Skenè Texts DA - CEMP

Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

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A Feast of Strange Opinions: Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes on the English Renaissance Stage

Edited by Marco Duranti
and Emanuel Stelzer

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Supplement to *SKENÈ. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*
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This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
ISBN 979-12-200-6188-9
ISSN 2464-9295
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
https://textsandstudies.skeneproject.it/index.php/TS
info@skeneproject.it

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CEMP - Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

The series of CEMP volumes offers studies and fully annotated scholarly editions related to the CEMP open-access digital archive. This archive includes texts pertaining to the genres of the paradox, of the paradoxical fiction, and of the problem, which were published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and which are currently unavailable online and/or not open access (https://test-01.dlls.univr.it/teipublisher-cemp/apps/cemp-app/index.html). Our digital archive features diplomatic, semidiplomatic, and modernised editions of selected works, furnished with critical apparatuses and editorial notes, alongside related documentary materials, which, in turn, are relevant to poetic and dramatic texts of the English Renaissance. These texts provide fundamental testimony of the early modern episteme, functioning as a hinge joining widespread forms of the paradoxical discourse in different genres and texts and within the development of sceptical thinking.

The project is part of the Skenè Centre as well as of the Project of Excellence Digital humanities applied to foreign languages and literatures (2018-2022) Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona (https://dh.dlls.univr.it/en/).

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Emanuel Stelzer is a researcher at the University of Verona. He is the author of *Portraits in Early Modern English Drama: Visual Culture, Play-Texts, and Performances* (Routledge, 2019) and of *Shakespeare Among Italian Criminologists and Psychiatrists, 1870s-1920s* (Skenè Texts and Studies, 2021). Together with Silvia Bigliazzi, he has edited the volume *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean:* Romeo and Juliet (Skenè Texts and Studies, 2022). His articles have appeared in journals including *Critical Survey*, *Early Theatre*, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, *English Studies*, *Notes and Queries*, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, and *Skenè: Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*. His main interests are early modern English literature and drama, textual studies, and theatre history. He contributes to the digital projects SENS (Shakespeare's Narrative Sources: Italian Novellas and their European Dissemination) and CEMP (Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England), of which he coordinates the early modern section. His work on William Sampson has earned him the *Huntington Library Quarterly* Centennial Essay Prize; he has also translated into Italian Philip Massinger's *The Picture* (Aracne, 2017) and John Milton's *Comus* (ETS, 2020). He is managing editor of *Skenè: Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies* and contributes to *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

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3. Paradoxical Dialogues

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The Paradox of Poverty. Thomas Randolph's Translation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*

Francesco Morosi

Abstract

This essay aims at comparing and contrasting two instances of the paradox of poverty: the agon of Aristophanes' *Wealth* (the first explicit extant formulation of the paradox), and Thomas Randolph's translation-adaptation of the scene in *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (c. 1625). By so doing, this essay will show the intellectual matrix of the paradoxical defence of poverty: in both scenes, the personification of Poverty is clearly represented as an intellectual. This relates to the intellectual nature of the paradox of poverty, and to its intellectual origin, which will be traced back to Socratic thinking.

Keywords: paradox; poverty; Aristophanes' *Wealth*; Thomas Randolph; translation; early modern English drama

1.

Thomas Randolph's *Πλουτοφθαλμία Πλουτογαμία. A Pleasant Comedy Entituled Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (hereafter, *Hey for Honesty*) is a translation-adaptation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, produced in the early 1620s (most probably right before 1625) by Thomas Randolph, then a fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. *Wealth* was by far Aristophanes' most widespread comedy during the Renaissance: it was the first to appear in a Latin translation, to be put onstage, and to receive full adaptations.[1] Although the cultural and historical reasons for the success of a text throughout the ages prove often elusive, we can be fairly certain that the

[1] On the reception of *Wealth* in early modern England, see Miola 2013, 492-5.

popularity of *Wealth* was at least in part due to its strongly moral stance. The moral problem on which the comedy is based – the relationship between one's behaviour and one's economic status –, as well as the religious problem of the role of the gods in rewarding men's behaviour, exerted a great fascination on modern readers, and looked particularly suitable for adaptations and proverbs. Of course, the theme of poverty, widely discussed throughout the agon of *Wealth*, attracted the readers' attention, and some even quoted Penia's arguments on the usefulness of poverty.[2]

Within such framework, *Hey for Honesty* stands out as one of the most extensive modern reworkings of *Wealth*. The text was not published until 1651, more than a decade after Randolph's death, by "F. J.", that is, Francis Jacques;[3] however, Randolph's authorship is virtually certain for all those scenes (the vast majority of the play) that directly translate Aristophanes' original.[4] Randolph's translation is mostly straight and accurate, but shows clear signs of adaptation to modern times. This is particularly true in the case of personal and political jokes, that needed to be adapted to the early modern English situation. In so doing, Randolph often shows the acumen of a shrewd interpreter, who is able to understand the dynamics of the original text in depth, and act accordingly. Religion, for instance, is one such case: as I intend to show elsewhere, Randolph's frequent attacks against Roman Catholicism are not just meant as sporadic jokes addressed to his modern audience, but are part of a coherent comic and ideological structure, that parallels, and takes the place

[2] Miola 2013, 492. These quotations are hardly ever a full reading of the agon, but a reuse of specific arguments with moralising aims (see especially Pierre de La Primaudaye's *The French Academy*, ch. 34, "On Poverty").

[3] See Smith 2015, 411. Jacques is probably the author of *The Queene of Corsica*, a tragedy published in 1642 (Watson 1974, col. 1746).

[4] The extant version of the play contains references to events and historical characters that certainly follow Randolph's death (e.g. the Civil War, Pope Innocent X, the Irish Rebellion), and must therefore be ascribed to "F. J.". However, close readings of the play have shown *Hey for Honesty* to be overall consistent with the poet's style (see esp. Day 1926). Nowadays, Randolph is rightly considered as the author of most of the play, which was later expanded through the addition of further, and unrelated to the original, scenes by "F.J.".

of, the original Aristophanic criticism of traditional religiosity.[5]

Religion is also mentioned at the beginning of the agon in *Hey for Honesty*, where Penia Penniless duels with Chremylus and Blepsidemus:

> CHREMYLUS What harm is it to you, if we study the catholic good of all mankind?
> PENIA What catholic good of mankind? I'm sure the Roman Catholic religion commands wilful poverty. (2.4.C4*r*.)

Obviously, this exchange is Randolph's own addition, and it gives a hint about the author's culture and methods: the word "catholic" is used by Chremylus in its etymological, and rather refined, meaning ("universal"), but is immediately taken up by Penia, who distorts it by assigning it its specific, and religious, meaning. Chremylus' line, thus, becomes a brilliant opportunity not only to establish once more the need to be poor, but also to give a sharp dig to the hypocrisy of Roman Catholicism, an aspect upon which the conclusion of the comedy (esp. 5.1) – bringing on stage no less than the Pope himself, become destitute due to Chremylus' moral reform – will insist greatly.[6]

Randolph's work on the agon of *Wealth* is particularly interesting. As we will see, this scene from Aristophanes' last extant play has attracted a great deal of attention from contemporary scholars, who have found it particularly puzzling. The scene is a grandiose debate between Chremylus, the comic hero who has decided to heal Plutus (the god of wealth) and by so doing making all honest men rich, and Penia, the goddess that impersonates poverty itself. Penia comes onstage to defend the role of poverty, and show Chremylus and his friend Blepsidemus that making wealth universal would be a

[5] Aristophanic comedy is replete of explicit attacks against a traditional form of religiosity consisting not so much in genuine worship but rather in a hypocritical form of *do ut des*. Such criticism is often related to money, as were most Protestant denunciations of Roman Catholicism: cf. e.g. Aristoph. *Pl.* 130-4, where Zeus is said to be very rich, due to the fact that his worshippers spend all their money sacrificing to him in order to become rich.

[6] Moreover, Penia's line immediately relates Penia's defence of poverty to a doctrine of Roman Catholicism – a relationship that Randolph's audience would have hardly found positive.

terrible mistake. Penia's defence of poverty, an actual *laus inopiae*, is counterintuitive at best, and aims at demonstrating that a world where everybody is rich is bound to fall apart: for a society to be productive, men have to be poor – not completely destitute, but just poor enough to keep working. If all men were rich, nobody would need to work, and nobody would perform the fundamental duties without which the *polis* would go bankrupt. Not even slavery would work anymore: if everybody had all the money they need, they would not be compelled to sell slaves. Moreover, all virtues can be traced back to poverty: moderation (*Pl.* 563: σωφροσύνης),[7] propriety (*Pl.* 564: κοσμιότης),[8] good physical shape and attitude to battle (*Pl.* 561) all derive from a state of hardship.

Thus, Penia can paradoxically conclude (*Pl.* 593-4) that πάντ' ἔστ' ἀγάθ' ὑμῖν / διὰ τὴν πενίαν ("all good things come to you thanks to poverty"). The paradox in Penia's line is even more evident if we observe that the phrase πάντ' ἀγαθά is frequently associated by Aristophanes with an image of exceeding wealth, which comic heroes tend to acquire, or re-acquire, toward the end of each play (see e.g. *Ach.* 976 αὐτόματα πάντ' ἀγαθὰ τῷδέ γε πορίζεται ["all goods come to him of their own accord"]; *Pax* 1326-7 τἀγαθὰ πάνθ' ὅσ' ἀπωλέσαμεν / συλλέξασθαι πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ["give us right back all the goods that we have lost"]; *Av.* 1706 ὦ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πράττοντες ["oh you who enjoy all goods"]). This seems in keeping with one of the most pronounced trends in Old Comedy, namely the description of a utopian situation, set either in a remote past or in a distant place, where characters can enjoy an exorbitant quantity of goods.[9] Again, πάντ' ἀγαθά can often be found in such a context: see e.g. Pherecr. fr. 113.1-2; Amphis fr. 28; Mnesim. fr. 4.64-5.

[7] Unless otherwise specified, Aristophanes' plays are quoted from N.G. Wilson's edition (2007). English translations are by A.H. Sommerstein, slightly modified.

[8] Moderation and propriety are two sides of the same coin: since rich people were normally accused of being prone to ὕβρις (cfr. e.g. Lys. 24.16), Poverty provides her worshippers with the opposite quality – self-restraint and moderation resulting in a harmonious life (cfr. Isocr. 7.4; see Sommerstein 2001 and Torchio 2001, *ad loc.*). Of course, σωφρωσύνη also had a pronounced socio-political value: McGlew 1997, 41.

[9] On which see e.g. Ruffell 2000; Wilkins 2000, 110-23.

Aristophanes' *Wealth* itself will conclude on this note: after Plutus is healed, Chremylus becomes exceedingly rich (*Pl.* 802-22), and all goods finally come to his house: *Pl.* 1190 πάντ' ἀγαθὰ τοίνυν λέγεις ("You say all goods!").[10] Then, saying that πάντ' ἀγαθά, the utopian abundance of all goods, comes to men thanks to poverty amounts to posing a paradox – wealth depends upon poverty. Penia goes even further, and, as Chremylus summarises, she ends up claiming that poverty is better than wealth, pure and simple (*Pl.* 572-3): ἀτὰρ οὐχ ἧττόν γ' οὐδὲν κλαύσει—μηδὲν ταύτῃ γε κομήσῃς— / ὅτι γε ζητεῖς τοῦτ' ἀναπείθειν ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἔστιν ἄμεινον πενία πλούτου ("you're going to howl nonetheless, for trying to persuade us that poverty is better than wealth!").[11]

Chremylus' indignant reactions to Penia's demonstration denounce the paradoxical, and apparently absurd, nature of her opponent's reasons:

Πε. καὶ σύ γε διδάσκου· πάνυ γὰρ οἶμαι ῥᾳδίως
ἅπανθ' ἁμαρτάνοντά σ' ἀποδείξειν ἐγώ,
εἰ τοὺς δικαίους φῄς ποιήσειν πλουσίους.
Χρ. ὦ τύπανα καὶ κύφωνες, οὐκ ἀρήξετε;
Πε. οὐ δεῖ σχετλιάζειν καὶ βοᾶν πρὶν ἂν μάθῃς.
Χρ. καὶ τίς δύναιτ' ἂν μὴ βοᾶν "ἰοὺ ἰοὺ"
τοιαῦτ' ἀκούων;
(*Pl.* 473-9)

[Poverty And you should be ready to learn that it's true. I expect

[10] The interpretation of *Pl.* 1189-90, where Chremylus tells the priest that Zeus himself has come αὐτόματος to his own house, is a longstanding interpretive problem: some believe that we are to imagine that Zeus physically descended from Mount Olympus to reach Chremylus' house, while others, myself included, are convinced that we are to understand Chremylus' line as a pun, defining Plutus Ζεὺς σωτήρ ("now the true Zeus is in my house", that is, Plutus). Be that as it may, the association of αὐτόματος with πάντ' ἀγαθά in a matter of two lines seems hardly fortuitous, and describes quite certainly the standard comic situation of an imaginary state of bliss, abundance, and no effort.

[11] I see no reason for printing, as Wilson 2007 does, Πενία and Πλούτου with capital letters: even though the two gods are clearly personifications, Chremylus and Penia are discussing the general condition of being poor or being rich.

> to prove very easily that you are making a total mistake if you mean to make honest men wealthy.
> CHREMYLUS Pillories and execution-boards, come to our aid!
> POVERTY You shouldn't scream and go all indignant before you've learned the fact.
> CHREMYLUS And who could keep from screaming with rage at hearing such a thing?]

Chremylus presents his own arguments as obvious, matter-of-fact truths, that anybody must share:

> φανερὸν μὲν ἔγωγ' οἶμαι γνῶναι τοῦτ' εἶναι πᾶσιν ὁμοίως,
> ὅτι τοὺς χρηστοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὖ πράττειν ἐστὶ δίκαιον,
> τοὺς δὲ πονηροὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀθέους τούτων τἀναντία δήπου.
> (*Pl.* 489-91)

> [Well, I think this much is plainly obvious to everyone alike – that it's right and just that the virtuous among mankind should have prosperity, and the wicked and the godless, of course, the reverse of that.]

While Chremylus' plan is self-evidently good and reasonable, the *status quo*, in favour of which Penia wants to argue, is branded as sheer folly:

> ὡς μὲν γὰρ νῦν ἡμῖν ὁ βίος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διάκειται,
> τίς ἂν οὐχ ἡγοῖτ' εἶναι μανίαν κακοδαιμονίαν τ' ἔτι μᾶλλον;
> (*Pl.* 500-1)

> [Because the way life is arranged at present for us humans, who would not regard it as sheer insanity and, even more, sheer wretchedness?]

By emphasising the obviousness of Chremylus' ideas, Aristophanes describes Penia's arguments as evidently opposed to good sense, and thus intrinsically, and perversely, paradoxical.

Randolph's dealing with the agon of *Wealth* deserves close scrutiny. On the one hand, the author is consistent with his general method of translating extensive passages from Aristophanes's text quite accurately. He thus preserves the core of each side's argumentation, in particular the paradox of poverty: Penia Penniless

boasts that she makes men better and that she is most noble, and therefore concludes that "I am to be preferred before riches" (2.5). On the other hand, and quite exceptionally, for the scene to be effective Randolph finds it necessary to alter the whole structure of the original text. In particular, he has Penia duel not so much with Chremylus and Blepsidemus (who leave quite early on during the agon) as Aristophanes did, but with four additional characters: three country swains (Scrape-All, Clodpole, and Stiff) and a parson called Dicaeus (in full Aristophanic tradition, a speaking name, which already sets the tone of the whole agon). The fundamental line of comedy consists in the sharp socio-cultural difference between the former and the latter: Dicaeus is proficient in Latin and rhetoric, while the country swains hardly speak English at all. During the agon, Dicaeus takes on the task of disputing with Penia, while Scrape-All, Clodpole, and Stiff play the role that Old Comedy ascribed to the so-called *bomolochos*, the ignorant buffoon commenting on everything that happens onstage – a role that in Aristophanic drama was frequently interpreted by the comic hero himself.

Dicaeus chooses a completely different style for conducting the agon in Randolph's *Hey for Honesty*. Since the outset of the scene, Dicaeus debates as if he were in an academic context, with a typically intellectual posture:

> DICAEUS Neighbours, be content. Poverty, stand you on one side, and I'll stand on the other; for I will be opposite to you *e diametro*, and teach you to know your distance. Thus I dispute. The question is whether *Plutus* ought to receive his eyesight? I say ay, *et sic probo.*
> (2.5.C4*v.*)

The extensive, and frankly quite useless, Latin quotations; the didactic tone and terms ("teach you"); the typical rhetorical strategy of putting forward his own proposition straightaway: all those elements immediately help describe the agon as a typical academic disputation, traditionally structured as a dialectic discourse of *pro et contra*, or *sic et non* ("*e diametro*"; "*sic probo*").[12]

[12] Along with lectures, declamations, and recitations, the *disputationes*

His opponent, Penia, is no less versed in Latin and rhetoric. Dicaeus will go so far as to define her a "she-Bellarmine", the female version of cardinal Bellarmino, and her argumentation is equally refined:

> Penia You do not dispute seriously, you put me off with trifling nugations. Thus I dispute. If I make men better than riches, I am to be preferred before riches. But I make men better: for poor men have the better consciences, because they have not so much guilt, I call their empty purses to witness. *Aliter probo sic.* I moralise men better than Plutus. *Exempli gratia*: Plutus makes men with puffed faces, dropsy bodies, bellies as big as the great tub at Heidelberg; noses by the virtue of Malmsey so full of rubies, that you may swear, had Poverty had dominion in their nativities, they had never had such rich faces: besides, they have eyes like turkey-cocks, double chins, flapdragon-cheeks, lips that may spare half an ell, and yet leave kissing room enough. Nay, 'tis the humour of this age, they think they shall never be great men, unless they have gross bodies. Marry, I keep men spare and lean, slender and nimble; mine are all diminutives, Tom Thumbs, not one Colossus, not one Garagantua [*sic*] amongst them; fitter to encounter the enemy by reason of their agility, in less danger of shot for their tenuity, and most expert in running away, such is their celerity. *Ergo*, Irus is a good soldier, and Midas is an ass. (2.5.D1*r*.)

This passage reproduces quite faithfully, although with obvious modern additions, the Aristophanic original (see esp. *Pl.* 557-64). In Randolph's version, Penia is granted an altogether similar rhetorical ability to Dicaeus: she uses Latin, as well; she uses technical vocabulary, as her opponent did ("Thus I dispute"; "*Aliter probo sic*"); in arguing, she adopts a somewhat syllogistic strategy ("*If* I make men better than riches, I am to be preferred before riches. *But* I make men better"). A similar strategy can also be detected some

were one of the most widespread teaching methods in medieval universities, and were still largely employed in modern universities: see Rüegg 1996; Müller 1996. As Berensmeyer 2020 correctly observes, in early modern teaching rhetoric still received the lion's share, and one of its fundamental features was "its competitive rather than conciliatory or consolidating nature".

lines later:

> PENIA Moreover, that which is most noble is most preferrable. But Poverty is most noble. Minor I prove thus: whose houses are most ancient, those are most noble: but poverty's houses are most ancient; for some of them are so old, like vicarage-houses, they are every hour in danger of falling. (2.5.D1*r.*)

Moreover, both Dicaeus and his *bomolochoi* will describe the parson's argumentations as syllogisms:

> STIFF In my 'pinion this simple-gism—
> DICAEUS Fie neighbour, 'tis a syllogism.
> STIFF Why simple and silly is all one: be what gism it will be, sure 'twas not in true mud and fig-tree, there was never a tar-box in the breech of it. (2.5.C4*v.*)

The differences between the original and Randolph's version even grow when we come towards the end of the scene. The agon of *Wealth* ends on a note of irrationality: Chremylus refuses to hear more from Penia, and cuts the debate short by simply rejecting his opponent's reasons in full (*Pl.* 600: οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἢν πείσῃς ["You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!"], on which more later). Randolph, on the contrary, eliminates any irrationalistic element from the conclusion of his scene, and has it end with an ultimate display of Dicaeus' rhetorical dexterity:

> DICAEUS Nay, she does not dispute well. Her major was born in Bedlam, her minor was whipped in Bridewell. *Ergo* her conclusion is run out of her wits. For well said M. Rhombus, *Ecce mulier blancata quasi lilium.* Now I oppose her with a dilemma, *alias* the cuckold of arguments. My dilemma is this: citizens and townsmen are rich, for there's the cornucopia; ergo, riches are better than poverty. Nay, if riches were not in some account, why would Jupiter be so rich? For you see he has engrossed to himself the golden age of Jacobuses, and the silver age of shillings and sixpences, and left us nothing but the brazen age of plundering and impudence; for tinkers' tokens are gone away too. To conclude in one syllogism more, I will prove my tenet true by the example of Hecate queen of hell; she would turn the clerk of her kitchen out of his office, and not suffer him to be the

> devil's manciple any longer, if he should bring any lean carcass or any carrion-soul to be served up at her table. Her chief dish is the larded soul of a plump usurer, basted with the dripping of a greasy alderman; the sauce being made with the brains of a great conger-headed lawyer, buttered with the grease of a well-fed committee-man, served up for want of saucers in the two ears of an unconscionable Scrivener. *Ergo*, Poverty, you may go and hang yourself. (2.5.D1*r.*-D1*v.*)

In other terms, while the original ended with a blatant rejection of any form of persuasion, in Randolph's version the debate is brought to a conclusion by a remarkable piece of persuasion.[13] Interestingly enough, Chremylus' line on not being persuaded even though he is persuaded (*Pl.* 600) is in fact translated by Randolph, but is placed at the end of the previous scene (2.4), right before Chremylus' and Blepsidemus' exit, when the agon has not yet even started:

> PENIA But what if I persuade you it's necessary that Poverty live amongst you?
>
> BLEPSIDEMUS Persuaded! We will not be persuaded; for we are persuaded not to be persuaded, though we be persuaded. Thus we are persuaded; and we will not be persuaded to persuade ourselves to the contrary, anyways being persuaded. (2.4.C4*r.*)[14]

A scene so deeply rooted in rhetoric, intellectualism, and rationalism such as the agon of *Hey for Honesty* (2.5) cannot end on an explicitly anti-intellectualist and irrationalistic note as the original did.

Randolph's strategy in dealing with the agon of *Wealth* looks by all means peculiar. *Hey for Honesty* is normally far closer to

[13] Although it must be observed that toward the end of the agon of *Hey for Honesty* we can find a more or less explicit acknowledgement of Penia's argumentative victory: ". . . Methinks Poverty disputes very poorly, and that's a wonder; for likely the naked truth is on her side" (2.5). Of course, this blunt confession does not parallel *Pl.* 600, but it surprisingly opens a breach into Dicaeus' argumentative strategy, just like the ending of the agon of *Wealth* did with Chremylus' (see below).

[14] Of course, the persistent polyptoton of 'persuade' is an astute solution to the apparent paradox of the original text, but seems to betray Randolph's limited acquaintance with the crucial anti-intellectualism of Aristophanes' line.

the original text, and innovations are usually isolated. On the contrary, Randolph shows greater freedom in this particular scene, by bringing in significant changes both in the overall structure and in the character dynamics of the scene. This radical choice deserves an explanation. Why did Randolph abandon his strategy while translating the agon? Why, in particular, did he choose to overemphasise the intellectual nature of the debate? Of course, the paradoxical defence of a clearly unworthy and undesirable object could well relate to the exercise in paradoxical encomia, which was considerably widespread in English schools throughout the modern era – we even preserve a number of encomia of poverty or beggary.[15] When translating the first praise of poverty in European literature, then, Randolph must have kept in mind the closest and most obvious context for such a praise. However, I would suggest that there is more. I believe that Randolph was driven by an almost unique, but accurate and rigorous, reading of *Wealth*, detecting an intellectual tone in the original text that scholars do not usually notice. In other words, Randolph's innovations in *Hey for Honesty* were not purely idiosyncratic choices or adaptations to contemporary cultural tendencies, but evidence of an acute interpretation of the original. The translator observed an intellectualistic tone in Penia's argumentation, and decided to accentuate it. In what follows, we will try to show that although certainly eccentric Randolph's reading of the agon of *Wealth* was by no means misguided. On the contrary, it shows an acute interpretation of Aristophanes' original scene. The agon of *Wealth* is one of the hardest interpretive *cruces* of all the Aristophanic *corpus*: Randolph's solution, we would contend, is not only original, but largely correct. This essay aims to compare and contrast Aristophanes' agon and Randolph's translation-adaptation thereof, in search for an insight into the historical continuity of the socio-cultural question of the paradox of poverty.

2.

Starting out as a radical moral reform, the plan of Chremylus, the

[15] For a full picture, and a list of such encomia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Knight Miller 1956.

protagonist of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, soon turns into a program of universal enrichment: with Plutus, the god of riches, healed, only honest people would be rewarded and become rich; honesty would then spread as the most advantageous way of life; and if everybody were to turn honest, then everybody would become rich, too. However, on their way to the temple of Asclepius, where the healing should take place, Chremylus and his friend Blepsidemus are met by Plutus' nemesis, Penia, or Poverty.

As seen, Penia offers a counterintuitive defence of poverty, an actual paradox. Nonetheless, the core of Penia's line of argumentation seems reasonable enough. According to Penia χρεία, economic need, is one of the few effective incentives to get to work, and work is the basis of an efficient economy and an efficient society – two points that are now met with the consensus of almost all contemporary Aristophanic scholarship. This is also the reason why the agon of *Wealth* has widely embarrassed the vast majority of scholars. Many readers of the play are way more sympathetic to Penia's arguments than to Chremylus': in their eyes, then, the scene stands out as the only extant Aristophanic agon where the reasons given by the protagonist seem far less persuasive than those given by his or her antagonist.[16] Chremylus himself seems to come to this conclusion, too: in the above-mentioned l. 600 (οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἢν πείσῃς [You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!]), while rejecting Penia's arguments he is also forced to recognise that precisely those arguments are most persuasive.

Those who conclude that the agon is won by Penia also tend to commit to the so-called 'ironic' reading of the play: Aristophanes, it is argued, does not believe in the actual possibility of the realisation of Chremylus' plan, and inserts some hints at disapproval throughout the text. The agon between Chremylus and Poverty would be the major signal of Aristophanes' pessimism about his hero's plan: by contrasting Chremylus' idea with a more realistic and persuasive view, Aristophanes would be hinting that what is happening on stage is to be considered implausible. Many reasons militate against

[16] See e.g. Schmid 1946, 379-80; Süß 1954, 303-5; Albini 1965, 434; Flashar 1975, 1996; Heberlein 1981, 44; Barkhuizen 1981, 19; David 1984, 31.

such an interpretation.[17] First and foremost, Chremylus' program is not the only Aristophanic comic idea that is utterly absurd, or unrealistic. In fact, most comic βουλεύματα are explicitly fanciful: obviously, in the real world there can be no such thing as a private peace treaty (as in *Acharnians*), or a flight to Mount Olympus (as in *Peace*), or the fortification of the sky (as in *Birds*), or the resurrection of a dead man (as in *Frogs*). In all these cases, though, the evident impossibility of the plan must not, and usually does not, lead us to believe that the playwright is distancing himself from the protagonist and his or her positions. In the fantasy world of comedy, the comic hero's plan is perfectly acceptable, even rational, and any reality check does not affect its credibility within the fictional context of the play. Although the comic βούλευμα is invariably absurd, nowhere in extant Aristophanic comedies does the poet feel the need to draw our attention to its absurdity. Chremylus' idea in *Wealth* is not different from the other heroes' ideas: absurd as it may seem, it is perfectly viable in the comic world, and makes a good response to a concrete problem, that of the unjust disparity of distribution of resources. Most importantly, Chremylus' plan is perfectly coherent with the crucial tendency of Aristophanic comedy towards self-fulfillment: individual pleasure must be gained at all costs, even when its realisation seems impossible. There is no reason to believe, then, that by introducing Penia's discussion of the healing of Plutus Aristophanes is ironically suggesting that Chremylus' plan is somehow flawed.

This, however, leaves us with the problem of the agon, where Penia is granted a stronger position than any other Aristophanic antagonist, and a line of reasoning that certainly looks persuasive. In what sense can we say that Penia's arguments are more convincing? And why is it so? As I tried to demonstrate elsewhere (Morosi 2020), this depends on the parodic intent of the agon: the whole scene is conceived of as a thorough parody of philosophical argumentation, and Penia herself – a rather rare figure of the Greek pantheon to meet in ancient literature, and even religion – is one of the typical Aristophanic personifications, in this case thought

[17] For a critical discussion of ironic readings of *Wealth*, see McGlew 1997; Fiorentini 2005; Ruffell 2006.

of as a character parodying a philosopher. This is evident in her vocabulary, in her aspect, and in her argumentation.

Specialised, philosophical vocabulary is consistently used by Penia throughout the agon: she challenges Chremylus to refute her arguments (*Pl.* 574), with a verb, ἐλέγξαι, that is closely connected with Socrates (see for instance his description by Thrasymachos in Pl. *Resp.* 337E1-3), and is frequently attested in relation to sophistic or philosophical characters (the Worse Argument in *Clouds*, Euripides in *Frogs*); she blames Chremylus for φλυαρεῖν (*Pl.* 575), a quite common accusation in the context of philosophical disputes (cf. e.g. Pl. *Resp.* 336C1, 337B4; *Grg.* 486C4-7, 489B7, 490E4, 492C7-8); she intends to give a demonstration about the benefits of poverty (*Pl.* 467 δοῦναι λόγον), another phrase that is widely used in philosophical prose (cf. e.g. Pl. *Phlb.* 50D8-E2); she mentions the difficulties in διαγιγνώσκειν, "distinguishing", "recognising" what is best, another verb typical of Socrates, describing his fundamental method of definition (cf. e.g. Pl. *Resp.* 618B-C). This wide use of specialised philosophical vocabulary fits in well with Penia's argumentation, a counterintuitive and paradoxical demonstration of a clearly weaker case – an activity in which comic philosophers are particularly versed (one only need think of Socrates' ability to make the wrong seem right and vice versa in *Clouds*).

Moreover, Penia's own aspect betrays her nature as a philosopher. When she first comes onstage, she is greeted by Chremylus' description (*Pl.* 422): σὺ δ' εἶ τίς; ὠχρὰ μὲν γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς (Who are you? You look very pale to me).[18] Now, since at the following line Blepsidemus suggests a comparison with a tragic Fury (*Pl.* 423 ἴσως Ἐρινύς ἐστιν ἐκ τραγῳδίας [Perhaps she's an Erinys out of some tragedy]), scholars have almost unanimously interpreted Penia's entrance as that of a Fury. However, the adjective ὠχρά looks out of place for an Erinys. Furies were either black (as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*) or white (λευκαί), if they were depicted as young maidens. Although of course we cannot rule out in principle that in

[18] At l. 422, I do not accept Jackson's emendation (Jackson 1955, 78-9), also printed by Wilson 2007: σὺ δ' εἶ τίς <ὦ γραῦ>; γραῦς γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς. The manuscripts are unanimous in transmitting ὠχρά, and the line is metrically sound if one adds μὲν before γὰρ as R does.

lost texts they were described as such, under no circumstances were they "pale", ὠχραί, in extant Greek literature. Most importantly, the comparison between Penia and an Erinys is dismissed by Chremylus and Blepsidemus themselves, who then go on to hypothesise she is an innkeeper or a pudding-seller. But while ὠχρός did not denote Penia as a Fury, it is commonly used by Aristophanes and other comic poets to describe the physical appearance of sophists and philosophers. In *Clouds*, Pheidippides calls Socrates' pupils in the Thinkery τοὺς ὠχριῶντας (those pale-faced, *Nub.* 103): among the effects of studying with Socrates, pale complexion is the first listed by the Better Argument (*Nub.* 1016-17 πρῶτα μὲν ἕξεις χροιὰν ὠχράν [first of all you'll have a pale skin]), and a practiced sophist is both pale and wretched (ὠχρὸν μὲν οὖν οἶμαί γε καὶ κακοδαίμονα, *Nub.* 1112). In comedy, philosophers frequently stand out because of their pallor: for instance, Chairephon, one of Socrates' closest pupils, is consistently depicted as pale (cf. e.g. Eup. fr. 253 K.-A.; Ar. *Nub.* 504).[19] Pale complexion, then, is one of the main features of the degenerate way of life of comic philosophers, in a sort of proverbial iconography.[20]

Penia, then, speaks, and looks, like a philosopher. This seems perfectly in keeping with Penia's own nature as a personification of poverty. Ancient thinkers (especially those coming from a Socratic *milieu*) tended to lead an extremely austere life, and interpreted their philosophical activity as an actual exercise in frugality and modesty. Comedy often distorts this trait, depicting philosophers – especially those connected to Socratism – as destitute characters, actual beggars (see Grilli 1992, 128-35): in *Clouds*, for instance, Strepsiades must suffer severe hardships (hunger, thirst, and cold) if he wants to enter the Thinkery, that is, if he wants to become a philosopher himself (*Nub.* 412-19); in *Birds*, the Socratic mania consists in not eating and not bathing (*Av.* 1282); and Ameipsias' *Konnos*, a harsh parody of Socratism, describes Socrates as a man

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

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

with no cloak and no shoes (fr. 9 K.-A. = F4 Olson). Socrates himself was portrayed by comic poets as a πτωχός, a beggar (cf. e.g. Eup. fr. 386 K.-A. = F1 Olson), a trait which Chremylus attributes to Penia as well, prompting her discussion of the difference between πτωχεία, complete destitution, and πενία, the state of need that keeps people to their work (*Pl.* 548-54). Moreover, Penia's distinction between πτωχεία and πενία reminds forcefully of a central passage in Plato's *Republic* 4 (421C10-422A3), where Socrates argues in favour of moderate poverty and of its social importance, making a very similar case to that of Penia in the agon of *Wealth*. Elsewhere (Morosi 2020, esp. 414-21), I have proposed an earlier dating of the central books of *Republic*, in order for them to predate Aristophanes' last surviving plays, and thus account for what looks like an ample and consistent parody of Plato's arguments in both *Wealth* and *Ecclesiazusae*.[21] Be that as it may, Penia's line of reasoning is surprisingly close to that ascribed to Socrates by Plato and to Socrates' pupils by Xenophon.

Then, Penia's comic appearance, vocabulary, and argumentations are those of a comic philosopher, and even more so those of a Socratic thinker. This reading of the agon of *Wealth* brings about two important breakthroughs. Firstly, it helps to bring to a solution the interpretive problem of the agon. Penia's arguments are certainly stronger and more logical than Chremylus': this depends on their philosophical origin. However, this philosophical origin is precisely what makes them unacceptable in a comic context: in a fundamentally irrationalistic context, Penia's rationalism is to be rejected precisely because it is rational ("You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!"). This is true from both a formal and a thematic point of view. To start with, Penia's arguments

[21] The critical issue of the relationship between Aristophanes and Plato is extremely vast and complex (now see Platter 2014), and the addition of *Wealth* to the question makes it all the more problematic. In recent times, see Ussher 1973, xvi-xviii, Sommerstein 1998, 13-18, and Capra 2010, 18-22 (on *Ecclesiazusae*); Beltrametti 2000 (on *Republic* 5). See also Tordoff 2007; Capra 2007; Canfora 2014. As for the dating of the *Republic*, most scholars tend to think that it was written only after 380 BCE; others, however, argue in favour of a "gradual growth" of the dialogue (see e.g. Thesleff 2009), supposing that the first elaboration could have started before Plato's first trip to Sicily in 388-87 BCE (as some sources seem to suggest, namely letter 7, 326B7).

are uselessly shrewd, and are discredited precisely because they appear rhetorically and philosophically refined, that is, far removed from common sense. By presenting Penia's demonstration as deliberately counterintuitive and paradoxical, Aristophanes is making her look like a supercilious untrustworthy smooth talker. On the contrary, Chremylus' ideas look way more down-to-earth and straightforward, then easier to grasp and to share. Moreover, Penia's – and Socrates' – reasons are seriously at odds with the most typical comic ideological framework: even though earning a living by working is an absolutely rational perspective, a genre such as Aristophanic comedy based upon the unrealistic self-fulfillment of each desire cannot accept any form of deliberate abstinence from pleasure.[22] The philosophers' ascetic program, and Penia's arguing against a complete, generalised and unproblematic enrichment, cannot but be rejected in full from the point of view of Aristophanic comedy. Precisely the philosophical nature of both Penia and her argumentation deeply invalidate Penia's position within the agon, directing the audience's empathy towards the protagonist.

This brings us back to Randolph's translation of the agon in *Hey for Honesty*. Of course, we cannot be sure that Randolph recognised much more than the generally intellectualistic tone of Aristophanes' scene. In fact, nothing in his translation points towards Socratic elements, and we can be fairly sure that Randolph's reading of the agon did not go as far as to recognising a parody of Socratic arguments.[23] The failure to grasp specific references to Socratism, however, is by no means a hurdle to Randolph's understanding of the deep comic and ideologic dynamics of the agon, and to their reproduction. Randolph seems particularly eager to highlight some of the most evident intellectual aspects that can already be found in *Wealth*: for instance, the incessant meta-discursive references to the opponents' argumentative strategies and their ability to debate, the use of technical vocabulary (which of course

[22] On the structural opposition between comic and philosophical ideology, see e.g. Grilli 1992, 133.

[23] Moreover, the parody of academics is a recurrent theme of Randolph's production: see for instance his *Aristippus, or the Jovial Philosopher* (1625-6), which is directly inspired by another Aristophanic drama, *Clouds*: Hall 2007.

Randolph transposes into Latin), the structure itself of the agon and the contents of each opponent's reasoning – all these originally Aristophanic aspects are faithfully reproduced. In other words, the similarities between Aristophanes' and Randolph's comic strategies here cannot be explained away as mere chance. On the contrary, they show a sophisticated literary and linguistic understanding based on a careful close reading of the original text, and resulting in an unparalleled interpretation of a difficult scene, that would be shared, and validated, by scholars only centuries later. This is altogether surprising as well as unique in the history of modern reception of *Wealth*, and is a testament to Randolph's acute reading of Aristophanes.

Of course, some crucial ideological differences can be observed between these two similarly academic scenes: to name just one, the opposition is now not between an intellectual and a rustic, embodying respectively the reasons of philosophy and those of comedy, but is entirely subsumed within a scholarly context, thus losing the typically Aristophanic clear-cut and symbolic nature. Certainly, Randolph's version, based on the widespread moralising reading of *Wealth* and staged in a scholarly context, is far from the anti-intellectualistic, anti-elitist, and anti-realistic stances of Old Comedy. In fact, Randolph's choice to set the agon of *Hey for Honesty* in an academic *milieu* is certainly due to the scholarly context of the first staging of the play, Trinity College, Cambridge: the scene is then conceived as a direct parody of Randolph's audience, who could watch their own cultural habits, manners, and obsessions brought onstage.[24] Whereas Aristophanes' parody of destitute philosophers is a representation, Randolph's parody is a *self*-representation: as such, it does not aim at being a sincere denunciation, but a benign caricature, that ends up confirming rather than condemning the most relevant aspects of any intellectual context.

The choice to have Penia depicted as an intellectual, however, also relates to another fundamental sociological aspect: scholars and Penia share a basic similarity – they are both intrinsically,

[24] Butler 1988 rightly takes the agon with its constant allusions to the poverty of scholars as one of the pieces of evidence for the comedy being performed in Cambridge rather than in a playhouse in London.

constitutionally, poor. This is made clear since Penia's first appearance, with Blepsidemus promising:

> . . . when Plutus can see again, we will kick you out of the universe, and leave you no place but the universities: marry, those you may claim by custom, 'tis your penniless bench; we give you leave to converse with sleeveless gowns and threadbare cassocks. (2.4.C4*r.*)

This line, one of Randolph's additions to the original text, explicitly states the existence of a strong link between universities and poverty: since "sleeveless gowns and threadbare cassocks" are destitute by nature, universities will be the only place left for Penia to live. Penia's ability to debate itself derives from her intimate acquaintance with scholars:

> STIFF . . . I say she will repute very well and tregorically, for she hath ever kept company with scholars ever since my memory or my grannam's either. (2.5.C4*r.*)

Of course, the poet, an academic himself, is no exception to this rule:

> PENIA If I do not [persuade you], do what you will with me; leave me no place to rest in, but the empty study of that pitiful poet, that hath botched up this poor comedy with so many patches of his ragged wit, as if he meant to make Poverty a coat of it (2.4.C4*r.*).

The metaphorical poverty of Randolph's poetic technique matches, and hints at, his actual poverty. To be sure, to say that Poverty and scholars are akin means both that intellectuals are destitute, and that Poverty is an intellectual. This is why Poverty must dispute as a scholar, and this is why her opponent must be a scholar, as well.

In connecting Poverty so closely with any intellectual activity, Randolph is comically emphasising a longstanding commonplace, as well as a social fact: *carmina non dant panem*, and intellectuals are therefore often thought of as poor people. However, I think the picture is more complex. Once more, this has to do with Aristophanes, and with his own choice to have Poverty depicted as a Socratic thinker. To fully understand this choice, and its historical

significance, we must take a closer look into the ancient spreading of the paradox of poverty.

3.

In a controversial book on ancient economy Moses I. Finley (1999, 35) famously argued that "the judgment of antiquity about wealth was fundamentally unequivocal and uncomplicated. Wealth was necessary and it was good; it was an absolute requisite for the good life; and on the whole that was all there was to it". Finley's theory was hotly debated, and branded as simplistic by later scholars.[25] However, as far as ancient Greece is concerned it does not seem far from the truth. Although definitive statements prove always elusive in the realm of ancient Greek literature, it is hard to find in there as well as in other sources an overt and absolute condemnation of wealth before the fourth century BCE. Excess and satiety (κόρος) are often criticised;[26] some specific kinds of wealth are also disapproved of;[27] but wealth as such is hardly ever described as a condition in which it would not be worth living.[28] On the other hand, poverty is regularly depicted as lacking any positive quality: it is bad (κακή),[29] accursed (οὐλομένη),[30] wretched (δειλή),[31] an insufferable evil.[32] To say that poverty ought to be preferred to wealth, then, was somewhat counterintuitive and paradoxical for a Greek. Of course, Greeks recognised the distinction between poverty (πενία) and destitution (πτωχεία),[33] and did not necessarily define poverty from

[25] See e.g. Ober 1989, 192n1.

[26] Cf. e.g. Thgn. 1.153-4, Sol. fr. 4.34-7 W.

[27] See for instance Aristotle's criticism of money and all financial goods (the so-called χρηματιστικὴ τέχνη: cf. esp. *Pol.* 1.1256a1-1258b8), and ancient Greek general distaste for the purely commercial life.

[28] Cf. e.g. Aristot. *Pol.* 7.1332a19-25, stating that, even though the good man can get advantage from difficult conditions such as poverty and disease, happiness (τὸ μακάριον) consists in their opposite (see also *EN* 1.1110b22-33).

[29] Hes. *Op.* 638: ἀλλὰ κακὴν πενίην, τὴν Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι δίδωσιν.

[30] Hes. *Op.* 717 (οὐλομένην πενίην θυμοφθόρον ἀνδρὶ); see also Thgn. 1.155-6, 2.1062.

[31] Thgn. 1.351; 1.649.

[32] Alc. fr. Z41.1 L.-P.: ἀργάλεον Πενία κάκον ἄσχετον.

[33] On this distinction, see e.g. Coin-Longeray 2014.

a financial point of view: anyone who was compelled to work for a living was often called a πένης, even if they were not completely financially destitute.[34] Thus, the praise of labour and of its social importance indirectly entailed a praise of poverty – or at least, of a degree thereof.[35] However, as commonsense as it may seem, even the praise of such partial kind of poverty is hardly ever present as a whole in non-philosophical extant literature before the fourth century BCE.

In fact, as William D. Desmond (2006) has persuasively shown, the praise of poverty is predominantly established within a philosophical, and principally Socratic, *milieu*. To be sure, the relationship between intellectual activity and destitution was already attested, at least in literature: one need only think of Hipponax's self-representation as an indigent poet.[36] However, in all those instances poverty is hardly ever depicted as a desirable condition. Socratic thinkers make a step forward, and paradoxically embrace poverty. Before going on to become one of the favourite paradoxes of Cynic thought,[37] the *laus inopiae* was a Socratic motif, and way of life. One need only think of Socrates' well-known καρτερία, his patient endurance and self-imposed abstinence from a life of comfort. Such ascetism was certainly a trait of Socrates' public self-portrait,[38] but most of all it was a direct, philosophical reaction against sophistic wealth, and sophistic teaching methods: in establishing free bonds of friendship with his pupils, Socrates was challenging the sophists' client-seller relationship,[39] and establishing a system based on the metaphorical wealth of wisdom, as opposed to the material wealth accumulated by Gorgias and his colleagues.[40] To be sure, such

[34] See e.g. Taylor 2017, esp. 34-6.

[35] Cfr. e.g. Plat. *Resp.* 4.421C10-422A3, on which more later.

[36] Cf. e.g. Hipp. frs 32, 34, 36, 39 W.

[37] On which see Desmond 2006, 21 ff.

[38] As such, it often played a crucial role in the descriptions of Socrates: see e.g. Plat. *Symp.* 174A, 219E-220B; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.1, 1.5.6, 1.6.2.

[39] On the giving and receiving of money as the basis of the sophists' pedagogical contract, see e.g. Too 2000, esp. 18-31 and Tell 2009; on Socrates' reaction to this prominent feature of sophistic education, see e.g. Corey 2002.

[40] Desmond 2006, 154-9. The metaphor of knowledge and friendship as forms of wealth is common in Socratic dialogues, even as directly opposed

favorable, and deliberately provocative, estimate of poverty was already perceived by Socrates' contemporaries as far removed from common sense and sound judgment, thus posing something of a paradox. Socrates' appraisal of poverty was then passed down to most of his pupils: see for instance Charmides' paradoxical praise of poverty in Xenophon's *Symposium* (4.29-32), or Plato's discussions on poverty (on which more later). The first person that we know of to express plainly the paradox that poverty is in fact wealth was actually a student of Socrates', namely Antisthenes, whose thought is strongly related to, and can be read as an anticipation of, Cynicism.[41] From Antisthenes, the Socratic *laus inopiae* sprang up directly into Cynic thought, which of course had close and evident ties with Socrates' teachings.[42] Thus, at least since the fifth century BCE, the praise of poverty was by no means a popular motif. In the following decades, it was developed as an eminently philosophical theme, mostly connected with Socratic wisdom. Before being a fact, or a commonplace, then, the intellectuals' poverty was a theoretical and philosophical stance.

Set against this background, that the first full-grown instance of the *laus inopiae* may be the agon of *Wealth* is hardly surprising. On the contrary, it shows the existence, since the first decades of the fourth century BCE, of a clear, direct, and intimate connection between the praise of poverty and Socratism – a connection which Aristophanes denounces and challenges by means of merciless parody, clearly showing that for Socrates and his acolytes poverty was a deliberate and paradoxical choice. Of course, this does not guarantee that Socrates was the *protos heuretés* of such praise; however, since its first literary instance, the theme has always been

to the sophists' literal earning of money: see for instance Plat. *Resp.* 1.337D6-338C1, where Trasymachus insists on getting paid by Socrates for teaching him what justice is, and Socrates explains that he normally pays back (ἐκτίνω) in terms of gratitude and praise.

[41] Xen. *Symp.* 4.34-46. On Antisthenes' ties with Cynicism, see Desmond 2008, 16-8.

[42] That of the (Socratic) origins of Cynicism is a longstanding critical question: for an overview, see Long 1996. According to a famous anecdote told by Claudius Aelianus (*VH* 14.33), Plato himself would define Diogenes a μαινόμενος . . . Σωκράτης (a "Socrates who got mad").

closely related to Socrates' doctrines. The history of the paradox of poverty, then, is an intellectual and a philosophical one, and the agon of *Wealth* can be now considered as the first extant stage in this history.

The social conditions of intellectuals did not improve after the staging of *Wealth*, and throughout the centuries the relationship between intellectual activity and poverty would become close and enduring. This relationship made the adaptation of Aristophanes' agon possible: in early modern England as well as in fourth-century-BCE Athens, the depiction of academics as poor people was ubiquitous,[43] and Poverty could therefore be impersonated by an academic. However, in both cases the perception of such relationship was not based on social grounds alone. In fact, Randolph's reception of Aristophanes' parody of Socrates demonstrates another socio-cultural continuity: poverty was also regarded, both in Greece and in seventeenth-century England, as a deliberate choice made by intellectuals. Such choice was obviously contrary to good reason, and deeply rooted in the (self-)representation of intellectuals as sharp-witted thinkers with a taste for counterintuitive reasoning and paradox. That being poor is preferable to being rich is a conspicuous paradox, which only those characters who were most versed in paradoxes could pose and live by: intellectuals.

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[43] This is not the place for a social history of intellectuals in early modern England. Of course, those who could proceed to higher education, and even enter Oxford or Cambridge, had a good prospect in life (Berensmeyer 2020), but this was a distinct minority. Moreover, social evidence is just one aspect of the question, and probably not even the most compelling. Although stemming from social facts, the intellectuals' poverty was part of a wider, traditional (self-)depiction, a literary cliché which originated in ancient literatures and was then strengthened throughout the Middle Ages.

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