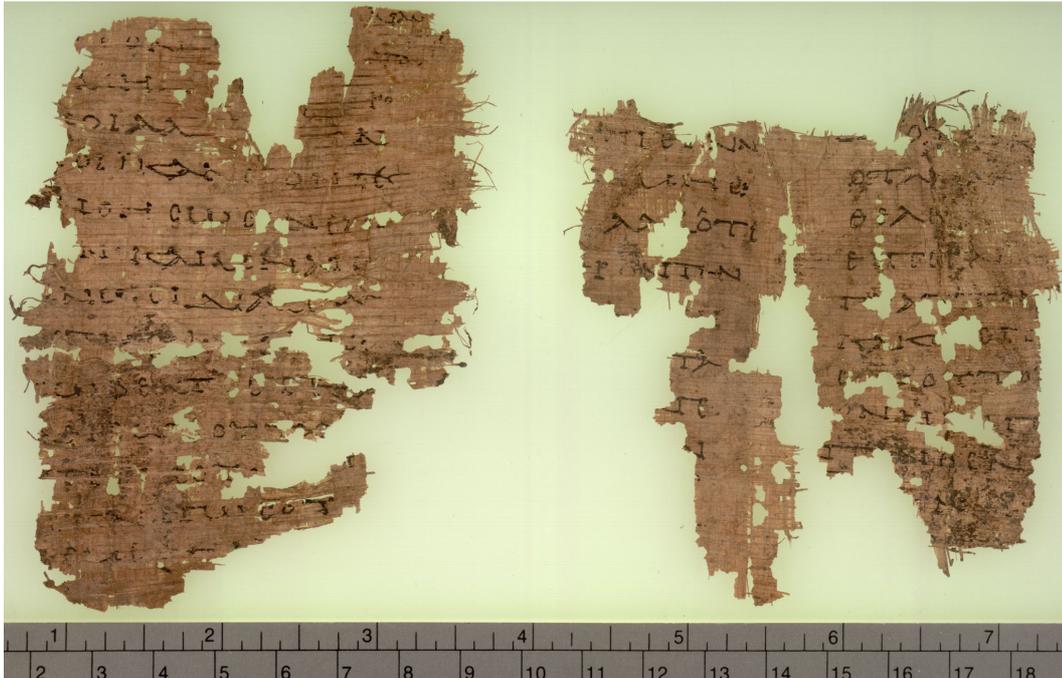


More on 'B' and other Sources

Afterthought: although 'Clarke 39' is over a thousand years old, it came to light on the remote island of Patmos only in 1801—so, there must have been other sources during antiquity from which the current texts derive.

(1) *Papyri*. Scrolls found in Oxyrhynchus (Egypt) in the late 19th century, probably dating back to the 2nd and 3rd century CE.¹ Here is how *Gorgias* 419b and 495c–e looks like.



(2) *Codices*. There are about 250 known codices that contain parts of Plato's works. In addition to B, the oldest are T (Venice) dating from the 11th century, which seems to be the first volume of an earlier two-volume work. (A Parisian ms from around 900 BCE seems to complement it; and T is partly copied from that.) And there is W (Vienna), dating from the 12th century and independent of B and T. There is another Viennese codex, F, which connects most to the papyri, and is itself the source for 'Florentinus x', which dates from 1420. F dates from the end of the 13th century, and is a cheap commercial copy with many errors: at the time when few scribes knew old uncials.

(3) *Ancient Commentators*, such as Olympiodorus (6th century), whose lecture notes on *Gorgias* we have.² The *Gorgias* was a set text for studying Plato in late antiquity; it was read out in class and then explicated and interpreted. This allows us a glimpse in the early reception and tradition of Plato.

(4) *Indirect Reports*. For instance, Stobaeus, who anthologizes about 12% of *Gorgias*, which allows for comparisons.³

1 See <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/ees/ees.html>.

2 Jackson, R., Lycos, K. and Tarrant, H. (eds.) (1998). *Olympiodorus of Alexandria, Commentary of Plato's Gorgias*. Leiden: Brill, 1998. [Bodleian: M98.E13005]

3 For more details, see Dodds, E. R. (1959) *Plato Gorgias*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (pp. 34–67).

The Characters of the Dialogue⁴

Gorgias of Leontini (Sicily; near Syracuse, where Plato stayed three times; cf. *Seventh Letter*) (c. 485–c. 380): renowned and influential rhetorician/orator, of whom there were statues in Olympia and (one of solid gold) in Delphi.⁵ He was a student of Empedocles (c. 490–c. 430). In 427, he travelled to Athens on an ambassadorial mission, which had a huge impact on Athenian rhetoric (for a parody, see *Symposium* 194e–197e). Gorgias’ imitators appear in Aristophanes’ *Wasps*, and in *Birds* (ll. 1695ff.) he is characterized as a rather disfigured and barbarian ‘englottogastor’, i.e. one who lives by his tongue (is ‘tongue-in-bellied’). Plutarch (c. 46–120) reports a work *On What-is-Not*, where Gorgias claims that (a) nothing exists, that (b) even if it does exist, it would be incomprehensible, and (c) even if it were comprehensible, it would be inexpressible.⁶ Some of his speeches survive (e.g., *Encomium on Helen*, where he characterizes rhetoric as persuading people by presenting a false argument (13)).⁷ This matches the charge against Socrates that *he* turns the weaker argument the stronger one (*Ap.* 18a–b; cf. Aristophanes *The Clouds*), and it may explain the vehemence of Plato’s antipathy for rhetoric. Mentioned in *Meno* (95c) for not being a sophist (see also *Gorg.* 520a).

Callicles of Acharnae (Attica) (c. 450–404): aspiring aristocratic and well-connected politician, host of Gorgias. He is characterized as the lover of beautiful Demos (who is a son of Plato’s mother Perictione from an earlier marriage) and the Athenian people—note that δῆμος (dēmos) means ‘people’. Given his dim view of the people is obvious (e.g., 489c), this characterisation is ironical. He embodies the view that nature is more important or powerful than law (convention or culture), which makes him the direct opposite of Socrates/Plato.⁸ Appears nowhere else in Plato’s works.

Chaerephon of Sphettus (Attica) (c. 470–c. 400): close friend and enthusiastic follower of Socrates (*Apology* 21a). His name means something like the man who sounds cheerful. He consulted the oracle in Delphi, being told that nobody was wiser than Socrates (cf. *Ap.* 21a). He is dead by the time of Socrates’ trial (*ibid.*). In comedy, Aristophanes presents him as tall and thin, with a jaundiced look, bushy brows, as an admirer of the Spartans, and even as a bat from hell (e.g., *Birds* and *Wasps*). He is the co-director of the ‘Thinkery’ (φροντιστήριον, phrontistērion) in *Clouds*, where he is described as *kakodaimōn* (κακοδαίμων), i.e. ill-fated or unlucky, and, like Socrates, as ‘unshoed’ or barefoot (ἀνυποδήτους, anupodētous) (line 103; see §7).⁹ Also appears in *Charmides*.

4 See Nails, D. (2002). *The People of Plato*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

5 Or so Pausanias reports: DK82A7. See Graham, D. W. (2010). *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 728–30).

6 *Adv. Math.* VII.65–87 (DK82B3, Graham, 2010, pp. 740–47).

7 Graham, 2010, p. 759.

8 For more details, see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/callicles-thrasymachus/#Call>.

9 The Greek for shoe (ὑπόδημα, hupodēma) means ‘that which is under the foot’, i.e. a sole with straps.



Polus of Acragas (Sicily) (c. 440–?): a young disciple of Gorgias, who has written on rhetoric (448c), a treatise that Socrates knew (462b). He is characterized as a little childish and irascible (cf. 463b, 467b, 473e), as his name suggests: Πώλος means ‘colt’. Polus is also mentioned in *Phaedrus* (267b), in relation to rhetoric.

Extracts from ‘The Clouds’ by Aristophanes

First performed in 423 BCE at the theatre of Dionysios, beneath the Acropolis in Athens. It is quite likely Socrates was in the audience. The surviving text is regarded as a revision of the play performed.

1. Lines c. 93–104¹⁰

STREPSIADES: Look over this way. You see that nice little door and that nice little house?

PHEIDIPPIDES: Yes. What is it, actually, father?

STREPSIADES: This is a Thinkery [*φροντιστήριον*, *phrontistērion*] for intellectual souls. That is where the people live who try to prove that the sky is like a baking-pot all around us, and we are charcoal inside it. And if you pay them well, they can teach you how to win a case whether you are right or not.

PHEIDIPPIDES: Who are these people?

STREPSIADES: I do not quite remember their name. They are very fine reflective intellectuals.

PHEIDIPPIDES: Yecch! I know the villains. You mean those pale-faced bare-footed quacks such as that wretched Socrates and Chaerephon.

2. Lines c. 217–48

STREPSIADES [*Socrates swings into view in a basket*]: Who in heaven’s name is that man hanging from the meat-hook?

STUDENT: It is him!

STREPSIADES: Him? Who’s him?

STUDENT: Socrates.

STREPSIADES: Socrates! Could you give him a good shout, please?

STUDENT: No, I have not got time, you do it yourself. [*Exit.*]

STREPSIADES: Socrates! Socrates darling!

SOCRATES: Why call’st thou me, O creature of the day?

STREPSIADES: Well, for a start, I would very much like to know what you are doing up there.

SOCRATES: I am walking on air and attacking the mystery of the sun.

STREPSIADES: Well, if you must attack the mysteries of the gods, why can’t you do so on the ground?

SOCRATES: Why, for accurate investigation of meteorological phenomena it is indispensable to get one’s thoughts into a state of suspension and mix its minute particles into the air which they so closely resemble. If I had remained

10 From *Aristophanes: Lysistrata and Other Plays*. Transl. by A. Sommerstein, revised edition 2002. London: Penguin.

on the ground and investigated the upper regions from there, I would never had made any discoveries—the earth exercises too powerful an attraction upon the moisture contained in thought. The same thing occurs in the case of cress.

STREPSIADES [*baffled*]: I do not know what you mean, all this about thought attracting moisture to cress. Do come down to me, Socrates darling, so you can teach me what I have come to learn.

SOCRATES [*as he is lowered to ground level*]: And what have you come to learn?

STREPSIADES: I want to me made an orator. Interest bills and heartless creditors are laying me waste with fire, the sword and distress warrants.

SOCRATES: How did you manage to get so much in debt, unawares?

STREPSIADES: I was laid low by a vicious attack of horse-fever. But anyway, I want you to teach me one of your two Arguments—the one that always pays off and never pays up. It does not matter what fees you charge; I am prepared to swear by the gods that I will pay them.

SOCRATES: What do you mean, swear by the gods? The first thing you will have to learn is that with us the gods are no longer current.

3. Lines c. 356–75

STREPSIADES [*to the chorus*]: Then hail to you, mighty Ladies; could you—if you ever do, do this—could you, Queens of the Universe show me the power of your heavenly voices?

CHORUS [*i.e. The Clouds*]:

Hail, grey-headed seeker for language artistic,
And you, our high priest of fine twaddle!
For although, among specialists cosmologicistic,
Old Prodicus has the best noddle,
Still we favour you greatly, because of the way
You swagger and glance with disdain [*cf. Symposion 221b*]
Endure much derision, go barefoot all day,
And on our account act really vain.

STREPSIADES: Holy Earth, *what* a voice! How divine, how awesome, how fantastic!

SOCRATES: Yes, you know, these are the only real divinities; all the rest are bunkum.

STREPSIADES: What on earth do you mean? You do not think Olympian Zeus is a god?

SOCRATES: Zeus? Who is Zeus? What rubbish you talk. There is no Zeus.

STREPSIADES: What do you mean? Who makes the rain, then? That is the first thing I want to know.

SOCRATES [*pointing to the chorus*]: They do, of course, and I will prove it to you very clearly. Have you ever seen it raining when the sky was blue? Surely Zeus, if it *was* him, would be able to send rain even when the Clouds were out of town!

