

# Pythagorean Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*\*

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**ABSTRACT** I argue that *Pythagorikos Sôkratês* is a significant image in constructing Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. My aim in this paper is to investigate on how Socrates is portrayed in the fictional world by Aristophanes, and what the playwright intended through such a depiction. When we pay particular attention to the Pythagorean aspects, we can understand more sufficiently the complex image of the dramatic character depicted in the play.

The φροντιστήριον (*Phrontistêrion*, Thinkery) of Socrates has notable characteristics that allude to Pythagoreanism, which include: a substantialized school in which the members dwell together, the exclusive attitude towards outsiders, the prohibition of spreading secrets out of the community, the coexistence of passion for natural science alongside the practice of a secret ritual, their use of terminologies, and a charismatic leader followed by his disciples.

**Keywords** *Pythagorikos Sôkratês*, Aristophanes, *Clouds*, *Phrontistêrion*, New Learning, Strangeness

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## 1. Introduction: Socrates on Stage

‘Extraordinary’ (ἄτοπος) is the adjective for Socrates in the eyes of many Athenians in the late fifth century BCE.<sup>1</sup> Socrates is depicted as distinct from ordinary Athenians in terms of his way of life, in the major works on Socrates, which were written by Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Plato.<sup>2</sup> In comic stages, Socrates often appears as the main target of mockery.<sup>3</sup> The comic playwrights of Athens put on stage and ridicule the contemporary intellectuals, among whom Socrates is the superstar as the butt of their satires.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 In Greek comedy, the strangeness of Socrates is most clearly revealed in *Clouds*. In Plato, Socrates' extraordinariness is mentioned by other characters, and even Socrates himself sometimes acknowledges that he possesses distinguishing characteristics from the Athenians of his time. Cf. *The Apology of Socrates, Symposium, and Theaetetus*. In Xenophon, though not as much as in the previous two authors, Socrates has distinctive features that set him apart from the ordinary Athenians.
  - 2 We know the names of seven authors who wrote *Sokratikoi logoi* in the fourth century, and among them, Xenophon and Plato are the most widely read authors. The works of other authors, such as Antisthenes, Phaedo, Euclides, Aristippus, and Aeschines, have been partially transmitted. In *Poetics* 1447b11, Aristotle mentions the *Sokratikoi logoi* as an established literary genre, and in his lost dialogue *On poets* (fr. 3, Ross), Alexamenos of Teos is named as the founder of this genre. Cf. Kahn 1996: 1. On the other hand, Aristophanes deals with Socrates in a different way in his work. For the treatment of Socrates in comedy, see footnote 3 in this paper.
  - 3 In 423, the same year that *Clouds* was performed, Ameipsias wrote *Konnos* (fr. 7-11 Kassel-Austin), in which Socrates also appears as an object of satire. In Eupolis' fragment (fr. 386 Kassel-Austin), Socrates is blamed by a character as someone who only engages in idle talk. Cf. Konstan 2011: 76.
  - 4 Cf. Dover 1968: xl. We must ask a more fundamental question. Why did Aristophanes single out Socrates? Konstan 2011: 87 points out that Aristophanes was able to use Athenian audiences' recognition of the historical Socrates who was a fellow-citizen, not a foreign visitor from other regions. Socrates, as it were, is a local celebrity. The most significant point raised by Konstan, however, is that Socrates was a public nuisance

Among the comic dramatists, Aristophanes is most renowned for satirizing Socrates, and *Clouds* is the only work that features Socrates as the main target.<sup>5</sup> In the play, Socrates sometimes appears as a natural philosopher studying astronomy (*Nu.*, 194, 201) and geometry (202), and at other times he is depicted as a teacher of rhetoric who can turn the weaker argument into the stronger argument (112-118). He is even described as a religious priest who performs a secret ritual (254-274). It is generally assumed that in order to criticize the intellectuals of the time Aristophanes presents Socrates as a scapegoat.<sup>6</sup> According to the assumption, Socrates is a composite character based on several historical figures. I generally agree with the interpretation that Aristophanes presents his Socrates as the mixed figure in *Clouds*, and certainly seems to have considered Socrates to be the most suitable candidate to perform such a role.

Among the studies on the Socrates in *Clouds*, some researchers point out that Pythagorean images are found in the play.<sup>7</sup> I believe that special attention should be given to the Pythagorean aspect. I suggest that there are many notable Pythagorean aspects in *Clouds*, and when we pay parti-

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of the time. If we can trust the historicity of the texts given to us today, Socrates was not just a simple intellectual, but a rather bothersome presence who fraternized with the ephebes of wealthy and socially influential families, and who challenged people's beliefs, especially those related to the norms of Greek tradition. In other words, he was considered to be 'the Pioneer of New Learning' to Athenian society in the late fifth century.

5 In addition to *Clouds* (and *Birds*), Aristophanes wrote a damning play called *Banqueteers*, which was performed in 427 but is now lost. In the play, the *didaskalos* is not designated but identified with Socrates. The comedy compared the traditional with the new and discussed the corrupt education of the time. Cf. Capra 2017: 64.

6 Dover 1968: xxxv-xl.

7 Cf. Dover 1968: xli, 125; Rashed 2009: 107; Demand 1982.

cular attention to them, we can obtain a better understanding of Socrates in the play. For example, I suggest that we can discover Pythagorean implications in the beginning scene of the play, where Strepsiades decides to visit Socrates, and where he enters the φροντιστήριον (*Phrontistêrion*, Thinkery) and has his first conversation with Socrates. Moreover, we have seldom found such a catastrophic ending scene, ‘setting fire to the φροντιστήριον,’ elsewhere in Greek drama. Therefore, we need to examine in what context this atypical scene was created. In the latter part of this paper, I suggest that this scene is an implication of the disastrous ‘Great Fire,’ which is said that the Pythagorean community suffered to have an end of their community in Croton. We can think, then, that the beginning and ending part are focused on Pythagorean aspects, and this ‘sandwich constructure’ allows the audience to remind of Pythagorean images at first, and to reinforce them once again.

I attempt to analyze the beginning scene and the final scene of *Clouds* in which we can find Pythagorean images through lexical analysis, by which specific terms related to Pythagoreanism such as ἀτραπός (short cut), δαίμων (*daimôn*), σώζεσθαι (to save), and αὐτός (self) will be given particular attention. I also attempt to clarify that several notable characteristics of Socrates and his φροντιστήριον in the play can be connected to Pythagoreanism, such as the exclusivity of the φροντιστήριον (140, 198–199), the substantialized school in which their members dwell together (95), the disciplines referred by the members to as secrets (143), Socrates as the charismatic leader (218–219) and the religious ritual performed by Socrates for the initiate (254–274). In addition to lexical analysis, I will attempt intertextual analysis by examining several texts dealing with Pythagoreanism to figure out the images of the community vaguely

portrayed in *Clouds*. In this regard, Isocrates' *Busiris* is a meaningful source, written around the time of the performance and revision of the play, in which we can find satirical depiction of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans.

In this paper, I argue that *Pythagorikos Sókratês* is a significant image in constructing Aristophanes' Socrates in *Clouds*. Although the aim of this paper is not to identify an historical view of Socrates, I hope that this paper provides an interpretation of how this problematic figure was understood in Athenian society at the time.

## 2. One Extraordinary Shortcut by *Daimôn*

I will argue that we can find implications of Pythagoreanism in the beginning part of *Clouds*. Ἄτραπός (short cut) and δαιμονίως (by *daimôn*) are the words that I pay particular attention to. In order to develop my argument convincingly, I will examine a passage from Plato's *Phaedo*. *Clouds* begins with the lament of Strepsiades, whose son, Pheidippides, has driven his family into debt due to his obsession with horses. Ultimately, Strepsiades man was embroiled in a lawsuit which stands to ruin him, but the elderly man claims to have found one extraordinary shortcut by a *daimôn* that will save him. "Then, I have now, thinking of way all night long, found one extraordinary monstrous shortcut by *daimôn*, if I will persuade this boy with it, I shall be saved" (75-77).<sup>8</sup> Ostensibly, the

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8 νῦν οὖν ὅλην τὴν νύκτα φροντίζων ὁδοῦ  
μίαν ἤβρον ἀτραπὸν δαιμονίως ὑπερφυᾶ,  
ἦν ἦν ἀναπέισω τουτονί, σωθήσομαι.

shortcut (ἀτραπός) suggested is to send his son to Socrates' φροντιστήριον to learn the art of rhetoric and to help him win the lawsuit. However, why the shortcut is necessary, should be considered. The old man was thinking all night of a way (ὁδός), but what he found was a shortcut (ἀτραπός). Besides this unexpected word, more or less subtle lines are being spoken sequentially; δαιμονίως (by *daimôn*) ὑπερφυᾶ (monstrous).

Ἀτραπός, compared with a somewhat common word ὁδός, is relatively uncommon to find in Greek literature. At first glance, it seems safe to read ἀτραπὸν in 76 as 'way' or 'method'. However, we would overlook the diligence of pondering Aristophanes' intention of employing different words with a single line of difference.<sup>9</sup> A possibly related usage of ἀτραπός is found in Plato's *Phaedo*. In this dialogue, which has an air of Pythagoreanism, there is a passage in which Socrates tells Simmias and Cebes about a hypothetical conversation between 'true philosophers'. According to Socrates, they would suggest a shortcut for their ultimate salvation.<sup>10</sup>

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So now I am thinking all night of a way,  
and I've found one monstrous short cut by *daimôn*,  
with which if I can persuade this boy, I shall be saved.

I follow Dover's edition of Greek text in this paper. All translations are my own.

- 9 We find ἀτραπός in *Frogs* 123, in which Heracles suggests to Dionysus who is trying to go down to Hades, a quicker shortcut through mortar (ἀτραπός ξύντομος τετριμμένη ἢ διὰ θυνείας), and Dionysus replies that he will not eat the hemlock. In that line, ἀτραπός means a very fast path to death.
- 10 "So inevitably, true philosophers will have some thoughts from all of these things and will say something like this to each other. 'It seems that there is a shortcut (ἀτραπός) that leads us with reason to our inquiry. As long as we have a body, and when our soul comes into contact with it and becomes contaminated, we will never be able to obtain what we desire, that is, the truth. ... In fact, if we are willing to obtain true knowledge, all of these things should show us that we need to separate ourselves from our bodies

There is a possibility that we suggest 'true philosophers' as Pythagoreans.<sup>11</sup> In the virtual conversation of the philosophers, death means a shortcut which leads them towards the pursuit for purity of the soul. When they reach this path, pure souls, like people who are liberated from prison, come to dwell on the pure abode above the earth. Moreover, those who have been sufficiently purified by philosophy will reach much more beautiful dwelling without having their bodies. (*Phd.*, 114b-c) The message conveyed by Socrates is that death, as a shortcut, is the intermediate goal towards salvation for Pythagoreans. In this regard, we can consider that the ἀτραπός is closely related to Pythagorean salvation.

Ἀτραπός is also found in the verses of Empedocles, a philosopher influenced by Pythagoreanism, as reported by Diogenes Laertius. Here, the meaning of the shortcut is no different from ἀτραπός in Pythagoreanism. After all, ἀτραπός is the way of salvation in the context of Pythagoreanism.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, Aristophanes' intention is not to depict Strepsiades as a Pythagorean. Rather, the dramatist, directing the protagonist to narrate the background of the play, induces sensible

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and look at them as they are." (*Phd.*, 66b-e)

- 11 cf. Rashed 2009: 116. Rashed, analyzing the Pythagorean Socrates in various texts, translates the passage 66b2-7 and adds his comment as follows. "Now there is a risk that we may be led astray in our inquiry by, as it were, some sort of track, with the argument that 'as long as we possess a body, and our soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never adequately gain what we desire - and that, we say, is truth etc.'" "Whom would Plato regard as likely to put forward a dangerous line of argument like this? The fact that the word *atrapos* is used to describe it is a clear enough indication: he is talking about the Pythagoreans."
- 12 "When I (Empedocles) go into their prosperous city, I am revered like god by both men and women. Many people follow me, asking me where they can find a shortcut (ἀτραπός) to gain benefits. Some seek advice, while others have suffered greatly and ask for certain words to heal all kinds of diseases." (Diog. Laert. 8.62; DK31B112).

audiences to recall a specific notion through the use of specific words in 75-7.

Another weird word following ἀτραπός in the same line, δαιμονίως, further draws the audience's attention more to those three lines. δαιμονίως is usually translated as 'marvelously' or 'miraculously', and it may seem to be understood in the same way in 76 as well. However, considering the use of ἀτραπός, it is plausible that δαιμονίως is chosen by Aristophanes to lead the audience to get wind of Pythagoreanism.<sup>13</sup> Pythagoreans showed great interest in the existence of δαίμων and believed that δαίμων gave them orders in the form of voices.<sup>14</sup> This Pythagorean belief about δαίμων was passed down to the members of their community as one of the guidelines of *bios pythagorikos*, and δαίμων served for them as the life guide, providing instructions on how to live.

At this point, it is necessary to mention *Phaedo* again. In the final part of the dialogue, Socrates tells an eschatological myth of souls, in which δαίμων performs the role of guiding dead man's soul, and the story is clearly unfamiliar to Greeks belonging to the Olympian tradition.<sup>15</sup>

13 Burkert 1985: 181. In Greek culture, the Pythagorean belief of δαίμων seems quite different from that of ordinary Greeks. While ordinary Greeks were terrified of meeting such mysterious being as they believed that it would bring destruction to humans, Pythagoreans considered that experience normal and even found it surprising if someone claimed to have never seen a δαίμων. Cf. Arist. *Fr.* 193 Rose.

14 Marciano 2014: 141. Cf. *The Apology of Socrates* 31d. In his apology, Socrates tells that a sort of voice has come to him since his childhood, which holds him back when he is going to do something such as the engagement of politics.

15 "There is a story. When each person dies, their δαίμων, which was chosen while they were alive, is assigned the task of leading them to a certain place. The people gathered there are judged and must go to Hades. This is executed together with the guide who has been designated to take the person from the mortal realm to the realm of the dead." (*Phd.*, 107d-e) Socrates says that he heard this story from somewhere. The



Considering the Pythagorean belief in regards to δαίμων, and taking into account the assumption that Aristophanes is implicitly referring to Pythagoreans in 75–7, it seems inappropriate to translate δαίμονιως simply as ‘miraculously.’ Instead, it would be proper to understand it as ‘by *daimôn*.’ I suggest that Aristophanes chose his words carefully in Strepsiades’ lines at the beginning of the play to bring the audience’s attention to Pythagorean air.<sup>16,17</sup>

### 3. The Exclusivity of the *Phrontistêrion* and Their Mysterious Learning

Strepsiades wakes up sleeping Pheidippides and introduces the φροντιστήριον in order to send him to Socrates. “ψυχῶν σοφῶν τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ

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depiction of δαίμων as the guide leads readers to assume that the source of this story is Pythagoreans.

- 16 Σωθήσομαι (I shall be saved) in 77 may scent *Clouds* with the Pythagorean air to further support this suggestion. Salvation is said to be the ultimate goal among Pythagoreans. This religious concept is seldom found elsewhere in the Greek culture. Therefore, a sensible audience, looking at Strepsiades who is in a desperate situation and claims to have found an idea of following a monstrous shortcut led by a *daimôn* toward salvation, might sense the intention of Aristophanes who is lampooning Pythagoreanism implicatively by parodying their terms. Furthermore, the astute audience may even anticipate the ultimate outcome of such a shortcut. Cf. Rashed 2009: 109–110.
- 17 One of the referees pointed out that it is difficult to say that the connection between two words ἀτραπός, δαίμονιως and Pythagoreanism has been sufficiently argued in this chapter. I understand that the comment fundamentally questions whether these words play a unique role in Pythagoreanism. Although I acknowledge the validity of this criticism, I feel regretful that I am unable to provide a satisfactory answer in this paper. I will strive to discover the unique meanings that ἀτραπός and δαίμων have in Pythagorean belief through the following research.

φροντιστήριον” (That is the *Phrontistêrion* for clever souls, 94). Audiences would immediately notice Aristophanes’ new coinage.<sup>18</sup> Goldberg pays attention to the suffix -τήριον in the φροντιστήριον.<sup>19</sup> According to his analysis, Aristophanes used -τήριον instead of -ειον, which is commonly used for place nouns, to create a coinage with public or religious characteristics, so that the φροντιστήριον would seem a ‘specialized’ and ‘dignified’ place, similar to βουλευτήριον (council-chamber), δεσμωτήριον (prison), and δικαιοτήριον (place of judgement). The specialization and dignity which is granted, of course, would be ironic, with a sense of mockery, to create humor for the audience.

Strepsiades tries to persuade Pheidippides to go to the φροντιστήριον, only to be refused. So the old man decides to go to the φροντιστήριον himself. As he knocks on the door of the school, someone from inside comes out and gets angry at Strepsiades for knocking so hard that he has miscarried what he had discovered. Strepsiades asks what it means, but the student firmly refuses. “ἀλλ’ οὐ θέμις πλὴν τοῖς μαθηταῖσιν λέγειν” (No, it is not lawful to say except to the students, 140). Through the dialogue, we learn that those who dwell together in Socrates’ φροντιστήριον are called μαθηταί (students). The word implies the existence of their teacher

18 They, reminded of several similar words, would likely understand that the φροντιστήριον (*phrontistêrion*) is a neologism formed by combining φροντικός (*phrontis*) and -τήριον (*-têrion*), and may try to speculate on the dramatist’s intention of creating that word. Some might think of δικαστήριον (*dikastêrion*), others of τελεστήριον (*telestêrion*), and still others might recall μυστήριον (*mystêrion*), which is normally used in plural form as μυστήρια (*mysteria*). It would not be that difficult for the average Athenian to recollect all of these words at once. Perhaps, Aristophanes wished that all of these places would enter the mind of the audience, in order that they might feel that the traditions on which their society stands are under threat from that strange place and its residents.

19 Goldberg 1976: 255.

and provides a reason to call them a school, along with the fact they dwell together in the φροντιστήριον. Μαθητής (student) is considered a significant word that can be read as an implied reference to Pythagoreans rather than any other group composed of a teacher and his students, because we never heard about any school or academic community living together other than Pythagoreans.<sup>20</sup>

Strepsiades claims that he has come to the φροντιστήριον as μαθητής (142), and asks what he has miscarried, which is lawful only to talk to the students. In response, the student approves, but warns against spreading the word. “νομίσαι δὲ ταῦτα χρὴ μυστήρια” (You must regard these things as sacred mysteries, 143). The reason why Strepsiades' request to listen to what the student has miscarried is that the content is not lawful to be spoken to anyone other than their members. Although he becomes a student and hears the thing, it should be considered a sacred secret that should not be spread outside. The statement of the μαθητής clearly distinguishes between the inside and outside of the φροντιστήριον,<sup>21</sup> and the membership of μαθητής plays the role of the only access card that passes the barricade. After all, lines 140 and 143 clearly demonstrate the exclusivity of the φροντιστήριον and the cohesion among its members.

Meanwhile, lines 140–143 remind me of the Pythagoreans, along with the scene of the initiation ceremony for Strepsiades as a new disciple in 258ff. Someone who wished to enter the Pythagorean community, had to

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20 Cf. Diog. Laert, 8.10. “His disciples owned the property collectively. For five years, the disciples kept silent and only listened to their master's lectures, never seeing Pythagoras until they were approved.”

21 Marianetti 1993: 11.

pass various tests and selection processes.<sup>22</sup> These secrets are represented by the term *akousmata*,<sup>23</sup> and ‘those things’ seem to have been mainly related to the issue of how to live. Marciano points out that these were handed down to the members of the community as rules for *bios pythagorikos*.<sup>24</sup>

Strepsiades having entered the *φροντιστήριον* witnesses a surprising sight. According to the student, some of Socrates’ disciples are looking at the ground to investigate what is under the earth; others are bending their backs to reveal what is beneath Tartarus. It is said that their buttocks are facing the sky because they themselves are studying astronomy (αὐτός καθ’ αὐτὸν ἀστρονομεῖν διδάσκεται, 194). This passage shows the nature of the studies performed in the *φροντιστήριον*, and the ridiculousness of their

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22 Iambl. *VP* 71f. Cf. Riedweg 2013: 52.

23 *Akousmata*, literally meaning ‘things heard’, can be translated as ‘oral saying.’ They consist of guide for life which is believed that Pythagoras would say to his pupils.

24 Marciano 2014: 137ff. In the following introduction of the *φροντιστήριον*, the student tells the mysteries to Strepsiades. However, these secrets when revealed raise doubts about whether they can truly be treated as sacred mysteries. That is because these things include absurd questions and serious answers with experimental explanations of them provided by Socrates. They include questions such as how many of its own feet a flea can jump on their own legs (145–152), and whether grasshoppers hum through their mouths or their anuses (157–164). Socrates’ serious experimentation for explaining absurd questions is all considered objects of ridicule to ordinary Athenians. However, even in the explanation on ‘the studies’ conducted in the *φροντιστήριον*, we can find parts that imply members of the *φροντιστήριον* are Pythagoreans. In 149–151, the student explains how Socrates measured how high fleas can jump on their own height. According to him, they melt wax and dip the flea’s legs into it, then they remove the shoes that make the flea feel heavy once the wax has cooled down, and then they measure the distance (ἀνεμέτρει τὸ χωρίον). In this explanation about flea’s jump, which is ridiculously specific, Taylor points out that *χωρίον* is a specialized terminology used in Pythagorean geometry. According to this suggestion, *χωρίον* in everyday language means ‘distance’, while in geometry it means ‘area’ or ‘rectangle’ (Taylor 1911: 151; *Meno* 82b–d, 83a, 87a).

activity. The words in 194 are weird to ordinary people, who are likely to find absurd and question. In this line, Aristophanes seems to have adopted a strategy of producing a sense of ridiculousness by parodying their terminologies, αὐτός and ἀστρονομεῖν (to study astronomy). Those names of the studies, so-called natural philosophies, are mentioned a few lines later with the specific names of astronomy (201) and geometry (202).<sup>25</sup> Strepsiades wants to talk to other members in the φροντιστήριον, but the student stops him, saying that they should not stay in the open air for long. This also highlights the insularity of the school. Strepsiades looks at some things in the φροντιστήριον and asks what they are, and listens to the answer that one is astronomy and the other is geometry (200–203). I suggest that Aristophanes is emphasizing the ridiculousness of the activities of the Socratic circle by repeating their terms, which insinuates the Pythagoreans.

#### 4. Charismatic *Autos*

During conversation, Strepsiades found someone hanging in the sky

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25 In Diogenes Laertius, we find a record of Pythagoras the Geometrian: “Although Moirist discovered the basic principles of geometry, it is said that Pythagoras was the one who led it to its pinnacle” (Diog. Laert. 8, 11). “It is said that he spent most of his time studying the theoretical form of geometry” (Diog. Laert. 8.12). Such descriptions of historical figures should be treated with caution. In the quotation, however, the expression such as “it is said” and “he was said” is significant because it implies that those people at the time were likely to believe that Pythagoras was such a man. Diodorus also tells that Pythagoras learned geometry from the Egyptians (Diog. Laert. 10, 10). Cf. Moore 2020: 71.

and asks who he is.<sup>26</sup> Instead of answering “Σωκράτης (Socrates)” at once, the student answers “αὐτός (Himself).” However, since Strepsiades, still being an outsider, does not understand what “αὐτός” means, he asks, “τίς αὐτός; (Himself who?)” Only then does the student say “Σωκράτης.” In this trivial looking, but humorous conversation with tetrachotomy, Aristophanes is using the relatively ordinary word of αὐτός, through which he designs the miscommunication between the outsider of the φροντιστήριον, or ordinary person, and the insider of the group. However, considering that the student refers to Socrates as his master, and recalling the peculiar expression “αὐτός καθ’ αὐτόν ἀστρονομεῖν διδάσκειται” in 194, we can think that Aristophanes put a Pythagorean implication beyond that humor by the miscommunication.

Αὐτός is a representative expression that Pythagoreans used in a different sense from ordinary people. It is relatively well known that Pythagoreans did not mention the name of their master when calling him. In other words, ‘Pythagoras’ was an unnameable name, and among his followers, Pythagoras was called ‘αὐτός’ or ‘ὁ ἀνὴρ (the man)’ which indicates the status of the leader in the Pythagorean community.<sup>27</sup> This also suggests how strange ordinary people would have perceived such a title. In my opinion, this short passage from *Clouds* shows the overlap between

26 μα. αὐτός.

στ. τίς αὐτός;

μα. Σωκράτης.

στ. ὦ Σώκρατες.

Student: He himself.

Strepsiades: Himself who?

Student: Socrates.

Strepsiades: Ὁ Σωκράτης. (219)

27 Diog. Laert. 8, 46. Cf. Iambl. VP 46; Cornelli 2013: 71–72.

the φροντιστήριον and Pythagoreanism, as the ordinary word αὐτός is used with a unique meaning. Here, it shows a case where communication between their community and outsiders becomes difficult, imprinting the image of a charismatic leader and the otherness of the group from the outside.

In 223,<sup>28</sup> the ordinary audience would likely throw a mocking gaze at the man who is not in the place where he should be. However, the author portrays Socrates as someone who is beyond by giving him more than just an ordinary manner of speaking. Except for *Clouds*, there are no cases in Greek drama where a human character appears in the air and speaks. Naturally, the sky is not a place for humans, but only for gods. Therefore, Socrates' dialogue towards Strepsiades is enough to give the impression that he considers himself a god. The poetic expression ἐφήμερος (living but a day), which denotes a solemn atmosphere, is used in the scene where Socrates in the air calls the earthly Strepsiades as if a god is calling a lower human.

The author is directing Socrates to occupy the position of a god and speak in the language of a god, which can be considered as a device of transformation. The gaze of the audience, which is initially mocking, can turn into a gaze of blasphemy. Thus, we witness a scene where Socrates, the instructor of the φροντιστήριον, the exclusive and closed community, is deified.

This also provides another opportunity to associate Socrates and his

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28 Στ. ὦ Σωκρατιδιον.

Σω. τί με καλεῖς, ὦ 'φήμερε;

Student: My Socrates,

Socrates: Why are you calling me, ephemeral creature? (223-4)

φροντιστήριον with Pythagoreanism. Pythagoras was not a figure who received respect from his followers as a mere teacher. Among the surviving remarks about him, there are frequent statements that show that Pythagoras was awe-inspiring to his followers and even had a divine status. According to Aristotle's fragments, Pythagoras was called *Apollōn Hyperboreios* by the people of Croton, and it is said that Pythagoras appeared in two places at once, being witnessed by many people in both Metapontum and Croton at the same time.<sup>29</sup>

## 5. Socrates' Double Role: Scientist and Religious Priest

In 239–248, Strepsiades pleads with Socrates to teach him how to speak (λέγειν), swearing an oath to the gods (τοὺς θεοὺς). However, Socrates responds by saying that the gods have no influence among them (θεοὶ ἡμῖν νόμισμ' οὐκ ἔστι). The two have the following conversation, which Socrates begins, “Do you really want to know clearly about the divine, what they rightly are?” “Yes, by Zeus, if it is truly possible.” “And do you want to communicate with our *daimones* the Clouds? (καὶ ξυγγενέσθαι ταῖς Νεφέλαισιν ἐς λόγους, ταῖς ἡμετέραισι δαίμοσιν;)” “Absolutely” (250–253). The expression of “our *daimones*” stands out conspicuously, which emphasizes the bond between ‘us’ and the exclusivity of ‘them.’ Meanwhile, the contrast of *theoi* and *daimones* in Socrates' lines is clearly confirmed, by which we consider him to reject τοὺς θεοὺς and to replace it with ταῖς ἡμετέραισι δαίμοσιν. Based on the

<sup>29</sup> Arist. fr. 191 Rose (Ael. VH 2.26; 4, 17).



examination of the Pythagorean belief of δαίμων, we have a reason to regard the Aristophanic Socrates as a Pythagorean. This interpretation also allows the audience to pay more attention to “ξυγγενέσθαι” (communicate with). The verb is not found elsewhere in Greek literature to take a deity (considered as such) as the direct object. It contains an idea of humans interacting with gods, which is abnormal and dangerous to ordinary Athenians.

Socrates tells Strepsiades, then, to sit on the sacred bed in front of them and to take the wreath. Strepsiades hesitates and begs Socrates not to dedicate himself like Atamas, a character in Sophocles' tragedy. In response, Socrates says, “οὐκ, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα τοὺς τελουμένους ἡμεῖς ποιοῦμεν” (No, we do this to everyone who is being initiated, 258-259). In these lines, we confirm that Aristophanes, using “ἡμεῖς” (we), highlights the exclusivity of the φροντιστήριον again. Τελουμένους (being initiated) clearly shows that Strepsiades is an initiate of the secret ritual, automatically granting the title of τελεστής (priest) to Socrates.

Socrates, placing Strepsiades in front of him, tells him to be silent and prays to Clouds the Goddesses.<sup>30</sup> Here, we find the imperative character of Socrates as τελεστής, a religious priest. Of course, this kind of charisma is questioned due to the ridiculous conversation between Socrates and the old man, as well as the invocation towards the bizarre beings that appear immediately after. Φροντιστής (thinker) in 266 is a crucial word in that it

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30 “The old man should keep a silence and listen to the prayer. O Master King, unmeasurable Aer, who has the earth suspended, and brilliant Aether, and revered goddesses of Clouds sending thunder and lightning, lift yourselves up, appear, O mistresses, to the *phronstistês*” (263-266).

identifies the character of Socrates and the *φροντιστήριον*.<sup>31</sup>

In the early part of the play, the audience received information that the *φροντιστήριον* is the place the drama unfolds, where the members study astronomy and geometry. In the preceding scene of the initiation ritual, Socrates, the master of the school, is depicted as the *τελεστής*. In the invocation scene, this *τελεστής* refers to himself as *φροντιστής*. Thus, it becomes clear that Socrates is both the *φροντιστής* of the *φροντιστήριον* and the *τελεστής* of the *τελεστήριον* (a place for initiation). Now the audience can clearly understand Socrates' double role. He is both a Thinker of natural science and Priest of a secret ritual.

Silence, meanwhile, which Socrates demands of Strepsiades, is one of

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31 In the invocation of Socrates, “βροντησικέραυνοι” (thunder and lightning) is *hapax legomenon*. The scene where Socrates points out to Strepsiades, who has believed that Zeus is the one who sends rain from the sky, that Clouds the Goddesses is the one who sends rain can be seen as a challenge to the traditional beliefs and a threatening scene. At this moment, many Athenian spectators who belong to the Olympian tradition may also experience a sense of discomfort. This is because the control of thunder and lightning is allowed only to one god. Earlier, the audience witnessed the sacrilegious scene of the false priest who introduced ‘new gods’ and tried to replace their traditions. And now, by giving the adjective of Zeus to them, another scene is staged that threatens the existing values, and Socratic subversion reaches its climax. In the eyes of the Athenian audience, the way of life and teachings in the *φροντιστήριον* are very foreign and even threaten the traditional customs that have sustained them. The alien members and their leader, who claim belief in new gods and new sciences, directly collide with the audience who have grown up with and thought the traditional beliefs. In *Clouds*, Socrates, replacing Zeus with the Clouds, attempts to overthrow the Olympian tradition. Among intellectuals who brought the new Learning into Athenian society in the late fifth century, there were sophists and natural philosophers. However, it is difficult to say that those groups had at once the characteristics of studying natural sciences such as geometry and astronomy, and of practicing religious rituals. Another possibility, then, is that Aristophanes posits the Pythagoreans as the members of the *φροντιστήριον*, with the revered Socrates and his disciples dwelling together.

the methods of livelihood that characterize Pythagoreans. New members must promise to remain silent to express their sincere respect for their master. It also represents the vow to keep the secret that should not be leaked to the outside world. Therefore, silence is a way of life that sustains their community. However, it can be seen as an unusual and even repulsive form of life by outsiders, as confirmed through Isocrates' description.

## 6. The Other Philosophy: A Contemporary Depiction of Pythagoreanism

Isocrates' *Busiris*, among the texts remaining today, is the work written closest to the time when *Clouds* was performed.<sup>32</sup> It contains a contemporary evaluation of Pythagoreans.

“He (Pythagoras), having come to Egypt and becoming their pupil, has brought the other philosophy (τὴν τ' ἄλλην φιλοσοφίαν) to the Greeks for the first time, and became distinguished for his practice of sacrifice and ritual from other people. (...) He exceeded other people in fame that all the young men wished to be his pupils, and the older men also wished their children to associate with him rather than caring for their own affairs. We cannot help but believe these things. For recently those who pretend to be his pupils are more respected with awe to keeping a silence rather than the people who have the greatest reputation for their speech.” (*Busiris*, 28–29)

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32 *Busiris* is believed to have been written in the late 390 to 370 BC. Cf. Horky 2013: 90.

These descriptions are fairly similar to what we have encountered in *Clouds*. Strepsiades desires to send his son to the *φροντιστήριον*. Inside, all the disciples (except the pupil introducing Strepsiades) remain silent,<sup>33</sup> studying astronomy and geometry. Pheidippides initially dislikes the Socratic group, but once he joins them, he completely absorbs himself in the thoughts of Socrates. Natural sciences practiced in the *φροντιστήριον* are not necessarily limited to Pythagorean studies, but, at the very least, those subjects represent the New Learning brought from foreign regions such as Egypt. Isocrates attributes this responsibility to Pythagoras in his book. Isocrates' statement explicitly mentions Pythagoras' otherness, and he emphasizes the alienness of the community through repetition.<sup>34</sup> Isocrates may refer to Pythagorean thought as "the other philosophy" because, unlike his Athenian philosophy of rhetoric, his imports such as astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry are different in their essence and purpose.<sup>35</sup>

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33 The silence which the students in the *φροντιστήριον* practice as a precept is connected to Socrates' demand to Strepsiades when he performs his secret initiation ceremony for the old man (εὐφημεῖν χρῆ τὸν πρεσβύτερον καὶ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐπακοῦειν, 263). We find a similar scene in an anecdote of a Pythagorean. On *Pythagorean Symbols*, which is not later than the first century BC, Thymaridas of Tarentum, in his long journey, demands someone silence who greets him in a wish that he would acquire what he desires from the gods. Instead, Thymaridas tells him that he should accept whatever the gods send. (Burkert 1972: 167 n, 10.)

34 Cf. Horky 2013: 92.

35 Cf. footnote 23 in this paper. We can find negative evaluations of Pythagoras even earlier in Heraclitus and Herodotus. Heraclitus reproaches Pythagoras calling him "the chief of swindlers and a trickster" (DK22B 81). The philosopher with a bitter tongue also calls Pythagoras "polymath who creates wisdom and evil trickery" (DK22B129). Herodotus (4.95), meanwhile, calls Pythagoras a sophist and accuses him of deceptive practices. The negative evaluations of Pythagoras as fraudulent did not suddenly appear one day but accumulated over a period of time.

## 7. Setting Fire to the *Phrontistêrion*

In the final scene, Strepsiades becomes engulfed in anger and sets fire to the φροντιστήριον with a torch. Such a disastrous ending scene is difficult to find elsewhere in the plays of Aristophanes, and considering the formula of Greek comedy, this unexpected scene would have been enough to surprise many Athenian audience of that time. I suggest that this ending scene, that is 'setting fire to the φροντιστήριον' implies a powerful image related to Pythagoreanism.<sup>36</sup>

Pythagoras, born in 570 in Samos, escaped from the oppression of Polycrates and migrated to Croton in Italy around 530 BC.<sup>37</sup> During

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<sup>36</sup> Diog. Laert. 8,38; Iamblichus *VP* 35,249–53. Cf. Taylor 1911; Konstan 2011: 82.

<sup>37</sup> There, he established a community, and even after Pythagoras' death in 490, the Pythagorean community maintained its exclusivity through a custom of keeping secrets that should not be spread to the outside. Meanwhile, they exerted significant political influence in Croton at that time, and the records of their successful political activities have been passed down to this day. As soon as Pythagoras arrived in Croton around 530 BC, he secured the trust of the local elites and had a significant influence on the education and overall way of life of Crotonian people. According to Diogenes Laertius, Pythagoras and his disciples were highly regarded for establishing laws among the Italians, and moreover, after Croton expelled Sybaris in 510, Croton seemed to exert a powerful influence in southern Italy. Based on these records, it is plausible that the influence of Pythagoreanism at the time extended beyond Croton to the entire southern Italy, and that the Greeks including the Athenians got wind of words about Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. Those rumors would include the Great Fire, as will be mentioned below, that occurred around 450 BC, at which time the influence of Pythagoreanism is regarded to have come to an end. According to the account of Polybius, "the leading men from each city lost their lives" during this event. Kahn suggests that such an account implies that the organization established by Pythagoras in Croton had extended its membership and influence to the surrounding cities. Indeed, in Greek classical authors such as Plato and Isocrates, we can find sufficient evidence that the Athenians, at least some intellectuals were aware of Pythagoreanism.

the peak of their political influence in the time of Croton, Pythagoreans presented an alternative model of life emphasizing moderation and soundness instead of the existing way of life in the region.<sup>38</sup> However, their prominent elitism, anti-democratic nature, and separation from common people were enough to create resentment among the locals, leading to a popular revolt known as the Cylonian conspiracy. Cylon, who wanted to join the Pythagorean group but was rejected, set fire to Milo's house where the Pythagoreans frequently gathered.<sup>39</sup> Only a few managed to escape from the burning place. As a result, Pythagoreans migrated to mainland Greece.<sup>40</sup> However, we can confirm that Philolaus, a Pythagorean philosopher in the late fifth century, was active in the mainland of Greece, and Archytas, a contemporary of Plato in the early fourth century held a dominant position in Tarentum. This shows that despite the downfall caused by the fire, their influence still persisted in the Magna Graecia for about 150 years. Therefore, the Athenians in 423 BC would have been aware of the history of Pythagoreanism. If this is the case, it is plausible that Aristophanes attempted to play the ending scene of *Clouds* as an overlap with the downfall of the Pythagorean community.<sup>41</sup>

Aristophanes could have depicted the downfall of Socrates in a different way. However, he chose to decorate the end of *Clouds* with a specific image

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38 Cornelli 2013: 63.

39 Aristox. fr. 18 in Iambl. VP 248.

40 Cf. Burkert 1972: 104-105; Horky 2013: 102.

41 A referee pointed out that there is a lack of evidence to prove that the ordinary people in Athens have a negative view of Pythagoreans. However, I do not attempt to speculate on the attitude of the Athenian public towards Pythagoreanism in this paper. Rather, what I argue is that it is more plausible to assume that Aristophanes would have used historical events, such as the Great Fire, as a reminiscent device for the audience.

of φροντιστήριον in fire and Socrates' cries. I believe that the dramatist is showing the urgency of current danger by echoing the past event, which is regarded as the Pythagorean fall.

## 8. Conclusions

We have posited that the images of Socrates overlap with the peculiar aspects found in Pythagoreanism. The φροντιστήριον of Socrates has notable characteristics that allude to Pythagoreanism. These characteristics include: a substantialized school in which the members dwell together,<sup>4243</sup> the exclusive attitude towards outsiders, the prohibition of spreading secrets out of the community, the coexistence of passion for natural science alongside the practice of a secret ritual, their use of terminologies, and a charismatic leader followed by his disciples.

In this paper, my aim is to investigate on how Socrates is portrayed in the fictional world by Aristophanes, and what the playwright intended through such a depiction. I suggest that the Pythagorean images in the

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42 In Porphyry (*VP* 9), Pythagoras established his *didaskaleion* in Samos, where his community discussed the public affairs. Cf. Cornelli 2013: 63–64.

43 A referee commented that, in order to argue for the connection between communal living in the Pythagorean community and mystical learnings, a comparative study with other philosophical schools and mystical teachings of the time is required. I promise to carefully examine relevant materials in order to respond to their suggestions, but for now, I can only provide a brief answer. Concerning communal living, apart from the research activities observed in the Phrontisterion, it seems that the Pythagoreans were the only ones who dwelled together. For example, the members of the school of Isocrates, the first educational institution in Athens, are not told that they lived together.

study of *Clouds* have been underrated when compared to the aspects of other intellectuals. When we pay particular attention to the Pythagorean aspects, we can understand more sufficiently the complex image of the dramatic character depicted in the play.

In *Clouds*, Socrates with the Pythagorean air (and other new Learnings) threatens the place of traditional beliefs that have supported Athenian society. It seems clear that Aristophanes believed that such a threat was not only happening in the world of imagination. The intellectual dramatist would think that if the Athenians leave 'the Socrateses' to swing their arms, they will inevitably face a regrettable catastrophe. Aristophanes is accusing Socrates of being a Pythagorean, along with a natural philosopher and sophist. In short, the Socrateses were those who introduced the New Learning to Athenian society. Aristophanes effectively attacks all of those groups by postulating one Socrates (and his followers in the φροντιστήριον), who is committing sorts of immoral acts that threaten the traditional beliefs of the many Athenians.

It is intriguing to pay attention to the points where Aristophanes planted the Pythagorean implications. According to my analysis, the scenes implying Pythagoreanism in *Clouds* are mostly concentrated in the beginning and ending scenes. I suppose that Aristophanes is hinting at Pythagoreanism to the audience in the 'introductory scene', and reminding them of it once again in the 'setting fire scene'. The reason Strepsiades originally thought of the φροντιστήριον was to send his son there to learn the art of rhetoric from Socrates. However, the scene in which Socrates and his disciples first appear on stage align with Pythagoreanism rather than rhetoric. Additionally, such a destructive ending scene of setting fire to the φροντιστήριον is not



found elsewhere in Attic drama. That extraordinary scene is enough to surprise the ordinary audience. If one has come across the record of the downfall of Pythagoreans due to the arson in Croton, (s)he would think the fire set in the φροντιστήριον to be a reminiscence of Pythagoreanism. I suggest that Aristophanes, the intellectual dramatist, by echoing an incident that is said to have happened in the past, is warning about the current threat which the Athenian people are facing.

In the final scene of the play, Aristophanes clearly hints what virtue the Athenians should have right now through the following dialogue of Strepsiades in anger and regretting his action. "What have you learned that you insult the gods, and spy on the position of the moon? (To Xanthias) Chase after those bastards, boy, throw them, there are many reasons, but especially because they have committed injustice against the gods" (1506-1509). Impiety is the accusation that Aristophanes raises against the extraordinary group, and piety is the virtue that the Athenians should possess, with which they must protect their society.<sup>44</sup>

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44 A referee requested that I deeply consider what Aristophanes intended when associating his Socrates with Pythagoreanism. The questions are as follows: 'Why did Aristophanes attribute various characteristics of Pythagoreanism to Socrates in his *Clouds*?', 'Is the target of the satirist Socrates, Pythagoreans, or both?', 'If so, why did Aristophanes consider them or either of them dangerous?', 'Is the Pythagorean Socrates based on historical evidence or a product of the dramatist's imagination?' These fundamental questions have been on my mind since I started preparing this paper. Unfortunately, I have not yet found any materials that can provide sufficient answers to these questions. Although it is clear that Aristophanes had a critical attitude towards Socrates, it is unclear whether this attitude was due to Socrates' Pythagoreanism or what attitude the playwright had towards Pythagoreanism. I will strive to find answers to these fundamental questions. I am grateful to the reviewer for their excellent insights.

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초록

## 아리스토파네스의 〈구름〉에 등장하는 피타고라스적인 소크라테스

김민수\*

이 글에서 나는 피타고라스적인 면모가 아리스토파네스의 〈구름〉에 등장하는 소크라테스를 이루는 중요한 이미지라고 제안한다. 아리스토파네스에 의해 소크라테스가 어떻게 묘사되는지, 그리고 그러한 묘사를 통해 희극 작가가 의도한 바가 무엇인지에 관한 추정을 시도함으로써, 작품 속 소크라테스의 피타고라스적인 면모에 주목할 때, 우리는 소크라테스라는 복잡한 인물됨을 보다 잘 이해할 수 있을 것이다.

소크라테스의 φροντιστήριον(*Phrontistêrion*)에는 피타고라스주의를 암시하는 중요한 특징이 있다. 이 글에서 제시하는 그 특징들은 다음과 같다. 1) 그 집단의 구성원들이 함께 거주하는 실체화된 학교, 2) 외부인에 대한 배타적인 태도, 3) 공동체 비밀 누설의 금지, 4) 자연학적인 탐구와 비밀의식 집전의 공존, 5) 그들 내부에서 사용되는 전문용어, 6) 제자들에게 의해 추종되는 지도자의 카리스마.

주제어 피타고라스적인 소크라테스, 아리스토파네스, 〈구름〉, 프론티스테리온, 새로운 학문, 이상함

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