

Aristophanes' Lost *Banqueters* and
Plato *Republic* I

John A. Stevens
East Carolina University

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2022/2600BanquetersPlatoRep1.pdf>

1. I went down...

Κατέβην χθές εἰς Πειραιᾶ μετὰ Γλαύκωνος τοῦ Ἄριστωνος προσευξόμενός τε τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἅμα τὴν ἐορτὴν βουλόμενος θεάσασθαι (*Rep.* 1.327a)

I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon, the son of Ariston, to say a prayer to the goddess and also because I wanted to be in the audience for the festival...

Ἴθι νυν, κατάβηθ', ὦ Σωκρατίδιον, ὡς ἐμέ, ἵνα με διδάξης ὣνπερ ἔνεκα ἐλήλυθα. (*Strepsiades, Clouds* 237-38)

Now then, come down, dear Socrates, to where I am, so you may teach me the things I have come to learn.

2. Feast of the Bendideia 1.354a-b

And so, Thrasymachus, injustice is never more profitable than justice.

Let that be your **banquet**, Socrates, at the **feast** of Bendis.

Given by you, Thrasymachus, after you became gentle and ceased to give me rough treatment. Yet I haven't had a fine **banquet**. But that's my fault not yours. I seem to have behaved like a glutton, snatching at every dish that passes and tasting it before properly savoring its predecessor.

3. Parabasis of *Clouds* 528-36

Since the time when in this place my Virtuous Boy and my Buggered Boy (ὁ σώφρων τε χὼ καταπύγων) won great favor among certain gentlemen whom it is a pleasure even to mention, and I, being a yet-unmarried girl and unfit for motherhood, gave up <my child> and another girl took it up, and you nobly raised and educated it—since that time I have been able to count on your favorable verdict. So now this new comedy of mine, like the famous *Electra*, has come looking somewhere to find similarly intelligent spectators: she will recognize her brother's lock if she sees it.

4. Summary of *Banqueters* by Kaibel (quoted *Poetae Comici Graeci ed. Kassel & Austin III2 Aristophanes Testimonia et Fragmenta De Gruyter, Berlin 1984 Δαιταλῆς test. vi ad Nub. 528-36 p.123*)

‘ad Heraclea celebranda Daetalenses congressi chorus fuerint (test, iii), primas partes agebant unus e paganis senex (ὁ πρεσβύτερος, fr. 205) eiusque filii ὁ σώφρων τε χῶ καταπύγων (test, vi), alter prisca disciplina attica institutus, alter sophistarum alumnus dicendi et argumentandi arte forensi doctus, laborum impatiens et luxuriosae vitae deditus’

‘The chorus consisted of banqueters who gathered to celebrate the festival of Hercules. The principal characters were an old man from the countryside and his sons, one prudent, and the other ‘buggered’. The one received the traditional Athenian education, the other is a graduate of the sophists taught the forensic art of persuasive speaking, allergic to work and dedicated to a life of excess.’

5. The problem of bastardized speech (Rep. 7.537e-538e)

The problem is that those who practice dialectic at present are filled with lawlessness (537e). He uses the example of a child introduced into a great household, brought up amid much wealth and ‘fawning sycophants’ (κόλαξι), and by people who pretend to be his parents, but are not (537e-538a): at first, he shows more honor to his pretend parents; but when he discovers the lie, he will slacken in his honor and attention to those he formerly regarded as parents (traditional morality). He may be seduced by other opposite ways of living, full of pleasures that flatter the soul and draw it away from conforming to *nomos* into lawlessness (538d-e; sophisticated rhetoric). The image explains both how sophists come to control the political dialogue in a city, and also how aristocrats who make a beginning of philosophy fall into lawlessness, like Alcibiades.

6. *Banqueters* Fr. 233. Galen, *Glosses on Hippocrates* 19 p.66 Kühn

In this play the old man from the banqueters’ deme challenges his undisciplined son first to explain some expressions from Homer, then the son makes a counterchallenge with legal expressions from the tablets of Solon:

(Father) Explain to me about these Homeric expressions. What do they mean by “high pointed sterns” (κόρυμβα)? What do they mean by “feeble heads” (ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα)?

(Bugged Son) No, let him, your son and my brother, explain what they mean by ἰδύους? What do they mean by ὀπίειν?

7. Fr. 205. Galen, *Glosses on Hippocrates* 19 p.66 Kühn

(A. Bugged son) These words will come back on you someday. (ἀποβήσεται σοι ταῦτά ποι τὰ ῥήματα.)

(B. Father) That “come back on you” is from Alcibiades. (παρ’ Ἀλκιβιάδου τοῦτο ἀποβήσεται.)

(A. Bugged son) Why do you keep insinuating and slandering against those who want to live like gentlemen? (τί δ’ ὑποτεκμαίρη καὶ κακῶς ἄνδρας λέγεις καλοκάγαθίαν ἀσκοῦντας;)

(B. Father) “Well, my fine Thrasymachus, which of the lawyers talks that nonsense?” (οἴμ’, ὦ Θρασύμαχε, τίς τοῦτο τῶν ξυνηγῶρων γηρύεται;)

8. Fr. 206 Scholia on Hippocrates De Fracturis 1

‘Do you have the clever arguments I acquired? (σοὶ γὰρ σοφίσματα ἔστιν ἀγὼ ἔκτησάμην;)

Didn’t you run away from the teacher immediately?’ (οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀποδίδρασκες ἐκ διδασκάλου;)

9. Other Fragments of *Banqueters*

Fr. 225. He didn’t learn these things when I sent him to school but rather drinking, bad singing, Syracusan cuisine, Sybaritic feasting, “Chian from Spartan Bowls,” and the love of drinking for pleasure.

Fr. 232. I’m one who’s spent all his time playing auloi and lyres, and now you tell me to dig in the dirt?

Fr. 228 The sycophant: I shook them down, extorted money, threatened, exposed, repeatedly

Fr. 244 (a) “In the archonship of Phallenius”: Ar. in *Banqueters* invented a certain archon, playing on “phallos” obscenely. (b) Ar. says that Alcibiades was born in the archonship of Phallenius, playing in mockery on Phales.

10. Socrates’ reply to Thrasymachus 1.345c

You think that he fattens his sheep qua shepherd not with a view to what is best for the sheep, but like some ‘banqueter’ about to ‘feast and enjoy himself’ (δατυμόνα... ἐστιάσεσθαι 345c; cf. εἰστιάσθω, 354a), or again for what one can sell them for, like a money-maker, not a shepherd.

11. Thrasymachus the beast; Socrates and Polemarchus the passive lovers 1.336b-c

When we came to a stopping place after I said these things, he could stay quiet no longer, and coiling himself up he sprang at us like a wild beast as if to tear us to pieces.

Both Polemarchus and I were terrified and panic-stricken. He roared into the middle of our discussion, ‘What is this foolishness that is taking you so long? Why do you two ‘innocents’ (εὐηθίζεσθε) keep ‘yielding’ to one another (ὑποκατακλινόμενοι)? If you truly want to know what the just is, don’t just ask questions and compete to refute whenever someone answers something

12. The slandering sycophant and the close shave.

I think that was what you were saying when you agreed that rulers are not infallible but do err sometimes.

You are a sycophant in arguments, Socrates – you quibble and slander your opponents (συκοφάντης γὰρ εἶ, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐν τοῖς λόγοις). (340c-d)

Οἷε γὰρ ἂν με, εἴπῃ, οὕτω μανῆναι ὥστε ξυρεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖν λέοντα καὶ συκοφαντεῖν Θρασύμαχον;
(341c)

Do you think I am crazy enough to try to shave a lion or quibble with a Thrasymachus?

13. and bathed

Ταῦτα εἰπὼν ὁ Θρασύμαχος ἐν νῶ εἶχεν ἀπιέναι, ὥσπερ βαλανεὺς ἡμῶν καταντλήσας κατὰ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀθρόον καὶ πολὺν τὸν λόγον (344d)

After saying this, Thrasymachus was intending to make his exit, having poured a great flood of words over our ears like a bath attendant.

14. Hot and bothered, blushing and struggling

Ὅ δὴ Θρασύμαχος ὠμολόγησε μὲν πάντα ταῦτα, οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ νῦν ῥαδίως λέγω, ἀλλ' ἐλκόμενος καὶ μόγις, μετὰ ἰδρωτὸς θαυμαστοῦ ὄσου, ἅτε καὶ θέρους ὄντος – τότε καὶ εἶδον ἐγὼ, πρότερον δὲ οὐπῶ, Θρασύμαχον ἐρυθριῶντα

As I spoke, Thrasymachus agreed to all these things not easily as I am speaking now, but only after being dragged and with difficulty, and with an amazing amount of sweat, it being summer-time – and then I saw something I had never seen before – Thrasymachus blushed. (350c-d)

cf. 354a Let that be your banquet, Socrates, at the feast of Bendis.

Given by you, Thrasymachus, after 'you became gentle and stopped being so rough' (πρᾶος ἐγένου καὶ χαλεπαίνων ἐπαύσω).

15. Alcibiades. Hesiod and Perses

ψηφίσασθε χωρὶς εἶναι τὰς γραφάς, ὅπως ἂν ἦ
τῶ γέροντι μὲν γέρων καὶ νωδὸς ὁ ξυνήγορος, 715
τοῖς νέοισι δ' εὐρύπρωκτος καὶ ἀλαος χῶ Κλεινίου. (Ar. Ach. 714-716)

Let us separate the indictments, so that for the old, the public prosecutor be old and toothless too, and for the young, the chattering buggered son of Kleinias.

Rep. 2.363b for the just, the gods make the oak 'bear acorns at the top and bees in the middle, and the wooly sheep are weighed down with heavy fleeces' (WD 232-34)

Rep. 2.364c-d Vice is abundant and easy for the taking

The way is smooth and right wherever you are;

But the gods have put sweat before the door to virtue (WD 287-89)