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Socrates, as we meet him in the dialogue "Courage," is a well-respected member of Athenian society. He has a distinguished military record and a well-respected family. We may wonder how his reputation became so tarnished that some few years later he could be condemned to death by the Athenian courts. Perhaps some part of the answer can be found in this week's reading. Aristophanes was renowned for his willingness to ridicule nearly anybody. In this comedy, Socrates' propensity to question all things and to encourage the youth to think in unique ways about things are Aristophanes' targets. The characters in this dialogue are as follows:

- STREPSIADES - a man trying to educate his son in sophistry
- PHIDIPPIDES - his son
- DISCIPLES OF SOCRATES
- SOCRATES
- CHORUS OF CLOUDS - literal clouds but divine goddesses

- JUST CAUSE
- UNJUST CAUSE

Two figures who represent good reasons and the traditional approach to things and bad reasons and a new fangled approach to doing things. These are not real people, but personifications of these ideas, like the "Spirit of Christmas Past" from Dickens.

The drama centers on a man from the country, something of a "country bumpkin," who having married the niece of a famous Athenian general now has a son. This son loves everything to do with horses and he is spoiled by his parents, as a result he has driven his father into debt through the expense of buying and maintaining these horses. This man, Strepsiades, has been up through the night, trying to figure out what to do about his debt situation. Having reached a conclusion, he awakens his son and addresses him

STREPSIADES

Phidippides, my little Phidippides?

PHIDIPPIDES

What, father?

STREPSIADES

Kiss me, and give me your right hand!

PHIDIPPIDES

There. What's the matter?

STREPSIADES

Tell me, do you love me?

PHIDIPPIDES

Yes, by this Equestrian Neptune.

STREPSIADES

Nay, do not by any means mention this Equestrian to me, for this god is the author of

my misfortunes. But, if you really love me from your heart, my son, obey me.

PHIDIPPIDES

In what then, pray, shall I obey you?

STREPSIADES

Reform your habits as quickly as possible, and go and learn what I advise.

PHIDIPPIDES

Tell me now, what do you prescribe?

STREPSIADES

And will you obey me at all?

PHIDIPPIDES

By Bacchus, I will obey you.



STREPSIADES

Look this way then! Do you see this little door and little house?

PHIDIPPIDES

I see it. What then, pray, is this, father?

Strepsiades now reveals that he wishes his son to study at a "thinking-shop" run by what are obviously sophists. Surprisingly, Socrates is listed as one of the members of this shop. Look for what we might take as a definition of a sophist in Strepsiades comments below.

STREPSIADES

This is a thinking-shop of wise spirits. There dwell men who in speaking of the heavens persuade people that it is an oven, and that it encompasses us, and that we are the embers. These men teach how to conquer in speaking, whether you are right or wrong, if you pay them.

PHIDIPPIDES

Who are they?

STREPSIADES

I do not know the name accurately. They are minute philosophers, noble and excellent.

PHIDIPPIDES

Bah! They are rogues; I know them. You mean the quacks, the pale-faced wretches, the bare-footed fellows, of whose numbers are the miserable Socrates and Chaerephon.

STREPSIADES

Hold! Hold! Be silent! Do not say anything foolish. But, if you have any concern for your father's patrimony, become one of them, having given up your horsemanship.

PHIDIPPIDES

I would not, by Bacchus, even if you were to give me the pheasants which Leogoras rears!

STREPSIADES

Go, I entreat you, dearest of men, go and be taught.

PHIDIPPIDES

Why, what shall I learn?

STREPSIADES

They say that among them are both the two causes--the better cause, whichever that is, and the worse: they say that the one of these two causes, the worse, prevails, though it speaks on the unjust side. If, therefore you learn for me this unjust cause, I would not pay any one, not even an obolus of these debts, which I owe at present on your account.

PHIDIPPIDES

I cannot comply; my uncle Megacles will not abide me being without a horse. Hence, I'll go home, and pay no heed to you.

[Exit Phidippides.]

Strepsiades, having failed to convince his son to join the think-shop, decides to go himself. He approaches the shop, knocks, and receives a rather rude response, and then hears about what we must surely assume to be an absurd example of the activity going on inside.

STREPSIADES

I will not give up. I will go myself to the thinking-shop and get taught. But how shall I learn the subtleties of refined disquisitions, being an old man? Yet I must go.

[Knocks at the door.]

Boy! Little boy!

DISCIPLE

(from within). Go to the devil! Who is it that knocked at the door?

STREPSIADES

Strepsiades, the son of Phidon, of Cicynna.

DISCIPLE

You are a stupid fellow, by Jove! Who have kicked against the door so very carelessly, and have caused the miscarriage of an idea which I had conceived.



STREPSIADES

Pardon me; for I dwell afar in the country. But tell me the thing which has been made to miscarry.

DISCIPLE

It is not lawful to mention it, except to disciples.

STREPSIADES

Tell it, then, to me without fear; for I here am come as a disciple to the thinking-shop.

DISCIPLE

I will tell you; but you must regard these as religious mysteries. Socrates lately asked Chaerephon about a flea, how many of its own feet it jumped; for after having bit the eyebrow of Chaerephon, it leaped away onto the head of Socrates.

STREPSIADES

How then did he measure this?

DISCIPLE

Most cleverly. He melted some wax; and then took the flea and dipped its feet in the wax. He then measured back the distance.

STREPSIADES

O King Jupiter! What subtlety of thought!

DISCIPLE

What then would you say if you heard another contrivance of Socrates?

STREPSIADES

Of what kind? Tell me, I beseech you!

DISCIPLE

Chaerephon the Sphettian asked him whether he thought gnats buzzed through the mouth or the rump.

STREPSIADES

What, then, did he say about the gnat?

DISCIPLE

He said the intestine of the gnat was narrow and that the wind went forcibly through it, being slender, straight to the breech; and then that the rump, being hollow

where it is adjacent to the narrow part, resounded through the violence of the wind.

STREPSIADES

The rump of the gnats then is a trumpet! Oh, thrice happy he for his sharp-sightedness! Surely a defendant might easily get acquitted who understands the intestine of the gnat. Open quickly the thinking-shop, and show to me Socrates as quickly as possible. For I desire to be a disciple. Come, open the door.

Strepsiades, comically, is convinced of the subtlety of thought in the shop by the fact that they contemplate the workings of the intestines of gnats. He calls out that he wishes to meet Socrates, and Socrates emerges and responds. Upon hearing that Strepsiades wishes to join the shop Socrates begins an initiation process. In this scene we see that it is well known that Socrates doesn't quite have the normal understanding of the gods, looking to a physical thing as the divine rather than one of the Olympians – this is one of the 'crimes' for which he is put on trial later in his life.

SOCRATES.

And for what did you come?

STREPSIADES

Wishing to learn to speak; for by reason of usury, and most ill-natured creditors, I am pillaged and plundered, and have my goods seized for debt.

SOCRATES.

How did you get in debt without observing it?

STREPSIADES

A "horse-disease" consumed me—they are terrific eaters. But teach me the unjust one of your two causes, that which pays nothing to a creditor; and I will swear by the gods to pay down to you whatever reward you exact of me.



SOCRATES.

By what gods will you swear? For, in the first place, the 'gods' are not a current belief with us.

STREPSIADES

By what do you swear? By iron money, as in Byzantium?

SOCRATES.

Do you wish to know clearly celestial matters, what they rightly are?

STREPSIADES

Yes, by Jupiter, if it be possible!

SOCRATES.

And to hold converse with the Clouds, our divinities?

STREPSIADES

By all means.

SOCRATES.

(with great solemnity). Seat yourself, then, upon the sacred couch.

STREPSIADES

Well, I am seated!

SOCRATES.

Take, then, this chaplet.

STREPSIADES

For what purpose a chaplet? Ah me! Socrates, see that you do not sacrifice me like Athamas!

SOCRATES.

No; we do all these to those who get initiated.

STREPSIADES

Then what shall I gain, pray?

SOCRATES.

You shall become in oratory a tricky knave, a thorough rattle, a subtle speaker. But keep quiet and hearken to my prayer.

O sovereign King, immeasurable Air, who keepest the earth suspended, and through bright Aether, and ye august goddesses, the Clouds, sending thunder and lightning, arise,

appear in the air, O mistresses, to your deep thinker!

STREPSIADES

Not yet, not yet, till I wrap this around me lest I be wet through. To think of my having come from home without even a cap, unlucky man!

SOCRATES.

Come then, ye highly honored Clouds, for a display to this man. Whether ye are sitting upon the sacred snow-covered summits of Olympus, or in the gardens of Father Ocean form a sacred dance with the Nymphs, or draw in golden pitchers the streams of the waters of the Nile, or inhabit the Maeotic lake, or the snowy rock of Mimas, hearken to our prayer, and receive the sacrifice, and be propitious to the sacred rites.

A group, called a chorus, made up of women representing these divine clouds appear and converse with Socrates and StrepsiaDES. StrepsiaDES promises his belief and veneration and as a result the goddess clouds ask him what he wishes to receive.

CHORUS

Tell us then boldly, what we must do for you? For you shall not fail in getting it, if you honor and admire us, and seek to become clever.

STREPSIADES

O mistresses, I request of you then this very small favor, that I be the best of the Greeks in speaking by a hundred stadia.

CHORUS

Well, you shall have this from us, so that hence-forward from this time no one shall get more opinions passed in his favor in the public assemblies than you.

STREPSIADES

Grant me not to deliver important opinions; for I do not desire these, but only to pervert



justice for my own advantage, and to evade my creditors.

CHORUS

Then you shall obtain what you desire; for you do not covet great things. But commit yourself without fear to our ministers.

STREPSIADES

I will do so in reliance upon you, for necessity oppresses me, on account of the horses, and the marriage that ruined me. Now, therefore, let them use me as they please. If I shall escape clear from my debts, I will readily appear to men to be bold, glib of tongue, audacious, impudent, shameless, a fabricator of falsehoods, inventive of words, a practiced knave in lawsuits, a fox, a slippery knave, a dissembler, a slippery fellow, an impostor, a gallows-bird, a blackguard, a twister, a troublesome fellow, a licker-up of hashes. If they call me this, when they meet me, let them do to me absolutely what they please. And if they like, by Ceres, let them serve up a sausage out of me to the deep thinkers.

CHORUS

This man has a spirit not void of courage. But, know that if you learn these matters from me, you will possess among mortals a glory as high as heaven.

STREPSIADES

Alright. But what shall I experience?

CHORUS

You shall pass with me the most enviable of mortal lives the whole time.

STREPSIADES

In what manner, shall I see this happen?

CHORUS

Many people will be always seated at your gates, wishing to communicate with you and come to a conference with you, to consult with you as to actions and affidavits of many talents, as is worthy of your abilities.

[To Socrates.]

But attempt to teach the old man by degrees whatever you purpose, and scrutinize his intellect, and make trial of his mind.

Socrates proceeds to test Strepsiades abilities as a thinker. He is not pleased with what he finds, but decides to give him one last chance to think out a means to achieve his goals. Strepsiades can only come up with absurd ideas and Socrates ultimately decides to kick him out. Strepsiades turns to the Clouds in prayer once again, and they respond.

SOCRATES.

By Respiration, and Chaos, and Air, I have not seen any man so boorish, nor so impracticable, nor so stupid, nor so forgetful; who, while learning some little petty quibbles, forgets them before he has learned them. Nevertheless I will certainly call him out here to the light. Where is Strepsiades? Come forth with your sleeping matt. Now meditate hard about this; and roll yourself about in every way, having wrapped yourself up; and quickly, when you fall into a difficulty, spring to another idea. But let delightful sleep be absent from your eyes.

STREPSIADES

Wretched man, I am perishing! The bed bugs, coming out from the bed, are biting me, and devouring my sides, and drinking up my life-blood, and tearing away my flesh, and digging through my vitals, and will annihilate me.

SOCRATES.

Ho you! What are you about? Are you not meditating?

STREPSIADES

I? Yea, by Neptune!

SOCRATES.

And what, pray, have you thought?

STREPSIADES

Whether any bit of me will be left by the bugs.



SOCRATES.

You will perish most wretchedly.

STREPSIADES

But, my good friend, I have already perished.

SOCRATES.

You must not give in, but must wrap yourself up in the blanket and in thought; for you have to discover a means of cheating.

[Walks up and down while Strepsiades wraps himself up in the blankets.]

Have you got anything?

STREPSIADES

No; by Jupiter, certainly not!

SOCRATES.

Nothing at all?

STREPSIADES

Nothing.

SOCRATES.

Will you not quickly cover yourself up and think of something?

STREPSIADES

About what? Give me a hint, O Socrates!

SOCRATES.

Find out yourself and then state what you wish.

STREPSIADES

You have heard a thousand times what I wish. About the interest; so that I may pay no one.

SOCRATES.

Then, wrap yourself up, and figure out your affairs little by little, rightly distinguishing and examining.

STREPSIADES

Ah me, unhappy man!

SOCRATES.

Keep quiet; and if you be puzzled in any one of your conceptions, leave it and go on; set your mind in motion again, and figure it all out.

STREPSIADES

(in great glee). O dearest little

Socrates!

SOCRATES.

What, old man?

STREPSIADES

I have got a device for cheating them of the interest.

SOCRATES.

Exhibit it.

At last Strepsiades comes up with some ideas about how he might cheat those to whom he owes money, but each is more absurd than the last. Socrates grows impatient and finally takes action against him.

STREPSIADES

Now tell me this, pray; if I were to purchase a Thessalian witch, and draw down the moon by night, and then shut it up, as if it were a mirror, in a round crest-case, and then carefully keep it--

SOCRATES.

What good would this do you?

STREPSIADES

What? If the moon were to rise no longer anywhere, I should not pay the interest.

SOCRATES.

Why so?

STREPSIADES

Because the money is lent out by the month.

SOCRATES.

Capital! But I will again propose to you another clever question. If a law suit for five talents should be entered against you, tell me how you would obliterate it.

STREPSIADES

How? How? I do not know but I must seek.

SOCRATES.

Do not then always revolve your thoughts about yourself; but slack away your mind into the air, like a bird tied by a string.



STREPSIADES

I have found a very clever method of getting rid of my suit, so that you yourself would acknowledge it.

SOCRATES.

Of what description?

STREPSIADES

Have you ever seen this stone in the chemist's shops, the beautiful and transparent one, from which they kindle fire?

SOCRATES.

Do you mean the burning-glass?

STREPSIADES

I do. Come what would you say, pray, if I were to take this, when the clerk was entering the suit, and were to stand at a distance, in the direction of the sun, thus, and melt out the letters of my suit?

SOCRATES.

Cleverly done, by the Graces!

STREPSIADES

Oh! How I am delighted, that a suit of five talents has been cancelled!

SOCRATES.

Come now, quickly seize upon this.

STREPSIADES

What?

SOCRATES.

How, when engaged in a lawsuit, you could overturn the suit, when you were about to be cast, because you had no witnesses.

STREPSIADES

Most readily and easily.

SOCRATES.

Tell me, pray.

STREPSIADES

Well now, I'll tell you. If, while one suit was still pending, before mine was called on, I were to run away and hang myself.

SOCRATES.

You talk nonsense.

STREPSIADES

By the gods, would I! For no one will bring action against me when I am dead.

SOCRATES.

You talk nonsense. Begone; I can't teach you any longer.

STREPSIADES

Why so? Yea, by the gods, O Socrates!

SOCRATES.

You straightaway forget whatever you learn. For what now was the first thing you were taught? Tell me.

STREPSIADES

Come, let me see: nay, what was the first?

Ah me! What was it?

SOCRATES.

Will you not pack off to the devil, you most forgetful and most stupid old man?

Having been kicked out of the Think-Shop StrepsiaDES is not sure what to do. He prays to the Clouds for guidance and help.

STREPSIADES

Ah me, what then, pray will become of me, wretched man? For I shall be utterly undone, if I do not learn to ply the tongue. Come, O ye Clouds, give me some good advice.

CHORUS

We, old man, advise you, if you have a son grown up, to send him to learn in your stead.

STREPSIADES

Well, I have a fine, handsome son, but he is not willing to learn. What must I do?

CHORUS

But don't you permit him to be disobedient?

STREPSIADES

Yes, for he is robust in body, and in good health, and is come of the high-plumed dames of Coesyra. I will go for him, and if he be not willing, I will certainly drive him from my house.

Clouds by Aristophanes

YEAR I



WEEK 19

Strepsiades sets off to do as the Chorus has advised. He soon returns with his son and attempts to explain some of the new things he has learned at the shop.

[Enter Strepsiades and Phidippides]

PHIDIPPIDES

What is the matter with you, O father? You are not in your senses, by Olympian Jupiter!

STREPSIADES

See, see, "Olympian Jupiter!" What folly! To think of your believing in Jupiter, as old as you are!

PHIDIPPIDES

Why, pray, did you laugh at this?

STREPSIADES

Because I reflected that you are a child, and have antiquated notions. Yet, however, approach, that you may know more; and I will tell you a thing, by learning which you will be a man. But see that you do not teach this to anyone.

PHIDIPPIDES

Well, what is it?

STREPSIADES

You swore now by Jupiter.

PHIDIPPIDES

I did.

STREPSIADES

Now you see how good a thing is learning? There is no Jupiter, O Phidippides!

PHIDIPPIDES

Who then?

STREPSIADES

Vortex reigns, having expelled Jupiter.

PHIDIPPIDES

Bah! Why do you talk foolishly?

STREPSIADES

Be assured that it is so.

PHIDIPPIDES

Who says this?

STREPSIADES

Socrates the Melian, and Chaerephon, who knows the footmarks of fleas.

PHIDIPPIDES

Have you arrived at such a pitch of frenzy that you believe madmen?

STREPSIADES

Speak words of good omen, and say nothing bad of clever men and wise; of whom, through frugality, none ever shaved or anointed himself, or went to a bath to wash himself; while you squander my property in bathing, as if I were already dead. But go as quickly as possible and learn instead of me.

PHIDIPPIDES

What good could anyone learn from them?

STREPSIADES

What, really? Whatever wisdom there is among men. And you will know yourself, how ignorant and stupid you are. But wait for me here a short time.

[Runs off]

PHIDIPPIDES

Ah me! What shall I do, my father being crazed? Shall I bring him into court and convict him of lunacy, or shall I give information of his madness to the coffin-makers?

[Strepsiades returns leading Socrates]

STREPSIADES

Come hither, come hither O Socrates! Come forth, for I bring to you this son of mine, having persuaded him against his will. Teach him. He is clever by nature. Especially, see that he learns those two causes; the better, whatever it may be; and the worse, which, by maintaining what is unjust, overturns the better. If not both, at any rate the unjust one by all means.

Clouds by Aristophanes

YEAR I



WEEK 19

SOCRATES

He shall learn it himself from the two causes in person.

[Exit Socrates and Strepsiades, enter the two causes]

Now Phidippides witnesses a debate between Just Cause and Unjust Cause.

JUST CAUSE

Come hither! Show yourself to the spectators, although being audacious.

UNJUST CAUSE

Go whither you please; for I shall conquer you, if I speak before a crowd.

JUST CAUSE

You destroy me? Who are you?

UNJUST CAUSE

A cause.

JUST CAUSE

Ay, the worse cause.

UNJUST CAUSE

But I conquer you, who say that you are better than I.

JUST CAUSE

By doing what clever trick?

UNJUST CAUSE

By discovering new contrivances.

JUST CAUSE

And these innovations work because they are favored by silly people.

UNJUST CAUSE

No; they are wise persons.

JUST CAUSE

I will destroy you miserably.

UNJUST CAUSE

Tell me, by doing what?

JUST CAUSE

By speaking what is just.

UNJUST CAUSE

But I will overturn your arguments by contradicting them; for I deny that justice even exists at all.

JUST CAUSE

You deny that it exists?

UNJUST CAUSE

Indeed, if it exists, where is it?

JUST CAUSE

With the gods.

UNJUST CAUSE

How, then, if justice exists, has Jupiter not perished, who was unjust to his own father?

JUST CAUSE

You are very impudent.

UNJUST CAUSE

And you are antiquated.

JUST CAUSE

And because of you, no one of our youths is willing to go to school. But you will be found out some time or other by the Athenians. They will discover the sort of doctrines you teach to the simple-minded.

UNJUST CAUSE

You are shamefully squalid.

JUST CAUSE

And you are prosperous.

UNJUST CAUSE

You shan't teach this youth, you old dotard.

JUST CAUSE

I must, if he is to be saved, and learn not merely to practise loquacity.

UNJUST CAUSE

(to Phidippides) Come hither, and leave him to rave.

JUST CAUSE

You shall howl, if you lay your hand on him.

At this point the Chorus appears and intervenes, asking each cause to describe how, exactly it would teach a youth. What we are seeing is a clever way in which Aristophanes can contrast what he sees as the new trends in Athenian culture and education with the old ways of days past.



CHORUS

Cease from contention and railing. But show to us, you, what you used to teach the men of former times, and you, the new system of education; in order that, having heard you disputing, he may decide and go to the school of one or the other.

JUST CAUSE

I am willing to do so.

UNJUST CAUSE

I also am willing. And, I will let him go first; and then, I will shoot him dead with new words and thoughts. And at last, if he mutter, he shall be destroyed, being stung in his whole face and his two eyes by my maxims, as if by bees.

CHORUS

Now the two, relying on arguments and sententious maxims, will show which of them shall appear superior in argument. For now the whole crisis of wisdom is here laid before them; about which my friends have a very great contest. But do you, who adorned our elders with many virtuous manners, utter the voice in which you rejoice, and declare your nature.

JUST CAUSE

I will, therefore, describe the ancient system of education, how it was ordered, when I flourished in the advocacy of justice, and temperance was the fashion. In the first place, boys were expected to keep silent and to march in good order through the streets to the school. Their master would teach them to learn by rote a song which our fathers transmitted to us. But if any of them were to play the buffoon, he was beaten with many blows. And it behooved the boys, to be modest in dress and voice. Also, they were not allowed, when dining, to snatch from their seniors, or to eat fish, or to giggle.

Certainly these are those principles by which my system of education nurtured the

men who fought at Marathon.

Wherefore, O youth, choose with confidence, me, the better cause, and you will learn to hate the Agora, and to avoid warm baths, and to be ashamed of what is disgraceful, and to be enraged if any one jeer you, and to rise up from seats before your seniors when they approach, and not to behave ill toward your parents, and to do nothing else that is base, because you are to form in your mind an image of Modesty: and not to contradict your father in anything; nor by calling him Iapetus, to reproach him with the ills of age, by which you were reared in your infancy.

UNJUST CAUSE

If you shall believe him in this, O youth, by Bacchus, you will be like the sons of Hippocrates, and they will call you a fool.

CHORUS

O thou that practisest most renowned high-towering wisdom! How sweetly does a modest grace attend your words! Happy, therefore, were they who lived in those days, in the times of former men! In reply, then, to these, O thou that hast a dainty-seeming Muse, it behooveth thee to say something new; since the man has gained renown. And it appears you have need of powerful arguments against him, if you are to conquer the man and not incur laughter.

UNJUST CAUSE

And yet I was choking in my heart, and was longing to confound all his arguments with contrary maxims. I have been called among the deep thinkers the "worse cause" for this reason, that I first contrived how to speak against both law and justice. However, this art is worth more than ten thousand staters, that one should choose the worse cause, and nevertheless be victorious.

But mark how I will confute the system of education on which he relies. He says, in the



first place, that he will not permit you to be washed with warm water. And yet, on what principle does he blame the warm baths?

JUST CAUSE

It is entirely unbecoming and creates weakness.

UNJUST CAUSE

Stop! For immediately I seize and hold you by the waist without escape. Come, tell me, which of the sons of Jupiter do you deem to have been the bravest in soul, and to have undergone most labors?

JUST CAUSE

I consider no man superior to Hercules.

UNJUST CAUSE

Where, pray, did you ever see cold Herculean baths? And yet, who was more valiant than he?

There were some famous baths that were named after Hercules. So this argument is based on that fact. There are some other references to legends below that it may be worthwhile to look up, if you have the time. The basic thrust of the argument is that "great" men of legends did all of the terrible things that Just Cause has been speaking against.

UNJUST CAUSE

You next find fault with their living in the market-place; but I commend it. For if it had been bad, Homer would never have been for representing Nestor as an orator; nor all the other wise men. I will return, then, from thence to the tongue, which this fellow says our youths ought not to exercise, while I maintain they should. And again, he says they ought to be modest: two very great evils. For tell me to whom you have ever seen any good accrue through modesty and confute me by your words.

JUST CAUSE

To many. Peleus, at any rate, received his sword on account of it.

UNJUST CAUSE

A sword? Marry, he got a pretty piece of luck, the poor wretch! While Hyperbolus, he of the lamps, got more than many talents by his villainy, but by Jupiter, no sword! But you are an old dotard.

For (to Phidippides) consider, O youth, all that attaches to modesty, and of how many pleasures you are about to be deprived—of women, of games at cottabus, of dainties, of drinking-bouts, of giggling. And yet, what is life worth to you if you be deprived of these enjoyments?

Unjust now changes over to an argument about the value of his approach just in case you do get caught doing something evil. Here we see Aristophanes making fun of even the entire audience.

UNJUST CAUSE

Though, say that you do go astray and are caught. You are undone, for you are unable to speak. But if you associate with me, indulge your inclination, dance, laugh, and think nothing disgraceful. For if you should happen to be detected as an adulterer, you will make this reply to him, "that you have done him no injury": and then refer him to Jupiter, how even he is overcome by love and women. And yet, how could you, who are a mortal, have greater power than a god?

JUST CAUSE

But what if he should suffer punishment through obeying you? What argument will he be able to state, to prove that he is not a blackguard?

UNJUST CAUSE

And if he be a blackguard, what harm will he suffer?

JUST CAUSE

Nay, what could he ever suffer still greater than this?



UNJUST CAUSE

What then will you say if you be conquered by me in this?

JUST CAUSE

I will be silent: what else can I do?

UNJUST CAUSE

Come, now, tell me; from what class do the advocates come?

JUST CAUSE

From the blackguards.

UNJUST CAUSE

I believe you. What then? From what class do tragedians come?

JUST CAUSE

From the blackguards.

UNJUST CAUSE

You say well. But from what class do the public orators come?

JUST CAUSE

From the blackguards.

UNJUST CAUSE

Then have you perceived that you say nothing to the purpose? And look which class among the audience is the more numerous.

JUST CAUSE

Well now, I'm looking.

UNJUST CAUSE

What, then, do you see?

JUST CAUSE

By the gods, the blackguards to be far more numerous. This fellow, at any rate, I know; and him yonder; and this fellow with the long hair.

UNJUST CAUSE

What, then, will you say?

JUST CAUSE

We are conquered. Ye blackguards, by the gods, receive my cloak, for I surrender to you.

Strepsiades opts to leave Phidippides at the school following this discussion. He returns sometime later, full of hope that his son will soon allow him to escape from his debt problems. He takes Phidippides home listens to his advice and awaits the arrival of

his creditors. Two come, each of which is ridiculed or beaten into retreating, and each of which threatens to take legal action against him. After Strepsiades returns to the interior of his house, the Chorus emerges to impart a final lesson.

CHORUS

What a thing it is to love evil courses! For this old man, having loved them, wishes to withhold the money that he borrowed. And he will certainly meet with something today, which will perhaps cause this sophist to suddenly receive some misfortune, in return for the knaveries he has begun. For I think that he will presently find what has been long boiling up, that his son is skillful to speak opinions opposed to justice, so as to overcome all with whomsoever he holds converse, even if he advance most villainous doctrines; and perhaps, perhaps his father will wish that he were even speechless.

Strepsiades and his son have a disagreement while they are in the house. This leads to the following scene, in which Strepsiades undergoes a change of heart about the entire education he has supplied for his son.

STREPSIADES

(running out of the house pursued by his son) Hollo! Hollo! O neighbors, and kinsfolk, and fellow-tribesmen, defend me, by all means, who am being beaten! Ah me, unhappy man, for my head and jaw! Wretch!

Do you beat your father?

PHIDIPPIDES

Yes, father.

STREPSIADES

You see him owning that he beats me.

PHIDIPPIDES

Certainly.



STREPSIADES

O wretch, and parricide, and house-breaker!

PHIDIPPIDES

Say the same things of me again, and more.
Do you know that I take pleasure in being
much abused?

STREPSIADES

You blackguard!

PHIDIPPIDES

Sprinkle me with roses in abundance.

STREPSIADES

Do you beat your father?

PHIDIPPIDES

And will prove too, by Jupiter! that I beat
you with justice.

STREPSIADES

O thou most rascally! Why, how can it be
just to beat a father?

PHIDIPPIDES

I will demonstrate it, and will overcome you
in argument.

STREPSIADES

Will you overcome me in this?

PHIDIPPIDES

Yea, by much and easily. But choose which
of the two Causes you wish to speak.

STREPSIADES

Of what two Causes?

PHIDIPPIDES

The better, or the worse?

STREPSIADES

Marry, I did get you taught to speak against
justice, by Jupiter, my friend, if you are going
to persuade me of this, that it is just and
honorable for a father to be beaten by his sons!

PHIDIPPIDES

I think I shall certainly persuade you; so
that, when you have heard, not even you
yourself will say anything against it.

STREPSIADES

Well, now, I am willing to hear what you
have to say.

PHIDIPPIDES

I will pass over to that part of
my discourse where you interrupted me; and
first I will ask you this: Did you beat me when
I was a boy?

STREPSIADES

I did, through good-will and concern for
you.

PHIDIPPIDES

Pray tell me, is it not just that I also should
be well inclined toward you in the same way,
and beat you, since this is to be well inclined-to
give a beating? For why ought your body to be
exempt from blows and mine not? And yet I
too was born free. The boys weep, and do you
not think it is right that a father should weep?
You will say that it is ordained by law that this
should be the lot of boys. But I would reply,
that old men are boys twice over, and that it is
the more reasonable that the old should weep
than the young, inasmuch as it is less just that
they should err.

STREPSIADES

It is nowhere ordained by law that a father
should suffer this.

PHIDIPPIDES

Was it not then a man like you and me, who
first proposed this law, and by speaking
persuaded the ancients? Why then is it less
lawful for me also in turn to propose
henceforth a new law for the sons, that they
should beat their fathers in turn? But as many
blows as we received before the law was made,
we remit: and we concede to them our having
been thrashed without return. Observe the
cocks and these other animals, how they
punish their fathers; and yet, in what do they
differ from us, except that they do not write
decrees?



STREPSIADES

Why then, since you imitate the cocks in all things, do you not both eat dung and sleep on a perch?

PHIDIPPIDES

It is not the same thing, my friend; nor would it appear so to Socrates.

STREPSIADES

Therefore do not beat me; otherwise you will one day blame yourself.

PHIDIPPIDES

Why, how?

STREPSIADES

Since I am justly entitled to chastise you; and you to chastise your son, if you should have one.

PHIDIPPIDES

But if I should not have one, I shall have wept for nothing, and you will die laughing at me.

STREPSIADES

To me, indeed, O comrades, he seems to speak justly; and I think we ought to concede to them what is fitting. For it is proper that we should weep, if we do not act justly.

PHIDIPPIDES

Consider still another maxim.

STREPSIADES

No; for I shall perish if I do.

PHIDIPPIDES

And yet perhaps you will not be vexed at suffering what you now suffer.

STREPSIADES

How, pray? For inform me what good you will do me by this.

PHIDIPPIDES

I will beat my mother, just as I have you.

STREPSIADES

What do you say? What do you say? This other, again, is a greater wickedness.

PHIDIPPIDES

But what if, having the worst Cause, I shall conquer you in arguing, proving that it is right to beat one's mother?

STREPSIADES

Most assuredly, if you do this, nothing will hinder you from casting yourself and your Worse Cause into the pit along with Socrates. These evils have I suffered through you, O Clouds! Having entrusted all my affairs to you.

CHORUS

Nay, rather, you are yourself the cause of these things, having turned yourself to wicked courses.

STREPSIADES

Why, pray, did you not tell me this, then, but excited with hopes a rustic and aged man?

CHORUS

We always do this to him whom we perceive to be a lover of wicked courses, until we precipitate him into misfortune, so that he may learn to fear the gods.

STREPSIADES

Ah me! it is severe, O Clouds! But it is just; for I ought not to have withheld the money which I borrowed. Now, therefore, come with me, my dearest son, that you may destroy the blackguard Chaerephon and Socrates, who deceived you and me.

PHIDIPPIDES

I will not injure my teachers.

STREPSIADES

Yes, yes, reverence Paternal Jove.

PHIDIPPIDES

"Paternal Jove" quoth'a! How antiquated you are! Why, is there any Jove?

STREPSIADES

There is.

PHIDIPPIDES

There is not, no; for Vortex reigns having expelled Jupiter.



STREPSIADES

He has not expelled him; but I fancied this, on account of this Vortex here. Ah me, unhappy man! When I even took you who are of earthenware for a god.

PHIDIPPIDES

Here rave and babble to yourself.

[Exit Phidippides]

STREPSIADES

Ah me, what madness! How mad, then, I was when I ejected the gods on account of Socrates! But O dear Hermes, by no means be wroth with me, nor destroy me; but pardon me, since I have gone crazy through prating. And become my adviser, whether I shall bring an action and prosecute them, or whatever you think. You advise me rightly, not permitting me to get up a lawsuit, but as soon as possible to set fire to the house of the prating fellows. Come hither, come hither, Xanthias! Come forth with a ladder and with a mattock and then mount upon the thinking-shop and dig down the roof, if you love your master, until you tumble the house upon them.

[Xanthias mounts upon the roof]

But let someone bring me a lighted torch and I'll make some of them this day suffer punishment, even if they be ever so much impostors.

1ST DISCIPLE

(from within) Hollo! Hollo!

STREPSIADES

It is your business, O torch, to send forth abundant flame.

[Mounts upon the roof]

1ST DISCIPLE

What are you doing, fellow?

STREPSIADES

What am I doing? Why, what else, than chopping logic with the beams of your house?

[Sets the house on fire]

2ND DISCIPLE

(from within) You will destroy us! You will destroy us!

STREPSIADES

For I also wish this very thing; unless my mattock deceive my hopes, or I should somehow fall first and break my neck.

SOCRATES

(from within). Hollo you! What are you doing, pray, you fellow on the roof?

STREPSIADES

I am walking on air, and speculating about the sun.

SOCRATES

Ah me, unhappy! I shall be suffocated, wretched man!

STREPSIADES

For what has come into your heads that you acted insolently toward the gods, and pried into the seat of the moon? Chase, pelt, smite them, for many reasons, but especially because you know that they offended against the gods!

[The thinking shop is burned down]

CHORUS

Lead the way out; for we have sufficiently acted as chorus for today.

[All Exit]