

# Strepsiades, Socrates and the Abuses of Intellectualism

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IN PLATO'S *Theaetetus*, Socrates at one point (155E) offers to help search out the truth of some well-known thinkers' hidden opinions. When Theaetetus responds eagerly to this offer, Socrates cautions him as follows: "Take a good look round," he says, "make sure no non-initiate is listening." Ironical or not, this remark at once reminds us of the student-gatekeeper in Aristophanes' pseudo-Socratic *φροντιστήριον* (143, *cf.* 140), who informs Strepsiades that the information he is about to impart must be regarded as *μυστήρια*.<sup>1</sup> Socrates then goes on to define 'non-initiates' in this context: "These are they who think nothing exists beyond what they can grasp in their two hands and who refuse to admit that actions and origins and abstraction generally have any real substance."<sup>2</sup> Theaetetus, agreeing, describes such persons as 'stubborn and obstinate' (*εκκληρούς . . . καὶ ἀντιτύπους*). Socrates corrects him. They are, more precisely, *ἄμουχοι*, without the Muses, gross, crude, lacking in both taste and mental cultivation. There is a similar attack in the *Sophist* (246A–B), and later in that dialogue (259E) the Eleatic Stranger links the epithet *ἄμουχος* with an equally derogatory one: *ἀφιλόσοφος*, of which perhaps the most accurate translation would be 'non- (or anti-) intellectual'.

Plato's immediate object in both cases was to discredit the

<sup>1</sup> See A. W. H. Adkins, "Clouds, Mysteries, Socrates and Plato," *Antichthon* 4 (1970) 13–24, where it is argued convincingly that Socrates employed initiation-language in philosophical discussion and further that Aristophanes deliberately held this practice up to ridicule in the *Clouds*. It is interesting, though probably coincidental, that in the *Theaetetus* Socrates goes on (156A) to identify the *ἀρχή* of his thinkers' secret opinions as the notion *ὡς τὸ πᾶν κίνησις ἦν* (*cf.* p.20 and n.17 *infra*). W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* III (Cambridge 1969) 374, suggests that Aristophanes may have described Socrates and his companions as a *thiasos* "for comic effect and adding such picturesque details as the ban on revealing its 'mysteries' to any but the initiated disciples," but he does not cite either of these Platonic passages.

<sup>2</sup> *εἰσὶν δὲ οὗτοι οἱ οὐδὲν ἄλλο οἰόμενοι εἶναι ἢ οὐδ' ἂν δύνωνται ἀπρὶξ τοῖν χεροῖν λαβέσθαι, πράξει δὲ καὶ γενέσει καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἀόρατον οὐκ ἀποδεχόμενοι ὡς ἐν οὐσίας μέρει.*

materialists and sensationalists, the adherents of such thinkers as Protagoras or Democritus. Yet the description of the materialist may have more general application. To find a significant example we need look no further than Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Strepsiades is there portrayed as the classic *ἄμωκος*, in terms that clearly foreshadow Plato's definition: and this Aristophanic sketch of Strepsiades as *ἄμωκος* is balanced by a brief attack on false intellectual values. The main satirical function of the *Clouds*, I would argue, was to demonstrate the disruptive impact of progressive ideas, advanced dialectic, upon social and familial stability: intellectual *Entwicklung* as a lethal solvent of what Gilbert Murray so memorably termed the 'Inherited Conglomerate'.<sup>3</sup> In the process Aristophanes found himself faced, simultaneously, with two distinct but related phenomena: (i) the inability or disinclination of the common man to grasp generalizations, abstractions or intellectual metaphors of any sort; and (ii) the dangerous tendency of some intellectuals to incur ordinary people's suspicion through *abuse* of the rational process, by allowing their abstractions to degenerate into mere cloudy obscurantism and misapplied metaphor, with a concomitant air of the initiates' closed shop, something particularly stressed in the early scenes of the *Clouds*.

The confrontation between Strepsiades and the Aristophanic Socrates dramatizes both problems with acute—and very modern—psychological insight. This, at first sight, is surprising. What Plato thought of Aristophanes' intellectual abilities we may deduce from the fact that in the *Symposium* Aristophanes is the only speaker *not* to analyse Love in abstract terms. Dover has suggested that Plato put such a speech into Aristophanes' mouth precisely because the latter was a comic poet and thus by definition not credited with the intellectual equipment of a philosopher.<sup>4</sup> The identification of

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Murray, *Greek Studies* (Oxford 1947) 66ff; cf. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 179–80.

<sup>4</sup> K. J. Dover, *Arethusa* 6 (1973) 70; cf. *JHS* 86 (1966) 47. Neither the flattering Platonic epigram on Aristophanes (Schmid-Stählin, *GGrL* I.4 [Munich 1946] 451 n.3) nor the story (*Vit. Aristoph.* 9, p. xlv Bergk) that Plato, in response to the tyrant Dionysius' request for a work that would explain the Athenian state, sent him the plays of Aristophanes to read, offers any evidence that the philosopher admired the playwright's *intellect* (as opposed to his imagination, charm or eccentricity). Indeed, the anecdote about Dionysius suggests that Plato, finding Athens' democratic politics irrational to a degree, regarded Aristophanes' comic fantasies as the most eloquent—and characteristic—embodiment of that craziness in literary form: no wonder he wanted to ban the artists from his ideal *politeia*.

rational intellectualism with the ability to abstract or generalize is a cliché today; but just how early in the history of Greek thought this concept became generally accepted is a matter for debate.<sup>5</sup> Some abstract terms only entered the Greek language during the fourth century: two well-known examples are ποιότης, quality, and ποσότης, quantity. Plato, in whose *Theaetetus* (182A) the former first occurs, actually apologizes for using what he describes as a 'grotesque term' (ἀλλόκοτον ὄνομα). The latter is not found earlier than Aristotle (see, e.g., *Metaph.* 1028a19). Such symptomatic phenomena as parataxis—well described as “the unsophisticated tendency to state logically subordinate ideas as separate, grammatically co-ordinate propositions”<sup>6</sup>—suggest strongly the fragile base on which fifth-century rationalism rested.<sup>7</sup> Similarly with the intellectual abuse of abstraction through misapplied metaphor: though this topic is familiar enough today,<sup>8</sup> to find it treated as a joke for the groundlings in 423 B.C. throws fresh light on the general dissemination of progressive thought in post-Periclean Athens. For that reason alone it would be worth examination.

Throughout the *Clouds* Aristophanes is at great pains to delineate Strepsiades as a person with a mind not merely pragmatic but anti-conceptual. His dominant aim in life is to get rid of his debts and to make money;<sup>9</sup> his outlook is unblushingly utilitarian.<sup>10</sup> His first question about geometry (202ff) aims to discover its practical benefits. His thinking is governed by traditional anthropomorphism. “*Who* rains, then?” he asks, on being told that Zeus does not exist, and goes on to admit his belief that rain was caused by Zeus mic-turating through a sieve (368, 373). A few lines later (379ff) this anthropomorphic functionalism produces a highly significant mis-

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge 1966), in particular 421ff; S. Sambursky, *The Physical World of the Greeks* (London 1956) ch. i, “The Scientific Approach,” 1–25; Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (New York 1953) ch. x, “The Origin of Scientific Thought,” 227–45; B. E. Perry, “The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately,” *TAPA* 68 (1937) 403–27.

<sup>6</sup> G. S. Kirk, *Homer and the Epic* (Cambridge 1965) 132. For a good account of parataxis see P. Chantraine, *Grammaire Homérique* II (Paris 1953) 351ff.

<sup>7</sup> Dodds, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 116–20, 180–85.

<sup>8</sup> The classic treatment is that by F. A. von Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies in the Abuse of Reason* (London 1955).

<sup>9</sup> *Nub.* 76–77, 116–18, 238–41, 244–45, 433–34, 484–85, 738–39, 1154–62.

<sup>10</sup> *Nub.* 202ff, 259, 338–39, 648, 1231, 1283–84.

understanding between him and Socrates. If Zeus is not the prime mover, he asks in effect, who is? Socrates has a ready answer. "Vortex," he declares—a notion to be found in Anaximander, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and the Atomists, and variously held responsible for such diverse phenomena as the rotation of the heavenly bodies, spontaneous generation, the rise of civilization, dizziness and stones in the gall-bladder.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Aristophanes' audience would at least have some familiarity with the term Vortex (*Δῖνος*) and be prepared to laugh at Strepsiades' reaction. The old farmer instantly and predictably *personifies* Vortex as a new usurper in the Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus sequence.<sup>12</sup> He also, though we do not learn this till later (1473–74), identifies this 'Vortex' with the large pot, also known as a *δῖνος*, that is set up as a stage-property outside Socrates' door. His terminology, then, is concrete and personalized, with a touch of magic about it: verbal coincidence suffices to predicate essential identity. For Strepsiades one god has simply been replaced by another,<sup>13</sup> and the *δῖνος* is naturally his image. In a series of encounters, mostly in the first half of the play, Aristophanes develops Strepsiades' character as a non-intellectual through two main techniques: (i) by making him misunderstand a whole range of images, metaphors and concepts; (ii) by demonstrating his thought-processes in action on various clearly defined situations. In both cases his incapacity for intellectual abstraction emerges clearly and most often forms the point of the joke. We must therefore assume that this joke was one which an Athenian audience would appreciate.

The misunderstandings are set up in a variety of ways. On his first appearance at the *φροντιστήριον*, Strepsiades is told (137) that his knocking has caused an idea to abort: being used to dealing with

<sup>11</sup> Anaximander: [Hippocr.] *Nat.Puer.* 17 (=Littré VII 498). Anaximenes: J. M. Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy* (Boston 1968) 44–45. Empedocles: Diels-Kranz (hereafter DK) 31 B35, A49, A30, A51; Arist. *De Caelo* 2.1, 284a25. Anaxagoras: DK 59 B13, B15, B16. The Atomists: DK 68 B167, A3, A69; Theophr. *De Vertig.* 1 (p.136 Wimmer); Lucr. 5.419–31; cf. Guthrie, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) II 174, 300ff, 400, 410, 423. Rotation of the heavenly bodies: DK 59 A12 (Anaxagoras). Spontaneous generation: DK 59 B13, B4 (Anaxagoras). Rise of civilization: DK 59 B4 (Anaxagoras). Dizziness: Theophr. *ibid.* Stones in the bladder: [Hippocr.] *Morb.* 4.55 (=Littré VII 600, reading *ὑπὸ δίνης* with Heidel, cf. Robinson, *op.cit.* 325).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dover's commentary on this passage, *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Oxford 1968) 150.

<sup>13</sup> Dover, *ibid.* xxxv.

nervous pregnant goats, he shows instant and literal interest.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes he gives mere juxtaposition a causal significance it does not possess, as when he concludes (167–68) that knowing which orifice in a gnat produces the hum will help him to gain acquittal in a lawsuit. More often the *malentendu* is verbal, a phrase acquiring limited concrete significance in Strepsiades' mind. When told that students are studying τὰ κατὰ γῆς, he at once assumes they must be truffle-hunting (188–90). His entire introduction to the Cloud-Chorus hinges on an inability to make the slightest concession to the Clouds as *concepts*: for Strepsiades they are either real clouds or real women, and his mind seesaws doggedly between the two. To begin with (267–68, 329–30) he is dealing in clouds and mist, things with which a farmer has close acquaintance. At 335f the idea of clouds-as-goddesses briefly touches him; but by 341 he has to reconcile the Chorus in the theater with actual clouds in the sky and is lost again. Why, he asks plaintively, do they look like women? Why, above all, do they have *noses* (344)?

Metaphorical usages always take him aback. When Socrates talks of bringing καινὰς μηχανάς, new devices, to bear on him (a favourite Socratic term: cf. Plat. *Crat.* 415A and elsewhere), Strepsiades at once has nervous visions of siege-warfare (478–81). Socrates, in another characteristically homely image (cf. Plat. *Crat.* 407D8, *Resp.* 536D7, etc.), talks of throwing (προβάλλω) him an idea, which he must snatch up (ὑφαρπάσει) instantly. Strepsiades, literal as always, his mind clearly running on bones (cf. *Vesp.* 916), complains that he is being made to eat cleverness like a dog (κυνηδόν), thus provoking the retort that he is an ignorant savage (489–92). When told by his mentor (634) “πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν,” he replies “ἰδοῦ,” obviously identifying mind with head and thrusting the latter forward—just as when asked (733) “ἔχεις τι;”—“Is something the matter?”—he assumes the question to mean “Have you got hold of something?” in a physical

<sup>14</sup> This point is well emphasized by Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) xlii–iii. I agree with him that we have no strong reason to link this metaphor with its use in Plato's *Theaetetus* (150E) apropos Socrates' maieutic techniques as 'midwife' to other people's ideas—it is there applied to those who leave Socrates' company too soon; but I think Dover underestimates the extent to which Aristophanes in the *Clouds* deliberately parodies verbal usages or imagery subsequently attributed to Socrates by Plato (see *supra* pp.15,18 for several such instances: they could be multiplied tenfold).

sense, and makes the characteristically Aristophanic reply: *Οὐδέν γε πλὴν ἢ τὸ πέος ἐν τῇ δεξίᾳ* (734).<sup>15</sup>

More revealing still are Strepsiades' reactions to the educational methods of the *φροντιστήριον*. These sometimes depend on verbal confusion; but the confusion always has a point. On being instructed to "slice his thought thin" (740) he exclaims "*οἴμοι τάλας*," clearly convinced that *φροντίς*, like *νοῦς*, is in some way a physical part of him (if not winged, as Theognis and others supposed): the mode of thought is familiar and archaic, and Onians has pointed out that to early Greeks "emotional thoughts. . . were living creatures troubling the organs in one's chest."<sup>16</sup> Strepsiades is not a plain fool; he is fundamentally *old-fashioned*, and as such evinces archaic thought-processes which tend, inevitably, towards the specific, concrete and physical. When any verbal ambiguity arises, Strepsiades will always pick a practical interpretation, preferably—since he is also a country peasant—connected with money, food or sex. This emerges with great clarity in the long passage on metrics, rhythm and gender (636–93). When Socrates mentions *μέτρα*, Strepsiades' immediate thought is for 'measures' of grain, and with the dealer's swift practical arithmetic he instantly converts the intellectual's prosodic 'four-measure' (*i.e.* a tetrameter) into a *ἡμικτέον*—logically, on his own terms, since it contains precisely four *χοίνικες*. The mention of *ῥυθμοί* (648ff) at once—probably by verbal association—turns his mind to sexual intercourse: one stock definition of rhythm was *ἡ κινήσεως τάξις*.<sup>17</sup> Equally unmistakable puns on terms such as *κυνοουσία* and *κατὰ δάκτυλον* follow.

For once the sexual lead-in has an ulterior purpose: to set up the basic misunderstanding over problems of gender that follows. To the concept of language with its structural metaphors Strepsiades is wholly oblivious. Such terms as *ἄρρενα* and *ἡ θηλεία* mean to him physical distinctions of sex in living creatures and nothing more. The entire passage plays with great subtlety on this failure of communication: Strepsiades, for instance, is wholly baffled by the notion of feminizing an inanimate object such as a kneading-trough (670ff) but finds no difficulty in applying the same tag to a homosexual,

<sup>15</sup> On this line see Dover's remarks, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 91.

<sup>16</sup> Theognis 729–30 West; R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge 1954) 86–87.

<sup>17</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 665A; *cf.* Arist. *Probl.* 882b2: *πᾶς ῥυθμὸς ὠρισμένη μετρεῖται κινήσει.*

Cleonymus. Similarly, when Socrates demonstrates the feminine-sounding vocative *Ἀμυνία* and suggests that this is to call Amynias a woman, Strepsiades undercuts his mentor's irony with the retort (692): "Quite right, too, since he's a draft-dodger." This world of concrete objective correlatives possesses its own archaic logic, strongly tinged, as we might expect, with magic. One solution Strepsiades proposes to avoid being dunned for debts in court is to melt the wax tablet on which his indictment is inscribed (and which for him constitutes its sole legal reality) by focussing a burning-glass on it (764–72). Even more suggestively he also equates his own verbal proposal on this score with factual accomplishment: to say and to do in his world are identical. Two lines later (773–74), indeed, he is congratulating himself because his five-talent debt *has been wiped out* (*διαγέγραπται*). That Alcibiades had recently done something very similar<sup>18</sup> adds to the joke but does not modify its essential nature. The same logic can be detected in yet another payment-dodging device of Strepsiades (749ff). He will buy a Thessalian witch and make her call down the moon, which will then be shut in a box. Since *τόκος* is collected monthly, he reasons, and calculated by the phases of the moon, the latter's absence will put a moratorium on interest payment. This is a remarkably percipient parody of archaic thought-processes and of sympathetic magic.<sup>19</sup>

But the best and most striking demonstration of the conflict between Strepsiades' mode of thought and the new intellectualism, between logical and non-logical symbolism, occurs in his discussion

<sup>18</sup> Alcibiades is said to have erased the record of a charge by rubbing it off with a dampened finger (Athen. 9.407B–C); cf. J. Hatzfeld, *Alcibiade*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1951) 132, who argues that the anecdote, involving the comic poet Hegemon of Thasos (against whom the charge had been brought) "ne mérite peut-être pas beaucoup de créance." I see no particular reason to regard it with more scepticism than any one of a dozen similar stories.

<sup>19</sup> For 'calling down the moon' as a magical ritual see W. Roscher, *Ueber Selene und Verwandtes* (Leipzig 1890) 87, 89, 177ff, 344ff. Menander associated Thessalian witches with this process: Pliny, *HN* 30.7, cf. A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge 1950) 2, 34. See also Pl. *Gorg.* 513A5–6, with Dodds' note (p.350); also Dar.-Sag. s.v. "Magia," III.2 p.1516 with fig.4785. It has been suggested to me that Socrates' apparent approval of Strepsiades' solutions at 749ff and 764ff militates against the argument which sees Socrates, *qua* exponent of the New Intellectualism, in conflict with the pragmatic and archaic thought-patterns of Strepsiades. But Socrates' two interjections (*εἶ γε* 757; *κοφῶς γε* 773) are both heavily ironic; and only a line or two later (781ff) his patience with this rustic non-conceptualizing pupil abruptly runs out.

with the student-doorkeeper concerning the map on display in the *φροντιστήριον* (206–16). Anaximander had constructed a map of sorts, which Hecataeus improved: Herodotus twice mentions *περίοδοι* of the world; and lately an excellent relief map of the hinterland behind Ephesus has been identified on the reverse of an Ionian silver tetradrachm.<sup>20</sup> We may therefore assume that in 423 an Athenian audience would be aware of the principles governing cartography: indeed, such knowledge is predicated by Aristophanes' joke. Strepsiades, on the other hand, cannot conceive representational symbolism at all. When told "This is Athens," he doubts the statement because he sees no dicasts in session, and he proceeds to search the area of his deme for his fellow-demesmen. Characteristically he equates a place with the people in it: *ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις*. His thinking is conditioned, here as elsewhere, by a respectable archaic cliché. When the student identifies Lacedaemon, Strepsiades, treating the map as concrete reality—or perhaps as a powerful instrument of magic—says: "How near it is: we ought to shift it further off." It is no accident, given his mode of thought, that when Strepsiades *does* use an image, it is more often than not that pregnant and quasi-magical form of archaic poet's metaphor, the pun: there is a neat instance in this very passage.<sup>21</sup>

Strepsiades, then, is intellectually mocked for his failure to grasp conceptual notions or symbolic logic. This should make us look more carefully at his attitude to the *φροντιστήριον* and its educational dialectic. Editors commonly suppose that his function was "to caricature the genus 'intellectual',"<sup>22</sup> and up to a point this is true. It is significant, however, that the most obvious nonsense all comes from the student-doorkeeper, not from Socrates: it is the former who retails the stories of the jumping flea (144–52), the gnat's trumpet (156–68) and the experiment in geometry designed for the ulterior purpose of filching clothes (177–79). For the bulk of the play Sophistic methods in dialectics, linguistics or rhetoric are described

<sup>20</sup> Anaximander frs.101–02 Kirk-Raven, Hdt. 4.36.2, 5.49; cf. A. E. M. Johnston, "The Earliest Preserved Greek Map: a New Ionian Coin Type," *JHS* 87 (1967) 86–94 with pl. ix, cf. pls. x–xi.

<sup>21</sup> See 212–13, *παρατέταται—παρετάθη*, which we may roughly approximate in English by the two usages of the phrase 'laid out'. For other Strepsiadie puns and portmanteau neologisms see, e.g., *Nub.* 24, 33, 74, 166, 243, 730, 857, 1108–09.

<sup>22</sup> Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) xxxv.



rather than parodied (see, *e.g.*, 314ff, 340ff, 369ff, 398ff, 478ff, 489f, 741f, 757ff, 775ff). What is more, they work. When it comes to debate, the *Ἡττων Λόγος* wins hands down. After a quick crash course, Pheidippides can run intellectual rings round his father (1171f), much as Alcibiades is said to have done with Pericles (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.40–46). In the set-piece of the Agon it is the Unjust Argument that emerges victorious (1103), and Strepsiades' sole final recourse is to the mindless violence of arson (1490ff)<sup>23</sup>—ironically, since he had been only too willing at first to exploit the New Dialectic for his own questionable benefit (243–45, 433–34, etc.). That Aristophanes objected to what he thought of as the immorality and atheism of the Sophists<sup>24</sup> seems certain: but he had no illusions about their effectiveness, and indeed he seems to have been covertly fascinated by many of their arguments—one reason, perhaps, for Cratinus' famous charge (fr.307) of *εὐριπιδαρικοφανίζειν*.

When we reexamine the play with these criteria in mind, Aristophanes' *intellectual* criticism of the New Learning reduces itself virtually to nothing once the student-doorkeeper and his fellow-experimentalists are off-scene.<sup>25</sup> There is surely implicit satire in Socrates' treatment of Air, Aether and the Clouds as deities (263ff), and the symbolic potential of *νεφέλαι—καπνός—όμίχλη* as what we would term 'hot air' is brought out at 331–34 with the list of intellectual fakes and parasites who batten on them. Yet we would expect

<sup>23</sup> Whether or not Aristophanes intended his audience to believe Strepsiades' assertion (1481–85) that it was Hermes who told him to set the Phrontisterion on fire is a moot point. What the spectators might well recall, however, was that famous incident, within living memory, when "the Crotoniates revolted against the political power of the Pythagoreans, trapped the leaders of the sect in a house where they met... and incinerated both house and leaders" (E. Christian Kopff, "*Nubes* 1493ff: Was Socrates Murdered?" *GRBS* 18 [1977] 116). For the purposes of this analysis I am working from the revised text as we have it, and I do not speculate on the degree to which Aristophanes originally favoured the sophistic arguments of the *Ἡττων Λόγος*. It is, however, suggestive that Dover (xciii–xciv) thinks that the first version may have "ended with the triumph of Pheidippides over his wretched father" and thus have "presented without irony or disguise the bleak reality which in *Knights* is overlaid by the conventional comic ending."

<sup>24</sup> See, *e.g.*, 247–48, 263–74, 291–92, 296–97, 398–402, 423–24, 818–19, 825ff, 1235, 1241–42, 1468–71, 1476–77; and *cf.* Adkins, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 24.

<sup>25</sup> Humanist critics in all ages have an unfortunate tendency to fear or mock scientific development. With the opening of the *Clouds* we may compare the chapter entitled "A Voyage to Laputa" in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, especially the passage (§5) describing the Academy of Projectors. A more modern example is the literary Luddism of D. H. Lawrence, sedulously propagated by the late Dr F. R. Leavis and brought to the attention of a wider public through the latter's acrimonious debate with Lord Snow.

far *more* of Aristophanes' attack to be directed against the bogus intellectual, whose false images and pretentiously vapid abstractions have always done so much to reinforce the common man's prejudice against all manifestations of higher thought, whether genuine or not. The first two hundred lines of the play suggest that this is, in fact, the target being lined up. But from the moment Socrates descends from his *ραπρός* (239) the idea is shelved. It is as though by coming down to earth he automatically abandoned his airier pretensions. The Clouds, too, turn out in the end all-too-orthodox supporters of conventional religion and morality (a characteristic latent in their pronouncements *ab initio*, and thus unlikely to have been the result of post-423 revision by the author).

This brief excursus into the higher nonsense is as penetrating as it is witty: few readers can have studied it without regretting Aristophanes' subsequent change of tack. For one brief speech (225, 227–34) Socrates talks the most splendidly contrived gibberish, mixing pseudo-physics, pseudo-biology and psychological theory in the kind of plausible metaphorical stew that F. A. von Hayek spent so much time demolishing in *The Counter-Revolution of Science*.<sup>26</sup> To understand τὰ μετέωρα, he explains, he had to suspend his thought aloft, mingle it with equally rarified air. Had he confined his efforts to ground-level, he would have got nowhere since “the earth draws into itself the moisture of thought”—and the same, he adds as an afterthought, is true of watercress. We laugh at the pretentiousness of it all—not least when Strepsiades, his mind dazed, replies: “What? Thought draws the moisture into cress?”<sup>27</sup> and tells Socrates in the same word (κατάβηθ') to come down and come off it. But then we remember that Aristophanes was, once more, not so much parodying as citing a genuine philosophical theory, that held by Diogenes of Apollonia, in which the words for moisture (ἰκμάς) and drawing-in (ἐλκεῖν) used by Aristophanes play a key rôle.<sup>28</sup> With such theories

<sup>26</sup> See *supra* n.8.

<sup>27</sup> It is possible (*cf.* B. B. Rogers *ad loc.*) that this homely instance was deliberately inserted—like many other turns of phrase in the *Clouds*: *cf. supra* n.14—to catch Socrates' characteristic tone. Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium* (221E) describes his conversation as being full of “pack-asses, coppersmiths, cobblers, tanners,” a remark which suggests not merely surprise at the *outré* but a gentleman's cheerfully snobbish contempt for the lower classes and all their works.

<sup>28</sup> See Guthrie, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) II 369–77, for a convenient summary of Diogenes' views.

on hand, what need of parody? As students of Pythagoreanism—indeed, of all archaic Greek thought—must be uncomfortably aware, the dividing line between magic and science, intellectual discovery and pseudo-mysticism (both constantly involved, without apparent distinction, in the concept of *ἰστροπία*) is a narrow and perilous one. Even in the mid-fifth century B.C., as Dodds has made us all too well aware,<sup>29</sup> the old and new modes of thought still coexisted, side by side and not always uneasily. It is much to Aristophanes' credit that he had the insight, both intellectual and psychological, to diagnose this double condition. That the Athenian jury relegated the play to third place at its original performance need surprise no one.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dodds, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) ch. vi, "Rationalism and Reaction in the Classical Age," 179ff.

<sup>30</sup> An earlier version of this paper was read at the APA meeting in Chicago, December 1974. I am grateful to those friends and colleagues—in particular to the most helpful anonymous referee for *GRBS*—who have since then filled various lacunae and ironed out some of its more obvious faults; for those that remain they are in no way responsible.