

This paper explores Aristophanes' playful treatment of words and abstract ideas, as if they were concrete objects, throughout his plays, and the reception of this comic trope by Plato.

The concretization of the abstract is a theme that runs throughout the Aristophanic corpus. For example, Aristophanes' protagonist in the *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis, speaks of peace treaties of different durations as if they were five-, ten- and thirty-year vintages of wine, each with its own distinctive bouquet. Likewise, in the same play, the tragedies of Euripides are treated as if they literally are the props used in their performance. And in the *Frogs*, the verses of Euripides and Aeschylus are placed on scales and weighed (1365-1410). Further examples of this nature abound, and I focus especially on those that involve words and ideas, examining the Old Comic proclivity for the literalization of metaphor.

This comic trope seems to reach a climax in the kommaton to the parabasis of *Wasps*, as the chorus, speaking on behalf of Aristophanes, exhorts the audience to "take care that the things that are about to be spoken well not fall shamefully to the ground" (νῦν τὰ μέλλοντ' εὖ λέγεσθαι / μὴ πέσῃ φαύλως χαμᾶζ' εὐλαβεῖσθε, *Vesp.* 1011-12). Following the parabasis proper, the chorus takes up the same idea once more in the pnygos, instructing the clever audience members to "save the thoughts" (τὰ νοήματα σώζεσθ', *Vesp.* 1053) of innovative poets, and to "put them into your clothes-chests along with your citrons. For if you do this, your cloaks will smell of cleverness for years to come" (ἐσβάλλετέ τ' ἐς τὰς κιβωτούς / μετὰ τῶν μήλων. κἂν ταῦτα ποιῆθ', / ὑμῖν δι' ἔτους τῶν ἱματίων / ὀζήσει δεξιότητος, *Vesp.* 1056-59).

Aristophanes' phraseology at *Vesp.* 1011-12 owes something to Pindar, who speaks of χαμαιπετέων λόγων at *Olympian* 9.12 and mentions a χαμαιπετές ... ἔπος at *Pythian* 6.37. But a strikingly similar phrase appears in one of the dialogues of Plato as well: Socrates, in the *Euthyphro*, says to his interlocutor, ἐπιθυμητῆς γὰρ εἰμι, ὦ φίλε, τῆς σῆς σοφίας καὶ προσέχω τὸν νοῦν αὐτῇ, ὥστε οὐ χαμαὶ πεσεῖται ὅτι ἂν εἴπῃς ("I am eager, dear man, to experience your wisdom, and I apply my mind to it, so that what you speak may not fall to the ground," 14d5). The resemblance between these phrases of Plato and Aristophanes has long been noted, but is explained simply as a proverbial expression or common metaphor. These are, however, the only two places in extant Greek literature where this phrase is to be found, and it seems rather pointed that in Aristophanes the speaker is the chorus, in the privileged location of the parabasis, and that in Plato the words are uttered by Socrates.

I therefore argue that the question here is of a marked usage, an intertext, and not of an accidental resemblance reflecting a common colloquialism. Plato is, as has been recognized, a very sensitive reader of Aristophanes, even quoting him on occasion (*Nub.* 225 at *Ap.* 19c3 and *Nub.* 362 at *Symp.* 221b3; cf. Brock 1990), and Plato's Socrates, specifically, is frequently associated with Old Comedy and the lower, iambic genres. I argue here that Plato's decision to put words of Old Comic origin in the mouth of Socrates forms a part of his program of characterization of this figure.