

**THE CLOUDS OF  
ARISTOPHANES. THE GREEK  
TEXT WITH A TRANSLATION  
INTO CORRESPONDING METRES**

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The Clouds of Aristophanes. The Greek Text with a Translation into Corresponding Metres by Anonymous

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ΑΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΝΕΦΕΛΑΙ.

THE

CLOUDS OF ARISTOPHANES.

THE GREEK TEXT

WITH

A TRANSLATION INTO CORRESPONDING METRES,

AND

ORIGINAL NOTES.

*πάντα καθαρά καθαροί.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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It is a question confessedly difficult to answer, in what manner and to what extent a translator is bound to conform to the conventional decorum of the age and nation in which he lives: whether he is to omit whatever in the least degree runs counter to those rules by which an author is now happily compelled to abide, a method which would infallibly destroy the whole humour of some of the most felicitous, and withal the most harmless passages of Greek Comedy and Roman Satire, or to follow his author even in his wildest extravagances, which would in many cases render his translation unreadable to by far the greater portion of English Society. It has been my endeavour to steer, as far as has been in my power, clear of either extreme: to leave nothing in my translation which can justly offend the classical reader: while at the same time I have not dared entirely to ignore any passage which seemed necessary to the full understanding of the true position of an author, who in spite of these occasional blemishes has been at all times venerated as well as admired, and that too even on moral grounds, by the best and wisest of mankind. For it must have been something more than the exuberance of wit which overflows every page of these Comedies, something more than that brilliancy of sarcastic humour which no imitator has ever approached, and of which, I sincerely hope and believe, no translation can entirely denude them; it must have been something beyond all this which has endeared Aristophanes in such a remarkable degree to so very many great and illustrious names, and among them, as is well known, to one of the severest Saints of the Christian Church, the "Glorious Preacher," St. Chrysostom. It was doubtless the excellence of their moral doctrines, the practical good sense, which, as Gibbon

truly remarks, is a faculty rarer and more precious than genius, and with which Aristophanes can, when he chooses to speak soberly, treat the great questions of Religion and Politics in Athens, and lay bare the causes of decay which were hurrying on that bright Republic to internal misery and external ruin. "Men smile," says Mr. Sewall, in his eloquent Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato, "Men smile when they hear the anecdote of one of the most venerable fathers of the Church, who never went to bed without Aristophanes under his pillow. But the noble tone of morals, the elevated taste, the sound political wisdom, the boldness and acuteness of the satire, the grand object, which is seen throughout, of correcting the follies of the day, and improving the condition of his country,—all these are features in Aristophanes, which however disguised, as they intentionally are, by coarseness and buffoonery, entitle him to the highest respect from every reader of antiquity. There is as much system in the Comedies of Aristophanes as in the Dialogues of Plato. No one play is without its definite object: and the state of national education as the greatest cause of all [the vitiated condition of the public mind] is laid open in the *Clouds*. Whatever light is thrown by that admirable play upon the character of Socrates, and the position which he occupies in the Platonic Dialogues, it is chiefly valuable as exhibiting in a short but very complete analysis, and by a number of fine Rembrandt-like strokes, not any of which must be overlooked, all the features of that frightful school of sophistry, which at that time was engaged systematically in corrupting the Athenian youth, and against which the whole battery of Plato was pointedly directed." Moreover it may be observed that the *Clouds* is far the purest and the most refined of all the productions of the Aristophanic Muse: it was an attempt, as he says himself, to raise Comedy out of a mere coarse and licentious *αἰσχρολογία*<sup>b</sup> to a philosophic and elegant entertainment: an attempt which unfortunately failed, and the result of that failure may be witnessed in most of the poet's later plays: but an attempt carried out with so much taste and

<sup>a</sup> p. 41.

<sup>b</sup> Aristotle says that the New Comedy succeeded in a similar attempt. Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ (the old Comedians) γελῶσιον ἢ ἡ αἰ-

σχρολογία· τοῖς δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπόνοια· διαφέρει δ' οὐ μικρὸν ταῦτα πρὸς εὐσχημοσύνην. *Esth. Nic. IV. viii. 6.*

vigour, that it would undoubtedly have been the most successful work of Aristophanes, had it not been for its one great and indelible blemish, its complete and entire misrepresentation of the character and tendencies of Socratic philosophy.

And this, it must be confessed, is another objection to the Play, far more formidable than the plea, which we have just considered, of its occasional indelicacy. But even this may be safely disregarded: for it is not difficult to discover the cause of the enmity which Aristophanes entertained towards Socrates: nor is it necessary that the character of either the one or the other should be vilified, (as has too often been done,) to account for it. The spirit of a new intellectual era was brooding over Athens: from one extremity of the Hellenic world to the other, from the coast of Ionia to the coast of Italy, the movements of philosophy were beginning to make themselves felt. Nor can it be denied that this change was accompanied by a change for the worse in the morals and character of the people: the old faith was breaking up, and no new one was offered to their minds: it cannot be denied that the Athenians of the Peloponnesian War had degenerated in generosity, in uprightness, in Pan-hellenic patriotism from the men of Marathon and Plataea. And doubtless there were at Athens many excellent men who sighed for the integrity, the honour, the moral rectitude of the good old times; who were content to live as their fathers lived, to die as their fathers died: to be no wiser than their ancestors. And this principle though unsound<sup>o</sup> is nevertheless always respectable, and if sometimes a check to beneficial improvement is more frequently a guard against rash and hasty innovation. Such a spirit found an interpreter in Aristophanes: he looked back with regret to the days when the whole education of an Athenian was "to call for his rations and to say his *Ehhyppape*," as distinguished, as indeed they were, by the superior simplicity, honesty, and temperance of their discipline, and he viewed with disgust and

<sup>o</sup> "If all other things fail, men fly to this, that such or such things pleased our ancestors, and it were well for us if we could but match them. They set up their rest on such an answer, as a sufficient con-

utation of all that can be said: as if this were a great mischief that any should be found wiser than his ancestors." Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, (Bp. Burnet's translation.)



apprehension this whole intellectual tendency which appeared to be bringing immorality and licentiousness in its train. His fault was that he did not discriminate: that he did not discern that the tendency was already taking two directions: that he confounded the efforts of Socrates to go on and build up a new and better morality in the place of the old which was now irretrievably undermined, with the sophistical school which would overthrow the old without substituting anything in its place: that he did not see that the only way then practicable of resisting the sophistical theories, was the way in which Socrates was attempting to proceed: that he looked upon their disputes as *κεραμῆος κεραμῆι*, and identifying the two systems which were alike merely in their onward tendency and intellectual progress, thought he should be doing God service by acting against the whole. We, with the writings of Plato and Xenophon in our hands, know that he was wrong: but with his own writings in our hands, that he was honest, who shall dare deny?

Still, although the opposition of Aristophanes to the spread of literature on the score of the blow thereby inflicted on the old principles of virtue and of honour, must by no means be carelessly confounded with the willing ignorance of such cavillers as the Bestius of Persius, (*Sat.* vi. 37.), and the Jack Cade of Shakespeare's *Henry the Sixth* ('He hath corrupted the youth of our age by erecting a grammar school,' Part II. Act iv. sc. 7): and although the idea of his having been incited to this opposition by pecuniary motives, by the bribes of Anytus and Melitus, is universally surrendered, and can indeed be refuted on chronological considerations<sup>4</sup>, in spite of all this, a deep blot must always remain upon the memory of Aristophanes, as having forwarded actually if not intentionally, the foulest deed, save one, that ever disgraced the annals of mankind, the accusation and execution of Socrates. The words

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Gilbert Cooper in his learned and ingenious *Life of Socrates* says, 'Ælian has made a most egregious blunder when he says that Melitus was concerned in hiring Aristophanes to compose it: for Melitus, when Socrates was brought to his trial (which was three or four and twenty years after this play was performed) is

called even then a young man: *νεὸς τις μοι φάσκειναι καὶ ἄνθρωπος*, says Socrates, Euthyphron ad init. If therefore he was then a young man, he certainly must have been too young to have entered into any plots four and twenty years before that time.' p. 55, note. See also Wigger's *Life of Socrates*, chapter 7, section 3.

of the Platonic Apology are too plain to be misunderstood: τὴν ἀνωμοσίαν δεῖ ἀναγνώσκειν αὐτῶν. "Σωκράτης ἀδικεῖ καὶ περιεργάζεται ζητῶν τὰ τε ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ οὐράνια, καὶ τὸν ἦπτιω λόγον κρείττω ποιῶν, καὶ ἄλλους ταῦτά ταῦτα διδάσκων." *Τοιαύτη τις ἔστι· ΤΑΥΤΑ ΓΑΡ ΕΩΡΑΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΚΩΜΩΔΙΑΙ, Σωκράτη τιῶν ἐκεῖ περιφερόμενον φάσκοντά τε ἀεροβατεῖν καὶ ἄλλην πόλλην φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα, ἃν ἐγὼ σφδὲν οὐτε μέγα οὐτε σμικρὸν πέρι ἐπαίω.* Apol. 19 B.—It is urged that twenty years after its publication a Comedy which was not even then successful could not have had so powerful an influence over the Athenian mind: but Plato was a contemporary speaking of what he felt and knew: and his testimony, partial as he was to Aristophanes, must be held fully sufficient to establish the fact. Doubtless Aristophanes regretted the fatal result: doubtless he would join in the universal repentance which pervaded Athens, and sympathise with those deeply pathetic lines of the Poet whom he uniformly connected with Socrates, addressed to the Athenian audience,

*ἐκάνετε, ἐκάνετε τῶν πάντοφον  
τῶν οὐδὲν ἀλγόνουσιν ἀθήσια μουσῶν\*.  
Ye have slain—ye have slain—the wisest in song,  
The Nightingale of Science, who had done you no wrong.*

And it is observed by Meineke that the Poets of the Middle Comedy who attacked and wrote against Plato, did it in a much more gentle and kindly spirit than that which animates the Clouds.

But although an entire misrepresentation of the Socratic philosophy, the picture in the Clouds is a faithful resemblance of what Mr. Mitchell calls "the outer Socrates:" so faithful that as Diogenes Laertius<sup>1</sup> observes, Aristophanes is often really praising him, when he thinks he is holding him up to derision. Without this external likeness the satire could not have had its prodigious effect alike upon the enemies and the friends of Socrates. He himself, conscious as he was of the internal dissimilarity, was, not improbably, the least

\* Eurip. Palamedes, ap. Diog. Laert., II. v. 44. ποιοὶ λαθάνουσιν ἱαντοῦς, δὲ ἔν σκόπτουσιν, ἐπαινοῦντες αὐτὸν, and he quotes Clouds

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laert., II. v. 27. Οἱ κωμικοὶ 410 sq.

moved of the audience. 'Ικαυός ἦν καὶ τῶν σκωπτόντων αὐτὸν ὑπερορῆν, says his biographer †, "He could afford even to contemn the scoffs of his assailants." Indeed that Socrates was believed to have disregarded the attack of the Comedian may be gathered with great probability from the well-known anecdote recorded by Ælian<sup>‡</sup> that he stood up in his place in the Theatre the whole time that the play was being acted: that his followers felt it deeply, may be concluded with certainty from the frequent allusions to the Clouds in the Dialogues<sup>§</sup> which are extant to this day. But their sense of the injustice with which Aristophanes had treated their master, did not for a moment lessen their admiration of his genius<sup>¶</sup>: Plato sent this very Comedy to Dionysius of Syracuse, as a specimen of the splendour of Athenian litera-

† Diog. Laert., II. v. 26.

‡ So Plutarch: 'Αριστοφάνους δὲ, ὅτι τὰς Νεφέλας ἐξέφερε, παρτοίαις πᾶσαν ἔβριμ αὐτοῦ (against Socrates) κατασκεδαννύνας, καὶ τισὺς τῶν παρόντων, τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀνακακοθεύοντες, οὐκ ἀγανακτεῖς, εἰκότως, ὃ Σάκρατες; μὰ Δῖ, οὐκ ἔγωγε, εἶφῆσεν, ὡς γὰρ ἐν συμποσίῳ μεγάλῳ τῇ θεάτρῳ σκώπτομαι. Περὶ παιδῶν ἀγωγῆς.

§ See for example the quotation from Apology, 19. B. given above. Add Xenophon Symposium vi. 6. εἶπεν ὁ Συρακόσιος, Ἄρα σὺ ὃ Σάκρατες ὁ Φροντιστῆς ἐπικαλούμενος;—εἰπέ μοι πόσους ψύλλης πίδαας ἐμοῦ ἀπέχει. (the emendation of Wieland and Dindorf, ψύλλα—ἑαυτῆς ἀλλεῖται is too violent: the present reading gives a very good sense). ταῦτα γὰρ σε φασὶ γυναιμερεῖν. Compare Clouds, 145.—Plato Symposium, 221, B. ἔπειτα ἔμοιγε ἔδοκει (ὁ Σακράτης), ὃ Ἄριστοφάνες, τὸ σὸν δὴ (Cf. Æsch. Agam. 550.) τοῦτο, καὶ ἐκεῖ διαπορέεσθαι, ὅσπερ καὶ ἐνθάδε, βρενθόμενος καὶ τῶφθαλμῶ παραβάλλων. Com-

pare Clouds, 356.—Gorgias, 436. Νῦν γὰρ, says Callicles, εἰ τις σοῦ λαβόμενος ἢ ἄλλου ἀνοοῦν τῶν τοιοῦτων εἰς τὸ θεομαρτήριον ἀπαγγέλοι, φάσκων ἀδικεῖν μηδὲν ἀδικούοντα, οἷός' ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιτε ὅ,τι εἴποιτο, ἀλλὰ ἀποθάνοις ἂν (turning Clouds 1060 to his own account).—Plato, Republic, Book VI. 488 E. τὸν ὅτι ἀληθῶς κυβερνητικὸν (i. e. φιλόσοφον) οὐχ ἡγεῖ ἂν τῇ ὄντι μεταωροσκόπον τε καὶ ἀδολέσχην καὶ ἀχρηστον κελίσθαι. Compare Clouds, 312, 356, 1461, etc. But the most affecting allusion is in the Phædo, where Socrates on the day of his death before commencing his solemn and earnest discourse on the immortality of the soul, and the state into which he was about to enter, says, Οὐκοῦν ἂν οἶμαι εἰπείν τιμὰ νῦν ἀκούσαντα, οἷδ' εἰ κομφοποιεῖς εἶν, ὡς ἀδολεσχῶ, καὶ οὐ περὶ προσηκόντων τούτῳ λόγους ποιοῦμαι.

¶ It was reserved for Voltaire to say that Aristophanes was a Comic Poet without anything comic or poetical in him.