

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Prelude.

[A flute is heard playing. Its repetitive sound has some effect of pathos. Nothing is seen. Gradually an old man is visible sitting upon a rock on the top of a mountain playing the flute. Like the opening bars of the Warsaw concerto is monotonous, repetitive, gripping. It is half wail half hope. He stops playing for a few moments looks around as if in search of something and then proceeds with his playing. After a few more moments he stops. He puts down the flute and softly soliloquize to himself]

PANDAMATOR:

Unchanged eternal nature. Vast expanse of nothing proceeding to no end. Or is it ~~expanding~~ to an end. I have grown weary with watching meditating. Feeding the same sheep watching day following night and the seasons obelisked by tucking themselves behind one another and the sun and the wind the same as always. I ~~have~~ thought once that the sun was life giver. Our great father. And the wind the hand of coolness caressing fiery brows. But I was mistaken. The sun has been the ~~inflection~~ that has whitened life to leprosy. That made skulls shine and the wind has been biting upon living bodies, with the mania of hate. I feel the scorching rays and the biting winds. I hear the wail of grief, the anguished sigh of remorse. I listened to the bridal whispers of man marrying catastrophe. Always the same. Always the futility of striving for the hiding-place of life that plays everybody false. Always the urge to do deeds to sing songs. Always the striving to go on ~~even~~ to pave the ~~earth~~ ~~eranking~~ changes ~~from~~ position to post with the dust of breath.

I was young then. I could see. ^{And I watched} The wriggly slimy creature struggling on unyielding unrelenting. The brutish ape using his hands to master the brutes. And the hands were used to conquer to climb to build to soil ships to forge weapons. And I watched him fighting. And cities and throes crumbling dying and rising again upon ~~the earth inconsiderate~~ ~~to~~ the chilled bosom of an inconsiderate earth. The streams of tears. The host of hearts beating in unison terror. The human bodies curled beneath human feet like grapes are crushed for wine. And the futility of it all remains

led to nothing. Dullness ~~shaded~~ shrouded the vanities of man. It terrified him. But it had not given him wisdom.

I thought that man could learn from experience. The crawling parasite learned to walk erect. He learnt from blind experience from blind urge and effort. He marvelled in the sun in contemplation of his achievement. He was nature's masterpiece. A labyrinthine mechanism operating in rhythmic unison, the most elaborate achievement of mother earth became the master of everything else produced by his mother. But earth's pride valued of all things less itself. The warm limbs the strong arms the beauty of it all, nature's painful laborious ~~times~~ products, man, the perfect animal valued not his life.

Tired of death and pain tired of seing blood flowy faces contorted in agony, children withing in terror, I became blind. No more sightful sights. But I can still hear the crie of victims echoing through the aeons. Above all the unholy discord of war above the sound and the fury, there would always be heard the cry of the victims. Hecuba bewailing the strange arithmetic of chance that left her helpless survivor amidst unconsolable desolation. Andromache's ~~we~~ crying her nobility to shreds for the murder of her baby son. "a strange murder for brave men". The Jews of the banks of the river of babylon. The blind stampede of dumb fear ~~following~~ Alexanders Alexanders putting whole cities to the sword. The heart-rending woe from Cesars senseless butcheries. And through Christian and Pagan and Molammedan savagery piling up pyramids of cries and groans that I cannot bear myself play my flute. And the havoc and the furious cacophony of disaster have spread and are spreading and blind as I am I cannot but sense the disaster.

The earth is full of sound and in that sound I hear raging the heartbeat of fear. Man unadjustable feet are failing under the ^{extended} weight of his ~~staggering~~ greed, and he is sinking down into the ~~mind~~ of primeval heartlines. An awful din rises from that sinking. No! no! It cannot be the death throes of man. No! neither I nor nature shall we be robbed of our efforts. No.

O! I am tired there must not be (the voices weaken, steadily and the light ^{correspondingly} fails) any more foulness. ~~I cannot bear to wait to see the anarchy and the fish and serpent to change the filthy worm of the slime to man.~~ There must not be another harrowing straining of charity. Life must go on, go on, go on. ~~factes~~ and the flute is heard for a brief second far away.

Stephanoles: Not on the couch please. Let me lie on the floor and think better that way.

Socrates: There is no other way but this. Do it.

Stephanoles: (while lying on the couch). Poor me! What trials and tribulations I will undergo to day at the hands of bugs! (lies down)

Socrates: (walking round him soliloquizing). Meditate on things, and analyze things, let your mind roam and examine envelope things from all sides and if you find yourself in an impasse quickly get on the scent of some new idea, and then on to another and drift on. But above all try and keep awake.

Stephanoles: (restless, turning over and over) Ugh, ugh, holy hell, etc.

Socrates: Why are you groaning and moaning? What's the matter?

Stephanoles: I am perished. There, blinking "Corinthian" bugs (Corinthians were at the time the principal enemy of Athens from whom) swarming upon me from all sides suck my blood and chew up my life, they tick venomously at my testicles and plough furrows in my buttocks. Oh, they are killing me.

Socrates: Don't make ^{so} much fuss.

Stephanoles: I cannot help it. How can I? My money is gone and my healthy colour. Then my slippers disappeared and now my life blood is being devoured. And to cap it all I must lie here and harm to keep wide awake while poor life is drained away.

Socrates: (still walking up and down as if in a trance) What are you ^{with} ~~with~~ about? Why are n't you meditating?

Stephanoles: Who me? I am indeed by Poseidon!

Socrates: And what have you been thinking?

Stephanoles: Nothing much. I was just calculating whether there will be anything of me left after the bugs have done their job.

Socrates: To hell with you.

Stephanoles: No need to. I am there already, couch I all.

Socrates (pleasantly): Come now. You should not weaken now. Cover yourself with the blankets and your mind will search for some subtle ^{thought} ~~way~~ to satisfy you.

Stephanoles: Oh how I wish that something would come to me under these blankets to satisfy me. (He covers himself up and remains quiet. Socrates walks around a couple of times and stops)

Socrates: Let's see now what the fellow is doing. (Kneeling) Hey! Are you asleep?

Stephanoles: No, I am wide awake. (he puts his head out)

Socrates: Did you get anything?

Stephanoles: No, nothing whatever by Zeus!

Socrates: Nothing at all?

Stephanoles: Nothing except what I hold with my right hand - shall I show you

Socrates: No need to. Aren't you going to cover yourself up and meditate a bit longer?

Stephanoles: About what? You'll tell ^{Socrates} what to think about.

Socrates: Think first, what you want the most and tell me

Stephanoles: You must have heard a whole lot of things what I want the most. I want to find a way not to pay my debt.

ACT III.

[The scene as in ~~that~~ one. Strepsiades' home. It's midday. Strepsiades is pacing up and down looking very angry. Phidippides ~~is~~ ^{is} coolly unconcerned sits on a couch.]

Strepsiades: No by the nixts of heaven! You won't stay here a minute longer. Go away and devour of what is left of your ^{ground} ~~mother's~~ ^{parent's} ~~people's~~ Megacles' fortune.

Phidippides. (sneaky) Poor daddy! What's the matter with you? In the name of Olympian Zeus you must be unwell, a bit out of your senses.

Strepsiades: You see, you see! "Olympian Zeus". O, the fool! At his age and to believe these nonsense about Zeus. ~~Hoo! Hoi! Hoi!~~

Phidippides: What is there prory to laugh at?

Strepsiades: I just realised that you must be a thoughtless babe to believe these ancient, old, antiquated nonsense. But come with me and you will find plenty ~~of things~~ of new things. I will teach you something which, if you learn it will make a real man, indeed. But be careful! ~~and~~ ~~and~~ don't whisper it to any one.

Phidippides (rising) Well what is it father.

Strepsiades (solemnly) Just now you ~~swore~~ ^{swore} by mentioned Zeus: Right?

Phidippides: Right

Strepsiades: Now you will realise what a blessing it is to learn, my son. (with great deliberation) Phidippides, there is no Zeus.

Phidippides: where ~~Mako~~ is in his place then?

Strepsiades: Whirl, the King of Chaos has overthrown Zeus, the King of Olympus.

Phidippides: what nonsense are you falling father?

Strepsiades: That is how it is. Be sure of it.

Phidippides: And who told you that?

Strepsiades: Socrates the Median and Chaeophon who can even follow the track of a flea.

Phidippides: Have you gone completely mad father, to believe the olives of this scatter-brains?

Strepsiades: Hold your tongue son and ^{speak} ~~say~~ ^{it} ~~about~~ ^{upright} and wise men - the thinkers of our age. Men who ^{believe in} ~~because~~ ^{frugality} and simple life who never shave or rub themselves with ointment or go to baths and clean themselves. You on the other hand even before my death you have squandered ^{my} ~~my~~ ^{property} ~~down~~ ^{the} ~~down~~. However it's not late. Come with me ^{now} ~~now~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{take} ~~my~~ ^{place} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~learn~~ ^{the} ~~things~~ in my place that I am too old to learn.

Phidippides: But what good thing can one learn from chaps like them?

Strepsiades: what good! Everything that is wise and clever in our world. First of all you will know how uneducated, how grossly ignorant you are. (~~That~~ ^{That} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~smack~~ ^{smack} ~~by~~ ^{by} ~~a~~ ^a ~~thought~~ ^{thought}) won't for time a couple of minutes. I will be back.

Phidippides. (^{clucking} ~~clucking~~ ^{about} ~~about~~) ^{What} ~~What~~ ^{shall} ~~shall~~ ^I ~~I~~ ^{do} ~~do~~ ^{know} ~~know~~? My father is out of his mind. What shall I do! To have him certified for a lunatic or to tell the undertakers about his affliction and ask them to prepare his coffin?

Strepsiades returns carrying two young chicks. Holds one up.

Strepsiades: Come on Tell me what this is.

Socrates. Start again. Cover yourself up. Give your thought a free rein and allow pure subtlety of wit to percolate through the essence of things minutely examining everything divide and differentiate purpose

Strepsiades. God helps us!

Socrates. Keep quiet. If any particular thought troubles you put it gently aside and proceed on another plan. Then come back to it again, set it once more in motion and balance up the imponderability of its alternatives.

Strepsiades. O dear, dear Socrates. Please.

Socrates. What's the matter old boy?

Strepsiades. I have found a scheme of how not to pay my debts.

Socrates. Well let's have it.

Strepsiades. What do you think of it?

Socrates. Of it? I haven't heard it yet.

Strepsiades. Assuming that I buy a witch from Thessaly and make her bring the moon down to earth at night and then frame her and keep her carefully on the wall as mirror...

Socrates. What good will that do you?

Strepsiades. It's obvious. If the moon never rises anywhere then nobody can calculate the ^{month} ~~time~~ and my debts need not be paid.

Socrates. How is that?

Strepsiades. Can't you see? We borrow the money on a monthly basis and payment is ^{always} due at the end of the month.

Socrates. (impressed.) Well done. It's very clever of you.

Now I am going to set another serious problem before you. Suppose that an action is brought against you to pay five Talents how can you manage to avoid this whole horrible affair?

Strepsiades. How? I don't know. Let me think about it.

Socrates. (seeing Strepsiades pensive). Don't always bury your thought in your navel. Let it fly freely about in the air, yes, freely like a cockchafer tied by the foot with a thin thread.

Strepsiades. (Sitting up with a jerk). I have found a wonderful, a very clever, a wonderful method to squash the case. Absit it wonderful, wonderful.

Socrates. Let's have it first.

Strepsiades. Have you seen those transparent, beautiful, rounded stones at in the drug-store which they use to light the fire?

Socrates. Oh, you mean the crystal lenses (i.e. the burning glass)

Strepsiades. That is! Well, I will get one of these and while the clerk is writing down the court decision, I from afar will train the rays on the wax plate and melt away every reference to my case.

Socrates. (ponderously) Very wise indeed, by all the Graces!

Strepsiades. Oh, I am so delighted to have this squashed a decision that would have cost me five Talents.

Socrates. (obviously pleased) Now try and solve me following question and quick mind you.

Strepsiades. What is it?

Socrates: Supposing you were summoned to court and your ^{opponent} ~~case~~ ^{case} were sure to lose your case because for lack of witnesses were to win the case what would you do?

Strepsiades: I should waste any breath on that. It's easy.

Socrates: What would you do?

Strepsiades: It's easy. If there is a trial before mine and I still have time I will run off and hang myself.

Socrates: Your talk arrand nonsense.

Strepsiades: In the name of the gods can't you see that if I am dead nobody can take me to court.

Socrates: You are out of your mind. Get away. I cannot teach you any longer.

Strepsiades: Why not Socrates? In God's name don't send me away.

Socrates: But you forget as soon as you learn. [That is so is it not.]

Can you tell me what was the first thing I have taught you?

Strepsiades (trying to remember): Let me see, let me see. What was the first thing now. What was it? Damn it. Oh yes! The thing we knead the bread... what do you call it?

Socrates: Oh, why don't you go and hang yourself? You are an old doddery forgetful, fool! [Socrates walks off looking angry.]

Strepsiades (alone): Alas. What damned hard luck. Poor me what is to become of me. It's certain that to perish now that I have not learned to use my tongue.

(Looking at one cloud.) Clouds, clouds! Give me some good advice clouds

We counsel you old chap
if you brought up a son
put him in your place. For him
this learning will be fun.

Strepsiades: Yes I have a son. A fine boy well-brought up. But he doesn't want to learn these things. What shall I do?

Chorus: And why do you allow it?

Strepsiades: He is big and strong, and through his mother he has the blood of the haughty Coesura family. (A host pours).

Still I must go and find him. And if he refuses to obey me I will turn him out of doors [once and for all] - that's what I'll do. But wait for me. I will go to him and come back shortly.

(Strepsiades goes. Socrates meanwhile comes out and the chorus address Socrates.)

Chorus: It will do you good to know that we're ready all goods divine to shower on you freely. For here you found a dupe all prepared to obey what you say - whether clever or silly. You can see for yourself how dazzled and elated he is by you so hurry and get what can out of him for chances like these one must not be slow to seize before they change and turn and leave you with nothing to earn.

Phid. A chicken.

Strepriades. Very good. (Holding up the other). And this?

Phid. A chicken

Step. What, both the same. You are an idiot. You will call one the male chicken and this the female.

Phid. Male and female chicken! Ha Ha Ha. These are the things that these earthy wiseans are feasting your's

Step. And lots more besides. But whatever, I learn I forget at once. My old head cannot hold anything.

Phid. This is the knowledge then that cost you your cloak.

Step. No I haven't lost it. I simply argued it away (or discussed it out of me).

Phid. And what has happened to your sandals, your feet?

Step. If I have lost it was because necessity dictated so, like Pericles and the treasure of Athens. But let's not waste time any longer. Come obey your father even if you feel that you do wrong. Obey me like I did you when you were six years old and still lisping and you wanted a little chariot out the festival of Diasia and I bought it for you with the first obol that I have received from my first judgeship in the court of the Heliasts.

Phid. I think that that the time will come when you will regret this.

Strepriades. I am so pleased that you have obeyed. (Both Strepriades and Phidippides leave for the frontistension. The scene changes to the Parousistherion. Step. & Phid. enter)

Strepriades. Socrates, Socrates, Come out. I am bringing my son to you. Here ^(Socrates emerges) ~~she~~ is. He did not want to come but I manage to persuade him.

Socrates. (Looking at Phidip). He looks too young to me and I don't suppose he is used unharassing his mind and suspending himself in mist-air to be nearest to the essence of things.

Phidip. (arrogantly) I believe you will sharpen your brain better if you was ~~hanged~~ ^{hanged} from that basket there instead of sitting in it!

Strepriades. Why don't you shut up. Insulting the master!

Socrates. ^{if you see} (Stangely) to ^{holly ungrammatical} what an idiotically ^{unpleasant} emphatic way to speak. And how clumsily he pouts his lips when talking! How can he learn how the art of pleading his case in court, of examining witnesses, the art of sharp and convincing repartee. And yet when I think of it Hypetobos (the ruler of Athens after the death of Cleon) has learned all these for a talent only!

Strepriades. Ignore what he says, but teach him. He is gifted with ^{good} (brain). Even when he was that high he would build houses at ^{his} home, carve boats, make ^{horse} carts out of leather and make frogs out of pomegranates. Birds ever so wonderfully. So I pray you teach well, both sides of the same question ^{in order to learn} (the two ways) of arguing or point the right one which is right and and the ^{false} ~~wrong~~ one which arguing from false premises defeats the right (You understand what I mean.) If you cannot teach both ways at least teach him the false one.

Socrates. The just and the unjust method of reasoning, [the straight and the crooked method] will teach ~~each~~ themselves. I will not be here.

Strepriades. Remember this above all. Teach him the knack of how to challenge and compute the right effectively.

