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SOCRATES AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN ARISTOPHANES' *CLOUDS*

This article argues that Aristophanes' *Clouds* treats Socrates as distinctly interested in promoting self-knowledge of the sort related to self-improvement. Section I shows that Aristophanes links the precept γνῶθι σαυτόν ('know yourself') with Socrates. Section II outlines the meaning of that precept for Socrates. Section III describes Socrates' conversational method in the *Clouds* as aimed at therapeutic self-revelation. Section IV identifies the patron Cloud deities of Socrates' school as also concerned to bring people to a therapeutic self-understanding, albeit in a different register from that of Socrates. Section V discusses a sequence of jokes connected to 'stripping' that give a concrete image to the search for self-knowledge. Both the action of the Clouds and the tales of cloak-stripping provide models for understanding self-knowledge in a Socratic key. Section VI argues that Socrates' other interest in the *phrontistērion*, myth-rationalization, is consistent with the promotion of self-knowledge. Section VII supports the claim that Plato's *Phaedrus* alludes constantly to the *Clouds*, and because the *Phaedrus* pays careful attention to self-knowledge, Plato must think that the *Clouds* does too. It notes in particular that we can explain the Platonic Socrates' famous self-knowledge-related curiosity about his similarity to Typhon (230a) as Plato's allusion to Aristophanes, an allusion made apt by Aristophanes' coordination of Socrates with self-knowledge. Section VIII concludes the paper.

Locating a subtle, coherent and interesting depiction of the Socratic interest in self-knowledge contributes to our understanding of the *Clouds*. It also contributes to our understanding of 'knowing yourself' as a classical Greek—or even universal—ethical imperative. For the Aristophanic Socrates at least, 'know yourself' means something distinct from 'know your limits', 'know you are a human', or even 'know your strengths and weaknesses', meanings of the precept commonly, if not with evidence, attributed to it. It means 'recognize your commitments', 'assess the degree to which you have not yet reached them' and 'work, by articulating your practical goals, to transform yourself into a person who can satisfy your commitments'.

I. SOCRATES AND THE ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ

In the *Clouds*, Strepsiades proves an indifferent student. He fails to learn Socrates' lessons. He does, however, listen to Socrates' words. In convincing his son to take his place at the *phrontistērion*, he continuously parrots Socrates' language. He appeals to Fog and Whirl, scorns traditional beliefs in Zeus, laughs at archaic thought, announces that he has secret new thoughts and vaunts the value of education.[1] His son mocks him

[1] Oaths to meteorology: 814, 828, echoing 264–6, 269, 291, 380, 424, 627; scorning Zeus: 818–27, echoing 247–8, 252, 365–7, 380, 423; ridiculing archaic thought: 821, echoing 238 with 137; new

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for using such unfamiliar language, and asks whom he got it from (816–17, 829, 832–3, 840, 844–6). Strepsiades admits he got his terms from Socrates (830), a man he says he holds worthy of respect despite his peculiarities (833–7). Pheidippides asks, 'what would someone even usefully learn from those people?' (840), meaning Socrates and the school's co-director Chaerephon. Strepsiades responds (841–2):

> Really? How much wisdom (σοφά) people have! And you'll know yourself, how unlearned and thick you are (γνώσει δὲ σαυτὸν ὡς ἀμαθὴς εἶ καὶ παχύς).

Strepsiades goes on to echo Socrates' grammatical training and show off his Socratic-style dress (847–59). Then Socrates enters, and, with some hesitation, accepts Pheidippides' discipleship.

Most of Strepsiades' lines in the passage 814–59 repeat Socrates' remarks earlier in the play. Even his remarks about wisdom (σοφά) and the content of the self-knowledge (ὡς ἀμαθὴς εἶ καὶ παχύς) echo Socrates. Socrates tells Strepsiades to attend closely 'whenever I toss up something wise' (ὅταν τι προβάλωμαι σοφόν, 489), and when Strepsiades balks, Socrates says that 'this man here is unlearned and barbaric' (ἄνθρωπος ἀμαθὴς οὑτοσὶ καὶ βάρβαρος, 492). Only one phrase does not explicitly repeat something Socrates has said: that being with Socrates will bring Pheidippides to know himself (γνώσει δὲ σαυτόν). The fact that this phrase is new draws attention to it; the fact that everything else Strepsiades says repeats Socrates suggests that even this repeats him, either his real or his imagined off-stage person.[2] Aristophanes thereby associates the advice to gain self-knowledge with Socrates. He may even be associating the precept γνῶθι σαυτόν itself, eventually associated with the Seven Sages and the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, with Socrates.[3] Strepsiades' dig at his son's education does not grammatically require the reflexive pronoun σαυτόν ('yourself'), since the verb γνώσει ('you will know') can take the indirect question 'how ignorant and thick you are' alone. This passage therefore represents the earliest attribution of the γνῶθι σαυτόν to Socrates.[4]

secret thoughts: 824, echoing 258 with 140, 143; value of education: 822, 826, echoing 369. Text throughout is from K.J. Dover (ed.), *Aristophanes Clouds* (Oxford, 1968); translations by the author unless otherwise noted.

[2] Perhaps Strepsiades does echo Socratic speech as viewers of the *Clouds* hear it, since forms of αὐτός and reflexive pronouns are associated with Socrates. Socrates is introduced as αὐτός, and Strepsiades asks, τίς αὐτός; (219). Just earlier, Socrates' student refers to the πρωκτοί of Socrates' other students studying astronomy αὐτὸς καθ' αὑτόν (194). On reflexives in this play, see E.A. Havelock, 'The Socratic self as it is parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*', *YClS* 22 (1972), 1–18, at 10–14.

[3] The earliest attested association with both is in Pl. *Prt.* 343ab, *Alc. I* 124b1, 129a2–3, 132c10, *Phdr.* 229e. The precept is cited at most three times earlier than Ar. *Nub.* 571, Heraclitus 116 DK, [Aesch.] *PV* 309 and Ion of Chios, fr. 55 *TrGF*.

[4] Sharing the view that this passage alludes to the γνῶθι σαυτόν, but without making the argument I have made: A.E. Taylor, 'The phrontisterion', in *Varia Socratica. First Series* (Oxford, 1911), 129–77, at 172; E.G. Wilkins, '"Know thyself" in Greek and Latin literature' (Diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1917), 102; Havelock (n. 2), 14 n. 38; N. Denyer, *Plato Alcibiades* (Cambridge, 2001), 191; E.T. Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought: From Homer to Plato and Beyond* (Leiden, 2012), 188. The discussion of the precept in C.G. Tortzen, 'Know thyself—a note on the success of a Delphic saying', in B. Amden et al. (edd.), *Noctes Atticae: 34 Articles on Graeco-Roman Antiquity and its Nachleben. Studies Presented to Jørgen Mejer on his Sixtieth Birthday March 18, 2002* (Copenhagen, 2002), 302–14 does not mention this one.

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II. KNOWING YOURSELF, HOW UNLEARNED AND THICK YOU ARE

Strepsiades' insult to his son, that he will come to recognize the extent to which he has not learned (ἀμαθής), and cannot readily learn (παχύς), gives important content to the γνῶθι σαυτόν, as Strepsiades attributes it to Socrates. He does not say that Pheidippides will learn that he is mortal, or that he has some position in the cosmic order, or that he must take divinity more seriously.[5] Instead, Strepsiades says that Pheidippides will come to assess two central and related aspects of himself: his education and his educability. Strepsiades' harshly negative evaluative language implies that his son will learn more than facts at Socrates' school. He will realize that he is badly off in these two central ways. In realizing that he is badly off, Strepsiades implies that he will seek to rectify his imperfections; this is implied by Strepsiades' (admittedly self-interested) hopefulness about his son's coming to learn to speak (859–87). Coming to know oneself thus includes wanting to improve oneself. Strepsiades articulates Socratic self-knowledge in the negative terms that Plato's *Apology of Socrates* characterizes as knowledge of ignorance (21b4–5, 21d6, 22d1). There, Plato's Socrates expresses gladness that, while he lacks the wisdom of craftsmen, he also lacks their unlearnedness (μήτε τι σοφὸς ὢν τὴν ἐκείνων σοφίαν μήτε ἀμαθὴς τὴν ἀμαθίαν, 22e3–4), and so he keeps going around asking people questions about virtue. Here, Strepsiades' claim that Pheidippides may learn 'how much wisdom people have!' (ὅσαπέρ ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις σοφά, 841) parallels the Platonic Socrates' observation that he has discovered himself to have at most a 'human wisdom' (ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία, *Ap*. 20d8), where this wisdom prompts continued self-improvement. 'Wisdom' (σοφία) in the *Clouds* usually means thoughtfulness (Aristophanes' playwrighting: 522, Nestor and his ilk: 1057), good judgement (the primary trait of the audience: 520, 526, 535, 575, 899) and intellectual success (the primary trait of members of the *phrontistērion*: 94, 1202, 1207, Euripides and other poets: 1370, 1378); only occasionally does it mean mere 'cleverness' (764 with 773, 895). Aristophanes' Socrates, like Plato's, urges a self-knowledge that recognizes the distance between one's ideal and one's present position, and that motivates self-improvement toward that ideal.

III. SOCRATES' REVELATORY CONVERSATION

A fifth of the way into the play, Socrates accepts Strepsiades' desire for tutelage, initiates him into the school and introduces him to the Cloud chorus. Strepsiades only gradually recognizes the Cloud chorus *as* a chorus (326–8). Socrates diagnoses his problem in terms of an epistemic failure: Strepsiades neither 'knew' (οὐκ ᾔδησθ') nor 'believed' (οὐδ' ἐνόμιζες) that the members of the chorus were goddesses, and he is not 'aware' (οὐ … οἶσθ') that they nourish sophists (329–30). When Strepsiades queries their status

[5] On these views of the meaning of the γνῶθι σαυτόν, see e.g. Wilkins (n. 4), 12–22, and her book *The Delphic Maxims in Literature* (Chicago, 1929), 1–10, 49–68; M.P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, trans. H.J. Rose (Oxford, 1948), 47, 55; J. Defradas, *Les Thèmes de La Propagande Delphique* (Paris, 1954), 269; P.P. Courcelle, *Connais-Toi Toi-Même de Socrate à Saint Bernard* (Paris, 1974), 1.12; H. Tränkle, 'Gnothi Seauton. Zu Ursprung und Deutungsgeschichte des delphischen Spruchs', *WJA* 11 (1985), 19–31, at 23; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 148. J.E. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalog of Responses* (Berkeley, 1978), 294 is one of the few authors to recognize the inadequacy of such attempts to locate the precept's meaning.

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as clouds, since the choral dancers look like women, Socrates asks Strepsiades what he thinks clouds in general look like (φέρε, ποῖαι γάρ τινές εἰσιν; 342). In his next remark, Socrates asks Strepsiades to give his view in response to further questions (ἀπόκριναί νυν ἅττ' ἂν ἔρωμαι, 345). His questions are about Strepsiades' experiences looking at cloud formations. When Socrates suggests a physical account of thunderstorms, and Strepsiades wonders why he should believe it (τουτὶ τῷ χρὴ πιστεύειν; 385), Socrates says 'I shall teach it to you from you yourself' (ἀπὸ σαυτοῦ ᾽γώ σε διδάξω, 385).

The account of the nature of the Clouds complete, Strepsiades is ready to learn to speak. The chorus leader tells Socrates to 'move through' (διακίνει) Strepsiades' mind and to 'test out his judgement' (τῆς γνώμης ἀποπειρῶ, 477). The first task seems to require displaying Strepsiades' mind at a fine-grained level of resolution; the second task, assessing Strepsiades' mettle. Socrates follows the chorus leader's instructions and says to Strepsiades: 'Come then, tell me your character (τὸν σαυτοῦ τρόπον), so that knowing it, what it is (αὐτὸν εἰδὼς ὅστις ἐστί), on those bases I can apply to you novel mechanisms' (478–80). Socrates rephrases what he means: he wishes to make some brief enquiries (σου πυθέσθαι, 482). He thereby forces Strepsiades' self-revelation (483, 487, 489).[6] Later he tells Strepsiades to 'say *yourself* what you wish to discover' (αὐτὸς ὅ τι βούλει … ἐξευρὼν λέγε, 737).

Aristophanes gives Socrates remarks which sound like, in their awkwardness, imitations of a distinctly Socratic manner of talking. The most notable ones are those that ask a person to reveal his opinions, attitudes and proclivities.[7] They distinguish him from other lecturers who intend for their students simply to listen and accept. He is unlike the Worse Argument, who goes in exclusively for silencing, not for revelation (891–931, 1101–4).[8] His repeated and seemingly pointless encouragements of Strepsiades to think for himself, and then to articulate those thoughts (696, 700–5, 722–4, 733–45), are of a piece with his question-asking method. Socrates' concern for self-knowledge has its pedagogical realization in his strategy of coaxing others' views out of themselves.[9] Socrates teaches very little in this play besides myth-rectification, which we will discuss below, and the gender-reassignment of common nouns; both aim to provide more coherent accounts of beliefs that people already have. Aristophanes may have treated many of the other views expounded in the *phrontistērion* as contributions by Chaerephon, other teachers or students; he does not attribute them to Socrates, despite the ease of doing so. Socrates departs before Better and Worse Arguments compete for Pheidippides' attention (886–8); Pheidippides' education comes to be provided solely by Worse Argument. Therefore, Socrates' teaching, whatever it is, is at least characteristically self-revelatory, aimed at instilling self-knowledge, whether this self-knowledge attends to beliefs about oneself or to beliefs about one's place in the world and the way one communicates in it.

[6] Cf. M. Nussbaum, 'Aristophanes and Socrates on learning practical wisdom', *YClS* 26 (1980), 43–97, at 69–70, 72–76; Taylor (n. 4), 131, 170–2, 175.

[7] Dover (n. 1), xxxiv calls it his 'tutorial' method—involving assessment of character, setting of problems, reduction of problems to constituent parts and assessing responses—in contrast to the 'expository' method.

[8] Thus Dover (n. 1), xxxv is wrong to say that ὁ κρείττων λόγος 'embodies the spirit of Socrates' teaching'. See Nussbaum (n. 6), 66.

[9] J. Newell, 'Aristophanes on Socrates', *AncPhil* 19 (1999), 109–19.

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IV. THE MANIA-MIRRORING CLOUDS

The Cloud chorus serves as a sort of agent for Socrates and the *phrontistērion*. It may therefore seem to consolidate Socrates' interest in meteorology; serve as a band of nature deities; suggest the airiness and malleability of sophistic reasoning; or stand in for traditional divine justice.[10] Whether any of these views is true, it is important to see as well that they especially help their viewers see themselves. They act as vehicles for self-knowledge and as symbols of Socrates' intentions to bring his interlocutors to self-knowledge.

Aristophanes carefully develops the theme of self-knowledge in his treatment of the Clouds. Among Socrates' earliest descriptions of the Clouds is his claim that they 'mock' (σκώπτουσαι) a person's 'obsession' (τὴν μανίαν, 350). The word σκώπτω means to draw attention to saliently embarrassing or laugh-inducing traits of a person, often by exaggerated mimicry; it does not mean merely to 'jeer' or 'scoff at.' Earlier in the play, Socrates tells Strepsiades not to 'mock' (σκώψει), that is, not to 'make like' (ποιήσεις ἅπερ) certain other comedians (296). Strepsiades is cracking scatological jokes, which is what other comedians do, so 'mocking' means imitating to draw out the (morally or aesthetically) relevant traits of Aristophanes' competitors. Aristophanes uses the word three more times in the play; one of them is especially telling.[11] The parabasis states that Aristophanes does not make fun of bald men; because the parabasis had just stated that Aristophanes does not dress his characters up with extravagant phalluses (538–9), the counterfactual mocking would probably be effected by dressing up actors with bald-headed masks (540), thereby physically exaggerating their appearances. Elsewhere in the Aristophanic corpus, σκώπτειν means either to caricature in one's own person or otherwise to exaggerate (attention to) someone's features. At *Acharnians* 854, the Chorus says that Pauson will no longer mock (σκώψεται) Dicaeopolis; Aristotle speaks of a Pauson who depicts (εἴκαζεν) people as worse (*Poet*. 2.2; cf. *Pol*. 8.5.7). If these persons are the same Pauson, and if depiction as 'worse' caricatures people as they really are, then this passage treats σκώπτειν as 'to mimic'.[12] At *Knights* 525, Magnes is said to have written his Choruses to imitate many animal sounds and appearances, but in old age he lost his power to 'mimic' (σκώπτειν). These cases, and many others,[13]

[10] A.M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual, and Comedy* (Cambridge, 1993), 124; D. Blyth, 'Cloud morality and the meteorology of some choral odes', *Scholia* 3 (1994), 24–45; D. Konstan, 'Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*', in D.R. Morrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge, 2011), 75–90, at 78. P.A. Vander Waerdt, 'Socrates in the *Clouds*', in P.A. Vander Waerdt (ed.), *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 48–86, at 73, explains the Chorus' being clouds as parody of Diogenes' deification of the air.

[11] In the second instance, Better Argument tells Pheidippides to flare up at those who mock him (992), but does not specify the kind of mocking he has in mind. In the third instance, a creditor charges Strepsiades with mocking him when Strepsiades, noting his tragic diction, implies that the creditor is Xenocles' Alcmena (1267).

[12] Aristophanes also mentions Pauson at *Plut.* 602 and *Thesm.* 948. On the difficult Aristotelian passages, see G. Zanker, 'Aristotle's *Poetics* and the painters', *AJPh* 121 (2000), 225–35 and P. Schultz, 'Style and agency in an age of transition', in R. Osborne (ed.), *Debating the Athenian Cultural Revolution: Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Politics 430–380 BC* (Cambridge, 2007), 180–3.

[13] *Vesp.* 542: if Bdelycleon loses the debate to his son, people will call him and his friends θαλλοφόροι, 'olive-bearers', and will thereby be pointing out (σκωπτόμενοι) their agedness; *Vesp.* 1320: at his debut party, Philocleon asks Thuphrastus, 'Why do you act like a bigwig and pretend to be stylish, when you're only a clown sucking up to anyone who's doing well at the moment'

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show that the Clouds imitate with the goal of revealing something unpleasant about the person imitated.[14]

The Clouds do not simply mock individuals; they mock a person's μανία. Pheidippides twice refers to his father's wholesale conversion to Socratism (818–43) as his μανία (832, 846). In the contest between Better and Worse Argument, Better Argument says that the city and Worse Argument share a μανία for captious argument (925–8). The 'obsession' relevant to the Clouds appears to be the central failing of the character: in Strepsiades' case, his overzealous commitment to an unfamiliar mode of argument; and in the case of Worse Argument, a preference for victory over solid education. To the extent then that the Clouds mock someone's obsession, they bring to light, perhaps exaggeratedly, that person's central failing.

Socrates also says that the Clouds reveal (ἀποφαίνουσαι) a person's nature (τὴν φύσιν, 352). Should we wonder what 'revealing' someone's 'nature' means, Aristophanes glosses both words throughout his play. It means proving to a person something deeply important about himself that he would not readily accept. Several lines after Socrates characterizes the Clouds as nature-revealers, Strepsiades says that he wants the source of rain 'revealed' to him (ἀπόφηναι, 368). He is compelled to agree, based on his pre-existing beliefs, that rain-clouds account for rain (372–3). This is the biggest step in his rejection of Zeus. Later in the play, Pheidippides says he will 'reveal' to his father the propriety in beating him (1331). He glosses this term with ἀποδείξω ('prove', 1334), and goes about revealing the propriety by giving a long argument (1408–39). It is this argument that, accompanied by the argument that it is proper to hit one's mother, brings Strepsiades to realize his faults and reject them (1462–4). He recognizes that he was in a crazed state and manic (παρανοίας … ἐμαινόμην … παρανοήσαντος, 1476–80). Revelation, then, is making compellingly clear something important, something that one would at first very much not like to acknowledge.

In the *Clouds*, one's nature (φύσιν) is one's most significant quality, as we see from a range of uses.[15] The Cloud chorus sings a song (276–90) to its own 'form', its dewiness, which for those not yet initiated to the *phrontistērion* is its primary constituent (276). Socrates asks whether Strepsiades has speaking ability in his 'nature' (486). After studying at the *phrontistērion*, Strepsiades worries that he may become indistinguishable from Chaerephon in respect to nature (503). Strepsiades is said to 'colour' his nature with novelties and to cultivate wisdom (νεωτέροις τὴν φύσιν αὐ- | τοῦ πράγμασιν χρωτίζεται | καὶ σοφίαν ἐπασκεῖ, 515–17). The play itself, the chorus leader says in the parabasis, is restrained 'by nature', and this distinguishes the play from its riotous competition (537). Strepsiades says it will be easy to teach his son, since he is θυμόσοφος ('desirous

(trans. Henderson), and Xanthias comments that his master περιύβριζεν and σκώπτων ἀγροίκως, rustically calls out someone for their embarrassing qualities; for further key evidence for this claim see also *Eccl.* 1005, 1074, *Nub.* 58, 417, *Pax* 740, 745, *Av.* 96, *Plut.* 557; more diffuse but still consistent evidence is at *Vesp.* 567, *Ran.* 392, *Pax* 173, *Plut.* 886, 973.

[14] In the one use of this verb in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus uses the term to describe Socrates' mocking of Lysias' speech for lacking rational order (264e3). Socrates does so by likening it to a four-line epitaph that could be, so he says, read in any order. Phaedrus calls Lysias' speech 'our' speech. Thus Phaedrus takes himself to be mocked: his preferences—for superficially provocative rather than structurally sound speeches—are being made manifest, brutally so. Socrates is bringing self-awareness to Phaedrus.

[15] Other commentators have read the uses of *phusis* mainly in contrast to *nomos*, e.g. S. Berg, 'Rhetoric, nature, and philosophy in Aristophanes' *Clouds*', *AncPhil* 18 (1998), 1–19, and Nussbaum (n. 6), 52–4 (but see 52 n. 17).

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of being wise') by nature (877). Better Argument is told by the chorus leader to speak of his own nature, namely its pedagogical perspective (960). Worse Argument acknowledges the supposedly unchangeable human 'nature' (1075, 1078). Solon is by nature a φιλόδημος ('populist', 1187).

The Clouds draw out from people their desires and help them act on those desires; when something goes wrong, those people are forced to realize that their own character is responsible (αὐτὸς … σαυτῷ σὺ τούτων αἴτιος, 1454). The collocation of intensifiers here emphasizes this reflexive relationship. The Clouds can help people understand themselves by appearing to each person in the way he or she wants them to look. This mirroring helps explain why the Cloud chorus can appear bimorphic in the play, early on as 'protectresses of the windy, up-in-the-air nebulosities of Socrates and his crew', and later as 'Aeschylean moralizers'.[16] Charles Segal has put the point well: 'To Strepsiades [the Clouds] hold out the promise of change and evasion, of avoiding the realities … of life':

> The enormous horizons which the Clouds encompass only mirror back to Strepsiades his own pettiness. When he is finally brought into 'converse' with them, they address him as a man who 'desires great wisdom from us' (ὦ τῆς μεγάλης ἐπιθυμήσας σοφίας ἄνθρωπε παρ' ἡμῶν, 412). But he replies, 'Don't tell me great thoughts, for I don't want them' (μή μοί γε λέγειν γνώμας μεγάλας· οὐ γὰρ τούτων ἐπιθυμῶ, 433). And they answer him with a confirmation of that very smallness which he seeks from them: 'You will get your desire; for your desires are not great' (τεύξει τοίνυν ὧν ἱμείρεις· οὐ γὰρ μεγάλων ἐπιθυμεῖς, 435).[17]

The Clouds end up mocking Strepsiades' μανία for simple solutions to his novel problems, and they reveal his nature as someone over his head in trying to live an urban life.[18]

V. JOKES ABOUT SELF-REVELATION

Near the beginning of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates and Phaedrus walk beyond the city walls. Phaedrus has told Socrates—in response to Socrates' correct surmise about his morning (ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἰ ἐγὼ Φαῖδρον ἀγνοῶ, καὶ ἐμαυτοῦ ἐπιλέλησμαι …, 228a5–6)—that he wants to talk about a speech that Lysias let him see. Socrates suspects that this is not the real reason for Phaedrus' desire for companionship. 'Show me first, dearest friend, what really you have in your hand under your cloak' (δείξας γε πρῶτον, ὦ φιλότης, τί ἄρα ἐν τῇ ἀριστερᾷ ἔχεις ὑπὸ τῷ ἱματίῳ, 229d6–7). Socrates guesses that Phaedrus carries the rolled script of Lysias' speech. He guesses that Phaedrus wants to treat Socrates as an audience for his memorization practice. Socrates refuses to allow it. As the conversation proceeds, Socrates reveals Phaedrus' commitment to Lysianic oratory and strives to wean him from it. What Socrates has seen inside Phaedrus' cloak reveals something important about Phaedrus' true, not simulated, desires.[19]

[16] C. Segal, 'Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus', *Arethusa* 2 (1969), 143–61, at 143, 148–50.
[17] Segal (n. 16), 149.
[18] For other views that the Clouds deceive and mock, seduce and disavow, see K. Reckford, 'Aristophanes' ever-flowing Clouds', *Emory University Quarterly* 22 (1967), 222–35, at 222–3, 225; A. Köhnken, 'Der Wolken-Chor des Aristophanes', *Hermes* 108 (1980), 272–8; Nussbaum (n. 6), 76. Blyth (n. 10), 29 criticizes the idea that the Clouds mock for not 'acknowledging any serious moral realization in Strepsiades', overlooking the ethical benefits in coming to self-knowledge.
[19] Cf. *Chrm.* 155d4: 'and I saw the things inside his cloak and I flared up and was not in myself' (εἶδόν τε τὰ ἐντὸς τοῦ ἱματίου καὶ ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ' ἐν ἐμαυτοῦ ἦν); cf. M.M. McCabe,

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Presaging the Platonic Socrates' ribald joke is the Aristophanic Socrates' chastisement.[20] After Strepsiades botches the grammar lessons, Socrates gives him something different to do (694). He instructs his student to 'reason out something of your own matters' (ἐκφρόντισόν τι τῶν σεαυτοῦ πραγμάτων, 695). The Cloud chorus echoes Socrates' demand: 'So think and scrutinize, twist and condense your every trait; quickly now, whenever you fall into perplexity, leap to another thought of mind' (φρόντιζε δὴ καὶ διάθρει | πάντα τρόπον τε σαυτὸν | στρόβει πυκνώσας. ταχὺς δ', ὅταν εἰς ἄπορον | πέσῃς, ἐπ' ἄλλο πήδα | νόημα φρενός, 700–5; cf. 743–5). When Socrates checks back in, Strepsiades is under bedcovers, and Socrates asks him for a progress report. 'What have you thought?' (721). Strepsiades having thought nothing yet, Socrates departs. When he returns again, he asks again whether Strepsiades 'has anything … anything at all?' Strepsiades replies: 'Nothing, except my penis in my hand' (οὐδέν γε πλὴν ἢ τὸ πέος ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ, 734). Socrates tells him to cover himself up and really to try to think (735). The surface joke is that where Socrates seeks some internally-generated idea—inside Strepsiades—his student reveals only his self-indulgence. The deeper joke is about seeking knowledge within a person, or pulling away the outer to learn about the inner.

This joke about revealing a person's inner realm pervades the play. Socrates is said to have snatched a 'cloak' (θοἰμάτιον) from the wrestling school (179). Strepsiades covers himself against the effects of the Clouds (267). Socrates tells Strepsiades to relinquish his cloak before studying, as is their custom (497–504). Pheidippides notes that his father has lost his cloak; Strepsiades avers that it is merely 'thought away' (καταπεφρόντικα, 857). Worse Argument shames Better Argument, and triumphs; in capitulation, Better Argument gives up his cloak and surrenders himself over (ἐξαυτομολῶ) to the tutelage of his once opponent (1102–4). In Strepsiades' final remarks, mocking Socrates' words throughout, he announces himself, as the arson of the *phrontistērion*, to be the man whose cloak was stolen (1498). Such stripping before engaging in Socratic studies is an image of self-revelation.[21] It is a theme we see again throughout Plato's descriptions of Socrates. Socrates wants to examine Theodorus' idol Protagoras, but doing so requires examining Theodorus. Theodorus responds that it is hard to refuse to give an account to Socrates, and that Socrates would never let him stay dressed, but is like Antaeus who forces all comers to wrestle, naked. Socrates agrees with the formulation (*Tht.* 169a5-c3).[22] Socrates wishes that Charmides would strip,

'Looking inside Charmides' cloak: seeing others and oneself in Plato's *Charmides*', in D. Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays on Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford, 2007), 1–19, at 12–14.

[20] This allusion is noted by E.S. Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art: Love for Wisdom in Four Platonic Dialogues* (Cambridge, 2012), 242.

[21] L.M. Stone, 'A note on *Clouds* 1104–5', *CPh* 75 (1980), 321–2; J. Tomin, 'Socratic Gymnasium in the *Clouds*', *SO* 62 (1987), 25–32, at 25, 28–9, 31; K. Kleve, 'The stolen mantle in the *Clouds*', *SO* 64 (1989), 74–90; O. Meynersen, 'Der Manteldiebstahl des Sokrates (Ar. *Nub*. 175–9)', *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993), 18–32. While cloak-stealing is a comic trope, it seems to have a deeper resonance in this play.

[22] M.F. Burnyeat, 'Socratic midwifery, Platonic inspiration', *BICS* 24 (1977), 7–16, at 12 describes self-knowledge in the context of the *Theaetetus*: it is not merely discerning one's private belief or articulating a theoretical framework (either of which he would call 'to have formulated a proposition in words') but to have 'thought through its implications in a systematic way, confronting it with other relevant beliefs and considering whether these require it to be withdrawn or revised'. This evaluative effort, which Burnyeat says is also 'a vital force in the process itself, … sustained by the pupil's growing awareness of his own cognitive resources, their strengths and their limitations', is—as is clear from the structure of the argument in the *Theaetetus*, not a 'psychotherapeutic' or 'biographical' matter, but

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though not his body of his clothes, as Chaerephon has suggested, but his soul, to see whether it is σώφρων (*Chrm.* 154d1-e8). Socrates tells Alcibiades to ignore his neighbours' attractive facades and 'study them stripped naked' (ἀλλ' ἀποδύντα χρὴ αὐτὸν θεάσασθαι, *Alc.* 132a8). The *Gorgias* ends with Socrates' speech about the final judgement, where the gods only eventually realize that proper assessment comes with a stripped-down body and soul (*Grg.* 523c1–525a10).

One more joke in the *Clouds* may develop the theme of stripping and self-knowledge. Strepsiades leaves the school to bring his son in. As Socrates enters the scene, the Clouds say to him: 'You, recognizing (γνούς) a man out of himself (ἐκπεπληγμένου) and obviously lifted up, will lap up (ἀπολάψεις; a scholium and *Suda* report ἀπολέψεις, 'take away') however much you can' (808–11). John Newell provides five possible readings, depending on the verb and its interpretation: (i) strip off (ἀπολέψεις) Pheidippides' tan, to match the other scholars; (ii) strip away (ἀπολέψεις) his errors; (iii) remove (ἀπολέψεις) his cloak, a symbol of self-deceit; (iv) cleanse (ἀπολάψεις) him of error, as a cat does itself; or (v) digest (ἀπολάψεις) him, i.e. get to know him well. Each interpretation could conceivably advance the theme of Socratic self-knowledge.[23]

VI. SOCRATES' SEVERAL ACTIVITIES

Aristophanes, of course, portrays Socrates as concerned with a richer variety of activities than solely drawing others' views out. Further, the *Clouds* has a comic and literary function beyond depicting Socrates' practices. Still, by making Socrates' gods—the play's chorus—vehicles of self-knowledge, the interlocutor-revealing part of Socrates' intellectual practice is given thematic centrality. The play's resolution is in Strepsiades' coming to self-understanding, about the badness of trying to escape his debt through nefarious means.[24] He comes to understand this when similarly nefarious means are turned against himself. When his son beats him (1408–42), and threatens to beat his mother, Strepsiades' wife (1443–5), Strepsiades sees the potential effects of his own interests. He now appreciates more fully the value and consequences of his nature set in its urban and expensive context. Knowing oneself is not merely having access to one's internal milieu as a spectator would look upon a sculpture or a reader a book. It is a matter of reflecting on one's experiences, assessing one's abilities, and judging one's intellectual and moral qualities. It is to lead to one making decisions about what to believe, what to value and what to pursue. It would be an accomplishment to learn, for example, about one's ignorance and one's zeal. Socrates and his Clouds do not teach about human nature, about the structure of the soul, about one's mortality or about one's social role, all of which are typical interpretations of Socratic self-knowledge. They bring a person to assess himself and decide how he must try to be.[25]

something that takes simultaneously awareness of one's current commitments and of one's norms governing and limiting those commitments.

[23] Newell (n. 9) favours (iii) on the basis of the other cloak-stealing jokes through the play; he says that Socrates and the Clouds will together dissemble (be 'ironic') to bring Strepsiades into self-knowledge. If not directly, then at least indirectly does (i) support the theme.

[24] A similar view may be found at Konstan (n. 10), 81.

[25] Aristophanes might, of course, disapprove of this pedagogical manner, as Nussbaum (n. 6) argues.

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Because self-knowledge plays a unifying but not totalizing thematic role in the comedy, it is worth understanding the relationship between Socrates' concern for self-knowledge and his other projects. The first activities attributed to the workers in the *phrontistērion* involve looking at science from a human perspective. The Socratics have decided that the world is like a cooker, and people are like the coals (95–7). They measure flea-leaps in terms of flea-feet, making their jumping power commensurate with our own (144–52). They study the gnat's singing power (ᾄδειν, σάλπιγξ) and thus its connection to human culture (157–68). They study the moon's revolutions and other astronomical phenomena (171, 194, 201, 225–32); geology (187–92); and surveying and map-making, for the sake of democracy (202–17).

Questions of the gods arise once Strepsiades coaxes Socrates down from his thinking-basket and swears by the gods to pay for lessons in cash. At this terribly human use of the gods, Socrates says that the gods count for nothing around here (θεοὶ | ἡμῖν νόμισμ᾽ οὐκ ἔστι, 247–8), playing on 'currency' language to emphasize Strepsiades' anthropocentric piety. Socrates then asks Strepsiades whether he 'would like to know clearly, regarding divine matters, what is correct' (ὀρθῶς, 251). Strepsiades does. He accepts Socrates' offer to interact with divinities (συγγενέσθαι … εἰς λόγους, 252), which emphasizes human-divine traffic. What or who are these divinities? They are 'our' divinities (ταῖς ἡμετέραισι δαίμοσιν, 253).

That the Clouds are divine is a regular theme of the play (263–6, 269–74, 291–2, 296–7, 316).[26] Socrates' meteorological δαίμονες simply replace the pantheonic Zeus. No principled disavowal of supernatural forces is ever made. The *phrontistērion* appears simply to aim instead for a 'correct' (ὀρθός) explanation for the way the world goes, better in terms of human appreciation.[27] In a series of analogies and inferences (μεγάλοις δέ σ᾽ ἐγὼ σημείοις αὐτὸ διδάξω, 369), Socrates links the rain to the clouds' presence; thunder to the clouds' sodden crashing; and cloud drift to cosmic rotation (370–94).

Until this point in the play, Socrates seems to have provided 'more correct' explanations for matters of little human relevance, even if they have been put into human terms, ones that allow students to think about themselves in new contexts. The precise noise-making mechanism of thunder might have little interest but to physicists, who study what must happen (δι᾽ ἀνάγκην, 377; ὑπ᾽ ἀνάγκης, 405) in accord with things' respective natures (φυσᾷ, 405). Myth-rationalization about Zeus may seem equally esoteric, even if more impious. Who cares whether thunder happens like flatulence? But the popular and mundane relevance of the *phrontistērion*'s research programme comes to the fore when Strepsiades asks about scorching lightning. Zeus hurls it against perjurers, Strepsiades claims (397). No he does not, Socrates says; those who obviously perjure are not struck, and Zeus' own temple and sacred trees have been burnt by lightning (398–402). That the play ends with the *phrontistērion* being burnt down (1483–509), most emphatically not by natural forces but by Strepsiades himself spewing morally-charged

[26] *Contra*, for example, Berg (n. 15), 2–6; A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Warminster, 1982), 2. Dover (n. 1), xxxv thinks that Socrates' calling the Clouds divine is an accident, not the result of intending to correct Athenian theology: 'The Greek tendency to personification of natural phenomena and abstractions ensures that a man who is regarded as rejecting the traditional gods is assumed to worship gods of his own choice, not to reject worship as such.'

[27] *Contra*, Vander Waerdt (n. 10), 68. P. Woodruff, 'Socrates and the new learning', in D.R. Morrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge, 2011), 91–110, at 95–6, 102–3 claims that advocates of the 'new learning' sought 'necessary causes … in place of [the] teleological ones' that Socrates sought; in either case, these thinkers were concerned not to disenchant the world but to account for events and ideals in more effective ways.

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language (δοῦναι δίκην, 1491; ὑβρίζετε, 1506; ἠδίκουν, 1509), highlights the importance of this passage. Further strong evidence for the human relevance of the *phrontistērion*'s research comes from the chorus leader's joke that, if the judges of the play vote for its victory, their crops will get the most appropriate amount of rain; but if they do not, they will get evil weather (1115–30).[28] Aristophanes shows that the cause of lightning and sky-borne fire is indeed a matter of public concern.[29] The fact that, as Socrates says, lightning comes from compressed dry wind (404–7) means that we cannot expect people to receive their cosmic due, or to be free, despite their holiness, from accident. What seemed like an academic concern—the source of storms and residential conflagration—proves in fact ethical and political.[30] The proper accounting for meteorological events determines how we think about human issues.

All the same, even were the Aristophanic Socrates' myth-rationalization ultimately ethical and political, or at least mundanely human, into which we might place teaching about self-knowledge and therefore one's appreciation of one's values, the rest of his curriculum looks like a hodge-podge. Lessons in myth-rationalization, as well as in the natural and earth sciences, seem to fit uneasily with the commands to think harder, to change the gender of common nouns and to learn how to argue from the conservative or radical perspective. This might suggest that Aristophanes' characterization of Socrates is interpretatively useless, there being no coherent individual to discover and think about. Aristophanes' very joke may come from this kitchen-sinking, attributing every possible novel pursuit to this intellectual and thereby presenting him as an incoherent bundle of desires for the cutting edge.[31] Alternatively, Aristophanes might depict a coherent individual, but an uninteresting one. He may have connected Socrates with the dubious ideal of the omnicompetent sophist (*Hippias maior, Dissoi logoi* 8), or as a student or doppelgänger of Diogenes of Apollonia, who himself may have had diverse interests.[32] Or some of the pursuits could be taken as oriented to potential or actual students of the *phrontistērion*, as propaedeutic or initiatory.

The starting assumption, however, that Aristophanes attributes to Socrates and his school a hodge-podge curriculum, might be wrong. Let us reflect on Aristophanes' presentation again. First, the *phrontistērion* puts science and technology in human terms. Second, it engages in myth-rationalization in a way that yields public benefit. Third, the *phrontistērion* is the obvious place for Strepsiades to go 'to learn to speak' (98–9, 111–18, 130, 239, 422, 792). A viewer would likely infer that the first two aspects of Aristophanes' presentation explain the third. What is often seen as speculations in natural philosophy and impious assertions of atheism are actually instructions

[28] See also L. Woodbury, 'Strepsiades' understanding: fives notes on the *Clouds*', *Phoenix* 34 (1980), 108–27, at 111 arguing that Strepsiades' experience as a farmer causes him to ask about and be interested in the weather.

[29] Blyth (n. 10), 37–42 shows the way Aristophanes links the Cloud chorus with Pantheonic justice served via weather.

[30] Thus it is hard to accept the claim of Vander Waerdt (n. 10), 65 that Aristophanes' Socrates has 'little or no interest in the ethical questions (e.g. whether law is founded in nature or convention …) favored by contemporary sophists'.

[31] Sommerstein (n. 26), 2: 'All these pursuits are depicted as useless and absurd.' Dover (n. 1), xxxiv and xxxvii says that, unlike the case of metre and grammar, 'there is no direct indication that natural science is propaedeutic to oratory' and 'astronomy and physics have no relevance'; but we see that the relation is made clear by the talk of lightning; see also Gorg. *Hel.* 13, about the persuasive task of astronomers, and Arist. fr. 15 Ross on Empedocles as the inventor of rhetoric.

[32] Vander Waerdt (n. 10) and R. Janko, 'The physicist as hierophant: Aristophanes, Socrates and the authorship of the Derveni papyrus', *ZPE* 118 (1997), 61–94.

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on how to speak well. Speaking well—if we do not take 'speaking' as a cynical pursuit, and remember that the *phrontistērion* (also) teaches how to speak well (113, 244, 883, 886)—involves giving the best explanations of events. During the Peloponnesian War, how injustice and impiety are punished, or not—whether by Zeus or randomly by thunder-storms—would be of central concern. How should a storm-caused shipwreck be interpreted (Hdt. 6.44)? How should burnt fields be understood? How might favourable winds be conjured (Hdt. 7.189)? How might prayers for safe passage be best executed? Weather—seasons, winds, storms—would influence health (Hdt. 1.142, 2.77, 3.106.1, 7.102, 9.122)[33] and, of particular importance, plagues (Thuc. 1.23). Pericles, thought to be among the very best speakers, is said to have studied the patterns of sky-borne events (μετεωρολογία, *Phdr*. 270a1). Not everyone would be happy to depend on explanations appealing to dumb weather patterns, but an able speaker would need to know how to appeal to such natural phenomena.[34]

Thinking about the democratic and war-engaged background, we may see the coherence of Aristophanes' picture of Socrates. We do not need to see myth-rationalization as merely a sort of cleverness, replacing difficult-to-prove explanations with other difficult-to-prove explanations, more rhetoric than discovery. Many philosophers could have seen that we have long been in ignorance about the true nature of the divine, and so one could with ease accept explanations appealing to novel gods, or foreign gods, or innovative spiritual methods. Such views would not appeal to arch-traditionalists, but those men are not the only members of the voting public. Wartime puts a higher price on certainty about to whom to sacrifice, pour libations, and offer incense (426). Socrates' apotheosis of the clouds is not a case of incomplete naturalization. His goal is not disenchantment itself: disenchantment alone would serve little persuasive or political function. The clouds are posited as a result of rectification and correction, the search for improved predictability and explanation. Socrates is being presented—satirically, sharply, perhaps derisively—as a dean of this sort of study oriented toward better public (and forensic) speaking. Socrates' encouragements to self-knowledge would be part of this overall programme of improvement. Whether Aristophanes presents Socrates in this coherent manner because he really saw the historical Socrates this way, or because it makes for dramatic plausibility, we cannot say. Presumably he found Socrates talking not just about self-knowledge but also about topics related to myth-rectification and speech-improvement so often that he could fairly attribute to him such a life. In this understanding of Socrates Aristophanes was not alone. Plato presented Socrates in a similar way.

VII. THE *CLOUDS* AND PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

An important piece of evidence that the *Clouds* highlights Socratic self-knowledge is that Plato seems to think it did. His *Phaedrus* seems to aim, among other targets,[35] at

[33] See R. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context: Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2000), 37–9.

[34] See D. Coppola, *Anemoi: morfologia dei venti nell'immaginario della Grecia arcaica* (Napoli, 2010) for a full account of the early Greek appeal to winds. The literary, metaphysical and ethical connotations of clouds are discussed at Dover (n. 1), lxvii–lxix and Bowie (n. 10), 125–30.

[35] See H. Yunis, *Plato Phaedrus* (Cambridge, 2011), 1–17 for the principal goals of the *Phaedrus*, and D.S. Werner, 'Plato's *Phaedrus* and the problem of unity', *OSAPh* 32 (2007), 91–137, for the history of interpretation; neither mentions the *Clouds*.

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redeeming Socrates from his depiction in the *Clouds*. This has never been acknowledged; yet a mass of evidence exists in its favour.[36] It is clear that Plato repeatedly addresses Aristophanes' picture of a radically naturalizing Socrates.[37] This testifies to the dramatist's influence on the coming century's interpretation of the Socratic legacy.[38] Aristophanes must have done more than prejudice the jury of 399; he described Socrates with enough accuracy that his *Clouds* could still mislead men otherwise familiar with its target.[39] It would seem that the *Clouds*, according to Plato, got something wrong—Socrates was not so preoccupied with fixing mythic tales as Aristophanes implies; but he got something very right—he was committed to promoting self-knowledge.

The *Clouds*, as we have seen, presents Socrates as rationalizing stories about divine meteorology. Socrates accepts the phenomena—rain, sky—but disproves old stories (for example, the rain as Zeus' urine, 368) and provides new accounts (for instance, the sky as a stove's lid, 96). In this provision of improved accounts, Socrates is assimilated to a wave of new intellectuals (ψυχῶν σοφῶν, 94).[40] These 'wise souls' have improved upon the way men have dealt with their affairs in Athens, Hellas and the world; they have applied instruments, technique and reflection to the casual and formal tasks of domestic and political persuasion.[41] The *Phaedrus* confronts Aristophanes' assimilation of Socrates to this trend directly. Socrates' friend Phaedrus asks him about his belief in divine meteorology (229b1–5), and Socrates says it would not be strange for the intellectuals (οἱ σοφοί, 229c6) to try to provide a better explanation; but he himself, he says,

[36] Dover (n. 1), xliii rejects a possible allusion by Plato's διαίρεσις (266b) to Aristophanes' ὀρθῶς διαιρῶν καὶ σκοπῶν (742); Dover also rejects the hypothesis that *Tht.* 150e echoes Strepsiades' having caused a miscarriage of an idea (*Nub.* 137). Konstan (n. 10), 80–1 notes only that the *Phaedrus* includes 'an account of the heavens' and thus supports Aristophanes' view that Socrates discoursed on the cosmos. K. Kleve, 'Anti-Dover or Socrates in the *Clouds*', *SO* 58 (1983), 23–37, at 25 and 28 notices three similarities between the two works. H. Tarrant, 'Midwifery and the *Clouds*', *CQ* 38 (1988), 116–22, at 122 n. 24 asserts without argument in a note that *Phdr.* 270a—about the importance of ἀδολεσχία, μετεωρολογία and friendship with Anaxagoras to Pericles' excellence in public speaking—shows knowledge of the *Clouds*. Evidence below supports Tarrant's assertion.

[37] *Ap.* 19c3–4 and *Clit.* 407a8-b1 (cf. S.R. Slings, *Plato Clitophon* [Cambridge, 1999], ad loc.); perhaps the dialogues that depict the *phrontistērion*'s co-director, Chaerephon (*Chrm.* 153b2–154d8, *Grg.* 447a8–449a1; cf. Taylor [n. 4], 146–7); maybe *Euthyd.* 277d and *Prt.* 315b–c (cf. A.W. Adkins, 'Clouds, mysteries, Socrates and Plato', *Antichthon* 4 [1970], 13–24, at 18–19, but G.J. De Vries resists, in 'Mystery terminology in Aristophanes and Plato', *Mnemosyne* 26 [1973], 1–8); and perhaps others (*Phd.* 70bc, 99b; *Resp.* 488e-489c; *Cra.* 401b7–8; *Prm.* 135d5; *Plt.* 229b6–8, according to Tarrant [n. 36], 122 n. 24; see also Kleve [n. 36] generally). Nussbaum (n. 6), 82–5 relates *Clouds* with *Protagoras* thematically but does not claim there are allusions. Taylor (n. 4), 148–51 and Tomin (n. 21), 99 claim that the reference to intellectual midwifery in *Tht.* 149e-151d is historical to Socrates, partially on the grounds that Aristophanes' Socratic *phrontistērion* also uses the language of miscarriage of discovery, though neither claims that these 'textual affiliations' are allusions; Tarrant (n. 36) doubts that the language of miscarriage in the *Clouds* is at all connected to Socrates, and certainly not to *Theaetetus*' Socrates. R. Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature: The Silent Stream* (Cambridge, 2012), 73–6 suggests that the *Republic* might show influence from *Knights*.

[38] Yunis (n. 35), 24 puts *Phaedrus*' composition anywhere between 370–350, more than five decades after the two versions of the *Clouds*, 423/419–416.

[39] Vander Waerdt (n. 10), 53 n. 18 argues that even Xenophon responded to the *Clouds*, in his *Oeconomicus, Symposium* and *Memorabilia*. Most recently, Konstan (n. 10), 76–7, 82–5, 88 and Woodruff (n. 27) observe the ways in which Aristophanes seems to have drawn an important but incomplete picture of Socrates; see also Nussbaum (n. 6), 71–6.

[40] Cf. J. Whitehorne, 'Aristophanes' representations of "intellectuals"', *Hermes* 130 (2002), 28–35, especially at 33–4.

[41] Cf. J.A. Bromberg, 'Academic disciplines in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (200–3)', *CQ* 62 (2012), 81–91.

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cannot spend any time doing that. He has to seek self-knowledge instead. And instead of demolishing implausible myths, as the dialogue goes on to show, Socrates in fact deploys new myths and elaborates on old ones (246a6–256e2, 258e6–259d7, 274c1–275c2).[42] So it may seem that Plato depicts *Phaedrus*' Socrates, at the same age as the Socrates depicted in the *Clouds*, as—unlike the one in the *Clouds*—avoiding the exact sciences, uninterested in the fashionable attention to nature, and directing his novel pursuits elsewhere, toward examination of himself and others.[43]

It would be wrong, however, to think that Plato simply rejects the Socrates of the *Clouds* as an implausible fiction or a cento of sophistic characteristics.[44] In the first place, Plato's Socrates also reduces supernatural to natural explanations: he re-explains the disappearance of Oreithuia, often thought to be seized by Boreas, the Thracian monster, as a tumble from rocks because of Boreas, the gusting wind (229c7-d2). He admits to finding appealing in certain ways the practice of doing so (ἄλλως μὲν τὰ τοιαῦτα χαρίεντα ἡγοῦμαι, 229d3). Plato thus does not reject the impression that Socrates could and did know how to fix myths.[45] He only specifies that Socrates does not make a life of it, and that he believes himself to have a more urgent task, looking into himself.[46] But even in reaffirming the importance of self-knowledge to Socrates Plato is not overturning the Aristophanic image. Far from presenting Socrates as interested solely in pursuits abstracted from living well, Aristophanes too dramatizes Socrates' interests in self-knowledge, as we have seen. Self-knowledge is also the central theme of the *Phaedrus*, and it just as much gets obscured, by some readers, behind its concerns with *eros* and rhetoric.[47] So in writing a dialogue about Socrates' commitment to the Delphic imperative, Plato has not abandoned Aristophanes' portrayal. It would be better to say that Plato has rectified the tales about Socrates. Socrates does not simply engage in two novel pursuits—practising myth-rationalization and pursuing

[42] On Socrates' use of myth in the *Phaedrus*, see D.S. Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's* Phaedrus (Cambridge, 2012) with C. Moore, 'Socrates among the mythographers: review of D.S. Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's* Phaedrus', *Polis* 30 (2013), 106–17 and C. Collobert, P. Destrée and F. González (edd.), *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (Leiden, 2012), chs. 14–15.

[43] On the way in which Socrates seems but is not actually similar, on a range of dimensions, to contemporary sophists, see Woodruff (n. 27).

[44] Sommerstein (n. 26), 3 believes that Socrates was 'singled out as a typical sophist'; that this classification of Socrates was untrue, 'Aristophanes either did not know or did not care'. Dover (n. 1), xxxvi–lvi is also extremely sceptical that Aristophanes knew or cared much about the details of Socrates' life and motivations. Konstan (n. 10), 85 and throughout takes a balanced position between 'hodge-podge' and derivation from Socrates' actual practice.

[45] Yunis (n. 35), on 229c5 claims that Socrates' rectification 'is an obvious one', because it would take no great originality to invent it. All the same, Socrates is highly competent at making difficult things look easy; consider his two speeches in this dialogue. See Moore (n. 42) for the connection between Socrates and myth-rectification.

[46] In this, Plato is similar to Xen. *Mem.* 4.7.3, in which he argued that Socrates could do advanced geometry but chose not to, on the grounds that doing so would take up one's whole lifetime. See C. Moore, 'How to "know thyself" in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Apeiron* 47 (2014), 390–418 for an account of myth-rationalization and self-knowledge in the *Phaedrus*.

[47] On self-knowledge in the *Phaedrus*, Moore (n. 46); Belfiore (n. 20), 211–71; C. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's* Phaedrus (New Haven, 1986); Werner (n. 42), 35–8, 85–7. C. Moore, 'Deception and knowledge in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *AncPhil* 33 (2013), 97–100, id., 'Arguing for the immortality of the soul in the palinode of Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Ph&Rh* 47 (2014), 179–208 and D. Scott, 'Philosophy and madness in the *Phaedrus*', *OSAPh* 41 (2011), 169–200 show that the speeches in the dialogue—especially about the powers of love and speaking—demand of the listener careful assessment of his own susceptibility to the lovely, persuasive arguments, and that the conversation of the dialogue points out that demand.

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self-knowledge—related under the rubric, as I argued they are for Aristophanes, of learning to speak well. Plato asserts that myth-rectification is subordinated to the other practice. Plato's work unifies Socrates' interests by placing them under the central goal of attaining self-knowledge.[48]

The *Phaedrus* is replete with parallels to the *Clouds*. They indicate more than that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* as a general response to the *Clouds*. Their concentration in certain areas of the two texts shows that Plato meant to address specifically the Socratic attitude toward self-knowledge and myth-rectification. If one takes seriously the way the *Clouds* makes sense of Socrates' interest in natural science, one may see the continuity in the *Phaedrus* account. In both, Socrates is attentive to questions of plausibility but reflects on that interest without appeal to formulated principles of atheism or materialism. One may also see continuity between the Aristophanic and the Platonic pictures of Socrates' self-avowed interest in self-knowledge. In neither is self-knowledge concerned explicitly with general anthropological, psychical or metaphysical knowledge of the human being *per se*, but rather with one's commitments and the skills appropriate for meeting those commitments.

Attention to the dramatic, linguistic, character and thematic parallels between the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* may be prompted by Phaedrus' warning that he and Socrates are at risk of speaking like characters in comedies (τῶν κωμῳδῶν, 236c2). But even a basic familiarity with the two works brings out both fundamental and detailed similarities.

The *Phaedrus* follows the main action of the *Clouds*. Strepsiades wants to learn to speak effectively, seeks out a teacher and is open to the mode of speech that does not hew to norms of truth or justice.[49] His son—his heir to discipleship—is audience to a competition between two rhetorical ideals (886). Phaedrus, in turn, also wishes to become a great speaker, seeks out a teacher in Lysias and is open to the mode of speech which cares only for what is persuasive, not for what is excellent and true.[50] He then is audience to a competition between (an absent) Lysias and Socrates (235c5–236b8, 257c1–4). Both Strepsiades and Phaedrus, by the end, drop their interest in unjust rhetoric (1462–3; 278b5) and decide to revere the gods (1509, 279c6).

Plato's dialogue explicitly adapts the motivation for the play's main action. Strepsiades' desire for education arises from the debt he has incurred from his son's love of horses and chariot-racing, as is frequently referenced.[51] This love is articulated in Pheidippides' name, the horse-based etymology of which Strepsiades discusses at great length (62–74). The Cloud chorus, in a most significant choral ode, calls the sun a charioteer, literally a horse-guider (ἱππονώμαν, 571).[52] The *Phaedrus* begins with a reference to Pindar's ode to a charioteer (227b9–10),[53] features a chariot and

[48] Contrast this with the view of Vander Waerdt (n. 10), that Aristophanes had already implicitly unified Socrates' interests, both via a complete uptake of Diogenes of Apollonia's interests (on Socrates' Diogenism, see also Janko [n. 32]), and (reconstructing via Xenophon's account of Socrates) through an acknowledgement that some investigation of nature is appropriate to ethical inquiry.

[49] Strepsiades' desire to become an effective speaker: 98–9, 111–18, 130, 239, 422, 792; seeking a teacher: 182–3, 244; cynicism about truth: 245, 434, 883–5.

[50] Phaedrus' desire to become an effective speaker: 228a3–4, 228e3–4; seeking a teacher: 227a2, 227c7, 228a6-b6, 257b2-4, 278b8; cynicism about truth: 260a1–4.

[51] 14–32, 64, 83, 122, 1401, 1407; cf. 1264–5, 1298–302.

[52] See Blyth (n. 10), 41.

[53] See C. Moore, 'Pindar's charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus* (227b9–10)', *CQ* 64 (2014), 525–32 on the importance of this reference to understanding the dialogue.

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chariot-driver as the chief image of its central myth (246a6–255a1) and uses the example of intending to buy a horse as part of its discussion of rhetoric (260b1-c1).[54] While it is not Phaedrus' love of horses that causes him to need to study rhetoric, Socrates' desire to praise the (charioteer-depicted) philosophical lover in the right way—just as Pindar wanted to praise his charioteer-client Herodotus in the cited *First Isthmian*—is his reason for teaching good rather than bad speech (242b4–244a5).

The *Phaedrus* parallels, and perhaps mirrors, the *Clouds* in three other large-scale structural matters. First, Socrates' acceptance of Strepsiades' tuition at the *phrontistērion* explicitly parodies an initiation rite.[55] The *Phaedrus* also plays up the formulas of mystery religion.[56] Second, just as the *Clouds* jokes about being indoors, behind the *phrontistērion*'s walls, the *Phaedrus* thematizes the unusual case of being out of doors, beyond the town walls.[57] Both works use the contrasting language of urbane (ἀστεῖος, 205; 227d1) and rustic (ἀγροῖκος, 628, 138; 229e3). Third, the *phrontistērion* is introduced as the place in which people talk about the sky as a lid that surrounds us (περὶ ἡμᾶς οὗτος, 97). *Phaedrus*' palinode provides, in response, a different account about the hyperouranian region that encircles us, as it says it will itself celebrate (247c3–4). Socrates in the *Clouds* thinks that only heights foster pure thought (228–35);[58] in *Phaedrus*' palinode the charioteers seek the highest orbit for access to contemplation of the pure forms (247c6–248c2).

The degree to which we suspect that the *Phaedrus* recapitulates the *Clouds* expands when we look at details. Pheidippides frequently draws attention to Socrates being unshod (103, 363, 719);[59] Phaedrus, for reasons otherwise difficult to explain, also draws attention to the fact (229e3). Socrates' language of his students' rear-ends learning astronomy αὐτὸς καθ' αὑτὸν ('itself in terms of itself', 194) has an echo in the palinode's description of the circling chariots' astronomy, looking skyward at the abstractions themselves (247d5–6).[60] The *Clouds* is populated by references to every kind of intellectual and pseudo-intellectual. One blast of references comes when the recipients of the Clouds' nourishment are said to be 'sophists (σοφιστάς), diviners (θουριομάντεις), medical experts (ἰατροτέχνας), lay-abouts (σφραγιδονυχαργοκομήτας), song-twisters of spiraling choral odes (κυκλίων τε χορῶν ἀσματοκάμπτας) and men of atmospheric thought (ἄνδρας μετεωροφένακας)' (331–3). The *Phaedrus* also mentions the life of the sophist (σοφιστικός, 248e3), diviner (μαντικήν, 244a8–245a1), medical expert (ἰατρός, 268c3; cf. 268b7–269a3, 270b1-d1), lay-about (259a4–6), choral-ode twister (238d1–3) and man

[54] See also Woodbury (n. 28), 125–7 on another significant allusion to horses at 1105–10.

[55] 140–3, 252–74; cf. Konstan (n. 10), 86; Janko (n. 32), 69; M.C. Marianetti, *Religion and Politics in Aristophanes'* Clouds (Hildesheim, 1992); Nussbaum (n. 6), 73; S. Byl, 'Parodie d'une initiation dans les *Nuées* d'Aristophane', *RBPh* 58 (1980), 5–21; Dover (n. 1), xli and on 143, 254; Adkins (n. 37), 13–14; de Vries (n. 37), 1–3; Taylor (n. 4), 166–9.

[56] 248b1, 249c6-d1, 250b4-c5; cf. Yunis (n. 35), ad loc.; C. Schefer, 'Rhetoric as part of an initiation into the mysteries: a new interpretation of the Platonic *Phaedrus*', in A.N. Michelini (ed.), *Plato as Author: The Rhetoric of Philosophy* (Leiden, 2003); M.A. Rinella, 'Supplementing the ecstatic: Plato, the Eleusinian mysteries and the *Phaedrus*', *Polis* 17 (2000), 61–78.

[57] *Phrontistērion*'s walls: 92, 103, 132, 198–9, etc.; Athens' walls: 227a2–7, 230c6-e1. Cf. Segal (n. 16), 145–7 on the importance of the outside-inside contrast in the *Clouds*. Note also that Better Argument describes its ideal of education as going outside the town walls into a veritable *locus amoenus*, with olives, reeds, woodbine, catkins, poplars, elms and plane trees (1005–8); the *Phaedrus* famously describes Socrates narrating to Phaedrus their walk outside the town walls as they see a verdant peaceful shaded spot beneath a plane tree (229b1–2, 229b7–8, 230b2-c5).

[58] On the rich possible meanings of Socrates' basket-thinking, see Nussbaum (n. 6), 70, 72.

[59] Cf. Nussbaum (n. 6), 71.

[60] Cf. J. Broackes, 'Αὐτὸς καθ' αὑτόν in the *Clouds*: was Socrates himself a defender of separable soul and separate forms?', *CQ* 59 (2009), 46–59.

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of atmospheric thought (Anaxagoras and his μετεωρολογίας, 270a5). Both the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* include cicadas in their action; *Phaedrus*' cicadas—singing overhead, encouraging philosophical discussion and discouraging sleep—seem presaged by the bugs—fleas and gnats—that provide the inspiration for Socrates' and Chaerephon's investigations and hinder Strepsiades' sleeping and thinking.[61] Both the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* speak at length about the correct way for the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos* to act.[62] The two works also share reference to the oaks of Zeus (402; 275b5–6); to Prodicus (361; 267b3); to Pericles (213, 859; 269b6, 270a3); to Nestor as a great orator (1055–7; 261c2); and to covering one's head (727; 237a4).

These parallels suggest, even if they do not prove, that Plato has the *Clouds* in mind. The parallels about self-knowledge go further in suggesting direct allusion. The theme of self-knowledge arises in the *Clouds* with the presence of the Cloud chorus. As the Clouds enter, Strepsiades at first has a hard time seeing them. Eventually he can make them out.

Soc.: And you didn't know that they're goddesses, or believe (ἐνόμιζες) it?
Str.: God no; I thought they were mist and dew and smoke.
Soc.: You didn't [*sc*. realize they're divine] because you're unaware that they nourish a great many sophists … and men of highflown pretension, whom they maintain as do-nothings because they compose music about these Clouds.
Str.: So that's why they compose verses like 'dire downdraft of humid clouds zigzaggedly braceleted', and 'plaits of hundred-headed Typhus' [πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ], and 'blasting squalls' [πρημαινούσας τε θυέλλας], and then 'airy scudders crooked of talon, birds swimming on high, and rain of waters from dewy clouds' …
[…]
Soc.: Have you ever looked up and seen a cloud resembling a centaur (κενταύρῳ), or a leopard, or a wolf, or a bull?
Str.: By Zeus I have. So what?
Soc.: Clouds turn into anything they want. Thus, if they see a savage with long hair … they mock his obsession [σκώπτουσαι τὴν μανίαν] by making themselves look like centaurs. (329–38, 346–50; trans. Henderson, modif.)

In these first lines, the nature of the Clouds is doubly ambiguous. The Clouds are both meteorological phenomena and divine beings. And they are both ideal objects of veneration and reflections of a person's idiosyncrasies. They reveal something particular about their viewers, as they do when they come to look like centaurs.

In the *Phaedrus*, in a remarkable parallel, Phaedrus asks whether Socrates believes a tale told about Boreas, the god of the north wind. Socrates says that certain *sophoi* would not believe this tale involving an anthropomorphic divine being; they would repair it by giving it a meteorologically plausible account of a violent wind (πνεῦμα, 229c7), and Socrates goes on to give the details of such an account. He says that these accounts are impressive, but, unfortunately, the task of creating them is never-ending. This he expresses by saying that the *sophoi* could not stop at the Boreas tale; they would need next to rectify (ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, 229d5) the stories about centaurs (τὸ τῶν ἱπποκενταύρων εἶδος, 229d5) and other beasts (he gives three examples, as did the Aristophanic Socrates). Because he does not have time to rectify them,

[61] Cicadas and other insects in *Clouds*: 1360; 145–68, 831; 634–5, 695–9, 706–30. In the *Phaedrus*: 230c2, 258e6–259d7. Just as the cicadas report intellectual conversation to the Muses through their songs (259b4-d6), the Clouds nourish intellectuals who μουσοποιοῦσιν ('make Muse-related song', 334).
[62] On the *Clouds*, see Nussbaum (n. 6), 55–6.

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Socrates says he accepts what is popularly believed, what is in common circulation (τῷ νομιζομένῳ, 230a2). But he does not ignore such stories altogether. He uses them for reflecting on himself. He wonders—in his sole example here—whether he is 'more many-plaited than Typhon' (Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον, 230a4), a resounding echo of πλοκάμους … Τυφῶ.[63]

It must be more than coincidence that in two brief passages about self-knowledge both Aristophanes and Plato discuss weather gods, *sophoi*, centaurs, Typhus/Typhon and scepticism about mythological beings. Plato must want to draw critical attention to Aristophanes' linking of Socratic myth-rationalization and Socratic self-knowledge. By doing so, he accepts the external picture there described: an inquisitive, innovative, pedagogically invested, interrogative, character-revealing man. He even accepts that Socrates found fascinating, at least in principle, the fields pursued in the *phrontistērion*: cosmology, entomology, linguistics (see 244b6-d1), myth-rectification and helping people attain self-knowledge. Plato's rectification of the Socrates myth limits itself to explaining the relationship between Socrates' interests. According to Plato, the sciences are to be pursued to the extent they can help one attain self-knowledge, and not if they cannot. To attain self-knowledge, Plato means to emphasize—though Aristophanes had already made the thought clear—is not, however, merely to do science on oneself and thereby to acquire self-related information. It is to work to understand the ideals that motivate one's actions, and to seek to conform oneself to those ideals.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This article has argued for a way to read Aristophanes' Socrates as a coherent and intellectually substantive character, one who advocates knowing oneself and, as it turns out, speaking well. Evidence comes from inside the play: Strepsiades' echoing, Socrates' conversational tendencies, the Cloud chorus' activities and a running joke. Evidence also comes from outside the play: the parallels and allusions in Plato's *Phaedrus*. That Aristophanes has drawn a coherent and interesting character does not mean that he approves of his character or of the man whom his character parodies; demands of dramatic realism or aesthetic excellence may explain his conception of the play's antagonist. I suspect that Aristophanes' connection of Socrates with self-knowledge gives evidence that the historical Socrates cared about self-knowledge in a notable way, but I have not argued that point here.[64]

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[63] No commentary on the *Phaedrus* or the *Clouds*, to my knowledge, has identified this parallel, and yet I think it resolves much of the trouble in making sense of Socrates' association of himself with Typhon. See R. Brouwer, 'Hellenistic philosophers on *Phaedrus* 229b-30a', *Cambridge Classical Journal* 54 (2008), 30–48, for the post-classical struggles to make sense of this passage. See LSJ s.v. Τῡφῶν for the conflation with Τυφωεύς/Τῡφώς by the time of Pindar.

[64] I do suggest it in C. Moore, *Socrates* and *Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge, 2015). I thank several very helpful anonymous referees and Elizabeth Belfiore for comments on earlier drafts of this paper; none is to be assumed to agree with the conclusions drawn here.

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