

## Antisthenes as Index to the Question of Historical Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*

The name of Antisthenes is rarely mentioned in scholarly discussion of the image of Socraticism presented in Aristophanes' *Clouds* as it has developed in the fifty years since the clear verdicts of Kenneth Dover (*Aristophanes' Clouds*, 1968). Dover evoked Antisthenes as parallel for Socrates' ragged style of dress (p. xxxix); but for his list of the "minor Socratics" whose philosophical interests might be compared to those of Aristophanes' Socrates, he looked to a passage in Themistius, from the fourth century CE (p. xlvi): Themistius mentions a "genuine Socratic chorus" consisting in Cebes, Phaedo, Aristippus and Aeschines, all ethicists, and among these Dover found no resonance of the intellectual style Socrates performs in the *Clouds*. Meanwhile, the Socratic disciples who were most likely to have encountered the Socraticism parodied in the *Clouds*, because they had come of age in the late 420s BCE – Antisthenes and Euclides – were oddly eliminated from the debate about the historicity and particularity of Aristophanes' Socrates.

In 1968, bodily style might have been the best-known aspect of Antisthenes: Dover refers to his speech in Xen. *Symp.* 4.34. The new wave of scholarship on Antisthenes as thinker, initiated through Ferdinanda Caizzi's lengthy article of 1964 and her subsequent edition of the *Fragmenta* in 1966, had not yet gained traction. Today matters are different, and we are equipped to compare Socrates as characterized in the *Clouds* to Socraticism as it can be gauged not just through Plato and Xenophon, who were young children in 423 BCE, but through the oldest of the minor Socratics, especially Antisthenes.

Goulet-Cazé 2017 ("Epilogue: Les Origines du Mouvement Cynique," in *Le cynisme, une philosophie antique*, 607-630) points to a few resonances in the *Clouds* related to proto-

Cynicism: for example, when Strepsiades wants to fold (πτύξαι) his garment, lest he get wet (*Clouds* 267), Aristophanes has him use the same verb used of Antisthenes' alleged invention of the Cynic costume of the folded tunic, D. L. 6.7; Strepsiades' promise to consume Socrates' wisdom "like a dog" (*Clouds* 491) evokes comments about Cynicism from the scholiasts. But comparisons can be made on intellectual topics. At the level of detail, we have coincidences such as the debate whether rhetorical craft is base (πονηρός) and how Homer evaluated his character Nestor in *Clouds* 1056-62 and a similar debate in Antisthenes' exposition of Odysseus' Homeric epithet πολύτροπος, where the terms of evaluation are πονηρός and ἀγαθός, and Nestor is again used for comparison (*SSR* VA 187). Socrates' interest in linguistic detail more broadly in *Clouds* is comparable to assorted testimonia for Antisthenes, who according to Xenophon was positively disposed to the wisdom of Prodicus, whereas it is not reconcilable with the image of Socrates in Plato, who generally rejects Prodicus' principles of differentiation among words. The portrayal of gainsaying (ἀντιλέγειν) in *Clouds* between Just and Unjust Logos is comparable to Antisthenes' theories of gainsaying, which according to tradition focuses on the same term. Even the references to Diogenes of Apollonia' natural philosophy might resonate in Antisthenes. Although Antisthenes was not a natural philosopher, he shares with Diogenes a novel reconsideration of the term πολύτροπος—Diogenes used the term as a quality of the airy substrate that becomes all things—and it could be that Antisthenes' eventual contributions to Athenian intellectual literature were responses to the same stimulations that Aristophanes detected in Socraticism of the late 420s.

Resonances between details in the *Clouds* and details in the remains of Antisthenes show not that Aristophanes' *Clouds* is about Antisthenes, who would have been an obscure Socratic disciple in 423 BCE, but ways in which the *Clouds* is about old, pre-Platonic Socratic teaching,

which Antisthenes also partly reflects. This comparison amounts to a triangulation different from those typically made, when the Socrates character in Plato or Xenophon is compared to Socrates in the *Clouds*, and it is an important addition to our discourse about the historical Socrates.