STAGING PHILOSOPHY: POVERTY IN THE AGON OF ARISTOPHANES' *WEALTH*

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1. The Problem

The agon of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, first staged in 388 BCE, has puzzled scholars for decades. Apart from its formal and structural divergence from the other agones in the Aristophanic *corpus*,[1] it raises some major thematic issues, especially with respect to the two opponents, Chremylus and Penia (Poverty). For instance, it is a commonplace in Aristophanic scholarship that the first speaker in agones is the one that eventually loses the argument:[2] then, why does Chremylus go first in *Wealth*? Is Aristophanes suggesting that Penia should be considered as the winner in the agon? And if so, why? By and large, scholars have found Penia's demonstration more persuasive than Chremylus', and therefore tend to think that the poet wanted his audience to sympathize with the antagonist rather than with the protagonist of the play.[3] This interpretation of the agon often relates to the "ironic" reading of the play, and has received the lion's share of scholarly attention: Aristophanes, it is argued, is pessimistic about the actual realization of Chremylus' endeavor, and therefore offers some moments of more or less explicit disapproval throughout the play—the argument with Penia being the clearest and the most evident.[4]

The agon of *Wealth* is thus highly problematic: is it possible for the antagonist to prevail in the agon? How is the scene shaped? What is its deep meaning in the

This work would not have been completed without the generous help of Luigi Battezzato, Giuseppe Cambiano, Andrea Capra, Alessandro Grilli, Glenn W. Most, and Guido Paduano, from whose comments and criticisms this article has benefited enormously. Earlier versions of this paper were discussed at Oxford University and at the research seminar at the Scuola Normale (Pisa): I am very grateful to all the participants, who contributed greatly to improving it. I am also grateful to *CP*'s anonymous referees for their useful comments.

1. The agon of *Wealth* looks shorter and simpler (Gelzer 1960, 35): Aristophanes cuts one of its two halves and limits the role of the Chorus to the mere *katakeleusmós* (Ar. *Plut*. 487–88). The agon is also more loosely structured, featuring an unusually free and unregulated argument between Chremylus and Penia. On these peculiarities (in particular, on choral interludes), see Maidment 1935; Handley 1953; Hunter 1979; Sommerstein 1984. The most recent and complete contribution on the subject is to be found in Imperio 2011.

2. See, e.g., Sommerstein 1996, 257; MacDowell 1995, 292. This is also explicitly stated in the agon of *Clouds* (Ar. *Nub*. 940–48), where the Worse Argument lets its opponent go first, so that it can criticize directly the points he has made.

3. Schmid 1946, 379–80; Süß 1954, 303–5; Albini 1965, 434; Flashar 1975; 1996; Heberlein 1981, 44; David 1984, 31.

4. German-speaking scholars have argued with most vigor for this option: see, e.g., Flashar 1967; 1975; 1996 (for a critical discussion of this theory, see, e.g., Sommerstein 1996). Although today Aristophanic scholarship tends rightly to undermine the value of the ironic reading of the comedies (see Fiorentini 2005; Ruffell 2006), irony is still a centerpiece of the general interpretation of *Wealth*.

Classical Philology 115 (2020): 402–423
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economy of the text? To be sure, these issues have been addressed by a variety of critical contributions, and are too complex to be addressed again by a single one. All the same, some aspects of the agon, I would contend, have been partially neglected by scholars. For instance, the characterization of Penia is a field that could and should be more widely explored.[5] Since Poverty is one of the two opponents to take part in the agon, a closer analysis of the character can help highlight the thematic and parodic texture of the agon itself and perhaps reconsider the whole scene. In parts 2 and 3 of this paper, I will explore Poverty's characterization, whereas in part 4 I will touch on a possible philosophical parallel for Penia's arguments.

2. CHARACTERIZING POVERTY: CONDENSATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Penia is a quite rare figure in Greek literature before *Wealth*: she is not to be found in mythology, we do not know her pedigree, and we do not have any proof of a cult, either.[6] It is more probable that Penia is one of Aristophanes' typical personifications, such as Peace or Reconciliation. We meet Poverty as a personification in some occasions—in fact, very few—before the agon of *Wealth*: lyric poets refer to her three times (Alc. frag. 364 V., featuring her as Amechania's sister; Thgn. 384–85, featuring her as Amechania's mother, and 351–54), and Herodotus mentions her, too (Hdt. 8.111.3, again in connection with Amechania).[7] Plato's *Symposium*, of course, stands out as the most direct mention of Poverty, but evidently comes after Aristophanes' *Wealth*.[8] As far as we know, then, Aristophanes was creating a quite new character, for which he hardly had any tradition behind him. Therefore, the first question to be asked is how he worked on the characterization of Poverty, whether he shaped her as in the vast majority of his personifications or he followed a different method.

The real peculiarity of the characterization of Poverty was first noticed by Hans-Joachim Newiger in his groundbreaking study on Aristophanic metaphors.[9] Usually, personifications in Aristophanes consist in a sort of *Verdichtung*—they must "condense" an abstract concept in a physical character. Peace, for instance, gives physical reality to what would otherwise exist only as an idea. Aristophanes does not even need her to speak—her mere appearance is sufficient to produce the desired effect. In this respect, Poverty is consistently different. It is not, to put it in Newiger's terms, a *Verdichtung* but an *Entfaltung*, the speaking development of a concept. Not only does Poverty embody a concept, but she *speaks*, she argues for herself, she even starts an agon.[10] As Newiger noticed, there is

5. The most notable exceptions being, to the best of my knowledge: Newiger 1957, 155–65; Heberlein 1981, 163–76; Sfyroeras 1995, esp. 240–48. See also the commentaries on *Wealth*, ad loc.

6. Apart from a late testimony by Philostratus (*V A* 5.4).

7. Among the personifications of Poverty, I do not consider Hes. *Op.* 717–18; Democr. 68 B 24 DK; Criti. 88 B 29 DK (= frag. 25 *TrGF*). In all these cases, the references to πενία do not allow us, in my view, to speak of an actual personification.

8. Some even suggested that Plato's Poverty is a postmortem homage to Aristophanes: Reckford 1987, 361 n. 107.

9. Newiger 1957, 161–62.

10. Newiger 1957, 162: "Das, worum es in dem Stücke geht, wird nicht mehr in kräftigen komisch-symbolischen Bildern *dargestellt*, es wird darüber vorwiegend ernsthaft und recht bildlos *geredet*." Later on, Gelzer (1960, 272) defines Poverty as a "rhetorische Allegorie," a "speaking allegory."

only one other such case in the whole Aristophanic *corpus*: the two Λόγοι in the agon of *Clouds*. This is, however, a relatively simple fact to account for: the basis of *Clouds* being the sophists' ability to make speeches, it comes as no surprise that Aristophanes chose to stage two speeches. Poverty's case, on the contrary, is harder to explain: Why did Aristophanes stage a speaking character instead of one of his common *Verdichtungen*?

Newiger explained the peculiar characterization of Poverty by reference to the peculiar place that *Wealth* occupies in Aristophanes' production. *Wealth*, Newiger argued, is already the product of the moral and philosophical metamorphosis of comedy in the fourth century BCE: then, Penia is a speaking character because Aristophanes wants his audience to be taught about a moral and philosophical theme such as the virtues of poverty. A case can be made, to be sure, that *Wealth* shows clear signs of a metamorphosis of Aristophanic comedy, but I think that the reason why Poverty is staged as a speaking character is different—it still has to do with philosophy, but in quite another sense.

3. STAGING PHILOSOPHY

Scholars have already pointed out that the context of Penia's arguments is somewhat sophistic.[11] In my opinion, though, the agon does not just bear some sophistic nuances: the whole scene is conceived of as a thorough parody of philosophical argumentation, and Poverty is a speaking personification because she is extensively characterized as a philosopher.

The first thing we can note is Penia's vocabulary. Poverty speaks as a philosopher would speak, and her part of the agon is thought of, and spoken of, in terms of a philosophical discourse, featuring a philosopher's rhetorical instruments. When challenging her opponent to prove otherwise, Penia uses some revealing terms (Ar. *Plut*. 574–75):

> καὶ σύ γ' ἐλέγξαι μ' οὔπω δύνασαι περὶ τούτου,
> ἀλλὰ φλυαρεῖς καὶ πτερυγίζεις.

> Well, you haven't been able to refute me on that yet; you're just wittering and flailing the air.[12]

The verb ἐλέγχειν, of course, has a vast range of meanings, depending on the many contexts in which it can be used, the main one being the legal jargon. However, despite its competitive sense, the verb is not that common in Aristophanes' agones. This is all the more interesting if we observe that the agones in which ἐλέγχειν is best attested feature sophistic or philosophical characters. In *Clouds*, for instance, (ἐξ)ελέγχειν is the dialectic strategy used by the Worse

11. The first to detect philosophical influence on the agon of *Wealth* were Meyer (1891) and Nestle (1942, 358–59 n. 44). Both Meyer and Nestle thought that Aristophanes had taken Poverty's arguments from a philosophical source, and suggested the existence of a treaty on poverty (possibly by Prodicus or one of his pupils), now lost. This hypothesis, though, proved impossible to be verified, and was set aside by later scholars. However, the sophistic nuance of the agon has been noticed throughout: see, e.g., Russo 1962, 357 ("il vigore sofistico ed euripideo delle argomentazioni di Povertà"); see also Olson 1990, 235–36.

12. The translations of *Wealth* offered hereafter are, with some minor modifications, those by Sommerstein (2001), whereas the edition of the text is that by Wilson (2007), unless otherwise noted.

Argument, the representative of Socratic wisdom: it does not explain its reasons, but confines itself to rebutting its opponent's arguments (Ar. *Nub*. 1043, 1061–62). Refutation, then, is part of the techniques that philosophers and sophists put in place in Aristophanic comedy, and one of the most peculiar traits in their parody. Obviously, Euripides, the sophistic and Socratic poet, is no exception: see Ar. *Ran*. 894, 908, 922. The choice of rebuttal as a centerpiece of the comic definition of philosophical argumentation was no coincidence: rebuttal was, of course, a significant part of Socrates' method, as his contemporaries already recognized (see, e.g., Thrasymachos' picture of Socrates in Pl. *Resp*. 337E1–3).[13] Penia, then, is using a term that both relates to a famous contemporary intellectual and has a specific, and parodic, nuance in Aristophanes.

Moreover, the verb φλυαρεῖν could also be alluding to the context of a philosophical discussion. As a matter of fact, the term (as well as its cognate noun φλυαρία) can be found in Plato's production, when Socrates' most vehement opponents try to discredit his demonstrations as philosophically weak:[14] in the *Republic*, for instance, Thrasymachos defines Socrates' previous discussion as φλυαρία (Pl. *Resp*. 336C1), and likewise he assures he will not let him φλυαρεῖν again (*Resp*. 337B4); in *Gorgias*, Callicles accuses Socrates of not stopping φλυαρεῖν (*Grg*. 489B7; 490E4), and again describes Socrates' ideas in terms of φλυαρία (*Grg*. 492C7–8). In one case, φλυαρεῖν is even connected with ἐλέγχειν (*Grg*. 486C4–7): paraphrasing Euripides' *Antiope* (frag. 188 Kannicht), Callicles suggests that Socrates should stop rebutting (παῦσαι δὲ ἐλέγχων)[15] and set aside the φλυαρίας.[16] Chremylus' attempt to make his point in *Wealth* is likewise described by Penia as φλυαρεῖν—a philosophically weak argumentation.

Poverty's line of reasoning also takes the form of demonstration (Ar. *Plut*. 467–71):

> καὶ μὴν <u>περὶ τούτου</u> σφῷν ἐθέλω <u>δοῦναι λόγον</u>
> τὸ πρῶτον αὐτοῦ· κἂν μὲν <u>ἀποφήνω</u> μόνην
> ἀγαθῶν ἁπάντων οὖσαν αἰτίαν ἐμὲ
> ὑμῖν δι' ἐμέ τε ζῶντας ὑμᾶς—·εἰ δὲ μή,
> ποιεῖτον ἤδη τοῦθ' ὅ τι ἂν ὑμῖν δοκῇ.
>
> Very well, I am prepared to <u>give the two of you a demonstration about that</u>, here and now. And if <u>I prove</u> that I alone am the cause of all the good things you have, and that it is thanks to me that you are even alive—; but if I fail, then you can do whatever you like to me.

The phrase λόγον δοῦναι ("make a speech," "give fame," or "discuss, debate") is not rare in Greek literature. However, it is in philosophical prose that the phrase λόγον δοῦναι is most frequently used—the Platonic *corpus* being the richest. In most cases Plato uses it in the specific (and dialectic) sense of "give reason."[17]

13. Bibliography on the subject is immense: see at least Vlastos 1995.
14. See also Zanetto 1996, 184 n. 147.
15. Callicles picks up ἐλέγχων instead of Euripides' ματᾴζων, as better suited to Socrates (Dodds 1959, ad loc.).
16. To be sure, this passage of *Wealth* is not the only one where Aristophanes uses φλυαρεῖν or one of its cognates. However, this is the only agon in which it can be found, and its relation with ἐλέγχειν suggests that philosophical parody should be taken into consideration in this case.
17. As has been noted (see Ferrari 2011, 361 n. 199), to give reason is one of the most important aims of Platonic dialectic. Cf., e.g., Pl. *Tht*. 175C8–D1; *Resp*. 533C2; *Symp*. 202A5; *Grg*. 501A2.

From this meaning, Plato develops a more general sense for the phrase λόγον δοῦναι + genitive (or περὶ + genitive): "make a demonstration, explain." A good example of this construction can be seen in *Philebus* (50D8–E2):

> τούτων γὰρ ἁπάντων αὔριον ἐθελήσω σοι λόγον δοῦναι, τὰ νῦν δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ λοιπὰ βούλομαι στέλλεσθαι πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν ἣν Φίληβος ἐπιτάττει.[18]

> I will gladly make a demonstration of all these matters tomorrow, but now I wish to address the remaining points that are needful for the judgment that Philebus demands.

This construction and this didactic meaning are, as far as I know, only to be found in philosophical prose. And this is exactly the meaning of λόγον δοῦναι in the passage from *Wealth*. It is hard to say whether Aristophanes wanted to hint explicitly at Plato; however, the context and the particular nuance of this expression look overtly philosophical. The same can be said for the verb ἀποφαίνειν, far more common than λόγον δοῦναι but still closely related to a didactic context.[19]

Another technical term could be detected toward the end of the agon, when Poverty says (Ar. *Plut*. 576–78):

> ὅτι βελτίους αὐτοὺς ποιῶ. Σκέψασθαι δ' ἔστι μάλιστα
> ἀπὸ τῶν παίδων· τοὺς γὰρ πατέρας φεύγουσι φρονοῦντας ἄριστα
> αὐτοῖς. Οὕτω διαγιγνώσκειν χαλεπὸν πρᾶγμ' ἐστὶ τὸ χρηστόν.

> Because I make them better people. You can see it most easily from what children do: their fathers have their best interests at heart, but the children run away from them. That's how hard a thing it is to recognize what is best for you.

Apart from the content of Penia's argument—the paradoxical praise of suffering recalls Pheidippides' sophistic explanation of his beating his father in *Clouds* (Ar. *Nub*. 1408–12)—, our attention is drawn to the verb διαγιγνώσκειν. This is a quite rare verb in Greek literature up to the last quarter of the fifth century BCE, but it is very widespread in a particular context—Socratic speculation. The works where διαγιγνώσκειν is best attested are, as a matter of fact, Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Plato's dialogues. There, the verb (in its meaning of "distinguish, know one from the other") is crucial to Socrates' method of definition. A good example can be found in Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates explains that men should try hard to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad (Pl. *Resp*. 618B–C):

> . . . μάλιστα ἐπιμελητέον ὅπως ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῶν ἄλλων μαθημάτων ἀμελήσας τούτου τοῦ μαθήματος καὶ ζητητὴς καὶ μαθητὴς ἔσται, ἐάν ποθεν οἷός τ' ᾖ μαθεῖν καὶ ἐξευρεῖν τίς αὐτὸν ποιήσει δυνατὸν καὶ ἐπιστήμονα, βίον χρηστὸν καὶ πονηρὸν διαγιγνώσκοντα . . .[20]

18. Cf. also, e.g., Pl. *Plt*. 286A4; *Phd*. 95D7; *La*. 187E10. The text of *Philebus* printed here is that edited by Burnet (1901).

19. The imperative διδάσκου (Ar. *Plut.* 473) and the infinitive ἀποδείξειν (*Plut.* 474) can also be put in this same framework. Those, however, can be found elsewhere in Aristophanic agones: cf., e.g., Ar. *Vesp*. 520, 549.

20. See also, e.g., Xen. *Mem*. 3.9. The translations of the *Republic* offered hereafter are those by Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (2013), whereas the edition of the text is that by Slings (2003), unless otherwise noted.

> . . . this is the chief reason why it should be our main concern that each of us, neglecting all other studies, should seek after and study this thing—if in any way he may be able to learn and to discover the man who will give him the ability and the knowledge to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad . . .

This passage is very similar to that from *Wealth*, where Poverty tells Chremylus how hard it is to distinguish what is good (sc. from what is bad). And it seems to me that in this use of the verb we could find a reference to a technical—philosophical—language, too.

Penia, then, speaks as a sophist or a philosopher would speak, using their own language and their own ways of argumentation.[21] Moreover, she does what a sophist or a philosopher is expected to do: she argues for a case that is clearly less desirable, giving a counterintuitive and paradoxical demonstration of its advantages. This is exactly what sophists and philosophers usually do in comedy:[22] see, for instance, Strepsiades' request to Socrates—teach him how to make the wrong seem right, and vice versa.

This is not, however, the only aspect that connects Poverty with philosophy. As has been noted, the characterization of philosophers in ancient Greek comedy often follows a regular pattern.[23] One of the most common features of comic intellectuals is their way of life: in comedies, they are usually extraordinarily tough and resistant, and they endure a poor and uncomfortable life. This might have been suggested to comic authors by the actual self-representation that some philosophers offered: a number of philosophic schools made frugality and modesty a distinctive trait of their teachings,[24] and, even more so, Socrates and his pupils had a name for their living in absolute economy and simplicity.[25] Comedy distorts and magnifies this trait, making philosophers (especially those connected to Socratism) destitute characters, actual beggars:[26] in *Clouds*, for instance, Strepsiades must suffer severe hardships (hunger, thirst, and cold) if he wants to enter the Thinkery, that is, if he wants to become a philosopher himself (*Nub*. 412–19); in *Birds*, the Socratic mania consists in not eating and not bathing (*Av*. 1282); and Ameipsias' *Konnos*, a merciless parody of Socratism, features Socrates as a character with no cloak and no shoes (frag. 9 KA = F4 Olson).[27]

21. The overlapping between strictly philosophical, sophistic, and generically rhetorical traits in Penia's vocabulary should not surprise us. Greek mentality did not necessarily draw a sharp distinction between intellectual professions (see, e.g., Zimmermann 1993; Miralles 1996). One could see in Poverty's lexicon and the argumentative strategies a more generic parody of a trained rhetorician or intellectual; however, the following pages will show that this is part of the parody of a more specific parodic target, more closely related to philosophy.

22. Thus Torchio 2001, ad Ar. *Plut*. 422–25.

23. The most organic study on the representation of philosophers in comedy is Imperio 1998. See Olson 2007, 227–55 for the comic fragmentary texts featuring philosophers. See also Battezzato 2008 for the parody of Pythagoreans.

24. See, e.g., Arnott 1996, 583.

25. Cf., e.g., Pl. *Symp*. 174A; Xen. *Mem*. 1.5.6.

26. For this portrayal of intellectuals as beggars in Aristophanes, see Grilli 1992, 128–35, showing that the connection between philosophers and poverty was a peculiar trait of ancient comedy: philosophers were poor *par excellence*, and this inevitably entailed a negative judgment (see below).

27. I am referring to the anthology of comic fragments edited by Olson (2007). For Ameipsias' fragment, see Totaro 1998, ad loc.; Olson 2007, ad loc.; Orth 2013, ad loc. See also the anecdotes on Antisthenes' *tribon* told by Diogenes Laertius (Diog. Laert. 6.8 = V A 15 Giannantoni; Diog. Laert. 6.13 = V A 22 Giannantoni).

Therefore, having the personification of Poverty act like a philosopher fits in perfectly with the comical pattern of poverty-stricken philosophers. It is almost obvious that a philosopher should defend the reasons of poverty, not just because she must make the wrong side seem right, but because philosophers are the most natural advocates for poverty. As a matter of fact, Chremylus' description of a poor person's disadvantages matches perfectly the common disadvantages that philosophers themselves are often said to suffer: poor people starve (πεινῶσιν, Ar. *Plut*. 504), as much as philosophers do; they dress in rags (ἔχειν ῥάκος, Ar. *Plut*. 540), and therefore must endure cold temperatures, as intellectuals do.[28]

Such a connection between Poverty and a philosopher's destitute lifestyle emerges quite clearly, I would contend, from at least one passage in the agon. After Chremylus has accused Penia of being responsible for all the ills of the poor, the two of them start arguing about a curious topic (Ar. *Plut*. 548–54):

> Πε. Σὺ μὲν οὐ τὸν ἐμὸν βίον εἴρηκας, τὸν τῶν πτωχῶν δ᾽ ἐπεκρούσω.
>
> Χρ. Οὔκουν δήπου τῆς Πτωχείας Πενίαν φαμὲν εἶναι ἀδελφήν;
>
> Πε. ὑμεῖς γ᾽, οἵπερ καὶ Θρασυβούλῳ Διονύσιον εἶναι ὅμοιον.
> Ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ οὑμὸς τοῦτο πέπονθεν βίος οὐ μὰ Δί᾽, οὐδέ γε μέλλει.
> Πτωχοῦ μὲν γὰρ βίος, ὃν σὺ λέγεις, ζῆν ἐστιν μηδὲν ἔχοντα·
> τοῦ δὲ πένητος ζῆν φειδόμενον καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις προσέχοντα,
> περιγίγνεσθαι δ᾽ αὐτῷ μηδέν, μὴ μέντοι μηδ᾽ ἐπιλείπειν.
>
> PO. You haven't been talking about my way of life at all; you've been inveighing against the lot of the destitute.
>
> CH. Well, we do say, don't we, that Poverty is the sister of Mendicancy?
>
> PO. Yes, you do, and you also say that Dionysius is no different from Thrasybulus! My kind of life doesn't involve that sort of thing, by Zeus, and it never could. The life of the destitute, which is what you're talking about, is to have to live on nothing. The life of a poor man is to live economically and keep at one's work, not having any surplus but not having a shortfall either.

Poverty shows here the difference between poor and destitute people (πτωχοί), and denies being Ptocheia's (i.e., Mendicancy's) sister. These lines have surprised Aristophanic scholars: the difference between poverty and mendicancy, as intuitive as it can be, is rare in Greek literature, as much as Penia's pedigree as suggested by Chremylus (nowhere else is Penia said to be Mendicancy's sister). In fact, the agon of *Wealth* is the only passage in extant Greek literature where a sort of personification of πτωχεία can be found. This is all the more surprising in view of the importance of these lines for the whole framework of the agon: after Chremylus' attack, Penia needs to stand up for herself and counterattack, showing that she has nothing to do with what she is accused of. Scholars usually agree that she succeeds—but the core of her argument here, her relationship with beggars and Mendicancy, is still open for discussion.

28. The Pythagoreans, for instance, had to tolerate ῥῖγος, "cold," as Alexis testifies in a comic list of major Pythagorean discomforts (frag. 201, 6 KA), and Socrates himself was renowned for his exceptional tolerance to cold temperatures (cf., e.g., Pl. *Symp*. 220A6–B1).

Some commentators have suggested that Aristophanes is using here another philosophical device, the *prodikeische Synonymik*, Prodicus of Ceos' well-known theory of synonyms, alongside his exceptional ability to show very subtle differences between two apparently similar concepts.[29] The suggestion of Prodicus' influence on Poverty's argumentation is certainly fascinating, and is very well plausible, as it fits in well with Penia's characterization as a philosopher. Yet, I believe that the choice of the word πτωχεία takes even further the joke on philosophy, insinuating that Penia shares a decisive trait of a philosopher's lifestyle.

As a matter of fact, πτωχεία is another central feature in the comic representation of philosophers.[30] As we have seen, the philosophers' choice to live in simplicity is often distorted by comic authors, so that frugality becomes destitution. Philosophers in comedy are frequently portrayed as beggars—and we often find the word πτωχεία related to them. Socrates himself was depicted as a beggar, as this passage from Eupolis shows (Eup. frag. 386 KA = F1 Olson):

μισῶ δὲ καὶ † Σωκράτην
τὸν πτωχὸν ἀδολέσχην,
ὃς τἄλλα μὲν πεφρόντικεν,
ὁπόθεν δὲ καταφαγεῖν ἔχοι
τούτου κατημέληκεν

I also hate Socrates, the begging babbler. He has thought out everything; but where he might get something to eat, that he has never considered.[31]

As is well known, ἀδολεσχεῖν, "to babble," is a distinctive trait of the comic Socrates.[32] But he is not only a babbler—he is the *begging* babbler. The adjective helps Eupolis put Socrates into his comic context: his being a πτωχός is what makes Socrates a philosopher. And this is true for other intellectuals, as well, such as Euripides, the sophists, and, some decades later, Diogenes of Sinope.[33] As much as ἀδολεσχία, then, πτωχεία is a defining trait of—at least some—philosophers in ancient Greek comedy. Read against this background, Penia's and Chremylus' mention of πτωχεία can hardly seem neutral. When Poverty started discussing the differences between her and οἱ πτωχοί, Aristophanes' audience could not help thinking of the immediate comic referent of the word, philosophers. Chremylus only needs to insist on Penia's proximity to

29. Thus Heberlein 1981, 41; Torchio 2001, ad loc.; Sommerstein 2001, ad loc. See Plato's parody of Prodicus in *Prt*. 337a–c.

30. See Imperio 1998, 102.

31. The translation is by Storey (2011, 2: 255).

32. As Socrates himself recognized (Pl. *Phd*. 70B10–C2). Cf., e.g., Ar. *Nub*. 1484–85. For more parallels, see Olson 2007, ad F1, 2.

33. Of course, Euripides' passion for beggars in his tragedies is a comic *topos*. What is more interesting is that Aristophanes attributes this passion to the fact that Euripides is himself a beggar: he is a πτωχοποιός (Ar. *Ran*. 842) because he himself is πτωχός (as stated at Ar. *Ach*. 412–13). To be sure, the portrait of Euripides as a beggar could depend on his family (his mother was famously accused of being a greengrocer: see Roselli 2005), but I would suggest that this trait connects Euripides more specifically to his intellectual, sophistic *milieu*: as a matter of fact, in Aristophanes' comedies sophists are πτωχοί, too, as the Better Argument reminds the Worse Argument (Ar. *Nub*. 921–22). As for Diogenes of Sinope, he repeatedly called himself a πτωχός (frags. 4 and 5 *TrGF*). It was precisely Socrates' frugal lifestyle that Diogenes aimed to imitate—or even surpass. It comes as no surprise, then, that Diogenes used to describe himself the same term used to describe Socrates, πτωχός.

Πτωχεία, Mendicancy, to make this reference clearer: everybody knows (φαμέν) that Poverty and Mendicancy are sisters, that is, everybody knows that Poverty is akin to the most notable πτωχοί, the philosophers.

Finally, the visual aspect probably strengthened the link between Penia and philosophers, as well. When Poverty first comes on stage, Chremylus and Blepsidemus do not immediately recognize her (Ar. *Plut.* 422–25):

Χρ. Σὺ δ' εἶ τίς; ὠχρὰ μὲν γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς.[34]

Βλ. ἴσως Ἐρινύς ἐστιν ἐκ τραγῳδίας·
βλέπει γέ τοι μανικόν τι καὶ τραγῳδικόν.

Χρ. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχει γὰρ δᾷδας.
Βλ. Οὐκοῦν κλαύσεται.

CH. And who are you? You certainly look very pale to me!

BL. Perhaps she's a Fury out of some tragedy; at any rate she has that crazy tragic look about her.

CH. She can't be, she hasn't got any torches.

BL. Then she's going to howl!

The scholia already suggested that the reference to the Erinyes at line 423 should be taken into serious consideration. In the scholiast's view, thus, Penia is shaped like a tragic Fury.[35] Following up the scholiast's suggestion, Raffaele Cantarella claimed that Aristophanes' main model in the characterization of Penia was the Chorus of Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (possibly as seen in a recent restaging).[36] I do not find this interpretation persuasive: the only common aspects that Cantarella could point out are Penia's pallor and her lack of a torch. However, neither of these elements can be attributed to Aeschylus' Erinyes with certainty: the rare adjective αἰανής (Aesch. *Eum.* 416) is probably not to be related with paleness,[37] and it can be argued that the Chorus of *Eumenides* ends up carrying λάμπαδες, "torches" (*Eum.* 1022).[38] On these grounds, Alan H. Sommerstein adapted Cantarella's hypothesis, suggesting that Aristophanes' model for Penia could be some more recent play featuring Erinyes.[39] Even though visual evidence shows that the Furies enjoyed a considerable iconographic success,[40] at the present stage of knowledge of early fourth-century Athenian drama, Sommerstein's hypothesis is hardly verifiable.[41] Moreover, the adjective ὠχρά does not look like a fitting description for a Fury: as a matter of fact, in ancient Greek public imagination Erinyes were white (λευκαί), not pale (ὠχραί). White complexion (λευκότης), the typical trait of women, was not the

34. For the textual reconstruction of this line, see below, n. 42.
35. Scholia ad Ar. *Plut.* 423: Ἐπισκώπτει αὐτὴν διὰ τὴν τῶν Ἐριννύων Εὐριπίδου ἢ Αἰσχύλου ὑπόθεσιν.
36. Cantarella 1965. Cantarella's hypothesis is partially shared by Torchio (2001, ad Ar. *Plut.* 423–24).
37. Sommerstein 1989, ad loc.; Podlecki 1989, ad loc. See also Silk 1983, 314–15.
38. I do not find the parallels pointed out by Sfyroeras (1995, 242–43) convincing, either: they all seem to me too generic to be hinting at a genuine Aeschylean parody.
39. Sommerstein 2001, ad Ar. *Plut.* 423.
40. See, e.g., Taplin 2007, 58–67.
41. For this reason, I also rule out Sfyroeras' (1995, 240–48) meta-literary interpretation, according to which Penia would be the representative of tragedy, as opposed to Plutus, the champion of comedy.

same thing as pale complexion (ὦχρος): the former denoted female beauty and young age, the latter an unhealthy state of body and mind. Furies were commonly pictured as young maidens: as such, they were λευκαί, not ὠχραί.[42] It seems to me, then, that Poverty's identification with a Fury was a mistaken identification, prompted by the effect of fright it triggered in Blepsidemus (it is frightening, therefore it must be a Fury), but comically contradicted by Penia's visual aspect, not at all that of an Erinys.[43]

While ὠχρὸς could not denote a Fury, however, it is not new to Aristophanes' audience and scholars. On some occasions, the adjective and its cognates show pallor due to a state of fright (*Pax* 642; *Lys*. 1140; *Ran*. 307),[44] but they are also used to describe the physical appearance of sophists and philosophers. In *Clouds*, for instance, Pheidippides calls the sophists in the Thinkery τοὺς ὠχριῶντας, "those pale-faced" (*Nub*. 103); among the effects of studying with Socrates, pale complexion is the first listed by the Better Argument (πρῶτα μὲν ἕξεις χροιὰν ὠχράν, "first of all you'll have a pale skin," *Nub*. 1016–17); and a skilful sophist is both pale and wretched (ὠχρὸν μὲν οὖν οἶμαί γε καὶ κακοδαίμονα, *Nub*. 1112). In comedy, philosophers frequently stand out because of their pallor: for instance, Chairephon, one of Socrates' closest pupils, is consistently depicted as pale (see, e.g., Eup. frag. 253 KA; Ar. *Nub*. 504).[45] Pale complexion, then, is one of the main features of the degenerate way of life of comic philosophers,[46] apparently once again preferably connected to Socratic thinkers. This must have created a sort of proverbial iconography, possibly conveyed by the color of the mask itself.[47]

When Penia comes on stage, the first aspect that Aristophanes points out about her is her pale complexion. Not her name, not her nature, but the color of her skin—a particular color, the one that philosophers usually share in comedy. The audience did not need to think immediately of a philosopher, but once the agon moved forward, Penia's appearance as a pale character (possibly

42. See Sarian 1986, 841; Revermann 2005, 11; 2006, 286 n. 64. This is also the reason why I do not accept Jackson's (1955, 78–79) emendation at line 422, printed by Wilson (2007): σὺ δ' εἶ τίς <ὦ γραῦ>; γραῦς γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς. The manuscripts are unanimous in transmitting ὠχρά, and the line is metrically sound if one adds μέν before γάρ as R does. Jackson's emendation was probably prompted by his (and Wilson's) consideration of Erinyes as dark and old creatures (thus not fitting in with the color implied by the adjective ὠχρά); however, since contemporary iconography of the Furies is unanimous in transmitting the image of beautiful white-faced maidens, the emendation seems to me rather inappropriate: the Furies being young girls, why then would Blepsidemus mistake an old hag for an Erinys? For this same reason, I also rule out Bamberg's emendation: σὺ δ' εἶ τίς <ὦ γραῦ>; μαινὰς γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς.

43. The simile with a Fury does not in itself suggest that Penia should be taken as a Fury: the pallor of intellectuals is sometimes compared to that of scary animals (Ar. *Av*. 1296) or of characters from tragedies (Ar. *Vesp*. 1412–13), in order to highlight the sense of monstrosity that it should convey (on comic philosophers as monsters, see Imperio 1998, 100).

44. This is a quite common phenomenology of fright in Greek literature: see, e.g., Hom. *Il*. 3.35.

45. On Chairephon's complexion, see Dunbar 1995, ad Ar. *Av*. 1296; Guidorizzi 1996, 203; Catenacci 2013, 47.

46. Thus Dover 1968, ad *Nub*. 103: "The intellectual is characteristically pale, because of his indoor life, but a 'normal' man is expected to be sunburnt, either, if poor, through long hours of work on the farm, or, if rich, through outdoor sports." See also Imperio 1998, 108.

47. The use of portrait-masks is still open for discussion: Dover's (1987) pessimistic opinion dominated the debate for decades, but now see Giuliani 1997, 995–1000; Catenacci 2013. What is more, in the case of pale complexion no precise portrait was needed, but only a mask with a yellowish color (see Stone 1981, 344 on Chairephon's mask in Ar. *Vesp*. 1413).

enhanced by the color of the mask worn by the actor) may have added another touch to the impression of having a philosopher on stage.

In light of all this, I would contend that Aristophanes had a precise model in his mind while creating the personification of Poverty—philosophers. The poet does not just hint at this model, but creates a substantial and consistent characterization. Poverty looks like a typical philosopher (she is ὠχρά), speaks like a typical philosopher (she uses the vocabulary and the rhetorical strategies of a philosophical discussion, and argues for the worse case), and behaves like a typical philosopher (she leads and provides a beggar's lifestyle). The reason why scholars have found echoes of a philosophical discourse in the agon of *Wealth*, then, is that one of the two characters involved in the agon is depicted as a philosopher. In particular, our survey of Penia's characterization seems to be pointing toward the parody of a peculiar way of understanding philosophical practice, and to a peculiar philosophical context—Socratism. This seems to emerge from a number of aspects: firstly, most of the lexical parallels that we have taken into consideration above show some interesting affinities with Socratic speculation and vocabulary; secondly, Penia's pallor may echo a physical feature apparently attributed to some of Socrates' pupils. And most of all, Poverty's program closely recalls that of Socrates and Socratic schools: as we have seen, Socrates and his pupils had a name for interpreting philosophy as an exercise of personal virtue and self-restraint, resulting in an extraordinarily humble lifestyle. Socrates' famous *karteria*, inherited by his successors (in particular, one may think of Antisthenes), was a centerpiece of Socratic wisdom and of Socrates' serious and comic portrait: self-imposed abstinence from a life of comfort was as peculiar as hilarious.[48] Obviously, this *ethos* was particularly suited to the kind of debate Aristophanes was looking for: since in the public imagination of fifth- and fourth-century Athens (Socratic) philosophers were especially renowned for the frugal lives they led, it was comically effective to have a philosopher argue for poverty.[49]

This, however, can also help better understand the general tone of the agon: Does Poverty really win the argument? I believe that Penia does not, from more than one point of view. To start with, from a formal point of view Poverty's argumentation is certainly more elaborate and more consistent than Chremylus', it even has a didactic tone: it is, in all respects, a philosophical argumentation (exactly what we would expect from a philosopher). At the same time, one must not forget that the intellectuals' ability with words is hardly ever a positive feature in ancient comedy: on the contrary, it makes them look like useless, sharp-witted smooth talkers, and does not inspire any confidence at all (eventually

48. See, e.g., Imperio 1998, 106–11. This also linked Socrates and his pupils to the Spartan *paideia* (see, e.g., Xen. *Lac.* 2.1). This overlapping between Socratic and Laconizing lifestyles comes as no surprise, if we consider that many among Socrates' pupils (Critias, Alcibiades, et al.) were known for their Laconophilia. See Lipka 2002, 18–19, 116–17, 120–21.

49. Obviously, Socrates was dead by the time *Wealth* was staged. This, however, does not prevent a Socratic parody from being comically effective, not only because of Socrates' unceasing fame in Athens, but also because of his pupils, who were directly influenced by Socratic teachings. In particular, as far as we can tell Antisthenes seems to have taken over the baton of Socrates' frugal lifestyle, and he may therefore be alluded to in Penia's characterization, as well. Moreover, as Andrea Capra suggested *per litt.*, the choice of a woman philosopher may also be related to the presence of women as pupils in Plato's recently founded Academy (Diog. Laert. 3.46).

dooming them to defeat). One need only think of *Clouds*, where Socrates' and his sophists' philosophical patter makes them look like liars and impostors that decent people should never trust or mingle with, or of oracle-mongers and diviners, whose skill in composing and declaiming oracles invariably marks them out as deceitful and greedy characters, making them prime targets for the protagonist's legitimate hostility.[50] Having Penia speak, and teach, like a philosopher, then, immediately connects her to the intellectual *milieu* and to the intellectual *ethos*. But this is exactly what makes her an unsympathetic character: in a fundamentally irrationalistic context, Penia's rationalism is to be rejected precisely because it is rational.[51] The philosophical and rationalistic side of Penia's argumentation, then, is what has made it so fascinating to modern scholars; paradoxically, it is precisely this philosophical side that could have made it look unconvincing to Aristophanes' audience.

Poverty's argumentation is invalidated on a thematic level, too. A world such as the one described by Penia, where everybody works and earns a living by working, is, of course, a perfectly acceptable perspective; but the comic world—a world based on self-assertion and on the selfish enjoyment of free and unlimited resources—works differently.[52] In such a world, Penia's proposal looks like a cruel imposition, rather than a rational organization of society. This has largely to do, I believe, with the dynamics of ancient comedy. As has already been stated, intellectuals in comedy are poor *par excellence*. This, however, also implies a strongly negative judgment on them. As a matter of fact, Aristophanes' characters, not least Chremylus, always pursue personal pleasure (related to sex, food, drinking, etc.): from a comic perspective, this is a perfectly natural and positive attitude—the comic hero's victory consisting in the fulfilment of that longing for pleasure. Personal pleasure, however, is precisely what philosophers keep off in ancient comedies. As we have seen, this conscious deprivation is a decisive trait in their serious and comic connotation.[53] More specifically, however, it is also the biggest liability to comic philosophers and to their program. As a matter of fact, this "ascetic programme"[54] is obviously at odds with the natural inclination of ancient comedy and its characters toward the pursuit of pleasure: abstinence from pleasure cannot but be seen as a self-destructive attitude, one that should not be trusted and should therefore be rejected in full. This sort of intentional deprivation is also what Poverty envisages, and even embodies: living a modest life, consciously abstaining from Wealth's pleasures, in order to become better men (*Plut*. 557–59). How is Chremylus—alongside his audience—supposed to accept such a restriction on his omnivorous plan of making everybody indiscriminately rich? Portraying

50. On oracle-mongers and their position in Aristophanic comedy, see Smith 1989.

51. This, I would contend, is the way in which we should read Chremylus' final remarks (Ar. *Plut*. 600): οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἢν πείσῃς ("you won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!"). This is, I believe, an interesting case of so-called confirmation bias: Penia's rationalism—which Chremylus is here acknowledging—is exactly what makes her arguments unacceptable, not persuasive, even if they *are* persuasive (on this puzzling line, see Paduano 1988, 119 n. 95).

52. The subject has been widely explored: see, e.g., Dover 1972, 31–41.

53. Grilli 1992, 133 ("I riferimenti alla rinuncia ai piaceri identificano una precisa categoria di κωμῳδούμενοι, i miserabili"). See also Imperio 1998, 106–11.

54. As described by Grilli (2001, 29–38; 1992, 133–35).

Poverty as a frugal philosopher, then, is coherent with the genre conventions of ancient comedy, fitting in perfectly with the comic *topos* of philosophers. This, however, also inevitably entails a negative judgment on the character and on her argumentation.

Thus, saying that Penia wins the argument seems to me to misunderstand the comic texture of the scene. Aristophanes features a character that bears close resemblance to a kind of character that his audience had learned to despise, Socratic philosophers. However rational they can be, in the Aristophanic corpus philosophers are always over-subtle, untrustworthy, and needlessly prone to suffering, and Penia proves to be no exception. Therefore, Aristophanes' audience can have no sympathy whatsoever for Poverty and her arguments: as Chremylus concludes, she cannot persuade us, even if—or rather *precisely because*—she does.

4. Nothing to Do with Plato? Investigating Penia's Arguments

Thus far, we have considered Penia's characterization and the parody of philosophy in the agon of *Wealth* in light of a generic image of Socratic philosophers as it emerges from both comic and serious representations between the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. We have also justified the convenience of a philosophical parody in the agon with reference to a generic *ethos*, the philosophers' habit of living in very modest conditions. This conclusion is certainly valid and plausible: Aristophanes did not need a precise parodic target, and his previous production—*Clouds*, in particular—shows that thinkers could be mocked as a category.[55] However, the question may be asked, whether it is possible to find a more precise philosophical parallel for Poverty's arguments. This is a more difficult subject to explore, and it is not even the main focus of this paper; yet, I believe it is worth a preliminary investigation. In what follows, I will confine myself to going through all the evidence that I have found, looking for a possible interpretation.

The core of Penia's argument is essentially the following (Ar. *Plut*. 509–16):

> . . . εἰ τοῦτο γένοιθ' ὃ ποθεῖθ' ὑμεῖς, οὔ φημ' ἂν λυσιτελεῖν σφῷν.
> Εἰ γὰρ ὁ Πλοῦτος βλέψειε πάλιν διανείμειέν τ' ἴσον αὑτόν,
> οὔτε τέχνην ἂν τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὔτ' ἂν σοφίαν μελετῴη
> οὐδείς· ἀμφοῖν δ' ὑμῖν τούτοιν ἀφανισθέντοιν ἐθελήσει
> τίς χαλκεύειν ἢ ναυπηγεῖν ἢ ῥάπτειν ἢ τροχοποιεῖν,
> ἢ σκυτοτομεῖν ἢ πλινθουργεῖν ἢ πλύνειν ἢ σκυλοδεψεῖν,
> ἢ γῆς ἀρότροις ῥήξας δάπεδον καρπὸν Δηοῦς θερίσασθαι,
> ἢν ἐξῇ ζῆν ἀργοῖς ὑμῖν τούτων πάντων ἀμελοῦσιν;

> . . . If what you desire were actually to happen, I tell you it would not be to your advantage at all. If Wealth were to regain his sight and distribute himself on an equal basis, no person on earth would practise any craft or any skill; and if you have both of these disappear, who will be willing to be a smith or a shipwright or a stitcher or a wheelwright or a cobbler or a brickmaker or a launderer or a tanner, or "to break the surface of the ground with ploughs and reap the fruits of Deo," if you're able to live in idleness and be careless of all that?

55. See Zimmermann 1993.

The real danger of generalized wealth (or rather of an equitable distribution of wealth)[56] is the social paralysis of the polis: if everybody were wealthy, then nobody would need to work. As a consequence, who would perform the basic duties in the city?

What is hardly ever pointed out is that such an argument has an extraordinarily similar parallel in Plato's *Republic*. For a society to work, everybody needs to renounce some benefits. Nobody, then, should be rich or destitute (Pl. *Resp*. 421C10–422A3):

Τοὺς ἄλλους αὖ δημιουργοὺς σκόπει εἰ τάδε διαφθείρει, ὥστε καὶ κακοὺς γίγνεσθαι.

Τὰ ποῖα δὴ ταῦτα;

Πλοῦτος, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ πενία.

Πῶς δή;

Ὧδε. πλουτήσας χυτρεὺς δοκεῖ σοι ἔτ' ἐθελήσειν ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς τέχνης;

Οὐδαμῶς, ἔφη.

Ἀργὸς δὲ καὶ ἀμελὴς γενήσεται μᾶλλον αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ;

Πολύ γε.

Οὐκοῦν κακίων χυτρεὺς γίγνεται;

Καὶ τοῦτο, ἔφη, πολύ.

Καὶ μὴν καὶ ὄργανά γε μὴ ἔχων παρέχεσθαι ὑπὸ πενίας ἤ τι ἄλλο τῶν εἰς τὴν τέχνην, τά τε ἔργα πονηρότερα ἐργάσεται καὶ τοὺς ὑεῖς ἢ ἄλλους οὓς ἂν διδάσκῃ χείρους δημιουργοὺς διδάξεται.

Πῶς δ' οὔ;

Ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων δή, πενίας τε καὶ πλούτου, χείρω μὲν τὰ τῶν τεχνῶν ἔργα, χείρους δὲ αὐτοί.

Φαίνεται.

Ἕτερα δή, ὡς ἔοικε, τοῖς φύλαξιν ηὑρήκαμεν, ἃ παντὶ τρόπῳ φυλακτέον ὅπως μήποτε αὐτοὺς λήσει εἰς τὴν πόλιν παραδύντα.

Τὰ ποῖα ταῦτα;

Πλοῦτός τε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ πενία· ὡς τοῦ μὲν τρυφὴν καὶ ἀργίαν καὶ νεωτερισμὸν ἐμποιοῦντος, τοῦ δὲ ἀνελευθερίαν καὶ κακοεργίαν πρὸς τῷ νεωτερισμῷ.

"Consider whether these things will ruin the rest of the workforce and actually make them bad as a result."

"Which ones are they, then?"

"Wealth and poverty," I said.

"How do you mean?"

56. The constant overlapping between the conception of generalized wealth (everybody becomes rich) and one of a more equitable distribution of wealth (the rich become less rich and the poor become less poor) is a crucial issue to the whole ideology of *Wealth*: see, e.g., Konstan and Dillon 1981.

"It's like this: do you think a potter who has become rich will still want to practice his craft?"

"Certainly not, " he said.

"But he will become more idle and careless than he was, won't he?"

"Yes, very much so."

"So he becomes a worse potter, doesn't he?"

"Again, much worse," he said.

"Furthermore, if he's unable to provide himself with the tools or anything else he needs for his trade as a result of his poverty, he'll produce inferior goods and he'll train inferior apprentices whether he teaches his sons or anyone else."

"Of course."

"Then as a result of both poverty and riches, the products of the trade and the producers themselves are inferior."

"So it would seem."

"In that case it seems we have discovered other things which our guardians must watch out for in every way they can, to prevent them creeping into the state unobserved."

"What kinds of things do you mean?"

"Wealth and poverty," I said, "the one creating fastidiousness, idleness, and revolution; the other servility and bad workmanship as well as revolution."

This economic argument is by no means to be underestimated. Not only does it testify to the historical roots of Plato's *kallipolis*, but it is crucial to the philosophical foundation of the so-called Platonic communism: in Plato's conception, an efficient polis needs everyone to do what is appropriate (τὰ αὑτῶν πράττειν);[57] and this cannot be the case if there is a substantial economic disparity between its inhabitants.[58] In arguing against wealth and poverty, though, Plato provides a discussion that is partially similar to Penia's. In particular, Penia's argument is very close to the first part of Socrates': wealth (πλοῦτος) is dangerous for the polis, because it could lead to a sort of social paralysis—if nobody needed to work, then nobody would perform the necessary tasks.

Once again, then, the analysis of Penia's arguments seems to point toward a Socratic context. This does not seem a generic connection, but shows a closer philosophical and argumentative affinity between the two texts. As has been clearly shown,[59] the performance of *technai* is vital for Plato's *kallipolis* and for its philosophical foundation: man not being αὐτάρκης, independent, it is his χρεία, his necessity, to join in a community to whose life everybody contributes through their own work, according to their nature (φύσις) and virtue (ἀρετή).[60] *Technai*, then, are not just an economic feature, but both the direct consequence of men's different natures and the very ground on which the ideal

57. On this section of the *Republic*, see Annas 1982, 101–8.
58. Thus Vegetti 1998a, 151. On wealth and poverty in the *Republic*, see also Fuks 1977.
59. Cambiano 1971, 172–92. See also Vegetti 1998b.
60. This principle is first enunciated at *Resp*. 369B–D.

city stands. This is why it would be unnatural and politically disastrous for some men not to perform their own *techne* or not to perform a *techne* at all – and this is also why one should not try to change his status (and his class) by getting rich: as Socrates clearly states (Pl. *Resp*. 434A–B), if a craftsman were to become richer and strive for a different position in society, this would be fatal (ὄλεθρον) to the whole city. Curiously enough, Penia's argument looks very similar to Plato's, and is heavily dependent on *technai*, as well: as in the *Republic*, it is χρεία that drives men to work (διὰ τὴν χρείαν, Ar. *Plut*. 534), and, as in the *Republic*, the city rests upon the performance of *technai* (a great deal of whose Aristophanes mentions in one of his typical comic lists at *Plut.* 513–15).[61] For Penia, *technai* allow a city to work, and citizens (namely Chremylus and Blepsidemus) to enjoy related benefits. If everybody got rich, then the citizens would live a far more distressful life (see especially *Plut*. 525–34). This seems to me to comically echo Plato's philosophical concept of τὰ αὑτῶν πράττειν and of its consequences on the life of the *kallipolis*.

From a thematic point of view, it is also interesting to observe that the results of both Poverty's and Socrates' arguments is the praise of the social importance of *medietas*. In the *Republic* wealth and destitution are said to be equally dangerous to the city: for opposite reasons they would both make it impossible for the citizens to work. Penia says something very similar: refusing to be confused with Πτωχεία, she argues that whereas destitution (i.e., absolute poverty) is to live on nothing, she offers a middle ground, where people have to keep at their work (Ar. *Plut*. 553–54). Penia is describing and praising the social model that Socrates describes and praises in *Republic* 4: a society where people have neither too much nor too little, and therefore are obliged to work at the best of their ability, making the polis work.

Furthermore, the two passages quoted above offer some striking similarities from a more detailed—and even lexical—point of view, as well. Firstly, at line 516 Penia defines mortals that have become rich as ἀργοί, "lazy," and ἀμελεῖς, "careless." Bizarrely enough, these are the two adjectives used by Plato to describe the fictitious case of the potter: if he was to become rich, he would also become ἀργὸς δὲ καὶ ἀμελής (Pl. *Resp*. 421D7).[62]

Secondly, in the *Republic* Socrates' argument against wealth is confronted with the theme of warfare: During a war, is it not more profitable for a polis to be rich than to be poor? Socrates answers the question by means of an analogy with boxing: a single but best prepared boxer could easily beat two rich, but fat, opponents. In other words, wealth does not make men fit—in fact, it makes them πίονες, fat. The same can be said of war (Pl. *Resp*. 422D2–7):

> Τί δ' ἂν πρεσβείαν πέμψαντες εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν πόλιν τἀληθῆ εἴπωσιν, ὅτι "Ἡμεῖς μὲν οὐδὲν χρυσίῳ οὐδ' ἀργυρίῳ χρώμεθα, οὐδ' ἡμῖν θέμις, ὑμῖν δέ· συμπολεμήσαντες οὖν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔχετε τὰ τῶν ἑτέρων;" οἴει τινὰς ἀκούσαντας ταῦτα αἱρήσεσθαι κυσὶ πολεμεῖν στερεοῖς τε καὶ ἰσχνοῖς μᾶλλον ἢ μετὰ κυνῶν προβάτοις πίοσί τε καὶ ἁπαλοῖς;

61. Spyropoulos 1974, 93. On the performance of *technai* as a common ground between Plato and Penia, see Olson 1990, 228 n. 20.

62. Note also the similarity in another expression used by both Aristophanes and Plato: οὔτε τέχνην . . . μελετῴη (Ar. *Plut*. 511) ~ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς τέχνης. Μελετάω and ἐπιμελέομαι are etymologically related, both descending from μέλω: Chantraine 1984 and Beekes 2010, s.v. μέλω.

> "But what if they send a delegation to the other state and tell them the truth, namely that: 'We ourselves have no use for gold and silver, it's not even right for us, but it is for you. So if you join us in war, keep the spoils of the other side.' Do you think that some will hear this and choose to make war against lean solid hounds rather than fight with them against fat tender sheep?"

Frugality, then, makes men fit and better trained: this should suffice to win against a rich, yet fat, enemy.[63] Again, Poverty's argument shows some interesting similarities to Plato's. While discussing the advantages of poverty (Ar. *Plut*. 559–61), Penia says:

> παρὰ τῷ μὲν γὰρ ποδαγρῶντες
> καὶ γαστρώδεις καὶ παχύκνημοι καὶ πίονές εἰσιν ἀσελγῶς,
> παρ' ἐμοὶ δ' ἰσχνοὶ καὶ σφηκώδεις καὶ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἀνιαροί.

> With him [sc. Wealth] men are gouty and pot-bellied and thick-calved and obscenely fat; with me they're lean and wasp-like and sting their enemies hard.

Once again, Poverty's argument is thematically close to that of Socrates: the connection between wealth and fatness, of course, is not rare;[64] however, the relationship between this *topos* and warfare seems more peculiar. But it is also lexically similar: not only are rich men described as πίονες, "fat," in both texts, but poor men are defined by both Plato and Aristophanes as ἰσχνοί, "lean," a somewhat rare term for the two authors.[65] This passage and those discussed above, then, should persuade us to consider the scene with Penia as somehow related to Plato's *Republic*, and to include *Wealth* into the problematic question of the relationship between Aristophanes and Plato.

As is well known, the relationship between late Aristophanic comedy and Platonic dialogues has long since been the subject of much discussion, and this is especially true in the case of *Ecclesiazusae* and *Republic* Book 5, which has drawn almost exclusively scholars' attention.[66] What should we do in the case of *Wealth*? Should we consider it as a parody of the *Republic*, or vice versa? Unfortunately, the date and the editorial process of the *Republic* are highly controversial, and at the present stage of knowledge it seems impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt the existence of a precise intertextual relationship between the two authors, and the direction of this relationship.[67] What is more, parody may not be the only option here: both Aristophanes and Plato deal with

63. A similar discussion can also be found later on in the *Republic*: see Pl. *Resp*. 556C6–E2.

64. Cf., e.g., Aesch. *Ag.* 820; LSJ[9], s.vv. πίων, λιπαρός.

65. With the notable exception of the *corpus Hippocraticum*, ἰσχνός (along with the related verb ἰσχναίνειν) is not particularly frequent in fifth- and fourth-century Greek literature to describe a thin person: in particular, it is nowhere else to be found in the Aristophanic *corpus* in relation to humans (while it is used twice in relation to vegetables: Ar. *Ach*. 469; *Plut*. 544), and Plato uses it only in two other occasions, one of which is *Resp*. 556D2, where Socrates is returning to the theme discussed in Book 4 (see above, n. 63).

66. For a summary of earlier opinions on the subject, see Adam 1902, 1: 345–55. In recent times, the question has been addressed by the commentators of *Ecclesiazusae* (Ussher 1973, xvi–xviii; Sommerstein 1998, 13–18; Capra 2010, 18–22), by the commentators of *Republic* 5 (e.g., Beltrametti 2000), and by more general studies (especially Tordoff 2007; Capra 2007; Canfora 2014). For a recent discussion of the relationship between Aristophanes and Plato, see Platter 2014.

67. Most scholars tend to think that the *Republic* was written after 380 BCE; others, however, argue for a "gradual growth" of the dialogue (e.g., Thesleff 2009), supposing that the first elaboration could have begun before Plato's first trip to Sicily in 388–387 BCE (as some sources apparently prove, namely Letter 7, 326B7).

utopia,[68] especially as a way of overcoming Athens' political and social troubles. Their coping with the fundamentals of building an efficient city and their discussing the same themes with almost equivalent arguments can be due to this shared interest. It is possible—if not probable—that a real dialogue existed between comedy and philosophy—a less rigid dialogue than that implied by parody. At the same time, however, the textual and philosophical similarities between *Wealth* and *Republic* 4 seem too close to be considered as generic and fortuitous intersections. Yet, the question could be even less straightforward than the relationship between two texts: Plato's *Republic* may be the final, textual, outcome of a far wider and longer debate over poverty and the best city ongoing in Athens, and possibly in the Socratic context,[69] and Aristophanes may be here reacting to a lost intermediate passage of this debate, included into the *Republic* at a later stage.[70]

One last observation, however, may be added to our comparative study of the agon of *Wealth* and *Republic*. During the debate, Chremylus frequently tries to wave Penia's arguments aside by caricaturing them. This strategy eventually makes Poverty burst out angrily (Ar. *Plut*. 557–59):

> σκώπτειν πειρᾷ καὶ κωμῳδεῖν τοῦ σπουδάζειν ἀμελήσας,
> οὐ γιγνώσκων ὅτι τοῦ Πλούτου παρέχω βελτίονας ἄνδρας
> καὶ τὴν γνώμην καὶ τὴν ἰδέαν.

> You are trying to mock and make jokes, with no concern for serious discussion, and refusing to recognize that I produce better men than Wealth does—better men both in mind and shape.

In his meta-literary interpretation of the agon, Pavlos Sfyroeras argues that "elsewhere in Aristophanes σκώπτειν describes the main function of comedy."[71] This is certainly true, but it can also be observed that Poverty uses the verb in connection with another verb with opposite meaning, σπουδάζειν. This verse from *Wealth* bears a curious similarity to a non-Aristophanic text, a notorious passage from Plato's *Republic*. In Book 5, Socrates starts his discussion of women's role in the *kallipolis* with a bizarre foreword (Pl. *Resp*. 452B6–D1):

> Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐπείπερ ὡρμήσαμεν λέγειν, οὐ φοβητέον τὰ τῶν χαριέντων σκώμματα, ὅσα καὶ οἷα ἂν εἴποιεν εἰς τὴν τοιαύτην μεταβολὴν γενομένην καὶ περὶ τὰ γυμνάσια καὶ περὶ μουσικὴν καὶ οὐκ ἐλάχιστα περὶ τὴν τῶν ὅπλων σχέσιν καὶ ἵππων ὀχήσεις.
>
> Ὀρθῶς, ἔφη, λέγεις.
>
> Ἀλλ' ἐπείπερ λέγειν ἠρξάμεθα, πορευτέον πρὸς τὸ τραχὺ τοῦ νόμου, δεηθεῖσίν τε τούτων μὴ τὰ αὑτῶν πράττειν ἀλλὰ σπουδάζειν, καὶ ὑπομνήσασιν ὅτι οὐ πολὺς χρόνος ἐξ οὗ

68. On the close relationship between ancient Greek comedy and utopianism see, e.g., Bertelli 1983; Ruffell 2000. Capra (2007) makes persuasively the case that utopia could have been the common ground between Plato and Aristophanes.

69. Poverty as a crucial litmus test for Athenian democracy was a quite widespread theme in late fifth- and early fourth-century Greek thought: see Vegetti 1998a, 151–55.

70. However difficult this theory is to prove, we cannot exclude that Plato and Socrates were not Aristophanes' only targets. For instance, one could think of one of Socrates' pupils, Antisthenes, who also led a very frugal life and proposed a strongly anti-hedonistic program (see, e.g., Giannantoni 1983, 350–54). However, to the best of my knowledge, close parallels between the agon of *Wealth* and Antisthenes' fragments are nowhere to be found.

71. Sfyroeras 1995, 243.

> τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐδόκει αἰσχρὰ εἶναι καὶ γελοῖα ἅπερ νῦν τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν βαρβάρων, γυμνοὺς ἄνδρας ὁρᾶσθαι, καὶ ὅτε ἤρχοντο τῶν γυμνασίων πρῶτοι μὲν Κρῆτες, ἔπειτα Λακεδαιμόνιοι, ἐξῆν τοῖς τότε ἀστείοις πάντα ταῦτα κωμῳδεῖν.
>
> "Since we've started our discussion, we mustn't be afraid of the gibes from the smart set, must we: the many sorts of things they may say when such changes take place in both this kind of physical exercise and cultural activity, and not least in weapon handling and horse riding?"
>
> "You're right," he said.
>
> "Well, since we've begun our discussion, we must proceed to the harsh reality of the law by demanding that they don't give us their usual stuff, but be serious, and remind them that it is not so long since the Greeks thought it shameful and ridiculous, as the majority of foreigners do now, to see men naked, and that when Cretans first began to exercise naked, followed by the Spartans, the wits of the day made fun of all this."

Before starting what he himself calls his γυναικεῖον δρᾶμα, Socrates admits being scared of the reaction that his plan may trigger. In particular, Socrates fears τὰ τῶν χαριέντων σκώμματα, οἱ χαρίεντες probably including also the comic poets (making fun of anything, Socrates says, is their job: τὰ αὑτῶν πράττειν).[72] Some scholars have seen in this passage a reference to *Assembly Women*, to which Plato would be here alluding before starting parodying it.[73] What is striking, though, is that Socrates' words are precisely the same as Penia's. In replying to Chremylus' sarcastic gibe, Poverty accuses him of limiting himself to mock (σκώπτειν) and make jokes (κωμῳδεῖν) instead of being serious (σπουδάζειν). To be sure, the opposition between what is serious and what is funny is ubiquitous in Greek literature; however, Penia's complaint toward Chremylus is in all respects similar to Socrates' complaint toward comic poets, both in its content (philosophical discourse risks being spoiled by jokes and not being taken seriously) and in its vocabulary (σκώμματα ~ σκώπτειν, κωμῳδεῖν, σπουδάζειν). Once again, Penia literally speaks the same language as Plato and Socrates, using both the same concepts and the same words. It could be tempting, then, to see a connection between this passage from *Wealth* and the *Republic*, as well.

If this were true, it would be of some interest that once again Penia's words seem to match the central books of the *Republic*, so to strengthen our impression that the agon of *Wealth* bears a special relationship not just with Socratism, but more precisely with the theories on the *kallipolis* as outlined in Plato's *Republic* 4 and 5. As Plato himself seems to recognize, these theories are particularly appropriate to both a philosophical and a comic treatment: the creation of a new, more efficient, and fairer society seems to have been the aim of both comedy and philosophical discourse at the turn of the century in Athens. That aim, however, produced radically different results: a world based on everybody's work and everybody's sacrifice (as Plato's world is) was exactly what Aristophanic characters were fighting against. To put it in other terms,

72. See, e.g., Beltrametti 2000, 233–47. The category of οἱ χαρίεντες is probably much ampler than this: for instance, Socrates may be alluding here to the habit of joking during the symposia, as well.

73. See, e.g., Sommerstein 1998, 16–17.

Plato's philosophical utopia, however thematically similar to Aristophanes', cannot match comic utopia.[74] The encounter between Plato's theories and Aristophanes' comedy seems almost inevitable, as well as inevitably hostile.

To sum up, the scene with Poverty is evidently conceived as a philosophical parody, and philosophy and philosophical *ethos* have proved relevant to the understanding of the agon: Penia's characterization, the issues that she discusses, her argumentative strategy come from a philosophical context. What is more, this characterization seems to point clearly toward a particular philosophical context, Socratism. Socrates' shadow on the agon of *Wealth* emerges both from Poverty's portrayal and from the thematic structure of her speech: as a matter of fact, the agon of *Wealth*, as much as Praxagora's speech in *Ecclesiazusae*, shows some ties with the central books of Plato's *Republic*. Then, however difficult as it is to reach some definitive conclusions given the vague state of our knowledge, it is my belief that the similarities between the two texts should at least persuade us to include the agon of *Wealth* into the question of the relationship between Aristophanes, Plato, and Socratism. Whatever the direction of influence was (providing that there was one), the intersection between Aristophanic comedy and Platonic theories on the best city looks even more widespread than we used to think.

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74. As has been rightly pointed out, in Plato's utopia the individuals depend upon work, and not work upon individuals (Cambiano 1971, 187). The typical comic utopia, instead, is based on and offers exactly the opposite perspective: a boundless individualism bearing no constraint whatsoever, much less work.

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