

Aristophanes, son of Philippos

CLOUDS

Cast of characters in order of appearance, with speaking parts in **bold print**.

An elderly, married, Athenian farmer named **Strepsiades**, son of Pheidon

The farmer's only son **Pheidippides**, who is in his late teens

One of the farmer's household slaves, named **Xanthias**

A **Lodge-keeper** at the nearby private college of meteorology and public speaking

The college Principal, '**Sokrates**'

A **Chorus of passing Clouds** (twenty-four in number) who occasionally sing and dance

A **Righteous man**, who has been a college lecturer for more years than he can remember

An utter **Scoundrel**, who entered the teaching profession fairly recently (for the money)

Pasias a banker who has loaned money unwisely to Strepsiades

Ameinias, a merchant who has sold goods to Pheidippides on credit

Chairephon, a senior research-fellow of the college (with tenure) is thought to make an appearance, but if so it is unlikely that he speaks.

The following stage 'props' are required: an equine statuette, a 'Herm', an 'oil-lamp' (powered by a torch-battery perhaps), a garland of wild-flowers or leaves, a rooster and a hen (preferably dead and stuffed), a fold-away pallet-bed, a winnowing-fan (or leaf-blower) and a hot-air balloon (optional).

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The scene of the play is contemporary with the date of its performance at the drama-competition of the festival of Dionysos in the spring of 423 B.C. It begins in the small hours just before dawn, the no-man's-land between sleeping and waking. A waning crescent moon is just visible high-overhead but the stage is in darkness. Through the gloom one can discern two dormant figures. One is a slave, who sleeps quietly by the door of the house to one side of the stage, his back against the pedestal of an equine statuette; the other, asleep on a pallet-bed toward the centre of the stage, snorting noisily. Across from the first house is a somewhat more imposing residence with a double bust of Hermes set beside its double doors. The word *stage* is used to denote the acting area, not a raised platform.

Prologue 1-274

A tortured voice is heard off-stage crying, "Oh-h-h! Woe is me!" Then, the bleary-eyed figure of an elderly man shuffles out from the doorway. He wears a thick cloak wrapped tightly around him for warmth.

Strepsiades God in Heaven! How long the nights last...for ever! (*He gestures to his limp phallus*). Will the day never dawn? I'm sure I heard a cock <crow> ages ago, and yet, the slaves are snoring. (*He regards the sleeping figure by the door with evident irritation*). They wouldn't have been snoring in the old days. (*He lifts an arm as if about to belabour the slave, but thinks better of it*) Oh, there's reason enough to curse you, War, when I can't even knock the slaves of my own household about.

(He moves on toward the pallet-bed and glowers at the other sleeping figure)

As it is, not even this fine specimen of youth here stirs himself during the night. No, he snorts away, swaddled in five layers of wool. Well, if that suits you, let's wrap ourselves up and snore away! (*He breaks wind*) Only, I can't sleep, can I? I'm being bitten all over by...by the cost of fodder, and the debts incurred for this son of mine! He's <forever> riding horses and driving around in his chariot and pair with his hair streaming...and dreaming of horses too.

(He looks up at the waning crescent of the moon and shudders)

But, I'm being ground to bits when I see the moon coming around to the month end, because the interest due <on my debts> is waxing <as it wanes>.

(He turns back to the sleeping slave by the door and shakes him awake)

Boy, get on and light a lamp!

(The slave wakes with a start, clambers to his feet and stumbles off into the house)

And fetch my ledger, so I can see how many creditors I have and calculate the interest due.

(He paces up and down irritably until the slave reappears with a lamp and wooden writing-tablet)

Bring it here and let me have a look to see what I owe.

(The slave holds up the lamp for him to examine the tablet)

Twelve minas to Pasiases! What did I use those twelve minas of Pasiases for?

(A pensive pause)

<I've got it! It was> when I bought the thoroughbred. I was thoroughly bled, poor wretch!

I wish I'd lost an eye sooner than seeing it.

A muffled sound comes from the figure asleep on the trestle-bed.

Pheidippides That's not fair, Philon ('pal')! Keep to your own lane!

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Strepsiades There you are! That's the cause of my ruin! You see, even when he's sound asleep he talks about horses in his dreams.

Pheidippides *(mumbling in his sleep)* How many laps do you drive the war chariots?

Strepsiades It's me, your father, that you are driving round the bend.

(He turns away in disgust and scrutinizes the tablet again)

What was the amount that 'mounted' me after Pasiases's <loan>?

Three minas to Ameinias for a set of wheels and a single-board for a chariot!

Pheidippides *(addressing an imaginary groom in his sleep)*

When you've given the horse a good rub-down and clean-up, lead him off home.

Strepsiades You've certainly taken me to the cleaners, my fine fellow, seeing that some creditors have soaked me in lawsuits and the rest are telling me that they have sought sureties for the interest <I owe them>.

Pheidippides *(awakened by the commotion, he yawns)*

Honestly, father! Why are you up and about all night long...and in such a bad mood?

Strepsiades Something has been putting the bite on me in the bedding...a local magistrate!

Pheidippides Oh, you're unbelievable, give me a break and let me get some rest.

He turns over and is soon fast asleep again.

Strepsiades Sleep tight then! Just keep in mind that all these debts will be your headache <one day>. Dash it! I wish the matchmaker who stuck me with your mother had come to a sticky end, 'cause my life as a country yokel was as good as it gets, lying around at my ease, mouldering away, not being bitten by bug-bears. There were swarms of honey-bees, flocks of sheep and cakes of pressed olives. Then, I married the niece of Megakles' son... Megakles, though I was a country bumpkin and she was an urbanite. She's snooty, spoiled and has the manners of a Koisyra! When I married this woman, I used to climb into bed with her smelling of the new vintage, fresh figs, shorn wool...<in a word> plenty! She, on the other hand, would be scented with perfume, <clad in> saffron, redolent of passionate kisses, expense, over-indulgence, the rites of the Love-goddess, babies!

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I won't say that her hands were idle though. She certainly didn't spare the thread when she *worked the shuttle*. I used to show her this 'ere cloak as evidence *(he lifts the hem of his cloak, so exposing his nether parts again)* and say, "You are wearing me to a thread, woman!"

The lamp sputters and goes out and the slave starts to back away slowly.

Xanthias *(stating the obvious)* Our lamp's out of oil.

Strepsiades: *(sarcastically)* Indeed? Why, in that case, do you light the one that laps up the oil?

Come over here, I'll make you sorry for it!

Xanthias What do I have to be sorry for?

Strepsiades You keep inserting one of the thick wicks.

(While the slave hurries inside to relight the lamp, he meanders on)

Anyway, afterwards, when this son of ours was born, me and my lady wife fell to squabbling about what to call him. She wanted to harness a horse to the name, <a 'hippos'> like Xanthippos, Kallippos, or Chairippides while I was for calling him Pheidonides after his grandfather. So, we were at loggerheads for a time, 'til at last we reached a compromise and called him Pheid...ippides! She used to take this son of ours in her arms and caress him <saying>, "When you grow up you'll drive a chariot up the pan-Athenaian Way, like Megakles, attired in the long, formal robe <proper to the occasion>". I, on the other hand, used to tell him, "You'll be wearing a fleece-jerkin like your father does when you're driving the goats from the Stone-pits". But, he didn't heed my words in the slightest; instead my money's being wasted by equine fever. So, I've been up all night long thinking of a way <out of my predicament> and I've found one, an extraordinarily clever way, which will be my salvation, if only I can persuade this fellow here. 77

First, though, I have to waken him. How can I do that, I wonder, in the least annoying way? Let me think. Oo-oooh, Pheidi-ppides! Pheidi-piddy!

Pheidippides (*dozily*) What is it, father?

Strepsiades G-give me a kiss...and give me your right hand.

Pheidippides (*sitting up*) There you are. What is it <you want>?

Strepsiades Tell me, do you love me?

Pheidippides (*gesturing towards the equine statuette*) Yes, I swear it by Poseidon here, the god of horses.

Strepsiades (*recoiling as if stung*) Oh, no! Please, not the horse-god! He's the god at the root of my misfortune. But, if you really care for me, my boy, do something for me.

Pheidippides What is it that you wish, then?

Strepsiades I want you to start to change your course directly and come and learn the things I'm about to suggest.

Pheidippides So tell me, what would you have me do?

Strepsiades Will you actually do what I tell you?

Pheidippides I will, so help me...Dionysos!

Strepsiades (*pointing to the other side of the stage*) Then, look over here! Do you see this bijou residence and its dinky, little doorway?

Pheidippides I do, Father. What is it exactly?

Strepsiades This 'ere is a 'Thinking-shop' of clever intellects. Here p-reside gentlemen who hold the <innovative> view ...and I believe them...that the sky above us is a cover of a barbeque-grill; it covers us all round and we're charcoal! They give lessons, if you pay them, in how to win an argument, whether you are in the right or not.

Pheidippides So, who are these men? 100

Strepsiades I don't know the exact term for them. <But>, they're assiduously intellectual gentlemen.

Pheidippides (*loudly*) Ugh-h! (*directing his words toward the 'Thinking-shop'*) Yes, I know this useless bunch. You mean those poseurs, with their wan complexions and bare feet. That miserable sod Sokrates is one of them...and Chairephon.

Strepsiades Now, now – hush! Don't talk silly! But, if you take any thought about your father's welfare, join them for my sake and give the horses a rest.

Pheidippides By Dionysos! I wouldn't join them, not if you gave me the <fast-off-the-mark> colts that Leogoras breeds.

Strepsiades Do go, please! <You know> I cherish you more than anyone. Go and become a student for me.

Pheidippides (*wearily*) What is it you want me to study?

Strepsiades Rumour has it that both sides of the argument are lodged with them, the stronger side – not one I'm acquainted with – and the weaker. It's said that the one of the two, the weaker one, can prevail, with less to justify it. So, if you learn this unjustified argument for me, I wouldn't have to fork out to anyone, not one red cent of these debts I now owe on your account.

Pheidippides No, I couldn't do that, because I wouldn't be able to face the horse-riding fraternity with my <healthy> complexion rubbed off.

Strepsiades (*angrily*) In that case, by Demeter, you will not go on eating me out of house and home; not you, not your yoke-horse, not your thoroughbred. No, I shall drive you out of the house to go rot.

Pheidippides jumps up out of bed. He is seen to have his long hair tied back in a 'pony-tail'.

Pheidippides (*petulantly*) Well, my uncle Megakles won't see me unhorsed at any rate. No, I'm off and I won't be giving any thought to you. 125

He flounces off the stage, still wrapped in his 'blankets', leaving his father speechless for a moment.

Strepsiades (*dejectedly*) Hmm, that's a blow certainly, but I'm not floored...no, sir! In fact, I'll go to the 'Thinking-shop' and, with the gods' help, I'll become a student myself.

(He heads determinedly toward the house opposite, but stops short.)

But, there again, I'm getting on in years, I tend to forget things, and I'm a bit slow on the uptake, how am I going to learn the fine nuances of debate?

(Summoning up his courage)

I have to go. Why do I allow these considerations to delay me instead of just knocking on the door?

(He proceeds to knock on the door, hesitantly at first, then more loudly)

Boy! Young feller!

Doorman (*off-stage*) Devil take it!

(The door opens a little way and the owner of the voice pokes his head out to glare at Strepsiades.)

Who's been trying to knock our door down?

Strepsiades Pheidon's son, Strepsiades, from the deme Kikynna ('Kick-it-in').

Doorman By Heaven, you're an illiterate lout, to be sure, to have given the door such a hefty kick without consideration, thus aborting a newly-conceived conception.

Strepsiades I'm sorry. I live way out in the sticks, y' know. But, do tell, what was it that was mis-carried, exactly?

Doorman (*becoming suddenly cagey*) Ah, that may be divulged only to the students.

Strepsiades Well, you can tell me then, 'cause I've come to the 'Thinking-shop' in person <to enrol> as a student.

Doorman I'll let you in on it, but you must treat what I tell you as confidential.

(He looks warily around to make sure they are alone)

Chairephon had just been asking Sokrates how many feet a flea could jump, in terms of its own feet. One had just bitten Chairephon on the eye-brow, you see, and thereupon leapt away onto Sokrates' head.

Strepsiades So, how did he manage to calculate that?

Doorman Most ingeniously; he melted some wax and then taking hold of the flea he proceeded to dip two feet in it, so that when the wax had cooled it set around <them> like Persian bootees. He unfastened this footwear and used them to measure the distance. 152

Strepsiades God in Heaven! What a neat idea!

Doorman <If you think that's neat>, what would you call this other piece of ingenuity from Sokrates?

Strepsiades What other? Do tell me, please.

Doorman 'Nat' asked him waspishly, which side he took in the question of the mosquito's buzz; whether it emanates from its mouth or its derrière?

Strepsiades And what did he have to say concerning the mosquito?

Doorman He explained that the mosquito's intestine is narrow and that air is forced through this constricted space leading up to the abdomen, at which point the arse, an orifice attached to a narrow tube, emits a sound under the pressure of the gas.

Strepsiades In point of fact, the mosquito's arse is a...trumpet. <Sokrates> is marvelously blessed with gut instincts. *(Thinking aloud)* A man with inside knowledge of the mosquito's insides would definitely get off easily if *he* was on trial.

Doorman Only the other day, in fact, he lost an important judgement...to a reptile.

Strepsiades How so? Do tell!

Doorman In the course of investigating the orbit and revolutions of the moon, he was yawning upwards when a nocturnal gecko defecated from the ceiling.

Strepsiades (*Guffawing*) How delicious, a gecko pooping on Sokrates!

Doorman ...and yesterday there was nothing for us to eat in the evening.

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Strepsiades Really? So what angle did he devise for putting grub on the table?

Doorman He dusted the table with a thin coating of ash, bent a skewer in two as a compass, and <therewith described a circle like a wrestling-circle...then, he described how to> encompass a wrestler's cloak from the gym.

Strepsiades It beats me why we venerate Thales <as a genius>.

(*Excitedly*)

Hurry up and open the 'Thinking-shop' and point out Sokrates for me at once, because I want to become his pupil. Come on, open wide the door!

(*As soon as the doorman opens the door and steps aside, a gaggle of students begins to emerge. Strepsiades is taken aback.*)

Herakles! What species of critter have we here?

Doorman What are you gawping at? What sort of creature do you think they resemble?

Strepsiades Like those <creatures> we trapped at Pylos, in Lakonian territory.

(*Pointing to one group of students*)

But, these fellows over here, why are they looking at the ground?

Doorman (*confidently*) They are conducting research into *subterranean* matters.

Strepsiades You mean...they're looking for truffles!

(*Calling out to them*)

You don't need to worry about that any more, 'cause I know where there are some lovely big ones.

(*Turning back to the slave*)

But, some of them here are bent completely double, what are they up to?

Doorman They are searching through the dark places of Tartaros' domain.

Strepsiades In that case, why does <each> arsehole survey the heavens?

Doorman <Each one> is learning to map the stars all by itself.

(*Addressing the students*)

Inside with the lot of you, now, so *he* doesn't catch us <out here>.

The students begin to file back quickly into the school and he makes to follow them.

Strepsiades (*restraining him by the arm*) No, no, not yet! Let them stay a bit more; there's a little matter of my own I'd like to communicate to them.

Doorman No, they are not allowed to spend very much time out in the fresh air.

In their haste the students have left behind some of their scientific instruments.

Strepsiades Ye gods! What are these objects here, if you please?

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Doorman (*taking a wild guess*) This instrument is used for...astronomy.

Strepsiades And what is this one for?

Doorman (*evidently looking at it for the first time*) Geometry.

Strepsiades What's the use of that?

Doorman (*surprised anyone should ask*) Duh! For measuring out land!

Strepsiades What...allotments?

Doorman No, the whole Earth.

Strepsiades That's brilliant! Now, there's a device which really serves the public interest!

And this over 'ere (*pointing*) is what, d'you think?

Doorman A map of the entire world. Do you see? This is Athens.

Strepsiades What are you talking about? I don't believe you. I don't see any juries sitting.

Doorman Well, this is actually Attic territory.

Strepsiades In that case, where are my fellow townsmen of Kikynna?

Doorman (*looking closely*) They're...here...indoors. (*Then hurriedly changing the subject*)

Anyhow, here is Euboia...extended, as you see, over quite a lo-o-o-ng distance.

Strepsiades I know why, because it was put on the rack by us <when we served> under Perikles.
But, where is Sparta?

Doorman Let me see...here it is!

Strepsiades That's a bit close to us. You need to re-think that and move it much further away from us.

Doorman Nope, can't be done.

Strepsiades Then, by god, you'll be sorry!

(While the two old men have been engrossed they have not noticed a hot-air balloon appear above the paraskenion centre-stage with a face peering over the edge of the gondola. Strepsiades turns and spots it)

Wait! Who is that up there in the basket?

The doorman turns around to look.

Doorman *(surprised)* The man himself.

Strepsiades Himself who?

Doorman *(apprehensively)* Sokrates.

Strepsiades Ah, *the* Sokrates! *(To the retreating doorman)* Go on you shout up to him loudly for me.

Doorman You call him yourself, if you want, because I've got things to do.

As he hurriedly disappears back into the 'Thinking-shop', Strepsiades summons up the courage to speak.

Strepsiades Ahoy...! Sokrates, m'deario!

Sokrates *(sonorously)* Why call'st thou upon me, o ephemeral one?

Strepsiades Please tell me, first of all, what you are up to?

Sokrates I am treading air and looking over the sun.

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Strepsiades So, you overlook the gods from a <lofty> perch! But...if you really think you should be doing that, couldn't you do it from the ground?

Sokrates No, for I would never have discovered the true nature of celestial phenomena, had I not suspended my consciousness and mingled my thoughts with a similarly rarefied atmosphere. Were I, on the other hand, to be observing what's up here from down there on the ground, I would never have cottoned on, because, you see, the force of the Earth attracts the damp thought-vapours...in much the same way that cress does.

Strepsiades [How's that?] Thoughts attract dampness into cress? *(Confused and impatient)*

Won't you descend to me, my dear Sokrates, and teach me what I've come here to learn.

The basket comes down to earth and Sokrates clambers out. He is a man of middle years and middling stature, with staring eyes accentuated by a receding hairline.

Sokrates What is it, then, that you have come <to study>?

Strepsiades I want to learn how to argue. I am being hounded back and forth by interest payments and intransigent creditors. My property is about to be seized as surety.

Sokrates How come you did not realize that you were getting in over your head?

Strepsiades A plague of horses afflicted me and consumed me at a gallop. But, won't you teach me that other side of the argument, the one that gives nothing back. Whatever fee you charge, I'll settle it, so help me god!

Sokrates Which gods will you swear by, because our primary 'currency' is not gods?

He casually sidles over to the bust of Hermes and filches the garland which adorns it.

Strepsiades How do you folk take an oath, then?

[**Sokrates**] <We swear> by lumps of iron, as they do in Byzantion.

Would you like to know the truth about theology, and learn what beings are truly divine?

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Strepsiades I would, by Zeus, if it's at all <permissible>.

Sokrates And would you like to converse with the beings we consider divine...the Clouds?

Strepsiades Oh yes, indeed!

Sokrates Then take your seat on the sacred stool.

He sits down on the pallet-bed vacated by his son.

Strepsiades There we go, I'm seated.

Sokrates Now, take hold of this garland.

He removes the one he has just swiped from the 'Herm' and hands it to him.

Strepsiades What is the point of the garland? Uh-oh! You don't mean to offer me as a sacrificial victim like Athamas?

Sokrates No. We are desirous that all our candidate-initiates <undergo> these <holy rites>.

Strepsiades So, how am I going to benefit?

Sokrates You'll become a polished con-man, a fluent chatterbox, a flowery orator...will you stop wriggling around!

Strepsiades By Heaven, you won't put one over on me, at any rate! I'll become 'floury' alright, if I'm thoroughly dusted for sacrifice.

Sokrates (*intoning*) Let him who is of advanced years maintain a <reverent> silence and give ear unto <our> prayer!

O lord and master, infinite Air, Thou who holdest the Earth in suspension!
And Thou radiant Space! And Clouds, ye goddesses of the awe-inspiring thunder-flash!
Arise! Reveal your majesty in the air on high to him who holds you in his thoughts!

Strepsiades Whoa, not just yet! Not before I wrap myself up to avoid taking a shower.

(He hastily lifts his cloak over his head while explaining)

As bad luck would have it, I left home without my <rain>-hat.

Sokrates Approach then, O revered Clouds, and put on a show for this fellow here!

Whether you are perched upon the snow-clad peaks of holy Olympos,
Whether you lead your sacred dance for the Nymphs in the gardens of father Okeanos,
Whether instead you draw with golden goblets from the outlets of the waters of the Nile,
Or occupy the inland sea of Maiotis, or the snowy promontory of Mimas,
Receive <our> sacrifice, hearken unto our prayer and show yourselves at our holy rites!

*A drum-roll signifying the rumble of distant thunder answers his summons and the **Chorus of Clouds** is heard off-stage.*

Choral Song 275-90

O come eternal Clouds! Let us arise and show
Our glistening and translucent forms <to those who dwell below>.
From our paternal Ocean whose thunder rumbles low,
To the lofty, tree-capped mountain peaks, let us arise and go.

With telescopic vision let us cast our gaze around
And make things fruitful down below by watering the ground
While helping holy rivers to increase their gurgling sound
And replenish booming surf, against the shore to pound.

Episode 291-297

Sokrates O magnificently majestic Clouds, manifestly my message has been received!

(To Strepsiades)

Did you note the low rumble of thunder which accompanies the sound of their voices, instilling reverence for their divinity?

Strepsiades I do indeed reverence you, most worshipful ones, and <to prove it> I reciprocate your thunderous flatulence with my own.

(He breaks wind ostentatiously)

I'm so in awe of them, actually, so sh-shaken up that...if it's permissible...at this point, in fact, even if it's not...I've got the runs!

Sokrates None of your lavatory humour, please! Don't go behaving like those god-forsaken comic

-actors do! But, watch your mouth, for a great air-squadron of divine entities is soaring aloft on <the wings of> song.

Choral Song 298-313

Chorus Maidens, bring your rain-storms,
to visit the illustrious land of Pallas,
and look upon the cherished country of Kekrops
with its noble folk, who respect the mystery of holy rites.
There, where the temple <of Demeter> receives the initiated,
and in the sacred rites is re-consecrated;
where offerings are made to the heavenly gods;
where there are high-ceilinged temples,
and images dedicated to the blessed gods,
and religious processions are piously conducted;
where the sacrificial victims are finely garlanded,
and every manner of feast day is celebrated in its season.
And with spring's onset, by Dionysos' grace,
the stimulating competition of tuneful choirs <is heard>,
accompanied by the resonant music of reed-pipes.

Episode 313-456

Strepsiades In the name of god, Sokrates, please tell me whose were the women's voices intoning that awe-inspiring <hymn>? They're not some sort of phantom-women, I hope?

Sokrates No, indeed! They are the clouds of the sky who are important divine entities for ...gentlemen of leisure.

<It is they> who furnish us with opinions, the art of discussion and mental acuity...along with talking nonsense, avoiding the topic, being argumentative and hogging the conversation.

Strepsiades So, that's what I heard? It was *their* singing! It lit a fuse under me. Now, I want to speak nebulously and prattle vaporously. I want to pinion an opinion with a pointed point of view and counter a <rational> argument with...a different one.

I long to see them with my own eyes, now...if that's possible.

He peers into the wings expecting them to appear.

Sokrates Then, look in the direction of Mount Parnes, yonder! For I see them now silently descending.

He stares up into the sky.

Strepsiades Where? Oh, come on, show me!

The members of the semi-chorus begin to descend through the auditorium.

Sokrates It is they! A great many of them, drifting through the wooded valleys...there they are on the hill-sides! 325

Strepsiades What's the matter with me? Why can't I see them?

Sokrates They're right by the entrance.

The remaining Clouds start to drift in from the side passage.

Strepsiades Only just now this instant in fact...<do I>...

Sokrates Yes, you must discern them by now...unless your eyes are out of focus!

Strepsiades Indeed, I do, for now they are...everywhere. (*Underwhelmed*) O much-revered ones!

Sokrates Were you in the dark regarding their divinity <'til now>? Had you no idea?

Strepsiades None whatsoever! I thought that they were mist...condensation...vapour.

Sokrates No, by heaven, because you do not appreciate the fact that they are the ones who sustain most of the pundits, raving prognosticators, medical quacks, gentlemen of leisure with flowing locks who sport gemstones on their manicured fingers and those men of spurious spirituality who compose folk-songs to accompany traditional dances. They keep these idle good-for-nothings

going, because they write and sing about them. Verses like, “*the refracted radiance of rainy clouds’ fierce onrush*”, “*the wavy locks of Typho’s hundred heads*”, “*seething storm-squalls*”, and then “*moisture carried by the wind*”, “*misshapen, air-borne fliers*” and “*watery showers from dewy nebula*”. Then, for writing these <poetic gems> they get to swallow down “*great, tasty piscine portions*” and “*thrushes’ avian flesh*” <as a reward>.

[**Strepsiades**] It’s thanks to these...<goddesses>, you mean?

Sokrates Deservedly, don’t you think?

Strepsiades So tell me then, if they (*indicating the members of the chorus*) really are clouds, how come they look like mortal women? Because, those <clouds> (*gazing up at the sky*) don’t look like that.

Sokrates Well, what do <you think> those look like?

Strepsiades It’s hard to say...they resemble as it were...flying fleeces. They don’t look like *women* at all. These ’ere, on the other hand, have got...er...*noses*, for heaven’s sake!

Sokrates Let me ask you this, then.

Strepsiades Go ahead, ask away!

Sokrates Have you ever, before now, been gazing up and seen a cloud which resembled <say> a centaur...or a leopard<-skin>...or a wolf...or a bull?

Strepsiades Yes, yes I have! What does this prove?

Sokrates <It shows> that they can become anything they like. So, if they happen to spot one of these wild fellows with long, shaggy hair, like Xenophantes’ son, they make fun of his excessive *look* by looking like ‘centaurs’ themselves. 350

Strepsiades So, what if they look down and spot Simon, that predator of the public purse? How do they react?

Sokrates They immediately reflect his character by turning themselves into wolves.

Strepsiades So that explains it! When they caught sight of Kleonymos the other day, they recognized him as the timorous discarder of his shield and that’s why they turned into deer.

Sokrates Yes, and that’s why they have turned into females now, because they noticed... Kleisthenes!

Strepsiades In that case, I greet you as my sovereigns. You are rulers of the world, and if ever you have <deigned to speak> to any other <mortal>, let your voices burst forth now across the sky for me too.

Chorus Leader

Greetings, o relic of an older generation, seeker after artful arguments!

Greetings to you too, high priest of pointless nit-picking! Tell us, what is it you want?

Know that we certainly would not give the time of day to any other of the current crop of cosmological gurus...except Prodikos. We respond to him on account of his knowledge and intellect. To you, on the other hand, <we answer> because you pick your way along the street like a distinguished grouse, turning your gaze from side to side, putting up with considerable discomfort through your lack of footwear, and because you adopt that *lofty* expression which you derive from us.

Strepsiades O Earth! The sound of <her> voice! How divine, how awe-inspiring, how marvellous!

Sokrates You see, these are the only <>true> divinities, all the rest are just ‘hot air’.

Strepsiades Steady on, by <Mother> Earth! Do you folk not hold Olympian Zeus to be a god?

Sokrates Who’s Zeus? Don’t waste your breath. Zeus doesn’t count!

Strepsiades What do you mean? Who makes the rain, then? Just explain that to me, for starters.

Sokrates Surely these <goddesses> do, don’t they? I’ll prove it to you conclusively. Look, when have you ever known it to rain without a cloud in sight? And yet, *he* ought to make rain when they are away and the sky’s clear.

Strepsiades You’re right, by Apollo! Your point is well-taken. And yet, I honestly believed until now that Zeus pisses through a sieve. But, tell <me something>. Who is it makes the thunder which scares the daylight out of me?

Sokrates They do, as they tumble about.

Strepsiades Nothing cramps your style! How do they do that?

Sokrates When they've soaked up a great deal of water, they cannot help but drift about and, brimming with rain, they start to sag under duress. Thereupon, they collide forcibly against each other and explode with a deafening report.

Strepsiades But, what makes them behave like that, if not Zeus?

Sokrates No, it's not Zeus, it's the flow of the heavens.

Strepsiades *Heavenly Flow*? That's a new one on me. So, Zeus is not around and *Heavenly Flow* now rules supreme in his place. But, you still have not really explained to me about the loud noise of the thunder.

Sokrates Were you not listening when I just told you how the clouds filled up with water and then collided with each other to produce the thunderous noise...due to their density?

Strepsiades Oh, come on, who could believe that?

Sokrates You can learn from your own experience. Have you not, on occasion, become bloated with greasy soup at the <feast of the> pan-Athenaia? You will have suffered an upset stomach, then, and felt a sudden spasm rumbling through <your gut>, did you not?

Strepsiades Yes, by god! It certainly does the works on me; I'm unsettled straightaway. Even a little bit of broth rumbles like thunder and makes a terrible racket. It starts off softly, "parp, parp!" then it shifts gear, "pa-a-rp, pa-a-a-rp!" Until I start shitting, then it really thunders, "PA-PA-PA, PA-A-RP!"...like they do.

Sokrates Just think then, if that's the kind of fart produced from that little tummy of yours, is it not reasonable for the atmosphere, being infinite, to thunder tremendously?

Strepsiades That explains why the words *thunderclap* and *thunder-crap* are so alike! But, explain this, where does the fiery flash of lightning come from, which burns us to a crisp if it strikes us, and leaves those who survive done to a turn? It's patently obvious that this is sent by Zeus to strike those who lie under oath.

Sokrates (*beginning to lose patience*) How can it be, you foolish, bleating, ante-diluvian fossil? If he were aiming at perjurers, then why has he not incinerated Simon, or Kleonymos or Theoros...all of whom are first-class oath-breakers? Instead of that, he strikes his very own temple and Athens' Sounion cape and the mighty oaks. Why do that? Has an oak tree perjured itself? 402

Strepsiades (*becoming flustered*) I don't know <about that>, but you seem to have a good point. In that case, then, what *is* lightning?

Sokrates Whenever a current of dry air is drawn up into the clouds and becomes trapped in them, it inflates them from inside like a bladder and then as a result of the pressure built-up it bursts them apart so that it rushes out through their dense mass and due to its sudden violent movement it self-combusts.

Strepsiades By heaven! That sounds exactly like what happened to me at the festival of Zeus one time. I forgot to cut a slit in a tripe-sausage while I was roasting it, so it grew bloated, and all of a sudden...the shit hit the fan! It exploded, spattering my eyes and scalding my face. 411

[**Sokrates** (423) So then, from now on you will hold no entity to be divine other than the trinity in which we believe; this Void and the Clouds and the power of Speech.

Strepsiades I would not even exchange a single word with the other gods, even if I bumped into them. I wouldn't offer them a sacrifice, pour a libation or burn any incense <to them>.] 426

Chorus Leader (412) O mortal, your desire to share our immense learning will bring you success among the Athenians and throughout Greece, provided you store it in your memory and think about it, and provided your spirit is inured to hardship and you do not get tired of standing up or walking, and you do not let the cold bother you, nor be overly concerned about having <your> breakfast, but go without sleep, keep away from gymnasiums and other such mindless pursuits, and if, as a clever man should, you make it your paramount concern to excel in your conduct, your deliberations and in the cut and thrust of debate.

Strepsiades Well now, if it's a matter of having an indomitable spirit, being unable to sleep for worry, and surviving on a meagre diet of bitter, wild herbs, then put your mind at rest. If these are your conditions, I won't hesitate to deliver myself up to be hammered into shape. 422

Chorus Leader (427) Tell us, then, how we can help you, confident in the knowledge that, if you honour us, worship us and seek to become an adept, you'll not go wrong.

Strepsiades In that case, O mistresses, I need just the following teensy favour. <I want> to become far and away the finest speaker in the Greek language.

Chorus Leader Then you shall receive this gift from us and hereafter, by <the teaching of> this man here, no-one will carry more motions in public fora than you.

Strepsiades No, don't give me the ability to speak on major issues. That's not what I want. Just enable me to pervert the course of justice...in my favour and evade the clutches of my creditors.

Chorus Leader Then, since you are not asking a huge favour, you shall have your heart's desire. Go ahead and place yourself unreservedly in the hands of our servants.

Strepsiades I will put my faith in you and do as you say, because I am being forced into it by thoroughbred race-horses and a marriage which has been my undoing.

So now, I deliver this body of mine into their hands to do exactly what they wish with it, to beat me...starve me...leave me dying of thirst...unwashed...and freezing...or flay me alive, as long as I can escape my debts and have people consider me to be an 'audacious', 'glib', 'stop-at-nothing', 'pig-headed', 'obnoxious', 'fabricator of falsehoods', a 'teller of tall tales', a 'court-room practitioner forever reeling off statutes', a 'sly rogue', an 'agile fox', a 'pretentious scumbag', a 'provocative pariah', a 'man who twists the truth', who's a 'pain in the neck' and 'in love with the sound of his own voice'. As long as I am called these things by the people I come up against, let them do exactly as they wish. And, I swear by the goddess <who puts food on the table> that, if <your servants> like, they can make sausage-meat out of me and serve me up to their intellectuals.

Lyric Dialogue 457-75

Chorus This guy certainly has an enterprising attitude and get-up-and-go! Rest assured that when we've taught you these <skills> your reputation among your fellow-men will be...sky-high.

Strepsiades Can I rest assured...?

Chorus That, with my help, you will live out the rest of your days, the envy of all men.

Strepsiades Am I likely to see this, really?

Chorus Yes, indeed! Queues will be camped out on your doorstep wanting to meet you and have a consultation, to get your opinion on their cases, a fitting match for your intellect, over suits and counter-claims involving substantial sums.

Exhortation 476-7

Chorus Leader (to Sokrates) So then, make a start at teaching the old timer the elements of what he is going <to study>, get his mind working, and put his comprehension to the test.

Episode 478-509

Sokrates Very well then, describe for me your personal disposition, so that armed with this knowledge, I can, henceforth, bring modern operational strategies to bear upon you.

Strepsiades (*alarmed*) You...what? Do you intend to batter down my defences? Heaven help me!

Sokrates No, I want only to learn some minor details from you...<such as> do you have a retentive memory?

Strepsiades As god is my witness, yes...and no. That is to say, if on the one hand I have a debt to collect, my memory is excellent. If, on the other hand, I'm the poor debtor, then I become rather absent-minded.

Sokrates In that case, are you studious by nature?

Strepsiades I don't have the gift of the gab, but I do have the 'gift of the grab'.

Sokrates So, how will you be capable of learning?

Strepsiades Oh, I'll manage, don't worry about that.

Sokrates Well, let's see how you do. Any testing tidbit of knowledge I may set before you with regard the elements, I want you to grab it straightaway.

Strepsiades How's that? You're going to feed me tasty tidbits of knowledge doggy-style?

Sokrates The man's an incorrigible ignoramus! I'm afraid you will need to be beaten into shape, you old codger. Let's see now, how would you react to being struck?

Strepsiades (*going through the motions in his mind*) I'm being beaten...I give it a few moments, then...I call for a witness and with that...in a jiffy, I take the case to court.

Sokrates (*resignedly*) Hmm, well lay down your cloak then!

Strepsiades Have I done something wrong?

Sokrates No, just that it's our practice to enter <the school> with minimal clothing.

Strepsiades But, I've no intention of going in to plant incriminating evidence.

Sokrates What are you blathering about? Take it off!

500

Strepsiades obediently lays down his cloak on the bed and starts to remove his shoes.

Strepsiades So, tell me this then. If I pay attention and study assiduously, which of your students will I take after?

Sokrates To all appearances, you'll be exactly like Chairephon.

Strepsiades Just my luck! I'll become a ghost of my <former> self.

Sokrates Do stop babbling and come along with me...and be quick about it!

He hastens into the 'Thinking-shop'.

Strepsiades (*calling after him*) Before I do, give me a sweet biscuit to have in my hands, because, <I feel> like someone descending into the <house> of Trophonios, I'm nervous of going inside.

Sokrates (*poking his head out again*) Get a move on! Why are you skulking in the doorway?

He drags the trembling Strepsiades inside. The doorman comes out to take in the pallet bed.

Valediction 510-7

Chorus Leader (*to Strepsiades*) Go then with our blessing for the courage you are displaying.

Chorus (*turning to address the audience*) May things turn out happily for the man! In spite of his being well-advanced in years, he cultivates his inner man and schools himself in the latest ideas.

Excursus 518-62

Now the poet addresses the audience; presumably the leader of the chorus acts as his mouthpiece.

Chorus Leader To you who are watching <this play>, I swear by Dionysos, who has fostered me, that I shall speak the truth without reserve. As a result, may I be adjudged the winner and acquire a reputation for wit.

Seeing as I take you to be an intelligent audience and consider that this is far and away the best of my comic-dramas, one which put me to a great deal of effort, I thought you deserved to relish it again. Back then <when it was presented for the first time>, I found myself retiring <from the drama competition> defeated by unsophisticated men, as being unworthy <of the prize>! I blame the intelligent ones among you for that <outcome>, because you are the ones for whom I put in all that effort. Nonetheless, I do not intend to ever leave the clever chaps among you in the lurch, because ever since <my play>, "*The Chaste and the Degenerate*" was rapturously received here <in this very theatre> by men, to whom criticising comes just as easily – when I myself was still an *ingénue* and it was not yet acceptable for me to *produce*, I *put it out in the open* and *another took it up and took it on*, and you then, right nobly, *nurtured* it and *educated* it – ever since then, I have felt that I have a binding agreement with you.

That's why, on this occasion, this comedy of mine has come, as in that tragic tale of Elektra, seeking to find, if it can, an audience with the same discernment, because if she spots <such spectators>, she will recognise <them>, <just as Elektra recognized> the lock of her brother's hair. Just consider how essentially demure *she* is! To begin with she didn't come on with a flaccid, rosy-tipped, thick, leather appendage which she had sewn on, just to raise a laugh from the immature; nor did she poke fun at bald guys; nor did she stagger around in a drunken reel; nor did

some old guy start beating his antagonist with a walking-stick while declaiming, so as to cover up for tired jokes; <nobody> dashed on waving torches or crying “goodness gracious me!” No, <my play> has made her entrance, confident in herself and relying on her script. I too, as writer, am cut from the same <plain> cloth, I don’t put on <h>airs, nor do I attempt to cheat you by introducing the same gags two and three times over, instead I am clever enough to be continually presenting innovative comic styles, completely different from one another, but always brilliant.

It was I who punched Kleon in the belly when he was at the peak of his power, but I did not have the gall to jump up and down on him again when he was on the ground. Whereas, all the <others>, as soon as Hyperbolos here handed them the chance, stuck it to the poor sod continually... his mother as well! Eupolis was the first <of them>, he hauled the fellow along <like a slave> in his ‘*Marikās*’; roughly parodying our “*Cavalrymen*”, the ruffian! What’s more, for the sake of the ‘drunk’s reel’, he brought on with him an inebriated, old woman, the one Phrynichos created originally...the one that the sea-monster tried to devour. Then, Hermippos wrote a play aimed at Hyperbolos again, and now all the rest have stuck their oar into him <vigorously>, imitating my simile of the eels. So, don’t let anyone <of you> enjoy my <comedies>, if he finds these <others> funny. If, however, you are entertained by the <witty ideas> I’ve come up with, your perspicacity will be talked of for years to come.

Strophe 563-574

Chorus First of all, I call upon Zeus, the mighty lord of the gods who rules on high, to <watch our> dance.

And he whose immense strength wields the trident,
causing violent upheaval of both earth and salt-sea.

I call too upon our father Atmosphere, whose name is exalted and revered,
who nurtures all living things.

And he who drives the chariot <of the sun>,
dominating the surface of the earth with his dazzling rays,
a great immortal power for gods as well as mortals.

Afterword 575-594

Chorus Leader Most discriminating spectators, give us your attention!

We have been wronged and we charge you in the presence <of witnesses> that, though of all the gods we are most beneficial to your city, we are the only deities to whom you neither sacrifice nor pour libations. We are the ones, who keep an eye on you, for, whenever anyone sets out for no good reason, then, either we thunder or start drizzling. Besides when you were going to elect that enemy of the gods, the Paphlagonian tanner <Kleon>, as a general, we knit our brows and made one hell of a racket, with flashes of lightning and thunder-claps.

The Moon, in turn, forsook her <usual> course, and the Sun drew in his wick forthwith, declaring he would not shine for you, if Kleon was elected general. But, you elected him anyway!

Well, they do say that this city makes a habit of following bad advice, though conversely <they say> this, that the gods turn your mistakes to your advantage.

We will provide a simple demonstration of how even this <mistake of yours> will come good: by catching that gannet Kleon in the act as he swoops down to take a bribe or snatch something, and silencing him with a wooden collar on his neck, so even if you were somewhat led astray, the city will return to its normal condition again and you will be the better for it.

Antistrophe 595-606

Chorus Shine around us, Phoibos, lord of Delos,
you who occupy “*the high, beetling crag*” of Kynthos.
And Thou, blessed <maid>, who dwell’st at Ephesos
in house of solid gold, wherein
the daughters of the Lydians revere you deeply.

And Thou who art our native deity, Athene,
Who wears the aegis, and holds the reins, protectress of the city.
And Thou who occupy rocky Parnassos, Dionysos,
Leading the revellers, the Delphic Bacchants,
with <your> gleaming pine-brand.

Another Afterword 607-626

Chorus Leader We had got ourselves all ready to set out <on our flight> here when Selina, goddess of the Moon, happened to drop by and told us to pass on a message. To begin with, she says “Hi!” to the Athenians and their allies. Next, she told us she is irritated at having been dreadfully treated, despite the manifest benefits she provides for you all...and that’s not just empty words. For a start, there’s at least a drachma’s worth of torch-light per month, when you go out of an evening you all tell <your slave>, “You don’t need to buy a torch, boy, because *The Moon shines bright*”. She claims to benefit you in *other* ways too! ...also, she says you do not keep a proper tally of the days and as a result make a complete dog’s dinner of the calendar. As a result, she says, whenever the gods miss out on a feast that’s due in accordance with the reckoning of the days and have to go back home cheated out of their supper, they blame *her* every time. Besides, when you ought to be sacrificing, you are extracting evidence under torture and holding trials. It often happens that when we divine beings refrain from feasting, in mourning for Memnon or Sarpedon, you are pouring wine and making merry. In response to your indifference, when Hyperbolos had been appointed by lot this year, to serve as state representative to the Amphictyonic Council, his crown of office was removed by us gods. So he’ll know in future that he ought to regulate his daily calendar by the phases of the Moon.

Episode 627-99

Sokrates (*emerging from the ‘Thinking-shop’ with a dazed expression (on his mask)*) As I live and breathe, I swear by Emptiness and Thin Air, I’ve never set eyes on such a country bumpkin. There’s no dealing with him, he’s past it, can’t retain anything. When he is trying to pick up any neat little poetic phrase, however miniscule, he’s forgotten it before it’s sunk in.

(*He wearily summons up his last reserves of patience*)

But anyhow here goes. (*He begins to intone loudly*) I summon him out here into the daylight!
Where is Strepsiades?

(*The old man pokes his head round the door*)

Come forth and bring your pallet-bed!

Strepsiades is seen to tug at something out of sight.

Strepsiades Can’t! The bed-bugs won’t let me bring it out.

He eventually pulls the bed out.

Sokrates Put it down this minute and give me your attention.

Strepsiades Right you are.

He leaves the bed in the doorway and comes out.

Sokrates Come along now and tell me, of those subjects you have never studied at all, which do you wish to learn first of all now? Is it quantities; is it scansion or is it the sung words?

Strepsiades I’d like to learn about quantities, because just recently a corn-seller short-changed me with a two-quart measure.

Sokrates That’s not what I am asking you. What is the stateliest <musical> quantity, is it the three-step or the quartette, in your opinion?

Strepsiades To my mind nothing beats the...half-peck.

Sokrates That’s nonsense, man!

Strepsiades I assure you that a half-peck has four quarts!

Sokrates You may as well drop dead now. What a dull-witted peasant you are!

(*Reflecting*) Perhaps, anyhow, you might manage to learn about metre.

Strepsiades I don’t see how scansion will help me with regard my luncheon.

Sokrates Well, for a start, it would help you express yourself neatly in conversation, and help you distinguish which metre is suited to military movements and conversely, which metre suits dancing.

Strepsiades Oh, I know the dance beat, by Zeus.

652

Sokrates So, tell <me> then.

Strepsiades <It's> none other than the old in-out, in-out!

(He proceeds to demonstrate his lewder version of the hokey-cokey, but is soon out of breath).

Anyhow, it used to be that years ago, when I was still a youngster.

Sokrates You are left-footed as well as uncouth.

Strepsiades Don't you see, my dear chap, these are not the subjects I want to learn at all.

Sokrates Well, what do you want?

Strepsiades *(excitedly)* That...that argument which has least to support it.

Sokrates No, there are other subjects which you must cover before that.

(He ponders awhile)

What four-footed creatures are rightly considered male ones?

Strepsiades Oh, I know the male ones alright...I haven't lost my marbles, you know. There's a ram...a billy-goat...a bull...a dog...a chicken.

Sokrates Observe your error. Don't you see that you are calling both the male and female by the same noun?

Strepsiades Am I? Kindly explain.

Sokrates Aren't you? <You would say> chicken and...chicken.

Strepsiades Shake me, Poseidon! That's true. From now on, how ought I to call the two?

Sokrates One is 'the cock' and the other is 'the cockette'.

Strepsiades 'The cockette'? Yes, I like that, by...Air. For this lesson alone, you deserve to have your whole threshing-circle filled with corn.

Sokrates There you go! You've just done it again. You referred to *my* threshing-floor, but it's a female appurtenance!

Strepsiades How's that? Do I call the threshing-place masculine?

Sokrates Yes, indeed. In the same way you <would> call Kleonymos <masculine>.

Strepsiades How so? Explain that.

Sokrates For you, the term 'threshing-place' has the same <gender> as Kleonymos.

Strepsiades Come now, my good chap! Kleonymos hasn't got a threshing place; his grinding gets done in a round mortar. But, anyway, what am I to call *it*...<his area>, from now on?

677

Sokrates Why, 'winnowing-fanny' of course, just like you say Fanny Hill (Sostrate).

Strepsiades So, fanny is female?

Sokrates That's right.

Strepsiades So, if fan should be 'fanny', that chap should be...Kleo-naomi!

Sokrates Ah, but you still have to learn about proper nouns; which are masculine and which are feminine.

Strepsiades Oh, I know which are feminine alright.

Sokrates Tell me.

Strepsiades Lysilla, Philinna, Kleitagora, Demetria.

Sokrates And which are masculine?

Strepsiades Loads and loads! Philoxenos, Melesias, Ameinias.

Sokrates But, these are not masculine, you dim wit!

Strepsiades Do *we* not consider them masculine?

Sokrates We certainly do not! Think about it, if you came across Ameinias, how would you catch his attention?

Strepsiades How? Like this... *(turning to the front row of spectators).*

"This way, Ameinia, over here!"

Sokrates Don't you see? You are calling Ameinias just as you would call a woman.

Strepsiades Quite appropriate really, for one who doesn't take part in military campaigns. But, these are things everyone knows, why am I taking lessons in them?

Sokrates (*sighing*) God knows!

(*He indicates the pallet-bed by the door*) Anyhow, why don't you lie down over here?

Strepsiades And do what?

Sokrates Try figuring out one of your problems.

Strepsiades Not here on the bed, please! If I have to, permit me to do the figuring out on the ground at any rate.

Sokrates (*sternly*) There is no way except this way.

He goes back into the 'Thinking-shop'.

Strepsiades Just my luck! I'll be taken to the cleaners by the bed bugs today!

He sits down on the bed and gingerly settles himself under the cloak which is lying on it.

Choral Song 700-706

Chorus Really think about your problem and focus on it,

Wholly concentrate your thoughts and put pressure on your mind.

But, whenever you find yourself unable to reach a solution,

Then quickly move on to another mental problem.

Only keep the pleasant notion of sleep away from your eyes.

Episode 707-803

Strepsiades (*He jumps up with a cry*) Ou-ouch! Ou-ouch!

Chorus What's wrong with you? What's your problem?

Strepsiades Poor me, I am finished! They're crawling out of the bed to put the bite on me...the Flea-asians! (*He cavorts around in an attempt to rid himself of his infestation*)

They are making a meal of my <spare> ribs. They are sucking out my very life-blood, testing my testicles, attempting anal penetration and finishing me off!

Chorus Well, don't make such a song and dance about it.

Strepsiades And why not? My money's gone, ditto my healthy complexion, as well as my outdoor footwear. My life is over, I'm practically finished. I'm singing to stay awake.

Drawn by the din, Sokrates reappears in the doorway.

Sokrates Hey, what are you doing? Are you not cogitating?

Strepsiades Who me? Absolutely, as Poseidon is my witness!

Sokrates And so what question, pray, have you pondered?

Strepsiades Whether there will be anything left when the bed-bugs have finished with me. 725

Sokrates (*exasperated*) I hope you meet a miserable end.

He retreats in a huff (or in 'huff a minute')

Strepsiades (*calling after him dejectedly*) My end is already pretty miserable, dear chap.

Chorus Leader Just cover yourself up <with your cloak> and hang in there! You have to come up with a way to avoid <paying your debts>; a method of cheating.

Strepsiades Dear me! I just wish that some <local magistrate> would impose a verdict that lets me con my debtors, <it would be> like laying a fleecy, <flea-free> blanket over me.

He yawns and conceals himself under his cloak. Before long he is snoring.

Sokrates pops in again.

Sokrates So then, let me check first of all and see what this fellow is up to.

Hey! Are you fast asleep, there?

Strepsiades (*awaking with a start, speaks from beneath his cloak*) Who me? Apollo knows I'm not!

Sokrates Have you grasped anything?

Strepsiades Not in so many words, heaven help me.

Sokrates What nothing at all?

Strepsiades (*throwing back the cloak*) Not a sausage! ...except this one in my right hand.

Sokrates Kindly put it away at once and try to come up with an idea!

Strepsiades What am I <supposed> to think about, Sokrates? Explain that to me exactly.

Sokrates You first, you tell me what it is you wish to find out.

Strepsiades You've heard me <say> countless times what I'm looking for. I'm concerned about the interest I owe and how I can avoid paying any <money> back to anyone.

Chorus Leader Cover yourself up and proceed then. Allow your thoughts free rein and examine the situation in minute detail. Analyse things properly and try to spot <a solution>.

Strepsiades Oo-oooh, the things I have to put up with!

Chorus Leader Just stay still. And if you are flummoxed over some train of thought, jump off and let it go on its way. Then, when you judge it right again, set it in motion once more and keep a tight rein on it.

Before long a muffled sound comes from the recumbent figure.

Strepsiades (*wheedling*) Oh, Sokrates, dear chap!

Sokrates What is it, old timer?

Strepsiades I've found a way of avoiding paying interest.

Sokrates: Expound it <for me>.

Strepsiades (*throwing off the cloak.*) Tell me what you think of this...

Sokrates What exactly?

Strepsiades If I bought a woman from Thessaly who specialises in spells and had her charm the moon down during the night and then I was to keep it confined in a crescent-shaped crest-case, as one would a mirror, I could hold on to it and keep an eye on it. 752

Sokrates And what precisely would you gain from this?

Strepsiades If the moon never rose any more, <I'd benefit> in that I would not have to pay out the interest <I owe>.

Sokrates How so?

Strepsiades Because money is loaned by the <lunar> month.

Sokrates All very good, but in that case, let me put to you another tricky problem. Suppose you were to be sued for five talents, tell me how you would make the suit go away.

Strepsiades How?...How?...I don't know, but I can try and find a way.

Chorus Leader Do not restrict your reasoning to revolving around your own situation all the time, like a beetle with cotton thread round its leg. Instead, let your mind float off into the atmosphere.

(Strepsiades ponders a little and then decides to fly a kite)

Strepsiades I have it! A brilliant way to make the suit go away...as you yourself will agree.

Sokrates What way?

Strepsiades Have you seen before now that stone which the apothecaries sell, the pretty, transparent one they use to light fires?

Sokrates You mean *glass*.

Strepsiades I do?

Sokrates So, how would you...?

Strepsiades If I was to take this <stone>, when the court scribe was having the indictment incised, and standing a little way off... holding it up to the sun like this, I could melt away what was written regarding my case?

Sokrates Gracious me, yes, that's scientific!

Strepsiades Phew! That's a pleasant relief! My five-ton lawsuit has been struck off.

Sokrates So then, without further ado, tackle the following <situation>. 775

Strepsiades What's that?

Sokrates <Imagine that> your witnesses haven't appeared and you are about to lose the case, how would you counter the charge and avoid having to pay.

Strepsiades Simple! Easy as pie!

Sokrates Well, tell <me>.

Strepsiades I'm just about to. While there was still one case to be heard ahead of mine... before my case was called...I'd run off and hang myself.

Sokrates That's no answer.

Strepsiades I swear it is, as the gods are my witness, because nobody is going to bring a case against me when I'm dead.

Sokrates You are talking nonsense. Off with you, I'm not going to try teaching you anymore.

Strepsiades Why's that? Please do, Sokrates, <I implore you> in the name of the gods.

Sokrates No, whatever you were taught you immediately forgot. For instance, tell me what was the first lesson you were taught?

Strepsiades Right, let me see, what was the first...what was the first thing? Who was the one who was grinding his barley-corns?

Sokrates You are way past it, old fellow! You are excessively forgetful and dull-witted.

Strepsiades Dear me! What fate awaits me then, with my luck? As I have not managed to learn how to flap my tongue, I'll be done for. But, you Clouds, can't you give me some advice to help me?

Chorus Leader Our advice, old timer, is that, if you have a grown son, you send him along to study in your place.

Strepsiades (*dejectedly*) Actually, I do have a son, a finely bred one at that, but what am I to do, he isn't willing to study.

[**Sokrates**] You put up with that?

Strepsiades I have to; he's well-built and works out. What's more, he comes of a line of fancy ladies...Koisyra among them. But, anyhow, I'm going to fetch him...and, if he refuses <again>, you can be sure I shall throw him out of the house. So, you just go inside and wait for me; I won't be a jiffy.

He hurries off back to his own house, leaving Sokrates outside for the moment.

Choral Song (Antistrophe) 804-13

Chorus (*Addressing Sokrates*) You do appreciate, of course, that most of the blessings you are about to receive – it's just a matter of time – will be conferred by us alone of the gods? This chap here is ready to do whatever you tell <him>. As for you, since you recognize when a man is scared out of his wits and his dependency <on you> is self-evident, you will take the fullest advantage of him you can. Be quick though, because such situations have a tendency to go pear-shaped one way or another.

Episode 813-888

Strepsiades comes out of his house and turns to shout angrily at the open door.

Strepsiades I tell you, by Mist, you are not going to remain in my household any longer. Go and eat away the pillars of Megakles!

Pheidippides appears in the doorway.

Pheidippides Come now, father, what has got into you? By Zeus of Olympos, you're losing your marbles!

Strepsiades There you go...how infantile, Olympian Zeus indeed! Fancy believing in Zeus, at your age!

Pheidippides And why precisely is that funny to you?

Strepsiades Because I just realized that you're <still> a child with out-moded ideas. But, why not come over here and advance your knowledge. I'm going to explain something to you which will make a man of you, when you know it...Only, you mustn't tell it to anybody.

Pheidippides advances hesitantly towards him.

Pheidippides O.K. What is it? 825

Strepsiades (*speaking in a conspiratorial whisper that can be heard at the back of the auditorium*) A moment ago, you swore by Zeus.

Pheidippides (*suspiciously*) Y-e-es.

Strepsiades (*gloating*) Do you appreciate the value of education now? Zeus is not in the picture anymore, Pheidippides.

Pheidippides Well, who is?

Strepsiades *Heavenly Flow* is in charge now; he's given Zeus the push.

Pheidippides Bleah! What is this rubbish?

Strepsiades That's how it is, it's a fact.

Pheidippides Says who?

Strepsiades Sokrates of Melos...and that expert in fleas' shoe-sizes, Chairephon.

Pheidippides Has your lunacy taken hold to such an extent that you put your faith in these provocateurs.

Strepsiades (*shocked*) Watch what you say! Do not disparage clever intellectuals. Such is their thrift that not one of them has ever cut his hair or rubbed oil on his skin or gone to take a bath at the <municipal> baths, while you are flushing my livelihood <down the drain> as if I were already dead. So, hurry up, go and become a student on my behalf.

Pheidippides But, is there anything...anything useful that is, one could learn from those people?

Strepsiades Certainly, all human knowledge! You'll realize just how uneducated you are and how lacking in subtlety of mind. (*He has an idea*) Just wait here for me one moment.

He goes back into the house.

Pheidippides Dear me! Father's out of his mind. What am I to do?

Should I take him before the court and have him declared insane?

Or, inform the undertakers about his senile dementia.

Strepsiades comes hurrying out of the house accompanied by a household slave.

Strepsiades Take a look here. Tell me what you think this is.

The slave holds up a rooster in one hand.

Pheidippides It's a chicken.

Strepsiades Fair enough, then what's this?

He motions to the slave to hold up the hen which is in his other hand.

Pheidippides It's a chicken.

Strepsiades You use the same word for both? You make yourself downright ridiculous. From now on, to avoid doing that, call this one a 'cock' instead and this other one a 'cockette'. 851

The slave exits.

Pheidippides *Cockette!* Is this the sort of subtlety you picked up just now from your stay with those...aboriginals?

Strepsiades Yes, and I learned a lot of other stuff as well, only each time I was taught something I promptly forgot it...due to my advanced age.

Pheidippides Doubtless, that accounts for the loss of your cloak too?

Strepsiades Oh no, I didn't lose it; I've just thought it through to the end.

Pheidippides Well, what has become of your outdoor shoes, you careless man?

Strepsiades Those I did lose, but as Perikles <would say, they were> "a necessary forfeiture".

But, come along step on it, let's be going. Bend the rules a bit, if only to humour your <old> dad.

Even as I was acceding to *your* <wishes> that time, when you were a lisping kid, not even six years-old. I used the first obol I received for jury-service to buy you a mini-chariot at the festival of Zeus.

Pheidippides (*grimly*) Be sure that in due course you will pay the price for these <impositions>.

Strepsiades (*ignoring his warning*) I'm glad I've convinced you, anyhow.

(He goes over to the door of the 'Thinking-Shop' at once)

Hey, Sokrates, won't you come outside, 'cause I'm bringing you my son here. He didn't want to come, but I managed to talk him round.

Sokrates appears at the door.

Sokrates (*casting a supercilious eye over the candidate for admission*)

Why he's just a 'freshman'. He lacks a trained eye for suspended thought.

Pheidippides (*mumbling*) If you were to be suspended, you yourself would be seen-thwu alright.

Strepsiades Hang it all! Would you insult your teacher?

Sokrates "*Seen-thwu*"...There, did you catch how he said it sappily, with his lips all aquiver?

(despondently) How on Earth <do you expect> this fellow to learn to gain acquittal in a trial, or launch a prosecution, or convince <a jury> to go easy. 875

(He turns away as if despairing of the situation, but pauses to mutter aloud)

And yet...for a princely sum, this very <skill-set> was acquired by...Hyperbolos, I suppose.

Strepsiadēs Take him on as your pupil anyway. He has a natural scientific bent. Why, when he was only a tot knee-high to a grasshopper he was moulding <clay objects> at home, and carving the outline of ships and fashioning carts out of old shoes. He used to form bunches of ‘gwapes’ out of pomegranate seeds too, imagine that? But, anyhow, he will learn those two sides of the argument; the stronger one, for what its worth, and the weaker one. Or, if he doesn’t learn <both>, at least he will learn ...come what may...the one in the wrong, which <can> upset the stronger using unjust <ploys>.

Sokrates He will be taught by the two sides of the argument in person. I’m not staying.

(He disappears back into the ‘Thinking-shop’)

Strepsiadēs *(calling after him)* Well, keep this in mind; he has got to be able to counter all the justified <claims>.

(He goes back home)

Debate Preliminaries (Προ-αγών) 889-948

[The Chorus prepare the ground for the debate, telling Pheidippides and the audience that ‘the two sides of the argument’ can never see eye to eye. Their choral interlude is missing from our text.]

Pheidippides is left on stage to witness the entry of a rather grubby, though distinguished-looking, gentleman, wearing an Academic gown, who calls back to someone inside the ‘Thinking-shop’ from which he himself has just emerged.

The Righteous man *(haughtily)* Come on out here, show yourself to the audience. You are usually as bold as brass, anyway <and have no compunction about performing your act for an audience >.

His adversary appears in the doorway.

The Scoundrel Go ahead, <say where, and I’ll go> wherever you want me to. I would just as soon demolish you in debate in front of a large audience

Righteous man You...demolish <me>! Who do you think you are?

Scoundrel A method of argument.

Righteous man Yes, but a less effective way.

Scoundrel Whatever the venue, I usually overcome the one who claims to be more effective than me.

Righteous man By what artifice?

Scoundrel By coming up with modern angles.

Righteous man There’s a lot of that about, thanks to these *stupid* people.

He gives a nod toward the auditorium.

Scoundrel *(beaming at the audience)* On the contrary, <I’d call them> *astute* people.

Righteous man *(becoming angry)* I intend to floor you once and for all.

Scoundrel How exactly, do tell?

Righteous man By stating what is Right.

900

Scoundrel While I will upset your case by arguing against this Right.

You see, I deny categorically that Right and Wrong exist.

Righteous man *(spluttering)* You deny that Right exists!

Scoundrel Well, <if it exists>, then where is it?

Righteous man <It is to be found> in company with the gods.

Scoundrel How is it, in that case, if Right exists, that Zeus got away with putting his father in chains?

Righteous man Ugh! *Something wicked this way comes.* *(To the audience)* Fetch me a wash-basin.

Scoundrel You delusional old fellow, you are not in synch <with the times>.

Righteous man You have no shame, no respect for morality...

Scoundrel Ooh, you shower me with compliments!

Righteous man ...and you exploit every opportunity.

Scoundrel You’re making me blush...with pride.

Righteous man You’re the kind of person who would raise a hand against his own father.

Scoundrel You are powdering me with gold-dust without realizing it.

Righteous man Such words would certainly not have been golden in days gone by...but leaden.

Scoundrel Maybe, but nowadays, the charge is to my credit.

Righteous man You have some effrontery!

Scoundrel Whereas *you* are past it.

Righteous man It's on your account that the youth <of today> do not want to go to school. But, one day the Athenians will come to see what sort of lessons you've been giving the unthinking.

Scoundrel You are a sorry mess; just look at yourself!

Righteous man Yes, you do all right for yourself <now>, though at one time you used to beg for your living, claiming to be Telephos of Mysia, chewing axioms you kept in a bag like Pandeletos.

Scoundrel (*with a sigh of nostalgia*) Ah, what <rhetoical> wit you have brought to mind! 925

Righteous man What <manifest> delusion! *You* are deluded and so is the state which gives you the wherewithal to infect young men's minds.

Scoundrel *You* cannot instruct this <young man>; you belong in chains!

Righteous man I have to <do the teaching>, if he is to be saved <from you> at any rate and not <end up> merely prating parrot-fashion. (*He motions to Pheidippides*) Come along, leave him to his ranting.

[**Scoundrel**] If you lay a hand on him, you'll regret it.

The Chorus Leader steps between them before they come to blows.

Chorus Leader Be done with your abusive squabbling!

(*Addressing the Righteous man*) Demonstrate, instead, what you used to teach the older generation, (*turning to the Scoundrel*) while you expound the new-style education. In this way, after having listened to the two of you, he can decide whose pupil he wishes to become.

Righteous man I am willing to act accordingly.

Scoundrel (*nonchalantly*) 'salright by me.

Chorus Leader Very well, then, which one of you will speak first?

Scoundrel I'll let this <gentleman go first>, and afterwards I'll shoot down whatever he says with subtle, new modes of expression and comprehension. Then, for a finale, if he mutters another word, my <sharply-penetrating> points will finish him off, just as if his whole face and eyes were being stung by hornets.

Choral Song (strophe) 949-58

Chorus Now they must demonstrate which of them will prove to be the better speaker, each side relying upon equally clever ideas and debating points, and carefully-minted axioms. For, here and now, <their> skill with words will be decided once and for all. There is a great deal riding on their skill, as far as my friends are concerned.

Debate (Ἀγών) 959-1104

Exhortation 959-60

Chorus Leader (*Addressing the Righteous man*) So, you who inculcated the older generation with the good morals which are their hallmark, speak out forcefully...in the way you like to, and state your inherent traits.

First Speaker 961-1023

Righteous man Very well then, I shall give an account of the traditional method of education, as it used to be practiced, when I in my prime discoursed on what is Right; at a time when self-discipline was the accepted norm.

In the first place, a child had to be <seen, but> not heard; not a mutter. What's more, the lads in the neighbourhood had to walk, in orderly fashion, not kicking up a racket, and lightly-dressed, even if the snow was falling like flakes of oat-meal, to the house of their music-tutor, who would then teach them to learn a song by heart...and not to cross their legs <while doing so>...either "*Pallas* <*Athena*> *awesome sacker of cities*" or "*Some cry from afar*"...always maintaining a close harmony in the tradition of their fore-fathers. And if one of them was trying to get away <without

singing> or happened to distort a musical phrase, like singers do nowadays, <introducing> those annoying trills in the manner of Phrynis, he'd be soundly beaten for ruining the music. Then at the gym, boys were made to sit with their legs straight...unfeeling brutes...so as not expose anything to the visitors' <eyes> and then, afterwards, when they stood up again they were made to rake over the sand and ensure that no imprint of their youthful <posterior> was left behind for their admirers...

976

...and, back then, no boy would oil himself *down below* the navel, with the result that there was a fresh, velvety bloom like peach-down to his *private parts*. And he would not mould his voice into a simper when speaking to an admirer, nor hint at his availability by the <coy> look in his eyes when he strolled around. Nor was it permitted for a boy to snatch at a radish top at the dinner-table...nor to grab his elders'...herbs...or celery-stick, nor nibble the tasty bits, nor to giggle or to sit cross-legged.

Scoundrel <This kind of conduct> is so passé; it puts me in mind of the <quaint ceremonial> of Guardian Zeus, and antique jewellery everywhere, KikiDees' <soul music> and <bizarre> rituals at the Ox-sacrifice.

Righteous man Yet, you see, these are the very methods by which my <form of> education reared the men who fought at Marathon. You, on the contrary, teach the men of today from their boyhood to wrap themselves up in their cloaks, and as a result it makes me apoplectic when they are obliged to perform the <martial> dance at the pan-Athenaia festival and one of them sticks out his 'weapon' in front of his thighs displaying disrespect toward the 'manly' goddess.

(He turns to address Pheidippides)

In this regard, young man, don't hesitate but plump for me <as having> the better <part of the> argument. Among other things, you will learn to detest the market-place and to keep away from bath-houses, to be embarrassed at indecency and to burn with indignation if anyone makes fun of you, and to give up your seat when your elders are present. You will not <for instance> go dashing into a strip-joint, in case while you stand gawping at these goings-on, you receive a direct hit from a little slut's apple-of-Venus. You will not answer back to your father, nor out of spite for past injury remind him of his age by calling him a has-been, when all the time he *has been* rearing you from a chick. [You'll learn not to embarrass your parents or do anything else you would be ashamed of, by which the image of Modesty is likely to be rendered a meaningless <decoration>".]

Scoundrel If you do what this <old fogey> tells you, my lad, as Dionysos is my witness, you will come to resemble Hippokrates' sons and <people> will call you a *mummy's boy*.

1001

Righteous man But, in consequence, you'll be in the bloom <of youth> and spend your time in the sports-ground with your skin gleaming, not <wandering> about the Agora picking arguments in the confrontational manner of today's youth, and not being hauled doggedly <before a magistrate> to answer for some ruinous, minor matter.

Instead, you'll take yourself along to Akademos' park where, under the mulberry trees, in company of a clean-cut pal of your own age you'll have put on a garland and be helping one another remove <unwanted> hair with a <sharp> white reed. You'll have an air of *Lad's love, Idle-vice, Lucy fern and stripped Pine*, 'exulting in spring's season when plane whispers to elm'.

If you follow my advice and keep your mind focused on these precepts you will always possess a gleaming chest, radiant complexion, broad shoulders, short tongue, strapping buttocks and a weensy wiener.

If, on the other hand, you should happen to adopt contemporary habits, first off, you'll get yourself a pigeon chest, a sickly complexion, narrow shoulders, over-developed tongue, skinny backside and a long, <drawn-out>...parliamentary debate.

Besides, *(indicating his opponent)* he will seduce you into believing that every shameful act is a moral one, and vice versa. What's more, he'll fill you full of the contempt for morality, typical of an...Antimachos!

Choral Song 1024-33

Chorus What an impressive and very distinguished defence of learning you have mounted <and> how lovely is the bloom of moral decency on your speech! Those who lived back in our forefathers' day were truly blest indeed. (*They turn to address the Scoundrel*)

You, whose powers of speaking appear refined <enough>, have to compose a rather imaginative speech in response to what he said, because the man has excelled himself.

Exhortation 1034-5

Chorus Leader It looks like you are going to need some pretty strong arguments to rebut him, if you are going to get the better of him and not become a laughing-stock.

Second Speaker 1036-1104

Scoundrel In truth, I have been choking with impatience for some time now, just longing to confound all these <ideas> with the opposite opinion. The reason that I have been called the worse side of the argument among intellectuals is because I was the very first to come up with the idea of contradicting the established view of Right and Wrong.

(*Addressing Pheidippides*)

Pick the one who has taught the weaker arguments to triumph and in so doing it will be worth a small fortune in debts owed that you won't be paying.

Watch how I question the educational methods in which he puts his faith. Firstly, he says you are not permitted to take hot baths.

(*Turning to the Righteous man*)

On what basis, then, do you cavil at taking hot baths?

Righteous man Because it's an unmitigated vice and makes one a namby-pamby.

Scoundrel Tell me, then, which mortal son of Zeus would you say had the noblest heart and endured the greatest hardship? Do tell!

Righteous man In my judgement, there was no finer man than Herakles.

1050

Scoundrel [Hold it there! You see, straightaway, I have got you. I hold you in a headlock, from which there's no escape.]

1047

In that case, then, where did you ever see *frigid* thermal springs?

1051

Yet, was there anyone more heroic <than Herakles>?

Righteous man (*nearly having a fit*) That's it! That...those are the <kind of> thing that teenagers prattle about all day and every day! <Such pretexts> fill up the bath-house and empty the wrestling-schools.

Scoundrel Next, you condemn spending time <around those speaking> in the market place, I, on the other hand, applaud it, because if it were reprehensible, Homer would not have made his Nestor an orator; and neither would he have made *all* the clever men public speakers.

Which brings me to the <matter of> rhetoric, a subject which this gentleman here maintains young men should not study, but which I say they should? Besides, he says that they ought to be virtuous. That's two major errors. Since when, 'til now, did you ever see any benefit accrue to anyone from being virtuous? Give me an example...prove me wrong!

Righteous man Many people have profited thereby. Peleus, for example, was given the sword as a result of his virtuous conduct.

Scoundrel (*with heavy sarcasm*) A sword? The poor fellow got a real bargain there. Whereas Hyperbolos, made loads of money through being shifty...he didn't make it from lamps! But, he was never given an <enchanted> sword, by Heaven!

Righteous man At any rate, as a result of his virtue, Peleus got to marry Thetis as well.

Scoundrel Yes, and afterwards she jilted him and took herself off, because he was not one to mix it with the gods and he was not good company spending an all-night vigil on the mattress <with her>. A woman likes to be used and abused.

You, on the other hand, should be pensioned off.

(*He turns to address Pheidippides*)

Just think, young man, about everything that is entailed in the notion of *virtuous conduct* and about all the pleasures you would deprive yourself of, <such as> having children, having women,

party-games, good food, drinking, and having a good laugh. If you are going to deprive yourself of these <pleasures>, then what is the point of living?

He pauses, looking pleased with himself.

Well, so far so good.

From this, I move on to natural compulsions.

1075

<Let's suppose>, you have gone off track, you find yourself in the grip of passion, you get a bit on the side and then...you get caught. You're done for. You cannot argue, can you? But, if you become my student, then you can give way to your urges, play around, have a laugh, consider nothing immoral, for if you happen to get caught in adultery, you can respond to the cuckold as follows: 'I've done nothing wrong'. Refer him to Zeus and say that *He* was no match for Love and women, and so how could a mere mortal like you manage to prove stronger than a god?

Righteous man But, what if he listens to *you* and gets treated to a *carrot* in...<retribution>? And, he gets some hairs removed with quicklime into the bargain? Is there any plan he can concoct to avoid having his rectum stretched?

Scoundrel What if he does get 'rectified'? Where's the harm in that?

Righteous man What greater harm could he suffer?

Scoundrel Well now...if my argument gets the better of you on this, how will you respond?

Righteous man I'll go quiet. What more could I say?

Scoundrel O.K. then kindly enlighten me, what category do public prosecutors belong to?

Righteous man Complete arse-holes!

Scoundrel I'm inclined to agree. Then, what category do actors of tragedies fall into?

Righteous man The 'complete arse-hole' category!

Scoundrel Absolutely! And how would you categorize politicians?

Righteous man Complete arse-holes!

Scoundrel But, in such case, you must recognize that you have no argument. Take a look at the audience; what are *they* <reputed to be>, for the most part?

Righteous man (*He surveys the audience carefully*) Yes, I am looking <at them>.

Scoundrel And...what do you see?

Righteous man Good heavens! The vast majority of them are... complete arse-holes. I know this chap over here is...that fellow is too...*and* this long-haired fop here!

1100

Scoundrel So, what have you got to say?

The Righteous man glowers and clenches his fists.

Righteous man That, "We stand defeated by he whom we are wont to beat."

Verily, by the gods; accept ye...my cloak!

Henceforth, I belong to your camp.

He hands over his cloak and retreats back into the 'Thinking-shop' in a huff (which he had been wearing beneath the cloak).

Strepsiades re-appears.

Episode 1105-12

Scoundrel (*addressing Strepsiades*) So, what <'s to be done>? Do you wish to have this son of yours back so you can take him home with you, or am I to tutor him to speak for you?

Strepsiades Go ahead, teach him and don't spare the rod! Mind you give him a sharp, double-edged tongue for me; with one side suited to small suits and the other whetted for more weighty cases.

Scoundrel No worries! In this one, you'll be bringing home a master at cut-and-thrust.

Pheidippides (*muttering*) Not to say 'off-colour and out of luck', if you ask me.

He reluctantly accompanies the 'Scoundrel' into the 'Thinking-shop'. His father watches him go, before turning to go home.

Valediction 1113-14

Chorus Leader Take your leave, then.

(*Pointing to Strepsiades*) But, it's my view that *you* will come to regret this <course of action>.

Second Excursus 1115-30

Chorus

We wish to explain to you, what the judges stand to gain if they bestow <their vote> on this chorus <of ours>, as by rights they should. To start with, when the season comes and you want to plough your fields, we will rain on you first of all, and on the rest afterwards. Secondly, we'll look after your vines when they have just started to fruit, to ensure that drought does not shrivel <the grapes> and they do not rot from excessive rain.

On the other hand, if any mortal fails to revere us as divine entities, let him beware just what kind of misfortune he will suffer; his land will produce no wine...or anything else, for when his olive-trees and vines begin to bud, they'll be *pruned*, such will be the force of the sling-shot we let loose upon them. If we spot him making bricks, we'll rain <on them> and bombard his roof-tiles with hailstones, and if he, or any one of his friends or relations, is getting married, we'll rain the whole night long, so that he'll wish he were in Egypt perhaps, instead of making ill-advised decisions.

Episode 1131-1213

Strepsiades re-appears carrying a sack over his shoulder. He heads for the 'Thinking-shop' once more, counting out loud as he goes.

Strepsiades Fifth...fourth...third...then the second day, that's today (*he stops short, and his voice quavers*). After this comes the day which I dread most of all; it gives me the shivers and I detest it. Right after today comes the 'first and the last <day>'. Every single one of the people to whom I happen to owe money, has issued a sworn affidavit and initiated proceedings at the magistrate's court, vowing to liquidate me and my assets...and when I seek to make a fair and reasonable compromise...“My good sir, pray do not insist on this particular amount right now, defer part of it for me, and let part of it go”. But, then they claim that they will not get their money back this way. They start abusing me and calling me a scoundrel and declare that they'll take me to court.

Well, let them take me to court now, because I don't give a tinker's cuss, provided Pheidippides has learned the art of <public> speaking!

I'll soon find out, when I've knocked at the <door of the> 'Thinking-shop'. (*Loudly*) Hey boy! Oh I say, boy!

The door is answered by the doorman, who recognizes him and motions to someone inside as he speaks.

Doorman Hello there, Strepsiades.

The 'Scoundrel' appears in the doorway.

Strepsiades Hello, yourself! (*He lowers the sack to the ground with a grunt of relief*)

Take hold of this, first off, 'cause its only right to show some appreciation to the teacher.

(The doorman gathers up the sack on behalf of the 'Scoundrel')

And tell me about that son of mine whom you took on just recently, has he learned the technique of arguing?

Scoundrel He has indeed.

Strepsiades Well done! O cheating Scam, you reign supreme!

1150

Scoundrel <With what he's learned> you could escape any indictment you like.

Strepsiades What, even if there were witnesses to me taking out the loan?

Scoundrel: Even if a thousand were present, so much the better.

Strepsiades In that case, let me let out a long whoop, hoora-ah!

You moneylenders can go wail. You can lament along with your principal, <your interest> and the interest on your interest! That's because you can no longer do me any mischief.

(Becoming histrionic)

So fine a son has been raised for me in this 'ere establishment, distinguished by his double-sided tongue...my bastion...saviour of <my> house...the ruin of my foes...who will put an end to his father's misery, brought about by great misfortunes.

(Turning to address the doorman) Run inside and call him out to me. *The doorman exits.*

My child! My boy! Come forth from thy abode! Hearken unto your father.

The doorman re-emerges with Pheidippides in tow.

Doorman Here's the man himself.

The actor playing the son has changed his mask to a whiter shade of pale, but still has his pony-tail.

Strepsiades My own dear boy!

Scoundrel Take him and off you go.

The teacher and the door-man retreat into the 'Thinking-shop'.

Strepsiades Whoah, son! What a joy it is, for a start, to see your <pale> complexion. One can see straightaway that you're ready now to refuse <payment> and dispute <claims>...and this native look absolutely blooms, the look that says "What *are* you talking about?"...I know it, that ability to appear hard-done-by, when you are in the wrong, even when you've done wrong [that Attic look all over your face]. So, now, since you were the one who made me broke, see to it that you become my salvation. 1177

Pheidippides <Save you from what?> What exactly are you scared of?

Strepsiades The "first and last".

Pheidippides What do you mean first and last?

Strepsiades I mean the day on which <my creditors> threaten to file their claims against me.

Pheidippides In that case, those who file their claim stand to lose, because it is not possible for one day to become two days.

Strepsiades Can it not?

Pheidippides How could it? Unless one was to say that an old lady could become a young lady as well.

His father briefly ponders this possibility, but quickly dismisses it because cosmetic surgery has yet to be introduced at Athens.

Strepsiades That is certainly what people believe, anyhow.

Pheidippides I think the reason for this is that they do not appreciate the law's intention.

Strepsiades And what is that?

Pheidippides Our ancient <lawmaker> Solon had a natural empathy with the common man.

Strepsiades Thus far, that has no bearing on the 'first and last'.

Pheidippides So, he ordained that <notifications of claims> were lodged over two days, namely the 'first and the last'. In this way the court fees were deposited on the first <full day> of the <new> month.

Strepsiades Why, in that case, did he specify the last day additionally?

Pheidippides So that, my good sir, the defendants could turn up on day one and make voluntary settlement before <the due date>. Then, if they failed to do so, they'd be reluctant to get out of bed along with the New moon!

Strepsiades But, how come the magistrates do not accept the court fees on the day of the New Moon, but only on the 'first and the last'?

Pheidippides My guess is that they follow the same policy as the supper supervisors, in that they get their jaws into training on day one, so as to gobble up the court fees as fast as they possibly can.

Strepsiades Brilliant! 1201

(addressing the audience) What are you poor unfortunates sitting there for? You're none the wiser! You're a profit-source for us wily ones...blocks of stone...there to make up the number... just sheep <to be fleeced>...a stack of jars <to be emptied>.

(He talks to himself) Such good fortune requires that I sing a celebratory hymn to congratulate myself and this son of mine.

When your rhetoric wins <my> cases, I'm sure my friends and fellow-demesmen will say, "Blessed are you, Strepsiades; what a natural genius you are, and what a clever son you are feeding!"

So, first off, I want to take you home and treat you to a slap-up dinner.

Strepsiades practically dances for joy as he leads Pheidippides back home.

There is now a short interval, during which we would expect a brief choral ode, but no sooner have the pair gone inside than one of Strepsiades' creditors enters from the other side, accompanied by a friend to act as his witness. The creditor is rather corpulent and waddles across the stage, before stopping in front of the house where he turns to question his silent companion.

Pasias Ought a man, then, to forego something that is his <by rights>? Never!

It would have been better though to have avoided embarrassment right from the start, than to incur this fuss, when I'm dragging you along now to act as my witness, to recover my own funds. What's more, I'll also be making myself an enemy of a fellow-demesman. Even so, while there's breath in me, I shall never put my native land to shame. No, (*he calls loudly*)...I summon Strepsiades...

Strepsiades (*from indoors*) Who's there?

Pasias ...< to answer> on the 'first and the last'.

Strepsiades enters.

Strepsiades (*addressing the audience in an aside*) You be my witnesses, he referred to *two* days. (*to Pasias*) What's up?

Pasias It's about the twelve minas which you borrowed to buy the dapple-grey. 1225

Strepsiades <Me, buy> a horse? (*To the audience again*) You heard that, didn't you? You all know how I detest anything to do with horses.

Pasias You did, so help me Zeus! You took an oath by the gods that you would pay back the loan.

Strepsiades <If I did> it was because, at the time, Pheidippides had not yet got by heart for me the method of arguing which can't be beat.

Pasias Is that the basis on which you now refuse payment?

Strepsiades Of course. How else would I reap the benefit of his learning?

Pasias Are you ready too to deny to me on oath in whatever <sacred precinct> I shall dictate to you?

Strepsiades By which gods?

Pasias By Zeus, by Hermes and by Poseidon.

Strepsiades By Zeus? Yes! To swear an oath by Zeus, I'd throw in three obols for good luck.

Pasias In that case, may your lack of reverence be your undoing yet.

Strepsiades (*as he prods Pasias rudely in the stomach*) This <chap> here would benefit from being rubbed down with sea-salt.

Pasias You are making fun of me. What effrontery!

Strepsiades <It's your front>...it should hold a gallon or two.

Pasias You won't escape my punishment; I swear by almighty Zeus and the divine powers...you won't!

Strepsiades By the *divine powers*? How very droll! An oath sworn by Zeus is risible to those in the know.

Pasias You will answer for these insults in due course, you mark my words. But, before I go, answer me this, will you return my money or not?

Strepsiades Stay just where you are. I'm going to give you a definite reply directly.

He disappears into the house.

Pasias (*to his companion*) What do you think he's going to do? Do you think he'll pay up?

Strepsiades reappears accompanied by his slave.

Strepsiades Where's this chap who's demanding money from me?

(*He indicates an object being held by the slave.*)

Tell us, what's this thing here?

Pasias This? It's a...winnowing fan.

Strepsiades And a man like you is asking for money back? I wouldn't return so much as an obol to anyone who called a 'fanny' a fan. 1251

Pasias So, you do not intend to pay me back?

Strepsiades To the best of my knowledge...no! So, why don't you cease loitering around my doorway and be off a bit quick-like?

Pasias I'm going, but be assured I shall be putting down the court-fees, if it's the last thing I do.

Strepsiades (*calling after him*) In that case, you will be throwing away more money after the twelve <minas>, and I wouldn't want you to suffer this loss just because you were silly enough to refer to a 'winnowing fan'.

The slave carries off the winnowing-fan but re-emerges almost at once, when a morose voice is heard wailing off-stage.

Second Creditor (Ameinias) "Oh, me! Oh, my!"

Strepsiades Hello! Whoever can this be, bemoaning his fate? I don't suppose it could be one of Karkinos' 'supernatural powers' making that noise, could it?

A man hobbles onto the stage leading a donkey. Despite his condition, he manages to maintain an air of superiority. His long hair is tied up in a bun.

Ameinias Why do you want to know who I am? *A man of constant sorrow*, that's who!

Strepsiades Well then, keep it to yourself.

Ameinias O harsh Fate, Miss Fortune, who bent the fender of my horse-powered vehicle! Pallas Athena, you have been my downfall!

Strepsiades What harm has <the tragic hero> Tlepolemos ever done you?

Ameinias Mock me not, good sir! Instead, instruct that son of yours to pay me back the money he borrowed from me...particularly in view of my present unfortunate condition.

Strepsiades What money would that be?

Ameinias The money he was loaned.

Strepsiades Well now, it looks to me as though you really are in a bad way.

Ameinias Yes, by heaven, I was riding in a chariot and fell out.

Strepsiades You fell on your head by the sound of it!

Ameinias Am I off my head to want to recover my money?

Strepsiades Well, there's no way you can be quite right just there (*he points at the other's head*), is there? 1275

Ameinias How's that?

Strepsiades Your brain seems to have suffered a concussion.

Ameinias You, however, seem about to end up in court, if you do not return the money. Let Hermes be my witness!

Strepsiades But, tell me this. (*He strikes a philosophical pose*) Do you believe that Zeus always sends fresh rain every time, or that Helios (the sun) draws up the self-same water from below again?

Ameinias (*haughtily*) I'm sure I don't know which <is correct>...and I don't care!

Strepsiades What right do you have to recover your money, if you are totally ignorant of weather phenomena?

Ameinias (*realizing that compromise is called for*) Look, if you are short of cash, just give me the interest on my money.

Strepsiades This...er...interest, what kind of creature is it?

Ameinias Why, it is simply the continual and steady increase of money, day by day and month by month, with the constant passage of Time.

Strepsiades That's well put. In that case, then, do you suppose that the sea is now bigger than it used to be?

Ameinias No, certainly not. It's the same now as it was before. The natural order of things does not allow for it to increase.

Strepsiades That being so, how come, you unlucky man, you expect your money to be increased, when the sea remains the same and does not increase even though rivers flow into it?

(*Turning to the slave*)

Won't you chase him away from my house?

Fetch me the horse-whip!

Ameinias (*addressing the donkey by his side*) I call you to witness this outrage.

Strepsiades Issue a summons, if you're going to. Won't you run away, you branded runaway!

Ameinias If this is not an outrage, what is?

Strepsiades (*addressing the donkey*) Lead him off! (*Brandishing his costume-phallos*) I'll give you an incentive, a <sharp> prick up the arse, you trace-horse! 1300
(*The frightened donkey makes off, dragging the unfortunate creditor after him*)
What, leaving are you? I was sure I would get you to move...along with your chariot and pair.

The 'chorus-women' ceremoniously remove their snowy-white shawls and reverse them to reveal that not every Cloud has a silver lining, theirs is dark grey which forecasts storms to come.

Choral Ode 1303-20

What it is to dream of petty deceit!
You see how this old fellow is ravished by <the idea>
And wants to avoid paying back the borrowed money.
There can be no doubt that on this very day he
Will get a dose of reality that will make him
Wiser for all that he has set out to do amiss;
And he will come to realize it in a flash.

I suspect, you see, that he will very soon discover,
Something which he has long been seeking,
That his own son has become an expert at scoring
Debating points against what is right,
With the result that even if what he says
Is utterly immoral, he <can> defeat all who
Mix it with him. It would not surprise me,
If he comes to wish that his son could not speak.

Episode 1321-44

Suddenly, Strepsiades' anguished cry is heard off-stage, "Oh-h-h! Woe is me!" and he soon appears holding his head in his hands.

Strepsiades Neighbours! Relations! My fellow-demesmen! I am being beaten up...come to my defence in any way you can. Oh-h-h! I'm in a bad way, look at my head...my jaw!

(*He turns round as if to defend himself against his son, who has followed him out of the house.*)

You utter rogue! You dare strike your father?

Pheidippides Indeed, I do, father!

Strepsiades You reprobate, you'd strike your own father. You have no scruples.

Pheidippides You realize, don't you, how much I relish hearing you heap abuse on me? Call me the same names over and over...have you any others?

Strepsiades You are full of shit!

Pheidippides Keep showering me with...compliments like these.

Strepsiades Do you strike your father?

Pheidippides Yes, by heaven, and I shall prove that I was giving you a well-deserved beating.

Strepsiades You utter reprobate! How can it possibly be just to beat your father?

Pheidippides I'll prove it by beating you in debate.

Strepsiades You'll beat me by asserting this <sacrilege>?

Pheidippides Yup, it'll be easy! You just pick which side of the argument you want to hold.

Strepsiades Which two sides?

Pheidippides The stronger or the weaker.

Strepsiades Well, clever clogs, I've definitely had you educated to contradict the people in the right, if you are going to convince me that it is right and proper for fathers to be beaten by sons.

Pheidippides Even so, I believe that I'll convince you, so that you yourself once you've heard me out will have no come-back.

Strepsiades This, I've got to hear.

Choral Song 1345-50

Chorus It's up to you, old timer, to find a means of restraining the fellow, for he would not have been so impudent, if he had not felt <really> confident. No, there's some cause for his insolence, for, clearly, his dander is up.

Exhortation 1351-2

Chorus-Leader At this point, however, you ought to explain to a Chorus what caused the conflict to break out...and doubtless you are going to do so.

Episode 1353-1475

Strepsiades Actually I am about to explain how it was that we first started to argue. As you are aware, we were having a <celebratory> feast. The fight began when I encouraged him to take his lyre and sing a song by Simonides, "*How the ram got shorn*". But he jumps down my throat at once asserting that to sing to the accompaniment of the lyre over drinks is an archaic tradition akin to the habit of women singing while they hull barley.

Pheidippides You should surely have come in for a thrashing and a threshing right there, should you not, for bidding me to sing, as if you were hosting a cicada?

Strepsiades That there...that's exactly the sort of thing he was saying before indoors! He also maintained that Simonides was a lousy poet, a thing I could barely endure <hearing>...though I did put up with it to begin with.

So, I told him to take the myrtle sprig and recite for me instead something from Aischylos. But he immediately retorted, "Yes, I consider Aischylos to be the best poet...for creating incoherent noise, and incomprehensible bombast".

Well, you can just imagine how passion welled up in me...but despite that I curbed my anger and said, "In that case, why don't you recite something from these more recent works, whatever is *smart* verse, when all is said and done?"

He promptly started reciting a <dramatic> passage out of Euripides concerning a brother who was having sex with his sister by the same mother, heaven help us! Well, I could bear <this> no longer and I really let him have it with a shower of vile abuse and from then on, as you can imagine, we traded insult for insult and the next thing is he's jumping on me...whereupon he was crushing me, buffeting me, choking me <to death> and squeezing <the life> out of me. 1376

Pheidippides Surely, anyone who fails to extol the superior wit of Euripides deserves all he gets?

Strepsiades (*spluttering*) Him...superior wit? You...er...(*he bites his lip*) so-and-so!

Oh, I'll only get another drubbing.

Pheidippides You certainly would and you'd deserve it!

Strepsiades In what way would I deserve it, exactly? You impudent rascal, I'm the one who reared you.

I always understood what you meant, when you lisped. If you said "*thpwing*", I realized what you meant and held you up to drink <spring-water>. When you asked for "*mam*", I'd come and bring you bread. And even before you finished saying "*kakka*", I'd have grabbed hold of you, and carried you outside and be holding you out at arms' length. You, on the other hand, you reprobate, when you were strangling me just now, and I was yelling and screaming that I needed a crap, you didn't bother to carry me outside, and I did it on the spot because I was being squeezed.

The chorus-leader intervenes before Pheidippides can advance toward his father.

Chorus Yes, I'm sure that younger members of the audience are sitting on the edge of their seats <in expectation of> what he is going to say, for if he really is so expert with that sort of talk and can prattle his way to convincing us, one wouldn't give much for the chances of the older generation saving their skins.

Chorus-leader You, the author and architect of innovative forms of expression, it's your job now, to seek out some cogent argument as to why what you say is just.

Pheidippides How nice to be proficient at cutting-edge cutting wit! How nice to be able to snub the established norms! 1400

Back when I used to pay attention to nothing but horses, I couldn't say three words without making a mistake. But, now, since my antagonist himself stopped me from engaging in these pursuits and I have become conversant with subtle ways of thinking and speaking, I feel I shall be able to demonstrate that it is morally right to chastise one's father.

Strepsiades So, definitely keep up the horse thing, then, because I'd rather feed a string of horses than get beaten to death.

Pheidippides I take up the debate from the point at which you cut me off and first off I'll put to you the following question. Were you accustomed to beat me when I was a child?

Strepsiades Indeed, I was. I had your welfare at heart, because it was for your own good.

Pheidippides So tell me, seeing that beating someone is for their own good, am I not then justified in beating you too *for your own good*? How is it that your hide has to be left un-tanned, but mine does not? After all, I was certainly born a free man as well <as you>. Children cry, so <as the bard has it> "do you not think that a father should cry too?" You will maintain that it is customary <for the child to cry and you will say that> that is the child's *raison d'être*. My answer to this is that old men are in a second childhood, and it makes more sense for old men to cry than youngsters, seeing that they have less justification for their misdemeanours.

Strepsiades But, it is not the custom anywhere for fathers to be mistreated in this manner.

Pheidippides But, was not he who originally proposed this 'rule' <of respect for one's parent> an adult man like you and I? He convinced the men of old in debate. So, what prevents me in turn from proposing a new law for sons to retaliate against their fathers? Only, we won't count the blows we got before the law was established, we accept that they be disbarred as a free bonus. 1426

Consider how cocks and you know... those other domesticated animals stand up to their sires the way they do, and yet how do they differ from us?...except, of course, for the fact that they do not pass legislation.

Strepsiades In that case, if you comparing yourself to a cock in all respects, why don't you eat shit and roost on a perch?

Pheidippides That's not the same thing, sir, and Sokrates would not endorse it.

Strepsiades Don't go on thrashing me in that case, otherwise one day you'll beat yourself up about it.

Pheidippides How come?

Strepsiades In as much as I am justified in chastising you, you in turn <will be justified in chastising> your son...if you have one.

Pheidippides But, if I have no son, my tears will get no compensation, whereas you will have the last laugh when you die.

Strepsiades (*turning to address the audience*) You older men <will agree>, his argument seems to have some validity and I think we ought to meet these young people half way. It's only reasonable that we should pay the price for acting unjustly.

Pheidippides But, consider an additional point.

Strepsiades (*wincing*) No, that would finish me off.

Pheidippides Indeed, but maybe you'll derive some consolation for the pains you have suffered.

Strepsiades How's that? Explain just how any good can come of these pains.

Pheidippides I can thrash mother in the same way I did you.

Strepsiades What are you saying, what *are* you saying? That's a different kettle of fish, a more scandalous matter still.

Pheidippides I wonder what you might find to say, when I proceed to beat you by adopting the weaker side of the argument, namely that one is *obliged* to mistreat one's mother?

Strepsiades If you do this, what else <could one say> than, you may as well throw yourself onto the trash heap, along with Sokrates and the weaker side of the argument? 1451

(*Addressing the Chorus*)

It's your fault Clouds that I have ended up like this, because I put myself entirely in your hands.

Chorus-Leader Yes, but you brought misfortune on yourself when you deviated from the straight and narrow.

Strepsiades In that case, why didn't you point that out back then, instead of leading on a simple-minded old man?

Chorus-Leader This is what we always do whenever we come across someone who is fixated on finding the wicked way out. We plunge him into a sea of trouble until he's learned to fear the gods.

Strepsiades Dear me! (*Rubbing his bruised head*) It was a painful lesson, Clouds, but a fair one, 'cause I ought not to have tried to avoid repayment of the money I'd borrowed.

(*Turning to Pheidippides*)

Well now, dear boy, I want you to come with me and put an end to Chairephon, that reprobate, and Sokrates, the ones who tried to mislead you and me?

Pheidippides No, I could not treat my teachers unjustly.

Strepsiades Oh verily you should, out of respect for Zeus, the god of <our> fathers.

Pheidippides Listen to him, "Zeus the god of <our> fathers"! How old-hat! Is there, you think, some 'Zeus'?

Strepsiades There is!

Pheidippides Not any more there isn't, not since *Heavenly Flow* gave Zeus the boot and reigns supreme.

Strepsiades He has not banished him ...though I used to think he had. (*He gestures toward the statue of Dionysos in the theatre*) It was all because of this 'ere flowing wine-goblet, fool that I am! Even though you are made of baked clay, I too considered you divine.

Pheidippides Go crazy where you are and talk drivel on your own time.

1475

(*He leaves his father and heads for home*)

Finale 1476-1511

Strepsiades What a pity he lost his mind! I suppose I must have been crazy when I too rejected the gods for Sokrates' sake. (*He addresses the 'Herm' by the door of the 'Thinking-shop'*) But, my beloved Hermes, don't be angry with me, and don't bring about my demise, but forgive me for having been robbed of my reason by sophistry. And give me your advice, do you think I should have recourse to the law and file a suit against them, or what?

(*He ponders the problem himself*)

You forbid me to file suit, and instead you advise me...quite rightly...to burn down this nest of sophists with all speed.

(*He summons a household slave*)

Hey, Xanthias, grab hold of a ladder and come out here...bring a pick-axe with you. Then climb up onto the roof of the 'Thinking-shop' and, if you care about your master, start demolishing it, until you bring the building down upon them.

(*He calls upon another slave*)

And someone bring me a lighted torch! This very day I shall make one of them pay for it, because they are *complete* charlatans!

Xanthias, meanwhile, has scrambled up the ladder onto the roof and is swinging his pick at the roof tiles to expose the wooden beams. The commotion attracts the attention of the doorman, who peeks out of the gate.

A second slave brings a torch out. Strepsiades takes it and follows Xanthias up the ladder.

Doorman Holy smoke! This is not good!

Strepsiades I'm relying on you, torch, to get a good fire started.

Scoundrel (*looking out of a window*) You there, fellow! What are you up to?

Strepsiades What am I up to? I'm simply scoring *cleaver* points off the roof-beams of your house.

Righteous man Oh help! Who is setting fire to our house?

Strepsiades It's the fellow whose cloak you <people> pinched.

Righteous man You'll be the death of us.

Strepsiades That's exactly what I have in mind, as long as the pick-axe doesn't let me down... 1500
and I avoid falling off and breaking my neck!

Scoundrel Hey, you up there on the roof! What precisely are you doing?

Strepsiades I am treading air and looking over the sun.

Scoundrel O-oh! Things look bad...I'm about to be smothered by smoke!

Righteous man While I, poor soul, am about to be barbecued!

Strepsiades Well, what prompted you to desecrate the gods and up-skirt Selina?

(He starts back down the ladder and eggs on his slave)

Drive them back...hit them...throw things...they thoroughly deserve it, particularly when one considers how they wronged the gods.

Chorus-Leader *(loftily addressing her companion Clouds)*

Make your way out <of the orchestra>. That's quite enough of song and dance for us today!

[A contemporary audience, expecting a more enthusiastic response from the Chorus, might prefer to hear them chanting the lyrics of *Bloodhound Gang*'s 'The Roof is on Fire' as they depart 'waving their hands in the air?']