

# STREPSIADES' UNDERSTANDING: FIVE NOTES ON THE *CLOUDS*

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THE TEXT OF THE *Clouds* has often been subjected to long and close scrutiny with a view to increasing our understanding of the "Socrates" presented there. By contrast, it has been usual to regard Strepsiadēs as simply a grossly-comic foil, as if he possessed no understanding worth noticing.<sup>1</sup> But, absurd as his responses to the intellectual culture may be, they illustrate, in a number of ways, the relation between the popular mind and this new influence in society. It is the purpose of this paper to provide new interpretations of five passages in the play in which one or another aspect of this confrontation is exhibited. The discussions are sometimes textual, sometimes grammatical, sometimes historical, and sometimes literary, but they always aim at an integral interpretation of the understanding that is presented dramatically in the passage concerned. If they are on the right lines, they provide, in addition to new interpretations of the passages, a modest contribution to the sociology of Athenian intellectual history.

## I. ATHEISM AND HARD CURRENCY: 244-249

- Στ. ἀλλὰ με δίδαξον τὸν ἕτερον τοῖν σοῖν λόγοιιν,  
τὸν μὴδὲν ἀποδιδόντα. μισθὸν δ' ὄντιν' ἂν 245  
πράττη μ', ὁμοῦμαί σοι καταθήσειν τοὺς θεοὺς.  
Σω. ποίους θεοὺς ὁμεί σὺ; πρῶτον γὰρ θεοὶ  
ἡμῖν νόμισμα' οὐκ ἔστι.  
Στ. τῷ γὰρ ὀμνυτε;  
[ῆ] σιδαρέοισιν, ὥσπερ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ;

Strepsiadēs, who is eager to be enrolled as a pupil in the School, promises Socrates that he will take an oath by the gods to pay him whatever fee he demands in return for his instruction. Socrates' reply strikes the note, often repeated in the play, of dogmatic atheism. "What gods do you mean you'll swear by? (You can't), for, to begin with, gods aren't current coin with us."

Socrates' metaphor is certainly not far-fetched, but it is too much for Strepsiadēs, who characteristically seizes on a literal and physical sense for the words. For him, as for other speakers of Attic prose, *νόμισμα* is, first and foremost, "coinage;" the sense has for him the assurance of hard

<sup>1</sup>A recent exception is P. Green, "Strepsiadēs, Socrates and the Abuses of Intellectualism," *GRBS* 20 (1979) 15-25.

cash. This is shown by his reference, in the last line of the passage, to the iron coins of Byzantium, which would make no sense, if he had not made this mistake. Even with this explanation, however, his response is puzzling, for we cannot discern what he supposes Socrates to be saying, apart from the perception that it concerns money. Thus interpreted, the passage is absurd and its humour will satisfy those critics who are satisfied to conceive Strepsiades as simply absurd. For those who believe that his humour is rooted in his character and understanding, something more intelligible, however ridiculous, is required.

Strepsiades' immediate response is indeed puzzling, for he first asks, *τῷ γὰρ ὀμνυτε*; His use of the dative case leaps to the eye, since both he and Socrates have just used the accusative in order to convey the sense "swear by the gods" and his shift from the plural "gods," which has just been used three times, to the unspecified singular *τῷ* is also noticeable. It seems then that he means something different here, and if so, his dative must be instrumental.<sup>2</sup> He means, "In that case, what (coinage) do you use when you swear?" Not only does he take Socrates to be speaking of coinage, but he assumes that the famous intellectual, whose habits are anyway unfathomable, finds a connection between swearing oaths and the acceptance of a coinage. Not for the last time in the comedy, Socrates' intellectual atheism fails to make an impression on Strepsiades. He never doubts, as his own practice shows, that it is normal to swear oaths, and his blunt and sturdy common sense infers, not that Socrates intends to wipe out gods and oaths together, but that he is objecting to the specification of a certain coinage in connection with oaths promising payment. It is entirely characteristic of him to prefer practice to theory and hard cash to soft fancies.

His mistake is made more intelligible, if we remember that he has just promised to take an oath that he will pay any fee that is charged by the School. He therefore already has in mind a connection between an oath and the payment of cash and understands *καταθήσειν* (from 246) with *ὀμνυτε*. He asks: "With what coinage do you (in the School) swear that you will pay fees?" Like a matriculant at a university, he looks with some alarm at the unfamiliar forms and customs that he is witnessing for the first time. He perhaps knows that sophists such as Protagoras made use

<sup>2</sup>K. J. Dover, in the note *ad loc.* of his edition of *Clouds* (Oxford 1968), translates, "Why, what do you use for oaths?" The Supplement to LSJ s.v. *ὀμνυμι* gives the same version, correcting the rendering of LSJ itself, which recognises here a unique use of the dative with the verb in the sense "swear by." The new translation, though formally closer to the syntax of the Greek text than the earlier version, does not seem to differ from it semantically, if it means, as it appears to mean, "What *gods* do you use for oaths?" If this rendering is correct, it becomes a problem to explain why Aristophanes has here abandoned the usual construction with the accusative, which he has just used twice over.

of oaths in settling complaints about fees made by dissatisfied pupils,<sup>3</sup> and he certainly knows the practice of taking oaths in connection with the payment of debts (cf. 1232–1233, and 1135–1136), but he must be ignorant of the forms of payment required by the Bursar or Chief Accountant. (If left to himself, he shows a preference for payments in kind, such as barley-meal.<sup>4</sup>) For all he knows, these outlandish intellectuals, who lead so strange and separate a life, use only a strange and separate currency. He rolls the Doric *σιδαρέουσιν* on his tongue,<sup>5</sup> as he marvels at the exotic habits of the School. He assumes, it seems, that he has made out his cheque of payment, as it were, in the wrong currency.

The interpretation is strengthened, if we can believe, with van Leeuwen,<sup>6</sup> after Goettling, that Athenian coins were sometimes called “gods” (*θεοί*). In that case, Strepsiades has made, not one mistake, but two mistakes, in grasping the meaning of Socrates’ *θεοὶ ἡμῖν νόμισμα οὐκ ἔστι*. At least, he makes in that way consistent sense of the words, which he can hardly have done if he took *θεοί* to mean “gods” and *νόμισμα* to mean “coinage.” He understands, “You can never take an oath by the gods, for they (as represented on Athenian coins) are not legal tender here.” A contemporary analogy might be imagined: an American comedy, in which, after the constitution had been amended to make atheism official, a farmer from the Middle West appeared, complaining that the currency had become illegal, because it bears the inscription “In God We Trust.”

In fact, Athenian coins, in addition to being called “owls” (Ar. *Av.* 1106), might be called “maidens” (*παρθέναι* in Eur. fr. 675 Nauck<sup>2</sup> and *κόραι* in Pollux 9.75) and even “Pallases” (Eubulus fr. 6), after the type that they display. We, for our part, may compare the use of “*louis d’or*” and “*napoléon*.” It seems clear that the practice of naming coins after their types was common, and the instance from Eubulus argues that “gods” might be taken to refer to coins bearing a representation of the city’s god. But, whatever the Athenian usage of *θεοί* may have been, it was in any case well within the scope of the Athenian audience’s intelligence to make the mental transition from the comedian’s “Pallases” to Strepsiades’ “gods.”

Strepsiades’ bizarre response becomes more intelligible, if he has understood Socrates in the way suggested. If, because the gods are out,

<sup>3</sup>Plato *Prt.* 328 b. Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 9.1.5: 1164a 24.

<sup>4</sup>*Nub.* 1146 and 668–669. The Scholiast on the former passage suggests that the object offered by Strepsiades to Socrates is a sack of flour, and a comparison with 668–669 makes this plausible. Dover, in his note *ad loc.*, while considering other possibilities, prefers a reference to “a tattered *χιτών*,” which is, to be sure, a recurrent theme in the play (54–55, 179, 497, 856).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Dover’s note *ad loc.* and Plato *Com.* fr. 96: *ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ὅπου σιδαρέους . . . νομίσμασιν/χρῶνται*; Strattis fr. 36.

<sup>6</sup>J. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Aristophanis Nubes* (Leiden 1898) note on 248.

Athenian currency is excluded from undertakings of payment, he must think, "What then do students promise to pay with—perhaps in the most outlandish coinage known? The School has abandoned the gold standard for the iron standard!" His response would seem more intelligible still, if we could believe that the iron coinage of Byzantium bore no effigies of the gods.<sup>7</sup>

Strepsiades' transition from theoretical atheism to hard currency is characteristic of his relations with the intellectual culture. A number of passages might be cited as instances, but here two must suffice. At 367 ff., when Strepsiades first hears from Socrates the doctrine of atheism in the form "Zeus does not so much as exist" (*οὐδ' ἔστιν ὁ Ζεὺς*), he does not respond directly to this existential proposition, but instead counters by asking, "Who is it then who makes it rain?" Dogmatic theology has become everyday meteorology, and Strepsiades, who is an experienced farmer but no philosopher, has put the question into a form that is more manageable for himself. He resembles in this way the old Euboean woman of the story who remarked in Holy Week, "Of course, I am worried; for if Christ does not rise tomorrow, we shall have no grain this year."<sup>8</sup> Again, at 423 ff. Socrates wishes to exact from the prospective entrant to the School an affirmation that he will acknowledge (*νομεῖς*) no divinities except those of the School itself. In Socrates' mouth such a statement can only be an assertion of intellectual atheism. But Strepsiades, who understands *νομεῖς* in the traditional sense as "give observance" rather than in the newer fashion (with *εἰναι*) as "believe in the existence of . . .,"<sup>9</sup> gives an enthusiastic assent: he would not even speak to them, he says, if he met them in the street, nor offer sacrifice, nor libation, nor incense! For him, it appears, there can be no real question of the gods' existence,<sup>10</sup> and he wastes no time in contemplating that question. What matters, and what may be promised or denied, is the kind of observance that they are given. The words that for Socrates signify theoretical atheism convey to him a declaration of non-recognition. In this passage, as in the other passages, it is not a matter of doctrine to which credence is given. In Strepsiades' mind what is at stake is the practice of religion, the continuance of rain, and the acceptance of the coinage. When confronted

<sup>7</sup>As would be the case, if the coins referred to were iron "obols", or spits: see C. M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (London 1976) 314.

<sup>8</sup>The traditional story is told most recently by J. B. Hainsworth in *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 84.

<sup>9</sup>On the distinction, see my discussion in *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 208 and 24 (1970) 352–353. Cf. also Dover's notes on *Nub.* 847 and 1185. Strepsiades' response to Socrates in *Nub.* 423 ff. illustrates very well the traditional understanding of *νομίζειν θεούς*.

<sup>10</sup>Two later passages (827 and 1470) in which the formula of "Socratic" atheism is repeated show also that Strepsiades understands the words in a sense other than the purely existential, probably in the sense, "Zeus is there, or in power."

with a doctrine of atheism, Strepsiades naturally turns from the Church to the Sects, from Zeus to the rain, and from dollars to yen.

## II. PHYSICS AND ETYMOLOGY: 394

Σω. σκέψαι τοίνυν ἀπὸ γαστριδίου τυννουτοῦ οἷα πέπορδας·  
τὸν δ' ἀέρα τόνδ' ὄντ' ἀπέραντον πῶς οὐκ εἰκὸς μέγα βροντᾶν;  
ταῦτ' ἄρα καὶ τῶνόματ' ἀλλήλοιν, "βροντῇ" καὶ "πορδῇ," ὁμοίω.

Στ. ἀλλ' ὁ κεραυνὸς πόθεν αὖ φέρεται λάμπων πυρί, τοῦτο δίδαξον, 395  
καὶ καταφύγει βάλλων ἡμᾶς, τοὺς δὲ ζῶντας περιφλεῖ.  
τοῦτον γὰρ δὴ φανερῶς ὁ Ζεὺς ἦσ' ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιόρκους.

Most of our manuscripts add 394 to the end of Socrates' speech that precedes it, though a minority (VM and, by implication, E) give it as the first line of Strepsiades' following speech.<sup>11</sup> The latter arrangement is strongly supported by the observation, made by Sir Kenneth Dover in his admirable edition of the play, that "everywhere else in Ar. initial ταῦτ' ἄρα signals a change of speaker."

It is worth adding that in each of the three instances of this form of expression earlier in this play (319, 335, 353) it is used to introduce a speech made by Strepsiades in answer to a statement of Socrates' doctrine. It appears to be a way that Strepsiades has of signifying his comprehension and acceptance of what he is taught, while contributing a glimpse of his own characteristic application of the new teaching: "So that then is why . . .!"

At 319 Strepsiades responds to Socrates' exposition of the inspiration provided by the Clouds to the intellectuals, to whom they give argument, dialectic, understanding, "the wonders of science," technical jargon, the thrust and parry of debate. The description must seem to convey an ironic tone, but that indicates no more than our appreciation of the distance between the intellectuals themselves and the comic poets' perception of them. It is the language of the intellectuals reported about as faithfully as the Athenian popular comedy, or our own popular press, can represent it. If we do not hear the historical Socrates himself, we can hear at least what the observant public made of the class to which they assumed that he belonged. Strepsiades' reply, on the other hand, is a big step below this level, as he speaks of his new excitement at the prospect of "subtle talk," "splitting hairs about nothing," and "fencing with one tricky little argument against another in parliamentary debate." This is the view of the plainest of plain men, whose excitement about learning owes little to understanding of what is taught.

<sup>11</sup>See J. C. B. Lowe, "The Manuscript Evidence for Changes of Speaker in Aristophanes," *BICS* 9 (1962) 27-39, on the variations shown by our manuscripts in assigning lines to speakers.

At 335 Socrates has just revealed that the Clouds give nourishment, not only to sophists, seers, physicians, and to other precious types, but also to those high-flown and airy modulators of song, the dithyrambic poets, who sing hymns of praise to their benefactors. Strepsiades is at once reminded of a cluster of tags that he remembers from attending the dithyrambic contests and goes on to quote them, and to recall the dinners that the poets ate at their producers' expense, thus confirming the doctrine that the poets "celebrate" in verse the patron divinities by whom they "are nourished." Here the step down is less abrupt, but we move nevertheless from an unfamiliar and astonishing doctrine to quotations of verse that must have rung reminiscently in the general ear, like the words of a popular song.

At 353 Socrates has been coping with Strepsiades' bewilderment that the Clouds have appeared in the form of women. They have the power, he explains, to take any form that they wish to assume. Thus, when they meet that well-known lecher, the son of Xenophantus, they mock his sexual psychosis by taking the shape of centaurs. This explanation leads Strepsiades to ask what form they take when they see Simon, who embezzles public funds. Learning that Socrates' answer is, "They take the form of wolves," he uses his familiar formula once more to enter the game himself: "That is then why, when they saw Cleonymus, the cowardly deserter, yesterday, they took the shape of deer!" Cleonymus, who "threw away his shield," was a stock-target of comedy and his name was a byword in the theatre, and so in the public mind. With Strepsiades' intervention the comic fantasy is grounded in the rock of the most common understanding.

It is attractive to read 394 in the same spirit and to find the humour of the passage in the discrepancy between the doctrine of the teacher and the understanding of the pupil.

Because Strepsiades is puzzled how rain can occur if Zeus is excluded, Socrates undertakes to give him an explanation of thunder-storms, in a form that is accommodated to his experience. It is really the same process, Strepsiades is assured, as he has observed in his own intestinal crepitation. The only difference is one of scale: his belly is small and his *πορδᾶν* is commensurate, whereas the air is boundless and its *βροντᾶν* correspondingly great. Once this bridge has been constructed between the theory of the meteorologists and his own experience, Strepsiades is ready to take part in his own way. "Why yes," he exclaims, "that is why the names *βροντή* and *πορδή* are alike!" The words are in his mouth everyday, and, as soon as the problem has been brought down from the heights to his own level, he is ready to make a contribution from the store of his understanding. Though he had never dreamed for himself of the "Socratic" analogy between the aetherial clouds and the human intestine, he is

made, by hearing it described, dimly aware that he has always noticed a certain similarity between the two words that signify the processes that are compared.

Dover, however, draws back from this conclusion because of the "etymology" that it attributes to Strepsiades. "It is as surprising," he writes, "that Strepsiades should etymologize as it is right that Socrates should do so, for etymology was an interest of the sophists." This judgment, though true to a degree, is incomplete, for it neglects the tradition, which begins with Homer, of popular "etymology."<sup>12</sup>

This practice is common enough, particularly with proper names. Odysseus, we are told (*Od.* 19.406 ff.; cf. 1.62 and 5.423), was named for his grandfather Autolycus, "the man of wrath" (from ὀδύσσομαι). Aphrodite's name is sometimes derived from ἀφρός ("foam": cf. Hes. *Theog.* 195 ff.),<sup>13</sup> and Ajax's from αἰετός ("eagle") or from αἰαῖ ("woe": cf. Pind. *Isthm.* 6[5].49 and Schol.; Soph. *Aj.* 430–431). In two well-known passages from the *Agamemnon* (688 and 1080–1082) Helen's name is recognised as signifying "seizure" (ἐλ-) and Apollo's as meaning "destruction" (ἀπόλλυμι). The list of examples might be much lengthened without difficulty, but these will serve the immediate purpose.

Though less frequent, instances in which common nouns occur exhibit the same characteristics. In a striking passage of the *Odyssey* (19.563–567), the poet explains the gates of horn and ivory, through which pass the true and the false dreams. The dreams that emerge from the gate of horn (κέρας) fulfil (κραίνουσι) their own truth, while the others, which issue by the gate of ivory (ἐλέφας), bring deception (ἐλεφαίρονται) and unfulfilment.

What both kinds of etymology appear to have in common is the intuition, which occurs in the light of a set of circumstances, that the meaning of a word is disclosed by the perception of its likeness to another word or of its identity with that word, whereby its function as a name is revealed. It is the fate of Ajax, the acts of Apollo, the results of Helen's

<sup>12</sup>For discussions of this subject, see (e.g.): E. S. McCartney, "Puns and Plays on Proper Names," *CJ* 14 (1918–1919) 343–358; W. D. Woodhead, *Etymologizing in Greek Literature from Homer to Philo Judaeus* (Toronto 1928); C. J. Fordyce, "Puns on Names in Greek," *CJ* 28 (1932–1933) 44–46, 290; P. B. R. Forbes, "Greek Pioneers in Philology and Grammar," *CR* 47 (1933) 105–112, especially 105–106; W. Kranz, *Stasimon* (Berlin 1933) 287–289; M. Platnauer (ed.), *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford 1938) 62–63; E. Risch, "Namensdeutungen und Worterklärungen bei den ältesten griechischen Dichtern" in *Eumusia: Festgabe für Ernst Howald* (Zurich 1947) 72–91; L. P. Rank, *Etymologiseering en verwante Verschijselen bij Homerus* (Assen 1951); C. J. Classen, "The Study of Language amongst Socrates' Contemporaries," *PACS* 2 (1959) 33–49 = *Sophistik* (Darmstadt 1976) 215–247; J. H. Quincey, "Etymologica," *RhM* N.F. 106 (1963) 142–148. For additional bibliography, see I. Opelt in *RAC* 6 (1966) 843–844.

<sup>13</sup>But cf. Eur. *Tro.* 989–990 for a derivation from ἀφροσύνη.

choice, and the fulfilment or the frustration of our dreams that lead to the recognition of the verbal analogy. What is perceived is not specifically a linguistic fact, such as is the aim of our compilers of etymological dictionaries. Rather, it is recognised that one word, functioning as a name, indicates clearly and truly the reference that is indicated doubtfully by another word bearing some degree of formal similarity to the first. The popular etymologies give therefore only precarious guidance to us in linguistic enquiries, but they may offer illumination of the Greek understanding of the world which their language was used to describe.

It is assumed, in this way of thinking, that there always exists a true name, by which, if we can but find it, the truth about things will be revealed. This assumption lies behind all the instances of popular etymology in the surviving literature. The feeling that accompanies the recognition of the etymology is therefore always consistent with the sudden perception of a revelation. The result may be humorous, as in our own word-plays, but it is more likely to be an expression of pure joy or of grief and horror. It is the moment of truth.

The true name, which has the power of exposing the revelation of truth, has this power because it was "rightly" given to the object that it signifies.<sup>14</sup> The Greek vocabulary is held to be the product of a name-giver and, as in the case of the other arts, the original and authoritative practitioner of the art is held to be divine. The "rightness" which characterizes the relation of true names to the objects signified by them is often mentioned in the texts, in a variety of forms, such as: ὀρθῶς, ὀρθάννυμος, ἀληθῶς, ἐτύμως, ἐτητύμως, εὐλόγως.<sup>15</sup> Once the meaning of the true name has been apprehended, all other names, which give or appear to give different information, must be either accommodated to the true name or rejected as false and deceptive.

A more refined form of this popular etymology is likely to have been developed under the influence of Ionian physics, and we indeed find Xenophanes, who came from Colophon in Ionia, providing a demonstration. The rainbow, he says (B32 DK), is called by the Greeks "Iris," the name of the messenger of the gods, but it is by nature (πέφυκε) a many-coloured cloud. Xenophanes appears to distinguish between the common usage of the Greek language and the Ionian doctrine of physics, and so between anthropomorphism and meteorology. The result must be to assert the truth of "cloud" and to repudiate the falsity of "Iris."

Repudiation of false names is characteristic of both Heraclitus and Parmenides. *Bios*, which is the name of the bow, may also mean "life," as Heraclitus notices (B48 DK), but in this case the name is the opposite of the function signified, which is death. The name, in the first sense, is

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 681 ff.: *τίς ποτ' ὠνόμαζεν ᾧδ' / ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμως . . .*

<sup>15</sup>Cf. the note on Aesch. *Ag.* 682 in E. Fraenkel's edition of the play (Oxford 1950).



therefore not true and its guidance, in this direction, is to be rejected.<sup>16</sup> For Parmenides, I believe, the names given to things by mankind are false and deceptive, by comparison with the true name, that is "being," which is alone trustworthy. It is Parmenides' purpose, on this view, to free us from the authority of the *doxai* that we accept in consequence of our misnaming.<sup>17</sup>

With the sophists, in the second half of the fifth century, it is *a priori* likely that language, like the other skills practised by men, was recognised as a specifically human activity and as an art, under the influence of the doctrine of "man the measure." In fact, we find evidence of grammatical enquiries, made by Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, and others,<sup>18</sup> and the doctrine of the first of these is burlesqued in the *Clouds* as part of Socrates' instruction of Strepsiades.<sup>19</sup> In this connection the antithesis of *nomos* and *physis*, which seems to have come in after Protagoras, might have been put to use in etymology.<sup>20</sup> Another available antithesis is that between *physis* and *thesis*.<sup>21</sup>

After this brief survey of a complex question it is advantageous to return to the text of the *Clouds* 382 ff. Strepsiades, not making much of Socrates' instruction in the theory of aerophysics and atheism, asks for an explanation of the sound of thunder, for which he evidently feels a solid respect, just as, in his discussion with his teacher concerning theoretical atheism, he had shown himself firm about rain (368). He is dissatisfied with the physical explanation, and Socrates undertakes, like a good teacher, to begin on his pupil's own ground (*ἀπὸ παντοῦ γὰρ διδάξω*). Strepsiades is then quickly convinced of the similarity between thunder (*βροντή*) and intestinal crepitation (*πορδή*). All that remains is for Strepsiades to compare small things with great and his own puny equipment with the unbounded expanse of air. That will be sufficient to make it clear to him that the difference between the two processes is simply one of scale. Socrates seeks to prove, as a concession to Strepsiades' experience and intelligence, that the "thunder" that he reveres is only the mighty wind of highest heaven.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. also B. Snell, "Die Sprache Heraklits," *Hermes* 61 (1926) 353–381, especially 369 ff.

<sup>17</sup>See "Parmenides on Names," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 145–160, reprinted with some revisions in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (ed. J. P. Anton and G. K. Kustas [Albany, N.Y. 1971]) 145–162. I rely upon the fragment of Parmenides recognised by F. M. Cornford in the text of Plato *Tht.* 180d: *ὅλον ἀκίνητον τελέθει τῷ παντ' ὄνομ' εἶναι*—"εἶναι is the sole and unchangeable name of the universe."

<sup>18</sup>Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 3 (Cambridge 1969) 219–223, 282.

<sup>19</sup>*Nub.* 658 ff. Cf. Guthrie, *History* 3.221.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. F. Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis* (Basel 1965) 156 ff.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Heinimann 162, note 39 and 163 with note 2.

It is at this point that the disputed line containing the etymology occurs. "That is just why," some one says, "the two names, *βροντή* and *πορδή*, are alike."

It is worth noticing that the observation contains none of the antitheses of the intellectuals and that it does not follow their practice of repudiating the false name. Instead, it seems to say that *βροντή* is like, and in the end reducible to, *πορδή* and this similarity or identity of words has been revealed by the proof just given of the identity of the two processes referred to. All of this is very like the popular etymologies, which assert, as a result of the recognition of some state of affairs, that the meaning of the relevant name is revealed through the acceptance of an analogy with another word. It was the mortal fate of Ajax that made him aware that his name truly signified "woe."

The two words are not, as words, very similar, but it is not possible to use this judgment as an argument in favour of a popular origin, for both popular and scientific etymologies are often formally strained, and deserved the derision to which they were subjected by Plato in the *Cratylus*. It might even be possible, by adducing the metathesis of rho, the suppression of nasals, and the voicing of labials, to make some kind of case for the scientific assimilation of the one word to the other. But none of this, no more than of the intellectuals' antitheses, appears in the line, and the general audience in the theatre was incapable of supplying these linguistic subtleties. Even if we could supply them here, the result would only be a transition that is uncharacteristic of the Aristophanic Socrates. For on this view he would be seeking to use etymology as a proof of his physics, but in the scene at 658 ff. he gives a strictly grammatical account of genders and is sharply distinguished from Strepsiades who, by mistaking gender for sex, does confuse language with its reference, which is there biology or zoology.

It looks very much as if it were the common man, not the intellectual, who speaks and as if the subject were, not the history and morphology of language, but the truth-value of names. Having been taught that thunder is really crepitation, and traditionally believing that every object has a true name, Strepsiades is compelled to wonder which of the two that is. Unlike the intellectuals, he will not reject one of the names as false, and he has then no alternative to recognizing both as the same. "Yes, of course," he thinks, with a mixture of partial comprehension and complete self-satisfaction, "now that I understand that the two processes concerned are the same, I see that is why I always thought the two names were much alike! *βροντή* really has the same meaning as *πορδή*, just as in Homer the meaning of *κέρως* was held to be revealed by a comparison with *κρίνω*." The formula with which the line begins can, on this reading of the passage, perform its usual function of beginning a new speech.

Strepsiades makes the transition, according to this interpretation, from Socrates' understanding to his own, and from theoretical physics to popular etymology. The bump that we feel as the transition is made is comically characteristic of the exchanges in the play between Socrates and his un-intellectual pupil.

III. THE WITCH'S MIRROR: 746 ff.

Στ. ὦ Σωκρατίδιον φίλτατον.  
 Σω. τί, ὦ γέρον;  
 Στ. ἔχω τόκου γνώμην ἀποσπηρετικήν.  
 Σω. ἐπίδειξον αὐτήν.  
 Στ. εἰπέ δὴ νυν μοι—  
 Σω. τὸ τί;  
 Στ. γυναῖκα φαρμακίδ' εἰ πριάμενος Θετταλὴν  
 καθέλοιμι νύκτωρ τήν σελήνην, εἴτα δὴ 750  
 αὐτήν καθείρξαιμ' εἰς λοφέιον στρογγύλον  
 ὥσπερ κάτροπτον, κᾶτα τηροίην ἔχων.  
 Σω. τί δῆτα τοῦτ' ἂν ὠφελήσειέν σ';  
 Στ. ὅτι  
 εἰ μηκέτ' ἀνατέλλοι σελήνη μηδαμοῦ,  
 οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην τοὺς τόκους.  
 Σω. ὅτι τὴ τί δὴ; 755  
 Στ. ὅτι κατὰ μῆνα τάργυριον δανείζεται.

As the climax of his examination for admission to the School, Strepsiades has been set to do some original thought while incubating in the bug-infested bedstead. Socrates evidently conceives the test as the crown of dialectic and the triumph of the intelligent and ambient Air. Strepsiades, however, who is more aware of the horrors of the bed than of the challenge of pure thought, cannot lift his thoughts above the prospect of his debts, by which he has been driven into the School against all his inclinations, and his reflections lead him, not to some dialectical discovery, but to the recollection of traditional means of coping with emergencies.<sup>22</sup> The first to occur to him is the employment of a witch, then he thinks of magic performed with the help of a burning-glass purchased at the local "drug-store," and last of all he conceives of suicide, surely a traditional remedy of last resort, in order to abort legal proceedings for the recovery of debts.

Strepsiades thinks of using a Thessalian witch because witches from that place were reported to possess the power to "draw down" the moon.<sup>23</sup> He will then take advantage of this feat, he says, by shutting up the moon in a round *λοφέιον*, as one might a mirror, and then by keeping it continuously under watch. If the moon is prevented from rising, he says,

<sup>22</sup>See pages 123–124 below.

<sup>23</sup>The evidence (Aristophanes is earliest) is collected by D. E. Hill, "The Thessalian Trick," *RhM* N.F. 116 (1973) 221–238. Cf. also Green (above, note 1) 21 and note 19.

the payment of debts, which was calculated by days "according to the moon," can never fall due, and he will be able to evade payment.

λοφείον is evidently formed from λόφος ("plume" or "crest") and is likely to mean "box/case for plumes/crests," a meaning that it evidently exhibits elsewhere (*Ach.* 1109). But this sense seems inappropriate here, for it is obscure why anyone should keep a mirror, or Strepsiades keep the moon, in a case intended for crests. On general grounds, therefore, it may seem plausible that the word had acquired a more general meaning, and Starkie suggests "dressing-case".<sup>24</sup> Here Pollux (10.126) comes to our assistance in identifying λοφείον as a woman's article and suggesting that it was used to keep mirrors in, while the Scholiast appears to have a similar idea.<sup>25</sup> One then of two possibilities: either Pollux gives us what he appears to give, viz., evidence concerning the cases found in a Greek household or possibly he is reporting an ancient interpretation of this passage of Aristophanes. Whatever the true explanation of his testimony, we must be justified in finding in it encouragement to believe that the meaning of λοφείον had been extended or generalised. In English, "suit-cases" serve women as well as men and carry dresses as well as suits, while "hat-boxes" may be turned to a variety of uses, having nothing to do with hats. Alternatively, if the λοφείον was a cover that protected the face of the mirror, somewhat like the cover of an old-fashioned pocket-watch, then λοφείον took the sense "cover," "crown," or "head-piece." I have therefore translated ὥσπερ κάτροπτον in 752 as meaning, "as one might a mirror." The implication would be that articles such as mirrors might properly be kept in λοφέια, whereas the novelty invented by Strepsiades is the idea of shutting the moon up in such a receptacle. The round shape of the λοφείον, he wishes to suggest, would be as suitable for the new purpose as for the traditional uses.<sup>26</sup>

It is well attested that the moon was "drawn down" with the help of incantations,<sup>27</sup> but on general grounds it is also probable that the chants accompanied some kind of symbolic act, as in the performance of many other feats of magic.<sup>28</sup> Empedocles, it was said, when he undertook to stay the winds, stretched out, on hills and headlands, bags made of asses' skins.<sup>28</sup> Simaetha, in Theocritus' Second Idyll, performs a series of acts

<sup>24</sup>W. J. M. Starkie (ed.), *The Clouds of Aristophanes* (London 1911) note on 751.

<sup>25</sup>The Scholiast reports: λοφείον· τήν τοῦ κατόπτρου θήκην.

<sup>26</sup>The Scholiast comments: ὥσπερ κατόπτρον' ὁ γὰρ τῆς σελήνης κύκλος στρογγυλοεῖδης καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔσοπτρα.

<sup>27</sup>The verbs used to describe the act are, in Greek, such as καθαιρεῖν, κατάγειν and κατασπᾶν and, in Latin, *deducere*, *detrahere*, *deripere* and the like. Hill (see note 23 above) shows amply that the act is regularly so described.

<sup>28</sup>For a brief survey of magical acts, see S. E(itrem) and J. H. C(roon) in *OCD*<sup>2</sup> 637–638.

<sup>29</sup>Timaeus ap. Diog. Laert. 8.60.

of sympathetic magic, matched by a series of appropriate prayers.<sup>30</sup> By analogy, it seems likely that the incantations of the Thessalian witches were the accompaniment of some imitative act by which the moon was "drawn down."<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, we are not well informed in this matter. But Hippolytus of Rome, in his *Refutation of All the Heresies* in the third century (4.37), does offer a description of the act. The magician, he says, was able to cause the moon to appear in a mirror overhead by the use of a light set over a bowl of water underneath it. This would seem to bring the act under the head of catoptromancy, which is occasionally reported from antiquity in Greece, notably in a procedure reported from Patras by Pausanias (7.21.12).<sup>32</sup> There is also known a vase-painting, once in the collection of Sir William Hamilton, which appears to depict the act of "drawing down" the moon.<sup>33</sup> Two naked witches stand, one on either side of a rounded frame or medallion exhibiting a face. From the frame, which is at some height, hangs what appears to be a cord, which falls down to a coil on the floor. It seems probable that the frame is in fact a mirror and that the rope was used by the witches in order literally to "draw down" the moon as reflected in it. Physics requires that the mirror was somehow suspended by a mechanism that permitted it to be lowered, but this machinery, though physically necessary, was magically irrelevant and was omitted by the artist from his representation of the scene.

If the procedure imagined by Strepsiades was of this kind, his suggestion becomes more interesting and intelligible than it is on our present understanding of the passage. Ordinarily, no doubt, the witch, if she were tidy in her habits, was careful, after the performance of the magical act, to store her valuable mirror away safely, out of harm's way, in its own case. It is Strepsiades' innovation that he would store the moon in the same way, "as one would a mirror." The "moon" of which he speaks is, of course, no more in physical terms than the reflection either of the moon in the sky above or of the machinery described by Hippolytus. But, according to magic, it *is* the moon, or is in close sympathy with it, just as, in Theocritus' poem (62) it *is* the bones of Delphis that Simaetha kneads over his threshold when she strews her herbs there. The magical moon is revealed in the mirror and may be stored in an appropriate mirror-case, just as *if it were* a mirror.

<sup>30</sup>Theoc. *Id.* 2.10 ff.

<sup>31</sup>The parallelism in the patterns of acts and prayers in Theocritus' description of Simaetha's magic is well brought out by A. S. F. Gow in his edition of the poet (Cambridge 1950) 2.40.

<sup>32</sup>See A. Delatte, *La catoptromancie grecque et ses dérivés* in *Bibl. de la Fac. de Philos. et Lettres de l'Univ. de Liège* fasc. 48 (1932) 132 ff. The Aristophanic Scholiast says of the mirror: *φησὶ τοὺς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα δεινοὺς τοῦτω κατὰγειν τὴν θεόν.*

<sup>33</sup>C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, *Dict. des Ant.* 3.2 (1904) 1516; W. H. Roscher, *Ausf. Lex. der gr. u. röm. Myth.* 2.2 (1894-1897) 3166; Hill (above, note 23) 224, note 4.

If the moon is "drawn down" and shut up in a household-case, there can be no count of days in accordance with the lunar cycle, and the payment of debts, which was regulated by this standard, cannot be made. The traditional device of the Thessalian witch has been adjusted to Strepsiades' purpose and this adjustment constitutes his first essay at original thought.

## IV. THE LAST RESORT: 775-782

- Σω. ἄγε δὴ ταχέως τουτὶ ξυνάρπασον.  
 Στ. 775 τὸ τί;  
 Σω. ὅπως ἀποστρέψαις ἂν ἀντιδικῶν δίκην,  
 μέλλων ὀφλήσειν, μὴ παρόντων μαρτύρων.  
 Στ. φανλότατα καὶ ῥᾶσ'·  
 Σω. καὶ δὴ.  
 Στ. καὶ δὴ λέγω.  
 εἰ πρόσθεν ἔτι μιᾶς ἐνεστῶσης δίκης  
 πρὶν τὴν ἐμὴν καλεῖσθ' ἀπαγξαίμην τρέχων. 780  
 Σω. οὐδὲν λέγεις.  
 Στ. νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγ', ἐπεὶ  
 οὐδεὶς κατ' ἐμοῦ τεθνεῶτος εἰσάξει δίκην.

Strepsiades comes to the culmination of his initiation into the activities of the School when Socrates proposes that he practise original research with regard to his own problems. He is quite sure, as he has been since the beginning of the play, that his debts are most urgent and his reflections are therefore aimed at evasion of payment. First, he thinks of consulting the local witch, and then when Socrates introduces the complication of actions-at-law to obtain recovery of debts, he conceives of using on the tablets of the court's docket of cases a burning-glass purchased from the local "drug-store," which may well have been kept by the witch herself.

Socrates now throws him a third bone to chew, evidently of the same form as the second, with the additional factor, that he is desperately handicapped in court by a lack of corroboratory witnesses. The general context suggests strongly that it is, as before, an action for recovery of debts that is imagined. Certainly, Socrates gives him a free choice (737) of subjects for investigation and Strepsiades, for his part, has no interest in the intellectual life, except in so far as it can save him from his debts. Strepsiades is therefore cast in the role of defendant in an action for recovery, and this inference is confirmed by 782, which implies that his purpose is the evasion of suits brought against him. The stipulation of a lack of witnesses points to the same conclusion, for on general grounds it is the defendant, rather than the plaintiff, who is likely to suffer this embarrassment. The prudent plaintiff takes care to secure witnesses before bringing an action (cf. 494-496, e.g.), whereas the defendant may not have the same opportunity.

In 776 we must choose between *ἀντιδικῶν*, the participle of the verb *ἀντιδικέω* (which is usually read) and *ἀντιδικῶν*, the genitive plural of the adjective *ἀντιδικος* (which is given by V and was preferred by K. Chr. Reisig). The words signify, according to LSJ, the adversary and his activities in an action-at-law and may be used of either side in a suit.<sup>34</sup>

The adjective requires that *ἀντιδικῶν δίκην* form a phrase ("the plea of the pleaders opposite") which has a vague, and even tautologous, ring to it. If the participle is read, on the other hand, there are at least two advantages. First, *ἀντιδικῶν* may seem to take on a stronger and more specific meaning, if it is compared with the many references in the play to the sophistic *ἀντιλογία*.<sup>35</sup> It is just the virtue of this skill that it can devise means to undercut and so to overthrow any argument set up against it in court. It is coveted by Strepsiades because he, though acknowledging his just debts, is seeking a way of avoiding payment of them. There is a most suggestive parallel at 901, where, in reply to the affirmation of the Stronger Argument that he will crush his rival by stating the rights of the matter (*τὰ δίκαια*), the Weaker Argument says, *ἀλλ' ἀνατρέψω ταῦτ' ἀντιλέγων*, "I shall overthrow all that by my *ἀντιλογία*."<sup>36</sup> It is attractive to believe that Aristophanes, in the context of the *Clouds*, has given the legal term a sophistic flavour. Why should not the admired "counter-punching" of the public speaker (*ἀντιλέγειν*) be paralleled here by a like skill of the adversary (*ἀντιδικεῖν*) in the courts?<sup>37</sup> Secondly, whereas *ἀντιδικῶν δίκην* seems repetitious and empty, the juxtaposition of *ἀντιδικῶν δίκην* develops a new strength, "rebutting plea with counter-plea in court." It seems clear that the text containing the participle is superior both in form and in meaning and conveys a flavour that is highly appropriate to the sophistic "Socrates."

The stipulation that the defendant be handicapped by a lack of corroboratory witnesses appears to be the key to Socrates' question. Later on (1151–1153) he will promise Strepsiades the power to deal with adverse witnesses. The means to be used are not there specified, but, in the circumstances here mentioned, they might include the impugning of the character, observation, and veracity of the plaintiff's witnesses, supported by a free use of the argument from probability. In our passage, however, Strepsiades has no such technique to propose. Instead he replies that, at the last moment when only a single case remains on the docket

<sup>34</sup>E. Fraenkel, on *Ag.* 41, appears to render *ἀντιδικος* as "claimant at law," i.e., as plaintiff. Cf. LSJ s.v.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. 901, 938, 1004, 1040, 1160, 1173, 1314, 1336–1339, 1409, 1417.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. 888, 1040, 1313–1315, 1339.

<sup>37</sup>The sophistic sense of *ἀντιδικῶν* proposed here fits well the situation that is imagined, in which it is the *defendant* who is on the point of losing the suit brought *against* him.

before his own is called, he would waste no time in going out and hanging himself. No suit will be introduced, he says, if he is dead.

Strepsiadēs' absurd answer must seem pointless indeed, unless, as in other instances, his absurdity arises from the discrepancy between the intellectuals and himself. The new education has its own slick way of dealing with these problems, but traditional society had no doubt long had its different, more rough-and-ready methods. In Strepsiadēs' earlier essays at original research what he has produced each time is a traditional resource of Greek life in an extremity, viz., consultation with the local witch and a purchase from the local "drug-store." It would be surprising if his third scheme differed in kind from the two schemes that preceded it. Suicide may very well have been the traditional last resort of the hard-pressed, as in our own society suicide and arson may provide a way out of inevitable bankruptcy in cases where life and property are insured. Strepsiadēs' proposal makes no sense unless the death of the defendant, at least in an action for the recovery of debts, had the effect of preventing a suit from being heard by the court. If it was the law of Athens that such a *δίκη* was not *είσαγωγίμος*, the advantage that it offered to suicide was tempting.<sup>38</sup> Strepsiadēs' ace-in-the-whole, ridiculous though it may be in the context of the comic confrontation with Socrates, is likely to be an adaptation of traditional small-farmer's cunning, which is here contrasted, as *ἀντιδικεῖν*, with the new techniques of the rationalisers. That appears to be why Strepsiadēs, who elsewhere shows himself inclined to timidity (cf. 256 ff. and 506 ff.), here puts forward so bold and drastic a plan. It appeared to Athenians, in all probability, less violent than it may appear to us, because it was a traditional remedy of last resort. Semonides of Amorgos (fr. 1.15–19 *IEG*), it seems, had said long before that deaths at sea are caused when poverty drives men to take ship, and then went on to speak of suicide, as if it had the same cause, and others follow him to similar effect.<sup>39</sup>

For a parallel in our own society, imagine the case of a shrewd entrepreneur who enrolls in an eminent School of Business Administration. Being confronted there with the problem presented by the plight of a

<sup>38</sup>It may be the implication of 779–780 that the suit would be aborted only if the defendant's death preceded, or was reported to the court before, the calling of the case. If so, Strepsiadēs' use of *τρέχων* is understandable: it was necessary to be quick and precise about the timing.

<sup>39</sup>See the interpretation of M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin and New York 1974) 177–178. According to Theognis (173 ff.), suicide is preferable to poverty, and Plato (*Laws* 9.873c) speaks as if the occurrence of an overwhelming and inescapable misfortune were sufficient justification. See also Hes. *Op.* 682 ff., Eur. *Hec.* 1106–1107, and Plato *Phaedo* 62a. For Stoic views on the justification of suicide, see Diog. Laert. 7.130, and for popular opinions, K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford 1974) 168–169.



failing company and instructed to present a plan by which it might be saved from bankruptcy, he might be thought to suggest, as an emergency measure, not one of the sophisticated manoeuvres that are contemplated in such places, but embezzlement, arson, or suicide, which are familiar devices for use in such a situation in less academic forms of business. The imagined parallel with our own society seems apt: I believe that it is in keeping also with Strepsiades' responses to the demands of the intellectuals elsewhere in the play.

It is true that Strepsiades' final move might not defeat his creditors in the end, for it would be open to them to proceed against his estate and his heirs.<sup>40</sup> But this was probably a less promising procedure for them than suing the debtor himself, for it seems evident that Greek estates were less stringently safe-guarded than their modern counterparts,<sup>41</sup> and so less open to attachment by legal action. It is important also to notice that fault might be found with Strepsiades' earlier schemes on the same grounds. The witch is unlikely to succeed in bringing down the moon, nor the burning-glass in expunging a name from the docket. But in each case his idea rests, however crazily, on a true perception: viz., that the payment of debts is regulated by the changes of the moon and that cases are called in court only in accordance with their listing on the docket. By analogy, it is likely that Strepsiades reports the truth when he implies that a case could not be called if the defendant had died before this was done. In particular, if we accept the implication of one of his statements concerning legal procedure, we should be inconsistent to reject the implication of the other.

The scene then reveals, by a designed contrast with the "Socratic" ἀντιλέγειν and ἀντιδικεῖν, three traditional remedies of the desperate: witchcraft, magic, and the rope.

#### V. THE HORSE'S MOUTH: 1105-1110

Ητ. τί δῆτα; πότερά τοῦτον ἀπάγεσθαι λαβὼν βούλει τὸν υἱόν, ἢ διδάσκω σοι λέγειν;	1105
Στ. δίδασκε καὶ κόλαζε καὶ μέμνησ' ὅπως εὖ μοι στομῶσεις αὐτόν, ἐπὶ μὲν θάτερα οἶον δικιδίους, τὴν δ' ἐτέραν αὐτοῦ γνάθον στόμωσον οἷαν εἰς τὰ μείζω πράγματα.	1110

The contest is finished, and Strepsiades, who has been a spectator, is asked whether he now wishes to have his son taught the art of argument or to take him home.

<sup>40</sup>Strepsiades speaks (39-40) of his debts falling upon his son. Cf. also Lys 17.2 ff. On the question of the recovery of debts from an estate or the heirs, see A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens: The Family and Property* (Oxford 1968) 125.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. the sad history of the state inherited by Demosthenes (27: *In Aphob.*).

The relevant verb (*ἀπάγεσθαι*) used in this enquiry is applicable equally well to the removal of a boy from a school (*Eq.* 993) or to the leading away of a horse (*Nub.* 32), but Strepsiades replies somewhat as if he took it in the latter sense. "See that he is instructed and beaten" might indeed illustrate the attitude of an angry father to a rebellious son or the popular image of a sadistic teacher, but the phrase may seem instead to be a Strepsiadean metaphor and to anticipate his physical treatment of the second creditor, whom he will later address and abuse as if he were a prize-horse (1297 ff.).

This impression is confirmed by what follows, when Strepsiades asks that Pheidippides be trained in respect of both his "jaws," so that he can cope with minor cases on the one side and more important briefs on the other. The phrasing suggests strongly, as Blaydes noticed, the word *ἐτερόγναθος*, which is used of a horse with an uneven mouth, one that answers the rein well on the one side, while refusing it on the other.<sup>42</sup> We may then conclude, with Starkie, that "he speaks of his son as if he were a horse." The alternative is to attribute to *γνάθος* here a meaning like that of the colloquial verb "to jaw" in English, or "to jawbone" in contemporary American, but, as the idiom does not appear to be Greek and *ἐτέραν* then becomes obscure, the case for this interpretation is weak.

In 1108 *εὖ μοι στομῶσεις αὐτόν* is said by the Scholiast to signify the act of giving an edge, as to an iron blade, and this interpretation is generally received. If this is the meaning of the phrase, Strepsiades is comparing the instruction of his son with the whetting of a twin-edged blade. It would be possible to support this version by comparing the use of *ἀμφίστομος* of a sword by Diodorus Siculus (5.53) and of the flukes of an anchor by Lucian (*Lex.* 15),<sup>43</sup> as well as that of *ἀμφήκης* of the tongue by Strepsiades himself at 1160 below, and the metaphor of whetting a blade is in itself appropriate in the context of instruction. Although LSJ give no instance of the usage of the verb from early or classical Greek, *στόμα* in the sense "edge" is evidently classical and a metaphorical use in regard to language has ready analogies. But again *ἐτέραν γνάθον* is resistant, for that noun, unlike *γένυς*, does not seem to take the metaphorical sense "edge" and unless this meaning can be elicited, there is a clash in these lines between the metaphors of the blade's edge and the horse's mouth.

It is preferable, I believe, to conjecture that *εὖ μοι στομῶσεις αὐτόν* might have been used of breaking a horse to the rein and the bit. The adjective *εὖστομος* is used by Plutarch (*De recta nat. aud.* 3.39b: *εὖστόμους τῷ χαλινῷ*)

<sup>42</sup>Xen. *De re eq.* 1.9, 3.5, 6.9 and Pollux 2.100 ff.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. also Soph. *Aj.* 651, Eur. *Supp.* 1206 and fr. 530.5–6 Nauck<sup>2</sup>, and Cratinus fr. 247. On the image of whetting the edge of the tongue or utterance, see J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1965) 287–288.

of animals trained to the bit, and ἄστομος on the other hand, by Sophocles (*El.* 724; cf. Plut. *Art.* 9) of a horse that is "hard-mouthed."<sup>44</sup> Xenophon speaks (*De re eq.* 3.5) of a similar horse as possessing an ἄδικος γνάθος, thus providing parallels both for εὖ and for γνάθον in our passage.<sup>45</sup> The meaning of μέμνησ' ὅπως εὖ μοι στομώσεις αὐτόν is then, "Take care to make him εὖστομος," while that of τὴν δ' ἐτέραν αὐτοῦ γνάθον στομώσον is "Train his mouth on the other side!" Though no instance of this usage of the verb is available for comparison, the use of the noun in the required sense in classical Greek seems guaranteed by Sophocles, and the analogies make the conjectured use of the verb reasonable, as the sense of the context makes it desirable. The interpretation has also the advantage of allowing an easy combination of the images of mouth and jaw, which are both in place of speaking of training to the bit. Further, the image of a horse well schooled in the bit is as applicable as that of the blade's whetted edge to training in argument, which is the point here, and more appropriate in the speech of Strepsiades.

Xenophon, in his *On Horsemanship* (3.5), gives us a description of the activity that Strepsiades imagines. The purchaser of a horse, he says, should have the animal ridden in figures-of-eight and in circles, first to the left and then to the right, in order to make certain that it has not an uneven mouth but answers to the rein equally on either side. If this test is not performed successfully, the purchaser will run the risk of acquiring a horse of limited usefulness. Strepsiades, for his part, brings to the choice of a course of study for his son his own experience in the stable-yard. He wishes to make sure that Pheidippides is trained to argue cases both large and small, presumably because he is himself threatened by suits of both kinds, and, by making use of the metaphorical sense of στόμα as "utterance", he is able to compare these skills in a pleader with a horse's habit of answering the rein on both sides, whether on the right or on the left. "Train him, beat him, give him a good mouth that is responsive to the rein on both sides!"

In the opening scene of the play we might incline to the conclusion that Strepsiades knew nothing about horses until he gained some experience at first hand through the expensive tastes of his spendthrift son, and at 1225–1226 he professes, to his insistent creditor, that it is well-known that he hates horsemanship. But Strepsiades' concern in these scenes is money, not autobiography, and what he tells the creditor is not reliable evidence for the historian. At 1297 ff., on the other hand, he drives a creditor with his goad, just as if he were on his farm driving a

<sup>44</sup>Cf. also *Ran.* 838: ἀχάλινον . . . στόμα and the use of εὖστομεῖν of a well-controlled or silenced utterance (*Nub.* 835 and Aesch. *Cho.* 997).

<sup>45</sup>Cf. also δύστομος ("hard-mouthed") at *Anth. Gr.* 16.4 and στόμις at Aesch. fr. 649 Mette: 442 Nauck<sup>2</sup>.

horse. His acquaintance with his farm and its yard is beyond question, and experience in the training and purchase of horses cannot be thought to be beyond the scope of a well-to-do farmer, no matter what the circumstances may have been in which he acquired it.<sup>46</sup> That the image is appropriate to Strepsiadēs' use can hardly be denied and, though humour is a subjective taste, I find that this figure is funnier than its more conventional alternative.

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<sup>46</sup>On the social and financial status of the Athenian cavalry, see J. K. Anderson, *Ancient Greek Horsemanship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961) 132 ff.