

The Weight of Aristophanes

Plato and the ‘Other’ Comic Poets:

An Intertextual Analysis of the *Protagoras* and Eupolis’ *Kolakes*

by

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Summary

This thesis has two aims. The first is to reorient the scholarly norm when thinking about Plato in relation to the genre of Greek Comedy. Since modern scholarship began taking Plato's relationship to comedy seriously as a means of analysing his work, it has been dominated by the figure, thought, and writings of Aristophanes, especially his extant *Clouds*. This is understandable, and examining one in light of the other has delivered excellent results. I aim, however, to show that scholarship has become overburdened by this figure. Socrates was a character or featured in at least four other comedies contemporary with but not by Aristophanes, namely Eupolis, Ameipsias, Telleskleidies, and Kallias. What can we say about Plato's reactions to the 'other' comic poets surrounding him both before and during his life? In other words, I aim to 'lift the weight' of Aristophanes from the standard scholarly procedure in the discourse on Plato's intertextual dealings with comedy.

To this end, I look to the long-known reliance of the *Protagoras* on Eupolis' *Kolakes* (or *Flatterers*). To examine how Plato relied on Eupolis thus forms the main content of this thesis in service of its central goal, and thus the second, subordinate aim of the thesis. After a brief *status quaestionis*, my introduction shows that it is possible to glean meaningful insights from fragmentary works of comedy and furnishes the crux of my intertextual reading. I argue the *Kolakes* furnished what was, in fifth century comedy, a faint distinction between the character of Socrates and the character and ethos of those we typically call 'sophists' and 'orators', like Protagoras and Gorgias. The former was an ascetic who aped the values of Spartan living and who, although a 'thinker' like the others, had no interest in food or luxuries but rather set his mind to speculative nonsense. The others were surreptitious gluttons, eager to dupe patrons with their 'wisdom' for mass quantities of corporeal pleasures. I argue that this distinction in comedy—if a latent or passing one—was regarded by Plato as correct, for which he reason held it up for reflection and enhancement; turning it into a full-blown trope. In doing so, he created the literary paradigm I call the 'philosopher and flatterer', and the *Protagoras* relies in various ways upon the *Kolakes* to highlight the difference between Socrates and the 'sophists' to various ends.

The first chapter shows how fifth century comedy first produced this element of difference; the second begins the process of showing how Plato fashioned his own trope through the affordances of that comic tradition, first through an examination of the character

of Protagoras as a *kolax* similar to that in Eupolis. The third chapter argues that the *Kolakes* had a ‘competition in wisdom’ between two opposing sophistic pairs, a type of competition that was popular in the fifth and fourth centuries. But Eupolis turned this competition into what one testimonium calls ‘a competition of flattery’. Plato, I argue, likely relied on and transformed that competition in Eupolis when depicting Socrates and Protagoras locked in combat, starting with the debate over Simonidean lyric to the closing of the dialogue. When Socrates *wins* that debate, however, he implicitly adopts its traditional prize: Delphic-sanctioned sage wisdom. This wisdom explains not only the aporetic ending of the dialogue but also Socrates’ ability to see through the souls of the sophists in the famed para-Homeric *Nekyia*.

The fourth chapter is a close reading of that passage and its resonances with Eupolis, and I argue the souls of the flattering sophists are shown to suffer the same fate as the flattering sophists in the *Gorgias*. This leads me to show that the two dialogues are *metaphysically* linked just in respect of the literary contrast ‘philosopher and flatterer’. I round out the fourth chapter by showing how Socrates is similarly reminiscent of the ‘therapeutic philosopher’ of the *Gorgias* and also how he is redolent of his persona as a laconizing chatterer in comedy. The *Protagoras* is therefore built around a motif that had an evidently irresistible, if latent, showcasing in the *Kolakes*—and that the motif derived from that comedy and others is to be seen elsewhere in Plato’s corpus, but most importantly in the *Gorgias*.

The intertextual analysis of the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes*, however, is just one means to the broader end of reorienting how we should think about Plato in his comic world. Thus, I conclude with argumentative suggestions as to research moving forward. Through an analysis of his *Demes* and other works, I argue that Eupolis had a philosophical acumen that was conducive to Plato’s own philosophical purposes, leaving me to ask what else there is of Eupolis to discover in Plato’s work. I also argue we should be looking towards ‘the Sicilian connection’ the dialogues had to Dionysius I of Syracuse, for whom I argue the *Protagoras* was written. What else can be gleaned from the dialogues if we look at them through a properly ‘internationalist’ lens? I close with an argument that the ‘Digression’ of the *Theaetetus* is Plato’s response to depictions of him and the Academy on the Middle Comic stage. It is in these and other ways that I hope to ‘life the weight’ of Aristophanes now and in future.

The Weight of Aristophanes

Plato and the ‘Other’ Comic Poets:

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And as to Aristophanes... How could even a Plato have endured life—without an Aristophanes!

Beyond Good and Evil § 28, modified.¹

Introduction

In this snippet from a much longer aphorism, Nietzsche is asserting that Plato looked towards Aristophanes as a transformative personality in order to break through the ailing and stolid structures of Greek literature to develop the Platonic dialogue as an ark on which to ‘save’ culture.² In the above aphorism, he refers to the ‘little lie’ (seen only in Olympiodorus, 2.65-69) that Plato was found with a copy of Aristophanes under his pillow on his deathbed.³ Nietzsche is entitled to his beliefs about the history of Greek life and art, most of which are highly contested at best. But despite basically reiterating (in his own, idiosyncratic manner) what in antiquity had a distinguished anecdotal pedigree—that Plato was a dramatist as much as a philosopher in various regards—I am sure Nietzsche would be pleased to know that he was also quite prescient. For, it has taken roughly one hundred and fifty-one years after the publication of his *Jenseits* in 1884 for scholarship to fully recognise the fact that Plato’s art could not, indeed, have existed without the help of ‘an Aristophanes’.

That recognition began slowly. A French article in the last year of Nietzsche’s sane life, in 1888, argued that the predicate for the ‘dialogue form’ was specifically Aristophanic literature on the basis that the dialogues are, broadly speaking, colloquial in manner. That

¹ All translations in this thesis are my own unless otherwise indicated. Occasionally in the body of the text I alternate between Greek script and transliteration, but I transliterate only when the words are commonly understood or commonly so-referenced and for ease of reading.

² As he also put it in his earlier (1872): § 14. Citations of Nietzsche are from Colli and Montinari (1961—).

³ Sleeping with texts under the pillow was a common Hellenistic trope signifying not exactly the importance of the text(s) only, but the ability to *memorise* its contents. Plato is also said to have been found sleeping (alive, not dead) with the mimes of Sophron in various *Lives* throughout antiquity. For these legends, see Riginos (1976): 174-178.

claim seems to have become the received opinion as to the emergence of the *Sokratikos logos* throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in the German philological tradition.⁴ One still-influential article in English went further.⁵ William Chase Green, in 1920, argued that Plato's works were saturated by comic conventions in situation and character-drawing, comic invective against rivals both internal and external to the dialogues, and that laughter is used for dialectical, refutative effects. And yet, in the same decade, Dorothy Tarrant, in her commentary on the *Hippias Major*, argued vociferously that that very dialogue could not have been written by Plato precisely because it was *too* comical, both in language, structure, and comically abusive tropes.⁶ I like to think she may have backtracked slightly by the '50s, given her keen eye for the prolific 'wordplay and colloquialisms' in Plato.⁷ The question of Plato and his relationship to the comical seems to have been a relatively niche topic and still contested in the first half of the twentieth century, outside of a broad recognition of some basic generic similarities.

It was not until the 1970s and '80s that scholars began to seriously address the question of comedy and the laughable, exploring the extent to which Plato imbued his use of comedy and laughter with deep philosophical significance, not merely for the sake of dialectical refutation or humiliation, character-drawing and scene-making. Rather, it became apparent that laughter and comedy could be truth-preserving and reveal the deepest aspects of nature, both human and divine.⁸ By this point, whole dialogues began to be examined through the lens of their appropriation of comic tropes and the laughable: most notably the *Republic*, *Euthydemus*, the *Hippias* dialogues, and eventually even the dialogues of the 'other' Socratics, such as (most notably) Aeschines of Sphettos.⁹ Greene's contention had finally become something of the norm. Effectively all the dialogues of Plato, not just the 'early' ones, can be said to traffic in the comical.¹⁰ For the last thirty years or so, what began as a slow and steady

⁴ That is, Huit (1888), Wilamowitz (1920), Shilling (1948), and Martens (1954).

⁵ Greene (1920).

⁶ Tarrant (1928).

⁷ Tarrant (1946), (1958).

⁸ Neumann (1971) and Mader (1977) were the first to broach this perspective.

⁹ That is, Saxonhouse (1978), Hawtrey (1981), Woodruff (1982), Owen (1983), and Kahn (1996) respectively.

¹⁰ I take no unique position on the dating of dialogues. Mostly I follow Nails (2002), although I also recognise that the dialogues could and probably were edited over a period of years, if not a lifetime. Unless the question of dating becomes absolutely critical to my argument, I follow the received opinion as to groupings and so forth. I refer to 'early', 'middle', and 'late' dialogues as a general schematic with respect to form and content, as is usual, though again with a recognition that there could be some 'cross-breeding' at different points as well.

drip of scholarship on Plato's use(s) of the comic and the laughable (the latter two are distinct, though are often treated as identical or interchangeable) has turned into a veritable torrent of literature.¹¹ In the last ten years alone, for example, no less than thirteen books, volumes of essays, or influential, major articles on the topic have been published, with the result that it is evidently standard scholarly procedure to find philosophical laughter and, in particular, Aristophanes on almost every page of Plato.¹²

In what follows, I aim to capitalise on this increasing volume of studies on Plato's relationship to comedy by pointing to the danger of its becoming, quite frankly, myopic. For the studies cited in almost every instance rely on Aristophanes alone as Plato's interlocutor, or the central comic author from which to understand comedy as a whole and the conceptual paradigm against which to pit Plato's art and thought. I aim therefore to redirect our scholarly focus towards Plato's relationship to 'the other' comic poets, to those who mocked and problematised Socrates and Plato; to a focus outside the exclusive purview of Aristophanes and, especially, his extant *Clouds*—a play which thoroughly dominates discussions of Plato and Aristophanes. It seems to me almost an unconscious assumption or principle in much of scholarship that where there is comedy in the dialogues of Plato, there too is Aristophanes, and especially his *Clouds*.¹³

I aim to challenge such a paradigm. What can looking to the wider world of Greek drama do to help us resolve long-standing issues in Platonic scholarship? What new dimensions of his work can be revealed? How can broadening our horizons as to the comic in Plato help us in better understanding Plato's uses and abuses of comedy *per se*? My ultimate

¹¹ See, for example, Brock (1990), Vander Waerdt (1994), Nightingale (1995), Capra (2001), Tordorff (2007), Miller (2008), Halliwell (2008), Wolfsdorf (2008), Broackes (2009), Rashed (2009), McCabe (2010), and Sissa (2012) to name but a few major dedicated studies on comedy and in particular relation to Aristophanes in Plato. In what follows, I will treat Greek comedy as *institutionalised* forms and uses of Greek laughter. For the theoretics of Greek laughter inside and outside it, see Halliwell (2008), whom I broadly draw upon for distinctions in 'consequential' laughter—the *καταγέλαστος*, lit. 'laughing down'—and the inconsequential, or 'merely playful' laughter (*γελαστός*, and 'to *παίζειν*'). This thesis will be about the generically comic in Plato, not his use of laughter. I also agree with Halliwell that most of comedy was done in a festive spirit of fun and that Plato was aware of this—thus making a philosophical dialogue between comedy and philosophy, rather than mere polemic, possible. For the latter argument see below.

¹² I note, for example, Platter (2013), Clements (2014), Moore (2013), (2015), Trivigno (2016), Preston (2017), de Luise (2017), Tanner (2017), Capra (2018), Destrée and Trivigno (2019), de Lera and Santos (2021), and Capra, Miles, and Hooper (Forthcoming).

¹³ This may be most egregiously the case with Tanner (2017), who sees the *Clouds* as the polemical backdrop for the *Apology*, *Laches*, and *Charmides*. That is not to take away from her admirable recognition and exploration of comical elements in those dialogues *per se*, however.

goal in this thesis is to reorient the standard scholarly procedure by lifting the weight, as it were, of Aristophanes within such endeavours.

To be clear, there can be little doubt that Aristophanes—his ideas, the structure of his works, his treatment(s) of Socrates—were likely at the forefront of Plato’s thoughts, uses, and rebuttals of the fifth-century comic tradition. But Aristophanes was not the only comic poet of the fifth century, nor the only one to engage with the thought of Socrates and philosophy, and to ignore that fact risks placing otherwise profitable studies into a wrong-headed focus. I understand that Aristophanes and the *Clouds* in particular are held out for special mention by Socrates at *Apology* 18b1-d2 and 19c1 for having a detrimental effect on Socrates’ image,¹⁴ a detriment that would take more than a single afternoon to dispel, thus implicating the dialogues themselves as the place where that detrimental image would be dispelled.¹⁵ I also understand that Socrates was featured in the two *Clouds*, the *Birds*, and *Frogs*. But there are also preserved in the fragments of Old Comedy references to and hits against Socrates in relation to his fellow intellectuals and singularly by Eupolis, Ameipsias, Kallias, and Telleklides, all in 420s BCE. He even pops-up in the *Pseudolos* (vv. 464) of the Roman comic poet Plautus, suggesting the Middle Comic poets also made fun of him potentially during Plato’s lifetime. But the comedies around the 420s are critical here, because it is the time to which Socrates seems to refer when discussing the influence of ‘one of the comic poets’ on his jurors, saying that they were too young to understand what was being discussed on stage

¹⁴ We cannot say whether Plato (or the real Socrates?) had the original or the revised version in mind when discussing the accusations made by Aristophanes, an accusation circulated by people for many years at 18b1-d2: ‘ἔστιν τις Σωκράτης σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, τὰ τε μετέωρα φροντιστὴς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς πάντα ἀνεζητηκῶς καὶ τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιῶν.’ (18b6-c1). If the first edition was more seriously condemnatory of Socrates, that could make a difference in the force of Socrates’ assertions about the dangers of this accusation. But we have less than a dozen scraps from the first edition that only speak to the ascetic qualities of the Socratics and a similar initiation scene, so it is impossible to tell what the force of the original ‘accusation’ was like in comparison with the revised version. Hypothesis I Dover, wedded to some other meagre evidence on the extent of the revisions of the play, may be, and has been, taken to mean both an almost total revision to virtually no changes at all. Considering, however, that the Hypothesis speaks of a completely new parabasis, a completely new *agon*, and a completely new ending ‘where the *Phrontistērion* is burned’, I cannot envision anything but a major revision of the play, if not in focus than obviously in structure. The question, however, does not affect the fact that Aristophanes was not the only poet mocking Socrates, nor the possibility that Socrates is referring to *them* too. Moreover, as also argued below, the condemnatory effort appears to have been proximate or accidental anyway, and that it is unlikely that Aristophanes or any poet had malicious intentions.

¹⁵ All citations of Plato henceforth follow the Stephanus pagination of the OCT, except for the *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Symposium*, which follow Denyer (2008), Dodds (1990), and Dover (1980) respectively, who deviate in numbering but little. Where there is a substantive *philosophical* difference in choices between the OCT and the other texts, that will be made clear. Similarly for the texts of Aristophanes, which follow the OCT. Fragments of Greek Comedy follow their entries in Kassel-Austin, except where noted differently.

and parroted by many people for many years (18b1-d2). That is to say, we have good reason to think Aristophanes was not the only comic poet Socrates had in mind during his defence against his ‘oldest and most dangerous accusers’.

Ian Storey’s seminal (2003) study on Eupolis argues that the poet likely brought Socrates onto the stage in up to five different comedies, namely the *Kolakes*, *Aiges*, *Baptai*, *Autolycus*, and *Demes*, all in the period between ca. 430 and ca. 412 BCE.¹⁶ Storey argues at length that Eupolis had an enthusiastic interest in the ‘sophistic movement’ and in Socrates in particular, the principle evidence being Lucian’s *Fisherman* 25: ‘in the past they [the audiences] enjoyed it when Aristophanes and Eupolis brought out Sokrates here on stage (τουτονι ἐπὶ χλεύῃ παράγουσιν ἐπὶ τὴν σκηνὴν) to make fun of him, and they wrote all sorts of strange comedies’ (trans. Storey, p. 321, modified). I will leave Storey’s contention as to four of those comedies aside, though I will strongly dispute the claim that Socrates was a character in the *Κόλακες* (hereafter ‘*Kolakes*’—usually translated *Flatterers* or *Spongers*). Socrates *may* have been a character, just as Protagoras *may* have been a character as well, and Lucian may just as well have been speaking ‘programmatically’ rather than literally—thus little for certain can be gleaned from this evidence of Lucian’s. I agree with Storey, however, that Socrates did come in for mentions in the *Kolakes* in ways that will be critical to this thesis; and there are good reasons to think Eupolis was in fact interested in the sophistic movement, as will also be critical for my purposes.

We should also not forget that Plato inhabited the transitional and more urbane world of ‘Middle Comedy’ and was himself subject to numerous jibes stemming from the comic stage.¹⁷ Plato is in fact the most commonly mocked, or simply named individual in all extant fragments of Middle Comedy. Certainly the language, content, and structure of his dialogues were put on stage during his literary career, indicating his works and their ideas may have had no small influence on the currents of comic drama, if not indeed also the social discourse of the fourth century—even if the sheer quantity of mentions of his name and the Academy are

¹⁶ Storey (2003): 321-328. He remarks (p. 323) that his view is similar to Patzer (2012 = [1994]): 75 in that ‘we should not be looking for whole comedies about Sokrates in the manner of *Clouds*, but places where he might appear in a single scene, an “intruder”, perhaps, in one of the episodes.’

¹⁷ I take no stance as to the traditional three-fold division of periods in comedy—comedy was a process of evolution just as is any art. I refer to ‘Old’, ‘Middle’, and ‘New’ as conventionally understood. Where there are important distinctions or cross-pollinations to be noted, it will be done.

mere historical happenstance.¹⁸ In fact, I plan in future to argue that much of Menander and his ostensibly Aristotelian-based comedy show features that are paralleled just as, if not more closely to the thought world and dialogues of Plato.¹⁹ And yet, despite all this, there is not one monograph-length treatment of the question of Plato's possible reactions to his situatedness in the wider world of fifth *and* fourth-century comedy.²⁰ This thesis aims to be the first such a one, or as the older scholars might have put it, a kind of 'prolegomenon' to such a major study.

So what had Plato to say about 'the other' comic poets? The most natural starting place to look, I suggest, is towards the one dialogue we *know* to have relied upon a comedy not by Aristophanes. That is, to the *Protagoras* and its reliance upon Eupolis' *Kolakes*; for the *Protagoras* borrows from the scenery, prosopography, and thematics of the *Kolakes* perhaps more transparently and systematically so than any other dialogue that refers to any other comedy.²¹ Both the dialogue and the comedy take place on the grounds of Callias' mansion, both feature Protagoras and Socrates in one form or another, and both highlight the question of pleasure and self-control. The earliest-known recognition of a philosophical link between the two works comes from a self-styled expert in the polemics of the 'ancient philosophers', Pontianus, in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. He says,

¹⁸ For literature on Middle Comedy and its relationship to Plato, see section three of my conclusion to this thesis.

¹⁹ For Menander and philosophy broadly, see esp. Cinaglia (2015), who still functions in the 'Menander as generally Peripatetic-in-outlook' paradigm. But what about Menander and Plato's dialogues, which were imbued throughout Alexis's work (Menander's possible mentor) who took Plato as a special interest, as Arnott's magisterial (1996a) has shown?

²⁰ To be clear, I do mean that the subject of Plato and the 'other' poets has been utterly neglected. But there are still only, to my count, four relatively major studies probing the question of Plato's relationship to other Old Comic poets. That is, Wolfsdorff (2006) on the *Kolakes* in the *Protagoras* (more on that study below), Petre (2009) on the possible link between Eupolis' *Demes* and the *Menexenus* (I'll return to her paper in my conclusion), Capra (2011) on Plato and Epicharmus, and Platter (2013) and Bromberg (2017) together who, though only implicitly, challenge the notion that Aristophanes held an exclusive hold on the comic imagination of Plato. There is no study extant to my understanding that questions what Plato may have had to say regarding his own image on the Middle Comic stage. I will broach the question in the final part of my conclusion to this thesis.

²¹ Perhaps even more-so than the *Republic's* ideal state engages with Aristophanic idealism in the *Ecclesiazusae*, as comedy of the fifth century effectively plied its trade on utopianism (and so it is not clear that the *Eccl.* is the exact target there rather than other utopian comedies). Even the oftentimes backdrop of *Clouds* in the *Euthydemus* is not thoroughly systematic in the way we understand the *Protagoras* to be reliant on the *Kolakes*, but rather episodic and referential. For an examination of utopianism in 'the rivals to Aristophanes', see Ruffell (2000). For *Clouds* in the *Euthydemus*, see Hawtrey (1981). For my argument against Capra's (2001) claim that the *Protagoras* is a 'reverse' *Clouds II* in content and structure, see below.

ὁ δὲ καλὸς αὐτοῦ Πρωταγόρας πρὸς τῷ καταδρομῇ ἔχει πολλῶν ποιητῶν
καὶ σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκθεατριζόμενον ἔχει καὶ τὸν Καλλίου βίον μᾶλλον τῶν
Εὐπόλιδος κολάκων.

And even his admirable *Protagoras*, whilst at once driving an assault against many of the poets and men of wisdom, even manages to out-theatrize [i.e. ridicule or upstage] the life of Callias better than Eupolis' *Kolakes*!

Deipnosophists 11.506f (test. iii K.A.).

What could have driven Pontianus to have asserted that a work of prose could ‘out-theatrize’ an actual work of theatre? Or that Plato could have outclassed a poet whose entire profession was ridicule?²² I will give my opinion on what Pontianus means here as I move along. But the basic question remains: what was it about Eupolis' *Kolakes* that was evidently so important to Plato's philosophical and literary purposes?

To answer this question is the subordinate, secondary task of this thesis and the one which will take up the majority of its pages. In other words, the thesis is a call to a new paradigm of research—a view of Plato within and responsive to his larger comic world—and for the sake of such an end I furnish a new, intertextual commentary on the *Protagoras* with

²² For more on Plato and the Socratics' iambic-abusive qualities, see Owen (1983); for Hellenistic and Second Sophistic critiques of Plato as dually mean-spirited and a plagiarist, see Chroust (1962). For Athenaeus as a reader of Plato, see Trapp (2000), who argues that Athenaeus had only a kind of passing familiarity with Plato, the likes of which would be expected from a moderately well-educated man of his time. A digression here is warranted on the latter question. On the one hand, it is remarkable that Trapp is the only dedicated study on the Athenaeus-Plato relationship; on the other hand, I find his conclusion quite misguided if not just false. I argue that Athenaeus was an astute reader of Plato, and that this figure of Pontianus provides but one, crucial key. Now, Pontianus is correct in noting the connection between the two dialogues (I leave aside for now his polemical intent in the passage cited). But he is wrong in other regards—very wrong. On the one hand, ‘the very wise banqueter’ Pontianus considers himself an expert on Plato and all the people the philosopher rankly abused. Now note that encyclopaedic knowledge of past works was characteristic of wisdom from the Second Sophistic and beyond (thus the force of Lucian's *Ignorant Book Collector*, or even simply the boast that Athenaeus himself had read effectively every comedy under the sun). But by 11.506d, Pontianus is almost stumbling over his words in his list of Platonic victims, when he eventually makes the following claim: ‘and even in [Plato's] *Kimón*, not only does he mercilessly accuse Themistokles, Alkibiades and Myronides, but even Kimón himself!’—‘ἐν δὲ τῷ Κίμωνι οὐδὲ τῆς Θεμιστοκλέους φείδεται κατηγορίας οὐδὲ τῆς Ἀλκιβιάδου καὶ Μυρωνίδου, ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Κίμωνος.’ There is not and never has been attested a dialogue *Kimón* by Plato, or by any other Socratic. So what was Pontianus referring to? I find a scribal error—emending ‘Gorgias’ for ‘Kimón’, for example—unlikely. Of course, Athenaeus himself may have made a slip of the pen. But it occurs to me that Pontianus may be the target of a joke. His litany of accusations against Plato are both humorous (because anecdotal) and sometimes (as in this case) patently false (though sometimes, as we've seen, also quite true). Thus, Pontianus' mouth-foaming rage against Plato may be a semi-Platonic move on the part of Athenaeus to ridicule a self-styled expert for being both without self-control and thereby real sense; it might also be a meta-historical move by Athenaeus as to how history is itself transmitted. That is, by fallible people. Athenaeus is not to be written off as a mere encyclopaedist, nor, I think, as a blasé reader of Plato.

respect to the *Kolakes*. That is, with such a commentary in hand, I can show how one might profitably begin to fill in the gaps of Platonic scholarship that is Plato and ‘the other’ comic poets.

Modern studies on the question of Plato’s reliance on Eupolis have been few and far between. Wilamowitz, perhaps the earliest to remark on the influence of Eupolis on the *Protagoras*, simply asserted that because Plato was young and had no personal experience with Protagoras, he looked to the sophist’s portrayal in the comedy. The result was that Plato turned out what would be his life’s dramatic masterpiece.²³ We have to effectively skip ahead to the early 1990s to hear anything more on the question. Arieti (1991): 117 boldly writes that ‘the *Protagoras* is Plato’s *Flatterers*’, but thereafter gives no evidence whatever to justify the claim or explain what he means. In his later, joint effort at an analysis of the *Protagoras*, he does offer a helpful summary of the generically comic elements of the dialogue, but he goes on to give the received—but highly speculative—account of the plot and content of the *Kolakes*, which is then said to be a philosophical predicate to the *Protagoras*.²⁴ But Arieti never (as in his earlier work) refers to the *Kolakes* in any meaningful sense thereafter. Nightingale, in her seminal and praiseworthy (1995), remarks on the Eupolis connection, rightly along with the fact that Protagoras is surrounded by a ‘chorus’ of flattering hangers-on (*Prot.* 315b2), and argues that this is the only ‘certain’ intertextual connection we can responsibly make for the sake of understanding Plato, and leaves the matter at that. The fragments, she argues, are simply too scarce for a meaningful intertextual analysis.²⁵ Dorati, in the same year, pointed also to the obvious connections the dialogue has to the fragments—

²³ ‘Protagoras war tot; er kannte ihn nur aus seinen Schriften. Um so besser: das führte ihn ganz in das Reich der freien Erfindung, der Poesie. Aber jung wie er war, konnte er doch einer literarischen Anlehnung nicht entbehren. Sie lieferte ihm die Komödie...’ Wilamowitz (1920): 140. Wilamowitz also claimed in the same passage that the *Protagoras* was effectively the centre of Plato’s literary universe—towards which he moved and ever afterwards moved away. Interestingly, something of the same sentiment may be found in the opening sentence of the dialogue’s introduction to the most widely-read, English-language edition of the text: ‘This is the dramatic masterpiece among Plato’s “Socratic” dialogues.’ Cooper-Hutchinson (1997): 746.

²⁴ Arieti and Barrus (2010): Introduction. The received opinion, or standard plot summary, is something of the following: Eupolis hosted a number of parasitical flatterers—mostly ‘sophists’ as conventionally understood—for a massive feast, and they took advantage of him through their flattery, or pleasing services, in word and deed. They physically ate up his estate and/or stole his goods, ruining him in the process. Protagoras was the leader of the Chorus of Flatterers, and Socrates showed up too in one way or another. The play ended either by Callias coming to his senses and kicking out the flatterers, or otherwise by being robbed completely by them in a para-tragic ending. For more on this received opinion and its serious flaws, with literature, see the closing of my first chapter.

²⁵ Nightingale (1995): 186.

such as I have pointed out above—in order to argue what, I confess, to be a somewhat unintelligible assertion about the dialogue’s internal dating scheme.²⁶

There are two other studies that are very much more helpful. David Wolfsdorf remarks—closing out his analysis of pleasure in the *Protagoras*—on the felicity of Plato’s writing a dialogue showing ‘the ridiculousness of being overcome by pleasure’ in the intertextual context of a comedy that likely pilloried sophists for being overcome by pleasure.²⁷ The other, by Kathryn Morgan, duly notes that the *Protagoras* is a *mixture* of genres, notably epic and comedy—weaving into its structure the central concern of Eupolis’ *Demes* (how to cultivate virtue in bad sons of apparently good men) as much as the concerns of the *Kolakes* and other comedies. Plato, even in the *Protagoras*, is not just the concerned with the life of Callias and the morality of the sophists, and does not need only one comedy or one work, epic or otherwise, to accomplish his goals.²⁸ I agree wholeheartedly with this approach.

But despite these latter studies, the scholarly situation with respect to the Eupolis connection is still regrettable, and notably Wolfsdorf and Morgan do not limit the possibility that more (if not indeed much more) can or should be said on the connection. Reading Plato’s dialogues as a kind of game of free association in genre does not mean that there are substantial philosophical points yet to be determined in a dialogue that importantly relies more systematically on one given comedy than any other. So what was it about the *Kolakes* that was evidently so philosophically important to Plato?

The problems here are manifold. On the one hand, there is the pervasive notion in Platonic scholarship that just because a work is fragmentary, then nothing meaningful or of real value can be gleaned from it. All too often at conferences and in conversation I have been met with the comment to the effect of ‘Alas! if only we had such plays to read the dialogues against! Good luck.’ And it regrettably is true that Kassel-Austin preserve only nine testimonia and thirty-five fragments from the play itself (which is in fact quite a lot more than most other fragmentary plays from Old Comedy in their collection). Then there is the problem

²⁶ Dorati (1995). For more on the dating of the *Protagoras* and its possible overlapping with the *Kolakes*, see the relevant portion of my second chapter.

²⁷ Wolfsdorf (2006).

²⁸ Morgan (2016).

of those who think it right and proper to go wild with speculation—most notably Arieti, as noted above—as if such an approach could be helpful in any systematic sense. The danger of speculation is heavy too in the most recent ‘reconstructions’ of the comedy in the classical world, notably by Napolitano, Storey, and Tylawsky, who use the fact of Plato’s engagement with Eupolis as a necessary reflection of the major features of the comedy itself, a very dangerous move indeed.²⁹ And then there is, quite simply, the general lack of interest in such comedies by Platonic scholars, despite the fact that Eupolis’ *Kolakes*—not Aristophanes’ *Clouds*—is the known dramatic and prosopographic backdrop to the *Protagoras*.

There are ways out of this methodological impasse. As to how to read fragments profitably, I follow what I like to call ‘the Olson paradigm’. Namely, that we should infer from the fragments *only* what they themselves say, supplementing what is said in them against the backdrop of the testimonia and other clearly relevant philological or historical details. I am not, however, a ‘hyper-conservative’ in this regard (Olson writes one sentence on *Kolakes* test. iv K.A. his commentary on the *Kolakes*, whereas it is the basis of my entire third chapter).³⁰ There is room for what I also like to call ‘productive speculation’. As Mario Telò put it in his response/rebuttal to Olson’s colossal, three-volume critical edition of the fragments of Eupolis from which I mostly draw, what is the point of reading fragments if you don’t use your imagination?³¹ There is room for both approaches.

In what follows I give my own reading of the fragments of the *Kolakes* with this approach in mind, and I will be very wary of using Plato as a predicate for reconstructing what went lost in Eupolis’ comedy. In terms of principles, then, I argue that we can derive knowledge of the *kinds* of personae that populated the *Kolakes*, some of the *situations* they found themselves in (or situations that *unknown* persons found themselves in), and—with a wide-ranging and discerning eye to the testimonia and where the testimonia point towards in their historical situatedness—it is possible can make reasonable inferences about the play’s general *thematic* principles, and *episodes* within it that took place even if not preserved in the fragments or testimonia themselves. My reading of the *Kolakes* will therefore be somewhat

²⁹ Napolitano (2012), Storey (2003), Tylawsky (2002). These readings will be broached in the first chapter.

³⁰ Olson (2017): 30, ‘Interpretation: The author does not obviously have any specific knowledge of Eupolis’ play, reference to which appears instead to function as a learned commonplace, as in test. v, vii-viii (although cf. fr. 174 for the details of Callias’ parties).’

³¹ Telò (2018).

fragmentary, which I think befits a fragmentary text; and my reading of Plato's *Protagoras* against this backdrop is somewhat fragmentary as well. I would say 'all the better' if we are to be philologically responsible and because the *Protagoras* features a wealth of different genres in conversation with each other; different comedies, aspects of epic, and various works of lyric.³²

With this method in hand, I will show that there is a great deal which is philosophically interesting about the *Kolakes* in a way that generates a new way of thinking about the *Protagoras* and several of its most-vexed problems. It is indeed possible to have a lengthy study on the relationship of the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes*, one that enlightens our understanding not just of the works themselves but various aspects of Plato and of Eupolis as such.

The crux of my intertextual analysis is the following. I will argue that Eupolis reiterated in his *Kolakes* what was a consistent contrast seen in several fifth century comedies, namely those by Ameipsias and Aristophanes. That is, there were 'sophists' such as Protagoras and orators like Gorgias who were often characterised as *kolakes*—flatterers who pandered to wealthy patrons with pleasing but nonsense 'wisdom' for the sake of corporeal luxuries. On the other hand, you had Socrates, who differed from the others with respect to his values embodied by his very way of life. Socrates was a chattering, laconizing ascetic, concerned with the care of the self and abstract speculation rather than with flattering patrons for food. The comic contrast itself was certainly amorphous or passing in its original context. But it was a real one in certain contexts, and it is those contexts Plato highlighted and turned into his own motif—for he found them to be fundamentally correct and manifestly important. He thus turned the contrast into the trope of 'flatterer versus philosopher' or alternatively 'philosopher versus flatterer'. The goal of my intertextual analysis of the *Protagoras*' relationship to the *Kolakes* is therefore to show how the dialogue deployed and developed the original contrast into this motif and to what ends.

³² As is the central thrust of Morgan (2016) again. Note her p. 159, 'It is not a matter of a particular narrative [of a work] being followed in a particular order [in the *Protagoras*], but more that certain resonances are available for those who want to pick up on them.' My own approach intends to incorporate Morgan's, whilst furnishing an extended intertextual analysis of one work in particular. Approaching that analysis in a 'fragmentary' way leaves space for the other generic elements that exist in the dialogue, however they may or may not be subsumed in what can be gathered from the *Kolakes* itself.

Thus, the first chapter is an examination of the comic record—namely Aristophanes, Ameipsias, and Eupolis respectively—to show that there was some such contrast between Socrates and the sophists to exploit. The second chapter begins the process of showing how Plato did appropriate that distinction by fashioning of Protagoras as a comical *kolax* along the lines of his character in the comedy, thereby implicitly revealing his values. In the third chapter, I rely on a testimonium of Maximus of Tyre to argue that there was, in the *Kolakes*, a parody of an institutionalised form of debate enormously popular in the fifth century, where—in the comedy—sophists, rhapsodes, or sophistic-like pairs disputed in front of Callias or some other third party over poetry on the model of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, similarly as in other comedies of the fifth century. With this argument in hand, I will argue we can more readily understand puzzling features of the so-called ‘Simonides Episode’ of the *Protagoras*. The results of this chapter are manifold, but one of which is the recognition that Plato has Socrates reaffirm his Delphic-sanctioned superiority in wisdom; for Socrates ‘wins’ the debate with Protagoras and thus adopts such a debate’s traditional prize: the mantle of a sage, and one who can (in legend) even see into the future.

In this way, the third chapter is something of an interlude, for I argue that the para-*Nekyia* from *Odyssey* 11 that forms the entrance into Callias’ portico in the *Protagoras* showcases the latter sort of wisdom, where Socrates ‘sees’ directly into the souls of the sophists as sinners and their moral futures. My analysis of such a vision leads me to ask to what extent the punishments on display in the para-Homeric *Protagoras* approximate to the punishment of sophists too in the *Gorgias*. I argue that the punishments are the same, and that the moral-metaphysical outlook of the two dialogues are to a significant degree harmonised. In other words, the dramatic motif of ‘philosopher and flatterer’ in the *Gorgias* (which I argue is likely also reliant upon Eupolis and Ameipsias to a significant extent) is operative philosophically and dramatically in *both* dialogues. I mentioned a harmonization of the two dialogues *vis-à-vis* a literary-philosophical analysis: that is to say, such an analysis allows me to answer one of the most problematic aspects of the *Protagoras* as a whole, namely Socrates’ ostensible defence of hedonism. Socrates is not, indeed cannot be a hedonist in the *Protagoras*. This is shown to be the case not only because of the shared dualism ‘philosopher-flatterer’ motif in the dialogue but, as I show in the final section of the fourth chapter, simply

in virtue of Socrates' way of life in the *Protagoras* as well—as a laconizing ascetic, or someone for whom pleasure has no moral value.

With these four chapters in hand, my analysis of the relationship between the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes* ends. I do not claim to give 'final answers' to several long-standing and pressing problems, such as how to interpret Socrates' or Protagoras' interpretation of poetry (though I complement some existing readings and rebut others); nor do I 'answer' the long-standing question of how the analytical structure of hedonism in the *Protagoras* is supposed to work, even if I argue it is in part *ad hominem*—though, to anticipate, I stake my claim in the camp of Russell (2005) with respect to self-control (i.e., the right sort of knowledge) as being the ultimate good in both dialogues. In short, I intend to point the way towards new ways looking for solutions to many of these issues. For example, if we want to know what Socrates or Protagoras *really* thinks about Simonides (if such a thing is even possible) then we should, my third chapter suggests, look more closely at the rules of sophistic competition in poetry and the attitudes regarding such 'displays of wisdom' around the time of Plato. It also suggests that we should look more closely at *where and how* the analytical structure of the *Gorgias* with respect to pleasure *must* be harmonised with the one in the *Protagoras*.

But my thesis is not entirely suggestive, of course. Perhaps most importantly, my intertextual analysis can best explain the famously (or infamously) 'sophistic' character of Socrates throughout this dialogue; for, as I aim to show in the third chapter, he stays and fights with Protagoras in a way that was reminiscent of the duelling sophistic, flattering pairs in the *Kolakes*. In this way I can explain many of the dramatic oddities better, I should say, than Capra's seminal analysis of the *Protagoras*.³³ Capra argues the dialogue is a 'reverse' *Clouds II*, wherein Socrates (= Strepsiades) must descend into the fearful 'Cave of Trophonius' that is the *Phrontistērion* (= Callias' home filled with the souls of sophists). Callias' portico is implicitly assimilated to the Cave of *Republic* and so Socrates is forced to 'fight with the shadows' using sophistic argumentative strategies that parallel the extant *agon* of *Clouds*. I do not deny there are very powerful resonances with *Clouds II*, or even perhaps *Clouds I*, throughout the *Protagoras*. But to suggest that there is a systematic effort on the part of Plato

³³ Capra (2001).

in the *Protagoras* to ‘reverse’ the detrimental effects of that play (only?) with reliance on the debate between Weaker and Stronger Logos and Plato’s ‘Middle Period’ metaphysics is perhaps to ‘jump the gun’ when we already know there is an alternative, systematic dramatic predicate that has yet to be explored—one that was very visible in antiquity.³⁴

Before I begin that exploration, however, it is necessary to remark on how I position myself with respect to Plato’s views on Greek Comedy—and if only briefly on the nature of that comedy as such. It was long the supposition that Aristophanes in particular and comedy in general sought to castigate Socrates thoroughly, and Plato, insofar as he ‘responded’ to Aristophanes or comedy at all, sought to ‘rebut’ those impressions; that comedy and Plato were at polemical odds by default. This paradigm has decidedly changed, and for good reasons.

First, I am in agreement with Halliwell in asserting that even the *Apology* makes it clear that Socrates did not hold Aristophanes (and, as I argued was an implicit backdrop for that passage) the other poets as primarily responsible for his mortal predicament, but rather by accident. Notice that, at the very point I left off in my citation above, 18d1, Socrates immediately thereafter, through the use of a δὲ clause, makes a distinction between those ‘oldest accusers’, and the unnameable persons who spread their content *with malice and hatred* in their hearts (ὄσοι δὲ φθόνῳ καὶ διαβολῇ, 18d2). In other words, the poets were often treating Socrates in a sense of festive fun rather than viciously ridiculing him.³⁵ That is not to say the poets were never serious in actually reproving Socrates (and in this way I disagree with Halliwell), but Socrates himself does appear to make a real distinction between (comic)

³⁴ McCoy (2008) argues roughly the same as Capra, and my response is the same as to Capra.

³⁵ ‘Sokrates’ first mention of *Clouds* in the *Apology* occurs when he is complaining that for many years he has had a false reputation for two types of interest: first, esoteric and perhaps ‘metaphysical’ questions (‘things up in the sky and under the earth’); secondly, ‘making the weaker argument into the stronger’ (a slogan for rhetorical facility known to have been used by Protagoras). He says it is impossible to name those who have spread these slanders (because, by implication, there were too many of them and they did so in general social intercourse), ‘unless one of them happens to be a comic poet’. The unmistakable allusion to Aristophanes and *Clouds* is immediately followed, however, by this: ‘But [δὲ] as for those who tried to persuade you (sc. of these things) *with animus and malice*... there is no way of putting any of *them* [ὄσοι δὲ φθόνῳ καὶ διαβολῇ χρώμενοι ὑμᾶς ἀνέπειθον] on the witness stand or cross-examining them; I am simply compelled to shadow-box with them . . .’ (18d). In other words, Sokrates draws a strong contrast which indicates that *Clouds* itself is *not* part of the serious social forces of “animus and malice” which have corroded his reputation over the years.’ Halliwell (2016): 5, modified, his emphases. I cannot say I agree entirely that a ‘strong contrast’ is made here rather than more general one, but the grammatical point appears sound to me. What is given here is a simplified version of his take on the *Apology* passage in his (2008).

fun and (human?) malice—thereby lifting the direct responsibility for his prosecution from the shoulders of the comic poets, and instead making them an accidental, or proximate cause. We should not presume that Socrates and subsequently Plato were outright antithetical to the comic project.³⁶ And with the presumption that comedy was not polemically related to philosophy by default, we are in a more ready position to understand that Plato and others would engage with comedy philosophically rather than polemically.

This latter assertion is strengthened considerably when we consider that comedy was, in fact, embroiled in the discourses of fifth and fourth century philosophy,³⁷ and that Plato patently took comedy as philosophically worthwhile to engage with. This has been known for more than half a century, as I have charted above.³⁸ To borrow an expression from Rashed, Plato sought to enhance or ‘improve’ comedy, not simply rebut or destroy it.³⁹ I follow Charalabopoulos in seeing Plato as constructing his own, quasi-theatre too (at least in some dialogues), and the appropriation of comedy was a critical feature of this.⁴⁰

So much for the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes*. But this thesis is not about those two works. It is about Plato’s dialectical embeddedness in fifth and fourth century comedy more generally, with an analysis of the *Kolakes* and the *Protagoras* being but one way to approach such a larger field of interest. It is only too appropriate, then, that I conclude with some thoughts about Plato in that wider world. I will do this in the three sections of my conclusion. First I will gesture towards the philosophical acumen of Eupolis as such, to show why Plato may have taken an interest in him as a general principle as a stimulus for future research, primarily through an analysis of the fragments of the *Demes*. In the second section I will ask why Plato wrote a comic dialogue about flatterers and philosophers at all. The answer has to do with what I argue is his primary audience for the dialogue (if not many dialogues): Dionysius I of Syracuse, who was a known Athenophile, patron of Attic theatre, and a great

³⁶ For this more positive view, see, e.g., Brickhouse and Smith (1990), Santoro (2013b), Platter (2013), Halliwell (2015), Moore (2013), (2015), Bromberg (2017).

³⁷ Laks and Cottone (2013) and Clements (2014) are essential in this respect.

³⁸ But see esp. in this regard Moore (2013) on Plato’s reappropriation at *Phaedrus* 261a7 of Socrates’ *psychagōgia* at *Birds* 1555, and Moore (2015) again on Aristophanes and Plato on Socrates’ stripping dialectical interlocutors of their outer clothing to test their souls.

³⁹ Rashed (2009): 132-133 on enhancing Aristophanes’ interpretation of Socrates as a Pythagorean: ‘My suggestion is that what is required in our approach to these texts is... a kind of Copernican reversal. Instead of viewing Plato and Aristophanes as satellites revolving around Socrates, we should rather think of Plato as orbiting Aristophanes and, as he does so, improving, in a way, on the image of Socrates as a Pythagorean.’

⁴⁰ Charalabopoulos (2012).

patron of the literature of Plato and the Socratics. But he was also understood to be situated in a court swarming with parasites (not least the Socratics!). Thus I argue the *Protagoras* was written for Dionysius as a morality tale that would appeal to his specific circumstances and his Athenocentric tastes. Lastly, I will argue that Plato responded to impressions of himself on the Middle Comic stage in the so-called ‘Digression’ or ‘Philosopher’s Digression’ of the *Theaetetus*. In it, I argue he embraced the absurd images the public *vis-à-vis* the poets had of him, and—of all things—by reproducing yet again the literary motif ‘philosopher versus flatterer’ to castigate those who live in the city versus the pleasurable life in the groves of the Academy and the life of the mind. If these contentions are taken seriously, I consider my task here done: to have, in part, ‘lifted the weight’ of Aristophanes in studies on Plato and Comedy.

Chapter One

‘Philosophers and Flatterers’ in Fifth Century Comedy

In this chapter I will argue that the fifth century comic poets preserved, intentionally or otherwise, a consistent contrast between the character of Socrates and his fellow intellectuals, or *phrontistai*, including those whom we traditionally call ‘sophists’ such as Protagoras, and professional orators like Gorgias.¹ I will show that the latter class of intellectuals, as opposed to the character of Socrates, were broadly portrayed as hedonistic *kolakes*: itinerate parasites on the estates of the rich, pandering to their patrons’ sensibilities with pleasing but nonsensical advice for the sake of food, drink, and wealth. Professionally antithetical to self-awareness and self-control, the sophists, in their capacity as *kolakes*, were destroyers of estates and corrupters of individuals; the orators of entire cities. But the character of Socrates is never once in extant Attic comedy directly associated with the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, or self-assertion; he is, rather, a chattering, laconizing ascetic, concerned with the abstracted, if often abusive, care of the self (and was made fun of by the others for this). The comic Socrates, though a ‘technician of thought’ like the others—e.g., in being an expert in oratory, a practitioner of metaphysics, or simply in being a teacher—was largely antithetical to their values and worldview *vis-à-vis* his way of life.²

That there were distinctions preserved in comedy between Socrates and ‘the sophists’ has been duly noted in recent years.³ In particular, however, I aim to solidify and expand upon

¹ For the wider debate on the precise semantic range and content of the *phrontistēs* (lit. ‘technician of the mind’)—and Socrates’ precise (or imprecise) relationship to them in comedy—see esp. Edmunds (2003), (2006), with Carey (2000). In general, I mean to speak of those who were essentially defined on account of their self-professed expertise: e.g., musicians, medical experts, oracle-mongers, ‘*meteōrsophistai*’ (i.e., ‘natural philosophers’), rhapsodes, and ‘sophists’ conventionally speaking, such as Protagoras (who was singled out as a *phrontistēs* by Athenaeus, at 5.218c). I shall refer to sophists here, in general, as a loose class of individuals who were wayfarers between cities, taking money from whatever source they could find, exploiting the moral conventions of each city to secure their pay, as well as genuinely philosophical innovators in their own right. I use ‘sophists’ and ‘orators’ sometimes interchangeably, as the distinction in terms was hardly clear then as much as it is now, as we will see in the discussion of the *Gorgias* in Chapter Four.

² In asserting that one’s values are represented by one’s way of life—in the fifth century BCE as now—I follow Williams (2008), Nehamas (1998), and Hadot (1995). Indeed, whether those values can be rendered ‘propositionally’ seems to have become a matter of dispute immediately upon the emergence of Socratic literature, such as we find in the *Ajax* and *Odysseus* of Antisthenes. I thank George Boys-Stones for the latter suggestion.

³ For major studies concerning the preservation of the philosophical tenets of Socrates, though almost always with respect to Aristophanes, see Bromberg (2017), Moore (2015) and (2013), Platter (2013), Patzer (2012), esp.

the central findings of Christopher Carey (2000), who tentatively concludes that ‘the other’ poets were interested in highlighting the *differences* between Socrates and his intellectual counterparts, especially with respect to Socrates’ forms of comic asceticism (or at least the received fragments generate this impression). As Carey says,

From [a] cursory survey [alone] we can see that, unsurprisingly, the comic tradition saw the contemporary intellectual movement in a broadly similar light, [but that Aristophanes’] rivals are more interested in taking note of the differences between Sokrates and the other sophists. They never associate Sokrates, even indirectly, with wealth and self-indulgence. The differences between Sokrates and other sophists were as visible to Aristophanes as to his contemporary comedians; this is clear from the fact that in the surviving *Clouds* Aristophanes presents Sokrates himself as an ascetic while associating him *indirectly* with hedonism and self-assertion (through his possession of the rhetorical skill which makes the weaker case [for hedonism] the stronger.⁴

In this chapter I aim to solidify Carey’s conclusions by highlighting a dimension of that separation between Socrates and the ‘sophists’ with respect to hedonism and self-sufficiency that has hitherto gone overlooked: the degree to which it operated upon the plane of furtive *kolakeia*.

Before I do this, it is necessary to be absolutely clear that I embrace the complexity of comedy as an artform that exists to explode distinctions, not least of character. It is not difficult to imagine that Socrates was a ‘sophist’ or even, indeed, a flatterer in comedy, as I will show at the end of this chapter. It may be that there were fragments that have simply gone missing over time which would negate any such distinction I am trying to show (especially with regard to Socrates in *Ameipsias*). But the point remains that fifth century comedy *did*

Laks and Cottone (2013) and Rashed (2009), Tomin (1987), esp. Nussbaum (1980), Rosetti (1971), Gigon (1947), Gomperz (1924), and Burnet (1911). Most of these studies will be examined as this chapter progresses.

⁴ Carey (2000): 429, modified. Cf. in this respect the much earlier and admittedly rougher conclusion of Chroust, who cursorily asserts the following after a brief analysis of the evidence of *Ameipsias* and *Eupolis*: ‘In contradistinction to Aristophanes, *Ameipsias* and *Eupolis* do not consider Socrates a sophist or a physicist, but actually endow him with those traits which not only seem to have attracted Antisthenes, but which to some extent correspond to Plato’s characterization of Socrates in the *Apology* [referring to his poverty and self-sufficiency in 32a-b]. Thus we may safely assume that these general traits of Socrates’ personality as expressed in the *Konnos* and the *Flatterers*—particularly Socrates’ refusal to accept any remuneration for his teachings as well as his poverty, unselfishness, and honesty—were common knowledge among the Athenians as early as the middle twenties of the fifth century.’ (Chroust 1996 [=1945]: 47, modified). Chroust is incorrect to assert that Socrates was no ‘physicist’ in comedy outside Aristophanes, nor that the poets did not consider him a sophist. But Chroust is correct, as I will argue in what follows, that the ‘other’ poets seem to have focused on his *αὐτάρκεια*, or self-sufficiency, perhaps more directly than did Aristophanes.

offer a distinction that was more or less consistent at critical moments which separated Socrates from his fellow intellectuals, and that Plato could exploit it and hold it up for reflection and problematization. He did so in the *Protagoras* and, indeed, in other dialogues across his corpus. He set out to fashion his own trope from that earlier contrast—fleeting and amorphous as it may have been—into what I am anachronistically calling the ‘philosopher and the flatterer’.

1. Aristophanes’ *Daitalēs*

In this section I will show that even in Aristophanes there was a difference between a class of intellectuals and that of Socrates predominantly with respect to *hedonism*, and—though more obliquely—with respect to *kolakeia* too. To do this, I will perhaps surprisingly begin with Thucydides.

In the Summer of 427, Cleon, in his speech on the fate of the Mytileneans (3.37-40), claims that Athens was experiencing a sort of bottleneck crisis of sophistic rhetoric.⁵ The Athenians, Cleon says, by this point have had their senses warped and their faculties of judgment destabilised on account of their passionate love of new-fangled rhetoric. Instead of deliberating with a healthy head on their shoulders (3.38.4), they act, rather, like participants in a theatre, spectators at the feet of sophists overcome by the pleasure of listening to any new trick of the tongue (‘ἀπλῶς τε ἀκοῆς ἡδονῇ ἡσώμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς ἐοικότες καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ πόλεως βουλευομένοις’, 3.38.6). They lurch back and forth in their judgement, day to day based merely upon the cleverness of any given account, no matter how transparently false or absurd it is—just like the competitive displays of rhetoric instituted

⁵ For Cleon’s speech as an indictment against (and demonstration of) Athens as awash with sophistic and, perhaps in particular, Parmenidean rhetoric, see Clements (2014): *passim*, but esp. 160-163 with bibliography. I take no stance as to Thucydides’ own perspective on the truth of Cleon’s speech on the matter of whether or not to back track on the previous day’s decision to massacre the town of Mytilene. I do, however, maintain that Thucydides is preserving evidence for what was then an Athens under the influence of new-fangled rhetors and sophists—the reasons for which should emerge just below. The fact that Thucydides does not use the word *kolakeia* in his *History* does not mean that Athens was not awash in political flattery, a culture of power-exchange through flattery, as I will address later. Political flattery (or flattery whatever) is not the issue here in any case.

throughout the city (3.38.1-5; cf. Pseudo(?)-Hippocrates, *Art of Man* 1-4, examined in Chapter Three below).⁶

Buried within Cleon's speech, however, is a subtle contrast made between the *ethical* characters of these sweet-talking speakers and those who lacked such an education. You should know, Cleon says, 'that being untaught with a sense of self-control (ἀμαθία τε μετὰ σωφροσύνης) is more helpful than over-cleverness wilfully lacking in self-discipline (δεξιότης μετὰ ἀκολασίας); and that the simpler sorts of people (φαιλότεροι) generally make better citizens than people shrewder (ξυνετωτέρους) than themselves...' (3.37.3, trans. Hornblower, modified). In other words, the rhetoricians are out to dupe their audiences because they have the greatest dexterity of the tongue, and because they use that tongue for purposes of utter lack of self-control and want of gain, as opposed to sensible, normal, but uneducated people.

At the Lenaean festival of 427, only a few months before Cleon's speech, Aristophanes staged this same sort of ethical contrast as we read in Thucydides—between the 'learned and unlearned', the 'controlled and uncontrolled'—in his first play, the *Daitalēs* (*Banqueters* or *Feasters*).⁷ Cleon (or Thucydides) in mentioning this contrast was thus likely reflecting a very real phenomenon that had taken hold of the Athenian people. After all, Gorgias and his ambassadorial entourage had also arrived in 427, and Cleon's own speech is replete with Gorgianic antitheses and other rhetorical hallmarks. And Aristophanes would, in 424, take home first prize for showcasing Cleon as the demagogic orator *par excellence*, an unscrupulous and cynical politician who is out merely to feast himself.

The *Daitalēs* seems to have problematised such people. So far as we can tell, the play featured a young man who went away from his family farm, leaving behind his elderly father and brother to associate with an expert teacher on the order of Alcibiades and Thrasymachus (Fr. 205 K.A.). He returned a kind of Prodician wordsmith (again Fr. 205 K.A.; cf. Fr. 243,

⁶ For competitive displays of rhetoric in Athens, see my discussion of the 'Simonides Episode' of the *Protagoras* in Chapter Three below as well, which argues that Eupolis in the *Kolakes*—as did Aristophanes in *Frogs* and probably other comic poets—parodied such displays.

⁷ For recent discussions of the fragments of the *Daitalēs*, see Bromberg (2017): 37-38, Halliwell (2015): 241, and Rusten (2011): 301-306. Kassel-Austin have a perfunctory, if still helpful statement of what might be most conservatively surmised from the fragments. The *Daitalēs* is understudied, despite its copious fragments and informative testimonia. Serious work on it seems to have stopped with Weber (1908), who builds upon and persuasively corrects the mistakes of two dissertations from the turn of the nineteenth century.

249, and 250 K.A.), and with an ability to analyse poetry, perhaps similar to the way Protagoras had done (cf. Fr. 233 and 240 K.A. with Laks-Most Prot. D32, 24-25). But above all, it seems, he learned ‘[first] to drink, then to sing badly, Syracusan tables, Sybaritic feasting, and [the song] “Chian from Spartan Cups!”’ (Fr. 225 K.A.).⁸ In other words, he became utterly dissolute in matters of pleasure and was challenged by his father in this regard. For this reason the boy was called by Galen ‘the ἀκόλαστος son’ (Fr. 233 K.A.),⁹ and variously by the scholia as ‘ἄχρηστον’ (useless) and ‘αἰσχρόν’ (ugly or bad) (test. vi K.A.). By the Chorus Leader at *Clouds* 529, however, the boy was called ‘ὁ καταπύγων’. Thus, it is the boy who says, presumably after his return to the farm, ‘I’m the one who’s spent all his time playing auloi and lyres, | and now you tell *me* to dig?’ (Fr. 232 K.A., trans. Henderson, modified).

Aristophanes’ chosen denominator is not a superficial one. I follow James Davidson in reading the καταπύγων to signify something on the order of ‘the total degenerate’—meaning that the boy has lost literally all sense of propriety and self-control, especially in the sense of actively seeking sex in the role of the passive partner.¹⁰ The boy, in other words, came home not only totally useless on the farm and an expert at disrupting the good order of the domestic symposium (Fr. 235 K.A.).¹¹ He fashioned himself after the effeminate Alcibiades, who was in turn pilloried for, if not outright defined by, his sexual appetites in Fr. 244 K.A. What is more—and this is critical—there was an agonistic contrast with the boy’s brother in respect of all this, who was called by Aristophanes’ Chorus Leader ‘ὁ σώφρων’—‘the self-controlled’—also at *Clouds* 529. There was likely a formal *agon* between the two brothers on the model of

⁸ ‘ἀλλ’ οὐ γὰρ ἔμαθε ταῦτ’ ἐμοῦ πέμποντος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον / πίνειν, ἔπειτ’ ἄδειν κακῶς, Συρακοσίαν τράπεζαν / Συβαρίτιδάς τ’ εὐωχίας καὶ “Χῖον ἐκ Λακαινᾶν” / ἱκυλίκων μέθῃ ἡδέως καὶ φίλως†’ (Fr. 225 K.A.). ‘Chian Wine from Spartan Cups!’ is understood to be the beginning of a drinking song and a proverbial expression for decadence. It is not certain that it is his father who says this in a comical lament at the moral loss of his son, as most commentators think, though it is most plausible considering the other aspersions and laments are clearly from the father as well. But I wonder if the comment may have come from some other teacher. Cf. the ambiguous Fr. 206 K.A.: ‘σοὶ γὰρ σοφίσματ’ ἐστὶν ἀγῶν κτησάμην; | οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀποδίδρασκες ἐκ διδασκάλου;’—‘[A?] ‘Do you have the *sophismata* that I acquired?’ [B?] ‘Didn’t you flee straight away from the teacher?’

⁹ Aristotle (*E.N.* 1150b.29-51a2, 1152a15-24) describes the ἀκόλαστος as someone who feels no remorse for their immorality because they are overcome by pleasure, subsequently believing pleasure is the right course of action.

¹⁰ See Davidson (1997): 167-182, and esp. 173. His argument is set against the received opinion that to be a *katapugōn* is merely to be the passive and subordinate, ‘dominated’ partner in a male sexual relationship.

¹¹ For the copious evidence for the existence and nature of the domestic (i.e., non-aristocratic) drinking and eating party, on stage and off, see Wilkins (2000): 63-66, 202-211, and esp. Konstantakos (2005).

the extant *Clouds*, or between the father and son (certainly the latter two had an argument at a symposium).

But the point of all this is that, from some of their earliest manifestations—in Thucydides and Aristophanes—the teachers of rhetoric and sophists (e.g. Thrasymachus) and successful politicians (e.g. Alcibiades) were associated with the teaching and practise of abject luxury and moral dissolution.¹²

We may note, too, that the opening of the comedy took place at a rural shrine to Heracles in an (as yet unidentified) deme of Attica, with the Chorus consisting of young θίασοι, or religious celebrants (test. ii K.A.). The characters were depicted feasting together in the god's honour (a *Heraclea*), whereupon 'they stood up to form a Chorus' in the *parodos* (test. iii K.A.). The figure of Heracles at such festivals presided over the health and educational upbringing of young men.¹³ But in comedy, Heracles was an archetypal glutton, and the fact that the play was not called *Theasoi* or some such, but *Daitalēs*, is suggestive. A δαιταλὲς was not just any banqueter or feaster, but a voracious eater—such as the eagle who repeatedly devours the regenerative liver of Prometheus in Aeschylus: 'Then indeed the winged hound of Zeus, the ravening eagle, coming an uninvited guest, a feaster (ἄκλητος... δαιταλὲς) the whole day long, with savage appetite shall tear your body piecemeal into great rents and feast his fill upon your liver until it is black with gnawing' (*Prom. Bound* 1020-25, trans. Smyth, modified).

Did Aristophanes in the *Daitalēs* problematise the role of Heracles—that is, hard work and feasting—in the education of the young, similarly as in the revised *agon* of *Clouds*? (cf. *Clouds* 1050-55 with *Daitalēs* Fr. 247 K.A. on the value of Heracles bathing in cold water in apparent contrast to his famed obsession with pea soup). Hugo Weber, back in 1908, put the matter thus: 'How the Old Man and his two sons can be brought into connection with the

¹² Thrasymachus may even have been called a 'sophist' as such, as perhaps is indicated by Fr. 206 K.A. Bromberg (2017): 37-38 conjectures that somebody appears to take astonished umbrage at someone who thinks they understand 'sophistry': 'σοὶ γὰρ σοφίσματ' ἔστιν;'—'You call this sophistry?' (trans. Bromberg). This is debatable. Aristophanes calls a σοφίσμα a 'clever routine' with respect to the generic conventions in comedy at *Frogs* 13-18, such as the 'porter scene' and the 'door-knocking scene'. For all we know, this fragment may have been part of a discussion about what constituted good theatre. Thus the fragment could be translated 'This is "clever routines" to you?'

¹³ For cults of Heracles in Attica and beyond, see esp. Woodford (1971). For the semiotics of eating at such festivals with a mind to this comedy, see generally Wilkins (2000): Ch. 2, esp. p. 63-67, with bibliography.

Chorus—that is, in relation to the feast [and/or the role of Heracles]—is unknown’.¹⁴ Unfortunately the hermeneutic situation has not changed since.

What is clear is that Aristophanes pitted two young men—one under the influence of new-fangled thought, the other not—to showcase the state of modern affairs, however extreme or comically imbued those characters and their values were. A kernel of truth seems to have been preserved if we are to take the speech of Cleon delivered the same year as the *Daitalēs* as indicative of a real trend, as I think we should. Hedonistic sophists and surreptitious speakers had become embedded within the Athenian polis by 427 BCE.

2. The *Clouds*

So Aristophanes’ earliest play preserves an image of the sophists and expert orators that is seen also in Thucydides: as louche hedonists. Compare *that* image of the intellectual, however, with the kind of education and worldview practised and taught by Socrates in the extant *Clouds*. Socrates and Socratic education in *Clouds II*, though similar in obviously many respects—he is a master of legal oratory, Prodician correctness of grammar, and denies the supremacy of the traditional gods—nevertheless relies almost entirely upon various practices of bodily asceticism. From resting on an insect-infested mattress, cultivating indifference to pain to better practise introspection (254, 694-785, and esp. 420-422), to stripping oneself of external goods, such as one’s routine outer cloak (*himation*) and shoes (103, 175-180, 364, 497-509, 715-22, 856-860, 1498)—a process that perhaps serves to better reveal and test the state of one’s soul.¹⁵ But what sophist as we understand them to be went about barefoot and underdressed? What sophist travelled the Greek world advertising pain and suffering for the sake of intellectual gain?¹⁶ As Nussbaum notes, when Socrates is pitted explicitly against Prodicus, though both are patron saints of the *Clouds*, Prodicus offers urbane cultivation whereas Socrates offers a life of comically extreme hardship.¹⁷ There is at once a collision of trades here but a contrast of lives.

¹⁴ ‘Wie der Alte und seine beiden Söhne zum Chore, also zu dem Schmause, in Beziehung gebracht werden, ist unbekannt.’ Weber (1908): 99.

¹⁵ See esp. Moore (2015) and (2013) for this view.

¹⁶ See Nussbaum (1980): 71-76 on this and other contrasts.

¹⁷ Nussbaum (*ibid.*): 72, on *Clouds* 358-63.

Far from advertising his teachings, too, as the travelling teachers of virtue ostensibly did,¹⁸ Socrates lives in an inconspicuous, squat shack (93), quietly mingling the essence of his mind with the purity of that to which it is most akin whilst famously hanging in a basket.¹⁹ Pheidippides, moreover—a prime target for a would-be sophist—would rather go *anywhere* than to the Socratics (102-125), indicating that Socrates had nothing to offer in terms of the conventional valuations of wealth, power, and a comfortable life, the very values which Pheidippides exemplifies both in name and action as a profligate teenager obsessed with chariot racing. Not only that, Socrates’ ‘disciples’ or ‘learners’ are as emaciated and close to death as the captive Spartan prisoners at Pylos (186-7).²⁰ Indeed, we shall see in the following sections just how closely Socrates was associated with hardy Spartanizing. Set *that* lifestyle, however, in contrast the long list of ‘σοφισταί’ at 330ff., which consists mostly of dandies and layabouts who, for their airy nonsense and trickery, ‘are feasted on gorgeous slices of barracuda and the avian flesh of thrushes!’ (335-340, trans. Sommerstein). But Socrates, despite ostensibly presiding over them, had only dust and geometrical equipment to bake bread for himself and his followers, as reported at 175-180.

Socrates, as Carey (2000): 429 correctly notes, is *indirectly* related to a hedonistic lifestyle in the *Clouds* through his ‘possession’ of the Weaker Argument in the extant *agon*, but there is no indication that he has any interest in such a lifestyle. Moreover, the *agon* seems more directly a hit at the teachings of Prodicus and Protagoras than at anything else: for the task set before the young Pheidippides in choosing between the personified Stronger (moral) and Weaker (immoral) arguments just is a laughable inversion of Prodicus’ *Choice of Heracles*.²¹ And the wrangling of the Logoi is equally as much a transparent personification of

¹⁸ On the travels of Prodicus: ‘And when his text [on Heracles’ Choice] had finally been composed at considerable length, Prodicus declaimed it in public for a fee, traveling through the cities and charming them like Orpheus and Thamyris; on this occasion he was deemed worthy of large rewards at Thebes and of even larger ones at Sparta, because he was teaching this for the benefit of the young’ (L.M., Prod. R1b, trans. Laks-Most).

¹⁹ There is *some* evidence that Socrates teaches for pay in *Clouds*. Strepsiades suggests twice he’ll be able to pay whatever it takes to learn the Unjust/Weaker Argument (98, 244-245). But Socrates never explicitly accepts any money nor does he even remark on Strepsiades’ inquiry as to how much or whether he would have to pay. And even if he does take payment, he evidently did nothing with it, as he was transparently impoverished. See Vander Waerdt (1994): 59 for discussion. Did Strepsiades *mistake* Socrates for a ‘normal’ sophist?

²⁰ For more on the nature of the disciples of Socrates and their exclusive focus on academic disciplines (and the nature of those disciplines), see Bromberg (2012).

²¹ On the revised *agon* as an inversion of the *Choice of Heracles*, see Clements (2014): 174 and esp. Papageorgiou (2004).

Protagoras' *Truth*, otherwise titled *Throwdown Arguments* (ὁ καταβάλλοντες), the *agon* being rife with wrestling metaphors, visually and linguistically.²²

What is more, the first we hear of Pheidippides after having had lessons with the sybaritic Weaker Logos (or after a lesson with Socrates left out from the original *Clouds*?),²³ what we hear of is a young man who has no taste at all for the regular trappings of drinking parties, as we might have expected if he had studied with the same sort of teachers in the *Daitalēs*. Instead, Pheidippides exudes a kind of Platonic derision of singing songs and lyre-playing, the sort of activity, as Plato put it, 'which amuses dull drunks at bad dinner parties' (*Prot.* 347c5, trans. Carson). This is evidenced in Strepsiades' report of his dispute with Pheidippides at a house party (1353-1372), where singing and traditional poetry was ridiculed by the newly-minted Socratic:

[Strep] [...] First of all I asked him to pick up his lyre and sing a song by Simonides [...] and he right away said it was old fashioned to play the lyre and sing at a drinking party, like a woman hulling barley.

[Pheid] Why, right then and there you should have been pounded and stomped—asking me to sing, as if you were throwing a feast for cicadas!

[Strep]: [...] And he said that Simonides was a bad poet! Then I asked him if he would at least take a myrtle sprig and sing me something from the works of Aeschylus. And he right away said, "In my opinion, Aeschylus is chief among poets—chiefly full of noise, incoherent, a windbag, a maker of lofty locutions." [...] Alright then, recite (λέξον—not ᾄδεν) something from these modern poets, that brainy stuff (τὰ σοφὰ ταῦτα), whatever it is." And he right away tossed off some speech (ῥῆσιν) by Euripides about how a brother, god save me, was screwing his sister by the same mother!

Clouds II 1353-1372, trans. Henderson, modified.

²² Protagoras is attested to have written a *Τέχνη ἐριστικῶν* (The Art of Eristic), *Περὶ πάλης* (On Wrestling), and *Ἀντιλογιῶν* ('Antilogics' or 'Opposing Arguments') in two separate books. It is often overlooked that Thrasymachus was also the author of a *ὑπερβάλλοντας* ('Overthrowers')—as mentioned by Plutarch, *Table Talk* 1.2.3 616D. For wrestling/Protagorean/Thrasymachean semiotics, physical and linguistic, in the extant *agon* (lit. 'battle'), see O'Regan (1995): Chapter 1, and pp. 90 with literature. I argue outside this thesis that Plato deploys the same comic technique against Protagoras in Socrates' dialectical dual with the sophist in the *Theaetetus*.

²³ 'Don't be concerned' says the Weaker Logos to Strepsiades, 'you'll take this one home a clever sophist' (ἀμέλει, κομει τοῦτον σοφιστὴν δεξιόν), 1111.

This attitude of Pheidippides is very different from the sort of education the καταπύγων received from sophistic experts in the *Daitalēs* regarding song and drink—in most ways it is precisely the opposite. Socrates may be a teacher of many of the same things they teach, but pleasure as a good, or feasting and traditional singing, is decidedly not one of them.

The fact is that in order to gain entrance into Socrates' school, Strepsiades—says the Chorus Leader—must *first* possess the hardy character of Socrates:

ὦ τῆς μεγάλης ἐπιθυμήσας σοφίας ἄνθρωπε παρ' ἡμῶν,
ὥς εὐδαίμων ἐν Ἀθηναίοις καὶ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι γενήσῃ,
εἰ μνήμων εἶ καὶ φροντιστὴς καὶ τὸ ταλαίπωρον ἔνεστιν
ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ μὴ κάμνεις μήθ' ἐστὼς μήτε βαδίζων,
μήτε ῥιγῶν ἄχθῃ λίαν μήτ' ἀριστᾶν ἐπιθυμεῖς,
οἴνου τ' ἀπέχει καὶ γυμνασίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνοήτων,
καὶ βέλτιστον τοῦτο νομίζεις, ὅπερ εἰκὸς δεξιὸν ἄνδρα,
νικᾶν πράττων καὶ βουλεύων καὶ τῇ γλώττῃ πολεμίζων.

Oh Mortal, who has set his heart on the desire for great wisdom from us,
How blessed and flourishing amongst the Athenians and the Greeks you shall become!
—if you are possessed of memory, a technician of the mind, if suffering resides
In your soul, and you are not weary when standing still or walking,
Neither vexed much by freezing cold, nor have a heart for breakfast,
If you both stay away from wine and the gymnasiums and all other mindless things,
And consider this the best of all: the appearance of a clever man,
To have victory in all affairs and deliberations, and in battling it out with the tongue!

Clouds II 412-419.

Strepsiades agrees wholeheartedly (at least verbally) that he is prepared to suffer immediately following at 420-422. But note also that Strepsiades later professes he is 'wholeheartedly [willing to] turn this body of mine over to [the Clouds] | to do with as they please, for eating, starving, parching | soiling, freezing, flaying into a wineskin | if that's how I'll escape my debts...' (439-443, trans. Henderson, modified). It is clear that in order to gain entry into the

Socratic school, no matter the purpose, Strepsiades must first transform his very life into one imbued with asceticism.

So even in the *Clouds*, that play which has so long been seen to radically assimilate Socrates with the malign influence of the teachers of rhetoric, even that comedy is careful to distance Socrates from such teachers with respect to pleasure as a good and, quite simply, how to live.²⁴ To become a comic Socratic in *Clouds* is to live a life of abstracted, even abusive self-care. And this is in contrast to the other expert innovators we have seen so far, who are squarely interested in a life of sensualism, and produced students in just such a state as well. So in these two plays of Aristophanes, I submit, there was a generalised contrast drawn between Socrates as a self-reflective ascetic versus the sophists and other intellectuals who both practiced and taught a life of abject luxury and immoral hedonism. What is more, there is no evidence from the first *Clouds* that contradicts this general picture; in fact the extant evidence reinforces it.²⁵

3. Ameipsias' *Konnos*

So much for Socrates' relationship to hedonism in Aristophanes. But the central distinction I am trying to demonstrate in this chapter—between the class of professional, sophistic spongers and the comically ascetic Socrates—is captured perhaps most succinctly in Fr. 9 K.A. of the *Konnos* of Ameipsias.

The *Konnos* premiered to the same audience as Aristophanes' original *Clouds* in 423 BCE, taking second place over the latter's third (or perhaps over its fifth, as we don't know

²⁴ For a compilation of essays which demonstrate the incredible variety of distinct thinkers and strains of thought philosophically tackled in the *Clouds*, see esp. Laks and Cottone (2013) and Clements (2014).

²⁵ Test. ix and Fr. 393 K.A. state that Aristophanes 'called' Socrates, Chaerephon, and the rest of the Socratics 'fevers'—withered and weak, like moths rolling in the dust (translations from Henderson). Fr. 398 K.A., 'to leaven', may suggest that Socrates is poor as well, prepared—if he can—to bake bread as at *Clouds II* 175; and Fr. 399 K.A., 'Ague: the chill preceding the fever' is multiply-suggestive. Did Socrates induce a fever in a character? There was likely an initiation ceremony in the play too, similar to the extant one that relied on the bug-infested mattress (Fr. 395 K.A.). Did Socrates induce a fever in his sophistic initiation rites? There is new edition and commentary on the fragments of *Clouds I* in Italian I have yet to be able to consult—Torchio (2021)—but for lack of any opposing impressions of the Socratics in that play as emaciated and dirty, I stand by my argument that asceticism was a key feature for entry into the Socratic school.

how many plays were premiered that year).²⁶ The *Konnos* featured a Chorus of individuated *phrontistai*—again, ‘experts’ of every stripe. Athenaeus tells us that the character of Protagoras couldn’t figure as a member of the Chorus if only because he was out of town during the time of its production.²⁷ Individual *phrontistai* may have been characters or otherwise members of the Chorus: perhaps a priest,²⁸ an oracle-monger,²⁹ a fisherman and/or butcher,³⁰ but more surely at least one very bad musician: Socrates’ lyre teacher, the titular *Konnos*.³¹ One may reasonably presume that *Konnos* was the leader of the Chorus or a leading character.

Socrates showed up too, and if he did not show up for a music lesson (which seems rather plausible to me, considering the likelihood that Plato refers to the play),³² we are at least told the following about him in Fr. 9 K.A., in which we see him approaching the Chorus of intellectuals:

Ἀμειψίας δ’ ἐν τρίβωνι παράγων αὐτὸν φησὶν οὕτως:

(a)

Σώκρατες ἀνδρῶν βέλτιστ’ ὀλίγων, πολλῶ δὲ ματαιόταθ’, ἥκεις
καὶ σὺ πρὸς ἡμᾶς; καρτερικός γ’ εἶ. πόθεν ἄν σοι χλαῖνα γένοιτο;

(b)

τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν κατ’ ἐπήρειαν τῶν σκυτοτόμων γεγένηται.

(c)

οὗτος μέντοι πεινῶν οὕτως οὐπόποτ’ ἔτλη κολακεῦσαι.

²⁶ For studies on the *Konnos*, see Bromberg (2017): 40-42, Platter (2013): 152, Patzer (2012): 76-84, Brown (2004): 526, Carey (2000): 420-423, Totaro (1998): 156-164, Rosetti (1971): 426-428, Gomperz (1924): 200-201, and Olson (2007): 236-7 for a helpful summary of earlier nineteenth-century scholarship.

²⁷ Athenaeus 5.218c: ‘Eupolis [in the *Kolakes* of 421 BCE] introduces Protagoras as being in Athens, but Ameipsias in *Konnos* staged two years earlier does not include him in the Chorus of *phrontistai*.—‘ἐν οὖν τούτῳ τῷ δράματι Εὐπολὶς τὸν Πρωταγόραν ὡς ἐπιδημοῦντα εἰσάγει, Ἀμειψίας δ’ ἐν τῷ Κόννῳ δύο πρότερον ἔτεσιν διδαχθέντι οὐ καταριθμεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ τῶν φροντιστῶν χορῷ.’ Trans. Rusten, modified.

²⁸ Fr. 7 K.A. = Athen. 9.368e: ‘from this animal the ham, the rib, | and the left side of the head are reserved especially for the priests.’ Trans. Rusten.

²⁹ Fr. 10 K.A.: ‘And so they invent oracles | and give them to the madman | Diopieithes to chant’ Trans. Rusten.

³⁰ Fr. 8 K.A.: ‘food for the perches, the sharks, and the sea brems.’ Trans. Rusten.

³¹ Carey (2000): 421-422 speaks of these experts as providing nonsense ‘disquisitions’. As Bromberg (2017): 40 put it, ‘The play thus appears to have lampooned a wide range of experts, including musicians, religious leaders, and educators.’ For *Konnos* as a failed and impoverished teacher, see Sommerstein (1983).

³² Patzer (2012): 82-83 reasonably argues that when Plato refers to the humorous thought of Socrates being an old man and still a bad learner from *Konnos* at *Euthydemus* 272c, 295d, and *Menexenus* 235e, Plato must presume on the part of his readers/listeners a familiarity with a humorous scene.

Moreover, Ameipsias brings [Socrates] onto the stage in a ragged cloak and says:

(a)

Socrates! Best amongst a few men, yet to many, completely worthless: *you*...
you too have come to us? You are indeed a ‘hardy and courageous’ one! But where
on earth would you get a posh cloak from?

(b)

This terrible thing here has become an insult to the shoemakers!

(c)

Yet this man—famished though he is—has never yet once
played the flatterer

Ameipsias’ *Konnos*, Fr. 9 K.A.

Diogenes Laertius, at 2.27-29, preserves this regrettably edited fragment—one that is embedded between two others (also edited) from the extant *Clouds* (361-362, 412-417, the latter of which we have examined above)—to demonstrate that the poets, in the act of ridiculing Socrates, were also praising the very real content of his virtue. In this case, his *εὐτελεία*, or self-sufficiency.³³

The lines in the fragment are broken into lettered parts to reflect their separation in the manuscripts of Diogenes, whose source deliberately edited the moments between the individual speakers for almost-certainly apologetic purposes. Ian Storey (1985) has argued on grounds of metre that the speaker of (a) is the Chorus as a whole, and his argument has unchallenged. The question is if (b) and (c) are spoken by any number of individuals elsewhere in the comedy rather than in the momentary context of (a). The general consensus is the latter—that these lines are different, probably individuated members of the Chorus

³³ ‘Ἦν δ’ ἱκανὸς καὶ τῶν σκωπτόντων [αὐτὸν] ὑπερορᾶν. καὶ ἐσεμνύνετο ἐπὶ τῇ εὐτελείᾳ, μισθὸν τε οὐδένα εἰσεπράξατο... τοῦτο δ’ ἐνέσται καὶ παρὰ τῶν κωμωδοποιῶν λαβεῖν, οἱ λανθάνουσιν ἑαυτοὺς δι’ ὧν σκώπτουσιν ἐπαινοῦντες αὐτόν.’—‘He found it just fine to look past those making jokes about him. And [for?] he prided himself on his self-sufficiency and never took a single fee... But all this may be gathered from the comic poets, who, in the act of mocking him, were unwittingly praising him.’ It is not clear to me if Diogenes means that the poets *meant* to praise him, but in disguise, or if they meant to mock him only, but failed by *accidentally* praising him. Perhaps Diogenes is mimicking the words of Alcibiades, who both mocks and praises Socrates’ virtuous qualities in the *Symposium*. For the most recent volume of the manuscripts of Diogenes, who includes a helpful appendix with studies on each section, see Dorandi (2013). There is to my knowledge no dedicated study on 2.27-29 as a whole (Dorandi for his part does not include one).

addressing Socrates at a singular, distinct moment of the play, and I follow that consensus here.

Diogenes reports that Socrates showed up on stage in his characteristic τρίβων. This τρίβων was no mere flimsy cloth, but a rough cloak worn over bare skin that, according to Plato (see esp. *Smp.* 219b5 ff. and Xenophon *Mem.* 1.6.2), Socrates wore all year round as a symbol of his virtuous hardihood. When not associated, in comedy, with the pompous virtue-signalling of the ascetic Pythagoreans (with whom Socrates was also closely associated with),³⁴ or with those who were simply too poor to wear anything else, to Athenian society the τρίβων was heavily linked to the ‘laconizers’ about Athens, or those who aped the standards of Spartan living.³⁵ The τρίβων was Spartan standard dress, and when worn by an Athenian, it was an ostentatious, symbolic rejection of the perceived Eastern decadence of Athenian society. Such a garment is in explicit contrast to the decadence of the Chorus’ own dress, their χλαῖνα, a heavy and expensive cloak fit for fine symposia.³⁶ Being deliberately barefoot and dirty, too, were likewise features of political-ethical laconism, each of which were ubiquitous features of Socrates. Later followers of Socrates saw his dress and physical, impoverished hardihood as an ‘ethical programme’ in its own right.³⁷ The close link that Socrates had with political-ethical laconism in comedy is perhaps paradigmatically expressed at *Birds* 1280-3:

³⁴ For Socrates and Pythagoreanism in *Clouds*, see esp. Rashed (2009) with bibliography. Cf. also the comical *Telauges* of the Socratic Aeschines, whose Socrates in the dialogue made fun of the titular character’s extreme Pythagorean asceticism; suggesting, it seems, that the man could not *defend* his own lifestyle as symbolised by his clothing. *Telauges* was a *poseur*, unlike Socrates. See the conclusion to the thesis for more on the *Telauges*. Certainly Middle Comedy made fun of the ostentation of the Pythagorean τρίβων-wearers as *poseurs*. Consider Aristophanes’ *Pythagoristēs* (‘Expert Pythagorean’?), Fr. 9 K.A.—ca. 360-350 BCE according to Webster (1953): 6 and 239—‘By the gods, do we suppose that those men of old, those who were really Pythagoreans, were voluntarily filthy or took pleasure in wearing threadbare clothes? (τοὺς Πυθαγοριστὰς γινομένου ὄντως ῥυπαρὴν ἐκόντας ἢ φορεῖν τρίβωνας ἡδέως;) Not at all, in my opinion! They did this by necessity, since they possessed absolutely nothing: having found a fine pretext for their shabbiness (εὐτελείας), they established standards appropriate for beggars.’ Trans. Laks-Most, modified (L.M. T37a). See also Fr. 12 K.A. from the same play on their τρίβων; and Fr. 10 K.A. on staying outdoors all year round, not wearing shoes, foregoing sleep in order to chatter. For Pythagoreans in comedy from Epicharmus and into the fourth century generally, see Horky (2013): Chapter 3 and *passim*, with (esp.) Battezzato (2008).

³⁵ For helpful studies on Athenian perceptions of Spartan living—the so-called ‘Spartan Mirage’—see Ducat (2006) and Hodkinson-Powell (2009), (1994).

³⁶ On the semiotics of the wearing of the τρίβων, see Clements (2002), David (1989a), and Geddes (1987). Compton-Engle (2015): Chapter Four analyses the Aristophanic semiotics of wealth signified by clothing generally, and Telò (2016): Chapter One explores the complexities of the Aristophanic portrayals of the τρίβων-wearers versus the decadent χλαῖνα-wearers as such. See also Stone (1981): 160-3 on the contrast as well.

³⁷ Patzer (2012): 77 makes an insightful remark that, amongst the inner groups of the Socratics at least, the τρίβων alone, not just going barefoot and unwashed, was ‘ein ethisches Programm’. He turns our attention to the

πρὶν μὲν γὰρ οἰκίσαι σε τήνδε τὴν πόλιν,
ἐλακωνομάνουν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι τότε,
ἐκόμων ἐπείνων ἐρρύπων ἐσωκράτουν

[Herald:] Before you [Pisthetaerus] built this city [Cloudcuckooland]
The people were all crazy about the Spartan way of life:
They grew their hair long, they went hungry, they were filthy, they Socratized

Birds 1280-3, trans. Laks-Most, modified.

In Ameipsias' *Konnos* Fr. 9 K.A., therefore, Socrates' physical dress and appearance would alone seem to signify his antipathy towards worldly pleasures and decadence, placing him in direct contrast to those he apparently wishes to join.³⁸

Indeed, Socrates does wish to join this Chorus of Thinkers, apparently as one amongst others who have come to do the same. Will he be accepted? It is not so clear. On the one hand he is obviously a thinker—something like their patron saint in Aristophanes' eyes (*Clouds* 359, 'σύ τε λεπτοτάτων λήρων ἱερεῦ'). But Socrates is also sharply distinguished from the others in the fragment, so much so that he may be excluded from their ranks. His very audacity in wishing to join them seems to form the substance of the fragment's comic register (i.e., 'you too... have come? – to us?'). What would be so laughable or astonishing about Socrates wishing to join in with the others?

The intuitive, *prima facie* sense, on the basis of (a) and (b), is that he is poor and miserable and has no place amongst the others, who define themselves on account of their sophistication and urbanity, thereby taking disgust at a shoeless man dressed in rags. His boldness in suggesting he join their ranks is '*karterikos*' indeed—hardy and courageous,

sensationally fictionalised but insightful anecdote on Socrates' remark to Antisthenes, who made it his job to ape Socrates' lifestyle: 'And when Antisthenes, turning [towards Socrates], revealed the tear in his *tribōn*, [Socrates said], "I'm seeing your vanity through this *tribōn* of yours."—"στρέψαντος δὲ Ἀντισθένης τὸ διεργωγὸς τοῦ τρίβωνος εἰς τοῦμφανές, "ὁρᾷ σου," ἔφη, "διὰ τοῦ τρίβωνος τὴν κενοδοξίαν.'" D.L. 2.36.

³⁸ As Patzer (2012): 79 also notes, regarding Socrates' barefootedness in (b) of the Ameipsias fragment, 'Wie der grobe Wollmantel, in dem Sokrates auftrat, so fungiert auch das Barfußgehen, das dem Zuschauer fraglos auch *ad oculos* demonstriert wurde, also eine poetische Chiffre, die auf den ärmlichen Lebensstil hinweist, den Sokrates pflegte'—'Just like the rough cloak which Socrates appeared on stage in, likewise for his going barefoot: each unquestionably demonstrated to the audience, *ad oculos*, and as a poetic cipher, the poor lifestyle that Socrates endured.' Cf. also Gomperz (1924): 201ff.

rendering (a) mock-praise of Socrates’ ‘virtuous’ hardihood, as Diogenes had suggested.³⁹ The Chorus’ strange praise of this virtue is in part that it would be the hardest feat of endurance in the world for someone like Socrates—whose very clothing symbolically rejects their principles of living—to join *their* ranks.

The sentiment expressed in (a) and (b) altogether likely reflects the sentiments expressed by ‘the sophist Antiphon’ in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 1.6 (or Antiphon reflects the sentiments expressed in Ameipsias’ Chorus).⁴⁰ Antiphon there accuses Socrates of being a teacher of ‘unhappiness’ (κακοδαιμονία) because makes his students ape his manner of impoverished living. ‘You consume the worst possible food and drink; your cloak (ἱματιον) is not only of the worst quality, but is the same one for summer and winter; and you don’t even wear any shoes or an ordinary under-cloth!’ (1.6.2, trans. Waterfield, modified). ‘You therefore cannot be wise, Socrates, as your “knowledge” is absolutely worthless.’—‘σοφὸς δὲ οὐκ ἄν, μηδενὸς γε ἄξια ἐπιστάμενος.’ 1.6.12). Thus Antiphon says, as do the Chorus in (a), that Socrates may be ‘best amongst a few men, but completely worthless to the many.’ But that is only because ‘apparently you, Antiphon, believe that happiness consists in luxury and having extra-much’—‘ἔοικας, ὦ Ἀντιφῶν, τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οἰομένῳ τρυφῇ καὶ πολυτέλειαν εἶναι 1.6.10, trans. Waterfield, modified).

So Socrates is distanced from the Chorus of Thinkers because he rejects their values with respect to self-sufficiency, pleasure, and the good life. It is, however, passage (c) of Fr. 9 K.A. that is most important for my purposes, as it explicitly distances Socrates from the other intellectuals with respect to *kolakeia*, or the duping of wealthy patrons for food, drink, and wealth. Socrates, as some *phrontistēs* says in (c), has suffered so much from hunger, yet he has never had the audacity to use his wisdom to dupe patrons for food. Moreover, the Chorus seem to attribute this property of *kolakeia* to themselves at the same time, or at least do not deny its immorality. I suspect that (c) may also be reflected in *Mem.* 1.6.12, in that Socrates is in reality ‘no wise person’ because he refuses ‘to cheat patrons through the love of money’ (ὅτι οὐκ ἐξαπατᾷς ἐπὶ πλεονεξία).

³⁹ Cf. the headline LSJ entry for *karteria*: ‘καρτερ-ία, *patient endurance, perseverance*, a conceptual derivative of ἐγκράτεια, or ‘self-control’. Or as the *Academic Definitions* put it, ‘καρτερία, fortitude: endurance of pain for the sake of what is admirable; endurance of labor for the sake of what is admirable.’ (412c, trans. Hutchinson).

⁴⁰ On this connection, see also Gomperz (1924): 200-2.

In Ameipsias Fr. 9 K.A., therefore, we find another strain in comedy that explicitly distinguished Socrates from his fellow *phrontistai*—which included those such as Protagoras, as Athenaeus’ comment above makes clear—in his refusal to flatter rich patrons, pursuing instead a brazenly ascetic, anti-hedonistic lifestyle.

There are critical evidentiary issues to keep in mind here, however. What is to keep us from imagining Socrates as having ditched his old cloak and stolen a new one, donned nice shoes, cozied up to the rich, and having eaten to his heart’s content with all the rest? The Chorus may be remarking on the *farce* that is his way of life, as is commonly the case for Pythagorean jokes in Middle Comedy.⁴¹ The gaps in the record of Fr. 9 K.A. is itself disconcerting, for it is clearly preserved in its present state in order to praise the virtues of Socrates. Indeed, Diogenes, in his treatment of *Clouds* 361-362 and 412-417, which respectively embed the citation from *Konnos*, brazenly cuts away whole lines and even replaces words, removes the passages from their contexts, and therefore presents two passages from the (surviving?) *Clouds* that turn out blanket praise for Socrates’ self-sufficiency, elements which are also clearly paralleled in and partial to Plato and Xenophon. So what was in the missing bits of the *Konnos*? Far from furnishing any sense of faint praise for Socrates, this passage from the *Konnos* could have been thorough mockery.⁴² Put even more pointedly, the *Konnos* might have tried to destroyed the very distance between Socrates and the others I am out to demonstrate altogether: to Ameipsias, Socrates’ outward asceticism was indeed just a farce!

But to think this way is to miss my overall goal here. Even if Socrates in the *Konnos* set out to ditch his identity as an ascetic and ‘anti-flatterer’, there was still a *prima facie* distinction operative within the play that made his presence amongst the others bizarre and comical material as such. And logically speaking, if there were a break in this distinction, there would must have been a distinction in the first place to break, or one that was implicitly operative to make the passage humorous. The Chorus is serious in remarking on their surprise

⁴¹ Indeed, it seems that works such as the *Telauges* were out to rebut the charges of Socrates as some sort of Pythagorean farce.

⁴² As Dover (1968): liv n.2 put it: ‘I suspect that the citation has been docked of its tail and thus of its sting.’ Or as Carey (2000) tried to make clear, Socrates may just as well have had some ‘schizophrenic’ properties that rub hard against the way the fragment as it is presented makes it out to appear.

to see him approach. And it was *this* serious recognition of a break in values that ultimately interested Plato, as I will show.

Thus, in Aristophanes and Ameipsias, I argue that there was a consistent strain of thought which sought to separate Socrates from the other intellectuals. They did so not only with respect to the values of Spartan asceticism versus luxuriance, but also due to Socrates' refusal to furtively pander to wealthy patrons. And it was this latter distinction which played some role in the *Kolakes* of Eupolis two years after the original *Clouds* and *Konnos*, a comedy that took home first prize at the City Dionysia of 421 BCE.

4. The *Kolax*

Eupolis wrote a play in which Callias, the newly-richest man in Greece, hosted a massive dinner party for a group of *kolakes*. I have given some indication as to the meaning of the latter term, but it is necessary to have a brief overview of the historical development of the creature and the *conceptual content* of flattery usually embodied as a behaviour, not only in order to better understand Eupolis' play, but also to understand Plato's eventual appropriation of the *kolax*'s rich cultural heritage and meaning within Eupolis and without. What follows, then, is the conventional, diachronic account of the emergence of what can consistently be called a *kolax* and its operative principles, though those principles and characteristics always bleed somewhat into different areas and characters in particular matters.

The *kolax* thus does not lend itself to an easy translation, or perhaps any modern translation.⁴³ Usually construed as 'flatterer', 'toady', 'yes-man', and (in a modern sense) 'sycophant', each term captures something correct about the *kolax*, but none of them, either individually or collectively, captures the full meaning of the term in its uniquely Greek social and literary context. This is precisely why I often prefer to leave the term untranslated.

⁴³ The starting point in modern scholarship on the *kolax* remains Ribbeck (1883), excepting, as I see it, his analysis of Alcman. See also Nesselrath (1985): 88-121 with Brown (1992) in response, Nightingale (1995): Ch. 5, Damon (1997), Wilkins (2000): 71-86, Fisher (2000), Tylawsky (2002), Edwards (2010), and Hubbard (2010). Fehr (1990) is a seminal study of the birth of the *kolax* from the Homeric *aklētos*—the impoverished, uninvited guest seeking food and shelter—an account developed more fully in Tylawsky (2002): Chapter One. In what follows, I shall lay out what is, I think, the least objectionable historical summary of the creature—both real and fictional. Though to be clear, the matter of its historical lineage and its signification at any point in time is exceedingly hard to place. This was obvious for the ancients themselves as it is for us.

The social phenomenon, or consistent contours of a character such as a *kolax* and its operative principles, appears to emerge in the Archaic period. Utterly destitute, socially-marginal and habitually itinerate gate-crashers to the parties of the rich, proto-*kolakes* were *aklētoi*—like Odysseus returning home in disguise as an old man in *Odyssey* 13 (perhaps the earliest prototype of the *kolax*). But because they had no commensurate payment to offer towards the feast they so desperately desired to join, they offered themselves up as *pleasing company* of one kind or another. Sometimes they acted the buffoon (βωμόλοχος) or simply puffed-up the self-esteem of the master of ceremonies through speech (thus the usual term, ‘flatterer’). But this was (transparently or not) a means to disrupt the good order of the feast for one’s own materialistic gain.⁴⁴

The first extant use of the word ‘*kolax*’ is in the sixth century elegiac poet, Asius of Samos, where we hear of an uninvited, lowly and hungry guest who seems to humorously play-act a ‘hero’ (or who is derisively described as such) on the hunt for sacrificial meat at a feast—the smell of which he had presumably caught whiff of as soon as the party had started:

χολός, στιγματίας, πολυγήραος, ἴσος ἀλήτη
 ἦλθεν κνισοκόλαξ, εὔτε Μέλῃς ἐγάμει,
 ἄκλητος, ζωμοῦ κεχρημένος: ἐν δὲ μέσοισιν
 ἦρως εἰστήκει βορβόρου ἐξαναδύς.

Limping, branded, much-aged, just like a beggar
 he came, the *kolax* after some fat, as soon as Meles was getting married –
 uninvited, in desperate need of broth: but there in the middle
 a hero he stood risen up out of filth.

Fr. 14 West (=Athenaeus 1.125b-4)⁴⁵

⁴⁴ They were not always popular: compare the disruptive behaviour of the proto-*kolax* in Archilochus Fr. 124 West—‘Regarding the customs (δίκην) of the people from Mykonos, it seems they had a bad name for stinginess [or ‘stickiness to others’?] and greed (ἐπὶ γλισχρότητι καὶ πλεονεξίᾳ) because of their poverty and because they lived on a wretched island: “Although you consumed a large quantity of unmixed wine, you did not contribute to the cost . . . nor again did you come invited . . . as though a friend, but your belly led astray your mind and wits to shamelessness.” So says Archilochus.’ Fr. 124 West, Trans. Gerber, modified.

⁴⁵ Most scholars see Asius as having written in sixth century, with a slight but less plausible option of the seventh. For extensive discussion of this mercurial passage with scholarship, see esp. Tywalksy (2002): 13-14 and Ribbeck (1883): 5. ‘a hero he stood risen up out of filth.’ I borrow from Tylawsky (*ibid.*): 13.

It is clear that, from the earliest, there was nothing but derision in the task of the *kolax*. It is generally agreed that in the early fifth century, in *Wealth or Hope* Fr. 32 K.A., Epicharmus furnished the earliest extant *comic* iteration of the *kolax*. Athenaeus (6.235e-6b) claims that Epicharmus' character was a paradigmatic example of what the Middle Comic poets would also come to interchangeably call the 'parasite' (παράσιτος), literally 'one who eats beside another':

συνδειπνέων τῷ λῶντι, καλέσαι δεῖ μόνον,
καὶ τῷ γὰρ μὴ λεῶντι, κούδὲν δεῖ καλεῖν
τηνεὶ δὲ χαρίης τ' εἰμὶ καὶ ποιέω πολὺν
γέλωτα καὶ τὸν ἰστιῶντ' ἐπαινέω.
καὶ κά τις ἀντίον τι λῆϊ τήνῳ λέγειν,
τήνῳ κυδάζομαί τε καὶ π' ὦν ἡχθόμαν.
κῆπειτα πολλὰ καταφαγών, πόλλ' ἐμπιὼν
ἄπειμι: λύχνον δ' οὐχ ὁ παῖς μοι συμφέρει:
ἔρπω δ' ὀλισθράζων τε καὶ κατὰ σκότος
ἔρημος: αἶ κα δ' ἐντύχω τοῖς περιπόλοις,
τοῦθ' οἶον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιλέγω τοῖς θεοῖς ὅτι
οὐ λῶντι πλεῖον, ἀλλὰ μαστιγῶντί με.
ἐπεὶ δὲ χ' εἴκω οἴκαδὶς καταφθαρεῖς,
ἄστρωτος εὖδω, καὶ τὰ μὲν πρᾶτ' οὐ κοῶ,
ἄς κά μ' ἔχων ὥκρατος ἀμφέπη φρένας.

Dining with whoever's willing—he only needs to issue an invitation!—as well as with whoever's unwilling—and then there's no need for an invitation. When I'm there, I'm very charming and pleasant [χαρίης], and I generate a lot of laughs, and praise the man who's providing the feast. And if someone wants to quarrel with him, I attack the fellow and get similar grief back. Then, after I've drunk lots and gobbled down tons [πολλὰ καταφαγών, πόλλ' ἐμπιὼν], I leave. No slave accompanies me carrying a lamp; I make my way alone, slipping and sliding in the darkness. If I meet the night-patrol, I credit the gods with having done me a favour, if all they want to do is whip me. When I come home, in terrible shape, I sleep with no bedding. At first I don't notice, so long as the unmixed wine envelops my mind.

Epicharmus Fr. 32 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.⁴⁶

Eupolis in the *Kolakes*, some seventy years later, characterised this Benthamite determination of such characters in militaristic terms: ‘neither fire nor sword | of iron or bronze keeps | these guys from finding a dinner’ (Fr. 175 K.A., trans. Rusten)—often, too, ‘on the heels of the first ready to assist at the feast.’⁴⁷ In the fourth century, the stereotypical flatterer-parasite would show up before sunrise, or rising at dawn and showing up at daybreak, banging at the door in their manic enthusiasm for food and drink.⁴⁸ Thus, what seems to have made the *kolax* as a comic type *funny* is, at least intuitively, the fact that he *embraces* his lifestyle as something perfectly honourable and desirable, which would become the most common refrain of the Middle and Roman Comic parasite.⁴⁹

In light of these small bits of evidence, Edwards (2010): 305 put the scholarly consensus thus: ‘these passages from Epicharmus [and Asius] attest that the *kolax* was by the end of the sixth century a distinct and recognisable character on the Greek stage and in Greek poetry, which might reasonably be taken to imply that the *kolax* was therefore a fixture in the Greek polis on the eve of the classical age.’ The original, or ‘traditional’ *kolax* was a lowly outsider who sought food by playacting a beneficiary in word and deed at symposia and/or feasts—though it seems that this playacting was rather transparent and the master of ceremonies was well aware of it. Such flattery was evidently subject to certain rules, as the Chorus of Flatterers say at the end of a song in Eupolis’ *Flatterers*: ‘Then we go off to dinner, each of us in a different direction, | to get a foreign barley-cake, where the *kolax* must

⁴⁶ Olson (2007) does not include a verse translation here.

⁴⁷ Cf. the Middle Comic poet Eubulus Fr. 11 K.A., of a parasite: ‘Out of our guests who have been invited to dinner are two who are invincible, Philocrates and Philocrates—for even though he is one I count him as two great [...], three even.’ (Trans. Wilkins). The utilitarian calculus of Epicharmus’ character can also be seen paralleled in the Middle Comic poet, Axionicus (Fr. 6 K.A.): ‘As soon as I, still a stripling, had come to love the parasite’s life in company with Philoxenus, that ‘Ham-cleaver,’ I began to receive patiently blows from knuckles, bowls, and bones; they were so many and so severe that sometimes I bore eight wounds at the least. (But I didn’t mind) for it paid; I am indeed a slave to pleasure (ἡττων εἰμὶ γὰρ ἤς ἡδονῆς). And so I have come to think that the business is in a way actually profitable. Suppose, for example, a man is quarrelsome, and gets into a brawl with me; I face about and acknowledge to him all the evil that he has said of me, and so I straightway come off without injury. Again, a scoundrel asserts that he is a good man; I load him with praise and win his gratitude... Such is my character and nature.’ (Trans. Wilkins).

⁴⁸ On the eschewing of the proprieties of timely arrival, see Wilkins (2000): 71 for discussion. But consider the last line of Lucian’s *The Art of Parasitism*: ‘In future I’ll be arriving at your door at daybreak and after lunch like a schoolboy, to learn your argument.’ (trans. Sidwell).

⁴⁹ Thus see again the tenor of Eubulus’ and Axionicus’ parasites.

immediately | offer many pleasant and agreeable things [δεῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ], or else he's dragged out. | And I know that exactly this happened to the tattooed Akestor; | for he told an offensive joke [i.e. at the expense of the host], and then the slave dragged him | outside with a collar around his neck and handed him over to [the slave trader] Oineus.' (Eupolis Fr. 172.11-16 K.A.)

It is easy to see how this conceptual model of *kolakeia* made its way into democratic politics. Indeed, by 424 BCE, Aristophanes' could expect an entire play concerning political flattery to be salient enough to win first prize at the City Dionysia. I speak here, of course, of Cleon in *Knights*, who, as a lowly outsider from Paphlagonia, slavishly flatters 'Demos' in word and deed for a constant place at his 'table', the Prytaneum. But it is also in politics where the 'darker' side of the *kolax* can be seen. Now, to be clear, it seems to have been only the lowly, outspoken or stereotypical *kolakes* that made little effort to conceal their true goals of food, other pleasures and power, whereas most *kolakes* had genuine interests in duping their targets for the same goals. You see this with politicians like Cleonymus and Theorus—explicitly called *kolakes* at, e.g., 42-45, 592, 683—in *Wasps* of 423 BCE, who were *kolakes* just in light of their close attachment to Cleon himself.⁵⁰ But consider also Gorgias in comedy too (an outsider), who uses his wits and clever tongue for food (though he was ostensibly just a political envoy), deploying what looks for all the world like political flattery indeed:

ἔστι δ' ἐν Φαναῖσι πρὸς τῇ
Κλεψύδρα πανοῦργον ἐγ-
γλωττογαστόρων γένος,
οἳ θερίζουσιν τε καὶ σπείρουσι
καὶ τρυγῶσι ταῖς γλώτταισι
συκάζουσί τε:
βάρβαροι δ' εἰσὶν γένος,
Γοργῖαι τε καὶ Φίλιπποι.

At Phanae, near the Clepsydra, there dwells a people who have neither faith nor law, the Englottogastors [lit. 'The-into-the-stomach-by-means-of-the-tongue-people'], who reap, sow, pluck the vines and the figs with their tongues; they

⁵⁰ For Cleon and his associates with respect to political flattery, see esp. Tylawsky (2002): 23-27, and Edwards (2010): 332-

belong to a barbaric race, and among them the Gorgias and Philippi are to be found.

Birds 1694-1701, trans. O'Neill, modified.

Edwards has thus plausibly argued that something had changed in Athens' political scene after the death of Pericles, who, as Thucydides reports, refused to pander to the wishes of the people as opposed to those who followed him:

In his eulogy of Pericles (2.65.7.4-11.1) [...] Thucydides appears to be sensitive [to the perception] that the great democratic leader managed the demos by means of pandering. We are told towards the end of this passage that Pericles' successors, in their competition for preeminence, came to serve the pleasure of the demos (ἐτράποντο καθ' ἡδονὰς τῷ δήμῳ) and thereby to surrender civic affairs to them, but that Pericles himself led the demos rather than being led by them and had no need to say what would please them (πρὸς ἡδονὴν τι λέγειν) due to his reputation for personal integrity, being able even to speak against them (πρὸς ὀργὴν τι ἀντειπεῖν). The pleasure of the demos establishes a politics of *kolakeia* even if the word itself does not enter into Thucydides' vocabulary. So, Pericles was no *kolax* to the demos, telling them only what it pleased them to hear [...].⁵¹

Strictly speaking, I stand neutral with respect Edwards' contentions as to the *reasons* why Periclean-style leadership ('free speaking' versus 'slavish pleasure-giving' we might say) underwent a profound change after his death (if they did), wherein (Edwards argues) suddenly the aristocratic classes are forced to behave slavishly to the demos in stooping to flattery for power. But the general observation that post-Periclean Athens was dominated by a politics of flattery *tout court*, or pleasure exchange for power and other goods—surreptitious or otherwise—seems surely correct. And it seems especially true in light of (as I put earlier) the evidence of a 'bottleneck crisis' of sophist rhetoric and pleasure exchange—that is, the predominance of *conceptual* flattery, or a specific kind of pleasure-exchange—in 427 BCE.

Whilst Thucydides may not have used the word '*kolakeia*' to describe the political situation of fourth-century Athens (though he seems to have been aware of its operative principles as having taken hold of the city), the philosophers certainly did use the word. Plato famously does, of course, in the *Gorgias* (463e5-466a3), borrowing much from the *Knights* to

⁵¹ Edwards (2010): 318.

do so in empirically describing the nature of political power and the ethical commitments that come with it, and Aristotle also identified political demagoguery with *kolakeia* outright. As he characteristically put it, ‘ὁ δημαγωγὸς καὶ ὁ κόλαξ οἱ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀνάλογον’—‘the demagogue and the *kolax* are the same and analogous’ (*Politics* 1292a10-38).

It should be noted, too, that the moral dynamics of demagogic flattery were also couched in decidedly erotic terms—where Cleon, for example, was a seductive ‘lover’ of the Demos willing to do anything for his ‘beloved’, no matter how debased. Conceptually, flattery thus easily extends to the very idea of pleasing, slavish ‘services’ as such—in word or deed—with the result that the flattering orators were also assimilated to cooks, pastry-bakers and sexual servants, as is also characteristic of Cleon in *Knights* and the orators in *Gorgias* as well (the latter of which will be explored in detail in Chapter Four).

By the mid-fourth century, the *kolax* and *parasitos*—when not attached to the buffoonish character onstage praising his art—was an aspersion cast more or less upon anyone who was thought to surreptitiously or cynically latch themselves onto more powerful patrons for the sake of personal advantage by means of the tongue and action: from ‘middle-class’ citizens seeking upward mobility;⁵² lackies to the demagogues themselves, such as the likes of Cleon and his own toadies;⁵³ to Rasputin-like ‘advisors’ to tyrants and rulers. The third-century peripatetic Clearchus of Soli was serious in saying that some *kolakes* to tyrants possessed more wealth than just about anyone else on earth (Athenaeus 6.260d-261b). Middle Comedy thereby came to distinguish between the ‘low’ and ‘high’ types of flatterer-parasite (Athenaeus 6.237b-c). Either way, the goals and *modus operandi* of the two sorts of parasites were essentially the same. As Lucian’s Simon rather analytically put it, in *On the Art of The Parasite* 10, ‘My feeling is that the best definition would be as follows: parasitism is the art of drinking and eating and the language which their acquisition requires. Its objective is pleasure.’—‘δοκεῖ γὰρ δὴ μοι οὕτως ἂν μάλιστα ὀρίσθαι· παρασιτική ἐστιν τέχνη ποτέων καὶ

⁵² As Fisher (2000) plausibly argues.

⁵³ Consider some unnamed lackies to Cleon, whose own head was ‘circled by the heads of one hundred flatterers, each with tongues like serpents’—‘ἐκατὸν δὲ κύκλῳ κεφαλὰὶ κολάκων οἰμωζομένων ἐλιχμῶντο, περὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν’, *Wasps* 1033.

βρωτέων καὶ τῶν διὰ ταῦτα λεκτέων καὶ πρακτέων, τέλος δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ ἡδύ.’ Trans. Sidwell, modified.⁵⁴

The philosophical problem was how to weed them out, the ‘true’ from the ‘false’ friend. Was the impoverished Archedemus Crito’s ‘true friend’ by performing helpful political services in exchange for food and shelter, asks Socrates in *Memorabilia* 2.9? How do you decide whether a political ally is exploiting you for your power or acting out of genuine beneficence, asks Plutarch in the lengthy *How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend*. Outside of certain contexts—such as symposia, where ‘traditional’ *kolakes* were welcomed, their duplicity a kind of open secret subject to unspoken rules—deliberating over the matter hinged on the awareness and control of one’s own passions, which the duplicitous flatterer chiefly sought to exploit almost always in secret. For ‘the flatterer’s domain is pleasure and pleasure is what he uses as bait’ (*How to Tell* 51b, trans. Waterfield). Self-knowledge and self-control are thereby what is most critical in order to discern a flatterer from a friend, and to ultimately remain autonomous (cf. Demos’ bizarre awareness of being duped because he simply loves the pleasures of flattery so much at *Knights* 1111-72, a passage that, I suspect, probably weds the quasi-ritualistic role of a ‘party flatterer’ with something as serious as an advisor and leader of the people).

To risk putting it too simply, *kolakes*, certainly according to Plato and Eupolis, were ‘leaches’—both in public and private, some lowly ones with no real intention to harmfully deceive, but most of them with every intention of doing so. All wanted a share in food and/or power, and the ‘higher’ flatterers often shared the same sympotic domain as the ‘lower’.

⁵⁴ Lucian is serio-comically rebutting Plato’s claim at *Gorgias* 463a6-b1 that flattery has nothing to do with expertise. Socrates defines *kolakeia* there in the following terms: ‘δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ὦ Γοργία, εἶναι τι ἐπιτήδευμα τεχνικὸν μὲν οὐ, ψυχῆς δὲ στοχαστικῆς καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ φύσει δεινῆς προσομιλεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις: καλῶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐγὼ τὸ κεφάλαιον κολακείαν.’—‘It [*kolakeia*] seems to me, Gorgias, to be a kind of activity which is not an ‘expert’ enterprise at all, but rather a feature of the mind which is good at guessing [what others want] and bold and clever at having intercourse with men. And I call this ‘*kolakeia*’ to the highest degree.’ Cf. also *E.N.* 1127a7, where Aristotle distinguishes the *kolax* as someone who is ‘good at guessing’ (στοχαστικῆς) at how to be as pleasant as possible for the ‘sake of money and that which comes from money’.

5. Eupolis' *Kolakes*

It was within this complex social nexus of flattery that Eupolis came to write his *Kolakes*. The paucity of evidence for the comedy is extreme, but far less so than the evidence for Ameipsias' *Konnos*.⁵⁵ Whilst the plot is frankly irretrievable, at least several things seem clear.

First is that the play was somehow about the *nature* of a *kolax*, and specifically those kinds which flocked around the tables and assurances of the young and vulnerable Callias, who had recently come into his formerly-prudent father's estate (test. v, about 'the sort of companions who could actually furnish a plot of a comedy').⁵⁶ Callias was portrayed as spending his inheritance lavishly on a group of these flatterers—that or the flatterers were physically eating up and dividing his estate against his will. In this way, the play was also about the *ēthos* of Callias himself, who was consistently portrayed as a debauched profligate throughout the 420s and beyond.⁵⁷ A scholiast on the *kōmōidoumenoi* of the fifth century appears to set the *Kolakes* as merely one amongst many comedies which dealt with Callias in a similar vein (test. vi).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ For recent and major works of philological literature on the *Kolakes*, see Olson (2017), whose circumspect approach to the evidence I follow closely, and whose translations I largely reproduce here. I have usually modified Olson's presentation of the Greek for the sake of greater clarity and ease of reading (just as with the texts of Kassel-Austin). Often, too, there are very slight modifications to his translations. When the texts have been modified that will be indicated after their citations. For more on the *Kolakes*, see esp. Napolitano (2012), Storey (2003), and Tylawsky (2002) for fuller, but highly speculative accounts, 'reconstructions' of the play.

⁵⁶ Test. v, Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 2.25.3 On the life of the second-century intellectual, Hermocrates of Phocaea. Philostratus writes, 'For he [Hermocrates] wasted the enormous paternal household he inherited not on raising horses or on liturgies [public services]... but on unmixed wine and the sort of companions who could actually furnish a plot for a comedy (κωμωδία λόγον), the sort of plot that those who once toadied up (κολακεύσαντες) to Callias son of Hipponicus furnished.' For the prudence and recent death of Hipponicus, see test. ii (Athenaeus 5.218b) and more below, on the connection to the *Odyssey*.

⁵⁷ For an excellent philosophical survey of Callias' riotous behaviours and character in comedy and in life, with literature, see Davidson (1997): 162-3.

⁵⁸ Test. vi, modified: 'This Callias, on the one hand, according to Cratinus in *Archilochoi* (fr. 12 K.A.), was the son of Hipponicus, and from the deme Melite, according to Aristophanes in *Hōrai* (Fr. 583 K.A.), wealthy, sexually passive, plundered by little whores, and someone who kept toadies in his house (πλούσιος καὶ πασχητιῶν καὶ ὑπὸ πορνιδίων διαφορούμενος καὶ κόλακας τρέφων)... Cratinus (Fr. 81 K.A.) also makes fun of him for seducing the wife of Phocus and giving him three talents to avoid being found guilty.' It is not clear if 'κόλακας τρέφων' refers to the *Kolakes* or was instead a feature of the *Hōrai*, but it has been widely understood to refer to Eupolis' play. Whether 'πασχητιῶν καὶ ὑπὸ πορνιδίων διαφορούμενος' refers to *Hōrai* or to *Kolakes* (or both) is also unclear, though there was certainly plundering and prostitutes in the *Kolakes*.

The Platonizing Maximus of Tyre, in his second-century CE Oration *On Friendship and Flattery* (14.7), passingly put the details of the comedy in the following way (hinting, perhaps, at the presence of some kind of ‘competition’ or, perhaps, a formal *agon* in flattery):

Καλλίαν μὲν ἐν Διονυσίοις ἐκωμῶδει Εὐπολῖς, ιδιώτην ἄνδρα ἐν συμποσίοις
κολακευόμενον, ὅπου τῆς κολακείας τὸ ἄθλον ἦν κύλικες καὶ ἐταῖραι καὶ
ἄλλαι ταπειναὶ καὶ ἀνδραποδώδεις ἡδοναί.

At the Dionysia, Eupolis used to make fun of Callias, a private person surrounded by toadies at drinking parties, where the prize for flattery was drinking cups and courtesans and other lowly, enslaving pleasures.

Kolakes test. iv, trans. Olson modified.

In fact, in my third chapter, I will argue that Maximus’ passing mention of the play *does* reveal a battle of wits on par with the poetic battle we see between Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs* for very specific reasons (as well as other possibilities), and that Plato took after that episode in the *Protagoras*. But for now I am laying out the essentials. The point at this moment is that revelry and conspicuous consumption were central components of the play. As the Chorus states bluntly in Fr. 174 K.A., ‘it’s party time at Callias’ house, | where you’ll find crayfish, rays, sea hares | and women ready to wrap their thighs around you...’ (trans. Rusten).

The Chorus consisted of a group of these rambunctious flatterers. The longest surviving fragment, 172 K.A., shows them justifying their lifestyle:

ἀλλὰ δίαιταν ἦν ἔχουσ’ οἱ κόλακες πρὸς ὑμᾶς
λέξομεν. ἀλλ’ ἀκούσαθ’ ὥς ἐσμέν ἅπαντα κομψοὶ
ἄνδρες· ὅτοισι πρῶτα μὲν παῖς ἀκόλουθός ἐστιν
ἀλλότριος τὰ πολλά, μικρὸν δέ τι [corrupt] αὐτοῦ.
ἱματίω δέ μοι δύ’ ἐστὸν χαρίεντε τούτῳ,
οἷν μεταλαμβάνων ἀεὶ θάτερον ἐξελαύνω
εἰς ἀγοράν. ἐκεῖ δ’ ἐπειδὴν κατίδω τιν’ ἄνδρα
ἡλίθιον, πλουτοῦντα δ’, εὐθὺς περὶ τοῦτόν εἰμί.
κᾶν τι τύχῃ λέγων ὁ πλούταξ, πάνυ τοῦτ’ ἐπαινῶ,
καὶ καταπλήττομαι δοκῶν τοῖσι λόγοισι χαίρειν.
εἴτ’ ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐρχόμεσθ’ ἄλλυδις ἄλλος ἡμῶν

μαῖζαν ἐπ' ἀλλόφυλον, οὗ δειῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ
τὸν κόλακ' εὐθέως λέγειν, ἣ ἔκφρεται θύραζε.
οἷδα δ' Ἀκέστορ' αὐτὸ τὸν στιγματίαν παθόντα·
σκῶμμα γὰρ εἶπ' ἀσελγές, εἶτ' αὐτὸν ὁ παῖς θύραζε
ἐξαγαγὼν ἔχοντα κλῶν παρέδωκεν Οἰνεῖ

But we'll describe for you how *kolakes*
live; so listen to how we're in every way the cleverest men!
We who have, first of all, a slave attendant
generally belonging to someone else—and a little [corrupt] of him
I also have these two lovely robes,
one of which routinely changing for the other I march off
to the marketplace. And when I spy someone there who's
a fool but rich, I'm immediately part of his entourage.
If the rich guy happens to be speaking, I praise his remarks lavishly,
and I act astounded, pretending to take delight in his words,
Then we go off to dinner, each of us in a different direction,
to get a foreign barley-cake, where the *kolax* must immediately
offer many pleasant and agreeable things [δειῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ], or else he's
dragged out.
And I know that exactly this happened to the tattooed Akestor;
for he told an offensive joke [at the expense of the host?], and then the slave
dragged him
outside with a collar around his neck and handed him over to [the slave trader]
Oineus.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ It is unlikely that Oineus refers to the tribe of Oineus that was (perhaps) located in the deme of Keiriadai, in which was located the βάραθρον, the pit into which the bodies of criminals against the State were thrown. In other words, that Akestor was dragged out and cast into the pit with other criminals of the State. Who in Athens would be casting a non-citizen (likely signified by Akestor's tattoo) without a trial into the Athenian βάραθρον? For the debate over the identity of Oineus, see Storey (2003): 190, Napolitano (2012): 146-7, and Olson (2007): 94-5. I follow the latter two in seeing the references to Akestor as likely an origin-story for the foreign tragedian who produced his work in Athens. One may, however, think on the uninvited and impoverished Irus at *Odyssey* 18.835—a proto-*kolax*?—who is mistreated by the evil suitor, Antinous: 'I will toss you on board a ship and send you | off to King Echetus in mainland Greece, | the lord of cruelty and pain.' Trans. Wilson. For the possible connections of the *Kolakes* to the *Odyssey*, see below.

Kolakes Fr. 172 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

At some point too, switching between first and third person in a parabolic context, they also claim divine status amongst mere mortals:

φημι δὲ βροτοῖσι πολὺ πλεῖστα παρέχειν ἐγὼ
καὶ πολὺ μέγιστ' ἀγαθὰ· ταῦτα δ' ἀποδείξομεν

And I declare that I furnish mortals with by far the most
and greatest goods; and we shall demonstrate these

Kolakes Fr. 173 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

It is not clear what sort of flatterer this Chorus represents, although the ‘goods’ they demonstrate can be easily presupposed—either unmitigated pleasures, power, or both.

But what type of flatterer *are* they? Are they the ‘traditional’ flatterer, impoverished and roaming the Greek world seeking to be invited to dinner parties of the rich (in this case ostensibly catching them in the Athenian agora)? Were they regular citizens, otherwise respectable figures latching onto social superiors for food? Or were they mostly intellectuals who proclaimed to bestow the highest benefits to men? Perhaps they were like the titular characters in Plato Comicus’ *Sophistai* Fr. 145 K.A., who may well proclaim that ‘προμηθία γάρ ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις ὁ νοῦς’—‘For to mortals, cognition is foresight’. It is noteworthy that Ian Storey translates this highly ambiguous expression as the pronouncement ‘For men the mind is something Promethean’. There may be something to that translation, as Protagoras ‘the sophist’ in his titular dialogue gives a long, mythological disquisition on the nature of humanity and the role of Prometheus. Some of Socrates’ parting words at the close of the dialogue also end with the utility of ‘προμηθία’ for men and his own life, especially in the aspects of conversion (*Prot.* 361d2-5).⁶⁰ But I will return to that passage in a later chapter.

⁶⁰ ἤρεσεν οὖν μοι καὶ ἐν τῷ μύθῳ ὁ Προμηθεὺς μᾶλλον τοῦ Ἐπιμηθέως: ὃ χρώμενος ἐγὼ καὶ προμηθοῦμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἐμμαντοῦ παντὸς πάντα ταῦτα πραγματεύομαι, καὶ εἰ σὺ ἐθέλεις, ὅπερ καὶ κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἔλεγον, μετὰ σοῦ ἂν ἤδιστα ταῦτα συνδιασκοποίην.’ It should be said that in the context of Platon’s *Sophistai*, these words could be a disquisition from any of the experts apparently included as ‘sophists’ in the comedy: an oracle (Fr. 161 K.A.), a military commander or some fighter (Fr. 160 K.A.), the *aulos* player Bacchylides (Fr. 149 K.A.), the magician Xenocles (Fr. 143 K.A.), or perhaps even Sporgilus the barber (Fr. 143 K.A.). But the words

Their self-description as ‘ἅπαντα κομψοὶ’ may help with their identity; for to be *kompsoi* in symposiastic settings just is to be deft in the proprieties of drinking, something like ‘refined’; but it can also mean, when attached to intellectuals in general, something like *too* clever. Were the Chorus *phrontistai* as in *Konnos*, well-versed in the proprieties of drinking and eating, and experts at exploiting such proprieties? It seems at least likeliest that they were divided into two parts—split between the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ flatterer, as test. ix suggests, especially when considering that the named individuals in the fragments are a mixed bag of social status.⁶¹

The Chorus must at least have represented the *spirit* of the individual flatterers who surrounded Callias. Those individuals were for the most part the similar sorts as those who Callias says he keeps around him at dinner parties in the opening of Xenophon’s *Symposium*. That is, generals, cavalry commanders, upstart politicians, and professional teachers of wisdom, such as (specifically mentioned) Protagoras, Prodicus, and Gorgias (1.4-6).

It is universally agreed that Alcibiades played a role as a character in the play, cavorting with prostitutes in Fr. 171 K.A. and—if Eupolis Fr. 385 K.A. belongs to the *Kolakes*—admitting he enjoys both early drinking and the intimate company of men. In other words, Alcibiades was probably not so different from the character of a καταπύγων as he is implied to be in the *Daitalēs*.⁶² The tragedian Melanthius featured in the play too, who was mocked as a glutton in all three comedies at the City Dionysia of 421 BCE as well, and was called an ἄδολεσχος by Plato Comicus, Fr. 140 K.A. Melanthius’ fellow tragedian (an ex-slave and foreigner), Akestor, may also have been featured in the comedy—his origin story perhaps having been told in the final two lines of Fr. 172 K.A. above. We are told that Chaerephon, and at least two lowly criminals, Orestes and Marpsias, were all ‘called’ (*legei*) *kolakes* by someone at some point (Frs. 178, 179, 180 K.A.).

would be highly suitable to a speech by whichever politician a certain Dracontides was, who somehow featured in the comedy (Fr. 148 K.A.).

⁶¹ Σ^R. Ar. Lys. 1189: ‘ἀποκοπή ἐστὶ τοῦ ἄλλου χορικοῦ (Wilamowitz : χοροῦ Σ), ὡς παρ’ Εὐπόλιδι ἐν Κόλαξί’ – ‘This is a part belonging to a second choral section (Wilamowitz : “chorus” Σ), as in Eupolis in *Kolakes*’ (test. ix). Wilamowitz’s emendation has largely been accepted, strongly suggesting that the Chorus may well have been split into two, like the two semi-Choruses of elderly women and men in *Lysistrata*. Plato’s ‘Chorus’ splits into two as well, as I showed above. For the individuals in the comedy, see just below.

⁶² Alcibiades in the *Kolakes* may have bragged that he made off with ten whole talents from someone in Fr. 168 K.A.—perhaps a marriage dowry from his recent marriage to Callias’ sister? Either way, *someone* came off with ten talents, and enormous quantity of money, through an unusual legal procedure (κατ’ἀντιβολίαν), usually one pursued as a matter of recompense for wrongs done against another.

Protagoras was a figure of some concern in the comedy. There are two fragments which directly refer to Protagoras. The first is Fr. 157 K.A., in which an unnamed character tells another unnamed character (or tells the audience) that Protagoras is ‘inside’ Callias’ house, and in the guise of an astronomical *alazon*—apparently amongst others engaged in similar activities:

ἔνδον μὲν ἐστὶ Πρωταγόρας ὁ Τήιος
ὃς ἀλαζονεύεται μὲν ἀλιτήριος
περὶ τῶν μετεώρων, τὰ δὲ χαμᾶθεν ἐσθίει
within, on the one hand, is Protagoras of Teos
who talks bullshit—the filthy, godforsaken bastard!—
about what’s in the sky, but eats what comes from the earth

Kolakes Fr. 157 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.⁶³

There is some controversy with the translation of ‘ἀλιτήριος’ in line 2. Edmunds (2007): 416 and others have suggested, that it must bear its more formal sense of ‘irreligious’ and the connotations which bring a sense of threat to the community. Edmunds argues on the lines that *phrontistai* were associated with the study of the things in the sky, which is a discipline (in comic logic) that ‘necessarily’ denies or does not recognise the gods as supreme. But this ignores the fact that in *comedy*, ἀλιτήριος also refers to a more generally negative moral character, to wit see Olson (2017): 47. I translate ‘ἀλιτήριος’ with the intent to keep the meaning open, especially because Plato will dive deeply into the irreligion of Protagoras in the context of Eupolis. Thus my addition of ‘godforsaken’ to Olson’s translation above.

A nameless character also states that Protagoras at some point (in the distant past? during the party?) dished out faux-medical wisdom merely for the sake of getting someone—

⁶³ There is some controversy with the translation of ‘ἀλιτήριος’ in line 2. Edmunds (2006): 416 and others have suggested, that it must bear its more formal sense of ‘irreligious’ and the connotations which bring a sense of threat to the community. Edmunds argues on the lines that *phrontistai* were associated with the study of the things in the sky, which is a discipline (in comic logic) that ‘necessarily’ denies or does not recognise the gods as supreme. But this ignores the fact that in *comedy*, ἀλιτήριος also refers to a more generally negative moral character, to wit see Olson (2017): 47. I translate ‘ἀλιτήριος’ with the intent to keep the meaning open, especially because Plato will dive deeply into the irreligion of Protagoras in the context of Eupolis.

and thus presumably himself—more drunk; for it was appropriate to drink *during* the Dog Days of Summer, but Protagoras advises just the opposite:

πίνειν γὰρ (αὐτὸν) Πρωταγόρας ἐκέλευ', ἵνα
πρὸ τοῦ κυνὸς τὸν πλεύμον' ἔκπλυτον φορῇ

for Protagoras was urging him to keep drinking, so that
before (the rising of) the Dog-Star he could have a lung washed clean

Kolakes Fr. 158 K.A., trans. Olson.

I will put in the fourth chapter my own interpretation of this passage as indicating that Protagoras may have been something on the order of the Sausage-Seller pretending to be a competent city-leader, but in the sophist's case he is a *seller and mixer of wine*. Some have seen, as well, sophistic etymologies at play here, and I will also argue there may be Empedoclean overtones—given that Empedocles actually claimed to be some sort of magical doctor.⁶⁴ Perhaps there is a mix of all of these associations going on; we cannot be sure. We can be sure, however, that Protagoras in the comedy feigned an interest in ‘higher things’, whilst having his mind only upon that which comes from the ground—‘an archetypal *kolax*’.⁶⁵ As Olson put, ‘no matter what Protagoras *talks* about, his real concern is with securing himself a dinner.’⁶⁶ Protagoras also has an interest in early drinking, as does Alcibiades in Fr. 385 K.A. above.

The reference in Fr. 157 K.A. to Protagoras as coming from Teos (in Asia Minor) is unclear, given Protagoras was in fact from Abdera (in Thrace). Perhaps it indicates that he had an Ionic dialect in the play (*if* he had a speaking role, which the fragments themselves do not explicitly attest to), or that he may have been ‘barbaric’ in a sense—keen on drinking unmixed wine—or that associating Protagoras with Teos added a ‘Persian flavour’ to his decadent personality (cf. ‘Socrates the Melian’ at *Clouds* 830).⁶⁷ The latter possibility I find most plausible, considering Plato’s implicating Callias within a nexus of Persian decadence even if

⁶⁴ For sophistic etymologies, e.g. ‘πλεύμον’ ἔκπλυτον’, see Napolitano (2009). For my suggestions regarding Protagoras as a travelling taverner, and for the Empedoclean connection, see Chapter Four.

⁶⁵ Olson (2017): 34

⁶⁶ Olson (2017): 46, his emphasis.

⁶⁷ On these possibilities, see Olson (2017): 45 and Napolitano (2012): 21-25.

just by the use of his Eunuch doorman (on which see below). Protagoras was in any case a part of Callias' entourage who offered pleasing services and feigned benefaction, but in reality was out for food and drink (and presumably money). There is another, unattested fragment in Aristophanes that directly parallels Fr. 157 K.A., which I think—but cannot prove—may also refer to Protagoras in the same vein, suggesting Eupolis may not have been the only poet to treat of Protagoras in this way.⁶⁸ If anything, the parallel *does* show that there were other intellectuals who were characterised as *kolakes* elsewhere in comedy.

But was Protagoras a character in the comedy? The evidence may at first sight seem to be speak for it as a matter of certainty. As Storey translates test. ii. K.A. (Athenaeus 218b):

ὁ ἐν τῷ Πρωταγόρᾳ διάλογος, μετὰ τὴν Ἰππονίκου τελευτὴν γενόμενος παρελληφότος ἤδη τὴν οὐσίαν Καλλίου, τοῦ Πρωταγόρου <μέμνηται> παραγεγονότος τὸ δεύτερον οὐ πολλαῖς πρότερον ἡμέραις. ὁ δ' Ἰππόνικος . . . τέθνηκε πρὸ τῆς ἐπ' Ἀλκαίου διδασκαλίας τῶν Εὐπόλιδος Κολάκων οὐ πολλῷ χρόνῳ κατὰ τὸ εἶκος. πρόσφατον γάρ τινα τοῦ Καλλίου τὴν παράληψιν τῆς οὐσίας ἐμφαίνει τὸ δρᾶμα. ἐν οὖν τούτῳ τῷ δράματι Εὐπόλις τὸν Πρωταγόραν ὥς ἐπιδημοῦντα εἰσάγει, Ἀμειψίας δ' ἐν τῷ Κόννῳ δύο πρότερον ἔτεσιν διδασχθέντι οὐ καταριθμεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ τῶν φροντιστῶν χορῷ. δῆλον οὖν ὡς μεταξὺ τούτων τῶν χρόνων παραγέγονεν.

The conversation in Protagoras, which took place after the death of Hipponicus, when Callias has already come into his inheritance, <mentions> that Protagoras had arrived <in Athens> for the second time not many days before. Now Hipponicus . . . had died probably shortly before the production of Eupolis' Spongers in the archonship of Alcaeus [422/1], since the play makes it plain that Callias' acquisition of his inheritance was something recent. In this play Eupolis brings Protagoras on stage as being present <in Athens>, while Ameipsias in his Connus, produced two years earlier [D-423], does not include

⁶⁸ That is, Fr. 691 K.A. from an unattributed of Aristophanes: 'ὅς τὰ φανῇ μεριμνᾷ, | τὰ δὲ χαμᾶθεν ἐσθίει' ('he who meditates upon the unseen (the uncertain?)/ but eats what comes from the earth'). I have strong suspicions that this refers to Protagoras—if, that is, the 'unseen' does in fact refer to Protagorean scepticism ('τὰ φανῇ' can, or perhaps should, be taken both ways). The famous opening of his *On the Gods* (D.L. 9.51): 'About the gods I am able to know neither that they exist nor that they do not exist nor of what kind they are in form: for many things prevent me from knowing this, its obscurity (ἀδηλότης) and the brevity of man's life.' (trans. Laks-Most). A passage in Didymus the Blind (L.M. Prot. R27) asserts that Protagoras spent a good amount of time contemplating the nature of the 'seen and unseen' in relation to Being—'[Protagoras] says that for the things that are, their being consists in appearing (φαίνεσθαι). He says, "I seem to you who are present to be sitting; to someone who is absent I do not seem to be sitting: it is unclear (ἄδηλον) whether I am [in reality] sitting or not sitting.'" Cf. also the fanciful discussion with Pericles reported by Plutarch (*Life of Pericles* 36.5), which may nevertheless have a basis in truth: 'When a competitor in the pentathlon unintentionally struck Epitimus of Pharsalus with a javelin and killed him, he [Pericles] spent a whole day with Protagoras examining the difficulty (διαποροῦντα) whether, according to the most correct reasoning, it was the javelin, or the man who threw it, or the umpires, that should be considered responsible for this unfortunate event.' (L.M. Prot. D30, trans. Laks-Most).

Protagoras in his chorus of intellectuals. It is clear that he came to Athens between these two occasions.

Kolakes Test. ii. K.A., trans. Storey, modified.

At first sight, the matter appears cut and dry. ‘ἐν οὖν τούτῳ τῷ δράματι Εὐπολὶς τὸν Πρωταγόραν ὡς ἐπιδημοῦντα εἰσάγει’—‘in this drama Eupolis brings Protagoras on stage as being in town.’ ‘εἰσάγει’ is, after all, something of a catchword in dramatic literature for ‘bring on stage’. But is that a correct translation in this case? The sentence is ambiguous. It could just as well be rendered ‘in this drama Eupolis introduces Protagoras as being in Athens.’ That does not mean he was a character in the comedy, but merely in Athens. The ‘certainty’ that this testimonium brings is that Protagoras was a feature of the comedy, as we have just seen in fragments 157 and 158 K.A. above. It is a reasonable assumption that he was a character, especially given those fragments, but the words contained therein could just as well be programmatic statements as to the kinds of people Callias was surrounded by.

It is therefore not clear what role Protagoras may (otherwise) have played in the *Kolakes*. He may have been called a *sophistēs* explicitly and a major actor on the stage, as in Plato.⁶⁹ Perhaps he was even the leader of the Chorus of Flatterers, as he is the leader of a ‘chorus’ of fawning hangers-on in his eponymous dialogue at 315b2-5 (a passage I will examine in the next chapter). But he may also have been a silent speaking character, a member of the Chorus of flatterers, or simply mentioned in those two fragments alone (although the last suggestion seems to me least likely). Whilst we cannot be sure, I will make some suggestions as this thesis moves forward.

Ian Storey, in his (1985) and (2003), has argued that the following fragment from an otherwise unknown play of Eupolis referring to Socrates—Fr. 386 K.A.—is a one-off comment in a parabolic context from the *Kolakes*. His argument has been widely accepted

⁶⁹ At least *someone* was called a sophist: ‘ἀλλ’ ἀδολεσχεῖν αὐτὸν ἐκδίδαξον, ὃ σοφιστά.’ – ‘Well then, teach him to blabber on, ‘sophist’!’ Fr. 388 K.A. It is reasonable, though by no means certain, to see in this fragment, which is unattributed to any play, as stemming from the *Kolakes*. Assuming that it does stem from the *Kolakes*, was Protagoras the sophist? Patzer (2012) asserts that the sophist was Socrates, based solely on the fact that Socrates was an *adoleschos* elsewhere in comedy, and even ridiculed (in part) for being such a one in Fr. 386 K.A. below. But Melanthios had also been called an *adoleschos* elsewhere, as I noted, and in the same year as the *Kolakes* even. The appellation may have belonged to anyone. There is evidence, too, that rhapsodes were called ‘sophists’ in the *Archilochuses* of Cratinus (Fr. 2 K.A.). This latter fact will come into play for my reading of the ‘competition in flattery’ in Chapter Three. It may well be that there were professional rhapsodes in the comedy, or sophists who claimed to know about poetry and battle about it such poetry.

(indeed, he has many predecessors going back since Bergk in 1838: 353), and I follow that consensus here.⁷⁰ Indeed, I will assume that this fragment is the only assured case of a reference to Socrates in the whole play. In the fragment, the Chorus of flatterers quip:

μισῶ δὲ καὶ < τὸν > Σωκράτην
τὸν πτωχὸν ἀδολέσχην,
ὅς τ᾽ ἅλλα μὲν πεφρόντικεν
ὀπόθεν δὲ καταφαγεῖν ἔχοι
τούτου κατημέληκεν

And I hate that Socrates too!
The babbling beggar,
Who has cast his mind about all things.
But from where to gobble down some food —
Concerning *this* he has ‘neglected to give any care’!

Eupolis Fr. 386 K.A.

It is hard *not* to see in this fragment much else than the flatterers distancing themselves from the intellectual activity and lifestyle of Socrates. Not only that, but they really seem to hate him—apparently amongst others. Even Olson (2017): 43-47, the arch-sceptic in deriving assumptions from fragments, cannot but see the radical reversal from Fr. 157 K.A. on Protagoras in this fragment. ‘[Fr. 386 K.A.] turns the idea [of Fr. 157 K.A.] the other way around: Socrates is too busy thinking to have considered where he will get his food’. As Storey (2003): 324 rightly put it, ‘This [passage] would belong very appropriately in the mouth of a chorus of professional spongers, for whom the Spartan lifestyle of Sokrates would be beyond their comprehension.’⁷¹ Note too that Socrates’ neglect of where to καταφαγεῖν—literally ‘to gobble down [food]’—is another explicit marker distancing him from a characteristic flatterer. As Epicharmus’ stock flatterer makes clear (Fr. 32.7 K.A.), his goal

⁷⁰ For recent discussions of this fragment, see Bromberg (2017): 40-42, Olson (2007): 234-6, Patzer (2012): 89-94, and Storey (2003): 324. But see Gomperz (1924): 203 too, who argues convincingly that Plato ‘explains’ and defends this characterization of Socrates as a general principle at *Apology* 23a-c. in that passage, Socrates explains the reasons he has acquired so much ‘hatred’ due to his bugging everyone in the marketplace constantly (i.e., his *adoleschia*), the total occupation to which results in his deliberate poverty.

⁷¹ I suspect that Storey means to refer to Fr. 157 K.A.; but the reversal is evident, too, in Fr. 158 K.A.

just is to gobble down food and drink up as much as possible (‘κῆπειτα πολλὰ καταφαγών, πόλλ’ ἐμπιών’— ‘...after I’ve drunk lots and gobbled down tons’, trans. Olson).

Socrates in the *Kolakes*, or at least in this preserved fragment of the play, is antithetical to the intellectual flatterers with respect to food and patronage. It is true that he may *resemble* a prototypical flatterer—he dresses in rags and confronts wealthy people in the marketplace, as do the flatterers of the Chorus, more on which later—but he is not one of them. Not in what directly remains of the play.

It is worth reflecting on the final line, or the last hit against Socrates as ‘κατημέληκεν’ (lit. ‘having neglected’) food, which seems to me undeniably related to his famed ‘care of the self’—cognate as it is with μέλω and its various verbal forms at Plato’s *Apology* 36b5-d1, or ἀμελήσας and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι. That is why I translate ‘τούτου κατημέληκεν’ as being a hit against the ‘care of the self’. Olympiodorus, in his commentary on *Phaedo* 70b10-c1 (Lecture 9.9) appears to me to be the only other scholar who broaches this possible reading.

Olympiodorus appeals to what he reads as Plato’s own thoughts on that very passage from Eupolis in the *Phaedo*. That is, where Socrates says ‘I do not think that if anyone were listening in on us, not even if he were a comic poet, would he say that I am simply babbling on and making speeches about things which are pointless.’—‘οὐκουν γ’ ἂν οἶμαι, ἢ δ’ ὅς ὁ Σωκράτης, εἰπεῖν τινα νῦν ἀκούσαντα, οὐδ’ εἰ κωμωδοποιὸς εἴη, ὡς ἀδολεσχῶ καὶ οὐ περὶ προσηκόντων τοὺς λόγους ποιοῦμαι.’ Olympiodorus sees in this comment a reference to and refutation of (what is now) Fr. 386 K.A., and thereby interprets the Eupolis passage as a hit against Socrates’ abstracted care of the self and the examination of one’s soul—whether (in the context of the *Phaedo* and Socrates’ comment) it is immoral and continues to exist in Hades, and if death is something to be feared. I find this extremely plausible, though by no means exhaustive (why should Socrates refer to just this *one* passage only?). Setting aside Olympiodorus, a final linguistic argument may bolster my claim: Fr. 386 K.A. is the earliest attested use of ‘κατημέληκεν’, as Olson 2014: 135 notes. This suggests to me that it likely *refers* to something in particular. And what would that be if not Socrates’ ‘care of the self’? If

this is a correct interpretation, Moore may not be correct in arguing that the extant *Clouds* ‘represents the earliest attribution of the *gnōthi sauton* to Socrates’.⁷²

Fr. 386 K.A. thus shows Socrates in the *Kolakes* to have been antithetical to the so-called sophists with respect to his values showcased and developed by his very way of life. He is not concerned with flattering patrons for food, but with the care of the self, likewise as had been the case with Aristophanes and Ameipsias. Whether or not this line between Socrates and the others was at some point breached does not affect the fundamental point I am trying to make: the point is that there was such a distinction *available* in comedy for later apologists of Socrates to exploit. Speculative arguments to the effect that Socrates was seen on stage chasing after Alcibiades in a stage of erotic passion,⁷³ or that he was a successful toady to Callias in having secured a meal,⁷⁴ are strictly-speaking irrelevant.

To be clear, I recognise that there Socrates may have been hard to distinguish from an archetypal flatterer in comedy as in real life. Elizabeth Tylawsky has even argued that Socrates just was a *kolax*—so-much-so that he served as the model personage (and especially his companion Chaerephon) upon which Alexis and all poets of Middle Comedy would thereafter build the stock figure of the parasite. As she says,

Socrates himself provided the model [for the Greco-Roman comic parasite]. Although he was personally careless about food, wine, and choice entertainment, Socrates frequently dined out in the best company where he enjoyed the finest of good things. Indeed, he was desired as a guest for his personality, his wit, and his conversation, not to mention his unchallenged capacity [for drink]. Socrates may have been his acquaintances’ democratic equal, but he was not their social peer. He earned his dinner in return for his cleverness, his impressiveness, and his ability to entertain and amaze. That he was unconcerned about what he ate and, in fact, was the pursued rather than the pursuer was irrelevant.⁷⁵

Whilst Tylawsky is correct in seeing these correspondences to a flatterer-parasite, a careful examination of the evidence of Old Comedy, such as I have just furnished, show that Socrates was not, in fact, a model for the later parasite. It was rather those very *differences* Tylawsky

⁷² Moore (2015): 12

⁷³ As argued by Storey (2003): 196.

⁷⁴ As argued by Tylawsky (2002): 45.

⁷⁵ Tylawsky (2002): 76

points out—that Socrates in real life had no intrinsic interest in food or money, nor chased such things down by means of his intelligence, nor was he ever once portrayed in extant comedy chasing after youths—which made the difference.⁷⁶ And again, even if Socrates was outright identified as a *kolax*, the point is that Plato and other apologists of Socrates latched onto the differences I have been charting.

By far the traditional view of the play’s ending is that Callias either got his comeuppance from the flatterers and was left destitute by them, or otherwise came to his senses and kicked the flatterers out who were destroying his estate. The first option is implausible, and there is no good evidence for the latter. Callias *would* lose almost the entirety of his wealth, but not until nearly thirty five years after the first performance of the play, and mostly due to the collapse of his mining business in Laurion rather than wasting his wealth on feeding intellectual parasites.⁷⁷ This moralizing reading of the play as a hit against Callias seems to me a function of Plato’s (re)treatment of the comedy’s subject matter; for with the benefit of hindsight, given that Callias did surround himself with sophists and others and that he did lose his wealth, Plato, in recasting the story, brought ‘the correct’ moral home. It is for this reason, I suspect, that Athenaeus’s Pontianus—a self-styled expert in philosophy—could mercurially assert that Plato ‘out-theatrized’ (ἐκθεατριζόμενον) the ‘whole life’ (*bios*) of Callias better than Eupolis’ *Kolakes*.⁷⁸ There is no reason to think of Callias as having been

⁷⁶ Cf. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 18.6 (Aristophanes test. 34 Henderson), who states that there was no link between Socrates’ ‘erotomania’ and the comedy poets’ treatment of him: ‘Even these formidable accusers (Anytus and Meletus) kept away from Socrates’ loves, nor did Aristophanes—who ridiculed Socrates in a comedy at the Dionysia and was the most formidable of his accusers—revile Socrates’ sexual life, though he called him poor and a chatterbox and a sophist and everything other than a poor lover. For it would seem that this was not a reprehensible matter in the eyes either of accusers or comic poets.’ Trans. Henderson. Of course, Socrates may have been notorious for chasing youths, and it is interesting that the Socratics all seem to have treated the matter rather comically. This might externally suggest that there *were* comedies that dealt with the theme, but we do not have them.

⁷⁷ As Olson (2017): 36 makes clear. Notice, too, that even in (the admittedly fictionalised) *Apology* of 399 BCE, Socrates makes no reference or even hints at a monetarily detrimental effect of the sophists, only that Callias spent more money on sophists than anyone else, and indeed, is actively continuing to do so under the assumption that they are helpful teachers (20a-c3).

⁷⁸ The passage again: ‘ὁ δὲ καλὸς αὐτοῦ Πρωταγόρας πρὸς τῷ καταδρομῇ ἔχει πολλῶν ποιητῶν καὶ σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκθεατριζόμενον ἔχει καὶ τὸν Καλλίου βίον μᾶλλον τῶν Εὐπόλιδος κολάκων.’—‘And even in his [otherwise?] fine Protagoras, whilst at once managing to drive an assault against many of the poets and men of wisdom, also manages to out-theatrize the life of Callias better than Eupolis’ *Kolakes*!’ 11.506f = test. ii.

left completely destitute by the flatterers, rather than simply having been exploited by them (and even enjoying it all the while). How the play ended we simply cannot say.⁷⁹

What I do wish to stress, however, is that there appears to have been some Homeric connection in the *Kolakes*, for which Carey (2000) and Morgan (2016) have also argued. That is, the resonances which the flatterers around Callias have to the suitors of Penelope, being under the impression that Odysseus had died, are resonances too strong to ignore. This is important for me to articulate simply in that, as I will show, there are numerous and important references to epic in the fragments and in the *Protagoras*, which relied on the *Kolakes*.

6. Conclusion

If my analysis of Aristophanes, Ameipsias, and Eupolis has been convincing, we have seen that there was a consistent distinction drawn between the comic Socrates as a self-reflective laconizer and those whom Plato sought to characterise as ‘sophists’, who were certainly in part professional spongers and abject hedonists. Again, even if this distinction was not always maintained—comedy systematically and by nature revels in the obscuring of boundaries—the contrast was at least *latent* or *available* in comedy. It did exist in some form. And it was this distinction that Plato sought to exploit and transform. In the following chapter, I will begin to show how he did appropriate that distinction, and enduringly so across his corpus.

⁷⁹ I should note here that the flatterers, in what remains of the comedy, never explicitly *call* themselves orators or experts in oratory and sophistry. But it is hard to escape the conclusion that Protagoras—who is said to be in the house of Callias—is anything but one of such options at least implicitly. The point is that flattery was *a live topic* at the time of the *Kolakes*’ composition, and the play treated of *many* types of flattery, not just ‘sophistic’ or ‘oratorical’. Indeed, the play seems even—as I argue in chapter three—to have made fun of *comic theatre* as a form of flattery.

Chapter Two

Plato's Flatterers – The Case of Protagoras

This chapter begins the process of an intertextual analysis between the *Kolakes* and the *Protagoras* insofar as the latter adopted the contrast between ‘sophists’ and Socrates in the former. It will, after some preliminary remarks on Plato’s ‘comic method’ and the basic facts that link the two dialogues, show how Protagoras is exposed as a comical flatterer, and one who is increasingly put under pressure by Socrates. Once the discussion between the two breaks down, and Socrates threatens to leave, the stage is set for a ‘contest in (sophistic) flattery’ that will be explored in the following chapter.

1. Plato’s *Protagoras* and Eupolis’ *Kolakes*: Some Preliminary Observations

Consider again the earliest evidence recognising a link between these two works, from Athenaeus’ Pontianus, who considers himself an expert in the iambic-abusive qualities of Plato (11.506a). Pontianus described the situation with regard to the *Protagoras* as follows:

ὁ δὲ καλὸς αὐτοῦ Πρωταγόρας πρὸς τῷ καταδρομῇ ἔχει πολλῶν ποιητῶν καὶ σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκθεατριζόμενον ἔχει καὶ τὸν Καλλίου βίον μᾶλλον τῶν Εὐπόλιδος κολάκων.

Even his [otherwise] admirable *Protagoras*, whilst at once managing to drive an assault against many of the poets and men of wisdom, manages to out-theatrize [i.e. ridicule or upstage] the life of Callias better even than Eupolis’ *Kolakes*!

Deipnosophists 11.506f.

I have given some indication of what I think Pontianus could mean here already—that with the benefit of hindsight, Plato could ridicule the *whole life*, or life considered as a whole (the primary meaning of *bios*, not just ‘lifestyle’), of Callias better even than Eupolis, whose entire profession just was ridicule.

Pontianus’ comment is worth a closer look and not dismissal as mere bombast. Callias had only recently come into his wealth in 421 BCE when the *Kolakes* was produced. At that time, he was only 29 years old; whereas he did not lose most of his wealth until probably

around 390, some thirty years later.¹ Moreover, Callias did not die until sometime after 367, in his mid-eighties, rendering the man almost certainly living when the *Protagoras* was written. In other words, Pontianus was right in the following sense: Plato was attacking Callias for his licentiousness and lack of foresight, but in this case, after he had lost a colossal amount of his wealth and when he was still active in public life (notably military affairs).² What is more, the primary dramatic date of the *Protagoras* is sometime just before the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431 BCE, although according to Walsh (1984), the dramatic date is split into two: 431 and no later than 420, thus overlapping with the actual date of the *Kolakes*. The earliest known comic hit at Callias was by Cratinus in the *Thracian Women* of 430 (Fr. 81 K.A.). Thus, Plato may well have been both the first and last ‘comic’ treatment of Callias’ life during the Classical and early Hellenistic periods.³

Plato ridiculing the life of a man still living and active in politics and war through the use of comedy also gives some considerable contextualisation to the force of the Athenian Stranger’s injunction against comic λουιδορία of living persons at *Laws* 11.935e5-7.⁴ It seems to locate Plato’s own comic tendencies as being more along the lines of Middle Comic ὑπόνοια—the ‘you-know-what’ or ‘what is implied’—which Aristotle speaks of as characteristic of the new style of ridicule and laudatory inasmuch as it is more respectable than the Old (*E.N.* 4.1128a22-25). It is perhaps along the lines of the ‘riddling’ or ‘enigmatic’ (αἰνιγματωδῶς) sort of ridicule said by one scholiast to be characteristic of Middle Comedy,

¹ For an overview of the life of Callias in comedy and outside it, see Nails (2002): 68-74 and, again, Davidson (1997): 162-3.

² Callias served as general in the late-390s as commander of troops in Corinth, successfully routing the Spartans; and he may have been partially responsible for ending the seven-years-war with Sparta in 371 (perhaps not without some self-aggrandisement, too, with respect of the latter; see Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.13ff., 5.4.22ff., 6.3.2ff.). Callias was not completely destitute—he was never worth less than two talents, which was still an incredible sum of money for a single individual. But it was nothing compared to his rumoured original 200 talents.

³ Pontianus may not have been thinking of two Socratic works that could have come after the *Protagoras*: the comical *Callias* of Aeschines of Sphettos and the jocular *Symposium* of Xenophon, which possibly relied on the *Autolycus I* or *II* of Eupolis (ca. 420) for its setting. Either way, given that the last known comedy to take a hit at Callias is Aristophanes’ *Eccl.* in 392/1 BCE (which may in fact overlap with the writing of the *Protagoras*), the Socratics were the last known group to ‘comically’ treat of Callias’ life. Note: there is a comical hit at Callias in Aristotle *Rh.* 1405a19-24, which Aristotle ascribes to a certain Iphikrates. But Iphikrates is not included in the *PCG* because there is no attested information about a comic poet with that name. Nails (2002): 73 is therefore not correct in grouping Iphikrates with the poets who made fun of Callias. It is most probable that the hit came from the Athenian general Iphikrates sometime in the first half of the fourth century BCE.

⁴ *Laws* 11. 935e5-7: ‘ποιητῇ δὲ κωμωδίας ἢ τινος ἰάμβων ἢ μουσῶν μελωδίας μὴ ἐξέστω μήτε λόγῳ μήτε εἰκόνι, μήτε θυμῷ μήτε ἄνευ θυμοῦ, μηδαμῶς μηδένα τῶν πολιτῶν κωμωδεῖν’, ‘No composer of comedies, or of songs or iambic verse, must ever be allowed to ridicule either by description or by impersonation any citizen whatever, with or without rancor.’ (Trans. Saunders in Cooper-Hutchinson).

versus the *φανερῶς*, or openly-insulting character of the Old.⁵ I will return to the question of Plato's relationship to Middle Comedy and insult in the *Protagoras* and elsewhere in the Platonic corpus at this thesis's conclusion. Suffice it to say at this point that Callias' continued public relevance would, in any case, have made him an excellent source of comic ridicule, direct or indirect. At a bare minimum, Nails' (2002): 310 comment holds true, that Callias in the *Protagoras* is 'a prominent example of Plato's putting well-known living persons into the dialogues; since Callias III remained active in Athenian politics well after the establishment of the Academy, members would have known the man and his character.'⁶

Pontianus is correct in seeing a thematic connection between the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes*, and the basic links between the two works have long been clear. The dialogue takes place in the house of Callias and features Protagoras, Socrates, Alcibiades, and Chaerephon. Fr. 167 K.A., where a slave is instructed to sweep the portal to the home, is often identified with Plato's comical Eunuch doorman. Callias' house in the *Protagoras* is also a veritable palace of luxury and decadence, and Callias' extraordinary wastefulness is implied in several ways. The doorman himself is an indication of the latter. Not even the Great Kings of Persia would put a Eunuch in such a lowly position as a doorman. As Denyer notes,

[...] simply by having a eunuch in his household, Callias gives an impression of expensive, oriental, and somewhat sinister luxury (cf. Hdt. 8. 105.1, on a man who made his living... castrating pretty boys, and sold them to the East for higher prices). The impression is strengthened by the fact that Callias uses so expensive a slave for so undemanding a task as doorkeeping (Arist. *Oeconomica* 1345a33-5: "it is thought that even in large households someone who is useless for other jobs can make a useful doorman"). Indeed, not even all those paradigms of luxury, the Great Kings of Persa... had eunuch doormen: Smerdis did not (Hdt. 3.77.1-2), and the "fact" that Cyrus did is found worthy of special remark (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.5.65).'⁷

This orientalism should be kept in mind, given that Protagoras is 'from Teos' in the *Kolakes*, signalling perhaps an influence already had by the sophist on his ostensible trainee.

⁵ See Hunter (1983): 26 and n.2 on the distinction in Dionysius Thrax. Open insults did not disappear from comedy, in Plato's day or after it. But Plato was not writing comedies, thus dialogues should not necessarily be placed alongside the strictures against comedy in *Laws*. For more on Middle Comedy, see the conclusion of the thesis below.

⁶ And for more on Plato and the Socratics' iambic-abusive qualities generally and amongst each other, see Owen (1983); for the many ancient critiques of Plato as dually mean-spirited and a plagiarist, see Chroust (1962).

⁷ Denyer (2008): 79, modified.

The luxuriance and wastefulness of Callias and his entourage are signified perhaps most conspicuously, however, by the character of Prodicus, who is lying about covered in fleece even after the sun has risen (315d5), a riotous inversion of the principles of his own Choice of Heracles. Even the luxuriant host and a riotous guest (in Eupolis) had to physically force him out of bed to join the others: ‘Callias and Alcibiades came bringing Prodicus after having made him get up from his couch.’—‘...Καλλίας τε καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδης ἠκέτην ἄγοντε τὸν πρόδικον, ἀναστήσαντες ἐκ τῆς κλίνης, καὶ τοὺς μετὰ τοῦ Προδίκου.’ 317d1-2). One may have the impression that Prodicus was hungover from the previous night’s party: perhaps a recollection of the lost ending of the *Kolakes*. Prodicus, moreover, is lying in a ‘storeroom’ (ταμειῖον, 315d2), which Callias is said to have ‘emptied out for him’ (315d4). But since ταμειῖον also means ‘treasury’, Plato is coyly implying that Callias is actively in the process of wasting his wealth, and Prodicus in the act of obliterating it.⁸

Fragment 157.1 K.A. of the *Kolakes*, where Protagoras and some unidentified others are said to be ‘inside’ (ἔνδον μὲν ἐστὶ Πρωταγόρας) has a direct linguistic correspondence with *Prot.* 311a5, where Protagoras and other intellectuals are said to be ‘inside’ (καὶ γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ Πρωταγόρας ἔνδον; ‘ἔνδον’ being used twice again in the same context at 311a1 and 311a6). Hippias, we might say, fills out the rest of the fragment (157.2-3 K.A.) at 315c5, expositing over the nature of the things in the air (περὶ... τῶν μετεώρων). It is unavoidable to assume that these scenes are meant to assimilate Socrates and Hippocrates to the unnamed characters in Fr. 157 and 158 K.A.—characters who, outside the house of Callias, declaim Protagoras, amongst others ‘within’, to be a swindling, boastful, morally corrupt, and irreligious ἀλιτῆριος. Whether those two characters in Eupolis were Socrates and Hippocrates, we cannot say. We can say that Protagoras and the others ‘within’ Callias’ house in Plato’s dialogue correspond to the aspersions cast against them in the fragments just considered.

The most obvious signifier that Plato is borrowing from the dramaturgy and, thereby, likely ideology of Eupolis is that Protagoras is the leader, and so chief representative, of a beautifully dancing ‘chorus’ (...ἐν τῷ χορῷ. τοῦτον τὸν χορὸν..., 315b2-5) of fawning hangers-on (altogether from 314e3 to b8), towards which Socrates and the young Hippocrates spend a good amount of time ‘spectating’, or (more properly, as I will argue later) ‘seeing-

⁸ My thanks to Sonya Tanner for pointing out this *double entendre*.

through’ (διαθεασάμενοι, 316a6-b1). Plato spends half a Stephanus page signifying Protagoras’ centrality in the nexus of comic adulation, sophistic, and pleasurable entertainment and/or spectacle. Moreover, the group around Protagoras can also be seen as splitting into two semi-Choruses which reunite, as the Chorus of Flatterers in Eupolis may also have done, as we find in test. ix above.⁹

Protagoras, then, is clearly the centre of attention—philosophically and dramatically—by this point of the dialogue. Therefore, we should focus on the *nature* of his character as a flatterer (and in this sense, the ancient subtitle of the dialogue, *On Sophists*, is surely also appropriate). What precedes Socrates and Hippocrates’ arrival likewise attests to this impression, where they have a discussion about *what*, exactly, Protagoras is supposed to be. In the following sections, I will indicate the dramaturgical techniques Plato brings to the table in order to signify not only that Protagoras is a flatterer but also how that signification implicitly reveals his beliefs and state of character *tout court*.

2. Protagoras ὁ χαρίης

Remember that the chief role of a *kolax* was to be entertaining, agreeable, pleasant in manner, and always oriented towards the inflation of their target’s self-esteem. In the words of Eupolis’ Chorus, the *kolax* must straightaway say many agreeable things—‘δεῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ τὸν κόλακ’ εὐθέως λέγειν’, Fr. 172.12-13 K.A.; he must pretend to delight in the words of the rich guy, ‘καταπλήττομαι δοκῶν τοῖσι λόγοισι χαίρειν’, 172. 10; even the clothing of the *kolax* is ‘χαρίεντε’ (172.5 K.A.). In Epicharmus’ prototype *kolax* (Fr. 32.1-3 K.A.), the *kolax* is ‘charming and agreeable’ (χαρίης τ’ εἰμι). It is for this reason that in the *Gorgias*, Plato can tersely describe flattery (though much more on this later) as an ἐμπειρία—a kind of skill-by-rote or clever ability derived from experience—that produces gratification and pleasure (χάριτός τινος καὶ ἡδονῆς ἀπεργασίας, 462c7). Flattery is described only a bit

⁹ In Plato’s account, they danced in such semi-choruses as follows: ‘τοῦτον τὸν χορὸν μάλιστα ἔγωγε ἰδὼν ἦσθην, ὥς καλῶς ἠύλαβοντο μηδέποτε ἐμποδὼν ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν εἶναι Πρωταγόρου, ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς ἀναστρέφει καὶ οἱ μετ’ ἐκείνου, εὖ πως καὶ ἐν κόσμῳ περιεσχίζοντο οὗτοι οἱ ἐπήκοοι ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν, καὶ ἐν κύκλῳ περιόντες ἀεὶ εἰς τὸ ὀπίσθεν καθίσταντο κάλλιστα.’—‘There were some locals also in this chorus, whose dance simply delighted me when I saw how beautifully they took care never to get in Protagoras’ way. When he [or ‘when he’, i.e. ‘the master’- αὐτὸς; cf. *Clouds* 219] turned around with his flanking groups, the audience to the rear would split into two in a very orderly way and then circle around to either side and form up again behind him. It was quite lovely.’ 315b2-8, trans. Lombardo, modified.

differently in the *Phaedrus*: ‘A flatterer, for example, may be a terrible beast and a cause of great harm (δεινὸν θηρίον καὶ βλάβη μεγάλη), yet nature makes [his] flattery rather pleasant by mixing in a little culture with his words’ (οὐκ ἄμουσον—lit. he is ‘is not uncultured’; 240b1-2, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, modified).¹⁰

Notice then how Protagoras represents such a character. His demeanour is anything but ‘uncultured’. It is august, prideful, and an object to admire—as his worshipful devotees make clear, following his voice as if entranced by the beauty of Orpheus’ music (315b1). This is a double-edged compliment, of course. Orpheus drove his followers utterly out of their minds, and even rocks and trees would follow along to his music. I will argue in the following chapter that Protagoras and the others convened in Callias’ house have come together in a sort of makeshift Panhellenic gathering of the wise, such as we find with claimants to sage wisdom at Olympia and Delphi. As we will see, the designation of ‘charmer’ or ‘bewitcher’ was a standard trope to describe the effects of these performers of wisdom at the games. Thus we already find a para-Eupolidean critique of sophistic display; but, as I said, more on this later.

Note that Protagoras is always at the ready to praise his potential customers to the skies, especially at the outset of his encounter with Socrates and Hippocrates. This goes from the mildly ridiculous compliment paid to Socrates merely for asking a question to his final parting words at 361d6-e4. It is instructive to read through these and other instances and to note how closely Protagoras’ words approximate to the complimentary character of Eupolis’ *kolakes* and even Theophrastus’ *kolax* (with the more direct correspondences underlined):

ὁρθῶς, ἔφη, προμηθεῖ, ὃ Σώκρατες, ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.

‘You are right’, he said, ‘to think ahead concerning me, Socrates’

Protagoras 316c5.

καὶ ὁ Πρωταγόρας ἐμοῦ ταῦτα ἀκούσας, σύ τε καλῶς ἐρωτᾷς, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, καὶ ἐγὼ τοῖς καλῶς ἐρωτῶσι χαίρω ἀποκρινόμενος.

¹⁰ Plato—or Lysias in the speech being recited by Phaedrus—must be thinking of the ‘higher’ or cultured sort of flatterer mentioned in Middle Comedy, as we saw above.

‘And Protagoras, having heard me say these things, said “You ask questions well, Socrates, and I just delight in giving answers to those who ask questions well.”’

Protagoras 318d5.

[Of a *kolax*:] ‘καὶ ἐπαινέσαι δὲ ἀκούοντος, καὶ ἐπισημῆνασθαι δέ, εἰ παύσαιτο, “ὀρθῶς”’

[Of a *kolax*:] When the man is speaking he tells the company to be quiet and praises him so that he can hear, and at every pause adds an approving ‘that’s quite right’

Theophrastus *Characters* 2.4, trans. Diggle, modified.

κἄν τι τύχῃ λέγων ὁ πλούταξ, πάνυ τοῦτ’ ἐπαινῶ, | καὶ καταπλήττομαι δοκῶν
τοῖσι λόγοισι χαίρειν.

[The *Kolakes*] And if the rich guy happens to be speaking, I praise his remarks lavishly, and I act astounded, seeming to take delight in his words.

Eupolis *Kolakes* Fr. 172. 9-10 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

Protagoras seems to take every opportunity he can to lavishly praise his potential customers: in this case Hippocrates, who is one such ‘rich guy’ (316cb7-c4), although the praise is directed at Socrates, who is speaking on the boy’s behalf. And one should not miss the fact that Protagoras brings the entire company around ‘to gloat’ (καλλωπίσασθαι) of his new potential customers (317c4-5)—which puts the spotlight on Protagoras as much as on Socrates and Hippocrates, on whom he is heaping praise.

Even Protagoras’ closing remarks after his ostensibly humiliating, dialectical defeat are a last-ditch effort to be taken as agreeable:

καὶ ὁ Πρωταγόρας, ἐγὼ μὲν, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπαινῶ [note *Characters* above] σου τὴν προθυμίαν καὶ τὴν διέξοδον τῶν λόγων. καὶ γὰρ οὔτε τᾶλλα οἶμαι κακὸς εἶναι ἄνθρωπος, φθονερός τε ἥκιστ’ ἀνθρώπων, ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ σοῦ πρὸς πολλοὺς δὴ εἶρηκα ὅτι ὢν ἐντυγχάνω πολὺ μάλιστα ἄγαμαι σέ, τῶν μὲν τηλικούτων καὶ πάνυ. καὶ λέγω γε ὅτι οὐκ ἂν θαυμάζοιμι εἰ τῶν ἐλλογίμων γένοιο ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ σοφία.

‘And Protagoras said, “Socrates, I praise this zeal of yours and your agility through arguments. And of all things, I certainly do not consider myself to be a bad person, and of all men the least envious, considering that I have told many people about you: that of all those I happen to meet, I am by far and above

most astonished by you—and at such an age! Indeed, I say I would not be surprised if you were to eventually become held in supreme account amongst men in wisdom.’

Protagoras 361d6-e4.

Denyer notes that Protagoras’ closing comments of the dialogue are almost a pleading to be taken as agreeable and not ill-disposed towards Socrates.¹¹ Now, this praise for the eventual esteem that Socrates will receive is, of course, an obvious and ominous foreshadowing of Socrates’ later reputation for sophistry. But it is, as Denyer also suggests, “more than simply ‘you might get a reputation for wisdom.’ It amounts almost to ‘you might come to be ranked with the Seven Sages.’”¹²

But Denyer’s remarks need not rely on linguistic grounds alone, as they are. I will argue extensively in the following chapter, that Protagoras and Socrates find themselves—beginning with the analysis of Simonides and not ending until the closing of the dialogue—in an established ‘competition in wisdom’ characteristic of sophists at the Panhellenic games, but rooted in an activity attributed to the Seven Sages themselves. The winner of such a sophistic competition took away the symbolic ‘prize’ of Delphic-sanctioned wisdom and a fame that stretched the globe. This ‘prize’ was, moreover, signified in stories about the Sages passing a tripod from one to the other in a competitive spirit, but ‘without any animosity’.¹³ What makes this comment by Protagoras so richly ironic, then, is that he passes the mantel of his own wisdom—which is allegedly derived from a lineage stretching back to Homer and Hesiod (316d3-317c4)—to Socrates, who grounds *his* special wisdom in the laconizing of the Seven Sages (342a6-343b4). Protagoras thus authenticates, whether he wants to or not, Socrates’ aporetic, Delphic sage wisdom through his flattering words.

¹¹ On linguistic grounds: ‘the connectives οὐτε... τε put special stress on Protagoras’ claim to be ungrudging.’ Denyer (2008): 203.

¹² Denyer (*ibid*): 204. He points to the commonalities in Socrates’ way of speaking of the Seven Sages as an admired group for their famed wisdom at 343aff.

¹³ ‘They [various sages] are all said to have met together at Delphi, and again in Corinth, where Periander arranged something like a joint conference for them, and a banquet. But what contributed still more to their honour and fame was the circuit which the tripod made among them, its passing round through all their hands, and their mutual yielding of it, with generous expressions of good will (μετ’ εὐμενείας φιλοτίμου γενομένη).’ (Plutarch *Life of Solon* 4.1, trans. Perrin, modified).

Linguistic markers and the concomitant behaviours of Protagoras' being *χαρίης* saturate the dialogue. This goes from Protagoras' comportment when actively discomfited in debate—'It seems to me it's through your love of victory, Socrates, that you want me to be answerer: but I shall nevertheless gratify you (*χαριοῦμαι οὖν σοι*)', 360e3-4—to the very motivation for his 'Great Speech'. When asked whether he should demonstrate that virtue is teachable in *logos* or *mythos*, Protagoras chooses the latter first (though he will eventually do both) simply because it would be 'more pleasant' to listen to (*χαριέστερον*, 320c6). Indeed, he tells the speech as a story by an older man to those younger than him (*ὥς πρεσβύτερος νεωτέροις*, 320c3-4). In this way, Protagoras is like Hippias in the *Hippias Major*, whose professionalism is grounded in spinning out 'pleasing old wives tales' to those younger than he is (*ὥσπερ ταῖς πρεσβύτισιν οἱ παῖδες πρὸς τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογῆσαι*, *H. Maj.* 286a1-2).

It may come as little surprise, then, that the analytical thrust of Protagoras' speech operates according to the rules of flattery. For, in order to show that virtue is teachable, Protagoras shows that the Athenians *believe* it to be teachable (chiefly on the evidence of the existence of punishment and teaching in schools), and so it must be teachable.¹⁴ This contextualises Socrates' deflating of Protagoras' Speech as one deliverable by any of the 'demagogues', or anyone sufficiently able to speak (*δημηγόρων... ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν ἱκανῶν εἰπεῖν*), such as Pericles (*Prot.* 329a1-2). That is to say, if they were an Athenian 'leader of the people'. It is interesting to note that Socrates seems to have set Protagoras up to speak for and defend Athenian values, given that Socrates asserts at 319b3-d7 that the Athenians *do not* believe virtue can be taught, and so therefore it cannot be taught.¹⁵ Protagoras is the one who must know his audience's wishes and has no intrinsic desire to contradict them.

Here again we have a similarity in Protagoras' art to Hippias' profession as a sophist, the latter flattering the sensibilities of young Spartans (when he is passing through Sparta) as youths who delight in hearing about the martial prowess of the Peloponnesian kings of old (the only sort of education they are allowed to hear anyway). To that end, Hippias composed for them what Pausanias called a written and extant 'Τρωικὸς διάλογος' (1.11.11 = Laks-Most

¹⁴ See 325b-d for a smaller example; but see Taylor (1991): 98-103 on 328c3-d2 for the whole argument as operating on the assumption that whatever the Athenians believe cannot be wrong.

¹⁵ And see also Taylor (1991): 72-74 on this passage, which establishes Protagoras' epistemic standards for the Great Speech.

Hippias D5; cf. *H. Maj.* 286a3-c2) in which Nestor tells the exceptionally violent Neoptolemus how to behave in a fine fashion. Hippias flatters the vanity and values of the young Spartans through mythic story-telling, the type that reaffirms their self-esteem via martial prowess. Indeed, such story-telling seems to be a sophistic speciality:

[Soc] ἀλλὰ τί μὴν ἐστὶν ἃ ἡδέως σου ἀκροῶνται καὶ ἐπαινοῦσιν; αὐτός μοι εἰπέ, ἐπειδὴ ἐγὼ οὐχ εὕρισκω.

[Hip.] περὶ τῶν γενῶν, ὃ Σώκρατες, τῶν τε ἡρώων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ τῶν κατοικήσεων, ὥς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐκτίσθησαν αἱ πόλεις, καὶ συλλήβδην πάσης τῆς ἀρχαιολογίας ἥδιστα ἀκροῶνται.

[Soc] Well just what is it [if not the exact sciences] they take most pleasure in hearing about from you, and applaud? Tell me yourself; I can't figure it out.

[Hip.] The genealogies of heroes and men, Socrates, and the settlements, how cities were founded in ancient times, and in a word all ancient history—that's what they take most pleasure in hearing about. So because of them I have been forced to learn up on all such things and to study them thoroughly.

[...]

[Soc] ...ὥστ' ἐννοῶ ὅτι εἰκότως σοι χαίρουσιν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἅτε πολλὰ εἰδότες, καὶ χρῶνται ὥσπερ ταῖς πρεσβύτισιν οἱ παῖδες πρὸς τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογεῖν.

[Hip.] καὶ ναὶ μὰ Δί', ὃ Σώκρατες, περὶ γε ἐπιτηδευμάτων καλῶν...

[Soc] So I understand: the Spartans take great delight in you, predictably, because you know a lot of things, and they use you the way children use old ladies, to tell fine activities.

[Hip.] And yes, by Zeus, Socrates! Concerning fine activities too...

Hippias Major 285d3-e2, 285e9-286a3, trans. Woodruff, modified.

In light of this, one can more readily understand Protagoras' keenness to mythically narrate the whole history of humankind up to the founding and then-present state of Athens to great approval. Woodruff says of the manner of Hippias that the sophist operates according to a 'virtual science of being agreeable'.¹⁶ This is, I submit, because Hippias is, like Protagoras, a flatterer—if a notably idiotic and boastful one. Indeed, it does not mean that Hippias is not

¹⁶ Woodruff (1982): 125.

also an ἀλαζών, as Trivigno (2016) has influentially argued. It means that ἀλαζονεία, as Fr. 157 K.A. makes clear, is merely one tool in the flatterer's toolkit. Protagoras, just like Hippias, teaches nothing other than what the student has come to learn (παρὰ δ' ἐμὲ ἀφικόμενος μαθήσεται οὐ περὶ ἄλλου του ἢ περὶ οὗ ἥκει., *Prot.* 318e4). They both say only what their given customers want to hear.

Indeed, such comforting but empty promises of teaching are on full display when Socrates asks Protagoras in straightforward, simple language what Hippocrates will derive from Protagoras' association. He was ready for the question:

ὕπολαβὼν οὖν ὁ Πρωταγόρας εἶπεν: ὦ νεανίσκε, ἔσται τοίνυν σοι, ἐὰν ἐμοὶ συνῆς, ἥ ἂν ἡμέρα ἐμοὶ συγγένῃ, ἀπιέναι οἴκαδε βελτίονι γεγονότι, καὶ ἐν τῇ ὕστεραίᾳ ταῦτά ταῦτα: καὶ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἀεὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ἐπιδιδόναι.

Protagoras, picking it up from there, said, Young man, this very thing will come to you if you associate with me: every day you spend with me, you will go home having become better, and the next day after that the same thing—every day always to grow better and better.

Protagoras 318a5-8.

This boastfulness is, considering the Eupolidean context of the dialogue, reminiscent of the ἀλαζονεία of Protagoras in Fr. 157 K.A. It also refers, as I will argue in chapter four, that Protagoras is an archetypal flatterer per the *Gorgias* in not actually giving a thought to what is best, τὸ βέλτιστον, a point that will be explored later. But the pretensions of Protagoras here may well approximate to the hyperbolic, godlike pretensions of the flatterers in Fr. 173 K.A., where the Chorus Leader there says:

φημὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι πολὺ πλεῖστα παρέχειν ἐγὼ
καὶ πολὺ μέγιστ' ἀγαθὰ. ταῦτα δ' ἀποδείξομεν

And I declare that I furnish mortals with by far the most
and greatest goods; and we shall demonstrate this

Fr. 173 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

After all, Protagoras—the leader of his own para-Eupolidean chorus of flatterers—*does* offer to deliver an *epideixis* to be all things to everyone, namely in his Great Speech, the kind of

epideixis expected immediately after Fr. 173 K.A. And there is the curious fact that everyone who is inside Callias' house is addressed not as a 'man' but as an ἄνθρωπος, 'human being' or 'mortal'. Even the Eunuch addresses (insultingly) Socrates and Hippocrates as if a god to mortals: 'ὦ ἄνθρωποι', at 314d5.¹⁷ Protagoras thus suggests that he thinks himself to have a supra-mortal wisdom (see esp. the close of his speech at 328a6-d2), an implication significantly strengthened given that Callias' house is populated by the souls of flatterers as much as by their mortal bodies. Protagoras and the sophists think themselves gods but they are more like Titans chained to the walls of Tartarus as spectacles to all who pass. But all this will be made clearer in chapter four.

So Protagoras, like Hippias, is a flatterer. He tells stories for pleasure; he does not teach, but flatters the sensibilities of his audiences. He serves up pleasing discourse like food and drink for sale without a thought to its goodness, as Socrates makes clear in the opening of the dialogue, describing Protagoras as an 'ἐμπορός τε καὶ κάπηλος' (313d1)—which just is the character of a flatterer in the *Gorgias*, too ('κάπηλον ὄντα ἢ ἔμπορον', 'ὁ κάπηλος'; 517d7, 518b7). Protagoras is *χαρίης*, as a perfect flatterer should be. With this in mind, Plato likely intends for his audiences to take the opening words of Protagoras' Great Speech (320d1) with a good deal of humour, or perhaps (also) derisive dismissal: 'ἦν γάρ ποτε χρόνος'—'Once upon a time...'. Such wording perhaps also hints at whatever was lost in the *Kolakes* after the parabolic Fr. 173 K.A.

In fact, these words of Protagoras do have an established comic lineage of their own. That is, 'ἦν γάρ ποτε χρόνος' is the very sort of wording to be used by elite *kompsoi* at symposia, the likes of which Philocleon in the latter parts of that play manages to spin off in order to avoid a lawsuit (1427, -35, -45, -48). He used clever 'ποτε' stories about legendary Sybaris that he had learned from the elite and 'wise' company at the symposium he attended ('οὕτω διηγεῖσθαι νομίζουσ' οἱ σοφοί'—'That's how wise men recount things', 1196; cf. 1256-61 on legendary stories of Sybaris and funny tales of Aesop). Protagoras' use of 'ἦν γάρ

¹⁷ See Denyer's (2008): 79 note on 314d5: 'ὦ ἄνθρωποι: in so addressing Socrates and Hippocrates, the slave shows brusque manners, of a kind that Athenians thought democracy encouraged in their slaves (*Rep.* 563b, Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.10, Dem. 9.3). ὦ ἄνθρωποι is how gods address human beings (*Clito.* 407b, *Smp.* 192d, *Ap.* 23b) and legislators address subjects (*Cra.* 408b). [...]'. The use of ὦ ἄνθρωποι here sets the tone for the later, ironical disquisition over pleasure and pain later in the dialogue in the context of the souls of the flatterers, starting at 352aff.

ποτε χρόνος’ therefore signifies that he and the other sophists present are, at the least, masters of *elite sympotic discourse*, who furnish pleasurable, sympotic company. We happen to find Protagoras in such a setting in the *Kolakes*, and the titular Chorus of that comedy is likewise *komposos* (Fr. 172.2 K.A.). It is therefore a reasonable suspicion that the Great Speech, or some version of it, was seen in the *Kolakes*, perhaps along the lines of the Prodicean, cosmogonical account of *Birds* in their parabasis, where they speak of their godlike helpfulness to mortals (685-800); or perhaps the Chorus of Flatterers articulated the moral goodness of pleasurable stories they can furnish to a patron who hosts a dinner. It only helps that Protagoras’ may actually have circulated a written ‘Great Speech’: ‘ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Μεγάλῳ λόγῳ ὁ Πρωταγόρας...’ (L.M. Prot. D8 and D11). Eupolis surely must have known of it and had it pilloried, just as Plato likely had done. But did Plato appeal to Eupolis’ account to make an implicit rebuke or statement?

3. Protagoras the ‘Yes-Man’ Under Pressure

So Protagoras is ready to be agreeable through speech and action, as long as it garners him paying customers and ostensibly other goods; and Plato has signified this element of his persona through a reliance on standard comic tropes we find with respect to flatterers generally, but the sophists in Eupolis specifically. Protagoras cannot hide his true motivations from the contemporaneous readers of Plato, or at least those who knew the story of Eupolis’ *Kolakes*. Sophists such as Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus furnished pleasing words for money and corporeal luxuries.

But the comic signalling does not stop at such aspects of agreeability. Protagoras’ nature as a *kolax* is signified by the way he *responds* to Socrates’ questioning. He is fundamentally a ‘yes-man’, good at guessing what his interlocutors want to hear in conversation. This sort of guessing is just how Plato understands *kolakeia* in the *Gorgias*, too:

Δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ὦ Γοργία, εἶναί τι ἐπιτήδευμα τεχνικὸν μὲν οὐ, ψυχῆς δὲ στοχαστικῆς καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ φύσει δεινῆς προσομιλεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις: καλῶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐγὼ τὸ κεφάλαιον κολακείαν.

It [*rhetorikē*] seems to me, Gorgias, to be a kind of activity which is not an expert enterprise at all, but is a feature of the mind which is good at guessing [what others want] and bold and clever at having intercourse with men. And I call this *kolakeia* to the highest degree.

Note how at the outset Protagoras takes pains to respond in a way that makes Socrates happy, and to secure agreement. This sort of deference to Socrates is at first rather subtle: ‘ὥστε πολὺ μοι ἡδιστόν ἐστιν, εἴ τι βούλεσθε’—‘it would be most pleasant to me, if you wish, [to gloat in front of the others, ‘καλλωπίσασθαι’]’ (317c4-5). And later, Socrates asks if Protagoras would like to hear his own interpretation of Simonides’ song (342a1), whereupon Protagoras channels Theophrastus’ *kolax* cited above almost to exactness: ‘ὁ μὲν οὖν Πρωταγόρας ἀκούσας μου ταῦτα λέγοντος, εἰ σὺ βούλει, ἔφη...’—‘And then Protagoras, having heard the things I said, said “if you wish, Socrates.”’ But when Socrates is really serious in debate, it seems he will have no quarter with such mannerisms, as if they were somehow important to the truth of the matter:

[Prot]: οὐ πάνυ μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὕτως ἀπλοῦν εἶναι, ὥστε συγχωρῆσαι τὴν τε δικαιοσύνην ὅσιον εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὁσιότητα δίκαιον, ἀλλὰ τί μοι δοκεῖ ἐν αὐτῷ διάφορον εἶναι. ἀλλὰ τί τοῦτο διαφέρει; ἔφη: εἰ γὰρ βούλει, ἔστω ἡμῖν καὶ δικαιοσύνη ὅσιον καὶ ὁσιότης δίκαιον.

[Soc]: μή μοι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ: οὐδὲν γὰρ δέομαι τὸ ‘εἰ βούλει’ τοῦτο καὶ ‘εἴ σοι δοκεῖ’ ἐλέγχεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἐμέ τε καὶ σέ: τὸ δ’ ‘ἐμέ τε καὶ σέ’ τοῦτο λέγω, οἰόμενος οὕτω τὸν λόγον βέλτιστ’ ἂν ἐλέγχεσθαι, εἴ τις τὸ ‘εἴ’ ἀφέλοι αὐτοῦ.

[Prot]: It’s not altogether clear to me, Socrates, to be as simple as you put the matter, when you say that justice is pious and piety just; instead, there seems to me a distinction here. But what’s the difference? If you like, let’s say justice is pious and piety just.

[Soc]: Don’t do this to me! I said. I have no need for this ‘if you wish’ and this ‘if it seems to you’, but simply to examine me and you! For, this ‘me and you’ I’m on about—I’m thinking the account would best be tested if someone were just to remove the ‘if’ from it.

Protagoras 331c3-d2.

So Protagoras is eager to grant the wishes of his potential clients, eventually to a point which irritates Socrates. I recognise that the above passage is also a clear statement of the ‘say what you believe’ condition of Socratic dialectic (however it may function). But such a condition

does not negate Protagoras' motivations for *not* saying what he believes. He merely wants to satisfy Socrates so he can get out of a jam.¹⁸

I also recognise that Protagoras does become increasingly irritated with Socrates' short-form of questioning and, eventually, ceases answering altogether because he cannot revert to his long-winded manner of speech, at 335b1. This, however, does not negate the fact of Protagoras' duplicitous nature. It shows that Socrates is doing his best to engage with Protagoras in a way that is meaningful and/or to break through Protagoras' flattering smokescreens. This is why Protagoras' response is to suggest that it is Socrates who is behaving badly for the company; it is Socrates who is not behaving as a flattering part of Callias' entourage should. But Socrates has not come to see Callias, but Protagoras, as the Eunuch doorman was told (314d7-e1).

Because Protagoras finds himself amongst flattering company, he finds Socrates' discussion 'δυσχερῶς' ('annoying' or 'unpleasant'), to which Socrates replies that he will change his approach, at 332a2-3. Socrates changes tactics again at 333e3-5, once he realises that Protagoras is becoming more irritated in being forced to shorten his answers: 'It seemed to me that Protagoras was becoming increasingly stormy and aroused for a battle, ready-at-arms and prepared to answer. And so, having seen him in such a disposition, I very carefully, gently laid down my question.' (καί μοι ἐδόκει ὁ Πρωταγόρας ἤδη τετραχύνθαι τε καὶ ἀγωνιᾶν καὶ παρατετάχθαι πρὸς τὸ ἀποκρίνεσθαι. ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἑώρων αὐτὸν οὕτως ἔχοντα, εὐλαβούμενος ἠρέμα ἠρόμην. 333e3-5). Protagoras then rushes at Socrates' simple question with a *tour de force* flourish of rhetoric that receives rapturous applause (334a4-c8), after which Protagoras continues to refuse to shorten his answers, and the discussion breaks down. But this, again, does not show that Protagoras is not a flatterer. It shows that Socrates is doing his best to break through the act, to little or no avail, and that Socrates has been willing to placate his audiences in order to do so.

¹⁸ I thank Franco Trivigno for pointing out this objection. Another objection may be that Socrates abandons this principle altogether at 333c5-9, agreeing to let Protagoras answer on behalf of 'the many'. My response is two-fold: first, the passage does not in any obvious sense make the whole discussion rely on a conditional, as Protagoras' previous remarks would have done, without anyone's commitments on the line. Second, the passage shows that Socrates is prepared to change tactics and/or modify his approach to the discussion.

One may thereby detect a feeling of the animosity expressed by the intellectual flatterers of Fr. 386 K.A. against Socrates: ‘μισῶ δὲ καὶ < τὸν > Σωκράτην | τὸν πτωχὸν ἀδολέσχην, | ὅς τ’ ἄλλα μὲν πεφρόντικεν | ὁπόθεν δὲ καταφαγεῖν ἔχοι | τούτου κατημέληκεν’ – ‘And I hate that Socrates too! | The babbling beggar, | Who has cast his mind about all things. | But from where to gobble down some food | Concerning *this* he has neglected to “give any care”!’ Protagoras, I think it is reasonable to suspect, thinks that Socrates will not stop chattering and speculating about abstract questions; he should, rather, get down to the real business of how to sponge a meal, or simply out of the way to such a meal.

4. A Mutual Circle of Flattery (335c7-338e6)

The discussion over the unity of virtue, however, does break down because of a refusal of Protagoras to drop his long-winded rhetoric for Socrates’ short-speaking back-and-forth, and Socrates attempts to leave. Protagoras simply cannot allow Socrates to get the better of his flattering rhetoric, as this would be a professional disaster. The whole company thereafter engages in what I describe as a ‘mutual circle of flattery’ in an attempt to find a compromised, negotiated way forward (335c7-338e6). In the process, the whole company signifies that they are at the mercy of the rules of flattering Callias. That they, too, are all flatterers. It is this mutual circle of flattery which Socrates will eventually use to pressure Protagoras to continue the discussion.

First, Callias—who is presumably the master of ceremonies—refuses to let Socrates leave. He implores him to stay and play the flatterer too: ‘ὥς ἐγὼ οὐδ’ ἂν ἐνὸς ἡδίου ἀκούσαιμι ἢ σοῦ τε καὶ Πρωταγόρου διαλεγομένων. ἀλλὰ χάρισαι ἡμῖν πᾶσιν. ‘For there is nothing I would take pleasure in more than listening to you and Protagoras having a dialogue. So please, gratify us all!’” (335d4-5). Alcibiades takes the side of Socrates in wanting to have a debate (336b7-d6), whence he is accused by Critias of being too pugilistic, a lover of victory (φιλόνικος) due to his pleasure in winning a debate alongside Socrates (336e2); rather, Critias says, each speaker should be able to speak as and however long they please (336b5-6), and for the observers not to take sides, thereby satisfying all parties involved (336e3). Prodicus gives a short lesson in how to have a lovely gathering (ἂν καλλίστη ἡμῖν ἡ συνουσία γίγνοιτο, 337b3-4), and everyone agrees with Prodicus (337c5). Indeed, as Hippias says, it would be a

shame if ‘being, as we are, the wisest of the Greeks and gathered here together in this veritable Prytaneum of Wisdom [that is, an eating hall], in this greatest and most august house of the city itself,’ they could not find a negotiated way forward (337d4-6, trans. Lombardo and Bell, modified). Hippias does not want Protagoras to experience displeasure (εἰ μὴ ἡδὺ Πρωταγόρα, 338a2), but instead wants agreement at all costs (338a1), thus exhorting Socrates and Protagoras to find a ‘middle-ground’ (τὸ μέσον, 338a1; μέσον τι, 338a6; τὸ μέτριον, 338b1) so as to adorn their gathering with a splendid discussion (338a2-4).¹⁹ All the company agree with Hippias’ suggestion and praise it to the skies (338b3).

It is at this point that Socrates starts to play along, signalling again his willingness to change tactics in order to salvage the discussion, likely for the sake of controlling its outcome. He flatters (‘*eironically*’?) Protagoras’ vanity by stating that there could not possibly be a referee (lit. ‘knower’, ἐπιστάτης) in a debate between the two, considering that Protagoras is the wisest man in Greece.²⁰ To appoint a referee over *him* would be an insult (338c1-5). Socrates says he would be ‘willing’ (ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐθέλω ποιῆσαι, 338c5) to take turns with Protagoras, each asking as many questions as they please, whereupon the respondent will switch roles and *everyone* present will play the ἐπιστάτης (338e2). Socrates says he will try to respond in a way he thinks a respondent should (καὶ ἅμα πειράσομαι αὐτῷ δεῖξαι ὥς ἐγὼ φημι χρῆναι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον ἀποκρίνεσθαι, 338d1-2), signalling—as I see it—that he wants something positive to emerge. Everyone agrees with what Socrates suggests (338e2).

It is the momentum of all this mutual flattery and agreement that eventually ‘necessitates’ Protagoras to agree to continue the discussion and to subsequently play the role of first questioner, despite his serious unwillingness to do so: ‘καὶ ὁ Πρωταγόρας πάνυ μὲν οὐκ ἤθελεν, ὅμως δὲ ἠναγκάσθη ὁμολογήσαι ἐρωτήσιν’—‘and Protagoras was in no way

¹⁹ I suspect two implicit hits against the sophists when Prodicus uses these different words for ‘measure’ without any discernible difference between them: namely, the *lack* of ‘measure’ expressed by the participants in the comedy and a mockery of Protagoras’ ‘Man-Measure’ doctrine. Perhaps it is also a foreshadowing of Socrates’ ‘art of measurement’ as to how to imbibe and eat properly, controlling the consuming passions for the sake of the good, that he will eventually get the sophists to enthusiastically agree to at 356e6-358a1, as well. For Socrates’ account of the good life in this dialogue as oriented entirely towards specifically *bodily* goods, see Shaw (2015), Strigel (2016), and chapter four below. The actual, Socratic good however is a matter of self-control, which supersedes any other goods and bads; to wit, see also below.

²⁰ I read Socratic irony (*eirōneia*) in terms of Wolfsdorf (2008), ‘Socratic irony’ being derived from the traditional Greek understanding of ‘liar’ for the sake of entrapment, especially seen in comedy. For specifically comic *eirōneia* in Socrates as a dialectical tool, see Trivigno (2016) on the *Hippias Major*. The point is that Socrates *playacts* the flatterer here.

willing to go ahead with it, but all the same, he was forced to agree to put the questions.’ (338e4-5). Socrates by this point seems to be toying with Protagoras, forcing him into uncomfortable situations, knowing that Protagoras simply cannot risk being too disagreeable; he uses his nature as a flatterer against him. ‘So if he doesn’t seem anxious to stick to the question in his replies, you and I, Callias, will together ask him, as you asked me, not to ruin the conversation.’ (338d5-7, trans. Taylor, modified).

In light of the analysis of Eupolis in the previous chapter, one may well detect a sense in which Protagoras risks being chucked out of the house like Akestor at the end of Fr. 172 K.A. for being offensive or overly-disagreeable to his patron-host, and that Socrates is well aware of this (Protagoras may even have tried to use this tactic against Socrates in avoiding answering Socrates’ question; that it was, as I noted above, Socrates who was misbehaving). Socrates at least is seeing, in effect, the cold sweat beginning to gleam on Protagoras’ forehead. Thus Alcibiades’ remarks on Protagoras’ comportment after Socrates’ triumphant exposition of Simonides are instructive if read in light of the predicament of Akestor:

In reply to this and similar things Protagoras gave no clear indication of what he was going to do. So Alcibiades looked at Callias and said, ‘Callias, do you think that Protagoras is being well-behaved (καλῶς), not telling us whether he’ll answer or not? I don’t think so, anyhow. So let him either join in the discussion or tell us that he’s not willing to, so that we know where he stands, and Socrates, or anyone else who wants to, can take up a discussion with someone else.’ And Protagoras, ashamed (αἰσχυνθείς), so it seemed to me, by these words of Alcibiades and by the entreaties (δεομένου) of Callias and practically everybody else, with great reluctance brought himself to continue the discussion (μόγις προυτράπετο εἰς τὸ διαλέγεσθαι), and told me to put the questions and he would answer.

Protagoras 348b1-c4, trans. Taylor, modified.

Protagoras is at the mercy of his flattering company, and it is Socrates who is taking control of the situation to the extent he can. In the following chapter I will show how this negotiated way forward actually works. At this point, however, it should be clear that Plato has reached the comic tradition I have charted previously to paint Protagoras as a sophistic *kolax* amongst others, and a rather pathetic one at that: one who cynically uses his tongue for luxurious gains. Socrates seems to have an interest in exposing this fact—if not to Callias, then to Hippocrates.

A last note or addendum here is fitting. That Protagoras is implicitly understood to be a flatterer explains a curious part of Protagoras' self-presentation that has always puzzled me, namely his talk of 'former sophists' having put on disguises but having been found out.

Protagoras says that it is reasonable to be wary of foreigners who waltz into town and take the young away from hearth and home—the elderly and young alike—the foreigners being under the pretension that *their* company is better than the company of one's own (316c5-d1). As Protagoras puts it at 316d2-3, he himself should be careful, 'for no small envies arise on account of these things, as well as many and varied forms of hatred and scheming' (οὐ γὰρ μικροὶ περὶ αὐτὰ φθόνοι τε γίνονται καὶ ἄλλαι δυσμένειαι τε καὶ ἐπιβουλαί.). But people fail to realise, says Protagoras, that the sophistic art is very ancient. Poets such as Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides were sophists. People like (τοὺς ἀμφί) Orpheus and Musaeus, too, who possess the oracular art. Hiccup the wrestler and expert gymnast; Herodicus, the ostensible founder of the medical art (and teacher of Hippocrates); Agathocles the musician, and many others—all sophists.²¹ These foreign and domestic experts, however, fearing the weight of all the envies, plots, and hatreds that would ensue if they were to openly declare themselves sophists, 'fabricated a costume and were content to veil themselves' (φοβουμένους τὸ ἐπαχθὲς αὐτῆς, πρόσχημα ποιεῖσθαι καὶ προκαλύπτεσθαι, 316d5-6) using each of their arts as a disguise and outer covering. But they failed in their designs and were exposed by the elites of the cities, however, who notice everything, as opposed to the mass of humanity who notice nothing (317a2-6). Indeed, it is much idiocy (πολλὴ μωρία) to get caught while in disguise, and for that reason Protagoras openly declares himself to be a sophist and to teach men (τε σοφιστὴς εἶναι καὶ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους, 317b4), so as not to come to any harm.

What explains Protagoras' use of this strange imagery of dressing-up and putting on disguises? The point, I suggest, is that *Protagoras* is himself dressing-up and wearing a disguise, which renders the final point about getting found-out in the act of deception to be 'much idiocy' thoroughly ironic. Protagoras is in the very act of implicating himself as the *πάνουργος*—or criminal trying to get away with his crimes but who is ultimately found out—

²¹ Were these some of the characters of Platon's *Sophistai*? See n. 101 above for the variety of its characters.

that he claims not be (317a6-c2). Certainly Socrates is attempting to expose the criminal, to pull the disguise right off in front of the others.

That Protagoras should be understood to be wearing a disguise is significantly strengthened in light of the fact that in the *Gorgias*, the flatterer puts on the *mask* of a genuine expert, seeking to disguise his true designs as well. Describing the nature of *kolakeia* as if it were a comically embodied thing (this is clear by 462e7), Socrates elaborates in the following manner on his theory of how *kolakeia* pretends to be the art it is:

ἡ κολακευτικὴ αἰσθομένη —οὐ γνοῦσα λέγω ἀλλὰ στοχασαμένη—τέτραχα
ἑαυτὴν διανείμασα, ὑποδύσα ὑπὸ ἑκάστων τῶν μορίων, προσποιεῖται εἶναι
τοῦτο ὅπερ ὑπέδου, καὶ τοῦ μὲν βελτίστου οὐδὲν φροντίζει, τῷ δὲ ἀεὶ ἡδίστῳ
θηρεύεται τὴν ἄνοιαν καὶ ἐξαπατᾷ, ὥστε δοκεῖ πλείστου ἀξία εἶναι.

Kolakeia perceives [these arts, such as true legislating and deliberating; gymnastics and medicine]—not by knowing, I say, but by guessing—and divides itself into four. Putting on the mask of each of them, it pretends to be the thing it has masked-up to play; and of what is best it gives no mind to at all, but rather, always using what is most pleasant, it hunts after ignorance, beguiles and cheats it thoroughly, making [his] *kolakeia* seem to be really worth something.²²

Gorgias 464c5-d3

Thus Protagoras ‘wears a mask’ like an archetypal Platonic flatterer and Socrates seems to be doing what he can to verbally remove it. The imagery of mask-wearing and dressing-up may have an indebtedness to Eupolis’ *Kolakes*, too, as I will argue in Chapter Four. Protagoras is a sham, dressed up and wearing the mask of a teacher. Protagoras is a surreptitious *kolax*, and Plato has reached into the comic tradition to reveal this.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid the foundation for an intertextual reading of the *Protagoras* in light of Eupolis’ *Kolakes* specifically, and the comic tradition which pitted Socrates against

²² An alternative translation of ‘καὶ τοῦ μὲν βελτίστου οὐδὲν φροντίζει’ may be ‘and of what is best it gives no “*phrontis*” at all’—the point being that Socrates is reclaiming the value of the comic *phrontistēs* altogether, as I will argue later. A more neutral approach is given above, however. Greek and Stephanus pages for the *Gorgias* is from Dodds (1990). For indications that this very passage is influenced by the *Kolakes* (esp. Fr. 172 K.A.), see below.

flattering sophists generally. This foundation supports the analysis described in the following chapters. At first, I aimed to show that Plato's 'comic method'—on account of an analysis of Athenaeus on the *Protagoras*—seems to approximate to the Middle Comic method of allusive ridicule rather than to the outright slander characteristic of the Old; that insofar as Plato 'does' comedy, he uses allusive motifs that are probably closer to Middle Comic technique, a point that will be explored more fully once we have a general understanding of the comic undertones of the dialogue. The chapter also illustrates that Plato heaped upon Protagoras a host of tropes characteristic of flatterers in the sophist's namesake dialogue. Not only is the dialogue's setting redolent of the *Kolakes* in setting and bears many of the same dramatis personae, but an analysis of Protagoras' locutions and mannerisms indicate his identity of a para-comic flatterer in themselves.

Protagoras is—certainly at the outset—eager to please at all costs; and he likely holds himself to a godlike, ridiculous standard, reminiscent of the flatterers in the parabolic self-assertions of the *Kolakes*. An inkling of the comic *contrast* with Socrates was indicated in Socrates' increasing irritation with Protagoras, although this does not negate the fact of Protagoras' false, flattering nature. Instead, this irritation and hostility shows that there are methodological considerations at stake here: not only is Socrates attempting to expose Protagoras as a fraud wearing the mask of an expert in virtue, but Socrates really does appear to want to get to the bottom of the question of the unity of virtue. To that end, Socrates pivots once more and agrees to stay, if only in accordance with the rules he set out at 338b3-e3. Throughout all of this, I demonstrated how Protagoras' nature can be understood through Plato's other treatments of sophists and flatterers: in the *Hippias* dialogues and in the *Gorgias*, suggesting a consistent way of thinking about sophists as flatterers throughout Plato.

In the following chapter, I will show how Plato had his Socrates, through the rules established at 338b3-e3, turn the discussion with Protagoras into something approximating a formal *agon* between two sophistic or poetic pairs, a competition with symbolic roots extending to the legendary battles between the Seven Sages. I will argue that Plato appropriates a scene in Eupolis (if not the structure of that whole play), where—as in *Frogs*—there was a makeshift Panhellenic festival where sophistic pairs competed in poetry on the basis of the story underlying the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*.

Understanding the holistic connection of the *Protagoras* with the *Kolakes* thus furnishes several important conclusions. It explains the (in)famously ‘sophistic’ nature of Socrates in the interpretation of poetry and later throughout the dialogue. Moreover, in having Socrates *win* this competition, Plato reaffirms Socrates’ unique, Delphic-sanctioned wisdom, whilst also significantly deepening our understanding of the nature of that wisdom. Moreover, Plato ridicules such sophistic conventions as more a display for the pleasure to the senses—a kind of flashiness in the quest of material gain—than a quest for truth (although not without, I stress, seeking to salvage something from the convention). And lastly, Plato affirms Socrates’ comic ἀδολεσχία as opposed to the flattering talk of the sophists, the very dualism I argued was present in the comic record in the first chapter. In this sense, the following chapter is something of a necessary interlude to a concluding discussion of the nature of the flatterers and Socrates’ para-comic character in the *Protagoras*, thus completing the task of exploring how this dialogue—and indeed, others—appropriated the duality of ‘flatterer and philosopher’, or ‘Sophists against Socrates’ as found in comedy.

Chapter Three

A Competition in Flattery and Socratic Sage Wisdom

So Plato, in the *Protagoras*, relied on the comic tradition, and particularly Eupolis, to castigate and define sophists as duplicitous panderers for luxuries. Already this conclusion—wedded to the discussions regarding the *Hippias* dialogues and the *Gorgias*—challenges the dominant, current notion that sophists, insofar as they were ‘comic’ characters for Plato were merely ἀλαζόνες, or boasters. The truth is that ἀλαζονεία is just one among many tools in a flatterer's toolkit.¹

But that means only one half of my goal is complete, as I am arguing that Plato is reshaping and reframing the faint or passing *duality* of Socrates against his fellow intellectuals with respect to pleasure and patronage in comedy. So what, then, about Socrates rather than just the others? What can we say about *his* comic character in the dialogue, and how might it conform or conflict with the Old Comic tradition inside Eupolis and outside it? This chapter serves as a prerequisite to answering that question. Through a series of somewhat complicated and interlacing historical steps, I must dig deeper into some of the structural or holistic connections that the *Protagoras* has to the *Kolakes* in terms of, as I will argue, its plot and ideological outlook. This does not require me to offer a ‘reconstruction’ of the *Kolakes* but rather to argue that there was a specific type of episode within it, one that was either pervasive throughout the comedy or even just a single episode.

Return then to where the previous chapter left off, this ‘mutual circle of flattery’. Each of the sophists has flattered the sensibilities of the others to make Callias happy and to avoid breaking off the discussion after Callias had taken hold of Socrates’ cloak, imploring him to stay and ‘gratify us all!’ (335d5). Hippias is the last of the three sophists to speak. He exhorts Socrates not to be too short in his manner of discussion because it is not ‘pleasurable’ (ἡδὺ) to Protagoras and because some form of rhetoric ‘seems most appropriate and elegant’ for the discussion (‘μεγαλοπρεπέστεροι καὶ εὐσχημονέστεροι ἡμῖν φαίνονται’, 338a5). Nevertheless, Protagoras must not be too long in his manner of speech either, says Hippias (384-6). It is

¹ I say ‘dominant, current notion’ because Trivigno (2016)—which itself relies heavily upon the work of Cornford ([1934] 1961)—has yet to be challenged.

suggested that a presiding judge should be appointed to hold each party to account in answering according to the proper length: ‘an umpire, master of ceremonies, and chief officer’ (ῥαβδοῦχον καὶ ἐπιστάτην καὶ πρύτανιν’, 338b1). After Hippias speaks, Socrates ‘starts to play along’, as I said, in agreeing to stay, presumably for his own purposes of salvaging the discussion.

Socrates lays down the rules of engagement for him if he is to stay: Protagoras will ask Socrates as many questions as he likes until he is satisfied, after which Socrates will take his turn in asking questions, and the whole company will play the presiding judge in forcing each party to answer to the other. The terminology of the passage in question is important to observe in full:

Everyone there thought [that Prodicus’ proposal to appoint a judge to keep the answers to the right length] was a fine idea and praised it (επήνεσαν). Callias said he wouldn’t let me go, and they requested me to choose a moderator (ἐπιστάτην). I said it would be a disgrace (αἰσχρὸν) to choose someone to umpire our words (βραβευτήν... τῶν λόγων). ‘For if’, I said, ‘the person chosen is going to be our inferior (χείρων), it is not right for an inferior to supervise his superiors (βελτιόνων). If he’s our peer (ὅμοιος) that’s no good either, because he will do the same as we would and be superfluous. Choose someone who’s our superior? I honestly think it’s impossible for you to choose someone wiser (σοφώτερόν) than Protagoras. And if you choose someone who is not his superior but claim that he is, then you’re insulting him (αἰσχρὸν καὶ τοῦτο τῷδε γίνεται). Protagoras is just not the insignificant sort of person (φαύλω ἀνθρώπῳ) for whom you appoint a supervisor (ἐπιστάτην). For myself, I don’t care one way or another. But as you have your heart set on this conference and these discussions (lit. ‘dialogues’) proceeding, and if that’s going to happen, this is what I am willing to do (ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐθέλω ποιῆσαι, ἵν’ ὁ προθυμεῖσθε συνουσία τε καὶ διάλογοι ἡμῖν γίνωνται).

If Protagoras is not willing to answer questions, let him ask them, and I will answer; and at the same time I will try to show him how I think the answerer ought to answer. When I’ve answered all the questions he wishes to ask, then it’s his turn to be accountable to me in the same way. So if he doesn’t seem ready and willing to answer the actual question asked, you and I will unite in urgently requesting (or ‘begging’) him, as you have of me, not to ruin our conference (ἐὰν οὖν μὴ δοκῇ πρόθυμος εἶναι πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ἐρωτώμενον ἀποκρίνεσθαι, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινῇ δεησόμεθα αὐτοῦ ἅπερ ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ, μὴ διαφθεῖρειν τὴν συνουσίαν). This will not require any one supervisor (ἐπιστάτην), since you will all supervise together (πάντες κοινῇ ἐπιστατήσετε).’ Everyone agreed this was the thing to do. Protagoras wanted no part of it, but all the same, he had to agree to ask questions (ὁμῶς δὲ

ἡναγκάσθη ὁμολογῆσαι ἐρωτήσειν), and when he had asked enough, to respond in turn with short answers.

Protagoras 338b3-338e2, tans. Lombardo and Bell, modified.

After these words, the discussion about virtue continues. At first, Protagoras transfers the debate into the realm of poetry, the vexed interpretation of Simonides, or the ‘Simonides Episode’ (338e7-348c5). After this, Socrates returns to the question of the unity of virtue (348c1), a discussion lasting until the dialogue's aporetic end. The subject of virtue is the same in each case, but in different contexts of discussion.

In what follows, I argue that the discussion, and indeed the whole dramatic tenor of the dialogue, has turned into an *institutionalised form of debate*. It was a form of debate that occurred at Panhellenic gatherings and games, rooted in the traditions of the wisdom of the Seven Sages, and eventually co-opted and dominated by sophists and orators. Håken Tell concludes his study on the nature of such competitions in the following terms:

What emerges [from the evidence is a tradition] of competitive performances of wisdom where such qualities as poetic excellence, riddle-solving capabilities, and specialised expertise were highly valued and rewarded. The competitive venues for these performances employed a language that mirrors the vocabulary we traditionally associate with athletic competition, for example, the use of terms such as “judges,” “winners,” “crowns,” or “prizes.” A crucial feature of these performances seems to have consisted in the ability on the part of the sage [or claimant to sage-like wisdom] to answer any questions posed to him.²

There are two reasons Plato has his Socrates turn the discussion of virtue into such a form of debate. One reason is internal to the human proceedings of the dialogue, which also cuts to Socrates’ ability to take control of the discussion. Callias would not permit Socrates to leave, which gave Socrates an ability to find a way forward in a way that would please everyone just enough, or in a way that is—at *first* only, or in the first part of the discussion of virtue on Protagoras’ terms—‘not [in] this staccato form of your dialogues, to search in a way that is excessively brief’ (‘καὶ μήτε σὲ τὸ ἀκριβὲς τοῦτο εἶδος τῶν διαλόγων ζητεῖν τὸ κατὰ βραχὺ

² Tell (2011): 144, modified.

λίαν', 338a1-2). Socrates, however, will have his turn after the discussion over virtue in his own manner. The point is that an apparent 'compromise' is a ruse to control the discussion.

On the other hand, there is a high degree of *dramatic* artifice here: Plato has turned the discussion into such a debate because, as I will argue, Eupolis in the *Kolakes* staged one, too. I will argue that Eupolis staged a makeshift Panhellenic gathering of claimants to wisdom in or just outside the palatial home of Callias, where poets and sophists displayed their 'wisdom' in a debate likely over poetry and/or virtue in funeral games/celebrations for the recently-passed Hipponicus. In the comedy, one or another competitor was crowned the victor, after which a banquet was held—that or the banquet was held at the same time as the competition—in which the contestants and/or victors were rewarded not only with the symbolic crown of sage wisdom but with (or perhaps *only* with) the basest of pleasures, as Maximus of Tyre's testimony suggests (test. iv). For Eupolis—or the internal logic of the play at least—the 'wisdom' displayed at such competition was merely duplicitous, pleasure-producing flattery, a 'competition in flattery' as Maximus put it. In this way, Eupolis was in close company with Aristophanes, who adapted the story at the heart of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (*Contest of Homer and Hesiod*) in which there was such a contest of sophistic-poetic wits, to frame the structure of *Frogs* of 405/4 BCE, as he had done for parts of *Peace* of 422. Eupolis, I argue, did so only the following year in the *Kolakes*. Indeed, even Cratinus may have staged such a contest in his *Archilochuses* in the 420s or earlier.

Looking at the discussion of virtue after the episode of mutual flattery in the *Protagoras* from this holistic, intertextual perspective explains many curious features of the dialogue. It explains the supremely delightful and humorous nature (that is, the *sophistic* nature) of Socrates' analysis of Simonides. And in having Socrates utterly destroy Protagoras in this formalised competition of wisdom—in what turns out to be based on the Eupolidean 'competition in flattery'—Plato explodes the conventions of sophistic argument altogether as geared towards pleasure production rather than truth-seeking. However, Socrates' winning the debate (by turning it, I presume, towards Socratic principles: see esp. 345e1-346a2 on intellectualism) also means he adopts its conventional prize: that of Delphic-sanctioned wisdom. This is why the dialogue ends in *aporia*, for Socrates' victory is an affirmation of his unique sort of Delphic wisdom as we know it from the *Apology*. Kathryn Morgan has argued

that the *Protagoras* is framed in large part over the question of who can best lay claim to the title of the ‘sage’, and it is Socrates’ aporetic form of wisdom, she argues, that comes out on top (though without any recognition of such a formalised debate).³ This chapter is, then, an extension of that argument. Lastly, a close analysis of the kind of wisdom understood to be on offer *vis-à-vis* the ‘tripod narrative’ will lead us into the following chapter regarding Socrates’ ability to see and understand the souls of the flatterers, a noetic insight that deliberately recalls the metaphysical worldview, indeed the comic worldview, of flatterers and philosophers in the *Gorgias*.

To be clear, I do not want, nor do I think it possible, to furnish anything like a complete analysis of the *Protagoras* in relation to the *Kolakes*, as I argued in the Introduction—as if we had the latter work available to reconstruct and set next to Plato’s dialogue side-by-side. I aim in this chapter merely to show that we must take seriously the notion that many of the most persistent questions about the dialogue can be answered, and new horizons about the dialogue and its connections to others revealed, if we look to its appropriation of the ‘competition in flattery’ I will argue took place in the *Kolakes* (to whatever degree or extent it did, in fact, take place).

Thus, in the first section of this chapter, I will lay out the origins of these competitions in wisdom as symbolically grounded in the ‘legend of the tripod’, or the traditions of the Seven Sages themselves in competition and performance. The second section demonstrates how the sophists transformed and laid claim to that tradition at the Panhellenic festivals, adopting the mantle of ‘sage’ for themselves in the process. The third section shows how a work entitled *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (*Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*) is our best evidence as to the rules of such sophistic engagements, and that the story underlying it shaped the basis for several comedies of the mid-fifth century. The fourth section surveys the detractors of these ‘spectacles of wisdom’, which included Eupolis, and I furnish my own conservative ‘reconstruction’ of one such competition that took place in his comedy, in ways similar to the works of other poets who had done the same. The fifth and final section shows how Plato took from Eupolis and the broader tradition of criticism against these spectacles as

³ Morgan (2016). The purpose of that paper is to show that Plato often has Socrates in some sort of formal competition with the sophists, such as (most notably) with Gorgias in the *Phaedrus*, as she also argues.

being mere flattery or a pleasure for the senses. That is, in having Socrates dominate the sophists in such a spectacle, he cleverly ridicules the convention, revealing that it is Socrates who can best assist states and persons (the traditional purview of the sophists and the Sages), but most importantly for my purposes the nature of Socrates' own Delphic-sanctioned, aporetic wisdom as one which can see into the moral future of souls.

1. Competitions in Wisdom: The Legend of the Tripod

These 'competitions in wisdom' that became so popular in the fifth and fourth centuries had their symbolic roots in certain stories about the Seven Sages, a loosely canonical group of wise poets and politicians of the sixth century BCE.⁴ That is, the legend (or, more properly 'legends') of the tripod. I gave a brief outline of this tradition above, but it is now necessary to examine the evidence more thoroughly to understand what was symbolically at stake or on offer in the possession and passing of this object.

The major evidence and sources for the legend are contained in a characteristically jumbled form by Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Thales* 1.27.10-1.34.⁵ There are several major variants of the story.⁶ The first and most commonly repeated in the literature (and the first which Diogenes relates) is that a group of youths from Miletus bought a batch of fish from their local fishermen, in which was found a splendid tripod—an archaic signifier of

⁴ Plato's list of Thales, Pittacus, Bias, Solon, Cleobulus, Myson, and Chilon at *Prot.* 343a1-4 is our earliest explicit reference to a canonical group of seven poets, politicians, and proto-philosophers of the sixth century we still call 'the Seven Sages'. Aside from one study some three decades ago claiming that Plato invented the very notion of a canonical seven, namely Fehling (1985), scholarship is otherwise universal in recognising Plato to have been preserving an Indo-European tradition that stretched into deep time and I follow that consensus here. Anyway, the actual number of sages is not my concern here. The most comprehensive treatment of the sages and their legacy, as well as the highly-malleable meaning of a '*sophos*' to date is Kurke (2011): 51-239. On the function of the sages in Greek culture and their relations to 'competitions in wisdom' specifically, from the archaic period to the fourth century, I follow Tell (2011): Chapters 5 and 6, who in turn collates the main evidence of Lloyd (1987): 50-107 on such competitions. I also follow Morgan (2016) and (1994) on sophists as claimants to such wisdom, with Socrates in contention amongst them. Bassino (2019) and Graziosi (2001) I follow on poetic competition as such, as well as Martin's seminal (1993) on the wisdom of the sages as essentially performative. I follow Gernet (1981): 78-81, too, on the symbolism of the tripod as such. See also Snell (1971) for a helpful compendium of the ancient sources for the sages, with German translation. The analysis of the *three forms* of wisdom ascribed to the sages in the legend(s) of the tripod is largely my own but aims to be rather uncontroversial. My account of the genetic heritage of the tripod legends with the sophists at the games is also my own, though it has been repeatedly hinted at or alluded to across the literature, but never fully argued.

⁵ Citations of Diogenes are, again, from Dorandi (2013).

⁶ Wiersma (1933) attempts to determine which of the many versions has the greatest antiquity; all of the major currents were in any case current in the fifth and certainly fourth centuries of Plato's day, as is universally recognised in scholarship.

victory in Panhellenic games, and the same sort of object upon which the Priestesses of Apollo were stationed.⁷ Naturally the discovery of such an object caused a dispute as to whom it belonged, until one of the fishermen consulted the Oracle at Delphi as to what should be done. He received the following reply:

ἔκγονε Μιλήτου, τρίποδος πέρι Φοῖβον ἐρωτᾷς;
τίς σοφία πάντων πρῶτος, τούτου τρίποδ' αὐδῶ.

Offspring of Meletus; you ask Phoibos Apollo concerning the tripod?

Whomsoever is first amongst all in wisdom, of the tripod, I say, to him it belongs.

D.L. 1.29.3-4

Thereupon all parties involved agreed to give it to Thales of Meletus. Thales in turn is said to have given it to other *sophoi* until it was given to Solon. At last, Diogenes reports, Solon declared that Apollo himself was wisest, and so dedicated the tripod to the god by sending it back to the Priestess at Delphi.

Another variant on the ‘accidental discovery’ version is decidedly political in nature (although all the stories are political, with the tripod either belonging to the ‘East’ or ‘West’), but this story is structured so as to stress the *temporal and synoptic* nature of the wisdom sanctioned by the possession of the tripod, as well as the ability to end conflict and assist states. In this version, the tripod had originally been crafted by Hephaestus, and Helen eventually threw it into the sea on the way to Troy after it had been stolen from Menelaus by Paris, Helen saying it would be a cause of war or strife (‘εἰπούσης ὅτι περιμάχητος ἔσται’, 1.32.5). In the passage of time, a group of youths from Lebedus purchased the batch of fish with the tripod from fishermen from Miletus. The Lebedeans brought the tripod to Kos, and after the Keans ignored the ambassadorial appeals from Miletus for its return, the Lebedeans and Milesians went to bloody war. Some Milesians finally made their way to Delphi to consult the Oracle.

⁷ For tripods as archaic prizes see, e.g., *Il.* 11.700, 22.164, and 23.259, with Bassino (2018): 169, who also notes that that there is still extant a fifth-century BCE tripod dedicated to a victor in *poetic* competition.

To whom should the tripod go? asked the Milesians. As in the first story: ‘To the wisest’ (‘τῷ σοφωτάτῳ’, 1.32.12; 1.33.9). The Keans, for their part, consulted their local Priestess at Didyma with the same question. To whom should it go?

οὐ πρότερον λήξει νεῖκος Μερόπων καὶ Ἰώνων,
πρὶν τρίποδα χρύσειον, ὃν Ἥφαιστος βάλε πόντῳ,
ἐκ πόλιος πέμψητε καὶ ἐς δόμον ἀνδρὸς ἵκηται,
ὃς σοφία τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα ἔμπρο τ’ ἐόντα†.

There shall be no end of strife between Mortals and Ionians,⁸
Until the golden tripod, which Hephaestus threw into the sea,
Be sent away by all of you to the house of a man to whom it most belongs,
The one whose wisdom [knows] the things that are, that shall be, †and that were†.
(Or, ‘The one in whose wisdom contains the things that are, shall be, and were.’)⁹

D.L. 1.33.2-6.

Both sides thereafter agreed to give the tripod to Thales and the war came to an end. After Thales sent round the tripod to the other sages, it finally made its way back to Thales, whereupon he dedicated it to Apollo at Didyma.

This specific version of the story and its longer oracle is important to observe closely. For, in having Socrates symbolically adopt such wisdom (as I will argue he does), that adoption explains *how and why* Socrates can have a noetic, moral insight into the souls and futures of the sophists. Now, this specific oracle is a clear adaptation of the so-called ‘eternity formula’ in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (22-53), where the poet says he received from the Muses on Mount Helicon the ability to have a totalising, synoptic vision of the nature of the universe, gods, and mortals.¹⁰ As the poet tells us, the story goes as follows. At first, Hesiod was just a

⁸ Lebedus and Kos were evidently in a strategic alliance against Miletus in this matter, but all were Ionians.

⁹ The ambiguity of the final line has led many editors, ancient and modern, to supply an ostensibly missing verb to properly clarify how the ‘σοφία’ relates to the one who has it. I suggest the oracle’s meaning was intended to be fluid—as does, I think, Dorandi, who deletes the many and varied suggestions that piled-up over the years. This fluidity in meaning may be confirmed when we see, further below, that the oracle is an adaptation of the ‘eternity formula’ of Hesiod *Theogony* 22-53, which itself seems to have had multiple formulations in Hesiod’s time, as Ashton (2022) has recently argued.

¹⁰ Greek and translations of Hesiod are from Most (2018), unless otherwise noted.

dumb, field-dwelling farmer, a disgrace and a mere belly (25-6), who knew how to approximate to speaking the truth without any real understanding—unlike the Muses, offspring of the immortal gods (27-8). But then ‘they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed ones who always are...’ (ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα... 31-32). Then Hesiod tells us that, in a slightly different formulation, he eventually did take up ‘telling of what is and what will be and what was before, harmonising in their sound...’ (εἴρουσαι τὰ τ’ ἐόντα τὰ τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα, φωνῇ ὁμηρεῦσαι... 38-39). Hesiod in this way became possessed of a divine insight: into the structure of the universe (43-46), then into the goodness, supremacy, and power of the gods (47-49), and lastly, insight into the nature of human beings (50-52).

Šćepanović has recently shown that pre-Socratic philosophers—such as Parmenides, Empedocles, and Heraclitus—imbued their works with this formula so as to demonstrate their supra-mortal wisdom about things divine, especially with respect to the physical structure of the universe.¹¹ Šćepanović concludes her study with Plato’s *Timaeus* as just another iteration of this Hesiodic wisdom. I have nothing to say about these other philosophers or the *Timaeus* here; my purpose is to note that Socrates, in the *Protagoras*, expresses a ‘Promethean, moral foresight’ into the souls of the sophists and demonstrates through action a superior, supra-mortal wisdom precisely because he adopts this Hesiod wisdom that was ascribed to the sophists in their formalised battles of wits. But to prove the latter claim will require the steps which follow.

Note too that the Oracle here indicates that the possessor of the tripod had a special insight and foreknowledge that allowed the possessor to resolve factionalism and wars. The Oracle stresses the sage’s role as a unique political advisor. This makes sense in light of the fact that Thales was most famous for predicting an eclipse, and was able to use his meteorological knowledge to best predict the rainfall for the cultivation of his olive trees (a knowledge that made him a wealthy man), and was remembered for his clairvoyant advice to

¹¹ See Šćepanović (2022) on the archaic meaning of the ‘eternity formula’ up to Aristotle, with bibliography. Though see Ashton (2022) for an anthropological-philosophical examination of the conceptions and usages of time in antiquity—her first chapter on this ‘eternity formula’. She notes (p. 28) that Epimetheus and Prometheus were themselves understood to have noetic powers under this Hesiodic formula, but does not quite make the Socrates connection I am trying to establish.

the rulers in Ionia. The latter legend, as seen in Herodotus 1.170, also contains a story of another canonical Sage, Bias of Priene, that “[he] floated a plan so full with potential that the Ionians, had they only adopted it, would surely have ended up the most prosperous of all the Greeks. ‘Here is what you must do,’ Bias told them...” (trans. Holland, modified). Solon, for his part in this sort of foresight, foresaw the rise of the tyrant Peisistratus (D.L. 1.50), and Chilon of Sparta was by the Hellenistic period purported to have written 200 verses emphasising that the virtue of a man is foresight about things to come: ‘He composed elegiac verse, around 200 lines, and he used to say that a man’s virtue is foresight about things to come obtained by reasoning’ (καὶ ἔφασκε πρόνοιαν περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος λογισμῷ καταληπτὴν εἶναι ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν, D.L. 1.68, trans. White). I will argue it is no coincidence that ‘Promethean foresight’ is Socrates’ privileged value in the *Protagoras* given these overtones with the sage wisdom he adopts.

So the kind of wisdom which is established by the possession of the tripod in the above formulation at least is a Hesiodic one that bestows the capacity to have a moral and temporal, noetic insight into the universe, as well as invaluable political advice and into matters of virtue.

The second major variant of the legend and another spin on the sort of wisdom characteristic of the sage involves a tyrant or king who is himself already in possession of the tripod, or otherwise a golden or silver drinking vessel, that served the same symbolic function as the tripod in the other stories. Diogenes relates Callimachus’ third-century BCE, versified version of an earlier prose story, where a drinking vessel (φιάλη) was left behind at the death of a certain Arcadian Bathycles. The dying man had directed the drinking bowl ‘to be given to the most helpful amongst the wise’ (δοῦναι τῶν σοφῶν ὀνηϊστῶ, 1.28.11). Accordingly, the drinking bowl was given to Thales and, as in the other stories, made the rounds to Thales twice, after which he dedicated it to Apollo at Didyma. Thales dedicated it as a ‘prize’ or ‘monument of valour’ (ἀριστεῖον), the best of which the Greeks could offer (1.29.3-5). Eudoxus of Cnidus, Plato’s friend and contemporary, wrote that King Croesus gave Thales a ‘golden drinking cup’ (ποτήριον χρυσοῦν), as it belonged to the wisest of the Greeks, ‘τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τῶν Ἑλλήνων’ (1.29.9-11). Eventually it was dedicated to Apollo at Delphi, being the wisest of them all.

So much for the major versions of the tripod narrative and, indeed, what I have shown are the major variants of wisdom expressive of the sage to whom such wisdom belongs. That is, the sage is the wisest of mortals in general, the one with the greatest temporal and moral *sophia* in relation to gods and mortals, and whose wisdom is most helpful in political matters.

But *how* was the tripod, bowl, or cup, actually passed around in these stories? The answer is clear from within Diogenes and outside it: in a Panhellenic environment and competitively. As to the Panhellenic environment, the sages are said to have met—when they fictionally did as a collective—at the religious festivals of Delphi, Didyma, and Olympia, both in public and at private parties (see, e.g., D.L. 1.40, 1.72, Plutarch *Life of Solon* 1.1-4 and *Dinner of the Seven Sages*). But the passing of the object that sanctioned such wisdom was not a purely passive phenomenon, where one wise man simply gives the object to a different sage in a spirit of mutual fraternity. Whilst the passing of the object itself was apparently done without any animosity, that was only after the ‘victory’ of one sage over another had already been made explicitly clear in the case of a competition between them (which in large part forms the structure of Plutarch’s accounts). The process itself was agonistic, in virtue of some form of ‘display’ or performative speech act, each sage trying to ‘out-do’ the other. But it was the bestowal of *victory* that was without animosity, as I have indicated earlier with respect to Protagoras bestowing victory upon Socrates, whether he wants to or not by the end of the dialogue.

That said, the competitive aspects themselves seem to have become rather extreme in some stories. Diogenes reports versions of the story that reflect a fifth or fourth-century understanding of the sages as outright competitors in the Assembly competing for a vote in various speech acts. We are told that a certain Andron wrote, in his *On the Tripod*, that the Argives ‘offered the tripod as a prize for virtue to the wisest amongst the Greeks’ (ἄθλον ἀρετῆς τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τρίποδα θεῖναι), and Aristodemus of Sparta and Chilon were ‘judged’ (κριθῆναι) before spectators. There are differing versions of who won the contest (1.30.9-11). And the performative element in these competitions, too, is clear in these cases. Aristodemus ‘conceded victory’ (παραχωρῆσαι) to Chilon; and that, in another case, when Aristodemus went before the Greeks to be judged, he merely had to display, through a

mere utterance or speech, some insight that was sufficiently captivating such as to receive the tripod over his competitor:

ὥς γὰρ δὴ ποτ' Ἀριστόδαμον
φᾶσ' οὐκ ἀπάλαμνον ἐν Σπάρτῃ λόγον
εἰπεῖν· 'χρήματ' ἄνηρ, πενιχρὸς
δ' οὐδείς πέλετ' ἐσλός'.

Just so Aristodemus they say
Did utter once in Sparta no feeble
Words: 'Wealth makes a man,
And a pauper's never noble'

D.L. 1.31, trans. White, modified.

This was likewise the case for Bias. The Athenians, having come upon the tripod in yet another version of the legend, voted in the *Ekklēsia* that it go to him as the 'wisest' (1.82); for Bias was legendarily wise not only for his poetic insight, but for his legal acumen. An unclaimed prize for the highest victories in Archaic Panhellenic competitions—such as are the very prizes offered at the funeral games for Patroclus at *Il.* 23.257-273, or the tripod given to Hesiod in the *Nautilia* of *Works and Days* 648-659 (more on which below)—strongly implies, if not outright necessitates, an agonistic context for its possession.

In short, we may agree with Louis Gernet on the competitions characteristic of the tripod narratives: 'The tripod or the [drinking] vase is regarded as a prize awarded on the basis of a competition of wisdom, indeed, a contest of happiness'.¹² As a last note, however, it is clear that many of these stories reflected a practice (to be outlined in the following chapter) which was in full swing during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and beyond. But in the following section, I will nevertheless show that those competitions did harken back to the cultural capital of the legend of the tripod of the Sages, which was, in turn, apparently always understood to take place in a performative, competitive, and Panhellenic context. The winners

¹² Gernet (1981): 79, quoted in Tell (2011): 123.

in Classical and Hellenistic battles of wits claimed the symbolic prize ascribed to the Sages themselves.

2. Competitions in Wisdom at the Games: Sophistic Usurpations

At this point, then, we can jump to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, where the games at Olympia and elsewhere were saturated by claimants to wisdom in the realms of poetry, oratory, sophistry, ‘Presocratic’ theorising, and even medical knowledge.¹³ It is clear, moreover, that the cultural capital of *sophia* bestowed upon the victors at the Panhellenic games maintained an implicit link to the legend of the tripod, that the ‘wisdom’ won in combat there was analogous to the wisdom characteristic of the Seven Sages. Everyone from Herodotus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Hippias, Gorgias, Lysias, Plato, Isocrates, and Diogenes the Cynic are said in various and many sources to have made appearances at Olympia, where they ‘displayed’ their wisdom to the throngs of spectators, both in word and deed.¹⁴ Before we look into that evidence, however, let us note the quality of these games, summed up perhaps best in a hostile account by the first century CE orator and philosopher, Dio Chrysostom, who, in an oration delivered at the Olympic Games of 97 CE, spoke of the reputed impressions of Diogenes the Cynic at the Isthmian Games of the mid-fourth-century BCE:

καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε ἦν περὶ τὸν νεῶν τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ἀκούειν πολλῶν μὲν σοφιστῶν κακοδαιμόνων βοῶντων καὶ λοιδορουμένων ἀλλήλοις, καὶ τῶν λεγομένων μαθητῶν ἄλλου ἄλλῳ μαχομένων, πολλῶν δὲ συγγραφέων ἀναγινωσκόντων ἀναίσθητα συγγράμματα, πολλῶν δὲ ποιητῶν ποιήματα ᾄδόντων, καὶ τούτους ἐπαινοῦντων ἐτέρων, πολλῶν δὲ θαυματοποιῶν θαύματα ἐπιδεικνύντων, πολλῶν δὲ τερατοσκόπων τέρατα κρινόντων, μυρίων δὲ ῥητόρων δίκας στρεφόντων, οὐκ ὀλίγων δὲ καπῆλων διακαπηλευόντων ὅτι τύχοιεν ἕκαστος.

That was also the time to hear crowds of wretched sophists around the Temple of Poseidon as they shouted and heaped abuse on each other, and their so-called students as they fought with one another, and many historians reading out their dumb writings, and many poets reciting poetry to the applause of others, and many magicians showing their tricks, many fortune-tellers telling fortunes, countless orators perverting justice, and not a few peddlers peddling whatever came to hand.

¹³ For a comprehensive sourcebook of evidence for the games *tout court*, see Miller (2004).

¹⁴ The following evidence for the wise men at the games closely follows Tell (2010): Chapter Five and Six, and Morgan (1994).

I will return to the central force of this criticism of the games in the following section. But this passage makes it clear that the games were a literal *locus classicus* for anyone who wished to showcase their wisdom, either by means of competition through a battle of wits or simply display (display nevertheless being a form of competition, as noted in the previous section).

It is also clear, when considering other evidence, that the symbolism of the tripod simmered at the surface of these spectacles, especially when it came to sophists and orators. Take Gorgias at Delphi and Olympia. At Delphi, he is said to have been so successful in bewitching the audiences with his written speeches and prepared responses to questions that he set up a golden statue of himself, just as would be expected of a victorious physical athlete.¹⁵ Philostratus (1.9.4-5) says that after his ‘Pythian Oration’, the golden statue was dedicated to and deposited in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, a clear recognition of Gorgias’ continuity with the sage tradition. At Olympia, too, he is likewise said to have—and very likely did in fact—set up a golden statue of himself. This is not simply recorded by Pausanias (6.17.7), but there is still extant an inscription found at Olympia. Its words ran in part:

Γοργίου ἀσκήσαι ψυχὴν ἀρετῆς ἐς ἀγῶνας
οὐδεὶς πω θνητῶν καλλίον’ εὔρε τέχνην·
οὗ καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος γυάλοις εἰκὼν ἀνάκειται
οὐ πλούτου παράδειγμ’, εὐσεβίας δὲ τρόπων.

No mortal ever invented a finer art than Gorgias
To exercise the soul in competitions of virtue.
And it is of him that, in Apollo’s hollows, the statue is dedicated,
A paradigm not of wealth, but of the piety of his character.

D.K. A8, L.M. Gorgias P34 b2, trans. Laks-Most, modified.

The inscription is saturated by signifiers of and resonances with the tripod tradition: Gorgias, the greatest of mortals in competitions of virtue, and the statue itself being dedicated within the precinct of Apollo, maintains a physical as much as a spiritual connection to the legend.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Cicero *De orat.* 3.32.129, Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.* 33. 83, and Pausanias 10.18.17.

Hippias likewise laid claim to Apollonian sage wisdom at the games. Though our evidence is mostly from Plato, we have little reason to doubt the core of what is said—that Hippias, on account of his speeches delivered many times at Olympia, sought to upstage the wisdom and consequent fame of Pittacus, Bias, Thales, and other *sophoi* ‘all the way down to Anaxagoras’ (*H. Maj.* 281c3-8; the list of seven was not precisely canonical). Hippias tells Socrates at *H. Min.* 363c-d that he had visited the Olympic games every time he had the opportunity, both to deliver prepared orations on any topic and to answer any question posed to him; he says he ‘competed’ there (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) and never found anyone who is stronger (κρείττονι) than himself in anything (presumably in the realm of *sophia*, and his many and different crafts). A fragment of Hippias’ writing (L.M. Hippias D22, D.K. B6) implicitly shows that he held himself above the *sophoi* of the past because he is able to amalgamate the best and most helpful parts of their wisdom into a new and variegated discourse.¹⁶

Thus the Panhellenic games were, by the fifth century, regular meeting places of new-age *sophoi*, where they would ‘display’ their wares and lay claim, through competition—implicitly through mere display or explicitly through a battle of wits—to a tradition going back to the Seven Sages. And according to Plato, at least, the sophists had co-opted entirely this tradition, especially if the ability to assist persons and estates is crucial to the nature of a ‘sophist’.

Now, at these gatherings, we see that the contenders displayed their wares in speech, but they did so in *action*, too, *vis-à-vis* the nature of their very bodies. Consider again the case of Hippias, who displayed his very body as if it were an outward expression of his inner *sophia*, outrageously and infamously expressed at *H. Min.* 368a8-369a2. Hippias in that passage is said to have regaled himself in signet rings, fine shoes and clothing (clothes which are elsewhere said to be purple, as was Gorgias’); and he wore a luxurious, embroidered Persian belt. All of these he ‘boasted’ (μεγαλαθροθμένου) to have made himself, along with

¹⁶ ‘τούτων ἴσως εἴρηται τὰ μὲν Ὀρφεῖ, τὰ δὲ Μουσαίῳ κατὰ βραχὺ ἄλλω1 ἄλλαχοῦ, τὰ δὲ Ἡσιόδῳ τὰ δὲ Ὀμήρῳ, τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ποιητῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐν συγγραφαῖς τὰ μὲν Ἑλλήσι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροις· ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ πάντων τούτων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ2 ὁμόφυλα συνθεῖς τοῦτον καινὸν καὶ πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι’—‘Of these [ancient opinions] some have doubtless been expressed by Orpheus, others by Musaeus, to put it briefly, by each one in a different place, others by Hesiod, others by Homer, others by the other poets; others in treatises; some by Greeks, others by non-Greeks. But I myself have put together from out of all these the ones that are most important and are akin to one another, and on their basis I shall compose the following new and variegated discourse.’ L.M. Hippias D22, D.K. B6, trans. Laks-Most, modified.

manifold other works of craftsmanship. It is explicit that Hippias felt these things to be expressive of his superiority in *sophia* generally (368b2-5).

But Hippias was not the only one whose wisdom is said to have been predicated on outward appearances. This is clear in the case of Empedocles, too, another famous claimant to superior wisdom. Particularly instructive in this regard is a commentary on Empedocles and one fragment of his writing, which together imply that external splendour was understood both by himself and others to signify internal, sage-like brilliance. Empedocles, according to Diogenes Laertius 8.63 and 8.66, was a regular participant at Olympia. At 8.73, Diogenes tells us of the appearance and persona of Empedocles generally:

No doubt it was from [Empedocles' great wealth] that enabled him to don a purple robe and over it a golden girdle, as Favorinus relates in his *Memorabilia*, and again slippers of bronze and a Delphic laurel-wreath. He had thick hair, and a train of boy attendants. He himself was always grave, and kept his gravity of demeanour unshaken. In such sort would he appear in public.

D.L. 8.73, trans. Hicks, modified.

The second passage is from Empedocles himself, where he reinforces this impression:

ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός
πωλεῖμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα,
ταινίαις τε περίστεπτος στέφουσίν τε θαλείοις.
τοῖσιν ἢ ἄμ' ἢ ἂν ἵκωμαι ἐς ἄστεα τηλεθάοντα,
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξί, σεβίζομαι· οἱ δ' ἄμ' ἔπονται
μυριοὶ ἐξερέοντες, ὅπη πρὸς κέρδος ἀταρπός,
οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεχρημένοι, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νούσων
παντοίων ἐπύθοντο κλυεῖν εὐηκέα βάζιν,
δηρὸν δὴ χαλεπήσι πεπαρμένοι <ἀμφ' ὀδύνησιν>.

But I go up and down among you an immortal god,
No longer mortal, held in honour among all, as it seems,
Crowned with both fillets and blooming garlands.
Men and women worship me, when I enter their flourishing towns;
And they follow me in countless numbers, asking where the path to profit lies.

Some want divinations; others, pierced for a long time by harsh pains,
Asked to hear a healing utterance against all kinds of diseases.

D.K. Emp. 31B 112, trans. McKirahan.

Thus, as Håken Tell put it, ‘conspicuous garments were as vital for one’s competitive standing and success as the proper intellectual disposition.’ It also seems, even to an impartial observer, that an incredible amount of self-flattery was involved, a topic I will broach in the fourth section.

3. *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*

Before I move on to that section, the detractors to such spectacles of wisdom, I need to broach the matter of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, or the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*. For this is our best evidence as to exactly how competitions in wisdom—competitions as such between two rivals in speech—took place in the fifth and fourth centuries, as well as evidence that the legend of the tripod symbolically undergirded such spectacles. Only then can we understand how it—or the story upon which it was based—influenced Eupolis, as it had Aristophanes. The *Certamen*, in other words, encapsulates a late fifth century of spectacle or competition of wisdom; Eupolis appropriated its story, and Plato finally engaged Eupolis’ understanding and appropriation in turn.¹⁷

The *Certamen* dates to the time of Hadrian, but, since Nietzsche deciphered the text on a Florentine manuscript in 1870, most scholars have agreed with his initial conclusion that it derives largely from the lost *Mouseion* of Alcidamas. Moreover, save one notable exception that has gained little established traction, scholarship agrees that Alcidamas—whatever his innovations and motivations were—was preserving within the *Certamen* what one scholar has

¹⁷ For the most recent edition of and commentary on the *Certamen*, see Bassino (2019), with bibliography. All text and translations of the *Certamen* follow Bassino, unless otherwise noted. For the *Certamen*’s relation to fifth century competitions in wisdom specifically, see esp. Graziosi (2001) and Tell (2011): Chapter Six. For the questions of sophistic attacks in the *Certamen*—Homer rebutting Protagoras’ measure doctrine, or linguistic attacks against Homer by the sophists generally—see Bassino (2019): 158-164.

called the *Urcertamen*, or the oral story upon which the extant text is based, even if the details of that oral tradition are unclear.¹⁸

The *Certamen* dramatises and elaborates greatly upon what was left unsaid but implied in lines 646-662 of *Works and Days*. In that passage, often called the *Nautilia*, Hesiod says he sailed to Calchis for funeral games (ἄεθλα) in honour of ‘warlike’ or ‘wise’ (the ‘δαΐφρονος’) king of Euboea, Amphidamas, set up by the dead man’s sons, in which many prizes (ἄθλ’) were offered.¹⁹ He tells us he won a handled tripod (τρίποδ’ ὠτώνεντα) for a victory due to a hymn (ῥυμνῶ), which he then dedicated to the Muses on Mount Helicon for having first initiated him in the ways of song (ἀοιδῆς). The relevant passage is as follows:

ἐνθα δ’ ἐγὼν ἐπ’ ἄεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος
Χαλκίδα τ’ εἷς ἐπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ
ἄθλ’ ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορος· ἐνθά μέ φημι
ῥυμνῶ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ’ ὠτώνεντα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ’ ἀνέθηκα,
ἐνθά με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοιδῆς.

There [at Aulis], to the games of warlike [or ‘wise’] Amphidamas,
To Chalcis I crossed. And many prizes announced beforehand
Were established by the man’s great-hearted sons. There [at Chalcis], I say,
Having been victorious with a hymn, I carried away a handled tripod.
That tripod I dedicated to the Muses of Helicon—
Helicon, there where they first initiated me to sweet-voiced song.

Works and Days 654-659

¹⁸ The exception is West (1967) who argues that Alcidas made the whole thing up. Heldmann (1982) proposed, on the basis of Plutarch’s *Dinner of the Seven Sages*, or *Moralia* 153f-154a, his own view of the ‘original’ contest that he believes Plutarch is quoting from memory. His study (or reconstruction) was not well-received in the particulars; but *that* there was some story popular in the fifth century resembling the extant *Certamen* is hardly in doubt. Lines 1279-85 of Aristophanes’ *Peace* of 422 BCE parallel to exactness lines 107-8 of the *Certamen*, both in language and in context (‘peace poetry versus war poetry’, thus Richardson 1981). And Ralph Rosen (2004) demonstrated, building upon what he shows many had long suspected, that the *Frogs* of 405/4 BCE is structured almost entirely upon some version of the *Urcertamen*. Alcidas, in other words, did not invent the story entirely, and some version or versions of it was apparently very popular in the fifth century.

¹⁹ Greek for *Works and Days* follows Most (2018). It is not made explicit that the games were *funeral* games, but is highly implied in the text. As with the *Theogony*, translations are from Most, unless otherwise noted.

Hesiod leaves unsaid just who he defeated, but the surrounding context makes it clear: Homer. Though ‘not very wise in sailing’ (οὐτέ τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος’, 649), Hesiod knew enough *not* to sail away from mainland Greece—implicitly justifying the subject matter of his own verses over the whole of Homeric epic, amongst other implicit attacks against his predecessor through verbal plays and ironies.²⁰

In the *Certamen*, we find explicitly dramatised this implicit battle with Homer. The ‘battle’ proper (lines 63-223) begins thus:

At about the same time Gannyctor, who was organising the funeral of his father Amphidamantos, king of Euboea, invited to the contest all the men distinguished (ἐπισήμους) not only for strength and speed, but also for wisdom (ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφία ἐπὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα), enticing them with great gifts (μεγάλαις δωρεαῖς τιμῶν συνεκάλεσεν). And so Homer and Hesiod, after meeting up by chance, as they say, went to Chalcis. Some of the distinguished (ἐπισήμων) Chalcideans were sitting as judges (κριταὶ) of the contest, and with them was Panoides [Πανοίδης, lit. ‘All-Knowing’—alternative manuscripts and most editions have Πανήδης, ‘Enjoys Everything’—variants to be kept in mind as equally plausible originals], brother of the dead man. Although both poets competed admirably (θαυμαστῶς ἀγωνισαμένων), they say that Hesiod won (νικῆσαι) in this way: he took the centre of the stage (προελθόντα γὰρ εἰς τὸ μέσον) and challenged Homer with one question after another, and Homer answered each one (πυνθάνεσθαι τοῦ Ὁμήρου καθ’ ἕνα, τὸν δὲ Ὅμηρον ἀποκρίνασθαι) [namely the following ...]

Certamen 63-74, trans. Bassino, modified.

What follows this passage is a competition of poetic wisdom (or equally so wisdom *in* and *by* poetry) overseen by judges that at times extend to ‘all of the Greeks’ (e.g., 91; 176; 205-6) along with the aforementioned distinguished Chalcideans, although they are not mentioned thereafter. The ruling king, Panoides/Panedes, however, seems to have wielded ultimate authority in judgement (176-179ff.).

The contest itself proceeds according to what appear to be formalised features, similar to what we know of Gorgias’ and Hippias’ ability to take and respond to any question posed. Throughout the contest, Hesiod loses badly, with Homer ‘responding well’ (καλῶς ἀπαντήσαντος, 102; 138) to each of the questions put to him by Hesiod, enrapturing the

²⁰ For the semiotics of the passage as implicitly attacking the whole of Homeric epic in a mere few lines, see Rosen (1990), Graziosi (2002), (2001), and Bassino (2019): 5-7, with bibliography.

audiences (or, ‘the Hellenes’) in attendance. Homer, moreover, has plausible-sounding answers to questions concerning human happiness and virtue, how best to run cities and how to pray to the gods (74-90; 148-175). He is able to complete bits of poetry that are ambiguous and based on faulty hexameters—to solve, that is, ‘riddles’ or ‘mental challenges’ posed by Hesiod (τῶν ἀπόρων ὥρμησεν, 102-138). Indeed, one of the *aporiai* posed by Hesiod just before these broken hexameters is to speak of a wisdom beyond that of the ‘eternity formula’ from Hesiod above: ‘Come, Muse, the things that are, shall be and were—sing nothing to me of those: but remember another song.’ And Homer, desiring to solve the challenge in a fitting matter, said: ‘Never around the tomb of Zeus will loud-hoofed horses shatter chariots, striving for victory.’” (96-101). In other words, Homer even knows the possible and impossible, which extends, at least on the fact of it, *beyond* the eternity formula. Homer can even ingeniously answer a mathematical problem in splendid language (10)! For these reasons, Bassino (2019) and Graziosi (2001) generally think the text was written by Alcidamas to rebut the many charges against Homer by the sophistic movement of the fifth century, but whether that is the case is not exactly my concern.

It is clear, however, that the many Greeks assembled to witness the spectacle wanted Homer to win, praising his responses at every turn to the very end. But it was, as I said above, King Panoides/Panedes who declared Hesiod the victor after a final challenge posed by the king himself, who seems to have been vacillating in his judgement. He commands them both to sing the best verses each could offer. The episode, or verdict, went as follows:

On this occasion, too, the Greeks in admiration praised Homer (θαυμάσαντες... ἐπῆνουν), as his verses were extraordinary beyond expectation, and they asked [the king] to award him the victory. But the king crowned Hesiod, saying that it was just (δίκαιον) for the one who promoted agriculture and peace to win, and not the one who expounded wars and slaughters. So they say (φασὶ) that Hesiod gained victory in this way and, receiving a bronze tripod (τρίποδα χαλκοῦν), he dedicated it to the Muses with this inscription: ‘Hesiod dedicated this to the Heliconian Muses when he defeated divine Homer with a hymn at Chalcis.’

After the contest was dissolved, Hesiod sailed to Delphi to consult the oracle and dedicate a tribute of his victory to the god. As he entered the temple, they say that the prophetess became divinely inspired and said: ‘Blessed is this man who attends my house, Hesiod, honoured by the immortal Muses. Certainly his

fame will spread as far as the light of day. But beware the beautiful grove of Nemean Zeus: for there the fulfilment of your death has been fated.’

Certamen 205-223, trans. Bassino, modified

It has caused much consternation over the years as to whether the judgement of Panoides/Panedes was, in fact, just. Hesiod *did* win the contest in *Works and Days*, and so presumably the author of the *Certamen* had to give a reason for the victory; the question is whether the victory was properly justified or correct. That question is also not my concern. What is important is that the king’s judgement seems reliant upon the criteria of wisdom established by the sage tradition charted above, a point I have yet to find in the scholarship.²¹

In the *Certamen*. Hesiod takes away the tripod and dedicates it not just to the Heliconian Muses, as in *Works and Days*, but the author adds the fiction that Hesiod *then* went to dedicate it to Apollo—thus establishing a clear link with the sage tradition, and likely Panoides’/Panedes’ intention. Moreover, the rest of the *Certamen* is an extended tale of Homer’s coming to write his extant works, whereupon he receives his own signifiers of Apollonian sage wisdom. His first gift after his defeat is a silver *phialē* given to him by the sons of king Midas, which he then dedicates to Apollo at Delphi with the inscription ‘Lord Phebus, I, Homer, offer you this beautiful gift for your thoughtfulness (ἐπιφροσύναις). May you always grant me fame.’ (273-4).

The *Certamen* shows that the sage tradition of wisdom lay at the very heart of displays and competitions of *sophia* that were so popular in the fifth and fourth centuries, the competitions that the sophists and others came to dominate. In the next section, I will explore the detractors to such competitions, and how Eupolis must be understood to fit amongst them (or how the logic of his play should be so understood), and precisely by staging his own parodic version of the story underlying the *Certamen*, whether the tripod itself made a distinct appearance or not.

²¹ Heldmann (1982) does foreground, in his first chapter, the *Certamen* and its predecessor(s) as an ‘ἄγων σοφίας’ with a cultural heritage dating back to the tripod narrative, but he does not pursue the matter further as to whether aspects of the text can be *explained* viz. the tripod narrative, so far as I have been able to see. Tell (2011): 144 similarly, but in far less detail, passingly asserts a cultural heritage to the tripod narrative, but does not argue for an intentional link within the *Certamen* itself. I have yet to find a study that connects the construction of the *Certamen* or its predecessors with the symbolism of the tripod. That situation may change, of course, but this chapter is just such an argument for the moment.

4. The Detractors and Eupolis' *Kolakes*

The detractors of these practices were not short in number. Consider again Dio Chrysostom with which I began section two above, who writes of the alleged impressions of Diogenes the Cynic at the Isthmian Games of the mid-fourth century BCE. The force of that critique is that the festivals had become, in short, morally sick spectacles. The loudness of the abuse heaped upon one sophist by another, the orators orating, the historians reading, the panderers pandering—all a cacophony that confuses the senses and seems to blind people to the immorality of what is actually on offer. And it is Cleon, of all people—the loudest and most violent, demagogic shouter of them all, according to Aristophanes and Thucydides—who heaps abuse upon the Athenians for falling victim to their love of just these spectacles; and in particular spectacles of intellectual display. In Thucydides' telling, Cleon argues that these pleasurable competitions between orators have infiltrated the good functioning of Athenian democracy. In his speech on the fate of the Mytileneans, after saying that the city would be better off run by men without any education rather than 'those who are clever but utterly lacking in moral self-control'—with which I began the first chapter—Cleon goes on to address those prepared to change their judgement from only the previous day:

I shall be amazed, too, if anyone contradicts me and attempts to prove that the harm done to us by Mytilene is really a *good* thing for us, or that when we suffer ourselves we are somehow doing harm to our allies! It is obvious that anyone who is going to say this must either have such confidence in his powers as an orator (τῷ λέγειν) that he will struggle to persuade you that what has been finally settled was, in actual fact, never even decided—or else he must have been bribed to put together some elaborate speech with which he will try to lead you out of the right track. But in competitions of this sort (τῶν τοιῶνδε ἀγώνων) the prizes (ἄθλα) go to others and the state takes all the danger for herself. The blame is yours, for stupidly instituting these competitive displays (αἵτιοι δ' ὑμεῖς κακῶς ἀγωνοθετοῦντες). Wherever any speeches come about, you are wont to behave like active theatregoers (οἵτινες εἰώθατε θεαταὶ μὲν τῶν λόγων γίγνεσθαι), but, where actions are concerned, you are content to be a passive listeners (ἀκροαταὶ δὲ τῶν ἔργων) [...]

Any novelty in an argument deceives you at once (καὶ μετὰ καινότητος μὲν λόγου ἀπατᾶσθαι ἄριστοι), but when the argument is tried and proved already, you become unwilling to follow it; you look with suspicion on what is normal and are the slaves of everything that is strange which comes your way (δοῦλοι ὄντες τῶν αἰεὶ ἀτόπων). The chief wish of each one of you is to be able to make a speech himself [...] What you are looking for all the time is something that

is, I should say, outside the range of ordinary experience, and yet you cannot even think straight about the facts of life that are before you! You are simply overcome by the pleasure of listening and appear more like spectators or theatre-goers sitting at the feet of sophists than deliberating over matters concerning the state. (ἀπλῶς τε ἀκοῆς ἡδονῇ ἡσσώμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς ἐοικότες καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ πόλεως βουλευομένοις.)

Thucydides 3.38.1-7, trans. Hornblower, modified

Cleon thus squarely implicates the influence of new-fangled theories of the ‘sophists’ and their ability to verbally bedazzle audiences for the decline in good judgment on the part of the state, which is a matter of facts staring you straight in the face, not abstractly in the mind. When it comes to making consequential, serious decisions concerning action, argues Cleon, nothing seems to matter to the Athenians unless there is some sort of purely verbal, inconsequential display piece going on; in which case, they are actively participating like rowdy theatre-goers.²² Moreover, says Cleon, the sophists and orators are masters of pleasure-making and of pulling audiences along as if with a string with their ‘strange’ arguments; but this pleasure-conjuring is a mere means of taking advantage of the gawping audiences, who are the real victims. Aristophanes, it is worth remembering, does not spare Cleon from this very criticism in a brutal, ironical attack against him as a flatterer to Demos in *Knights* of 424 BCE, suggesting that there was indeed some sort of crisis of judgement due to these displays and games of intellect at the time.

Another criticism against these spectacles of wisdom comes from Hippocrates (or perhaps pseudo-Hippocrates—either way, likely a fifth-century work), who implicitly argues that the sophists, despite the pretensions of their writings, in fact ‘overturn’ themselves (καταβάλλειν—a sophistic catchword) in their Parmenidean theories whilst pulling the judgement of the spectators back and forth merely through the powers of their Nestor-like ‘honied tongue’ (γλῶσσα ἐπιρρύεισα). In a passage reminiscent of the brothers Dionysius and Euthydemus doing intellectual backflips for the roaring crowd, Hippocrates opens his text with the following:

²² The behaviour of crowds was so rowdy at the theatre they at times had to be beaten away from the stage with a stick by foremen or removed from the theatre. This is why I have modified Hornblower’s translation to reflect the ‘passive-active’ distinction Cleon appears to me to be making with respect to passively listening versus *active* spectating as would a drunken theatrical, rowdy audience.

This account is not suitable for anyone to hear who is used to listening to people talking about human nature more deeply than concerns medicine. I do not in the least maintain that a human being is air, fire, water, or earth, or anything else that is not an obvious constituent of humans (ὅ τι μὴ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐνεὸν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ). I leave these views to those who wish to assert them, [... who say] that what exists is a single thing and this is the one and the all. [For they all use the same arguments and reasoning but each gives a different material account]. Indeed, one may see [their falsity] best if you are present at their debates (ἀντιλέγουσιν). When the same men debate one another in front of the same audience, victory in the discussion never goes to the same man three times in a row, but now one person wins, now another, and now the one who happens to have the most honeyed-tongue for the crowd (πρὸς γὰρ ἀλλήλους ἀντιλέγοντες οἱ αὐτοὶ ἄνδρες τῶν αὐτέων ἐναντίον ἀκροατέων οὐδέποτε τρίς ἐφεξῆς ὁ αὐτὸς περιγίνεται ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλὰ ποτὲ μὲν οὗτος ἐπικρατεῖ, ποτὲ δὲ οὗτος, ποτὲ δὲ ὃ ἂν τύχη μάλιστα ἢ γλῶσσα ἐπιρρύεισα πρὸς τὸν ὄχλον.). But when a person claims to have correct knowledge on a subject, the speech he gives should prevail every time, provided that he knows the facts and presents them correctly. But in my opinion such people in their stupidity overthrow themselves in the terminology they use in their accounts and resurrect the theory of Melissus! (Ἀλλ' ἐμοί γε δοκέουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ ἐωντοὺς καταβάλλειν ἐν τοῖσιν ὀνόμασι τῶν λόγων αὐτέων ὑπὸ ἀσυνεσίας, τὸν δὲ Μελίσσου λόγον ὀρθοῦν.) About these people I have said enough. Now as for doctors [...].

(Pseudo-?) Hippocrates, *Nature of Man* 1.1-2, trans. McKirahan, modified.

In Cleon's speech and in this passage of Hippocrates, the sophists and their spectacles of competition are implicated in a general dumbing-down, if not outright duping, of the Athenian populace. Good judgement at these competitions have been subordinated to mere pleasure. That is one reason why Thucydides says of his own work: 'Mine is a possession to last for all time, rather than a prize composition piece which is heard and then forgotten' – 'κτηῖμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται', 1.22.4; trans. Hornblower.²³

It is at this point and in precisely these respects that Eupolis must be understood. Eupolis in the *Kolakes*, I argue, should be seen as one amongst the critics in Athens who took aim at the peddlers of Presocratic philosophy and other pleasure-producing displays as destructive to those who otherwise had the power to do the most good for the city, in this case

²³ This duly famous passage sets Thucydides' work in contrast with the new writers of history, which just is the thrust of 1.22 altogether. What a 'little competition piece of history' actually is remains mysterious, but the natural presumption is that it was a brief work that relied on grand oratory in a competitive environment, rather than presenting 'straight fact for all time'.

the focus being on Callias. The ‘wisdom’ on display, according to the *Kolakes*, was duplicitous pandering and the spectacles themselves a display for the senses—a highly ironical move, too, given that *the comedy itself* was a competitive piece of wisdom in the context of a religious festival and/or a spectacle against others.²⁴

More specifically, I argue that Eupolis staged a kind of makeshift Panhellenic gathering of claimants to wisdom—poets, sophists, and others—who competed for prizes at funeral games for the recently-deceased Hipponicus reminiscent of the ‘battle proper’ in the *Certamen*. After the competition, or perhaps during it, a riotous symposium was held. Moreover, it seems to me that the several fragments of the play taking note of the expensive items on the property present or missing just are the ‘prizes’ on offer (prizes deliberately meant to mirror those of the funeral games for Patroclus, as I will show). The para-tragic fragments of the play remarking on those items beings stolen or suddenly gone were likely comments by the *slaves*—the ones typically with any awareness of trouble in comedy—remarking on the master unwittingly giving away all his valuables. Or if Callias *knowingly* gave them away (esp. if Callias was present in Fr. 165 K.A. below), he did so evidently without much care. Perhaps, as Kathryn Morgan suggests, Callias was, as in Plato, a sort of ‘glutton of learning’—a Panoides/Panedes figure.²⁵ Or perhaps (as I think most likely) he was (and this is not incompatible with the previous option) a *pornomanos* in this comedy as in

²⁴ That Eupolis’ comedies were competitive pieces of *wisdom* may be thought clear in a merely generic sense. But there is preserved a parabasis of his from an unknown play (Fr. 392 K.A.), in which a Chorus Leader claims *sophia* for himself, which actually demonstrates this claim. It may be a standard comic trope, but it is important not to forget that Eupolis was actively a part of a raging, fifth-century discourse of parabolic self-creation and self-defence: ‘Pay attention, spectators, “and hark unto | my words”; for right away at the beginning I’ll offer you a defense | [several lines missing...] what you’re thinking, that you say foreign poets are *sophoi*, | whereas if someone local (ἐνθάδ’), who’s no less thoughtful, | applies himself to poetry, he appears to be utterly thoughtless, | and is crazy and slips away from his senses, according to you. | Take my advice: thoroughly change your ways | and don’t begrudge it when one of us young men enjoys the arts (μουσικῇ χαίρη).’ Trans. Olson, modified. The foreign poets cannot be conclusively identified, but the passage seems to defend *Athenian* poets like Eupolis as much as Aristophanes and others as against the influence of foreigners. Of course we cannot identify which play this bit of a parabasis comes from, but the defence of native versus foreign poets may remind one of the aspersion against Akestor in the *Kolakes* (along with other foreigners, not least Protagoras), and the use of the linguistic signifier of ‘χαίρης’ at the end of the passage and the reference to a poet ‘within’ the city (ἐνθάδ’)—compare the function of ‘ἔνδον’ in Fr. 157.1—are suggestive that the passage may come from the *Kolakes* itself. But again, this is hovering around speculation without more context and argument. For more on Eupolis’ approach to the parabasis and his perhaps unique didacticism (and Plato’s interest thereby), see the conclusion to this thesis.

²⁵ Morgan (2016): 163, ‘Callias [in the comedy] is spending his inheritance on sophists in a kind of careless intellectual gluttony that corresponds to the warnings that characterize Socrates’ conversation with Hippocrates at the beginning of the dialogue.’

others, plagued—similarly as Dionysus in *Frogs*—between prioritising pleasure over valuable learning in choosing which poet is best; or like Demos in *Knights*, who simply enjoys being flattered too much at *Knights* 1111-72. Again, how the play itself ended simply cannot be answered.

On my reading, then, the play staged some critical aspects of the *Certamen*, or the oral tradition on which it was based. That is, funeral games in poetic wisdom were held, the *dramatis personae* came from across the Greek and Eastern worlds for the games, various esteemed and non-esteemed judges were present, and Callias was both the host and ultimate decision-maker, though it is possible he deferred that judgement to others or, indeed, to everyone present. But instead of (only?) the symbolism of the tripod—the prize of wisdom—being at stake in victory in the competition, as it was in the *Certamen* story, in the *Kolakes* it was drink, courtesans, and other ‘lowly, enslaving pleasures’, as Maximus put it. The battle of wits was somehow in reality a ‘competition in flattery’ as he also implies.

That the *Kolakes* would reproduce aspects of the *Certamen* should be unsurprising. Most notably, the story of the *Certamen* (or *Urcertamen*) is suffused throughout the *Frogs* of 405/4 BCE, as Ralph Rosen conclusively demonstrated some years ago, building on a century of suggestions in scholarship.²⁶ The parallels are profoundly numerous, but we might note some essentials: that Dionysus was the ruling judge in a Panhellenic *Ekklēsia* (see esp. *F.* 764) outside the palace of Pluto, vacillating in his judgement over the merits of Aeschylus and Euripides, a vacillation due to his slavish compulsion for pleasure.²⁷ The procedure of the poetic debate between Aeschylus and Euripides proceeds along exactly the same lines as the *Certamen* as well, a point that would take us far afield here to demonstrate wholly. What is more, only the year before the *Kolakes*, Aristophanes referred explicitly to *Certamen* lines 148-9 at *Peace* 1270-1283 in 422 BCE, likely in the same context as Panoides/Panedes’ judgment, namely peace poetry versus war poetry.²⁸ Ian Storey, building on earlier

²⁶ Rosen (2004).

²⁷ Rosen (2004), for what it is worth, sees Panoides/Panedes’ judgment as ultimately inexplicable, thus removing any responsibility on the part of Aristophanes to explain *why* Dionysus, who is the former’s analogue, ultimately chooses Aeschylus over Euripides.

²⁸ Thus Richardson (1981). Bassino (2019) as well as Richardson also take note of *Peace* 1097 at *Certamen* 155; and (as would be expected thus far), *Frogs* 1033-6 at 165; and *Wasps* 1019-20 at 175. The connection of *Peace* to the *Certamen* dates probably to the Hellenistic period, given the scholia on the relevant passage.

scholarship, has suggested that the *Archilochuses* of Cratinus (staged anywhere from the 440s to late 420s) may have had a competition in the house of a wealthy man—possibly even the house of Callias (Fr. 11 K.A.)—where poets and/or rhapsodes, who were called ‘sophists’ there (Fr. 2 K.A.), debated the merits of Hesiod against Homer, as well as iambic poetry versus comedy.²⁹ To see in the *Kolakes* a staged rivalry between poets or sophistic pairs in front of some sort of judge or judges would, therefore, be right at home in fifth-century comedy, especially a rivalry based upon the story underlying the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*.³⁰

The evidence for my reading of such a competition in Eupolis is as follows. First, it is not just the comedies that surrounded the *Kolakes* in time and cultural space which give me these clues. The evidence comes from the testimonia and fragments themselves. Indeed, my initial intimation for this reading originated with the statement of Maximus of Tyre’s passing comment about the play, that

Καλλίαν μὲν ἐν Διονυσίοις ἐκωμῶδει Εὐπόλις, ιδιώτην ἄνδρα ἐν συμποσίοις
κολακευόμενον, ὅπου τῆς κολακείας τὸ ἄθλον ἦν κύλικες καὶ ἐταῖραι καὶ
ἄλλαι ταπειναὶ καὶ ἀνδραποδώδεις ἡδοναί·

At the Dionysia, Eupolis used to make fun of Callias, a private person surrounded by toadies at drinking parties, where the prize for flattery was drinking cups and courtesans and other lowly, enslaving pleasures.

Eupolis *Kolakes* test. iv, trans. Olson, modified.³¹

²⁹ For these arguments with analysis of the fragments, see Storey (2011): 268-275.

³⁰ Indeed, Morgan (2016): 167-169 argues that Cratinus’ play had a ‘contest of genres’ as a kind of ‘contest of wisdom’—on the basis of works such as the *Certamen*—and that Plato reproduced this in the *Protagoras* wholesale by having his own contest of genres; namely epic, lyric, and comedy. Her recognition of the *Protagoras* being a ‘contest of wisdom’ is correct but cursory and passing (and in a contest in the sense of *which genre* is wisest); I hope to fill in these gaps and complementary as this chapter moves along. For more on the possibility of Plato’s use of Cratinus’ techniques in the *Theaetetus*—namely the *Pytine*—see the concluding thoughts of this thesis.

³¹ I have left out the following, thoroughly-enigmatic line from Maximus’ testimony, because it adds little of concrete value in this context: ‘τὸν δὲ δῆμον αὐτόν, τὸν τῆς Εὐπόλιδος στωμυλίας θεατὴν, ποῦ τις ἐλθὼν κωμωδῆσει;’—‘But the demos itself, the spectators of Eupolis’ verbiage, where shall someone go to make a comedy about them?’ At first sight, such a claim may suggest that Maximus thought Eupolis’ critique or message should have been extended (further?) to the populace at large. Ian Storey would suggest this means the play was a ‘purely private comedy’—despite there being no evidence inside Eupolis or out of it for such a thing in the fifth century. My reading of the comedy that follows, however, refutes Maximus’ impression if he did think the comedy was, in fact, too private (he may have only had second-hand reports of the play, after all). I argue that Eupolis’ comedy was relevant to the public for many reasons, not least given it was, at least in part, *about*

It is the use of ‘τὸ ἄθλον’ here that set off my suspicion of the presence of its natural counterpart, an ‘ἄθλος’, or competition—and its most natural counterpart being a competition *in flattery*. So there was presumably a ‘competition in flattery’ in the comedy.³²

Before I ask what a ‘competition in flattery’ might look like, the word ‘ἄθλον’ is itself revealing, for it has strong links to the wisdom tradition I have been charting throughout this chapter. ‘ἄθλον’ is something of a catchword for the ‘prize’ bestowed upon the wisest in the tripod narrative, with ‘ἄθλ’ being the word Hesiod uses for the prizes at Amphidamas’ funeral games—the Hesiodic episode on which the *Certamen* story is also based, in which the word is variously repeated. Even Thucydides’ Cleon talks about ‘ἄθλα’ going to those experts in fifth-century oratorical combat. So there was most likely a kind of competition in the *Kolakes* redolent of competitions we have seen throughout the wisdom tradition.

Consider too the context of the comedy, which strengthens the link to the wisdom tradition and the story of the *Certamen* in particular. Hipponicus had recently died, subsequently leaving his young and profligate son, Callias, to become the richest man in Greece. Callias was surrounded by intellectual and powerful parasites at the time, as we have seen—not just by Protagoras and tragedians, as in the comedy, but generals and politicians too, as in Xenophon; and it is not to be dismissed that Socrates and Chaerephon may also have been occasional attendees to his parties. A ‘celebration’ (i.e., an outrageous party) ‘in honour’ of the recent death of Hipponicus would be—to a man of such famed, rambunctious luxuriance as Callias—only too apt for a comedy. And anyway we *know* he did host such a party. The question is why, and the recent passing of his father provides the most natural explanation. Therefore, I submit that Callias did, in large or small part, host funeral celebrations for his recently deceased father, as the brothers of the deceased king did in Hesiod and in the *Certamen*. Callias held funeral games where ‘the prizes’ for competing in

comedy as such qua spectacle, as well as how intellectual spectator sports had infiltrated Athens at the time. On the other hand, and to speak in Maximus’ favour, Maximus may have been anticipating the thoughts Nightingale (1995): 191. That is, whilst Aristophanes was allowed and even encouraged to ridicule the populace for (speaking of the *Knights* in particular) being susceptible to flattering demagogues, Aristophanes could not fundamentally critique the institution of Athenian democracy itself—nor could *any* comedy.

³² Not all instances of *athlon* necessarily imply a competition, of course—indeed, some sort of trophy may have simply appeared. But in the context of Maximus’ comment and the implicatory force of the other facts I mentioned above and will adduce just below, I find it hard to escape the conclusion that some sort of competition took place.

flattery were the drinking, sleeping, and carousing we find both in Maximus and in the fragments.

So what, then, would a ‘competition in flattery’ look like? We could easily imagine that each of Callias’ attendants in turn took efforts at, well, flattering him to an ever-increasingly outrageous degree. That is most plausible and should be kept in mind, but I will also suggest in the following chapter that the flatterers competed amongst flatterers for their own admirers(!). Let us look again at the opening of the contest proper in the *Certamen* and compare that with what we know about the attendants to Callias’ party, and the link between the two should become clear:

At about the same time Gannyctor, who was organising the funeral of his father Amphidamantos, king of Euboea, invited to the contest all the men distinguished not only for strength and speed, but also for wisdom (ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφία ἐπὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα), enticing them with great gifts (μεγάλαις δωρεαῖς τιμῶν συνεκάλεσεν).

Certamen 63-66, trans. Bassino, modified.

Tragic poets like Melanthius and Akestor, sophists and educators like Protagoras, perhaps Chaerephon and even Socrates—all of them had something to prove in terms of wisdom. It is a reasonable assumption, then, that travelling sophists like Protagoras would have received word of the ‘prizes’ for flattery if Callias had similarly spread word across Greece like Gannyctor in Hesiod ‘in advance’ as well—to Protagoras ‘of Teos’, for example. After all, the Middle Comic parasite waltzed around Athens and other cities on the hunt for the smell of cooking from a frying pan. It seems clear that Plato is reframing the sophistic city-to-city starts and stops for pay as a similar activity as that of a flatterer. One may have a concern about the fact that Protagoras and the others are *invited* to Callias’ house. But even Epicharmus’ flatterer is invited to dinner, so we need not worry that Callias invited his wise guests in the *Protagoras* and *Apology* and Xenophon’s *Symposium*: what matters is the kind of wheedling they pursue. In any case, I submit that there was a ‘contest of wisdom’ that paralleled to some degree the *Certamen* story, but transferred to the realm of flattery and deception: a transference that made fun of the spectacles of wisdom as surreptitious flattery of one kind or another.

As to the prizes themselves which the victors were awarded in such a competition, take note of the following fragments listing the items of Callias' property—keeping in mind that Maximus has already told us of the 'κύλικες καὶ ἐταῖραι' ('drinking cups and escorts') in Callias' possession:

θὲς νῦν ἀγροὺς καὶ πρόβατα καὶ βοῦς
Now put down fields and sheep and cows!
Fr. 163 K.A., trans. Olson.

ἵππον κέλητ' ἀσκοῦντα θές
Put down a racing horse in training!
Fr. 164 K.A., trans. Olson.

(A.) δεῖπνον θές ἑκατὸν δραχμάς. (B.) ἰδοῦ
(A.) κόλαξιν οἶνον θές ἑτέραν μνᾶν
(A.) Count dinner as 100 drachmas! (B.) Done!
(A.) Count wine for *kolakes* as another mina!
Fr. 165 K.A., trans. Olson.³³

Observe also the items that are apparently stolen:

φροῦδον τὸ χειρόνιπτρον
gone is the hand-washing basin!
Fr. 167 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

φέρουσιν, ἀρπάζουσιν ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
τὸ χρυσίον, τὰργύρια πορθεῖται
they're carrying off, they're snatching the gold coinage
from the house, the silver coins are being plundered!
Fr. 162 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

³³ Variant manuscripts do not have 'for the *kolakes*' and instead say 'count wine for another *mina*!'. If this were Callias speaking, he would have known who his guests were, otherwise it was the slaves who did—apparently on a tour of the property or on a shopping trip, preparing for the party and/or competition.

Were these the prizes on offer? There is reason to think so, if only we look at another Homeric intertextual connection within the play. Scholarship, as I noted in the first chapter, has recognised the strong resonance that the flatterers have with the suitors of Penelope, who gobble up the estate of Odysseus. But then, consider the following, different Homeric parallel. The items in the fragments just considered are more-or-less the same sort of ‘prizes’ (ἄεθλα) on offer at the funeral games for Patroclus.

But Achilles stopped them and made the whole assembly sit down for Patroclus’ funeral games. For these he brought out prizes (ἄεθλα) from the ships—a cauldron of copper (λέβητας) and tripods (τρίποδάς); horses, mules and fine head of cattle (ἵππους θ’ ἡμιόνους τε βοῶν τ’ ἵφθιμα κάρηνα); grey iron and fine women. The first event was a chariot-race, for which he laid out the following splendid prizes (ἀγλά’ ἄεθλα): for the winner, a woman skilled in arts and crafts and a tripod with handles (τρίποδ’ ὠτώεντα) holding twenty-two measures; for the runner-up, a mare six years old and not broken in (ἄδμήτην), with a little mule in her womb; for third, a fine cauldron (λέβητα καλὸν) holding four measures, untarnished by the flames and still as bright as ever; for fourth, two talents of gold; and for fifth, a two-handed urn (ἀμφίθετον φιάλην) as yet untouched by fire. Achilles stood up and addressed the Greeks: ‘Agamemnon and you other Greek men-at-arms, these are the prizes that await the charioteers in this contest (τάδ’ ἄεθλα δεδεγμένα κεῖτ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι).

Iliad 23.257-273, trans. Rieu, modified.

A splendid collation of items on offer! Cattle of various sorts, beautiful women, spectacular basins for cooking (a ‘λέβης’, it is critical to note, was also a Homeric term for a *hand-washing* basin), beautiful women; untamed horses and even talents of gold. Callias, I submit, staged funeral games for his father on a literally epic scale, and it seems to be the slaves who understand all the trouble Callias has put himself in.

There may have been a distinctly Hesiodic connection as well, one that sets up a link to the story at the heart of the *Certamen*. Consider the function of ‘ἔνδον’ at the start of Fr. 157 K.A.:

ἔνδον μὲν ἐστὶ Πρωταγόρας ὁ Τήιος
ὃς ἀλαζονεύεται μὲν ἀλιτήριος
περὶ τῶν μετεώρων, τὰ δὲ χαμᾶθεν ἐσθίει

within, on the one hand, is Protagoras of Teos

who talks bullshit—the godforsaken bastard!—
about what’s in the sky, but eats what comes from the earth

Fr. 157 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

There seems to me a deliberate resonance with the use and function of ‘ἐνθα’ in the passage from *Works and Days* considered above:

ἐνθα δ’ ἐγὼν ἐπ’ ἄεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος
Χαλκίδα τ’ εἷς ἐπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ
ἄθλ’ ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορος· ἐνθά μέ φημι
ὔμνω νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ’ ὠτώεντα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ’ ἀνέθηκα,
ἐνθά με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοιδῆς.

There [at Aulis], to the games of warlike [or ‘wise’] Amphidamas,
To Chalcis I crossed. And many prizes announced beforehand
Were established by the man’s great-hearted sons. There [at Chalcis], I say,
Having been victorious with a hymn, I carried away a handled tripod.
That tripod I dedicated to the Muses of Helicon—
Helicon, there, where they first initiated me to sweet-voiced song.

Works and Days 654-659.

The meaningful similarity consists in the *kind* of competitions taking place ‘within’ or ‘there’—within the grounds of a ruler (or one wealthy enough to be a ruler, on which witness again the use of a Eunuch doorman as a luxury not bold enough even for Persian Kings). Was there, in Fr. 157 K.A., a competition prepared for ‘within’ the grounds of Callias’ house, ‘there’ in a para-Hesiodic reminiscence, one which was critical for the dramatic foregrounding of the *Kolakes*? The wording and context of *Frogs* 755-758 (which we know to have been predicated on the *Certamen* story), 755-758 being the arrival of Dionysus and Xanthius outside the palace of Pluto, certainly has some resonance with Fr. 157 K.A., where Xanthias asks a fellow slave and doorkeeper about what is going on ‘inside’. ‘Now tell me, by Zeus, our mutual god of floggings, what’s all this commotion and yelling and name-calling inside

the palace?—‘καί μοι φράσον πρὸς Διός, ὃς ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ὁμομαστιγίας, τίς οὗτος οὔνδον (=ἔνδον) ἐστὶ θόρυβος καὶ βοή χῶ λοιδορησμός;’ (*Frogs* 755-758, trans. Henderson). So it seems like there are, indeed, many reasons to suspect a para-Hesiodic, *Urcertamen* taking place in the *Kolakes*.

There is also extant a fragment from Eupolis which, though not ascribed to any comedy with certainty, would fit my reading of the events going inside the grounds of Callias’ home. In the fragment, a competition in sophistic or poetic display (or pleasure production?) is taking place:

(A.) ἄγε δὴ, πότερα βούλεσθε τὴν <νῦν> διάθεσιν

ᾠδῆς ἀκούειν ἢ τὸν ἀρχαῖον τρόπον;

(B.) ἀμφοτέρ’ ἐρεῖς, ἐγὼ δ’ ἀκούσας τοῖν τρόποιν

ὃν ἂν δοκῇ μοι βασιτάσας αἰρήσομαι

(A.) Come on! Do you (pl.) want hear about the modern disposition of song or the old style?

(B.) You’ll describe both, and after *I* hear about them, I’ll consider which of the two styles appeals to me and I’ll choose

Eupolis Fr. 326 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

In this fragment, we find one man (A.) giving a demonstration to two unnamed individuals about which sort of song they would prefer to hear, the old or the new. One of the addressees (B.) takes over from the other and asserts final authority in judgment. Olson (2014): 12 notes that this is almost certainly a sympotic scene where someone is entertaining guests, or a scene in which people are being treated to an education for a symposium of elites (Olson compares *Wasps* 1174–1264, esp. 1224–49; but also Pl. Com. Fr. 46 and 47 K.A., Antiphanes Fr. 57 K.A. and Anaxandrides Fr. 1 K.A.).

Assuming that this fragment comes from the *Kolakes*, and if we imagine somebody like Protagoras and/or the others inside the grounds of Callias’ house in such a manner, it is natural to assume that some sophistic display of poetic excellence is taking place at the party

to one or more judges.³⁴ And even if Protagoras was *not* a speaking character in the *Kolakes*, somebody like him almost certainly was, and so it is reasonable to suspect that the abusive fragment to ‘teach him to babble, sophist!’ (Eupolis 388 K.A.) could be applied to this situation as well, as rhapsodes and poets were also called ‘sophists’ in comedy (to wit see Cratinus *Archilochuses* Fr.2 K.A.), and cf. the list of *sophistai* at *Cl.* 333ff.).

Fragment 326 K.A. has been assigned to *Nanny-Goats* by Bergk (1838): 334-5, *Golden Race* by Meineke (1839): 548-9, *Heliōtes* by Telò (2007): 637-8, and to *Demes* by Ian Storey (2011): 237. I suggest—with caution—that it belongs to the *Kolakes*, and that speaker (B) is Callias, whose role is analogous to Panoides (the ‘all-knowing’) or, more probably, to Panedes (Πανήδης: πᾶν + ἡδύς = ‘he who enjoys everything’), witnessing and enjoying a display from a sophist or ‘knowledgeable’ rhapsode, such as Ion.

I therefore maintain that there was some sort of makeshift Panhellenic competition in wisdom *vis-à-vis* poetry and or other means, where claimants to wisdom like Protagoras arrived to take advantage of Callias’ prizes—his property and wealth—who not only flattered him outright, competed with each other for admirers, but probably also took advantage of him in the guise of a teacher, as befits not only a sophist but a poet too. Callias had advertised prizes on a literally epic scale to all comers in advance. With this connection to epic in mind, we can more readily appreciate the mock-epic gluttony of the guests, which I conjecture the slaves remark upon thus: ‘λαφύσσεται λαφυγμὸν ἀνδρεῖον πάνυ’ – ‘he’s engaged in profoundly vigorous, courageous gluttony!’ (Fr. 166 K.A., trans. Olson, modified). Aside from the use of ‘ἀνδρεῖον’ here, ‘λαφύσσω’ is, as Olson in his commentary on the fragment of Eupolis also notes, Homeric vocabulary for the manner in which a beast violently eats its prey (*Il.* 11.176, 17.64, 18.583). So the flatterers not only collected epic prizes, they *ate* epically too.

³⁴ I recognise that this fragment may simply be a (sympotic?) episode of an *exhibition* of song rather than an analysis of it, which would seem to conflict with the notion of a competition. But clearly there *is* a competition here—a choice of song. But what was the choice? Which is more pleasant? Or which is best to discuss? The context is profoundly obscure, but—along with Olson’s comment—I take it that a demonstration or education of song is in fact taking place, and the fact of a judge fits quite well with the trajectory of the rest of the fragments considered, has me just about convinced that Fr. 326 K.A. would belong quite appropriately in the context of a ‘competition’ in poetry or which sort is *better* (and display is still competitive, remember). We are nonetheless dealing with fragmentary material here.

Plato will have something to say about the violent, beastliness of his own flatterers, as we will see, which only strengthens this impression of mock-epic eating and competition, if not even the frightfulness ascribed to the flatterers (if not in the comedy, then certainly in the *Protagoras*). And lastly, it is not to be forgotten that the *Kolakes* was staged in 421 BCE during the Peace of Nicias when foreigners were allowed in the city. A comedy about foreigners taking advantage of the wealthy at such a time makes the comedy *topical*, especially considering the fact that the Panhellenic games and festivals were locations where the values of *xenia* were reinforced and celebrated, as we hear from Isocrates; and *xenia* was the very value a travelling sophist took professional advantage of—sophists were *false friends*, they were flatterers.³⁵

On my reconstruction, then, at least one point of the comedy is clear enough: such spectacles of sophistic-poetic wisdom were duplicitous pandering for gross luxuries (as well as probably outright flattery), in line with similar criticisms of such spectacles of wisdom we see of the same time. There was an ineliminable irony too, insofar as Eupolis must have implicated himself and the other comic poets within that nexus of pandering. The comic poets were themselves competing for victory at Panhellenic festivals by pleasing the crowd through their so-called ‘wisdom’—even pandering to them by asking for things in exchange for giving them clever laughs, a principle technique of the *kolax* highlighted by the *kolakes* in Fr. 172 K.A. of the play itself. This is not an ‘un-philosophical’ technique, we might say, nor is it unprecedented in comedy of course, that most metatheatrical of genres. One ‘point’ of the *Kolakes* must then have been self-referential and intended to give pause about passive versus active consumption of theatre, not unlike Cleon’s critique in Thucydides. At a structural level, moreover, the *Kolakes* problematised pandering and pleasure production in the realm of sophistic and poetic combat (private and public), just as Aristophanes had done in the *Knights* with demagoguery in the proceedings of the state. But we cannot say to what extent that parody of sophistic and rhapsodic combat actually took place in the comedy.

³⁵ ‘Now the founders of our great festivals are justly praised for handing down to us a custom by which, having proclaimed a truce toward each other and resolved our pending wars, we come together in one place, where, as we make our prayers and sacrifices in common, we are reminded of the kinship which exists among us and are made to feel more kindly towards each other for the future, reviving old *xeniai* and establishing new ones.’ Isocrates *Panegyricus* 4.43, trans. Hermann, modified; quoted in Tell (2011): 131. For more on the exploitation of *xenia* by travelling sophists, see Tell (2011): Chapter Four.

5. The *Protagoras* and a ‘Competition in Flattery’

I therefore take it as established that Eupolis staged, in part or in whole, a Panhellenic gathering of *sophoi* who competed for ‘prizes’ in a parodic, flattering competition in wisdom as part of funeral games/celebrations for the father of the host, most probably on the model of competitions as seen in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (or *Urcertamen*), *Frogs*, and other comedies of the time. The message of the *Kolakes* was clear with respect to the use of such a parody: these competitions in wisdom, or in poetic-sophistic wits, were just spectacles of pleasure-production by *kolakes*, in line with the criticisms seen in Thucydides and Hippocrates. The comedy was also therefore brutally self-referential and an indictment against comedy itself and theatre-going audiences—or, perhaps equally plausibly, a celebration of such things, though the ridicule of Callias points more, I think, towards a serious aspect of condemnation of the uncritical enjoyment of such spectacles as if they showcased real wisdom.

In this section, I aim to show that Plato took after Eupolis in this regard. Plato, I will show, staged his own makeshift Panhellenic gathering of *sophoi* in the house of Callias. Socrates, because he evidently cannot leave, plays the very game of the sophists in a formal competition of wits, in a competition of pleasure production or flattery. And yet, in defeating Protagoras in a most pleasurable (that is, sophistic) way, Socrates explodes the convention of such debates outright. That is not to say he does not salvage Socratic principles from that debate, namely intellectualism and the principles of self-control, steering the discussion to his own ends (see again esp. 345e1-346a, and below on the defence of Hesiodic ‘hard work’); but at the same time, in winning the competition, he adopts its conventional prize: the highest human wisdom sanctioned by the Delphic Apollo, along with the other aspects traditionally under the purview of the sophists. That is, political and personal advice and the knowledge of virtue. That is why the discussion ends in *aporia* and the dialogue confirms Socrates has a better grasp on matters of virtue at home and in the city than Protagoras. Seeing how Socrates is symbolically ‘crowned the victor’ in this way will help us in understanding Socrates’ mantic ability to see right through the souls of the sophist-flatterers in a temporal and moral respect upon the entrance to the Callias’ portico, which will lead us into the following chapter.

It should be noted here that several scholars have seen generically comic elements in the interpretation of Simonides, as if the ‘Simonides Episode’ (338e4-348c5) was borrowed from a formal *agon* (always from *Clouds*). This argument has been met with less than an enthusiastic reception.³⁶ If my argument about a competition in flattery in Eupolis has been convincing, and the following argument here is convincing too—that Plato takes after aspects of that competition, which may well have been contained in a formal *agon*—we should at last have real evidence that the ‘Simonides Episode’ is formally related to a comic *agon*.

Take first the issue of the *Protagoras*’ setting or staging in relation to the *Kolakes*. Callias’ company should be conceived as a makeshift Panhellenic gathering of ‘the wise’. Note that Hippias in fact does much of the work for us, making it clear that Callias has turned his manor into a meeting place for all the *sophoi* of Greece, indeed, into ‘the Prytaneum of Wisdom itself’ (αὐτὸ τὸ πρυτανεῖον τὸ σοφίας):

Gentlemen, I regard all of you here present as kinsmen, intimates, and fellow citizens by nature, not by convention. For like is akin to like by nature [...] Therefore it would be disgraceful for us to understand the nature of things and not—being as we are the wisest of the Greeks and gathered here together in this veritable Prytaneum of Wisdom Itself, in this greatest and most august house of the city itself (ἡμᾶς οὖν αἰσχροὺν τὴν μὲν φύσιν τῶν πραγμάτων εἰδέναι, σοφωτάτους δὲ ὄντας τῶν Ἑλλήνων, καὶ κατ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο νῦν συνελθυσθότας τῆς τε Ἑλλάδος εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πρυτανεῖον τῆς σοφίας καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς πόλεως εἰς τὸν μέγιστον καὶ ὀλβιώτατον οἶκον τόνδε)—not, I say, produce anything worthy of all this dignity, but bicker with each other as if we were the dregs of society (φαυλατάτους τῶν ἀνθρώπων). I therefore implore and counsel you, Protagoras and Socrates, to be reconciled and to compromise, under our arbitration, as it were, on some middle course.’

Protagoras 338d3-a1, trans. Lombardo and Bell, modified.³⁷

³⁶ The argument that the Simonides Episode is a formal *agon* of a type is seen in Capra (2001) and Arieti and Barrus (2010). Reviewing Arieti and Barrus, however, Miller (2011) captures the general mood regarding the argument: ‘In the introduction, Arieti and Barrus argue that the *Protagoras* is essentially a prose comedy in the style of Aristophanes (8-13). The dramatic and comic elements in the dialogue are obviously very important, and Plato certainly makes frequent use of specific Aristophanic ideas and motifs. But not all readers will be convinced of the strict formal parallels that Arieti and Barrus wish to draw. For instance, Socrates’ conversation with Protagoras does not seem to me to resemble a comic *agon*, except perhaps in an extremely general way, which would of course also apply to many other Platonic dialogues.’ I agree with Miller surely, but at least with a sound intertextual basis, some of these suspicions about a para-*agon* or the like can be confirmed.

³⁷ It is notable that winner in the contest of tragedy in the house of Pluto is entitled to free meals in the (Underworld’s) ‘prytaneum’ at *Frogs* 755-765, wherein they seem to go and feast at the play’s conclusion.

The other sophists hold themselves to a similar standard. Protagoras locates his own art of sophistry as the pinnacle of wisdom going back to Homer and Hesiod and even beyond (316d3-317c6); and Prodicus does not protest when *his* verbal art is said to be as old or even more ancient than Simonides' sage-like facility with words (331a1-2). Callias' palace is populated by the self-proclaimed wisest of the Greeks who know 'the nature of things' (φύσιν τῶν πραγμάτων εἰδέναι) who hold themselves over all mere mortals in wisdom.

Then there is the matter of their physical comportment, one which is closely related to the comportment of such claimants to wisdom at festivals and games. Recall that Empedocles was a frequent visitor of the Panhellenic meeting places. Observe what he says of himself in the passage cited above, and then compare Empedocles' self-fashioning with the image of Protagoras in the dialogue:

But I go up and down among you an immortal god,
No longer mortal, held in honour among all, as it seems,
Crowned with both fillets and blooming garlands.
Men and women worship me, when I enter their flourishing towns;
And they follow me in countless numbers, asking where the path to profit lies.
Some want divinations; others, pierced for a long time by harsh pains,
Asked to hear a healing utterance against all kinds of diseases.

D.K. Emp. 31B, trans. McKirahan.

Like Empedocles, Protagoras has a train of attendants who broadly constitute his worshipful 'chorus' along with manifold others whom he 'picks up along all the cities he comes and goes through' (315c8). Remember also that in Fr. 158 K.A., Protagoras has a kind of faux-medical knowledge, which has sophistic and Heraclitean overtones; but it seems to have had Empedoclean ones as well, who was some sort of doctor. The incredible self-flattery of holding oneself as an actual god walking among mortals also fits what the Chorus of Flatterers say of themselves in Fr. 173 K.A., and the repeated use of ἄνθρωπος rather than simply ἄνθρω throughout the dialogue likewise seems to attest to 'godlike' sophists in the house. Even the

Eunuch doorman addresses Socrates and Hippocrates with ‘ὧ ἄνθρωποι’ (314d5), suggesting this supra-mortality was a theme of self-fashioning for some within the grounds.³⁸

Protagoras is also said to ‘charm’ or ‘spellbind’ everyone he meets as if with the voice of Orpheus (κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ ὥσπερ Ὀρφεύς, οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν ἔπονται κεκλημένοι, 315b1). Håken Tell has shown that ‘κηλήω’ and ‘θέλω’ were common words and themes ascribed to sage-like visitors and competitors at the games and religious sites; Empedocles, Hippias, and even Ion claimed to enchant their listeners as an explicit symbol of their magical, godlike powers. Indeed, Tell argues that Plato in this very passage of the *Protagoras* intended to link the titular character’s character as symbolically related to the ‘Charmers’ who speak for Apollo, the κληδόνες, outside one of several temples at Delphi.³⁹ In other words, Protagoras is signified to have some privileged position in relation to Apollo in this passage of the *Protagoras*. All that may be true; but I also see Socrates’ description as a double-edged complement here (or merely a plain insult). The voice of Orpheus drove his listeners out of their minds.⁴⁰

So the sophists in Callias’ manor constitute a makeshift Panhellenic gathering of claimants to wisdom, in a location that recalls the competitive setting of the *Frogs*. What is more, Protagoras is there in part to ‘display’ his wisdom in a competitive stance *against* other flatterers, in competition for admirers. Such aspects of competitive display are immediately evident upon Socrates’ encountering Protagoras. Consider that, after Protagoras has given his disquisition on the history of the ‘sophist’ as having the most ancient lineage amongst the wise, he asks Socrates whether he would like to discuss alone or in front of every person present in the house (περὶ τούτων ἀπάντων ἐναντίον τῶν ἔνδον ὄντων τὸν λόγον ποιῆσθαι, 317c5-6). Socrates relates to his anonymous friend that he suspected Protagoras wanted to take pleasure in gloating and boasting in front of Prodicus and Hippias (τῷ τε Προδίκῳ καὶ τῷ Ἰππία ἐνδείξασθαι καὶ καλλωπίσασθαι), given that Protagoras sees (or thinks) Socrates and

³⁸ The slave’s address may also be taken as a sign that Socrates’ entrance into Callias’ portico is meant to recall a comic, para-Homeric *katabasis* populated by the souls of flatters as much as their mortal bodies. For discussion of this, see below, and the general outlook of Capra (2001).

³⁹ Tell (2011): 124-130

⁴⁰ Denyer (2008): 81 on *Prot.* 315b1: ‘κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ ὥσπερ Ὀρφεύς: this is somewhat derogatory of Protagoras’ followers: the song of Orpheus was renowned for being able to charm not only rational beings, but also birds, fish, wild beasts, trees and rocks (Simonides fr. 567 *PMG*, Eur. *Bac.* 562-4, *IA* 1211-12).’

Hippocrates had come as his ‘admirers’ or ‘lovers’ (ἐρασταί). Socrates replies ‘Sure, why don’t we call Prodicus and Hippias and the others with them, so that they can listen?’ (317d2-3).

It is perplexing as to why Socrates would call himself an *erastēs* of Protagoras. But if wisdom is what makes a thing beautiful and worth pursuing (N.B. 309c10: πῶς δ’ οὐ μέλλει, ὃ μακάριε, τὸ σοφώτατον κάλλιον φαίνεσθαι;), and Protagoras is the reputedly wisest man living (309d1), being an *erastēs* of Protagoras (rather than of Alcibiades) makes sense. Indeed, this is the whole reason for Socrates’ claiming Protagoras to be more beautiful even than the son of Clinias at the outset of the dialogue, namely his wisdom (Prot. 309a1-d2, esp. 309c1-3). Socrates erotically chases the property of wisdom in the dialogue, not persons, whose worth is determined insofar as they are wise. Protagoras thinks Socrates and Hippocrates have come to join his entourage, to become one of his chorus of flatterers. Remember, too, that in *Knights*, *kolakeia* is couched in mutually erotic terms with the lover and beloved having mutually reinforcing feelings for one another.

Thus Protagoras is in competition with Prodicus and Hippias for admirers; a competition for flatterers amongst flatterers. Indeed, this competitive stance towards admirers becomes explicit when Protagoras takes a hit at Hippias’ unique, and uniquely unpleasant polymathy at 318d8ff, where Hippias’ form of teaching ‘abuses’ young men (λωβῶνται τοὺς νέους) by forcing them to, in effect, go back to school. With Protagoras, a young man will not learn anything but what he *wants* to learn (318e4; strictly speaking, how to run a city and one’s own house or estate well). We should, however, be aware that Protagoras is lying or half-lying here: Protagoras *did* in fact write on and make advances in grammar and language, mnemonics and geometry—all the ostensible purview of Hippias’ expertise (LM Prot. D17-25, D33-34 respectively). Protagoras’ competitive boastfulness in having admirers makes so much sense here that I submit it was part of the ‘competition in flattery’ in the *Kolakes* as well.

Some more remarks about the setting of both the dialogue and the *Kolakes*. Note the following remarks of Denyer, who writes of Callias’ wishing to turn his atrium into a συνέδριον after Socrates agrees to turn the discussion into a kind of exhibition for Protagoras:

“Callias”, writes Denyer, “shows some pretension in talking thus about rearranging the furniture. Συνέδριον is generally restricted to the grander sorts of ‘sitting together’: conferences, congresses, councils, courts, their meetings and the building where they hold them. Thus in Menander *Dys.* 174-7, building a συνέδριον is a stage beyond building a mere θῶκος [seated council chamber] for people to sit and chat in; and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 2.13.1, uses συνέδριον to describe the foundation of the Roman senate. Plato’s joke here was anticipated by, and perhaps borrowed from, Pherecrates fr. 70 *PCG*, which talks scornfully of a shopkeeper [building a] συνέδριον ‘for youngsters to spend the day chatting in.’”⁴¹

That is perceptive, and the joke may indeed have been anticipated by Pherecrates. I suggest that the change of scenery, however, is not borrowed (just) from Pherecrates, but that the stage is set for a flatterer to showcase his wares in competition with other flatterers, as in *Frogs*. It will also be the location where one of those ostensible ‘admirers’ will destroy the flatterer utterly in a pleasing contest of poetic wisdom and, after that, through questioning on the nature of virtue. Callias has turned the entrance to his house into a virtual *Ekklēsia* populated by both the wise and unlearned (that is, the others present and the students, and ultimately Plato’s audiences to the dialogue) to witness a display of wisdom from a speaker who stands (that is, Protagoras, see 328d3), whilst the others sit (there is no indication that Protagoras sits as they begin, whereas the others do). This set-up mimics not only the debate in *Frogs* but also the opening of the *Certamen*: ‘Although both poets competed admirably (θαυμαστῶς ἀγωνισαμένων), they say that Hesiod won (νικῆσαι) in this way: he took the centre of the stage (προελθόντα γὰρ εἰς τὸ μέσον) and challenged Homer with one question after another, and Homer answered each one (πυνθάνεσθαι τοῦ Ὀμήρου καθ’ ἕνα, τὸν δὲ Ὅμηρον ἀποκρίνασθαι, *Certamen* 70-74, trans. Bassino). Moreover, considering that the *Certamen* or *Urcertamen* was likely a predicate to the *Kolakes*, as we know it was for *Frogs*, it is reasonable to assume that a battle is primed in the *Protagoras* in a way that deliberately recalls the battle of the *Kolakes*.

⁴¹ Denyer (2008): 91.

That battle does eventually begin, the transition starting just after the Great Speech has ended, presumably with Protagoras standing all the while, demonstrating his role as a contender and Socrates as challenger.

Callias, then, is clearly a sort of Panoides/Panedes analogue who wants a ‘battle of flattery’. It is Callias who first refuses to allow Socrates to leave, demanding that Socrates stay and gratify the company. He says ‘I beg of you to stay with us: there’s just nothing I would take pleasure in more than listening to both you and Protagoras having a dialogue. Please, gratify us all!’ – ‘δέομαι οὖν σου παραμεῖναι ἡμῖν: ὥς ἐγὼ οὐδ’ ἂν ἐνὸς ἡδίου ἀκούσαιμι ἢ σοῦ τε καὶ Πρωταγόρου διαλεγομένων. ἀλλὰ χάρισαι ἡμῖν πᾶσιν.’ (335d4-5). After Socrates says he has always admired Callias for his ‘love of *sophia*’ (ἀεὶ μὲν ἔγωγέ σου τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἄγαμαι, 335e1), and that he would like to ‘gratify’ Callias (βουλοίμην ἂν χαρίζεσθαι, 335e2) it just is not possible. For, Socrates says, he cannot keep up with an expert in demagoguery or ‘speaking to the crowd’, so different is that form of speech from an actual dialogue or discussion (ἀλλήλοισι διαλεγομένους καὶ τὸ δημηγορεῖν, 336b3). Callias, slightly discomfited (note the awkward ‘ὀρᾷς;’ in the following passage) says that Protagoras should be able to speak as he likes, and Socrates as long *he* likes (ἀλλ’—ὀρᾷς;—ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, δίκαια δοκεῖ λέγειν Πρωταγόρας ἀξιῶν αὐτῷ τε ἐξεῖναι διαλέγεσθαι ὅπως βούλεται, καὶ σὺ ὅπως ἂν αὖ σὺ βούλῃ, 336b4-6). At this point it is clear that Callias just wants to be a controlling member of a pleasing, flattering spectacle, no matter the outcome. Callias seems to be a Panoidēs-Panēdēs analogue, as he probably appeared in the *Kolakes*, who is either a ‘philosopher’ as Socrates ironically mentions (thus ‘Panoides’ = ‘All-Knowing’) or someone who simply ‘enjoys everything’ as a ‘Pan-hēdus’ figure—namely listening to both sides.

After all these intervening remarks by this para-comic Callias, the stage is finally set for the debate to continue when everyone agrees to play the judge together in keeping each party to answering according to the proper length. It is unclear exactly what such arbitration is supposed to mean or look like, although Alcibiades seems to play the role twice: once in staving off Hippias’ own prepared speech on Simonides at 347b3ff. and at 348b2ff. in holding Protagoras’ feet to the fire in keeping his end of the deal to answer Socrates’ questions after the Simonides Episode is over.

The latter moment is an important dramatic and philosophical marker. Socrates does not drop the rules of engagement until the end of the dialogue; he does not drop the *act* until the end of the dialogue. His parting words to the company make this clear: ‘It is a long time now since I should have gone, but I stayed to gratify the remarkable Callias’ – ‘καὶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ οἷπερ ἔφην ἰέναι πάλαι ὥρα, ἀλλὰ Καλλία τῷ καλῷ χαριζόμενος παρέμεινα’ (362a1-2). Socrates stays to gratify Callias and play the flattering game—at least to the extent he finds it conducive to his purposes.

It should therefore be unsurprising that the battle between Protagoras and Socrates begins in poetry, indeed in *song*, as it likely did in the *Kolakes*.⁴² As Charalabopoulos notes, ‘It is very likely that Protagoras and Sokrates quoted Simonides’ poem in the *Protagoras* mostly by singing [as] the poem is almost exclusively referred to as an ᾠσμα, “song”.’ (339b4, 341a8, 343c7, 345d1). Only once (339d3) is it called a ποίημα, “poem”.⁴³ The entire Simonides Episode would therefore be a contest of two sophistic, poetic pairs, just as in the *Certamen* and *Frogs*, and a discourse that would most reliably please someone like a Panoidēs-Panēdēs analogue, namely Callias.

Look now at some similarities in the debate between Socrates and Protagoras in their songlike competition with the *Certamen*. Protagoras’ ostensible takedown of Simonides with the roar of approval it receives from all those present (except Socrates, of course) is just about the same sort of response Homer receives after the best hymns he can muster in the *Certamen*: ‘εἰπὼν οὖν ταῦτα πολλοῖς θόρυβον παρέσχεν καὶ ἔπαινον τῶν ἀκούοντων’—‘These words of his caused a paroxysm of approval and praise from many of his hearers’ (*Prot.* 339e1-2); ‘θαυμάσαντες δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν Ὅμηρον οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐπῆνουν, ὥς παρὰ τὸ προσῆκον γεγονότων τῶν ἐπῶν, καὶ ἐκέλευον διδόναι τὴν νίκην.’—‘And taken in wonder by this song of

⁴² It must be said that my analysis of the Simonides Episode will have a kind of ‘macro-focus’ and will not concern itself with the usual questions Platonic scholars of Greek Lyric concern themselves with. I aim here to show, on the one hand, *that* the Episode is predicated on Eupolis’ ‘Competition in Flattery’ and how it effects the outcome of the dialogue as much as the nature of the Episode itself. For recent and excellent treatments of the age-old problems of Simonides in the *Protagoras*, though with a distinctly philological and cultural focus, see most recently Hunter (2021) though with Ford (2005). For perhaps the most influential philosophical study on the question in its relationship to the ‘measure doctrine’ built by Socrates in the dialogue, see Carson (1992).

⁴³ Charalabopoulos (2012): 61-2, n. 83, modified. Charalabopoulos makes a critical point that will become important in the final chapter that we will return to. We have here a performative work of literature on the part of Plato; the readers of the dialogue would have themselves been singing the tune of Simonides out loud, adding a genuinely theatrical aspect to a work of prose quasi-theatre. For more on ‘song culture’ in the fifth century, see esp. Ford (2002).

Homer's, the Greeks praised him for having created these verses and asked that he be awarded the victory.' (*Certamen* 205-206). Socrates receives no loud shouts of approval or applause during his analysis of Simonides (though he does receive praise from Prodicus for defending Hesiod, 'ὁ μὲν οὖν Πρόδικος ἀκούσας ταῦτα ἐπήνεσέν με', 340d5). More significant is simply that Protagoras is reduced to silence after Socrates' extended and triumphant analysis (348b1)—a silence indicating Protagoras' defeat in the competition in song—and ultimately even shame due to the exhortations of the 'judges' Alcibiades, Callias, and 'basically every single person present' to keep up the discussion and take questions (καὶ ὁ Πρωταγόρας αἰσχυνοθείς, ὥς γέ μοι ἔδοξεν, τοῦ τε Ἀλκιβιάδου ταῦτα λέγοντος καὶ τοῦ Καλλίου δεομένου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων σχεδόν τι τῶν παρόντων, 348c1-3).⁴⁴

If we are to examine the parallels of the *Protagoras* to the *Certamen* seriously, we should note that Socrates defends Hesiod (even though Protagoras takes the 'centre of the stage' as Hesiod does in the *Certamen*). Now, I cannot say it is controversial to assert that Socrates reads Simonides as someone who defends the basic Greek ideal of Hesiodic 'hard work'—that it is hard to *become* good, but easy to *be* good. Indeed, Socrates explicitly aligns the values of Simonides with those of Hesiod's famous passage at *Works and Days* 289-292.

εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστὶν τὸ εἶναι τῷ γενέσθαι, οὐκ ἐναντία λέγει ὁ Σιμωνίδης αὐτὸς αὐτῷ. καὶ ἴσως ἀνφαίη Πρόδικος ὅδε καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ καθ' Ἡσίοδον γενέσθαι μὲν ἀγαθὸν χαλεπὸν εἶναι—τῆς γὰρ ἀρετῆς ἔμπροσθεν τοὺς θεοὺς ἰδρῶτα θεῖναι—ὅταν δέ τις αὐτῆς εἰς ἄκρον ἵκηται, ῥηϊδίην δῆπειτα πέλειν, χαλεπὴν περ ἐοῦσαν, ἐκτῆσθαι. ὁ μὲν οὖν Πρόδικος ἀκούσας ταῦτα ἐπήνεσέν με.

And if being is not the same as becoming, Simonides does not contradict himself. Perhaps Prodicus and many others would say in the words of Hesiod that it is difficult to become good, "For the gods have placed sweat on the path to excellence," but when you reach the top, "Thereafter it is easy to keep, hard though it was to achieve." On hearing these things, then, Prodicus praised me.

Protagoras 340c7-d7, trans. Taylor, modified.

Socrates' claim is justified because, to Socrates' Simonides, doing well or goodness is knowledge (see 345a1-5 on 'ἀγαθὴ πρᾶξις' being 'μάθησις'), and doing badly and badness is

⁴⁴ Whilst Graziosi (2001) argues that poetic competition was *cooperative*—the lines of Hesiod could not be completed without the help of Homer—she notes that actual defeat in competition comes only when one party is reduced to silence.

‘nothing other than being deprived of knowledge’ (αὕτη γὰρ μόνη ἐστὶ κακὴ πράξις, ἐπιστήμης στέρηθῆναι, 345b5). This principle of ‘knowledge = doing well’ will be a foundational one for the good life later in Socrates’ development of the ‘art of measurement’, but the point here is that Socrates takes the Hesiodic principle ascribed to Simonides as one that befits his own, well-known Socratic worldview. In other words, Socrates takes the position of Hesiod in whatever battle of sophistic wits took place in the *Kolakes*—if that is, there was some such battle between spokesmen for Hesiod and Homer in the *Kolakes*.⁴⁵

Remember, too, that a central feature of the sophistic-poetic battles of wisdom was the ability to interpret ‘riddles’ or *aporiai* set by one challenger to another (see *Certamen* 74-89, 94-101, and 102-37). This convention of argument may be seen as, on the one hand, overshadowing the whole discussion with Protagoras: for the challenge—which literally ends in an *aporia*—is the ‘riddle of virtue’, as it were. But notice too that when Socrates humiliates Protagoras with the help of Prodicus, he does so by posing the challenge or riddle of the meaning of ‘χαλεπὸν’ in Simonides. Does it mean ‘bad’ or ‘hard’? Socrates, after some cheeky bantering against Protagoras with Prodicus, in fact admits to Protagoras that it was just a playful challenge, saying that he agrees with Protagoras on the ordinary meaning of the term as well, as well as does Prodicus. ‘But of course I know, Protagoras, that Simonides says this [that ‘χαλεπὸν’ means ‘hard’ in Simonides], as indeed Prodicus here knows, but he posed the question to put you to the test; both to tease you and determine if you could come to the aid of your position’ (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἔφην, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, τοῦτο λέγειν Σιμωνίδην, καὶ Πρόδικόν γε τόνδε εἰδέναι, ἀλλὰ παίζειν καὶ σοῦ δοκεῖν ἀποπειρᾶσθαι εἰ οἷός τ’ ἔσῃ τῷ σαυτοῦ λόγῳ βοηθεῖν. 341d7-9).

So a challenge of ‘riddles’ is taking place in the interpretation of Simonides. It is clear, too, that Socrates ‘wins’ the contest quite frankly due to a great deal of violence to the original text, at least insofar as he deliberately mutilates the *word order* of the poem. In Ann Carson’s influential essay on the Simonides Episode, she writes that

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that Simonides *did* discuss this very passage of Hesiod at Fr. 579 *PMG*, but Simonides’ precise relationship to that passage and Hesiodic epic in general is highly controversial. For a recent treatment of the matter, see Rawls (2018): Chapter One.

The mixed condition of the [poetic] text is further confused by Socrates' hermeneutic method. His close reading of Simonides' poem relies heavily on violent transgressions of Greek syntax and idiom; he favors a technique of creative hyperbaton, whereby words are trajected out of the boundaries of their natural phrasing into new and strange mixtures of sense. For example he treats in this way the adverb ἀλαθέως (“truly”) in the first verse (changing Simonides' meaning from “it is hard to become truly a good man” to “it is truly hard to become a good man” and draws attention to his own impropriety with the bland statement ἀλλ' ὑπερβατὸν δεῖ θεῖναι ἐν τῷ ᾄσματι τὸ ἀλαθέως: “Well I think what we need at this point is a little hyperbaton of the truth.”[at 343e3-4].⁴⁶

Few can deny that Socrates does not do some violence to the poem—or song—of Simonides, even if poetry has, perhaps, equally plausible interpretations. The point is that this interpretative violence, though not seen in the *Certamen*, is just another one of the formal rules in competitions of sophistic and poetic wisdom. As Lloyd writes, not only of the spectacles characteristic of the brothers Dionysus and Euthydemus in Plato, but of all spectacles of wisdom:

In the open debates that we know took place each participant, striving to win, would naturally try to justify his own position and undermine those of his opponents, and one way he might attempt to claim superiority for his own ideas was by stressing their novelty. Moreover, the occasions for display that occurred (both in connection with contests of wisdom and independently of them) did not just permit, but must sometimes positively have *favoured* open, indeed ostentatious, claims to originality.⁴⁷

Socrates wins the battle of pleasing sophistry because he is parodying the manner of the sophists themselves, both to explode the convention *as* displays of entertainment—just as in Eupolis—but also in order to adopt its traditional prize of the highest wisdom conferred to mortals by the Delphic Apollo. The victory is both implicit in that he reduced Protagoras to silence, and also in that he famously turns or contorts Simonides towards adopting traditional Socratic, intellectualist principles. Christopher Moore has argued that the ‘Simonides Episode’ is a debate about *sage wisdom*—Pittacus against Simonides—with Socrates taking the latter side and adopting the title sage for himself, considering that Socrates predicates his own

⁴⁶ Carson (1994): 112.

⁴⁷ Lloyd (1989): 90.

‘wisdom’ on that of ‘sage-like Spartans’.⁴⁸ My analysis here and below complements that reading.

The Simonides Episode at last ends with the infamous aspersions against poetry and song as befit for low-end *symposia* and uneducated street people who entertain themselves with songs, hired acts, and wine drunk without any *kosmos*—all types of behaviour and characters clearly reminiscent of the party at Callias’ in the *Kolakes*, indeed to an almost explicit degree. The harshness of the critique and transparent comic pedigree require full citation here:

καὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ μοι τὸ περὶ ποιήσεως διαλέγεσθαι ὁμοιότατον εἶναι τοῖς συμποσίοις τοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ἀγοραίων ἀνθρώπων. καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι, διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι ἀλλήλοις δι’ ἐαυτῶν συνεῖναι ἐν τῷ πότῳ μηδὲ διὰ τῆς ἐαυτῶν φωνῆς καὶ τῶν λόγων τῶν ἐαυτῶν ὑπὸ ἀπαιδευσίας, τιμίας ποιοῦσι τὰς αὐλητρίδας, πολλοῦ μισθούμενοι ἀλλοτρίαν φωνήν τὴν τῶν αὐλῶν, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων φωνῆς ἀλλήλοις σύνεισιν: ὅπου δὲ καλοὶ καγαθοὶ συμπόται καὶ πεπαιδευμένοι εἰσίν, οὐκ ἂν ἴδοις οὔτ’ αὐλητρίδας οὔτε ὀρχηστρίδας οὔτε ψαλτρίδας, ἀλλὰ αὐτοὺς αὐτοῖς ἱκανοὺς ὄντας συνεῖναι ἄνευ τῶν λήρων τε καὶ παιδιῶν τούτων διὰ τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς, λέγοντάς τε καὶ ἀκούοντας ἐν μέρει ἐαυτῶν κοσμίως, κἂν πάνυ πολλὸν οἶνον πίωσιν. [...] ἀλλὰ τὰς μὲν τοιαύτας συνουσίας ἐῷσιν χαίρειν, αὐτοὶ δ’ ἐαυτοῖς σύνεισιν δι’ ἐαυτῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἐαυτῶν λόγοις πεῖραν ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες καὶ διδόντες. τοὺς τοιούτους μοι δοκεῖ χρῆναι μᾶλλον μιμεῖσθαι ἐμέ τε καὶ σέ, καταθεμένους τοὺς ποιητὰς αὐτοὺς δι’ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους τοὺς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι, τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν πεῖραν λαμβάνοντας: κἂν μὲν βούλῃ ἔτι ἐρωτᾶν, ἔτοιμός εἰμί σοι παρέχειν ἀποκρινόμενος: ἐὰν δὲ βούλῃ, σὺ ἐμοὶ παράσχεες, περὶ ὧν μεταξὺ ἐπαυσάμεθα διεξιόντες, τούτοις τέλος ἐπιθεῖναι.

Discussing poetry strikes me as no different from the second-rate drinking parties of the agora crowd. These people, largely uneducated and unable to entertain themselves over their wine by using their own voices to generate conversation, pay premium prices for flute-girls and rely on the extraneous voice of the reed flute as background music for their parties. But when well-educated gentlemen drink together, you will not see girls playing the flute or the lyre or dancing, but a group that knows how to get together without these childish frivolities, conversing in a state of order (κοσμίως) no matter how heavily they are drinking wine. [...] The best people avoid such discussions and rely on their own powers of speech to entertain themselves and test each other. These people should be our models (τοὺς τοιούτους μοι δοκεῖ χρῆναι μᾶλλον μιμεῖσθαι ἐμέ τε καὶ σέ). We should put the poets aside and converse directly with each other, testing the truth and our own ideas. If you have more

⁴⁸ Moore (2016).

questions to ask, I am ready to answer them; or, if you prefer, you can render the same service to me, and we can resume where we broke off and try to reach a conclusion.

Protagoras 347b7c3-348a8, trans. Lombardo and Bell, modified.

These comments, as I see it, squarely implicate the entire episode on poetry as one predicated on the *Kolakes*, or something like it—that ‘gentlemen’ should rather ‘μυμεῖσθαι’ different sorts of characters, not the drunken, rambunctious ones on the comic stage.

But Socrates does *not* drop the act after the Simonides Episode; he continues to ‘μυμεῖσθαι’ comic characters from the *Kolakes* in flattering the desires of Callias and the others present. For, after Protagoras ‘is forced’ to agree to answer Socrates’ questions on virtue, Socrates gives an *epideixis* to ‘all mankind’ that pleasure is the good and that we should take ourselves and our children to the sophists for paid training in how to have the most pleasurable life.⁴⁹ Of course this is ironic because it is a *measured* life that Socrates gives a demonstration of, which the sophists neither practise nor teach. But what explains this bizarre and decidedly non-Socratic turn of argumentation? My suggestion is that Socrates is articulating what followed after Fr. 173 K.A.; that the good life is the most pleasant one, but turning it into his own formulation of measurement and self-control.

I will have much more to say on the vexed question of Socrates’ ostensible hedonism in the next chapter. In any case, it is clear that Socrates, in having Protagoras by the end of the dialogue reluctantly admit that virtue *is* a single thing—namely knowledge of the science of self-controlled or ‘measure’—Protagoras has been defeated through a process of none other than pleasing ‘sophistry’ to the audiences who are playing ‘judge’. Thus, when Protagoras brushes off the humiliation by somehow finding a way to praise Socrates afterwards at 361d6-e4, as noted in the previous chapter, he bestows (willingly or not) upon his competitor the sage wisdom that belongs to him. In this way, Socrates has reaffirmed his Delphic-sanctioned, aporetic wisdom as understood in the *Apology* that is showcased by the *aporia* of the closing of the dialogue; but Socrates also adopts the mantel of being wisest in virtue and politics both at home and in the city, and having a mantic insight into virtuous actions concerning the future. He defeats Protagoras utterly, along with the other sophists present, thereby completing

⁴⁹ For more on this ironical argument, probably adopted/adapted from Eupolis, see p. 151 below.

his goals in (presumably) dissuading the excitable Hippocrates from joining Protagoras' entourage. If this Hippocrates is the general who died at Delium in 424, and whose sons are made fun of across comedy as corrupt and nothing like their martial father, this either shows that he *did* become a student of Protagoras and his sons ruined or, alternatively, that nature alone cannot pass on virtue and needs knowledge, which is somewhat the message of the closing of the dialogue.⁵⁰

One may say that this conclusion to the battle of wits—the reaffirmation of Socrates' wisdom—can be derived without any help from an intertextual analysis of Eupolis, but merely through an analysis of what can be derived from the *Certamen* and elsewhere on formal agonistic battles. That would only be partly true, however. To forget or neglect the role of Eupolis here would not only be contextually, historically blind *per se*, but also to fail to recognise that Plato was joining Eupolis and a host of others who had criticised spectacles of sophistic wisdom, and that it is *through* Eupolis (though to be clear: by no means *only* through Eupolis) that Plato reaffirms Socrates' Delphic-sanctioned wisdom. And that wisdom, most notably the kind that sees temporally and morally through souls, will be on full display in, an explain key features of, the *para-katabasis* of the *Protagoras*. In this way, such an analysis is necessary to explain certain organic features of Socrates as a person in the dialogue and how that dialogue proceeds.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has covered a lot of ground. Taking a step back, however, several major insights have been revealed. On the one hand, we have seen a structural similarity between Eupolis' comic outlook and Plato's to a significant degree, a fact that necessarily challenges the notion that Aristophanes held an exclusive or near-exclusive hold on Plato's view of comedy and its philosophical value. On the other hand, digging deeper into the structural or holistic connections—to the point I thought possible or philologically responsible—between the *Protagoras* and the *Kolakes* revealed critical insights into the philosophical nature of Socrates as such, especially in relation to his famed Delphic wisdom. The *Protagoras*, through

⁵⁰ We do not know who this Hippocrates was; it seems likeliest to me, however, that he was made fun of in the *Kolakes* after his death, and his sons made fun of. Plato took this message and turned it into an entire drama, perhaps even showing the positive influence of Socrates on the very real Hippocrates. For the question of the identity of Hippocrates, see the entry in Nails (2002).

Eupolis' *Kolakes*, contextualises that very wisdom by placing him in a direct lineage to the sage tradition whilst brushing aside the interference caused by the sophists—or otherwise contextualising their innovations as misguided. It also implicitly justifies Socrates' 'chattering' that was criticised by the flatterers in Eupolis' play an elsewhere.

There are other aspects of the *Protagoras* that have been resolved through this recourse to Eupolis, too. We have seen that his problematic 'sophistic' behaviour as such can best be explained through his playing the actual game of the sophists for his own surreptitious, perhaps 'eirōnical' reasons.

I admit, however, that it can be hard to see how this interlude exploring the holistic or structural connections between the *Kolakes* and the *Protagoras* plays into Plato's use of the comic dualism of 'flatterer versus philosopher' in the *Protagoras*. But this will become less mystifying once I examine the relationship that Socrates' seeing through the souls of sophists as flatterers (namely gluttons who suffer on account of their gluttony) in the para-katabasis of the *Protagoras* leads us to see the relationship that scene has to the moral-metaphysical outlook of the *Gorgias*; a dialogue which famously pits the flatterer against the laughably ascetic Socrates, and which also (I will argue) shares much with Eupolis and Ameipsias. This connection to the *Gorgias*' dualism of character leads me to question whether it is also present in the *Protagoras*. I will argue that it is. Thus it is the examination of Eupolis and the comic tradition as a whole that unites the two dialogues which have so often been thought to be at philosophical loggerheads. With this philosophico-dramatic synthesis in place, I will conclude what I set out to show from the start: that the *Protagoras* recreates the comic contrast setting Socrates, or Plato's ideal philosopher against the flattering sophists, and relies on the broader comic tradition to do so.

Chapter Four

Philosophers and Flatterers in the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*

I have argued that Plato has reached into the comic tradition to paint Protagoras as a para-comic flatterer, as well as what were key structural features of the *Kolakes*, namely a ‘competition in wisdom’ fashioned in a way as a ‘competition in flattery’ after the *Certamen* story. We cannot say if the characters ‘Protagoras and Socrates’ had, say, a formal agon on the comic stage. We can say, however, that Plato rewrote the script, as it were, placing the two in intellectual combat, likely replacing two contestants who did debate the poetry of Simonides or the merits of Homer versus Hesiod or any given topic. We do know that in *Clouds*, Socrates is said to have said that Simonides is a bad poet, which Pheidippides picks up on (*Clouds* 1362). So Socrates sought to transfer the debate in the *Kolakes* into a debate over Simonides and Pittacus, not only, perhaps, into a defence of Simonides against the position in *Clouds*, but into a debate over sage wisdom *for* sage wisdom.

In having Socrates *win* the debate between the two, or competition in wisdom (tweaking the conventions to his own ends all the while), Socrates explodes and exposes the convention(s) of sophistic argument as in large part geared towards pleasure-making rather than truth-finding. Indeed, very much as a means of garnering paying customers and outrageous luxuries under the pretence of real wisdom. Socrates, through his victory, is able to reaffirm his Delphic-sanctioned wisdom, along with the other symbols of wisdom ascribed to the sages, which the sophists took up for themselves. Plato seems even to have affirmed Socrates’ comical ‘chattering and thinking about everything’ as against his rival intellectuals, who are only interested in food. And much of this seems to have been made possible due to the dramatic backdrop and/or ideological help of Eupolis.

This chapter has four sections. In the first section, I aim to show that Socrates’ divine sort of wisdom is on full display when he sees into the core nature of the flatterers’ souls upon his entrance into Callias’ house in the famed para-Homeric *katabasis* of *Odyssey* 11. Similar to Odysseus, Socrates has a frightful, noetic insight into the souls of the sophists, two of whom are aligned to the most egregious sinners trapped in Tartarus. It is his panoptic, temporal and moral sage wisdom that is on implicit display here through the use of Homer. I

cannot think of another internally consistent explanation for this ability on the part of Socrates.

The second section recognises the profound similarities that the forms of suffering on display in Callias' Underworld have to the terrible condition of the souls of flatterers in the *Gorgias*, thus leading me to question to what degree the Platonic, moral-metaphysical model of 'flatterer versus philosopher'—a duality which, I will show, is likewise borrowed from the comic tradition seen in the first chapter—is operative in the *Protagoras* too. Thus, I will furnish a brief overview of the philosophical-comic duality of 'flatterer and philosopher' in the *Gorgias* so as to set up a strong intertextual analysis of sophists and Socrates in the *Protagoras*.

Thus, in the third section, I will show that the sophists of the *Protagoras* do indeed suffer the same fate as the flatterers of the *Gorgias* and that the moral-metaphysical judgement of souls in both dialogues are, in effect, the same. That is, the two dialogues are metaphysically linked just insofar as they share the dualism of 'philosopher and flatterer'. I say 'in effect' because I will sidestep the question of dating and/or the influence of one dialogue on another, as well as some important questions of detail. The point is that there is such a close similarity in the dramatic representation of character between the two dialogues that I argue the *Protagoras* should be read, at least in part, through the lens of the flatterers and philosophers in the *Gorgias*.

In this way, I will pave some way forward in what is probably one of the longest debates in the history of Platonic scholarship, namely the question of Socrates' alleged hedonism in the *Protagoras* in contrast to the *Gorgias*, which most vehemently denounces pleasure as a moral good.¹ I will not get drawn too extensively into that debate here, as I have

¹ In other words, this chapter will in part tackle the 'problem of hedonism' in the *Protagoras*: that Socrates, from 351b4 to 358a1, argues pleasure is good, valuable, and worthy of pursuit for its own sake, and that the flourishing life is one that can prudentially measure which pains are most conducive to a most pleasant life. And yet, in the *Gorgias* (esp. 495d-e and 500d), pleasures have no moral worth whatever, and to mistake them for goods is to condemn oneself to Hades potentially forever. There have been innumerable approaches this radical divergence and how to reconcile (if we should reconcile) the perspectives. My approach is novel in that it looks to the *literary* similarities of the two dialogues to harmonise their philosophical content. My general outlook in an analytical sense follows Russell (2005), but I need not rely on that here. For the 'anti-hedonism' wing of the debate—that Socrates does *not* believe pleasure is a moral good in the *Protagoras*—some influential studies are Shaw (2015), Zeyl (1980), along with Kahn (1988b) and (1996). Irwin, in his (1977) and (1995), is perhaps the

my own thoughts on the matter elsewhere, and a discussion would take us much too far afield. My hope is that this chapter—which extends my most recent work on the problem—will enlighten some perspectives on how to move forward with such a debate.²

The final section will round out the bulk of this thesis: how, I will ask, is Socrates pitted against the flatterers in the *Protagoras*? Beyond what we have seen with respect to sophistic competition borrowed from Eupolis, I argue that Socrates has the same values as the philosopher in the *Gorgias* insofar as he is opposed to the values of the flattering orators and sophists. The highest principle for Socrates in both dialogues is *self-control*—and not pleasure. Happiness and virtue, so far as Socrates has any beliefs he is willing to defend, is, in the *Protagoras*, based on a kind of Hippocratic model of the *kosmos* of body and soul, as against the sort of happiness conceived and practised by the companions of Callias at his comic party. That this is the case can be gleaned by virtue of the similarities seen with the dialectic of character in the *Gorgias*.

But the analysis does not end there. I will show that even the superficial details of Socrates' way of life in the *Protagoras* repeatedly allude to the comic tradition I have charted thus far, making the contrast clear enough. With this para-comic, Socratic anti-hedonism demonstrated in both dialogues, the circle is at last complete—that Plato did reach deeply into the latent comic distinction 'flatterer versus philosopher' in the *Protagoras* and, in fact, across his corpus. In this way, too, the overarching goal of this thesis is satisfied: I can safely say that Plato has systematically and philosophically relied upon a poet—indeed, many poets—other than Aristophanes to create one of his greatest dramatic works. The several possible or plausible reasons as to *why* he did so will be broached in the conclusion of the thesis.

most vociferous defender of Socratic hedonism, along with Rudebusch (1999). There are many paths to take in between. Taylor (2008) encapsulates this approach best, who argues that Socrates takes the question of pleasure as a good seriously simply because it is 'a worthwhile proposition' (p. 265). Kamtekar (2017) is the most recent and well-received volume on this problem, who argues that each dialogue is *entirely* guided by organic conversation, thus hedonism becomes a live option *in the context of* the *Protagoras*. But this is just to scratch the surface of the issue; I merely hope to show that the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* are in harmony on account of their shared understanding of what a 'philosopher' is in comparison to a 'flatterer'.

² Thus, see my (Forthcoming).

1. Protagoras ὁ ἀλιτῆριος – the Para-Homeric Descent into Callias' House (314d7-316b1)

So Plato relied upon Eupolis and other poets to paint Protagoras, a representative of all sophists, as a para-comic flatterer. The sophist is a pleasing spectacle in himself, and his speech and mode of discourse are oriented entirely around being agreeable. Socrates, moreover, defeats Protagoras at his own game of poetic interpretation and the give-and-take of sophistic refutation, a game likely derived from or expressed in Eupolis (who in turn derived it from the actual practice of the sophists, of course). In defeating Protagoras, Socrates at once explodes and exposes the conventions of sophistry as flattery—or the bamboozlement of the senses and thought—and yet, at the same time, reaffirms his divinely sanctioned, aporetic wisdom, taking for himself the privileged position of ‘teacher’ of politics and virtue.

In this section, it is the latter side of Socrates' wisdom that is examined—his noetic insight into the souls and the future punishment of the sophists. Socrates' sage wisdom is what allows him to see these things and is what explains their presence in the dialogue, as well as Socrates' remarks on the role of Prometheus in his own life; that or, it seems likely to me, Socrates' insight was predicated on an episode in the *Kolakes* where the flatterers were described as frightful souls at the edge of Hades. It is clear in any case that the philosopher has a noetic insight into the sophistic representative, Protagoras, as a roguish, irreligious ‘ἀλιτῆριος’, who gobbles up whatever he can get his hands on through his surreptitious mouth in Fr. 157 K.A. And Protagoras suffers, or will suffer, on account of it. To be a flatterer is not merely a matter of being laughable—these sorts of people are false friends and insatiable gluttons, frightfully dangerous, irreligious, and suffer the most terrible fates thereby. Antisthenes was serious in saying (along with Aristophanes) that it is better to go to the crows than to the flatterers whilst still living.

Socrates will rely on citations from Homer to signify all this. This may be puzzling, given that *all* mortals in traditional Greek religion went to Hades and suffered there simply because they were dead. What's so special about the sophists in Hades, then? Aside from the fact that Plato has a different view of the afterlife—where the good go to a place of goodness, the bad to a place of badness (thus the force of the closing myths of the *Gorgias* and *Republic*)—Socrates will use references to Homer's Hades to stress the importance of *moral*

injury on the model of those very myths. The point is that the moral scars made on the body *now* will be kept in the afterlife or determine the fate of that life. As the late Paul Woodruff (2023): 14 put it, ‘Some wounds are felt, some are not. If you have an accident with your power saw, and lop off part of a finger, you know it. But if your eating habits have reduced the capacity of your arteries to an extent that endangers your heart, you may be happily unaware. So it is with moral injury as I understand it. Sometimes you know you have it, sometimes you do not.’ In Plato’s *Protagoras*, the immoral behaviours of the sophists are paralleled in the character of their counterparts in Hades to make a rhetorical and serious effect. The sophists, though happy and content *now* in their physical lives, are damaging their souls and have likely long already done so—and will continue to suffer on account of it in the afterlife. This is the point of Socrates’ famous citation of Euripides at *Gorgias* 492e.

When Socrates and Hippocrates are let into the door of Callias’ house, they witness the choral spectacle or *parodos* of Protagoras and his entourage, as well as take sight of Prodicus and Hippias with their respective followers. Before finally talking with Protagoras, Socrates narrates to his companion,

ἡμεῖς οὖν ὥς εἰσήλθομεν, ἔτι σμίκρ’ ἅττα διατρίψαντες καὶ ταῦτα
διαθεασάμενοι προσῆμεν πρὸς τὸν Πρωταγόραν, καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον [...]

After we came in, and had spent a little more time lingering and taking this all in, we turned towards Protagoras, and I said [...]

Protagoras 316-5-b1.

At first sight there seems to be nothing telling or interesting here. But look closer at ‘ταῦτα διαθεασάμενοι’. Here I could translate this into something like (pl.) ‘taking all this in’ or ‘looking at these things’, or perhaps even ‘spectating’—for the passage seems to suggest that they were lingering and apparently enjoying the display of all those present a little longer. Note their explicit enjoyment of the spectacle of Protagoras’ chorus at 315b2-c8 as being ‘κάλλιστα’ and ‘ἐν κόσμῳ’, for example; and the root for ‘διαθεάομαι’ is of course ‘θεάομαι’, which just is the activity of a spectator in a theatre, a θεατής. So ‘spectating’ might be a good choice here. But the word used above is ‘διαθεασάμενοι’, and the ‘δια-’ prefix is added to make it clear that they were not passively spectating. They were *seeing through*: ‘After we

came in, and had spent a little more time lingering and *seeing through all these things*, we turned towards Protagoras...’. They were discerning and discriminating—the primary sense of διαθεάομαι—to see through the spectacle and parade right to the truth of the matter.³

Note that after first seeing Protagoras and his fawning entourage, Socrates turns to see Hippias. Socrates says

τὸν δὲ μετ’ εἰσενόησα, ἔφη Ὅμηρος, Ἰππίαν τὸν Ἠλεῖον [...]

And after him, straight into my understanding it came, as Homer says, Hippias of Elis

Protagoras 315c1.

Socrates breaks off there. But the passage in Homer refers to the noetic-perception of Heracles’ spectacular and woeful phantom in what seems to be an ever-present state of distress:

τὸν δὲ μετ’ εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακλεΐην,
εἰδῶλον: αὐτὸς δὲ μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ὕβην,
παῖδα Διὸς μέγαλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδύλου.
ἀμφὶ δέ μιν κλαγγὴ νεκύων ἦν οἰωνῶν ὥς,
πάντοσ’ ἀτυζομένων: ὁ δ’ ἐρεμνῇ νυκτὶ ἐοικώς,
γυμνὸν τόξον ἔχων καὶ ἐπὶ νευρῆφιν ὀιστόν,
δεινὸν παπταίνων, αἰεὶ βαλέοντι ἐοικώς.
σμερδαλέος δὲ οἱ ἀμφὶ περὶ στήθεσσιν ἀορτὴρ
χρύσεος ἦν τελαμῶν, ἵνα θέσκελα ἔργα τέτυκτο,
ἄρκτοι τ’ ἀγρότεροί τε σύες χαροποί τε λέοντες,
ὑσμῖναί τε μάχαι τε φόνοι τ’ ἀνδροκτασίαι τε.
μὴ τεχνησάμενος μηδ’ ἄλλο τι τεχνήσαιτο,
ὃς κεῖνον τελαμῶνα ἐῖ ἐγκάτθετο τέχνη.

³ In general, it should be noted that Plato often associates spectating with theorizing, given that ‘theorizing’ literally derives from the root ‘θεωρία’—which just is to spectate as if in a theatre or cult practise. For more on the notions of Platonic ‘spectacles of truth’, see Nightingale (2004), who does not notice this instance of διαθεάομαι in the *Protagoras*.

And after him, straight into my understanding it came, the mighty Heracles
 —but his phantom only; for Heracles is himself with the immortal gods,
 happy and feasting, with fine-ankled Hebe,
 child of mighty Zeus and golden Hera.
 Around his ghost, the dead souls shrieked like birds,
 all panic-struck. He appeared like gloomy night,
 holding his bow uncased and with an arrow
 held on the string. He glowered terribly,
 poised for a shot. Around his chest was strapped
 a terrific baldric made of gold,
 fashioned with marvellous images of bears,
 wild boars, and lions with fierce staring eyes,
 and battles and the slaughtering of men.
 I hope the craftsman who crafted this scene
 Will never make another work like it

Odyssey 11.600-618, trans. Wilson, modified.

That Socrates would not at first see Hippias the man but straight through to the soul of the lamentable Heracles is understandable for a rich variety of reasons. Now, the general force of the allusion in Plato is clear enough: Hippias' soul is understood to be in an eternal state of distress and loathing—even whilst his mortal body feasts, as the sophist himself put it, amongst the most august company of Greece, the self-proclaimed divine amongst men. But it is in the following parallels where an array of criticisms and warnings emerge.⁴

Begin with how this allusion signifies Hippias' *impiety*. Heracles was driven mad by Hera for his ruthless brutality in killing the Euboean king and the egregiously impious treatment of the body after his death. The hero, thus driven mad, slaughtered six of his own children and at least two of his nephews, all of whom had bright futures as kings. For these

⁴ A note of caution or honesty is needed here. I am not a mythicist, nor an expert in Homer, but a philosopher and historian of philosophy. The summaries of the fates of those in Hades below follow what can be gleaned from Graves (2017) and Gantz (1993) in their citations *ad loci*. Plato's citations do not immediately seem to require extensive knowledge of the myths to understand the implications being made; although some papers that I have found particularly relevant are cited below.

further impieties, Heracles—after recovering from his madness—asked the Delphic Oracle how to atone for his sins. The atonement was to serve a lesser king than himself, Eurystheus, who dictated his twelve famous labours, after the completion of which he was granted immortality. Heracles remarks on this fate after catching sight of Odysseus in the passage which follows the one above (11.615-627).⁵

This assimilation of Hippias to Heracles signifies that Hippias, far from educating the young, destroys them entirely—he ‘slaughters’ them. But consider also how Heracles destroyed those under his tutelage, namely under the influence of madness. For Plato, even in the *Protagoras* (e.g. 360b4-c1), madness on an intellectualist model is a form of shameful ignorance. If Hippias is to be assimilated to Heracles ‘the madman’, the implication is that the sophist’s ignorance is colossal, Herculean. In this respect it is all too important that the named teenage students around him are Phaedrus and Eryximachus, who were both implicated in the impieties of 415; and Andron, son of Androtion, who became a member of the oligarchy of 411 and an aspiring Gorgianic demagogue, one with the same gluttonous values as Callicles (Gorg. 487c1-4). The golden baldric with the slaughtering of men is a horrible sight on a man like Hippias, seated in authority above children.

Indeed, Hippias’ outrageous and spectacular outfits we are familiar with are implied to be an outer sheen of glitter and gold, a mere *eidōlon* of beauty and power that hides the horrible reality within. It is a dress that this Socrates-Odysseus hopes no τεχνίτης ever fashions again. It is not for nothing, then, that Hippias says he fashioned all his own items himself, being ‘altogether the wisest of mortals in all of the arts’ (πάντως δὲ πλείστας τέχνας πάντων σοφώτατος εἶ ἄνθρώπων, 368b2; cf. 368d2, e2, 369a7). Hippias, moreover, considers his external splendour to display his inner wisdom, thus the assimilation to the terrible armour of Heracles is likewise apt. It is all a spectacle and has nothing to do with wisdom. Socrates is serious in the *Gorgias* when he says that sophistry is merely a kind of dressing-up (κομωτική) and mask-wearing which pretends to be the art good legislating (first laid-out at 463e5-466a3). The point is that the Panhellenic splendour of the likes of Hippias and

⁵ For references to this legend contemporary with Plato—including the destruction of his politically-promising family—see esp. Euripides’ *Heracles*, ca. 416/415 BCE, which was a reworking of earlier myth. But see also esp. Provenza (2013) on the literal ‘beastialization’ of Heracles in Euripides. Flatterers were beasts in Plato too, as we saw in the *Phaedrus* above. Were they somehow in Eupolis, too—in some sort of para-tragic reference now lost?

Empedocles is just a farce that lands one before the courts of the afterlife. But more on those connections in the following sections.

There are other, rather more obvious connections between Hippias and Heracles as well. Heracles was not always the shrewdest of heroes, and Hippias is infamously dull in his two eponymous dialogues; although we have seen the darker side of Hippias' dullness, too, just above. Heracles was also a famous *glutton*, insatiable in appetite for food and women, especially in comedy.⁶ The fact that Hippias is seen in the context of a choral *parodos* of para-comic flatterers signals that his very gluttony was a function of his own *kolakeia*.⁷

So Socrates signifies the gluttony, ignorance, corruptive influence, and irreligion of Hippias and that his soul is, or will be, in an ever-present state of anxiety—his 'bow always ready to shoot' as in Homer's Underworld. He is, like Protagoras in Fr. 157 K.A., a threatening ἀλιτήριος.

This is similarly the case for Prodicus at 315d1, for when Socrates turns from seeing the soul of Hippias, he has a vision of another trapped soul in Hades:

καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ Τάνταλόν γε εἰσεῖδον—ἐπεδήμει γὰρ ἄρα καὶ Πρόδικος ὁ Κεῖος

And after him, right away did I know *Tantalus*—for Prodicus of Ceos was also in the house

The passage in Homer goes as follows:

καὶ μὴν Τάνταλον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα
έστεῶτ' ἐν λίμνῃ: ἡ δὲ προσέπλαζε γενεΐῳ:
στεῦτο δὲ διψάων, πῖεῖν δ' οὐκ εἶχεν ἐλέσθαι:
ὅσσάκι γὰρ κύψει' ὁ γέρων πῖεῖν μενεαίνων,
τοσσάχ' ὕδωρ ἀπολέσκειτ' ἀναβροχέν, ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶ
γαῖα μέλαινα φάνεσκε, καταζήνασκε δὲ δαίμων.

⁶ For studies on Heracles in comedy, see the relevant portion of my discussion of the *Daitalēs* above.

⁷ The reasonings of Segvic (2009): 39 for the Heracles-association also ring true: 'Hippias' teaching of the many branches of knowledge nicely corresponds to Heracles' countless heroic labours. Heracles is a superhero, whose boundless, and sometimes outrageous energy and enterprise seem to mock the ordinary hero. He is an apt ironical stand-in for Hippias' encyclopaedic ambitions.' Segvic misses the darker side of this Homeric allusion, however. Her interpretation of this whole episode will be examined later.

δένδρεα δ' ὑψιπέτηλα κατὰ κρήθεν χέε καρπόν,
ὄγχναι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι:
τῶν ὅπῳτ' ἰθύσει' ὁ γέρων ἐπὶ χερσὶ μάσασθαι,
τὰς δ' ἄνεμος ῥίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα σκιάοντα.

And after him, right away did I know Tantalus
—there too in his endless agony;
in water up to his chin,
so parched, no way to drink. When that old man
bent down towards the water, it was gone;
some god had dried it up, and at his feet
dark earth appeared. Tall leafy trees hung fruit
above his head: sweet figs and pomegranates
and brightly shining apples and ripe olives.
But when he grasped them with his hands,
the wind hurled them away towards the shadowy clouds.

Odyssey 11.583-592, trans. Wilson, modified.

This passage is famous and the implications are immediately clear. Prodicus, like Hippias, is an insatiate glutton who can never fill the empty jar of desire within his soul. But to fully appreciate the resonances of this passage or the reasons for such a reference, one must also understand Tantalus' backstory.

Tantalus was once a wealthy king and a close friend of Zeus, who shared feasts of ambrosia and divine nectar. But Tantalus turned out to be a *false* friend: he stole the food and drink. And yet, before this crime was found out, he committed another, more spectacular crime. Invited to dine with the gods, he found the soup so unsatisfying to his standards that he diced up and put his own son into the stew. For *this* crime, Zeus punished Tantalus first with the destruction of his kingdom, then with the destruction of his soul. Tantalus, as we see quoted in the passage above, was forced for eternity to languish in a pool with ripe fruits hanging over his head, food and drink forever out of his insatiable reach, a punishment for

gross unrestraint and disrespect to the gods. A host of other crimes are reported for Tantalus in the mythic tradition, usually regarding perjury and theft, for which he was also understood to be perpetually tormented by the prospect of being crushed by a giant rock hanging over his head—another symbol of his eternal state of anxiety and the pains of unquenchable desire.⁸ Like Hippias-Heracles, there is no rest for Prodicus-Tantalus.

Prodicus is therefore implicitly drawn up with all the hallmarks of Antisthenes' 'korakes-kolakes' as mentioned earlier: as a thief (he had Callias' treasury emptied out for him, after all), a false friend, a heinous glutton, and responsible for the ruination of kingdoms and his soul.⁹ Indeed, it is telling that Philoxenus, father of Eryxis, is said to have fallen in with the 'sophists' Prodicus and Anaxagoras in Aeschines of Sphettos' comical *Callias*. There is evidence that Philoxenus may have taken issue with the provisions of nature, so strong was his hedonism. Humans, he argued, should have had longer necks, like storks, so they can enjoy their food for a longer time—if pleasure be the good. His son became one of the great gluttons and parasites in comedy in the fourth century as well, who may also have been (confusingly) referred to as Philoxenus too.¹⁰ For Plato's part, the students surrounding Prodicus in Callias' ταμειῶν are Pausanias and Agathon, and two Adeimantuses. Pausanias and Agathon are wrapped up in fleece like the hedonistic Prodicus himself (316d6) and were regarded as degradingly effeminate in comedy (esp. Agathon in Aristophanes *Thesma*. 88-

⁸ Plato would have had Pindar's understanding of Tantalus' punishment in hand (*Olympian Odes* 1.38 and 60): that it was due to his gluttony, theft, and deception—or 'false friendship'—to Zeus. Other reports of Tantalus in Plato corroborate this impression. Plato knew of the rock suspended over Tantalus' head for having stolen Haephaetus' golden dog and of his lying to Hermes/Zeus about it (*Cratylus* 395d-396a). Plato's Socrates also says in that passage that Zeus was *Tantalus' father*, likewise assimilating Tantalus to someone who openly abuses one's parents, a cardinal sin (and one attributed famously to the sophistic Socrates of the extant *Clouds*). Tantalus (along with Sisyphus) was imprisoned in Tartarus as a moral example to all passers-by at *Gorgias* 525e1 due to his tyrannical, luxurious, and impious lifestyle (on which see the section below). Tantalus is likewise referred to as a horrendous and impious person at *Hippias Maj.* 293b5-7. Impiety, even in the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* 372a, seems to be the principle sin of Tantalus.

⁹ Cf. Philostratus 1.12 (L.M. Prod. P8): 'He tracked down the young men of noble families and those from wealthy ones, to the point of even procuring assistants for this hunt. For he could not resist money and gave himself up to pleasures [...].' Trans. Laks-Most.

¹⁰ His [Aeschines'] *Callias* contains [. . .] a satire on the sophists Prodicus and Anaxagoras. For he says that Prodicus made Theramenes his disciple, while the other one did so with Philoxenus, the son of Eryxis, and Aripbrates, the brother of Arignotus the citharodist, wanting to reveal, from the immorality of the men represented and their gluttony for worthless things, the kind of education they had received from their teachers.' L.M. Prod. R3, trans. Laks-Most, modified. See Storey (1995) for the comic evidence regarding Philoxenus in particular. Arignotus is slandered as a womanly, utterly degenerate, and a *katapugōn* by Aristophanes at *Knights* 1274-89. Theramenes, the direct pupil of Prodicus in the fragment, was thought by some to be a traitor to the *polis*, with feet split between the democratic and oligarchic camps of 411, and so also fell afoul of the comic poets.

265). And they were, along with at least one of the Adeimantuses mentioned, implicated in the religious scandals of 415.¹¹

In this way, then, the morality of the sophists, insofar as they are flatterers, does not simply put them into a state of bodily or living luxury, but implies that their souls are, or will be, in a state of eternal torment on account of these very values. What appears at once an amazing and pleasurable spectacle on offer by these sophists is more appropriately—or rather is *in reality*—a frightening vision of the woeful sinners in Tartarus. Moral corruption and injury to the soul.

This sequence of para-Homeric significations does not end with the soul of Prodicus, however. Note that when Socrates mentions the noetic perception of Hippias' soul, which is likened to Heracles', Socrates marks the transition—in its Homeric context—from Odysseus' vision of Sisyphus (11.593-599) to that of Heracles (11.600-614). In other words, Protagoras is implied to have the tormented soul of *Sisyphus*, who is seeking to push the 'shameless stone' (λαῖας ἀναιδής) up the hill to no avail forever. The passage in Homer is as follows:

καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα
λαῖαν βαστάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρησιν.
ἦ τοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσὶν τε ποσὶν τε
λαῖαν ἄνω ὥθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον· ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότε' ἀποστρέψασκε κραταίς·
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λαῖας ἀναιδής.
αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἄψ ὥσασκε τιταινόμενος, κατὰ δ' ἰδρὼς
ἔρρεεν ἐκ μελέων, κονίη δ' ἐκ κρατὸς ὀρώρει.

And after him, right away did I know Sisyphus, there too in his endless agony;
pushing a great stone with his hands, leaning on it
with all his might to shove it up towards
a hilltop; when he almost reached the peak,
its weight would swerve, and to the ground the shameless stone rolled,

¹¹ As with the students of Hippias, see their respective entries in Nails (2002), who were also implicated in the religious scandals of 415.

heedlessly. But he kept on straining, pushing,
his body drenched in sweat, his head all dusty.

Odyssey 11.593-599, trans Wilson, modified.

That Protagoras' soul would be likened to the soul of Sisyphus is only too rich. First, 'Sisyphus' was understood in antiquity to be etymologically related to 'si-sophos', or 'very wise' (cf. again Hesiod, 'not very wise in sailing'—'οὐτέ τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος', *W.D.* 649). Sisyphus was the cleverest scoundrel, a cheat, and the ultimate false friend; and Sophocles, perhaps for that very reason, set the cunning of Sisyphus into the legal arena (thus *Soph. Ajax* 190; *Philoctetes* 417). Pausanias (2.5.1) records an older story that makes him out to be a miser or blackmailer of knowledge for luxuries: Zeus raped the daughter of Asopus, Aegina, and then hid her in Sisyphus' kingdom of Corinth. When Asopus approached Sisyphus seeking to learn of her whereabouts, Sisyphus—who knew of her location, Zeus having told him—refused to disclose the secret until Asopus had furnished an everlasting spring in his kingdom. Sisyphus made the exchange and was punished by Zeus because of this. With this story in mind we might make some sense out of Hippocrates' bizarre joke (καὶ ὅς γε λάσας, νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς, ἔφη...) that Protagoras alone is wise and won't make Hippocrates wise—unless, says Socrates, he gives Protagoras money first and with a little 'persuasion' (πείθης) too (310d3-e2).

Sisyphus was most famous for twice-over acting the false friend to the gods in order to cheat death. Being sent to Hades as punishment for selling Zeus' secrets, Sisyphus taught Pluto how to use hand restraints, only to bind the hands of Pluto himself and escape.¹² Before he was eventually brought back, he instructed his wife to leave his body unburied.¹³ When he was eventually returned, he acted the friend to Persephone by instructing her that the laws simply do not allow unburied bodies to cross the Styx into Hades and so he must come back to

¹² Plato would have likely been familiar with this 'binding trick' of Sisyphus—comical as it is—if it was portrayed in the satyr play *Sisyphus* of Euripides in 415 BCE (see esp. Test. iii Collard and Cropp). There are also the mostly-lost *Sisyphus* satyr plays by Sophocles and Aeschylus, too, which may have contained the story. There is some question as to whether the play by Euripides was written by the would-be tyrant Critias. If Critias were the author, and Plato intends for his audiences to be thinking of this play and its author upon laying eyes on Critias, that may double the effect of shock in witnessing such a sight, given the punishment meted out to the man.

¹³ Besides being in the plays just mentioned, this and what follows is the oldest version of Sisyphus' trickery.

tell his wife to bury his body. He made a promise to return—only to break it and escape yet again. Finally brought back to Hades by Hermes, and was at last forced to push the shameless stone up the hill forever, to no avail.

So Protagoras, like Sisyphus, is a false friend and irreligious scoundrel, always on the lookout to dupe people for his own good and a monopolist of ‘wisdom’. Insofar as Protagoras is a *kolax*, his soul most closely approximates that of Sisyphus—or it will be after he is dead.

There is no direct evidence that a katabatic scene took place in the *Kolakes* and to presume that there was one merely on the basis of Plato’s depiction would be to make an unsupported assumption. However, I noted that the two characters describing Protagoras and the others ‘within’ complex of Callias in Fr. 157 K.A. parallel the characters outside the house of Pluto in *Frogs*, who are wondering what is going on ‘within’. And both comedies, as I have argued, staged a ‘competition in wisdom’ in a makeshift Panhellenic festival. In *Frogs*, that competition was outside the house of Pluto himself but inside the realm of Hades (that is, on the stage proper). Was the portico of Callias’ house assimilated to the outside of the palace of Pluto, the ghostly staging ground for the games? There are also other Homeric allusions in the comedy I have noted, as well: someone was engaged in ferocious, epic eating, and there may have been a deliberate resemblance between *kolakes* and Penelope’s suitors.

So there is a certain plausibility in envisioning a comic scene where an Odysseus-analogue visits an ‘underworld of flatterers’ that was equally frightening as Odysseus venturing to the edge of Hades. It is not for nothing, after all, that Antisthenes said ‘it is better to go to the crows than to the flatterers: for the one eats you after you’ve died, the other whilst you’re still living (κρεῖττον [...] εἰς κόρακας ἢ εἰς κόλακας ἐμπεσεῖν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ νεκρούς, οἱ δὲ ζῶντας ἐσθίουσιν. SSR 84A DC, modified); and Antisthenes, as it happens, may have picked-up his wordplay from *Wasps* 41-45 (‘κόρακος... κόλακος’ in that passage), suggesting further agreement between the Socratic and comic tradition.¹⁴ There were reasons to be fearful of lickspittles as if going to beasts, as we have seen, in comedy and outside it.¹⁵ And in the

¹⁴ As Prince (2015): 386 argues.

¹⁵ Prince (2015): 385 interestingly also points our attention to the following apothem attributed to Diogenes the Cynic, but argues it more likely should be thought from Antisthenes: ‘ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς “Τί τῶν θηρίων κάκιστα βλάπτει;” ἔφη “Τῶν μὲν ἀγρίων συκοφάντης, τῶν δὲ ἡμέρων κόλαξ”’—‘The same man, when asked “Which of the beasts harms the worst?” said, “Among the wild ones, the informer; among the tame, the flatterer.”’ (Trans.

long beginning of the dialogue, Socrates exhorts Hippocrates to be careful and not put his soul in ‘great danger’ (‘μέγας ὁ κίνδυνος’, 314b1) by uncritically paying money to Protagoras. But this is as far as the evidence for a reliance on the *Kolakes* goes, and I am not sure it goes far enough to support the idea that in Eupolis, two characters ‘descended’ into Callias’ house to somehow confront the fearful flatterers. Perhaps the safest assumption, if we are to make one—because this dialogue is indeed so closely assimilated in dramaturgy and ideology to Eupolis’ comedy—is that there was a passing reference made to the journey of Odysseus when some character or two entered a den full of flatterers at a makeshift Panhellenic festival, which was really a den of frightful, truly monstrous sinners—perhaps even in a kind of paratragic reminiscence to tragedies dealing with Heracles, Tantalus, and Sisyphus. It is, however, Socrates’ *actual* noetic insight that lends considerable depth to Eupolis’ character’s perception.

What makes Plato a master of philosophical prose just is his ability to transcend and fuse genres, and the *Protagoras* is no exception. It is the task of a Platonic reader/audience to recognise and appreciate what is typically a constellation of dramatic and contextual interplays in the dialogues; a kind of game of free association.¹⁶ There may well have been a *katabasis* in Eupolis’ *Demes* (although we cannot say for sure; certainly the dead came to life again), and we do know it engaged with the same questions as to how to raise youths in virtue.¹⁷ Perhaps the *Protagoras* means to recall that comedy as much as Capra wants it to recall *Clouds*, where, on Capra’s view, Socrates has entered into a frightening ‘Cave of Trophonius’ in the way that Strepsiades entered the *Phrontistērion*, a house of weak and emaciated soul, whereupon Socrates is forced to ‘fight with the shadows’ in the metaphysical Cave of *Republic*;¹⁸ or, as Klär argued, Socrates has a philosophical insight into the souls of the sophists simply as prisoners within a prototype of the *Republic*’ Cave.¹⁹ But if I am to

Prince). One should compare Plato’s description of a flatterer also as ‘δεινὸν θηρίον καὶ βλάβη μεγάλη’—‘a terrible beast and a cause of great harm’ at *Phaedrus* 240b1-2.

¹⁶ As Morgan (2016) and of course Nightingale (1995) have shown.

¹⁷ Thus again Morgan (2016), and see my discussion of the *Demes* below.

¹⁸ See Capra (2001): esp. 67-71.

¹⁹ ‘Socrates is represented here [in the *Protagoras*] as Odysseus entering Hades—temporarily; the sophists are the inhabitants of Hades; the three main figures—Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus—become set in direct correspondence with Sisyphus, Heracles and Tantalus. And that is precisely the situation in the allegory of the cave, when the philosopher returns to the cave and to the so-called wisdom there... The way of Socrates as the philosopher is the same here and [in the *Republic*], the characterization of the Sophists as inhabitants of Hades, as

stake a claim here, it seems that my own para-comic option seems to account for the katabatic features of this para-*Nekyia* scene better than the alternative options. On the one hand, it is not clear how the metaphysics of the *Republic* is supposed to help us resolve an aporetic dialogue regarding the unity of virtue and it is the *Kolakes* which has been clearly shown to be at work in the dialogue so far; and the unique philosophical insight ascribed by Klär to Socrates as seeing the sophists as ‘prisoners’ can be better understood by Socrates possessing an insight that signals his sage wisdom, which the ‘agon’ forming the core of the dialogue mere reaffirms. And in any case, the metaphysics of the dialogue does not most closely approximate to the *Republic*’s, but to the *Gorgias*’, as I will show presently. Nevertheless, these suggestions do seem to latch on to something fundamentally correct.

This too is the case for one important and major Homeric reading of the *Protagoras*, namely Segvic (2009), who takes the Homeric allusions of the para-*katabasis* to the fullest extent she can, indeed within an approach that displaces comedy altogether. Her reading, however, needs a reorientation. But wedded to my own, a new way of thinking about the Homeric parallels in the *Kolakes* emerge.

Segvic remarks on the opening words of Socrates in the *Protagoras*, who justifies his erotic pursuit of Alcibiades with a quotation of Homer *Od.* 10.279: ‘πρῶτον ὑπηνήτη, τοῦ περ χαριεστάτη ἦβη’—‘the charm of youth is greatest in a young man with the first down upon his chin’ (trans. Segvic). The Homeric citation refers to Hermes, who appears to Odysseus as an apparition in the form of a beautiful young man. The context of that passage in Homer has Hermes confronting Odysseus so as to provide him with a *pharmakon* to stave off the effects of the magical powers of the sorceress Circe. Odysseus, with the *pharmakon* in hand, successfully avoids the tricks of Circe and can, thanks to her advice, eventually go on his way; and Hermes will soon lead Odysseus into the Underworld as a protective guide. Socrates tells us that Alcibiades came to his aid and ‘said many things in my defence’ (309a6) in conversation with Protagoras. Thus, Segvic argues, the link of Alcibiades to Hermes is complete, and the expectation of a para-Homeric transition from *Odyssey* 10 and 11 is set up.

captives of the world of shadows... all this together allows us to understand the allegory of the cave, if not in the fully elaborated version, at least in its essential outlines.’ Klär (1969): 257, my trans.

That expectation, she argues, is fulfilled when Protagoras is compared to the bewitching soul of Orpheus, which she says—because Orpheus is a chthonic figure and ‘vase painters often depict him in Hades’—must be placed in Hades like the Prodicus and Hippias, who she recognises parallel the trapped souls of Tantalus and Heracles, respectively.²⁰ Moreover, a sophist is a γόης—sorcerer or magician—in the *Sophist* (234c5, 235a1, a8, 241b7), Protagoras is both a Circe and Orpheus figures, which Socrates must call upon Hermes/Alcibiades to defeat.

The problem starts with her use of the OCT’s citation of Homer in Plato, which includes the ‘πρῶτον’ in Socrates’ citation of *Od.* 10.279. But the earliest manuscripts do not have the ‘πρῶτον’, leading Adam and Adam (1893) to not supply it, assuming the audience would supply it by memory. But Plato did not want us to supply the word—he wanted us to know that Socrates was justifying the erotic pursuit of Alcibiades *after* he had started to get a beard, a point after which the *erōmenos* would be too old for the affection of a man of Socrates’ age. That Alcibiades is too old in the context of the initial discussion may be seen in the off-handed admission by the unnamed friend, ‘between us, he is still good looking’, at 309a2. As Denyer put it, whose edition of the text I follow and which leaves out the ‘πρῶτον’, Socrates ‘mischievously [makes] Homer assert that the most attractive age is when a man *has* a beard, rather than when he first starts to grow one.’²¹ So there is no strict parallel between Hermes and Alcibiades.

That is not to say he does not come to Socrates’ aid. Alcibiades holds Protagoras to account in the debate between them. But this is only because, as is alleged by Critias, he wants to be a party to a victory, not because he is Socrates’ divine protector. ‘The beautiful Alcibiades’ is just as much a denizen of the spectacular citizens of Hades as much as are the others that Socrates ‘spectates’ or ‘sees through’ (thus the description of Alcibiades’ entrance at 316a3-5). Socrates has no ‘guide’ upon entering the den of sophist-flatterers, but he does

²⁰ Segvic (2009): 38-40 and n.20.

²¹ Denyer (2008): 66, emphasis his.

have his young companion Hippocrates—whose namesake *did* criticise these spectacles of ‘presocratic wisdom’ as we saw above.²²

Segvic’s analysis of Hippocrates deserves a closer look, however. She recognises the young man’s heroic, indeed almost violent qualities: his ‘ἀνδρείαν καὶ τὴν πτοίησιν’ (310d3)—his ‘courage and fluttering excitement’. Hippocrates comes in the middle of the night violently banging his stick on Socrates’ door (τῇ βακτηρίᾳ πάνυ σφόδρα, 314b1) and shouts for Socrates with a ‘great voice’ at the break of day (φωνῇ μέγα, 314b3). Hippocrates has contorted himself with somewhat mock-heroic qualities, which Socrates will go on to put to the test, namely the young man’s boldness of spirit (ἀποπειρώμενος τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους τῆς ῥώμης, 311b1). As Segvic says, ‘Hippocrates is posed for action. He is all set to pursue the object of his desire. That object is Protagoras.’²³ This is insightful because Hippocrates, as we know, is about to rush headlong into a den of bestial flatterers; and wedded to the other aspects of mock-epic throughout the *Kolakes* which the *Protagoras* appears to parallel, there is reason to believe that Hippocrates, or someone like him, really was a character in the comedy about to head into a den of frightful wraiths who require blood to speak.

What I will argue for now, however, is that Plato in this para-Homeric *Nekyia* passage means to recall the fate that befalls flattering sophists and orators in Hades in the *Gorgias*, both *during* their lives trying to endlessly fill their leaky jars of desire, and after their lives, as portrayed in the *Gorgias*’ closing myth. In fact, a recognition of this link leads one to question to the extent to which the *Protagoras* shares the same moral-metaphysical outlook of the *Gorgias*, and just in respect of the para-comic duality played out in the latter dialogue: the duality between the philosopher and the flatterer.

2. Philosophers and Flatterers in the *Gorgias*

It is in some ways a wonder that I have not yet fully broached the question of the philosophical drama of the *Gorgias*. Scholarship has long known that Plato reaches into the comic tradition—most notably the *Knights* of Aristophanes—to paint rhetoric and its

²² That is why Segvic (*ibid*): 45 notes in passing: ‘Although Socrates directly associates Alcibiades with Hermes—thorough his initial Homeric quotation—the spirit of Hermes is more at home with Socrates himself than with Alcibiades.’

²³ Segvic (*ibid*): 34.

philosophical commitments as the same as a comical flatterer's. And this too in precise opposition to comic Socratism, which is variously ridiculed as over-talkative and committed to principles of extreme asceticism that no other mortal would take seriously (if asceticism requires doing what is just).²⁴ In this way, the *Gorgias* may be the most explicit example of Plato's use of that comic dualism I argued existed in the comic tradition. But we have had hints and indications all along that this is the case; and in having a more complete understanding of exactly how that comic dualism in the *Gorgias* works, we can better understand how that dualism informs the philosophy and drama of the *Protagoras*.

This section cannot, of course, be a complete examination of the *Gorgias*, one of Plato's most sprawling and complex works.²⁵ To that end, I will offer what I see as the most uncontroversial summary of the philosophical commitments on offer actually are, namely Socratic-Platonic self-control versus its opposite, Calliclean intemperance. At the same time, I attempt to recognise the Hippocratic character of the Socratic-Platonic ideal, which is critical to recognise if we are to understand the role of Hippocrates in the *Protagoras*, as well as the general ethical outlook of Socrates in that dialogue.²⁶ Following a brief elaboration of the two

²⁴ Nightingale (1995): Chapter Five is the seminal contribution to that matter. The most recent and substantial treatments of comedy in the *Gorgias* are, however, a forthcoming paper by Tanner and Worman (2008), though I have yet to have the opportunity to read Tanner's contribution or follow-up there. Worman importantly shows the dialogue uses this comic dualism of flatterer-philosopher throughout, and, moreover, as a challenge to its audiences by asking *how* Socrates' comic properties can be considered morally praiseworthy in comparison to the comic property of the other intellectuals. As she puts it (p. 187): 'Readers of Plato have not, I think, been sufficiently sensitive to the extent to which [the portrait] of Socrates [as at-once distanced from, and yet assimilated to, the comical sophists and orators] indicate Plato's own participation in a contentious, sometimes openly defamatory debate over the attributes of character and speaking style that mark the good orator and/or educator. That is to say, for instance, that Plato does not simply oppose Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates and the sophists; rather, he takes up its challenge, and depicts his teacher as an irreverent, irritating, witty rogue not so far removed from either a sophist or a comic hero.' But this just is to say that the dialogue is 'metatheatrical', which is the very approach of Tanner's work generally, and Charalabopoulos (2012) specifically, as well as mine; that Plato's dialogues are often self-conscious and reflective works of prose theatre—and sometimes actual, performative literature, such as was probably the *Protagoras*.

²⁵ The dialogue is also para-tragic as much as comic, too, as the dialectic between Callicles and Socrates has also long been known to be predicated on the *Antiope* of Euripides. To wit, see Trivigno (2009) for the best treatment so far on that connection, but esp. with respect to how the closing myth is meant to serve as a para-tragic *deus ex machina* that justifies Socrates' position in the debate regarding 'true politics' (i.e., the contemplative musical arts of Amphion, Socrates' para-tragic analogue, is what will build the walls of Thebes, based on the intervention of Hermes at the end of the *Antiope*).

²⁶ How Plato wants us to understand Calliclean hedonism or intemperance has long been clear, but the exact content of the Socratic-Platonic good remains rather controversial. To avoid an overly-lengthy hiatus, I will firmly plant my feet into the camp of Russell (2005) in the understanding of the Socratic-Platonic good as, quite simply, self-control above all things—a kind of logical principle of *kosmos* as the ultimate good which supersedes any other human factor, such as pleasure (even if pleasure is a good in itself; though my own take is that it is not, which should make clear later). For debates on the Socratic-Platonic good in the *Gorgias*, see most

lives on offer in the *Gorgias*, I will show how those two lives are conceived as decidedly comic ones—that is, along the axis ‘flatterer and philosopher’ and how Plato walks us through which is the better, even if both are laughable.

The *Gorgias* is a work about many things, but Socrates eventually does boil down the whole lengthy discussion to one or two points:

ὁρᾷς γὰρ ὅτι περὶ τούτου ἡμῖν εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι, οὗ τί ἂν μᾶλλον σπουδάσειέ τις καὶ σμικρὸν νοῦν ἔχων ἄνθρωπος, ἢ τοῦτο, ὄντινα χρὴ τρόπον ζῆν, πότερον ἐπὶ ὃν σὺ παρακαλεῖς ἐμέ, τὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς δὴ ταῦτα πράττοντα, λέγοντά τε ἐν τῷ δήμῳ καὶ ῥητορικὴν ἀσκοῦντα καὶ πολιτευόμενον τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ὃν ὑμεῖς νῦν πολιτεύεσθε, ἢ ἐπὶ τόνδε τὸν βίον τὸν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, καὶ τί ποτ’ ἐστὶν οὗτος ἐκείνου διαφέρων.

For you see, don’t you, that all these arguments of ours are really about this (and what would a mortal having even the slightest intelligence take more seriously than this?)—about the way we’re supposed to live. Is it the way you urge me towards, to engage in these ‘manly’ activities, to make speeches among the people, to practice rhetoric, and to be active in the sort of politics you people engage in these days? Or is it the life spent in philosophy? And in what way does this latter way of life differ from the former?

Gorgias 500c1-8, trans. Zeyl, modified.

So the discussion is about which of two lives is best and why.²⁷ On the one hand, there is the life of the contemporary politician, who seeks to practise Gorgianic rhetoric for the sake of tyrannical power in the city and a luxurious life. This life is advocated for and expressed chiefly by Callicles, who articulates what Gorgias and Polus are too ashamed to say. This Calliclean ‘good life’ conceives of ‘virtue and the human good’ to be replete with ‘luxury, wilful dissipation, and freedom in a secured fashion’ (‘τρυφή καὶ ἀκολασία καὶ ἐλευθερία, ἐὰν ἐπικουρίαν ἔχῃ, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἀρετή τε καὶ εὐδαιμονία’, 492c4-6). The real politician and real man, according to Callicles, lives the life of an extreme Sybarite which requires fooling the

recently, for example, Kaiser (2021), with bibliography. For the Hippocratic character of Socrates’ ‘therapeutic politics’ in the *Gorgias*, see Levin (2014), Valkanou (1998) and as a complement to this chapter my (2016) on Hippocratic medicine in the *Protagoras*.

²⁷ Socrates in the passage cited refers to the criticism of Zethus (=Callicles) against Amphion (=Socrates) in Euripides’ *Antiope*, namely that (in its most general contours) one should not live one’s life attending to oneself in quiet contemplation and the pleasurable arts of the Muses, but rather to practise hard work in the fields and to battle it out in the arena of politics. But to pursue the connection further would take us far adrift of my present goal—although the connection that Amphion has to *the pleasant life* in relation to the apparent rejection of hedonism in the *Gorgias* has yet to be explored as far as I am aware.

mass of people with pretty words for the sake of such luxuries—to play the flattering demagogue.

The other life is what Socrates calls true politics, not a mask of it—what we might call the ‘therapeutic politics’ of Socratic-Platonic *philosophia*. This politics seeks only what is best (βέλτιστον), to cultivate the health of souls—both one’s own and others’—primarily on an individual basis, away from the arenas of public deliberation, such as a doctor attends to patients individually (cf. *Prot.* 313d5ff).²⁸ Like the Hippocratic art, moreover, Socratic-Platonic *therapeia* sets the soul (as the Hippocratic art does to the body) into a holistic order, or κόσμιον βίον (*Gorgias* 494a2-5).²⁹ This means, in explicit contrast to the values espoused by Callicles (the values of an ἀκόλαστος), restraining one’s passions (κολάζειν, 491e9), ‘ruling oneself’ instead of others (αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἄρχειν, 491d9), and cultivating self-sufficiency, ‘being in need of nothing’ (μηδενὸς δεόμενοι, 492e3).³⁰ Giving no thought to pleasure, the true political art is prepared to stimulate, as would a doctor, the utmost physical and mental pains so long as it is in the interest of real justice, balance, and the health of the soul (521d6-522c3, 513d3).

Moreover, it is only *this* sort of therapeutic politics which can secure our ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία) and ‘security’ (βοήθεια) (522c4-e6). This is the central thrust of the dialogue’s closing myth (523a-526d2). Gorgianic rhetoric may be able to lengthen and thereby ‘save’ our mortal lives, but it cannot save our immortal souls. It cannot, that is, deliver us any aid when standing alone before the ultimate judge, Minos, after our deaths, as Homer also reports (526d1-2). Indeed, it is precisely the ‘false’ or ‘liars’ (ψεύδους) and ‘boasters’ (ἀλαζονείας) whom the gods ‘recognise’ (κατεῖδεν, 524e4-525a2); the ‘incurable’ (ἀνίατοι) and ‘unsymmetrical’ (ἄσυμμετρία) souls of tyrants and demagogues—who have lived lives

²⁸ Although Socrates does admit just before the myth at the end of the dialogue that there is space for this ‘true rhetoric’ to the masses once one has sufficiently learned the therapeutic art. He shows little interest in this sort of activity, however, throughout the dialogue.

²⁹ On the *kosmos* of the body as analogous to the *kosmos* of the soul in Hippocratic medicine, see *The Nature of Man* 7.8 and 4.2, with *The Art* 3.2.

³⁰ See 491d10-e1 for elaboration: ‘[ΚΑΛ.] πῶς ἑαυτοῦ ἄρχοντα λέγεις; [ΣΩ.] οὐδὲν ποικίλον, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοί, σώφρονα ὄντα καὶ ἐγκρατῇ αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ, τῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ἄρχοντα τῶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ.’ ‘[Callicles] What do you mean, ‘ruling oneself’? [Socrates] ‘Nothing special, but just what the many do: being temperate and having control over oneself—ruling over the pleasures and passions within the self.’

precisely according to Calliclean hedonism (525a3-6)—that are condemned to be chained to the walls of Tartarus forever as examples to the souls who *are* curable.

So much for my best effort at an uncontroversial, schematic overview of the philosophical commitments of the two lives on offer. It is a contrast between self-control and wilful dissipation, a life governed by the knowledge of medicine versus a child in a candy store. And what is certainly uncontroversial is that these two lives are cast in decidedly comic moulds. Socrates accuses contemporary rhetoricians of flattering Demos just as did Cleon in *Knights*, whereas Socrates receives the repeated rejoinder—most memorably expressed in Callias’ lengthy exhortation, from 481d6-486d1—that he lives an overly-chattering lifestyle that may get him smacked in the face or even killed, and that he lives according to principles that no mortal would take seriously, facing extreme asceticism if only it means doing what is just.

But how to decide which life is best—the other purpose of the whole discussion, as Socrates says above? The ‘method’ Socrates uses in order to demonstrate this is to appeal to shame or ugliness, the αἰσχρός.³¹ And it is a decidedly *comic* shame to boot, to reduce the alternative positions to the unacceptably ridiculous. Thus Socrates can say ‘These conclusions [of mine] are held down and bound by arguments of iron and adamant, [and] no one I’ve ever met, as in this case right now, can say anything else without showing himself to be condemnably laughable (οὐδεὶς οἷός τ’ ἐστὶν ἄλλως λέγων μὴ οὐ καταγέλαστος εἶναι).’ (508e5-509a7, trans. Zeyl, modified). Socrates thus levels a ‘gelastic criticism’ against the life of contemporary oratory.³² That is why he reduces Callias’ unmitigated hedonism to increasingly absurd and lowly images: reducing ‘happiness’ to the state of a man who obsessively scratches at an itch; to a messy bird that passes as much food as it voraciously eats; and finally to the happiness of a male prostitute, or κίναδος. It is this latter conclusion which is too much for Callicles to accept, finally forcing him to abandon unqualified hedonism and accept the difference between good and bad pleasures. This abandonment

³¹ For shame and/or ugliness as a dialectical tool in the *Gorgias*, see esp. Kahn’s seminal (1983) with Shaw (2015).

³² Whether or not this is a *successful* exercise in dialectic is not my concern other than to note that Socrates apparently believes comedy really is, or can be, truth-preserving. But this is a common refrain in Plato if we take the very fact that ‘proper’ comedy *must* exist in the ideal state at *Laws* 11.934d-6b (on which see Halliwell 1991) and that to know what is *truly* laughable is the mark of a man with *nous* in the *Cave* of the *Republic* (e.g. 518a-b).

ultimately allows Socrates to establish a distinction between the good and the pleasant altogether, thereby ostensibly defeating hedonism as such.

This dialectical defeat of Callicles therefore leaves Socrates' view of modern oratory intact: that it is a species of comical and shameful *kolakeia*. I have already cited the critical moment where Socrates defines *kolakeia* as a practice that makes itself seem worth all the world to those it seeks to dupe by dangling pleasure as bait, and how it dons the mask of whatever art it pretends to be. But it is important to see how closely that passage parallels the Chorus of Flatterers in Eupolis, such that we may question whether Plato had that Chorus of Flatterers in mind when writing his dialogue:

ἡ κολακευτικὴ αἰσθομένη —οὐ γνοῦσα λέγω ἀλλὰ στοχασαμένη—τέτραχα
ἑαυτὴν διανείμασα, ὑποδῶσα ὑπὸ ἑκάστων τῶν μορίων, προσποιεῖται εἶναι
τοῦτο ὅπερ ὑπέδω, καὶ τοῦ μὲν βελτίστου οὐδὲν φροντίζει, τῷ δὲ ἀεὶ ἡδίστῳ
θηρεύεται τὴν ἄνοιαν καὶ ἐξαπατᾷ, ὥστε δοκεῖ πλείστου ἀξία εἶναι.

Kolakeia perceives [these arts, such as true legislating and deliberating, litigation and justice; gymnastics and medicine]—not by knowing, I say, but by guessing—and divides itself into four. Putting on the mask of each of them, it pretends to be the thing it has masked-up to play; and of what is best it gives no mind to at all, but rather, always using what is most pleasant, it hunts after ignorance, beguiles and cheats it thoroughly, making [his] *kolakeia* seem to be really worth something.

Gorgias 464c5-d3

Note the relationship the above passage has to *Kolakes* Fr. 172.5-13 K.A. in particular, where the *kolax* goes out into the marketplace and uses pleasure to hunt after ignorance for food using pleasing remarks:

ἱματίῳ δέ μοι δὴ ἐστὸν χαρίεντε τούτῳ,
οἷν μεταλαμβάνων ἀεὶ θάτερον ἐξελαύνω
εἰς ἀγοράν. ἐκεῖ δ' ἐπειδὴν κατίδω τιν' ἄνδρα
ἡλίθιον, πλουτοῦντα δ', εὐθὺς περὶ τοῦτόν εἰμί.
κᾶν τι τύχῃ λέγων ὁ πλούταξ, πάννυ τοῦτ' ἐπαινῶ,
καὶ καταπλήττομαι δοκῶν τοῖσι λόγοισι χαίρειν.
εἴτ' ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐρχόμεσθ' ἄλλυδις ἄλλος ἡμῶν

μᾶζαν ἐπ' ἀλλόφυλον, οὗ δεῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ
τὸν κόλακ' εὐθέως λέγειν, ἣ 'κφέρεται θύραζε.

I also have these two lovely robes,
one of which, routinely changing for the other, I march off
to the marketplace. And when I spy someone there who's
a fool but rich, I'm immediately part of his entourage.
If the rich guy happens to be speaking, I praise his remarks lavishly,
and I act astounded, pretending to take delight in his words,
Then we go off to dinner, each of us in a different direction,
to get a foreign barley-cake, where the *kolax* must immediately
offer many pleasant and agreeable things, or else he's dragged out the door.

Kolakes Fr. 171.5-13 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

So Eupolis' *Kolakes* may have played some role in Plato's construction of the flatterer in the *Gorgias* (although he may also have been using a generic trope too, of course). But there is not only this similarity: Socrates even seems to reconstitute the Chorus of Flatterers in *Ameipsias* as a foil against which to cast his own chattering and overly-contemplative qualities, when he characterises tragedians and their *choregoi*, bad musicians, along with makers of tasty treats and makeup artists, rhetoricians and sophists, all as separate species under the single genus 'flatterer' (501d3-502d8). As in *Ameipsias*, Socrates is the odd man out: he is intelligent like Polus and Callicles but he refuses to take part in their flattering ambitions, as Callias himself emphasises in his closing peroration to Socrates (485e3-d1)—that he feels like a brother cut from the same cloth as Socrates, such as Zethus is to Amphion in Euripides' *Antiope*. But Socrates just does not fit. As he says to Callicles, 'And yet for my part, my good man, I think it's better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune and dissonant, and have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person.' (*Gorgias* 482b6-c2, trans. Zeyl).

Plato is clearly reaching into the comic tradition to single out Socrates' Spartanizing, self-reflective and chattering persona against which to understand his fellow *phrontistai*. This

is why I am inclined to translate ‘καὶ τοῦ μὲν βελτίστου οὐδὲν φροντίζει’ at 461d1 above as ‘and of what is best it [*kolakeia*] gives no “*phrontis*” at all’—the point being that Socrates is reclaiming what is really is to be a ‘*phrontistēs*’. To be a ‘real’ *phrontistēs* is setting one’s mind to what is best, even if that includes self-abuse for the sake of the good and the other ridiculous qualities levelled against Socrates, such as babbling nonsense that overly-irritates people (481b6-486d1). Socrates, it seems to me, is affirming the value of his character in the *Kolakes* in Fr. 386 K.A., the ‘babbling beggar who has put his mind to everything’ (τὸν πτωχὸν ἀδολέσχην | ὅς τ’ ἅλλα μὲν πεφρόντικεν) but ‘from where he could gobble down some food—considering *that* he has neglected to give any care!’ (τούτου κατημέληκεν). This comic duality of the fifth century is flatly on display in the *Gorgias*, starting with Polus in his repeated aspersions against Socrates’ ‘verbal drivell’ (φλύαρία) in arguing for doing what is right even at the cost of torture.³³ Socrates even seems to reclaim the *Phrontistērion* as a sort of house of truth: if we take the many allusions to violence against him and his property, Socrates’ references to geometry and arithmetic in his mock-teaching of Polus and the others in ‘true’ rhetoric as a reference to, and ultimately an inversion of, his position as teacher in *Clouds*. There are even more considerations to take into account, but the *Clouds* is not my concern here.

If we are to really understand what sets the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras* together or apart, one must notice that sophistry too is a species of *kolakeia* in the *Gorgias*, a *kolakeia* that ‘wears the mask’ of the real art of making laws and deliberating in a city, or νομοθετική—that sophistry is in fact just the natural talent or knack of dressing-up the body (κομμωτική), a disgraceful sort of deception, masquerading as expertise in deliberating over how to run cities properly. Contemporary political rhetoric is, in its turn, the non-scientific making of tasty treats (ὀψοποιική), wearing the mask of ‘δικαστική’—the art of litigation and being a judge. These lowly knacks derived from experience seek only what is pleasant and never what is best

³³ ‘Verbal drivell’ is Worman’s (2008) translation. See her study for an examination of the *Gorgias* as Foucaultian analysis of literally how to use one’s mouth properly. Critically, she notes that from the very opening of the dialogue that the orators are already ‘feasting’ one another, and that the characters—including Socrates—play out their comic roles ascribed to them by one other, forcing the audiences to recognise the comic ambiguity. But this sort of metatheatre does not leave us adrift completely in how to decide between their respective lives. Socrates levels a ‘gelastic criticism’, as I called it earlier, against Callias—which, it should be noted, Callias also tries but fails to do (in the drama if not philosophically).

(see esp. 464b2-c4).³⁴ But note that the distinction between Socrates' views of sophistry and contemporary rhetoric eventually breaks down near the closing of the dialogue, collapsing into a single thing, that or their differences become negligible: 'ταὐτόν, ὃ μακάρι', ἐστὶν σοφιστῆς καὶ ῥήτωρ, ἢ ἐγγύς τι καὶ παραπλήσιον, ὥσπερ ἐγὼ ἔλεγον πρὸς Πῶλον'—'It's the very same thing, my good man, the sophist and rhetorician, or hand-in-hand and just about identical, as I was saying to Polus' (520a7-8). Thus, when we think of sophistry in the *Protagoras*, we should be thinking, if not of experts in dressing up parading as expert statesmen *per se*, then at least of men who wear the mask of true physicians of the soul, an art which rather belongs to the purview of Socrates and Plato.

3. Flatterers in the *Protagoras*, Revisited

When we take what Protagoras actually says of himself and wed that to the noetic insights of Socrates we observed in section one above, the parallels to the *Gorgias* are clear: it is no surprise that the sophists in the house are implied to have terrible, warped souls, and eventually suffer equivalently terrible fates.³⁵ Consider that Protagoras declares himself an expert in 'making people better' precisely by making them better citizens at home and at work in the state, which means the passage and repealing of laws (319d1-7). Protagoras of course affirms this and goes on to attempt to justify it in his Great Speech. In this way, Protagoras is implied to be just such an expert in 'νομοθετική' we hear of in the *Gorgias*. And because he obviously does not know the content of virtue—the substance of a good person and citizen—it is clear he is an imposter. Moreover, as I argued above, the extravagant display in dress, speech, and debate characteristic of the sophists really is a kind of 'dressing up', or κομμωτική, that hides the hideous reality within; and κομμωτική in the *Gorgias* just is the mask of real νομοθετική. So, on this model, Protagoras is a *kolax* who knows how to guess well what his subjects want to hear in the arena of lawmaking and virtue.

³⁴ Variant manuscripts have 'δικαιοσύνη' and I disagree with Dodds (1990) that we should dismiss 'δικαστική' as the correct form, as does Zeyl (1997) in his edition. It is the *arts* that are being discussed here. But the sense of both terms would be the same, namely the art of being a dicast, of deciding what is just in a criminal proceeding.

³⁵ Thus, see again Woodruff (2023): 14. To be clear here: the point is that the sophists, though happy and content *now* in their physical lives, are damaging their souls and have long already damaged them—and will continue to suffer injuries in the afterlife. It is unclear *what* the injuries suffered by immoral characters are in Plato, and I do not take a stand on that issue here.

Indeed, with Protagoras playing such a role as we find it in the *Gorgias*, it is no wonder that the para-Homeric *Nekyia* of the *Protagoras* above shows the sophists to be suffering a similar, if not exactly the same terrifying fate as the sophistic flatterers of the *Gorgias*. Prodicus and Protagoras are even aligned to Tantalus and Sisyphus, who just are, in the *Gorgias*, the only named ‘incurable’ demagogues and tyrants chained to the walls of Tartarus as *actual* spectacles (θεάματα, 525d1) intended to frighten passers-by who are curable. Those passers-by in the case of the *Protagoras* include the young and excitable Hippocrates and the sensible Socrates (although I presume that Hippocrates, who has no such Socratic sage insight into their souls, may have gotten the point by the end of the dialogue; certainly his comical enthusiasm for Protagoras was cooled by Socrates even before arriving). The parable of the ‘leaky jars of desire’ within our souls, which Socrates uses to show that, in reality, insatiable hedonists are most miserable even whilst still alive at *Gorgias* 492e7ff. is likewise characteristic of the insatiability of all three sophists in terms of their para-Homeric analogues in the *Protagoras*. The souls of Heracles, Tantalus, and Sisyphus—the souls of Hippias, Prodicus, and Protagoras—are all striving for something they cannot reach; eternally parched, always in a state of anxiety and unrest.³⁶ At a minimum, their souls are completely out of balance, in a state of utter disarray.

Now take a close look at the wording of Socrates’ remarks after he has established that virtue can be taught if it is one thing, namely knowledge. That is, the strangely foreboding reference Socrates makes to taking ‘Promethean forethought’ over his life as a whole:

‘ἐγὼ οὖν, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, πάντα ταῦτα καθορῶν ἄνω κάτω παραπτόμενα δεινῶς, πᾶσαν προθυμίαν ἔχω καταφανῇ αὐτὰ γενέσθαι, καὶ βουλοίμην ἂν ταῦτα διεξελθόντας ἡμᾶς ἐξελθεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅτι ἔστιν, καὶ πάλιν ἐπισκέψασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ εἴτε διδακτὸν εἴτε μὴ διδακτὸν, μὴ πολλάκις ἡμᾶς ὁ Ἐπιμηθεὺς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐν τῇ σκέψει σφίλῃ ἐξαπατήσας, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ

³⁶ This thesis is concerned with Plato’s reliance on the ‘other’ comic poets, and so it is appropriate to note here that it has long been my suspicion that ‘the myth of the water carriers’ at *Gorgias* 493a-494b is borrowed from, or a Platonizing take on, a lost play of the Pythagoreanizing Epicharmus. Indeed, the mythical imagery is said by Socrates to have come down from ‘τις μυθολοφῶν κομψὸς ἀνὴρ’, and ‘some Sicilian or Italian’, 493a5-6. Epicharmus wrote about human nature as wine skins and the distasteful contents therein (Fr. 166 and 168 K.A.), and the souls of hedonists are, in Epicharmus, like leaky sieves or wine skins, never sated (as Kassel-Austen think is reported by Seneca, *Epist.* 77.16). Epicharmus was also famed for his philosophical etymologies, which is constitutive of Socrates’ mythic imagery in the relevant passage. That Plato would revert to a strange image from Epicharmus to refute Polus would be in line with his general epistemic procedure in the *Gorgias*, too—to reduce the alternative position to the *katagelastos*, as I have shown.

διανομῇ ἡμέλησεν ἡμῶν, ὥς φης σύ. ἤρεσεν οὖν μοι καὶ ἐν τῷ μύθῳ ὁ Προμηθεὺς μᾶλλον τοῦ Ἐπιμηθέως: ὃ χρώμενος ἐγὼ καὶ προμηθεύμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἐμαυτοῦ παντὸς πάντα ταῦτα πραγματεύομαι, καὶ εἰ σὺ ἐθέλεις, ὅπερ καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔλεγον, μετὰ σοῦ ἂν ἥδιστα ταῦτα συνδιασκοποίην.'

'Now, Protagoras, seeing that we have gotten this topsy-turvy and terribly confused, I am most eager to clear it all up, and I would like us, having come this far, to keep going until we come through to what virtue is in itself, and *then* to return to inquire about whether it can or cannot be taught, so that Epimetheus might not frustrate us a second time in this inquiry, as he neglected us in the distribution of powers and abilities in your story. I liked the Prometheus character in your story better than Epimetheus. Since I take promethean forethought over my life as a whole, I pay attention to these things, and if you are willing, as I said at the beginning, it would be most pleasant to investigate them along with you.'

Protagoras 361c2-d5, trans. Lombardo and Bell, modified.

Protagoras very politely declines the invitation to continue inquiring into what sort of knowledge virtue appears to be. But what does Socrates mean when he says he says he 'προμηθεύμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἐμαυτοῦ παντὸς'? I have given indications already as to what this must mean. Socrates alludes to his ability to prudentially see into the future, to have foresight into virtuous actions that befits the true sage. But there is more to look at here.

On the one hand, it seems that he is referring to Protagoras' early words to Socrates and Hippocrates—that a student must have forethought for their own safety when giving oneself to a sophist; a foreigner taking away youths from hearth and home under the pretences of making them better (ὁρθῶς, ἔφη, προμηθεῖ, ὃ Σώκρατες, ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, 316c5ff.). It may also remind the reader of something terrible that happened to the 'sophists' in Plato Comicus' *Sophistai* (422-410) Fr. 145 K.A.—'προμηθία γάρ ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις ὁ νοῦς'. It may also remind the reader of what happened to Socrates at the end of the extant *Clouds* and his actual prosecution and death on account of being taken for a sophist. And Socrates may be making a comment about Callias not properly watching over himself, being unaware that he is hurdling towards destruction.

On the other hand, Socrates is explicitly also referring to the character of Prometheus in Protagoras' Great Speech. Prometheus' role there is to be in charge of supervising Epimetheus in distributing the various powers and abilities to mortal creatures for the sake of

their ‘σωτηρία’, or ‘salvation’ (320e3, 321a2, 321b6, 321d1). Epimetheus (‘afterthought’) naturally forgets to include human beings in his distribution of the powers amongst the animals. Prometheus swoops in and, desperate, steals the art of fire from Hephaestus ‘and the many other arts of Athena’ (καὶ τὴν ἄλλην τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, 321e2)—which include *sophia* (321d2)—and gave them to humans. But humans did not as yet have the political art (τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην, 322c1), and so could not find their salvation by successfully establishing cities (ἐζήτουν δὴ ἀθροίζεσθαι καὶ σώζεσθαι κτίζοντες πόλεις, 322b5). Zeus saw that without a sense of moral shame or inhibition (αἰδώς), as well as justice, right, or punishment (δίκη), humans could not only not make cities but were at risk of being totally wiped out (ἀπόλοιτο πᾶν, 322c2). So he sent Hermes—the patron god of wayfarers and thieves, Protagoras thus sneakily making room for his own profession—to distribute the ‘arts’ (αἱ τέχναι, 322c6) of αἰδώς and δίκη to mortals, for the sake of *kosmos* in cities and friendships amongst men (πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί, 322c3-4).

This is Protagoras’ speech, not Socrates’, and so it is doubtful whether Socrates would say there is more than one *technē* when it comes to virtue and/or its administration. But Protagoras, I argue, has accidentally articulated the same, or a very similar vision of ‘the true political art’ according to Socrates in the *Gorgias*; an art that must cultivate justice and a sense of shame in the soul of oneself and others for the sake of our ‘salvation’, individually and communally. This is why Socrates insists on taking ‘Promethean foresight over his life as a whole’, for he wants to arrive at the gates of Hades with a soul untouched by any sort of injustice. Socrates wants to develop and have knowledge of the true political arts of salvation, which Protagoras cannot teach. Protagoras is like Epimetheus. Epimetheus above ‘ἐξαπατήσας’—trips us up, a catch-word for sophistic deception. For Protagoras, too, may just well ‘deceive us thoroughly’ if we are not careful, as Socrates warns Hippocrates (ὁ σοφιστής... ἐξαπατήσῃ ἡμᾶς, ὥσπερ οἱ... ἔμπορος τε καὶ κάπηλος, 313c9-11). ‘καπηλεύοντες’ (313d5), huckstering and being a wine-seller cutting customers short, is really all Protagoras knows; as Epimetheus cuts short the mortals he was tasked by Zeus to help.

Indeed, note that Protagoras is an ‘ἔμπορός τε καὶ κάπηλος’ (313d1)—a travelling, swindling salesman of junk food (and in the case of a teacher, of ‘learnings’, of ‘μαθήματα’). Such sorts of people are analogous to the sophistic flatterer in the *Gorgias*, too (‘κάπηλον

ὄντα ἢ ἔμπορον’, ‘ὁ κάπηλος’; G. 517d7, 518b7). I suggest, however, that we should be thinking of Protagoras, bearing this descriptor, not as any travelling seller of junk, but particularly of *wine*. For a κάπηλος was, in the comic and non-comic literature, primarily associated with taverners, travelling or otherwise. And given that Protagoras was associated with how and when to drink wine in the *Kolakes* (Fr. 158 K.A.), this identification as a κάπηλος has a particular potency. I suggest that there is a very good chance that Protagoras was, both in the *Kolakes* and (therefore also) the *Protagoras*, a seller and mixer of wine, but one who *wears the mask* of an ‘expert craftsman’, the literal sense of ‘σοφιστής’—an identity Protagoras defends by predicating his art on *all* the masters of previous crafts.

Thinking of Protagoras in this way would give some ironic bite to Socrates’ asking, after the conclusion to Protagoras’ Great Speech, ‘Now, then, Protagoras, I need one small thing, and then I’ll have it all, if you’ll just answer me this. You say that virtue is teachable, and if there’s any human being who could persuade me of this, it’s you. But there was something about your speech that amazed me, so please, regarding this too *fill up my soul*. (ὁ δ’ ἐθαύμασά σου λέγοντος, τοῦτό μοι ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἀποπλήρωσον.)’ (329b5-c2, trans. Lombardo and Bell, modified).³⁷ A κάπηλος was not just a taverner, but was often referred to as a mixer who would dilute the wine too much, thus cheating the customer. Socrates seems here, then, to allude to this gastric hucksterism in having only a half-full (or half-empty) cup from Protagoras. And so I suggest that Protagoras in the *Kolakes* may well have been similar to the ‘Sausage-Seller’ from Paphlagonia who comes to Athens seeking power through flattery in the *Knights*; but Protagoras, in the case of Eupolis’ comedy, was ‘from Teos’ seeking to take advantage of the richest man in town, Callias—thus indicating, for those in the know, his true, louche origins. That is, as a travelling, swindling merchant of wine (who himself seeks to get drunk).³⁸ And one who—again like Epimetheus—cuts his customers short.

³⁷ Lombardo and Bell (1997) have the final sentence thus: ‘But there is one thing you said that troubles me, and maybe you can satisfy my soul.’ Taylor (1991) has ‘[...] just satisfy me on something which surprised me when you said it’. Denyer (2008): 122 says of 329c2: ‘Socrates continues to develop the conceit that knowledge is the nutrition of the soul (313c6-9).’ He goes on to correctly cite other instances of this metaphor in Plato (*Rep.* 586a-b; *Plt.* 286a). But the metaphor is particularly salient here if Protagoras *really* was a kind of mixer of wine in the comedy that is being parodied.

³⁸ For lowly wine merchants or travelling taverners as trickster κάπηλοι in Classical Greece, see Davidson (1997): 53-61 with references, and cf. Ehrenberg (1943): 86-91.

The sophists of the *Protagoras* should clearly be read in light of the orators and sophists of the *Gorgias*, both in terms of the objects that concern them (legislation and litigation) and their para-comic characterisation as flatterers (dress-up artists, pastry bakers, cooks and wine-dealers). They also have the same *values* as the flatterers of the *Gorgias* and seem to suffer on account of such values.

Thus, we have seen that at least four dialogues—the *Protagoras*, *Hippias Major* and *Minor*, and the *Gorgias*—all have roughly the same theoretical and dramatic frameworks to describe and understand the sophists and experts in legal arenas. We have seen, moreover, that the framework owes a great debt to the comic literature on sophists as flatterers, not least a debt to Eupolis, but Ameipsias and others as well. I suspect that more work could be done with the *Euthydemus* and other dialogues that treat sophists as entertainers, with their rowdy crowds and choruses, but it should be sufficiently clear at this point that Plato had a consistent understanding of the sophists when writing these dialogues. My analysis, I should also add, gives considerable depth to the claim of Nightingale that the *Gorgias* is indebted to the comic literature on flattery, not just to the *Knights* of Aristophanes. It is indebted to an entire tradition that pit these sorts of experts against Socrates.³⁹

So much for the sophists in the *Protagoras* and their counterparts in the *Gorgias*, as well as other dialogues. But what about Socrates, the other side of the comic coin here? Does he maintain the model of Socratic-Platonic *therapeia* of the soul in the *Protagoras* too? More fundamentally, how and in what way does he conform to the trope ‘philosopher versus flatterer’?

4. The Para-Comic Socrates of the *Protagoras*

Let us take the first question first as to the intertextual connection with the *Gorgias*: does Socrates maintain that there is a true political art of therapeutic tendence to the soul in

³⁹ Nightingale (1995): 190 does recognise that a *broader* appropriation of comic themes is at work in the dialogue besides that of just demagoguery in Aristophanes’ *Knights*. As she says, ‘By portraying them as lovers, as flatterers, as cooks, Plato does indeed “make a comedy” of the rhetoricians and the politicians in the *Gorgias*. For he uses a number of recognizable comic *topoi* to bolster his own critique of Athens.’ But her claim, as I think my analysis shows, needs modifying: these ‘cooks and lovers’ in the *Gorgias* are in fact species of the larger genus ‘flatterer’ (see again esp. 501d3-502d8 on the possible reconstitution of the Chorus of Ameipsias’ *Konnos*).

the *Protagoras*, in contrast to the sophistic type masquerading as a science? Certainly. Socrates gives us evidence throughout the dialogue that the knowledge which cultivates virtue in the soul is a *therapeutic* knowledge based on a Hippocratic model, similar to what we find in the *Gorgias*.

Take the opening of the dialogue, where Socrates spends a considerable amount of time telling Hippocrates that he should cultivate and protect the health of his soul, or otherwise, if he cannot do it himself, to find a physician able to do so (311b3-314c2). This physician of the soul is like a physician of the body—his namesake (τὸν σαντοῦ ὁμώνυμον, 311b5), Hippocrates of Kos—knowing what to eat and drink, how much, and when (esp. 314a6). In other words, Socrates exhorts the young man to find someone with a genuine art of measurement of the soul, as he would reasonably look to find a physician of the body. There can be no coincidence, then, that Socrates does develop an ‘art of measurement’ (μετρητική τέχνη) of pleasures and pains, seeking to avoid excesses and deficiencies as the model that will bring about our happiness (from 351b4 to 358a1).⁴⁰ Indeed, that this science of rational, measured self-control may bring about the ‘salvation of our life’ (ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ βίου, 356e6-358a1).

It is all too clear that Socrates, in the *Protagoras*, is setting himself up as a proponent of the very thing which distinguished him from his intellectual counterparts in the *Gorgias* and in comedy: self-control, being to Socrates the highest value in this and the following life. Moreover, given that the sophists are implied to be the most *intemperate* sorts of persons, this ‘art of measure’ does not only ridicule Protagoras’ ‘man-measure’ doctrine or even the arts which the sophists claim to teach, but Socrates’ ‘art of measurement’ likely refers to Protagoras’ penchant for over-drinking in the *Kolakes*.

Indeed, it seems all too likely that Socrates is ridiculing the sophists by didacticizing to *them* in the way they didacticized to *us* as a Chorus in Fr. 173 K.A., as gods to mortals. ‘οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγετε, ὦ ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλὰ ψεύδεσθε,’—‘You do not speak rightly, mortal men, but wrongly!’ says a third party through the voice of Socrates at 353a3. Socrates, ‘with the help of Protagoras’, didacticizes to all mortals (through the repeated use of the vocative ‘ὦ ἄνθρωποι’

⁴⁰ The model itself is built on a conceit; Socrates does not—indeed cannot—believe pleasure is unqualifiedly good in the *Protagoras*. See below for how.

at 353a3, c4, e8, 354a3, e3, 356c3, 357a6), they must ‘together’ persuade and teach the masses (πείθειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διδάσκειν) to take themselves and their children to the sophists in order to live a most pleasant and happy life. But by arguing for the *impossibility of being overcome by pleasure*, Socrates is, I am almost certain, using the principles of hedonism in the parabasis of the *Kolakes* and elsewhere in the comedy precisely to curtail or reverse what the Chorus and those whom they represented likely argued—that unmitigated pleasure is the good and happy life, and that it was indeed possible to be overcome by pleasure. As a parasite says in a fragment by the Middle Comic poet Axionicus,

As soon as I, still a stripling, had come to love the parasite’s life in company with Philoxenus, that ‘Ham-cleaver,’ I began to receive patiently blows from knuckles, bowls, and bones; they were so many and so severe that sometimes I bore eight wounds at the least. (But I didn’t mind) for it paid; *for I am weaker than pleasure* (ἥττων εἰμὶ γὰρ ἤς ἡδονῆς). And so I have come to think that the business is in a way actually profitable. Suppose, for example, a man is quarrelsome, and gets into a brawl with me; I face about and acknowledge to him all the evil that he has said of me, and so I straightway come off without injury. Again, a scoundrel asserts that he is a good man; I load him with praise and win his gratitude... Such is my character and nature.

Axionicus, Fr. 6 K.A., trans. Wilkins.

Socrates’ getting the flatterers to agree to this ridicules them in character and values thereby.⁴¹

It is these correspondences *in drama*—the dialectic between ‘flatterer and philosopher’—that should lead us to recognise the profound moral-metaphysical connections the two dialogues share in the rejection of hedonism.⁴² It is in this sense that I find myself surprised to see lacking a recognition that sophistry too is a species of *kolakeia* in the *Gorgias* in the scholarship on the problem(s) of reconciling the apparent inconsistencies of the two dialogues. It is the drama of character in both dialogues which, I assert, holds the key to

⁴¹ To be clear, Socrates is addressing ‘the many’ as much as he is surreptitiously addressing the sophists—as the thesis that it is possible to be overcome by pleasure just is a popular belief Socrates is nominally refuting on behalf of Protagoras and himself. But is ‘the many’ here *the audience* of the dialogue, as the audience was to a comedy like Eupolis’?

⁴² Shaw (2015) does something similar. He argues that the true beliefs of Protagoras—whom Shaw argues is too ashamed to admit aloud, because he is like the orators of the *Gorgias*—are buried within an examination of ‘the masses’. This is because sophists and orators unconsciously absorb popular belief in the *Gorgias*. But even Shaw fails to recognise that sophists and orators do so *because they are flatterers*, acting, in the case of public orators, as ‘lovers’ to the *demos* (or Demos) who must assimilate themselves to the objects of their desire in order to achieve their goals.

reading the dialogues together and, therefore, somewhat bypasses the morass of ink that has been spilt on trying to harmonise the two dialogues with respect to hedonism. Socrates in the *Gorgias* has an indifference to pleasure as a moral good and is certainly antithetical to unmitigated consumption of food; and just so in the *Protagoras*, for Socrates lives a life of quiet self-control in contrast with the ‘*akolastic*’ and flattering sophists.

On the other hand, there are considerations within the *Protagoras* itself that not only lead us to see Socrates rejecting pleasure as any sort of unqualified good there, but an examination of his personage in the dialogue shows us what ‘self-control’ or a truly measured life is supposed to mean—as well as cutting to the final question posed at the conclusion to the previous section. How does Socrates in the *Protagoras* resemble the kind of character we see him in the *Kolakes*, the *Konnos* of Ameipsias, as well as the plays of Aristophanes in conjunction with his fellow intellectuals?

So in the *Protagoras*, Socrates, as in comedy, is probably thought by Protagoras as a chatterer and to be interested in everything but food. Plato thus reproduced the hostility against Socrates expressed by the flatterers in Fr. 386 K.A. It seems all too clear, as well, that Socrates and his companion are to be identified by Plato with the hostile characters speaking against Protagoras in Fr. 157 K.A. outside the house of Callias—whether or not they were those characters in the original context of the play. Socrates’ very life in this dialogue comports with what we understand about him from comedy.

Observe too that, when Hippocrates comes comically banging on Socrates’ door before sunrise with his stick and ‘very violently’ (πάνυ σφόδρα), Socrates is found not exactly in his ‘bed’ but in his σκίμπος (310c1). This is no ordinary ‘bed’ but a kind of couch or tarp, flimsy enough to be used as a stretcher for invalids in battle.⁴³ It is, moreover, in the extant *Clouds*, the place not merely where the initiation rites occur inside Socrates’ house (*Cl.* 254), but what Strepsiades is instructed to lie down on so as to think about his problems and examine himself, banishing sleep (*Cl.* 693-735). Strepsiades, of course, would rather lay down anywhere else—for the function of the bed is just as much to tear his body apart through insect infestation. Yet the Chorus and Socrates seem to suggest that this is just the point: not

⁴³ See Denyer (2008): 69 on this.

to be ‘so womanly’ about it (*Cl.* 727). This bed seems to have been a feature of the original *Clouds*, too, both for an initiation scene similar to the extant one on the couch at Fr. 395 (a)(b) K.A., and an offhanded insult against a ‘dusty’ Chaerephon and others who roll around like moths (Fr. 393 K.A.), suggesting that Socrates’ sleeping arrangements were somehow either a publicly-known feature of his person or at least an enduring feature of Socrates’ comic persona. But the fact that Socrates is found sleeping peacefully on this ‘mattress’ at the opening of the dialogue—in contrast to the fleece-covered Prodicus—demonstrates through action Socrates’ *καρτερία*, or endurance, from the very outset of Socrates’ narrative. This sort of endurance and ability to sleep peacefully under otherwise perilous circumstances is on full display, if for different purposes, when Socrates has been sleeping peacefully ever closer to the hour of his death, at the para-tragic opening of the *Crito*.

But this apparent indifference to pain, moreover, is on display in itself and in contrast to the sophists in terms of Socrates’ very clothing. Socrates’ Spartanizing dress, his *τρίβων* I discussed above. Callias takes a hold of ‘this old cloak here’ (*τοῦ τρίβωνος τουτουῖ*) to keep Socrates from breaking up the party too early, as Socrates gets up to go (335d1). Moreover, when he and Hippocrates knock on Callias’ door, the Eunuch does not mistake them for sophists merely because he overhears the two chattering outside (314d2); instead, he mistakes them for sophists because they *act and look like flatterers*. Recall that the ‘traditional’ figure of the flatterer is to be a form of the *ἄκλητος*, or ‘uninvited guest’. Poor and dressed in rags, they roamed the Greek world seeking patronage; sometimes even before or as the sun rises. This is why the Eunuch mistakes him for another itinerate and uninvited sophist, with the conventionally comic reply that ‘the master is busy’—irritated with the swarm of sophists having already come. But ‘we are not sophists!’ Socrates must clarify, precisely because they are not looking for the host of the party, but to quiz Protagoras on the ostensible ‘goods’ (the ‘teachings’) he offers to one’s soul. Socrates is therefore emphasised to appear poor and dressed in rags, yet at the same time, he is explicitly *not* looking for food and patronage. However similar he may be to the sophists, he is no flatterer, both in word and in dress. The external splendour of the sophists in the opening moments within Callias’ house is an implicit valorisation of the poverty and simplicity of Socrates versus the Persian decadence of the sophists as seen in the likes of Ameipsias and Eupolis, especially and even in Aristophanes.

Observe next Socrates' at-once puzzling and apparently absurd admiration for Spartan living at 342a6-343b4, just before his complete analysis of Simonides. On the one hand, this is a conveniently silly way to justify the pugnacious character of Socrates' 'sophistic' breakdown of the poem. It also firmly establishes his own philosophical practises with the Seven Sages in competition with the 'wisdom' of the sophists. But remember too that in comedy, Socrates was not only associated with asceticism per se, but that his asceticism was refracted through an Athenian understanding of the practices of Spartan pedagogy and virtue, and that such behaviour served as a symbolic critique of the 'Eastern decadence' of Athenian society, which Callias' party exemplifies (the wastefulness of using a Eunuch for a doorman, again, was something even the Persian kings would avoid). Aristophanes, in *Birds* 1280, gives us the most direct and clear indication that Socrates' way of life was associated with Spartanizing *vis-à-vis* asceticism, as we saw in the first chapter.

I claim that Socrates takes some effort to establish and defend such laconizing and this imagery, bringing out, that is, the philosophical foundations which underlie its practice as an *ethos* for living. Socrates states that there are more 'philosophers' found in Crete and in Sparta than anywhere else in the world, and that to laconize is to do philosophy much more than to engage in physical training (τὸ λακωνίζειν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐστὶν φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ φιλογυμναστεῖν, 342e5). But what distinguishes a Spartan in respect of wisdom, he says, is that, whilst they appear to the outside world short of memory and simply stupid (as Socrates says of himself at 336b7-d6, and behaves severally throughout the discussion with Protagoras), in reality the Spartans are masters of the form of belittling talk, or making appear like fools and children (342e1-4), which takes the form of short speaking, or βραχυλογία (343b4).

Here we have a thinly veiled reference to the whole process of biting, ironical Socratic dialectic, the kind which increasingly irritates Protagoras. It is important to note that εἰρωνεία also serves an important role here; for, to be a Spartan in respect of wisdom is also to be a kind of *pretender*, for the Spartans 'deny their wisdom and pretend to be ignorant, so as not to betray their superiority over the rest of Greece' (ἀλλ' ἐξαρνοῦνται καὶ σχηματίζονται ἀμαθεῖς εἶναι, ἵνα μὴ κατάδηλοι ᾧσιν ὅτι σοφία τῶν Ἑλλήνων περίεσιν, 342b1-5, trans. Taylor). 'Saying one thing and thinking another'—or 'Spartan duplicity'—was a key feature of laconizers about Athens, and so this passage would have rung quite true; and it is obviously

true of Socrates.⁴⁴ Lastly, Socrates says that to be a Spartan in a philosophical spirit is ultimately to conform to the Socratic maxims—derived from the Seven Sages themselves—‘Know Thyself’ and ‘Nothing in Excess’ (343b2-3).

Thus Socrates is at once explaining and building upon the reality of the image propagated in comedy of the laconizing philosopher. To recall the words of Rashed again, Plato is ‘improving’ the comically laconizing Socrates, in this case as a philosophical foil to the flattering sophists. This image is little different from the famed portrait of Socrates by the drunken Alcibiades in the *Symposium* (215a4-222b7)—which, though comically mocking him, is intended also to praise him seriously, to get at the truth (215b1).

To dive into the *Symposium* as a whole, not least the speech and character of Alcibiades and his impression of Socrates, is both an exciting and dangerous prospect at this juncture, for it is one of the most complex and vexed moments in Platonic literature. And that, too, not least for its laughable (or satyric, tragic-comic) aspects.⁴⁵ Suffice it to say at this moment, however, that Alcibiades likewise brings to the fore these very comical properties highlighted in the *Protagoras*, whilst admittedly highlighting others—others we interestingly do *not* find in comedy, namely Socrates’ Dionysian, erotic properties in the dialogues.

All this is to say, Alcibiades stresses what is ‘serious’ and not simply laughable about Socrates. He stresses Socrates’ absolute self-control under sexual pressure and moderation in drinking and eating, 217a3-219e5; his military prowess (219e6-221c1); and, from beginning to end, a praise of his unique sort of wisdom. All of these properties accord with Socrates’ comments on admiring ‘Spartan philosophy’. Alcibiades, for example, highlights the threadbare cloak, or τρίβων, Socrates always wears. Indeed, *is* wearing to the party (‘ὕπὸ τὸν τρίβωνα κατακλινεῖς τὸν τουτουί’, 219b6-7; ‘οὗτος δ’... ἔχων ἱμάτιον μὲν τοιούτου’, 220b4). He also praises Socrates’ habit of going barefoot no matter the time of year, able to advance

⁴⁴ For Spartan duplicity, see Bradford (1994). I stand silent here about how Athenian perceptions of Spartan lying may affect our reading of Socratic *eirōneia*—though this would be a worthwhile pursuit.

⁴⁵ Studies on the *Symposium* and comedy are effectively endless; for its closing moments problematise the very question of what sort of person should write comedies and tragedies, with obvious metatextual overtones suggesting that the *Symposium* itself—and Plato himself, or Socrates—should be the ones to do both in the form of dialogue and, apparently, personage. Interestingly, however, there is no full, book-length study on comedy in that dialogue as such that I am aware of (or rather, how the *Symposium* in particular informs Plato’s ‘comic technique’). Perhaps the closest is the overlooked Mader (1977).

better even than men with boots on (220b6-7), a nimbleness highly-valued by Spartiate warriors, as we know from Xenophon. That Socrates wore fine sandals and took a real bath before heading to Agathon's party is explicitly noted as an exception to the norm ('ἄ ἐκεῖνος ὀλιγάκις ἐποίει', 174a7).⁴⁶ Alcibiades, in other words, means to praise Socrates' absolute indifference to pleasure or pain. Even Socrates' immunity to tiredness is thematised in his speech (220c1-220d5) as well as at the closing of the dialogue. And as in the case of the *Protagoras*, Socrates' words appear stupid at first, but such words cut down whomever he is examining, being of the greatest value (*Smp.* 221e1-222a6).

Socrates is literally a portrait in virtue, even if a silly one. This, I can only presume, is precisely why Alcibiades so memorably quotes Aristophanes' *Clouds* 362 in order to praise Socrates' fearlessness and adroit perception in the heat of the chaotic retreat at Delium (*Smp.* 221b1-3). What one must do is 'spectate' Socrates at the right time to discover the incredible reality hidden within the hideous (or hideously laughable) exterior (ἄξιον ἦν θεάσασθαι Σωκράτη' 220b8; 'ἐνταῦθα δὴ καὶ κάλλιον ἐθεασάμην Σωκράτη ἢ ἐν Ποτειδαίᾳ, 221a5-6). He is superficially ugly and laughable but utterly divine—the point that opens Alcibiades' speech. Alcibiades' speech sets Socrates in absolute contrast to the sophists in the *Protagoras*, who are beautiful to look at but are, in fact, hideous once the reality of their souls is 'spectated'. And it is Socrates' form of ridiculous speech and oratory that has the correct, divine impression on his listeners.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ As Dover (1980): 81 put it in his commentary, remarking on Socrates' wearing slippers (βλαύτας) and his having bathed (λελουμένον): 'Socrates commonly went unshod (cf. 220b6 and Ar. *Clouds* 103). It sounds here [also] as if he also went unwashed, and Ar. *Birds* 1554 calls him ἄλοντος. But he washes the morning after the party (223d11 ἀπονιψάμενον); we should distinguish between washing off sweat and surface dirt (ἀπονίζεσθαι) and having a good bath (λούεσθαι) followed by oiling and preening. In Ar. *Birds* 132 and *Plutus* 615 λούεσθαι is associated with feasting and celebration...'. A good question is *why* Socrates wears shoes and prepares for the party as is socially appropriate. My suspicion is that he is simply doing a favour for the notoriously luxurious and effeminate Agathon. Socrates says he avoided (lit. *fled from*—διέφυγον') the party the day before 'in fear of the crowd', but he nevertheless promised to show up, so he was expected to take great care to adorn himself (174a6-9). He does not bathe and wear sandals for the sake of luxury, but because that is simply what one wears to Agathon's party. And as Alcibiades notes—and as the closing of the dialogue demonstrates—everyone passes out drunk, whereas Socrates talks until daybreak only to sleep the following evening after a normal day at the Lyceum.

⁴⁷ We should note the para-comic move here on the part of Plato. Alcibiades says that Socrates alone makes him feel shame for his lifestyle (216b3), not least for his efforts at captivating Socrates' erotic attention. Plato thus has Alcibiades—a paragon *katapugōn* in comedy—inadvertently admit to the reality of that very role, similarly as the sophists admit to being flatterers. Alcibiades implicitly admits that he desperately, actively seeks passive sex by multiple means. Perhaps the 'role-reversal' of pursuer and pursued should be taken with a serious dose of

This portrait of ‘Spartan’ virtue, though less comically imbued, became a Socratic paradigm as seen, most notably, in the case of the Cynic tradition. But the Spartan virtues and hardihood of Socrates in the *Protagoras* may be adequately summarised, too, by Plutarch’s description of the Spartan Agesilaus: ‘Agesilaus’ fame still increased, insomuch that the Persian king received daily information concerning his many virtues, and the great esteem the world had of his temperance, his plain living, and his moderation... In so great an army you should scarce find a common soldier lie on a coarser mattress (φαυλοτέραν στιβάδα) than Agesilaus: he was so indifferent to the varieties of heat and cold that all the seasons, as the gods sent them, seemed natural to him. The Greeks that inhabited Asia were much pleased to see the great lords and governors of Persia, with all the pride, cruelty, and luxury in which they lived, trembling and bowing before a man in a poor threadbare cloak (ἐν τρίβωνι), and, at one laconic word out of his mouth, obsequiously deferring and changing their wishes and purposes.’ (*Agesilaus* 14, trans. Ducat 2006: 129).

5. Closing the Circle

In the *Protagoras*, Plato reached into the broader comic tradition to paint Socrates as a foil to the sophists, as a philosopher against flatterers. This is clear not just from an analysis of the *Protagoras* itself but also from its structural relationship to Eupolis. A close reading of the concomitant philosophical commitments ascribed to the duality of ‘flatterer and philosopher’ as portrayed in the *Gorgias* has also shown that such commitments are operative in the *Protagoras* too. With this chapter, then, at last there should emerge a rounded picture of Plato, at a certain point in his writing career, consistently pitting Socrates as a para-comic, laconizing ascetic (one who is indifferent to pleasures and pains as moral goods) against the gluttonous and surreptitious sophists, who are *kolakes*.

condemnatory force rather with the merely laughable. Is Alcibiades the perpetually ithyphallic one in his ‘satyr play’ of a speech? (τὸ σατυρικόν σου δράμα, 222d4).

Conclusion

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

This thesis has aimed to be deliberately wide-ranging and has proceeded along a subordinated series of questions. The first question: what would an examination of Plato's relationship to the broader nexus of Greek comedy tell us about his work, a nexus that extended beyond the exclusive purview of Aristophanes and, most notably, the extant *Clouds*? To that end, the most natural place to look, I suggested, was towards the one dialogue we know to have been predicated to a significant degree upon a comedy not by Aristophanes, namely the *Protagoras* and its relationship to the *Kolakes* of Eupolis. Thus, the second question that dominates the thesis: what was evidently so important about that comedy for Plato's dramatic and philosophical purposes?

I argued that Eupolis' *Kolakes* furnished a difference between Socrates and his fellow *phrontistai* with respect to flattering patrons for food and luxuries. Socrates, in contrast to those thinkers, which included the likes of Protagoras and Gorgias, was deliberately impoverished and took after the 'laconizers' about Athens who protested against 'Eastern' luxuriating, and who used his chattering and speculative wisdom for the sake of self-examination and self-care. Eupolis was not alone in producing such a distinction: it is seen in Aristophanes and Ameipsias too. After establishing that this is the case in the first chapter, I sought to show, over the following three chapters, that Plato took this distinction seriously, holding it up for reflection and reinforcement in the *Protagoras*. In this way, Plato sought to establish or harden what was, in its original, likely-ephemeral context, the comic trope 'flatterer and philosopher', in order to effect the distance between Socrates and the 'sophists'. Plato sought to 'improve' comedy in this regard.

My analysis of the *Protagoras* in relation to the *Kolakes* was somewhat piecemeal and fragmentary, which I think befits an intertextual analysis of a fragmentary text, one that probably also alludes to many other comedies and genres. In the second chapter, I showed that many peculiarities of Protagoras' mannerisms and even the analytical thrust of his 'Great Speech' can be explained by his *nature* as a flatterer and that Socrates was attempting to expose this; Plato by implicitly referring to the comedy in the first place, and Socrates

internally by attempting to get Protagoras to ‘chatter’ and stop giving long, pleasing speeches. In this way, I ended up challenging a dominant notion in the literature that insofar as sophists are comic characters, they are merely boasters. But boasting, as an analysis of the *Kolakes* itself shows, is just one tool in the shed of a *kolax*’s techniques.

The third chapter was something of an interlude, arguing that the *Kolakes* staged—in small or large part, singularly or multiply—a ‘contest of wisdom’, the type that was fanatically popular in Athens during the mid-fifth century. It was one that likely resembled the contest we see in the *Frogs*, which in turn is based on the *Certamen* story. But in the *Kolakes*, it was a contest reflecting a criticism seen across the literature of the time: that the contests were just a flattery of the sensibilities of the observers and a spectacle, not a real means of determining wisdom. Thus the *Kolakes* staged a ‘competition in flattery’, as Maximus of Tyre put it.

With this argument in hand, the very existence of the famed battle over the interpretation of Simonides in the *Protagoras* can be explained. And with an analysis of the operative principles of these battles in wisdom in hand, I can determine that, because Socrates crushes Protagoras he at once explodes the notion that these competitions as such showcase real wisdom by exposing the contestants as flattering pretenders, but Socrates also implicitly—in the act of defeating them—reaffirms his Delphic-sanctioned claim to be wisest of all mortals. This is likely why the dialogue ends in *aporia*, for the nature of ‘Socratic’ wisdom just is aporetic. At the same time, Socrates appropriates for himself the other standard ‘prizes’ on offer at these games—unique, sage insight into the things that were, are, and will be. The two sorts of wisdom, I should say, are not in conflict. Socrates at the close of the *Apology* prophesies as to the fate of his accusers, individually and collectively.

To recognise this sort of prophetic, sage wisdom on the part of Socrates is what made my third chapter ‘transitional’ or an interlude. It caused me to recognise that Socrates’ ability to see through the souls of the flatterers—both before and after the battle with Protagoras—is indicative of his unique insight, or certainly is the most plausible explanation for how he is able to do so. A close analysis of that insight also led me to question the extent to which the punishments given to the sophist-flatterers approximates to the punishment received by the

sophist-orators of flatterers of the *Gorgias*. I argued that the punishments are not only the same but that the whole literary-philosophical paradigm ‘philosopher versus flatterer’ in the *Gorgias*—which I also argued was developed with the help of Eupolis and others—is operative in the *Protagoras*.

In this way, I was able to harmonise the two dialogues with respect to Socrates’ views on pleasure; a matter that has dogged interpreters since the *Protagoras* has been read in modern scholarship. On the one hand, I showed that the Socratic-Hippocratic paradigm of soul-tendance, as opposed to unmitigated pleasure-giving in service of pleasure-seeking, is evident throughout the *Protagoras*. On the other hand, an analysis of the very way of Socrates’ life in the dialogue shows him to be redolent of his character seen on the comic stage, both individually and when set in contrast to ‘the sophists’ and other intellectuals. At this point, then, my intertextual analysis of the *Protagoras* with respect to the *Kolakes* came to an end, with the result that a pattern emerged showing the ‘philosopher versus flatterer’ paradigm pervades other dialogues of Plato. We can now say that Eupolis was no ‘minor’ or ‘other’ poet to Plato, but was held in the same ‘esteem’ (if we could call it that) as Aristophanes.

This conclusion does not aim to be a summation of such an analysis, however. This thesis is about what can be gleaned from a broader examination of Plato in his comic world, with the analysis of the *Protagoras* in relation to the *Kolakes* being merely one effort at showing how a reorientation in scholarly focus with respect to Plato’s reactions to comedy can be done. Thus I would like to gesture towards further avenues of exploration. And the first place to begin may be just where I have left off, with the question of Eupolis as a poet of considerable interest for Plato. What, in general, might we say about Eupolis to the extent that he was important for Plato’s purposes generally? The following summary of what we know about the poet, his style, and his *Demes* in particular show that the poet was no less interested in broadly ‘philosophical’ themes than Aristophanes—and that there was much that was conducive to Plato and the Socratics’ general interests, thus suggesting more studies on their relationship would very well be profitable. Indeed, the following three sections aim to be more gestural towards future research, and thus ask more questions than they answer.

1. Plato and Eupolis

Eupolis was one of the ‘canonical three’ poets of Attic Old Comedy—those being, according to Hellenistic and later traditions, Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus.¹ At least one commentary preserves the programmatic opinion that Eupolis wrote comedy as a kind of ‘smokescreen’ or ‘pretence’ (προσποιησμένη) for doing ‘philosophy’.

ἡ δέ γε κωμῳδία ὅτι πολιτεύεται ἐν τοῖς δράμασι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖ, ἡ τῶν περὶ τὸν Κρατῖνον καὶ Ἀριστοφάνην καὶ Εὐπόλιν, τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν; ἡ γάρ τοι κωμῳδία αὐτὴ τὸ γελοῖον προσποιησμένη φιλοσοφεῖ

Indeed, that comedy engages in politics in their dramas and philosophizes—that is, the comedies of Cratinus and Aristophanes and Eupolis—what more is there to say? For comedy itself sets up the laughable merely as a pretence to do philosophy.

Eupolis test. 27 K.A. = Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ars Rh.* 8.11.

Whilst, of course, *any* deeper thought or creative activity may be characterised as ‘philosophy’, Pseudo-Dionysius may have had a good reason to single out Eupolis and the other two canonical poets from the many alternatives in such terms. There is some evidence, for one, that Eupolis may have been more explicitly didactic than the norm, furnishing ‘weighty introductions’ to his works and imbuing his comedies throughout with the characteristics normally seen in the parabases (presumably giving advice to the audience as was typically of the Chorus Leader in Aristophanes?). The evidence comes not from the fragments but from what appears to be a learned, though late Byzantine commentary—Platonius’ *On the Differentiation of Styles*. This is thought to stem from a Hellenistic, third-century BCE Peripatetic commentary on comedy (given its predilection for a broadly normative evaluation of the historical development of drama).

Εὐπόλις δὲ εὐφάνταστος μὲν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ἐστὶ κατὰ τὰς ὑποθέσεις· τὰς γὰρ εἰσηγήσεις μεγάλως τῶν δραμάτων ποιεῖται, καὶ ἥνπερ ἐν τῇ παραβάσει φαντασίαν κινουῦσιν οἱ λοιποὶ, ταύτην ἐκεῖνος ἐν τοῖς δράμασιν, ἀναγαγεῖν ἱκανὸς ὢν ἐξ Ἄιδου νομοθετῶν πρόσωπα καὶ δι’ αὐτῶν εἰσηγούμενος ἢ περὶ θέσεως νόμων ἢ καταλύσεως. ὥσπερ δὲ ἐστὶν ὑψηλός, οὕτω καὶ ἐπίχαρις καὶ περὶ τὰ σκώμματα λίαν εὐστοχος.

¹ Again, all translations that follow are my own, even though many largely follow Olson (2017), Storey (2011), or Rusten (2011) often with modifications. If they are from either of the latter, it will be noted.

Eupolis, on the other hand, is extremely imaginative in his plot-structures; for he makes the introductions to his plays substantial and (includes) in the plays themselves the imaginative material the other (Old Comic poets) take up in the parabasis, being capable of bringing characters representing lawgivers up from Hades and using them to propose the establishment or dissolution of laws. But just as he is elevated, so too on the other hand is he charming and extremely right on the mark in his mockery.

Eupolis test. 34 K.A.²

In general, Storey (2003): 49 and I are in agreement. Platonius—through his ambiguous use of ‘εἰσηγήσεις μεγάλας’ and ‘φαντασία’—means to say effectively the following: aside from the allegedly unique charm, ‘Eupolis’ comedies tackle great themes with prominent people as characters and discussions of important issues. Not only did he come up with imaginative and striking ideas (εὐφάνταστος), but his comedies touched the great issues and people of his day. Perhaps also his opening scenes launched his “great idea” with power and good effect.’ We should note here that the ‘prologue’ of the Protagoras, namely the discussion with and warning to Hippocrates to keep himself away from the dangers of the sophists, is ‘weighty’ and lengthy indeed.

Setting aside the question of whether Eupolis was less thoroughly aischrological than his competitors (the fragments seem to speak against it, though we have no full comedies of Eupolis’ to competently judge), there seems to be little reason to doubt that he was not interested in didacticizing perhaps in ways more prevalent than the others. Platonius highlighted this *vis-à-vis* Eupolis’ prologues and the apparent parabasis-like qualities that pervaded his works. But we do not have the prologues of Eupolis, nor his works with their parabases, so we would have to look elsewhere to confirm what he says. What I will do is show how greatly the resonance with Platonic thematic and dramatic concerns in his comedies is; or rather, through one—apparently his best and most representative of what he had to offer—the *Demes*.

The commentator above implicitly refers to the *Demes*, which was very probably produced in 412, its prize unknown, in support of his claims.³ The *Demes* was Eupolis’ best-

² For a helpful, extended discussion of Platonius and this passage, see Storey (2003): 41-51, with literature.

known play and is the most cited of the lost comedies from the fifth century; it is also the best preserved of his works, with up to ten percent of the original text surviving (as opposed to an average of about two to three percent for each of the others).⁴ Fr. 99 K.A. constitutes three papyrus folios of roughly 120 lines with three scenes of more-or-less coherent action; and the testimonia is clear about the basics of what went on in the play. There is also a welcome, if mercurial fourth-century Sicilian vase painting likely depicting a scene from the comedy, in which the main character forcibly pulls on a younger, attractive lyre-player. To be sure, a painful amount of information about the comedy is still lost to us for now, and it is by no means possible to ‘reconstruct’ the play. But it is enough for my purposes to point out the following details.

The *Demes*’ main character, Pyronides (lit. ‘the fiery one’), was likely an old country bumpkin with a great deal of anger who seems to have been furious with the decadence of the city’s leaders. The opening lines (1-15) of Fr. 99 K.A. likely show the Chorus of Athenian Demes—tellingly in a parabasis-like manner—complaining of the gluttony and bodily decadence of Athens’ leading lights. For this, I will use Storey’s (2011) Loeb translation because it is clearest and because it follows the majority of commentators in the general contours of its interpretation of the fragment’s meaning, translated into prose:

καὶ δὴ δὲ Πείσανδρ[ο]ν διε-
στράφθαι χθὲς ἀριστῶντά φα-
σ’, † ἐπιξενοῖν τιν’ οντ’ αὐτοῦ †
οὐκ ἔφασκε θρέψειν.
Παύσων δὲ προσστάς Θεογένει
δειπνοῦντι πρὸς τὴν καρδίαν
τῶν ὀλκάδων τιν’ αὐτοῦ
λέψας ἅπαξ διέστρεφεν·
λ]υτὸς δ’ ἔκειθ’ ὁ Θεογένης
τ]ῆν νύχθ’ ὅλην πεπορδώς.
δια]στρέφειν οὖν πρῶτα μὲν

³ The most comprehensive recent editions of the *Demes* are Olson (2017), Telò (2007), and Storey (2003). What follows is largely my own, I think rather conservative interpretation of the fragments and testimonia.

⁴ For these statistics, see Olson (2017): 17.

χρὴ Καλλίαν τοὺς ἐν μακροῖν
τειχοῖν θ' ἄμ', ἀ[ρ]ιστητικώ-
τεροι γάρ εἰσιν ἡμῶν,
Νικήρατόν τ' Ἀχαρνέα

And indeed they say that Peisander was screwed [lit. 'twisted'] yesterday while having breakfast, after he said he wouldn't feed a hungry stranger. And Pauson, standing beside Theogenes dining [at dinner] to his heart's content off one of his merchant ships, thrashed and screwed him good, and the beaten Theogenes lay there, farting all night long. First of all, they ought to screw Callias and those in the Long Walls, for they eat better than we do. And Niceratus of Acharnae [...]

Fr. 99.1-15 K.A., trans. Storey, modified.

In effect, the city appears to be run by a group of dissolute leaders along the lines of Alcibiades in Aristophanes' *Daitalēs*, who, in *Demes*, are so debased as to be 'screwed' even whilst having their first meal of the day and later during dinner. And yet, the Chorus go on to say, they have the audacity to lead the people or play the demagogue (κάξιοι δημηγορεῖν, Fr. 99.23 K.A.). The Chorus further states they are not of respectable stock, but rather 'layabout prostitutes!' (ἀπραγμόνων γε πόρνων, 99.26 K.A.). Pyronides' 'Big Idea'—or rather the 'Big Idea' of the play—is thereby to fetch from the Underworld (either through physical *katabasis* or a conjuring scene) the great martial and intellectual leaders of the past to put a stop to the 'unmanly men' (ἀνάνδρους ἄνδρας, 99.75 K.A.) and 'crying babies' (or those who lit. 'bleat like sheep'—βληχητὰ τέκνα, see Fr. 112 K.A.) currently running things.⁵ The chosen four are Solon, Miltiades, Aristides 'the Just', and Pericles. What is likely Pyronides, speaking in Fr. 104 K.A., makes his intentions clear: 'And, lords Miltiades and Pericles, do not let these too-young faggots (μειράκια κινούμενα) hold office anymore, who drag the generalship around their ankles' (trans. Storey, modified).

One receives the impression that the political situation circa 412 was so dire such that there were literally no grown men left to take care of things ('μειράκια' implies that the demagogues may have been too young to hold office, an age set at thirty). A strange state of affairs—had all the generals perished in the Sicilian campaign? Thus Fr. 133 K.A.: 'μὴ παιδὶ τὰ κοινά' ('Don't entrust matters of state to a child'), which plays on the proverb 'μὴ παιδὶ

⁵ Note the relationship to epic here as we saw in the *Kolakes*.

μάχαιραν’ (‘Don’t entrust a knife to a child’).⁶ Through his four leaders, ‘Eupolis’ discoursed on the passage and repealing of laws (‘περὶ θέσεως νόμων ἢ καταλύσεως’, test. v K.A. = test. 34.10-12 above), though surely not without a strong dose of overweening self-importance or outright irony—‘I am a just man!’ says Aristides in Fr. 99. 80 K.A. Moreover, with so much focus on the young-and-old, decadence-versus-prowess, new-versus-traditional dynamic (all of which may be depicted on the Sicilian vase), it makes sense that the play also raised the question of education in virtue as such: how justice and virtue is cultivated in individuals *per se*, and why the virtues of great men are not passed-on to their sons. The following fragments shows Pericles inquiring about his own sons upon his arrival to Athens from the Underworld:

(Πε.) ὁ νόθος δέ μοι ζῇ; (Πυ.) καὶ πάλαι γ’ ἂν ἦν ἀνὴρ,
εἰ μὴ τὸ τῆς πόρνῆς ὑπωρρώδει κακόν

(Pericles) Is my bastard son alive? (Pyronides) (Yes,) and he would
actually have been a man long ago,
were he not a bit afraid of the trouble involving your whore [for a wife, Aspasia]

Fr. 110 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

Fr. 112 K.A. makes what seems to be a similar remark, about which Olson (2017): 412 importantly also notes, ‘τε in 1 makes clear that this is not the only example of the phenomenon under discussion’:

εἷς Ἴπποκράτους τε παῖδες ἐμβόλιμοί τινες,
βληχητὰ τέκνα κοῦδαμῶς ταῦτοῦ τρόπου

There are also some supposititious children belonging to Hippocrates [the nephew of Pericles, died at Delium 424/3],
bleating offspring and not at all of the same style [as you?]

Fr. 112 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

⁶ Aristotle also spins the proverb to mean ‘Don’t entrust power to lowly people’ at *Protrepticus* Fr. 3 Ross (trans. Olson).

The concern over why there are no good sons of good men was confronted directly, perhaps para-tragically in Fr. 111 K.A., when an unnamed character asks the following:

οὐ δεινὸν οὖν κριοῦς μὲν ἐκγεννᾶν τέκνα

ὄρνις θ' ὁμοίους τοὺς νεοττοὺς τῷ πατρί

Isn't it awful, then, that rams beget offspring

and chickens their nestlings resembling their father

Fr. 111 K.A., trans. Olson.

Scholarship is universal in recognising that the lines continued with something on the order of 'whereas with men, they produce no such similarities?'. The question as to the cultivation of virtue was confronted again in Fr. 105 K.A., where a character questioned Aristides along the following lines:

(A.) † ητίας ὦν † ἐγένου δίκαιος οὔτω διαπρεπῶς;

(Ἀρ.) ἡ μὲν φύσις τὸ μέγιστον (ἦν), ἔπειτα δὲ

καὶ γὰρ προθύμως τῇ φύσει συνελάμβανον

(A) <How> did you become so outstandingly just?

(ARISTIDES) Nature was the most important fact, but then

I enthusiastically helped nature along.

Fr. 105 K.A., trans. Storey, modified.

This fragment has as I see it more than a faintly sophistic tinge, perhaps spoofing or ridiculing the claims of Protagoras in particular on the foundational role of one's nature in a training for virtue and justice. Its citation by Galen (*On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* 7.10) comes in a discussion of how the *physis* of children are all different and variable, but can ultimately be tempered and controlled through proper training. A fragment from Protagoras' very real 'Great Speech':

ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Μεγάλῳ λόγῳ ὁ Πρωταγόρας εἶπε φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως
διδασκαλία δεῖται καὶ ἀπὸ νεότητος δὲ ἀρξαμένους δεῖ μανθάνειν

In the book entitled *Large Discourse* [Great Speech?] Protagoras said: ‘Instruction needs nature [i.e. a natural disposition] and practice’ and ‘People must learn starting when they are young’

L.M. Prot. D8 and D11, trans. Laks-Most, modified.

Perhaps the idea or joke at Fr. 105 K.A. is that Aristides did not need the services of a sophist to help him along because there *can* be no training that can make a person virtuous—only nature, and in this sense resonant with the closing of the *Meno* on divine dispositions in virtue.

The spectre of Protagoras in *Kolakes* Fr. 157 as an irreligious scoundrel seems to emerge when perhaps Pericles, upon his arrival to Athens, inquired into who had replaced him since his death:

(A.) ῥήτωρ γάρ ἐστι νῦν τις; (B.) ὧν γ’ ἔστιν λέγειν,
ὁ Βουζύγης ἄριστος ἀλιτήριος

(A.) And is there a rhetōr these days? (B.) Of those one can apply the term to,
The best of them is the Bouzygete [i.e. probably Demonstratus, a seer]—the
godforsaken bastard!

Fr. 103 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

In other words, the play may also have questioned the influence of the ‘sophistic movement’ in Athens on the young, as the *Kolakes* had done with respect to Callias and sophistic ‘battles of wisdom’. As for Pericles’ own rhetorical chops, we are told the following in this fragment that was famous throughout antiquity:

(A.) κράτιστος οὗτος ἐγένετ’ ἀνθρώπων λέγειν.
ὁπότε παρέλθοι <δ’>, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ δρομῆς,
ἐκ δέκα ποδῶν ἥρει λέγων τοὺς ῥήτορας.
(B.) ταχὺν λέγεις γε. (A.) πρὸς δέ <γ’> αὐτοῦ τῷ τάχει
Πειθῶ τις ἐπεκάθιζεν ἐπὶ τοῖς χεῖλεσιν.
οὕτως ἐκήλει καὶ μόνος τῶν ῥητόρων
τὸ κέντρον ἐγκατέλειπε τοῖς ἀκρωμένοις

A.) This man was the most effective speaker there was;
 and whenever he came forward, like good sprinters,
 with his words he would overtake the other orators from ten feet back.
 (B.) You're talking about someone fast. (A.) And in addition to his speed,
 a sort of goddess of persuasion used to sit upon his lips.
 In this way he would hold his audience spellbound, and he was the only orator
 who used to leave his stinger in them

Fr. 103 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.

Pericles was routinely described as the greatest orator of his generation, but the remarks about his having the ability to bewitch (ἐκήλει, line 6) an audience recalls the abilities of Protagoras in his titular dialogue and the effects of speakers at the Panhellenic festivals, as I've reviewed in the third chapter. Protagoras had the ability to bewitch or spellbind (‘κηλῶν’) his followers, who are ‘κακηλημένοι’—spellbound as if by the enchanting music of Orpheus (315a7-b1). Even Socrates himself is ‘κεκηλημένος’—utterly bewitched—by the end of Protagoras' Great Speech (Prot. 328d4-6). Pericles' skills in Fr. 103 also parallel Diodorus Siculus' account of Gorgias in Athens, who ‘knocked the socks off’ (ἐξέπληξε, 12.53.3) the Athenians with his oratory.⁷ Perhaps Pericles was himself not immune to criticism of sophistic influence, then; the sons of Pericles are under the paid tutelage of Protagoras in the latter's eponymous dialogue, and Pericles was himself said to be close, discursive friends with Protagoras by Plutarch (*Pericles* 36.5 = LM Prot. D30).

There is much, then, in the *Demes* which was conducive to Plato's general interests—a potentially ‘didactic’ comedy about justice and virtue, new-fangled speech and sophistic, the passage of good and bad laws, and the education of the young. Admittedly most of these topics can be found in Aristophanes. But that is not to take away from its potential for philosophical augmentation and conversation by Plato. Its apparent raillery against decadence in relation to the raising of leaders—as in the *Kolakes*—rings similarly Platonic as well, certainly in the later tradition as we find it in the *Letters*. Note the similarity of Fr. 99 above

⁷ For these and others instances of Protagoras and other sophists as spellcasters and wizards (γόης) in Plato, see Segvic (2009): 40-46.

with the thoughts of ‘Plato’ upon his first arrival at the court of Syracuse in the pseudo-Platonic *Seventh Letter*:

When I arrived and saw what they call there the ‘happy life’ (βίος εὐδαίμων)—a life filled with Italian and Syracusan banquets, with men gorging themselves twice a day and never sleeping alone at night (οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ἤρεσεν, δὶς τε τῆς ἡμέρας ἐμπιπλάμενον ζῆν καὶ μηδέποτε κοιμώμενον μόνον νύκτωρ, cf. Demes Fr. 99. 1-4, 5-8 K.A. above), and following all the other customs that go with this way of living—I was profoundly displeased. For no man under heaven who has cultivated such practices from his youth could possibly grow up to be wise—so miraculous a temper is against nature—or become temperate, or indeed acquire any other part of virtue. Nor could any city enjoy tranquillity, no matter how good its laws, when its men think they must spend their all on excesses, and be easy-going about everything except the feasts and the drinking bouts and the pleasures of love that they pursue with professional zeal. (πόλις τε οὐδεμία ἂν ἡρεμήσαι κατὰ νόμους οὐδ’ οὐστινασοῦν ἀνδρῶν οἰομένων ἀναλίσκειν μὲν δεῖν πάντα εἰς ὑπερβολάς, ἀργῶν δὲ εἰς ἅπαντα ἡγουμένων αὖ δεῖν γίνεσθαι πλὴν ἐς εὐωχίας καὶ πότους καὶ ἀφροδισίων σπουδὰς διαπονουμένας). These cities are always changing into tyrannies, or oligarchies, or democracies, while the rulers in them will not even hear mention of a just and equitable constitution (δικαίου δὲ καὶ ἰσονόμου πολιτείας).

Pseudo-Plato, *Letter Seven* 326b6-d5, trans. Morrow.⁸

Thus it is reasonable to see in the *Protagoras* the thematic elements of *Demes* as much as it is to see the thematics of the *Kolakes*, as Morgan has argued.⁹ Zoe Petre (2012), moreover, argues that the most sensible explanation for the gross anachronism in the *Menexenus*, which refers to the King’s Peace of 387 BCE at 245e3, is because Plato has ‘resurrected’ Socrates and Aspasia in order to ‘save’ Plato’s Athens in a manner deliberately reminiscent of *Demes*—if not in outright opposition to *Demes*, which ostensibly relies on Pericles to save Athens and, as it does, ridicules Aspasia.¹⁰ It may well be profitable to examine the *Laches* through the

⁸ I reject the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter*, but to give my reasons here would be an unnecessary digression, though by far and above the best refutation of its authenticity is Frede and Burnyeat (2015). The *Seventh Letter* is still an important document in the Platonic tradition, however, and the themes highlighted above are similar enough to what we have seen in Plato already, thus expressive, I think, of Plato’s general outlook. Certainly the text generically reflects (through literal citation) the thoughts of most of his extant dialogues, especially the *Republic*.

⁹ See again Morgan (2016).

¹⁰ Charalabopoulos (2012): 70 n. 105 calls the suggestion ‘ingenious’ and so it is, and thus deserves a closer look. It seems to me that Petre’s argument is a bit overstrained, even if there may be some resonances or implicit rebuttals. There is, for instance, no good evidence that the dramatic date of the *Menexenus* is 386 BCE (Nails 2002: 319 sets the date in Winter of 401/400 BCE), nor a special instance of a ‘*Dialogue des morts*’, as Petre

partial lens of the *Demes* of ca. 412 BCE—the *Laches* which, as Tanner (2017): Chapter 2 has shown adequately, is (perhaps surprisingly to some readers) saturated with comical structures and characters, and takes place on the cusp of the Sicilian expedition in ca. 416 BCE. Ashley Clements (2014) has argued that the *Thesmaphoriazusae* of 411 is in part a structurally Parmenidean critique of the (Euripidean) Dionysia and the Athenian people as being trapped in the world of mortal *doxa*, which Plato may reflect in his thoughts regarding ‘lovers of sights and sounds’ (though see, in comparison or complementarity, the following section on Plato’s thoughts on Sicilian theatre). In general, I suggest we should not preclude the possibility of thinking of Eupolis’ *Demes*—likely produced just the year before—as complex as Aristophanes could be with respect to philosophy or ‘philosophizing’ (if not necessarily to the extreme Clements takes it; though we have no evidence to *deny* such a claim).

This overview of Eupolis’ art and the *Demes* in particular has been to show that, wedded to what we have seen regarding the *Kolakes*, Eupolis’ didactic interest in the morality and legislation on the part of individuals and states at large, the nature of justice and self-control, make it clear that there is no good argument to show that Eupolis was, for Plato, a ‘minor’ or merely an ‘other’ poet. Lucian, I suggest, was not speaking flippantly when he cited Eupolis along with Aristophanes as the two paradigmatic poets of comedy with which to set together ‘dialogue’—for, I think it is implied, the works of Eupolis, just as those of

argues, as every dialogue could be called a ‘dialogue of the dead’. Moreover, the *Menexenus* presents a funeral oration; there is no discoursing on good or bad laws as in *Demes*, and there were no funeral orations (so far as we know) in the *Demes*. Petre seems to privilege Pericles as the favoured figure to save Athens in *Demes*, whereas there is no evidence for any such favouritism on the part of Eupolis (indeed, he may have been utterly ridiculed by Eupolis). However, Petre raises important and overlooked questions about the *Menexenus*: what explains its manifestly generic comic properties? Socrates, for example, is a ‘late-learner’, a *presbutēs* (234a8) who takes lessons from Aspasia, his *didaskalos* (236c4-10)? Socrates is bewitched by orators into feeling—in the manner of Theophrastus’ *alazōn*—taller, of good stock and better-looking to the point of delusion (235a1-c5). Socrates claims to be an expert in music and political oratory because he has Konnos as well as Aspasia, both ridiculed in comedy as bad teachers (235e10-236a3). Socrates reports being under threat of a flogging when his memory failed him during his lessons (236c1); and he would even be willing to *strip naked and dance* for Menexenus (236d1). Is Socrates being ‘generically’ playful, as it were, or is he referring to some number of comic scenes, esp. Ameipsias’ *Konnos*, or, say, the rustic old man and the urbane *didaskolos* who teaches music and dance in Eupolis’ *Aiges*, or *Nanny Goats*? And what might this tell us about the meaning of the dialogue in part and as a whole? Perhaps the her central contention holds good: that this is an implicit rebuttal of *Demes*’ treatment of (especially) Aspasia and (perhaps) Pericles, but without more information—or further reflection—I would not privilege that comedy over others here.

Aristophanes, were uniquely conducive to the Platonic project.¹¹ But this is just to speak of Eupolis and Aristophanes—what else could we find if only we looked further?

2. Plato and the ‘Comic Dialogue’ – The Sicilian Connection

A brief question I would like to broach here is the question of why Plato wrote ‘comic’ dialogues in the first place, and in particular the *Protagoras*, a ‘comic’ dialogue reliant on the *Kolakes*. Was it merely so as to enhance and stabilise a distinction between Socrates and ‘the sophists’ in comedy so as to salvage the reputation of Socrates *tout court*? I think that is the case, of course. But is there more to the story? Now, I do not wish to become embroiled in the question of why Plato wrote dialogues in the first place. I will instead gesture towards what I think is a profitable, new way of looking at the dialogues as ‘internationalist’ in outlook. With this view in mind, we can more readily understand why Plato would write a ‘comic’ dialogue like the *Protagoras*.

Consider the following. Plato, along with other unnamed Socratics, is said by Hermodorus (Plato’s student and one author of his teacher’s biography) to have fled from Athens to stay for a time with Euclides in Megara ‘out of fear’ of the then-tyrannical Athenians (D.L. 2.106; 3.6), and I have found little reason to doubt that. Plato, moreover, is said not to have returned to Athens—after some further adventures in the East (the stories of which are embellished)—until he was 40 years old, some 12 years after the execution of Socrates. When he did return, he founded the Academy just outside the city.¹² I have difficulty bringing myself to believe that Plato wrote nothing during that time, even if the details of the biography are somewhat fictionalised. Debra Nails argues that Plato was invited to the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse most likely due to the fame generated by his dialogues written during that time; and she also plausibly argues that Plato first arrived at his court probably

¹¹ ‘He [Lucian] stripped me [Dialogue] of my tragic and respectable mask and gave me another, a comic and satirical one, just short of ridiculous (τὸ μὲν τραγικὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ σωφρονικὸν προσωπεῖον ἀφεῖλέ μου, κωμικὸν δὲ καὶ σατυρικὸν ἄλλο ἐπέθηκε μοι καὶ μικροῦ δεῖν γελοῖον). Then bringing me to the same place he locked in with me Jest and the Iambic and the Cynical, Eupolis and Aristophanes, men very skilled at lampooning what is decent and at making fun of what is proper (δεινοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπικερτομῆσαι τὰ σεμνὰ καὶ χλευάσαι τὰ ὀρθῶς ἔχοντα)’ (*Double Accusation* 33 = Eupolis test. 30 K.A., trans. Storey).

¹² On the fuzziness of the dates of Plato’s travels and the establishment of the Academy, see Nails (2002): 248 and esp. Kalligas (2020): *passim*. On Plato’s travels in the East and eventual return, see Riginos (1976): 61-69, and esp. Horky (2009). For the latest advances in research on Plato’s Academy, archaeological and otherwise, see again Kalligas (2020).

sometime around 384 BCE, either immediately before or after the establishment of the Academy.¹³ We know that Plato's works were being read widely enough by ca. 380 BCE, given that Theopompus Fr. 16 K.A. in the latter's *Hedýkaris*, or *Pleasure Seekers* (*Pleasure Lovers?*), parodically quotes *Phaedo* 96e1-4: 'For one is not even one, | And in fact two are scarcely two, as Plato says' (trans. Rusten).¹⁴

Now, there is also ample testimony that Dionysius was a lover of classical Athenian drama, so much so that he eventually submitted his own tragedy for competition at the City Dionysia of 367 BCE. Rather astonishingly, he received first prize after having already been granted honorary Athenian citizenship the year before.¹⁵ Thus, the anecdote found in an anonymous *Vita* of Aristophanes telling us that Dionysius asked Plato how best to learn the history of Athens and its people—with Plato sending him the plays of Aristophanes with the remark to stage them if possible—seems more likely to be true than false.¹⁶ Epicharmus and Sophron were Sicilians, after all; Sicily was the birthplace of theatre and mime, both of which are known to have been important for the shaping of Platonic dialogue. Theatre was valued in Sicily to such a degree that Bonnie Maclachlan could write that, 'among the votive finds from chthonic shrines and from tombs in the Greek colonies of Southern Italy and Sicily are thousands of models of actors and paraphernalia belonging to the comic stage.'¹⁷ The citizens—even if not the rulers—'literally lived and died theatre.'¹⁸

Plato's dialogues were themselves 'staged' in a sense—not at the theatre but at the parties of the elite, read and (probably) gesticulated by slaves a bit if practised beforehand.¹⁹ This is evident to a basic degree when considering a loose fragment by Ophelio (unfortunately we cannot say when during the fourth century it was written):

¹³ Nails (2002): 247-248.

¹⁴ Socrates says at *Phaedo* 96e1-4: 'Since I don't accept that when someone adds one to one that anything becomes two, neither the one to which it was added, nor the one which was added to it, not the one added and the one to which it was added because of the addition of one to the other.' Trans. Rusten. For the dates of *Pleasure Seekers*, see the relevant entries in Rusten (2011) and Storey (2011), with literature.

¹⁵ The play was *The Ransom of Hector*, though he is known to have written many, of which the *TGrF* has collected some scraps. For Dionysius as an author of tragedy and Athenophile, see his entry in Nails (2002), with Duncan (2012) for a substantive analysis of Dionysius' 'innovative' self-presentation as a tragic hero of Syracuse on the order of a Theseus of Athens. See also

¹⁶ On this anecdote, see Riginos (1976): 176-8.

¹⁷ Maclachlan (2012): 343.

¹⁸ For 'Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy' see Bosher (2012).

¹⁹ For gesticular, performative aspects of the *Protagoras* in particular, see also Charalabopoulos (2001).

Λιβυκὸν πέπερι θυμίαμα καὶ βιβλίον
Πλάτωνος ἐμβρόντητον.

[What is proper for slaves to serve up for a party is] Libyan pepper, incense,
and a stupefying book by Plato.

Ophelio Fr. 3 K.A., trans. Olson, modified.²⁰

There is ample evidence that the court of Dionysius was crawling with lackies, Indeed, this forms almost half of the anecdotal tradition about the man. On the assumption that Plato was, in fact, patronised by Dionysius, I submit that Plato wrote the *Protagoras* as a morality tale to the tyrant when embedded in his sybaritic court, or just afterwards. I suggest that Plato tailored the message of Eupolis to Dionysius, the lover of Athenian drama, and that the dialogue was meant to be ‘performed’ for him in some sense to warn him of the very entourage he is said to have surrounded himself with.

That is why Plato wrote a ‘comic’ dialogue about flatterers.²¹ I noted at the outset of my discussion of the *Protagoras* that Plato’s dialogue is rife with ‘allusive’ qualities reminiscent of Middle Comedy insofar as it ‘does’ comedy altogether. My suggestion here, that it was a comical work for Dionysius in the transitional period of Middle Comedy, would therefore seem to give this idea more plausibility. What is more, if the allegedly ‘anti-prudentialist’ hedonist, Aristippus of Cyrene, was also at Dionysius’ court as a ‘parasite’, then the purpose of Socrates’ developing an ‘art of measurement’ of pleasures and pains as an (allusive) *ad hominem* against such persons makes good sense as well.²² Sarah Monoson has

²⁰ Charalabopoulos (2012), whose entire book sets out to prove that Plato’s dialogues were performative, prose theatrical works, somehow managed to miss this fragment. Four comedies, two mythological burlesques, place Ophelio at any time during the ‘Middle Comic’ period, but perhaps likeliest at the height of such comic productions ca. 380-320 BCE. But that Plato’s dialogues were read apparently *anywhere* there was downtime to do so, and certainly by slaves at least, may be gleaned simply by the slave being told, somewhat offhand, to read the main content of the *Theaetetus* aloud to Euclides and Terpsion.

²¹ If he did not also write it in self-defence in the eyes of others. Plato was himself attacked for being a parasite of Dionysius in the anecdotal tradition, and his *Phaedo* suggestively pops-up in a comedy called ‘Pleasure Seekers’, and Plato was said to be a lover of figs and other fineries; indeed, that his students were all dandies when not dialectical obsessives in the comic fragments of Middle Comedy, as will become clear in the following section.

²² With this suggestion about Aristippus being an object of attack in mind, one must note the closeness with which Xenophon seems to freely use prudentialist arguments found in the *Protagoras* (successfully or not) against ‘Aristippus’ in *Memorabilia* 2.1. But I will not pursue the matter here. Plato was also said to be at the court of Dionysius together with Aristippus, when may have come his reputation in some circles for hedonism, see Riginos (1976): 176-178.

recently argued that Plato’s discussion of theatre itself and its audiences—especially in the *Republic*—may have been garnered in no small part from his experiences with Sicilian theatre and how Dionysius I should control it.²³ I suggest that we need to be thinking of Plato’s dialogues as ‘internationalist’ in scope, and its uses of Athenian drama especially geared towards those in Sicily. Most of Middle Comedy, as I understand it, went West in smaller troupes of actors. Did Plato’s dialogues do something similar?²⁴

3. Plato on ‘Plato’

I suggest, then, that Plato wrote the *Protagoras* as a morality tale to Dionysius when embedded in his sybaritic court or just afterwards, a court swarming with the very sorts of characters who were thought to corrupt and destroy Callias (whether Aristippus was included in the entourage or not). As Plato’s works were evidently performance art at parties in Athens, my suspicion is that they were in Syracuse, too.

My reader may have noticed that subtle references to Plato as a character in comedy have slowly and piecemeal begun to rear their head. Plato was, as I mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, the most consistently mocked or even named individual in the extant fragments of Middle Comedy (however we might define that amorphous term; perhaps from the death of Aristophanes in 386 BCE to the death of Alexis, who seems to have lived from 375 to 275 BCE).²⁵ Whether and how we define ‘Middle Comedy’ is less important than

²³ Monoson (2012): 172 concludes her analysis thus: ‘...Plato’s use of references to Sicily to situate theatre at the center of an investigation of the continuities between democracy and tyranny was innovative.... Plato relied on references to Sicilian manners, rulers and practices to keep the key role of theatre in his account of the continuities between democracy and tyranny before his readers. In particular, the portrait of the tyrant in *Republic* Books 8 and 9 recalls the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius I, reiterates the *Gorgias*’ attack on tyrannical power’s appeal (developed [she argues] with references to Sicilian affairs) and systematically deploys patterned sets of allusions to Sicilian theatrical practises, including the poetic aspirations of Dionysius I.’

²⁴ There is an anecdote regarding (or comic hit against) Hermodorus—Plato’s student again—who is said to have monetarily gained from selling Plato’s dialogues throughout Sicily: “Hermodorus trades in dialogues’: Hermodorus, who was a disciple of Plato, brought his dialogues to Sicily and sold them, after they had been collected by him. Hence the proverb is uttered on account of this.”—‘λόγοισιν Ἑρμόδωρος ἐμπορεύεται· ὁ Ἑρμόδωρος ἀκροατῆς γέγονε Πλάτωνος, καὶ τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ συντεθειμένους λόγους κομίζων εἰς Σικελίαν ἐπώλει. Εἰρήται οὖν διὰ τοῦτο ἡ παροιμία.’ *Adesp. com.* 937 K.A.). This, as I see it, is as close to proof that Plato’s dialogues were meant to be read through a ‘universalist’ lens—and that the use of comedy and other aspects of classical Athenian drama would be most salient in such regard, obviously in Sicily. I thank Philip Horky for the reference and his subsequent translation.

²⁵ For the minefield that is the definition of ‘Middle Comedy’, see first the Introduction to Arnott’s (1996a) commentary on Alexis, but also Nesselrath (2020) and esp. (1990): *passim*. For a helpful summation and

the argument which follows, however, which in turn aims to be gestural towards future research, as were the previous two sections. Plato, I argue in brief, responded vociferously to the depictions of him and his Academy as they appeared on the comic stage throughout his lifetime, most notably in the so-called ‘Philosopher’s Digression’ of the *Theaetetus* (172c3-177c5). Moreover, he did so precisely by adopting and enhancing the image of his entourage as seen on the comic stage whilst setting the alternative life on offer (usually understood to represent Plato’s aspersions against Isocrates) in contrast (though the two understandings are hardly incompatible).²⁶ Thus Plato, even during the start of his ‘late’ period of writing, reproduced and relied upon the very contrast I have been showcasing throughout this thesis: the contrast between the comical ‘flatterer and philosopher’.

In this ‘πάρεργα’ (177b8) from the main discussion, as Socrates puts it, Plato has his Socrates pit what is repeatedly called the singular ‘philosopher’ and, at the outset, ‘τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ καὶ τῇ τοιᾷδε διατριβῇ τεθραμμένους’ (172d1), against the rhetorician who, having endured the ‘danger’ of growing up in the judicial square (172c8-9), survives only by ‘cultivating the knowledge of how to flatter and sneak into the good graces of their master in both word and deed’ (ἐπιστάμενοι τὸν δεσπότην λόγῳ τε θωπεῦσαι καὶ ἔργῳ ὑπελθεῖν, 173a2-3). Thus the Digression from the very outset furnishes a conflict between the philosopher and the flatterer as separate types.

Moreover, both are pitted against each other as if two separate ‘choruses’. The ‘δὲ’ in ‘τοὺς δὲ τοῦ ἡμετέρου χοροῦ’ (173b4), when switching to the discussion of the chorus of philosophers, makes it clear that there is a kind of antistrophal display going on between two different kinds of choruses (cf. ‘τὰ ἀντίστροφα’ of the two sorts of ‘τρόπος’ at 175d2-7).²⁷ So the Digression contrasts two ‘types’, the philosopher and flatterer, which represent respective choruses. And they are decidedly comic choruses, too. On the one hand, Socrates and Theodorus decide to talk about the ‘Chorus Leaders’ of their chorus—for, why indeed would anyone spend their time talking about those who spend their time badly in philosophy? (λέγωμεν δὴ, ὥς ἔοικεν, ἐπεὶ σοὶ γε δοκεῖ, περὶ τῶν κορυφαίων. τί γὰρ ἂν τις τοὺς γε φαύλως

translation of sources on the three-fold Hellenistic distinction, see also Rusten (2011). See the following section for more on Middle Comedy.

²⁶ The latter was well-established by Nightingale (1995): Chapter One. But see also, for the most extended analysis of ‘Plato versus Isocrates’ in the Digression, see Eucken (1983): *passim*, but esp. 95-100, 270-284.

²⁷ I borrow ‘antistrophal display’ from Rue (1993).

διατρίβοντας ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ [cf. 172d1 above] λέγοι;’ 173c6-8). Unsurprisingly, then, the ‘chorus leaders’ thereafter described look very little like Socrates.

First, those properly brought up doing philosophy from youth don’t even know the road to the agora—or to the places of trial, deliberation, or any public assembly (οὔτοι δέ που ἐκ νέων πρῶτον μὲν εἰσάγορὰν οὐκ ἴσασι τὴν ὁδόν, οὐδὲ ὅπου δικαστήριον ἢ βουλευτήριον ἢ τι κοινὸν ἄλλο τῆς πόλεως συνέδριον, 173c6-d2). They neither hear about nor see the laws and decrees being discussed and passed (173d1-3). They have no interest in political organizations, nor especially any κῶμοι with their drinking and flute girls (173d4-6). No one of any significance at all, male or female, is known to these Chorus Leaders (173d5-d1). Nor, indeed, do they know that they don’t know these things! (καὶ ταῦτα πάντ’ οὐδ’ ὅτι οὐκ οἶδεν, οἶδεν, 173e1). It is not because they want to seem aloof from the political fray, but merely because their physical body resides in the city, whereas their ‘διάνοια’ considers these political things ‘σμικρὰ καὶ οὐδέν’ (173e3-4). Their διάνοια is simply, as Pindar says, “‘both under the Earth’ doing geometry, ‘and soaring above the heavens’ doing astronomy.” (κατὰ Πίνδαρον ‘τᾶς τε γᾶς ὑπένερθε’ καὶ τὰ ἐπίπεδα γεωμετροῦσα, ‘οὐρανοῦ θ’ ὑπὲρ’ ἀστρονομοῦσα... 173de5-6). They are trying to discover the whole nature of all the things that are, never lowering their (noetic) gaze to anything that is right in front of them (καὶ πᾶσαν πάντῃ φύσιν ἐρευνωμένη τῶν ὄντων ἐκάστου ὅλου, εἰς τῶν ἐγγύς οὐδὲν αὐτὴν συγκαθειῖσα, 174a1-2).

For this reason they are laughed at like the proverbial Thales, who fell into a well because he was too busy gazing at the stars (174a4-7). But in the case of philosophers, they bear this insult (σκῶμμα) not only by barmaids but by everyone collectively (οὐ μόνον Θράτταις ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ ὄχλῳ, 174c4). They bear it not only when they are forced to speak in public, but on any occasion that they have to talk about things right before their very eyes—as they don’t even know whether they are human beings, given that they don’t know what ‘human being’ even is as opposed to any other animal (174b3). They are condemnably laughable (ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν καταγελάται), according to the many because they appear to hold themselves in esteem for this sort of *aporia*, when such a state of confusion seems to be, to the many, manifest idiocy (175b4-7; esp. 174d1).

On the other hand, the Chorus of flattering orators are brought up at risk of being reared like slaves (172c8-9—and here we surely also must think of Isocrates and the ideals of the Athenian populace). Without the leisure to direct their discussions freely, growing up in this environment means always keeping to the drip of the water clock and making the master of ceremonies happy through the shrewdness of flattery (172e1, 173a2-3). The great fear they experience causes them to be false (ψεῦδος) and return bads for bads, warping their souls, thinking all the while that this makes them clever and wise (δεινοί τε καὶ σοφοί, 173b3). But there is, for those who choose this path, no ‘διάνοια’ in them at all from the start to manhood (173b1-2). They have become slaves associating only with fellow slaves (172e5). And whilst a philosopher who enters into this world appears utterly ridiculous, it is the philosopher who laughs at the kind of discourse held to be serious by such people (173d3ff.). Socrates states that *these* shrewd people do not know how to drape their cloak properly over their shoulder like gentlemen (ἀναβάλλεσθαι), nor how to correctly sing a tune to the gods and happy amongst men (175e5-176a2). These sorts are genuinely laughable in that when they enter into the pursuits of the philosopher, the orators’ mouths dry up and gape open, and their rhetoric abandons them; nor can they defend the aspersions cast against philosophical pursuits in private conversations, thus end up looking like children (175d2-7, 177b1-7).

There are real metaphysical and ethical implications to whether we choose one life over the other, a choice between two παραδείγματα. The life of the orator, insofar as he bends and distorts his soul, becomes ever-increasingly like what he will become in the afterlife—wicked associating with the wicked, and he will regret it: for the place of goodness will not receive him (esp. 177a1, 177a5-8). It is just the opposite for the one who has ‘escaped’ or ‘fled’ wickedness and fled as quickly as one can—flight, which means becoming as like god as possible by becoming just and pious with wisdom (φυγή δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν: ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι, 176b1-3).

The so-called Digression of the *Theaetetus* is one of the most controversial and important passages in Platonic scholarship and has been so since antiquity.²⁸ My purpose here is not to analyse its function in the dialogue’s larger argument(s), the specifics of its

²⁸ See, for example, the Introduction to Boys-Stones’ (2019) on the Anonymous commentary to the *Theaetetus*; the ‘likeness to god’ passage above in particular proved the most important and programmatic statement in the ancient Platonic tradition.

metaphysical relationship to *Republic* and other dialogues, or whether Plato is asserting that the ‘ideal’ philosopher seeks Platonic Forms rather than the Digression just being a programmatic statement about the quest for seeking out reality—Forms having ostensibly been abandoned (even if argumentatively) in the previously-written *Parmenides*. I do not even want to ask whether or to what extent Socrates is serious in asserting that this ‘laughable’ philosopher is a *livable* ideal for which we should strive.²⁹ I merely want to show that Plato is here responding to the way he and his Academic colleagues had been seen on stage, which should—if accepted—pave the way to answering some of these questions, not least opening our eyes to a new way of reading Plato’s dialogues in their comic world and new aspects of Platonic self-revelation.

First of all, that Plato would even want to respond to depictions of his works and activities on the comic stage can be gleaned from the fact that, even at the very end of Plato’s writing career, the Athenian Stranger’s proposed laws ban a comic poet or poet of any kind to ridicule any citizen either in word or by likeness, either with real hatred or without hatred (ποιητῇ δὴ κωμωδίας ἢ τινος ἰάμβων ἢ μουσῶν μελωδίας μὴ ἐξέστω μήτε λόγῳ μήτε εἰκόνι, μήτε θυμῷ μήτε ἄνευ θυμοῦ, μηδαμῶς μηδένα τῶν πολιτῶν κωμωδεῖν, *Laws* 11.935e5-7). This may just be a statement about how to have good comedy in general, but the fact that becomes salient here is that references to the Academy and Plato outnumber all other identifiable persons in the fragments of Middle Comedy. There are about a dozen references to Pythagoreans, a handful referring to the other writers of Socratic dialogues, whereas there are at least twenty references to Plato himself.³⁰ Probably just around or (more likely) immediately after Plato’s death,³¹ Aristophon wrote a whole play entitled *Plato*—an extant fragment of which (Fr. 8 K.A.) parallels Socrates’ claims to make Strepsiades like

²⁹ For the most recent, major work on the Digression, see Menn (2020), with literature. Major studies on these issues mentioned, however, may be found in McDowell (1973), Burnyeat (1990), Rue (1993), Sedley (1999), (2004), Blondell (2002), McPherran (2010), and Giannopoulou (2013).

³⁰ By far and above the best treatment of Plato and Academics in the Middle Comic tradition is Farmer (2017) and Papachrysostomous (2008). The second half of Preston (2017) often fails to use the Kassel-Austin edition of the texts—usually relying on older Loeb editions for citations from Athenaeus—thus leaving the reader with a false impression of Academics on the stage. For current trends in research on Middle Comedy and philosophy, see again the work of Papachrysostomous and Farmer (the former has commentaries I have yet to be able to consult). See also a new volume of Papaioannou and Demetriou (2020) on the philosophical acumen of Plautus. That said, Webster (1953), Lever (1954), Natali (1987), and Baltes (1993) remain essential guideposts, and Arnott (1996) on Alexis has Plato on every other page.

³¹ Assertions on dating henceforth come from Farmer (2017), who collates and thoroughly scrutinises the evidence in a way I haven’t had the time to do.

Chaerephon in the extant *Clouds*. In other words, Plato just was one of those who was held up for attack, with or without animosity, on the comic stage, and had understandably personal reasons to ban such attacks in their then-present form.

Even Isocrates grumbles that the comic poets are allowed to make fun of citizens to the whole world whilst his own works are not taken seriously (*On the Peace* 14, ca. 355 BCE). There is what looks like a Middle Comic-style *hyponoia* to Isocrates's *Helen* (written ca. 375) in a papyrus fragment (*Adesp.* 1146 K.A.) reprinted and translated at the end of Storey (2011). It was at first attributed to Archippus' *Fishes* but the attribution has since then been put into doubt.³² Nevertheless, in the fragment, an unknown character sings the praises of a gigantic Egyptian fish better than Isocrates praises Helen:

(B) What are you saying? Have you concluded that the sheatfish is superior (κρείττον) to the dogfish?

(A) I say that the sheatfish is the cleverest (σοφώτατον) of all the fishes, the king of the fishes, their leader, their monarch, their ruler (ἡγεμόνα, μόναρχον, ἄρχόν). All the rest, just foot soldiers, not worthy to carry a spear before the sheatfish.

(B) Have you undertaken to write a hymn of praise to the sheatfish (συγγράφειν ἐγκώμιον)?

(A) Indeed, the sheatfish does have quite the reputation, a veritable Adonis of the rivers. For if the sheatfish were not willing to gamble and make love, ten talents' worth of seasonings wouldn't be surrounding him now, and he wouldn't be now wearing a wide-brimmed lid and be broiling among the cadets. And what's more, there is a fish that stands before the sheatfish's door, bright and early, decree in hand, and says, "Now that the sheatfish has finished his bath, ... going in. Did the maeots get all they were asking for? The sea bass from the Rocky Quarter have had their audience, so too the catch of pigfish from the Nets."

(B) Isocrates has never composed such a hymn of praise about Helen as you have over the sheatfish! But, by got, what's this discourse? It is certainly worth wondering about. (Ἰσοκράτης ἐγκώμιον τοιοῦτον οὐδεπώποτε καθ' Ἑλένης

³² Archippus' *Fishes* could have been written anytime between 400 and 375 BCE (on which see *cit. ad loci.* in Storey 2011). In the play, the Athenians make a truce with the Fish of the Sea, with each fish being subtly aligned to prominent Athenians. Tezzon (2016) argues that the fragment was at least Hellenistic, or 'New Comic' in origin based on certain grammatical oddities and linguistic anachronisms. That does not preclude the possibility that the joke may have been borrowed from an earlier work, and Tezzon does not question whether that is the case.

εἴρηκεν ὥς σὺν περὶ σιλούρου. πρὸς θεῶν ἢ δὲ διατριβὴ τίς ἐστιν; θαυμάσαι γὰρ ἄξιον).

[...]

Adesp. Com. 1146 K.A., Greek and trans. Storey.

Clearly by the time of Plato's death, then, there were reasons for Plato and other intellectuals to be perturbed that their works (or they themselves: Strattis made fun of Isocrates for making love in Strattis' *Atalantos* Fr.3 K.A.) were not being taken as seriously as their authors thought they deserved. This will now become clear after considering the ways in which the Digression addresses the way that Plato and the Academics and their works were portrayed on the comic stage.

First is that, in the Digression, the Academics—and note that the 'Chorus Leaders' are not Socrates; they do not live in the city and do not even know the road to the city, they are also *plural*—are searching for the genus of things; and in the case of the Digression, into the nature of human beings in contrast to all other animals. We know this was a preoccupation of Plato's even by the time of the *Phaedrus* (thus 230a-b). But the fact that the plural 'Chorus Leaders' is used here rings especially apt in light of Epikrates' use of the plural to describe the heads of the Academy in his famous fragment describing a group of school-children analysing the species of a pumpkin. It is unclear when to place the composition of this fragment. The traditional date was usually ca. 370 or thereafter, but Farmer puts it likely after 350 BCE (considering that Menedemus arrived at the Academy, who is mentioned in the fragment, closer to the end of Plato's life). The Platonic vocabulary is so prolific that the Greek should be cited in full here, despite its length.

(A.) τί Πλάτων

καὶ Σπεύσιππος καὶ Μενέδημος;

πρὸς τίσι νυνὶ διατρίβουσιν;

ποία φροντίς, ποῖος δὲ λόγος

διερευνᾶται παρὰ τούτοισιν;

τάδε μοι πινυτῶς, εἴ τι κατειδῶς

ἤκεις, λέξον, πρὸς Γᾶς <...>

(B.) ἀλλ' οἶδα λέγειν περὶ τῶνδε σαφῶς.

Παναθηναίοις γὰρ ἰδὼν ἀγέλην

<...> μειρακίων

ἐν γυμνασίοις Ἀκαδημείας

ἤκουσα λόγων ἀφάτων, ἀτόπων,

περὶ γὰρ φύσεως ἀφοριζόμενοι

διεχώριζον ζώων τε βίον

δένδρων τε φύσιν λαχάνων τε γένη.

κᾶτ' ἐν τούτοις τὴν κολοκύντην

ἐξήταζον τίνος ἐστὶ γένους.

(A.) καὶ τί ποτ' ἄρ' ὠρίσαντο καὶ τίνος γένους

εἶναι τὸ φυτόν; δήλωσον, εἰ κάτοισθά τι.

(B.) πρώτιστον μὲν πάντες ἀναυδεῖς

τότ' ἐπέστησαν καὶ κύψαντες

χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον διεφρόντιζον.

κᾶιτ' ἐξαίφνης, ἔτι κυπτόντων

καὶ ζητούντων τῶν μειρακίων,

λάχανόν τις ἔφη στρογγύλον εἶναι,

ποίαν δ' ἄλλος, δένδρον δ' ἕτερος.

ταῦτα δ' ἀκούων ἰατρός τις

Σικελᾶς ἀπὸ γᾶς

κατέπαρδ' αὐτῶν ὥς ληρούντων.

(A.) ἦ που δεινῶς ὠργίσθησαν χλευάζεσθαι τ' ἐβόησαν;

τὸ γὰρ ἐν λέσχαις ταῖσδε ποιεῖν τοιαῦτα' <οὐκ> εὐπρεπές <ἐστίν>.

(B). οὐδ' ἐμέλησεν τοῖς μειρακίοις.

ὁ Πλάτων δὲ παρὼν καὶ μάλα πράϊως,

οὐδὲν ὀρινθείς, ἐπέταξ' αὐτοῖς
πάλιν <...>
ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὴν κολοκύντην
ἀφορίζεσθαι τίνος ἐστὶ γένους.
οἱ δὲ διήρουν.

(A.) S what about Plato and Speusippus and Menedemus? How are they spending their time nowadays? What deep thoughts, what sort of speculation is under investigation at their establishment? Please, give me an insightful account of these matters if you've come with any knowledge of them, by Earth! (B.) I know enough to give you a very clear report about this. For during the Panathenaic festival, I saw a herd of young men in the exercise grounds of the Academy, and I listened to unspeakably strange discussions. They were producing definitions having to do with natural history, and trying to distinguish between animals, trees, and vegetables; and in the course of these discussions they attempted to determine which category the gourd belongs to. (A.) What definition did they settle on? And what category did they put the plant into? Reveal this, if you have any information! (B.) At first they all stood silent and gazed at the ground for a long time, thinking the matter through. Then suddenly, while the other boys were still staring at the ground and considering the question, one of them said that it was a round vegetable; another a type of grass; and a third a tree. And a Sicilian doctor, when he heard this, farted on them for talking nonsense. (A.) I imagine they got terribly angry and shouted that they were being mocked? Because during conversations of this sort † it's appropriate to do something like that. (B.) The young men paid no attention. But Plato was there, and very gently and with no sign of excitement he ordered them once again to try to determine what category it belonged to. And they began drawing distinctions.

Epikrates Fr. 10 K.A., Greek and translation Olson (2007), modified.

There is far too much to say about this fragment at the moment but several things are clear.³³ Farmer (2017): 22-26 rightly remarks on the fact that this fragment mimics the very opening structure of many Platonic texts with one character asking to hear about what went on in some conversation and dispute. But it also shows that Plato, in conjunction with other heads of the

³³ For some discussions on this fragment, but see esp. Farmer (2017): 22-26 and Olson (2007): 239-242 for discussion and extensive bibliography. Davis (2013) notes the similarity that the pseudo-Platonic *Rival Lovers* has with this scene from Epikrates, though he rejects the notion the dialogue, or its opening specifically, was designed from or as a response to the scene. I disagree. I would argue that the *Rival Lovers* is an entire collation of and discourse regarding comic motifs about philosophers. For 'comic' dialogues as a strain of dialogic literature after the death of Plato (though Davis is inclined to read the *Rival Lovers* as genuine, which it may be), see Jazdzewska (2022): *passim*, and esp. 92-109 on, in part, the comical nature of the dialogues of Heraclides of Pontus in particular, who would have been subject to these jibes on the stage as well.

school, were engaged in ‘natural philosophy’—the very kind we hear about both in the *Phaedrus* and other dialogues with their ‘splitting the matter by the bones and sinews’, but also in the Digression above as to the process of *diagnosis*. Not only that, but the opening lines, with its use of ‘διατρίβουσιν’ may show a familiarity with Plato’s own use of this term—even in the Digression. For even if this passage from Epikrates postdates the *Theaetetus* (generally considered written around 369 BCE), it may both reflect the Digression as such and an enduring preoccupation with Plato’s works on the stage *per se*, which adds to the plausibility that Plato was responding to these depictions in the Digression in a kind of dramatic tit-for-tat.

That he was responding to these aspersions in the Digression may be gleaned from the odd assertion that it is the philosopher and not the man of the city who knows how to drape their cloak properly over their shoulder like a gentleman (ἀναβάλλεσθαι). Why this assertion? It makes more sense in light when we take note that another central criticism of the Academy and its denizens is that they took proper care of their appearance to the extent that they were simply dandies. Ehippus—who won prizes at Athens in the 370s and ‘60s BCE—in Fr. 35 K.A. sums up the matter in the following way, which Athenaeus (11.509c) says was for the sake of ‘making fun of Plato himself’:

(A.) My friend, do you have any idea who that old man there is?

(B.) By his appearance, he's Greek: white cloak, nice little grey tunic, soft little cap, graceful staff... Why speak any further? For I seem to see the Academy itself right before my very eyes!

Ehippus Fr. 35 K.A., trans. Farmer, modified.

Similarly, a young man in a different comedy by Ehippus is turned out by the Academy and Bryson of Heraclea (Plato’s friend and associate) to be so tightly manicured that even his speech is manicured, or over-prepared:

Then a well-kempt young man stood up, one of those taught by Plato, from the Academy, driven by need of Brysono-thrasymachean-coingrabbing, familiar with the art of <?>, unable to say anything unexamined, his hair carefully trimmed with a razor, carefully letting his beard run down to its uncut depths, carefully placing his foot in its sandal <?>, with twists of equal straps on his shins, carefully armored by the bulk of a wool cloak. Leaning his worthy shape

on a staff, he delivered another's line, it seems to me, not his own: 'Men of the Athenians' land'

Ephippus Fr. 14 K.A., trans. Farmer.

Heraclides of Pontus—Heraclides Ponticus—was himself so concerned with his appearance, his robe so white and fine, that he eventually came to be called, though much later, 'Heraclides Pompicus'.³⁴

So there are good reasons to see in the Digression Plato at once recognising the criticisms of his dress (which is curiously opposite to that of the laconizing Socrates' *tribōn*; but the ethics of how to dress properly for Plato would be a thesis in itself and, I suspect, look first to the *Laws* on bodily comportment); but the Digression also recognises the criticisms of the Academic philosopher in the judicial system.

Then there is the matter of concern for the soul and the leisure of the philosopher, which the Digression defends with a great deal of vigour. Where would aspersions on the comic stage been seen against these things? Plato's concern with the soul was seen in *Pleasure Seekers* above, but we see it too in Fr. 10 K.A. of Cratinus the Younger's *False Changeling*, in which (as I would argue) an educated slave interrogates someone (perhaps an identical twin) using Platonic language and ideas about personal identity on account of having an individual soul. As to the question of having too much leisure time, which the Digression is so eager to defend (it is the identifying feature of a philosopher there), Fr. 151 K.A. of Alexis' *Meropis* showcases a woman walking back and forth trying to figure out something 'wise' like Plato (περιπατουσ' ὥσπερ Πλάτων σοφόν), but only succeeds in wearing out her legs; a commonly repeated pattern in Menander, as well as in later comedy, when a character in distress tries to solve some problem about love (note esp. the opening of Menander's *Misoumenos*, and cf. the passage from Alexis' *Phaedrus* below). Plato is also insulted for wasting his time enjoying himself, eating sacred olives in Anaxandrides Fr. 20 K.A. And in

³⁴ On this see Baltes (1993): 13. Later antiquity, Baltes also notes, maintained that Plato wore a golden ear-ring. That the Academics valued proper dress is also humorously indicated by the story of two peasants who managed to pay their way into the Academy by working all night and day in the fields. The judicial system took notice, suspecting that they were making illegal income. It wasn't possible, it was thought, that such poorly-dressed youths could afford to mill about the Academy wasting time all day long. When the judges were credibly informed that the youths had paid their way for such cause, they were given 200 drachmae. The story is seen in Diogenes and Apuleius, for which also see Baltes (1993): 12.

Alexis Fr. 163 K.A., we in fact see a collision of *both* his doctrine of the spirit and the leisure to invent such ideas hit at the same time. Here, one person may have had what seems to be a near-death experience, although the context may be impossible to recover:

(A.) σῶμα μὲν ἐμοῦ τὸ θνητὸν αὔρον ἐγένετο,

τὸ δ' ἀθάνατον ἐξῆρε πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα.

(B.) ταῦτ' οὐ σχολή Πλάτωνος;

(A.) My body, the mortal part, became withered, but my immortal part rose up and away into the air.

(B.) Aren't these things a teaching of Plato's?

Alexis Fr. 163 K.A., trans. Farmer.

It is not just the soul here which is targeted for a joke: the use of 'σχολή'—perhaps 'musings' or 'leisure-time'—for Plato's thought-world is suggestive of the very 'σχολή' said to be representative of the ideal philosopher at the very outset of the Digression itself (172d4). So both the general uselessness of the Academic life and the doctrine of the soul were ridiculed on stage—in at least one instance at the same time—and the Digression appears to respond to such things. I admit that Alexis may himself have been *responding* to the Digression here and elsewhere, which in any case, as I have argued, would only hint further that these comical aspersions against Plato were in the air in the first place.

Then there is the matter of *aporia*, which the Digression says is so laughable to the many but, according to the philosopher, a respectable state of being. Where is *aporia* in the dialogues on stage? We need look no further than to the *Phaedrus* of Alexis.

πορευομένῳ δ' ἐκ Πειραιῶς ὑπὸ τῶν κακῶν

καὶ τῆς ἀπορίας φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπῆλθέ μοι.

καί μοι δοκοῦσιν ἀγνοεῖν οἱ ζωγράφοι

τὸν Ἑρωτα, συντομώτατον δ' εἶπεῖν, ὅσοι

τοῦ δαίμονος τούτου ποιοῦσιν εἰκόνας,

ἐστὶν γὰρ οὔτε θῆλυς οὔτ' ἄρσην, πάλιν

οὔτε θεὸς οὔτ' ἄνθρωπος, οὔτ' ἀβέλτερος

οὐτ' αὔθις ἔμφρων, ἀλλὰ συνενηνεγμένος
 πανταχόθεν, ἐνὶ τύπῳ τε πόλλ' εἶδη φέρων,
 ἢ τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀνδρός, ἢ <δὲ> δειλία
 γυναικός, ἢ δ' ἄνοια μανίας, ὁ δὲ λόγος
 φρονοῦντος, ἢ σφοδρότης δὲ θηρός, ὁ δὲ πόνος
 ἀδάμαντος, ἢ φιλοτιμία δὲ δαίμονος.
 καὶ ταῦτ' ἐγώ, μὰ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν καὶ θεούς,
 οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔχει γέ τι
 τοιοῦτον, ἐγγὺς τ' εἰμὶ τοῦνοήματος.

On my way back from the Piraeus I was inspired by helplessness to play the philosopher. And it seems to quite concisely, the painters who paint pictures of Eros don't know him. For he is neither female nor male, and again neither god nor man, neither foolish nor clever, but collected from everywhere, bearing many forms in a single shape. For he has the daring of a man, the cowardice of a woman, the insanity of a madman, the logic of an intelligent man, the vehemence of a beast, the endurance of adamant, the ambition of a daemon. By Athena and the gods, for all that I still don't know what he is, but nevertheless he has at least some such quality, and I'm near his name.

Alexis Fr. 247 K.A., trans. Farmer

Scholars have known for the better part of two hundred years that this passage is bristling with Platonic parallels in language, ideas, and structure.³⁵ Not only is the main character similar to the generic character in love at the openings of many later comedies, but the language specifically parallels that seen in the dialogues. Most obviously, of course, the title is the same as Plato's *Phaedrus*; Alexis, it should be noted, also wrote a *Phaedo*. I am not concerned to show, however, the many parallels in language and content in the above fragment—to, say, the *Republic*, *Symposium*, and countless other dialogues. Rather, it is the element of puzzlement and *aporia* that is characteristic of the man which is important, for it serves a fitting contrast against which the Digression argues (although I shall note that the passage seems to furnish, by extension, perhaps what was understood to be the nature or goal of Platonic dialogue itself: *aporia* and mental blockage).

³⁵ For the most extensive treatment of this fragment, including its Platonic parallels, see Arnot (1996a): 691-704.

All the fragments above could and should be analyzed very closely, much more so than they have been; and there are many more fragments that could and should be analysed. But such a task would take another thesis in itself. Nevertheless, I assert that the pieces have fallen in place to suggest that Plato, in the Digression of the *Theaetetus*, was responding to the criticisms against him and his Academy from the comic stage—namely the search for genus of things, concern with proper dress, leisure-time spent outside the city, concern with the immortal soul, and *aporia* as a general state of being. And he did so precisely by adopting them. This adoption, I will add, is not too unlike Cratinus the Older adopting the respective aspersions cast against him in the *Pytine*.

It is interesting that Plato effected his rebuttal by reproducing yet again the philosopher and flatterer motif, but this time with respect to the Academy and not exactly Socrates (how Plato and Socrates relate in this way can be addressed another time). It is notable also that Socrates in the Digression speaks of ‘Chorus Leaders’. I will not defend this here, but there are decidedly parabolic qualities in the Digression—the parabasis, where the Chorus Leader would step forward to address the audience in the guise of the poet or author himself. In this way the Digression, insofar as it has parabolic qualities, may be the closest thing to authorial self-revelation we get in the dialogues of Plato. Thus the long sought-after ‘voice of Plato’ may well take place through comedy.

These and the other things in the sections above are what I would like to consider more moving forward, and in this way also to help us ‘lift the weight of Aristophanes.’

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