ γὰρ ὄμνυτ'; ἢ  
 σιδαρέοισιν ὡσπερ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

βούλει τὰ θεῖα πράγματ' εἰδέναι σαφῶς 250  
 ἅττ' ἐστὶν ὀρθῶς;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ Δι' εἴπερ ἔστι γε.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

καὶ ξυγγενέσθαι ταῖς Νεφέλαισιν ἐς λόγους,  
 ταῖς ἡμετέραισι δαίμοσιν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μάλιστά γε.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

κάθιζε τοῖνον ἐπὶ τὸν ἱερὸν σκίμποδα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἰδοὺ κάθημαι. 255

STREPSIADES

I want to learn to argue.  
 I'm being pillaged—ruined by interest [240]  
 and by creditors I can't pay off—  
 they're slapping liens on all my property.

SOCRATES

How come you got in such a pile of debt  
 without your knowledge?

STREPSIADES

I've been ravaged  
 by disease—I'm horse sick. It's draining me  
 in the most dreadful way. But please teach me  
 one of your two styles of arguing, the one  
 which never has to discharge any debt.  
 Whatever payment you want me to make,  
 I promise you I'll pay—by all the gods.

SOCRATES

What gods do you intend to swear by?  
 To start with, the gods hold no currency with us.

STREPSIADES

Then, what currency do you use to swear?  
 Is it iron coin, like in Byzantium?

SOCRATES

Do you want to know the truth of things divine, [250]  
 the way they really are?

STREPSIADES

Yes, by god, I do,  
 if that's possible.

SOCRATES

And to commune and talk  
 with our own deities the Clouds?

STREPSIADES

Yes, I do.

SOCRATES

Then sit down on the sacred couch.

STREPSIADES

All right.  
 I'm sitting down.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τουτονὶ τοῖνυν λαβέ  
τὸν στέφανον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐπὶ τί στέφανον; οἴμοι Σώκρατες  
ὥσπερ με τὸν Ἀθάμανθ' ὅπως μὴ θύσετε.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα τοὺς τελουμένους  
ἡμεῖς ποιοῦμεν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἶτα δὴ τί κερδανῶ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

λέγειν γενήσει τρίμμα κρόταλον παιπάλη. 260  
ἀλλ' ἔχ' ἀτρεμί.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐ ψεύσει γέ με·  
καταπαττόμενος γὰρ παιπάλη γενήσομαι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

εὐφημεῖν χρὴ τὸν πρεσβύτην καὶ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐπακούειν.  
ὦ δέσποτ' ἀναξ ἀμέτρητ' Ἀήρ, ὃς ἔχεις τὴν γῆν μετέωρον,  
λαμπρός τ' Αἰθήρ σεμναί τε θεαὶ Νεφέλαι βροντησικέ-  
ραυνοι, 265  
ἄρθητε φάνητ' ὦ δέσποιναί τῶ φροντιστῆ μετέωροι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μήπω μήπω γε πρὶν ἂν τουτὶ πτύξωμαι, μὴ καταβρεχθῶ.  
τὸ δὲ μηδὲ κυνῆν οἴκοθεν ἐλθεῖν ἐμὲ τὸν κακοδαίμον'  
ἔχοντα.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἔλθετε δῆτ' ὦ πολυτίμητοι Νεφέλαι τῶδ' εἰς ἐπίδειξιν·  
εἴτ' ἐπ' Ὀλύμπου κορυφαῖς ἱεραῖς χιονοβλήτοισι  
κάθησθε, 270

SOCRATES

Take this wreath.

STREPSIADES

Why a wreath?

Oh dear, Socrates, don't offer me up  
in sacrifice, like Athamas.<sup>22</sup>

SOCRATES

No, no.

We go through all this for everyone—  
it's their initiation.

STREPSIADES

What do I get?

SOCRATES

You'll learn to be a clever talker,  
to rattle off a speech, to strain your words  
like flour. Just keep still. [260]

[Socrates sprinkles flour all over Strepsiades]

STREPSIADES

By god, that's no lie!

I'll turn into flour if you keep sprinkling me.

SOCRATES

Old man, be quiet. Listen to the prayer.

[Socrates shuts his eyes to recite his prayer]

O Sovereign Lord, O Boundless Air,  
who keeps the earth suspended here in space,  
O Bright Sky, O Sacred Goddesses—  
the Thunder-bearing Clouds—arise,  
you holy ladies, issue forth on high,  
before the man who holds you in his mind.

STREPSIADES [lifting his cloak to cover his head]

Not yet, not yet. Not 'til I wrap this cloak  
like this so I don't get soaked. What bad luck,  
to leave my home without a cap on.

SOCRATES [ignoring Strepsiades]

Come now, you highly honoured Clouds, come—  
manifest yourselves to this man here—  
whether you now sit atop Olympus,  
on those sacred snow-bound mountain peaks, [270]

εἴτ' Ὀκεανοῦ πατρὸς ἐν κήποις ἱερὸν χορὸν ἴστατε Νύ-  
φαις,  
εἴτ' ἄρα Νείλου προχοαῖς ὑδάτων χρυσέαις ἀρύτεσθε πρό-  
χοισιν,  
ἢ Μαιῶτιν λίμνην ἔχετ' ἢ σκόπελον νιφόεντα Μίμαντος·  
ὑπακούσατε δεξάμεναι θυσίαν καὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖσι χαρεῖσαι.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀέναοι Νεφέλαι 275  
ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον,  
πατρὸς ἀπ' Ὀκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος  
ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἐπὶ  
δενδροκόμους, ἵνα 280  
τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιὰς ἀφορώμεθα,  
καρπούς τ' ἀρδομένην ἱερὰν χθόνα,  
καὶ ποταμῶν ζαθέων κελαδήματα,  
καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον·  
ὄμμα γὰρ αἰθέρος ἀκάματον σελαγεῖται 285  
μαρμαρέαις ἐν αὐγαῖς.  
ἀλλ' ἀποσεισάμεναι νέφος ὄμβριον  
ἀθανάτας ιδέας ἐπιδώμεθα  
τηλεσκόπῳ ὄμματι γαίαν. 290

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὦ μέγα σεμναὶ Νεφέλαι φανερώς ἠκούσατέ μου καλέσα-  
ντος.  
ἦσθου φωνῆς ἅμα καὶ βροντῆς μυκησαμένης θεοσέπτου;

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ σέβομαί γ' ὦ πολυτίμητοι καὶ βούλομαι ἀνταποπαρδεῖν  
πρὸς τὰς βροντάς· οὕτως αὐτὰς τετρεμαίνω καὶ πεφόβη-  
μαι·  
κεὶ θέμις ἐστίν, νυνὶ γ' ἤδη, κεὶ μὴ θέμις ἐστί, χεσεῖω. 295

or form the holy choruses with nymphs  
in gardens of their father Ocean,  
or gather up the waters of the Nile  
in golden flagons at the river's mouths,  
or dwell beside the marsh of Maeotis  
or snowy rocks of Mimas—hear my call,  
accept my sacrifice, and then rejoice  
in this holy offering I make.

CHORUS [*heard offstage*]

Everlasting Clouds—  
let us arise, let us reveal  
our moist and natural radiance—  
moving from the roaring deep  
of father Ocean to the tops  
of tree-lined mountain peaks, [280]  
where we see from far away  
the lofty heights, the sacred earth,  
whose fruits we feed with water,  
the murmuring of sacred rivers,  
the roaring of the deep-resounding sea.  
For the unwearied eye of heaven  
blazes forth its glittering beams.  
Shake off this misty shapelessness  
from our immortal form and gaze upon  
the earth with our far-reaching eyes. [290]

## SOCRATES

O you magnificent and holy Clouds,  
you've clearly heard my call.

[*To Strepsiades*]

Did you hear that voice  
intermingled with the awesome growl of thunder?

## STREPSIADES

O you most honoured sacred goddesses,  
in answer to your thunder call I'd like to fart—  
it's made me so afraid—if that's all right . . .

[*Strepsiades pull down his pants and farts loudly in the direction of the offstage Chorus*]

Oh, oh, whether right nor not, I need to shit.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐ μὴ σκώψει μηδὲ ποιήσεις ἄπερ οἱ τρυγοδαίμονες οὔτοι,  
ἀλλ' εὐφήμει· μέγα γάρ τι θεῶν κινεῖται σμήνος αἰοδαῖς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

παρθένοι ὀμβροφόροι  
ἔλθωμεν λιπαρὰν χθόνα Παλλάδος, εὐάνδρον γὰν 300  
Κέκροπος ὀψόμεναι πολυήρατον·  
οὐ σέβας ἀρρήτων ἱερῶν, ἵνα  
μυστοδόκος δόμος  
ἐν τελεταῖς ἀγίαις ἀναδείκνυται,  
οὐρανίους τε θεοῖς δωρήματα, 305  
ναοὶ θ' ὑπερεφεῖς καὶ ἀγάλματα,  
καὶ πρόσοδοι μακάρων ἱερώταται,  
εὐστέφανοί τε θεῶν θυσίαι θαλίαι τε,  
παντοδαπαῖς ἐν ὥραις, 310  
ἦρί τ' ἐπερχομένῳ Βρομία χάρις,  
εὐκελάδων τε χορῶν ἐρεθίσματα,  
καὶ μούσα βαρύβρομος αὐλῶν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πρὸς τοῦ Διὸς ἀντιβολῶ σε φράσον, τίνες εἶσ' ὦ Σώκρα-  
τες αὐται 314  
αἱ φθελγόμεναι τοῦτο τὸ σεμνόν; μῶν ἠρῶναί τινές εἰσιν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἦκιστ' ἀλλ' οὐράνιαι Νεφέλαι μεγάλαι θεαὶ ἀνδράσιν ἀρ-  
γοῖς·  
αἴπερ γνώμην καὶ διάλεξιν καὶ νοῦν ἡμῖν παρέχουσιν  
καὶ τερατείαν καὶ περίλεξιν καὶ κροῦσιν καὶ κατάληψιν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀκούσασ' αὐτῶν τὸ φθέγμ' ἢ ψυχὴ μου πεπότη-  
ται, 319  
καὶ λεπτολογεῖν ἤδη ζητεῖ καὶ περὶ καπνοῦ στενολοσχεῖν,

SOCRATES

Stop being so idiotic, acting like  
a stupid damn comedian. Keep quiet.  
A great host of deities is coming here—  
they're going to sing.

CHORUS [*still offstage*]

O you maidens bringing rain—  
let's move on to that brilliant place, [300]  
to gaze upon the land of Pallas,  
where such noble men inhabit  
Cecrops' lovely native home,<sup>23</sup>  
where they hold those sacred rites  
no one may speak about,  
where the temple of the mysteries  
is opened up in holy festivals,<sup>24</sup>  
with gifts for deities in heaven,  
what lofty temples, holy statues,  
most sacred supplication to the gods,  
with garlands for each holy sacrifice,  
and festivals of every kind [310]  
in every season of the year,  
including, when the spring arrives,  
that joyful Dionysian time,  
with rousing choruses of song,  
resounding music of the pipes.

STREPSIADES

By god, Socrates, tell me, I beg you,  
who these women are who sing so solemnly.  
Are they some special kind of heroines?

SOCRATES

No—they're heavenly Clouds, great goddesses  
for lazy men—from them we get our thoughts,  
our powers of speech, our comprehension,  
our gift for fantasy and endless talk,  
our power to strike responsive chords in speech  
and then rebut opponents' arguments.

STREPSIADES

Ah, that must be why, as I heard their voice,  
my soul took wing, and now I'm really keen  
to babble on of trivialities,  
to argue smoke and mirrors, to deflate [320]  
opinions with a small opinion of my own,

καὶ γνωμίδιᾳ γνώμην νύξασ' ἑτέρῳ λόγῳ ἀντιλογῆσαι.  
ὥστ' εἴ πως ἔστιν ἰδεῖν αὐτὰς ἤδη φανερώς ἐπιθυμῶ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

βλέπε νυν δευρὶ πρὸς τὴν Πάρνηθ'· ἤδη γὰρ ὀρῶ κατιούσας  
ἡσυχῇ αὐτάς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

φέρε ποῦ; δείξον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

χωροῦσ' αὐται πάνυ πολλαὶ  
διὰ τῶν κοίλων καὶ τῶν δασέων, αὐται πλάγαι. 325

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί τὸ χρῆμα;  
ὡς οὐ καθορῶ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

παρὰ τὴν εἴσοδον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἤδη νυνὶ μόλις οὕτως.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

νῦν γέ τοι ἤδη καθορᾶς αὐτάς, εἰ μὴ λημᾶς κολοκύνταις.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νὴ Δί' ἔγωγ', ὦ πολυτίμητοι· πάντα γὰρ ἤδη κατέχουσιν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ταύτας μέντοι σὺ θεὰς οὔσας οὐκ ἤδησθ' οὐδ' ἐνόμιζες;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' ὀμίχλην καὶ δρόσον αὐτὰς ἡγούμην καὶ καπνὸν  
εἶναι. 330

to answer someone's reasoned argument  
with my own counter-argument. So now,  
I'd love to see them here in front of me,  
if that's possible.

SOCRATES

Just look over there—  
towards Mount Parnes. I see them coming,  
slowly moving over here.<sup>25</sup>

STREPSIADES

Where? Point them out.

SOCRATES

They're coming down here through the valleys—  
a whole crowd of them—there in the thickets,  
right beside you.

STREPSIADES

This is weird. I don't see them.

SOCRATES [*pointing into the wings of the theatre*]

There—in the entrance way.

STREPSIADES

Ah, now I see—  
but I can barely make them out.

[*The Clouds enter from the wings*]

SOCRATES

There—  
surely you can see them now, unless your eyes  
are swollen up like pumpkins.

STREPSIADES

I see them.  
My god, what worthy noble presences!  
They're taking over the entire space.

SOCRATES

You weren't aware that they are goddesses?  
You had no faith in them?

STREPSIADES

I'd no idea.  
I thought clouds were mist and dew and vapour.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐ γὰρ μὰ Δί' οἶσθ' ὅτι πλείστους αὐταὶ βόσκουσι σοφιστάς,  
 Θουριομάντεις ἰατροτέχνας σφραγιδονυχαργοκομῆτας,  
 κυκλίων τε χορῶν ἄσματοκάμπτας ἄνδρας μετεωροφένε-  
 κας,  
 οὐδὲν δρῶντας βόσκουσ' ἀργούς, ὅτι ταύτας μουσοποιούσιν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἐποίουν ὑγρῶν Νεφελῶν στρεπταιγλῶν δάιον  
 ὀρμάν, 335  
 πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ πρημαινούσας τε θυέλλας,  
 εἶτ' ἀερίας διεράς, γαμφίους οἰωνοὺς ἀερονηχεῖς,  
 ὄμβρους θ' ὑδάτων δροσερῶν Νεφελῶν· εἶτ' ἀντ' αὐτῶν  
 κατέπινον  
 κεστρῶν τεμάχη μεγαλῶν ἀγαθῶν κρέα τ' ὀρνίθια κιχηλῶν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

διὰ μέντοι τάσδ' οὐχὶ δικαίως; 340

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

λέξον δὴ μοι, τί παθοῦσαι,  
 εἴπερ νεφέλαι γ' εἰσὶν ἀληθῶς, θνηταῖς εἴξασι γυναιξίν;  
 οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖναί γ' εἰσὶ τοιαῦται.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

φέρε ποῖαι γὰρ τινές εἰσιν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδα σαφῶς· εἴξασιν γοῦν ἐρίοισιν πεπταμένοισιν,  
 κοῦχὶ γυναιξίν μὰ Δί' οὐδ' ὅτιοῦν· αὐταὶ δὲ ῥίνας ἔχουσιν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀπόκριναί νυν ἄτ' ἂν ἔρωμαι. 345

SOCRATES

You didn't realize these goddesses support a multitude of charlatans— prophetic seers from Thurium, quacks who specialize in books on medicine, lazy long-haired types with onyx signet rings, poets who produce the twisted choral music for dithyrambic songs, those with airy minds— all such men so active doing nothing the Clouds support, since in their poetry these people celebrate the Clouds.

STREPSIADES

Ah ha, so that's why they poeticize “the whirling radiance of watery clouds as they advance so ominously,” “waving hairs of hundred-headed Typho,”<sup>26</sup> with “roaring tempests,” and then “liquid breeze,” or “crook-taloned, sky-floating birds of prey,” “showers of rain from dewy clouds”—and then, as a reward for this, they stuff themselves on slices carved from some huge tasty fish or from a thrush.<sup>27</sup>

SOCRATES

Yes, thanks to these Clouds. [340]

Is that not truly just?

STREPSIADES

All right, tell me this— if they're really clouds, what's happened to them? They look just like mortal human women. The clouds up there are not the least like that.

SOCRATES

What are they like?

STREPSIADES

I don't know exactly. They look like wool once it's been pulled apart— not like women, by god, not in the least. These ones here have noses.

SOCRATES

Let me ask you something. Will you answer me?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

λέγε νυν ταχέως ὅ τι βούλει.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἤδη ποτ' ἀναβλέψας εἶδες νεφέλην κενταύρω ὁμοίαν,  
ἢ παρδάλει ἢ λύκω ἢ ταύρω;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ Δί' ἔγωγ'. εἶτα τί τοῦτο;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

γίγνονται πάνθ' ὅ τι βούλονται· κᾶτ' ἦν μὲν ἴδωσι κομήτην  
ἄγριόν τινα τῶν λασίων τούτων, οἷόνπερ τὸν Ξενοφάντου,  
σκώπτουσαι τὴν μανίαν αὐτοῦ κενταύροις ἤκασαν αὐτάς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί γὰρ ἦν ἄρπαγα τῶν δημοσίων κατἴδωσι Σίμωνα, τί  
δράσωιν; 351

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀποφαίνουσαι τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ λύκοι ἐξαίφνης ἐγένοντο.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ταῦτ' ἄρα ταῦτα Κλεώνυμον αὐται τὸν ῥίψασπιν χθῆς  
ἰδοῦσαι,  
ὅτι δειλότατον τοῦτον ἐώρων, ἔλαφοι διὰ τοῦτ' ἐγένοντο.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

καὶ νῦν γ' ὅτι Κλεισθένη εἶδον, ὄρᾳς, διὰ τοῦτ' ἐγένοντο  
γυναῖκες. 355

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

χαίρετε τοίνυν ᾧ δέσπομαι· καὶ νῦν, εἴπερ τινὶ κάλλω,  
οὐρανομήκη ῥήξατε κάμοι φωνήν, ᾧ παμβασιλείαι.

STREPSIADES

Ask me what you want.

Fire away.

SOCRATES

Have you ever gazed up there  
and seen a cloud shaped like a centaur,  
or a leopard, wolf, or bull?

STREPSIADES

Yes, I have.

So what?

SOCRATES

They become anything they want.  
So if they see some hairy savage type,  
one of those really wild and woolly men,  
like Xenophantes' son, they mock his moods,  
transforming their appearance into centaurs.<sup>28</sup>

[350]

STREPSIADES

What if they glimpse a thief of public funds,  
like Simon? What do they do then?<sup>29</sup>

SOCRATES

They expose  
just what he's truly like—they change at once,  
transform themselves to wolves.

STREPSIADES

Ah ha, I see.  
So that's why yesterday they changed to deer.  
They must have caught sight of Cleonymos—  
the man who threw away his battle shield—  
they knew he was fearful coward.<sup>30</sup>

SOCRATES

And now it's clear they've seen Cleisthenes—  
that's why, as you can see, they've changed to women.<sup>31</sup>

STREPSIADES [to the Chorus of Clouds]

All hail to you, lady goddesses.  
And now, if you have ever spoken out  
to other men, let me hear your voice,  
you queenly powers.



## ΧΟΡΟΣ

χαῖρ' ὦ πρεσβῦτα παλαιογενές θηρατὰ λόγων φιλομούσων,  
 σὺ τε λεπτοτάτων λήρων ἱερεῦ, φράζε πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὅ τι  
 χρήσεις·  
 οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλω γ' ὑπακούσαιμεν τῶν νῦν μετεωροσοφι-  
 στῶν 360  
 πλὴν ἢ Προδικῶ, τῶ μὲν σοφίας καὶ γνώμης οὔνεκα, σοὶ δέ,  
 ὅτι βρενθύνει τ' ἐν ταῖσιν ὁδοῖς καὶ τῶφθαλμῶ παραβάλλεις,  
 κἀνυπόδητος κακὰ πόλλ' ἀνέχει κἀφ' ἡμῖν σεμνοπροσωπείς.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ γῆ τοῦ φθέγματος, ὡς ἱερὸν καὶ σεμνὸν καὶ τερατῶδες.

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

αὐται γάρ τοι μόναι εἰσὶ θεαί, τᾶλλα δὲ πάντ' ἐστὶ φλύα-  
 ρος. 365

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὁ Ζεὺς δ' ἡμῖν, φέρε πρὸς τῆς γῆς, οὐλύμπιος οὐ θεὸς ἐστίν;

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ποῖος Ζεὺς; οὐ μὴ ληρήσεις· οὐδ' ἔστι Ζεὺς.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί λέγεις σύ;  
 ἀλλὰ τίς ἔει; τουτὶ γὰρ ἔμοιγ' ἀπόφηναι πρῶτον ἀπάντων.

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

αὐται δήπου· μεγάλοις δέ σ' ἐγὼ σημείοις αὐτὸ διδάξω.  
 φέρε ποῦ γὰρ πώποτ' ἄνευ Νεφελῶν ὕοντ' ἤδη τεθέασαι;  
 καίτοι χρῆν αἰθρίας ἕιν αὐτόν, ταύτας δ' ἀποδημεῖν.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τουτό γέ τοι δὴ τῶ νῦν λόγῳ εὖ προσέφυσ-  
 σας·  
 καίτοι πρότερον τὸν Δι' ἀληθῶς ᾄμην διὰ κοσκίνου οὐρεῖν.  
 ἀλλ' ὅστις ὁ βροντῶν ἐστὶ φράσον· τουτό με ποιεῖ τετρα-  
 μαίνειν.

## CHORUS LEADER

Greetings to you, old man born long ago,  
 hunter in love with arts of argument—  
 you, too, high priest of subtlest nonsense,  
 tell us what you want. Of all the experts  
 in celestial matters at the present time,  
 we take note of no one else but you—  
 and Prodicus<sup>32</sup>—because he's sharp and wise,  
 while you go swaggering along the street,  
 in bare feet, shifting both eyes back and forth.  
 You keep moving on through many troubles,  
 looking proud of your relationship with us.

[360]

## STREPSIADES

By the Earth, what voices these Clouds have—  
 so holy, reverent, and marvelous!

## SOCRATES

Well, they're the only deities we have—  
 the rest are just so much hocus pocus.

## STREPSIADES

Hang on—by the Earth, isn't Zeus a god,  
 the one up there on Mount Olympus?

## SOCRATES

What sort of god is Zeus? Why spout such rubbish?  
 There's no such being as Zeus.

## STREPSIADES

What do you mean?  
 Then who brings on the rain? First answer that.

## SOCRATES

Why, these women do. I'll prove that to you  
 with persuasive evidence. Just tell me—  
 where have you ever seen the rain come down  
 without the Clouds being there? If Zeus brings rain,  
 then he should do so when the sky is clear,  
 when there are no Clouds in view.

[370]

## STREPSIADES

By Apollo, you've made a good point there—  
 it helps your argument. I used to think  
 rain was really Zeus pissing through a sieve.  
 Tell me who causes thunder? That scares me.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

αὐται βροντῶσι κυλινδόμεναι. 375

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τῷ τρόπῳ ᾧ πάντα σὺ τολμῶν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὅταν ἐμπλησθῶσ' ὕδατος πολλοῦ κἀναγκασθῶσι φέρεσθαι,  
κατακρημνόμεναι πλήρεις ὄμβρου δι' ἀνάγκην, εἶτα βαρεῖαι  
εἰς ἀλλήλας ἐπίπτουσαι ῥήγνυνται καὶ παταγοῦσιν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὁ δ' ἀναγκάζων ἐστὶ τίς αὐτάς, οὐχ ὁ Ζεὺς, ὥστε φέρεσθαι;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἦκιστ' ἀλλ' αἰθέριος Δῖνος.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Δῖνος; τουτί μ' ἐλελήθειν, 380  
ὁ Ζεὺς οὐκ ὦν, ἀλλ' ἀντ' αὐτοῦ Δῖνος νυνὶ βασιλεύων.  
ἀτὰρ οὐδέν πω περὶ τοῦ πατάγου καὶ τῆς βροντῆς μ'  
ἐδίδαξας.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ ἦκουσάς μου τὰς Νεφέλας ὕδατος μεστὰς ὅτι φημὶ  
ἐπιπτούσας εἰς ἀλλήλας παταγεῖν διὰ τὴν πυκνότητα;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

φέρε τουτὶ τῷ χρῆσι πιστεύειν; 385

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀπὸ σαυτοῦ γὰρ σε διδάξω.  
ἤδη ζωμοῦ Παναθηναίοις ἐμπλησθεῖς εἶτ' ἑταράχθης  
τὴν γαστέρα, καὶ κλόνος ἐξαίφνης αὐτὴν διεκορκορύγησεν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω καὶ δεινὰ ποιεῖ γ' εὐθύς μοι, καὶ τετάρακται  
χῶσπερ βροντῆ τὸ ζωμίδιον παταγεῖ καὶ δεινὰ κέκραγεν·  
ἀτρέμας πρῶτον παππάξ παππάξ, κᾶπειτ' ἐπάγει παπα-  
παππάξ, 390

SOCRATES

These Clouds do, as they roll around.

STREPSIADES

But how?

Explain that, you who dares to know it all.

SOCRATES

When they are filled with water to the brim  
and then, suspended there with all that rain,  
are forced to move, they bump into each other.  
They're so big, they burst with a great boom.

STREPSIADES

But what's forcing them to move at all?  
Doesn't Zeus do that?

SOCRATES

No—that's the aerial Vortex.<sup>33</sup>

STREPSIADES

Vortex? Well, that's something I didn't know. [380]  
So Zeus is now no more, and Vortex rules  
instead of him. But you still have not explained  
a thing about those claps of thunder.

SOCRATES

Weren't you listening to me? I tell you,  
when the Clouds are full of water and collide,  
they're so thickly packed they make a noise.

STREPSIADES

Come on now—who'd ever believe that stuff?

SOCRATES

I'll explain, using you as a test case.  
Have you ever gorged yourself on stew  
at the Panathenaea and later  
had an upset stomach—then suddenly  
some violent movement made it rumble?<sup>34</sup>

STREPSIADES

Yes, by Apollo! It does weird things—  
I feel unsettled. That small bit of stew  
rumbles around and makes strange noises,  
just like thunder. At first it's quite quiet— [390]  
“pappax pappax”—then it starts getting louder—

χῶταν χέζω, κομιδῆ βροντᾶ παπαπαππὰξ ὡσπερ ἐκεῖναι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

σκέψαι τοῖνυν ἀπὸ γαστριδίου τυννουτουὶ οἶα πέπορδας·  
τὸν δ' Ἄερα τόνδ' ὄντ' ἀπέραντον πῶς οὐκ εἰκὸς μέγα  
βροντᾶν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ταῦτ' ἄρα καὶ τῶνόματ' ἀλλήλοισιν βροντῆ καὶ πορδῆ ὁμοίω.  
ἀλλ' ὁ κεραυνὸς πόθεν αὖ φέρεται λάμπων πυρί, τοῦτο  
δίδαξον, 395  
καὶ καταφρύγει βάλλων ἡμᾶς, τοὺς δὲ ζῶντας περιφλύει;  
τοῦτον γὰρ δὴ φανερώς ὁ Ζεὺς ἴησ' ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιόρκους.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

καὶ πῶς ᾧ μῶρε σὺ καὶ Κρονίων ὄζων καὶ βεκκεσέληνε,  
εἴπερ βάλλει τοὺς ἐπιόρκους, δῆτ' οὐχὶ Σίμων' ἐνέπρησεν  
οὐδὲ Κλεώνυμον οὐδὲ Θέωρον; καίτοι σφόδρα γ' εἶσ' ἐπιόρ-  
κοι· 400  
ἀλλὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ γε νεῶν βάλλει καὶ Σούνιον ἄκρον Ἀθηνέων  
καὶ τὰς δρυὲς τὰς μεγάλας· τί μαθῶν; οὐ γὰρ δὴ δρυὲς γ'  
ἐπιορκεῖ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδ'. ἀτὰρ εὖ σὺ λέγειν φαίνει. τί γὰρ ἐστὶν δῆθ' ὁ  
κεραυνός;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὅταν ἐς ταύτας ἄνεμος ξηρὸς μετεωρισθεῖς κατακλησθῆ,  
ἐνδοθεν αὐτὰς ὡσπερ κύστιν φυσᾶ, κᾶπειθ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης  
ρήξας αὐτὰς ἔξω φέρεται σοβαρὸς διὰ τὴν πυκνότητα,  
ὑπὸ τοῦ ροίβδου καὶ τῆς ρύμης αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν κατακάων.

“papapappax”—and when I take a shit,  
it really thunders “papapappax”—  
just like these Clouds.

SOCRATES

So think about it—  
if your small gut can make a fart like that,  
why can't the air, which goes on for ever,  
produce tremendous thunder. Then there's this—  
consider how alike these phrases sound,  
“thunder clap” and “fart and crap.”

STREPSIADES

All right, but then explain this to me—  
Where does lightning come from, that fiery blaze,  
which, when it hits, sometimes burns us up,  
sometimes just singes us and lets us live?  
Clearly Zeus is hurling that at perjurers.

SOCRATES

You stupid driveling idiot, you stink  
of olden times, the age of Cronos!<sup>35</sup> If Zeus  
is really striking at the perjurers,  
how come he's not burned Simon down to ash,  
or else Cleonymos or Theorus?  
They perjure themselves more than anyone. [400]  
No. Instead he strikes at his own temple  
at Sunium, our Athenian headland,  
and at his massive oak trees there. Why?  
What's his plan? Oak trees can't be perjured.

STREPSIADES

I don't know. But that argument of yours  
seems good. All right, then, what's a lightning bolt?

SOCRATES

When a dry wind blows up into the Clouds  
and gets caught in there, it makes them inflate,  
like the inside of a bladder. And then  
it has to burst them all apart and vent,  
rushing out with violence brought on  
by dense compression—its force and friction  
cause it to consume itself in fire.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νὴ Δί' ἐγὼ γοῦν ἀτεχνῶς ἔπαθον τουτί ποτε Διασίοισιν  
 ὀπτῶν γαστέρα τοῖς συγγενέσιν, κᾶτ' οὐκ ἔσχων ἀμελήσας·  
 ἢ δ' ἄρ' ἐφυσᾶτ', εἰτ' ἐξαίφνης διαλακήσασα πρὸς αὐτῶ  
 τῶφθαλμῷ μου προσετίλησεν καὶ κατέκαυσεν τὸ πρόσω-  
 πον. 411

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ τῆς μεγάλης ἐπιθυμίας σοφίας ἄνθρωπε παρ' ἡμῶν,  
 ὡς εὐδαίμων ἐν Ἀθηναίοις καὶ τοῖς Ἑλλησι γενήσῃ,  
 εἰ μνήμων εἶ καὶ φροντιστῆς καὶ τὸ ταλαίπωρον ἔνεστιν  
 ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ μὴ κάμνεις μῆθ' ἐστὼς μῆτε βαδίζων, 415  
 μῆτε ῥιγῶν ἄχθει λίαν μῆτ' ἀριστᾶν ἐπιθυμεῖς,  
 οἴνου τ' ἀπέχει καὶ γυμνασίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνοήτων,  
 καὶ βέλτιστον τοῦτο νομίζεις, ὅπερ εἰκὸς δεξιὸν ἄνδρα,  
 νικᾶν πράττων καὶ βουλεύων καὶ τῇ γλώττῃ πολεμίζων.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐνεκά γε ψυχῆς στερρᾶς δυσκολοκοίτου τε μερίμνης  
 καὶ φειδωλοῦ καὶ τρυσιβίου γαστρὸς καὶ θυμβρεπιδείπνου,  
 ἀμέλει θαρρῶν οὐνεκα τούτων ἐπιχαλκεύειν παρέχοιμ' ἄν.

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄλλο τι δῆτ' οὖν νομεῖς ἤδη θεὸν οὐδένα πλὴν ἅπερ ἡμεῖς,  
 τὸ Χάος τουτί καὶ τὰς Νεφέλας καὶ τὴν γλώτταν, τρία  
 ταυτί;

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐδ' ἂν διαλεχθείην γ' ἀτεχνῶς τοῖς ἄλλοις οὐδ' ἂν ἀπα-  
 ντῶν· 425  
 οὐδ' ἂν θύσαιμ', οὐδ' ἂν σπείσαιμ', οὐδ' ἐπιθείην λιβανωτόν.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

λέγε νυν ἡμῖν ὅ τι σοι δρῶμεν θαρρῶν, ὡς οὐκ ἀτυχήσεις  
 ἡμᾶς τιμῶν καὶ θαυμάζων καὶ ζητῶν δεξιὸς εἶναι.

## STREPSIADES

By god, I went through that very thing myself—  
 at the feast for Zeus. I was cooking food,  
 a pig's belly, for my family. I forgot  
 to slit it open. It began to swell— [410]  
 then suddenly blew up, splattering blood  
 in both my eyes and burning my whole face.

## CHORUS LEADER

O you who seeks from us great wisdom,  
 how happy you will be among Athenians,  
 among the Greeks, if you have memory,  
 if you can think, if in that soul of yours  
 you've got the power to persevere,  
 and don't get tired standing still or walking,  
 nor suffer too much from the freezing cold,  
 with no desire for breakfast, if you abstain  
 from wine, from exercise, and other foolishness,  
 if you believe, as all clever people should,  
 the highest good is victory in action,  
 in deliberation and in verbal wars.

## STREPSIADES

Well, as for a stubborn soul and a mind [420]  
 thinking in a restless bed, while my stomach,  
 lean and mean, feeds on bitter herbs, don't worry.  
 I'm confident about all that—I'm ready  
 to be hammered on your anvil into shape.

## SOCRATES

So now you won't acknowledge any gods  
 except the ones we do—Chaos, the Clouds,  
 the Tongue—just these three?

## STREPSIADES

Absolutely—

I'd refuse to talk to any other gods,  
 if I ran into them—and I decline  
 to sacrifice or pour libations to them.  
 I'll not provide them any incense.

## CHORUS LEADER

Tell us then what we can do for you.  
 Be brave—for if you treat us with respect,  
 if you admire us, and if you're keen  
 to be a clever man, you won't go wrong.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ δέσποιναι δέομαι τοίνυν ὑμῶν τουτὶ πάννυ μικρόν,  
τῶν Ἑλλήνων εἶναι με λέγειν ἑκατὸν σταδίοισιν ἄριστον.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἔσται σοι τοῦτο παρ' ἡμῶν· ὥστε τὸ λοιπὸν γ' ἀπὸ  
τουδὶ 431  
ἐν τῷ δήμῳ γνώμας οὐδέεις νικήσει πλείονας ἢ σύ.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὴ μοί γε λέγειν γνώμας μεγάλας· οὐ γὰρ τούτων ἐπιθυμῶ,  
ἀλλ' ὅσ' ἐμαντῷ στρεψιοδικῆσαι καὶ τοὺς χρήστας διολ-  
ισθεῖν.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

τεύξει τοίνυν ὦν ἰμέρις· οὐ γὰρ μεγάλων ἐπιθυμεῖς. 435  
ἀλλὰ σεαυτὸν θαρρῶν παράδος τοῖς ἡμετέροις προπόλοι-  
σιν.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

δράσω ταῦθ' ὑμῖν πιστεύσας· ἢ γὰρ ἀνάγκη με πιέζει  
διὰ τοὺς ἵππους τοὺς κοππατίας καὶ τὸν γάμον ὅς μ' ἐπέ-  
τριψεν.  
νῦν οὖν ἀτεχνῶς ὅ τι βούλονται  
τουτὶ τοῦμὸν σῶμ' αὐτοῖσιν 440  
παρέχω, τύπτειν πεινῆν διψῆν  
αὐχμεῖν ῥιγῶν ἀσκὸν δείρειν,  
εἴπερ τὰ χρέα διαφευξοῦμαι,  
τοῖς τ' ἀνθρώποις εἶναι δόξω  
θρασὺς εὐγλωττος τολμηρὸς ἴτης 445  
βδελυρὸς ψευδῶν συγκολλητῆς  
εὐρησιεπῆς περίτρυμμα δικῶν  
κύρβις κρόταλον κίναδος τρύμη  
μάσθλης εἴρων γλοιὸς ἀλαζῶν  
κέντρων μιαρὸς στρόφισ ἀργαλέος 450  
ματιολοιχός·  
ταῦτ' εἴ με καλοῦσ' ἀπαντῶντες,  
δρώντων ἀτεχνῶς ὅ τι χρήζουσιν,  
κεῖ βούλονται  
νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ' ἔκ μου χορδὴν 455  
τοῖς φροντισταῖς παραθέντων.

## STREPSIADES

O you sovereign queens,  
from you I ask one really tiny favour—  
to be the finest speaker in all Greece,  
within a hundred miles. [430]

## CHORUS LEADER

You'll get that from us.  
From now on, in time to come, no one will win  
more votes among the populace than you.

## STREPSIADES

No speaking on important votes for me!  
That's not what I'm after. No, no. I want  
to twist all legal verdicts in my favour,  
to evade my creditors.

## CHORUS LEADER

You'll get that,  
just what you desire. For what you want  
is nothing special. So be confident—  
give yourself over to our agents here.

## STREPSIADES

I'll do that—I'll place my trust in you.  
Necessity is weighing me down—the horses,  
those thoroughbreds, my marriage—all that  
has worn me out. So now, this body of mine [440]  
I'll give to them, with no strings attached,  
to do with as they like—to suffer blows,  
go without food and drink, live like a pig,  
to freeze or have my skin flayed for a pouch—  
if I can just get out of all my debt  
and make men think of me as bold and glib,  
as fearless, impudent, detestable,  
one who cobbles lies together, makes up words,  
a practised legal rogue, a statute book,  
a chattering fox, sly and needle sharp,  
a slippery fraud, a sticky rascal,  
foul whipping boy or twisted villain, [450]  
troublemaker, or idly prattling fool.  
If they can make those who run into me  
call me these names, they can do what they want—  
no questions asked. If, by Demeter, they're keen,  
they can convert me into sausages  
and serve me up to men who think deep thoughts.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

λήμα μὲν πάρεστι τῶδέ γ'  
οὐκ ἄτολμον ἀλλ' ἔτοιμον. ἴσθι δ' ὡς  
ταῦτα μαθὼν παρ' ἐμοῦ κλέος οὐρανόμενες  
ἐν βροτοῖσιν ἕξεις. 460

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί πείσομαι;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τὸν πάντα χρόνον μετ' ἐμοῦ  
ζηλωτότατον βίον ἀνθρώπων διάξεις. 465

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἄρά γε τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ ποτ'  
ᾔψομαι;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὥστε γέ σου πολλοὺς ἐπὶ ταῖσι θύραις αἰεὶ καθῆσθαι,  
βουλομένους ἀνακοινοῦσθαί τε καὶ ἐς λόγον ἐλθεῖν 470  
πράγματα κἀντιγραφὰς πολλῶν ταλάντων,  
ἄξια σῆ φρενὶ συμβουλευσομένους μετὰ σοῦ. 475  
— ἀλλ' ἐγχείρει τὸν πρεσβύτην ὃ τι περ μέλλεις προδιδάσκειν,  
καὶ διακίνει τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς γνώμης ἀποπειρῶ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄγε δὴ κάτειπέ μοι σὺ τὸν σαυτοῦ τρόπον,  
ἵν' αὐτὸν εἰδῶς ὅστις ἐστὶ μηχανὰς  
ἤδη ἢ τούτοις πρὸς σέ καινὰς προσφέρω. 480

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δέ; τειχομαχεῖν μοι διανοεῖ πρὸς τῶν θεῶν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ βραχέα σου πυθέσθαι βούλομαι.  
ἦ μνημονικὸς εἶ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

δύο τρόπω νῆ τὸν Δία·  
ἦν μὲν γὰρ ὀφείλῃται τί μοι, μνήμων πάνν·  
ἐὰν δ' ὀφείλω, σχέτλιος, ἐπιλήσμων πάνν. 485

CHORUS

Here's a man whose mind's now smart,  
no holding back—prepared to start  
When you have learned all this from me [460]  
you know your glory will arise  
among all men to heaven's skies.

STREPSIADES

What must I undergo?

CHORUS

For all time, you'll live with me  
a life most people truly envy.

STREPSIADES

You mean I'll really see that one day?

CHORUS

Hordes will sit outside your door  
wanting your advice and more— [470]  
to talk, to place their trust in you  
for their affairs and lawsuits, too,  
things which merit your great mind.  
They'll leave you lots of cash behind.

CHORUS LEADER [*to Socrates*]

So get started with this old man's lessons,  
what you intend to teach him first of all—  
rouse his mind, test his intellectual powers.

SOCRATES

Come on then, tell me the sort of man you are—  
once I know that, I can bring to bear on you  
my latest batteries with full effect. [480]

STREPSIADES

What's that? By god, are you assaulting me?

SOCRATES

No—I want to learn some things from you.  
What about your memory?

STREPSIADES

To tell the truth  
it works two ways. If someone owes me something,  
I remember really well. But if it's poor me  
that owes the money, I forget a lot.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἔνεστι δῆτα μανθάνειν ἐν τῇ φύσει;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

λέγειν μὲν οὐκ ἔνεστ', ἀποστερεῖν δ' ἔνι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

πῶς οὖν δυνήσει μανθάνειν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀμέλει καλῶς.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄγε νυν ὅπως, ὅταν τι προβάλλω σοι σοφὸν  
περὶ τῶν μετεώρων, εὐθέως ὑφαρπάσει.

490

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δαί; κυνηδὸν τὴν σοφίαν σιτήσομαι;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄνθρωπος ἀμαθῆς οὕτοσὶ καὶ βάρβαρος.  
δέδοικά σ' ὦ πρεσβῦτα μὴ πληγῶν δέει.  
φέρ' ἴδω τί δράς, ἦν τίς σε τύπτῃ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τύπτομαι,

ἔπειτ' ἐπισχῶν ὀλίγον ἐπιμαρτύρομαι,  
εἴτ' ἀθις ἀκαρῆ διαλιπῶν δικάζομαι.

495

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἴθι νυν κατάθου θοιμάτιον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἠδίκηκά τι,

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ γυμνοὺς εἰσιέναι νομίζεται.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐχὶ φωράσων ἔγωγ' εἰσέρχομαι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

κατάθου. τί ληρεῖς;

SOCRATES

Do you have any natural gift for speech?

STREPSIADES

Not for speaking—only for evading debt.

SOCRATES

So how will you be capable of learning?

STREPSIADES

Easily—that shouldn't be your worry.

SOCRATES

All right. When I throw out something wise  
about celestial matters, you make sure  
you snatch it right away.

[490]

STREPSIADES

What's that about?

Am I to eat up wisdom like a dog?

SOCRATES [*aside*]

This man's an ignorant barbarian!  
Old man, I fear you may need a beating.

[*to Strepsiades*]

Now, what do you do if someone hits you?

STREPSIADES

If I get hit, I wait around a while,  
then find witnesses, hang around some more,  
then go to court.

SOCRATES

All right, take off your cloak.

STREPSIADES

Have I done something wrong?

SOCRATES

No. It's our custom  
to go inside without a cloak.

STREPSIADES

But I don't want  
to search your house for stolen stuff.<sup>36</sup>

SOCRATES

What are you going on about? Take it off.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἰπὲ δὴ νῦν μοι·

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τὸ τί;

500

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἦν ἐπιμελής ὦ καὶ προθύμως μανθάνω,  
τῷ τῶν μαθητῶν ἐμφορῆς γενήσομαι;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδὲν διοίσεις Χαιρεφῶντος τὴν φύσιν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἷμοι κακοδαίμων ἡμιθνής γενήσομαι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐ μὴ λαλήσεις, ἀλλ' ἀκολουθήσεις ἐμοὶ  
ἀνύσας τι δευρὶ θᾶττον;

505

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐς τὴν χεῖρ ἔννυ  
δός μοι μελιτοῦτταν πρότερον· ὡς δέδοικ' ἐγὼ  
εἶσω καταβαίνων ὡσπερ ἐς Τροφωνίου.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

χώραι· τί κυπτάζεις ἔχων περὶ τὴν θύραν;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἴθι χαίρων τῆς ἀνδρείας  
οὔνεκα ταύτης.

510

— εὐτυχία γένοιτο τάνθρώπῳ,  
ὅτι προήκων  
ἐς βαθὺν τῆς ἡλικίας  
νεωτέροις τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ  
πράγμασι χρωτίζεται  
καὶ σοφίαν ἐπασκεῖ.

515

— ὦ θεώμενοι κατερῶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθέρως  
τάληθῆ νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον τὸν ἐκθρέψαντά με.

STREPSIADES [*removing his cloak and his shoes*]

So tell me this—if I pay attention  
and put some effort into learning,  
which of your students will I look like?

[500]

SOCRATES

In appearance there'll be no difference  
between yourself and Chaerephon.

STREPSIADES

Oh, that's bad.

You mean I'll be only half alive?

SOCRATES

Don't talk such rubbish! Get a move on  
and follow me inside. Hurry up!

STREPSIADES

First, put a honey cake here in my hands.  
I'm scared of going down in there. It's like  
going in Trophonios' cave.<sup>37</sup>

SOCRATES

Go inside.

Why keep hanging round this doorway?

[*Socrates picks up Strepsiades' cloak and shoes. Then Strepsiades and Socrates exit into the interior of the Thinkery*]

CHORUS LEADER

Go. And may you enjoy good fortune,  
a fit reward for all your bravery.

[510]

CHORUS

We hope this man  
thrives in his plan.  
For at his stage  
of great old age  
he'll take a dip  
in new affairs  
to act the sage.

CHORUS LEADER [*stepping forward to address the audience directly*]

You spectators, I'll talk frankly to you now,  
and speak the truth, in the name of Dionysus,  
who has cared for me ever since I was a child.



οὕτω νικήσαιμί τ' ἐγὼ καὶ νομιζοίμην σοφός, 520  
 ὡς ὑμᾶς ἠγοούμενος εἶναι θεατὰς δεξιούς  
 καὶ ταύτην σοφώτατ' ἔχειν τῶν ἐμῶν κωμωδιῶν,  
 πρώτους ἠξίωσ' ἀναγεῦσ' ὑμᾶς, ἢ παρέσχε μοι  
 ἔργον πλείστον· εἴτ' ἀνεχώρουν ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν φορτικῶν  
 ἠττηθεῖς οὐκ ἄξιος ὢν· ταῦτ' οὖν ὑμῖν μέμφομαι 525  
 τοῖς σοφοῖς, ὧν οὐνεκ' ἐγὼ ταῦτ' ἐπραγματευόμην.  
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς ὑμῶν ποθ' ἐκὼν προδώσω τοὺς δεξιούς.  
 ἐξ ὅτου γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν, οἷς ἠδὺ καὶ λέγειν,  
 ὁ σῶφρων τε χῶ καταπύγων ἄριστ' ἠκουσάτην,  
 κἀγὼ, παρθένος γὰρ ἔτ' ἦν, κοῦκ ἐξῆν πῶ μοι τεκεῖν, 530  
 ἐξέθηκα, παῖς δ' ἑτέρα τις λαβοῦσ' ἀνείλετο,  
 ὑμεῖς δ' ἐξεθρέψατε γενναίως κἀπαιδεύσατε·  
 ἐκ τούτου μοι πιστὰ παρ' ὑμῖν γνώμης ἔσθ' ὄρκια.  
 νῦν οὖν Ἠλέκτραν κατ' ἐκείνην ἦδ' ἢ κωμωδία  
 ζητοῦσ' ἦλθ', ἣν που ὑπύχῃ θεαταῖς οὕτω σοφοῖς· 535  
 γνῶσεται γάρ, ἣνπερ ἴδη, τὰδελφοῦ τὸν βόστρυχον.  
 ὡς δὲ σῶφρων ἐστὶ φύσει σκέψασθ'· ἦτις πρώτα μὲν  
 οὐδὲν ἦλθε ραιψαμένη σκυτίον καθεμμένον  
 ἐρυθρὸν ἐξ ἄκρου παχύ, τοῖς παιδίους ἴν' ἢ γέλωσ·  
 οὐδ' ἔσκωψε τοὺς φαλακρούς, οὐδὲ κόρδαχ' εἴλκυσεν, 540  
 οὐδὲ πρεσβύτης ὁ λέγων τᾶπη τῇ βακτηρίᾳ  
 τύπτει τὸν παρόντ' ἀφανίζων πονηρὰ σκώμματα,  
 οὐδ' εἰσῆξε δᾶδας ἔχουσ', οὐδ' ἰὸν ἰὸν βοᾶ,  
 ἀλλ' αὐτῇ καὶ τοῖς ἔπεσι πιστεύουσ' ἐλήλυθεν.  
 κἀγὼ μὲν τοιοῦτος ἀνὴρ ὢν ποιητῆς οὐ κομῶ, 545  
 οὐδ' ὑμᾶς ζητῶ ἔξαπατᾶν δις καὶ τρις ταῦτ' εἰσάγων,  
 ἀλλ' αἰεὶ καινὰς ἰδέας ἐσφέρων σοφίζομαι,  
 οὐδὲν ἀλλήλαισι ὁμοίας καὶ πάσας δεξιᾶς·  
 ὅς μέγιστον ὄντα Κλέων' ἔπαισ' ἐς τὴν γαστέρα,  
 κοῦκ ἐτόλμησ' αὐθις ἐπεμνηδῆσ' αὐτῷ κειμένῳ. 550

So may I win and be considered a wise man.<sup>38</sup> [520]  
 For I thought you were a discerning audience  
 and this comedy the most intelligent  
 of all my plays. Thus, I believed it worth my while  
 to produce it first for you, a work which cost me  
 a great deal of effort. But I left defeated,  
 beaten out by vulgar men—which I did not deserve.  
 I place the blame for this on you intellectuals,  
 on whose behalf I went to all that trouble.  
 But still I won't ever willingly abandon  
 the discriminating ones among you all,  
 not since that time when my play about two men—  
 one was virtuous, the other one depraved—  
 was really well received by certain people here,  
 whom it pleases me to mention now. As for me,  
 I was still unmarried, not yet fully qualified [530]  
 to produce that child. But I exposed my offspring,  
 and another woman carried it away.  
 In your generosity you raised and trained it.<sup>39</sup>  
 Since then I've had sworn testimony from you  
 that you have faith in me. So now, like old Electra,  
 this comedy has come, hoping she can find,  
 somewhere in here, spectators as intelligent.  
 If she sees her brother's hair, she'll recognize it.<sup>40</sup>  
 Consider how my play shows natural restraint.  
 First, she doesn't have stitched leather dangling down,  
 with a thick red knob, to make the children giggle.<sup>41</sup>  
 She hasn't mocked bald men or danced some drunken reel. [540]  
 There's no old man who talks and beats those present  
 with a stick to hide bad jokes. She doesn't rush on stage  
 with torches or raise the cry "Alas!" or "Woe is me!"  
 No—she's come trusting in herself and in the script.  
 And I'm a poet like that. I don't preen myself.  
 I don't seek to cheat you by re-presenting here  
 the same material two or three times over.  
 Instead I base my art on framing new ideas,  
 all different from the rest, and each one very deft.  
 When Cleon was all-powerful, I went for him.  
 I hit him in the gut. But once he was destroyed,  
 I didn't have the heart to kick at him again. [550]

οὔτοι δ', ὡς ἅπαξ παρέδωκεν λαβὴν Ὑπέρβολος,  
 τοῦτον δειλαῖον κολετρῶσ' αἰεὶ καὶ τὴν μητέρα.  
 Εὐπόλις μὲν τὸν Μαρικᾶν πρῶτιστον παρείλκυσε  
 ἐκστρέφιας τοὺς ἡμετέρους Ἰππέας κακὸς κακῶς,  
 προσθεῖς αὐτῷ γραῦν μεθύσιν τοῦ κόρδακος οὐνεχ', ἦν 555  
 Φρύνιχος πάλαι πεποίηχ', ἦν τὸ κῆτος ἦσθιεν.  
 εἶθ' Ἑρμιππος αὖθις ἐποίησεν εἰς Ὑπέρβολον,  
 ἄλλοι τ' ἤδη πάντες ἐρείδουσιν εἰς Ὑπέρβολον,  
 τὰς εἰκόνας τῶν ἐγγέλεων τὰς ἐμὰς μιμούμενοι.  
 ὅστις οὖν τούτοις γελᾷ, τοῖς ἐμοῖς μὴ χαιρέτω· 560  
 ἦν δ' ἐμοὶ καὶ τοῖσιν ἐμοῖς εὐφραίνησθ' εὐρήμασιν,  
 ἐς τὰς ὥρας τὰς ἐτέρας εὖ φρονεῖν δοκίσητε.

— ὑψιμέδοντα μὲν θεῶν  
 Ζῆνα τύραννον ἐς χορὸν  
 πρῶτα μέγαν κικλήσκω· 565  
 τὸν τε μεγασθενῆ τριαίνης ταμίαν,  
 γῆς τε καὶ ἀλμυρᾶς θαλάσσης ἄγριον μοχλευτήν·  
 καὶ μεγαλώνυμον ἡμέτερον πατέρ'  
 Αἰθέρα σεμνότατον βιοθρέμμονα πάντων· 570  
 τὸν θ' ἵππονώμαν, ὃς ὑπερ-  
 λάμπροις ἀκτίσιν κατέχει  
 γῆς πέδον μέγας ἐν θεοῖς  
 ἐν θνητοῖσι τε δαίμων.

— ὦ σοφώτατοι θεαταὶ δεῦρο τὸν νοῦν προσέχετε. 575  
 ἡδικομένην γὰρ ὑμῖν μεμφόμεσθ' ἐναντίον·  
 πλείεστα γὰρ θεῶν ἀπάντων ὠφελούσαις τὴν πόλιν,  
 δαιμόνων ἡμῖν μόναις οὐ θύετ' οὐδὲ σπένδετε,  
 αἴτινες τηροῦμεν ὑμᾶς. ἦν γὰρ ἢ τις ἕξοδος  
 μηδενὶ ξὺν νῶ, τότ' ἢ βροντῶμεν ἢ ψακάζομεν. 580  
 εἶτα τὸν θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸν βυρσοδέψην Παφλαγόνα  
 ἡνίχ' ἠρείσθη στρατηγόν, τὰς ὀφρῦς συνήγομεν  
 κάποιοῦμεν δεινά, βροντῆ δ' ἐρράγη δι' ἀστραπήσ·  
 ἢ σελήνη δ' ἐξέλειπε τὰς ὁδοὺς, ὁ δ' ἥλιος

Yet once Hyperbolos let others seize on him,  
 they've not ceased stomping on the miserable man—  
 and on his mother, too.<sup>42</sup> The first was Eupolis—  
 he dredged up his *Maricas*, a wretched rehash  
 of my play *The Knights*—he's such a worthless poet—  
 adding an aging female drunk in that stupid dance,  
 a woman Phrynichos invented years ago,  
 the one that ocean monster tried to gobble up.<sup>43</sup>  
 Then Hermippos wrote again about Hyperbolos,  
 Now all the rest are savaging the man once more,  
 copying my images of eels. If anyone  
 laughs at those plays, I hope mine don't amuse him. [560]  
 But if you enjoy me and my inventiveness,  
 then future ages will commend your worthy taste.

## CHORUS

For my dance I first here call  
 on Zeus, high-ruling king of all  
 among the gods—and on Poseidon,  
 so great and powerful—the one  
 who with his trident wildly heaves  
 the earth and all the brine-filled seas,  
 and on our famous father Sky,  
 the most revered, who can supply [570]  
 all things with life. And I invite  
 the Charioteer whose dazzling light  
 fills this wide world so mightily  
 for every man and deity.

## CHORUS LEADER

The wisest in this audience should here take note—  
 you've done us wrong, and we confront you with the blame.  
 We confer more benefits than any other god  
 upon your city, yet we're the only ones  
 to whom you do not sacrifice or pour libations,  
 though we're the gods who keep protecting you.  
 If there's some senseless army expedition, [580]  
 then we respond by thundering or bringing rain.  
 And when you were selecting as your general  
 that Paphlagonian tanner hated by the gods,<sup>44</sup>  
 we frowned and then complained aloud—our thunder pealed  
 among the lightning bursts, the moon moved off her course,

τὴν θρυαλλίδ' εἰς ἑαυτὸν εὐθέως ξυνελκύσας 585  
οὐ φανείν ἔφασκεν ὑμῖν, εἰ στρατηγήσει Κλέων.  
ἀλλ' ὅμως εἴλεσθε τοῦτον. φασὶ γὰρ δυσβουλίαν  
τῆδε τῆ πόλει προσεῖναι, ταῦτα μέντοι τοὺς θεοὺς  
ἄτ' ἂν ὑμεῖς ἕξαμάρτητ' ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον τρέπειν.  
ὡς δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ξυνοίσει ραδίως διδάζομεν· 590  
ἦν Κλέωνα τὸν λάρων δώρων ἐλόντες καὶ κλοπῆς  
εἶτα φιμώσητε τούτου τῶ ξύλω τὸν αὐχένα,  
αὐθις ἐς τάρχαϊον ὑμῖν, εἴ τι κάξημάρτετε,  
ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον τὸ πρᾶγμα τῆ πόλει συνοίσεται.

— ἀμφί μοι αὐτε Φοῖβ' ἄναξ  
Δήλιε Κυνθίαν ἔχων  
ὑψικέρατα πέτραν,  
ἦ τ' Ἐφέσου μάκαιρα πάγχρυσον ἔχεις  
οἶκον ἐν ᾧ κόραι σε Λυδῶν μεγάλως σέβουσιν, 600  
ἦ τ' ἐπιχώριος ἡμετέρα θεὸς  
αἰγίδος ἡνίοχος πολιοῦχος Ἀθάνα,  
Παρνασσίαν θ' ὅς κατέχων  
πέτραν σὺν πεύκαις σελαγεί  
Βάκχαις Δελφίσιμ ἐμπρέπων, 605  
κωμαστῆς Διόνυσος.

— ἡνίχ' ἡμεῖς δεῦρ' ἀφορμᾶσθαι παρεσκευάσμεθα,  
ἢ σελήνη συντυχοῦσ' ἡμῖν ἐπέστειλεν φράσαι,  
πρῶτα μὲν χαίρειν Ἀθηναίοισι καὶ τοῖς ξυμμάχοις·  
εἶτα θυμαίνειν ἔφασκε· δεινὰ γὰρ πεπονθέναι 610  
ὠφελουῖσ' ὑμᾶς ἅπαντας οὐ λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐμφανῶς.  
πρῶτα μὲν τοῦ μηνὸς ἐς δᾶδ' οὐκ ἔλαττον ἢ δραχμὴν,  
ὥστε καὶ λέγειν ἅπαντας ἐξιόντας ἐσπέρας,  
'μὴ πρήναι παῖ δᾶδ', ἐπειδὴ φῶς σεληναίας καλόν.'  
ἄλλα τ' εὐδρᾶν φησιν, ὑμᾶς δ' οὐκ ἄγειν τὰς ἡμέρας 615  
οὐδὲν ὀρθῶς, ἀλλ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω κυδοιδοπαῖν·  
ὥστ' ἀπειλεῖν φησιν αὐτῇ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐκάστοτε  
ἡνίκ' ἂν ψευσθῶσι δείπνου κάπίωσιν οἴκαδε,

the sun at once pulled his wick back inside himself,  
and said if Cleon was to be your general  
then he'd give you no light. Nonetheless, you chose him.  
They say this city likes to make disastrous choices,  
but that the gods, no matter what mistakes you make,  
convert them into something better. If you want  
your recent choice to turn into a benefit,  
I can tell you how—it's easy. Condemn the man— [590]  
that seagull Cleon—for bribery and theft.<sup>45</sup>  
Set him in the stocks, a wooden yoke around his neck.  
Then, even if you've made a really big mistake,  
for you things will be as they were before your vote,  
and for the city this affair will turn out well.

## CHORUS

Phoebus Apollo, stay close by,  
lord of Delos, who sits on high,  
by lofty Cynthos mountain sides;  
and holy lady, who resides  
in Ephesus, in your gold shrine,  
where Lydian girls pray all the time; [600]  
Athena, too, who guards our home,  
her aegis raised above her own,  
and he who holds Parnassus peaks  
and shakes his torches as he leaps,  
lord Dionysus, whose shouts call  
amid the Delphic bacchanal.<sup>46</sup>

## CHORUS LEADER

When we were getting ready to move over here,  
Moon met us and told us, first of all, to greet,  
on her behalf, the Athenians and their allies.  
Then she said she was upset—the way you treat her [610]  
is disgraceful, though she brings you all benefits—  
not just in words but in her deeds. To start with,  
she saves you at least one drachma every month  
for torchlight—in the evening, when you go outside,  
you all can say, “No need to buy a torch, my boy,  
Moon's light will do just fine.” She claims she helps you all  
in other ways, as well, but you don't calculate  
your calendar the way you should—no, instead  
you make it all confused, and that's why, she says,  
the gods are always making threats against her,  
when they are cheated of a meal and go back home

τῆς ἑορτῆς μὴ τυχόντες κατὰ λόγον τῶν ἡμερῶν.  
 κᾶθ' ὅταν θύειν δέῃ, στρεβλοῦτε καὶ δικάζετε. 620  
 πολλάκις δ' ἡμῶν ἀγόντων τῶν θεῶν ἀπαστίαν,  
 ἡνίκ' ἂν πενθῶμεν ἢ τὸν Μέμνον' ἢ Σαρπηδόνα,  
 σπένδελ' ὑμεῖς καὶ γελᾶτ'. ἀνθ' ὧν λαχῶν Ὑπέρβολος  
 τῆτες ἱερομνημονεῖν, κᾶπειθ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν τῶν θεῶν  
 τὸν στέφανον ἀφῆρέθη· μᾶλλον γὰρ οὕτως εἴσεται 625  
 κατὰ σελήνην ὡς ἄγειν χρὴ τοῦ βίου τὰς ἡμέρας.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

μὰ τὴν Ἀναπνοὴν μὰ τὸ Χάος μὰ τὸν Ἀέρα  
 οὐκ εἶδον οὕτως ἄνδρ' ἄγροικον οὐδένα  
 οὐδ' ἄπορον οὐδὲ σκαιὸν οὐδ' ἐπιλήσιμονα·  
 ὅστις σκαλαθυρμάτι ἄττα μικρὰ μανθάνων 630  
 ταυτ' ἐπιλέλησται πρὶν μαθεῖν· ὅμως γε μὴν  
 αὐτὸν καλῶ θύραζε δευρὶ πρὸς τὸ φῶς.  
 ποῦ Στρεψιάδης; ἔξει τὸν ἀσκάντην λαβῶν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐώσι μ' ἐξενεγκεῖν οἱ κόρεις.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀνύσας τι κατάθου καὶ πρόσσεχε τὸν νοῦν. 635

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἰδοῦ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄγε δὴ τί βούλει πρῶτα νυνὶ μανθάνειν  
 ὧν οὐκ ἐδιδάχθης πώποτ' οὐδέν; εἰπέ μοι.  
 πότερα περὶ μέτρων ἢ περὶ ἐπῶν ἢ ρυθμῶν;

because their celebration has not taken place  
 according to a proper count of all the days.<sup>47</sup>  
 And then, when you should be making sacrifice, [620]  
 you're torturing someone or have a man on trial.  
 And many times, when we gods undertake a fast,  
 because we're mourning Memnon or Sarpedon,<sup>48</sup>  
 you're pouring out libations, having a good laugh.  
 That's the reason, after his choice by lot this year  
 to sit on the religious council, Hyperbolos  
 had his wreath of office snatched off by the gods.  
 That should make him better understand the need  
 to count the days of life according to the moon.<sup>49</sup>

[Enter Socrates from the interior of the Thinkery]

SOCRATES

By Respiration, Chaos, and the Air,  
 I've never seen a man so crude, stupid,  
 clumsy, and forgetful. He tries to learn  
 the tiny trifles, but then he forgets [630]  
 before he's even learned them. Nonetheless,  
 I'll call him outside here into the light.

[Socrates calls back into the interior of the Thinkery]

Strepsiades, where are you? Come on out—  
 and bring your bed.

STREPSIADES [from inside]

I can't carry it out—

the bugs won't let me.

SOCRATES

Get a move on. Now!

[Strepsiades enters carrying his bedding]

Put it there. And pay attention.

STREPSIADES [putting the bed down]

There!

SOCRATES

Come now, of all the things you never learned  
 what to you want to study first? Tell me.

[Strepsiades is very puzzled by the question]

Poetic measures? Diction? Rhythmic verse?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

περὶ τῶν μέτρων ἔγωγ'· ἔναγχος γάρ ποτε  
ὑπ' ἀλφίταμοιβοῦ παρεκόπην διχοινίκα.

640

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐ τοῦτ' ἐρωτῶ σ', ἀλλ' ὅ τι κάλλιστον μέτρον  
ἡγεῖ· πότερα τὸ τρίμετρον ἢ τὸ τετράμετρον;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ μὲν οὐδὲν πρότερον ἡμικτέου.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδὲν λέγεις ὠνθρωπε.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

περίδου νυν ἐμοί,  
εἰ μὴ τετράμετρον ἔστιν ἡμικτέον.

645

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἐς κόρακας, ὡς ἄγροικος εἶ καὶ δυσμαθής.  
ταχύ γ' ἂν δύναιο μαθάνειν περὶ ῥυθμῶν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δέ μ' ὠφελήσουσ' οἱ ῥυθμοὶ πρὸς τᾶλφίτα;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

πρῶτον μὲν εἶναι κομφὸν ἐν συνουσίᾳ,  
ἐπαῖονθ' ὁποῖός ἐστι τῶν ῥυθμῶν  
κατ' ἐνόπλιον, χῶποῖος αὖ κατὰ δάκτυλον.

650

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κατὰ δάκτυλον; νῆ τὸν Δ', ἀλλ' οἶδ'.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

εἰπέ δή.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τίς ἄλλος ἀντὶ τουτοῦ τοῦ δακτύλου;  
πρὸ τοῦ μὲν, ἔτ' ἐμοῦ παιδὸς ὄντος, οὔτοσί.

STREPSIADES

I'll take measures. Just the other day  
the man who deals in barley cheated me—  
about two quarts.

[640]

SOCRATES

That's not what I mean.  
Which music measure is most beautiful—  
the triple measure or quadruple measure?

STREPSIADES

As a measure nothing beats a gallon.

SOCRATES

My dear man, you're just talking nonsense.

STREPSIADES

Then make me a bet—I say a gallon  
is made up of quadruple measures.

SOCRATES

O damn you—you're such a country bumpkin—  
so slow! Maybe you can learn more quickly  
if we deal with rhythm.

STREPSIADES

Will these rhythms  
help to get me food?

SOCRATES

Well, to begin with,  
they'll make you elegant in company—  
and you'll recognize the different rhythms,  
the enoplion and the dactylic,  
which is like a digit.<sup>50</sup>

[650]

STREPSIADES

Like a digit!  
By god, that's something I do know!

SOCRATES

Then tell me.

STREPSIADES

When I was a lad a digit meant this!

[Strepsiades sticks his middle finger straight up under Socrates' nose]

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*ἀγρείος εἶ καὶ σκαίος.*

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

*οὐ γὰρ ᾧζυρὲ* 655  
*τούτων ἐπιθυμῶ μανθάνειν οὐδέν.*

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*τί δαί;*

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

*ἐκεῖν' ἐκείνο, τὸν ἀδικώτατον λόγον.*

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*ἀλλ' ἔτερα δεῖ σε πρότερα τούτου μανθάνειν,*  
*τῶν τετραπόδων ἅττ' ἐστὶν ὀρθῶς ἄρρενα.*

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

*ἀλλ' οἶδ' ἔγωγε τᾶρρεν', εἰ μὴ μαίνομαι·* 660  
*κρίδος τράγος ταῦρος κύων ἀλεκτρυνών.*

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*ὀρᾶς ὃ πάσχεις; τήν τε θήλειαν καλεῖς*  
*ἀλεκτρυνόνα κατὰ ταῦτ' οὐ καὶ τὸν ἄρρενα.*

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

*πῶς δὴ φέρ';*

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*ὅπως; ἀλεκτρυνῶν καὶ ἀλεκτρυνών.*

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

*νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ. νῦν δὲ πῶς με χρὴ καλεῖν;* 665

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

*ἀλεκτρύαιναν, τὸν δ' ἕτερον ἀλέκτορα.*

SOCRATES

You're just a crude buffoon!

STREPSIADES

No, you're a fool—  
I don't want to learn any of that stuff.

SOCRATES

Well then, what?

STREPSIADES

You know, that other thing—  
how to argue the most unjust cause.

SOCRATES

But you need to learn these other matters  
before all that. Now, of the quadrupeds  
which one can we correctly label male?

STREPSIADES

Well, I know the males, if I'm not witless—  
the ram, billy goat, bull, dog, and fowl. [660]

SOCRATES

And the females?

STREPSIADES

The ewe, nanny goat,  
cow, bitch and fowl.<sup>51</sup>

SOCRATES

You see what you're doing?  
You're using that word "fowl" for both of them,  
Calling males what people use for females.

STREPSIADES

What's that? I don't get it.

SOCRATES

What's not to get?  
"Fowl" and "Fowl" . . .

STREPSIADES

By Poseidon, I see your point.  
All right, what should I call them?

SOCRATES

Call the male a "fowl"—  
and call the other one "fowlette."

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλεκτρύαιναν; εἶ γε νῆ τὸν Ἄερα.  
ὥστ' ἀντὶ τούτου τοῦ διδάγματος μόνου  
διαλφιώσω σου κύκλω τὴν κάρδοπον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἰδοὺ μάλ' αὖθις τοῦθ' ἕτερον· τὴν κάρδοπον 670  
ἄρρενα καλεῖς θήλειαν οὖσαν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τῷ τρόπῳ  
ἄρρενα καλῶ γὰρ κάρδοπον;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

μάλιστά γε,  
ὥσπερ γε καὶ Κλεώνυμον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πῶς δὴ; φράσον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ταῦτὸν δύναται σοι κάρδοπος Κλεωνύμῳ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὠγάθ' οὐδ' ἦν κάρδοπος Κλεωνύμῳ, 675  
ἀλλ' ἐν θυεῖα στρογγύλῃ γ' ἂν ἐμάττετο.  
ἀτὰρ τὸ λοιπὸν πῶς με χρὴ καλεῖν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὅπως;  
τὴν καρδόπην, ὥσπερ καλεῖς τὴν Σωστράτην.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὴν καρδόπην θήλειαν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὀρθῶς γὰρ λέγεις.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐκεῖνο δ' ἦν ἄν, καρδόπη, Κλεωνύμη. 680

STREPSIADES

“Fowlette?”

By the Air, that's good! Just for teaching that  
I'll fill your kneading basin up with flour,  
right to the brim.<sup>52</sup>

SOCRATES

Once again, another error! [670]  
You called it basin—a masculine word—  
when it's feminine.

STREPSIADES

How so? Do I call  
the basin masculine?

SOCRATES

Indeed you do.  
It's just like Cleonymos.<sup>53</sup>

STREPSIADES

How's that?  
Tell me.

SOCRATES

You treated the word basin  
just as you would treat Cleonymos.

STREPSIADES [*totally bewildered by the conversation*]

But my dear man, he didn't have a basin—  
not Cleonymos—not for kneading flour.  
His round mortar was his prick—the wanker—  
he kneaded that to masturbate.<sup>54</sup>  
But what should I call a basin from now on?

SOCRATES

Call it a basinette, just as you'd say  
the word Sostratette.

STREPSIADES

Basinette—it's feminine?

SOCRATES

It is indeed.

STREPSIADES

All right, then, I should say  
Cleonymette and basinette.<sup>55</sup> [680]

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἔτι δὴ γε περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων μαθεῖν σε δεῖ,  
ἄττ' ἄρρεν' ἐστίν, ἄττα δ' αὐτῶν θήλεα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οἶδ' ἔγωγ' ἃ θήλε' ἐστίν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

εἰπέ δή.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Λύσιλλα Φίλινα Κλειταγόρα Δημητρία.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄρρενα δὲ ποῖα τῶν ὀνομάτων;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μυρία. 685  
Φιλόξενος Μελησίας Ἀμυνίας.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὦ πόνηρε ταῦτά γ' ἐστ' οὐκ ἄρρενα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἄρρεν' ὑμῖν ἐστιν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδαμῶς γ', ἐπεὶ  
πῶς ἂν καλέσειας ἐντυχὼν Ἀμυνία;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅπως ἄν; ὦδί, δεῦρο δεῦρ' Ἀμυνία. 690

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὄρᾳς; γυναῖκα τὴν Ἀμυνίαν καλεῖς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ οὐν δικαίως ἦτις οὐ στρατεύεται;  
ἀτὰρ τί ταῦθ' ἃ πάντες ἴσμεν μανθάνω;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδὲν μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ κατακλιεῖς δευρὶ —

SOCRATES

You've still got to learn about people's names—  
which ones are male and which are female.

STREPSIADES

I know which ones are feminine.

SOCRATES

Go on.

STREPSIADES

Lysilla, Philinna, Cleitogora,  
Demetria . . .

SOCRATES

Which names are masculine?

STREPSIADES

There are thousands of them—Philoxenos,  
Melesias, Amynias . . .

SOCRATES

You fool,  
those names are not all masculine.<sup>56</sup>

STREPSIADES

What?  
You don't think of them as men?

SOCRATES

Indeed I don't.  
If you met Amynias, how would you greet him?

STREPSIADES

How? Like this, "Here, Amynia, come here."<sup>57</sup> [690]

SOCRATES

You see? You said "Amynia," a woman's name.

STREPSIADES

And that's fair enough, since she's unwilling  
to do army service. But what's the point?  
Why do I need to learn what we all know?

SOCRATES

That's irrelevant, by god. Now lie down—  
[indicating the bed]  
right here.



ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δρῶ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἐκφρόντισόν τι τῶν σεαυτοῦ πραγμάτων. 695

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὴ δῆθ' ἰκετεύω σ' ἐνγεταῦθ'. ἀλλ' εἴ γε χρή,  
χαμαί μ' ἔασον αὐτὰ ταῦτ' ἐκφροντίσαι.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ ἔστι παρὰ ταῦτ' ἄλλα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κακοδαίμων ἐγώ,  
οἶαν δίκην τοῖς κόρεσι δώσω τήμερον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

φρόντιζε δὴ καὶ διάθρει πάντα τρόπον τε σαυτὸν 700  
στρόβει πυκνώσας.  
ταχὺς δ', ὅταν εἰς ἄπορον πέσης,  
ἐπ' ἄλλο πῆδα 704  
νόημα φρενός· ὕπνος δ' ἀπέστω γλυκύθυμος ὀμμάτων.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀτταταῖ ἀτταταῖ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί πάσχεις; τί κάμνεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀπόλλυμαι δειλῆιος· ἐκ τοῦ σκίμποδος 710  
δάκνουσί μ' ἐξέρποντες οἱ Κορίνθιοι,  
καὶ τὰς πλευρὰς δαρδάπτουσι  
καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκπίνουσι  
καὶ τοὺς ὄρχεις ἐξέλκουσι  
καὶ τὸν πρωκτὸν διορύττουσι,  
καί μ' ἀπολοῦσιν. 715

ΧΟΡΟΣ

μὴ νυν βαρέως ἄλγει λίαν.

STREPSIADES

And do what?

SOCRATES

You should contemplate—  
think one of your own problems through.

STREPSIADES

Not here,  
I beg you—no. If I have to do it,  
let me do my contemplating on the ground.

SOCRATES

No—you've got no choice.

STREPSIADES [*crawling very reluctantly into the bedding*]

Now I'm done for—  
these bugs are going to punish me today.

[*Socrates exits back into the Thinkery*]

CHORUS

Now ponder and think, [700]  
focus this way and that.  
Your mind turn and toss.  
And if you're at a loss,  
then quickly go find  
a new thought in your mind.  
From your eyes you must keep  
all soul-soothing sleep.

STREPSIADES

O god . . . ahhhhh . . .

CHORUS

What's wrong with you? Why so distressed?

STREPSIADES

I'm dying a miserable death in here!  
These Corinthian crawlers keep biting me.<sup>58</sup> [710]  
gnawing on my ribs,  
slurping up my blood,  
yanking off my balls,  
tunneling up my arse hole—  
they're killing me!

CHORUS

Don't complain so much.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ πῶς; ὅτε μου  
 φρούδα τὰ χρήματα, φρούδη χροιά,  
 φρούδη ψυχή, φρούδη δ' ἐμβάς·  
 καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἔτι τοῖσι κακοῖς  
 φρουρᾶς ἄδων  
 ὀλίγου φρουδὸς γεγένημαι.

720

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὗτος τί ποιεῖς; οὐχὶ φροντίζεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐγώ;  
 νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

καὶ τί δῆτ' ἐφρόντισας;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὑπὸ τῶν κόρεων εἴ μου τι περιλειφθήσεται.

725

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀπολεῖ κάκιστ'.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὦγάθ' ἀπόλωλ' ἀρτίως.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐ μαλθακιστέ' ἀλλὰ περικαλυπτέα.  
 ἐξευρετέος γὰρ νοῦς ἀποστερητικὸς  
 κάπαιόλημ'.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἴμοι τίς ἂν δῆτ' ἐπιβάλου  
 ἐξ ἀρνακίδων γνώμην ἀποστερητρίδα;

730

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

φέρε νυν ἀθρήσω πρῶτον ὅ τι δρᾶ τουτονί.  
 οὗτος καθεύδεις;

STREPSIADES

Why not? When I've lost my goods,  
 lost the colour in my cheeks, lost my blood,  
 lost my shoes, and, on top of all these troubles,  
 I'm here like some night watchman singing out—  
 it won't be long before I'm done for.

[720]

*[Enter Socrates from inside the Thinkery]*

SOCRATES

What are you doing? Aren't you thinking something?

STREPSIADES

Me? Yes I am, by Poseidon.

SOCRATES

What about?

STREPSIADES

Whether there's going to be any of me left  
 once these bugs have finished.

SOCRATES

You imbecile,

why don't you drop dead!

*[Socrates exits back into the Thinkery]*

STREPSIADES

But my dear man,

I'm dying right now.

CHORUS LEADER

Don't get soft. Cover up—  
 get your whole body underneath the blanket.  
 You need to find a good idea for fraud,  
 a sexy way to cheat.

STREPSIADES

Damn it all—

instead of these lambskins here, why won't someone  
 throw over me a lovely larcenous scheme?

[730]

*[Strepsiades covers his head with the wool blankets. Enter Socrates from the Thinkery and looks around thinking what to do]*

SOCRATES

First, I'd better check on what he's doing.  
 You in there, are you asleep?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω ἴγώ μὲν οὔ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἔχεις τι;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὰ Δί' οὐ δῆτ' ἔγωγ'.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδὲν πάνυ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐδέν γε πλὴν ἢ τὸ πέος ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ ἐγκαλυψάμενος ταχέως τι φροντιεῖς; 735

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

περὶ τοῦ; σὺ γάρ μοι τοῦτο φράσον ὦ Σώκρατες.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

αὐτὸς ὅ τι βούλει πρῶτος ἐξευρών λέγε.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀκήκοας μυριάκις ἀγὼ βούλομαι,  
περὶ τῶν τόκων, ὅπως ἂν ἀποδῶ μηδενί.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἴθι νῦν καλύπτου καὶ σχάσας τὴν φροντίδα 740  
λεπτὴν κατὰ μικρὸν περιφρόνει τὰ πράγματα,  
ὀρθῶς διαιρῶν καὶ σκοπῶν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἴμοι τάλας.

STREPSIADES [*uncovering his head*]

No, I'm not.

SOCRATES

Have you grasped anything?

STREPSIADES

No, by god, I haven't.

SOCRATES

Nothing at all?

STREPSIADES

I haven't grasped a thing—  
except my right hand's wrapped around my cock.

SOCRATES

Then cover your head and think up something—  
get a move on!

STREPSIADES

What should I think about?

Tell me that, Socrates.

SOCRATES

First you must formulate  
what it is you want. Then tell me.

STREPSIADES

You've heard  
what I want a thousand times—I want to know  
about interest, so I'll not have to pay  
a single creditor.

SOCRATES

Come along now,  
cover up.

[*StrepsiaDES covers his head again, and Socrates speaks to him through the blanket*]

Now, carve your slender thinking [740]  
into tiny bits, and think the matter through,  
with proper probing and analysis.

STREPSIADES

Ahhh . . . bloody hell!

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἔχ' ἀτρέμα· κἂν ἀπορῆς τι τῶν νοημάτων,  
ἀφείς ἄπελθε, καὶ κατὰ τὴν γνώμην πάλιν  
κίνησον αὐτὸ καὶ ζυγώθρισον.

745

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ Σωκρατίδιον φίλτατον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τί ὦ γέρον;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔχω τόκου γνώμην ἀποστερητικὴν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἐπίδειξον αὐτήν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἰπέ δὴ νῦν μοι —

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τὸ τί;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

γυναῖκα φαρμακίδ' εἰ πριάμενος Θεσσαλὴν  
καθέλομι νύκτωρ τὴν σελήνην, εἶτα δὴ  
αὐτὴν καθείρξαμι ἐς λοφείον στρογγύλον,  
ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον, κἄτα τηροῖην ἔχων —

750

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τί δῆτα τοῦτ' ἂν ὠφελήσειέν σ';

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅ τι;

εἰ μηκέτ' ἀνατέλλοι σελήνη μηδαμοῦ,  
οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην τοὺς τόκους.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὅτιν' εἰ δὴ;

755

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅτιν' κατὰ μῆνα τὰ γύριον δανείζεται.

SOCRATES

Don't shift around.

If one of your ideas is going nowhere,  
let it go, leave it alone. Later on,  
start it again and weigh it one more time.

STREPSIADES

My dear little Socrates . . .

SOCRATES

Yes, old man,

what is it?

STREPSIADES

I've got a lovely scheme  
to avoid paying interest.

SOCRATES

Lay it out.

STREPSIADES

All right. Tell me now . . .

SOCRATES

What is it?

STREPSIADES

What if I purchased a Thessalian witch  
and in the night had her haul down the moon—  
then shut it up in a circular box,  
just like a mirror, and kept watch on it.

[750]

SOCRATES

How would that provide you any help?

STREPSIADES

Well, if no moon ever rose up anywhere,  
I'd pay no interest.

SOCRATES

And why is that?

STREPSIADES

Because they lend out money by the month.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

εὖ γ'· ἀλλ' ἔτερον αὖ σοι προβαλῶ τι δεξιόν.  
εἶ σοι γράφοιτο πεντετάλαντός τις δίκη,  
ὅπως ἂν αὐτὴν ἀφανίσαις εἰπέ μοι.

760

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅπως; ὅπως; οὐκ οἶδ'· ἀτὰρ ζητητέον.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

μή νυν περὶ σαυτὸν εἶλλε τὴν γνώμην αἰεί,  
ἀλλ' ἀποχάλα τὴν φροντίδ' ἐς τὸν ἀέρα  
λιόδετον ὥσπερ μηλολόνην τοῦ ποδός.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἡῦρηκ' ἀφάνισιν τῆς δίκης σοφωτάτην,  
ὥστ' αὐτὸν ὁμολογεῖν σ' ἐμοί.

765

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ποῖαν τινά;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἦδη παρὰ τοῖσι φαρμακοπώλαις τὴν λίθον  
ταύτην ἐόρακας τὴν καλήν, τὴν διαφανῆ,  
ἀφ' ἧς τὸ πῦρ ἄπτουσι;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τὴν ὕαλον λέγεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔγωγε. φέρε τί δῆτ' ἂν, εἰ ταύτην λαβών,  
ὅποτε γράφοιτο τὴν δίκην ὁ γραμματεὺς,  
ἀπωτέρω στὰς ὧδε πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον  
τὰ γράμματ' ἐκτῆξαμι τῆς ἐμῆς δίκης;

770

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

σοφῶς γε νῆ τὰς Χάριτας.

SOCRATES

That's good. I'll give you another problem—  
it's tricky. If in court someone sued you  
to pay five talents, what would you do  
to get the case discharged.

STREPSIADES

How? I don't know.

I'll have to think.

[760]

SOCRATES

These ideas of yours—

don't keep them wound up all the time inside you.  
Let your thinking loose—out into the air—  
with thread around its foot, just like a bug.<sup>59</sup>

STREPSIADES

Hey, I've devised a really clever way  
to make that lawsuit disappear—it's so good,  
you'll agree with me.

SOCRATES

What's your way?

STREPSIADES

At the drug seller's shop have you seen  
that beautiful stone you can see right through,  
the one they use to start a fire?

SOCRATES

You mean glass?

STREPSIADES

Yes.

SOCRATES

So what?

STREPSIADES

What if I took that glass,  
and when the scribe was writing out the charge,  
I stood between him and the sun—like this—  
some distance off, and made his writing melt,  
just the part about my case?<sup>60</sup>

[770]

SOCRATES

By the Graces,

that's a smart idea!

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἴμ' ὡς ἦδομαι  
ὅτι πεντετάλαντος διαγέγραπταί μοι δίκη.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄγε δὴ ταχέως τουτὶ ξυνάρπασον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὸ τί;

775

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὅπως ἀποστρέψαι ἂν ἀντιδικῶν δίκην  
μέλλων ὀφλήσειν μὴ παρόντων μαρτύρων.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

φαιλότατα καὶ ῥᾶσ'.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

εἰπέ δῆ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ δὴ λέγω.  
εἰ πρόσθεν ἔτι μιᾶς ἐνεστώσης δίκης,  
πρὶν τὴν ἐμὴν καλεῖσθ', ἀπαγξαίμην τρέχων.

780

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐδὲν λέγεις.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγ', ἐπεὶ  
οὐδεὶς κατ' ἐμοῦ τεθνεώτος εἰσάξει δίκην.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὕθλεις· ἄπερρ', οὐκ ἂν διδάξαμι' ἂν σ' ἔτι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὅτι τί; ναὶ πρὸς τῶν θεῶν ᾧ Σώκρατες.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἐπιλήθει σύ γ' ἄττ' ἂν καὶ μάθης.  
ἐπεὶ τί νυνὶ πρῶτον ἐδιδάχθης; λέγε.

785

STREPSIADES

Hey, I'm happy—  
I've erased my law suit for five talents.

SOCRATES

So hurry up and tackle this next problem.

STREPSIADES

What is it?

SOCRATES

How would you evade a charge  
and launch a counter-suit in a hearing  
you're about to lose without a witness?

STREPSIADES

No problem there—it's easy.

SOCRATES

So tell me.

STREPSIADES

I will. If there was a case still pending,  
another one before my case was called,  
I'd run off and hang myself.

[780]

SOCRATES

That's nonsense.

STREPSIADES

No, by the gods, it's not. If I were dead,  
no one could bring a suit against me.

SOCRATES

That's rubbish. Just get away from here.  
I'll not instruct you any more.

STREPSIADES

Why not?

Come on, Socrates, in god's name.

SOCRATES

There's no point—  
as soon as you learn anything, it's gone,  
you forget it right away. Look, just now,  
what was the very first thing you were taught?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

φέρ' ἴδω τί μέντοι πρῶτον ἦν; τί πρῶτον ἦν;  
 τίς ἦν ἐν ἧ ῥ' ματτόμεθα μέντοι τᾶλφιστα;  
 οἷμοι τίς ἦν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οὐκ ἐς κόρακας ἀποφθερεῖ,  
 ἐπιλησμότατον καὶ σκαιότατον γερόντιον; 790

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἷμοι τί οὖν δῆθ' ὁ κακοδαίμων πείσομαι;  
 ἀπὸ γὰρ ὀλοῦμαι μὴ μαθῶν γλωττοστροφεῖν.  
 ἀλλ' ὦ Νεφέλαι χρηστόν τι συμβουλεύσατε.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἡμεῖς μὲν ὦ πρεσβῦτα συμβουλεύομεν,  
 εἴ σοί τις υἱός ἐστιν ἐκτεθραμμένος,  
 πέμπειν ἐκείνον ἀντὶ σαυτοῦ μανθάνειν. 795

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἔμοιγ' υἱὸς καλὸς τε καὶ γαθός·  
 ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐθέλει γὰρ μανθάνειν. τί ἐγὼ πάθω;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

σὺ δ' ἐπιτρέπεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εὐσωματεῖ γὰρ καὶ σφριγᾶ,  
 καῖστ' ἐκ γυναικῶν εὐπτέρων τῶν Κοισύρας. 800  
 ἀτὰρ μέτεμί γ' αὐτόν· ἦν δὲ μὴ θέλη,  
 οὐκ ἔστ' ὅπως οὐκ ἐξελῶ κ' τῆς οἰκίας.  
 ἀλλ' ἐπανάμεινόν μ' ὀλίγον εἰσελθῶν χρόνον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀρ' αἰσθάνει πλείστα δι' ἡμᾶς ἀγάθ' αὐτίχ' ἔξω  
 μόνας θεῶν; ὡς  
 ἔτοιμος ὄδ' ἐστὶν ἅπαντα δρᾶν  
 ὅσ' ἂν κελεύῃς.

STREPSIADES

Well, let's see . . . The first thing—what was it?  
 What was that thing we knead the flour in?  
 Damn it all, what was it?

SOCRATES

To hell with you!  
 You're the most forgetful, stupidest old man . . . [790]  
 Get lost!

STREPSIADES

Oh dear! Now I'm in for it.  
 What going to happen to me? I'm done for,  
 if I don't learn to twist my words around.  
 Come on, Clouds, give me some good advice.

CHORUS LEADER

Old man, here's our advice: if you've a son  
 and he's full grown, send him in there to learn—  
 he'll take your place.

STREPSIADES

Well, I do have a son—  
 a really good and fine one, too—trouble is  
 he doesn't want to learn. What should I do?

CHORUS LEADER

You just let him do that?

STREPSIADES

He's a big lad—  
 and strong and proud—his mother's family  
 are all high-flying women like Coesyra. [800]  
 But I'll take him in hand. If he says no,  
 then I'll evict him from my house for sure.

[to Socrates]

Go inside and wait for me a while.

[Strepsiades moves back across the stage to his own house]

CHORUS [to Socrates]

Don't you see you'll quickly get  
 from us all sorts of lovely things  
 since we're your only god?  
 This man here is now all set  
 to follow you in anything,  
 you simply have to prod.

σὺ δ' ἀνδρὸς ἐκπεπληγμένου καὶ φανερώς ἐπηρμένου 810  
 γνούς ἀπολάβεις ὃ τι πλεῖστον δύνασαι,  
 ταχέως· φιλεῖ γάρ πως τὰ τοιαῦθ' ἑτέρα τρέπεσθαι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Ὀμίχλην ἔτ' ἐνταυθοῖ μενεῖς·  
 ἀλλ' ἔσθι' ἐλθὼν τοὺς Μεγακλέους κίονας. 815

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ δαιμόνιε, τί χρῆμα πάσχεις ὦ πάτερ;  
 οὐκ εὖ φρονεῖς μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν Ὀλύμπιον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἰδοὺ γ' ἰδοὺ, Δί' Ὀλύμπιον· τῆς μωρίας,  
 τὸν Δία νομίζεις ὄντα τηλικουτονί.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δὲ τοῦτ' ἐγέλασας ἐτεόν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐνθυμούμενος 820  
 ὅτι παιδάριον εἶ καὶ φρονεῖς ἀρχαϊκῶς.  
 ὅμως γε μὴν πρόσελθ', ἵν' εἰδῆς πλείονα,  
 καί σοι φράσω τι πράγμ' ὃ μαθὼν ἀνὴρ ἔσει.  
 ὅπως δὲ τοῦτο μὴ διδάξεις μηδένα.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰδοὺ· τί ἔστιν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ᾧμοσας νυνὶ Δία. 825

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔγωγ'.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὀρᾶς οὖν ὡς ἀγαθὸν τὸ μανθάνειν;  
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὦ Φειδιππίδη Ζεὺς.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλὰ τίς;

You know the man is in a daze.  
 He's clearly keen his son should learn.  
 So lap it up—make haste—  
 get everything that you can raise. [810]  
 Such chances tend to change and turn  
 into a different case.

[Socrates exits into the Thinkery. Strepsiades and Pheidippides come out of their house. Strepsiades is pushing his son in front of him]

STREPSIADES

By the foggy air, you can't stay here—  
 not one moment longer! Off with you—  
 go eat Megacles out of house and home!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Hey, father—you poor man, what's wrong with you?  
 By Olympian Zeus, you're not thinking straight.

STREPSIADES

See that—"Olympian Zeus"! Ridiculous—  
 to believe in Zeus—and at your age!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Why laugh at that?

STREPSIADES

To think you're such a child—  
 and your views so out of date. Still, come here,  
 so you can learn a bit. I'll tell you things.  
 When you understand all this, you'll be a man.  
 But you mustn't mention this to anyone.

PHEIDIPPIDES

All right, what is it?

STREPSIADES

You just swore by Zeus.

PHEIDIPPIDES

That's right. I did.

STREPSIADES

You see how useful learning is?  
 Pheidippides, there's no such thing as Zeus.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Then what is there?



ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Δίως βασιλεύει τὸν Δί' ἐξεληλακῶς.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

αἰβοῖ τί ληρεῖς;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἴσθι τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχον.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τίς φησι ταῦτα;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Σωκράτης ὁ Μήλιος 830  
καὶ Χαιρεφῶν, ὃς οἶδε τὰ ψυλλῶν ἴχνη.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ δ' ἐς τοσοῦτον τῶν μανιῶν ἐλήλυθας  
ὥστ' ἀνδράσι πείθει χολῶσι;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εὐστόμει  
καὶ μηδὲν εἶπης φλαῦρον ἄνδρας δεξιούς  
καὶ νοῦν ἔχοντας· ὦν ὑπὸ τῆς φειδωλίας 835  
ἀπεκείρατ' οὐδεὶς πῶποτ' οὐδ' ἠλείψατο,  
οὐδ' ἐς βαλανεῖον ἦλθε λουσόμενος· σὺ δὲ  
ὥσπερ τεθνεῶτος καταλόει μου τὸν βίον.  
ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστ' ἐλθὼν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ μάνθανε.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δ' ἂν παρ' ἐκείνων καὶ μάθοι χρηστόν τις ἄν; 840

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἄληθες; ὅσαπερ ἔστ' ἐν ἀνθρώποις σοφά·  
γνώσει δὲ σαυτὸν ὡς ἀμαθῆς εἶ καὶ παχύς.  
ἀλλ' ἐπανάμεινόν μ' ὀλίγον ἐνταυθοῖ χρόνον.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οἴμοι τί δράσω παραφρονοῦντος τοῦ πατρός;  
πότερον παρανοίας αὐτὸν εἰσαγαγὼν ἔλω, 845  
ἢ τοῖς σοροπηγοῖς τὴν μανίαν αὐτοῦ φράσω;

STREPSIADES

Vortex now is king—  
he's pushed out Zeus.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Bah, that's nonsense!

STREPSIADES

You should know that's how things are right now.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Who says that?

STREPSIADES

Socrates of Melos<sup>61</sup> [830]  
and Chaerephon—they know about fleas' footprints.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Have you become so crazy you believe  
these fellows? They're disgusting!

STREPSIADES

Watch your tongue.  
Don't say nasty things about such clever men—  
men with brains, who like to save their money.  
That's why not one of them has ever shaved,  
or oiled his skin, or visited the baths  
to wash himself. You, on the other hand,  
keep on bathing in my livelihood,  
as if I'd died.<sup>62</sup> So now get over there,  
as quickly as you can. Take my place and learn.

PHEIDIPPIDES

But what could anyone learn from those men  
that's any use at all? [840]

STREPSIADES

You have to ask?  
Why, wise things—the full extent of human thought.  
You'll see how thick you are, how stupid.  
Just wait a moment here for me.

[Strepsiades goes into his house]

PHEIDIPPIDES

O dear,  
What will I do? My father's lost his wits.  
Do I haul him off to get committed,  
on the ground that he's a lunatic,  
or tell the coffin-makers he's gone nuts.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

φέρ' ἴδω, σὺ τοῦτον τί ὀνομάζεις; εἶπέ μοι.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλεκτρούνα.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καλῶς γε. ταυτηνὶ δὲ τί;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλεκτρονόν'.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἄμφω ταυτό; καταγέλαστος εἶ.  
μή νυν τὸ λοιπόν, ἀλλὰ τήνδε μὲν καλεῖν  
ἀλεκτρούαιναν τουτονὶ δ' ἀλέκτορα.

850

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλεκτρούαιναν; ταῦτ' ἔμαθες τὰ δεξιὰ  
εἴσω παρελθὼν ἄρτι παρὰ τοὺς γηγενεῖς;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

χᾶτερά γε πόλλ'. ἀλλ' ὅ τι μάθοιμ' ἐκάστοτε,  
ἐπελανθανόμεν ἂν εὐθὺς ὑπὸ πλήθους ἐτῶν.

855

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ θοιμάτιον ἀπώλεσας;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολώλεκ', ἀλλὰ καταπεφρόντικα.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τὰς δ' ἐμβάδας ποῖ τέτροφας ὠνόητε σύ;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὡσπερ Περικλῆς ἐς τὸ δέον ἀπώλεσα.  
ἀλλ' ἴθι βάδιζ', ἴωμεν. εἶτα τῷ πατρὶ  
πιθόμενος ἐξάμαρτε· καγὼ τοί ποτε,  
οἶδ', ἐξέτει σοι τραυλίσαντι πιθόμενος,  
ὄν πρῶτον ὀβολὸν ἔλαβον ἡλιαστικόν,  
τούτου ἑπριάμην σοι Διασίους ἀμαξίδα.

860

[Strepsiades returns with two birds, one in each hand. He holds out one of them]

STREPSIADES

Come on now, what do you call this? Tell me.

PHEIDIPPIDES

It's a fowl.

STREPSIADES

That's good. What's this?

PHEIDIPPIDES

That's a fowl.

STREPSIADES

They're both the same? You're being ridiculous.  
From now on, don't do that. Call this one "fowl,"  
and this one here "fowlette."

[850]

PHEIDIPPIDES

"Fowlette"? That's it?

That's the sort of clever stuff you learned in there,  
by going in with these Sons of Earth?<sup>63</sup>

STREPSIADES

Yes, it is—

and lots more, too. But everything I learned,  
I right away forgot, because I'm old.

PHEIDIPPIDES

That why you lost your cloak?

STREPSIADES

I didn't lose it—

I gave it to knowledge—a donation.

PHEIDIPPIDES

And your sandals—what you do with them,  
you deluded man?

STREPSIADES

Just like Pericles,

I lost them as a "necessary expense."<sup>64</sup>  
But come on, let's go. Move it. If your dad  
asks you to do wrong, you must obey him.  
I know I did just what you wanted long ago,  
when you were six years old and had a lisp—  
with the first obol I got for jury work,  
at the feast of Zeus I got you a toy cart.

[860]

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦ μὴν σὺ τούτοις τῶ χρόνῳ ποτ' ἀχθέσει. 865

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εὖ γ' ὅτι ἐπέισθης. δεῦρο δεῦρ' ὦ Σώκρατες,  
ἕξελθ'. ἄγω γάρ σοι τὸν υἱὸν τουτουὶ  
ἄκοντ' ἀναπείσας.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

νηπύτιος γάρ ἐστ' ἔτι,  
καὶ τῶν κρεμαθρῶν οὔπω τρίβων τῶν ἐνθάδε.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

αὐτὸς τρίβων εἴης ἂν, εἰ κρέμαιό γε. 870

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἐς κόρακας; καταρᾶ σὺ τῶ διδασκάλῳ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἰδοὺ κρέμαι', ὡς ἠλίθιον ἐφθέγγετο  
καὶ τοῖσι χεῖλεσιν διερρηγκόσιν.  
πῶς ἂν μάθοι ποθ' οὗτος ἀπόφυξιν δίκης  
ἢ κλήσιν ἢ χαύνωσιν ἀναπειστηρίαν; 875  
καίτοι γε ταλάντου τοῦτ' ἔμαθεν Ὑπέρβολος.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀμέλει δίδασκε· θυμόσοφός ἐστιν φύσει.  
εὐθύς γέ τοι παιδάριον ὄν τυννουτονὶ  
ἔπλαττεν ἔνδον οἰκίας ναῦς τ' ἔγλυφεν,  
ἀμαξίδας τε σκυτίνας ἠργάζετο, 880  
κάκ τῶν σιδίων βατράχους ἐποίει πῶς δοκεῖς.  
ὅπως δ' ἐκείνῳ τῶ λόγῳ μαθήσεται,  
τὸν κρείττον' ὅστις ἐστὶ καὶ τὸν ἥττονα,  
ὅς τ' ἄδικα λέγων ἀνατρέπει τὸν κρείττονα.  
ἐὰν δὲ μή, τὸν γοῦν ἄδικον πάσῃ τέχνῃ. 885

PHEIDIPPIDES

You're going to regret this one fine day.

STREPSIADES

Good—you're doing what I ask.

[Strepsiades calls inside the Thinkery]

Socrates,

come out here . . .

[Enter Socrates from inside the Thinkery]

Here—I've brought my son to you.

He wasn't keen, but I persuaded him.

SOCRATES

He's still a child—he doesn't know the ropes.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Go hang yourself up on some rope, [870]  
and get beaten like a worn-out cloak.

STREPSIADES

Damn you! Why insult your teacher?

SOCRATES

Look how he says "hang yourself"—it sounds like baby talk. No crispness in his speech.<sup>65</sup> With such a feeble tone how will he learn to answer to a charge or summons or speak persuasively? And yet it's true Hyperbolos could learn to master that—it cost him one talent.<sup>66</sup>

STREPSIADES

Don't be concerned.

Teach him. He's naturally intelligent. When he was a little boy—just that tall—even then at home he built small houses, carved out ships, made chariots from leather, and fashioned frogs from pomegranate peel. You can't imagine! Get him to learn those two forms of argument—the Better, whatever that may be, and the Worse. If not both, then at least the unjust one—every trick you've got. [880]

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

αὐτὸς μαθήσεται παρ' αὐτοῖν τοῖν λόγων.  
ἐγὼ δ' ἀπέσομαι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοῦτό νυν μέμνησ', ὅπως  
πρὸς πάντα τὰ δίκαι' ἀντιλέγειν δυνήσεται.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

χώρει δευρί, δείξον σαυτὸν  
τοῖσι θεαταῖς, καίπερ θρασὺς ὤν.

890

ἝΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἴθ' ὅποι χηρῆζεις. πολὺ γὰρ μάλλον 'ς  
ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖσι λέγων ἀπολώ.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀπολείς σύ; τίς ὤν;

ἝΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

λόγος.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἤττων γ' ὤν.

ἝΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀλλά σε νικῶ τὸν ἐμοῦ κρείττω  
φάσκοντ' εἶναι.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί σοφὸν ποιῶν;

895

ἝΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

γνώμας καινὰς ἐξευρίσκων.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ταῦτα γὰρ ἀνθεὶ διὰ τουτουσὶ  
τοὺς ἀνοήτους.

ἝΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

οὔκ, ἀλλὰ σοφούς.

SOCRATES

He'll learn on his own  
from the two styles of reasoning. I'll be gone.

STREPSIADES

But remember this—he must be able  
to speak against all just arguments.

[Enter the Better Argument from inside the Thinkery, talking to the Worse Argument who is still inside]

BETTER ARGUMENT

Come on. Show yourself to the people here—  
I guess you're bold enough for that.

[890]

[The Worse Argument emerges from the Thinkery]

WORSE ARGUMENT

Go where you please.  
The odds are greater I can wipe you out  
with lots of people there to watch us argue.

BETTER ARGUMENT

You'll wipe me out? Who'd you think you are?

WORSE ARGUMENT

An argument.

BETTER ARGUMENT

Yes, but second rate.

WORSE ARGUMENT

You claim that you're more powerful than me,  
but I'll still conquer you.

BETTER ARGUMENT

What clever tricks  
do you intend to use?

WORSE ARGUMENT

I'll formulate  
new principles.

BETTER ARGUMENT [indicating the audience]

Yes, that's in fashion now,  
thanks to these idiots.

WORSE ARGUMENT

No, no. They're smart.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*ἀπολῶ σε κακῶς.*

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*εἰπέ τί ποιῶν;*

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*τὰ δίκαια λέγων.*

900

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*ἀλλ' ἀνατρέψω γ' αὐτ' ἀντιλέγων·  
οὐδὲ γὰρ εἶναι πάνυ φημί δίκην.*

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*οὐκ εἶναι φής;*

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*φέρε γὰρ ποῦ ἔστω;*

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*παρὰ τοῖσι θεοῖς.*

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*πῶς δῆτα δίκης οὔσης ὁ Ζεὺς  
οὐκ ἀπόλωλεν τὸν πατέρ' αὐτοῦ  
δήσας;*

905

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*αἶβοι τουτὶ καὶ δὴ  
χωρεῖ τὸ κακόν· δότε μοι λεκάνην.*

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*τυφογέρων εἰ κἀνάρμοστος.*

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*καταπύγων εἰ κἀναίσχυντος.*

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*ρόδα μ' εἴρηκας.*

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

*καὶ βωμολόχος.*

910

BETTER ARGUMENT

I'll destroy you utterly.

WORSE ARGUMENT

And how?

Tell me that.

BETTER ARGUMENT

By arguing what's just.

[900]

WORSE ARGUMENT

That I can overturn in my response,  
by arguing there's no such thing as Justice.

BETTER ARGUMENT

It doesn't exist? That's what you maintain?

WORSE ARGUMENT

Well, if it does, where is it?

BETTER ARGUMENT

With the gods.

WORSE ARGUMENT

Well, if Justice does exist, how come Zeus  
hasn't been destroyed for chaining up his dad.<sup>67</sup>

BETTER ARGUMENT

This is going from bad to worse. I feel sick.  
Fetch me a basin.

WORSE ARGUMENT

You silly old man—  
you're so ridiculous.

BETTER ARGUMENT

And you're quite shameless,  
you bum fucker.

WORSE ARGUMENT

Those words you speak—like roses!

BETTER ARGUMENT

Buffoon!

[910]

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

κρίνεσι στεφανοῖς.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ πατραλοίας.

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

χρυσῶ πάπτων μ' οὐ γιγνώσκεις.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

οὐ δῆτα πρὸ τοῦ γ', ἀλλὰ μολύβδῳ.

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

νῦν δέ γε κόσμος τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐμοί.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

θρασύς εἰ πολλοῦ.

915

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

σὺ δέ γ' ἀρχαῖος.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

διὰ σέ δὲ φοιτᾶν  
οὐδεὶς ἐθέλει τῶν μειρακίων·  
καὶ γνωσθήσει ποτ' Ἀθηναίοις  
οἷα διδάσκεις τοὺς ἀνοήτους.

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀνχμείς αἰσχρῶς.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

σὺ δέ γ' εὖ πράττεις.  
καίτοι πρότερόν γ' ἐπτώχευες,  
Τήλεφος εἶναι Μυσοῦς φάσκων,  
ἐκ πηριδίου  
γνώμας τρώγων Πανδελετείους.

ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ᾧμοι σοφίας ἧς ἐμνήσθης

925

WORSE ARGUMENT

You adorn my head with lilies.

BETTER ARGUMENT

You destroyed your father!

WORSE ARGUMENT

You don't mean to,  
but you're showering me with gold.

BETTER ARGUMENT

No, not gold—  
before this age, those names were lead.

WORSE ARGUMENT

But now,  
your insults are a credit to me.

BETTER ARGUMENT

You're too obstreperous.

WORSE ARGUMENT

You're archaic.

BETTER ARGUMENT

It's thanks to you that none of our young men  
is keen to go to school. The day will come  
when the Athenians will all realize  
how you teach these silly fools.

WORSE ARGUMENT

You're dirty—  
it's disgusting.

BETTER ARGUMENT

But you're doing very well—  
although in earlier days you were a beggar,  
claiming to be Telephos from Mysia,  
eating off some views of Pandeletos,  
which you kept in your wallet.<sup>68</sup>

[920]

WORSE ARGUMENT

That was brilliant—  
you just reminded me . . .

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ᾧμοι μανίας τῆς σῆς, πόλεώς θ',  
ἤτις σε τρέφει  
λυμαινόμενον τοῖς μειρακίοις.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

οὐχὶ διδάξεις τοῦτον Κρόνος ὦν.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

εἵπερ γ' αὐτὸν σωθῆναι χρὴ 930  
καὶ μὴ λαλιὰν μόνον ἀσκήσαι.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

δεῦρ' ἴθι, τοῦτον δ' ἔα μαίνεσθαι.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

κλαύσει, τὴν χεῖρ' ἣν ἐπιβάλλῃς.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

παύσασθε μάχης καὶ λοιδορίας.  
ἀλλ' ἐπίδειξαι σύ τε τοὺς προτέρους 935  
ἄττ' ἐδίδασκες, σύ τε τὴν καινὴν  
παίδευσιν, ὅπως ἂν ἀκούσας σφῶν  
ἀντιλεγόντων κρίνας φοιτᾷ.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

δρᾶν ταῦτ' ἐθέλω.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

κᾶγωγ' ἐθέλω.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

φέρε δὴ πότερος λέξει πρότερος; 940

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τούτω δώσω.  
κᾶτ' ἐκ τούτων ὧν ἂν λέξῃ  
ρήματίοισιν καινοῖς αὐτὸν  
καὶ διανοίαις κατατοξεύσω.  
τὸ τελευταῖον δ', ἣν ἀναγρύξῃ, 945  
τὸ πρόσωπον ἅπαν καὶ τῶφθαλμῶ  
κεντούμενος ὥσπερ ὑπ' ἀνθρηγῶν  
ὑπὸ τῶν γνωμῶν ἀπολείται.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

It was lunacy!  
Your own craziness—the city's, too.  
It fosters you while you corrupt the young.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

You can't teach this boy—you're old as Cronos.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

Yes, I must—if he's going to be redeemed [930]  
and not just prattle empty verbiage.

WORSE ARGUMENT [*to Pheidippides*]

Come over here—leave him to his foolishness.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

You'll regret it, if you lay a hand on him.

## CHORUS LEADER

Stop this fighting, all these abusive words.

[*addressing first the Better Argument and then the Worse Argument*]

Instead, explain the things you used to teach  
to young men long ago—then you lay out  
what's new in training now. He can listen  
as you present opposing arguments  
and then decide which school he should attend.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

I'm willing to do that.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

All right with me.

## CHORUS LEADER

Come on then, which one of you goes first? [940]

## WORSE ARGUMENT

I'll grant him that right. Once he's said his piece,  
I'll shoot it down with brand-new expressions  
and some fresh ideas. By the time I'm done,  
if he so much as mutters, he'll get stung  
by my opinions on his face and eyes—  
like so many hornets—he'll be destroyed.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

νῦν δείξετον τὼ πισύνω τοῖς περιδεξίουςι  
 λόγουςι καὶ φροντίσι καὶ γνωμοτύποις μερίμναις,  
 ὁπότερος αὐτοῖν λέγων ἀμείνων φανήσεται.  
 νῦν γὰρ ἅπας ἐνθάδε κίνδυνος ἀνείται σοφίας, 955  
 ἧς πέρι τοῖς ἐμοῖς φίλοις ἐστὶν ἀγὼν μέγιστος.

— ἀλλ' ὦ πολλοῖς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἦθεσι χρηστοῖς  
 στεφανώσας,  
 ῥῆξον φωνὴν ἦτιμι χαίρεις, καὶ τὴν σαντοῦ φύσιν εἰπέ.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

λέξω τοίνυν τὴν ἀρχαίαν παιδείαν ὡς διέκειτο, 960  
 ὅτ' ἐγὼ τὰ δίκαια λέγων ἦνθουν καὶ σωφροσύνη ἵνευόμιστο.  
 πρῶτον μὲν ἔδει παιδὸς φωνὴν γρύξαντος μηδὲν ἀκοῦσαι·  
 εἶτα βαδίζων ἐν ταῖσι ὁδοῖς εὐτάκτως ἐς κιθαριστοῦ  
 τοὺς κωμήτας γυμνοὺς ἀθρόους, κεῖ κριμνώδη καταναίφοι.  
 εἶτ' αὐτὸν προμαθεῖν ἄσμ' ἐδίδασκεν τὼ μῆρῶ μὴ ξυνέχοντας,  
 ἢ Ἰαλλάδα περσέπολι δεινὰν ἢ Ἰηλέπορον τι βόαμα,  
 ἐντευμαμένους τὴν ἀρμονίαν, ἣν οἱ πατέρες παρέδωκαν.  
 εἰ δέ τις αὐτῶν βωμολοχεύσαιτ' ἢ κάμψαιεν τινα καμπήν,  
 οἷας οἱ νῦν τὰς κατὰ Φρυγίαν ταύτας τὰς δυσκολοκάμπτους,  
 ἐπετρίβετο τυπτόμενος πολλὰς ὡς τὰς Μούσας ἀφανίζων.  
 ἐν παιδοτριβῶν δὲ καθίζοντας τὸν μῆρῶν ἔδει προβαλέσθαι  
 τοὺς παῖδας, ὅπως τοῖς ἔξωθεν μηδὲν δείξειαν ἀπηνέες·  
 εἶτ' αὐτὸν πάλιν αὐθις ἀνιστάμενον συμψῆσαι, καὶ προνοεῖσθαι  
 εἶδωλον τοῖσι ἐρασταῖσι τῆς ἡβῆς μὴ καταλείπειν. 976

## CHORUS

Trusting their skill in argument,  
 their phrase-making propensity, [950]  
 these two men here are now intent  
 to show which one will prove to be  
 the better man in oratory.  
 For wisdom now is being hard pressed—  
 my friends, this is the crucial test.

CHORUS LEADER [*addressing the Better Argument*]

First, you who crowned our men in days gone by  
 with so much virtue in their characters,  
 let's hear that voice which brings you such delight—  
 explain to us what makes you what you are. [960]

## BETTER ARGUMENT

All right, I'll set out how we organized  
 our education in the olden days,  
 when I talked about what's just and prospered,  
 when people wished to practise self-restraint.  
 First, there was a rule—children made no noise,  
 no muttering. Then, when they went outside,  
 walking the streets to the music master's house,  
 groups of youngsters from the same part of town  
 went in straight lines and never wore a cloak,  
 not even when the snow fell thick as flour.  
 There he taught them to sing with thighs apart.<sup>69</sup>  
 They had memorize their songs—such as,  
 “Dreadful Pallas Who Destroys Whole Cities,”  
 and “A Cry From Far Away.” These they sang  
 in the same style their fathers had passed down.  
 If any young lad fooled around or tried  
 to innovate with some new flourishes,  
 like the contorted sounds we have today  
 from those who carry on the Phrynis style,<sup>70</sup> [970]  
 he was beaten, soundly thrashed, his punishment  
 for tarnishing the Muse. At the trainer's house,  
 when the boys sat down, they had to keep  
 their thighs stretched out, so they would not expose  
 a thing which might excite erotic torments  
 in those looking on. And when they stood up,  
 they smoothed the sand, being careful not to leave  
 imprints of their manhood there for lovers.



ἠλείψατο δ' ἂν τοῦμφαλοῦ οὐδεὶς παῖς ὑπένερθεν τότ' ἂν,  
 ὥστε  
 τοῖς αἰδοίοισι δρόσος καὶ χνοῦς ὥσπερ μήλοισιν ἐπήνθει·  
 οὐδ' ἂν μαλακὴν φυρασάμενος τὴν φωνὴν πρὸς τὸν  
 ἔραστὴν  
 αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν προαγωγέων τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐβάδιζεν, 980  
 οὐδ' ἀνελέσθαι δειπνοῦντ' ἐξῆν καὶ κεφάλαιον ῥαφανίδος,  
 οὐδ' ἄννηθον τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀρπάζειν οὐδὲ σέλινον,  
 οὐδ' ὀμοφαγεῖν οὐδὲ κιχλίζειν οὐδ' ἴσχειν τῷ πόδ' ἐναλλάξ.

## ἸΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀρχαῖά γε καὶ Διπολιώδη καὶ τεττίγων ἀνάμεστα  
 καὶ Κηκείδου καὶ Βουφονίων. 985

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὐν ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνα,  
 ἐξ ὧν ἄνδρας Μαραθωνομάχας ἡμῆ παιδεύσεις ἔθρεψεν.  
 σὺ δὲ τοὺς νῦν εὐθὺς ἐν ἱματίοισι διδάσκεις ἐντετυλίχθαι·  
 ὥστε μὲν ἀπάγχεσθ', ὅταν ὀρχεῖσθαι Παναθηναίοις δέον  
 αὐτοῦς  
 τὴν ἀσπίδα τῆς κωλῆς προέχων ἀμελῆ τῆς Τριτογενείας.  
 πρὸς ταῦτ' ὦ μειράκιον θαρρῶν ἐμὲ τὸν κρείττω λόγον  
 αἰροῦ· 990  
 κἀπιστήσει μισεῖν ἀγορὰν καὶ βαλανείων ἀπέχεσθαι,  
 καὶ τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι, κἂν σκώπτῃ τίς σε  
 φλέγεσθαι·  
 καὶ τῶν θάκων τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ὑπανίστασθαι  
 προσιοῦσιν,  
 καὶ μὴ περὶ τοὺς σαντοῦ γονέας σκαιουργεῖν, ἄλλο  
 τε μηδὲν  
 αἰσχρὸν ποιεῖν, ὅτι τῆς αἰδοῦς μέλλεις τᾶγαλμ'  
 ἀναπλάττειν· 995  
 μηδ' εἰς ὀρχηστρίδος εἰσάττειν, ἵνα μὴ πρὸς ταῦτα κεχηνῶς  
 μήλω βληθεὶς ὑπὸ πορνιδίου τῆς εὐκλείας ἀποθραυσθῆς·  
 μηδ' ἀντειπεῖν τῷ πατρὶ μηδέν, μηδ' Ἰαπετὸν καλέσαντα  
 μνησικακῆσαι τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐξ ἧς ἐνεοττοτροφήθης.

Using oil, no young lad rubbed his body  
 underneath his navel—thus on his sexual parts  
 there was a dewy fuzz, like on a peach.  
 He didn't make his voice all soft and sweet  
 to talk to lovers as he walked along,  
 or with his glances coyly act the pimp. [980]  
 When he was eating, he would not just grab  
 a radish head, or take from older men  
 some dill or parsley, or eat dainty food.  
 He wasn't allowed to giggle, or sit there  
 with his legs crossed.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

Antiquated rubbish!  
 Filled with festivals for Zeus Polieus,  
 cicadas, slaughtered bulls, and Cedeides.<sup>71</sup>

## BETTER ARGUMENT

But the point is this—these very features  
 in my education brought up those men  
 who fought at Marathon. But look at you—  
 you teach these young men now right from the start  
 to wrap themselves in cloaks. It enrages me  
 when the time comes for them to do their dance  
 at the Panathenaea festival  
 and one of them holds his shield low down,  
 over his balls, insulting Tritogeneia.<sup>72</sup>  
 And so, young man, that's why you should choose me, [990]  
 the Better Argument. Be resolute.  
 You'll find out how to hate the market place,  
 to shun the public baths, to feel ashamed  
 of shameful things, to fire up your heart  
 when someone mocks you, to give up your chair  
 when older men come near, not to insult  
 your parents, nor act in any other way  
 which brings disgrace or which could mutilate  
 your image as an honourable man.  
 You'll learn not to run off to dancing girls,  
 in case, while gaping at them, you get hit  
 with an apple thrown by some little slut,  
 and your fine reputation's done for,  
 and not to contradict your father,  
 or remind him of his age by calling him  
 Iapetus—not when he spent his years  
 in raising you from infancy.<sup>73</sup>

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

εἰ ταῦτ' ὦ μειράκιον πείσει τούτῳ, νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον 1000  
 τοῖς Ἱπποκράτους υἱέσιν εἴξεις καὶ σε καλοῦσι  
 βλιτομάμμαιαν.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὖν λιπαρός γε καὶ εὐανθῆς ἐν γυμνασίοις διατρίψεις,  
 οὐ στωμύλλων κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν τριβολεκτράπελ' οἰάπερ  
 οἱ νῦν,  
 οὐδ' ἐλκόμενος περὶ πραγματίου γλισχραντιλογεξεπι-  
 τρίπτου.

ἀλλ' εἰς Ἀκαδήμειαν κατιῶν ὑπὸ ταῖς μορίαις ἀποθρέξει  
 στεφανωσάμενος καλάμῳ λευκῷ μετὰ σώφρονος  
 ἡλικιώτου, 1006  
 μίλακος ὄζων καὶ ἀπραγμοσύνης καὶ λεύκης φυλλοβο-  
 λούσης,

ἦρος ἐν ὥρᾳ χαίρων, ὁπότεν πλάτανος πετελέα ψιθυρίζῃ.  
 ἦν ταῦτα ποιῆς ἀγὼ φράζω,  
 καὶ πρὸς τούτοις προσέχῃς τὸν νοῦν, 1010  
 εἴξεις αἰεὶ

στήθος λιπαρόν, χροῖαν λαμπράν,  
 ὤμους μεγάλους, γλώτταν βαιάν,  
 πυγὴν μεγάλην, πόσθην μικράν.  
 ἦν δ' ἄπερ οἱ νῦν ἐπιτηδεύης, 1015  
 πρώτα μὲν εἴξεις

χροῖαν ὠχράν, ὤμους μικρούς,  
 στήθος λεπτόν, γλώτταν μεγάλην,  
 πυγὴν μικράν, κωλῆν μεγάλην,  
 ψήφισμα μακρόν, καὶ σ' ἀναπείσει  
 τὸ μὲν αἰσχρὸν ἅπαν καλὸν ἡγείσθαι, 1020  
 τὸ καλὸν δ' αἰσχρόν.

καὶ πρὸς τούτοις τῆς Ἀντιμάχου  
 καταπυγασύνης ἀναπλήσει.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ καλλίπυργον σοφίαν κλεινοτάτην ἐπασκῶν,  
 ὡς ἡδύ σου τοῖσι λόγοις σώφρον ἔπεστιν ἄνθος.  
 †εὐδαίμονες δ' ἦσαν ἄρ' οἱ ζῶντες τότε ἐπὶ

## WORSE ARGUMENT

My boy, if you're persuaded by this man, [1000]  
 then by Dionysus, you'll finish up  
 just like Hippocrates' sons—and then  
 they'll all call you a sucker of the tit.<sup>74</sup>

## BETTER ARGUMENT

You'll spend your time in the gymnasium—  
 your body will be sleek, in fine condition.  
 You won't be hanging round the market place,  
 chattering filth, as boys do nowadays.  
 You won't keep on being hauled away to court  
 over some damned sticky fierce dispute  
 about some triviality. No, no.  
 Instead you'll go to the Academy,<sup>75</sup>  
 to race under the sacred olive trees,  
 with a decent friend the same age as you,  
 wearing a white reed garland, with no cares.  
 You'll smell yew trees, quivering poplar leaves,  
 as plane trees whisper softly to the elms,  
 rejoicing in the spring. I tell you this—  
 if you carry out these things I mention,  
 if you concentrate your mind on them, [1010]  
 you'll always have a gleaming chest, bright skin,  
 broad shoulders, tiny tongue, strong buttocks,  
 and a little prick. But if you take up  
 what's in fashion nowadays, you'll have,  
 for starters, feeble shoulders, a pale skin,  
 a narrow chest, huge tongue, a tiny bum,  
 and a large skill in framing long decrees.<sup>76</sup>  
 And that man there will have you believing  
 what's bad is good and what's good is bad. [1020]  
 Then he'll give you Antimachos' disease—  
 you'll be infected with his buggery.<sup>77</sup>

## CHORUS

O you whose wisdom stands so tall,  
 the most illustrious of all.  
 The odour of your words is sweet,  
 the flowering bloom of modest ways—  
 happy who lived in olden days!

τῶν προτέρων· πρὸς τάδε σ' ὦ κομψοπρεπῆ μουσαν ἔχων,  
δεῖ σε λέγειν τι καινόν, ὡς ἠὺδοκίμηκεν ἀνὴρ. 1031

— δεινῶν δέ σοι βουλευμάτων ἔοικε δεῖν πρὸς αὐτόν,  
εἴπερ τὸν ἄνδρ' ὑπερβαλεῖ καὶ μὴ γέλωτ' ὀφλήσεις. 1035

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ μὴν πάλαι γ' ἐπνιγόμενην τὰ σπλάγχνα κάπεθύμου  
ἅπαντα ταῦτ' ἐναντίας γνώμαισι συνταράξαι.  
ἐγὼ γὰρ ἦττων μὲν λόγος δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτ' ἐκλήθη  
ἐν τοῖσι φροντισταῖσιν, ὅτι πρῶτιστος ἐπενόησα  
τοῖσιν νόμοις καὶ ταῖς δίκαις τὰναντί' ἀντιλέξαι. 1040  
καὶ τοῦτο πλεῖν ἢ μυρίων ἔστ' ἄξιον στατήρων,  
αἰρούμενον τοὺς ἦττονας λόγους ἔπειτα νικᾶν.  
σκέψαι δὲ τὴν παιδευσιν ἢ πέποιθεν ὡς ἐλέγξω,  
ὅστις σε θερμῶ φησι λουῖσθαι πρῶτον οὐκ ἐάσειν.  
καίτοι τίνα γνώμην ἔχων ψέγεις τὰ θερμὰ λουτρά; 1045

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ὅτι κακιστόν ἐστι καὶ δειλὸν ποιεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἐπίσχε· εὐθὺς γὰρ σ' ἔχω μέσον λαβῶν ἄφυκτον.  
καί μοι φράσον, τῶν τοῦ Διὸς παίδων τίν' ἄνδρ' ἄριστον  
ψυχὴν νομίζεις, εἰπέ, καὶ πλείστους πόνους πονῆσαι.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἐγὼ μὲν οὐδέν' Ἡρακλέους βελτίον' ἄνδρα κρίνω. 1050

## [to the Worse Argument]

Your rival's made his case extremely well,  
so you who have such nice artistic skill.  
must in reply give some new frill. [1030]

## CHORUS LEADER

If you want to overcome this man  
it looks as if you'll need to bring at him  
some clever stratagems—unless you want  
to look ridiculous.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

It's about time!

My guts have long been churning with desire  
to rip in fragments all those things he said,  
with counter-arguments. That's why I'm called  
Worse Argument among all thinking men,  
because I was the very first of them  
to think of coming up with reasoning  
against our normal ways and just decrees. [1040]  
And it's worth lots of money—more, in fact,  
than drachmas in six figures<sup>78</sup>—to select  
the weaker argument and yet still win.  
Now just see how I'll pull his system down,  
that style of education which he trusts.  
First, he says he won't let you have hot water  
when you take a bath. What's the idea here?  
Why object to having a warm bath?

## BETTER ARGUMENT

The effect they have is very harmful—  
they turn men into cowards.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

Wait a minute!

The first thing you say I've caught you out.  
I've got you round the waist. You can't escape.  
Tell me this—of all of Zeus' children  
which man, in your view, had the greatest heart  
and carried out the hardest tasks? Tell me.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

In my view, no one was a better man  
than Hercules. [1050]

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ποῦ ψυχρὰ δῆτα πώποτ' εἶδες Ἡράκλεια λουτρά;  
καίτοι τίς ἀνδρειότερος ἦν;

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ταῦτ' ἐστὶ ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνα,  
ἂ τῶν νεανίσκων αἰεὶ δι' ἡμέρας λαλούντων  
πλήρες τὸ βαλανεῖον ποιεί, κενὰς δὲ τὰς παλαιίστρας.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

εἶτ' ἐν ἀγορᾷ τὴν διατριβὴν ψέγεις· ἐγὼ δ' ἐπαινῶ. 1055  
εἰ γὰρ πονηρὸν ἦν, Ὅμηρος οὐδέποτ' ἂν ἐποίει  
τὸν Νέστορ' ἀγορητὴν ἂν οὐδὲ τοὺς σοφοὺς ἅπαντας.  
ἄνεμι δῆτ' ἐντεῦθεν ἐς τὴν γλώτταν, ἦν ὁδὸς μὲν  
οὐ φησι χρῆναι τοὺς νέους ἀσκεῖν, ἐγὼ δὲ φημι.  
καὶ σωφρονεῖν αὖ φησι χρῆναι· δύο κακῶ μεγίστω. 1060  
ἐπεὶ σὺ διὰ τὸ σωφρονεῖν τῷ πώποτ' εἶδες ἦδη  
ἀγαθάν τι γενόμενον, φράσον, καί μ' ἐξέλεγξον εἰπῶν.

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

πολλοῖς. ὁ γοῦν Πηλεὺς ἔλαβε διὰ τοῦτο τὴν μάχαιραν.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

μάχαιραν; ἀστείον γε κέρδος ἔλαβεν ὁ κακοδαίμων.  
Ἵπέρβολος δ' οὐκ τῶν λύχνων πλείν ἢ τάλαντα πολλὰ  
εἴληφε διὰ πονηρίαν, ἀλλ' οὐ μὰ Δῖ οὐ μάχαιραν. 1066

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ τὴν Θέτιν γ' ἔγημε διὰ τὸ σωφρονεῖν ὁ Πηλεὺς.

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

καῖτ' ἀπολιποῦσά γ' αὐτὸν ὄχετ'. οὐ γὰρ ἦν ὑβριστῆς  
οὐδ' ἠδὺς ἐν τοῖς στρώμασι τὴν νύκτα παννυχίζειν·  
γυνὴ δὲ σιναμωρουμένη χαίρει· σὺ δ' εἰ Κρόνιππος. 1070

## WORSE ARGUMENT

And where'd you ever see  
cold water in a bath of Hercules? But who  
was a more manly man than him?<sup>79</sup>

## BETTER ARGUMENT

That's it, the very things which our young men  
are always babbling on about these days—  
crowding in the bath house, leaving empty  
all the wrestling schools.

## WORSE ARGUMENT

Next, you're not happy  
when they hang around the market place—  
but I think that's good. If it were shameful,  
Homer would not have labelled Nestor—  
and all his clever men—great public speakers.<sup>80</sup>  
Now, I'll move on to their tongues, which this man  
says the young lads should not train. I say they should.  
He also claims they should be self-restrained.  
These two things injure them in major ways. [1060]  
Where have you ever witnessed self-restraint  
bring any benefit to anyone?  
Tell me. Speak up. Refute my reasoning.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

There are lots of people. For example,  
Peleus won a sword for his restraint.<sup>81</sup>

## WORSE ARGUMENT

A sword! What a magnificent reward  
the poor wretch received! While Hyperbolos,  
who sells lamps in the market, is corrupt  
and brings in lots of money, but, god knows,  
he's never won a sword.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

But his virtue  
enabled Peleus to marry Thetis.<sup>82</sup>

## WORSE ARGUMENT

Then she ran off, abandoning the man,  
because he didn't want to spend all night  
having hard sweet sex between the sheets—  
that rough-and-tumble love that women like.  
You're just a crude old-fashioned Cronos. [1070]

σκέψαι γὰρ ὦ μειράκιον ἐν τῷ σωφρονεῖν ἅπαντα  
 ἄνεστω, ἡδονῶν θ' ὅσων μέλλεις ἀποστερεῖσθαι,  
 παίδων γυναικῶν κοττάβων ὄψων πότων κιχλισμῶν.  
 καίτοι τί σοι ζῆν ἄξιον, τούτων ἐὰν στερηθῆς;  
 εἶεν. πάρεμι' ἐντεῦθεν ἐς τὰς τῆς φύσεως ἀνάγκας. 1075  
 ἡμαρτες, ἡράσθης, ἐμοίχευσάς τι, κἄτ' ἐλήφθης·  
 ἀπόλωλας· ἀδύνατος γὰρ εἰ λέγειν. ἐμοὶ δ' ὀμιλῶν  
 χρῶ τῇ φύσει, σκίρτα, γέλα, νόμιζε μηδὲν αἰσχρόν.  
 μοιχὸς γὰρ ἦν τύχης ἀλούς, τάδ' ἀντερεῖς πρὸς αὐτόν,  
 ὡς οὐδὲν ἡδίκηκας· εἴτ' ἐς τὸν Δῖ' ἐπανενεγκεῖν, 1080  
 κακείνους ὡς ἦττων ἔρωτός ἐστι καὶ γυναικῶν·  
 καίτοι σὺ θνητὸς ὢν θεοῦ πῶς μείζον ἂν δύναιο;

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί δ' ἦν ραφανιδωθῆ πιθόμενός σοι τέφρα τε τιλθῆ,  
 ἔξει τινὰ γνώμην λέγειν τὸ μὴ εὐρύπρωκτος εἶναι;

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἦν δ' εὐρύπρωκτος ἦ, τί πείσεται κακόν; 1085

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί μὲν οὖν ἂν ἔτι μείζον πάθοι τούτου ποτέ;

## ἌΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί δὴτ' ἐρεῖς, ἦν τοῦτο νικηθῆς ἐμοῦ;

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

σιγήσομαι. τί δ' ἄλλο;

Now, my boy, just think off all those things  
 that self-restraint requires—you'll go without  
 all sorts of pleasures—boys and women,  
 drunken games and tasty delicacies,  
 drink and riotous laughter. What's life worth  
 if you're deprived of these? So much for that.  
 I'll now move on to physical desires.  
 You've strayed and fallen in love—had an affair  
 with someone else's wife. And then you're caught.  
 You're dead, because you don't know how to speak.  
 But if you hang around with those like me,  
 you can follow what your nature urges.  
 You can leap and laugh and never think  
 of anything as shameful. If, by chance,  
 you're discovered screwing a man's wife,  
 just tell the husband you've done nothing wrong.  
 Blame Zeus—alleging even he's someone  
 who can't resist his urge for sex and women. [1080]  
 And how can you be stronger than a god?  
 You're just a mortal man.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

All right—but suppose  
 he trusts in your advice and gets a radish  
 rammed right up his arse, and his pubic hairs  
 are burned with red-hot cinders. Will he have  
 some reasoned argument to demonstrate  
 he's not a loose-arsed bugger?<sup>83</sup>

## WORSE ARGUMENT

So his asshole's large—  
 why should that in any way upset him?

## BETTER ARGUMENT

Can one suffer any greater harm  
 than having a loose asshole?

## WORSE ARGUMENT

What will you say  
 if I defeat you on this point?

## BETTER ARGUMENT

I'll shut up.  
 What more could a man say?

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

φέρε δὴ μοι φράσον·

συνηγοροῦσιν ἐκ τίνων;

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

παίθομαι.

τί δαί; τραγωδοῦσ' ἐκ τίνων;

1090

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

εὖ λέγεις.

δημηγοροῦσι δ' ἐκ τίνων;

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἄρα δῆτ'

ἔγνωκας ὡς οὐδὲν λέγεις;

καὶ τῶν θεατῶν ὀπότεροι

πλείους σκόπει.

1095

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ δὴ σκοπῶ.

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί δῆθ' ὀρᾶς;

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

πολὺ πλείονας νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς

τοὺς εὐρυπρώκτους· τουτοινὶ

γούνη οἶδ' ἐγὼ κάκεινονι

καὶ τὸν κομήτην τουτονί.

1100

ἽΔΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

τί δῆτ' ἐρεῖς;

WORSE ARGUMENT

Come on, then—

Tell me about our legal advocates.

Where are they from?

BETTER ARGUMENT

They come from loose-arsed buggers.

WORSE ARGUMENT

I grant you that. What's next? Our tragic poets,

where they from? [1090]

BETTER ARGUMENT

They come from major assholes.

WORSE ARGUMENT

That's right. What about our politicians—

where do they come from?

BETTER ARGUMENT

From gigantic assholes!

WORSE ARGUMENT

All right then—surely you can recognize

how you've been spouting rubbish? Look out there—

at this audience—what sort of people

are most of them?

BETTER ARGUMENT

All right, I'm looking at them.

WORSE ARGUMENT

Well, what do you see?

BETTER ARGUMENT

By all the gods,

almost all of them are men who spread their cheeks.

It's true of that one there, I know for sure . . .

and that one . . . and the one there with long hair. [1100]

WORSE ARGUMENT

So what do you say now?

## ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

ἤττημέθ' ὦ κινούμενοι  
 πρὸς τῶν θεῶν δέξασθέ μου  
 θοιμάτιον, ὡς  
 ἔξαυτομολῶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

τί δήτα; πότερα τοῦτον ἀπάγεσθαι λαβῶν  
 βούλει τὸν υἱόν, ἢ διδάσκω σοι λέγειν; 1105

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

δίδασκε καὶ κόλαζε καὶ μέμνησ' ὅπως  
 εἶ μοι στομώσεις αὐτόν, ἐπὶ μὲν θάτερα  
 οἶον δικιδίους, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν αὐτοῦ γνάθου  
 στόμωσον οἶαν ἐς τὰ μείζω πράγματα. 1110

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἀμέλει κομει τοῦτον σοφιστὴν δεξιόν.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὠχρὸν μὲν οὖν οἶμαί γε καὶ κακοδαίμονα.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

χωρεῖτέ νυν. οἶμαι δέ σοι ταῦτα μεταμελήσειν.  
 τοὺς κριτὰς ἂ κερδανούσιν, ἦν τι τόνδε τὸν χορὸν 1115  
 ὠφελῶσ' ἐκ τῶν δικαίων, βουλόμεσθ' ἡμεῖς φράσαι.  
 πρῶτα μὲν γάρ, ἦν νεᾶν βούλησθ' ἐν ὥρᾳ τοὺς ἀγρούς,  
 ὕσομεν πρώτοισιν ὑμῖν, τοῖσι δ' ἄλλοις ὕστερον.  
 εἶτα τὸν καρπὸν τεκούσας ἀμπέλους φυλάξομεν,  
 ὥστε μήτ' ἀυχμὸν πιέζειν μήτ' ἄγαν ἐπομβρίαν. 1120  
 ἦν δ' ἀτιμάσῃ τις ἡμᾶς θνητὸς ὢν οὔσας θεάς,  
 προσεχέτω τὸν νοῦν, πρὸς ἡμῶν οἶα πείσεται κακά,  
 λαμβάνων οὔτ' οἶνον οὔτ' ἄλλ' οὐδὲν ἐκ τοῦ χωρίου.  
 ἦνικ' ἂν γὰρ αἶ τ' ἐλαῖαι βλαστάνωσ' αἶ τ' ἄμπελοι,  
 ἀποκεκόφονται· τοιαύταις σφενδόταις παιήσομεν. 1125  
 ἦν δὲ πλυθεύοντ' ἴδωμεν, ὕσομεν καὶ τοῦ τέγους  
 τὸν κέραμον αὐτοῦ χαλάζαις στρογγύλαις συντρίψομεν.

## BETTER ARGUMENT

We've been defeated.

O you fuckers, for gods' sake take my cloak—  
 I'm defecting to your ranks.

[The Better Argument takes off his cloak and exits into the Thinkery]

## WORSE ARGUMENT [to Strepsiades]

What now?

Do you want to take your son away?  
 Or, to help you out, am I to teach him  
 how to argue?

## STREPSIADES

Teach him—whip him into shape.

Don't forget to sharpen him for me,  
 one side ready to tackle legal quibbles.  
 On the other side, give his jaw an edge  
 for more important matters. [1110]

## WORSE ARGUMENT

Don't worry.

You'll get back a person skilled in sophistry.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Someone miserably pale, I figure.

## CHORUS LEADER

All right. Go in.

I think you may regret this later on.

[Worse Argument and Pheidippides go into the Thinkery, while Strepsiades returns into his own house]

We'd like to tell the judges here the benefits  
 they'll get, if they help this chorus, as by right they should.  
 First, if you want to plough your lands in season,  
 we'll rain first on you and on the others later.  
 Then we'll protect your fruit, your growing vines,  
 so neither drought nor too much rain will damage them. [1120]  
 But any mortal who dishonours us as gods  
 should bear in mind the evils we will bring him.  
 From his land he'll get no wine or other harvest.  
 When his olive trees and fresh young vines are budding,  
 we'll let fire with our sling shots, to smash and break them.  
 If we see him making bricks, we'll send down rain,  
 we'll shatter roofing tiles with our round hailstones.

κὰν γαμῆ ποτ' αὐτὸς ἢ τῶν ξυγγενῶν ἢ τῶν φίλων,  
ὔσομεν τὴν νύκτα πᾶσαν· ὥστ' ἴσως βουλήσεται  
κὰν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τυχεῖν ὦν μᾶλλον ἢ κρίναι κακῶς. 1130

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πέμπτη, τετράς, τρίτη, μετὰ ταύτην δευτέρα,  
εἶθ' ἦν ἐγὼ μάλιστα πασῶν ἡμερῶν  
δέδοικα καὶ πέφρικα καὶ βδελύττομαι,  
εὐθὺς μετὰ ταύτην ἔσθ' ἔνη τε καὶ νέα.  
πᾶς γάρ τις ὁμνὺς οἷς ὀφείλων τυγχάνω, 1135  
θεῖς μοι πρυτανεῖ' ἀπολεῖν μέ φησι κάξολεῖν,  
κάμοῦ μέτριά τε καὶ δίκαι' αἰτουμένου,  
'ὦ δαιμόνιε τὸ μέν τι νυνὶ μὴ λάβης,  
τὸ δ' ἀναβαλοῦ μοι, τὸ δ' ἄφες', οὐ φασίν ποτε  
οὔτως ἀπολήψεσθ', ἀλλὰ λοιδοροῦσί με 1140  
ὡς ἄδικός εἰμι, καὶ δικάσεσθαί φασί μοι.  
νῦν οὖν δικαζέσθων· ὀλίγον γάρ μοι μέλει,  
εἴπερ μεμάθηκεν εὖ λέγειν Φειδιππίδης.  
τάχα δ' εἴσομαι κόψας τὸ φροντιστήριον.  
παῖ, ἡμί, παῖ παῖ. 1145

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

Στρεψιάδην ἀσπάζομαι.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κᾶγωγέ σ'· ἀλλὰ τουτονὶ πρῶτον λαβέ·  
χρὴ γὰρ ἐπιθανμάζειν τι τὸν διδάσκαλον.  
καί μοι τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μεμάθηκε τὸν λόγον  
ἐκείνον εἴφ' ὃν ἀρτίως εἰσήγαγες.

## ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

μεμάθηκεν.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εὖ γ' ὦ παμβασιλεῖ' Ἀπαιόλη. 1150

If ever there's a wedding for his relatives,  
or friends, or for himself, we'll rain all through the night,  
so he'd rather live in Egypt than judge this wrong. [1130]

[Strepsiades comes out of his house, with a small sack in his hand]

## STREPSIADES

Five more days, then four, three, two—and then  
the day comes I dread more than all the rest.  
It makes me shake with fear—the day that stands  
between the Old Moon and the New—the day  
when any man I happen to owe money to  
swears on oath he'll put down his deposit,  
take me to court.<sup>84</sup> He says he'll finish me,  
do me in. When I make a modest plea  
for something fair, “My dear man, don't demand  
this payment now, postpone this one for me,  
discharge that one,” they say the way things are  
they'll never be repaid—then they go at me,  
abuse me as unfair and say they'll sue. [1140]  
Well, let them go to court. I just don't care,  
not if Pheidippides has learned to argue.  
I'll find out soon enough. Let's knock here,  
at the thinking school.

[Strepsiades knocks on the door of the Thinkery]

Boy . . . Hey, boy . . . boy!

[Socrates comes to the door]

## SOCRATES

Hello there, Strepsiades.

## STREPSIADES

Hello to you.

First of all, you must accept this present.

[Strepsiades hands Socrates the small sack]

It's proper for a man show respect  
to his son's teacher in some way. Tell me—  
has the boy learned that style of argument  
you brought out here just now?

## SOCRATES

Yes, he has.

## STREPSIADES

In the name of Fraud, queen of everything,  
that's splendid news!



ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὥστ' ἀποφύγοις ἂν ἦντιν' ἂν βούλη δίκην.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κεῖ μάρτυρες παρήσαν, ὅτ' ἔδανειζόμεν;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

πολλῶ γε μᾶλλον, κἂν παρῶσι χίλιοι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

βοάσομαί τᾶρα τὰν ὑπέρτονον  
 βοάν. ἰὼ κλάετ' ὦ ἔβολοστάται 1155  
 αὐτοί τε καὶ τάρχαϊα καὶ τόκοι τόκων·  
 οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄν με φλαῦρον ἐργάσαισθ' ἔτι,  
 οἶος ἐμοὶ τρέφεται  
 τοῖσδ' ἐνὶ δώμασι παῖς,  
 ἀμφήκει γλώττη λάμπων, 1160  
 πρόβολος ἐμός, σωτῆρ δόμοις, ἐχθροῖς βλάβη,  
 λυσανίας πατρῶων μεγάλων κακῶν·  
 ὄν κάλεσον τρέχων ἔνδοθεν ὡς ἐμέ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ὦ τέκνον ὦ παῖ ἔξελθ' οἴκων, 1165  
 ἄιε σοῦ πατρός.  
 ὄδ' ἐκεῖνος ἀνήρ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ φίλος ὦ φίλος.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

ἄπιθι συλλαβών.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἰὼ ἰὼ τέκνον, ἰὼ ἰοῦ ἰοῦ. 1170  
 ὡς ἦδομαί σου πρῶτα τὴν χροῖαν ἰδών.

SOCRATES

You can defend yourself  
 in any suit you like—and win.

STREPSIADES

I can?  
 Even if there were witnesses around  
 when I took out the loan?

SOCRATES

The more the better—  
 even if they number in the thousands.

STREPSIADES [*in a parody of tragic style*]

Then I will roar aloud a mighty shout—  
 Ah ha, weep now you petty money men,  
 wail for yourselves, wail for your principal,  
 wail for your compound interest. No more  
 will you afflict me with your evil ways.  
 On my behalf there's growing in these halls  
 a son who's got a gleaming two-edged tongue— [1160]  
 he's my protector, saviour of my home,  
 a menace to my foes. He will remove  
 the mighty tribulations of his sire.  
 Run off inside and summon him to me.

[*Socrates goes back into the Thinkery*]

My son, my boy, now issue from the house—  
 and hearken to your father's words.

[*Socrates and Pheidippides come out of the Thinkery. Pheidippides has been transformed in appearance, so that he now looks, moves, and talks like the other students in the Thinkery*]

SOCRATES

Here's your young man.

STREPSIADES

Ah, my dear, dear boy.

SOCRATES

Take him and go away.

[*Socrates exits back into the Thinkery*]

STREPSIADES

Ah ha, my lad—  
 what joy. What sheer delight for me to gaze,  
 first, upon your colourless complexion, [1170]

νῦν μὲν γ' ἰδεῖν εἰ πρῶτον ἐξαρνητικὸς  
 κἀντιλογικός, καὶ τοῦτο τοῦπιχώριον  
 ἀτεχνῶς ἐπανθεί, τὸ 'τί λέγεις σύ;' καὶ δοκεῖν  
 ἀδικοῦντ' ἀδικεῖσθαι καὶ κακουροῦντ' οἶδ' ὅτι·  
 ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου τ' ἐστὶν Ἀττικὸν βλέπος.  
 νῦν οὖν ὅπως σώσεις μ', ἐπεὶ κἀπώλεσας.

1175

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

φοβεῖ δὲ δὴ τί;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὴν ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔνη γάρ ἐστι καὶ νέα τις ἡμέρα;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἰς ἣν γε θήσειν τὰ πρυτανεῖά φασί μοι.

1180

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀπολοῦσ' ἄρ' αὐθ' οἱ θέντες· οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅπως  
 μὴ ἡμέρα γένοιτ' ἂν ἡμέρα δύο.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

πῶς γάρ; εἰ μὴ πέρ γ' ἅμα  
 αὐτῇ γένοιτ' ἂν γραῦς τε καὶ νέα γυνή.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν νενόμισται γ'.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ γάρ, οἶμαι, τὸν νόμον  
 ἴσασις ὀρθῶς ὅ τι νοεῖ.

1185

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νοεῖ δὲ τί;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ Σόλων ὁ παλαιὸς ἦν φιλόδημος τὴν φύσιν.

to see how right away you're well prepared  
 to deny and contradict—with that look  
 which indicates our national character  
 so clearly planted on your countenance—  
 the look which says, "What do you mean?"—the look  
 which makes you seem a victim, even though  
 you're the one at fault, the criminal.  
 I know that Attic stare stamped on your face.  
 Now you must rescue me—since you're the one  
 who's done me in.

PHEIDIPPIDES

What are you scared about?

STREPSIADES

The day of the Old Moon and the New.

PHEIDIPPIDES

You mean there's a day that's old and new?

STREPSIADES

The day they say they'll make deposits  
 to charge me in the courts!

[1180]

PHEIDIPPIDES

Then those who do that  
 will lose their cash. There's simply no way  
 one day can be two days.

STREPSIADES

It can't?

PHEIDIPPIDES:

How?

Unless it's possible a single woman  
 can at the same time be both old and young.

STREPSIADES

Yet that seems to be what our laws dictate.

PHEIDIPPIDES

In my view they just don't know the law—  
 not what it really means.

STREPSIADES

What does it mean?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Old Solon by his nature loved the people.<sup>85</sup>

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τουτὶ μὲν οὐδέν πω πρὸς ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκεῖνος οὖν τὴν κλήσιν ἐς δύο ἡμέρας  
ἔθηκεν, ἕς γε τὴν ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν, 1190  
ἵν' αἱ θέσεις γίγνουτο τῇ νομηνία.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἴνα δὴ τί τὴν ἔννην προσέθηχ';

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἵν' ὦ μέλε  
παρόντες οἱ φεύγοντες ἡμέρα μιᾷ  
πρότερον ἀπαλλάττωιθ' ἐκόντες, εἰ δὲ μή,  
ἔωθεν ὑπανιῶντο τῇ νομηνία. 1195

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πῶς οὐ δέχονται δῆτα τῇ νομηνία  
ἀρχαὶ τὰ πρυτανεῖ, ἀλλ' ἔνη τε καὶ νέα;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅπερ οἱ προτένθαι γὰρ δοκοῦσί μοι ποιεῖν·  
ὅπως τάχιστα τὰ πρυτανεῖ ὑφελόιατο,  
διὰ τοῦτο προὔτένθουσιν ἡμέρα μιᾷ. 1200

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

εἶ γ' ὦ κακοδαίμονες, τί κάθησθ' ἀβέλτεροι,  
ἡμέτερα κέρδη τῶν σοφῶν ὄντες, λίθοι,  
ἀριθμός, πρόβατ' ἄλλως, ἀμφορῆς νενησμένοι;  
ὥστ' εἰς ἑμαυτὸν καὶ τὸν υἱὸν τουτονὶ  
ἐπ' εὐτυχίασιν ἄστειον μοῦγκώμιον. 1205  
ἴμακαρ ὦ Στρεψιάδες,  
αὐτὸς τ' ἔφυς ὡς σοφὸς  
χοῖον τὸν υἱὸν τρέφεις,

STREPSIADES

But that's got no bearing on the Old Day—  
or the New.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Well, Solon set up two days 1190  
for summonses—the Old Day and the New,  
so deposits could be made with the New Moon.<sup>86</sup>

STREPSIADES

Then why did he include Old Day as well?

PHEIDIPPIDES

So the defendants, my dear fellow,  
could show up one day early, to settle  
by mutual agreement, and, if not,  
they should be very worried the next day  
was the start of a New Moon.

STREPSIADES

In that case,  
why do judges not accept deposits  
once the New Moon comes but only on the day  
between the Old and New?

PHEIDIPPIDES

It seems to me 1200  
they have to act like those who check the food—  
they want to grab as fast as possible  
at those deposits, so they can nibble them  
a day ahead of time.

STREPSIADES

That's wonderful!

[to the audience]

You helpless fools! Why do you sit there—  
so idiotically, for us wise types  
to take advantage of? Are you just stones,  
ciphers, merely sheep or stacked-up pots?  
This calls for a song to me and my son here,  
to celebrate good luck and victory.

[He sings]

O Strepsiades is truly blessed  
for cleverness the very best,  
what a brainy son he's raised.

φήσουσι δὴ μ' οἱ φίλοι

χοῖ δημόται

1210

ζηλοῦντες ἤνικ' ἂν σὺ νικᾶς λέγων τὰς δίκας.  
ἀλλ' εἰσάγων σε βούλομαι πρῶτον ἐστιᾶσαι.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

εἶτ' ἄνδρα τῶν αὐτοῦ τι χρῆ προίεναι;  
οὐδέποτε γ', ἀλλὰ κρεῖττον εὐθὺς ἦν τότε  
ἀπερυθριάσαι μᾶλλον ἢ σχεῖν πράγματα,  
ὅτε τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ γ' ἔνεκα νυνὶ χρημάτων  
ἔλκω σε κλητεύσοντα, καὶ γενήσομαι  
ἐχθρὸς ἔτι πρὸς τούτοισιν ἀνδρὶ δημότη.  
ἀτὰρ οὐδέποτε γε τὴν πατρίδα καταισχυνῶ  
ζῶν, ἀλλὰ καλοῦμαι Στρεψιάδην —

1215

1220

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τίς οὐτοσί;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

ἐς τὴν ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μαρτύρομαι,

ὅτι ἐς δὺ εἶπεν ἡμέρας. τοῦ χρήματος;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

τῶν δώδεκα μνῶν, ἃς ἔλαβες ὠνούμενος  
τὸν ψαρὸν ἵππον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἵππον; οὐκ ἀκούετε;

1225

ὄν πάντες ὑμεῖς ἴστε μισοῦνθ' ἵππικὴν.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

καὶ νῆ Δι' ἀποδώσειν γ' ἐπώμνυς τοὺς θεούς.

So friends and townsfolk sing his praise.

Each time you win they'll envy me—

[1210]

you'll plead my case to victory.

So let's go in—I want to treat,

and first give you something to eat.

[*Strepsiades and Pheidippides go together into their house. Enter one of Strepsiades' creditors, Pasiās, with a friend as his witness*]

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

Should a man throw away his money?

Never! But it would have been much better,

back then at the start, to forget the loan

and the embarrassment than go through this—

to drag you as a witness here today

in this matter of my money. I'll make

this man from my own deme my enemy.<sup>87</sup>

But I'll not let my country down—never—

not as long as I'm alive. And so . . .

[*raising his voice*]

I'm summoning Strepsiades . . .

[1220]

[*Enter Strepsiades*]

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Who is it?

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

. . . on this Old Day and the New.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

I ask you here

to witness that he's called me for two days.

What's the matter?

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

The loan you got, twelve minai,

when you bought that horse—the dapple grey.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

A horse? Don't listen to him. You all know

how I hate horses.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

What's more, by Zeus,  
you swore on all the gods you'd pay me back.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ γάρ πω τότε ἐξηπίστατο  
Φειδιππίδης μοι τὸν ἀκατάβλητον λόγον.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

νῦν δὲ διὰ τοῦτ' ἔξαρκος εἶναι διανοεῖ; 1230

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί γὰρ ἄλλ' ἂν ἀπολαύσαιμι τοῦ μαθήματος;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

καὶ ταῦτ' ἐθελήσεις ἀπομόσαι μοι τοὺς θεοὺς  
ἵν' ἂν κελεύσω ἴω σε;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοὺς ποίους θεοὺς;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

τὸν Δία, τὸν Ἑρμῆν, τὸν Ποσειδῶ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

νῆ Δία  
κὰν προσκαταθείην γ' ὥστ' ὁμόσαι τριώβολον. 1235

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

ἀπόλοιο τοίνυν ἔνεκ' ἀναιδείας ἔτι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλσὸν διασμηχθεῖς ὄναιτ' ἂν οὔτοσί.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

οἴμ' ὡς καταγελαῖς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔξ χοᾶς χωρήσεται.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

οὔ τοι μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν μέγαν καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς  
ἐμοῦ καταπροίξει. 1240

STREPSIADES

Yes, by god, but Pheidippides back then  
did not yet know the iron-clad argument  
on my behalf.

PASIAS

So now, because of that,  
you're intending to deny the debt? [1230]

STREPSIADES

If I don't, what advantage do I gain  
from everything he's learned?

PASIAS

Are you prepared  
to swear you owe me nothing—by the gods—  
in any place I tell you?

STREPSIADES

Which gods?

PASIAS

By Zeus, by Hermes, by Poseidon.

STREPSIADES

Yes, indeed, by Zeus—and to take that oath  
I'd even pay three extra obols.<sup>88</sup>

PASIAS

You're shameless—may that ruin you some day!

STREPSIADES [*patting Pasiās on the belly*]

This wine skin here would much better off  
if you rubbed it down with salt.<sup>89</sup>

PASIAS

Damn you—  
you're ridiculing me!

STREPSIADES [*still patting Pasiās' paunch*]

About four gallons,  
that's what it should hold.

PASIAS

By mighty Zeus,  
by all the gods, you'll not make fun of me  
and get away with it!

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

θαυμασίως ἦσθην θεοῖς,  
καὶ Ζεὺς γέλοιος ὀμνύμενος τοῖς εἰδόσιν.

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

ἦ μὴν σὺ τούτων τῷ χρόνῳ δώσεις δίκην.  
ἀλλ' εἴτ' ἀποδώσεις μοι τὰ χρήματ' εἴτε μή,  
ἀπόπεμψον ἀποκρινάμενος.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔχε νυν ἦσυχος.  
ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτίκ' ἀποκρινοῦμαί σοι σαφῶς. 1245

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

τί σοι δοκεῖ δράσειν;

ΜΑΡΤΥΣ

ἀποδώσειν μοι δοκεῖ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ποῦ 'σθ' οὗτος ἀπαιτῶν με τὰργύριον; λέγε  
τουτὶ τί ἔστι;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

τοῦθ' ὅ τι ἔστι; κάρδοπος.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔπειτ' ἀπαιτεῖς τὰργύριον τοιοῦτος ὢν;  
οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην οὐδ' ἂν ὀβολὸν οὐδενί,  
ὅστις καλέσειε κάρδοπον τὴν καρδόπην. 1250

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

οὐκ ἄρ' ἀποδώσεις;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐχ ὅσον γέ μ' εἰδέναί.  
οὐκ οὐκ ἀνύσας τι θάττον ἀπολιταργιεῖς  
ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας;

ΠΑΣΙΑΣ

ἄπειμι, καὶ τοῦτ' ἴσθ' ὅτι  
θήσω πρυτανεῖ ἢ μηκέτι ζῶην ἐγώ. 1255

STREPSIADES

Ah, you and your gods— [1240]  
that's so incredibly funny. And Zeus—  
to swear on him is quite ridiculous  
to those who understand.

PASIAS

Some day, I swear,  
you're going to have to pay for all of this.  
Will you or will you not pay me my money?  
Give me an answer, and I'll leave.

STREPSIADES

Calm down—  
I'll give you a clear answer right away.  
*[Strepsiades goes into his house, leaving Pasi-  
as and the Witness by themselves]*

PASIAS

Well, what do you think he's going to do?  
Does it strike you he's going to pay?

*[Enter Strepsiades carrying a kneading basin]*

STREPSIADES

Where's the man who's asking me for money?  
Tell me—what's this?

PASIAS

What's that? A kneading basin.

STREPSIADES

You're demanding money when you're such a fool!  
I wouldn't pay an obol back to anyone  
who called a basinette a basin. [1250]

PASIAS

So you won't repay me?

STREPSIADES

As far as I know,  
I won't. So why don't you just hurry up  
and quickly scuttle from my door.

PASIAS

I'm off.  
Let me tell you—I'll be making my deposit.  
If not, may I not live another day!

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ προσαπολείς ἄρ' αὐτὰ πρὸς ταῖς δώδεκα.  
καίτοι σε τοῦτό γ' οὐχὶ βούλομαι παθεῖν,  
ὅτιγ' ἄλεσας εὐηθικῶς τὴν κάρδοπον.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ἰὼ μοί μοι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔα.  
τίς οὐτοσί ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ θρηγῶν; οὔτι που  
τῶν Καρκίνου τις δαιμόνων ἐφθέγγατο; 1260

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

τί δ' ὅστις εἰμὶ τοῦτο βούλεσθ' εἰδέναι;  
ἀνὴρ κακοδαίμων.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κατὰ σεαυτόν νυν τρέπου.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ὦ σκληρὲ δαίμον, ὦ τύχαι θραυσάντυγες  
ἵππων ἐμῶν, ὦ Παλλὰς ὡς μ' ἀπώλεσας. 1265

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δαί σε Τληπόλεμός ποτ' εἵργασται κακόν;

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

μὴ σκῶπτέ μ' ὦ τᾶν, ἀλλὰ μοι τὰ χρήματα  
τὸν υἱὸν ἀποδοῦναι κέλευσον ἄλαβεν,  
ἄλλως τε μέντοι καὶ κακῶς πεπραγότι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὰ ποῖα ταῦτα χρήμαθ';

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ἀδανείσατο. 1270

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κακῶς ἄρ' ὄντως εἶχες, ὡς γ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖς.

[Pasias exits with the Witness]

STREPSIADES [calling after them]

That'll be more money thrown away—  
on top of the twelve minai. I don't want  
you going thorough that just because you're foolish  
and talk about a kneading *basin*.

[Enter Amynias, another creditor, limping He has obviously been hurt in some way]

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

Oh, it's bad. Poor me!

STREPSIADES

Hold on. Who's this  
who's chanting a lament? Is that the cry  
of some god perhaps—one from Carcinus?<sup>90</sup> [1260]

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

What's that? You wish to know who I am?  
I'm a man with a miserable fate!

STREPSIADES

Then go off on your own.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ [in a grand tragic manner]

“O cruel god,  
O fortune fracturing my chariot wheels,  
O Pallas, how you've annihilated me!”<sup>91</sup>

STREPSIADES

How's Tlepolemos done nasty things to you?<sup>92</sup>

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

Don't laugh at me, my man—but tell your son  
to pay me back the money he received,  
especially when I'm going through all this pain.

STREPSIADES

What money are you talking about?

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

The loan he got from me. [1270]

STREPSIADES

It seems to me  
you're having a bad time.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ἵππους ἐλαύνων ἐξέπεσον νῆ τοὺς θεούς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δῆτα ληρεῖς ὥσπερ ἀπ' ὄνου καταπεσών;

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ληρῶ, τὰ χρήματ' ἀπολαβεῖν εἰ βούλομαι;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως σύ γ' αὐτὸς ὑγιαίνεις.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

τί δαί; 1275

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ὥσπερ σεσεῖσθαί μοι δοκεῖς.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

σὺ δὲ νῆ τὸν Ἑρμῆν προσκεκλήσεσθαί γέ μοι,  
εἰ μὴ ᾗ ποδώσεις τὰργύριον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κάτειπέ νυν,

πότερα νομίζεις καινὸν αἰεὶ τὸν Δία  
ὑεῖν ὕδωρ ἐκάστοτ', ἢ τὸν ἥλιον  
ἔλκειν κάτωθεν ταῦτ' οὗθ' ὕδωρ πάλιν;

1280

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

οὐκ οἶδ' ἔγωγ' ὀπότερον, οὐδέ μοι μέλει.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πῶς οὖν ἀπολαβεῖν τὰργύριον δίκαιος εἶ,  
εἰ μηδὲν οἶσθα τῶν μετεώρων πραγμάτων;

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ἀλλ' εἰ σπανίζεις, τὰργυρίου μοι τὸν τόκον  
ἀπόδοτε. 1285

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοῦτο δ' ἔσθ' ὁ τόκος τί θηρίον;

AMYNIAS

By god, that's true—

I was driving in my chariot and fell out.

STREPSIADES

Why then babble on such utter nonsense,  
as if you'd just fallen off a donkey?

AMYNIAS

If I want him to pay my money back  
am I talking nonsense?

STREPSIADES

I think it's clear  
your mind's not thinking straight.

AMYNIAS

Why's that?

STREPSIADES

From your behaviour here, it looks to me  
as if your brain's been shaken up.

AMYNIAS

Well, as for you,  
by Hermes, I'll be suing you in court,  
if you don't pay the money.

STREPSIADES

Tell me this—

do you think Zeus always sends fresh water  
each time the rain comes down, or does the sun  
suck the same water up from down below  
for when it rains again? [1280]

AMYNIAS

I don't know which—  
and I don't care.

STREPSIADES

Then how can it be just  
for you to get your money reimbursed,  
when you know nothing of celestial things?

AMYNIAS

Look, if you haven't got the money now,  
at least repay the interest.

STREPSIADES

This "interest"—  
What sort of creature is it?



ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ κατὰ μῆνα καὶ καθ' ἡμέραν  
πλέον πλέον τὰργύριον ἀεὶ γίγνεται  
ὑπορρέοντος τοῦ χρόνου;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καλῶς λέγεις.  
τί δῆτα; τὴν θάλατταν ἔσθ' ὅτι πλείονα  
νυνὶ νομίζεις ἢ πρὸ τοῦ; 1290

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' ἴσην.  
οὐ γὰρ δίκαιον πλείον' εἶναι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

κῆρα πῶς  
αὕτη μὲν ὦ κακόδαιμον οὐδὲν γίγνεται  
ἐπιρρεόντων τῶν ποταμῶν πλείων, σὺ δὲ  
ζητεῖς ποιῆσαι τὰργύριον πλείον τὸ σόν;  
οὐκ ἀποδιώξει σαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας;  
φέρε μοι τὸ κέντρον. 1295

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὑπαγε. τί μέλλεις; οὐκ ἐλᾶς ὦ σαμφόρα;

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

ταῦτ' οὐχ ὕβρις δῆτ' ἐστίν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἄξεις; ἐπιαλῶ  
κεντῶν ὑπὸ τὸν πρωκτὸν σε τὸν σειραφόρον. 1300  
φεύγεις; ἔμελλον σ' ἄρα κινήσειν ἐγὼ  
αὐτοῖς τροχοῖς τοῖς σοῖσι καὶ ξυνωρίσω.

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

Don't you know?  
It's nothing but the way that money grows,  
always getting larger day by day  
month by month, as time goes by.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

That's right.  
What about the sea? In your opinion,  
is it more full of water than before? [1290]

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

No, by Zeus— it's still the same. If it grew,  
that would violate all natural order.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

In that case then, you miserable rascal,  
if the sea shows no increase in volume  
with so many rivers flowing into it,  
why are you so keen to have your money grow?  
Now, why not chase yourself away from here?

[calling inside the house]

Bring me the cattle prod!

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

I have witnesses!

[The slave comes out of the house and gives Strepsiades a cattle prod.  
Strepsiades starts poking Amynias with it]

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

Come on! What you waiting for? Move it,  
you pedigree nag!

ΑΜΥΝΙΑΣ

This is outrageous!

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ [continuing to poke Amynias away]

Get a move on—or I'll shove this prod  
all the way up your horse-racing rectum! [1300]

[Amynias runs off stage]

You running off? That's what I meant to do,  
get the wheels on that chariot of yours  
really moving fast.

[Strepsiades goes back into his house]

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

οἶον τὸ πραγμάτων ἐρᾶν φλαύρων· ὁ γὰρ  
 γέρων ὄδ' ἐρασθεῖς  
 ἀποστερῆσαι βούλεται  
 1305  
 τὰ χρήμαθ' ἀδανείσατο·  
 κοῦκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐ τήμερον  
 λήψεται τι πρᾶγμ', ὃ τοῦτον  
 ποιήσει τὸν σοφιστὴν ἴσως,  
 ἀνθ' ὧν πανουργεῖν ἤρξατ', ἐξαίφνης λαβεῖν κακόν τι.

οἶμαι γὰρ αὐτὸν αὐτίχ' εὐρήσειν ὅπερ  
 πάλαι ποτ' ἔπεζήτει†  
 εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν δεινόν οἱ  
 γνώμας ἐναντίας λέγειν  
 τοῖσιν δικαίοις, ὥστε νικᾶν  
 1315  
 ἅπαντας οἷσπερ ἄν  
 ξυγγένηται, κἂν λέγη παμπόνηρ'.  
 ἴσως δ' ἴσως βουλήσεται κάφωνον αὐτὸν εἶναι.  
 1320

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ιοὺ ἰοῦ.  
 ὦ γείτονες καὶ ξυγγενεῖς καὶ δημόται,  
 ἀμνάθετέ μοι τυπτομένῳ πάσῃ τέχνῃ.  
 οἴμοι κακοδαίμων τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ τῆς γνάθου.  
 ὦ μαρὰ τύπτεις τὸν πατέρα;  
 1325

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

φήμ' ὦ πάτερ.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὄρᾶθ' ὁμολογοῦνθ' ὅτι με τύπτει.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μάλα.

## CHORUS

Oh, it's so nice  
 to worship vice.  
 This old man here  
 adores it so  
 he will not clear  
 the debts he owes.  
 But there's no way  
 he will not fall  
 some time today,  
 done in by all  
 his trickeries,  
 he'll quickly fear  
 depravities  
 he's started here.

It seems to me  
 he'll soon will see  
 his clever son  
 put on the show  
 he wanted done  
 so long ago—  
 present a case  
 against what's true  
 and beat all those  
 he runs into  
 with sophistry.  
 He'll want his son  
 (it may well be)  
 to be struck dumb.

[1320]

[Enter Strepsiades running out of his house with Pheidippides close behind him hitting him over the head]

## STREPSIADES

Help! Help! You neighbours, relatives,  
 fellow citizens, help me—I'm begging you!  
 I'm being beaten up! Owwww, I'm in such pain—  
 my head . . . my jaw.

[To Pheidippides]

You good for nothing,  
 are you hitting your own father?

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, dad, I am.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ μισρὲ καὶ πατραλοῖα καὶ τοιχωρύχε.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

αὐθὶς με ταῦτὰ ταῦτα καὶ πλείω λέγε.

ἄρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι χαίρω πόλλ' ἀκούων καὶ κακά;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ λακκόπρωκτε.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

πάττε πολλοῖς τοῖς ῥόδοις.

1330

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τὸν πατέρα τύπτεις;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

κάποφανῶ γε νῆ Δία

ὡς ἐν δίκη σ' ἔτυπτον.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦ μιανώτατε,

καὶ πῶς γένοιτ' ἂν πατέρα τύπτειν ἐν δίκη;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔγωγ' ἀποδείξω καὶ σε νικήσω λέγων.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τουτὶ σὺ νικήσεις;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

πολύ γε καὶ ῥαδίως.

ἐλοῦ δ' ὁπότερον τοῖν λόγων βούλει λέγειν.

1335

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ποιῶν λόγων;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸν κρείττον' ἢ τὸν ἥττονα.

STREPSIADES

See that! He admits he's beating me.

PHEIDIPPIDES

I do indeed.

STREPSIADES

You scoundrel, criminal—  
a man who abuses his own father!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Go on—keep calling me those very names—  
the same ones many times. Don't you realize  
I just love hearing streams of such abuse?

STREPSIADES

You perverted asshole!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Ah, some roses!

[1330]

Keep pelting me with roses!!

STREPSIADES

You'd hit your father?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, and by the gods I'll now demonstrate  
how I was right to hit you.

STREPSIADES

You total wretch,  
how can it be right to strike one's father?

PHEIDIPPIDES

I'll prove that to you—and win the argument.

STREPSIADES

You'll beat me on this point?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Indeed, I will.

It's easy. So of the two arguments  
choose which one you want.

STREPSIADES

What two arguments?

PHEIDIPPIDES

The Better or the Worse.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔδιδασξάμην μέντοι σε νῆ Δί ὦ μέλε  
 τοῖσιν δικάοις ἀντιλέγειν, εἰ ταῦτά γε  
 μέλλεις ἀναπέσειν, ὡς δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν  
 τὸν πατέρα τύπτεισθ' ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τῶν υἰέων. 1340

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οἴομαι μέντοι σ' ἀναπέσειν, ὥστε γε  
 οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἀκροασάμενος οὐδὲν ἀντερεῖς.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ὅ τι καὶ λέξεις ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

σὸν ἔργον ὦ πρεσβῦτα φροντίζειν ὄπη  
 τὸν ἄνδρα κρατήσεις,  
 ὡς οὗτος, εἰ μὴ τω 'πεποιθειν, οὐκ ἂν ἦν  
 οὕτως ἀκόλαστος.  
 ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὅτω θρασύνεται· δηλὸν γε τὰν-  
 θρώπου 'στὶ τὸ λῆμα. 1345  
 1350

— ἀλλ' ἐξ ὅτου τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαθ' ἡ μάχη γενέσθαι,  
 ἤδη λέγειν χρῆ πρὸς χορόν· πάντως δὲ τοῦτο δράσεις.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ὅθεν γε πρῶτον ἤρξάμεσθα λοιδορεῖσθαι  
 ἐγὼ φράσω· πειδὴ γὰρ εἰσιτώμεθ', ὥσπερ ἴστε,  
 πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸν τὴν λύραν λαβόντ' ἐγὼ 'κέλευσα 1355  
 ἄσαι Σιμωνίδου μέλος, τὸν Κριὸν ὡς ἐπέχθη.  
 ὁ δ' εὐθέως ἀρχαῖον εἶν' ἔφασκε τὸ καθαρίζειν  
 ἄδειν τε πίνονθ' ὥσπερὲι κάχρυσ γυναικ' ἀλοῦσαν.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ γὰρ τότε εὐθὺς χρῆν σ' ἄρα τύπτεισθαί τε καὶ πατεῖσθαι,  
 ἄδειν κελεύονθ' ὥσπερὲι τέττιγας ἐστιῶντα; 1360

## STREPSIADES

By god, my lad,  
 I really did have you taught to argue  
 against what's just, if you succeed in this—  
 and make the case it's fine and justified  
 for a father to be beaten by his son.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Well, I think I'll manage to convince you,  
 so that once you've heard my arguments,  
 you won't say a word.

## STREPSIADES

Well, to tell the truth,  
 I do want to hear what you have to say.

## CHORUS

You've some work to do, old man.  
 Think how to get the upper hand.  
 He's got something he thinks will work,  
 or he'd not act like such a jerk.  
 There's something makes him confident—  
 his arrogance is evident. [1350]

CHORUS LEADER [*addressing Strepsiades*]

But first you need to tell the Chorus here  
 how your fight originally started.  
 That's something you should do in any case.

## STREPSIADES

Yes, I'll tell you how our quarrel first began.  
 As you know, we were having a fine meal.  
 I first asked him to take up his lyre  
 and sing a lyric by Simonides<sup>93</sup>—  
 the one about the ram being shorn.  
 But he immediately refused—saying  
 that playing the lyre while we were drinking  
 was out of date, like some woman singing  
 while grinding barley.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Well, at that point,  
 you should have been ground up and trampled on—  
 asking for a song, as if you were feasting  
 with cicadas. [1360]

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τοιαῦτα μέντοι καὶ τότε ἔλεγεν ἔνδον οἰάπερ νῦν,  
καὶ τὸν Σιμωνίδην ἔφασκ' εἶναι κακὸν ποιητήν.  
καγὼ μὲν ἀλλ' ὅμως ἠνεσχόμεν τὸ πρῶτον·  
ἔπειτα δ' ἐκέλευσ' αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ μυρρίνην λαβόντα  
τῶν Αἰσχύλου λέξαι τί μοι· κἄθ' οὗτος εὐθύς εἶπεν· 1365  
'ἐγὼ γὰρ Αἰσχύλον νομίζω πρῶτον ἐν ποιηταῖς,  
ψόφου πλέων ἀξίστατον στόμφακα κρημνοποιόν·  
κάνταῦθα πῶς οἶεσθέ μου τὴν καρδίαν ὀρεχθεῖν;  
ὅμως δὲ τὸν θυμὸν δακῶν ἔφην, 'σὺ δ' ἀλλὰ τούτων  
λέξον τι τῶν νεωτέρων, ἅττ' ἐστὶ τὰ σοφὰ ταῦτα.' 1370  
ὁ δ' εὐθύς ἦσ' Εὐριπίδου ῥῆσίν τιν', ὡς ἐκίνει  
ἀδελφὸς ὠλεξίκακε τὴν ὁμομητρίαν ἀδελφήν.  
καγὼ οὐκέτ' ἐξηνεσχόμεν, ἀλλ' εὐθέως ἀράττω  
πολλοῖς κακοῖς καὶ σχροῖσι· κἄτ' ἐντεῦθεν, οἶον εἰκόσ,  
ἔπος πρὸς ἔπος ἠρειδόμεσθ'· εἶθ' οὗτος ἐπαναπηδᾷ, 1375  
κάπειτ' ἔφλα με κάσπῳδεὶ κάπνιγε κάπέθλιβεν.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ οὐκ δικαίως, ὅστις οὐκ Εὐριπίδην ἐπαινεῖς  
σοφώτατον;

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

σοφώτατόν γ' ἐκείνον ὦ — τί σ' εἶπω;  
ἀλλ' αὐθις αὖ τυπτήσομαι.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ἐν δίκῃ γ' ἄν.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

καὶ πῶς δικαίως; ὅστις ὦ 'ναίσχυντέ σ' ἐξέθριψα, 1380  
αἰσθανόμενός σου πάντα τραυλίζοντος, ὅ τι νοοίης.

## STREPSIADES

The way he's talking now—  
that's just how he was talking there before.  
He said Simonides was a bad poet.  
I could hardly stand it, but at first I did.  
Then I asked him to pick up a myrtle branch  
and at least recite some Aeschylus for me.<sup>94</sup>  
He replied at once, "In my opinion,  
Aeschylus is first among the poets  
for lots of noise, unevenness, and bombast—  
he piles up words like mountains." Do you know  
how hard my heart was pounding after that?  
But I clenched my teeth and kept my rage inside,  
and said, "Then recite me something recent,  
from the newer poets, some witty verse." [1370]  
So he then right off started to declaim  
some passage from Euripides in which,  
spare me this, a brother was enjoying sex  
with his own sister— from a common mother.  
I couldn't keep my temper any more—  
so on the spot I verbally attacked  
with all sorts of nasty, shameful language.  
Then, as one might predict, we went at it—  
hurling insults at each other back and forth.  
But then he jumped up, pushed me, thumped me,  
choked me, and started killing me.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Surely I was entitled to do that  
to a man who will not praise Euripides,  
the cleverest of all.

## STREPSIADES

Him? The cleverest? Ha!  
What do I call you? No, I won't say—  
I'd just get beaten one more time.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Yes, by Zeus,  
you would—and with justice, too.

## STREPSIADES

How would that be just? You shameless man,  
I brought you up. When you lisped your words,  
I listened 'til I recognized each one.

εἰ μὲν γε βρῶν εἴποις, ἐγὼ γνοῦς ἂν πιεῖν ἐπέσχον·  
μαμμᾶν δ' ἂν αἰτήσαντος ἠκόν σοι φέρων ἂν ἄρτον·  
κακκᾶν δ' ἂν οὐκ ἔφθης φράσας, κἀγὼ λαβὼν θύραζε  
ἐξέφερον ἂν καὶ προὔσχόμεν σε· σὺ δ' ἐμὲ νῦν ἀπάγχων

βοῶντα καὶ κεκραγὸθ' ὅτι 1386

χέζητιώην, οὐκ ἔτλης

ἔξω ἕνεγκεῖν ὦ μιαρὲ

θύραζέ μ', ἀλλὰ πνιγόμενος

αὐτοῦ ποίησα κακκᾶν. 1390

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

οἴμαί γε τῶν νεωτέρων τὰς καρδίας  
πηδᾶν ὅ τι λέξει.

εἰ γὰρ τοιαῦτά γ' οὗτος ἐξειργασμένος  
λαλῶν ἀναπέισει,

τὸ δέρμα τῶν γεραιτέρων λάβοιμεν ἂν 1395  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐρεβίνθου.

— σὸν ἔργον ὦ καινῶν ἐπῶν κινητὰ καὶ μοχλευτὰ  
πειθῶ τινα ζητεῖν, ὅπως δόξεις λέγειν δίκαια.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ὡς ἡδὺ καινοῖς πράγμασιν καὶ δεξιόις ὀμιλεῖν,  
καὶ τῶν καθεστῶτων νόμων ὑπερφρονεῖν δύνασθαι. 1400  
ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅτε μὲν ἵππικῇ τὸν νοῦν μόνη προσεῖχον,  
οὐδ' ἂν τρεῖς εἰπέην ῥήμαθ' οἷός τ' ἦν πρὶν ἐξαμαρτεῖν·  
νυνὶ δ' ἐπειδὴ μ' οὐτοσὶ τούτων ἔπαυσεν αὐτός,  
γνώμαις δὲ λεπταῖς καὶ λόγοις ζύνειμι καὶ μερίμναις,  
οἴμαι διδάξειν ὡς δίκαιον τὸν πατέρα κολάζειν. 1405

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἵππευε τοῖνυν νῆ Δί, ὡς ἔμοιγε κρεῖττόν ἐστιν  
ἵππων τρέφειν τέθριππον ἢ τυπτόμενον ἐπιτριβῆναι.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκείσε δ' ὅθεν ἀπέσχισάς με τοῦ λόγου μέτειμι,  
καὶ πρῶτ' ἐρήσομαί σε τουτί· παιδά μ' ὄντ' ἔτυπτες;

If you said “waa,” I understood the word  
and brought a drink; if you asked for “foo foo,”  
I’d bring you bread. And if you said “poo poo”  
I’d pick you up and carry you outside,  
and hold you up. But when you strangled me  
just now, I screamed and yelled I had to shit—  
but you didn’t dare to carry me outside,  
you nasty brute, you kept on throttling me,  
until I crapped myself right where I was. [1390]

## CHORUS

I think the hearts of younger spry  
are pounding now for his reply—  
for if he acts in just this way  
and yet his logic wins the day  
I’ll not value at a pin  
any older person’s skin.

## CHORUS LEADER

Now down to work, you spinner of words,  
you explorer of brand new expressions.  
Seek some way to persuade us, so it will appear  
that what you’ve been saying is right.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

How sweet it is to be conversant with  
things which are new and clever, capable  
of treating with contempt established ways. [1400]  
When I was only focused on my horses,  
I couldn’t say three words without going wrong.  
But now this man has made me stop all that,  
I’m well acquainted with the subtlest views,  
and arguments and frames of mind. And so,  
I do believe I’ll show how just it is  
to punish one’s own father.

## STREPSIADES

By the gods,  
keep on with your horses then—for me  
caring for a four-horse team is better  
than being beaten to a pulp.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

I’ll go back  
to where I was in my argument,  
when you interrupted me. First, tell me this—  
Did you hit me when I was a child?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔγωγέ σ' εὐνοῶν τε καὶ κηδόμενος.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰπέ δή μοι, 1410

οὐ κάμει σοι δίκαιόν ἐστιν εὐνοεῖν ὁμοίως  
τύπτειν τ', ἐπειδήπερ γε τοῦτ' ἐστ' εὐνοεῖν τὸ τύπτειν;  
πῶς γὰρ τὸ μὲν σὸν σῶμα χρὴ πληγῶν ἀθῶον εἶναι,  
τοῦμόν δὲ μή; καὶ μὴν ἔφυν ἐλεύθερός γε καγώ.  
κλάουσι παῖδες, πατέρα δ' οὐ κλάειν δοκεῖς; . . . 1415  
φήσεις νομίζεσθαι σὺ παιδὸς τοῦτο τοῦργον εἶναι.  
ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἀντίποιμι' ἂν ὡς δις παῖδες οἱ γέροντες.  
εἰκὸς δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς γέροντας ἢ νέους τι κλάειν,  
ὄσπερ ἐξαμαρτάνειν ἦπτον δίκαιον αὐτούς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδαμοῦ νομίζεται τὸν πατέρα τοῦτο πάσχειν. 1420

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὔκουσιν ἀνὴρ ὁ τὸν νόμον θεῖς τοῦτον ἦν τὸ πρῶτον  
ὥσπερ σὺ καγώ, καὶ λέγων ἔπειθε τοὺς παλαιούς;  
ἦττόν τι δητ' ἔξεστι κάμοι καινὸν αὖ τὸ λοιπὸν  
θεῖναι νόμον τοῖς υἱέσιν, τοὺς πατέρας ἀντιτύπτειν;  
ὄσας δὲ πληγὰς εἴχομεν πρὶν τὸν νόμον τεθῆναι, 1425  
ἀφίεμεν, καὶ δίδομεν αὐτοῖς προῖκα συγκεκόφθαι.  
σκέψαι δὲ τοὺς ἀλεκτρυόνας καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ βοτὰ ταυτί,  
ὡς τοὺς πατέρας ἀμύνεται· καίτοι τί διαφέρουσιν  
ἡμῶν ἐκεῖνοι, πλὴν γ' ὅτι ψηφίσματ' οὐ γράφουσιν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δητ', ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἀλεκτρυόνας ἅπαντα μιμεί, 1430  
οὐκ ἐσθίεις καὶ τὴν κόπρον καπὶ ξύλου καθεύδεις;

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ ταῦτόν ᾧ τᾶν ἐστίν, οὐδ' ἂν Σωκράτει δοκοίη.

STREPSIADES

Yes.

But I was doing it out of care for you.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Then tell me this: Is it not right for me  
to care for you in the same way—to beat you—  
since that's what caring means—a beating?  
Why must your body be except from blows,  
while mine is not? I was born a free man, too.  
"The children howl—you think the father  
should not howl as well?" You're going to claim  
the laws permit this practice on our children.  
To that I would reply that older men  
are in their second childhood. More than that—  
it makes sense that older men should howl  
before the young, because there's far less chance  
their natures lead them into errors.

STREPSIADES

There's no law that fathers have to suffer this. [1420]

PHEIDIPPIDES

But surely some man first brought in the law,  
someone like you and me? And way back then  
people found his arguments convincing.  
Why should I have less right to make new laws  
for future sons, so they can take their turn  
and beat their fathers? All the blows we got  
before the law was brought in we'll erase,  
and we'll demand no payback for our beatings.  
Consider cocks and other animals—  
they avenge themselves against their fathers.  
And yet how are we different from them,  
except they don't propose decrees?

STREPSIADES

Well then, [1430]  
since you want to be like cocks in all you do,  
why not sleep on a perch and feed on shit?

PHEIDIPPIDES

My dear man, that's not the same at all—  
not according to what Socrates would think.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ τύπτ'. εἰ δὲ μὴ, σαυτὸν ποτ' αἰτιάσει.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ πῶς;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐπεὶ σὲ μὲν δίκαιός εἰμ' ἐγὼ κολάζειν,  
σὺ δ', ἦν γένηταί σοι, τὸν υἱόν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦν δὲ μὴ γένηται, 1435  
μάτην ἐμοὶ κεκλαύσεται, σὺ δ' ἐγχανὼν τεθνήξεις.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἐμοὶ μὲν ὦνδρες ἡλικες δοκεῖ λέγειν δίκαια.  
κάμιοιγε συγχωρεῖν δοκεῖ τούτοισι τὰπεικῆ.  
κλάειν γὰρ ἡμᾶς εἰκός ἐστ', ἦν μὴ δίκαια δρῶμεν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

σκέψαι δὲ χἀτέραν ἔτι γνώμην.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἀπὸ γὰρ ὀλοῦμαι. 1440

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ἴσως γ' οὐκ ἀχθέσει παθὼν ἂ νῦν πέπονθας.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

πῶς δῆ; δίδαξον γὰρ τί μ' ἐκ τούτων ἐπωφελήσεις.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τὴν μητέρ' ὥσπερ καὶ σὲ τυπτήσω.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί φῆς, τί φῆς σύ;  
τοῦθ' ἕτερον αὖ μεῖζον κακόν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δ' ἦν ἔχων τὸν ἥττω  
λόγον σε νικήσω λέγων 1445  
τὴν μητέρ' ὡς τύπτειν χρεών;

STREPSIADES

Even so, don't beat me. For if you do,  
you'll have yourself to blame.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Why's that?

STREPSIADES

Because I have the right to chastise you,  
if you have a son, you'll have that right with him.

PHEIDIPPIDES

If I don't have one, I'll have cried for nothing,  
and you'll be laughing in your grave.

STREPSIADES [*addressing the audience*]

All you men out there my age, it seems to me  
he's arguing what's right. And in my view,  
we should concede to these young sons what's fair.  
It's only right that we should cry in pain  
when we do something wrong.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Consider now another point.

STREPSIADES

No, no.

It'll finish me!

[1440]

PHEIDIPPIDES

But then again  
perhaps you won't feel so miserable  
at going through what you've suffered.

STREPSIADES

What's that?

Explain to me how I benefit from this.

PHEIDIPPIDES

I'll thump my mother, just as I hit you.

STREPSIADES

What's did you just say? What are you claiming?  
This second point is even more disgraceful.

PHEIDIPPIDES

But what if, using the Worse Argument,  
I beat you arguing this proposition—  
that it's only right to hit one's mother?



## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἦν ταυτὶ ποιῆς,  
οὐδέν σε κωλύσει σεαυ-  
τὸν ἐμβαλεῖν ἐς τὸ βάραθρον  
μετὰ Σωκράτους  
καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν ἦττω.

1450

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ταυτὶ δι' ὑμᾶς ὦ Νεθέλαι πέπονθ' ἐγώ,  
ὑμῖν ἀναθεὶς ἅπαντα τὰμὰ πράγματα.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν σαυτῷ σὺ τούτων αἴτιος,  
στρέψας σεαυτὸν ἐς ποιηρὰ πράγματα.

1455

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί δήτα ταῦτ' οὐ μοι τότ' ἠγορεύετε,  
ἀλλ' ἄνδρ' ἄγροικον καὶ γέροντ' ἐπήρετε;

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἡμεῖς ποιούμεν ταῦθ' ἐκάστοθ' ὅταν τινα  
γνώμεν πονηρῶν ὄντ' ἐραστήν πραγμάτων,  
ἕως ἂν αὐτὸν ἐμβάλωμεν ἐς κακόν,  
ὅπως ἂν εἰδῆ τοὺς θεοὺς δεδοικέναι.

1460

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ὦμοι πονηρὰ γ' ὦ Νεφέλαι, δίκαια δέ.  
οὐ γάρ μ' ἐχρῆν τὰ χρήμαθ' ἀδανεισάμην  
ἀποστρεῖν. νῦν οὖν ὅπως ὦ φίλτατε  
τὸν Χαιρεφῶντα τὸν μαρὸν καὶ Σωκράτη  
ἀπολεῖς μετ' ἐμοῦ ἰθὺν, οἱ σὲ καὶ ἐξηπάτων.

1465

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν ἀδικήσαιμι τοὺς διδασκάλους.

## ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ναὶ ναὶ καταιδέσθητι πατρῶον Δία.

## ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰδοὺ γε Δία πατρῶον· ὡς ἀρχαῖος εἶ.  
Ζεὺς γάρ τις ἔστω;

1470

## STREPSIADES

What else but this—if you do a thing like that,  
then why stop there? Why not throw yourself  
and Socrates and the Worse Argument  
into the execution pit?

[1450]

[Strepsiades turns towards the Chorus]

It's your fault,  
you Clouds, that I have to endure all this.  
I entrusted my affairs to you.

## CHORUS LEADER

No.  
You're the one responsible for this.  
You turned yourself toward these felonies.

## STREPSIADES

Why didn't you inform me at the time,  
instead of luring on an old country man?

## CHORUS

That's what we do each time we see someone  
who falls in love with evil strategies,  
until we hurl him into misery,  
so he may learn to fear the gods.

[1460]

## STREPSIADES

O dear. That's harsh, you Clouds, but fair enough.  
I shouldn't have kept trying not to pay  
that cash I borrowed. Now, my dearest lad,  
come with me—let's exterminate those men,  
the scoundrel Chaerephon and Socrates,  
the ones who played their tricks on you and me.

## PHEIDIPIDES

But I couldn't harm the ones who taught me.

## STREPSIADES

Yes, you must. Revere Paternal Zeus.<sup>95</sup>

## PHEIDIPIDES

Just listen to that—Paternal Zeus.  
How out of date you are! Does Zeus exist?

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

ἔστιν.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἔστ', οὐκ, ἐπεὶ 1470

Δῖνος βασιλεύει τὸν Δί' ἐξεληλακῶς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἐξελήλακ', ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τοῦτ' ὠόμην  
διὰ τουτονὶ τὸν δῖνον. οἴμοι δειλαιοσ  
ὄτε καὶ σέ χυτρεοῦν ὄντα θεὸν ἡγησάμην.

ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐνταῦθα σαυτῷ παραφρόνει καὶ φληνάφα. 1475

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

οἴμοι παρανοίας· ὡς ἐμαινόμεν ἄρα,  
ὄτ' ἐξέβαλλον τοὺς θεοὺς διὰ Σωκράτη.  
ἀλλ' ὦ φίλ' Ἑρμῆ μηδαμῶς θύμαιέ μοι  
μηδέ μ' ἐπιτρίψης, ἀλλὰ συγγνώμην ἔχε  
ἐμοῦ παρανοήσαντος ἀδολεσχία. 1480

καὶ μοι γενοῦ ξύμβουλος, εἴτ' αὐτοὺς γραφὴν  
διωκάθω γραψάμενος εἴθ' ὅ τι σοι δοκεῖ.  
ὀρθῶς παραινεῖς οὐκ ἐὼν δικορραφεῖν,  
ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστ' ἐμπιμπράναι τὴν οἰκίαν  
τῶν ἀδολεσχῶν. δεῦρο δεῦρ' ὦ Ξανθία,  
κλίμακα λαβὼν ἔξελθε καὶ σμυνύην φέρων,  
κᾶπειτ' ἐπαναβὰς ἐπὶ τὸ φροντιστήριον  
τὸ τέγος κατάσκαπτ', εἰ φιλεῖς τὸν δεσπότην,  
ἕως ἂν αὐτοῖς ἐμβάλῃς τὴν οἰκίαν.

1485

STREPSIADES

He does.

PHEIDIPPIDES

No, no, he doesn't—there's no way, [1470]  
for Vortex has now done away with Zeus  
and rules in everything.

STREPSIADES

He hasn't killed him.

[He points to a small statue of a round goblet which stands outside Thinkery]

I thought he had because that statue there,  
the cup, is called a vortex.<sup>96</sup> What a fool  
to think this piece of clay could be a god!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Stay here and babble nonsense to yourself.

[Pheidippides exits]<sup>97</sup>

STREPSIADES

My god, what lunacy. I was insane  
to cast aside the gods for Socrates.

[Strepsiades goes up and talks to the small statue of Hermes outside his house]

But, dear Hermes, don't vent your rage on me,  
don't grind me down. Be merciful to me.  
Their empty babbling made me lose my mind. [1480]  
Give me your advice. Shall I lay a charge,  
go after them in court. What seems right to you?

[He looks for a moment at the statue]

You counsel well. I won't launch a law suit.  
I'll burn their house as quickly as I can,  
these babbling fools.

[Strepsiades calls into his house]

Xanthias, come here.

Come outside—bring a ladder—a mattock, too.  
then climb up on top of that Thinkery  
and, if you love your master, smash the roof,  
until the house collapses in on them.

[Xanthias comes out with ladder and mattock, climbs up onto the Thinkery and starts demolishing the roof]

ἐμοὶ δὲ δᾶδ' ἐνεγκάτω τις ἡμμένην,  
 κάγώ τιν' αὐτῶν τήμερον δοῦναι δίκην  
 ἐμοὶ ποιήσω, κεῖ σφόδρ' εἶς' ἀλαζόνες.

1490

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ Α  
 ἰοὺ ἰοῦ.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 σὸν ἔργον ᾧ δᾶς ἰέναι πολλὴν φλόγα.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ Α  
 ἄνθρωπε, τί ποιεῖς;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 ὅ τι ποιῶ; τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ  
 διαλεπτολογοῦμαι ταῖς δοκοῖς τῆς οἰκίας;

1495

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ Β  
 οἴμοι τίς ἡμῶν πυρπολεῖ τὴν οἰκίαν;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 ἐκεῖνος οὐδὲρ θοιμάτιον εἰλήφατε.

ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ Γ  
 ἀπολεῖς ἀπολεῖς.

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 τοῦτ' αὐτὸ γὰρ καὶ βούλομαι,  
 ἦν ἢ σμινὴ μοι μὴ προδῶ τὰς ἐλπίδας,  
 ἦ γὰρ πρότερόν πως ἐκτραχηλισθῶ πεσών.

1500

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ  
 οὗτος τί ποιεῖς ἐτέον οὐπὶ τοῦ τέγους;

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ  
 ἀεροβατῶ καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον.

Someone fetch me a flaming torch out here.  
 They may brag all they like, but here today  
 I'll make somebody pay the penalty  
 for what they did to me. [1490]

[Another slave comes out and hands Strepsiades a torch. He joins Xanthias on the roof and tries to burn down the inside of the Thinkery]

STUDENT [from inside the Thinkery]

Help! Help!

STREPSIADES  
 Come on, Torch, put your flames to work.

[Strepsiades sets fire to the roof of the Thinkery. A student rushes outside and looks at Strepsiades and Xanthias on the roof]

STUDENT  
 You there, what are you doing?

STREPSIADES  
 What am I doing?  
 What else but picking a good argument  
 with the roof beams of your house?

[A second student appears at a window as smoke starts coming out of the house]

STUDENT  
 Help! Who's setting fire to the house?

STREPSIADES  
 It's the man  
 whose cloak you stole.

STUDENT  
 We'll die. You'll kill us all!

STREPSIADES  
 That's what I want—unless this mattock  
 disappoints my hopes or I fall through somehow  
 and break my neck. [1500]

[Socrates comes out of the house in a cloud of smoke. He is coughing badly]

SOCRATES  
 What are you doing up on the roof?

STREPSIADES  
 I walk on air and contemplate the sun.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ

οἶμοι τάλας δέλαιος ἀποπνιγήσομαι.

ΧΑΙΡΕΦΩΝ

ἐγὼ δὲ κακοδαίμων γε κατακαυθήσομαι. 1505

ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ

τί γὰρ μαθόντες τοὺς θεοὺς ὑβρίζετε,  
καὶ τῆς σελήνης ἐσκοπέισθε τὴν ἔδραν;

ΕΡΜΗΣ

δίωκε βάλλε παῖε, πολλῶν οὔνεκα,  
μάλιστα δ' εἰδὼς τοὺς θεοὺς ὡς ἠδίκουν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἠγείσθ' ἔξω· κεχόρευται γὰρ 1510  
μετρίως τό γε τήμερον ἡμῖν.SOCRATES [*coughing*]

This is bad—I'm going to suffocate.

STUDENT [*still at the window*]

What about poor me? I'll be burned up.

[*Strepsiades and Xanthias come down from the roof*]STREPSIADES [*to Socrates*]Why were you so insolent with gods  
in what you studied and when you explored  
the moon's abode? Chase them off, hit them,  
throw things at them—for all sorts of reasons,  
but most of all for their impiety.[*Strepsiades and Xanthias chase Socrates and the students off the stage and exit after them*]

CHORUS LEADER

Lead us on out of here. Away!

We've had enough of song and dance today.

[*The Chorus exits*]

## NOTES

1. *Thinkery*: The Greek word *phrontisterion* (meaning school or academy) is translated here as Thinkery, a term borrowed from William Arrowsmith's translation of *The Clouds*.
2. During the war it was easy for slaves to run away into enemy territory, so their owners had to treat them with much more care.
3. Wearing one's hair long and keeping race horses were characteristics of the sons of very rich families.
4. The interest on Strepsiades' loans would increase once the lunar month came to an end.
5. *twelve minai* is 100 drachmas, a considerable sum. The Greek reads "the horse branded with a *koppa* mark." That brand was a guarantee of its breeding.
6. *Megacles* was a common name in a very prominent aristocratic family in Athens. *Coesyra* was the mother of a Megacles from this family, a woman well known for her wasteful expenditures and pride.
7. The Greek has "of Colias and Genetyllis" names associated with festivals celebrating women's sexual and procreative powers.
8. Packing the wool tight in weaving uses up more wool and therefore costs more. Strepsiades holds up his cloak which is by now full of holes.
9. *-hippos* means "horse." The mother presumably wanted her son to have the marks of the aristocratic classes. Xanthippos was the name of Pericles' father and his son. The other names are less obviously aristocratic or uncommon.
10. *Chaerephon*: a well-known associate of Socrates.
11. *pheasants* were a rich rarity in Athens. *Leogoras* was a very wealthy Athenian.
12. *an obol* was a relatively small amount, about a third of a day's pay for a jury member.

13. *Knights* is a term used to describe the affluent young men who made up the cavalry. Pheidippides has been mixing with people far beyond his father's means.
14. A *yoke horse* was part of the four-horse team which was harnessed to a yoke on the inside.
15. I adopt Sommerstein's useful reading of this very elliptical passage, which interprets the Greek word *diabetes* as meaning a passive homosexual (rather than its usual meaning, "a pair of compasses"—both senses deriving from the idea of spreading legs apart). The line about selling the cloak is added to clarify the sense.
16. *Thales* was a very famous thinker from the sixth century BC.
17. The Athenians had captured a number of Spartans at Pylos in 425 and brought them to Athens where they remained in captivity.
18. Athenians sometimes apportioned land by lot outside the state which they had appropriated from other people.
19. Attica is the territory surrounded by and belonging to Athens.
20. A deme was a political unit in Athens. Membership in a particular deme was a matter of inheritance from one's father.
21. In 446 BC the Athenians under Pericles put down a revolt in Euboea, a large island just off the coast of Attica.
22. *Athamas*, a character in one of Sophocles' lost plays who was prepared for sacrifice. He was rescued by Hercules.
23. *Cecrops*: a legendary king of Athens. Pallas is Pallas Athena, patron goddess of Athens.
24. *holy festivals*: the Eleusinian mysteries, a traditionally secret and sacred festival for those initiated into the band of cult worshippers.
25. *Mount Parnes*: a mountain range to the north of Athens.
26. *Typho*: a monster with a hundred heads, father of the storm winds (hence, our word *typhoon*).
27. *thrush*: meat from a thrush was considered a delicacy, something that might be given to the winner of a public competition. These lines are mocking the dithyrambic poets (perhaps in comparison with the writers of comic drama).

28. *Xenophantes' son*: a reference to Hieronymos, a dithyrambic and tragic poet. A centaur was known for its savage temper and wild appearance.
29. *Simon*: an allegedly corrupt Athenian public official.
30. *Cleonymos*: an Athenian accused of dropping his shield and running away from a battle.
31. *Cleisthenes*: a notorious homosexual whom Aristophanes never tires of holding up to ridicule.
32. *Prodicus*: a well-known Athenian intellectual, who wrote on a wide variety of subjects. Linking Socrates and Prodicus as intellectual equals would strike many Athenians as quite absurd.
33. *Vortex*: the Greek word is *dinos* meaning a *whirl* or *eddy*. I adopt Sommerstein's suggestion for this word here.
34. *Panathenaea*: a major annual festival in Athens.
35. *Cronos*: the divine father of Zeus, the age of Cronos is part of the mythic past.
36. Legally an Athenian who believed someone had stolen his property could enter the suspect's house to search. But he first had to remove any garments in which he might conceal something which he might plant in the house.
37. *Trophonios' cave* was a place people went to get prophecies. A suppliant carried a honey cake as an offering to the snakes in the cave.
38. *win*: this is a reference to the fact that the play is part of a competition. The speech obviously is part of the revisions made after the play failed to win first prize in its initial production. The speaker may have been Aristophanes himself or the Chorus Leader speaking on his behalf.
39. *trained it*: This passage is a reference to Aristophanes' first play, *The Banqueters*, and to those who helped him get the work produced. The child mentioned is a metaphorical reference to that work or to his artistic talent generally. The other woman is a metaphorical reference to Callistratos, who produced *The Banqueters*.
40. *Electra* was the sister of Orestes and spent a long time waiting to be reunited with him. That hope kept her going. When she saw her brother's lock of hair on their father's tomb, she was overjoyed that he

had come back. The adjective “old” refers to the story, which was very well known to the audience.

41. These lines may indicate that in *The Clouds* the male characters did not wear the traditional phalluses or that the phalluses they did wear were not of a particular kind.
42. *Cleon* was a very powerful Athenian politician after Pericles. Aristophanes savagely attacked him in *Knights*. Cleon was killed in battle (in 422). Hyperbolos became a very influential politician after Cleon’s death.
43. Eupolis, Phrynichos, and Hermippos were comic playwrights, rivals of Aristophanes.
44. *Paphlagonian tanner* is a reference to Cleon, who earned his money from tanneries. Paphlagonia is an area in Asia Minor. The word here implies that Cleon was not a true Athenian.
45. *seagull* was a bird symbolic of thievery and greed. The contradiction in these speeches in the attitude to Cleon (who died the year following the original production) may be accounted for by the incomplete revision of the script.
46. *holy lady* is a reference to the goddess Artemis. The *aegis* is a divine cloak which has invincible powers to strike fear into the god’s enemies. Here it is invoked as a protection for Athens, Athena’s city. *Dionysus* lived in Delphi when Apollo was absent from the shrine during the winter.
47. Athenians followed a lunar calendar, but there were important discrepancies due to a very careless control over inserting extra days.
48. *Memnon or Sarpedon*: Memnon, the son of Dawn, was killed at Troy, as was Sarpedon, a son of Zeus, and leader of the Lycian allies of the Trojans.
49. *religious council*: the Amphictyonic Council, which controlled some important religious shrines, was made up of delegates from different city states. In Athens the delegate was chosen by lot. It’s not clear how the gods could have removed the wreath in question.
50. the *dactyl* is named from the Greek word for finger because it consists of one long stress followed by two short stresses, like the structure of

bones in a finger. The phrase “which is like a digit” has been added to make the point clearer.

51. I adopt Sommerstein’s suggested insertion of this line and a half in order to clarify what now follows in the conversation, which hinges on the gender of words (masculine, feminine, or neuter) and the proper ascription of a specific gender to words which describe male and female objects. The word “fowl” applies to both male and females and therefore is not, strictly speaking masculine. This whole section is a satire on the “nitpicking” attention to language attributed to the sophists.
52. *kneading basin*: a trough for making bread.
53. *Cleonymos* was an Athenian politician who allegedly ran away from the battle field, leaving his shield behind.
54. *to masturbate*: the Greek here says literally “Cleonymos didn’t have a kneading basin but kneaded himself with a round mortar [i.e., masturbated].”
55. The point of this very laboured joke seems to be making Cleonymos feminine, presumably because of his cowardice (running away in battle).
56. The three names mentioned belong to well known Athenians, who may have all been famous for their dissolute life style. Socrates is taking issue with the spelling of the last two names which (in some forms) look like feminine names. Strepsiades, of course, thinks Socrates is talking about the sexuality of the people.
57. *Amyntia*: in Greek (as in Latin) the name changes when it is used as a direct form of address—in this case the last letter is dropped, leaving a name ending in *-a*, normally a feminine ending.
58. *Corinthian* is obviously a reference to bed bugs, but the link with Corinth is unclear (perhaps it was a slang expression).
59. *bug*: children sometimes tied a thread around the foot of a large flying bug and played with it.
60. The scribe would be writing on a wax tablet which the heat would melt.

61. *Melos*: Strepsiades presumably is confusing Socrates with Diagoras, a well known materialistic atheist, who came from Melos (whereas Socrates did not).
62. *died*: part of the funeral rituals in a family required each member to bathe thoroughly.
63. *Sons of Earth*: a phrase usually referring to the Titans who warred against the Olympian gods. Here it also evokes a sense of the materialism of Socrates' doctrine in the play and, of course, ironically ridicules the Thinkery.
64. "*necessary expense*": refers to the well-known story of Pericles who in 445 BC used this phrase in official state accounts to refer to an expensive but secret bribe he paid to a Spartan general to withdraw his armies from Athenian territories around Athens. No one asked any embarrassing questions about the entry.
65. *speech*: the Greek says "with his lips sagging [or loosely apart]." Socrates is criticizing Pheidippides' untrained voice.
66. *talent*: an enormous fee to pay for lessons in rhetoric. Socrates is, of course, getting Strepsiades ready to pay a lot for his son's education.
67. Zeus overthrew his father, Cronos, and the Titans and imprisoned them deep inside the earth.
68. *Telephos from Mysia* was a hero in a play by Euripides in which a king was portrayed as a beggar. Pandeletos was an Athenian politician. The imputation here is that the Worse Argument once did very badly, barely surviving on his wits and borrowed ideas.
69. *thighs apart*: keeping the thighs together was supposed to enable boys to stimulate themselves sexually.
70. *Phrynis style*: Phrynis was a musician who introduced certain innovations in music around 450 BC.
71. *Cedeides*: a dithyrambic poet well known for his old-fashioned style. The other references are all too ancient customs and rituals (like the old tradition of wearing a cicada broach or the ritual killing of oxen).
72. *Marathon*: a battle in 490 BC in which a small band of Greeks, mainly Athenians, defeated the Persian armies which had landed near Athens. The Panathenaea was a major religious festival in Athens. Tritogeneia was one of Athena's titles.

73. *Iapetus* was a Titan, a brother of Cronos, and hence very ancient.
74. Hippocrates was an Athenian, a relative of Pericles. He had three sons who had a reputation for childishness.
75. *Academy*: this word refers, not to Plato's school (which was not in existence yet) but to a public park and gymnasium in Athens.
76. *long decrees*: The Greek says "and a long decree," which makes little sense in English. The point of the joke is to set the audience up to expect "and a long prick" (which was considered a characteristic of barbarians).
77. Antimachos was satirized in comedy as a particularly effeminate man.
78. *drachmas*: the Greek has "more than ten thousand staters." A stater was a general term for non-Athenian coins, usually of high value. The idea, of course, is equivalent to "a ton of money."
79. *bath of Hercules* was a term commonly applied to thermal hot springs.
80. This part of the argument is impossible to render quickly in English. Homer's word is *agoretēs*, meaning "speaking in the assembly." The Worse Argument is implying that, since the word *agora* means market place, Homer is commending these men for "talking in the market place."
81. Peleus once refused the sexual advances of the wife of his host. She accused him of immoral activity, and her husband set Peleus unarmed on a mountain. The gods admired Peleus' chastity and provided him a sword so he could defend himself against the wild animals.
82. *Peleus*, a mortal king, married Thetis, a sea goddess, with the blessing of the gods. Their child was the hero Achilles. She later left him to return to her father (but not for the reason given in the lines following).
83. *asshole*: Someone caught in the act of adultery was punished by having a radish shoved up his anus and his pubic hair singed with hot ash. The various insults here ("loose-arsed bugger," "gigantic asshole," and so on) stand for the Greek perjorative phrase "wide arsed," which, in addition to meaning "lewd" or "disgusting," also carries the connotation of passive homosexuality, something considered ridiculous in mature men. Terms like "bum fucker" are too active to capture this sense of the insult.



84. The person making the charge in court had to make a cash deposit which was forfeit if he lost the case.
85. *Solon*: was a very famous Athenian law maker. In the early sixth century he laid down the basis for Athenian laws.
86. Pheidippides' hair-splitting argument which follows supposedly establishes that the law suits against Strepsiades are illegal and should be tossed out because (in brief) the court had taken the deposit, which the creditor had to make to launch the suit, on the wrong day (the last day of the month instead of the first day of the new month). The case rests on a misinterpretation of the meaning of the term Old and New Day—which was single day between the old and the new moon. The passage is, of course, a satire on sophistic reasoning and legal quibbling for self-interest.
87. *my own deme*: the deme was the basic political unit in Athens. Membership in it passed down from one's father.
88. *three extra obols*: Strepsiades means here that swearing the oath will be such fun he's prepared to pay for the pleasure—an obvious insult to Pasion.
89. *salt\**: leather was rubbed down as part of the tanning process. The phrase "wine skin" has been added to clarify the sense.
90. *Carcinus*: an Athenian writer of tragic drama.
91. Arynias is here quoting from a tragedy written by Carcinus' son Xenocles.
92. *Tlepolemos* is a character in the tragedy mentioned in the previous note.
93. *Simonides*: was a well-known lyric poet of the previous century.
94. *myrtle branch*: traditionally a person singing at a drinking party held a myrtle branch unless he was playing a musical instrument.
95. *Paternal Zeus*: This seems to be an appeal to Zeus as the guardian of the father's rights and thus a way of urging Pheidippides to go along with what his father wants. The line may be a quote from a lost tragedy.

96. *Vortex*: the Greek word *dinos*, meaning "whirl," "eddy," or "vortex," also means a round goblet. The statue of such a goblet outside the Thinkery represents the presiding deity of the house.
97. It's not clear whether Pheidippides goes back into his house or back into the school. If he does the latter, then the comic violence at the end of the play takes on a much darker tone, since Strepsiades' murderous anger includes his son. In fact, the loss of his son might be the key event which triggers the intensity of the final destruction.