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Introduction

Aristophanes's chorus, in the *Birds* of 414, jokes that in its flights over Athens it sees a Laconizing (1281) Socrates *psychagogei* ("soul-conjures," 1555). Plato's Socrates, in the *Phaedrus* of 370-350, personifies a group of "Laconic" (260e5) *logoi*, also lately arrived in the Attic midst, as making a remarkably similar claim, that rhetoric properly conceived is a kind of *psychagogia*; his *logoi* thereby appear to attribute soul-conjuring once again to Socrates (261a7-8; reiterated 271c9).¹ What can we make of this apparent parallel?

Earlier in the *Birds* Aristophanes had implied that Socrates was Sparta-crazy, longhaired, famished, unwashed, and followed by other laconizers (1281-1283). In his latter passage of 1553-1564, a spoof on *Odyssey* XI.23-51 and Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* 273a *TrGF*, Socrates is again unwashed, and is now a denizen of an underworldly swamp, conjuring Chaerephon the deathly-pale Bat (Chaerephon is called a bat once before, in the earlier Socrates passage, 1296). Thus for Aristophanes, saying that someone *psychagogei* means deriding him as uncouth, eccentric, manipulative, and even anti-Athenian (as Spartan and as engaging in a probably illicit practice). Because Plato uses the same—relatively rare—word for *his* Socrates, are we to suppose that he too means to deride Socrates' innovative conception of rhetoric, and thereby Socrates himself? Does he mean something shocking by the idea of a Socratic *psychagogia*?

Plato scholars tend not to think so. They take *psychagogia* in the *Phaedrus* to be an apt description of good rhetoric, and Plato's use of the term to reflect his approval of Socrates' innovative practice. Reading *psychagogia* as having an laudatory meaning cuts against its older use. To take it as affirmative would, then, require both demonstrating the term's change in tenor—from obviously negative to always or at least occasionally affirmative—and also demonstrating that Plato approves of the specifically *psychagogic* practice articulated or displayed in the *Phaedrus*. Recent scholarship does not provide such demonstrations. This paper argues that even in the *Phaedrus* the term probably retains its derisive, or at least bemused or ironic, connotation. It also argues that Plato means for this ironic connotation to cause the reader to rethink the way Socrates talks to Phaedrus.

This paper thus has two related purposes. First is to understand a 55-year-old specifically *psychagogic* Socrates in the eyes of Aristophanes. Second is to understand why Plato, at least

¹ Text and lineation from Henderson 2000 (Aristophanes) and Burnet's OCT (Plato). All translations by the author.

² Collins 2001

³ Recently, Moss 2013; Ryan 2012, xxi, 253-4; Yunis 2011, 12-13, 183; Scully 2003, vii; Asmis 1986, 154 (who says that Plato depicts a bad kind of *psychagogia*, but this bad form is never called *psychagogia*).

forty years later, once again associates a 55-year-old Socrates with the idea of *psychagogia*, and does so in the context of his discussion of rhetoric.

I. Socrates in Aristophanes' Birds

Late in the play and over four stanzas, the bird-chorus reports on the many bizarre goings-on it has seen in its ethnographic flights over Athens.⁴ In the first, the birds make fun of Cleonymus' cowardice (for the second time in the play; cf. 290). Then they regard a land of the blessed, full of dinners and conversation (ξυναριστῶσι καὶ ξύνεισι) with the heroes but terrorized by a particularly rapacious Athenian (1470-1493 with 712). The third stanza, immediately following Prometheus' scene and preceding the embassy of Poseidon, Heracles, and the Triballian God (1565-1693), is shorter:

By the Shadefoots there is some swamp, where unwashed Socrates *psychagogei*. There even Pisander came wanting to see the soul [ψυχήν] which when living left him, having as sacrifice some camellamb, cutting whose throat just as Odysseus, he left, and then coming up to him from below, to the gore of the camel was Chaerephon the Bat.

The joke on Socrates and Chaerephon frames a joke on Pisander, a man, like Cleonymus, regularly derided for his failure of courage. The fourth episode (1694-1705) identifies as "tongue-nourished people" (ἐγγλωττογαστόρων γένος)—paradoxically called "barbarians"— Gorgias and his ilk, those who make their living in Attica through talk.

The choral interludes mark time while the speaking actors change costume. They cause a dawning recognition that seemingly foreign novelties are really local products, and are thus the cause a sort of comedic self-recognition.⁶ They may serve as a sort of exotic miscellanea of

⁴ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καινὰ καὶ θαυμαστ'... δεινὰ πράγματα 1470-1472. On the enthnographic quality, see Rusten 2013; Dunbar 1998, 468-470.

⁵ Andocides *On the mysteries* 36; Aristophanes fr. 84; Eupolis fr. 35.

⁶ Rusten 2013. Strauss 1966, 184, 186, asserts that holding the interludes together is their depiction of unjust men.

Athenian decadence, or they may instead share an internal connection concerned with a life and afterlife of philosophical talk, a sort of multipart Socratic idyll (cf. *Apol.* 41a6-c4, *Grg.* 447b1-461b2). This last observation may be better assessed once we have considered specifically the middle of the last three episodes, the one featuring Socrates.

For Aristophanes' joke on the *Nekyia*, the image of Socrates must conjure in the popular mind something connected to psychagogia. How so, and to what aspect of psychagogia? Benjamin Rogers makes the simplest and at the same time boldest conjecture. According to him, in 414 the term *psychagogia* could refer only to "conjuring spirits of the dead." This is relevant to Socrates because "[i]t is extremely probable that... [Socrates] had compared himself to a necromancer..., by whose means souls were brought up to the light from the nether darkness" (1906, 208). Rogers presents this view as required by the context, but we might cite some circumstantial evidence to support it. As we will see below, through the fifth century we know only of psychagogia's connection to dead souls. Aristophanes may have sent up Socrates' language about selves and souls, given that in his earlier *Clouds* he appears to quote or paraphrase Socrates' use of reflexive pronouns (345, 385, 478, 482, 695, 737). Plato presents Socrates as explaining his goals by means of outrageous analogies, especially "midwifery" in the Theaetetus (148e1-151d3), but also as a gadfly, military sergeant, and Achilles (Apol. 31a5-a8, 28a10, 28c1-d8). Socrates' purported "soul-raising" analogy would be particularly apt, presaging both the Republic Socrates' allegory of the cave (514a1-517d1) and the Apology Socrates' image of the wakening gadfly. For the Platonic Socrates, being properly alive and human (*Apol.* 38a5) requires something more than uniting body and soul; it requires the perfection of that soul (30b1, 36c5). Using the language of psychagogia, Socrates would hang his unusual moral concerns on his neighbors' very usual mortal concerns. The most striking evidence for Rogers' conjecture is that Plato too associates Socrates with the word psychagogia.

It would not be surprising, then, that were someone to have asked Socrates (or an associate) what he meant to do with those with whom he investigated, Socrates or that associate would have answered that he *psychagogei* them. But would Socrates or that associate have said so enough times or around enough gossips for Aristophanes and his audiences to have learned about it? Supposing they had, would the analogy have had enough impact, and have seemed so perfectly to characterize Socrates' behavior, as to make this joke worthwhile? (That it would, see Simmias' report on the popular association of philosophy and death at *Phaedo* 64b1-c1.) Would Socrates really have thought that his activity seemed at all similar to soul-conjuring—and did soul-conjuring ever seem to *improve* the lot of the dead? As a final consideration, we must

⁷ Jeremiah 2012, 182-191.

remember that being a *maia* was not itself a shameful profession;⁸ but on the condition that being a *psychagogos* were shameful,⁹ would Socrates want to associate himself with such a dubious expertise? What plausibility Rogers' view has must be tempered by all these uncertainties.

A more cautious line retains the essential connection to dead-soul *psychagogia* that the entire scene at 1553-1564 depicts but avoids direct attributions of speech to Socrates. Van Leeuwen 1902 sees the joke in terms of Simmias' characterization of philosophers in the *Phaedo* mentioned above. Socratic-types love the Shadefoot region. they protect themselves from the sun (*Clouds* 92, 96, 103, 120, 198-199, 1171); they seek the obscuring and ever-changing sophistic mists (*Clouds* 263-339); and in stark contrast with visiting intellectual impresarios—bedazzled in fine clothes and finer words—they remain filthy and dour. Van Leeuwen claims that the audience would laugh at the philosopher who habitually disputed about the soul's immortality while casting aspersions on the allurements of life. Van Leeuwen's view shares the advantage of Rogers', that it explains Socrates' presence in this stasimon without asserting that Socrates has a special understanding of soul or that the word *psychagogia* already means "beguiling speech." It instead plays first on the sort of life-in-death parodied in the *Clouds*, and second, and more concretely, on an inferred Socratic interest in the connection between being alive and having some continued conscious existence, where Socrates' supposed ambivalence about this present life puts into question his concerns about death.

Coherent, modest, and defensible as this dead-soul line of interpretation may be, the majority of commentators cannot avoid thinking about *psychagogia*'s role in later rhetorical history, and Socrates' reflections on and participation in that history. Thus an older and more continuous tradition of interpretation understands *psychagogia* to have two meanings. Kennedy 1874, 141-143, is characteristic of this tradition. He says that Socrates' psychopompic duties express both his "personal eccentricities" and the fact that he "charmed the souls" of his disciples. On this view, *psychagogia* means "attract[ing] living people to one's side." Merry 1904, ad 1553, claims that Aristophanes "hit at unpopular characters" in this parody of the *Nekyia*, and in treating Socrates as the "hierophant," he played on *psychagogei*'s double meaning as summoner of souls from Hades and attractor of minds by teaching. Asmis 1986, 156, assumes that Aristophanes' audience could understood *psychagogia* outside a raising-the-dead context. She goes further than Merry's "attraction" reading, and adopts an "influencing" reading. "In casting Socrates as a conjurer of souls, Aristophanes is parodying Socrates' well-known

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⁸ Tarrant 1988, 119-120.

⁹ Dickie 2001, 22-23; Johnston 1999, 103.

¹⁰ The Shadefoot idea is suggested here perhaps by Prometheus' parasol, per Dunbar 1998, 485, or by the fact that σχιά can mean soul of the dead (LSJ 3

¹¹ See generally Whitehorne 2002.

¹² Cf. Handley 1956, 213, noting that the Aristophanic Socrates keeps persuasive Λόγοι on retainer.

ethical concern, his care for the soul." On this reading, *psychagogia* refers both to raising dead souls and doing therapeutic work, but these two actions would have had to have seemed similar enough for the lampoon to come off. Sommerstein 1987, 300-301, suggests that rather than parodying Socrates' ethical concern, by saying that Socrates *psychagogei*, a term which "can also be used of beguiling men's minds by persuasive talk," Aristophanes "may... hint here that Socrates corrupts his pupils morally (as he corrupts Pheidippides in the *Clouds*)." Most recently, Nan Dunbar has split the difference between Asmis and Sommerstein. She accepts that for Socrates *psychagogei* "perhaps" also meant "charms (living) people's souls," given that he talked about "mind as the seat of knowledge and ignorance, goodness and badness, which needs care and cultivation even more than the body" (1998, 485-486, per *Apol*. 29d-30a and *Nu*. 94, 198-9, 503-4). She continues: "[t]here may be present also the other sense of ψυχαγωγεῖν, 'beguile or seduce the mind of the living,' Socrates [made] enthusiastic disciples of young men, whom his teaching encouraged to question traditional values." Dunbar implies that that questioning would have "ethically inflected" or "corrupting" purposes, depending on one's perspective.

Thus the majority understanding is that Aristophanes' joke on Socrates requires the audience to know two distinct meanings of *psychagogia* the performance of which could be imagined to overlap in the *Nekyia* parody. One refers to the raising of dead *psuchai*. The other refers to influencing the *psuchai* of the living. There is some disagreement about the nature of that influence on the living. The "charismatic" *psychagogos* draws people to him, or he causes them to nurture their true selves, or he beguiles them and thus corrupts their moral character. Both aspects of *psychagogia* are funny here. On the dead-soul side, Socrates' followers look like corpses; Socrates presumably spoke often about life, death, death-in-life, and life-in-death; and Socrates' charm is so powerful it would surely lure someone from out of Hades. ¹⁴ On the living-soul side, Socrates' concern to turn or nurture souls, and criticize other thinkers for inadequately thinking about soul, would distinguish him from the run-of-the-mill sophist.

Though the jokes would be good, we must ask: is this two-meaning view of the term *psychagogia* plausible? And if it is plausible, can anything more definite be said about the implied effect of Socrates on the souls of the living? To answer these questions, our evidence is the other uses of *psychagogia* in classical Greek literature.

II. The History of psychagogia

In the fifth century, we have record of *psychagog*- words only in tragedy (except for Aristophanes' use). There they refer exclusively to conjuring up the dead, and with time, a

¹³ His evidence for this meaning is the *Phaedrus* passages from forty years later.

¹⁴ Cf. Borthwick 2001.

growing tinge of disrepute. In the *Persians* of 472, the chorus of Persian elders conjure (ψυχαγωγοῖς 687) the Ghost of Darius from his tomb. They do so with shrill cries and piteous invocations. The path from the underworld is difficult, Darius says, but the authority he still wields allows him brief leave. Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* apparently dramatized Odysseus' *nekyia*, calling up dead souls (ἀψύχοις) for their interrogation (273, 273a Radt). A fragment of Sophocles' *Cerberus* asserts bluntly that only those having died are conjured (ἀλλ' οἱ θανόντες ψυχαγωγοῦνται μόνοι, 327a Snell). In Euripides' *Alcestis* of 438, Admetus asks whether the Alcestis he sees is in fact a mere shade, some illusion (τι φάσμα) from the Underworld, rather than a living woman; Heracles denies it, saying, with some fervor, that no *psychagogos* had any role in her return (1127-1128). *Psychagogoi*, a dubious crowd in the first place, must deal only with dead souls. In a Euripidean fragment from the *Eurystheus*, written perhaps the year before the *Birds*, Heracles is derided as a terrible, great *psychagogos* (βάσκανον μέγιστον ψυχαγωγόν: 379 Nauck), likely for kidnapping Cerberus. In the chorus of Persian elder son with shrill cries and piteous invocations.

Only from the fourth century do we have evidence of *psychagogia* referring also to actions unrelated to the souls of the dead. A passage from Plato's *Laws* (X.909b1-10), written as late as the mid-fourth century, plays on the dual meaning:

And such bestial men may come to be who don't believe in the gods, or find them unconcerned with humans, or think them persuadable, and—scorning men, they $\psi\nu\chi\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\hat{\omega}\sigma\iota$ many of the living, and claiming to $\psi\nu\chi\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\nu}$ the dead, and promising to persuade the gods, using magic by sacrifices and prayers and songs—single and entire homes and cities they try to take out utterly for the sake of money.

Plato's Athenian Visitor derides the heterodox—atheists, deists, theomancers—as manipulators of people's fears about being manipulated in death. His observation about blackmailers is a clever one. To protect their souls from being conjured once they are dead, people allow themselves to be conjured while still alive. The method of soul-conjuring differs in the two cases: fear-mongering persuasion is used in the present day, potent ritual is used in the afterlife; and the consequences differ: giving over money now, having one's spirit entranced later. But the

¹⁵ On the last two passages see also Dickie 2001, 30-31.

¹⁶ Lloyd-Jones 1996 acknowledges *Cerberus* could be another name for the lost *Heracles*.

¹⁷ Dickie 2001, 326n47, and Johnston 1999, 21-23, 62, note that this play makes clear that *psychagogia* is a distinct and contemptible specialty. Plutarch, *Moralia* fr. 126 Sandbach, says that the Spartans hired *psychagogoi* in the mid-fifth century to expel the ghost of Pausanius.

¹⁸ This last conjecture: John of Sardis on Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 5 Rabe; that it refers to Heracles: see Collard and Cropp 2008.

basic form remains the same: causing a person to act in some way disconnected from his free choice.

Plato's Timaeus uses the term with a similarly contra-voluntariness sense when he describes the appetitive part of the soul. The appetitive part does not understand reason, he says, and even if it did, it would still be mostly bewitched (ψυχαγωγήσοιτο Tim. 71a8) throughout night and day by images and phantasms. Isocrates, likewise, says that the work of poets may be poor in style and thought (τῆ λέξει καὶ τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασιν ἔχη κακῶς) but their non-rational components, their rhythm and harmony (ταῖς εὐουθμίαις καὶ ταῖς συμμετοίαις), may alone have strength enough to carry off their listeners (9.10; from ca. 370-365 BCE). Isocrates also says that the psychagogic effect of speech comes not from reason-based admonition and advice (νουθετείν καὶ συμβουλεύειν) but from the greatest charm to the crowd (τοὺς ὄχλους μάλιστα χαίροντας, 2.49, from ca. 376-373 BCE). Lycurgus uses the term psychagogia to express his doubt that it is possible "to budge" someone by words alone (Leoc. 33). Aeschines tells his audience that even now he "fears lest you will misunderstand me being beguiled by [Demosthenes'] antitheses developed in malice" (On the Embassy, 2.4). Xenophon's Socrates, using language presumably from the mid-fourth century, ¹⁹ asks Cleiton about the way his sculptures' appearance psychagogei viewers into thinking they are alive (Mem. 3.10.6). By the latter half of the fourth century, Aristotle can observe that a tragedy enthralls us most by means of the reversals and recognitions, both parts of the plot ($\mu\dot{\nu}\theta\sigma\nu$), not the spectacle. The comic playwright Timocles, he too talking about the effect of tragedy, says that the spectator becomes enraptured in another's suffering and so forgets his own (*Dionusiazousai* 6 = Athen. 6.223b).²⁰

Thus through the fifth century, *psychagogia* referred to the conjuring of the dead. Only as early as the start of the second quarter of the fourth century do we know it gained metaphorical or new meanings as "either enslavement or pleasure or enjoyment or deception" (Doxopater, *Rhet. Gr.* 2, 347, 15 Walz, following John of Sardis). This has some consequences for the *Birds* of 414. The "conjuring of (dead) souls" meaning is current to the play, and is necessary for the allusions to the *Odyssey* and *Psychagogoi* to come off. But an "influencing of (living) souls" is not testified to for at least forty years. It is remarkable that, despite strong Greek interest in the "non-rational" effects of speech, art, and community in the late fifth century, we have no evidence that a writer ever used *psychagogia* to describe it, not even Plato before his *Phaedrus* (which may have been written anytime after 370).²¹ This does not mean that the word did not or could not have had this secondary meaning as early as 414. It only means that we do not have direct evidence it does. This forces us to reconsider the possible meaning of *psuchê* in 414 both

¹⁹ Cautiously suggested by Gray 1998, 4n18.

²⁰ On the connection between *psychagogia* and the arts, see Murray 2004, 374-80, and Moutsopoulos 1959, 259-61.

²¹ Yunis 2011, 22-24, on 370-350 BCE.

for Aristophanes and for Socrates, and the extent to which such meanings could affect the meaning of *psychagogia*.

III. Psuch-, psuchê and Socrates in the fifth century

An important way by which *psychagogia* might develop new meanings is if its first element, *psuch*-, would be heard independently, as a form of the noun *psuchê*, and the new meanings *psuchê* acquired could be transferred back into the compound. In other words, if people heard *psychagogia* as "*soul*-leading," a compound, then the meaning of "soul-leading" will change if the meaning of "soul" changes. Evidence that people might hear a word like *psychagogia* as a compound is the existence of other, novel *psuch*- prefixed words. Aeschylus wrote a play called Ψυχοστασία ("Soul-weighing"), in which Zeus weighed the soul, or fate, of Achilles against Memnon's. Aristophanes parodied such weighings—replacing souls with words—in his *Frogs* (1365-1410) of 405. Euripides provides the earliest evidence for two further *psuch*- words, ψυχοφοαγής ("letting the soul break loose," *IT* 1466) and ψυχοπομπός ("conductor of souls," *Alc*. 361). Thus by the late fifth-century, *psuch*-x words must have had some familiarity and currency; and if these words were thought of together, they would be seen to be decomposable to the same first element.

Now let us consider the term *psuchê* in the fifth century. By the time of the *Persians*, Heraclitus could mean by *psuchê* that "central faculty connecting all the others, and ascribing to it the power of connected reasoning and language-learning." The Hippocratics contrasted body and soul in *Airs*, *Waters*, *Places* (23). In tragedy, *psuchê* became, in addition to "life" or "the soul after life," (i) that which is "affected by sorrow, anger, pleasure, joy, love"; (ii) "the organ of daring, courage, and endurance"; (iii) "an intellectual element"; (iv) "the most precious part of the personality," vulnerable to injustice and vice; (v) a person as such; (vi) "a mental process or state." By Sophocles' *Philoctetes* of 409, five years after the *Birds*, *psuchê* clearly refers to the mind affected by rhetoric: τὴν Φιλοκτήτου σε δεὶ ψυχὴν ὅπως λόγοισιν/δόλοισιν ἐκκλέψεις λέγων ("You have to snatch the soul of Philoctetes by speaking with words/deceits," 54).²⁵

Given the available meanings of *psuchê*, Aristophanes could have made a play on *psychagogei*, using it to mean not just "soul-conjuring" but also "person-enchanting"; and this would be so even if the word when used in everyday society had only the necromantic sense. But the *availability* of the non-necromantic sense does not alone *show* that Aristophanes used it here. Whether he did depends in part on Aristophanes' thoughts about Socrates' use of or connection

²² Sommerstein 2008, 274-5; Farioli 2004.

²³ Nussbaum 1972, 5, drawing especially on 67a ("spider analogy") and 107 ("barbarian souls") DK; Webster 1957, 149: "it is the function of *psyche* to understand the language of the senses."

²⁴ Webster 1957, 150-151.

²⁵ The λόγοισιν/δόλοισιν crux does not have immediate bearing on the meaning of *psychagogia*.

to the term *psuchê*. Our evidence for Socrates' vocabulary is weak. Plato was a mere boy by 414. So despite the interference Aristophanes' comic temper causes to reconstructing philosophical vocabulary, the poet is the best source we have. He did, fortunately, have reason to think frequently about Socrates—at least during the writing of the *Clouds* of 424, during his revision of that play sometime after 419, at the time of the Birds in the run-up to 414, and at the time of the *Frogs* of 405.²⁶ In his earliest play featuring Socrates, Socrates does not use the word *psuchê*. Aristophanes' usages seem otherwise consistent with those elsewhere in drama; they do not obviously presuppose a special Socratic sense, even if the term arises more frequently here than in his other plays, a quarter of the extent mentions.²⁷ Strepsiades, who does not know who Socrates is or even his name (100), refers to the members of the *phrontisterion* as ψυχῶν $\sigma \circ \phi \hat{\omega} v$ ("wise souls," 94). He speaks of his own soul having taken flight upon hearing the voice of the Clouds; now his soul seeks ($\zeta \eta \tau \epsilon \hat{i}$) to talk in ludicrously sophistic ways (319-321). When the chorus asks him whether "enduring is in your soul" (τὸ ταλαίπωρον ἔνεστιν ἐν τῆ ψυχῆ 414-415), he responds that he is willing to develop a "rigorous soul" (ψυχής στερράς 420). But Strepsiades later complains that the bedbugs are draining his life-soul (τὴν ψυχὴν ἐμπίνουσιν 711, cf. 717). The Worse Argument asks his opponent which of Zeus' son has the "best soul" (ἄριστον ψυχήν 1049). Thus psuchê can refer to people, ghostliness, one's courage and endurance, one's traits personified, one's moral excellence, and, with tradition, one's principle of biological life. Presumably none is idiosyncratically Socratic or unfamiliar to the audience.²⁸

In the *Birds*, *psuchê* means courage (which Pisander lost, 1557), but at 466 Peisetairos says that he is cogitating a plan so great that it "will shatter the soul of" (τὴν τούτων θοαύσει ψυχήν) the birds, as though, in modern parlance, it will "blow their minds." This use seems new since the *Clouds*, and to mean "capacity for calm reflection." Likewise, in the *Frogs* of a decade later, Dionysus says that he will choose between Aeschylus and Euripides by following what "his soul wishes" (ἡ ψυχὴ θέλει, 1468). The soul is something not altogether influenced by the spectacle of competition; it is a truer guide to virtuous action (at least per the Chorus' judgment, 1482-1490).

The consequence of this survey is twofold. First, if Aristophanes heard in *psychagogei* "soul-leading," because he thought the term *psuchê* could refer to many aspects of the human besides "that which leaves the corpse of the dead," he could reinterpret it to imply a wide variety of types of leading. He could think of drawing one's courage around; modifying one's deep attitudes; or even improving one's moral character. But second, because *psuchê* had such

²⁶ Probably even more often than that, given the frequency of his extant references to Chaerephon, in *Seasons* fr. 584 K.-A. (after 423) and *Telmissians* fr. 552 (possibly late fifth-century).

²⁷ According to a TLG search, six of Aristophanes 22 uses of the noun are in *Clouds*.

²⁸ Handley 1956, 206-207, 212-215, 221 summarizes all Aristophanes' usages and declares that for him the word regularly means life, courage or seat of courage, and moral or emotional character.

semantic variety through the end of the fifth century, and because Aristophanes never explicitly links Socrates to a particular use of it, we cannot know by *which* sense he means the term. So while we do not need to exercise the caution of Ben Rogers, who supposes that Socrates would have meant the term merely metaphorically, we do need to retain Nan Dunbar's caution, who sees that the <u>stasimon</u> does not articulate the *way* or *sense* in which Socrates "leads souls."

All the same, Aristophanes did make the joke on Socrates' *psychagogia*. Before this play, he thought that Socrates captivated men with his combined esoteric thought and manner and his bewitchingly personal pedagogical mode. By 414, he has a word to describe Socrates-following (ἐσωκράτων, *Birds* 1282).²⁹ Within the decade, Aristophanes brings up the popular conception that Socrates (or at least the Socratic Euripides) still has accomplices, and that they talk too much in unproductive ways:

Thus it is charming not to babble (λαλεῖν)³⁰ sitting alongside Socrates, tossing out culture and leaving aside the greatest things of the tragedian's art.

And this is a sign— whiling away in uselessness (διατριβὴν ἀργὸν ποιεῖσθαι) with words and scratchings of prattle (λήρων)—of a man out of his mind (*Frogs* 1491-1499)

From this combined twenty-year perspective, we see that Aristophanes regularly registers Socrates' amazing appeal. What is amazing is that his appeal is not based in the political power or beauty of the usual celebrities. It comes instead from his austere disposition and the intensity of his seemingly impractical conversations. He slices through tradition, cares little for public appreciation, and vaunts the power of verbal investigation to bring people up to the character they desire. Socrates' comrades may not be the most outwardly vigorous of body (even if they are hardier than one might suspect), but they are certainly strong of tongue. This Euripidean ideal, the charge against which Pericles' defends Athens by saying "we self-cultivate with economy, we philosophize without weakness" (Thuc. 2.40.1), seems to be Aristophanes' target throughout his extant Socrates-mentioning plays.

With all this in mind, the *nekyia* joke seems prompted first by the familiar idea that Socrates' followers are half-dead (ἡμιθνής: *Clouds* 504, cf. 102-103, *Wasps* 1414). But why

²⁹ See Dunbar 1998 ad loc on the reasons to prefer this to the other MS reading, ἐσωμράτουν.

³⁰ On this word see Dover 1993, 21-22.

Socrates at all?³¹ The three parts of the bird-chorus' ethnographic journey, told on the margins of the Prometheus episode (himself the god of forethought), identify elements characteristic of this attitude appropriate to the *phrontisterion*.³² Good talking—perhaps in contrast to the birds' witless singing—is Athens' greatest asset. Socrates, along with Gorgias and those wishing to engage in conversation with heroes, is an emblem of this attitude.³³ Aristophanes can play up Socrates' presumed attention to the inner character that is reached by language: to one's constitution, to the seat of the moral and intellectual faculties. This does not require that Socrates himself be so concerned with the word ψυχή itself. It requires only that Socrates has his procedure, as the psychagogoi had their procedure, to bring his interlocutors' psuchai to their attention.

IV. Plato, the *logoi*, and *psychagogia*

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The noun-form psychagogia comes up twice in the Phaedrus. But the context in which Socrates deploys the noun is complex. Socrates had asked Phaedrus whether a person needs knowledge of one's topic—for example, what is really just—to speak well on that topic (259e4-6). Phaedrus thought not, having heard that to be persuasive, one needs only to know one's audience, what they think to be the case. This is so because persuasion ($\tau \delta \pi \epsilon (\theta \epsilon \nu) 260a4$) comes from knowing how matters appear to someone, not how they actually are (259e7-260a4). Socrates replies to this truth-indifferent view by imagining himself as a persuader (εἴ σε πείθοιμι 260b1; cf. 260b6, c7, c9) who knows nothing besides the beliefs of his audience, in this case Phaedrus. They agree that in such contexts of ignorance, Socrates could cause ridiculous, or even bad, results (260b1-d2).

Socrates catches himself, and wonders whether they have just been too abusive toward the "art of speech" (τὴν τῶν λόγον τέχνην). Socrates imagines "her" rebuttal, which is that she does not mean to claim that one should not know the truth of things—and that to assert that she does so claim this is mere prattling (ληρεῖτε 260d5). All she wants to say is that a successful speaker needs to know her skill. Phaedrus wonders about the strength of this rebuttal. Socrates personifies yet more arguments (λόγοι) "coming over" to lodge a protest, that she is a skill only if knowing her involves knowing the truth of things (260e2-7). Phaedrus now wants these views examined: "lead them (αὐτοὺς παράγων) over here and examine what they say and how (πῶς) they say it." Phaedrus maintains the personification of the logoi, wants them conjured ($\pi\alpha \rho$ άγων), and wants to know the manner in which they speak.

³¹ Strauss 1966, 169, observes that Socrates and Euclpides are from the same *phyle*. ³² Dickie 2001, 31, observes that the bird-chorus is identifying disreputable activities.

³³ The mention of Gorgias probably recalls the nuisances of the courtroom, 39-45 (per Dunbar 1998, 507-510).

Socrates invokes the *logoi* in his highest register, treating them as actual beings from which Phaedrus will take questions:

So come over here, noble beasts ($\theta \varrho \acute{\epsilon} \mu \mu \alpha \tau \alpha$), and persuade ($\pi \epsilon \acute{\epsilon} \theta \epsilon \tau \epsilon$) Phaedrus-with-beautiful-children that unless he philosophizes adequately, he will never be able to speak adequately about anything either. So let Phaedrus answer you. (261a3-5)

Phaedrus, speaking to the *logoi* in the plural, says to them: "Ask away" (261e6). Immediately, then, Socrates utters the following question: "Well then, won't the rhetoric skill as a whole be some kind of *psychagogia* through speech?" (ἡ ὑητορικὴ ἀν εἴη τέχνη ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων, 261a7-8). The talk goes through an argument that this skill applies to all venues and topics, large and small (261b8-e4), and then subsequently an argument that effective persuasion requires knowledge of the truth of one's topic of conversation (261d6-262c3).

We will examine what is said in these arguments, and how it is said, in a moment. But the introductory scene just mentioned deserves a number of comments. The first is that Socrates unequivocally attributes the claim about psychagogia to the logoi. The three imperatives directed at the *logoi* would make no sense if Socrates instantly returned to speaking in his own voice. Socrates has already spoken frequently in someone else's voice, and disclaimed ownership of remarks he physically uttered but who intention he disavowed.³⁴ Second, the *logoi*'s directive is to "persuade" Phaedrus, and the term "persuasion" has been used on four occasions within the last page to mean trying to persuade a person by appeal to their character or beliefs, not, as we might say, kata alêtheian. 35 Third, the logoi say that the sort of psychagogia they mean operates dia ("through," "by means of") logoi. This could be "words" (Griswold 1986) or "things said" (Rowe 1987), as it is generally taken, to contrast the rhetorical kind of psychagogia with a purely ritualistic variety. But it could just as well be a reference to that which is doing the persuading, namely the personified *logoi*. More generally, the *logoi* could be "intentionally persuasive speeches." The *logoi* enunciating this definition could be referring to themselves. Fourth, the τις, referring to "some kind of" psychagogia, means that the speaker knows the term will shock, and thinks the phrase should receive closer inspection. ³⁶ Fifth, "leading around" has been thematized throughout the dialogue, most recently several lines earlier when Phaedrus wants the *logoi* led

³⁴ The *Phaedrus* translation of Rowe 2005, 42-46, changes the speaker titles here to "Socrates/Arguments" (but this change does not appear to affect his interpretation at any point). See Moore 2013 for further discussion of many of the points in this paragraph.

³⁵ On *peithô*, see Gross 1985, 19; Buxton 1982, 31-52; Pepe 1967, chh. 3, 6; Moore 2008.

³⁶ The *tis* is ambiguous between its imperfection-indicating function ("not exactly") and its species-indication function ("a kind of"); for closer discussion of this indefinite article in a similar rhetorical context (on *sullogoi*), see Burnyeat 1996, 94. Yunis 2011, 183, suggests that the τις "cushions the unexpected sense of ψυχαγωγία"; but it does not make *psychagogia* a less strange idea.

over (παράγων 261a2). The dialogue famously begins with jockeying between Socrates and Phaedrus over who will lead whom (227c1, 229a7, b3, 237e3). Socrates likens Phaedrus' power to lead him (περιάξειν) all around Attica by means of speeches (λόγους) to the power of people to lead animals (θρέμματα ... ἄγουσιν) around by means of food (230d5-e1). Thus the *logoi*'s talk of *psychagogia* by means of speeches—*logoi* who Socrates calls animals—resonates with Socrates' earlier talk of non-rational influence. Sixth, the only other occurrence of the term *psychagogia* in this dialogue, at 271c10, introduces no new information. It simply recapitulates this section. It even does so in the context of another speech whose ownership Socrates eventually disavows, attributing it to a writer (ὁ συγγραφεύς 272b3) who addresses Socrates and Phaedrus on his own behalf (272b3). Seventh, by the early fourth century, a *psychagogos* would be a well-known specialist, concerned with manipulating dead—and often impure—spirits.³⁷

Eighth, the question that motivates the second half of the dialogue is what it takes to speak well and finely rather than the opposite (257d7, 259e2, e5). Calling rhetoric psychagogia avoids the question of moral responsibility. Who is to take the blame for bad actions done under the force of persuasion (cf. 260c10-d2: the "bad harvest" is attributed to "rhetoric," not to the speaker or the listener)? Is the person persuaded into action still a free agent and capable of using his judgment, or has the person been turned into a tool of the speaker, an extension, as it were, of his reach?³⁸ "Leading someone around" leaves undetermined whether that leading is compelled, and to where that someone is led. Socrates' first speech, about the harms of love, finds its hazards in its compulsive force (fourteen times: 238e3, 239a5, a7, b5, c5, 240a4, c4, d1, e1, 241b4, b5, b6, b7, c2). To figure out what makes something persuasion rather than coercion, we cannot appeal to the idea of "leading." Leading is ambiguous between pulling or dragging, on the one hand, and guiding or pointing, on the other. That rhetoric has built into itself the idea of asymmetry—a leader and a led, on the current metaphor—does not itself undermine the ideal. There is in every instance of persuasion at least someone propounding and someone considering that proposal. But that asymmetry need not entail that one side is active, the other passive.³⁹ Speaking of rhetoric as "leading" ignores this crucial component.

Socrates' story of the palinode emphasizes the moral difference between being led and using judgment. At first the charioteer is pulled and halted by his horses, at the mercy of his winglessness; he is engaged in violent tugging at the bit (254b-e). As he matures, he gains control over the chariot and his horses. His horses still provide the power, the wings the lift, but

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³⁷ An early fourth-century Dodona oracular tablet speaks of the *psychagogos* Dorius: Evangelides 1935, 257, #23. See also Hdt. 5.92, 1.46.2-3, 49, 8.134.1, E. *Hel.* 569-70, fr. 375, *Phdo.* 81c10-d9, *Rep.* 364b5-365a3, X. *Cyr.* 8.7.18-19, and generally Johnston 1999, 23-121.

³⁸ This question remains live, in, e.g., Garsten 2006; Villa 2001, ch. 1.

³⁹ Cf. Kirby 1990 and Gert 1972.

neither so much *lead* him: he *drives* both. He is given something—forward thrust and vertical lift—that he needs, but he does not alienate his control to the horses. In the same way, rhetorically-fashioned speeches provide one with what most people need, guidance on difficult issues, but admission of them into one's decision does not require alienating from oneself one's power of choice; it enables that power of choice.

Despite calling rhetoric a "psychagogia via words [or speeches]," this definition obscures the role words play in this process, and thus the choice the listener has to accept or ignore what a speaker says. Words are important because they can provide reasons and express judgments. Speakers remind people, through speech, of things they already believe and are willing to act on. How they formulate their words to bring up these memories or latent values, and how they pick the words that lend urgency to what may have otherwise seemed unimportant, are the most pressing practical questions of rhetoric. Speaking of rhetoric in a way where the verbal component is mentioned but unexplored and almost concealed suggests the definition is intentionally oblique to the salient issues.

We see from these eight features of Socrates' introduction of the term *psychagogia* that its deployment is decidedly strange. Adding to this strangeness is the structure of the two ensuing arguments.

V. Two overtly psychagogic arguments

The first argument the *logoi* give concerns the scope of rhetoric (261a7-e4). Phaedrus is asked whether the domain of rhetoric ranges over every instance of speaking (261a7-b3). He does not think so; since he knows that persuasion occurs in public and private, about big matters and small (227-8, 235, 242), he must understand "rhetoric" to be skill of public address. The *logoi* do not query the relationship between persuasion (a speech act) and rhetoric (a publicly-defined skill). They refer instead to the Eleatic Palamedes and his method of showing that a particular object has contradictory qualities. The *logoi* evidently mean Zeno's use of *antilogikê*, which they take as an instance of non-public speech.⁴⁰ Yet an appeal to Zeno's method does not support the claim that rhetoric ranges over every instance of speaking. Here is the text:

S: ...In a courtroom, the adversaries (ἀντίδικοι) do what? Don't they just contradict (ἀντιλέγουσιν) one another? Or what will we say?

P: Just that.

S: About what is just and what is unjust?

P: Yes.

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⁴⁰ Parm. 128d1-6; cf. Kerferd 1981, 62-5.

- S: Now won't the one who does this skillfully make the same thing to the same people appear at one time just, and when he wishes, unjust?
- P: Of course.
- S: And in public addresses the same things will seem to the city at one time good, but at another time just the opposite?
- P: That's so.
- S: Now, the Eleatic Palamedes speaks, don't we know, skillfully, so that the same things appear to those listening both similar and dissimilar, both one and many, both at rest, and again, departing?
- P: Definitely.
- S: Then this art of contradiction (ἀντιλογική) is not only for the courtrooms and public addresses, but, so it seems, for all things said there will be some single skill... (262c5-e2)

Phaedrus had already accepted the minimal view that rhetoric is used in the courtroom. The *logoi* thus develop that idea. Phaedrus agrees that courtroom adversaries (*antidikoi*) can be said to speak against (*antilegein*) one another. The verb *antilegein*—suggested by the contentious name of the disputants (the *antidikoi*)—has a related nominalization as the art *antilogikê*. *Antilogikê* is the art of giving contradictory arguments. Contradictory arguments are given outside the courthouse: at a philosophy demonstration, for example. Thus Phaedrus' minimal view is wrong.

This argument is invalid, but we can see its appeal. The *logoi* make a series of small shifts, starting at what Phaedrus believes and leading him, by incremental agreement, to its opposite. They shift between *rhetorikê*, *antilegousin*, and then *antilogikê*, none of which have identical scopes but whose similarities are great enough to obscure their differences. Thus Phaedrus has had his soul—his power of judgment—led from one place to another, not through rational evaluation but through powerful appearance. This has occurred by means of an argument *about* what is happening: private persuasion.

The second argument the *logoi* give concern the materials of deception (by which—in a further slide along non-equivalent ways of talking—they mean rhetoric). They argue that deception proceeds by small shifts, starting at what a person and leading him, by incremental agreement, to its opposite (261e6-262a3). Doing this successfully, they claim, requires knowing the reality about the things among which the speaker shifts (262a5-b8). Phaedrus started out believing that successful deception did not require knowing the reality about the things spoken of. By the end of their six-part argument, he does.

As I have argued at length elsewhere, this argument is, like the earlier one, invalid, and like the earlier one, we can see the way by which, starting with its audience's beliefs and moving

incrementally between near-equivalences, it appeals to Phaedrus.⁴¹ What is more remarkable about this argument, though, is that not only is it *about* argumentative persuasion (as the previous one was). It in fact describes the *way* such deceptive arguments persuade their audiences. They do so by deploying near-but-not-complete equivalences, specifically the ones taken as complete equivalences by their particular listeners.

VI. Some kind of soul-leading by means of speeches

By referring to rhetoric as *psychagogia tis*, the *logoi* refer to exactly what they are about to do: some kind of soul-leading by means of *logoi*. This kind of soul-leading involves logically invalid inferences and does not depend on knowledge of reality. It does, all the same, act in sympathy with its audience's beliefs. Phaedrus, and many contemporary readers, accept their arguments as valid—and have their souls led whither the *logoi* wish—despite their many disclaimers. If Plato did not want to alert Socrates' Phaedrus or Plato's readers to the possibility of deception, his notices would be hard otherwise to explain.

Phaedrus is amazed by speeches. But he is also amazed—or numbed—by argument. The formal presentation of the reasoning that soul, being self-moving, is immortal, is just the boldest instance (245c6-246a2).⁴² Phaedrus needs to learn, through being subjected to it, about the trickiness of inferential sequences. Many readers are content—perhaps with Phaedrus—to find the second half of the dialogue full either of "dry," "dense," philosophical discussion or of a salutary replacement to bad Lysianic rhetoric; they thereby forego careful assessment of the quality of the reasoning.⁴³ But if rhetoric may happen in one-on-one conversation, no matter how well-disposed the speaker is,⁴⁴ its methods deserve close scrutiny. The use of a byword for devious, counter-rational conjuring—*psychagogia*—makes emphatic the need for scrutiny. So even if the term may seem apt, as Elizabeth Asmis (1986) has most forcefully argued, its seeming aptness should trigger some defensive reinvestigation.

It may be true that Socrates engages in a certain kind of soul-leading with words. It may be true that construing his persuasive activity as soul-leading emphasizes his concern to change people's lives rather than simply to cause some momentary decision of belief.⁴⁵ The burden of his conversation in the *Phaedrus* may be to show how both love and rhetoric must be used to cause this change in life.⁴⁶ Socrates obviously stands simply for speaking well and finely: he

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⁴¹ Moore 2013. Scott 2011 shows that this kind of *psychagogic* argument had already shown up the palinode, leading many listeners to accept, due to carelessness, that there is some form of philosophical madness.

⁴² Bett 1986 finds the argument invalid; Blyth 1997 believes it is supposed to appear invalid.

⁴³ Moss 2013: "dry discussion." See Moore 2012a on Yunis 2011.

⁴⁴ Asmis 1986, Yunis 2011, and Moss 2013 all see Socrates "soul-leading" Phaedrus toward beauty and truth.

⁴⁵ This distinction is seen most explicitly in the Platonic *Clitophon*, on which see Moore 2012b.

⁴⁶ Moss 2013.

exhibits it, by being helpful, caring, patient, enduring, pious, friendly, and curious. But the term *psychagogia* is much more fraught and marked than the phrase "leading the soul." So what holds of *psychagogia*—that Socrates never avows it, that it implies deception, that it has a history connected to the dead, and so forth—need not hold about "leading the soul." Since the topic of many recent papers is really "lead the soul," their findings, to the extent they are about Socrates' practice in Plato's eyes, do not contradict those of this paper.

VII. The Phaedrus and the Birds

Why does Plato associate Socrates with *psychagogia*? If Merry was right, Plato could be citing Socrates' self-description (or an associates' description of him). But he could also be citing the *Birds*. Plato certainly knew of the *Clouds*, an older play than this one.⁴⁷ There are also several remarkable parallels between the *Birds* and the *Phaedrus*.

The *Birds* begins with the Athenians (30-38) Euelpides and Peisetaerus outside of Athens (3-9), wandering up and back a road (πάλιν 2, ἄνω κάτω πλανύττομεν 3), having been persuaded (πειθόμενον 5) to do so by their birds. The *Phaedrus* begins with the Athenians Phaedrus and Socrates outside of Athens (227a1-b1, 230c6-e1), wandering back and forth (πάλιν 227d4), having been persuaded (πειθόμενος 227a6) to do so by their doctors. Both works mention cicadas (*Birds* 39, *Phdr*. 258e7-259d5), Gorgias (*Birds* 1701, *Phdr*. 261c2, 267a6) and dressing up in feathers and wings (*Birds* 104-6, 296, 434, 572-576, 655, 687, 704, 785-800, 803-808, 1070, 1306-1345, 1373-1465, 1760; *Phdr*. 246a7-255d2).

Plato could be citing Aristophanes' attribution of *psychagogia* to Socrates. Like Aristophanes, Plato does not think the word is a particularly favorable one. Thus the broad range of distancing devices he uses between Socrates and the term. But, like Aristophanes, he thinks there is something apt in its deployment. What is apt is Socrates' ability to charm with words, rather than with force (compare Phaedrus, *Phdr*. 236b9-d3), political power (227c9d2), or obvious beauty (*Symp*. 215b1). How this charm works, and how it relates to Socrates' interests in truth and analytic clarity (cf. 265c8-266d2), are two of the deepest questions in Socratic studies. Aristophanes appeared to wonder—perhaps frowningly—about the promise in Socratic persuasive babbling. Plato expressed optimism, but also diffidence and a good deal of irony, in his struggles to depict the Socratic soul-leading which surely led his soul to that very place.

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⁴⁷ In an unpublished paper I describe the range of reactions Plato makes to the *Clouds*.

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