

Rhetorical Ethics in the Comedy of Aristophanes

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Alex and Martha Larson, for showing me the value of curiosity and pursuing knowledge.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

*ô despoinai, deomai toinun humôn touti panu micron,
tôn Hellênôn einai me legein hekaton stadiousin ariston.*

O Mistresses, I ask of you this very small favor,
Of all the Greeks that I be the best in speaking by one hundred miles.
-Clouds, 429-430

Understanding the role of the comic playwright Aristophanes in the history of persuasive speech and performance is no small task. Rhetoric scholars and classicists often consider his plays testimonial documents for the origins and practice of oratory in the late 5th century BCE in Athens; *Clouds* in particular is regularly treated as contemporary evidence that the sophists were peddlers of logical snake-oil, teaching unscrupulous students how to take advantage of their fellow citizens purely for selfish ends. This point of emphasis reduces Aristophanes to the role of historical witness without giving him credit for his own acts of social commentary and intellectual contributions to the *polis*. Other attention is given to Aristophanes as pandering moralist, decrying the outrageous and inimical behaviors corrupting a once prosperous city and its many institutions. This avenue of research routinely minimizes the playwright's influence because his anti-war plays appear to have little practical effect on Athenian politics, and focuses mainly on institutional critique without solutions for the audience to consider. My purpose in this dissertation is to draw attention to Aristophanes as an ethicist who uses comedy to reorient audience values and behaviors. Using Kenneth Burke's theory of the hortatory negative, I argue that Aristophanes depicts his characters as abhorrent models for oratorical behavior, suggesting implicitly to the audience via inference that an alternative type of speaker may engage in more ethical oratory and thereby provide more effective and beneficial leadership in the *polis*. As introduction to my analysis in this chapter, I consider the performance culture and politics of Old Comedy, the rhetorical power and advantage of using ridicule over more traditional persuasive forms, review the scholarship of Aristophanes and his relationship to rhetoric and oratory, present arguments about the ethical character of comedy, and conclude with a discussion of Burke's theory of the hortatory negative and its relationship to Aristophanes.

I. Performance Culture in 5th c. BCE Athens

Athenian culture in the late 5th c. BCE was marked by an array of intersecting values and practices, all of which fashioned a keen identity for democratic politics and

communal welfare. Male citizens were encouraged to take an active interest and participation in the body politic, serving as soldiers, officials, or members of the voting public. They enjoyed and promoted agonistic competitions throughout society, through such varied fora as the deliberative assembly, which established public policy, or by judging plays in the polis-wide dramatic festivals. At the heart of these contexts lie oratorical performance and a budding understanding of rhetorical theory. Citizens engaged in combative arguments before audiences of their peers to carry influence, decide important issues of the day, and construct a uniquely democratic identity based “upon larger habits of thought, feeling, and imagination” compared with other areas of the ancient Mediterranean world (Halliwell “Audience” 141).

These values and the democratic ideology they privileged encouraged citizens to adopt certain practices which would fashion them into a robust, ideal member of the *polis*. Although a person had to possess the proper birthright in order to be granted the benefits of citizenship, active participation in Athenian culture was equally as important and considered a core behavior for this ideal citizen. The number of citizens exceeded the available positions of leadership within the political infrastructure, so the majority of voting-eligible males would contribute by serving as members of audiences. Legislative debates may have been guided by individual orators, but the audience in attendance would make the final determination over which policies were accepted and rejected. Advocacy in the lawcourts would have been a pointless exercise without juries to provide

verdicts to cases. Even the plays performed at dramatic festivals required an audience to give opinions about which production had been the most enjoyable.¹

It may seem like a pedestrian act to hoot and holler, boo or clap for a play, but this active participation was heavily encouraged for all citizens. Unlike the other oratorical fora, it was more convenient and manageable for citizens to watch tragedies and comedies because the festival environment was a handy justification to rest from work. The additional attendance also creates a more democratic environment because more of the citizenry is represented in the same place (Cartledge 17). Even the poor of Athens could attend the festivals through the *Theoric* fund, which provided money for citizens to pay the entrance fee if they could not otherwise afford it. This fund was considered so vital to the democratic process and conception of citizenship, that it “was protected by law: it was a prosecutable offense even to propose changes to the fund” (Goldhill “Audience”67). The *Theoric* fund was such a hallmark of the festival experience that it persisted well into the 4th c., only being abolished by a Macedonia-supported oligarchy aiming to reduce democratic power (Csapo and Slater 287). Even if they were not trained orators themselves, great value was placed on witnessing a speech performance and rendering a judgment on it.² One could say that political involvement was an ethical imperative for the Athenian citizen.

Oratory served as the object of audience judgment in a wide range of contexts. Apart from the direct speaking situations involving an individual policy, court case, or play, the

¹ Goldhill (“Audience” 1997) provides a robust discussion of the roles of citizens at the dramatic festivals, including pre-ritual events and the importance of participation (55ff).

² Cartledge (1997) presents more detailed information about the wages owed to jurors, indicating again the institutional importance of participating as a witness to oratory at political events (10).

act of addressing the audience worked to solidify community values and create a comprehensive culture of debate and nascent intellectualism. Halliwell explains that oratory's "forms and modes of discourse permeated well beyond the official frameworks of political and civic institutions, and impinged upon larger habits of thought, feeling, and imagination" ("Between" 141). As sophistry became more prominent around Athens, both speakers and audiences recognized that an effective speech or performance was the key to securing influence, power, personal advancement, as well as benefits for the rest of the *polis*. Even if one believes that there was not yet a systematized and disciplinary understanding of rhetorical theory in the late 5th c., more people were concerned with using speech as a powerful tool and recognizing its uses and abuses (Halliwell "Between" 125).

Oratory was intimately bound with the Athenian appreciation for competition and agonistic exchange (Poulakos 173). The format of the speech would vary based on circumstances and audience expectation, but would likely take one of two shapes. First, a lengthier and more elaborate monologue (*rhexis*) offered by a speaker to describe a position, outline a policy, or set the narrative scene for an argument or drama. Second, and often found in dramatic works, a shorter and more pointed exchange (*stichomythia*) of opinions, insults, or dialogue to carry an argument more fluidly (Goldhill "Language" 127). Whether the competition took place at a more protracted, sophisticated level or worked as dialogic refutations, Athenians came to expect some kind of conflict in their public addresses. Moreover, this expectation was not limited to speaking situations, as Athenian culture promoted the same value in physical experiences such as cockfights,

athletic competitions, and privileged honor attached to military endeavors (Cartledge 12-13). The ideal citizen would appreciate and recognize the value in this type of spirited competition, especially regarding political issues.

II. The Politics of Old Comedy

The cultural institution of Old Comedy created a unique intersection of these values for competition, skill in speaking, and political participation. There is no doubt that drama was a profoundly political institution, as evident from the opening ceremonies. As Meier explains (56-57), tribute from the members of the Delian League were collected before the performances and

the orphans of war who had just come of age entered the theatre in solemn procession. They wore for the first time the armour which the city had given them, after having taken care of their upbringing. A herald announced that they, whose fathers had fallen as brave warriors in battle, would now be released from the care of the people. They were given seats of honor.

Moreover, the arrangements and selection of the *khoregoi*, as well as other responsibilities, were decided by government administrators (Cartledge 18). Unlike other oratorical fora, a greater proportion of the citizenry was able to attend and participate in the event, with numbers estimated between 14,000 – 17,000 present (Goldhill “Audience” 55-58).

The winner of the festival competition was determined by a small jury of 10 citizens, who were allowed to take audience reaction into account when casting their vote, therefore the process was heavily dependent on audience participation. Moreover,

there is evidence that the plays had a strong effect on the audience. Apart from clapping and providing a positive response, Goldhill explains that audiences could also boo loudly enough for actors to leave the stage. Audience reaction could be so intense, that playwrights could personally suffer if a performance was not well-received: “A play about the historical event of the Persian sack of Miletus, an act the Athenians failed to prevent, so moved the audience that the author, Phrynichus, was fined and the play banned” (“Reading” 76). This demonstrates that attendance at the theatre was not a passive action, that its role in developing and interacting with ideals of citizenship was very much a dynamic and interactive process.

It is obvious to note that oratory and public speaking are a signature element of live performance, but what is less obvious is how or why playwrights used these speeches to influence the audience. Scholars disagree on whether the plays should be taken as serious political commentary for the late 5th c., mere comedic entertainment, or some combination of the two (Goldhill “Poet’s” 194). The very nature of the satirical performance presents a shifting ground on which the live spectator or modern reader must interpret often conflicting evidence. For this reason, some argue that “*Everything* in comedy, including anything that seems to be an authorial claim or a programmatic statement, is to be imagined as being inside ‘quotation marks’” (Wright 10). Because no testimony from or about the playwrights explains the purpose of their comedy and satirical commentary (if any), it is tempting to make as few assumptions as possible, pushing the political dimensions to the margins of interpretation. Malcolm Heath argues from the polarized position that the ambiguous nature of comedy compels a rather

conservative interpretation from both the critic and audience member. Because humor is such a slippery concept that is always governed by a concrete context and historical period, he advises caution when looking too deeply into the political meaning of Aristophanes' plays ("Aristophanes" 242).

The greatest interpretive obstacle for Heath is intentionality. Aristophanes has not provided a clear answer to his political ambitions (the *parabaseis* notwithstanding) and no additional playwrights or critics can illuminate how seriously one is meant to treat his comedy, therefore the politics of Old Comedy remain an open question. He explains that there is certainly conflict between some prominent orators of the late 5th c. and Aristophanes (most notably Cleon), but that the two are not in direct competition for influence over the polis. He continues ("Aristophanes" 238):

But for the comic poet, unlike the orator, winning the competition did not entail establishing direct competitive ascendancy over the victim of the abuse, since the comic poet was not in direct competition with the victim. Henderson's statement that the comic poets "argue...purposefully" is not in dispute, therefore; the question is, What was that purpose.

If we treat the different speech genres as Heath suggests, there is certainly some influence occurring but not one that pits playwright directly against demagogue; although they are both addressing the same audience, their purposes must be more circumspect and pragmatic given the context of performance.

His answer to these concerns is that one can detect political leaning or perhaps a political component to the characterizations and plots, but that there is no direct evidence of political *ends*. He summarizes his position succinctly: "Politics was the material of

comedy, but comedy did not in turn aspire to be a political force” (“Political” 42). As evidence, he refers to the festival context for the *Lenaia* or *Dionysia* and the need to win over the audience to secure victory in the dramatic competition. If the path to victory requires a certain kind of material such as the skewering of key public figures, Aristophanes must provide his audience with what they expect (“Political” 43). Moreover, Heath claims that the festival context may be considered political in a very narrow sense, “that is, it may be a celebration of the polis” (“Poetics” 65). With this perspective, it would not be practical to directly engage the issues of the day for fear of offending partisans judging the competition, and that it is easier to focus on Panhellenic themes that appeal to wide range of spectator.

Heath also addresses the broad roles of poetry, positing that some forms (such as tragedy) have a didactic function in society but that Old Comedy is largely exempt from this duty. He reduces the 5th c. Athenian audience’s desire to a simplistic drive for entertainment without significant critical thinking; this argument stems largely from the idea that Athenian drama (including tragedy) does not have covert or hidden meanings within its plays and that the average Athenian audience member is not looking for such signs in the plot, characters, acting, etc. The only political activity that Heath identifies is “an uncontroversial, pan-Athenian kind” (Poetics 70). This position distinguishes the political topicality of drama from the overt, partisan policies and advocacy of other oratorical fora while still situating festival performance into an institutional Athenian context.

The final point for Heath's conservative interpretation concerns the narrative content of Athenian drama. Compared with the more thorough and explicit advocacy in the assembly, Old Comedy is short on solutions and long on laughs. It is not unreasonable to examine the effects on the audience, which do not appear to be lasting or consequential. Cleon does not appear to suffer any permanent indignities to his reputation and continues to be a powerful political force despite Aristophanes' continued attention. Under this perspective, the playwright is neither a policy wonk nor a figure sufficiently influential enough to move the citizens who can directly submit proposals to the assembly. If the playwright is only concerned with putting on a good show, "The anodyne proposition that peace is nicer than war may generate good drama, but it lacks political substance" (Heath "Aristophanes" 240). A playwright concerned with winning the dramatic competition cannot afford to dwell significantly on the minutia of wartime policy because the audience can already consume this content in other institutions and, perhaps more importantly, few authors can resolve this content into something legitimately funny.

In contrast to Heath, a number of other scholars have taken a less conservative interpretation of the purpose and effects of Old Comedy, arguing that its political edge concerns not just mere entertainment but active political engagement with fellow citizens. Beginning with the issue of intentionality, Konstan agrees that it is difficult to pinpoint a single authorial viewpoint from Aristophanes' collected work; however, there is a political delineation that becomes consistent as some viewpoints are privileged and others are discouraged ("Greek" 6):

There is no unambiguous “Aristophanes” within the texts. There is, however, a complex of ideologically valorized elements that are not wholly reconcilable with each other, but which in combination yield determinate ideological effects: not a political line, necessarily, but an angle of vision, from which some social possibilities are occluded and others are rendered especially visible.

Heath concedes this very point (“Aristophanes” 241), that the playwright has favorite targets and patently ignores their rivals (Nicias and his friends are routinely spared the Aristophanic treatment), but where he sees this as only political topicality Konstan traces a political temperament that nudges the audience gently in a particular direction without coming across as direct political policy. It does not matter if Aristophanes has a direct political agenda because the content of the plays is guiding the audience to criticize key factions and demagogues. Konstan argues that there is no single “author” present in the text so much as a series of ideological elements, thus the issue of intentionality becomes unimportant. Regardless of Aristophanes’ intentions as a man and author, the plays speak for themselves and present a consistent vision about demagoguery and its effects on the *polis*, and presents an implied course of action for any concerned citizen spurred to action.

The next logical step is to consider the more broad purpose of the festivals, referred to by Konstan as the “social interpretation of ancient comedy” (“Greek” 5). If Aristophanes and the other playwrights are not considered partisans as political as Cleon, there must be another explanation for the origin and continued participation of the citizens for the dramatic events. Some scholars, such as Goldhill, believe “the public space of the festival becomes not merely the arena for a contest between poets, but also

for contestation of the values, attitudes and beliefs of the citizens” (“Poet’s” 174).

Henderson argues the “Festivals were one of the chief ways in which the city organized itself, established who was who, and demonstrated what was important” (“Dēmos” 287).

This perspective, echoed others by Meier, Ober, and Silk³, positions comedy less as entertaining if somewhat political distraction and more as social and political influence.

When the *polis* comes to celebrate as one all-encompassing group of citizens, there is opportunity to take stock of the previous and current issues of the day, explore them in a different yet socially permissible manner, and make considerations for the future identity of the community. Although the playwright and his works are sources of influence, scholars do not interpret his efforts or the plays’ arguments as direct attempts to draft policy, manipulate, or cajole the audience into adopting certain beliefs or behaviors. Silk argues compellingly that the extant Aristophanic plays never present or defend an explicit call to action (305), a position also taken up by Heath (“Political” 42).⁴

There is sound reason to think that the “mere entertainment” argument is overly reductive and simplistic, as the terms “serious” and “humorous” can coexist in a number of rhetorical situations. Hybrid genres are more of a modern concept than something

³ See Meier (1929) for exploration of the ability for drama to develop and maintain public values: “It seems possible that we have here a rather special example of a social body carrying out quite publicly the maintenance and development of its mental infrastructure” (4). Ober and Strauss (1990) explain why drama can possess such potent influence: “indirect political symbolism is more resonant with meaning than a blatant and straightforward political speech. Politics can be powerfully manifested in apparently nonpolitical institutions, such as rites of passage, funerals, and drama” (“Drama” 249). For additional corroboration, see Silk (2000).

⁴ See also Redfield (1990): “[Tragedy] is an art of understanding and compassion, and does not tell us what to do next. In this sense tragedy is after all detached from history; like social science it is ‘wertfrei,’ value free. It reveals the conditions of action, but cannot reach that ground of action which is *themis*” (“Drama” 326).

derived from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but there is nothing to suggest that an ancient speaker or author could not attempt to evoke more than one emotion within a single work (Silk 309-310). The experience of living in 5th c. Athens could not have been so segmented and rigidly structured that politics was reserved only for those occasions when the assembly debated proposals, as Meier explains: "It is surely clear that politics, when it becomes the very stuff of life for a citizenry, is not limited to its commonplace definition" (21). The converse would also be true, that festive environments were not the only situations at which public humor was permitted; therefore, it is not necessary to relegate the comedic plays to the status of being written only for laughs. The reduction of these situations and their rhetorical expectations to a single, unalterable purpose will inevitably blunt the corners and minimize interpretive possibilities so that one response is considered appropriate (Silk 319). Such an interpretation robs any rhetorical work of its sophistication, relegates context to an unchanging constant, and ties the hands of a critic looking for new insight.⁵

Viewing Old Comedy as a more versatile rhetorical practice shows that the genre has a distinct advantage over traditional forms of oratory. Its explicitly humorous side allows what Ober and Strauss refer to as "deep play," where one may "spell out externally an internal truth" ("Drama" 246). Not every lesson is absorbed through the rigors of schoolwork, political campaigning, or waging war — these situations do not

⁵ Silk (2000) makes a similar argument about the reductive purposes separating tragedy and comedy, in that they are not direct opposites as commentators often assume (55). Furthermore, Silk points out that tragedy and comedy are often described as a pair, with tragedy acting as the first and privileged term. This preference demonstrates that tragedy defines comedy by its presence and prior characteristics and that comedy has been treated as the secondary and less important term, although strictly speaking they are not direct opposites (82-83)

satisfy the whole experience of being a human and ignore much of the social nature of humanity. Narratives, comical and otherwise, held a prominent place in Athenian culture, often acting as a guide for the values and behavior allowed for one to participate in society. Failing to count them among the formative experiences of both children and adults again reduces the Athenian political experience to a fixed number of situations and excludes the possibility that a citizen can be influenced outside these formal boundaries. An idea hammered out in the assembly could be reshaped, refuted, or reaffirmed depending on any number of additional influences, from the everyday conversation between citizens to the more stylized messaging of the festivals. As Goldhill explains (“Reading” 65-66):

The sense of the involvement of a citizen in the life of a city goes far beyond the democratic institutions of power, and a description of the city cannot sensibly limit itself to a history or description of the formal institutions of power. Indeed, it is this complexity of power relations and possible rivalries within such a polymorphous system that makes the political analysis of Athens so complex — or, for Plato and others, that makes its order so unwieldy and unstable.

The business of politics is *not* constrained to one argumentative arena and may take a number of different forms, demonstrating that one need not engage in “pure” persuasion to effect social and political change.

III. The Rhetorical Power of Ridicule

The paradoxical intersection of humorous advice and serious political influence is where comedy, the dramatic festival, and the power of narrative find their institutional

roles in the *polis*. Comedic narrative possesses the power to *mediate* and *regulate* values and behaviors, even if the genre of Old Comedy and the context of dramatic competition do not allow for overt discussions or the satisfying resolution of political issues via directing voting. These narrative performances can shape and redirect audience understanding of and emotional reaction to individual people and whole classes of citizens, and undermine or strengthen the ways they influence the policies, identity, and survivability of the polis. As Meier explains, the building and maintenance of this mental infrastructure is what Max Weber refers to as “nomological knowledge,” or “the general, overarching and normative knowledge to which we relate all our thinking, actions and experience, and in which these must all be incorporated if things are to seem ‘right’” (34-35). It is perhaps more useful to think of Old Comedy as providing a *moral orientation* for the audience member concerning his relationship to peers, the *polis* as community, and how the individual and collective citizenry can interact in the most beneficial manner.

The most potent force in Old Comedy is the ability to mock and ridicule targets with abandon. These attacks are not value-free judgments made only to impress the audience, because even the most flattering humor has an undercutting tone of criticism. Athenian citizens had many different ways to censure behavior, through both the formal procedures of litigation and the *euthunai* regularly performed to audit the work of public officials. Old Comedy provides an alternative and less formal approach to identifying undesirable social behaviors and drawing attention to them in public. Henderson convincingly argues that “ridicule uses complaints about disruptive but otherwise

unpunishable behavior (that is, gossip and malice) as a form of social control” (“Dēmos” 295). One reserves ridicule for when formal redress is not permissible or perhaps appropriate, but nevertheless is necessary for the *polis* to strike back at individuals or groups who are engaging in behaviors that should be discouraged. This affirmation of community norms has the additional advantage of being remarkably difficult to argue against; to acknowledge the nature of the accusations and rail against them, as modern politicians such as Rick Santorum have recently discovered, implies that they have the power to legitimately damage one’s reputation and ability to provide leadership. Even if the mockery becomes outright slander and the targets have the weight of truth on their sides, a good joke is difficult to forget or completely put out of mind. This one-sided advantage may be unfair, Henderson concludes, “But it is the fate of prominent people to live, or die, by their public images” (“Dēmos” 304-305).

The comic playwrights could mediate these unpunishable behaviors and promote more positive values through the strategic ridicule of scapegoats. This technique creates a bond with the audience, in which the playwright emphasizes ideas already in circulation and that allow him to sympathize with the plight and values of the common Athenian. Once a certain commonality is established⁶, the audience views the scapegoat as an abnormal or toxic *other* that is not representative of their ideal society. The current political and social landscape is not presented intact, however, because “everything appears in exaggerated or distorted form, as it might be in a refracting mirror” (Wright

⁶ Borrowman and Kmetz draw on Kenneth Burke to explain the need for developing commonality in order to influence an audience (2011): “Thus division creates identification, the discomfort of being separate from one another causing the natural human need to find points of commonality, parallels in ideology, shared beliefs and values, and enemies” (281).

16). The playwright can present this altered and perhaps even false equivalence of Athenian society because he has established a certain trust with the audience; humor tends to connect people quickly, and it is easier to bond with someone when you have a common enemy or mutual hostility to something else (Redfield “Drama” 330).

The scapegoat may be an individual capable of great damage to the *polis*, but his real value lies in representing an entire class of similar people. Aristophanes used many of the same targets across his plays not only for the potential to make a good joke the audience would understand, but because these figures are associated with military agendas, disruptive influences in the assembly, and initiating major policy that may benefit themselves over the public.⁷ As a member of the literary profession, Aristophanes does not have the power to provide a coherent counterpoint or argue directly against the demagogues, which would violate the expectations of the audience and may not even play to his persuasive strengths. Instead, he can give voice to “the spectators’ resentment of this kind of selfishness at a time when the city is fighting for its survival. The spectators feel that something has been done about [a demagogue], even if nothing has been changed, and hope that people like [the demagogue], present and future, will take a lesson, even if they can choose not to” (Henderson “Dēmos” 295-296).

The people similar to the scapegoat are encouraged to take notice of his treatment at the comic playwright’s hands, because such shame-inducing attacks are especially

⁷ As Ober and Strauss explain (1990), the radical democracy of Athens did not create a fully egalitarian society and even distribution of power amongst all citizens, thus abuse of political office was a legitimate threat to the prosperity of the *polis*: “Despite a wide acceptance of the principle of political equality among the citizens, Athenian political society was never socially or economically homogenous. The citizenry remained hierarchically stratified in terms of class and status, and the interests of elite citizens were sometimes at odds with those of the mass of ordinary citizens” (“Drama” 237).

personal in a timocratic society (Goldhill “Poet’s 185). Cairns argues that it is only possible to reduce or tarnish one’s honor in such an environment through the presence of an audience: “One feels shame before those who witness one’s actions, and focuses on what the members of that audience may say or think of one” (15). This feeling of vulnerability implies that such a target is being seen in an appropriate or unfavorable context, such as being observed naked when everyone else is fully clothed (Williams 78). Moreover, the scapegoat could be demonized through a combination of verbal jokes and nonverbal, physical representations. The festive environment is not suited to point and counter-point argumentation, where evidence is presented in a more logical and summary fashion (Silk 334). The additional, visible layer of buffoonery via slapstick comedy and unflattering masks reinforces that the scapegoat is subject to public shame because the audience may witness the fictional manner and consequences of his poor behaviors.⁸ The result of these characterizations is that the scapegoat has great difficulty in disproving or using rational argument against effective comedy, therefore he and the others of his class are left in a rhetorically disadvantageous position.

Using scapegoats as a stand-in for the larger class of disreputable or dangerous individuals suggests that the audience can alter the status quo and redirect Athenian values that may have drifted away from ethical values. Redfield outlines the concept of “antistructure,” which describes not only our understanding of classical Athens but the kind of culturally accepted mockery that can take place across the world in various time

⁸ Also drawing on Kenneth Burke, Hawhee (2006) argues that “words as human analogs of barks or yaps become re-infused with emotive force, while bodily disposition and movement exhibit purpose” (“Language” 339). The power of comedic narrative hinges not just on poetic cleverness but the ability for nonverbal representations to reinforce the caricatures and memorably frame the scapegoat in a negative, censuring way.

periods (“Drama” 328). Maintaining order or structure in any culture creates a set of binding restrictions that comedy deconstructs and criticizes. By lowering even the highest individuals and values to a position and status that may be occupied by everyone, hierarchy is brought to a more democratic level. This happens through the humiliating processes of scatology, obscenity, and allowing the audience to see the scapegoat vulnerable and naked.⁹ The trappings of position and power are stripped away so that the elite are made equal to everyone else. The status quo becomes marginalized and reframed so that that “Individuals are deprived of their dignity — but in the process, mankind in general, embodied in the audience, recovers a sense of power and liberty” (“Drama” 328).

The narrative technique of critiquing society through a representative figure is a signature characteristic of Old Comedy because it avoids the thorny issue of dealing with audience complicity for current problems. According to the Old Oligarch, the collective citizenry “is pragmatic but unprincipled and unaccountable. It makes policy in its own self-interest but cannot be made to take any responsibility. Instead, it can blame the individual who has advocated or called for the vote on a policy or an agreement” (Henderson “Dēmos” 275). Political speech must work around the same limitation because even if the *demos* is directly responsible for voting a failed policy into action, they do not have the desire or wherewithal to admit their culpability. Old Comedy also cannot risk antagonizing the voting audience because any direct criticism would lead

⁹ Bostdorff (1991), quoting Brummett, explains that comedy is “more deterministic than is tragedy concerning the inevitability of sin, for it shows that error arises not from the occasional violation of principle but from the human condition” (6). This idea highlights that the imperfections of the human condition (which are felt and experienced by elite and commoner alike) will ultimately lead to corruption, mistakes, and the need for a rebalancing of social values.

them to act defensively or angrily, which would greatly reduce the chance of a playwright receiving top honors at the festival. This obstacle is not insurmountable, however, because any rich or elite citizen could be mocked so that the greater majesty of the *polis* and *demos* would be preserved (Henderson “Dēmos” 295).

It is also crucial that the audience recognize a clear difference between the scapegoat and themselves, otherwise the playwright risks making the critical attacks strike too close to home for the voting public. Old Comedy revels in using scathing and distorted caricatures to flesh out some jokes, which presents difficulties for the modern reader in determining whether an attack is based in truth or fiction.¹⁰ The playwright had enormous freedom to take an existing belief or perception about a fellow citizen and bring it to an absurd pole. One must note, however, that not simply any citizen was treated as a target for comic attention; Aristophanes aligns himself against the more popular demagogues associated with Cleon and never directly attacks his political rival Nicias or his allies (Henderson “Dēmos” 273).¹¹ Cleon is never given credit for political or military victories, demonstrating that Aristophanes is under no compulsion to present a fair and balanced approach to any character in his plays.¹²

¹⁰ Acknowledging this difficulty, Timmerman and Schiappa maintain there is still valuable insight in engaging comedic texts: “Although we must recognize the use of exaggeration for humorous effect, these characterizations give us insight into the political and social practice that we typically do not see in prose texts” (76).

¹¹ Henderson (1990) explains this point further: “Those who claim that the comic poets were mere humorists must explain why they consistently and one-sidedly championed the position of the ‘best’: like Thucydides, they refrain from criticizing Nicias (who could just as fairly be called a slave and a seller as Kleon); they explain away, play down, or even omit to mention the victories both military and financial that were achieved by the new politicians; and they hold profoundly ambivalent views about the ability of the *dēmos* at large to choose responsible leaders (like themselves)” (“Dēmos” 284).

¹² For further elaboration concerning the types of characters and plots in drama, Gredley (1996) discusses the flexibility of characters to make choices and influence their environments in comedy, while Taplin (1996) presents some of the major differences between tragedy and comedy.

As long as the audience can see the tangible difference between themselves and this *other* citizen, there is room for the plays to present a competing vision of Athens compared with its present state. For the comic distortions to have such an effect, the audience must be able to recognize that there is an existing person or behavior being parodied and that the new version is an exaggeration of the old. Goldhill argues that this realization is the first necessary step for crafting any narrative parody.¹³ The audience is not told explicitly that a parody is occurring because the festival environment more or less guarantees that Old Comedy (excluding the later Aristophanic plays) will present this kind of material. The plays therefore operate through narrative enthymemes, being drawn together through the jokes, physical actions, and costumes from the characters. Because the argument is primarily an implicit one, the audience must infer who the target is, why they are being parodied, and what the objective lesson is to be gleaned from the dramatic experience.

The comic (mis)representations comment on the perceived state of affairs in the *polis* so that they may be transformed into a more beneficial, potential reality for the citizens. Konstan remarks that many plays in the Aristophanic corpus reflect an idealized, utopian perspective that often reaches back to events and circumstances in the past, much as members of an elder group look wistfully back towards a golden age of values and prosperity and lament the moral or economic lapses of the most recent generation (“Greek” 8). Even if Aristophanes does not desire the return of some

¹³ Goldhill (1991) explains that virtually any person or institution could become fodder for Old Comedy: “institutions such as the Assembly and Law-courts, public figures such as poets, generals and orators, rituals of social behavior and rituals of religious observance, all fall under the general rubric of an inversion or distortion of an assumed model, set in a new context, for comic effect – a rubric that remains the starting-point for definitions of parody.” (“Poet’s” 206)

idealized past circumstances, there is always an implicit (and sometimes direct) comparison between social conditions of the present and a future state without their ills, injustice, or pains. The plays hold out the possibility that Athens can live up to a higher ideal and that present circumstances are not the only ones available. We need not assume that universalism or equality is Aristophanes' endgame (as Konstan does), only that comedic plays invite the audience to think that a solution exists for Athens' struggles.¹⁴

The enthymematic structure of the plays situates the ethics of their arguments. Even if the plays do not instruct the audience on how to address Athens' troubles, they imply that the city can be saved with the proper intervention and that it is the ethical responsibility of the citizens to enact these changes.¹⁵ Commenting specifically on *Birds*, Henderson's argument may be writ large to the rest of the Aristophanic corpus: "Nephelokokkugia appears to be a superior alternative to Athens that implicitly criticizes the real Athens" ("Mass" 145). The Athenian audience must first recognize per Goldhill's description of parody that such a comparison is offered in the first place and note the differences and similarities between target and its new form ("Poet's 206-208). A second recognition must follow, inferring that the difference between these positive and negative characterizations also carry an implied judgment about the worth and

¹⁴ Silk (2000) also concurs with Konstan: "Aristophanic comedy's essential connection is, of course, with a pre-existing Athens and its citizens collective memory — of Marathon, of country life, of the festival institutions and their traditional celebratory resonances" (409-410). I argue that Aristophanes does sympathize with these past values, but that they are not the only means of comparison borne out by the plays.

¹⁵ Bonnstetter (2011) engages in criticism of modern American comedy to arrive at a similar conclusion; the character Bart in *Blazing Saddles* does not forsake the townspeople of Rock Ridge and the film does not condemn them; "they are fools for acting antagonistically towards Bart, and the film allows them to correct that behavior" (22). Even if Athens is currently plagued with serious social and political problems, Aristophanes would have the audience believe the city can still be saved and redeemed with the proper intervention.

qualities of the target and how the audience should react to them. Evaluating the new context and how it applies to contemporary Athens is fundamentally an act of criticism for both playwright and audience. By highlighting certain qualities and pushing them to a comic extreme, the playwright asks the audience to judge whether the target is a legitimate or insignificant threat to the *polis*, determine whether it is worthy of their continued attention, and decide how they can best react to implement the ideal, potential community implied in the drama.

The critical judgment asked of the audience is inherently a democratizing force that seeks to pull control over the *polis* away from elite politicians and restore authority back to the collective citizenry. Through the scapegoating process, even the most honored or powerful individual can be brought to the same level as the lowest commoner, which demonstrates to the other citizens that they are not so different after all. This emphasizes a perception of parity that allows the citizens to believe they too can influence political or social affairs and that this power does not belong only to the privileged elite. As Redfield explains, when we reduce everything to the same basic level and strip away the status and emotional attachments they enjoy, all values and behaviors can be evaluated honestly (“Drama” 331):

Perhaps the poetry we admire is mere bombast, our religious language sententious nonsense; the statesmen we admire are fools, and those we trust are knaves. Comedy weakens the control of the performers over their audience and thus increases the power of the people. In this sense it is after all a democratic art.

It is no accident that these equalizing attacks also take place before the majority of the citizens where all are encouraged to attend (via the *Theoric* fund), so that as many voting members of the public as possible can witness the ridicule and judge for themselves how effective their leaders have been, whether they are worth keeping, and whether the identity they have crafted for the polis is worth pursuing.

This responsibility is not one that should be considered lightly, as the Athenian people were known for capriciously reacting to politicians who had promised more than they could deliver. As the Old Oligarch indicates, trusting the citizens to make the right choice would not always be a fruitful gamble, and Plato is hardly confident in the deliberative abilities of democratic groups in the later books of the *Republic*.¹⁶ However, the audience is charged with making their own determinations and must be assumed to act ethically and in the best interests of the city since the festival context does not allow Aristophanes to provide specific guidance or instruction for resolving the tensions in Athens. Given the political success of Cleon after his drubbing in plays such as *Knights* and *Wasps*, the concern of elites that drama would hold undue influence over the citizens is perhaps moot. There is no guarantee and perhaps should be no significant expectation that the audience will react immediately and work to create the ideal city sooner rather than later because Old Comedy is a genre of subtle influence. The audience is invited to rather than tasked with response, and may hold out the hope that things can get better

¹⁶ Ober and Strauss (1990) provide further commentary on this point: “the play [Ecc.] reaffirms the unique power that political action in a democratic state carried with it, the power to change, in a revolutionary way, the nature of relations between elite and mass within the political society, and the relations between citizens and noncitizens. That power was potentially dangerous, open to abuse, and perhaps even limited in its efficacy if it were stretched too far, but the play locates it in the center of the organizing social structures of the society” (“Drama” 269).

without the difficult, pragmatic work of actually making it so. Ideals are easier to conceive than to put into action, as Henderson explains: “The mediating force of humor softens the realization that ideals are more easily imagined than attained” (“Dēmos” 311).

As the preceding remarks indicate, scholars have explored the purpose of Aristophanes’ work and how it might have contributed to the intellectual developments and culture of the late 5th c. BCE in Athens. In addition to these questions, scholars have examined the connection between Old Comedy and *rhetorike*, especially regarding the reconstruction of rhetorical theory beginning in the 5th c. with the sophists and ending with Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in the 4th c. In the next section, I discuss a few noteworthy examples of how scholars have changed their perceptions of the playwright, viewing him as a more skilled practitioner of rhetoric in a culture thriving on innovative, intellectual developments. I survey some of the major works linking Aristophanes to rhetoric, identify their contributions to this area of Aristophanic scholarship, and explain what I will add to existing understandings of the playwright. I will discuss the need to read Aristophanes as a link to oratory rather than rhetoric and argue that his characterizations of oratory and oratorical performance can be read using ethical behavior as an interpretive touchstone.

IV. Aristophanes as Rhetorical Agent

The earliest such study appeared in 1938, an article by Charles Murphy entitled “Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric.” Murphy’s analysis of rhetorical arrangement across the Aristophanic corpus was pivotal for its time, but not followed up by his peers

for many decades. His main argument is that Aristophanes was familiar with the art of rhetoric as it existed in the second half of the fifth century. He attempts to prove this by showing 1.) that Aristophanes had an opinion about the rhetors of his time, which implies enough knowledge of their art to portray and criticize them; and 2.) that he was able to use their own techniques to mock them in his plays. It is unclear whether Murphy believed Aristophanes was a student of the sophists firsthand; there is no doubt, however, that Murphy argues that Aristophanes was familiar with the art and its principles (110).

Murphy thoroughly examines the entire surviving Aristophanic corpus for any traces of “opinion” about rhetoric. His conclusion is that Aristophanes “condemned rhetoric on moral and political grounds” because it was significantly harming Athens and its citizens (69). Fragments from Aristophanes’ first play, the *Banqueters* (*Daitales*) show a father coping with a son who shows sophistic tendencies compared with a more upstanding, traditional son. It is clear the latter is preferable to the former (Murphy 71). A brief passage in *Knights* shows that the young men of the day (the 420’s BCE for this play) are fond of the speaker Phaeax, who is known for a variety of clever verbal tricks (72). The sophistic signature from this section is the series of descriptions for Phaeax that use several *-ikos* words. Furthermore, Aristophanes routinely criticizes leading politicians such as Cleon, who is named or alluded to in *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Wasps*, *Clouds*, and many other plays, for flattering the *demos* and leading them into manipulation (72-4). Many of these examples appear in later works, such as O’Sullivan and to a lesser extent Hubbard. Murphy also uses Pheidippides, the young man from

Clouds, as a representative example of the type of youth corrupted by the new education (78):

Pheidippides, who had entered the school of the sophists as a young aristocrat, comes out as a demo-cratic rhetor, willing and able to pervert justice and twist the truth for selfish ends. The democratic orators as a group use their rhetorical training to overwhelm less skilled citizens in court, to dupe the mass of citizens into an uncritical acceptance of their leadership, while they themselves line their own pockets and ruin the state. Such, in brief, is the charge of Aristophanes against the new rhetoric of his day.

Murphy contends that Aristophanes is critical of the new education because it allows young aristocrats to use undue influence over the assembly and law-courts purely for their own ends. It is ultimately a perversion of the state and a danger to Athenian democracy.

Next, Murphy argues that Aristophanes was certainly familiar with the art of rhetoric despite his negative opinions towards it. He argues that one can detect this rhetorical knowledge by closely examining the arguments in the plays for rhetorical structures, *topoi*, and techniques. Murphy never states a clear definition of rhetoric as it existed in the fifth century; instead, he relies on later texts, in particular the *Rhetoric to Alexander* (87-90), to identify and explain the techniques he observes in Aristophanes. After dissecting several speeches, he describes the presence of *prooimion*, *eunoia*, *prothesis*, *diegesis*, *pistis*, *bebaiosis*, and *epilogos* (81-84). Furthermore, the speeches are filled with phrases that act as signposts to cue the audience for rhetorical progressions in the argument (84). Rhetorical *topoi* from later writers appear in Murphy's analysis, such as building up *eunoia* in the presence of *diabole*, and various types of *pisteis*, such as

paradeigmata, *semeia*, and *tekmeria* that one may use for different situations (90-4). He concludes his analysis with a diagram of various speeches that outlines their constituent parts using the preceding terms (99-110).

Murphy's article is a valuable contribution to both the history of rhetorical theory and the appearance of rhetoric in Aristophanes. He was one of the first to connect Aristophanes explicitly with rhetoric and to show that his work has a significant rhetorical dimension. Many of the passages he examines have become the subject of debate for later scholars who see inferential evidence of sophistic thought and theorization in the last decades of the fifth century. By identifying many of the references to oratory and sophistry in Aristophanes' speeches, Murphy situates the playwright into a culture of public performance and speechmaking that is consistent with other sources about the fifth century. He has adequately demonstrated that Aristophanes was familiar with the new education taking root in the Athens of his day as well as the practitioners who made it so visible to the Athenian populace.

Murphy has not, however, adequately demonstrated that Aristophanes was himself a student of rhetoric or intimately familiar with rhetoric as a systematized discipline. If we examine the first part of his evidence, that Aristophanes had a negative opinion about the new education, we see that Murphy commits the authorial fallacy. At no point can we conclusively determine what Aristophanes the playwright actually thought about the sophists and their students because the narrative drama of the plays is a comic distortion of reality, just as the constraints of the genre dictate. It is certainly possible that Aristophanes was not enamored of the sophists, but his plays are catering to

an audience that need not share his personal views. If his purpose is to win over the audience of Athenian citizens, his own opinions about education are immaterial so long as he can give the audience enough of what they want to see to take first prize. If we are to accept that Aristophanes was a student of the new education or well-versed in its concepts, we would need some kind of biographical evidence making this link. No such information has survived to the present, so we cannot assume that Aristophanes had this kind of in-depth knowledge.

Murphy is the precursor to many later scholars who use texts outside the fifth century to explain and identify the precepts of the sophists. Unlike O'Sullivan, who uses Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the Hellenistic poets, Cicero, Quintilian, et alia to make his connection to the fifth century, Murphy uses the *Rhetoric to Alexander* almost exclusively. It is his belief that this text is chronologically closest to Aristophanes' period of writing and hence is a working guide to the rhetorical theory of the fifth century.¹⁷ He assumes that rhetoric is a systematized discipline widespread enough in Athens that Aristophanes has incorporated many sophisticated techniques into his comedy. Unfortunately, this belief is impossible to prove without direct evidence from the fifth century and language contemporaneous with Aristophanes' plays. The technical terminology Murphy uses is well beyond Aristophanes' time and shows a level of complexity that is simply not found in our surviving texts from the fifth-century BCE. Moreover, the definition of rhetoric he uses is one that Aristophanes himself never mentions by name or allusion.

¹⁷ This view has been roundly discredited by Sansone (2012) and Major (2013). See also Schiappa and Timmerman: "Fourth-century BCE use of the word *rhētorikē* is sporadic, and it seems fairly clear that not all educators of the era embraced it" (131).

Finally, Murphy takes a very text-based approach to Aristophanes without looking at the narrative drama. I believe he is correct to focus on the language Aristophanes uses with only brief recourse to outside texts (such as the *Rhetoric to Alexander*), but he never considers why Aristophanes might have made certain linguistic choices for his immediate audience. If we accept that Aristophanes knew enough about politicians to caricature them onstage, this alone does not imply that he had a working knowledge or interest in rhetorical principles. Moreover, it is not reasonable to think that the majority of his audience was sufficiently trained in rhetorical education to recognize the constituent parts of a speech by name or the strategies of flattering an audience and be able to discuss the theory behind them intelligibly. All we can conclude from Aristophanes' plays is that he was a master of comic mimicry, that he could sew together arguments to fit the genre of his choice, and that he was familiar with some of the leading political and sophistic figures of his day. None of these necessitates a firsthand knowledge of rhetorical precepts.

V. Aristophanes as Stylistic Critic

Neil O'Sullivan's influential book *Alcidamas, Aristophanes and the Beginnings of Greek Stylistic Theory* (1992) further advanced Aristophanes as a rhetorical agent and Athenian intellectual familiar with rhetorical precepts from the fifth-century BCE. Working on the assumption advanced by George Kennedy that classical rhetoric stems from a single, unified tradition from at least as early as the sophists to the later years of the Roman Empire, O'Sullivan attempts to point out certain markers in the history of

rhetorical criticism before Aristotle. His book examines various references to style, as well as descriptions of politicians and orators in the plays of Aristophanes to demonstrate that a technical vocabulary designed for rhetorical and poetic criticism was present in fifth-century Athens.¹⁸ His main source of evidence is *Frogs* because it features a protracted argument between Aeschylus and Euripides about whose poetic skills can best save Athens from its troubles. The poets stridently attack their opponent's style and justify their own as a benefit for the city. O'Sullivan takes this as definitive evidence that stylistic criticism was alive and well in Athens in the fifth-century and had much in common with the writings of rhetorical theorists from the fourth-century and beyond, especially regarding differences between the grand and low styles (*genus grande* vs. *genus tenue* as O'Sullivan consistently refers to them).

Aristophanes describes Aeschylus and Euripides in stark, contrasting terms consistently across his plays. Aeschylus and his language is bloated and swollen, with images of hugeness and massiveness (such as "words big for a horse" or "mountainous"); he has language that is quite ornate and sophisticated, but that is not easily comprehensible to everyone. Furthermore, he tends to evoke emotion in his audience rather than induce a more intellectual response (O'Sullivan 8). Euripides is the very opposite: his language is described as *leptos*, thin or narrow in contrast to the bloat of Aeschylus, is fairly easy to understand, and uses ordinary (*phrazein anthropeios*, or *lalein*) rather than elaborate words and syntax (9). Moreover, his plays do not evoke a

¹⁸ O'Sullivan is a prominent representative of the view that since language in Greek drama may appear rhetorical with a modern or even 4th c. perspective, "it is therefore likely to have originated with the pioneers of rhetorical theory and practice, from whom dramatists like Sophocles and Euripides would have learned it" (Sansone 181).

heavily emotional response, but seem to appeal to a more rational mood in the audience.

O'Sullivan also links these descriptions of style to three later authors who wrote specifically about rhetoric: Aristotle and his *Rhetoric*, "Demetrius" and *On Style*, and Cicero in the *Orator* (10-14). He also shows a few connections to possible contemporaries of Aristophanes, but these are limited to a *scholion* of a lost play of Pherecrates called *Krapataloi*, two comic fragments, and some references in Plutarch (14-16). O'Sullivan's efforts adequately demonstrate that Aristophanes was aware of different styles and could point out examples of them for his audience.

He then takes the argument to prose authors, specifically Gorgias and Prodicus. He sees these two as historical counterparts to the Aeschylus and Euripides of Aristophanes in terms of their style, and examines a variety of sources to prove this link. He refers to characterizations of Gorgias and Prodicus in the works of prose authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Gorgias himself. He concludes that Gorgias is also an example of the grand style because he uses elevated language, mystifies or stuns his audience, uses complicated language (the *dipla onomata* as explained by Aristotle), and mentions that Gorgias may have used language of fullness or hugeness to describe a play of Aeschylus (*Areos meston* for the *Seven Against Thebes*). In contrast, Prodicus is described as having a preoccupation with the correct definition of words (*orthotes onomaton*) and performing the same speech after careful calculation. O'Sullivan also examines their portrayal in *Frogs* and some other plays, and briefly analyzes a short passage from Euripides' *Medea* to show the playwright's similar interest in *orthotes onomaton* (16-22). He shows that many of these similarities are also found in

leading politicians from the fifth-century (such as Pericles and Cleon) and rivals of Aristophanes (such as Cratinus) to further demonstrate the terminological links between politics, rhetoric, and poetics (107ff).

O'Sullivan can legitimately defend his assertion that Aristophanes is contrasting different concepts of style in his plays, and that similar descriptions of style occur between orators and poets. It is difficult to argue that Aristophanes was unaware of stylistic concerns within his own genre of comedy, tragedy, and political oratory as well. However, the evidence says little beyond these assertions, because O'Sullivan has not demonstrated that such language constitutes a technical vocabulary used in a systematic or disciplinary understanding of style or rhetoric. To explain my reasoning, I argue that O'Sullivan's argument suffers from four improper assumptions: 1.) that rhetorical theorists after Aristophanes are necessarily part of the same tradition as he; 2.) that criticism is conflated with rhetoric as a discipline; 3.) that any reference to an orator or poet must contain technical language; 4.) that it is not necessary to use contemporary sources to prove his argument.

First, O'Sullivan assumes that rhetorical theorists after Aristophanes are necessarily part of the same rhetorical tradition as the comic playwright. This thesis was propagated largely by George Kennedy and argues that traces of classical rhetoric as a discipline can be found through much of antiquity, even before Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (which is considered by many scholars as the earliest systematic understanding and conception of disciplinary rhetoric to date). O'Sullivan openly admits to such an assumption (1-6), and his argument relies almost exclusively on the works of established

rhetorical critics from well after the fifth century BCE to explain the “technical” meanings of his focal terms. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine how much cultural caché these terms had acquired in the decades leading up to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*; this becomes even more problematic when using terms found in Cicero or Plutarch. O’Sullivan rarely calls these authors into question as legitimate sources of information. He readily accepts their interpretations of words without examining their motivations, how the terms operate in their own systems of rhetorical thought, and only claims we have to be skeptical of critics as late as Cicero (109). The eminent philologist Kenneth Dover explicitly warns against any such comparison: “The terminology of criticism, including metaphors and similes which might have an obvious appeal and catch on, must have percolated in varying degrees from those who cared a great deal about poetry, through those who gave it less attention, down to those who gave it hardly any. For that reason it is unwise to assume, when we find words used in the appraisal of poetry both by Aristophanes and by the literary critics of the Hellenistic period, that they already constituted a technical terminology in 405, let alone that they originated in sophistic treatises” (32-3).

Second, O’Sullivan assumes that criticism is conflated with the kind of technical vocabulary associated with rhetoric as a discipline. Dover explains that even in preliterate periods, “the composition of songs is a process in which discussion and criticism, often passionate, play an important part---and inevitably so, because any aesthetic reaction implies preference, and preference implies criticism” (32-3). Any time an audience has the opportunity to see a performance, there will be some kind of

critical reaction. Aristophanes is hardly the first person to detect differences in performances from a range of competing authors.¹⁹ However, such a detection is a far cry from demonstrating that he was thoroughly familiar with rhetorical practices and could speak about them *systematically*.²⁰ Rhetoric by our definition must imply some understanding and awareness of criticism, but criticism need not imply an understanding of rhetoric. One may recognize that a play's jokes are funny and enjoy them without having a thorough understanding of joke composition, the art of timing, or how to engage in comedy writing.

Third, O'Sullivan assumes that any reference to an orator or poet must contain technical language. This is a risky proposition because it completely ignores the genre of comedy and its performative setting in Athens. Old Comedy, regardless of its political or institutional purposes, was designed at the very least to get a laugh out of the audience. O'Sullivan routinely ignores that, as a comedic institution in Athens, it may have been subject to the same kinds of generic constraints as other forms of speech; if the audience happens to like a certain caricature or gag, one is somewhat obligated to throw these in to score points with the judges. Consequently, he often neglects the context of each reference to the orators or poets within the larger context of the plays themselves.

Certain metaphors and similes might have been consistent crowd-pleasers based on the

¹⁹ Sansone extends this logic to explain that playwrights could not be successful at their craft without a discerning eye: "Attic playwrights learned their lessons from the immediate reaction of the audience in the theater, the verdict of the judges, and the potential for mockery by rival poets" not from explicit rhetorical training (168-169).

²⁰ It is telling that *Clouds*, one of the plays that most explicitly discusses sophistry and the ability to speak effectively in public, never uses the terms *rhētorikē* or *rhētoresia*. As Schiappa explains (1999), "Socrates' lesson concerning how to win a lawsuit is an exercise in the invention of creative arguments that has little in common with the discussions of forensic rhetoric found in the fourth century" (51). This is further evidence that the technical terminology of later rhetorical theory is noticeably absent in the Aristophanic corpus and that Aristophanes is more of a discerning critic of oratory first and foremost.

types of stories the audience enjoyed, or that they fit more in-line with a political agenda of the author to direct public attention to certain issues. There is no guarantee or reasonable expectation that in these types of plays Aristophanes is making a point to demonstrate technical knowledge of the budding rhetorical discipline without at least some consideration for comedic and narrative elements.

Finally, O'Sullivan seems to think that it is not necessary to use contemporary sources to prove his argument. This is the biggest obstacle for his argument because so few sources about or from the sophists from the fifth-century BCE have survived to the present. If one had access to sophistic treatises in their entirety from Prodicus, Gorgias, or the other sophists, one could more conclusively determine what, if any, technical language was being used and by how many people. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of this, thus all O'Sullivan can use as evidence from the fifth-century itself is Aristophanes and other comic fragments. He has been forced to supplement these with quotations about the fifth century, but from much later sources, the accuracy and bias of which he rarely considers. Without definitive evidence that rhetoric was systematized as a discipline, without direct usage of technical vocabulary in a non-literary context contemporaneous with Aristophanes, the references in his work can only demonstrate that he was a critic in the sense Dover outlines, which is not radically new or noteworthy.

O'Sullivan is a significant contributor to the history of rhetoric because his descriptions note some of the earliest motifs and characterizations for oratory and public performance, which perhaps later writers will take up when more technical discussions of rhetoric occur. Many of the connections he notes amongst politicians, sophists, and poets

show a wide range of performative practices in fifth-century oratory. Unfortunately, such arguments demonstrate only that Aristophanes was a shrewd critic and keen observer of *oratorical* behavior, not that he was familiar with *rhetoric* as a systematized discipline.

VI. Aristophanes as Critic of Rhetoric

Thomas Hubbard's 2007 book chapter entitled "Attic Comedy and the Development of Theoretical Rhetoric" attempts to reconstruct the early stages of classical rhetorical theory in the manner of O'Sullivan. He argues that the agonistic elements typical of debates in Old Comedy highlight terms and techniques from the newer form of education which the sophists began and politicians subsequently adopted. The key to detecting these terms can be found "in the comic poet's own verbal practice and in his satirical depiction of the social and intellectual currents of his time." Hubbard has synthesized much of the criticism from earlier scholarship, acknowledging that the late fifth-century lacked the technical vocabulary and systematization of the fourth, but still asserting that "rhetoric" was sufficiently formed as a discipline because "Comedy clearly shows speakers engaged in self-conscious linguistic and discursive strategies to succeed in persuading a specific target audience." By examining the argumentative techniques of Aristophanes' characters and recognizing that they appeal to specific audiences, Hubbard sees enough strategy to denote the presence of sophisticated rhetorical awareness. As evidence for these claims, Hubbard looks at arguments within Aristophanes' plays 1.) to show that characters use strategies to persuade specific audiences; 2.) to characterize the old vs. new forms of education with certain stylistic and moral terms; and 3.) to show that

intellectual interests such as philology were certainly present at the end of the fifth century and signify the early formation of classical rhetorical theory.

Hubbard presents a number of scenes in Aristophanes' plays that show characters implementing strategies to persuade a specific internal audience. Hubbard describes Dicaeopolis' attempts to convince the chorus in *Acharnians* that his personal peace treaty with Sparta was a necessary and reasonable thing to do; he also dissects the techniques used by both the Paphlagonian and the Sausage-Seller in *Knights* when they try to persuade Demos. He analyses the protracted contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs* to prove to Dionysus which is the better poet, and of course the *agon* between the Greater and Lesser Discourse in *Clouds* over who will instruct the young Pheidippides. In each of these scenes, the characters have a pragmatic objective at hand, to convince an independent party that their position is the most legitimate; arguments are tailored for the judge, often with claims to provide the most advantages based on the judge's position in society, so that the interlocutors may receive a personal advantage of some kind with a favorable result. There is also a discussion of *Banqueters* and how certain orators have provided pithy expressions or witticisms for the Athenian young.

Hubbard next shows that young sons overcome their fathers in arguments in *Clouds* and *Wasps* to highlight the difference between the old and new educations. He closely examines some of Bdelycleon's arguments in *Wasps* to show that he is using *eikos*-like reasoning: his catalog of the money Athens takes in vs. what it pays out to the jury means that politicians are taking a large cut of the income. Hubbard argues that this is strategically designed to show the chorus of Wasp-jurors that the politicians are far

from looking after them if they pocket this difference. He also asserts that *Clouds* shows a clear demonstration of speech-making education because the first steps to defeating a charge are grammar, *orthopeia*, metrics, and other things that could reasonably constitute *inventio*. When Socrates is instructing Strepsiades at the *Phrontisterion*, he begins with these steps as a way to build up towards fraudulent reasoning and swindling, hence they form the foundation to more advanced sophistical training.

The Socratic *inventio* in *Clouds* leads to Hubbard's last main point, that intellectual activities such as *orthopeia* and philology indicate the presence of sophisticated rhetorical understanding. As evidence, he takes the discussion in *Clouds* about different terms for gendered things ("fowl" compared with "fowless," for example), as well as Strepsiades' confused attempt to dissuade his creditors using such distinctions later in the play to show the presence of philology early in Aristophanes' career. The more progressed discussion about definitions and word usage found in *Frogs* demonstrates to him that philology had advanced significantly towards the end of the fifth-century. Hubbard also argues that making the lesser argument appear the stronger, a parody of a well-known saying of Protagoras, further shows that Aristophanes thought the audience would be familiar enough with the concept to recognize and approve his mockery of it.

Hubbard's analysis of Aristophanes' plays is thorough and insightful because it addresses the concept of audience. It is unfortunate that he does not linger on this topic, because it is a crucially important one for the formation of rhetoric. Rhetorical strategy is often dependent on the audience that will hear one's argument, thus when Aristophanes'

characters make such appeals, it shows much more of a self-conscious attempt to persuade. One must also consider that these scenes present only a snapshot of the persuasive process, where characters do not show what they are thinking before the speech or what their initial thoughts were afterward. The only terms and techniques we see are those of performance; it is entirely possible that Aristophanes saw successful speeches and hoped to recreate the same effect by imitating them or making similar statements without regard for a more explicit and rational strategy. Hubbard's analysis of argumentative appeals is invaluable because it treats speeches and arguments in Aristophanes as rhetorical situations within a narrative structure, a perspective I use in my own analyses. For him, the dramatic elements are much more critical and necessary for consideration than for Murphy and O'Sullivan, even if he focuses on individual scenes to the exclusion of entire plays and their broader themes. He has also demonstrated that the agonistic trend in Aristophanes' early plays also appears in later ones, indicating that debate, argument, and public performance were almost certainly at the core of the litigious and contentious Athenian culture during the late 5th c. BCE.

Despite such an important contribution to the scholarship of Aristophanes and rhetoric, there is not definitive enough evidence in Hubbard's analysis to conclude that rhetoric was overtly and systematically a discipline during Aristophanes' tenure as a comic playwright. Much of my earlier criticisms concerning O'Sullivan and Murphy apply here, because without definitive evidence showing Aristophanes' awareness of rhetorical training, or the presence of more explicit metalanguage from the teachers of the new education in Athens, the most we can say is that oratory was a booming business in

the late fifth-century. Hubbard and O'Sullivan's analyses both work under the assumption that "In the absence of evidence, [scholars are] constrained to use an argument from likelihood," which should generate a healthy amount of skepticism and critical examination (Sansone 148). The outcome or public reception after a performance was the main measuring-stick for persuasion, not discussion of technique or strategy as one might see in the fourth-century. Even in Aristophanes' plays, we only catch glimpses of characters engaged in debate and argument, rarely consciously discussing *how* they will achieve persuasion in debate and argument.

Perhaps the lone exception to this is Socrates' questioning of Strepsiades as to how he will escape his creditors. Strepsiades provides a series of statements emphasizing fallacious reasoning, but this alone does not constitute rhetoric as systematic and teachable discipline, which at least in the fourth-century featured strategic thinking as well as the ability to enact it in public. Pheidippides, the young man in *Clouds* who receives the sophistic training from Socrates, also does not engage in lengthy speech, opting instead to use the more "Socratic" form of question and answer to effect persuasion. At no point in *Clouds* do we see language that is specifically identified with rhetoric. Strepsiades routinely describes the training he and his son will receive as *legein* or *eu legein*. Based on the way these characters and Socrates in the *Phrontisterion* put the training to use, *legein* could reasonably refer to a type of sophistic logic or the ability to converse with an interlocutor to one's advantage. Even the *Ettōn Logos* embodies this style of questioning when arguing with his *Kreittōn* counterpart.

Furthermore, it is reasonable that intellectual activities such as *orthopeia* were present well into Aristophanes' career. The sophist Prodicus is reported to have engaged in such activities, for example. But an interest in the verbal arts does not alone mean a person is committed to or engaged in a rhetorical discipline that stresses strategy in public performance. A modern day philologist or etymologist may have the deepest understanding of the origins of words and suitable definitions based on context, but that in no way guarantees a knowledge or ability to speak well in public. The same applies in the works of Aristophanes. *Orthopeia* is certainly one of the verbal arts ascribed to the late fifth-century, but its existence does not guarantee or necessarily imply an explicit understanding of rhetoric.

Wilfred Major's dissertation *Aristophanes: Enemy of Rhetoric* (1996) and subsequent book *The Court of Comedy* (2013) served as the next great foray into Aristophanes and his relationship with rhetoric, and did much to recognize that the playwright uses language about public persuasion without assuming he was himself a student of the sophists. Major takes a more critical approach to examining rhetoric in Aristophanes; rather than looking only at individual speeches (as Murphy did), he looks at all of Aristophanes' plays for evidence of language about orators, oratory in society, and rhetorical motifs, often looking at the same evidence as O'Sullivan. His investigation is more broad and sweeping than Murphy and shows the full extent to which Aristophanes comments on or makes use of language about rhetoric, thus he casts a much wider net than O'Sullivan. Moreover, he provides a far-reaching survey into previous scholarship. Based on his analysis of previous work, Major concludes that one

is obligated to view Aristophanes and his plays as comic institutions in Athens that react to the political institutions of his day. He argues that Aristophanes saw the new education as both a danger to the state and a potential rival to Old Comedy as a political institution. Failure to see the overtly political tone to Aristophanic plays prevents scholars from seeing an important and intrinsic component to Old Comedy and its treatment of oratory. His criticisms of the various methodologies and perspectives that support the conclusions of other scholars are invaluable for anyone reading Aristophanes, regardless of whether their focus is rhetoric or another topic.

The idea that one must evaluate Aristophanes based on terms contemporaneous with his work is a necessary and legitimate corollary to Major's political perspective. Our surviving texts do not indicate that rhetoric was a fully-formed and self-aware discipline in the same way that one observes in fourth-century texts. Major convincingly argues that rhetoric was "not a crude, early form groping toward the more polished version in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," but "entrenched in its time, based firmly on intellectual principles of the day" ("Aristophanes" 38). One should make no mistake; rhetoric was still at the stage where its language was evolving as practitioners became more skilled in public performance, but the metalanguage found in the fourth-century is noticeably absent. Thus, one must use the language of Aristophanes' day to determine the nature of his comments about oratory and to detect the possible cultural events and climates he uses to affect his audience without recourse to later writers. For this reason, Major's catalog of orators and oratorical motifs is important for establishing a relationship between oratory and Old Comedy in the late fifth-century BCE, in terms that show

antagonism and shared traditions. By accounting for terms Aristophanes himself used or with which he might have been familiar, as well as examining historical circumstances, literary/aesthetic principles, and generic considerations for Old Comedy itself, one may get closer to providing a broad understanding of his language, the possible purposes or effects his works can produce, and the state of oratory as it existed in the fifth-century.

Major contends that Aristophanes viewed the younger generation of orators as a threat to himself and Athens because they represented an alarming antidemocratic trend. He makes a point to explain that Aristophanes is not attacking rhetorical theorists as scholars typically understand Aristotle or Isocrates in the fourth-century BCE, but orators who perform in public (“Court 18”). “Accordingly, the poets of Old Comedy criticized the rhetoric of the day via attacks directly on rhetoric’s practitioners. Because Old Comedy’s thrust was fundamentally political, jokes about a speaker’s rhetorical mannerisms also mock the political agenda espoused by that speaker and, by extension, entire political movements” (“Aristophanes” 85). He comments further that there is no explanation or description of a rhetorician in Aristophanes because rhetoric did not exist “as a distinct discipline and intellectual pursuit” (“Aristophanes” 86). Therefore, any reference to the orators is made to highlight the potential danger that current politicians were posing to the Athenian populace and which Aristophanes considered a threat to his own medium. To prove these claims, Major collects references to speakers, their personal characteristics, and things associated with their speech, putting them into two broad categories: “(1) relatively common and recognizable words easily associated with the courts, assemblies, the sophists, and any environment where speakers employ

suspicious and distinctive mannerisms (e.g., *antilegin*, *demegorein*); and (2) strongly evaluative terms which can be grafted to superficial mannerisms and to the speakers themselves, always to the speaker's degradation, whether by applying a negative term (*adolesches*, *alazon*), or withholding a positive one (*dexios*, *sophos*) ("Aristophanes" 110). Major's catalog is exhaustive, stretching across all the extant Aristophanic plays.

Major also reorients the conversation surrounding Aristophanes and his relationship to rhetoric and oratory so that the playwright is interpreted through language from his own period rather than the highly technical and disciplinary terminology of the 4th c. As a historical source about the origins of rhetoric and performance culture in Athens, Aristophanes is able to comment on the intellectual developments of his period without the distorting filter of historical perspective or philosophical bias, such as those adopted by philosophers acting as rivals to sophistic education ("Court" 6-7). His position stands counter to those of Murphy, O'Sullivan, and Hubbard, whose arguments he routinely discredits for ahistorical bias, lack of evidence, and unsupported logic ("Court" 10-15, 56-50, 106-108). At issue is whether Aristophanes provides evidence of the beginnings of rhetoric as a teachable discipline with its own culture, terminology, and established techniques. His plays engage in persuasive speechmaking and show characters skilled in argument, therefore the traditional view espoused by O'Sullivan, etc. argues that he was familiar with the new discipline enough to demonstrate it onstage. Major (and Sansone, footnote 19) contends that "Playwrights of all places and times, of course, dramatize events to reflect and comment on the world they experience." This kind of dramatization "does not require an established or nascent formalized system of critical

terminology to describe speech making” (“Court” 16). This requires no logical gymnastics to justify the existence of something that has no direct contemporaneous evidence from its period and refers to the basic human practice of observation and storytelling.

His analysis moves in a similar direction to my own in that we are both examining the often negative associations Aristophanes creates to the class of orators in the late 5th c. Major’s focus spans the entire Aristophanic corpus, including of course the later plays, so the breadth of his analysis covers more ground than my own. This allows him to look at how “Aristophanes and some other comic playwrights, initially at least, considered the use of proto-rhetorical language as inimical to the democratic process, but, following the challenges to the Athenian democracy in the wake of the Sicilian expedition, *Aristophanes reframes the problem as what formal rhetorical techniques the Demos should allow as a component of democratic debate*” (italics mine, “Court” 18). This line of argument considers the ethics of debate and speech performance, because Athens had suffered considerably as a result of poor decision-making and was perhaps more reflective about its democratic processes. He explains further that “comedy was in the business of policing politics and the beat included oratory, comprising its manner, technique, and purpose, for improper use of oratory was embedded in tyranny and was *a fortiori* antidemocratic” (“Court” 50).

A significant difference between our analyses is that Major tends to focus on the monolithic character of the democratic institutions; thus criticism over the lawcourts or Assembly results in a solution of resetting or overhauling the system so the demos can

retake its rightful place of authority from the demagogues (“Court” 69, 71, 79, 102-103). The Athenian institutions are presumed to be of sound origin because the pre-Periclean, pre-Peloponnesian War periods enjoyed prosperity and profound influence throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, but Aristophanes’ early plays “feature processes central to the democracy (public debate, trial by jury, education) stalled in their normal and proper locations and translocated to other environments” (“Court” 52). Any avenue for change involves a broad suggestion that the voting citizens assume their prior role, with little idea about how they might actually conceive of accomplishing this daunting task. My analysis considers the broken nature of the democratic institutions as Aristophanes describes them, but with focus instead on the speaker and voting citizen and their roles as individual ethical agents that can work towards a restoration of prosperity (this position is explained in greater detail in section VIII of this chapter).

Even if one were to ignore his own independent research into Aristophanes’ plays, Major’s analysis of critical perspectives is itself invaluable for anyone interpreting Old Comedy. It is clear that different critics have used a variety of perspectives to highlight what they consider the most important elements of Aristophanes’ work. I support Major’s argument that it is necessary to view Old Comedy from a number of perspectives because the genre is such a complicated phenomenon in fifth-century Athens. Because Old Comedy was such a vehemently political genre, one must take into account the immediate and recent historical context for each play, which often involves war efforts against Sparta and the politicians who push military agendas. To conceive of Aristophanes as merely a poet with aesthetic tendencies is to ignore a crucial element to

his work; although his main, nominal purpose is to entertain the audience and work within the constraints of his poetic genre, he is reacting to the current events of his city and incorporating them so that he and the audience can consider them together. He was an Athenian citizen, just as the audience members witnessing his plays; therefore, he could use cultural events and characters to advance comic plots or arguments. Comedy was almost certainly an established part of Athenian culture to which Aristophanes had a strong affinity, thus it is reasonable that he would feel pressure from outside influences, political or sophistic, and be able to incorporate them positively or negatively into his plays. As Major summarizes, “Greek comedy as an institution reacts to the institutions which support rhetoric. Moreover, comic poets filter rhetoric through their own dramatic and literary screens. Only an apparatus which processes Greek comedy as an institution, genre, and artistic creation can yield a meaningful analysis of rhetoric’s appearance within the comedies” (“Aristophanes” 29).

VII. A New Direction: Ethical Arguments in Old Comedy

The work from these scholars has been invaluable for showing the elements of and commentary about persuasion in Aristophanes’ work, but I believe another, unexplored area may also be fruitful. Several authors in the Greek literary tradition have been considered ethicists or authors with ethical arguments, but Aristophanes is not reckoned among them. In this section, I outline my position on interpreting Greek ethics from the late 5th c., why it is valuable to read texts from non-philosophers ethically, and

how we can see the underlying ethical arguments in narrative works using Kenneth Burke's theories on the hortatory negative and antithesis.

Understanding and evaluating Greek ethics is a thorny issue. The concept of ethical character and behavior, pertaining to the identity of both individuals and the *polis*, seems to change from one historical period to another and even between contemporaneous authors. MacIntyre refers to this conceptual heterogeneity as "an incoherence in moral standards and vocabulary" (124). The more one tries to pin down a single definition for ethics or ethical terminology (such as *dike* and its related cognates, *sophrosune*, etc.), the more difficult it becomes to understand and negotiate the great disparity between competing authors. This is especially true among the philosophers, where one sees certain similarities but also wide divergences between such closely related authors as Plato and Aristotle. The very task of writing explicitly about ethics demonstrates, in many cases, a deliberate attempt to recategorize and define moral vocabulary in such a way that has not previously existed or been prevalent before (126-7). For this reason, we must be cautious when looking for any explanation that quickly summarizes the Greek position on the virtues; moreover, we must confront the possibility that the coherence of these terms and their corresponding concepts are a great deal less consistent than we would like. It is a great disservice to accept wholeheartedly the ethical terms and definitions of one author at the expense of others because such an understanding assumes that one source may somehow speak for all Greek ethical views monolithically.

The common overlap between “ethical” authors concerns the importance of one’s character as always related to the *polis*. MacIntyre explains that “all do take it for granted that the milieu in which the virtues are to be exercised and in terms of which they are to be defined is the *polis*” (127). The distinctions between terms may differ, certain emphases may not be the same between authors, but being an ethical person is directly related to one’s obligations and commitments to the larger community. The dilemmas depicted by tragedians may not present explicit arguments and narrowly define ethical terms by example, but their conflicts inevitably revolve around the adjudication between competing social roles and the forces they exert on the citizen. When Plato discusses the philosopher king in the *Republic*, the *polis* may be an allegory for the human soul but it can easily be read as the connections between citizens and how they may best cohere and live together. Greek authors may see the virtues as doing different things and having different essences, but they maintain that the virtues are intimately connected to ideas of citizenship and relationships that exist beyond the individual.

Athens of the late 5th c. revolved around agonistic competition, thus it should come as no surprise that similar language and *topoi* appear in several aspects of public life. MacIntyre convincingly shows that “the categories political, dramatic, philosophical were much more intimately related in the Athenian world than in our own” through the ubiquity of the *agōn* in such diverse places as the assembly, law courts, tragedy and comedy (which he refers to as “a piece of symbolic (and very serious) buffoonery in the plot-line of comedy” (129). The audience would have been mainly the same for each performative context, and each individual member could potentially move from spectator

to active participant. The *agōn*, in all its different representations, provides the context and occasion in which the virtues are to be discussed and enacted (130).

If one accepts the premise that the *agōn* allowed Athenians to shape ethical understandings through such fora as the political arena and tragic plays, one may also consider the works of Old Comedy as vehicles for ethical discussion. Nussbaum convincingly argues that poetry of all kinds was not considered ethically neutral, which is further evidenced by Plato's view of them as a real threat to the well-being and development of citizens in the polis. She argues that "For [the Greeks] there were human lives and problems, and various genres in both prose and poetry in which one could reflect on those problems" ("Fragility" 12). Poets from the heroic age as well as 5th c. were considered both by the Greeks as well as modern scholars as prime instruction for citizens who wished to learn virtuous behavior and to see models who exemplified the most desirable qualities in citizenship. Referring specifically to tragedy, Nussbaum writes that dramatic works can be considered "as ethical reflection in their own right, embodying in both their content and their style a conception of human excellence" ("Fragility" 13).

One may object that Old Comedy has no stated purpose to articulate philosophy to its audience or that the claims of playwrights to improve the character and well-being of the *polis* are generic boasts designed to elicit laughs and trade good will for votes from the judges.²¹ However, I would argue that Old Comedy does not need to present ethical arguments using the language of philosophers and explicit concepts of morality (the

²¹ Major (2006) articulates the differences between an actual boast and the more humorous posturing that occurs in Old Comedy.

genre would likely not allow discussions of this kind anyway), but can present situations that question the best way to live and act in the *polis* and frame ethical depictions of citizenship through comic narrative and characterization. Although he does not explicitly connect this idea to Old Comedy, MacIntyre argues that “to adopt a stance on the virtues will be to adopt a stance on the narrative character of human life.” He concludes that such “a life is understood as a progression through harms and dangers, moral and physical, which someone may encounter and overcome in better and worse ways” (135).

There are even a few advantages to portraying ethics narratively compared to the more traditional style of philosophical argument. Nussbaum champions the view of ethical dimensions in Greek tragedy, arguing that dramatic texts allow the presentation of human vulnerability in ways that more strictly philosophical texts are simply unable to do. They can focus on the conflict between influential values, the difficulty of deciding which area to sacrifice, and the manner in which harm may be visited upon the self or those close to the self (“Fragility 13). She refutes the idea that a philosophical text may present a series of shorter examples to illustrate the same tough choices because a narrative format may present the entire process of deliberating, as each choice is weighed and scrutinized, as well as the full extent of the consequences resulting from such choices. Sansone concurs, contending that “The visible presence of these characters on stage, listening to the words addressed to them, makes it almost inevitable that we in the audience, overhearing those words, will make some mental effort to frame a response to them” (60). Moreover, it involves the audience as an integral member of the deliberative process and allows them to feel many of the same conflicts and pulls as the dramatic

characters. “[Tragedy] shows a searching for the morally salient, and it forces us, as interpreters, to be similarly active.” (“Fragility” 13). Nussbaum emphasizes the rational process as one debates different courses of action, which is perhaps not quite so applicable to Old Comedy. However, the underlying argument for the visible depictions presented by Old Comedy, as well as the idea that one can construct or visit the logical processes of the characters (even those distorted for comic effect), provides another dimension to an ethical portrait of behavior that a philosophical text is unable to do.

Nussbaum’s second main argument is that a philosophical text traditionally appeals to the intellect alone, but drama (specifically tragedy) appeals to our sense of emotions as well; we discover what we think about those events partly by noticing how we feel as we experience them along with the protagonists.²² A philosophical text, often by design, covers a series of rigidly logical statements and attempts to found a rational explanation for what virtuous behavior is, why one may consider it so, and how one may go about living in this way. The first goal appears to be understanding before evaluation. The ethical arguments of drama provide a less rational but no less visceral scene for the audience; it may not be necessary to fully understand why a virtue is defined in a certain way if one can see the tangible results for certain behaviors, especially if those behaviors produce intense reactions. An audience may not be able to define *sophrosune* into other terms, but they can identify the troubles associated with a figure such as Hippolytus when his excessive devotion to the virtue brings about his downfall, consider the

²² Weaver (1953) articulates a similar theory discussing the ethics of rhetoric in Plato’s *Phaedrus*: when referencing the complete man and his ability to be “the ‘lover’ added to the scientist,” he states that the problems of the world “will have to be handled, as Socrates well knew, by the student of souls, who must primarily make use of the language of tendency. The soul is impulse, not simple cognition; and finally one’s interest in rhetoric depends on how much poignancy one senses in existence” (78-79).

ramifications for his decisions, and start to determine whether his choices were worth the costs. The emotional reactions of sadness, empathy, or schadenfraude one may feel towards him or any figure in tragedy or comedy can jumpstart the process of considering similar ethical situations present outside the theatre.

The earlier discussion regarding the politics of Old Comedy, the advantage and technique of using ridicule, and the ethical nature of drama come together neatly when we consider the plays of Aristophanes. He is not typically considered an ethicist, but his comedies take advantage of the narrative form available to any playwright and can discuss matters of great importance to his audience. I argue in this dissertation that Aristophanes creates arguments about ethical citizenship, focusing in particular on themes of persuasive speaking, public deliberation, and the role of oratory in democratic Athens. The scenes and characters witnessed by his audience will not be as emotionally wrought and conflicted as those of the tragedians, but the audience is still able to observe the different choices available to protagonists, empathize or condemn their actions, and form an impression about whether they too would act in the same way if put into a similar situation. I believe one may read Aristophanes as an ethicist regarding general acts of citizenship, but I will focus exclusively on the rights and responsibilities of citizens as speakers and audience members in 3 argumentative fora. In the next section of this chapter, I outline some of Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theories concerning the origin and function of the hortatory negative and rhetorical figure of antithesis, the role of audience identification in persuasion, and how these concepts allow us to read Aristophanes as an advocate for ethical persuasive speech.

VIII. Old Comedy and Kenneth Burke's Theory of the Negative

Kenneth Burke's ideas regarding the ethics of human experience, most notably his theory of the origin and application of the linguistic negative, can provide insight for understanding Aristophanes' arguments for his fellow citizens. One may begin with the idea that ethics are situational in that "all moral judgments and acts are situated" in particular contexts and descriptions (Crusius). Burke fleshes out this concept in *Language as Symbolic Action*, using the example of a novel's title to illustrate his point (361):

language [should] be viewed, not directly in terms of a word-thing relationship, but roundabout, by thinking of speech as the 'entitling' of complex nonverbal situations (somewhat as the title of a novel does not really name one object, but sums up the vast complexity of elements that compose the novel, giving it its character, essence, or general drift.

Unlike the certainty and absolutism of a Platonic form, this ethical reasoning privileges the response to a situation rather than applying a rule that can encompass any circumstance or context, as Crusius explains (2):

MacIntyre is right: Our moral convictions are inconsistent. But they are not so primarily because we are confused. They are so because morality is always a response to a situation. If you abstract from the situations, of course what you'll get are batches of inconsistent moral principles. But this is precisely what we Burkeans wouldn't or shouldn't do. What is language for us? Symbolic action. And what is symbolic action? "A strategy for encompassing a situation." Our morality enters the picture both in sizing up some situations and in the strategies we adopt for encompassing those situations.

Applied to Aristophanes, it is important to see how his historical context situates the acts portrayed in the plays. Moreover, one need not look for binding consistency because the comic heroes and the conflicts they encounter require more of an individual motive to solve the narrative problems of the plot. One may object that the heroes and their antagonists have a striking similarity — demagogues and the pro-war factions are routinely criticized and taken to task by Aristophanes' heroes, with utopian ideas of luxury, convenience, and the absence of war as common goals throughout the plays. Burke would argue that some consistency is possible and perhaps expected provided the situations are similar enough in scope, content, or purpose. If Aristophanes offers up the situations for public viewing, it will be the duty of the audience to determine the moral motives most appropriate to handle the situation. The logical consequence of Burke's ethics concludes that the good man, good citizen, or good Athenian does certain kinds of acts when a situation requires — for example, when presented with a demagogue the motive or action can be acquiescence or resistance. When interacting with other citizens in the agora or hearing a case as a juror, the appropriate response might be rude hostility, calm disinterest, or passionate partisanship. When addressing an audience as speaker, one has the choice of speaking to the facts, providing entertaining digressions, or focusing entirely on emotional appeals. Old Comedy never provides a direct answer, but allows the audience to consider the situation first before determining if their responses are similar to or contrary with those presented in the play, and whether one response would be considered more appropriate and ethical than another.

The function of the linguistic, hortatory negative and its human origins provide important context for audiences making these kinds of ethical determinations. Burke explains that the linguistic form of the negative arose from a positive description that came to hold “strongly *imperative* or *hortatory* connotations,” a demonstrative gesture or term that began as “look at that” that eventually became a “look out for that!” to prevent error or suggest action (“Language” 423-424). Such a positive term is more than mere description, possessing the extra dimension of an implied negative without the full force of explicit command. To highlight the idea that humans distinctly created the negative compared with non-linguistic animals, a negative characterization does not reside within the essence of an object or thing so much as how one expects it to be used or to act. Burke notes that “[I]f you are expecting something to be damp and it is found to be dry, then its dryness is expressible not just as dryness, but as the negation of your expectation” (“Language” 420). The condition of the object remains the same regardless of whether it is touched, but our impression and perception changes from “I expect it to be wet” to “it is actually dry.” The negative is primarily a linguistic phenomenon but may also be extended to nonverbal understanding, as Murray explains (38-39):

Perhaps human beings, then, are primordially *invented* by the negativizing gaze of the Other. Perhaps the human being's initial separation from the Other plays a constitutive role in its coming into being. The existential assertion that "I am" would seem to be impossible without the simultaneous recognition that "I am not you" as manifested by the ontological negation/separation of self and Other.

This argument would supplant Burke’s own origins of the negative and instead conclude that human identity and recognition of distinct selves from the other derives from a

nonverbal understanding that an “I” is not equal to a “you.” Even without the key terms to entitle a situation or confer status and context, our eyes routinely reveal that many things are not as we expect and demonstrate that the logical process of using the negative need not be confined solely to words.

When humans use language, any positive or negative term must thematically imply its opposite. Drawing on material from mythological traditions, Burke explains that a “tale of conflict between order and disorder, chaos and cosmos” will offer up both terms to the audience regardless of whichever is being discussed at a given moment (“Language” 386). The terms need not have a direct linguistic connection (such as we see with order and disorder), but their meanings will automatically imply presence and understanding of an opposing term. For language-users, this division of meaning is a necessary part of entitling the natural world and making sense of one object from another (Borrowman and Kmetz 279).

Insofar as terms imply one another, thematic opposition will continue indefinitely until their meanings change. Rival terms assume almost a personified purpose to do battle against each other, striving to vanquish an opponent so that one term becomes dominant in situated context. Returning to Burke’s earlier example (“Language” 387-389),

[O]nce you have translated the logical principle of antithesis into terms of narrative combat, by the same token you have set the conditions for a *purposive* development. Thus, for instance, the principle of disorder can be pictured as *aiming to win* over the principle of order, and vice versa, so that the purely directionless way in which polar terms imply each other can be replaced by schemes intensely teleological...

This pair suggests that a term such as order, especially once put into a narrative context, may assume temporary dominance which is recognized by the audience in a given situation. However, its opposite is never completely vanquished or removed, as the term disorder does not disappear from an audience's vocabulary or cease to be uttered ever again. Once the linguistic or narrative context switches to something more hospitable, disorder and its associated meanings may appear in full force to resume control and become the dominant term in the previous or a new situation. The dominance of a term is always contingent upon the audience, hence the potential existence of opposites is always present and terms will inevitably, constantly point back to each other.

The tension between opposites must move beyond semantic territory for terms to have a profound effect on an audience and assume a dominant role. Burke describes the characteristics and conflicts between competing principles, which he names the "Positive Favored Principle" and its rival, the "Unfavored Principle." A "principle, to be narratively 'perfect,' must be a *person*" ("Language" 403).²³ Perfection as an ultimate or complete terministic form is an application of language that all words strive for, especially considering that humans are often concerned with pursuing matters to their final or most advanced form ("Language" 440). Once a principle takes personified form, it becomes associated with a series of characteristics that must adhere to its favored or unfavored status. Commenting on the Unfavored Principle, for example, Burke

²³ Hawhee (2006) uses the expression "somatic notion of identification," which skillfully describes the perfect embodiment of the negative and how it can be slain or terministically overthrown in physical form (341).

concludes that its “ambition [should be] for total tyranny, absolute misrule” (“Language” 403). To take one more example, heaven and hell are the perfect embodiments of “thou shalt’s” and “thou shalt not’s,” because they provide a vivid picture of the ultimate destinations for who has acted appropriately and otherwise (“Language” 474).

Regardless of their existence in a metaphysical sense, their linguistic presence is enough to imply the opposing term and take the concept of punishment and reward to their final, most complete forms.

The implications for the negating force between opposing terms effect not only linguistic persuasion, but reveal an essential part of the human experience. Burke argues that without the ability to refuse, to choose to say no to an action, that humans cannot experience freedom. This pertains to ethics because there can be no moral character without the choice to act and *be* this way; ethical conduct by definition cannot occur through compulsion or external force if the individual is unwilling to make it so. This ability to assess a situation’s moral imperative via entitlement signals the possibility of a “higher, moral realm” that “is available only to” humans,” which corresponds to Burke’s concept of human action rather than motion (“Language” 439). Moreover, the decision to act morally is balanced by the inevitable consequences of choosing immorality, or embracing the power of the negative to act contrary to an existing order. Perfection is an ideal but ultimately impossible state for humans, therefore they will rebel against custom and choose the less ethical path from time to time. Burke has anticipated these “conflicts of drama,” because it is through a second choice to return to the moral state that allows an individual or culture to feel guilt, sacrifice the self or a proxy to assuage negative feelings

for betraying their ethical system, and redeem themselves despite prior immoral actions (Appel 383).

The hortatory negative provides an explanation for how opposing terms can shape human ethics, but Burke also contends that ethical arguments are structured and formed effectively for audiences with antithesis (“Language” 19). The pairing of opposites is a common feature of language and dramatic presentation because it offers clarity for difficult topics. Fahnestock explains that the clarifying power of antithesis often results from its structure, which emphasizes “repetition that leads to the construction of parallel or even identical phrases: ‘If it does not rain, I will go; but if it does rain, I will not go’” (49). Moreover, antithesis allows an audience to see relevant differences between competing claims and to make a choice about their validities, especially if the contrasts are set up on “a uniform background” or “placed side by side” (Fahnestock 50). This notion of choice arranged strategically for audiences is important to Burke because it is one of the signature characteristics of human experience and morality. Burke says in *The Rhetoric of Religion* that “*Action* involves *character*, which involves *choice*; and the *form* of choice attains its perfection in the distinction between Yes and No (between *thou shalt* and *thou shalt not*). Though the concept of sheer ‘motion’ is non-ethical, ‘action’ implies the ethical (the human personality)” (41). When pressed to choose an action, one cannot escape that such a choice always implies the rejection of one idea and acceptance of another, both of which are called to mind as the issue is decided. Positive and negative are viewed as counterparts that are equally capable of happening, and which have ethical implications that stretch beyond their first occurrence.

Burke refers to this as “a kind of ‘terministic compulsion’ to carry out the implications of one’s terminology” (“Language”19). When the audience sees antithetical figures interacting in a debate, they are invited to reflect on the actions of these characters and determine what kind of persons they would be in Athenian society. The audience must evaluate the personality, or perhaps personality *type*, they see onstage and determine if the corresponding actions regarding public speech are moral enough to promote city-wide.

Antithesis presents two additional advantages besides the clear set of contrasts it can create for audiences. First, the implied opposites that always exist between terms can be so apparent or already known to the audience that they are able to conjure or anticipate the unspoken concept, fleshing out the antithetical argument even if it is entirely ignored by a speaker. “So strong, in fact, are the implications that can come from recognized pairs of opposed terms and from familiarity with the figure, that it is possible to use what could be only half an antithesis and still secure the effect of the whole” (Fahnestock 59). Second, it is also rhetorically useful because once the form is recognized as an advantageous structure, antithesis can be used to frame entire narratives or arguments. Aristophanes’ plays are built almost exclusively around this structure, as a concept is introduced in brief to the audience, given concrete form often via debate and verbal combat, and ultimately shaped into “a new form that defines it ethically in the comic world” (Major “Court” 87). To use Fahnestock’s terminology, this transformation can only occur when positioned against a suitable *contrast*, where the characteristics or behaviors for opposing figures stand at the end of a “measurable” scale such as hot/cold

or wet/dry, or *contradiction*, where the figures are so diametrically different that they are incomparable, exclusive opposites such as “‘rational/irrational,’ ‘known/unknown,’ ‘I did see it’/‘I did not see it’” (48). Aristophanes consistently creates an antagonist that works to undermine, debate, or overwhelm the protagonist because of their competing interests, values, or backgrounds.

Burke’s antithesis does not have to cover only topics that have polarized opposites, although these are frequently the examples he cites. The major criterion for establishing the opposites in an antithetical pair is the question of choice, not mere existence. He explains that there is no corresponding opposite to a table because we have no concepts of “counter-table, anti-table, non-table, or un-table,” therefore table would not exist antithetically (“Language” 11). Other theorists have arrived at similar conclusions because objects in and of themselves do not project an opposing counter-object or concept unless humans have provided the perspective and relevant language to illustrate this adversarial relationship. “‘Objects will therefore appear as opposites only in so far as some sensational factor is involved, i.e. in so far as adjectival elements, admitting of quantification or dichotomy, enter into their descriptions or definitions’” (Fahnestock 73). So-called God-Devil terms are often found rhetorically paired against each other because they offer a choice to pursue a particular path and disavow the tenets of the competing idea once humans have established the antithetical concepts or practices. This reflects the “intrinsically hortatory” function of language, which acts as “a medium by which men can obtain the cooperation of one another” (“Language” 20).

Terms do not have to be diametrically opposed to each other to act antithetically, as Fahnstock's contraries demonstrate. However, Burke chooses a different point of emphasis to this issue, referring to responses that create antitheses through negative motivation. The emergence or origin of world religions may arise in this way ("Language" 12):

Negative motivation of this sort is attested by such steps as the formation of Christianity in opposition to paganism, the formation of Protestant offshoots in opposition to Catholicism, and the current reinvigoration of churchgoing, if not exactly of religion, in opposition to communism. So goes the dialectic!

The key component in these examples is motivation not to act or be in a certain way, reaffirming Burke's idea that language routinely guides human behavior and social identity through negative, admonitory images. Antithetical language does more than provide clarity to issues, it should provide a sense of what one ought to do and what to avoid. Although it may originate both internally or against other people, it creates prohibitions against a selected concept, activity, or person. "The negative begins not as a resource of definition or information, but as a command, as 'Don't'" (Burke 10).

The origins and properties of the linguistic negative and its rhetorical form in antithesis explain how rhetors can connect with audiences and establish ethical arguments through a process Burke calls identification. A rhetor's message is not created solely through individual consciousness because persuasion always occurs in a cultural setting. Convincing rhetoric allows a speaker to situate him or herself within the existing order of a culture and *identify* with the prevailing beliefs and values of the audience, creating a

sense of overlap between their visions of the world (Murray 32). This common understanding and perception leads Burke to believe “that order is exploited rhetorically” so that an audience can be influenced to accept or modify their ethical choices (Wolin 215). In the context of a comedic scapegoat, rhetor and audience become united through the “the vilification of one who acts...beyond the bounds of acceptable expectation, beyond what is viewed as the consensus of the constituents for whom they stand” (Borrowman and Kmetz 278). The materials for identification can be borrowed from sources internal or external to a culture, drawing upon experience, belief, value, or any kind of cognition that allows for consubstantial overlap.²⁴ The defining characteristic of this process is that “There must be identification among the members of the out group, the members of that group within the social order, and the social order with the members” (Carlson 319).

The end point for identification is when an audience turns away from the scapegoat or target and focuses inward to examine their own behaviors and choices. Receivers of a rhetorical act will become “observers of themselves, while acting” and engage not in “passiveness, but maximum consciousness” (Betts Van Dyk 37). A rhetor presents a situation, the ethical motives for which must be interpreted not through unchanging or rote principles but more of a nuanced understanding of context. The presence of the negative provides an implicit or explicit counterpoint to the actions being criticized or advocated, allowing the audience to view and consider the different moral choices available. If the rhetor has successfully identified him or herself with the

²⁴ Oravec (1989) explains that identification has another dimension, in that it can also be the process by which something comes to be identified and known for a community. See also Hawhee (2006) for discussion of identification as “postural and somatic as it is social and psychological” (342).

interests and values of the audience, they are encouraged to look past the decisions represented narratively so that there is more of an internal assessment if they encounter a similar situation. This is the point where ethical conflict and resolution may arise, because the audience must choose whether they will support or reject the situational characterizations, whether they will act (and correspondingly *be*) similarly to the narrative, or follow an entirely different moral path.

The decision to act morally towards the interests of the *polis* is where one may apply Burke's theories to the plays of Aristophanes. Through the use of a scapegoat who represents certain members of Athenian society, Aristophanes argues that certain behaviors and values are damaging and dangerous to the citizenry.²⁵ The caricatures on display highlight the worst excesses of these people, as perceived by at least some of the audience in attendance, so that the poet can establish a common identity with his spectators. The presence of the *agōn* is noteworthy in this respect, because the plays often highlight a key debate which brings together some of the core issues put forward for audience consideration, the results of which often play a key role in the outcome of the plot. Burke would argue this is one of the ways his principles of negation can be narratively perfect, because "The two principles must come to terms — and the most fitting way to do so narratively is in terms of a contest" (403).

²⁵ The relationship between antithesis and scapegoating is well established in Burkean theory: "As Aristotle observes in his *Rhetoric*, antithesis is an exceptionally effective rhetorical device. There is its sheerly *formal* lure, in giving dramatic saliency and at least apparently clarity to any issue. One may find himself hard put to define a policy purely in its own terms, but one can advocate it persuasively by an urgent assurance that it is decidedly *against* such and-such other policy with which people may be disgruntled" ("Language" 19). Going further, he concludes that "And in this way, of course antithesis helps reinforce unification by scapegoat."

Aristophanes often presents Burke's exploit of order and disorder in the plays.

Flaws built into the common social order begin to upend the lives of one or more citizens, so that they are no longer able to live comfortably or in peace. The citizens in question are usually dealing with a measure of unpredictability and disorder, because the *polis* has lost the stability of prior values and political continuity with the advent of demagogues and personal opportunism. Aristophanes works with themes and narrative devices likely to resonate with the audience, their beliefs about the state of the *polis*, and the experience of being a (mostly) poor Athenian citizen so that he can rhetorically identify with them. Once the particulars of the situation have been established for the audience, the only remaining course of action is for the comic hero(ine) to effect a change, correcting the social and political ills so that the city may return to an ideal state of prosperity and freedom.

The plays present the contrasting views and models for action based on the dramatic conflict between protagonist and antagonist, comic hero and villain. Antagonists are routinely portrayed in a disproportionately unkind manner so that their worst attributes and motives are amplified to an absurd extreme, but even the heroes show a remarkable degree of selfish interest and often work only towards their own satisfaction rather than for their peers. The audience is not encouraged to identify with the protagonists completely, because their flaws render them an imperfect and unsuitable model for actual behavior outside the festival setting.²⁶ Instead, the force of the linguistic

²⁶ Silk (2000) comes to a similar conclusion: "Diverse and endlessly impressive as carriers of humour though they are, Aristophanes' recreative characters have little in the way of personality, relationships, or psychological life. If we need fictional characters to identify with and grow with, we should look else" (413).

negative allows them to consider an alternative to the actions presented onstage, which works to solve Athens' problems in a more beneficial and ethical way rather than through the vehicle of impractical, comic fantasy. Each individual spectator is invited to embrace and enact this implied ideal of citizenship as both potential persuasive speaker and audience member, which is arrived at by rejecting the characterizations for ethical motives depicted in the plays and looking for something less extreme, less absurd, and within their ability to accomplish.²⁷ As Biesecker explains, Aristophanes presents "a call to realize the 'possibility for a future that is not simply a future-present, but a radically other future whose conditions of realization are given over to us as a promise but whose actualization rests solely upon us'" (Crabbe 120).

Even if one accepts the argument that Old Comedy is mere (or mainly) entertainment that concerns political topics, the genre has the ability to treat matters of public import with a flexibility unavailable to other forms of speaking in 5th c. Athens. Aristophanes represents the kind of freedom being advocated through his plays; audience expectation is an obstacle that must be accounted for, but the narrative depiction of competing principles allows him to identify with the audience, argue for the ethical

²⁷ Referring to *CloudCuckooland* in *Birds*, Henderson (1997) also argues that Aristophanes uses a logic of implied contrast to make the case for ethical citizenship: "In the most fundamental ways, Nephelokokkugia is a utopia defined by its lack of what Athenians found annoying and its possession of what Athenians desired" ("Mass" 136). Moreover, Silk (2000) believes that comparison is one of the cornerstones of dramatic logic, because comedy and tragedy are both understood and interpreted by contrasting the events onstage with one's own experience (83-84). He explains further that "Comparison (it follows) must underlie grief as much as it underlies amusement, and so too it must also underlie most feelings that are likely to generate art, or be generated by art, from perplexity to indignation, from curiosity to fear, from achievement to loss, from tolerance to intolerance" (84). It is worth adding that comedy provides a fairly stark contrast because the form invites the perception of the audience as superior to those mocked or lambasted on stage.

speaking values he considers worthy of discussion, and attempt to influence the audience to adopt his position and enact them outside the festival.²⁸ This action empowers them to look beyond the confines of the status quo and to envision Athens free from the constraints of demagogues and political opportunists. The audience is encouraged to act and become more ethical by retaking political power and channeling it in ways more productive and beneficial to the entire polis. If more citizens act in this manner, Aristophanes' plays argue that the competing and corrupt influences in Athens can be marginalized and political stability can be restored.

In the following chapters, I examine Aristophanes' descriptions of oratory and oratorical performance as characterizations of ethical citizenship in 5th c. Athenian politics. I intend to focus on the language he uses to describe characters, their attitudes, and behaviors regarding oratory in three main contexts: sophistry, the law courts, and the legislative assembly. Using Burke's theories of the negative and the implied opposites of polarized terms via antithesis, I will argue that Aristophanes presents examples of poor ethical conduct to highlight the flaws surrounding oratory in 5th c. Athenian society. He does not show the best qualities of ethical orators in his plays, but these actions and motives are implied as the opposite of the comic exaggerations embodied in his characters. I argue that the audience is invited to see and evaluate certain characters as representations of poor ethical conduct and to envision how they may prove themselves

²⁸ Rueckert (1989) provides context for the freedom of art enjoyed by Aristophanes compared with other rhetorical forms: "Using Burke's terms, we can speak of literary forms — that is, completed symbolic acts — as the perfection of the ontological motive intrinsic to language and symbolic acts. Just as pure persuasion is persuasion undertaken for its own sake, to persuade itself, as it were, so literary work would represent pure verbal being, or verbal being interested only in being itself. As Burke has argued most eloquently, poetry is the realm in which we can be most completely free" ("Rereading" 252).

superior as citizens working together in the *polis*. Moreover, my analysis does not refer to later rhetorical developments (such as those of the 4th c.) so that we may more carefully discern attitudes about oratory and sophistry from a strictly 5th c. perspective. Although it is tempting to view Aristophanes as *either* a literary author *or* intellectual with philosophical pretensions, I believe it is important to regard his works as the ancient Greeks might have---as an author that possessed the ability to provide a dramatic performance combining the emotional expressions of poetry along with serious consideration of public affairs. With this in mind, it is necessary to evaluate his characters within both a narrative and argumentative context to flesh out how vividly he portrays ethical speaking behavior before his audience.

In chapter 2, I examine language about oratory and sophistry in *Clouds*, one of Aristophanes most notorious plays. *Clouds* is often the focus of research because it has one of the earliest surviving characterizations of Socrates, and the *agōn* between *Htton Logos* and *Kreitton Logos* is one of the most explicit debates about sophistic education. I examine how Aristophanes presents Socrates, Pheidippides, and *Hetton Logos* as examples of sophistic education run amok; although the audience does not see a clearly positive counterpart to their sophistic excesses (as *Kreitton Logos* is also a flawed character), the audience is invited to picture a citizen with oratorical training that does not serve only his own interests and might provide meaningful support for the polis.

In chapter 3, I describe many references to judicial oratory and its effect on the Athenian populace found in *Wasps*. This play critiques the Athenian judicial system and its susceptibility to corruption through abusive demagogues and irresponsible jurors; I

argue that Philocleon is a representative of the flaws in the jury system because he emphasizes the entertainment value of the lawcourts and the sense of personal authority it provides at the expense of any lingering sense of justice or the betterment of the community. Moreover, Aristophanes also characterizes politicians such as Cleon as deliberate manipulators of the audience to preserve their own influence over the *polis* without regard for the welfare of their supporters such as Philocleon. The audience is invited to see how both participants in the legal process are attempting to game the system, and through their negative characterization to see the image of a citizen who uses the jury system to help the community run in a more egalitarian and just manner.

In chapter 4, I outline characterizations of persuasion in the legislative assembly in *Knights*. This play features two characters, the Sausage-seller and Paphlagonian, who act as demagogues dueling for the privilege of serving the old man Demos, a clear proxy for the Athenian citizenry. Each orator almost effortlessly influences decisions in the assembly through a number of contrived techniques. I argue that Aristophanes portrays the audience as overly susceptible for these techniques and that a different class of speaker would persuade through a more ‘honest’ or direct manner of speech to guide the citizenry without resorting to threats, bullying, or sensational delivery.

In chapter 5, I offer up conclusions from the earlier chapters and demonstrate how they contribute to existing work on Aristophanes. I argue that Aristophanes should be considered as a serious author presenting questions of public ethics despite that his medium of choice is not the same as more those more traditionally considered philosophical. Moreover, I will explain that the rhetorical medium of comedy should

receive more scholarly attention because its form may be more commonly experienced than major public address, it affects huge swathes of the population across the globe regardless of culture, and uses one of the most basic human experiences to shape values and behavior.

Chapter 2

Ethical Considerations of Sophistry in *Clouds*

Abstract:

Not unlike the *Gorgias* or *Phaedrus*, Aristophanes' *Clouds* presents competing ideas of communication and education within the context of 5th c. BCE Athenian life, constantly interweaving elements of oratory and public performance, ethics, and citizenship. In a scathing caricature, *Clouds* highlights the excesses and abuses of sophistical training in an attempt to show the dangers inherent in this new model of education. Although the majority of the play is devoted to mocking the group generally understood as sophists, Aristophanes also describes and criticizes an older, more traditional form of education in Athens. The contrast between old and new, traditional and sophistic education, demonstrates that each system is fundamentally flawed and presents obstacles to an ethically-governed polis. However, sophistry is the bigger villain in *Clouds* because it trains students to have no regard for the polis and one's fellow citizens, creating the belief that each person is accountable only to the pursuit of one's desires, not necessarily for the well-being of the community at large. The traditional education emphasizes the importance of family and community, but at the expense of the self. This instruction manifests through rigorous physical training and strict obedience to the elders of the community, foregoing the possibility of intellectual or linguistic development. This too is dangerous because it has the potential for abuse via dishonest leaders and an improper concentration of power, but retains some benefit because it has the weight of tradition and some measure of accountability to the community. Using Kenneth Burke's theories of the negative, I explore how *Clouds* invites the audience to see balance between these competing perspectives, that education will perhaps be most beneficial if it promotes intellectual development and the sense that a student is one member of a larger community.

I. Introduction

Although rhetoric scholars regularly read Plato, Aristotle, and other theorists from the classical period, the works of the comic playwright Aristophanes are less frequently circulated. The most notable exception is his play *Clouds* because it lampoons Socrates and the role of sophistry in Athenian education. Not unlike the *Gorgias* or *Phaedrus*, *Clouds* presents competing ideas of communication and education within the context of Athenian life, constantly interweaving elements of rhetoric, ethics, and citizenship. However, Aristophanes never presents a cogent or practical answer to the problems he poses or even a specific direction to pursue (such as dialectic in the *Phaedrus*). As Gomme describes, “All drama represents a conflict of some kind; but there will be little success for the writer who can only take one side” (102). Instead, Aristophanes forces the audience to contemplate and devise their own solutions. After exploring some competing forms of education, the play invites the audience to consider the best kind of education for the city based on the ethical character of the young men it produces.

The plays from Aristophanes’ earlier period show a heightened sensitivity to political and social matters. They were especially devoted to anti-war themes and merciless mockery of public officials, as well as to crude jokes unrelated to such concerns; plays such as *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Lysistrata* typify this period. One may argue that these plays used topics the common Athenians were discussing amongst themselves as subjects for conversation (Murphy “Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric” 113). The debate between the Greater and Lesser Discourse, as well as other scenes in *Clouds*, therefore likely reflected ethical concerns about public

speaking norms that were relevant to the Athenian citizens.²⁹ It is unlikely that the version of the play that has survived is the same one performed before an Athenian audience.³⁰ Based on textual clues in the *parabasis*, our version of *Clouds* shows that the poet was displeased the play finished last in an earlier appearance. However, because my purpose here is to discuss the ethical considerations raised in the play, we may privilege the idea that Aristophanes was interested in influencing *an* audience, even if the play itself never saw a second production. I will explore the value this play may offer a modern audience by considering how Aristophanes portrays the adversarial and antithetical relationships between loyalty to the state vs. selfish desires and inability to speak in public vs. speaking well.

Although much of the play follows a sophistic Socrates instructing his students, the *agôn* (889-1110) more explicitly examines key differences between Socratic sophistry and a more traditional education through the exchange of the Greater Discourse (*Kreittôn Logos*) and Lesser Discourse (*Hettôn Logos*).³¹ This combative argument epitomizes

²⁹ Major (2013) points out that “*Clouds* is the earliest extant example of the perspective that the Sophists engaged in morally destructive projects” (84).

³⁰ Hypothesis IV (or I as printed in Dover’s edition) indicates that some revisions differentiate the present text of *Clouds* from an earlier one, including the section concerning the two *Logoi* (Dover 1). Dover presents a detailed account of the evidence for two versions for the play (lxxx-xcviii). Hubbard (1986) examines clues in the *parabaseis* of *Clouds* to determine how much is new and to whom the new material is directed. Sidwell (2009) argues that the revision was intended to attack more political targets than the previous version. Rosen (1997) discusses the possibility that the revised version was intended only for literary use.

³¹ The *Logoi* are often translated as “Right and Wrong” (Dover 1968, Kleve 1983, Platter 2007), “Just and Unjust” (Strauss 1966, Coulon and Van Daele 2009), “Better and Worse” (Revermann 2006), “Right and Anti-Right” (Nussbaum 1980), or “Stronger and Weaker” (Schiappa 2003) to refer to the different moral values attached to the adjectives “*Kreittôn*” and “*Hettôn*.” The Hypothesis before the text of the play also refers to them as *o dikaios logos* and *o adikos logos*, reflecting that the contrast of just and unjust was also one of the ways early scholiasts understood the *Logoi*. They are also referred to as “Arguments” (MacDowell 1995, Bowie 1993) to capture the antagonistic nature of the term “*Logoi*.” Euben also interprets them metaphorically, as “Old and New Education (1996).

I have chosen to follow Hubbard (2007) in translating the *Logoi* as “Greater and Lesser Discourse” to highlight their opposition as embodiments of speech styles without over-emphasizing their argumentative

the ethical associations with the old and new forms of education and acts as the critical scene for establishing which type of education should be preferred, providing Pheidippides a direct choice over the manner and content of his instruction. The contrast will prove anticlimactic in its own way because *Clouds* presents an condemnatory picture of both the Greater and Lesser Discourse, paving the way for its audience to conceive of an alternative style of speaking favored by a more ethically minded orator, who resists the flaws of the *logoi* and embodies the virtues they lack.

This ideal ethical citizen, acting as a contrasting figure to the flaws of both *logoi*, would undergo enough training to think critically on difficult legislative or policy questions and to see the importance of public engagement as a way of maintaining social stability. The Greater Discourse's greatest deficiency is that his students would be loyal to the state, but not necessarily able to comment meaningfully on how to run it. The Lesser Discourse excels in this area because he and his pupils can think on both sides of a topic and use more than one style of reasoning, therefore they have the potential to cut through poor argumentation when the Assembly considers important matters. Considering how effortlessly they eviscerate the claims of their opponents, it would be impressive to see the marshaling of their oratorical powers on behalf of all the citizens rather than only themselves. The ideal citizen would not only have such training but be

or moral characters. Moreover, I believe Aristophanes criticizes both characters and is not necessarily privileging one over the other. "Discourse" allows us to consider the characters as more than their persuasive techniques, as the play is concerned not only with oratorical training but the caliber of citizens produced and their corresponding political influences toward the city. As I argue in the concluding remarks of this chapter, the greatest danger presented by the *Logoi* is not a specific policy or agenda so much as their ability to alter the overall culture and caliber of discourse in the *polis*.

encouraged to use it in service of the state, which is one of the more cherished and important ethical norms in late 5th c. Athens. As Ober explains (“Debate” 191),

The Athenians expected that citizens would be educated, not just by the spirit or the wording of the law, but by engaging in (and observing others engaging in) political and legal processes: by serving as jurors, magistrates, Assemblymen and so on. The Athenians assumed, I believe rightly, that a clear code of ethics arose not only from a public discourse centered on freedom, equality, and security, but also from the logic inherent fair and consistent public practices. And they supposed that “practices in use” could be effective educators.

The citizen whom the audience is invited to conjure does not represent the unfortunate, binary dilemma of choosing either the Greater or Lesser Discourse because either option is still inherently flawed and will not live up to the social and political norms identified by Ober. Instead, this ideal person skilled in speech will be negatively motivated to avoid their flaws and embrace the characteristics and skills that make them poor models of ethical speaking skill and civic participation. Burke might even say that the presentation of flaws implies a corresponding set of virtues even if they are not discussed or displayed for *Clouds*' audience. As the two *Logoi* demonstrate, it is not enough to have either a loyal appreciation for the values of the community or developed intellectual abilities and skill in argument. The ideal ethical citizen will possess both characteristics and attempt to become something *more* than his opposites. It is worth noting that *Clouds* does not give the impression that any citizen could become this idealized figure because the play presents contrasting dangers originating from both the accomplished orator and the audience seduced by his words. Not every citizen would have the natural intellect to

undergo the training and develop the sophisticated techniques necessary to steer the Assembly, nor would everyone have sufficient attachments in the community to use these abilities responsibly (Nussbaum “Aristophanes” 79). It would be insulting to suggest such an idea openly in the play and against the interests of a playwright trying to win the crowd’s favor, which is perhaps why the characters approach the question of ethical citizenship from a more understated and comical position. Even if the audience members do not consider themselves as likely candidates to become the ideal citizen and orator, *Clouds* gives them the opportunity to contemplate the identity and moral character of this kind of person and to infer the *actions* and *choices* this person would make in public. They are invited to explore an antithesis to the portrayals onstage and to hope that an alternative figure may exist or come into existence that will steer Athens out of its present troubles and towards a more positive future.

In this chapter, I examine the values privileged by the Greater and Lesser Discourse and determine whose values are best served by their brands of education. Although Aristophanes presents a more critical view of sophistry compared to the more established education in Athens, I argue that he highlights the flaws of both educational systems and invites the audience to consider a more balanced, reciprocal relationship between attachments to the state and argumentative skills to promote ideas of good citizenship in the city. This ideal citizen is implied by the deficiencies of his counterparts in the play and must be constructed by the audience as a viable alternative to the prevailing educational systems in the city.

II. Old vs. New Education

When we arrive at the *agôn* between the Greater and Lesser Discourse, Aristophanes has already established a new, sophistic form of education as a focus of the play. *Clouds* has not, however, adequately addressed the relevance or superiority of the new education compared with the old, which has remained noticeably absent so far in the play. Thus, lines 889-1110 advance the concepts already introduced by Strepsiades and Socrates but pit them against a suitable comparison to elaborate the qualities of the new education; this “pairing of opposites” is essential to making the argument that both *Logoi* represent absurd and illogical positions for Athenian education (Fisher 24). This scene allows the audience to see the ethical implications behind each system through narrative and argumentative confrontation.

One may divide this *agôn* into two sections. The first describes the posturing and initial set of insults hurled by the Greater and Lesser Discourse against each other, but before the debate proper begins. “That the two [*Logoi*] should be personified and brought before us as speaking characters is fully in accord with traditional Greek categories of thought and with the techniques of comedy” (Dover “Clouds” lviii). This introductory language allows the audience to quickly learn who these characters are and what they represent, because their strange appearances as rooster/human hybrids will not have been readily recognizable without some kind of verbal explanation.³² Dover tells us the

³²Major (2006) argues the *Logoi* are constructed to let the audience know immediately who they represent and that they are an excessive departure from actual citizens (135). Papageorgiou (2004) explains that the appearance of virtue and vice in Prodicus’ parable of Herakles also provides clues to their identity, value systems, and lifestyles similarly to the two *Logoi*: “However, both Vice and Hetton logos are eager and self-confident, while Virtue and Kreiton logos express a measured willingness” (“Prodicus” 65).

contest is a well-known case of old vs. new, “in which the older generation represents itself as tough, upright, and virtuous and represents the younger generation as soft, dishonest, and dissolute” (lxii).³³ The chorus, who initiates the rules of the debate, also describes them as fitting the old. vs. new stereotype (934-938). As this prologue reveals, the Greater Discourse will be mocked for being simple-minded, physically aggressive, and overly concerned with morality (especially sexual *mores*). The Lesser Discourse will be mocked for being overly clever and subversive, effeminate and weak. Quoting Aristotle’s *Poetics* (ch. 2), Van Hook reveals that “Comedy tends to make its personages *worse than the man of the present day*,” therefore the audience would recognize these characters as caricatures not directly relevant to their own experiences (284).

The presentation of the *logoi* as buffoonish characters with clear moral leanings stands at odds with what was likely the more common and neutral understanding of the Protagorean expression for speech positions in a debate, “*ton hēttō de logon kreittō poiein*.” Based on Protagoras’ reputation around Greece, it is unlikely Aristophanes arrived at the names for his *logoi* independently and without considering any possible familiarity or connotative associations in his audience. As Schiappa notes, “Of the two *logoi* in opposition concerning any given experience, one is – at any given time – dominant or stronger, while the other is submissive or weaker” (107). Aristophanes has cleverly distorted the speaking positions so that he can add a more pronounced moral dimension, which allows him to demonize the sophists and use them as comic scapegoats. Major concurs with Schiappa, arguing that Aristophanes creates the

³³ Schiappa also discusses this point (1999): “With hindsight we can interpret specific portions of *Clouds* as an attack on Rhetoric, but a more historical reading suggests that the play was an attack on the newfangled ‘higher education’ in general” (72).

appearance that “he is straightforwardly dramatizing or reflecting established usage, when in fact he is *reconstituting terminology* (italics mine) and reevaluating people involved in the exploration of, and training in, language use” (83-84).

Greater Discourse is obsessed with morality, linking his program to *sôphrosunê*, justice, and divinity. He claims to speak just things (900, *ta dikaia legôn*). When confronted by the Lesser Discourse, who denies that any justice can be found and subsequently asks where it is, Greater naturally turns to what should be the trump card in his ideology: that justice resides with the gods (903, *para toisi theois*). This should be an unimpeachable argument because few at this time would openly question the authority or power of the gods, especially as they pertain to matters of justice. The Athenians gave added credibility to their own pledges and promises; thus when Greater Discourse invokes the gods, he links himself to their authority in an attempt to make his own argument appear stronger (Dillon 135). By equating his own words (*dikaia*) with the ethical identity of the gods, Greater Discourse attempts to establish himself as a more trustworthy source than his opponent. One may contrast the characterization of his own words to Lesser Discourse’s, which he considers “empty talk” or “bullshit” (931, *lalian monon askêsai*). It is not only important to him that his words prevail over those of Lesser Discourse and prove more persuasive, but that they do so because they are “right” and his opponent’s are inherently meaningless, empty, and morally wrong. This unshakable belief in the authority of the gods then comes under fire when Lesser Discourse asks why Zeus was not punished or killed for binding his father, an act that would have been considered morally outrageous by the Athenians of the 5th c. (904-906).

Lesser Discourse mocks Greater because the moral exemplar in question shows a profound disobedience to existing authority, which Greater Discourse holds in high regard. The criticism the play directs towards Greater Discourse is not necessarily for the substance of his faith, but that his inability to defend it leaves him vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. He never anticipates that his beliefs will be the source of his opponent's criticisms and has no persuasive response when the logical inconsistencies of his position are revealed. Even before the formal debate, the blind belief in the moral superiority of the gods has been made problematic and difficult to defend when put to the question, thus the audience may begin to ask what this moral belief is really worth.

Greater Discourse is also concerned with sexual conduct. He is regularly characterized as an aggressive, brawny creature who is not stupid exactly, but certainly less clever than his counterpart. He makes a point to accuse Lesser Discourse of being a passive homosexual and debauch (909, *katapugôn ei kanaischuntos*). At this point in the play, Greater does not discuss his own sexuality, but his charge is telling because it attacks an act considered objectionable in Athenian society. There is some dispute about the degree of acceptance for homosexuality in 5th c. Athens, but it is clear that it was predominantly an elite, aristocratic activity and not commonly practiced in the lower classes.³⁴ Although these types of jokes were common in Aristophanic comedy, their

³⁴ Papageorgiou ("Ambiguities" 2004) argues that homosexuality adhered to a "strong set of rules of propriety" to protect the interests and reputations of both parties and to contain homosexual desires within moderate, disciplined boundaries (289). A desire for young boys was, in his view, only considered inappropriate if it skirted these boundaries and overtly made one participant sexually passive through penetration. Dover (1978) comes to a similar conclusion, that "the male who breaks 'rules' of legitimate eros detaches himself from the ranks of male citizenry and classifies himself with women and foreigners" (103). For a critical review of Dover's work, cf. Davidson (2009). Hubbard (1998, 2003) is more convincing, however, that the practice, regardless of how it was performed, would likely have been disapproved of by the lower classes because the distinction between passive and active was more fluid and

purpose here is to ally Greater Discourse with a more traditional type of morality that deplores passivity, sexual or otherwise. This stance is corroborated by his threat to beat Lesser Discourse if he lays a hand on Pheidippides (933, *klausei, tēn cheir' ên epiballêis*). When he fails to defeat Lesser Discourse's initial arguments, he shifts tactics to emphasize his physical might as another advantage over his opponent to impose his will and win the debate. He shows that at least initially, his claims to rightness have not been able to vanquish his opponent and thus he must reposition his authority. His sexual *mores* might not be considered foolish at this point in the play, but he establishes them as a major theme for the defense of his education. Lesser Discourse will fiercely attack this foundation and show that their moderate and reasonable appearance here (by Athenian standards) only covers up a prurient obsession with young boys.

Unsurprisingly, Lesser Discourse has little in common with his opponent.³⁵ In place of the traditional modes of behavior and thinking, Lesser Discourse explicitly states that he represents the discovery of novel ideas in Athens (896, *gnômas kainas exeuriskôn*). This declaration may not be antagonistic *per se*, but the context makes clear that he is asserting subversive tendencies. His opponent stands 'with moral authority' and traditional education, thus any new ideas would run contrary to the accepted will of the gods (as explained by Greater Discourse). Not only are these thoughts new, but Lesser Discourse is openly trying to overturn the 'just' words of his opponent (901, *all'*

unstable. A young *erômenos* would become an *erastês* later in life, thus perpetuating "a closed and incestuous system of aristocratic gift-exchange which included even the exchange of one's own body for the privilege of admission into the chosen circle of the Athenian political and intellectual elite" ("Popular" 69).

³⁵ Papageorgiou (2004) convincingly argues that the Lesser Discourse represents not just one figure from classical Athens, such as Protagoras or Socrates, but the entire sophistic movement based on references to several intellectuals from the period ("Prodicus" 62).

anatrepsô taut'antilegôn). Furthermore, he embraces the insults hurled at him (such as being called a passive homosexual) and says they are like roses (910, *roda m' eirêkas*) and gold (912, *chrusô pattôn m' ou gignôskeis*). Lesser Discourse represents a direct threat to the former method of education and morality itself because he deliberately tries to sabotage its reputation. This mission of intentionally overturning Athenian *mores* demonstrates that Lesser Discourse is a monstrous and unreal version of the sophists, which the audience should be able to recognize without much effort.³⁶ He offers a striking contrast to Greater Discourse because he has no regard for his own reputation, delightfully embracing the accusations and epithets describing him. Lesser Discourse may be more clever than his opponent, but at this point in the play he represents cleverness without principles, intellect apart from and opposed to morality. The audience can plainly see he knows how to talk smoothly, but his arguments are fallacious and impious. Few Athenians would publicly criticize Zeus and abuse his own father, even if the god were a suitable model for such behavior.

To underscore disrespect for traditional authority, Lesser Discourse treats Greater as an old man with antiquated customs. He refers to his opponent as doddering and silly (908, *tuphogerôn ei kanarmostos*) and very old (929, *Kronos ôn*). The implication behind these attacks is that Greater Discourse is an ancient figure who has become

36 There is no doubt the sophists inspired caution or fear that customs and beliefs would change in the 5th c., but there does not appear to be signs of deliberate attempts to create social upheaval, especially with the kind of zeal displayed by Lesser Discourse. As Marianetti (1993) explains, "Both the speculative approach of natural philosophy and the sophistic movement introduced new trends in viewing conventional religion and practical ethics. The emphasis of natural philosophy on the contemplation of natural phenomena, and the concerns of the sophists with persuasive techniques in political assemblies and law courts, challenged the validity of customs religious and political by promoting the primacy of rationalism and individualism" (5).

outdated in the current political and social landscape and whose ideas are no longer valuable. The sophistic movement and intellectuals in general were not a new development in Athens, thus there had been ample time for Athenians to believe that traditional concepts of morality were being undermined with less consistent obligations to *oikos* and *polis*.³⁷ Furthermore, Pericles had shown that political power rests in the ability to persuade the Athenian Assembly with words, not brute strength. Before the debate begins, we see the clear dichotomy between these value systems. As Dover explains, “Devotion to the technique of persuasion was incompatible with a firm belief in objective values” (“Clouds” xxxviii). This was presumably because a set of objective values locks a person into certain courses of action, but techniques of persuasion open the door to all manner of possibilities, moral or otherwise. Lesser Discourse seeks to undermine the credibility of his opponent as the representative of traditional education to show that the new system is superior and worth adopting in its place.

At this point I should clarify that the two Discourses certainly invoke morality for their own purposes, but neither should be considered a legitimate moral authority because their positions are ridiculous polarizations. Greater Discourse values what he considers traditional morality, but he sacrifices critical thought and the ability to thoroughly examine his own beliefs. As the next section will show, he blindly restrictive

³⁷ Gagarin (2001) argues that persuasion was not necessarily the main purpose in sophistic lessons, that there were other goals “such as the serious exploration of issues and forms of argument, the display of ingenuity in thought, argument and style of expression, and the desire to dazzle, shock and please,” which Athenians could easily perceive as an uncomfortable change to existing social practices (289). This view is shared by Ford (2001) and Ober (2001), who suggest that personal contacts amongst the aristocracy may have been a more important benefit from sophistic training and that persuasive skills may have more incidental than deliberate. Whitehorne (2002) maintains that intellectuals were prominent enough in the late 5th c. that they could be caricatured through props and poses that most Athenians would readily understand, further demonstrating that their presence in Athens had seeped well into the cultural consciousness (33-34).

morality is predicated more on vanity and pride than on the welfare of young citizens. Lesser Discourse privileges intellectual thought and the ability to subvert traditional notions in society, but is hardly a model worth following because he has respect for no established custom and adheres to no principles other than self-satisfaction. “If the old education was defective in its indifference to reason, the new education may be equally one-sided in its indifference to the training of the passions” (Nussbaum “Aristophanes” 69). Aristophanes deepens these flaws when the two *Logoi* combat openly for Pheidippides’ trust.

III. The Ethics of New vs. Old Education

Although the debate between the Greater and Lesser Discourse is nominally about Pheidippides, its larger themes concern the development of young men and their responsibilities as ethical speakers participating in the *polis*; it should therefore come as no surprise that it is charged with fierce political overtones.³⁸ As the debate progresses, it becomes clear that there is a pronounced urgency to its outcome.³⁹ “In times of crisis the question is not simply who will define what is right or wrong, but who will define the discourse in which such claims are recognized as being either right or wrong” (Euben 895). The initial talking points give a clear indication of the participants’ interests.

Unlike the initial exchange, however, they now provide more specific examples to

³⁸ Long rightly points out that “strictly taken, the *agôn* is meant to be not a contest but a lesson: Pheidippides is to learn about the two arguments by hearing them debate one another” (294). However, this debate has implications beyond a matter of simple instruction, as the *Logoi* are not presenting information which Pheidippides can use at his own discretion. Instead, they engage in logomachic attacks to vanquish their opponent so that there is only one option available for Pheidippides to choose, thus one must acknowledge that the debate acts as much more than a routine lesson for purely informative purposes.

³⁹ As Schiappa explains, “The famous contest between the two *logoi* is both a battle of words and a conflict between two ways of life (111). See also Major (2013), page 90.

illustrate and amplify their points, which makes their value systems appear all the more foolish and impractical. Greater Discourse again begins with moral issues (962, *sôphrosunê*), cueing the audience that it is a significant element of his educational method. He defines this term through a series of examples explaining how boys behaved when he was in charge. His speech shows remarkable consistency for describing the sexual *mores* of his students: they sat without exposing their thighs (966 *tô mêrô mê xunehontas*), swept away the ground so that lovers would not see the imprint of their youth (975-976, *authis anistamenon...mê kataleipein*), and did not use a soft voice or lead a lover on with the eyes (979-980, *oud' an malakên...ebadizen*). These are hardly radical concepts for Athenians hoping to train the next generation of civic-minded students and reflect the degree of modesty expected by Greater Discourse in his students (Eden 234). As Cohen explains, “Boys who, under certain circumstances, participated in sexual intercourse with men were believed to have acted for gain and to have adopted a submissive role which disqualified them as potential citizens” (9). However, the degree of detail and the constant attention that Greater Discourse brings to these descriptions seems to go beyond a simple concern. Furthermore, one may conclude that because he has provided such specific details in the characterization of a young man seducing an older one, he has more than passing knowledge of the activity. Eden suggests that this is a characterization of “the boys’ activities in chronological sequence as part of a day’s routine,” underscoring how many times Greater Discourse has observed the boys in this environment (234). It is plausible under these circumstances that he has had to resist the temptation of pretty boys and presents an overly zealous case to conceal his interest.

Greater Discourse never explains his own sexual proclivities, but it is clear that he has been watching the naked young boys for some time (otherwise he would not have included these details). He admits to being choked with anger (988, *ôste m'apagchesth'*) that the students of Lesser Discourse cover themselves in cloaks (987, *tous nun euthus en himatioisi didaskeis entetulichthai*) and hide their “ham” (*tês kôlês*) with shields when dancing at the Panathenaea (988-989). His outrage is that he can no longer see the flesh of young boys in a public forum (Hubbard “Homosexuality” 95)! There is enough evidence in his speech for the audience to think that he is a little too concerned with the sexual habits of young boys and to give less credence to the sense of morality and restraint he is trying to promote. It is difficult to take his arguments seriously when he displays such a prurient and contradictory interest in his students.

Greater Discourse also advocates that young men act with deference to their elders and always unquestioningly obey. They must keep quiet at all times (963, *edei paidos phônên gruxantos mêden' akousai*), rise up from their seats whenever their elders pass by (993, *tôn thakôn tois presbuterois hupanistasthai prosiousin*), and never talk back to their fathers (994, *mê peri tous sautou goneas skaiourgein*, again at 998-999). Furthermore, if the boys acted like fools at school, they were soundly beaten (969-972, *ei de tis autôn bômolocheusait'...ôs tas Mousas aphanizôn*). As seen with his concerns for sexual behavior, Greater Discourse is very interested in making sure young men know their place in society and rigidly adhere to that role. In this educational system, young men do not speak unless spoken to and live for the service of their elders. He does not value the intellectual development of his students because at no point in their training do

they learn to speak publicly, articulate their thoughts, or challenge existing opinions. Students of Greater Discourse become locked into a system that would perpetuate itself without significant risk of change to the status quo because its supposedly objective values are timeless. The only potential source of change in his value system would have to originate from the top down, in which elders speak amongst themselves and come to a final decision without necessarily consulting the young, who must embrace and enact that change. Greater Discourse would produce citizens who are not trained or perhaps comfortable enough to speak out of turn or voice opinions, whose discipline is ruthlessly enforced while they are students (i.e. through beatings), and who do not have the same sense of personal autonomy privileged by the Lesser Discourse. As Nussbaum succinctly explains, “Its tools are stern discipline and rote repetition” (“Aristophanes” 55).

This is a system whose sole design is to *control the young*, commit them to the bidding of others, and remove them from meaningful participation in public deliberation. Perhaps older Athenian citizens witnessing this argument would approve because they stand to gain the most from it, but younger citizens stand to lose any sense of individuality, independence, and the ability to influence public affairs. With training in speech replaced with physical exercise and discipline, they become ill-equipped to present arguments, defend themselves intellectually, and use critical thinking when evaluating the positions and speeches of other citizens. When one considers the effects associated with heightened sensitivity to sexual practices, the students of Greater Discourse will always be disciplined against personal pleasure and will also always be expected to obey orders; even if instructions are unbeneficial or foolhardy, they are not

given the privilege of asking questions or providing an alternative. It is a system built with potential for abuse because the Greater Discourse's earlier words indicate that older men will always lust after younger ones, keep them firmly in place, and hold onto their own power for as long as possible. However, his solution is not to castigate the elders as certain Athenian laws were created to do (Cohen 6), but instead to impose responsibility for sexual purity, chastity, and adhering to rigid social roles on the young. Instead of insulating them from such corrupting influences, they are still allowed to train naked and tempt would-be lovers. They are allegedly shielded from moral lapses by a rigid psychological discipline predicated upon shame and personal reputation (especially lines 992-997, *kai tois aischrois aischunesthai...upo pornidiou tês eukleias apothrausthês*). In this system, the *only* major responsibility given to the young is protecting the reputations of their family and themselves while the business of decision-making and public deliberation is enjoyed only by elders. If put in a position to steer the ship of state when they assume the role of elders, students of the Greater Discourse are unlikely to be effective speakers working ethically to produce decisions that benefit the entire *polis*.

Greater Discourse continues his fixation on the appearances of young men by privileging a strong, muscular physique. He summarizes the way they should look at 1009-1014: a shining chest, dark skin, broad shoulders, small tongue, large buttocks, and a small penis. The shining chest, dark skin, broad shoulders and large buttocks demonstrate that the student is an active, muscular youth who works outside and does not have female characteristics such as white skin (Dover "Clouds" 222, Coulon and Van Daele 111). The small tongue shows the youth's respect for his elders, that he holds his

tongue in their presence and does not act verbally abusive towards them. The small penis was considered a sign of sexual restraint and temperance, and was thought to be more aesthetically pleasing (Hubbard “Homosexuality” 96). These characteristics epitomize the mental and physical traits Greater Discourse would have in his students: a strong, sexually chaste young man who does not talk back to his elders. Greater Discourse is mocked by Aristophanes because his students are pretty automatons acting at the whims of social superiors.⁴⁰ Pheidippides would be inclined to choose this type of training if he were especially interested in his own beauty, in looking a certain way, and knowing that he was an object of admiration (Murphy “Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric” 95). Because this value system also privileges beauty, it would appeal to a student whose vanity needs approval and praise from everyone around him. These conditions are perfect for creating the mentality of an *erômenos* and the kind of behavior prohibited in his system, but Greater Discourse seems oblivious to this contradiction. The ethics of Greater Discourse affect the self and *polis* in one significant way: the alleged temperance serves only to massage the egos of vain students so that they may be more compliant with their superiors’ wishes and prevent behavior, such as providing new political agendas or policies, that could threaten or change the status quo.

40 Marrou (1956) presents an interesting counterpoint: “This ideal, strange though it may seem to us, is nevertheless perfectly legitimate; that is to say, in itself it is quite consistent. There is nothing absurd in believing that physical beauty, the worship of the body, can be for some people a real reason for living, a way of expressing, indeed of fulfilling, their personality—after all, it has long been accepted as legitimate enough as far as women are concerned. In fact these young Greeks were honoured and courted and pampered and admired very much like our women of today (or yesterday). Their whole life was bathed, like any woman’s, in the glow of their youthful successes, the lustre of their beauty (Alcibiades is a case in point)” (44). In a more sympathetic character, the virtue of physical beauty would not seem ridiculous, but I contend it is difficult to take this idea seriously when its main advocate is as exaggerated and comical as Greater Discourse. His arguments are not the philosophical ideals of beauty found in Plato’s *Symposium*, as his continued attention to boys’ genitalia and the importance of their disuse make clear.

When we consider whose interests are served in this model, it is clearly the elder generation of Athenians and *perhaps*, one could argue, the welfare of the city at large. They would produce a group of very strong and fit young men who will not challenge them or attempt to usurp their authority, and who are also quite pleasing to the eye. These values emphasize the services youths can do for the rest of the city, and a broad sense of civic responsibility replaces any focus on personal pleasure or desire. The city stands to benefit provided the elder generation does not abuse its authority and sets out meaningful tasks for the young, but Aristophanes puts this assertion in doubt through the overzealous statements of Greater Discourse. Moreover, there is no evidence the students would take much interest in legislative affairs because they are not making any of the important decisions while young, nor does Greater Discourse mention training appropriate for speaking in the Assembly or law-courts as they assume responsibility for public action later in life. The lone exception is if their sense of moral discipline somehow gives them the ability to speak the right words, as Greater Discourse claims to do before the debate. The elders would obtain a large group of boys to carry out their will without questioning their orders, a discipline instilled through beatings, rigid sexual control, and an honor/shame based society. The argumentative strategy employed by Greater Discourse to persuade Pheidippides is predicated not on the belief that it is the only way to understand education, but that it is the only *right* or *moral* way. Greater Discourse never explicitly defines his brand of education, but he associates the term with a sense of morality (*dikaia* or *sôphrosunê*) that does not allow the possibility of

adaptation or evolution, and that should be considered legitimate because it has the weight of tradition and chronological priority (Baracchi 156).

It is easier to see the satire behind the characterization of Lesser Discourse because his excesses are more apparent and openly admitted than Greater Discourse. His first such admission appears early in his speech, that he is expressly against the established customs of the city (1040, *toisin nomois kai tais dikais tanti' antilexai*). This is another way of saying he may support virtually anything that Greater Discourse opposes. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume he will not have the same prejudices about sexual behavior and commitment to following the orders of his elders, or to the sustained welfare of the *polis*.

Lesser Discourse claims that Pheidippides can do virtually anything he pleases if the young man chooses his brand of education, which he characterizes as choosing the worse argument but still winning (1042, *airoumenon tous êttonas logous epeita nikân*). This is a stunning admission because it implies that, to a certain extent, Lesser Discourse does not fundamentally disagree about the nature of his opponent's moral impulses and beliefs. The main point of contention concerns the value or significance of morality based on what it allows the individual citizen to do and how it satisfies personal desires. For Lesser Discourse's system, one deliberately chooses to act contrary to those values knowing that it is not the right thing to do, but that the potential for profit can justify anything (1041, *touto plein ê muriôn est' axion stratêrôn*).

Unlike his opponent, Lesser Discourse draws attention to his sophistic method by cross-examining some of the points made in the previous speech (1043). This is a

different style of persuasion because there was little question-and-answer when Greater Discourse was speaking, and this method provides the audience with another opportunity to see stark differences between the two interlocutors (their appearance on-stage might have shown off their physical training as well).⁴¹ Euben notes that the debate format, which requires arguments of some kind, already rigs the contest against Greater Discourse and later Strepsiades: the inability to anticipate flaws in their positions creates a distinct disadvantage that proves insurmountable, especially compared with the level of attention and analysis applied by their opponents (897). Lesser Discourse begins by attacking the idea that young men should avoid the baths and the marketplace, both points fitting into Greater's system of avoiding situations that can bring shame upon one's name. After Greater Discourse claims the baths are very bad (1046, *kakiston*) and make a man cowardly (*deilon*), Lesser compels him to admit that Herakles, the best man in all of Greece (1050, *beltion' andra*), is associated with hot baths (Dover "Clouds" 224). Furthermore, the marketplace cannot be a bad place because the poet Homer describes Nestor, a man known for his wisdom and good counsel, as a man of the marketplace (1057, *Nestor' agorêtên*). These are important points because they downplay the importance of being physically superior to other people (one will not become soft by going to the baths) and highlight the significance of being able to manipulate language and make logical connections. Moreover, they again show that the moral participant in the debate has not examined his own beliefs and is incapable of

⁴¹ Dover's commentary is insightful on this point. The text itself gives no indication about the physical characteristics of the *Logoi*, but the scholia indicate that "the *Logoi* are shown in the theatre (*upokeintai epi tês skênês*) in wicker cages, fighting like birds,' (i.e. like cocks)" (xc). His comments on the following pages suggest the scholia's interpretation of the *Logoi* should be taken seriously in the second version of *Clouds*.

presenting a cogent argument on his own behalf; although Lesser Discourse has presented some clever examples, a more skillful opponent might examine the nature of this evidence and argue that they do not apply as given, or provide counter-examples to demonstrate the initial point more convincingly (Freydberg 42). Even if Greater Discourse holds the moral high ground, he cannot defend himself against a more intellectual opponent or provide sufficient refutation.⁴² These exchanges show that Lesser Discourse is both *capable* of taking advantage of his opponent and *willing* to do so to further his own interests.

These are minor points, however, in Greater Discourse's exposition. Lesser Discourse next attacks the lynchpin of his opponent's argument, *sôphrosunê*. He puts morality and sophistry in direct contrast when he reminds the audience that Greater Discourse has claimed to be decent (1060, *sôphronein*) and not to exercise the tongue, which Lesser calls two bad things (1060, *duo kakô megistô*). Then he puts Greater to the test, asking for the benefits conferred by *sôphronein*. The answers are hardly memorable: that Peleus, the father of Achilles, obtained a knife allowing him to survive (1063, *o goun Pêleus elabe dia touto tên machairan*) and was then able to marry the nereid-nymph Thetis because he was so decent (1067, *kai tên Thetin g' egême dia to sôphronein o Pêleus*). Lesser Discourse then argues she left Peleus because he was not sexually active enough for her (1068-1070, *apolipousa g'auton ôchet'...sinamôroumenô chairei*). This exchange is pivotal for persuading Pheidippides because Greater Discourse again cannot

⁴² This point is underscored by the emphasis of the new education not only on the act of speaking, but instruction in sophistical logic: "Throughout the play, Aristophanes portrays the process of learning to speak (*mathôn legein*) as a natural consequence of learning to engage in "sophisticated" (though sometimes absurd) reasoning" (Schiappa "Beginnings 71).

find a reasonable or persuasive defense for his beliefs, and shows that the benefits for his brand of morality are not so obvious or compelling. As he demonstrated before, physical beauty and sexual-control will be pleasing for a particularly vain person or one already conditioned to following orders; as Lesser Discourse begins to describe, there is another type of student who will not be persuaded by these arguments: one driven by intense personal pleasures and who does not need the approval of others.

Lesser Discourse is concerned only with enjoying the pleasures of life. His remarks about marrying a nymph reflect this point, because his ideology questions the value of such a wife if the relationship is sexless. Peleus is a poor example for Greater Discourse to reference because he appears all the more foolish for losing such a desirable woman and the accompanying pleasures she could provide, and offers no additional benefits to compensate for this loss. There are many pleasures at odds with Greater Discourse's morality (1071, *en tô sôphronein*) such as women, young boys, games, drinking, and laughter (1073, *paidôn, gunaikôn, kottabôn, opsôn, potôn, kachasmôn*) that are worth pursuing. Lesser Discourse consistently contrasts the moral language of his opponents, often using variants of *sôphronein*, with the language of pleasure to show Pheidippides what he stands to gain from each system and to create negative associations with traditional education. He accepts the definition for moral behavior and can agree that deprivation and sexual control are its major components; however, he forcefully disputes the implications for morality and why this behavior is worth adopting. Greater Discourse has claimed that respect and discipline are the important results for *sôphrosunê*, benefits that extend greater results for those who can exert self-control in an

honor-based system. However, he “rambles on and on about moderation, yet he cannot produce anyone who has ever profited from it. How could Pheidippides be expected to emulate a life so filled with contradictions? Why would he *want* to, given what he would have to give up---the pleasure of satisfying his natural desires unstintingly and without fear of reprisal” (Euben 898).

Lesser Discourse says the opposite, that losing the ability to indulge in such pleasures makes life not worth living (1074, *kaitoi ti soi zên axion, toutôn ean sterêthês*). To even an audience member listening casually, traditional education of the young sounds quite grim: temperate behavior becomes a discipline that constantly deprives and eliminates many physical pleasures. Lesser Discourse would have them see morality as an antiquated set of practices that makes life dull and more work than play. Argued in this way, sophistry involves having lots of sex, drinking, and generally treating other people as objects of one’s desires. As he predicted earlier, Lesser Discourse does indeed invoke values completely opposed to the Greater Discourse’s argument, because he presents the option of living explicitly for the self and using others as a means to accomplish this goal, not living for or at the will of others and their pleasures. He emphasizes the importance of personal goals and desires at the expense of the city and community.

The final example to explain this mentality is the case of adultery, where Lesser Discourse bridges the principles of immorality with prowess in persuasion and oratory. He advises Pheidippides that if he receives sophistic instruction and has a little adultery, he will be able to defend himself verbally if caught (1076-1077, *hêmartes, êrasthês...adunatos gar ei legein*). Lesser Discourse again resorts to Zeus as evidence to

support his sophistic logic, because if the god was unable to resist mortal women (even if they were married), how can a mere man do otherwise (1080-1082, *ôs ouden êdikêkas...pôs meizon an dunaio*). When pressed by Greater Discourse to admit this is foolish because the penalty for being caught is sodomy by radish (1083, *hraphanidôthêi*), Lesser retorts that it is not such a bad thing because it happens to everyone (1085ff). Public sodomy by radish is a fiendishly terrible punishment for the Greater Discourse because it represents passivity and shame in an open forum (what could be worse in an honor-based society?), but this is not a concern to his opponent.⁴³ To a student educated by Aristophanes' sophists, pleasure matters irrespective of cost; shame and physical discomfort are insignificant and well worth the risk if they can successfully satisfy one's desires. Furthermore, this underscores the idea that Lesser Discourse cannot be tamed by public opinion to adhere to the status quo. If he can face such an ignominious punishment and remain defiant, it is clear that little if any social pressure will affect him. The students of Lesser Discourse also stand a reasonable chance of avoiding such a fate because his methods, especially the ability to think fast and speak well, should provide a consistent safeguard against punishments. Morality is absent in his system because such beliefs are a hindrance to pleasures and fail to provide suitable defense when needed. In contrast, students of Greater Discourse would be prohibited from engaging in personal desires, feel acute shame if caught, and have no reliable defense to avoid punishment except the hope that moral words would be so inspirational that the audience would be

43 Gardner (1989) explains there were also pragmatic concerns for adultery, including potentially strict obligations to citizens and their children, as well as the possibility of adulterous wives helping their lovers rob the household of its resources (53-4). Although Greater Discourse does not mention these issues, an Athenian audience would likely have them in mind and recognize that an adulterer with impunity could be very dangerous.

compelled to align with the “right” side. For these reasons, the educational system of the Lesser Discourse is also one predicated on *control*, but he is concerned with manipulating those who can aid him in the enjoyment of pleasure, which could be *anyone* in Athenian society. As Redfield explains, “as figures of power rather than righteousness, great but not good, those gods often prove their greatness by their freedom from ethical norms” (“Poetry” 59). Moreover, enforcement of such control is only available to people with the right intellectual wherewithal; a sense of community, family, shame, or physical strength is absent or simply irrelevant. Nussbaum explains that this group would likely not have many members because “it is evident that without any social order there would be a chaos in which the pursuit of pleasure would become much more difficult than it is in a well-ordered city. Anti-Right nowhere disputes this. He proposed not the overthrow of *nomos* but its exploitation by a smart minority” (“Aristophanes” 65). The group likely to identify with this message would be the intellectuals or naturally-gifted public speakers, especially those who were not as interested in physical training, or those without strong ties to family or polis. The power to redefine situations and ideas and to capriciously justify any behavior gives sophistic students added flexibility for enforcing their will. This power of speaking well allows them to be protected from public opinion, which they can either shape with their persuasive powers or apathetically ignore. To a society concerned with stability and preventing *stasis*, sophistic students of this kind present great potential for danger because their malleability makes them unpredictable and very adept at obtaining what they desire. At the conclusion of the first *agōn*, the audience is invited to consider which of the following citizens they would most prefer to

inhabit the polis: a smart libertine who can wield speech as dangerously as any physical weapon or a strong, chaste soldier without the ability to present a coherent argument. Regardless of how they answer, the prospect of ethical leadership and decision-making in the *polis* is fairly grim.

IV. Sophistry in Practice: Pheidippides vs. Strepsiades

The *agôn* between the Greater and Lesser Discourses is instructive because it lays out the values of their educational programs, but it provides only a general theme for citizenship with two clearly grotesque caricatures. The audience can more fully appreciate the ethical consequences of allowing sophists to run amok in Athens if a young man trained in such speaking techniques applies them directly to his environment. Thus, the final encounters between Strepsiades and Pheidippides as a young sophist are crucial for Aristophanes to explore the topic of ethical orators and their effects on the *polis*. In this section, I analyze how Aristophanes recreates the *agôn* between the Greater and Lesser Discourse using Strepsiades and Pheidippides as proxies to show the Athenian audience that the unethical tenets of sophistry will produce profoundly negative changes in Athens.

After the Greater Discourse concedes defeat, Strepsiades decides for Pheidippides that he will be instructed by the Lesser Discourse. The next section of the play cues the audience that major changes are happening to Pheidippides as he transforms into a young sophist. The contrasts in the earlier *agôn* reappear as Pheidippides changes physically and

mentally to match his new lifestyle and training.⁴⁴ Strepsiades is initially overjoyed because he believes Pheidippides' new skills will be a boon to his family: his creditors will not be able to sue him because Pheidippides has learned effective speaking (1143, *eu legein*), the type of speech perfect for dodging lawsuits (1151, *ôst' apophugois an êntin' an boulê dikên*). However, the young man shows no respect for the traditional center of power and authority, directing his loyalty to his teachers at the *Phrontisterion* rather than his father and family. This is an important development in *Clouds*' critique of sophistic education, as Ober explains: "Since the polis could be regarded as a macrocosm of the extended family/kinship network, anyone who cheated his family could be seen as potentially dangerous to society as a whole" ("Mass" 212).

Although Pheidippides transforms into a young sophist with a pale complexion and "what are you talking about" look on his face (1170ff), the most striking change is his utter disregard for Strepsiades' orders. A not-so-friendly disagreement over poetry rapidly turns ugly as Pheidippides decides to beat his father viciously. The main points of the earlier *agôn* are vividly reemphasized for the audience as Strepsiades describes the beating that happened offstage and Pheidippides adeptly uses sophistic logic to justify his actions. Strepsiades uses a more conventional style of narration to portray his victimage as a wronged authority figure and to highlight traditional values, just as Greater Discourse provided a monologue of admittedly poor examples to demonstrate the moral

⁴⁴ Dover explains that *Clouds* is not the only Aristophanic play to highlight more than one debate, but that it is distinguished because of the scale of each debate. The similarities between Greater and Lesser Discourse compared with Strepsiades and Pheidippides are not coincidental: "The parallelism of structure between the two contests emphasizes the extent to which Pheidippides has emerged from his education a replica of Wrong; we shall see how he reproduces not only the rhetorical methods but even the actual words of Wrong" ("Clouds" 248).

behavior of his students. Pheidippides employs the same techniques as Lesser Discourse, asking his father a series of questions and compelling him to participate in the logical process; Strepsiades' downfall is that he admits to deserving the beating and that, in effect, he no longer merits the power he used to wield over his son.

Pheidippides displays much of the disrespect and shocking behavior typical of the Lesser Discourse after his sophistical training. Strepsiades is outraged over his son's conduct, calling him a wretch, parricide, and robber (1327, *ô miare kai patraloia kai toichôruche*). Pheidippides remarks that he enjoys such names and, when referred to as a giant asshole (1330, *lakkoprôkte*), replies that his father should hit him with more roses (*patte, pollois tois rodois*). This is similar to the language used by the Lesser Discourse earlier in the play and shows Pheidippides' disregard for the prevailing values of his culture and willingness to attack them with speech. These are names that should thoroughly shame him, and perhaps cow Pheidippides into submission so that he is compelled to renounce his actions, but instead they fuel the desire to defend himself and vehemently attack his father. This becomes evident when Pheidippides offers to let his father decide the position he would prefer to defend (1335-6). Strepsiades seems shocked that his son would make such a fearless and confident proposal, and admits that he must have been taught well if he can definitively prove that beating one's father is a just and right action. Before the argument begins, the audience knows that Pheidippides has already performed the beating, asserted that it was a justifiable action despite its abnormal character, and confidently proclaimed that he can defend himself regardless of which position he is given. This is a young man who can use speech to transform himself

into whoever and whatever he wants regardless of circumstance and without any connection to established cultural beliefs or customs.

Strepsiades reveals that an altercation happened offstage in their home because of a series of disagreements involving poetry. That such a terrible result⁴⁵ in the eyes of Athenian culture began over a trivial issue further demonstrates that Pheidippides is unpredictable and anchored by no prevailing cultural authority. This set of conflicts rehashes the dichotomy between old and young, established authority in the *oikos* and potential usurper. As Strepsiades explains, he was so pleased that his son can wrangle him out of debt that the house had occasion to celebrate. This initiates two disagreements between father and son: *which song* will Pheidippides sing at the party and the *manner in which* he will sing it. As innocuous and insignificant as these decisions seem, they reflect sensibilities with little overlap and generate great hostility between father and son. Strepsiades asks his son to play the lyre while singing (1355, *prôton men auton tèn lyran labont' ego 'keleusa*). This is an older form of celebrating at a symposium that eventually was replaced when guests would sing to the accompaniment of someone else, such as a slave playing an instrument (Dover "Clouds" 251-253). Pheidippides is not happy with this arrangement, claiming it is old-fashioned (*archaion*) to sing and play the lyre while drinking. Then Strepsiades becomes agitated because his son does not approve of the choice of music: he wishes Pheidippides to play first Simonides, then Aeschylus.

⁴⁵ Children were supposed to respect paternal authority regardless of their own opinions or preferences. Clay (1982) emphasizes that anything associated with *androphonos* (including murder and parricide) were so taboo as to be almost unspeakable (280-281). Although Pheidippides has not killed his father, he has already swung to an extreme position from which parricide is not far off. His actions are all the more appalling because Strepsiades validates them through his agreement at the end of the second *agôn* and may indirectly be helping to establish them as a new norm for parent-child relationships in the play's narrative. Dover (1968) also comments on the ability for children to harm parents: "A free man could strike his own children (cf. Pl. *Prt.* 325D), but he himself could not be struck with impunity" (259).

Pheidippides brusquely calls Simonides a bad poet (*kakon poiêtên*, 1362) and refers to Aeschylus as the first among poets, full of noise, incoherent, a ranter, and using big, rugged words (1366-1367, *ego gar Aischulon nomizô prôton en poiêtais---psophou pleôn, axustaton, stomphaka, krêmnoipoion*). Neither of these poets are acceptable options to Pheidippides, who offers to sing some Euripides when pressed by his father to sing something from the new poets (1370, *lexon ti tôn neôterôn, att'esti ta sophia tauta*). The resulting tune is not, predictably, well received by Strepsiades; he is outraged that his son would choose a song in which a brother has sex with his sister mother (1371-1372, *ôs ekinei/adelphos, ô lexikake, tên homomêtrian adelphên*).

It would be easy to assume that poetical taste is the only issue here, but Strepsiades makes clear that he is especially upset because his sacrifices while raising his son have been forgotten. He stresses that he was the person who fed Pheidippides, brought him drinks, and changed him (1380ff). His previous efforts should give him priority in formal decision-making, even for something as pedestrian as music at a party, and he resents that his son is not making good on the initial investment. In return, Pheidippides physically attacked him for insulting Euripides as the poet of the day and refused to let him outside when the attack caused him to defecate (1385ff). Absent training at the *Phrontisterion*, the easiest way to resolve these conflicts would have been to privilege the desires of the father as the head of the household; thus, Pheidippides would have obliged his father's whims by singing and playing the lyre simultaneously and choosing a song from one of the older poets. This comic turn underscores that Pheidippides has reversed his role in the family from one of respectful or grateful

obedience to full-fledged authority. His father's previous caretaking is of little import if it inhibits the satisfaction of his desires at that moment and he is willing to use whichever weapons are at his disposal (it turns out violence and speech are equally accessible) to take control of the household for himself.

A young man deliberately reversing the child-parent relationship may certainly have been cause for concern for elder Athenians, but Pheidippides reveals in the ensuing dialogue that he represents a far greater danger to the *polis*. If one takes the incident between Pheidippides and his father at face-value, it is a problematic example for familial relationships but nothing more than an isolated incident. After all, not every young man in Athens will receive sophistic instruction and find himself in a position to abuse his elders so thoroughly. However, Aristophanes quickly transforms Pheidippides into a public threat capable of harming everyone in the polis with only the power of his words. The young sophist is aware that his ideas are not necessarily popular or widely accepted at the moment, but that he has the power to alter public opinion so that any taboo, such as parent-beating, may become the new norm. His newfound argumentative strengths provide the ability to shape the discourse and attitudes of the polis to suit his own needs, regardless of whether anyone else stands to benefit from them.

Pheidippides begins his justification by explaining that his beatings come from good intentions. When put to the question, Strepsiades admits that beatings of his son as a youth were performed out of good will and concern for his well-being (1410, *eunoôn te kai kêdomenos*). Just as the Lesser Discourse did against his opponent earlier, Pheidippides turns this idea back against his father by extending the initial logic of

Strepsiades' position and providing a clever interpretation of it. He asks why parents alone should be able to show good intentions to their family in this manner, and why children could not show the same kind of concern. If parents do not own a monopoly over good intentions for their family, then Pheidippides can claim the same rights and responsibilities to "help" as his father. He concludes this proof by comparing old men to children and explaining that elders are more worthy of beatings because it is less right for them to make errors in judgment (1419, *osôper examartanein êtton dikaion autous*). By asserting that his father is acting childishly (and that old men generally act this way), Pheidippides makes the case that he is the more legitimate authority figure and would merely be doing his duty in correcting his father's behavior. His actions become less of a personal threat and more of a recognition of cultural obligation to act in a certain way. Age and familial position in the *oikos* become less important compared with observable behavior, therefore the role of father figure, as well as its accompanying benefits, is no longer exclusive to the eldest male in the family. It is also noteworthy that the issue is no longer about aesthetic differences in poetry; Pheidippides changes the topic of the *agôn* to a more general principle of who is allowed to act in certain situations and what authority allows them to do so. A small dispute about songs has evolved into a debate about cultural expectations and how one can be punished (or not punished) for violating them.

The next issue concerns the legality of beating one's parents and how it is not considered acceptable in Athenian society.⁴⁶ Strepsiades argues that current laws do not

⁴⁶ Harris argues that the ensuing scene gives Pheidippides added credibility as a trained sophist because he uses a variety of legal terminology when pleading his case. This is important because "Aristophanes

allow fathers to suffer this kind of indignity (1420, *all' outdamou nomizetai ton patera touto paschein*). Although this is true, Pheidippides appears unconcerned because laws have been and may be changed by anyone, even a man such as himself or his father (1421-1422). He is just as able to establish a new law that allows sons to strike their fathers in turn (1424, *theinai nomon tois uiesin, tous pateras antituptein*). This is the very fear outlined by the Greater Discourse in the earlier *agōn*, because a young man skilled in speaking can turn his talents against his elders and cause them as much or as little suffering as he likes, enshrining the new arrangement permanently in the law. He continues to use analogical reasoning, comparing the relationship between human fathers and sons to those of roosters, emphasizing that young roosters are not defenseless against their fathers (1428, *ōs tous pateras amunetai*). This is a tacit admission that his father is correct, that existing laws do not favor his position, but that this is perhaps an unfair convention that should be changed for sons in the future (1423ff). The argument is couched in broad terms so that it appears to be for the benefit of many people, but this is a flimsy excuse for Pheidippides to get away with his own crime, just as Lesser Discourse argued he could escape punishment if caught in adultery. He shifts attention away from the specifics of this situation, which show that he has been absurdly petty, and instead offers the possibility that the law itself is flawed. With this reasoning in place, Pheidippides serves *himself* up as the victim of unfair legislation that must be rectified if he is to act appropriately, drawing attention away from the fact that his father did not deserve the beating and is the victim of actual abuse and harm.

would not have imitated the language of Athenian laws and decrees so carefully unless he thought his audience was knowledgeable enough to appreciate the joke” (5)

Pheidippides shows that the value and content of the law become less important than its malleability when shaped by a skillful sophist. Custom, unlike natural law, can be changed with enough will from the citizenry and there was no guarantee the norms of one generation would be preserved by the next. Dover notes that “Pheidippides is characteristically Greek in thinking of a *nomos* not as a ‘behavior pattern’ which is eventually codified but as the product of one man’s conscious design and one assembly’s conscious decision” (“Clouds” 260). Strepsiades would not have been the only one alarmed that his values could be overturned so effortlessly or callously against him. The burning of the *Phrontisterion* shows how seriously he reacted to these changes. Although he is an excessive portrait of contemporary Athens, even a mild reaction to the intellectual changes of the late 5th c. could produce discomfort that so much power could be wielded by so unprincipled and capricious a citizen. Pheidippides felt like beating his father today, but one could reasonably ask what he is capable of tomorrow, and how much more radically will he attempt to mold Athenian society to his next round of desires? As Baracchi explains, “The Clouds depicts fatherhood in its dejection and loss of credibility. What this caricatured remnant of paternity signals is the simultaneous collapse of the orders of the divine, of ancestral authority, and of legality” (152). This depiction of sophistry mirrors the earlier *agôn* and the performance of the Lesser Discourse because Pheidippides is unpredictable, but adept enough to work his oratorical powers on whomever he sees fit. If he can compel his own father to admit that parent-beating is acceptable (1437-1439) and profoundly alter the conventional relationship between father and son, it is not unreasonable to think he could overturn or destroy other

important, cherished values in the polis. He is a stark representation of a violent potential that adheres to no consistency other than personal satisfaction, which leaves the rest of society in the lurch.

I should also note that Strepsiades is not automatically seduced by his son's words, only conceding the argument at the end of the dialogue. Unlike Greater Discourse, he responds to his son's criticisms and points out the absurdity of Pheidippides' positions. He criticizes the rooster analogy, mockingly stating that roosters are perhaps not the best animal for humans to model (1430-1431), but does not press the matter far enough to change the outcome of the argument.⁴⁷ The trajectory of the discussion highlights Pheidippides' mental quickness as he always has a ready answer for his father, who often is not clever or mordant enough to refute the opposing argument even though he recognizes that it is inherently flawed. Moreover, the penalty for attacking a parent was severe enough that Pheidippides also commits himself to great potential for suffering if he loses the argument, thus he shows the characteristic lack of shame demonstrated by the Lesser Discourse. In this brief episode, Pheidippides presents a clear example of how sophistic training can undermine the state and create a dangerous potential for all its citizens, and how traditional education cannot prepare its students to defend against such destructive personal agendas from its opponents. The traditional education represented by Greater Discourse is far from perfect, but the training found in the *Phrontisterion* is markedly more frightening and unethical.

⁴⁷ Dover's commentary explains that Pheidippides distorts the conventional arguments using animal analogies because he has made an improper comparison, as Strepsiades notes: "Strepsiades sees without difficulty the fatal flaw in any argument which selects elements common to animals and man but ignores the differences. In most extant Greek discussion of this topic it is the differences which are emphasized" (261).

In the following section I outline some conclusions about Aristophanes' arguments in *Clouds* about the comparative advantages and uses for different educational models. I contend that Aristophanes paints the issues with broad strokes so that the audience may think on the deficiencies in both educational systems and pose questions about how Athenian society can look past them to a more syncretic, beneficial alternative.

V. Conclusions

Aristophanic comedy criticizes pressing issues and conditions for contemporary Athenian society, no doubt reflecting concerns for many of his audience. Unlike other oratorical arenas, the comic playwright presents no concrete solutions or answers to the problems of his day. One may reasonably ask how seriously his audience was to receive such criticism and if a modern reader should grant it enough influence to alter perceptions and cultural norms. Halliwell argues that it is tempting to compare Aristophanes to the late-night satirists of our own period, who regularly mock the same targets and have the potential to influence based on repeated, consistent viewings by their audience ("Aristophanic" 8). He rightly points out that Aristophanes produced or wrote plays for 2 showings a year, and that it is difficult at best to assume he was actively shaping public policy through a program that could skewer the reputation or legislative agendas of prominent politicians. It is far more likely that the comic playwrights were able to take advantage of a general festive air that permitted more outlandish behavior and criticism that was typically considered acceptable in Athenian culture, and that his attacks were

made more for general mockery than a specific change in social values. He echoes many scholars in pointing out that Old Comedy was noteworthy “in its implicit impotence, in its inability to exert a practical influence on social and political life.”

The analogy to modern satire is correct in that Aristophanes did not benefit from repeated exposure to his audience. It misses the mark, however, because one need not assume that Old Comedy intended or was in a position to directly challenge deliberative or judicial oratory or act as a rhetorical rival for cultural influence. The purpose of Aristophanic comedy (if one must limit it in this way) is perhaps more pedestrian---to raise issues currently in the cultural consciousness and explore how seriously they affect the citizenry⁴⁸. As Hubbard explains, “Like the *Clouds*, Aristophanes deliberately plays with his audience and leaves it open to them to project their own sympathies into the drama and its characters, but at the same time deconstructs those projections through a complex rhetoric of ambiguity and irony” (“Mask” 89). The negative portrayals of certain character types and social concepts allows the audience to recognize that a particular kind of person, one represented by a figurehead in the comedy, is one that should not be imitated or with whom to sympathize. Even if an initial reaction is to side with one figure over another (as perhaps one is inclined to do during the first

⁴⁸ Euben sees Old Comedy as a kind of resistance or inoculation against political manipulation, but only insofar as it can make Athenians “more attentive to the seductions around them” and “help sustain the vitality of a democratic citizenry. Political Education is not a matter of foisting a particular agenda on an audience, but of helping them think about what they are doing, and what others are trying to do to them, sometimes in their name, often for their unrecognized benefit” (902). Ober refers to this insulating effect as “dissident criticism” that provides enough of a challenge “that (at a remove) the democracy acknowledged that valid concerns had been raised by its critics” (“Debate” 196). They represent the view that political commentary is a strong presence in Athenian society, but that its effects are more subtle and nuanced than the direct argumentation of other oratorical arenas. Cf. Meier (2002), who has a more theoretical take on Aristophanes, putting the play in the category of political philosophy rather than political commentary and contending that the play offers sophisticated moral critiques about Socrates and the philosophical life.

agôn in favor of Greater Discourse), Aristophanes consistently highlights that these characters are deeply flawed and poor models for engaging in civic participation and conducting ethical arguments. He invites the audience to critically examine what these characters offer to the *polis* and draw their own conclusions about any solutions to the problems he raises.

The evidence for direct effects on legislative action as a result of Old Comedy is difficult to ascertain given the number of surviving texts from the 5th c. BCE and the continued influence of mocked politicians such as Cleon. The most one can assume is that similar themes appearing in different literary genres, such as dramatic plays and public orations, demonstrate the topics of conversation dominating public discourse for a given period. Even the direct examination of key passages offers only a fleeting glimpse of how one author chose to frame a particular issue, such as corruption in the democratic process; textual analysis cannot definitively prove that there was “direct intertextuality among the works we happen to have preserved, nor that this critic was in contact with that orator” (Ober “Debate” 202). As stated above, the effects of Old Comedy appear to be more subtle and appropriate for a festive environment concerned with unbridled free speech and less political urgency than those of more traditional oratorical genres attempting to provide clear answers to pressing social and political problems.

The portrayal of the characters in *Clouds* tells the audience that both educational systems are inherently flawed and their argumentative claims to mold students need to be examined more closely. The Greater Discourse highlights a model designed to fashion young men into strong warrior-types without a significant interest in

literary matters, critical thinking, or speaking skills. He posits a strong campaign of physical activity and a healthy respect for working outdoors, but his students are ill-equipped to handle the rigors of political life as legal advocates. His continued interest in protecting the chastity of his charges, as evident from the repeated descriptions of ways boys can entice potential lovers, appears excessive and prurient. It would be difficult to take him seriously, especially because he is unable to defend his position and wholeheartedly adopts the arguments of his opponent at the conclusion of the first *agôn*. His evidence, reasoning, and examples are consistently unimpressive and easily refutable, demonstrating to the audience that he is likely a product of the education and style of speaking he promotes and their most damning indictment. The Lesser Discourse does not present a suitable alternative to traditional education. Although he successfully defends his portion of the argument and is able to claim victory in the battle for Pheidippides, he delights in proclaiming his antipathy for convention and that reputation and good-standing in the community are only useful perhaps in satisfying personal desires; put another way, they become the raw materials for any logics or evidence he might need to secure his desires and overcome an opposing position with speech. He is reason divorced from morality and community, a weapon in search of a target. Lesser Discourse's pupil, Pheidippides, is perhaps more unsettling than his instructor because he is the proxy for the worst-case scenario for young sophists. Having tasted victory over his father and assumed his authority, he is free to set his sights on areas even more dangerous to the social order. Nussbaum summarizes the problematization for each advocate thusly: "If the old education was defective in its indifference to reason, the new education may be

equally one-sided in its indifference to the training of the passions” (“Aristophanes” 69).

Both hold severe consequences for a public drive by political deliberation and democratic decision-making.

Aristophanes uses these characters to demonstrate that democracy has dangers inherently built into its system, both because it can be abused by savvy individuals such as the sophists, and that it may provoke violent reactions in people unable to participate meaningfully in the political process, just as Strepsiades burns down the *Phrontisterion* at the play’s end. Although it is a point of Athenian pride that the city has avoided many of the disasters brought on by tyrants, *Clouds* shows that democracy can be a monster just as dangerous if guided by irresponsible hands (Nussbaum “Aristophanes” 97). The play provokes the audience to question which of these influences would be most beneficial in the *polis*, but neither answer is satisfactory: The forceful, self-righteous lout who is unable to successfully plead a case in public, or the young man with an interest in politics but no scruples for practicing it honestly.

Aristophanes never reveals his hand on these issues, leaving the audience to muse on the question of ethical citizenship after the play’s end. However, Kenneth Burke’s theory of the hortatory negative can shed some insight into the citizen who might be a better alternative to the ones presented in *Clouds* and how one might recognize or *become* him in the assembly. The flaws present in the two educations imply that there are characteristics to be commended rather than reviled, assumed rather than rejected, in a person trained differently from the traditional and sophistic models and that the ideal for ethical participation in the city lies away from these polarizations or contrasting

figures. Aristophanes fleshes these characters in such a way that their deficiencies may be readily acknowledged as the kinds of behaviors detrimental to political stability, and that the members of the audience should take pains to avoid them in the performance of their civic duty.

The depictions of traditional and sophistic education create a stark contrast between the kinds of citizens that may be serving Athens in the next generation. On the surface, the first *agôn* sets up almost a perfect antithesis because Lesser Discourse disavows virtually everything his opponent stands for: physical vs. intellectual strength, strong vs. weak physique, sexual chastity vs. hedonism, respect vs. distaste for convention. However, neither character type offers an attractive solution to the question of training young Athenian citizens, so the antithesis is less useful than at first glance. Neither should be considered wholly positive or negative because of the many underlying flaws that become revealed as the *agôn* progresses, and the few positive qualities are not enough to compensate for glaring deficiencies that would prove dangerous if taken to extremes. Neither advocate presents a compelling case for how the ideal, ethically-minded citizen would be trained in persuasive speech and consequently participate in the deliberative processes in Athenian society.

Clouds presents a more nuanced antithesis because he encourages the audience to react negatively to the portrayals of both educational systems. They may easily acknowledge the flaws in the character types on stage and explore a third possibility, a citizen who encompasses the strengths of both systems but avoids their moral pitfalls.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Redfield (1999) treats the character Socrates as the focal point in *Clouds*, but arrives at a similar conclusion: “No successful alternative to Socrates is presented in the play — certainly not Mr. Right, who

This interpretive process is not a straightforward dialectic or synthesis, whereby the two *logoi* and the systems they represent come together to form an entirely new education, style of speaking, and concrete embodiment for the audience to view. Aristophanes has made sure that old and new education are so incompatible and fundamentally flawed that only the most partisan supporters would accept them as legitimate teachers of the young. *Clouds* instead presents the contrasting figure of a model citizen who would display respect for the home and parental authority, just as Greater Discourse promotes in his education. This attitude need not manifest an unflinching deference, as Strepsiades shows he is not the most competent paternal figure, but would be considered valuable for many Athenians to provide a sense of stability and loyalty for the *polis*. It is no surprise that many Athenians were concerned with political continuity considering how many other Greek states had fallen prey to revolution and *stasis* regardless of the regime in power (Edmunds 78-79). Moreover, the ideal young citizen would recognize his connection to the rest of the Athens, not only to his family. The potential abuse of Pheidippides is not that he could wreak havoc only in his own home, but that such instability and potential violence could spill over to the rest of the city. As Berg explains, “Pheidippides’ take-over of his own household is merely a prelude to a take-over of the city as a whole” (9). With more of an established connection in place, this ideal citizen has a greater likelihood of speaking to the interests of fellow citizens and trying to increase the prosperity of more Athenians than simply his *philoï*. One would find less

personifies the kind of boneheaded athleticism that caused Strepsiades’ son to incur the debts in the first place” (55). If neither the Greater or Lesser Discourse is the ethical alternative to the sophistic abuses characterized in the play, there must an implicit third choice conjured by the audience.

chance of this contrasting figure to the two *logoi* thinking selfishly and only to satisfy personal desires because a challenge to the status quo would argue to support a community of citizens rather than an isolated but powerful individual.

The political conditions in many *poleis* leading up to the 5th c. reveal that self-interest was an entrenched value in Greek culture, despite its consistent effects on regime change and political instability.⁵⁰ Thus, there is no reason to suspect that the ideal citizen would sacrifice all his desires for *polis* and *oikos* because the emphasis of *sôphrosunê* advocated by the Greater Discourse sounds unrealistic and unappealing to any but the most selfless of young men. Instead, there must be more of a balance between personal desires and how they can affect the rest of the citizenry. Such a balance would begin by recognizing that change is not necessarily the enemy of society, but that it should not happen too suddenly or radically. Pheidippides' plans represent a substantial paradigm change that could overwhelm the rest of the citizenry and take shape without due consideration. He makes the mistake of trying to subvert too much of traditional Athenian culture, which is the critical step necessary for Strepsiades to resist the seduction of his son's logic and react more intuitively to the wrongness of the argument (Nussbaum "Aristophanes" 77). The antithesis to Pheidippides would maintain a clear connection to the *polis* and its history, recognizing the value in retaining part of the culture and perhaps engaging in a less capricious appraisal of preceding generations

⁵⁰ Forsdyke's discussion (2000) of the constant cycle of exile and regime change leading up to the 5th c. underscores how the struggle for political power between aristocratic factions may nominally have concerned the well-being of the polis, but often reflected the desire for personal and unrivaled authority (257-258). She asserts that that the institution of ostracism, developed by Cleisthenes as a response to capricious exiles by political rivals, helped to peacefully stabilize Athenian politics as a way of giving the *demos* power to regulate the self-interests of powerful individuals and avoid the dangerous possibility of exiled leaders returning with a foreign army.

while acknowledging that it may be beneficial to enact certain changes. This contrasting figure would not be conservative to the same degree as the Greater Discourse, but perhaps exercise more caution when presenting new ideas and allowing for less of a radical, immediate shift in social value than the *polis* is prepared to undergo.

The sophists in *Clouds* contribute nothing to their fellow citizens because they live and interact only in the *Phrontisterion*; the effects of their “knowledge” stop at the walls of their school and have little practical use. Their antithetical figure would have the kind of hands-on experience described by Ober because civic engagement is more important than knowledge for its own sake. Pheidippides is not a total monster despite his moral shortcomings because he seems willing to participate in civic culture and lend his voice to the Assembly, which would be considered a positive character trait. Moreover, sophistic education not only provides critical thinking, but a network of possible political connections that would prove useful when bringing matters to a vote or trying to galvanize support for a proposal. It would be a waste to have such instruction but never or rarely act on it to the benefit of the *polis*. These skills and values are directed toward social cohesion because there was always the possibility that demagogues could gain undue influence over their fellow citizens. States could implode from domestic forces just as easily as from foreign ones, but one could prevent this from happening by encouraging advocates with strong public speaking abilities to combat them in the Assembly.

Chapter 3

Judicial Ethics for Orators and Jurors in *Wasps*

Abstract:

As a democratic state, classical Athens prided itself on eschewing the will of the individual over the many, enforcing the idea that equality was the city's defining strength and virtue. However, Athenian culture in the 5th c. was often the site of tension between conflict and consensus, personal advantage and public good. The economic and political disparity between wealthy and poor was a common theme, despite the supposed equality of all citizens. Few places could exhibit this paradox between difference and sameness more than the law courts, and few authors could present this divide as critically and scathingly as the comic playwright Aristophanes. His play, *Wasps*, highlights the instability surrounding courtroom rhetoric by showing the irresponsible behavior of both orators and jurors. Aristophanes argues that orator *and* audience do not have the best interests of Athens in mind when considering the effects of a verdict, instead privileging personal advantage and pleasure to an excessive degree. Prosecutors and defendants routinely use flattering appeals and entertaining performances to sway the jury, whose members are consistently capricious and rarely willing to hear the substance of an argument without personal incentive. *Wasps* presents the argument that judicial oratory, if practiced in this way, cannot produce ethical citizens that will put aside their competitive and selfish drives in order to better the city as a whole. By portraying an exaggeration of courtroom rhetoric and its excesses, Aristophanes points out the flaws in the judicial system in 5th c. Athens and invites his audience to contemplate a more ideal, ethical vision of the law courts. Kenneth Burke would argue these negative examples of courtroom oratory imply ideal opposites who see themselves less as individuals scheming for an advantage over neighbors and more as members of a community whose success and prosperity are dependent on setting aside differences in pursuit of a common good. Although Aristophanes does not describe this ideal orator and juror in the play, the Athenian audience would see the flaws in these characters and think on how they could avoid such excesses and become more ethical citizens themselves.

I. Introduction

Aristophanes devoted significant attention to the power and perceived abuse of demagogues in 5th c. Athens, as previous chapters have already discussed. He argued narratively that their influence began in sophistic training and under the tutelage of accomplished practitioners, but their story does not end with the burning of the *Phrontisterion*. In *Wasps*, the play produced in 422 BCE (the year following *Clouds*), Aristophanes continues his exploration into oratorical ethics by examining another forum in which demagogues can incite and unduly influence their fellow citizens. Instead of the school where they learn such techniques, *Wasps* follows the story of an old man, Philocleon, who is addicted to hearing speeches in the lawcourts and serving as a juror. The play highlights two dangers that put the *polis* at risk: first, that certain types of speakers should not be allowed to argue and overwhelm the ability of audiences to get to the truth of a case with flattery and entertaining stories; second, that the audiences of jurors are also responsible for the unethical state of legal oratory because they punish speakers who do not provide enough entertainment and privilege the demagogues who can pander successfully. Unlike in *Clouds*, where only orators seem to receive blame for their influence, *Wasps* argues that both speaker and audience are responsible for creating an environment where guilt and innocence are less important than putting on and enjoying a good show. I argue the play can also be interpreted using Burke's concept of the negative to view a more ethical, ideal speaker and audience that will address the deficiencies in the Athenian legal sphere.

Aristophanes rightfully turns his attention to the lawcourts in *Wasps* because this aspect of Athenian society provided a consistent opportunity for abuse and unethical behavior. As a signature institution for the *polis*, the courts publicly represented and maintained the democratic values of deciding matters collaboratively and giving each citizen the opportunity to pursue justice as individuals.⁵¹ Like all institutions, however, it was imperfect and could unduly harm citizens unfortunate enough to get caught up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Christ beautifully sums up the Athenian attitude toward litigation and explains why Aristophanes would devote an entire play to its examination (227):

If the past can provide a lesson for the present, the Athenian experience suggests that discussion of and concern about legal excess and abuse are inevitable in a democratic society that values access to courts and yet remains conscious that the pursuit of litigation is not necessarily synonymous with the pursuit of justice.

Unlike the judge in a modern case in western Europe or America, the presiding officials (*archai*) exercised limited authority. They typically did not convene juries with the expressed purpose of deciding particular cases, did not have the power to decide who would serve on a jury for a particular case, could not object to or exclude evidence and types of arguments, and did not appear to provide instructions for weighing evidence appropriately (Todd “Shape” 79). Although there is certainly room for corruption, the

⁵¹ Christ (1998) correctly identifies one of the difficulties of exploring Athenian attitudes of the court system: “Because most of the sources date from the period ca. 430-322 B.C., it is difficult to assess the Athenian reaction to the dramatic legal changes that occurred in the decades immediately following the reform of the popular courts in 462 B.C. When the sources speak of legal excess and abuse, they are probably not reacting so much to a revolution in progress as to its aftermath” (5). He concludes that the legal system was likely consistent during this lengthy period and did not experience significant change, but the extended nature of the evidence is worth bearing in mind.

judges themselves were spared Aristophanes' scorn because there was little they could do to bias a jury, favor an advocate, or unduly influence the proceedings.

With the *archai* acting mostly as official witnesses to the cases, more potent authority rested with audiences and advocates. Juries were quite powerful because they exercised the final decision in any case and there was no appeals process. The translation of juror and court for *dikastēs* and *dikasterion* is something of a simplification, as Todd explains ("Purpose" 19):

It is easy enough to remember that the dikastes is neither precisely a 'judge' nor a 'juror'. But every time that we translate dikasterion as a 'court' (and it would be insufferably pedantic never to do so) we thereby imply that an Athenian court was essentially similar to our own, not only in appearance but also (and this is the important point) in function. This is a false assumption, and it is wasted criticism, based on modernizing assumptions, to blame the Athenian dikasterion for failing to achieve that supposedly objective enactment of justice for which it was never designed.

One must also recognize that juries decided cases amongst private individuals, state prosecutions (detailed below), confirmed magistrates, conducted audits of public officials, and impeached generals (Hansen "Political" 235-239 and "Eisangelia" 59).⁵² In short, the authority of jurors was broad, without review, and delved into several aspects of state business.

Citizens who appeared for jury service in the late 5th c. BCE likely represented a range of economic backgrounds, both by profession and amount of income. A more destitute citizen could afford to leave the farm or take some time away from a trade

⁵² Hansen estimates that 35 of 143 known generals in a 77-year span were indicted by the polis, which demonstrates that juries were not only settling disputes between individuals but conducting important state business.

because the economic loss or lack of productivity would be somewhat offset by the daily juror wage.⁵³ Jury service required only that participants be 30 years old or more and to have sworn the juror's oath at the start of the year. To differentiate this service from others in the *polis*, any citizen over 20 years old could participate in the *ekklēsia*, but only citizens 30 or older could serve on juries, which eliminated approximately one-third of the potential candidates for jury service overall (Hansen "Political" 222-223). Moreover, this reflects the Greek belief that older men are considered more sensible than their younger counterparts and that the judicial system required more wisdom than other argumentative fora. The size of juries could change depending on the circumstances of a trial, but Blanshard notes that 500 jurors was a fairly standard number, with 1000 and 1500 citizens casting ballots for more egregious or politically charged cases (33).⁵⁴ The larger jury size than we are accustomed to in the modern west is likely because the Greeks assumed "that it would be impossible to bribe such a large number of people" (Timmerman and Schiappa 70). Moreover, even citizens who were not yet eligible to serve in juries because they were too young or who arrived after the maximum juror capacity was reached might still observe the proceedings. Lanni explains that this kind of spectator politics provided ample entertainment for citizens of all kinds and that "most Athenians could be quite familiar with the workings of the lawcourts, the method of argument, and some of the city's laws by the time they served as jurors (186). It is likely

⁵³ MacDowell (1995) argues that "There can be no doubt that the original purpose of introducing pay for juries was to ensure that rich men did not predominate in them; a poor man could not afford to abstain from his normal work unless he was paid to do so" ("Aristophanes" 157).

⁵⁴ Blanshard (2004) also explains that there may have been different jury sizes based on the severity of the charge and the economic cost disputed by the advocates. The *Ath. Pol.* lists 40, 201, and 401 as additional jury sizes, although it is difficult to assess the frequency of these cases in court. See also Christ for a thorough breakdown of the different roles allowed in the different assemblies and committees in late 5th c. Athens (18-19).

that cases were routinely judged and observed by a broad cross-section of the Athenian populace and that familiarity with the art of litigation was commonplace for many citizens.

The advocates who brought cases and publicly pursued justice were the counterpart to juries and the other source of courtroom influence. Athenian jurisprudence was a flexible institution in that it provided different procedures and types of cases depending on the alleged offense and standing of the advocate. There were no publicly funded prosecutors (or even lawyers as we understand the modern profession) or citizens who always acted in the interest of the state, so any suit would be brought by a private citizen. Prosecutors were afforded flexibility based on whether a suit represented a public interest (*dike demosiae*) or dispute between private individuals (*dike idiai*), as well as whether anyone could bring a suit (*graphe*) or only one of the people directly connected to the case (*dike* in a more narrow sense). Moreover, there was little to no personal risk in pursuing a *dike*, but anyone prosecuting a *graphe* could be severely fined by the state if a case was too trivial to be successful or wasted the court's time with incompetent arguing (Osborne 40-43). Since the *archai* did not provide instructions, it was up to each advocate to explain any laws relevant to the case at hand and "often ask the jury to shout down their opponent if he misrepresents the laws or facts of the case" (Lanni 187). The ability to decide when a case was brought to trial and which laws were

most pertinent offered significant power for advocates to shape the jury's interpretation of facts.⁵⁵

This distinction from our own legal system is important for understanding Athenian courts because they allowed citizens to tailor their prosecutions to the needs and desired outcome of a case, which often meant sabotaging the reputation and influence of political rivals. Todd remarks that “What is most notable here is that if you want to use a trial for political ends, you need to choose a procedure that will cause your opponent substantial damage: ideally death or atimia, or a fine so substantial as to be crippling” (“Shape” 159). The Athenians not only tolerated but *encouraged* this kind of political combat because helping friends and harming enemies was a cornerstone to their conception of social worth and personal identity.⁵⁶ Engaging in physical combat or taking disputes to the street was not considered socially acceptable, as the moral takeaway from the *Eumenides* makes clear; however, “vengeance through a lawsuit was well within the bounds of socially acceptable retaliation” (Christ 154). The courts were not only a means for procuring justice in the more virtuous sense of the term, but in the hands of skilled strategically-minded speakers could act as a powerful weapon to bring down political opponents. When one considers the shifting and unpredictable nature of the courtroom audience alongside the ability for advocates to cherry pick the circumstances and context for any charges brought, it is easy to conclude that “Athenian

⁵⁵ Gagarin (2002) also makes the point that “A litigant’s primary task in presenting his case was to take control of the issue—to direct the juror’s attention to those issues that favored his own case, while at the same time drawing their attention away from points that might favor his opponent” (“Antiphon” 137-138).

⁵⁶ Major (2013) demonstrates that the common Greek value of helping friends and harming enemies appears elsewhere in Aristophanes (65).

justice was therefore, to say the least, capricious” (Todd “Shape” 79). This environment of political opportunism in front of spectators who enjoyed the verbal jousting created a culture where any individual could be profoundly harmed through the whims of fellow citizens.

The decision to critique and mock this institution in *Wasps* was not likely an idle choice from Aristophanes, as the lawcourts provided ample opportunity for abuse, corruption, and unethical behavior. Because each trial began and concluded on the same day, advocates were confronted with a certain urgency to make their case immediately, often based on the force of personality rather than facts.⁵⁷ The timeframe for trials created a dramatic spectacle similar to the theatrical plays at festivals, as stories were enacted argumentatively for audiences that could enjoy them in their entirety before going home for the day. The play follows the misadventures of an older Athenian gentleman named Philocleon (“Loves Cleon” in Greek) who is addicted to jury service and the conflict it provokes with his son Bdelycleon (“Hates Cleon”). Older characters in Old Comedy typically represent established values and tradition, whereas their young counterparts (such as Pheidippides in *Clouds*) stand in for new perspectives; in *Wasps*, we see the opposite in that Philocleon demonstrates an unapologetic, impish glee in scorning justice while his son argues against the rise and influence of demagogues who promote and reward his father’s capricious and spiteful behavior (Konstan “Politics” 29). The old man is an atypical juror because he is not compelled to service as a means of

⁵⁷ Cf Finley (2004) for the desperation endured by Athenian orators: “Their leaders had *no* respite. Because their influence had to be earned and exerted directly and immediately — this was a necessary consequence of a direct, as distinct from a representative, democracy — they had to lead in person, and they also had to bear, in person, the brunt of the opposition’s attacks” (176).

supporting himself; the extra money certainly does not hurt and he delights in being able to bring obols home to his family, but Bdelycleon appears to be a man of means and could provide any number of material comforts for his father (as is demonstrated in the second half of the play). As Christ argues, Philocleon's addiction to jury service "shifts attention away from the problem as one rooted in class and socioeconomic status, and paves the way for an imaginary solution to it" (109). His situation allows Aristophanes to comment on the entire court system without excessively hovering over economic conditions and their ability to distract from other vital considerations.

Philocleon's addiction is fueled by two competing aspects of his personality, which are given further emphasis in the chorus of fellow jurors. First, he is profoundly angry and enjoys inflicting harm on other people.⁵⁸ The title of *Wasps* is a sound metaphor for his character because he views it as his right and duty to sting people who displease him, regardless of whether the offense in question has done actual or perceived harm. The core of this attitude was likely common amongst many Athenians because the very act of addressing an audience almost "declared an individuality that was potentially suspect" (Ober "Mass" 296). Philocleon is an object of ridicule because his anger is so intense that he is unable to distinguish a trivial from a legitimate threat. However, the idea of righteous indignation being channeled against a worthy foe was considered a positive virtue in late 5th c. Athens; Konstan notes that Aristophanes himself uses the position of playwright to brag "of having an anger like that of Hercules that has enabled him from the beginning of his career to stand up against serious opponents like Cleon

⁵⁸ According to Konstan (1985), the chorus of wasps or Philocleon are described with the term *orge* or its related synonyms no less than 19 times in the play ("Politics" 33).

rather than prostituting his muse in petty jibes” and that “MacDowell [in his commentary on *Wasps*] rightly glosses *orge* here as spirit or courage (“Politics” 32-32). Moreover, this kind of mental and physical toughness was integral to the fighting spirit of the *polis*, as citizens were expected to defend Athens and uphold its reputation in the Greek world with vigor and passion (Bowie “Aristophanes” 97). Second, Philocleon demonstrates that he is a fairly powerless and uninfluential. His only authority comes from the casting of a juror’s ballot, as he does not hold political office or assume the role of an orator, no longer serves in the military, and has relinquished the upkeep of his home and finances to his son. Sitting in judgment as one individual among hundreds is his only opportunity to exercise control in Athens. Konstan aptly compares his standing to that of a child with no place to express or release this energetic caprice, which should by definition render him unqualified to act as a juror (“Politics 31). He is not respected by his fellow citizens, capable or willing to lead, or an established member of the speaking elite, thus he represents the less financially secure class of common Athenians whose main civic duty in peacetime was acting as an audience member.

The conflicting portrayal of Philocleon as a spirited member of the older generation and powerless nobody has led to different interpretations about the play’s import or meaning, although many scholars believe *Wasps* is more than mere entertainment. Interpreting the play broadly, some believe that Aristophanes is transgressively playing with norms so that citizens will think more carefully about how they fit into the social stratum. Crane argues that the *polis* is more of an abstract or idealized construct observed in the discourse of the late 5th c., from which one can infer

values and themes from the period; Aristophanes strives for an idealized version of the city, particularly its judicial system in *Wasps*, while dealing with the particulars of daily Athenian experience (198-202). Approaching the play in more of an ethical manner, MacDowell observes that “Serious criticisms emerge mainly when Philokleon and Bdelykleon have a debate (the agon of the play) on the question whether the life of a juror is really a good life or not” (“Aristophanes” 160). One may slightly reframe this question to what kind of person ought to participate in the jury system and how can they make it less prone to abuse for the *polis*, which is a defining theme of my argument in this chapter. As I discussed in chapter 2, one of the benchmarks for ethical citizenship was participating in government and effecting some kind of service for the *polis* that went beyond benefits for the individual citizen. *Wasps* consistently portrays the courts as a series of opportunities for both speakers and jurors to game a broken system, with mutually beneficial and unethical behavior on both sides.

Any examination of the juror system will involve people as targets, because even the most entrenched and methodical institution is ultimately composed of and maintained by human agents.⁵⁹ Athenian authors discussing threats to the *polis* routinely avoided the institutions in abstract or general terms because the possibility of real danger was more likely to appear as events, actions, or through human intervention (Blanshard 29). In *Wasps*, scholars see different human elements as part of Aristophanes’ criticism. Some suggest that the demagogues receive the main brunt of the play’s attacks rather than the

⁵⁹ For a competing view, cf. Major (2013): “Bdelycleon’s interjections and follow-up arguments pertain more to the deliberative and political process generally than to the operation of the courts and juror behavior” (103).

jurors.⁶⁰ Referring to an argument from de Ste. Croix, Konstan argues that Aristophanes tends to adopt a more conservative political position and that the play criticizes the abuses of democracy because of its rule by the people; the inner tension of the play “works to mask the popular character of the court system and valorize the upper-class ideals of withdrawal and privatism” (“Greek” 27).⁶¹ Others argue that the play critiques not democracy as a whole, but the particular incarnation adopted by and currently alive in 5th c. Athens. Olson convincingly argues that *Wasps* “is probably better characterized simply as ‘conservative’ and interpreted as a response by a representative of one set of democrats to the arguments and ideology put forward by another” (“Politics” 147). This view asserts that Philocleon represents the common Athenian, who has been manipulated and conned into giving away his vote and a share in the collective prosperity of the *polis* to gratify the needs of a recently influential class of politicians. If *Wasps* is not anti-democratic, this position would stress, perhaps it leans towards a less direct form of self-governance, one which had been present in earlier generations to remove the element of caprice so characteristic of rule by the people.

In this chapter, I argue that Aristophanes uses *Wasps* to critique the Athenian judicial system by not only attacking the influence of selfish demagogues but also the jurors who are complicit in their rise to political power. Unlike previous commentators, I

⁶⁰ MacDowell (“Aristophanes” 163-164) and Christ (12) allow for a sophisticated attack on the judicial system, but put more emphasis on the demagogues as collectors of influence rather than the jurors who readily surrender their votes in service of unjust causes.

⁶¹ Olson (1996) briefly extends this argument to its logical conclusion: “As for democracy, *Wasps* as a whole explicitly denies that anything which could reasonably be called “rule by the *stilos*” exists in contemporary Athens and implicitly questions whether an arrangement under which the people administer the city’s affairs on a day-to-day basis benefits them in any case, given how consistently they have in the past, it claims, been taken in by smooth-talking political opportunists who played to all their worst instincts. (“Politics” 146).

believe the caricature of Philocleon does not spare the voting public from their share in the current status of the court system, although his excesses are gross enough not to cut too close to their own experience or overly prejudice them against the play as a competitive performance. By highlighting qualities for the most capricious, unsympathetic type of juror and the manipulative, selfish type of advocate in *Wasps*, Aristophanes points out serious flaws in the judicial system in 5th c. Athens, to invite his audience to contemplate a more ideal, ethical vision of the law courts. The audience is encouraged to think of a citizen who will not look to decide cases based on their entertainment value or the ability to use the courts to harm fellow citizens with impunity. Instead, the ideal juror will weigh the merits of a case without resorting to significant personal motive and render a verdict based on evaluating both sides of a case at its conclusion. His oratorical counterpart, the advocate for a case, is also characterized as distorting the legal system because of personal motives which unduly harm fellow citizens and using unethical argumentative techniques. The ideal advocate will persuade audiences less through pandering and entertaining stories, without looking to enrich himself significantly at the expense of his fellow citizens. Aristophanes implies that these are the only people who can readjust the court system so that it does not fall into further corruption. As in chapter 2, I will describe the arguments of the play's *agōn*, where Philocleon and Bdelycleon debate the advantages of the juror's life (526-724), how it characterizes the excesses of judicial oratory, and conclude by explaining how these arguments help the audience to visualize a more ethical juror and advocate.

II. Delusions of Grandeur in the *Agōn*

The *agōn* in *Wasps* highlights the motivations for Philocleon and his fellow jurors by hearing directly from the source. The debate has the air of an advocate presenting opening arguments for a lengthier and more complicated case, as the old man provides 5 key reasons or benefits for acting capriciously. While he lays out these arguments, Bdelycleon takes notes, much as a modern courtroom reporter might do, so that he fully understands the scope and logic of his father's concerns. After Philocleon's statements, his son begins to dissect the arguments to show that the common citizen has been taken advantage of by the demagogues and orators. This section of the play discusses some important ethical issues, such as the people who have or should have power to make decisions in the *polis*, whether citizens can consider themselves legitimate equals, and the types of persuasion considered appropriate for sound and effective politics.

The first key issue involves acceptable types of persuasion, especially concerning the power of demagogues and the rise of sophistry. The term itself, *demagogue*, bears consideration because a modern English understanding implies manipulation, sloganeering, and a penchant for propaganda rather than sound argumentation. In contrast, Aristophanes' contemporaries would likely have had a more elastic definition in the late 5th c. because the term applied broadly to virtually anyone who was able to address a mass audience. Finley argues that demagogues were a necessary component of the Athenian political system because *someone* had to present ideas, policies, and commentary on past action; without some kind of leading figure, consensus building would have been impossible (180). Moreover, it is telling that Aristophanes himself, in

the many caricatures of demagogues and sophists scattered throughout the extant plays, only uses the term or its related cognates twice in *Knights* and once in *Frogs*.⁶² One might also refer to the class of speakers addressing juries as *orator* because “debate designed to win votes among an outdoor audience numbering many thousands means oratory, in the strictest sense of the word” (Finley 173). For these reasons, I will use demagogue, orator, and advocate interchangeably throughout the analysis in this chapter to describe the broad class of speakers in the courtroom.

The unethical and manipulative speaker is critiqued so often by Aristophanes and his literary peers (but especially so in *Wasps*) because it represented a shifting balance of power from traditional governance in Athens. The end of the 5th c. ushered in a new groundswell of persuasive technique, which was likely a cause for concern because one person could influence thousands with a single speech. As Rhodes explains, “Xenophon remarks in his *Memorabilia* that a man who dares to use violence needs many allies but one who is able to persuade needs none” (“Political Activity” 198-199). Bdelycleon observes how quickly and effortlessly juries are lead to acquit or convict because of their apparent helplessness in the face of these speakers. The only recourse is to use these very techniques in a mock-trial setup against his father to demonstrate the full stretch of their impact and that Philocleon himself will be affected negatively (Harriot 37). The audience is likely familiar enough with these rhetorical moves to anticipate and laugh at them, but the larger question remains whether these techniques should be socially approved or rejected.

⁶² Finley explains that “demagogue” eventually took on a negative connotation to refer to the “bad types” of speakers, but that the term was fairly neutral in the late 5th c and did not have a particularly shocking or scandalous connotation (165). This perhaps explains its consistent absence in the Aristophanic corpuse.

The second issue considered in the *agon* is the type of person who should be granted authority to make decisions in the *polis*. Philocleon and Bdelycleon debate the use of power strong enough to enslave fellow citizens, so this is not an idle conversation about courtroom gossip or mild inconveniences. The argument hinges on whether elites from an upper social class can or should be allowed to direct their fellow citizens or if all members of the voting public should be ascribed the same general status and position (MacDowell “Aristophanes” 160). Philocleon will openly admit early in the *agōn* that he is not a simpleton being fooled by the elite speakers, but that he deliberately uses the court system and his role as a juror as “a means to an extraordinary, almost unrivalled degree of power and pleasure (Olson “Politics” 133).⁶³ Bdelycleon’s main argument is that the jurors’ pursuit of power is delusional because they have misread the oratorical situation and its effects on them. Instead, they have willingly handed over power to the elites and robbed themselves of the ability to participate meaningfully in political life.⁶⁴

III. Philocleon’s Benefits of the Juror Lifestyle

Philocleon lays out his case by arguing that the common juror receives 5 substantial benefits. First, he enjoys that rich and important defendants are subservient to him, which illustrates the larger dichotomy of autonomous vs. servile actions. Philocleon

⁶³ Konstan and Olson disagree about whether Philocleon’s motivations for jury service is only a sickness for comic effect, but Olson rightly points that the old man reveals later in the play that he has complex rationalizations to explain his enjoyment and continued desire for jury service (“Politics” 133).

⁶⁴ Slater (2002) points out that this was a fairly scathing indictment of the judicial system even within the approved impropriety of Old Comedy: “They [the demos] have become titillated spectators of a drama orchestrated by the corrupt political leaders of Athens. They have allowed the pleasures of spectatorship (and its modest financial rewards) to delude them, chaining them to their miserable lives on the jury benches when they could be living as free men. The charge that jury service enslaves is a shocking one in a society where slavery existed, where in fact participation in such activities of the democracy as jury service was considered an essential marker of the status of free man” (91).

begins his apologia for the capricious juror by describing the daily activities and people he is likely to encounter (Harriot 39). He elevates the power of a juror to no less than that of a king (548-9, *peri tês archês apodeixô/tês êmeteras ôs oudemias êttôn estin basileias*), then outlines the hypothetical story of young defendants who are large in stature and six feet tall (553, *andres megaloi kai tetrapêcheis*), putting their hands into Philocleon's and asking him to grant them a favorable result in court (556ff). Bdelycleon records this part of the argument as a benefit concerning supplicants (559, *peri tôn antibolountôn*). It is noteworthy that Philocleon does none of the things he said he would do to the defendants (561, *endon toutôn ôn an phaskô pantôn ouden pepoiêka*).

This first point in the *agon* sets the tone for the rest of the argument and provides Bdelycleon with a counterpoint later in the play. Philocleon recognizes that there is great disparity between the lives of the wealthy social class and his own of older laborers and former soldiers. It is reasonable to conclude that he relishes engaging in a bit of class warfare and bringing rich defendant down to his level, because the juror position affords him the power to affect the livelihood of his peers in a direct, material way. Although democracy was zealously guarded and upheld in public fora, Philocleon's desire for social control would not have been uncommon or looked at askance in the late 5th c. The jurors were more likely to come from an economically underprivileged class, thus any opportunity to improve their situation without causing directly bodily harm to a fellow citizen would not have been immediate cause for censure.⁶⁵ Moreover, Davie observes

⁶⁵ There are clear limits to this mentality, elaborated at length by Taylor in her second discussion of Athenian bribery (2001): "A further problem for the Athenians was how to react to bribery in the law courts, a crime for which there was a special law: the *graphe dekasmoi*. This law prescribed the death penalty for both giving and receiving bribes: there was no alternative penalty, as there was with crimes

that the travails of autocratic rule “as a woeful burden, familiar to us from Shakespeare's histories, seems not to have troubled the ordinary Athenian overmuch,” despite some more introspective examination from the tragedians (167).

Philocleon is moved by more than power, as he delights in the different types of entertaining appeals provided by legal advocates. He views it as unimportant whether he grants serious consideration to any issue presented so long as he is enjoying the spectacle and showmanship of the performers. He begins by describing the different classes of defendants and the techniques they use to ingratiate themselves with jurors. Some bewail the deep poverty of their situation (presumably to instill pity in the audience) until they are made equal to Philocleon's own situation (564-565, *oi men g' apoklaontai penian autôn...eôs an pôs anisôsêi toisin emoisin*). Others entertain by telling stories, jokes (566, *oi de legousin muthous êmin, oi d' Aisôpou ti geloion*) or making Philocleon laugh to the point where he sets aside his anger (567, *oi de skôptous', in' egô gelasô kai ton thumon katathômai*). If an appeal from the advocate himself is unsuccessful with the jury, some bring their children in front of the audience (568, *kan mê toutois anapeithomestha...*). Philocleon refers to this set of examples as a great authority and the mockery (or derision) of wealth (575, *ar ou megalê tout' est' archê kai tou ploutou katachênê;*).

committed by officials or other persons in the public eye. This seems to indicate that the Athenians viewed jury corruption as a more serious crime than any other form of bribery. Why this was so can perhaps be explained by the common notion that poorer men were more likely to be involved in financial irregularities than their wealthy counterparts: if the poor were more likely to accept bribes than the rich, they would need a greater deterrent” (“Bribery II” 156).

His argument implies that the jurors have more control over persuasive techniques than the speakers because verdicts dictate future action. An advocate would be foolish to use a style of speaking that had produced unfavorable results before, so the most consistent path to a legal victory lies through pandering to the audience's desire for a show. A speaker might even have to adapt or altogether throw out the initial plan for a speech because "unpopular speakers were shouted down or even dragged off the orator's platform" (Wallace 106). Philocleon makes clear that the jurors he represents are looking for something beyond the cut and dried approach of logical argumentation. Either they wish to see something pleasant and funny or to see a fellow citizen groveling for their favor. This limited range of persuasive options for advocates further highlights the juror's desire to demonstrate control over their peers and rebalance the social strata so that all are brought to a similar level.

The ability to exert social control over fellow citizens is not only intoxicating in its own right, as Philocleon also revels in the belief that his fellow jurors can act without being called to account for their decisions. This type of power borders on the tyrannical since he can bestow favor or malicious attack with impunity (587, *kai taut' anupeuthunoi drômen, tôn d'allôn oudemi' archê*).⁶⁶ Jurors may compel a defendant to blatantly entertain them, even if it has nothing to do with the case at hand (Oeagrus, allegedly a tragic actor, might have to deliver the best speech from the *Niobe* if he wishes to successfully defend himself in court: 579-80, *kan Oiagros eiselthe pheugôn, ouk*

⁶⁶ As Major (2013) explains, tyranny was generally reviled when originating in an individual who set himself above the rest of the *polis*, but Athenians were remarkably receptive to the concept of tyrannical acts if they were endorsed by and for the voting demos (101).

apopheugei prin an êmin/ek tês Niobês eipê rêsin tèn kallistên apolexas).⁶⁷ They also reserve the right to reject the stipulations in a will to bequeath an heiress daughter to someone if they so choose (582ff). Bdelycleon makes a point to stress that the jurors responsible for counterfeiting the seal for the heiress's will are doing her an injustice (589, *tês d'epiklêrou tèn diathêkên adikeis anakoghuliazôn*).

The larger point Philocleon makes about the legal system is that jurors could decide cases emotionally based on an intuitive rather than intellectual understanding of the law. The arguments presented need not have dealt with facts or evidence pertaining to a case, as Bers shows (13):

A litigant in an Athenian popular court was perfectly free to broaden his presentation to incorporate any private or public consideration that he regarded as favoring his case. Consequently, trials often took in a variety of issues far removed from the specific charge, but having some urgency in the public mind.

Litigants were not trained explicitly as a modern lawyer and rules of evidence did not exclude certain types of arguments, so jurors were compelled to vote based on what was put before them using community standards or personal understandings of moral behavior as guides (Christ 195-196). In the case of the heiress mentioned by Philocleon, the legal system recognized that wills could be corrupted and fraudulent, so some

⁶⁷ Slater adds that individual advocates, especially coming from a dramatic background, might be compelled by the audience to perform some of their 'greatest hits:' "At this period, tragedies were still given only a single performance at the dramatic festivals. An actor might well be asked to reprise a famous speech as a party piece—but jurors of Philocleon's sort were not invited to those parties. Here the court is turned into a form of symposium, with Oeagrus put on the spot by his 'hosts'" (93).

additional evidence was required such as verification by human witnesses (Rydberg-Cox 653). However, his larger point stands that any juror is free to ignore the testimony of those witnesses, even if he believes them to be credible, and cannot be stopped from giving her away to someone not stipulated in the will. Wallace underscores this point, noting that citizens used and recognized the ability “of the Athenian state to interfere in virtually any aspect of personal life, as shown by a history of regulations and sometimes arbitrary punishments in matters pertaining to speech, thought, and conduct” (107-108).

An additional benefit concerns the relationship Philocleon believes he has built with influential politicians. This is not a political alliance in which he can promote his own agenda to the *polis* so much as he receives favors from the politicians to whom he gives positive verdicts. He describes how Euathlus and Flatter-onymous promise not betray the people and that they will fight on their behalf (592-3, *eit' Euathlos chô megas outos Kolakônunos, aspidapoblês,/ouchi prodôsein êmas phasin, peri tou plêthous de macheisthai*); moreover, politicians do not convene the Assembly until they have adjourned the court after only one case (594-595).⁶⁸ Even Cleon, the shout-conqueror (596, *o kekraxidamas*), does not gnaw at the jurors (*monon êmas ou peritrôgei*), but protects with the hand and wards off the flies (597, *alla phulattei dia cheiros echôn kai tas muias apamunei*). Theorus is said to shine Philocleon's shoes (599ff).

This kind of relationship does not appear to be improper and, expressed sincerely, would have been akin to the more personal feelings of *philia* between individual citizens.

⁶⁸ The translations for *Kolakônunos* and *kekraxidamas* were obtained from MacDowell's (1971) commentary on *Wasps*. Moreover, he provides historical context for adjourning the court after a single case: “A juror was paid 3 obols for any day on which he sat, regardless of the number of cases tried, but he received no fee if no cases were tried. Thus a proposal that the courts should try one case and then adjourn was in effect a proposal that the jurors should have a half-holiday with a full day's pay” (“*Wasps*” 213).

The argument is noteworthy because it is the only time Philocleon implies that he has someone else's interests in mind when deciding a case or that personal satisfaction is not the only guiding principle for his vote. He seems to genuinely appreciate his connection to certain politicians as if they were friendly on more personal terms. Philocleon likely recognizes that men such as Cleon and Euathlos can provide things that he alone is incapable of obtaining, but insinuates that their status in the relationship is more equal than perhaps would have been realistic. Instead of depending on political favors from a Cleon-like figure as a more traditional patron with clients, they "enjoy his affection" (Crane 209). Moreover, the remark about Theorus shining Philocleon's shoes is clearly an exaggeration that underscores his earlier arguments about possessing a unique power to control fellow citizens. These relationships are further complicated because Philocleon does not emphasize the juror's wage as part of their patronage, but the monetary incentive to decide cases in favor of demagogues is not exactly inappropriate. Harvey reflects that terms for persuasion are often used as substitutes for direct gift-giving or receiving. With reference to *chremasi peithein*, he remarks that "the implications are interesting: the phrase seems to suggest that there are two ways of persuading, with words and with gifts" and "that neither is necessarily more improper than the other" (83).

Philocleon concludes his case for the advantages of jury service by arguing that he has a certain degree of personal autonomy when it comes to providing for his family. The 3-obol wage allows him to avoid obtaining money or supplies from his son; consequently, he derives satisfaction and enjoyment for being the main provider for his family. Philocleon presents the family's reaction upon his return from a day in the courts

as overwhelmingly positive (606ff, his daughter kisses him, calls him daddy while getting the jury pay, and washes and oils his feet while his wife brings sweet food and encourages him to eat it up). This is important to him because Philocleon says explicitly that he is brightened by these occurrences (612, *toutoisin egô ganumai*); moreover, Philocleon sees his jury pay as a means of defense against negligence from his son, referring to it specifically as “defensive equipment against missiles” (615ff, *skeuên beleôn aleôrên*). He concludes the argument by comparing himself to Zeus and proclaiming that his power is no less than the authority of the king of the gods (619, *ar’ ou megalên archên archô kai tou Dios ouden elattô*).

The apologia for jury service is founded on the belief that an individual citizen can wield enormous power over his peers to secure lasting benefits and personal advantage, but it ultimately rings hollow. If Philocleon’s argument is valid, he is granted vast authority over other citizens, provided entertainment, able to build relationships with politicians, enjoys the pride of being the breadwinner at home, and is allowed to act in the court system without oversight or punishment. Crane aptly summarizes this argument by referring to its complexity as a blending of “money, kinship, emotions, and raw power” (211). Because *Wasps* is a comedy and prone to elaborate exaggeration, one need not accept Philocleon’s claims at face value. There is a certain mischievous charm to the old man’s logic and an Athenian audience would likely have sympathized with his desire to be in control over his own life, but the outlandish claims do not measure up with the humble status of his position. As Rodgers explains, the 3-obol pay for jurors was not enticing enough for many citizens to participate in court because the wage was barely

enough to sustain a small family (150-151). The implication is that only the most poor, or those unable to perform other work, were best suited for daily jury service and that they were beholden to demagogues who continued to provide this wage. This lower economic standing creates an ugly opportunity for corruption and abuse of the system, because maintaining the relationship between juror and politician becomes more important than following an (admittedly imperfect) pursuit of justice.

Philocleon's attitudes towards his peers reveal a further complication about the life of jurors in the late 5th c and the kind of ethical audience behaviors encouraged by *Wasps*. Athenian culture at this time was not sympathetic to citizens who believed themselves superior. Kingship and tyranny were dangerous ideas because many *poleis* had witnessed a number of savage, destructive revolutions that Athenian citizens hoped to avoid. Even if Philocleon is not an actual tyrant with a standing army and formal political authority, the attitudes he displays are representative of dangerous precedents. Given the tensions between upper and lower classes, many in the Athenian audience may have appreciated his desire to wound and harass wealthy defendants while looking for some personal advantage. There is little evidence that Athens privileged a culture of altruism or charity, because citizens did not feel compelled to help out unless there was some room for personal advancement (Christ 121-122). However, a fellow citizen whose reactions to cases could be mightily unpredictable and excessively vindictive would at some level have to be considered a *potential threat* to one's livelihood and standing in the *polis*.

An ideal juror implied as the ethical antithesis to Philocleon preserves his exuberant energy and *thumos* without the savagery and unpredictability. Each flaw and negative characteristic embodied in the old man has a corresponding virtue and positive trait lying in wait to be expressed in a more ethical and civic-minded person. The play's title of an animal that can harm anything in its path but may elect not to if left alone is fitting because a single wasp can be an annoyance, while a swarm can be an outright dangerous force of nature. Unfortunately, avoiding the beasts is not a workable solution for anyone wishing to use the courts as a formal means of redress; therefore, *Wasps* suggests that the jurors *themselves* need to change. When properly channeled, the independence claimed by Philocleon can be used to avoid the excessive influence of the demagogues or disproportionate advantages for entertaining speakers. Moreover, keeping advocates honest about the issues of the case rather than pursuing unnecessary digressions would ensure that disputes are settled with more due consideration of both sides and without the vindictive unpredictability of caprice (which Bdelycleon argues later in the play). The ethical juror would not reward speakers for their superficial argumentation and obsequious displays of emotion because this privileges persuasion based on the cult of personality. *Wasps* is especially critical of not only the demagogues who wield this kind of power but the audiences who consistently sanction its advancement.

IV. Bdelycleon's Indictment of Demagogues

Bdelycleon has been dutifully taking notes during his father's exposition so that he may reply in kind to Philocleon's arguments. In the second half of the *agōn*, he

provides a counterpoint to the earlier themes of economic and political power throughout Athens but puts more emphasis on the influence of demagogues instead of the jurors themselves. As many commentators have noted, *Wasps* undercuts the authority of the juror by pitting Philocleon in the role of advocate rather than audience, a position to which he is not normally accustomed (Slater 91). In contrast, Bdelycleon is a more well-to-do young man capable of using the same sophistic techniques employed by the demagogues to influence his father. The contest is rigged in favor of the son because, as we have seen with the poor sophistic training of Strepsiades pitted against Pheidippides in *Clouds*, the older generation routinely does not have the wherewithal to compete intellectually with their young counterparts (Reckford 248). The *agōn* concludes with a narrative metacommentary where unethical and manipulative persuasive techniques are used to illustrate the danger of unethical persuasive techniques.⁶⁹

Bdelycleon also unveils 5 arguments to make his case, the first of which concerns the disproportionate amount of money distributed to jurors compared with politicians. As he explains, the *polis* takes in nearly 2000 talents from the allies (660, *toutōn plērōma talent' eggus dischilia gignetai êmin*), but Bdelycleon supposes that only 150 is distributed to the jurors (662, *gignetai êmin ekaton dêpou kai pentêkonta talanta*). This amounts to less than a tenth of the money coming to Athens and demonstrates how the common citizen receives so little for consistent civic service. It is telling that Philocleon is the one who recognizes the disparity immediately, which shows Bdelycleon using enthymematic logic to draw his father into the argument and become more fully invested in its outcome (664, *oud ê dekatê tôn prosiontôn êmin ar' egineth' o misthos*).

⁶⁹ Cf. Konstan for discussion of the persuasion used to discuss persuasion in this scene (“Greek” 25).

This measurable figure erodes Philocleon's earlier assertion about the authority and unrivaled power of the juror, when their powerlessness appears to be demonstrated quantitatively. The old man has repeatedly stressed the personal impact of the juror's wage and its importance to his well-being, but Bdelycleon reverses this argument to show its relative insignificance compared to the amount of money drawn elsewhere.

Philocleon's attention is subsequently drawn away from the micro, individual level where smaller amounts are awarded to the common citizen to focus instead on the macro level where demagogues cash in big. Based on his earlier reactions, Philocleon can be hot-blooded and prone to immediate action, especially concerning his livelihood. Bdelycleon overturns the logic of his father's position, that money is a formidable part of being a juror, only to reveal that it is proof he has relatively little influence in the *polis* after all (Crane 211).

Bdelycleon's next argument continues to discredit the disproportionate allocation of wealth in Athens by examining the finances of leading orators. He contends that some of the money not allocated for jury service instead is given to politicians, who receive 50 talent bribes from the allied cities after threatening and frightening them away (669-670, *kath' outoi men dôrodokousin kata pentêkonta talanta/apo tôn poleôn epapeilountes toiauti kanaphoubountes*). Bdelycleon mentions that his father chooses them to rule over him, having been baked over by their little pet phrases, so he is complicit in their rise to power and personal enrichment (667-668, *su gar, ô pater, autous/archein airei sautou toutois rêmatiois peripephtheis*). Moreover, the allies recognize where the real power lies and ignore the citizens, cozying up to these orators and giving them personal gifts as well

(676-677, including, but not limited to, wine, cheese, honey, and crowns among other things). The allies provide a range of different gifts and clearly have allotted significant amounts of resources as tribute to Athens, but the common citizen receives very little compared to the demagogues.

This is a direct indictment of the speaking class and how they mismanage public affairs for significant personal gain. Philocleon had little trouble justifying behaviors inconveniencing his peers, (and the play does not detail how severely they were affected by his actions), but the level of graft alleged by Bdelycleon could be grounds for major public censure.⁷⁰ To put 50 talents into context, “A single talent, consisting of 6,000 drachmas would support a single juror for forty years, or a skilled workman for fifty years” (Crane 208). Moreover, the demagogues are taking advantage of the Athenian belief that a poor person is more likely to succumb to bribery than someone already wealthy, therefore they would be at less suspicion of malfeasance. Bdelycleon also makes the link between politicians who accept bribes and engage in gluttony, because overindulgence as a character flaw would manifest in both appetite for food and desire for wealth (Davidson 59). One may conclude that this type of person embodies the same fundamental flaw as Philocleon, an excess of a commonly understood or accepted desire, brought to an extreme capable of harming many more people and significantly impacting the well-being of the entire *polis*. Moreover, the demagogues cajole bribes in the first place by threatening and frightening the allies, so they resort to scare tactics as a means

⁷⁰ Taylor (2001) also supports the idea that “Financial profit was to some extent acceptable and it was a recognized part of politics, if not entirely approved of” (“Bribery I” 57). There were penalties for bribery, some of which were quite severe, but being guilty need not always be grounds for conviction if argued effectively.

of manipulation. While Philocleon may enjoy watching this technique as a spectator, the situation changes markedly when his livelihood is on the line.

Another troubling characteristic of the demagogue and their privileged treatment is their ability to prevent jurors from receiving daily wages. This cuts directly against the last of Philocleon's arguments because bringing 3 obols home to his family was a source of great personal pride and a signature element of his paternal identity. Bdelycleon claims demagogues receive their advocate's wage as a matter of course while the jurors have to work for their money and, if they arrive after the signal has been given, will not walk away with their 3-obol payment (689-690, *ôs ostis an umôn/usteros elthê tou sêmeiou, to tribôlon ou komieitai*). Moreover, the prosecutor gets paid regardless even if he shows up late (691, *autos de pherei synêgorikon drachmên, kan usteros elthê*), and there is the potential for both advocates to conspire together, with one bribing the other, to put on a good show and get paid (692-693). The system is rigged in favor of the speaking class so that there is a guarantee of money, regardless of whether they have put in genuine effort for their case or shown up on time. This too is designed to inflame Philocleon's sense of outrage that someone may enjoy an advantage he is not privy to and direct his anger accordingly.

The causes of the financial hardships endured by the common citizen maintain the status quo so that the class of demagogues continues to enjoy their bribes, additional political power, and elevated social status. Bdelycleon again highlights the disparity between life at the top and bottom of the economic ladder to undercut the notion that juries have any significant political or social power. The jurors could be rich because of

their participation in and connection to the *polis* as citizens, but they are *deliberately* kept poor by the ruling class of demagogues (703, *boulontai gar se penêt' einai*). Bdelycleon does not give the speaking class the benefit of the doubt, accusing them of manipulating the system so that the jurors will come to know the one who has tamed them; and whenever he sets them upon his enemies having motioned to strike someone, the jurors leap upon them savagely (704-705, *ina gignôkês ton tithaseuten, kath otan outos g' episixê/epi tôn echthrôn tin' epirruzas, agriôs autois epipêdas*).

If the jurors do not attack because they wish to but because they are compelled by the economics of their situation, they cannot in good faith lay claim to the mantle of tyrant, authoritative figure, or any of the other grandiose titles Philocleon mentioned in his opening remarks. Instead, they have assumed the de facto position of a slave. Bdelycleon again reframes his father's protestations of autonomy so that political and social power rests with the speakers instead of the audience. His point of attack legitimately stresses how they pursue their own interests first and foremost, using the audience as a blunt object to accomplish their goals. Following the money, so to speak, was not something particular to Aristophanic satire: "From Aristophanes to Aristotle, the attack on the demagogues always falls back on the one central question: in whose interest does the leader lead" (Finley 166). It is also worth noting that the regular targets in Aristophanes' plays, such as Cleon, were not the originators of this tactic. Mitchell explains that Pericles was the "forerunner to Cleon" in this regard ("Greeks" 44-45):

By withdrawing from his *philoï* and using state funds for jurors' salaries and his building projects, Pericles was changing the range and scale of his *philia* network

but was not essentially changing the pattern of the relationship. It should be pointed out not only that he still had the nucleus of a political group supporting him, but also that he was creating obligations which could be put to political purposes. Now, rather than forming relationships with individual philoi, he was effectively and ostentatiously making all the citizens his friends. Every political leader needed to bind people to himself by ties of obligation and loyalty. This was the new strategy for achieving such support on a large scale

Thus, the demagogic class represented in *Wasps* by Cleon, Theorus, etc. creates a sense of *philia* in the minds of jurors so that they become obligated to vote favorably toward certain speakers and against their opponents; however, as Bdelycleon explains, this is a fundamental distortion of the proper relationship since the demagogues enjoy a striking imbalance in the exchange.⁷¹ Underscoring this point, the three-obol wage for jury service would have been sufficient for the daily needs of a poor citizen, but not sufficient for much else. Markle provides evidence that the price of wheat and barley, the staples of a poor Athenian's diet in the second half of the fifth century, were roughly equivalent to 2.5-3 obols, thus Bdelycleon's argument that this is enough to keep them coming without actually empowering them, is supported by other contemporaneous evidence (108-109).

The final piece of Bdelycleon's argument concerns the consistency with which orators do not live up to their promises to audiences. There may come a time when the citizens start to recognize they have been deceived and decide to lash out at the demagogues. As he handily demonstrated in his own section of the *agōn*, Philocleon's waspish behavior could be turned on and off at will, but becomes especially aggravated

⁷¹ Mitchell (1997) also details that these relationships carried the expectation of receiving "either an equal or a greater return; so, Aristotle warns, one must take care at the outset from whom one receives a benefaction, for whom one performs one, and on what conditions, so that on this basis one may accept these conditions or not" (8).

when he is in a convicting mood. To combat this, orators begin to promise whatever will assuage the ire of the masses but rarely deliver the goods in the end. Speaking hypothetically, Bdelycleon asserts whenever demagogues become afraid they offer to give Euboia, promising to furnish food in the order of 50 medimnoi (715-717, *all' opotan men deisôs' autoi, tèn Euboian didoasin/umin, kai siton uphistantai kata pentêkonta medimnous/poriein*).⁷² However, they do not actually deliver on the promise (717, *edosan d' oupôpote soi*).

The result of Bdelycleon's case is a damning indictment against the manipulative, gluttonous demagogues and the complicit audiences providing favorable verdict almost on command. Philocleon is brought to realize that he does not possess the extensive power so important to his daily routine and personal identity; in the end, he receives a fraction of the money and resources given to speakers and provides verdicts based on their dictates and against their political enemies (Freydberg 83). He has virtually no autonomy and exerts authority only nominally in Athens. The real power rests with the speaking class, caricatured so thoroughly in people such as Cleon, but also embodied in the young class of social elites like Bdelycleon. It is no accident that the justification for jury service was demolished effortlessly, with Bdelycleon countering each of his father's points and presenting virtually no concrete evidence to support his position. If the current class of demagogues is not beholden to the facts or main issues of a case, and can digress into personal attack, conjecture, or speculation, there is nothing to stop Bdelycleon from using the same tactics to persuade his father to stop serving on juries.

⁷² MacDowell explains this further in his commentary: "Fifty medimnoi would be an absurdly large quantity of grain to give to one citizen. Ar. Is ridiculously exaggerating the demagogue's promises: 'when they're frightened, they offer you the earth'" ("Wasps" 230).

As Reckford concludes, “What is more important is that Bdelycleon uses fantasy as a weapon to counter fantasy. He matches a delusion of power with one of riches” (248).

An ideal advocate implied as the ethical antithesis to Cleon and his class will avoid the more manipulative behaviors encouraged by jurors and rebalance the financial scales. Even the direct democracy of Athens required certain people to take a more elevated position to guide audiences over key decisions, but *Wasps* implies this is possible without resorting to pandering, corruption, and advanced personal enrichment. The Athenian palate likely was not prepared for argumentation that focused exclusively on facts, evidence, and issues related to a case, but certainly a reduction of distracting elements would help jurors lead to more ethical and just verdicts than speeches composed entirely of such oratorical tactics. This would empower a greater number of speakers and allow them greater chance at success when addressing crowds, because only the gifted, emotional storyteller is given a privileged position in Philocleon’s court system. Moreover, the motives for the ideal advocate would not need to entirely avoid collecting some money for their efforts because this was a commonly tolerated if not accepted aspect of the court system. Instead, the ethical speaker would not cash in to the detriment of his peers or take a disproportionately high amount of bribes unavailable to rest of the *polis*. Bdelycleon’s arguments do not claim that it is unethical to receive some monetary advancement using the court system, only that it is wrong when the amount of wealth is distributed unevenly so that a scant few benefit at the expense of thousands of additional citizens.

V. Conclusions

Wasps demonstrates, as *Clouds* did in chapter 2, that Old Comedy can create implicit comparisons for audiences to make moral judgments. The form of Aristophanic satire does not present fully formed conclusions for audiences to accept at face value, instead prompting spectators to draw their own conclusions based on the narrative arguments onstage (Freydberg 79). Christ notes that the play has an overall tone of pessimism because Philocleon is never ultimately cured of his obsessions and maintains a consistently boorish, entitled attitude regarding the worth of fellow citizens (114). However, this absence of a solution is where a Burkean analysis shines: the play cannot present a definitive solution to litigation abuse because the forum and audience would not likely be receptive to it, but *Wasps* only needs to plant a seed in the audience that the problem is so thoroughly entrenched that something else must be done. The play is not so open-ended that *anything else* should be considered a legitimate alternative; Philocleon and Bdelycleon's arguments gently guide the audience to consider a court system where the jurors and advocates have lost their current excesses in favor of a more balanced perspective on their roles and responsibilities, replacing poor behavior and values with more socially responsible alternatives. As long as the audience can recognize *not to be* a Philocleon (a contradiction in Fahnestock's terminology) or someone who embodies his worse characteristics, the play can influence civic attitudes about responsible jury service or the expectations for speakers in court.

The audience is encouraged to consider juror behavior and motivations to make some kind of change to the court system. This was a serious concern because the courts

exercised something akin to “ultimate sovereignty” and whose decisions were not subject to review or revision.⁷³ Even if one assumes *Wasps* is presenting a more panicked or exaggerated version of the lawcourts, one can still accept the principle that certain flaws will contribute more harms than good if left unattended. Later events in the play, such as the unpredictable end to the trial of Labes and Philocleon’s subsequent ascent and failure to adjust to high society, illustrate that some citizens do not handle good fortune or responsibility well (Olson “Politics” 144). The play implies that jurors are part and parcel to the corrupt practices because they reward the more unethical and manipulative politicians while harming opponents of their favorite demagogues. If the current system and its adherents are working against Athenian interests, something else must step in to take its place, a role Blanshard refers to as the “alternative identity” for the jury (44).

This ideal juror will take certain positive qualities currently in excess and properly balance them. Burke might rightly point out that any excess (even of a positive trait) may logically imply a smaller amount as its opposite, because too much of a good thing calls to mind the correct or due proportion as desirable. Thus the negative characterization of the juror’s fighting spirit needs only a reduction to a more moderate quantity to fulfil its purpose without unduly harming innocent advocates. The qualities of being waspish (or having *thumos*), looking for some personal advancement by participating in the court system, and taking pride in providing for one’s family are not negative in and of

⁷³ Cf Hansen (1974) for additional explanations on the power of Athenian courts: “We must conclude that any decision made by the Assembly may ultimately be reversed by the courts, whereas no decision made by the courts can ultimately be reversed by the Assembly. This state of affairs is best described by means of a terminology which is sometimes used in modern political science in connection with the concept of sovereignty, but which might with more reason be applied to Athenian conditions in the fourth century: while both the Assembly and the courts are immediate sovereigns, the courts alone have the ultimate sovereignty” (“Sovereignty” 17).

themselves. Their extreme versions can be the subject of parody when effects are relatively minimal or a genuine concern when they severely impact a larger proportion of the *polis*. The ideal juror will still desire to sting advocates who have presented a poor case or done real injustice to a fellow citizen, but only follow through after hearing both sides of the case. Harriot argues that the crux of *Wasps*' argument is simply to forbear judgment until the entire case has concluded, which seems beyond Philocleon's abilities even early in the play (43). Moreover, the ethical picture of a juror may still receive something personal from the trial such as being entertained or enjoying the spectacle of the courtroom atmosphere, but only so long as it does not interfere with the heavy responsibility of settling a dispute properly. Allaying these concerns should provide more just verdicts and create a more balanced and predictable juror (Freydberg 79).

The ideal advocate in court stands as an ethical antithesis to the more manipulative and self-aggrandizing caricatures described and enacted by Bdelycleon. It is difficult to take Aristophanes' criticisms at face value because Old Comedy deliberately misrepresents and distorts to get a laugh out of the audience, but one can reasonably conclude that some people were exerting a disproportionate amount of influence with audiences in a way that other citizens considered dangerous. Speakers could attempt to enrich themselves through the court or legislative system provided they did not noticeably damage the state or their fellow citizens.⁷⁴ It was even considered one of the primary responsibilities for the voting public to keep advocates in check so that they would not accrue too much power (Taylor "Bribery II" 164). *Wasps* focuses on

⁷⁴ Taylor uses evidence from Hypereides' speech against Demosthenes in 323 that bribery was tolerated unless it became detrimental to the city ("Bribery II" 162).

political demagogues, but it is worth noting that “Private citizens who were not politically ambitious must have contributed significantly to the rise in litigation” (Christ 15-16).

The ideal advocate must therefore cover anyone who addresses jurors or presents a case before them, regardless of political reputation or influence.

The audience is encouraged to recognize that unethical advocates are also working to imbalance the court system and thus need to be curtailed. Bdelycleon even uses the same sophistic techniques employed by the demagogues to outfox his father. The dog trial of Labes that follows the *agōn* further illustrates this trend, as “The scene’s primary function is to increase, by fair means or foul, Bdelycleon’s control of his father” (Harriot 149). Bdelycleon uses distracting arguments such as Labes’ good qualities, that he protects the house, that he may have stolen the cheese for good reason, and even parades the dog’s young puppies in front of “the jury” to elicit sympathy from Philocleon. In the end, he cons his father into putting the ballot into the wrong urn so that Philocleon’s desire to convict is thwarted. He may have sound intentions, but he personifies some of the most offending qualities of the men he criticizes.⁷⁵

The ideal advocate must embody Bdelycleon’s positive qualities while minimizing his negative influences. There is no evidence that Athenian jurisprudence prohibited certain types of evidence or privileged facts and issues directly relevant to a case; based on the surviving speeches, one may conclude as Todd does that jurors of the late 5th c. often voted certain in favor of speakers because “‘who you are’ matters more than ‘what you say’” (“Purpose” 31). Despite this flexibility in the courts, *Wasps* asks

⁷⁵ Slater aptly compares Bdelycleon’s demagogic skills to those of the Sausage-Seller in *Knights*, which is the subject of chapter 4 (99).

the audience to imagine a speaker who has Bdelycleon's good will towards his audience without resorting to oratorical tricks, emotional manipulations, or outright rigging the verdict in his favor. This advocate would use a more balanced approach that allows for some personal enrichment (or not accepting bribes on the level Bdelycleon decries) without acquiring enough influence in the *polis* to harm his fellow citizens. This too presents an opportunity for the Athenian legal system to provide more just verdicts when settling disputes and minimizing the opportunity for skilled speakers to abuse the courts for excessive personal gain.

The argument in *Wasps* does not call for the audience to uproot the system or engage in civil anarchy because these changes, while important, are accentuating established Athenian values. It is no secret that the legal system did not undergo substantial change in the century after the play's production, so a modern reader should not import more influence to Aristophanes than the evidence allows (Todd and Millett 15). The argumentative advantage to using comedy in this way does not require immediate results, especially for something as complicated as a foundational cultural institution. Instead, the play provides an ideal vision of the ethical citizens each member of the audience can become so that there is the potential for positive change. Moreover, *Wasps* highlights the arbitrary rules and conventions that have come to govern the Athenian judicial system and how the audience is complicit in maintaining them indefinitely (Reckford 242-243). So long as individual jurors are deceived into thinking they have legitimate power and are not dependent on demagogic whim, corruption and abuse will continue to pervade the lawcourts. The logic of the play indicates that

whatever was constructed by previous citizens can be undone and rebuilt with the efforts and more balanced perspectives of their heirs.

Chapter 4

Ethical Criticisms of Oratory in *Knights*

Abstract:

Aristophanes' play *Knights* explores questions of ethical behavior for orators addressing the assembly. Focusing on two rival orators, a slave called the Paphlagonian and a Sausage-Seller from the agora, the play highlights unethical behaviors motivated by self-interest currently in vogue with politicians in late 5th c. Athens to flatter and manipulate the citizenry. Although the play considers these behaviors in several scenes, two are frame the arguments of the play in explicit terms for the audience. The first *agon* pits the two main characters in a direct competition to see who can prove the most shameless (*anaidos*), which would effectively demonstrate their ability to persuade others in the service of the aging citizen, Demos. The second *agōn* continues the arguments from before, but focuses on the ability of the orators to provide tangible results for Demos as a result of their persuasive efforts. The prize for the winner is unlimited influence over the Demos, a clear allegory to the Athenian citizens participating in the political process. Both characters use the same style of argumentation, stressing skills in public speaking, thievery, threats of physical harm, and prosecution for trumped-up charges to demonstrate their worth. Their similarity ensures that the audience, if left with only these options, would get a less or worse version of the same politician, neither of which will necessarily act in the best interests of the polis. Continuing to use Burke's principles of the negative, I argue that Aristophanes is proposing a new possibility not directly portrayed in the play but acting as an implied opposite concept, in which orators addressing the assembly do not feel compelled to pander to or flatter voters, but instead try to argue ethically and without considering their own personal interests. This ideal, ethical speaker will be more moderate in tone and more respectful to his opponents, without creating a culture of fear and intimidation, unlike both the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller. This new orator would proceed ethically in terms of both the motivation to engage in politics as well as oratorical technique.

I. Introduction

As chapter 2 has shown, rhetoric scholars have regularly engaged *Clouds* in recent decades because Aristophanes satirizes and lampoons the practitioners of oratorical techniques relatively new to contemporary Athens, but other plays have not received similar attention. Having concluded chapter 3's discussion of *Wasps*, I continue to argue in this chapter how other plays from the late 420's BCE can provide similar insight into the techniques circulating around Athens. *Knights* is particularly noteworthy for the scathing criticisms of the politician Cleon and the perceived harms of demagoguery. The play portrays sophistic speechmaking as an extensive and potentially long-lasting danger to the *polis* if the citizenry is not diligent and careful about whom to trust.

Knights, produced at the *Lenaea* in 424 BCE, follows the tale of the old man Demos, a trusting citizen who's been led astray by the machinations of a single manipulative slave named the Paphlagonian (so called because of his place of origin). The Paphlagonian regularly abuses Demos as well as his fellow slaves and effectively creates a tyranny in his master's house. The Paphlagonian has been able to successfully steal and connive his way into a place of authority, and the task of removing him from his position is exceedingly difficult. Two of the other slaves decide that they must take matters into their own hands, and following the dictates of an oracle, recruit a champion who will fight the Paphlagonian in his own arena. This champion comes from an unlikely source, a Sausage-Seller working in the marketplace. The contest that ensues is

a detailed caricature and allegory for the state of Athens and the direction in which it is heading.⁷⁶

Although the subject of *Knights* as political satire is the subject of widespread agreement, there is no consensus about how seriously one should take Aristophanes' arguments.⁷⁷ Edmunds argues that *Knights* is not an ideological text, because "it is impossible to show that Aristophanes is governed by any ideology, either by the ones to be discussed or by any other, including 'the ideology of the city'" (236). However, he does concede that because Aristophanes is commenting on the social and political perceptions of his era, one can read *Knights* and other plays as political documents. In contrast, Stow argues that Aristophanes fashions himself a teacher and instructor of the state, if not an outright reformer of poor social and political policy (84).⁷⁸ Scholz notes that the play can be emphasizing two distinct villains in the city: either the greedy elite who try to take advantage of the citizens and look only after their own interests, or the corrupt citizens looking to gain advantage by tacitly condoning the activities of demagogues and using them as a source of money and gifts (281). Brock argues that even if one considers that the works of Old Comedy are not traditional and philosophical treatises on the nature of democracy, they are precisely the kind of untheorized but

⁷⁶ Glowacki (2003) discusses the transformation of Demos towards the end of the play, as there is archaeological evidence that Demos was indeed a deified kind of character in Athenian architecture described in terms similar to his rejuvenation in *Knights*.

⁷⁷ The discussion in chapter 1 (pages 5-13) regarding the intentionality of Aristophanic satire, especially Heath's position vis-à-vis Henderson, Ober and Strauss, et alia, provides further detail on this interpretive divide.

⁷⁸ Bowie (1997) aptly summarizes the play's dominant theme: "In the absence of guests and with the other slaves kept at bay, Paphlagon exercises control over his master, rather as their isolation enabled Pheidippides to treat his father as he wished. A Paphlagonian slave dominating his Athenian master at dinner acts as a clear image for the state of politics in Athens" ("Thinking" 6).

nonetheless rhetorical works that will resonate with the audience and impel them to discuss the issues of the day (160). Olson treats the play as “a thinly veiled allegory about contemporary Athens: Demos Puknites (Eq. 42) stands for the people, particularly when in Assembly; the old man's property is the state and all its goods; his Paphlagonian slave is Cleon; and the Sausage-seller is an aspiring rival demagogue, struggling to win the master's favor” (253-254).⁷⁹

This latter point about the identity of the Paphlagonian as a reference to Cleon is not in dispute. Drawing upon the etymology of his name, Edmunds explains (241),

Cleon's very name, Paphlagon, re-minds of [*paphlazein*] “bluster,” a word that was used of the waves (II. 13.798). It will be seen that Aristophanes' diagnosis of Cleon's demagoguery as “disturbance” and his description of this “disturbance” as a storm arise out of an old tradition of Greek thought about the polis. In this tradition, civil disorder is conceived in terms of meteorological phenomena-winds and storms-and especially in terms of storm-driven water.

The characteristic style of loud, blustering oratory that Cleon was known for (according to Aristophanes and Thucydides) was embedded in the Paphlagonian's name, thus the audience should be able to see the reference and put it in the appropriate political context. Whether Aristophanes is making a deliberate argument about Cleon the man and/or the political class he represents or using a common point of reference as comedic material is irrelevant provided the audience can recognize the characteristics associated with this portrayal and put them into a broader political context.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ For a full discussion of the relationship between the *boulē* and *ecclēsia*, cf. Timmerman and Schiappa (69-70).

⁸⁰ See Welsh (1990) for the number of references to Cleon in the Aristophanic corpus and how their public personae became antagonistic early in the playwright's career (429).

Although the contest for Demos' favor is a recurring theme throughout the play, there are two scenes in particular that best represent the allegory for the deliberative assembly in Athens, the first (lines 303-460) and second (756-940) *agōn*. As discussed in chapter 2, the *agōn* is a debate central to the main plot, in which two characters justify the main arguments around which the play is based (Humphreys 179-180). Although the content is typically addressed to an internal judge or audience, such as the chorus or *Pheidippides* in *Clouds*, McGlew convincingly argues that "when protagonist and antagonist in the *agon* speak to the chorus, they speak also through them as if to persuade the real audience sitting behind them, addressing issues (albeit on comedy's own terms) that concern the city's political future as much as the play's dramatic needs" ("Citizens" 94-95). For this reason, the *agōn* is considered an important element of the early plays for making a larger political point to the immediate audience of Athenian citizens.

In *Knights*, these verbal jousting matches pit the Paphlagonian against the Sausage-Seller to see who could provide the most benefits to Demos.⁸¹ In the first *agōn*, the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller try to prove who can be the most shameless (*anaidos*) in a range of different contexts. The logic behind choosing the Sausage-Seller as an opponent capable of vanquishing Cleon is that he can be greater and more combative in all of Cleon's perceived oratorical strengths, implicitly arguing that the only way to fight a monster is with a worse monster. The second *agōn* presents to the audience a discussion of who can provide more gifts in the form of bribes and material gains, a charge that Aristophanes routinely levies against Cleon. This side of the orator

⁸¹ Silk (2000) fittingly describes these exchanges as an "extravagant exercise in competitive odiousness [that] takes up most of the play (275-1252)" (336).

provides more clear benefits to the audience and acts as a counterpart to the more frightening and dangerous elements present in the first debate.

It is noteworthy that Aristophanes attacks Cleon and does not target the Athenian citizens themselves, at least not explicitly within the play. For pragmatic reasons Aristophanes would not wish to alienate the people directly judging the competition and deciding who would win the prize for best poet. In addition, there is evidence that a specific law passed around 415 B.C.E either criminalized attacks against the majesty and dignity of the Athenian democracy or put language in place that such mockery would be censured by the people. Although this law is several years after the production of *Knights* (Atkinson 59), Aristophanes was likely shrewd enough to know that it is often easier for an audience to laugh at an external rather than internal target, especially one with a prominent reputation and presence in Athenian politics such as Cleon and the other demagogues.⁸²

Although the contest of one monster pitted against another makes for clever comedic narrative, Aristophanic caricature cannot present clear and literal solutions for the problems plaguing 5th c. Athens. His audience is unlikely to consent that the only way forward is to fight fire with fire, therefore another message must be implicit in the play. In this chapter, I argue that the characterizations of the Paphlagonian and Sausage-

⁸² How reasonably one should interpret Aristophanes' attacks on Cleon is another subject of disagreement. Andrews (1994) presents a balanced and more charitable reading of Cleon's character, noting the more blustery and manipulative techniques portrayed by Thucydides and Aristotle, but also crediting him with positive ethos via *arête* and *phronesis*. Mitchell (1991) presents a more nuanced description of Cleon's generalship and success in politics, which was not the failure Aristophanes would have the audience believe, especially since Cleon enjoyed reelection to this position up to his death. McGlew (2002) dissents from these perspectives, comparing passages of Cleon to descriptions of Pericles in Thucydides; his conclusion is that Cleon advanced political oratory as spectator sport to be enjoyed as entertainment rather than legitimate civic engagement.

Seller portray a picture of Athenian politics so excessive and shameless that the audience can visualize a worst-case scenario of what deliberative oratory might become if left unchecked by voting citizens. By picturing how much worse the situation might turn, Aristophanes urges his audience to think of a different character more beneficial to the city that is in many ways the opposite of his villainous characters. Using Burke's theories of the negative, the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller in *Knights* imply an ideal, ethical orator that the audience is invited to conjure and bring to mind so that they have an example of legitimate, proper oratory that benefits not just the solitary politician but the city at large. I will describe the arguments of the first *agōn* and how it creates a negative image of deliberative oratory, discuss the key arguments in the second *agōn* and how they provide a more positive but still flawed characterization of political speakers, and conclude by explaining how the audience can visualize the implied, ethical orator.

II. A Desire to be Shameless: Arguments in the First Agōn

The first *agōn* features the Paphlagonian and the Sausage-Seller in a contest to see who can demonstrate the most accomplishment in *shamelessness*, a characteristic that alone proves to be the defender or protector of orators (325, *anaideian, ēper monē prostatei rhētoron*).⁸³ This term appears towards the beginning of the scene in remarks by the chorus (who often act as judges for *agōnes*) to set the tenor of the debate and establish a main argumentative theme, but also appears later to remind the audience of

⁸³ Heath (1997) notes that many of the common motifs in the agon, including deception, flattery, corruption, shamelessness, and depravity are also found in the oratory of 4th c. speakers ("Aristophanes" 232-233).

the topic in dispute (409, *anaideiai*, in reference to the Paphlagonian's claims and 413, *uperbaleisthai s'oiomai toutousin* for the Sausage-Seller's retort). The arguments unfold over a series of characteristics that each uses to establish his shameless credentials, with quick back-and-forth quips and responses to keep the verbal action flowing and dynamic for the audience. Unlike debates in other plays, the verbal combat in *Knights* rarely features long expositions or monologues which are then critiqued by an opponent; instead, the participants fire off jokes and claims at rapid-fire speed so that there are several characteristics and supporting claims to buttress their arguments.

The first claim to shamelessness concerns the act of speaking and whether they have training in oratorical technique. Each participant disputes who will speak first in the debate, culminating with the Sausage-Seller ending the point with a declaration that he is especially wretched and therefore will not yield the floor (336, *ma Di, epei kagō ponēros eimi*). The Sausage-Seller explains that he is skilled in speaking and can make a rich sauce of the debate (343, *otiē legein oios te kagō kai karukopoiein*), implying that there is a certain amount of creative manipulation at his disposal that makes him more shameless and deceptive than his opponent. This statement causes the Paphlagonian to accuse the Sausage-Seller of using deliberate oratorical techniques to strategize for a major address. Specifically, he describes a scenario in which the sausage seller spoke against a foreigner in a small lawsuit, in preparation for which babbling the speech all night long and talking over the material to himself in the streets (348, *tēn nukta thrulōn kai lalōn en tais odois seautō*), drinking water (instead of wine to remain sober) and showing it to his friends while walking about (349, *udōr te pinōn kapideiknus tous philous t' aniōn*). The

Paphlagonian's conclusion is that the Sausage-Seller erroneously thinks that this gives him an advantage in speaking. The implication is that someone who would engage in these activities is perhaps naïve and not fully prepared for deliberative oratory in the way that the Paphlagonian has been since he took up residence in Demos' house. By contrast, the Paphlagonian implicitly argues that because he is experienced in this area (350, *dunatos einai legein*) without the use of such techniques illustrated above and has been successfully manipulating Demos for some time, he has the advantage in the debate and can more convincingly prove that he is the more wretched of the two and worthier of the shameless title. This characterization is consistent with reports of the historical Cleon, who was said to have disparaged skill in speaking as a tool of undemocratic politicians. Yunis explains this aspect of Cleon's public statements using the work of Thucydides for corroboration (188):

Cleon further disparages the Periclean ideal by mocking the instructive role of the political leaders during public deliberation: it is the duty of such leaders to avoid engaging in what he terms 'cleverness and a contest of intelligence' while advising the masses (3.37.5). Thus, whereas Cleon formally acknowledges the propriety of the demos' power of decision, in his scheme instruction in debate is mocked as destructive display and the demos is precluded from deciding independently and intelligently.

In contrast to the arguments Aristophanes makes in *Clouds* just a year later, the speaker with less training is more wretched and repulsive than the sophist using the new manner of speaking, if the Paphlagonian is to be believed.

Another major characteristic in the argument concerns physical threats of violence. The debate shifts from a theme of verbal attack to bodily injury, with each side

upping the ante and trying to create a more vivid and graphic description of how they intend to harm the opposing speaker. The Sausage-Seller exclaims that he will stuff the Paphlagonian's asshole like a sausage (364, *egō de bunēsō ge sou ton prōkton anti phuskēs*), to which his opponent replies that he will drag the Sausage-Seller outside by the ass with his face stooping down (365, *egō de g'exelxō se tēs pugēs thuraze kubda*). The Paphlagonian threatens to put his opponent in the stocks (367, *oion se dēsō <n> tō xulō*) and use his skin as a bag (370, *derō se thulakon klopēs*), while the Sausage-Seller responds that he will bring his opponent up on charges of cowardice (368, *diōxomai se deilias*) and then pluck off his opponents eyebrows (373, *tas blepharidas sou paratilō*). The only threats one could seriously consider are the potential for imprisonment and prosecution, whereas the others are delivered for exaggerated comic effect. The implication, however, is that there is no level too vile or inconsiderable for these characters to approach if it creates a tactical advantage over their opponents. As Dorey explains, "the whole picture is one of a man to whom no means of speculation, no methods of profit-making, were too sordid or too base. Yet incongruously combined with this is the picture of a man utterly ruthless and implacable, who will not be turned from his hostile intentions by any form of appeasement" (136). Although the Paphlagonian is serving as a proxy for the historical Cleon, he is representative of a larger class of politician which Aristophanes considers a serious threat to the democratic process. Even if the actual politicians were not capable of such outlandish actions, the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller are emblematic of a dangerous attitude of personal entitlement and

territoriality in the political arena, as well as a pronounced hostility towards any perceived threats.

The participants in the *agōn* also try to distinguish themselves in terms of their skills at thievery. The Paphlagonian does not offer evidence in this area, whereas the Sausage-Seller spins a tale of how he used to steal from butchers as a boy (417-420). He does not go into a wealth of detail, as this scene is punctuated more by a shorter exchange than longer expositions; however, he describes how he would distract butchers and take some of their meat while they were looking away. He ends this short story with the graphic detail of hiding the ill-gotten spoils in his pants (the text is not entirely clear where exactly he puts the food) if caught in the act, which any observing politician remarks is a sign that there is no way he will not govern the citizenry someday (426, *ouk esth' opōs o pais od' outon dēmon epitropeusei*). Smith remarks that such cleverness and deception would not necessarily be considered the sign of a weak or immoral character, as there are examples throughout Greek literature such as Odysseus which are considered praiseworthy (156). Other characters in Aristophanic plays privilege this mentality, such as Philocleon in *Wasps*, who fondly remember times when he could successfully steal food as a soldier; it is worth noting that Philocleon is a buffoonish old man with whom the audience might sympathize at times, but ultimately not identify as someone they hope to emulate. As in *Wasps*, the context in this scene does not display a hero using cleverness in service of a larger cause that benefits other citizens or pursue a mission ordained by the gods – the Sausage-Seller's tale is another example of one citizen trying to scam another out of his property. While any citizen might act in his own interest in

this way if the situation presented correctly, there is little doubt that this kind of thievery, especially writ large through political circumstances, would be considered a negative character trait by many in the audience.

Compared with the direct physical threats earlier in the debate, the participants move to the more practical and serious threat of prosecution for bribery. After the Sausage-Seller accuses his opponent of accepting a bribe of 10 talents (438), the Paphlagonian attempts to initiate a bribe of one talent if the other party will keep quiet about the affair (439). He then turns around and promises that the Sausage-Seller will face four charges of bribery with a penalty of 100 talents each if convicted (442-443). The Sausage-Seller replies that the Paphlagonian will face charges of draft-dodging (which returns to the theme of cowardice from earlier) and embezzlement with a penalty of 1000 talents. This exchange further underscores that whatever the Paphlagonian is capable of politically and rhetorically the Sausage-Seller can take to a more extreme and frightening level. Although these charges are clearly trumped up and designed to intimidate more than anything else, they reflect a period in which the historical Cleon was linked to a number of trials, “in which a private citizen could act as accuser at any time” (Mitchell 187-188). This was one of the more effective ways to strike out against an opponent, and the Sausage-Seller shows that he is not averse to using the same tactics that have worked so well for the Paphlagonian (and by extension Cleon) in the past.

III. The Ethics of Inter-Orator Debate

The first *agōn* in *Knights* creates a contrast between two characters competing over the same prize, the favor of Demos and all of the benefits he can bestow accordingly. As textual evidence has shown, the Paphlagonian and the Sausage-Seller are remarkably similar, competing against each other to see who can demonstrate greater prowess in a number of moral traits and technical skills. They do not fit the Burkean sense of a pair of polarizing concepts because they are not approaching the argument from different perspectives; instead, the Paphlagonian is a more mild version of the corrupt and sychophantic politician modeled on the historical Cleon, who himself represents a larger class of citizens that Aristophanes deems dangerous to the *polis*. The Sausage-Seller is not a paragon of virtue and speaking ethics that the audience should treat as a model for future politicians; instead, he is the Paphlagonian to an exaggerated level – he can overcome his opponent in terms of oratorical ability, thievery, physical violence, and intimidation through prosecution. The Athenian audience watching this play would likely not identify with either character, because both represent a shifting trend in Athenian politics that obscured rather than aided the decision-making process in the assembly, shifting power away from ordinary citizens towards a less ethical, more self-serving group of demagogues.⁸⁴

These characters act as an easy vehicle for making jokes at the expense of a certain class of politician, but they and their many negative traits also serve to create a

⁸⁴ As Ober notes (1989), there was always an antagonism or tension between elite and commoners in Athens, with no guarantee that speakers in the Assembly would work towards the common good (168-170). However, politicians such as Pericles were advocates whose policies produced genuine benefits and prosperity to the polis, so there was a certain degree of demonstrable good-will that (so Aristophanes argues) is absent in the policies of Cleon and his kind.

more positive, ideal image as well. As Hunter relates, “to criticize others is to imply some ideal standard of behaviour from which they have veered” (322).⁸⁵ Each negative trait has a corresponding positive opposite, which the audience is invited to consider as they watch these bizarre caricatures make fools of themselves onstage. The question is not whether the class of politicians can be bested using their own techniques, but rather if there is an entirely different class of politicians who can govern and lead the assembly more ethically and to the benefit of all citizens. This ideal political candidate might have some experience in speaking, but certainly would not exist at the extremes observed in both the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller. The Paphlagonian decries such technical expertise, but it is clear that the more emotional and hot-tempered style of speaking that he embodies is hardly beneficial for the citizenry; it can be used to intimidate or bully opponents, drown out alternative perspectives in a literal shouting match, and provide more emotionally reactive sentiments rather than those crafted through calm and measured deliberation.⁸⁶ The Sausage-Seller never confirms that he has such training, so it is an open question how valuable it actually is. However, the fact that this skill is criticized by the Paphlagonian – and perhaps disadvantageous to his position – means that it is more desirable than no training at all.

The threats of physical violence are also exaggerations in the *agōn*, but they serve to illustrate a larger ideal about how politicians should govern. Athenians were fond of

⁸⁵ This argument appears in the context of gossip, but the idea of criticism in a timocratic society such as Athens implies that any form of public censure helps to enforce community norms and keep behaviors from deviating too far outside of social boundaries. Gossip was a common form of attack in the assembly and lawcourts, thus the connection to Cleon via Knights is not unusual or extraordinary.

⁸⁶ Thucydides makes a similar argument against Cleon in the Mytilenean Debate in Book 3.37-38 of his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Cleon remarks that overthinking will be the downfall of Athens and lead it to making poor decisions

thinking that anyone could address the assembly, while in practical terms there was a select group of elite speakers who consistently guided policies and topics of discussion. Few would reasonably think they might be sodomized if considered a threat by an opposing politician (as the threats from both the Sausage-Seller and Paphlagonian imply). However, a more traditional benefactor to the city, such as Pericles, would have no need of direct physical threats because the only territoriality he might feel is the most advantageous course of action for the city rather than merely the good will of the voters. The contrast referenced earlier by Yunis shows that at least within the opinion of the contemporary Thucydides, a politician with poise and respect for the democratic process is far superior to one who takes advantage of it through intimidation. One need not consider that Pericles is the Aristophanic ideal, but the confrontational and more hostile antagonism embodied by the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller conjures a contrasting image of a stately and dignified politician more worthy of the *polis*' trust. To allow them continued authority and sway over Demos will result in what Major aptly coins "an ever-spiraling kakocracy" ("Court" 68).

The caricature inherent in *Knights* allows the average audience member to see himself as superior to the characters onstage. The excessive character traits do not encourage one to create Burke's audience identification, as he might suggest for a speaker in a more direct argumentative situation such as the lawcourts or assembly. Thus, even if there is a mild sympathy or admiration for the thievery skills of the Sausage-Seller, one would not often or deliberately choose to imitate his behavior because of the social and practical consequences. The ideal orator would have an

antithetical trait, linking arguments and policy proposals to a wider benefit for the *polis* rather than what lines his own pocket. One does not have to believe that the accusation of thievery was accurate for all demagogues at this time (or even for Cleon), because this portrayal reflects a general belief about political motivation. Aristophanes argues that one does not have to settle for the same caliber of orator, and that perhaps there is a better, more trustworthy person who can lead Athens instead.

Lastly, the ideal orator would not need to resort to outlandish political recriminations and threat of prosecution to carry a proposal. Neither the Paphlagonian nor Sausage-Seller are especially trustworthy considering what they are capable of threatening – even if one hopes and believes that such an ally is capable of harming an opposing or enemy faction, the possibility remains that such dangerous and harmful abilities could be turned on friends as circumstances change. The Sausage-Seller is the character closest to a hero in *Knights* because his purpose is to rescue Demos from an unwieldy and manipulative tyrant, but the cure is almost as harmful as the disease. The only separation between them is that the Sausage-Seller can be said to help Demos in a more beneficial way (as his actions and arguments play out in the second half of the play), but the methods he uses as persuasion are just as pernicious and unethical as those from the Paphlagonian; no wonder since they are the same! The implied opposite of these characters would still embody this positive trait, but the methods and motivations would be different enough that one would not have to worry about a trumped up charge, regardless of whether it was bribery, treason, impiety, etc.

IV. Bribery and Political Pandering: Arguments in the Second Agōn

The second *agōn* continues the arguments from earlier in the play, as the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller continue their efforts to persuade Demos about their worth and abilities as his personal advocates, but the debate focuses less on their shamelessness and more on their capacity to provide favors for the aging citizen. The stakes are higher for each verbal combatant because the outcome for this debate is not merely a factual claim about their abilities; the winner of the debate will be given more authority and the position of formally acting as Demos' steward, which the Paphlagonian had previously held and the Sausage-Seller is contesting. The circumstances and setting for this debate reflect the more "serious" rewards, because Demos is requested to call an assembly on the Pnyx, much as would happen for legislative discussion (750). This becomes a point of concern to the Sausage-Seller, because (as the Paphlagonian has demonstrated) Demos is the most sharp or clever of men at home but whenever he sits on this rock (the Pnyx) he gapes like a person stringing figs together for packing; (752-755, *oimoi kakodaimōn, ōs apolōl' . o gar gerōn/oikoi men andrōn esti dexiōtatos,/otan d' epi tautēsi kathētai tēs petras,/kechēnen ōsper empodizōn ischadas*). The implication is that the spectacle of debate and the kind of entertaining antics associated with the Paphlagonian and his type of orator are enough to distract the old man away from thinking critically on the issues that directly affect him.

At center stage is the issue of whose good will and friendship can more profitably benefit the old man. Demos is the judge tasked with making a formal decision on the matter, so the analogical connection to the Athenian assembly is clear for the audience in

attendance (746-748, (*kai mēn poiēsas autika mala'ekklēsian,/ō dēm', in' eidēs opoteros nōn esti soi/eunousteros, diakrionon, ina touton philēs*). Each speaker will deliver a small chunk of argument as happened in the first *agon*, with a format emphasizing point and counterpoint rather than lengthier exposition. The evidence contrasts the Paphlagonian's promises for the future with the Sausage-Seller's material gifts to Demos in the present, a divide that distinguishes between so-called empty rhetoric and the immediacy of tangible results. It is worth pointing out that each speaker blatantly panders to their judge, so the oratorical style is still decidedly manipulative and worth censuring as the Sausage-Seller continues his mission to out-Paphlagon the Paphlagonian. The entire debate hinges on whether Demos believes he is better off bestowing his favor on one speaker vs. the other.⁸⁷

The first major characteristic the debaters try to prove to Demos is how much they can provide for him based on their willingness to harm someone else. The Paphlagonian lays out his first arguments by claiming that he has showed a lot of money to Demos in the public accounts, torturing and stretching men on the rack, throttling them, demanding a share of their work, and not considering anything about their individual situations provided it is pleasing to the old man (774-777, *soi chrēmata pleist' apedeixa/ en tō koinō, tous men streblōn, tous d' agchōn, tous de metaitōn,/ou phrontizōn tōn idiōtōn oudenos, ei soi charioimēn*). To put it mildly, this set of intended actions shows that the

⁸⁷ Heath (1997) notes that "The assembly debate in *Knights* provides further evidence for the continuity of rhetorical practice. The question at issue in this debate is which of the two rivals has greater goodwill toward the people (748)" (233). He uses evidence from the 4th c., in particular Demosthenes' *On the Crown*, to show that "This is something to which fourth-century political speakers too laid competing claim in their struggle for political influence" (233).

Paphlagonian is willing to overlook the interests of other citizens if it benefits his master; if it is possible to snake some money from them and make Demos more prosperous, he will not stop at resorting to physical or psychological manipulation. Even if their situation perhaps warrants some additional consideration, none of which is specified in the argument, he will ignore them because the only thing that matters is the final result: more money to Demos acquired by his most trusted servant.

The Sausage-Seller responds in kind that he too is capable of stealing from another citizen for Demos' benefit. Instead of money, he explains that by snatching someone's loaves of bread he will offer them up to the old man (778, *arpazōn gar tous artous soi tous allotrious parathēsō*). He also begins a series of refutations against his counterpart's arguments, pleading that the Paphlagonian will not help Demos and that he only enjoys sitting by the fire. The implication is that any action to help his aging master is undertaken only for the Paphlagonian's own benefit and that he has no regard for the material comfort or well-being of Demos. As proof, he stresses that the Paphlagonian does not consider that his master sits on a hard seat on the very rocks of the Pnyx (783, *epi taisi petrais ou phrontizei sklērōs se kathēmenon outōs*). In contrast, the Sausage-Seller has brought a cushion having gotten it stitched for the old man; he implores Demos to get up, and sit down softly or gently, so that he does not wear out or grind that which was at Salamis (this is a roundabout description for his buttocks) (784-5, *ouch ōsper egō rapsamenos soi touti ferō. All' epanairou,/kata kathizou malakōs, ina mē tribēs tēn en Salamini*). Demos is meant to see that the Sausage-Seller is willing to take care of his needs at that very moment, producing tangible results that the judge can experience with

certainty rather than relying on the promise of future gains. Even if the Paphlagonian has produced some significant monetary results for Demos in the past, he cannot demonstrate that they will be replicated and prove to the old man that he has political or social worth right now.

Aristophanes continues the discussion of demagogic worth by next focusing on the issue of political policy and how it will impact Demos. At this point in the debate, the Paphlagonian likely recognizes that his points have not resonated with Demos as much as his opponent's and explicitly double-downs on his arguments, claiming that his previous political efforts have proven beneficial and that he is willing to stake his head on the outcome of the debate (791, *ethelō peri tes kephales peridosthai*). The Sausage-Seller takes issue with this statement, counter-claiming that it cannot be true: seeing Demos living in wine-casks, crannies, and little towers in now the 8th year (perhaps of the Peloponnesian war), the Paphlagonian did not take pity on him, having imprisoned and robbed him of his honey (792-4, *os touton orōn oikount' en tais pithaknaisin/kai gupariois kai purgidiois etos ogdoon oik eleaireis,/alla katheirxas auton blitteis*);). Furthermore, when Archeptolemus brought a peace treaty, having scattered it to the wind the Paphlagonian drives out the embassy, the ones who were offering peace, from the city while slapping them on the ass (794-6, *Archeptelemou de pherontos/ten eirēnēn exeskedasas, tas presbeias t' apelauneis/ek tēs poleōs rathapugizōn, ai tas spondas prokalountai*). If true, this means that the Paphlagonian has willfully recognized that his master is living in poverty and made no efforts to alleviate the situation. Moreover, by tossing out the Spartan embassy from the city, he has halted a serious effort to end the

Peloponnesian war and prevented his master from returning to his idyllic life in the country. This directly undercuts the Paphlagonian's previous argument that he is dedicated to making Demos' life better, because even if he has provided monetary benefits in the past, his current policies only serve to minimize his master's income and the quality of life it allows.

The exchange that follows is telling, as the Paphlagonian defends his foreign policy decisions and makes the argument that they are indeed working to increase Athenian prosperity. His next argument justifies such a decision on the grounds that he did this so that Demos could rule over all the Greeks (797, *ina g' Ellēnōn arxē pantōn*), an action which adds to the majesty and overall authority of the old man and, by proxy, his fellow citizens. The Paphlagonian adds that it is in the oracles that it will be necessary that Demos sit on court cases in Arcadia at a wage of 5 obols (797-98, *esti gar en tois logioisin/ōs touton dei pot' en Arkadia pentōbolou ēliasasthai*). If the logic holds, continuing the current course of action as advocated by the Paphlagonian is the only way to bring about this eventual, positive result. Up to this point, the Sausage-Seller has provided no policy of his own, thus Demos is left with the status quo and the promise that things will get better once the war is over. As further reinforcement of the previous argument, the Paphlagonian mentions that he will accomplish this result by good or poor means (*eu kai miarōs*) (798-800), which reinforces his earlier comments about resorting to any physical or psychological manipulation if it can benefit his master.

This section of the *agōn* ends with the Sausage-Seller directly explaining that none of these actions were undertaken for Demos' benefit. Instead, the Paphlagonian wages war

not for the sake of Demos and Athens' increased authority in Greece but so that he can plunder and take bribes from the allied cities (801-2, *all' ina mallon/su men arpazēs kai dōrodokēs para tōn poleōn*). This is especially nefarious because it assumes that Demos will not be aware of the situation and how he is being affected by it on account of his dependence on the state and the Paphlagonian based on necessity, need, and jury wages (804, *all' up anagkēs ama kai chreias kai misthou pros se kechēnē*). In a way this affirms the Paphlagonian's earlier comment about creating revenue for Demos, but changes the motivation and overall tone of the relationship; instead of providing income and working to reduce poverty, the Paphlagonian is accused of deliberately creating a sense of indentured poverty that the old man is powerless to escape. By reducing him to the position of forced juror, the orator can dictate any political or social decisions and assume that they will be supported without questions or resistance. The situation is so dire that Demos cannot see past it, but the Sausage-Seller predicts that if the old man ever returns to his farm, he will realize the sorts of good things the Paphlagonian has cheated him of through the wages received (807, *gnōsetai oiōn agathōn auton tē misthophorai parekoptou*) and that afterward, he will come at his former steward like a bitter farmer, seeking out the ballot (to use) against him (808, *eith' ēxei soi drimus agroikos kata sou tēn psephon ichneuōn*). The charge of jingoistic war-mongering and ignoring the plight of the common Athenian is a consistent one in Aristophanes' peace plays, and one which the Paphlagonian is correct to take seriously. As Murphy explains, "The Athenians were quick to suspect treachery or malfeasance when any of their foreign projects, no matter how optimistic, failed of suc-cess" ("Aristophanes, Athens, and Attica" 314). The

historical Cleon was not safe from such political pressures either, because his reputation and policies for continued warfare and aggressive enforcement of Athenian power represented a fairly radical element of the political landscape.⁸⁸

Once this section of the argument is complete, Demos is left to consider two sets of consequences based on the political activity of his steward. His living conditions and general poverty are a constant source of suffering felt in the immediate present, without the genuine possibility of abatement or relief in the future because the Paphlagonian has thrown out the embassy offering peace. In the meantime, his pains are buying the potential advance of Athenian interest (as the Paphlagonian claims), but the Sausage-Seller reframes this narrative so that only his opponent will stand to gain monetarily if the war ends favorably for Athens. On balance, Demos loses with either outcome — either he suffers in the present because the war will not end and there will be no change in his living conditions, or the war's completion will see more money through plunder and bribery for his steward, but his income will be tied directly to whatever scraps and leftovers the Paphlagonian deems fit to send his way. As long as he is tied to the Pnyx and the influence of such demagoguery, Demos' life will not improve and he will experience no additional material comforts. The future holds little chance for significant progress if the Paphlagonian's agenda remains unchecked.

⁸⁸ Welsh (1990) convincingly argues that Cleon's reputation was controversial and that Aristophanes' criticisms were well-founded: "The Mytilenean debates and the dispatchment of the second trireme which reached Lesbos just in time for the Athenians to countermand the mass execution (Thuc. 3.49.2-4) clearly aroused considerable controversy in Athens. Since the 'Babylonians' followed so closely upon these momentous events, it is natural to suspect that the criticism of Athenian imperialism and the mockery of Cleon which certainly figured in the play were linked with the brutal punishment which he had urged for the Mytileneans and some support for this is provided in the fragments of the comedy ("Ending" 426).

The debaters use the accomplishments of Themistocles as a representative analogy to further the issue of political efficacy. The Paphlagonian argues that it is terrible that his opponent is saying such things about him and slandering his name in front of the Athenians and Demos (810-811, *oukoun deinon tauti se legein dēt' est' eme kai diaballein/pros Athēnaious kai ton dēmon,/) and that he is a person who has done more beneficial things by far than Themistocles did for the city (811-812, *pepoikēota pleiona chrēsta/nē tēn Dēmētra Themistokleous pollō peri tēn polin ēdē*). As Anderson explains, he “presents himself as the new (and better) Themistocles in the subsequent action of the play. Thus, the Paphlagonian boasts that he has done more for the city (a reference to the capture of Pylos from the Spartans) than Themistocles ever did (810-12)” (14). The Sausage-Seller uses a cooking metaphor to reply, that Themistocles found the city full and then filled it to the brim (814, *os epoiēsen tēn polin ēmōn mestēn eurōn epicheilē*), that he made a lunch of the Piraeus (815, *aristōsē ton Peiraia prosemaxen*), and taking none of the old away he served up new fishes (816, *aphelōn t' ouden tōn archaiōn ichthus kainous parethēken*).⁸⁹ The purpose of this description is to illustrate that Themistocles made the city demonstrably better than it had been before, providing new opportunities and improvements that made the city more comfortable and pleasant.*

This is a striking difference from the previous argument, in which both debaters agreed on the initial set of facts. The Paphlagonian supported a vigorous campaign for waging war throughout the rest of Greece because in his mind the ends justified the

⁸⁹ Anderson (1989) further shows that later in the play (1166-1167), when the Paphlagonian offers a Pylian barley-cake to Demos, the possession of the cake alone indicates that he looted the food meant as a sacrifice to the gods. This act of sacrilege provides further evidence of the Paphlagonian hoarding items that he is not meant to have and which could more rightly be offered to Demos (15).

means. In dispute was not the definition of his policy so much as how it would affect *the rest* of the Athenian populace. In the second case case, the debaters do not agree on the initial premise that the Paphlagonian has acted as Themistocles; instead, they struggle to determine how well the analogy fits and therefore how much esteem and credibility the Paphlagonian should receive from Demos in the argument. The key argument and the outcome of the debate continues to depends on who can demonstrate more good will to the old man and prove that he can provide enough to be made Demos' steward. The *agon* does not appear to going the Paphlagonian's way, as Demos starts to get upset and upbraids him for acting deceitful (821-822). As the situation becomes more serious, the arguments become more antagonistic and personal.

Recriminations abound as the *agōn* progresses, with both the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller attempting to intimidate the other and returning to the issues of political motivations and material comforts. Beginning at lines 828-829, the Paphlagonian threatens to convict his opponent of stealing 30,000 drachmas (which is similar to his accusations from the first *agōn*), while the Sausage-Seller returns the favor by claiming to show that his opponent took a bribe from Mytilene of more than 40 minas (832-835, *kai s' epideixō/nē tēn Dēmētr', ek Mutilēnēs/plein ē mnas tettarakonta*). When these threats fail, the Paphlagonian lays claim to an accomplishment so great that he is forever immune to prosecution, the evidence for which is the shields taken from the Spartan soldiers at Pylos (844-46, *emoi gar est' eirgasmenon toiouton ergon ōste/apaxapantas tous emous echthrous epistomizein,/eōs an ē tōn aspidōn tōn ek Pulou ti loipon*). However, the Sausage-Seller replies that this should not disqualify him from prosecution

because it is a tactic designed to help him avoid punishment – the shields still have their handles, thus the Paphlagonian can get his friends and thugs to take them down at night and quickly seize the entrances to the grain markets, effectively holding them hostage (847-57).

At issue is the orators' reputation and how much Demos should consider past accomplishments as evidence in the debate. The Paphlagonian focuses on two timeframes, the past and future, as a way of convincing his master that he will be the more productive and beneficial steward. Along with the claim to financial prosperity, he invokes military victory to underscore that his foreign policy (an argument which was not decided in his favor before) has been successful and that he what Aristotle could call *phronesis*. Unfortunately, this is another self-serving argument because the Sausage-Seller reframes the narrative so that the victory is tainted; instead of being able to revel in a legitimate triumph, Demos is asked to consider the full effects of leaving the shields on display in the city. Because the trophies can still be used for combat and are readily available in public, the Paphlagonian has another means of controlling Demos and ensuring that he does not act contrary to the slave's interests and decisions. If the old man decides to strike out independently and resist the juror's wage that, among other things, has kept him locked in poverty, he may be forcibly kept in place by the Paphlagonian and his associates.

One of the final arguments shores up the Paphlagonian's motivation to act out of self-interest rather than help Demos. The Paphlagonian mentions that he was the one who put a stop to conspirators, and that not anything that has been contrived escaped his

notice in the city, but having discovered it he screams [about it] (861-63, *ostis eis ōn/epausa tous sunōmotas, kai m' ou lelēthen ouden/en tē polei sunistamenon, all' eutheōs kekragā*). In response, the Sausage-Seller compares him to an eel-fisherman, who catches nothing when the lake is still but makes a catch after stirring things up considerably: for you are in the same state as those who chase after eels, whenever the lake waters are calm, they seize nothing; but if they should stir up the mud up and down, then they seize something; and you catch something, if you should stir up the city (864-67, *oper gar oi tas egcheleis thērōmenoi peponthas./otan men ē limnē katastē,, lambanousin ouden/ ean d' anō te kai katō ton borboron kukōsin,/airousi. Kai su lambaneis, ēn tēn polin tarattēs*). Furthermore, the Sausage-Seller asks if his opponent stopped them out of jealousy, so that they would not become rhetors (878-83). Returning to an earlier theme, he questions how effectively the Paphlagonian actually provides for the aging judge: if as one who sells leather hide, has he ever given to Demos a sole (or patch) for his shoes (868-69, *en d' eipe moi tosoutoni; skutē tosauta pōlōn/edōkas ēdē toutōi kattuma para seautou/tais embasin phaskōn philein*). The answer is of course no, but the Sausage-Seller demonstrates his own goodwill to the old man by giving a pair of shoes that he has bought specifically for him (871-72, *all' ego soi/zeugos priamenos embadōn touti phorein didōmi*). Underscoring this act of generosity, the Sausage-Seller provides Demos with a tunic to wear at that very moment (883, *all' egō soi toutoni didōmi*), in contrast to the Paphlagonian who recognized that his master did not have a tunic at his advanced, old age and never thought to give him one in the winter (881, *tondi d' orōn aneu chitōnos onta tēlikouton*). Demos is so pleased with the tunic that he

exclaims the Piraeus was a clever thing, but indeed no invention appears to be better than the tunic (Henderson refers to *exeurema* as a policy) (884-886, *toioutoni Themistoklēs oupōpot' epenoēsen./kaitoi sophon kakein' o Peiraiēus, emoige mentoi/ou meizon einai phainet' exeurēma tou chitōnos*).

These arguments highlight and position the earlier themes so that Demos can consider one more time which orator might be the better steward. The Paphlagonian is made out to be a jealous and manipulative speaker, who intentionally weeds out potential opponents so that no one may rival his influence with Demos. This might be acceptable and something the old man could forgive if he were being well compensated for the trouble, but the slave continues to focus on past accomplishment and promises for the future rather than help Demos in the immediate present. The Sausage-Seller recognizes and brings attention to the fact that the old man is impoverished and not receiving anything of worth from the Paphlagonian. Moreover, he takes the explicit step of bringing things that can aid Demos by making his living conditions more comfortable; these material possessions are often small (such as a pair of shoes or tunic), but the old man appears to be desperate enough to need them. The Sausage-Seller is also engaging in manipulation, but at least Demos gets something direct out of the arrangement and has a clear decision for who can take care of him most effectively.

V. Conclusions

Along with *Clouds* and *Wasps*, *Knights* presents ideas about ethical oratory and the role that speakers play in a democratic society. The class of demagogues initially represented by the Paphlagonian slave is characterized as vindictive, dangerous, and

looking out only for their own interests. The Sausage-Seller is the perfect foil, because he can engage in the same tricks, techniques, and oratorical style as his opponent so that the Paphlagonian's influence is reduced.⁹⁰ Demos is a clear stand-in for the Athenian audience, but the choice represented in each *agōn* is not something they are invited to consider literally. Instead, the audience should be thinking of the behaviors and character traits that are not shown onstage, because the ethical orator is one they must conjure and compare with the terrible models in the play.

The ideal speaker in the assembly will not stoop to manipulating the audience through pandering, intimidation, or trickery. This is the signature technique adopted by both the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller, as they routinely try to threaten each other, keep Demos in a state that does not allow him to critically engage the issues debated via poverty or comfort, and try to buy his vote with gifts. The Sausage-Seller is more effective than his counterpart,⁹¹ but the audience should not see his victory as some kind of tacit approval for demagoguery. As Silk explains, “Whatever else it may be, then, *Knights* is not a call to action” (305). The play's orators are two versions of the same social ill, because both of them will say and do whatever is necessary to secure votes from the audience. If the Sausage-Seller is left to his own devices, he could become an even worse monster than the Paphlagonian, which could produce ever greater harms to Demos and by extension to the rest of the Athenian citizens. Silk also notes that the

⁹⁰ Lines 888-889 explicitly references this idea, as the Sausage-Seller compares his persuasive style as so similar to the Paphlagonian's, that he is like a man who, while drinking and needing to shit, borrows those oratorical tricks like a kind of slippers (ouk, all' oper pinōn aner peponth' otan cheseiei,/toisin tropois tois soisin ōsper blautioisi chrōmai)

⁹¹ Demos determines that the Paphlagonian should no longer be his steward and asks for his signet ring back at lines 946-8.

Sausage-Seller is not the plucky hero who will be reformed into an ethical, model citizen: “The problem is not that Sausage-Seller has eventually to be made into a ‘proper’ moral hero in order to make his moral point, nor that he has to be converted into an honest counsellor of state by the characteristic non-realist means of recreativity: non-realism and recreativity are perfectly compatible with political seriousness” (336). The play features a problematic character who is not redeemed or eventually chastened into good behavior, because the audience will recognize that the Sausage-Seller is not the model whose words and deeds should be imitated.

The Athenian audience watching the play is invited to consider an alternative to the ones presented onstage. Instead of the manipulative, bribing politician, there may be a speaker who looks to the audience’s interests before considering his own financial advantage. This speaker rebalances the political system so that the rhetors do not have a disproportionate amount of authority and power. In the status quo represented by *Knights*’ characters, the Athenian citizen asked to vote on measures in the assembly is put into an awkward situation because they may not have enough financial security or independence to move against the more powerful factions and individuals. This person is not so difficult to persuade provided there is enough of a personal incentive, such as being indirectly bribed with jury wages or presenting the argument in an entertaining manner. Although this audience is nominally in control and has the ability to vote on political proposals, they are also at the mercy of elite speakers who can advance their own agendas without necessarily considering or caring how their fellow citizens may be

affected.⁹² The ideal, ethical orator would reestablish the audience as the main source of authority in Athens and whose interests should be privileged in both word and deed; the citizenry would not be viewed as a colossal means to an end that must be skillfully manipulated and directed to arrive at decisions so much as an end unto themselves. This speaker, much as Plato describes in the *Phaedrus*, would present arguments truthfully and without distortion, would not resort to intimidating tactics such as threatening imprisonment or hefty fines, and would seek to make the citizens themselves more ethical and keen evaluators of arguments. The emphasis would no longer rest on how the individual speaker might profit, but how all might share in the city's prosperity. *Knights* does not argue that the people should be the sole authority or that collective wisdom is a cherished trait in a democracy.⁹³ The audience watching the play is the same that supported Cleon's war policies and was complicit in the culture of demagoguery, so they are clearly part of the problem Aristophanes describes.⁹⁴ However, the orators have too much control and seemingly not enough competition to provide the audience with a legitimate alternative. If Aristophanes wishes to combat their influence, the audience must recognize the virtues noticeably *absent* in the Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller and

⁹² The Athenian populace is treated more sympathetically in the play because Demos is the doddering old man who simply needs to reclaim his rightful place of authority, but they are not blameless for the dysfunctional state of affairs and are also criticized for being complicit in the rise of the demagogues (Timmerman and Schiappa 77).

⁹³ Aristophanes was not the only intellectual to display concern about the inefficiencies of democratic rule, as the Old Oligarch, Plato, and Isocrates would voice similar criticisms based on their own observations (Timmerman and Schiappa 110-111).

⁹⁴ Murphy (1964) interprets the play as democratic, but not *overly* democratic: "the rejuvenated and reformed Demos is supposed to enter from the gates of the Propylaia, and there is a suggestion that he has moved up from the Pnyx, his former habitat, to settle on the Acropolis. This change of address would fit well the political tendency of the play, which recommends (as I have always believed) a return to the older, limited democracy of pre-Periclean times" ("Aristophanes, Athens" 310-311).

hope that a different politician (perhaps a *philos* or *aristos*) will embody them in the future.

Burke's theories of the negative and antithesis provide an insightful method of interpreting the play and what it considers a transformative argumentative moment for the audience. There is little evidence that Aristophanes was able to persuade his audience with a magic-bullet experience, especially considering Cleon was reelected to the generalship after the production of *Knights*. However, it is common practice for playwrights in both modern and ancient periods to use the cultural values and expectations of their audiences to contribute to larger discussions of social and political values. Aristophanes adds to the conversations no doubt happening amongst many citizens in the 5th c. who were concerned about the new trends in political and oratorical techniques. Moral considerations were largely built on one's actions; the motivations of a select few had a disproportionate effect on the polis, which made their choices and behaviors a concern for everyone. The negative meanings implied in any term, as Burke explains, means that the audience does not have to accept the character types onstage as their only options because there is always a new possibility waiting to arise and become the predominant meaning in any pair of terms. The contemporary politicians in Aristophanes' period of the late 5th c. BCE were perhaps not the most ethical or altruistic, but a concerned citizen watching *Knights* could envision or attempt to become the kind of leader who would inspire genuine trust in the audience without using bribes, intimidation, or any of the other negative behaviors mocked in the play.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

I. Summary of Evidence and Analysis

In this dissertation I have focused on several issues relating to Aristophanes, ethics, and the role of oratory in late 5th c. Athens. Using Burke's theory of the negative as a touchstone, my analysis has presented evidence about the characters, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding orators, argumentative arenas, and their effects on the *polis* in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Knights*. The plays consistently portray the worst excesses of characteristics considered positive by the Athenians, which demonstrates to Aristophanes' audience the path to corrupt institutions and oratorical practices. By highlighting the flaws in caricatures, Aristophanes can bring suspect behaviors to more immediate public attention and invite the audience to consider a different set of actions to right the ship of state. This allows the audience to view themselves as superior to the presented conduct and imagine themselves acting more ethically and towards a more communal good. The plays also put a limit around acceptable behavior so that the audience can recognize which actions may position them as the object of ridicule, which is not an idle concern in a timocratic society such as Athens. Their own behavior and values are put under a microscope so that the Athenian citizens do not succumb to the trap of accepting the status quo in its present state, or believing that it may progress further without significant social and political harm. Finally, Aristophanes is presented as an author who can be read influencing his audience using the emotional arguments found in comedy while commenting on serious social and political issues. The plays

subtly nudge the audience to think about how their conduct in the public sphere as audience members and orators can lead them to become more ethical and productive citizens.

In chapter 2, my analysis focused on *Clouds* and its presentation of sophistic education in the late 5th c. The play followed the desire of the aging father Strepsiades to enroll his son Pheidippides in Socrates' *Phrontisterion*, so that the young man could successfully argue away his father's debts. Key arguments about the value of education and its effects on the *polis* hinged on the debates between the Greater and Lesser Discourse and Strepsiades and his son. The Greater Discourse, as the representative of traditional education, privileged a system where young men were given martial training, valued obedience and loyalty, and maintained a positive reputation for themselves and their families. This amounted to an indirect form of social control where a corps of strong youth carried out the orders of their elders without engaging in critical thinking or participating meaningfully in the democracy. The Lesser Discourse represented a newer form of education privileging critical thinking, transgressive behaviors, and personal satisfaction. This system also revolved around control over fellow citizens, but assumed that the individual owed loyalty to no one but himself.⁹⁵

The ideal, ethical citizen acting as a counterpoint to the Greater and Lesser Discourse embodies their positive traits while excluding the negative. He acts as an antithesis to their worst excesses while retaining the characteristics that make them strong and powerful forces in the *polis*. The imagined ethical citizen will not strive to

⁹⁵ Because women were forbidden citizenship, the ideal ethical citizen in Athens at this time could only have been male. Later commentary in this chapter that focuses on modern implications for my research will broaden the conversation to include other cultural groups.

manipulate other citizens in such a pernicious, overpowering way because he is more (although not exclusively) concerned with the well-being of the city as community rather than pursuing his own satisfaction. The tendency for the Greater Discourse to focus on strength and physical training might be preserved but would not include his desire to inculcate the young to be obedient automatons. This flaw seems designed to create a populace ripe for following whichever orders they are given, which cuts directly against democratic ideals. Moreover, the ethical citizen would inherit the Lesser Discourse's ability to speak well in front of audiences and cut through the logic of poor arguments, but would not hold the welfare of other citizens hostage to satisfy his own desires. There is also room for personal advancement provided the ethical speaker considers the interests of the *polis* along with his own. These new values reflect a perspective that repositions personal and public interest in a more balanced and beneficial way for the city.

In chapter 3, the analysis focused on *Wasps* and its portrayal of audiences and advocates in the Athenian judicial system. The play followed the conflicts between the aging Philocleon and his son Bdelycleon as they argue about the value of a juror's life and responsibilities. The *agōn* features a range of social advantages and disadvantages as the old man is put into the position of arguing on behalf of his lifestyle rather than remaining an interested spectator. He believes the role of juror affords him authority over fellow citizens, to enjoy the spectacle of a trial, act with impunity, build relationships with influential speakers, and function as the main provider for his family. All of these results create the self-identity of a powerful individual that Philocleon is

loath to give up. In contrast, Bdelycleon argues that these virtues are in fact vices that keep his father locked into a servile position while demagogues enjoy the spoils of true power. He alleges that orators receive a disproportionate amount of resources and wealth based on their position, regularly receive bribes from the allied cities after issuing frightening threats, work to keep jurors poor by design, can prevent juries from receiving the 3-obol wage, and do not typically deliver on their promises. These charges create the impression that jurors are deluded into thinking they exercise legitimate power in the *polis* when they are actually blunt tools used to intimidate or punish the rivals of demagogues and serve only to line the pockets of influential speakers.

The play creates two images of an ethical citizen, focusing respectively on the roles of audience member and advocate. The ideal, ethical audience member will retain the waspishness and desire to inflict harm on deserving peers, but acts without the caprice and vindictive qualities embodied in Philocleon and the other jurors onstage. Moreover, the audience of Athenian spectators is encouraged not to value his more negative excesses, such as judging a case based only on its entertainment value or Philocleon's immediate like or dislike for an advocate. Instead, they are asked to suspend judgment until both sides of the case has been heard so that a more accurate and just verdict can be rendered. This kind of citizen is more likely to judge a case based on sound argument rather than personal predilection, although *Wasps* leaves room for the juror to act however he sees fit rather than focusing exclusively on facts. The ideal, ethical advocate will likely still look for an attempt to advance his personal situation, but will not act to the extremes as Bdelycleon describes. This person would employ a more balanced

approach to how the *polis* distributes its resources, so that it is possible for the ideal citizen to occasionally wet his beak while still leaving enough for the rest of the citizens. The techniques used to persuade audience might still include some entertaining material, but would not employ them to the exclusion of other issues that pertain directly to the case at hand.

In chapter 4, I examined *Knights* and its characterization of oratory in the legislative assemblies. The play describes the negative influence of a Paphlagonian slave in the house of Demos and how a Sausage-Seller from the agora engages him in verbal combat. The result is nothing less than total influence over Demos, a clear stand-in for the Athenian populace. The first *agōn* focuses on each advocate's *aneideia* or shamelessness in public. The Paphlagonian and Sausage-Seller attempt to outdo one another in terms of whether oratorical training provides an opportunity to be more shameless, offer up threats of violence to each other, demonstrate their relative skills at stealing, and threaten to prosecute the other for bribery. The debate implies that advocate superior in these skills will be more valuable to Demos and a more effective speaker in the assembly overall. The second *agōn* provides a more heated confrontation between the speakers as they argue over who can demonstrate more good will and friendship to Demos. Several key issues are debated, including whether the Paphlagonian or Sausage-Seller can give things to the old man by harming other people, how their political policies (such as engaging in continued warfare throughout Attica) may benefit or harm Demos, which person is better able to threaten and eventually convict his opponent on a trumped up charge, whether their arguments should be accepted based on past and future action or

gifts provided in the immediate present, and how much self-interest affects their goodwill towards the old man. The Sausage-Seller is judged to be superior in all categories, deemed the best speaker, and receives the good will and favor of Demos. The logic of the play seems to argue on the surface that the only way to combat a monster is with someone more monstrous, dangerous, and capable of using the same tactics more forcefully.

The ideal advocate in the legislative assemblies would not possess these qualities because *Knights* also portrays characteristics in the negative to conjure an image of more ethical behaviors and values. This person would develop enough skills in speaking to influence an audience, but would not resort to such extreme tactics as threats or intimidations as a matter of course. As observed in previous chapters, there is opportunity or perhaps tolerance for a speaker who wishes to receive some compensation for civic efforts but not to the detriment of the rest of the polis. Threats of prosecution, recrimination, and pandering were an accepted part of the Athenian oratorical landscape, but *Knights* demonstrates that these values can be pushed to the point where decision-making is severely hampered and rendered ineffective. The ideal speaker would still have room to attack political rivals and engage in some audience flatter but would use the assemblies to advance both personal and public agendas. This more proportionate amount of authority reflects a balanced perspective where the interests of the individual present fewer conflicts with the *polis* at large.

II. Implications of Comedic Oratory

Considered collectively, *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Knights* describe speakers who are complicated, multi-dimensional, and a direct response to the alleged corruptions of the late 5th c in Athens. A caricature cannot be taken at face value, so it is improper to assume that charlatans such as the Lesser Discourse and Pheidippides, Philocleon and the demagogues he admires, or the Sausage-Seller were alive and flourishing en masse in Athens. One may reasonably conclude, however, that *some citizens* were using these tactics, that their influence was gaining *some traction* in the *polis*, and that *enough citizens* were concerned about their actions for Aristophanes to draft characters that would be easily recognized and whose comedy could be readily digested. The audience is encouraged to avoid performing the behaviors onstage or to at least consider the alternative if similar situations should arise, so that they too will not be ridiculed. Comedy rarely offers rational and deliberate appraisals of situations and values because it is primarily an emotional force. Executed effectively, the ability to disarm with laughter builds a connection between speaker/author and audience, which allows one to direct attention to sensitive issues without immediately creating a defensive or hostile tone. Aristophanes is consistently able to address serious social and political issues that directly affect the well-being of his audience and, if his competitive success is any indication, often while remaining a popular playwright with the ear of the city on an annual basis. Old Comedy thus allows modern critics to examine historically untraditional avenues of persuasion and the way multiple sources may have influenced the 5th c. *polis* in Athens.

The research of this dissertation demonstrates additional methods of interpreting Aristophanes and the genre of Old Comedy. I believe he presents arguments about the ethical use of persuasion designed to gently influence the decisions and behaviors of his fellow citizens in isolated, solitary performances that may challenge or reinforce the arguments of traditionally persuasive fora such as the lawcourts and legislative assemblies. His techniques can be understood using Burke's characterizations of the hortatory negative and antithesis because comedy is an art of target, humiliation, and warning the audience not to become the next object of ridicule. Burke is rarely invoked as a means of examining ancient texts, but his philosophies of language that work so well for modern rhetorical artifacts can also yield valuable insights into the world of antiquity. Few if any scholars believe that Aristophanes can be reduced to mere entertainment, so the issues worth pursuing concern any additional effects, purposes, or influences he exerts on audiences. The plays do not present political commentary as an abstract or philosophical ideal; Aristophanes is not writing *the Republic* or any other logical treatise. He does, one may conclude, attack some of the more novel additions to the oratorical landscape as one type of democrat seeking to preserve an older, aristo-centric version of governance. When the audience encounters the newer class of demagogues after the festival's run of plays, they are asked to consider more carefully whether support of these leaders is justified or working against their own interests, and whether the means with which they have acquired support in public fora are ethical and worth continuing or manipulative and deceptive.

My intention with this research was to examine the oratorical techniques from a particular point in history to determine additional persuasive influences, but I believe Aristophanes can also serve as a model for modern persuaders. It is difficult, of course, to generalize about comedy across different eras and cultures, but there are many similarities to modern American comedy and Aristophanic techniques. Through shocking obscenity or subtle cleverness with language, humor often conjures a target for the audience to view as inferior to themselves regardless of whether the victim is the comedian or an external person. The force of these attacks rarely concludes with an explicitly stated belief or suggestion because the audience *enthymematically* arrives at the desired outcome or encounters some elements of cognitive dissonance: if I am or become this person, I will be guilty of the same offenses and perhaps socially sanctioned in a similar way; however, if I abstain from these behaviors and act contrary to them, I am likely to be spared this treatment and will be adhering to acceptable social norms. American society is less timocratic than 5th c. Athens, but attacking one's personal identity can yield severe reactions from both subtle and intense mockery. People who wish to use humor to ethically influence audiences can look to Aristophanes as an ancient forebear, whose tactics can be readily assimilated into modern contexts and which can be adapted for current audiences.

A modern audience may also find value in Aristophanes' arguments about ethical speaking behaviors. Although the radical democracy of Athens is substantially different from the representative version found in the modern west, one can find similar concerns about the power of language and persuasion, improper influence from elite and powerful

citizens compared with the common person, corruption in key institutions such as elections and the judicial system, and who should be making decisions that affect an entire culture. The conclusion that audience members need to be savvier at detecting manipulation and more open-minded when hearing competing sides of an issue is worth considering in a culture as diverse as 21st c. America. The same consideration should apply for ethical speakers that attempt to balance their own interests with those of the audience instead of using them as means to a personal end and engaging in pandering distractions. Moreover, it is easy to ignore the abuses or marginalizations of one's own society because they seem commonplace or normalized after a period of time, thus seeing an example of similar conduct without the cultural baggage may highlight the nature of unjust or unethical behavior all the more.

III. Implications for Future Research

A project of this kind necessarily must make strategic selections so that certain types of evidence are included at the expense of others. Aristophanes has 11 plays that have survived to the 21st century, only 3 of which are included in this analysis. This choice was based on the observation that *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Knights* explicitly presented material concerning oratorical situations and characters, thus the connection to rhetorical studies was immediately clear. Other plays, such as *Acharnians*, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriasuzai*, and *Ekklesiasuzai*, also consider implications for persuasion in the public sphere and are worthy of continued study. Moreover, the 3 plays considered in this dissertation reflect the earlier period of Aristophanes' writing career, when the Peloponnesian War was still in its infancy and before later historical events such as the

Peace of Nicias and the disastrous Sicilian expedition. They are routinely categorized as part of his “anti-war” plays, but the period of their production spans only a few years in total. Further exploration into his corpus may discover an evolving or consistent attitude towards persuasion, focusing on several aspects such as techniques, motivations, participants, and contexts.

Hellenistic literature is fairly limited in the number of surviving texts that explicitly feature humor as a defining or signature element. In contrast, ancient Rome produced a few more surviving authors that use humor to subvert or maintain established norms, particularly in the genre of satire. Future research can use Burke’s theory of the negative as well as additional theories (perhaps the comedic frame discussed in *Attitudes Towards History*) to examine the rhetorical tactics available to humorists in a more dictatorial regime. As one of the earlier satirists, Horace was writing for an audience in the golden age of Augustus while his successors, Persius and Juvenal, found themselves in periods of harsher and more authoritative emperors. It is worth asking whether humorous appeals can maintain consistency in different political contexts or whether speakers and authors must adapt techniques to achieve similar results.

I alluded to modern works of rhetoric earlier in this chapter as another avenue for analysis. Focusing on the late 5th c. necessarily precludes American humorists or rhetors who include humor, but this is another fruitful source of additional research. Grouping stand-up comics broadly and from different generations, one may observe that individuals such as George Carlin, Louis CK, Eddie Murphy, Dave Chapelle, Sarah Silverman, and a wealth of others consistently challenge pervasive social and political ideals in America

while looking to establish new mores. The belief that they are only trying to make the audience laugh belies the often scathing criticisms associated with their targets, either as individuals, types of people, or cultural institutions. One may also include media such as television, film, literature, crowd-sourced internet fora, and other rhetorical artifacts that do not involve comedic arguments spoken in front of a live audience. Although American culture is strikingly different in many respects, it is worth exploring whether there is consistent similarity amongst the rhetorical techniques of Aristophanes and modern comics to generalize about rhetorical humor.

The last area of potential research concerns additional cultures, especially those outside the privileged citizens of Athens and more broadly the western world. Ancient Athens was a fairly small and monochromatic community, thus its texts reveal the values of an insular group of citizens that excludes many other noteworthy groups such as women, foreigners, and the large population of slaves. Their views are not likely included or represented in Aristophanic comedy, thus it is difficult to determine if they would present a counterpoint to the arguments raised in his plays or confirm their cultural values. Moreover, humor can change quickly when crossing from one area to another, thus it is worth posing the question whether cultures outside the western world share similar techniques or values to using humor. In a heavily face-saving environment, for example, one may wish to explore if comedic persuasion is permissible at all and, if so, whether its form changes markedly from western humor.

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