

αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν IN THE *CLOUDS*:  
WAS SOCRATES HIMSELF A DEFENDER OF SEPARABLE SOUL AND  
SEPARATE FORMS?

Στ. τί δῆτ' ὁ πρωκτὸς εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέπει;

Μα. αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν ἀστρονομεῖν διδάσκεται.

Aristophanes, *Clouds* 193-4

As Strepsiades casts his first uncomprehending glances into the Socratic thinking-shop, he hears that the men bent over are searching the regions below Tartarus. ‘But what, then, is their arsehole doing, looking to the heavens?’ ‘Alone by itself it is learning to do astronomy,’ the Student replies. The phrase αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν, emphatic in its near-repetition of the ideas *alone* and *by itself*, is passed over without comment in the main editions. It is, however, a phrase that became distinctive of what is usually thought of as specifically Platonic philosophy—used both of the separation of the soul αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν from the body, as far as possible, and of the separation of a Form αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό from, it seems, things in the everyday world (e.g. *Phd.* 83b1; cp. 64c5-8, 65c5-d2, 66a1-3, 79d1-7). The question arises, therefore, how much these ‘Platonic’ ideas may themselves have figured already in the thought of Socrates some thirty-five years earlier<sup>1</sup>—despite the standard view, promoted by Aristotle, that they did not in the slightest.

The phrase αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν is unremarked in the main editions I have seen of the play individually,<sup>2</sup> as also in the larger

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<sup>1</sup> The *Clouds* was first produced at the City Dionysia of 424/3, and the text we have is a partial revision, from some time between spring 420 and late 417. (K. J. Dover, ed., *Aristophanes: The Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), lxxx-lxxxi; abridged edn. (Oxford, 1970), xxix). The main revisions that we know of (from Hypothesis I) do not concern the parts of the play that we will be concerned with. Scholars mostly date the *Phaedo* to the years following Plato’s first visit to Sicily in 388/7 (e.g. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* IV (Cambridge, 1975), 325).

<sup>2</sup> K. H. Weise (Leipzig, 1822), Imm. Bekker (London, 1826), G. Hermann (Leipzig, 1830), Fr. H. Bothe (Leipzig, 1830), C. C. Felton (Cambridge, 1841; Boston, <sup>7</sup>1877 (rev. W. W. Goodwin)), W. S. Teuffel (Leipzig, 1856, 1863), W. W. Merry (Oxford, 1879), M. W. Humphreys (Boston, 1885), C. E. Graves

editions of Aristophanes;<sup>3</sup> lines 193-4 are indeed omitted from some older editions—for reasons, I imagine, of school decorum.<sup>4</sup> There are no relevant scholia<sup>5</sup> and there is nothing in Bekker's (anonymously published) compendium of earlier editions.<sup>6</sup> One school edition notes the phrase as philosophical, without saying in what way;<sup>7</sup> probably the most promising note that I have seen is in L. L. Forman's edition for H. W. Smyth's Greek Series for Colleges and Schools (New York, 1915):

αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν: by itself, independently

—but it makes no comment on what the point of the phrase in the context might be.

The need for comment, however, could hardly be clearer. Virtually all the more respectable English translations get the phrase wrong. 'It's taking private lessons on the stars' (B. B. Rogers, 1852<sup>8</sup>) suggests almost the opposite of what is meant, in that the Greek implies a maximum of independence, while 'private lessons' suggests a relation of scholastic and perhaps financial indebtedness. A succession of translators have repeated one phrase: 'It is studying astronomy on its own account' (Anon., 1912);<sup>9</sup> 'Learning astronomy

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(Cambridge, 1898), J. van Leeuwen (Leyden, 1898), W. J. M. Starkie (London, 1911), K. J. Dover (Oxford, 1968; abridged edn., 1970), A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> F. H. Bothe (Leipzig, 1828-30, <sup>2</sup>1845, 4 vols.), G. Dindorf (Oxford, 1835-38, 4 vols. in 7); Th. Kock, *Ausgewählte Komödien* (Berlin, 1852-64, 4 vols).

<sup>4</sup> The editions by T. Mitchell (London, 1838), with rather full notes, and H. A. Holden (Cambridge, <sup>3</sup>1865).

<sup>5</sup> Bekker, pp. 73-131; Dindorf, vol. 4 pt. 1; or *Scholia in Aristophanem* Fasc. III.1 (ed. D. Holwerda) (Groningen, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> *Notae in Aristophanem sedula recensione collatae ex editionibus Brunckii, Reisigii, Beckii, Dindorfii, Schutzii, Bentleii, Dobreii, Porsoni [...]* &c. &c. (London, 1829, 3 vols).

<sup>7</sup> 'Rather a philosophic phrase; perhaps intentionally so, though "de re ludicra."' W. C. Green (London, 1881).

<sup>8</sup> *The Clouds of Aristophanes: The Greek Text with a Translation into Corresponding Metres* (Oxford, 1852), which appeared anonymously. The translation, with revisions, was later included in *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, ed., tr. and explained by B. B. Rogers (London, 1902-16, 6 vols.), which keeps the same phrase; and was also used in the Loeb Classical Library (London/NY, 1924).

<sup>9</sup> *The Eleven Comedies*, [Anon. tr.] (London, 1912; New York, 1928, 1932).

on its own account' (Bailey, 1921);<sup>10</sup> 'It's learning astronomy on its own account' (Easterling & Easterling, 1961).<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, unless the phrase is just another way of talking—wrongly, as we have seen—of self-financed tuition, then it is almost entirely obscure what it might mean.<sup>12</sup> 'In lonely state 'tis practising—astronomy' (Starkie, 1911) has a nice tone of mockery, but 'in lonely state' could never be—as αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν is—a phrase used also in a serious and straight description of the condition in which we are recommended by Plato us to pursue the highest ambitions of philosophy. The best I have found is Hickie (1859): 'It is getting taught astronomy alone by itself.'<sup>13</sup> But while 'alone by itself' is, I think, exactly right, 'getting taught' makes definite allusion to a teacher, which may rather defeat the claim to aloneness, whereas διδάσκεται may be (and, I think, here is) simply *is learning* or *teaching itself*.

The French, unfortunately, are no better.<sup>14</sup> Brunck's Latin gets the separation, but not the acting *by itself* ('Quid ergo podex in

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<sup>10</sup> C. Bailey, *The Clouds partly in the Original and partly in Translation* (Oxford, 1921).

<sup>11</sup> H. J. Easterling & P. E. Easterling, trs. (Cambridge, 1961). So also, with exactly the same wording here, Sommerstein (1982).

<sup>12</sup> The best I can offer would follow the lead of the OED<sup>2</sup> (s.v. *account* 4.): '**on its own account**' would mean *for its own interest, at its own risk, for its own sake*. But that would surely be a mistranslation: to be engaged either in astronomy or intellection *for one's own interest* or *one's own sake* is certainly not the same as doing it *alone by oneself* (which is what the Greek, I think, means). When Ion talks (Eur. *Ion* 608-10) of how Creusa will now bear her misfortune αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν, rather than, as before, with the partnership of her husband, he is talking of her as suffering 'alone by herself', not 'on her own account' or 'for her own sake'. And if 'on his own account' carries any suggestion of the pursuit of ulterior personal advantage, then it is particularly inappropriate for a phrase attached elsewhere (as in the *Phd.*) to activities that are to be performed for their own sake and intrinsic worth.

<sup>13</sup> W. J. Hickie, tr., (London, 1859). Another exception, with exactly the same wording (here), is T. J. Arnold (London, s.d. [1887]), in the unglamorous series of Kelly's Keys to the Classics. R. H. Webb (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1960) comes close with 'Studying on their own, astronomy'; as does J. Henderson (Cambridge, MA, 1998) with 'Learning astronomy on its own.'

<sup>14</sup> 'Il apprend de son côté l'astronomie' (N. L. M. Artaud, *Comédies d'Aristophane*, (Paris, <sup>2</sup>1841, <sup>4</sup>1879)). 'Il apprend pour son compte

coelum spectat?' 'Seorsum ille astronomiam discit.').<sup>15</sup> The early nineteenth-century German versions are more or less unique in showing a sense of the philosophical use of the phrase elsewhere, but if anything they exaggerate it. Voss understands the text perfectly well, I think, though he renders it in free (and today archaic<sup>16</sup>) terms: 'Was will der Arsch denn, daß zu der Himmelshöh' er kuckt?' 'Selbst vor sich selber treibt er da Sternwissenschaft.' (Joh. Heinr. Voss (Braunschweig, 1821).) But Droysen and Schnitzer surely go too far: 'Er an und für sich beschäftigt sich mit Astronomie!' (Joh. Gust. Droysen (Berlin, 1835-38; Leipzig, <sup>2</sup>1869)). 'Das lernt an sich und für sich selbst Astronomie' (C. F. Schnitzer (Stuttgart, 1842)).<sup>17</sup> Both omit the idea of being *alone* and substitute a metaphysical aura of the 'in itself' for more ordinary talk of a thing's acting 'by itself'. So it seems, for an accurate rendering we do best with a 19th-century crib or school translation;

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l'astronomie' (tr. A.-Ch. Brotier, corr. L. Humbert (Paris, 1889)). 'Il s'instruit pour son compte dans l'astronomie' (C. Poyard (Paris, 1898), and, with exactly the same wording, H. Van Daele (Paris [édns. Budé], 1923, <sup>2</sup>1934)). One happy exception (but for the last word): 'Il s'exerce, à part soi, à la géométrie' (Ch. Zévort (Paris, s.d. [1889])). ('**A part soi**, seul avec soi-même': A. Hatzfeld, A. Darmesteter, *Dictionnaire général de la langue française ...* (Paris, 1895-1900), s.v. *part*.)

<sup>15</sup> *Comœdiæ in latinum sermonem conversæ* [by Rich. Fr. Phil. Brunck] (Strassburg, 1781, 3 vols.), repr. in *Aristophanis Comœdiæ ... Graece et Latine ...* (Paris, 1846). With this phrasing Brunck also loses any coincidence with the phrasing of the *Phd.*—which in the Latin of, e.g., Ficino runs (at 66a1-3) '*ipsa secundum se ipsam* mentis excogitatione sincera utens, *ipsum per se* quodlibet sincerum existens studeret venari ...' (my emphasis).

<sup>16</sup> 'Vor sich selber': i.e. *für sich selbst*. Cp. H. Paul, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Halle a. S., 1897; Tübingen, <sup>9</sup>1992), s.v. *vor*.

<sup>17</sup> And their successors have as much difficulty as anyone, capturing neither the ordinary meaning nor any more philosophical associations: 'Auf eigne Faust betreibt die Himmelskunde Der [d.i. der Hintere]' (H. Müller (Leipzig, 1843; 1861)); 'Der treibt Astronomie auf eigne Hand' (L. Seeger (Zürich, 1952)); 'Der lernt auf eigne Rechnung Sternkunde' (O. Seel (Stuttgart, 1963)). Unfortunately, 'auf eigne Faust' or '... Hand' means something like *on one's own initiative, under one's own steam, off one's own bat* (originally, I presume: *by the force of one's own hand or fist*)—which is not what the Greek phrase means. For a person, for example, to grieve αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν (as at *Rep.* X 604a3) is for him to grieve *alone by himself*, not *under his own steam*; and the error is pretty much the same when the case is one of learning astronomy.

the German-speakers who hear philosophical echoes also exaggerate them; and in the absence of any good notes in the main editions, a succession of translators have made quite inaccurate sense of the passage.

How does αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν come to mean *alone by himself, herself, itself* etc., as I have supposed—if indeed it does? Let us take καθ' αὐτόν first. αὐτόν is of course the Attic contraction of ἐαυτόν, the reflexive pronoun, *himself, herself, itself*. κατὰ has the root meaning *down, downwards* and, like other prepositions, it had in pre-classical uses an adverbial force.<sup>18</sup> An accompanying ablatival genitive was used of the *place from* (κατ' Οὐλύμπιοι, *down from Olympus*, *Il.* 1.44), and a proper genitive of the *place to* (πνείοντε κατ' ὠμῶν, *breathing down upon the shoulders [of Asius]*, *Il.* 13.385; also *down into*); an accusative was used of the *place through which* the action extended ([αἷμα] κατὰ ῥίνας πρῆσεν, *blood spurted down through his nostrils*, *Il.* 16.349). By a extension of meaning (paralleled in the English going *down the road*) the last usage became applied also to cases where the action went *through* something, *but not spatially down* (καθ' ὅλην τὴν πόλιν, *throughout the city*, *Lyc.* 40; καθ' ὁδόν, *along the way*). With these fundamental uses, the other main uses of κατὰ with the accusative can be traced, I think, as figurative extensions of the idea of *what one goes through*, or *what one follows the path of*. There is a temporal usage (e.g. κατὰ μὲν τὸν πρότερον πόλεμον, *during or through the previous war*, *Hdt.* 1.67); and there are the various cases that Smyth classes under the headings of 'Conformity' (κατὰ τοὺς νόμους, *according to the laws*, *Thuc.* 8.2), 'Ground on which an act is based' (κατὰ φιλίαν, *owing to friendship*, *Thuc.* 1.60), 'Manner' (καθ' ἡσυχίαν, *in accord with quietness, quietly*, *Thuc.* 6.64), and 'Distribution' (κατ' ἔθνη, *according to nation, nation by nation*, *Thuc.* 1.122): all these can be seen, I think, as developments of the idea of *following the path of* (the laws, friendship, quietness, the nation)—and hence of what one acts *in accordance with*, or goes *by* (as in our *going by the book*).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> On κατὰ: R. Kühner, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*. 1. Teil. In neuer Bearbeitung besorgt von Dr. Friedrich Blass (Hannover, 1890) §433; H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (1920; Cambridge, MA, 1956 (rev. G. M. Messing)) §1690.

<sup>19</sup> Cp. M. L. Gill, who in her *Parmenides* (Indianapolis, 1996) translates καθ' αὐτό as 'by itself' and adds a note (to 129a) giving as meaning for that

What is it for a person or thing to act αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν? αὐτὸς of course means *himself, herself, itself*, but also *by himself, by herself, etc.*, i.e. *alone*. (LSJ s.v., I.3: αὐτὸς περ ἑών, although *alone*, *Il.* 8.99; αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἔσμεν, for we are *alone*, i.e. among friends, *Ar. Ach.* 504; usages with which LSJ lists αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν.) When a person—or the soul—acts αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν or αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν, the force of the phrase is, then, I think, that it is acting *alone by way of itself, alone in accordance with itself*—independently following its own path, not using anything else—hence, in short, *alone by itself*. It is worth noting that ‘itself by itself’ (as e.g. in Vlastos: *Socrates*, 256-262) is not generally a good equivalent: when Plato talks of a time when the soul may *come to be* αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν (*Phd.* 65c5-7: ὅταν ... ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν γίγνηται), he surely means ‘alone by itself’, rather than simply ‘itself by itself’. The qualification ‘as far as possible’ (ὅτι μάλιστα, 65c7, repeated 65a1, 67a3, 67c6, cp. κατὰ τὸν δυνατὸν, 65c9) is a sign of how hard the task to be performed is; whereas the soul is presumably always (if trivially) *itself*: what is hard is for it to be *alone*, approximating the state of death when it will be ‘pure, through separation from the folly of the body’ (67a6-7).<sup>20</sup>

With the meaning of the phrase clear in general, I shall say only a little about its use in Plato in particular. The classic text is the

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phrase both ‘apart, on its own’ and ‘in virtue of, or because of, itself’. The latter can be seen as a small extension of the root idea I have proposed, *following the path of itself*, a necessary extension indeed when the phrase comes to be applied not just to the soul but also to Forms.

<sup>20</sup> One might try to defend ‘itself by itself’, saying that the soul is only fully ‘itself’ when it is also in the relevant sense ‘alone’, stripped of bodily accretions so as to become what it ‘really’, ‘in its truest nature’, is (cp. *Rep.* X 611bc). (Thus: the soul is, trivially, always (numerically) itself, but only under conditions of ideal separation from the body does it come to be (qualitatively) itself, i.e. of its true nature and character.) And there are of course cases where, in English as in Greek, ‘itself’ (‘myself’, etc.) has the force of ‘alone’. (‘Thank you, I can do it *myself*.’) But none the less, it is hard, I think, to hear phrases like ‘using the intellect *itself* by itself’ as actually meaning ‘using the intellect *alone* by itself’ (cp. *Phd.* 66a1-2): and if one does so, I suspect it is only by drawing on a special piece of Platonic doctrine, rather than on the common understanding of the words themselves.

*Phaedo*,<sup>21</sup> where αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν occurs repeatedly in one form or another, applied to the soul or to Forms as its objects (e.g. 64c7, 65c7, 65d1, 66a1, 66e6, 67c7, 67e8, 70a7, 78d6, 79d1 & 4, 81c1, 83b1 (bis), 100b6; also applied to the body: 64c6), with variants (like μόνην καθ' αὐτήν, 67d1) and parallels using other prepositions (e.g. αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, 82e4; αὐτὴ εἰς αὐτήν, 83a6, cp. 80e5).<sup>22</sup> The main discussion is at 64d-67b, where Socrates draws out from Simmias agreement that the body is an impediment to attaining wisdom and that there are such things as a 'just itself', a beautiful and a good (δίκαιον αὐτὸ ... καὶ καλὸν ... καὶ ἀγαθόν, 65d4-7) and greatness, health and strength; he argues that a person will come closest to knowledge of the *being* of such things who has trained himself to think most precisely of each object itself, abandoning the

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<sup>21</sup> D. Gallop translates the phrase 'alone by itself' in his *Phaedo* (Oxford, 1975; 1993); as does Burnet, *Plato's Phaedo*, ad 64c6. R. Hackforth (*Plato's Phaedo*, Cambridge, 1955) uses a variety of phrases: 'by itself' (64c), 'alone by itself' (65c7, 65d1), 'pure and simple' (for αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν εἰλικρινεῖ [sc. τῆ διανοίᾳ], 66a1-2). G. Vlastos (*Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge, 1991), 256-64) has 'itself by itself'—but, though I cannot accept that as a translation, I think we are largely in agreement on the purposes to which Plato puts the phrase.

<sup>22</sup> For other uses of the whole phrase, applied to Forms, see e.g. *Sym.* 211b1 (of the Beautiful αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδές), *Parm.* 128e6, *Tim.* 51c1; for the phrase applied to the soul, see *Rep.* VI 485d11. For some more ordinary and unmetaphysical uses, see e.g. *Rep.* X 604a3 (quoted later in the main text) and *Thet.* 206a5-8 (*Thet.* learning to distinguish the letters 'each alone by itself', αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἕκαστον). The language of Forms existing each αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό is, I think, absent from the great analogies of Sun, Line and Cave in the *Rep.*—except, notably, in application to the sun itself (516b) which is uniquely distant and apart from the other things of the upper realm—perhaps because, if Plato is talking of the survey of a whole realm or τόπος of Forms (e.g. 508c, 509d, 517b; cp. *Phdr.* 247c), then he may be becoming more impressed with their *relations* to each other, and to the Good, rather than their independence. Indeed it is the interconnection among Forms (rather than their *aleness*) that is stressed in the Line passage, as reason ascends to the Good and then descends again to an endpoint, making use of 'Forms alone by way of Forms and onward to Forms' (προσχωόμενος ... εἶδεν αὐτοῖς δι' αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά, *Rep.* VI 511c; cp. 510b8)—where the old incantatory phrasing is adapted now to express connection rather than separation. Forms as a group are alone or apart (sc., from sensibles), but they are not individually alone or apart (sc., from each other). For later discussion of interrelations, see *Soph.* 255c-258c, and (for an application of αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό none the less) 255c14-15.

senses, as far as possible, in favour of intellection (65e-66a). ‘Using his intellect *alone by itself* and unsullied (αὐτῇ καθ' αὐτήν εἰλικρινεῖ), he would undertake the hunt for each reality [i.e. each Form] *alone by itself* and unsullied (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἰλικρινεῖ)’ (66a1-3).<sup>23</sup> If knowledge is fully attainable by human beings at all, it can only be after death and separation from the body (66e-67a); and this is the reason why Socrates is unafraid of the fate ahead of him: ‘those who practise philosophy aright are cultivating dying, and for them, least of all men, does being dead hold any terror’ (67e). The same ideas are invoked later, at 78d-80c, in the third main argument for immortality: the soul and Forms are kin, so, since the Forms themselves are ‘divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble’, it would be proper for the soul too to be indissoluble, or something close to that (80c). ‘When ... [the soul] studies *alone by itself* (αὐτῇ καθ' αὐτήν), it departs yonder [into the realm of Forms] towards that which is pure and always existent and immortal and unvarying, and by virtue of its kinship with it, enters always into its company, whenever it has come to be *alone by itself* (αὐτῇ καθ' αὐτήν), and whenever it may do so; *then* it has ceased from its wandering and, when it is about those objects, it is always constant and unvarying, inasmuch as it is apprehending things of a similar kind [i.e. constant and unvarying]; and this condition of it is called wisdom, is it not?’ (79d). That is the condition we may expect death to bring, and philosophy in this life to approximate. The soul ceases from wandering as it fixes on unwandering things—and the assimilative process at work here turns out in later writings of Plato to operate in the practice of astronomy itself. Observational astronomy is, in the educational scheme of the *Republic*, only a pale shadow of the purer theoretical astronomy studied in ‘problems’ (*Rep.* VII 528e-530c). But it is itself also, the *Timaeus* will say, a direct way to calm the wandering soul: ‘the revolutions of reason’ in the stars, when seen by us, will ‘stabilize the variable revolutions within us’ (*Tim.* 47bc; cp. 90cd)—as the soul *becomes like* the unwandering things that it attends to.

Socrates’s case for immortality approaches its highpoint (after which a long silence ensues, *Phd.* 84c) with an explosion of

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<sup>23</sup> Here and elsewhere I draw on the versions of Gallop (Oxford, 1975; 1993) and Hackforth (Cambridge, 1955), but with modifications and variations of my own.

recommendations for the soul to act αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, αὐτὴν εἰς αὐτὴν, αὐτὴν αὐτῇ, and αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτὴν, and to regard as true only what is—as are the Forms—αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό. When bound to the body, the soul investigates *through* the eyes and other senses (διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων, 83a3), as if through a prison, rather than *alone through itself* (αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, 82e4): it is ‘rolling about’ in total ignorance (ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλιδουμένην, 82e5). Philosophy attempts to release the soul, by persuading it to withdraw from body and senses,

by urging it to collect and gather *itself to itself* (αὐτὴν ... εἰς αὐτὴν, cp. 80e5) and *itself* to trust *none other but itself* (μηδενὶ ἄλλω ἄλλ' ἢ αὐτὴν αὐτῇ), whenever, *alone by itself* (αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν), it thinks of any reality *alone by itself* (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τῶν ὄντων); and *not* to regard as true what it observes *through other things* (μηδὲν ... δι' ἄλλων), and what varies in various things; that kind of thing is sensible and seen, whereas the object of its own vision is intelligible and invisible. (*Phd.* 83a6-b4<sup>24</sup>)

The visual metaphor should be noted: the eye of the soul contemplates the Forms.

The same phrase recurs elsewhere with similar force. Perhaps the most interesting place is *Theaetetus* 184b-187a, where the same opposition is drawn between what the soul does *through other things* and what it does *through itself* and *by itself*. On the one hand there is *perceiving*, which we do with the soul *through the senses* (184d4); on the other hand, there is *thinking* or judging—for example, that two colours or sounds are like or unlike, same or different, beautiful or ugly—which the soul does *alone through itself* (αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς, 185e1, 6) and *alone by itself* (αὐτὴ ... καθ' αὐτὴν, 186a4; 187a5). To attain the *being* of things, and hence have knowledge of them (186c-e), (that is, I think, to grasp the *nature* of, for example, hardness and softness, or of the various colours and sounds) is the work of the soul acting *alone by itself* (187a5): something achieved by reasoning and calculation, and made possible, where it occurs at all, only through ‘a great deal of effort and education’ (διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας, 186c2-5). Once again, αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν is used as a phrase to conjure with in the promotion of higher thought.

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<sup>24</sup> tr. Gallop, with modifications to bring out the Greek phrasing; I substitute ‘true’ for ‘real’ to render ἀληθές.

When the Student comments, then, that the πρωκτός of the various figures bent over is learning αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν to do astronomy, might his words be a parodic echo of (an earlier manifestation of) any or all of these Platonic conceptions of the soul and its objects?

Of course much of the science and philosophy of the *Clouds* is absurd, all of it is comic, and none of it can be taken at face value as a depiction of Socrates's own views or practice. But one of the methods of comedy is to take the language and catch phrases characteristic of a person's discourse that sound fine and proper in one context and to set them instead in a place where they are evidently ridiculous. Dover talks (ad 193) of a resemblance between anus and eye which makes βλέπει more vivid; but it is the inversions as much as the parallels (and indeed the combination of the two opposite characters) that sustain the comedy here: that it is the arsehole—perhaps the least upwardly and immaterially ambitious part of the body—that is given the task of learning *alone by itself* is of course part of the operation of Aristophanes's ridicule. And obviously from comedy built with such traduced materials, it is not going to be easy to read out any conclusions about what the original might have been of what we see only in exaggerated, partly transposed, form.

There is evidently no mention in our passage of a theory of separate Forms or of any particular view on the nature or separability of the soul. But we have what looks like a definite reference to a project or practice of *withdrawing* from the everyday environment to be intellectually 'alone' and seek knowledge or learning 'by oneself'—and, if that indeed is what it is, then we must ask what such a project might have amounted to, in whatever form it might have existed in Aristophanes's environment. In Plato's *Phaedo*, of course, the project involved a separable soul attending to separate Forms, and it was combined with a large-scale opposition between lower things that are constantly changing and higher things that are not; while the confusion constantly produced in the soul by lower things was to be alleviated by turning our attention to higher things—thanks to a process whereby the mind becomes assimilated in certain respects to the things it attends to. (Those who think on orderly things themselves become orderly: cp. *Phd.* 79d, *Tim.* 47bc, 90cd; cp. *Rep.* VI 500b-d.) But how much less than all that might the

project have involved in the thought of Socrates, or of others in his world, if they used the phrase αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν?

We are facing here a version of the traditional ‘Socratic problem’: that of trying to decide how much of what we find in the mouth of Plato’s Socrates may actually have been said or thought by the historical Socrates. The internal evidence of the dialogues is of course hard to disentangle and the external evidence (principally from Xenophon and Aristophanes) is suspect and tendentious. But views have been taken, and for serious reasons. At one extreme, A. E. Taylor and John Burnet ascribe to Socrates all the main views of the Socrates of the *Phaedo*—including an immortal soul and the theory of Forms.<sup>25</sup> At the opposite extreme, there is, recently, Gregory Vlastos, and a large tradition developed in part from Hegel, that denies Socrates any metaphysical views on either subject—and insists that Socrates was exclusively a moral philosopher.<sup>26</sup> In the fairly large middle ground stand others, who ascribe some but not all such views to Socrates—like Guthrie, for example, who ascribes to him immortality of the soul but not separability of Forms, arguing

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<sup>25</sup> J. Burnet, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford, 1911) and A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica* (Oxford, 1911). Burnet argues: ‘Whatever Plato may or may not have done in other dialogues ... , I cannot bring myself to believe that [in the *Phd.*] he falsified the story of his master’s last hours on earth by using him as a mere mouthpiece for novel doctrines of his own. That would have been an offence against good taste and an outrage on all natural piety ...’ (xi-xii). Curiously, the theory of Ideas or Forms that Burnet attributes to Socrates as also to Plato (and credits originally not to either of them, but to the Pythagoreans) contains no claim of separation of Forms from particulars (xlvi n. 2)—which Burnet ascribes only to the ‘friends of Forms’ of *Soph.* 248a. As will be seen from the main text, I am not sure that this fits well with the *Phaedo*’s talk of a Form as αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό (e.g. 66a2, 83b1), but that is an issue that I shall not take further here.

<sup>26</sup> Socrates’s philosophy ‘had an altogether practical aspect’: ‘in regard to the personality and method’, Plato’s picture of Socrates is ‘satisfactory’, but ‘in regard to the content of his teaching and the point reached by him in the development of thought, we have in the main to look to Xenophon’ (G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. E. S. Haldane & F. H. Simson (London, 1892-96) i.397, 414). G. Vlastos argues in *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge, 1991) that ‘the historical Socrates’ (49) fits ten main claims, the first two of which are that he ‘is exclusively a moral philosopher’ (47), and that he had no such theory as the Platonic theory of “separately existing” Forms and of a separable soul which learns by “recollecting” (48).

that separable Forms are a Platonic addition that would have seemed to Plato only a trivial inference ('a legitimate projection'<sup>27</sup>) from Socrates's interest in definitions, given his faith in the survival of the soul.

Aristotle has seemed to support a rejection of Taylor and Burnet: it was Plato, he says,—not Socrates, it seems—who in his youth became familiar with the Heracleitean doctrines 'that all sensible things are ever in a state of flux' and 'that there is no knowledge about them', and he maintained those views even in his later years.

Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions; Plato accepted his teaching, but held that the problem applied not to any sensible things but to entities of another kind—for this reason, that the common definition could not be a definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing. Things of this other sort, then, he called Ideas, and sensible things, he said, were apart from these, and were called after these ... (*Met. A.* 6, 987b1-9, tr. Ross, rev. Barnes)

Many people accept Aristotle's word here. But we should remember that Aristotle was himself an opponent of Plato's separated Forms, and it is not unusual for a person, when disagreeing, so to speak, with his intellectual father, to claim his grandfather to be on his side—and the claim may all too easily go unchallenged when the grandfather died some fifteen years before the speaker and his contemporaries were even born. The claim that Socrates neglected the science of nature may cite *Apology* 19b-d in support; pointing in the opposite direction, however, is not only *The Clouds* but also the 'intellectual autobiography' of *Phaedo* 95a-99d—in which 'Socrates' declares himself, when young, to have 'had a remarkable

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<sup>27</sup> Guthrie, *Socrates*, 33. Similarly Ed. Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy* (1874), 227: 'The reality of Ideas seems to him the direct and inevitable consequence of the Socratic philosophy of Concepts.' To derive the existence of Forms simply from a demand for definitions of terms like 'pious' would surely be, as critics have pointed out, an invalid move; but it might yet be plausible, and even in part valid, to derive it from the particular kinds of question that Socrates asked about (e.g.) piety and his particular conception of what the definitional task amounted to.

enthusiasm for the kind of wisdom known as natural science (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν)' (96a6). Some people (like Vlastos) have preferred the Aristotelian view (dismissing the report of Socrates's early interest in natural science as a 'canard' (161), citing *Apol.* 19b-d in support, and passing over *Phd.* 96 without any serious discussion at all); while others (like Guthrie (*Socrates*, 100-105) have concluded in favour of the opposite view, that Socrates did indeed have scientific interests while young.<sup>28</sup> This is not the place to attempt to adjudicate that whole dispute. But what we are currently finding in the *Clouds* is a virtually unnoticed piece of evidence of a kind too often ignored:<sup>29</sup> it is external evidence (whether ultimately persuasive or not) of a Socratic interest not just in natural science, but also in some kind of special epistemology of *withdrawal* from the everyday world in order to acquire learning about distant things—something that (if we do end up attributing it to Socrates) would certainly go beyond what Aristotle described as a concern simply with 'ethical matters', and something that might easily be combined (whether or not it actually was in the 420s) with

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<sup>28</sup> The status of *Phd.* 95a-99d as biographical evidence is itself not clear: for a survey of views and a balanced assessment, see Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo*, 127-32.

<sup>29</sup> Burnet and Taylor have noted other 'Platonic' ideas that are already to be found in the Socrates of the *Clouds*: 'Aristophanes also knows of the spiritual midwifery of Sokrates, for he has a jest about the miscarriage of a thought. ... [H]e represents him as a spiritualistic medium, and he calls the inmates of the *Phrontisterion* "souls," a word which to the ordinary Athenian would only suggest ghosts. He also ridicules them for going barefoot and unwashed, and speaks of them as "semi-corpses." All that, and more of the same kind, has a sufficient foundation in what Plato tells us of the Sokratic doctrine of the soul and the "practice of death.'" (J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London, 1914) 145. Burnet is referring, no doubt, to 137 (φροντίδ' ἐξημβλωκας ἐξηυρημένην), with 139; 94 (ψυχῶν σοφῶν τοῦτ' ἐστὶ φροντιστήριον); and 504 (ἡμιθνής γενήσομαι), with 102-4.) In 'The φροντιστήριον', in *Varia Socratica* (Oxford, 1911), A. E. Taylor brings forward a mass of evidence of 'Platonism' in the Socrates of the *Clouds*—and much of the material remains impressive, I think, despite some exaggerations, and even after the influential objections of, e.g., A. M. Adam ('Socrates, "Quantum mutatus ab illo"', *Class. Q.* 12 (1918), 121-39). But in any case, Taylor makes no mention in his essay of αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν at 193-4 and, though he mentions the physics of the clouds, connecting them with Diogenes of Apollonia (165 & n.), he is silent on the main points I suggest below.

metaphysical doctrines on separation of soul and Forms.<sup>30</sup> And Plato at this moment would have been five or six years old—and certainly not the source.

Might the phrase just be accidental? Might Aristophanes have quite nonchalantly set a student at a task αὐτὸν καθ' αὐτόν—as Plato himself talks, for example, at *Rep.* X 604a3, of how a man may grieve in the company of his equals or instead ‘alone by himself’, αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν—without alluding to anything particularly metaphysical or, indeed, to anything else at all? Quite possibly, if Aristophanes had been talking of just one student. But there is a whole collection of them (σῖδε ... οἱ σφοδρ' ἐγκεκυφότες, 191) searching the subterranean regions, each with an arsehole looking αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν at the sky—: and that a whole collection of such things should be said, with the innocence of pure literalism, to be acting *alone by itself* would surely make little sense. (And it perhaps explains the fact that so many of the translators have not understood the phrase at all.) If the phrase means anything, it must surely be an allusion to something that allows it to make better sense than it does literally. The phrase might perhaps be an echo of something not properly Socratic, or perhaps of a body of thought other than the one which I have been drawing out of Plato. But with some searching I have been able to find no other candidate in other philosophers—except for some uses of αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ, which I shall discuss after briefly considering in the next paragraph a quite separate objection, and which actually only add, I think, to the case for Socratic talk of withdrawal αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν. The phrase has a huge and important role that we have seen in Plato, which, if (perhaps in some lesser form) it had played also in Socrates, would make perfect sense of Aristophanes's lines as a good piece of mocking parody—making fun of a whole body of philosophical thought about higher thinking and withdrawal from the confusions of the bodily world, by transposing one of its most spiritually ambitious catch-phrases to one of the more heavily material parts of the body. And I cannot help thinking that if the phrase had itself been a catch-phrase of some quite different philosophy, well-enough

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<sup>30</sup> For a rather different kind of withdrawal—that of the ἀπράγμων (Eur. fr. 193, Ar. *Eq.* 261), the man who seeks quiet uninvolvement rather than either meddling or fighting in a dirty political world, see L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford, 1986), esp. 162-73 on Eur.'s *Antiope*.

known to have resonated with Aristophanes's audience but only by confusion associable with Socrates, then Plato would hardly have taken it over to play a new and different, but again resonant, role in his own philosophy—or at least, not without some comment to distance himself from that rival body of thought. (When the Socrates of the *Apology* wishes to distance himself from the impression given by the *Clouds*, he does so (19cd), whether entirely fairly or not.) There is no ground for claiming certainty in the case, but from the new evidence, the most plausible conclusion is, I think, that the phrase is indeed an allusion to a body of Socratic thought, and that that body of thought is, at least at a moderate level of generality, the kind of thing that we find later in the *Phaedo*.

It would be a mistake to suggest that αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν was a phrase that entirely by itself needed a special philosophical reading.<sup>31</sup> Related phrases using other prepositions have a perfectly ordinary non-philosophical usage, and our phrase is no exception. In his own death, Ajax acted αὐτὸς πρὸς αὐτοῦ, 'himself toward himself' (Soph. *Ajax* 906; cp. *OT* 1238); Electra talks of being left in the house to lament αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτήν, 'alone and to myself' (Soph. *Electra* 285); we are told that the Barbarian failed, for the most part, αὐτὸν περὶ αὐτῷ, 'himself by reason of himself', i.e. by his own fault (Thuc. 1.69.5; cp. 6.18.6). And, using precisely our phrase, Ion talks of Xuthus's wife Creusa bearing her misfortune with bitterness αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν, 'alone by herself' (Eur. *Ion* 610)—as also Plato talks of a man grieving on his own, in the passage I mentioned above (*Rep.* X 604a3). The point is not that the phrase is in itself philosophical, but that in our particular context it makes no good sense unless it alludes to something, so to speak, off-stage; and—given what the phrase literally means, along with the remainder of the sentence, how it is later used in Plato, and the fact that we are supposedly at the gates of Socrates's school—the best candidate in the circumstances is, as it happens, a doctrine of epistemological withdrawal that Aristophanes apparently associated with Socrates. But at this point someone might suggest a rival view: that parallel idioms like those I have just mentioned show that the relevant sense is one of separateness and autonomy, rather than of withdrawal or literal solitude. I am not sure: there is no single force to αὐτός and

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<sup>31</sup> I am very grateful here for the suggestions of an anonymous Reader for this Journal, which I have developed I hope not too freely.

the significance of these prepositional phrases depends of course on the preposition and the case in question. In his suicide, Ajax acts ‘himself’ toward himself (whether alone or not), and one can talk indeed of autonomy as salient rather than aloneness; but Electra laments, surely, ‘alone’ to herself—and what is in question is aloneness not autonomy. There are places where a person brings a judgement αὐτὸς κατ' αὐτοῦ, ‘himself down upon himself’ (Soph. *OT* 228; cp. Eur. *Heracl.* 143), and there indeed one might talk of autonomy. But when we hear of Creusa bearing her misfortune αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν (Eur. *Ion* 610), the contrast is explicitly with earlier days when in adversity she had had the company of her husband (κοινουμένη τὰς συμφορὰς σοι πρόσθεν 608-9): the emphasis is precisely on the aloneness. This last is as good an example as one could hope for of our phrase in a non-philosophical context at a time close to that of the *Clouds*—and it confirms, I think, the general interpretation I offered earlier of αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν: as meaning *alone by himself, herself, itself*. But in that case, I think, aloneness must indeed be reckoned a standard (though perhaps in special contexts cancellable) part of the phrase’s meaning. There are many different ways to act or be alone, but to *come to be alone* is, in many central cases, to *withdraw*, and in our passage in the *Clouds* the pretended withdrawal seems to be for the purpose of learning astronomy, an epistemological task particularly special for Plato as, rather differently, it had also been for Anaxagoras. From that point on—to say what kind of epistemological withdrawal might be at issue, for what range of epistemological projects—is I think a matter of probabilities and weighing of hypotheses in the light of larger bodies of evidence; but that some kind of doctrine of epistemological withdrawal is being associated with Socrates and held up as a object of fun, seems to me a hypothesis that sits well with the philological evidence.

It is time to discuss the only other candidate I know that might be cited as a possible object of Aristophanes’s joking—the similar phrase αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ, *alone by itself*, as it occurs in Hippocratic texts and, more significantly, in Anaxagoras. αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ—or Attic ἐφ' αὐτοῦ—is, I think, at least as ordinary a phrase as αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν (see LSJ, s.v. ἐπί, I.1.2). But it occurs in the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* (*VM* 14, 15) in a context with εἶδος and κοινωνία, indeed,<sup>32</sup> that led A. E. Taylor to call the

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<sup>32</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς, οἶμαι, ἐξευρημένον αὐτό τι ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ θερμὸν ἢ ψυχρὸν ἢ ξηρὸν ἢ ὑγρὸν μηδενὶ ἄλλω εἶδει κοινωνέον, ‘they have not, I think,

phrase ‘Plato’s αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό’ and to say it showed that ‘the technical phrases of the *Phaedo* are not Plato’s invention but belong to fifth-century science’ (*Varia Socratica*, 215). It would be an exaggeration, however, I think, to suggest that any very similar doctrine or conception—as opposed to the words themselves—were to be found in the Hippocratic treatise. The author has talked of how, e.g., the salty, or the acid, may in the human body become separated off (the same word is used for *secretion*) alone by itself (ἀποκριθῆ καὶ αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ γένηται *VM* 14), thereby causing disease; he doubts, however, that the same thing happens with the hot or cold, wet or dry (§15), or if it does, that it happens in the same way (§§16-18); he concludes that the principal causes of disease are not the hot, cold, wet and dry of the new thinkers, but the bitter, salt, sweet, astringent, etc. of the older physicians. Separation ‘alone by oneself’ here is no more than occurs all the time with humours in the body of the sick—and there would not be much promise, I think, in any suggestion that it was something of that kind that was the object of Aristophanes’s fun with αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν.

Anaxagoras, however, talks somewhat similarly of separation (ἀποκρίνεσθαι (frs. 9, 12, 13, 14, 16) and χωρισθῆναι (frs. 6, 8)) and of being alone ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ (fr. 12, three occurrences), and with more philosophical significance—in a way seems more promising. In Anaxagoras, ‘All other things have a portion of everything, but Mind (νοῦς) is infinite and self-ruled, and is mixed with nothing but is all alone by itself (μόνος αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ)’ (fr. 12). (By contrast, he says that, of everything other than Mind, ‘nothing can be separated nor come to be by itself’ (οὐκ ἂν δύναιτο χωρισθῆναι, οὐδ' ἂν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ γενέσθαι fr. 6): they are all, to varying degrees, intermixed.) And this separation of Mind from non-mental things is declared essential to Mind’s mastery (and, in Aristotle, to Mind’s knowledge): ‘things that were mixed with it (τὰ συμμεμειγμένα) would have prevented it (ἐκώλυει αὐτόν) from controlling anything in the way that it does when it is actually alone by itself (μόνον ... ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ)’; ‘it is the finest of all things and the purest’ (fr. 12; cp. Arist. *DA* 429a18). It is Anaxagoras whose works we are told Socrates got hold of with such eagerness and then found disappointing for not giving a larger role indeed to mind (*Phd.* 97b-98c); and Anaxagoras who is said to have taught Archelaus, who in turn taught Socrates (DL ii.16). That Socrates should on these topics have modified Anaxagorean (as well as Pythagorean) materials and put them to further and new use would not be surprising. And the demand for

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discovered any item that is alone by itself hot or cold or dry or wet, having no share of any other form’ *VM* 15.

separation in the *Phaedo* is made in rather similar terms, requiring purity (*Phd.* 67a5-b2, c5) and separation (e.g. 67c7, d4) as a condition for knowledge, and with a psychological theory of the body as an impediment (ἐμπόδιον 65a10) when it is ‘grown together’ or interspersed with the soul (σύμφυτον 81c6). Of course there would be a modification of doctrine: whereas Anaxagoras has Mind (the cosmic mind) alone by itself, it is individual souls that in Plato are recommended to be alone by themselves; and the object of knowledge is not bodily things but Forms (cp. 65c9). And there is a significant change in vocabulary—from ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ (or ἐφ' αὐτοῦ) to καθ' αὐτό. (The former is, I think, never used in Plato for the soul setting itself ‘alone by itself’ (though there are non-philosophically-charged uses at *Soph.* 217c3 and *Prot.* 326cd, and it is used briefly of the Form of fire (*Tim.* 51b8) before giving way (for Forms in general, in the plural) to καθ' αὐτά (51c1, d4)): so we have a new technical usage (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό, αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν) that has more or less completely displaced αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ.) But then the remarkable thing is that Aristophanes associates Socrates with the newer phrase: the change—if there has been one—has taken place in the time of Socrates, not of Plato. And, far from being just an echo of some general philosophical or scientific usage (of something like ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ as used in certain medical theories), αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν in the *Clouds* would be an echo of a characteristically Socratic usage—connectable with Anaxagoras, perhaps, as also with the Pythagoreans, but only by way of transformation of language as well as philosophical advance.

Curiously, once we remember that withdrawal in the *Phaedo* is withdrawal specifically from the confusions of a world of flux and becoming, we can find much in the same part of the *Clouds* that may be an echo also of those latter ideas. When the Clouds finally appear on stage, heralded by Socrates as goddesses who bestow intelligence and discourse and thought and fantasy and circumlocution (317-8), Strepsiades’s first response is that he had thought that the clouds were mist and dew and vapour—not gods; his second response is more comic: ‘if they really are clouds, what has happened to them, that they look like mortal women?’ (340-1) The answer is drawn out of Strepsiades himself by what is supposed to be a barrage of Socratic questioning (345)—though (comically) Strepsiades in his innocence quickly turns the method round and

poses questions instead to his questioner (347, 351). The answer is that the clouds of the sky themselves ‘come to be whatever they want’ (γίνονται πάντ' ὅ τι βούλονται, 347), taking the form of an animal corresponding to the character of people they wish to expose: if they see a shaggy man, they make a likeness of centaurs (κενταύροις ἠκάσαν, 350); to expose a thief (ἄρπαγα, 351), they become wolves (λύκοι ... ἐγένοντο, 352); when most recently they saw a coward, they became deer (354); and finally, having seen Cleisthenes, they have become women (356). There may be a joking transformation here of the kind of idea that shows up in the *Phaedo* (also, I think, not entirely seriously), about the reincarnation appropriate to the various types of soul (81e2-4): the gluttonous and lecherous will take on the body of donkeys and similar animals, those who have preferred injustice, tyranny and thieving (ἄρπαγᾶς, 82a2) will have the bodies of wolves, hawks and kites—while those with everyday but unphilosophical virtue will return to the condition of ‘tame and social creatures’, like bees, wasps and ants (82b5-8). The transposition in the *Clouds* is of course into a different key: for Plato’s transmigrating souls merely *take on* the body of these various animals, whereas the clouds are said literally to *become* the animals in question. But that is the real point: these clouds are constantly *becoming*—constantly changing shape and character—just what Plato will emphasize as being the character of *sensible things*: continually *becoming*, not *being*, they are things that merely *resemble* other things.

Once there is a chance of taking the clouds as comic echoes of (what we know later as) the Platonic conception of *sensible things*, there are other resonances to be heard. The clouds thunder when ‘rolling about’ (αὐτὰι βροντῶσιν κυλινδόμεναι, 375): when filled with water (ὕδατος μεστάς, 383) then by necessity they collide and make a noise because of their density—just as Strepsiades, when ‘filled with soup’ (ζωμοῦ ... ἐμπλησθείς, 386) at the Panathenaea, has suffered disturbances in his stomach (ἐταράχθη], 386; τετάρρακται, 388).

The pattern of ideas of *rolling about*, when *filled* with relevant matter, causing discord and *disturbance*, reappears in the *Phaedo*, in the same contexts as we have been considering (64c-67b, 78b-82d), to characterize the soul’s problems when impeded by the body in the path of true philosophy. To be *rolling about*, i.e. roaming, by tombs and graves (περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους

κυλινδομένη) is precisely what the soul of the newly deceased does when weighed down by an excess of bodily material (*Phd.* 81c11). The soul of each of us indeed is ‘rolling about in utter ignorance’ when tied to the body, examining things through the senses (ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην, 82e4<sup>33</sup>): inquiry through the eyes is ‘full of deceit’ (ἀπάτης ... μεστή, 82e3). And the effects of constant bodily demands have earlier been described: the body ‘fills’ us up (ἐμπύμπλησιν, 66c4) with desires and longings, producing war and faction and fighting—‘clamour and disturbance’ (θόρυβον παρέχει καὶ παραχὴν, 66d5; cp. 66a5-7; 79c7)—which rob us of the leisure for the true philosophy that the soul would pursue αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν (67a1).

Thus we have two groups of ideas in both our short portions of the *Clouds* (184-99 and 314-411) and in some important parts of the *Phaedo* (64c-67b, 78b-82d): the idea of the learner *alone by himself* considering his distant objects, and, on the other hand, the idea of things nearby in constant change, rolling about, being filled with troublesome stuff and producing disturbance. So the question arises, again: might the philosophical conceptions that go with this second cluster of ideas in the *Phaedo* have been present in Socrates as well as Plato: the conception (a) of sensible things as constantly changing, and (b) of such things as an impediment to knowledge? The case for finding (b) in Socrates may at first seem less strong than with (a). But without (b), what would be the *point* of any doctrine of the need for withdrawal αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτόν? If it is not that one’s everyday environment is in some way confusing and an impediment (many very different ways, of course, being conceivable), then what would be the need to withdraw from it? The signs in the clouds of something like (a) in Socrates can only be taken as suggestive, rather than probative; but if they were

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<sup>33</sup> κυλινδεῖσθαι is a buzz-word of what is usually counted as Platonic theory of mind and reality: *Rep.* V 479d (τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλὰ νόμιμα ... μεταξύ που κυλινδεῖται τοῦ τε μὴ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὄντος), *Tim.* 44d, *Phaedr.* 257a, 275e, *Plt.* 309a; though the word is also used in more everyday physics, *Tim.* 59d. παραχὴ (*Rep.* IV 444b, X 602c, *Phd.* 66d5 (quoted above)) and παράπτειν (*Rep.* II 381a, *Phil.* 63d, *Phd.* 66a5-7, 79c7) are characteristic terms in Plato, especially for the confusing effect of the body on the soul; but less exclusively so. The tyrannized soul, like the tyrannized city, being dragged about by desire, is ‘full of disturbance and regret’ (παραχῆς καὶ μεταμελείας μεστή, *Rep.* IX 577e).

accepted, we would have reason to reject Aristotle's suggestion that the Heracleitean conception of flux left a mark only on Plato and not Socrates. It is at least clear, I think, that Aristophanes associated Socrates with a doctrinal catch-phrase that was crucial to Plato and Platonism some thirty-five years later. To settle exactly which 'Platonic' ideas might at that earlier time have gone with the phrase and the larger question, which 'Platonic' views go all the way back to Socrates—if a settlement is to be expected at all, given the available evidence—would demand a larger investigation than I can offer here. But the debate is, I think, worth continuing as well as ending—and we do now have more evidence on it than people have noticed.<sup>34</sup>

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