Politeness and Impoliteness in Aristophanes

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The difference between an interpretation of dramatic dialogue in terms of pragmatics (what speakers do with words) and an interpretation in terms of semantics (what words mean) can be illustrated by the following exchange:

[1] Aristophanes *Knights* 725–727

Πα. ὦ Δῆμε, δεῦρ' ἔξελθε. Αλ. νῆ Δί', ὦ πάτερ,
ἔξελθε δῆτ'. Πα. ὦ Δημίδιον (ὦ) φίλτατον,
ἔξελθ', ἵν' εἰδῆς οἷα περιυβρίζομαι.¹

Pa. Demos, come out here!

Sa. Yes, father, come out by Zeus!

Pa. Little Demos, dearest, come out and see how outrageously I am being treated!

Demos, a stupid and bad-tempered old man, represents the Athenian people. He has bought a new slave called Paphlagon, representing the demagogue Cleon, who flatters and indulges him. The play deals with Paphlagon being usurped by an even more unscrupulous figure, the Sausage-Seller, a purely fictional character who does not represent anyone in the real world of Athens. The present passage comes just before Demos' first appearance, as Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller call him out of his house to decide between them. The Sausage-Seller addresses Demos as *πάτερ* ('father'), a respectful term of address to an older man who is not necessarily the speaker's real father.² Paphlagon addresses him as *φίλτατον* ('dearest') and uses an affectionate diminutive of his name. Alan Sommerstein sees only the locutionary force of these expressions of affection: 'Paphlagon speaks thus because he claims to be Demos' "lover" (732)'.³ Stephen Halliwell takes a similarly literal view of such terms in Plato, remark-

1 Aristophanes is cited from the Oxford Classical Text edited by Wilson (2007). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. The eleven surviving plays date from 425 BC (*Acharnians*) to 388 BC (*Wealth*).

2 Cf. *Men. Dys.* 107, 171; Dickey (1996: 78–81).

3 Sommerstein (1981: *ad* 726).

ing that φίλε ('friend') 'carries a normal presumption of affection, attachment or some stronger feeling'.⁴

Sommerstein's interpretation fits neither the portrayal of Paphlagon elsewhere in the play nor Aristophanes' use of diminutives in other plays. Paphlagon does indeed explain to Demos that he is suffering on his account 'Because I feel affection for you, Demos, and am your lover' (732), but only a few lines earlier he had boasted of his ability to control the old man (719–720). Another slave, usually identified with the Athenian general Demosthenes, characterises Paphlagon's treatment of Demos with the following three verbs, all meaning 'flatter' or 'fawn upon': αἰκάλλω, θωπεύω, and κολακεύω (48).⁵ Paphlagon's expressions of affection are exaggerated and manipulative. There are other examples in Aristophanes of diminutives and terms of affection being used in requests or to get someone's attention when there is no other evidence of the speaker having any particular liking for the addressee, e.g. Dicaeopolis' Εὐριπίδη, Εὐριπίδιον, ὑπάκουσον ('Euripides, little Euripides, answer me', *Ach.* 404–405), Strepsiades' ὦ Σωκρατίδιον φίλτατον ('Dearest little Socrates', *Nub.* 746), Trygaeus' μή νυν λακήσης, λίσσομαι σ', ὦ Ὠρμήδιον ('Don't shout, I beg you, little Hermes', *Pax* 382), and the children's prayer ἔξεχ' ὦ φίλ' ἥλιε ('Come out, dear sun', fr. 404, from *Islands*).⁶

Paphlagon's request to Demos can be interpreted in terms of politeness theory. The most influential model for understanding politeness is the 'face-threat' theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), according to which every act of politeness is oriented to a specific 'face-threatening act'. They distinguish two kinds of face, which are assumed to be universal. The first, termed positive face, is the want to be approved of or admired. The second kind of face, termed negative face, is the want not to be imposed upon or impeded. Brown and Levinson's theory accordingly distinguishes two different types of politeness. Positive politeness offers redress to positive face, by expressions of affection, compliments, or limited agreement. Negative politeness is oriented to negative face, and thus aims to leave an 'out' (i.e., scope for evading or ignoring the face-threatening act) and to minimise the imposition.

4 Halliwell (1995: 91).

5 Cf. Unceta Gómez pp. 292–293 in this volume on expressions of flattering (e.g. 'blandiri', 'adulare') as part of the Latin metalanguage of over-politeness.

6 For a contrasting meteorological prayer, see the popular song ὕσον ὕσον, ὦ φίλε Ζεῦ ('Rain rain, dear Zeus', *Carm. Pop.* fr. 8 PMG). The ingratiating nature of this prayer means that it is at best only indirectly relevant to the question whether the Greeks could ever be said to love Zeus: Aristotle, *MM* 1208b30; Dodds (1951: 35); Lloyd-Jones (1983: 193 n. 34).

Terms of affection and respect are often used in Aristophanes, as in other Greek authors, to mitigate face-threatening acts.⁷ The most common in his plays are φίλε ('friend'), φίλτατε ('dearest'), ἀγαθέ ('good'), and δαιμόνιε ('marvellous'). The similarity of their illocutionary force is more significant than any difference in lexical meaning.⁸ They are especially common in Aristophanes with directives (*Ach.* 296, 305, 929, 1020; *Eq.* 240, 860; *Nub.* 38, 1138; *Vesp.* 962, 967, 1052, 1149, 1152; *Av.* 206, 846, 961, 1436, 1638; *Lys.* 95, 140, 762, 883, 945; *Thesm.* 64; *Ran.* 44, 175, 835, 997, 1227; *Eccl.* 564, 784; *Plut.* 360), but also occur with other face-threatening acts such as disagreement (*Eq.* 843), rebuke (*Nub.* 816; *Vesp.* 1145), and rejection (*Pax* 1238; *Av.* 1577; *Eccl.* 784).

The question then arises of how we can distinguish between positive politeness and straightforward expressions of affection where the locutionary force of the friendship terms is to be taken at face value.⁹ Brown and Levinson remark, 'the linguistic realizations of positive politeness are in many respects simply representative of the normal linguistic behaviour between intimates'; compare, more concisely, 'Positive-politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy'.¹⁰ They argue that positive politeness is distinguished by an element of exaggeration. It is not always easy to distinguish what is exaggerated from what is appropriate, but in cases like that of Paphlagon we have other evidence for the speaker's real attitude which suggests that his expression of affection is indeed exaggerated. Another clue is the proximity of a face-threatening act. Richard Watts quotes the (fictional) utterance 'Jim, you're really good at solving computer problems', which in itself is merely face-enhancing, but can readily be analysed as polite when followed by 'I wonder if you could just help me with a little formatting problem I've got'.¹¹

Similar issues arise in a more developed form in the following passage:

7 Dickey (1996: 107–145, 274–283) calls these vocatives 'friendship terms,' which will be followed here although some of them appear to be complimentary rather than friendly.

8 Sommerstein (1977: 272) alleges that Aristophanes' characters employ δαιμόνιε 'in rebuking, admonishing, or pleading with a respected person, always with an element of deference', but that is clearly not true of (e.g.) *Ran.* 175 where Dionysus is bargaining with a corpse to act as a porter to the underworld.

9 Contrast Dickey (1996: 109): 'polite or affectionate,' treated as equivalent; Watts (2003: 12–17); Willi (2003: 166).

10 Brown and Levinson (1987: 101, 102).

11 Watts (2003: 89).

[2] Aristophanes *Clouds* 80–89

- Στ. ... Φειδιππίδη, Φειδιππίδιον. Φε. τί, ὦ πάτερ;
 Στ. κύσον με καὶ τὴν χεῖρα δὸς τὴν δεξιάν.
 Φε. ἰδοῦ. τί ἐστίν; Στ. εἰπέ μοι, φιλεῖς ἐμέ;
 Φε. νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ τουτονὶ τὸν ἵππιον.
 Στ. μὴ 'μοιγε τοῦτον μηδαμῶς τὸν ἵππιον·
 οὗτος γὰρ ὁ θεὸς αἵτιός μοι τῶν κακῶν.
 ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας μ' ὄντως φιλεῖς,
 ὦ παῖ, πιθοῦ. Φε. τί οὖν πίθωμαι δῆτά σοι;
 Στ. ἔκστρεψον ὡς τάχιστα τοὺς σαυτοῦ τρόπους,
 καὶ μάνθαν' ἐλθὼν ἂν ἐγὼ παραινέσω.

- St. ... Pheidippides, little Pheidippides!
 Phei. What, father?
 St. Kiss me and give me your right hand.
 Phei. There. What is it?
 St. Tell me, do you love me?
 Phei. Yes, by Poseidon here, the god of horses.
 St. Don't mention the god of horses to me, for he is the cause of my troubles. But, my son, if you really love me from your heart, obey me.
 Phei. How should I obey you then?
 St. Change your ways at once, and go and learn what I recommend.

Strepsiades wants to evade his debts by persuading his extravagant son Pheidippides, who despises intellectual pursuits, to give up horses and learn the sophistic art of clever speaking. He has made clear in the immediately preceding lines (75–77) that his affectionate behaviour has a specific purpose, and it leads up to a significant face-threatening act in the last two lines of this passage. The scene ends with threats and insults when Pheidippides refuses to co-operate (121–123). Unusually sensitive requests have polite pre-expansion elsewhere in Aristophanes, for example ἐβελήσεις τί μοι οὖν, ὦ πάτερ, ἦν σου τι δεηθῶ; ('Would you be willing to give me something, father, if I ask you?', *Vesp.* 291–292) or ὦ δαιμόνιε, πρόσσελθε· δέομαι γάρ τί σου ('Come here, my good man, I have something to ask you', *Ran.* 44). Strepsiades' positive-politeness gambit 'if you really love me from your heart' (86) is used elsewhere in Aristophanes: ἀλλ' εἴ τι κήδει Δερκέτου Φυλασίου ('But if you care for Dercetes of Phyle ...', *Ach.* 1028) and ἀλλ' εἴ τι χάρεις ἀνδρὸς εὐόργου τρόποις, ἐμοὶ φρά-

σον ('But if you rejoice in the character of a good-tempered man, tell me', *Plut.* 61–62).¹²

The low P(S) implied by Strepsiades' politeness strategy expresses the humility of his approach to Pheidippides.¹³ Aristophanes' heroes are ordinary people faced with challenges which require them to approach important or intimidating individuals who might assist their plans, and their manner in doing so is accordingly deferential. Their use of supplicatory language is particularly marked. Thus Peisetaerus addresses Tereus: *ἰκέται [...]* ἀφίγμεθα [...] εἴ τινα πόλιν φράσειας ἡμῖν ... ('We have come as suppliants, if you might tell us of a city ...', *Av.* 120–122). Euripides approaches Agathon in a similar fashion: ἐγὼ δὲ καὶνῇι ξυμφορᾷ πεπληγμένος ἰκέτης ἀφίγμαι πρὸς σέ ('I have been struck by an unexpected disaster, and have come to you as a suppliant', *Thesm.* 179–180). Agathon's initial response is favourable, but his attitude soon changes when he hears the actual request.¹⁴

Passage [2] seems to be an example not just of politeness but of over-politeness. Strepsiades has made clear that his affectionate tone is manipulative (75–77), and he introduces it with the metapragmatic comment that he wants to treat Pheidippides 'most pleasantly' (ἡδίστα, 79). An extended sequence of pre-expansions is appropriate only to an extremely face-threatening request (e.g. Eur. *Tro.* 48–58), and in terms of Greek cultural norms it is difficult to imagine any normal situation in which Strepsiades' level of politeness would be appropriate for a father addressing his son. Over-politeness might be expected to attract adverse comment from third parties or from the hearer, but in this case no-one else is present and it is part of the joke that the arrogant Pheidippides is not surprised by his father addressing him in this extraordinary way. Compare Hermes' ἄρ' ὠφελήσας ἂν τι τὸν σαυτοῦ φίλον; ('Would you help your friend?', *Plut.* 1134), where the joke is that his request is incongruously ingratiating for a god addressing a slave. Brown and Levinson's theory focuses on generating politeness, but using it for literary interpretation requires reverse-engineering in order to determine the implications of the

12 εὐόργου ('good-tempered') is Schaefer's conjecture for codd. εὐόρκου ('keeping his oath').

13 P(S) = the relative power of the speaker, P(H) = the relative power of the hearer, D = the social distance between them, and R = the absolute ranking of an imposition in a particular culture. For these abbreviations, and the sociological variables to which they refer, see Brown and Levinson (1987: 15–17, 74–84).

14 On the polite 'nouniness' of Agathon's reply τίς οὖν παρ' ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὠφέλειά σοι; (literally, 'What assistance is there from us for you?', *Thesm.* 183), see Lloyd (2009: 188–189).

politeness strategy in a particular text. In this case, we can deduce from Strepsiadēs' over-politeness that he is humbling himself, as Aristophanes' heroes often do early in a play. This shows the unusual balance of power in their relationship which is due to the habits and attitudes which Pheidippides has derived from his aristocratic mother.

Brown and Levinson themselves include over-politeness under the heading 'Trying to re-rank R, P, or D', in particular the use of a non-expectable strategy to insult: 'if S is *too* [original emphasis] polite (overestimating W_x) he may insult H (or simply wound his feelings) by implying that D or P(H) is greater than it is'.¹⁵ Their example is of a man switching from the T pronoun to the more formal V when challenging a former comrade to a duel. Vimala Herman (1995: 241) cites a similar strategy in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*: 'initial friendliness is displayed in the change of address forms, mutually agreed upon, from the formal "Miss Cardew", "Miss Fairfax" to "Cecily" and "Gwendolen". When antagonism owing to misunderstanding occurs between them, the change in address forms to formality signals distance, while the highly indirect "polite" methods of disagreement used regarding which of them is actually engaged to Ernest constructs not comity, but an acute frostiness in their relations'. It is not common in Aristophanes for over-politeness to be perceived as inappropriate or sarcastic, although the Sausage-Seller wrongly interprets Demosthenes' effusive approach in these terms: τί [...] καταγέλαις; ('Why are you making fun of me?', *Eq.* 160–161).¹⁶ One possible interpretation of the over-politeness of the shopkeeper described by Dickey (2016: 202–203), 'So sorry to trouble you, but do you suppose you could possibly pay twelve pounds and forty-five pence for that, please?', rather than (e.g.) 'That'll be twelve pound forty-five, then', is that that the customer was delaying unreasonably in paying, or even making to leave the shop without paying at all. The shopkeeper sarcastically adjusts the politeness of the request to an exaggerated assessment of R.

The most elaborate example of politeness in Aristophanes is the scene in *Acharnians* in which Dicaeopolis tries to obtain from Euripides the costume and props of a suitably pathetic character in order to make a speech to the bellicose Acharnians justifying his private peace with Sparta (*Ach.* 414–479). He begins as follows:

15 Brown and Levinson (1987: 229–230). W_x = the 'weightiness' of the face-threatening act *x*.

16 For modern examples, see Culpeper (2008: 24–27, 2011: 100–103, 178–180).

[3] Aristophanes *Acharnians* 414–417

ἀλλ', ἀντιβολῶ πρὸς τῶν γονάτων σ', Εὐριπίδη,
 δός μοι ῥακίον τι τοῦ παλαιοῦ δράματος.
 δεῖ γάρ με λέξαι τῷ χορῷ ῥῆσιν μακράν·
 αὕτη δὲ θάνατον, ἣν κακῶς λέξω, φέρει.

I beg you by your knees, Euripides, give me a bit of rag from that old play.
 I need to make a long speech to the chorus, and it means death if I speak badly.

Dicaeopolis is thinking of Telephus, but cannot remember his name and rejects four suggestions by Euripides before he hits on the right character. There is a series of insert expansions before he finally specifies Telephus in his request (430–431). A further negative politeness technique here is to describe the overwhelming reasons for the imposition; compare Euripides' approach to Agathon (*Thesm.* 179–180, quoted above).¹⁷ Supplicatory language is common in Aristophanes in polite requests, notably ἀντιβολέω ('supplicate', 'pray', *Eq.* 1202; *Nub.* 155, 224, 314; *Vesp.* 1388; *Pax* 87, 376–377, 400; *An.* 207; *Plut.* 103, 444), ἱκετεύω ('supplicate', 'pray', *Ran.* 167, 299; *Eccl.* 970), and πρὸς τῶν θεῶν ('by the gods': *Vesp.* 760; *Plut.* 1176). The literal meaning of these words is stronger in some cases than in others, but sometimes they mean little more than 'please'.¹⁸

Dicaeopolis then requests a further item of Telephus' costume:

[4] Aristophanes *Acharnians* 437–439

Εὐριπίδη, 'πειδὴ περ ἐχαρίσω ταδί,
 κάκεῖνά μοι δὸς τὰκόλουθα τῶν ῥακῶν,
 τὸ πιλίδιον περὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τὸ Μύσιον.

Euripides, since you have done me this favour, give me also what goes with the rags, the little Mysian felt cap for my head.

Euripides is happy to oblige with this too, and his favourable response indicates that Dicaeopolis is still being acceptably polite. The *da-quia-dedisti* ('give

¹⁷ Cf. Brown and Levinson (²1987: 189).

¹⁸ Cf. Willi (2003: 25); Lloyd (2006: 243).

because you have given') formula, familiar in prayers, is a positive politeness gambit, establishing common ground and good will.¹⁹

In the rest of the scene, Dicaeopolis combines politeness with increasingly intrusive demands. He gives a metapragmatic signal of his more face-threatening approach by exhorting himself to be γλίσχρος ('tenacious', 'importunate', 452). Euripides asks him why he needs a little basket, and he replies χρέος μὲν οὐδέν, βούλομαι δ' ὅμως λαβεῖν ('There is no need, but I still want it', 455), which is in notable contrast with the overwhelming need he had politely expressed earlier (417). The climax comes with the following lines:

[5] Aristophanes *Acharnians* 475–478

Εὐριπίδιον, ὦ γλυκύτατον καὶ φίλτατον,
κάκιστ' ἀπολοίμην, εἴ τί σ' αἰτήσαιμι' ἔτι,
πλὴν ἓν μόνον, τουτὶ μόνον, τουτὶ μόνον·
σκάνδικά μοι δὸς μητρόθεν δεδεγμένος.

My sweetest and dearest little Euripides, may I perish most wretchedly if I ask you for anything else, except one thing alone, this alone, this alone: give me some chervil from your mother.

The endearments in line 475 are a positive politeness feature, more exaggerated than those in 404 and 467, but his politeness is mostly negative. For minimising the imposition (458, 462–463, 477), compare Strepsiades' ὦ δέσποινα, δέομαι τοίνυν ὑμῶν τουτὶ πάνυ μικρόν ('Ladies, I ask of you this very small thing', *Nub.* 429) and Lysistrata's πρὶν λέγειν δ' ὑμᾶς τοδὶ ἐπερήσομαι τὸ μικρόν ('Before I speak, I shall ask you this small question', *Lys.* 97–98).²⁰ Dicaeopolis' exaggerated politeness is itself face-threatening, even without the concluding allusion to Euripides' mother's alleged trade as greengrocer. Euripides responds with increasing impatience, and Dicaeopolis is characterised as λυπηρός ('annoying', 456) and ὀχληρός ('vexatious', 460, 472).²¹ Euripides' concluding verdict is ἀνὴρ ὑβρίζει ('The man is insulting me', 479).

19 Pulleyn (1997: 32) discusses the same strategy in line 405. Contrast the *da-quia-dedi* ('give because I have given') strategy at *Pax* 384–388.

20 The diminutive in Wealth's description of someone 'asking to borrow a small sum of money' (αἰτῶν λαβεῖν τι μικρόν ἀργυρίδιον, *Plut.* 240) clearly reflects the actual language of the request.

21 Olson (2002: ad 460) suggests that ὀχληρός ('vexatious') is paratragic, comparing Eur. *Alc.* 540, *Hel.* 452.

It is obvious from halfway through this passage (line 447) that, for all his use of polite expressions, Dicaeopolis is increasingly impolite. Discursive theorists like Richard Watts argue that ‘no linguistic structures are inherently polite.’²² This is sometimes presented as an objection to Brown and Levinson’s theory, although they do in fact take account of such situations, e.g. ‘our system “over-generates” and needs to be complemented with a set of “filters” that check that a chosen utterance form has no impolite implicatures for other reasons.’²³ In this case, a filter might be that utterances which are formally polite can threaten negative face if they are disproportionately extended. This would apply to the example given by Dickey (2016: 202): ‘a child who wants an ice-cream cone might say “Please, please, please, Mummy, *please* gimme ice cream, please, please!”; in this request “please” makes it harder, not easier, for the mother to refuse the child’s demands’. Geoffrey Leech offers a qualified defence of his much-criticised notion of absolute politeness, which he now terms ‘pragmalinguistic’ as opposed to ‘sociopragmatic’ politeness, although he only commits himself to recognising relative degrees of politeness in the absence of context, e.g. ‘Thank you very much’ is invariably more polite than ‘Thank you.’²⁴ The *Acharnians* passage discussed above seems to show that there is not necessarily a contradiction between individual expressions being polite in themselves while being used as part of an overall strategy which is not polite, and indeed the comic effect here depends on the ostensible politeness of Dicaeopolis’ approach.

This passage resembles others in Aristophanes in which the hero approaches someone to help him, often an expert in the field in question. The hero is usually very polite, as noted above. There is however more at stake in Dicaeopolis’ approach to Euripides. This hero is uniquely close to Aristophanes himself, and the politeness strategy in the scene reflects the dramatist’s own complex relationship with Euripides.²⁵ Dicaeopolis’ negative politeness expresses deference to a distinguished playwright, and in particular serves to establish D and P(H). The positive politeness is also respectful, but implies a greater degree of intimacy. The overt face threat, and in particular Dicaeopolis’ irrepressible persistence, conveys that aspect of Aristophanes’ relationship with Euripides which

22 Watts (2003: 168).

23 Brown and Levinson (1987: 11); cf. 22: ‘politeness is *implicated* [original emphasis] by the semantic structure of the whole utterance, not communicated by “markers” or “mitigators” in a simple signalling fashion which can be quantified’.

24 Leech (2014: 15–17); he reasonably observes that ironic politeness is a second-order phenomenon which is not covered by this principle (2014: 232–238).

25 See (e.g.) Foley (1988).

is not respectful at all, but rather focuses on mundane and disreputable features of his plays such as heroes dressed in rags. Dicaeopolis' politeness strategy combines elements which could hardly be found together in any normal social interaction, but which vividly express the complexity of Aristophanes' attitude to Euripides.

Politeness implies P(S) or P(H) in ways which Aristophanes can exploit for comic incongruity. Both are at stake at the end of *Birds*, when the gods are obliged to send a delegation to seek terms with the now all-powerful Peisetaerus. Poseidon greets him as follows: τὸν ἄνδρα χαίρειν οἱ θεοὶ κελεύομεν ('We gods bid you greeting', *Av.* 1581). This doubtless reflects the formal language of diplomacy, in which there is face vulnerability on both sides, and it is amusing that such an important god needs to be so polite to a mortal. Socrates' 3rd-person greeting Στρεψιάδην ἀσπάζομαι ('I greet Strepsiades', *Nub.* 1145; cf. *Eur. Tro.* 48–50) has a similar effect. Strepsiades had earlier incurred Socrates' contempt for his stupidity (*Nub.* 789–790), but now we hear the dignified tones of a teacher addressing the father of a student at the end of an expensive course of study. Strepsiades responds in a similarly gracious style (1146–1147). The formal greeting of the chorus to the Spartan delegates ἄνδρες Λάκωνες, πρῶτα μὲν μοι χαίρετε εἴτ' εἴπαθ' ἡμῖν πῶς ἔχοντες ἤκετε ('Men of Laconia, first of all my greetings, and secondly tell us what brings you here', *Lys.* 1074–1075) is incongruous with their comically distressed state.

A rather different kind of incongruity may be seen in the following passage:

[6] Aristophanes *Birds* 1010–1011

Πε. ... Μέτων— Με. τί ἐστίν; Πε. ἴσθ' ὅτιῃ φιλῶ σ' ἐγώ,
κάμοι πιθόμενος ὑπαποκίνει τῆς ὁδοῦ.

Pe. ... Meton—

Me. What is it?

Pe. Please understand that I like you: take my advice, and get out of the way.

The geometer Meton is one of the unwelcome visitors whom Peisetaerus expels from his new city. The introductory expression of affection is a positive-politeness gambit: compare εὖνους γὰρ ὦν σοι πυνθάνομαι πάνυ σφόδρα ('I deserve an answer to my question because I am extremely well-disposed to you', *Plut.* 25). In passage [6], κάμοι πιθόμενος ('take my advice') would naturally be interpreted as the introduction to a friendly and constructive suggestion (cf. *Ar. Vesp.* 760;

Pl. *Grg.* 486c). What follows is a bluntly face-threatening order. Meton continues to speak as though he is receiving friendly advice, until he is threatened and then physically attacked before he manages to escape. He is identified as an ἀλαζών ('charlatan', 1016–1017),²⁶ and his failure to recognise Peisetaerus' strategy exposes his lack of self-awareness. Jonathan Culpeper has discussed 'verbal formula mismatches' of this kind, and suggested that the ostensible politeness exacerbates the face threat.²⁷ This is plausible, although there seems to be additional significance in Peisetaerus' use of this gambit. He affects rather a grand air in this part of the play, and polite forms of expression are an aspect of that. Compare ἀσπαζόμεσθα φιλόρρινον Κινησίαν ('We welcome lime-wood Cinesias', 1377), where the respectful greeting is combined with what seems to be an uncomplimentary reference to the poet's unhealthy appearance.²⁸

Peisetaerus' dismissal of Meton in *Birds* is typical of the way the comic hero treats unwelcome visitors after his triumph, and these passages are the most interesting examples of impoliteness in Aristophanes. As we have seen, the hero is often polite or even ingratiating in the earlier part of a play, and this expresses the low P(S) of an ordinary man trying to deal with overwhelming problems. The situation is reversed at the end of a play, where the hero is now in control and treats other people impolitely. This implies high P(S), demonstrating that he no longer needs to mitigate threats to the face of the hearer and that he is indeed in a position to aggravate them.²⁹ This can involve actual or threatened physical violence, as when Strepsiades prods the Second Creditor with a goad as if he were a horse (*Nub.* 1298) or Peisetaerus threatens to rape Iris (*Av.* 1253–1256). More frequently, the hero subjects his victims to jokes and taunts, as when Trygaeus makes a series of insulting suggestions about uses to which the Arms-Dealer's wares could be put (*Pax* 1228, 1242–1244, 1262–1263), or Dicaeopolis contrasts his tasty peacetime food with Lamachus' frugal campaign diet (*Ach.* 1115–1116).

The 'discursive turn' in politeness theory stresses the wider context of any given interaction, and in particular its ongoing evaluation by the participants.³⁰

26 On the meaning of ἀλαζών, see Dunbar (1995: *ad* 825).

27 Culpeper (2011: 174–178, 193). Leech (2014: 238) observes that the polite element tends to precede the impolite element in such cases.

28 See Dunbar (1995: *ad* 1378) for discussion of the meaning of φιλόρρινον. Cf. 916, 1025–1026 for further examples of Peisetaerus' combination of politeness and abuse.

29 Cf. Brown and Levinson (²1987: 69, 97). On impoliteness and power generally, see Bousfield and Locher (2008).

30 Locher and Watts (2005) is fundamental; cf. Kádár and Haugh (2013: 36, with references to earlier discussions).

A response by the addressee can give some indication of what should be regarded as polite or impolite, but is in itself only a personal opinion which does not necessarily reflect accepted social norms. Further illumination may come from the wider context, with third parties expressing their views and commenting on the interaction, but this rarely happens in Aristophanes. Another clue is if consistent terminology is used in similar situations. One word which is especially common as a description of the heroes' impoliteness is ὕβρις.³¹ This and cognate words are used of Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 479, 1117), Strepsiades (*Nub.* 1299), Philocleon (*Vesp.* 1303, 1319, 1441), Trygaeus (*Pax* 1229, 1264), and Peisetaerus (*Av.* 1259). The victims in these situations often also say 'you are mocking me' (καταγελᾷς), sometimes as a question ('are you mocking me?') or directive ('stop mocking me!'). This word is used of Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 1081, 1107; cf. 1126), Strepsiades (*Nub.* 1238), Philocleon (*Vesp.* 1406), Trygaeus (*Pax* 1245), and Peisetaerus (*Av.* 1407). σκώπτω has a similar meaning, and is used of Strepsiades (*Nub.* 1267) and Philocleon (*Vesp.* 1320).³² Some of the victims respond with threats of their own, especially summoning witnesses with a view to legal action (e.g. *Ach.* 926; *Nub.* 1297; *Vesp.* 1406–1408, 1417–1418, 1436; *Pax* 1119; *Av.* 1031, 1259; *Plut.* 932, 944–950). Brown and Levinson (1987: 69) write of cases 'where S is vastly superior in power to H, or can enlist audience support to destroy H's face without losing his own'. In the particular context of Aristophanic comedy, there is no effective internal audience and it is the implied audience in the theatre which endorses the heroes' behaviour.

Conversely, Aristophanes confirms Brown and Levinson's theory that bald-on-record directives can be polite in certain contexts. Invitations are in the interests of the hearer, and thus do not need mitigation, e.g. ἐπὶ δείπνον ταχὺ βᾶδιζε ('Come quickly to dinner', *Ach.* 1085–1086; cf. 1094; *Pax* 1207–1208; *Av.* 640–642; *Ran.* 503, 507, 512, 517, 669; *Eccl.* 695). Other examples of unredressed imperatives to the hearer's advantage include *Nub.* 189 ('Don't worry about that!') and *Vesp.* 248 ('Be careful!'). Bald-on-record imperatives are also not impolite in task orientation (e.g. *Pax* 1–2), emergencies (e.g. *Vesp.* 829), and commands to slaves (e.g. *Vesp.* 138, 529). There is no evidence in any of these cases that the hearers regarded the bald-on-record directives as impolite.

31 Olson (2002: ad 479) defines ὕβρις as 'outrageously hostile behaviour designed not so much to injure as to humiliate its victim', with references to other discussions. Cf. 'Insults' in Baron (2020).

32 Cf. μὴ σκώπτέ με, ('Do not mock me!') at *Ran.* 96; *Eccl.* 1005, 1074.

Wealth ends, as do *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Birds*, with a series of scenes involving characters whose circumstances have changed for better or worse as a result of the new dispensation brought about by the hero. Chremylus has cured the god Wealth of his blindness, so that he is now able to bestow his favours with more discrimination. The first character to appear in this sequence is a just man who has regained the prosperity which he had lost through helping his friends. A sycophant then complains that he has fallen into poverty, and is driven off with insults and blows.³³ In describing what is being done to him, he uses what we have seen to be the three key terms for impolite behaviour by the hero at the end of a play, although in this case Chremylus himself is not the actual perpetrator: ὕβρις (886; cf. ὑβρίζειν, 899), καταγελᾶω (880), and σκώπτω (886).³⁴ Insulting language culminates in violence (928–943), and the Sycophant threatens retaliatory legal action as he departs (944–950).

The third character to appear is an old woman, who addresses the chorus as follows:

[7] Aristophanes *Wealth* 959–961

ἄρ', ὦ φίλοι γέροντες, ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν
ἀφίγμεθ' ὄντως τοῦ νέου τούτου θεοῦ,
ἢ τῆς ὁδοῦ τὸ παράπαν ἡμαρτήκαμεν;

Dear old men, have we really arrived at the house of this new god, or have we completely missed the way?

The Old Woman is characterised by her polite manner of speaking. She uses positive politeness by addressing the old men as φίλοι ('dear'), and uses the vocative of φίλος ('dear') and φίλτατος ('dearest') on three other occasions (967, 1025, 1034). She also uses negative politeness by framing her question in such a way that the preferred answer 'yes' can truthfully be given whether or not this is in fact the right house. Compare the words of the chorus to Cassandra (Aesch.

33 The word 'sycophant' is not used here in its usual English sense, but as an equivalent of the Greek word συκοφάντης: 'a term of abuse for a bringer of what the speaker considers unjustified charges from discreditable motives' (Dunbar 1995: *ad* 674, with discussion and references).

34 Olson (1989: 197 n. 15) gives the leading role in the assault on the Sycophant to the Just Man, while Sommerstein (2001: *ad* 926–934) hesitantly prefers Carion (cf. 2001: *ad* 824).

Ag. 1049): *πείθοι' ἄν, εἰ πείθοι' ἀπειθοίης δ' ἴσως* ('Obey please if you are going to obey, but perhaps you will disobey'); also *Hom. Il.* 14.190–192, 15.201–204. Potential optatives are also used in these introductory questions, sometimes in the third person: *τίς ἄν φράσειε ποῦ 'στὶ Χρεμύλος μοι σαφῶς*; ('Who would tell me reliably where Chremylus is?', *Plut.* 1171); *τίς ἄν φράσειε ποῦ 'στιν ἡ Λυσιστράτη*; ('Who would tell us where Lysistrata is?', *Lys.* 1086); *ἔχοιτ' ἄν οὖν φράσαι νῶιν Πλούτων' ὅπου 'νθάδ' οἰκεῖ*; *ξένω γάρ ἐσμεν ἀρτίως ἀφιγμένω* ('Would you be able to tell us where around here Pluto lives? We are strangers who have just arrived', *Ran.* 431–433).³⁵

The chorus-leader's response is not so easy to assess:

[8] Aristophanes *Wealth* 962–963

ἀλλ' ἴσθ' ἐπ' αὐτάς τὰς θύρας ἀφιγμένη,
ὦ μειρακίσκη· πυνθάνει γὰρ ὠρικῶς.

You have come right to his door, young woman—for you ask youthfully.

The first line here is a formulaic polite response.³⁶ The chorus-leader's ironic comment on the Old Woman's 'youthfulness' must relate to her appearance or intonation rather than to the actual content of what she says, which is polite but not otherwise remarkable, unless he is provoked by her addressing the chorus as 'dear old men'. The chorus-leader's reply seems to be another example of verbal formula mismatch, as it can hardly be polite to allude to her attempt to look younger than she really is. Compare *Nub.* 358–363, where disrespectful remarks take the place of the expected compliments after the Clouds' initially polite greeting to Socrates. The chorus-leader's impoliteness here foreshadows the way the Old Woman is treated in the rest of the scene.

Her complaint is that a young man to whom she has been giving frequent and substantial gifts rejects her now that he is rich. Chremylus initially assumes that she resents the new dispensation because she has behaved unjustly (*Plut.* 970–972). This appears not to be the case, as she denies the offences which he suggests she might have committed, and does not seem otherwise to be partic-

35 Another polite expression by the Old Woman may be *οὐχ ὑγιαίνειν μοι δοκεῖς* (1060, 1066; lit. 'you do not seem to me to be healthy', i.e. 'in your right mind'; cf. the ladylike Iris at *An.* 1214).

36 Cf. *Ran.* 436. On the similar exchange at *Soph. El.* 660–662, see Lloyd (2006: 233).

ularly bad.³⁷ In any case, she does not complain about having lost her wealth, and thus does not resemble the Sycophant in being a bad person who is now deservedly poor. On the other hand, the Young Man does not seem to deserve his new wealth. The previous scene suggested that the result of Wealth regaining his sight is that good men become rich while bad men lose their ill-gotten gains, and it has often been suggested that this scene implies a different plot in which everyone becomes rich.³⁸

MacDowell sees no redeeming features in the Young Man: 'He was making money by disgraceful means, and now that he no longer needs to do so he is drunken and boorish'.³⁹ Sommerstein defends him, but does not distinguish between his behaviour before and after becoming rich: 'With no marketable asset except his good looks, he has been forced into a life that he finds repugnant, and his reaction when able to escape is natural'.⁴⁰ The Old Woman, however, stresses the change in his behaviour (994), as does Chremylus (1003–1005, 1047–1048), although he takes a different view of it. Chremylus criticises his treatment of the Old Woman and insists that he should continue his relationship with her (1071–1087, 1201).⁴¹ On the other hand, there is no particular reason to find fault with his behaviour in the past. The Old Woman gives a favourable account of his character (975–979), and his language as she describes it is impressively eloquent. Wealth himself notes that people become bad when they become rich (107–109, 567–570), and the Young Man seems to be an example.

He is often described as a gigolo, and some scholars take rather a narrow view of this profession, e.g. 'it becomes clear that he is a gigolo who has been giving her sexual satisfaction in return for payment'.⁴² The Oxford English Dictionary offers a less specific definition: 'a young man supported financially by an older woman in return for his attentions'. This gives a more accurate impression of the relationship as this woman describes it. The following passage is an excerpt from her conversation with Chremylus:

37 Halliwell (1998: 208) reasonably remarks 'the woman is not a convincingly moral target'. MacDowell (1995: 341) is more censorious.

38 On the 'double plot' in *Wealth*, see e.g. Flashar (1967: 161 = 1996: 318); Konstan and Dillon (1981); Olson (1990: 223–224).

39 MacDowell (1995: 341); cf. Flashar (1967: 170 = 1996: 324–325).

40 Sommerstein (1984: 324–325 = 1996: 267–268).

41 Chremylus twice expresses approval of the Young Man's behaviour (1003–1005, 1023–1024), but only in the context of a cynical interpretation of it which has the rhetorical purpose of undercutting the Old Woman's romantic view.

42 MacDowell (1995: 340); cf. Halliwell (1998: 207).

[9] Aristophanes *Wealth* 1018–1024

Γρ. καὶ τάς γε χεῖρας παγκάλας ἔχειν μ' ἔφη.
 Χρ. ὁπότε προτεῖνοιέν γε δραχμάς εἴκοσιν.
 Γρ. ὄζειν τε τῆς χροιᾶς ἔφασκεν ἡδύ μου.
 Χρ. εἰ Θάσιον ἐνέχεις, εἰκότως γε νῆ Δία.
 Γρ. τὸ βλέμμα θ' ὥς ἔχοιμι μαλακὸν καὶ καλόν.
 Χρ. οὐ σκαιὸς ἦν ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ἠπίστατο
 γραὸς καπρώσης τὰφόδια κατεσθίειν.

Old Wom. He used to say that I had the most beautiful hands.
 Chr. At any rate when they were holding out twenty drachmas.
 Old Wom. And he would say that my skin smelled sweet.
 Chr. Very likely, by Zeus, if you were pouring out Thasian wine.
 Old Wom. And that I had a gentle and beautiful expression.
 Chr. The man was not stupid: he knew how to eat up the wealth
 of an old sow on heat.

The Old Woman seems to take pleasure in being flattered and describes what she does for the Young Man in terms of gifts rather than payment. Chremylus, by contrast, believes that everything good depends on money (144–146), and relentlessly reduces the relationship to a transaction in which fine words are mere camouflage for the purchase of sex.⁴³ Sommerstein further suggests that the scene contains a number of sexual euphemisms. The Old Woman introduces her account of the relationship as follows:

[10] Aristophanes *Wealth* 975–978

ἦν μοί τι μειράκιον φίλον,
 πενιχρὸν μέν, ἄλλως δ' εὐπρόσωπον καὶ καλὸν
 καὶ χρηστόν· εἰ γάρ του δεηθείην ἐγώ,
 ἅπαντ' ἐποίει κοσμίως μοι καὶ καλῶς.

I had a young **friend**, poor but good-looking and honourable and decent: if
 I wanted **something**, he would **do everything** for me dutifully and nicely.

Sommerstein detects three euphemisms in these lines:

43 On the importance of money in the play, see Olson (1990: 227–228).

- (1) 'φίλος "friend", i.e. "sexual partner";
- (2) 'τι "something" denotes sexual intercourse [...] for there was nothing else which the impoverished young man was capable of supplying to the elderly woman on whom he was sponging';
- (3) 'ποιεῖν ἅπαντα "do everything" means "copulate"'.⁴⁴

He finds two further sexual euphemisms in the scene. The Old Woman suggests that Wealth should force the Young Man to 'treat her well in return' for what she has done for him (1029), and he explains this as follows: 'εὖ ποιεῖν "do good to" means "copulate with"'.⁴⁵ The most plausible of these supposed euphemisms is the one spoken by the Young Man, when he asks if she would like to 'play with' him (1055); Sommerstein glosses πρὸς με παῖσαι as 'have sexual intercourse with'.⁴⁶ The Old Woman stresses her pleasure in the Young Man's flattering words, so it seems incorrect to say that he has nothing else to contribute, and Sommerstein's view of the relationship is unnecessarily reductive. Aristophanes was well able to portray sexual coercion in explicit terms, as we can see from Epigenes' interaction with the old women at *Ecccl.* 877–1111. The decree which compels him reads in part: ἥν ἀνὴρ νέος νέας ἐπιθυμῇ, μὴ σποδεῖν αὐτὴν πρὶν ἂν τὴν γραῦν προκρούσῃ πρῶτον ('if a young man desires a young woman, he shall not bonk her until he screws an older woman first', 1015–1017).

James Davidson begins a subtle discussion of the important if sometimes elusive distinction between commodity exchange and the exchange of gifts with a quotation from *Wealth*:

[11] Aristophanes *Wealth* 149–159

- Χρ. καὶ τὰς γ' ἐταίρας φασὶ τὰς Κορινθίας,
 ὅταν μὲν αὐτὰς τις πένης πειρῶν τύχῃ,
 οὐδὲ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, ἐὰν δὲ πλούσιος,
 τὸν πρωκτὸν αὐτὰς εὐθὺς ὡς τοῦτον τρέπειν.
- Κα. καὶ τοὺς γε παῖδ' αὖ φασὶ ταῦτ' οὐ τοῦτο δρᾶν,
 οὐ τῶν ἐραστῶν ἀλλὰ τὰργυρίου χάριν.
- Χρ. οὐ τοὺς γε χρηστούς, ἀλλὰ τοὺς πόρνους· ἐπεὶ
 αἰτοῦσιν οὐκ ἀργύριον οἱ χρηστοί. Κα. τί δαί;
- Χρ. ὁ μὲν ἵππον ἀγαθόν, ὁ δὲ κύνας θηρευτικούς.

44 Sommerstein (2009: 93, 92, and 91); cf. Sommerstein (2001: ad 977–978).

45 Sommerstein (2009: 87).

46 Sommerstein (2009: 92, 101). Contrast Dunbar (1995: ad 1098–1101), observing more cautiously '(συμ-)παίζειν sometimes has erotic overtones'.

Κα. αἰσχυρόμενοι γὰρ ἀργύριον αἰτεῖν ἴσως
ὀνόματι περιπέττουσι τὴν μοχθηρίαν.

Chr. They do say those Corinthian hetaeras pay no attention whatsoever when a man without means tries to seduce them but if a rich man comes along they bend over and present themselves in no time at all.

Ca. Yes and they do say that boys do the same, not for the sake of their lovers, but for money.

Chr. Only the whores among them, not the decent ones; decent boys never ask for money.

Ca. And what do they ask for, then?

Chr. Well, one might ask for a thoroughbred, another might ask for a pack of hunting dogs.

Ca. That's just euphemism. They are ashamed to ask for money and gloss over their vice with words.⁴⁷

Aristophanes presents the effect of the new dispensation on financially asymmetrical relationships and it would be interesting to consider a play in which the gender roles were reversed, as they doubtless were much more frequently in real life. Davidson (1997: 124) writes: 'Misrecognition, beating about the bush, the avoidance of specifics, the uncertainty of favours in return, are all strategies designed to keep "friendship" out of the market-place'. One may add that they can all be interpreted in terms of politeness, and many members of the audience may well have preferred such transactions not to be too crudely bald-on-record.

This chapter has focused on the politeness or over-politeness of Aristophanes' heroes in the earlier part of a play, which expresses the need of ordinary individuals to ingratiate themselves with those who are more powerful in order to gain their ends. Impoliteness conversely demonstrates their power after they have succeeded, an aspect of the comic fantasy of having no need to respect the face of others. The means by which Chremylus gains good fortune in *Wealth* do not require him to be ingratiating, but he takes full advantage of the freedom to be impolite at the end of the play, as does his slave Carion. The usual reversal from politeness to impoliteness is shown more clearly by the Young Man. Universal wealth does away with the need to earn money in potentially disagreeable ways, but also allows people to say whatever they like

47 Davidson (1997: 109), his translation.

without having to worry about the consequences of being offensive. It could be argued that this is not an altogether good thing, and that *Wealth*, like others of Aristophanes' plays, is open to an 'ironic' interpretation which brings out the darker side of the hero's success.⁴⁸ It is notable that the Old Woman is one of the most polite characters in Aristophanes, and gives the impression that it is gracious speech which she found most desirable in her lover. Chremylus may show little or no interest in politeness, and is indeed extremely offensive to her, but he eventually agrees that the Young Man has treated her unjustly (1071–1085), compels him to resume his relationship with her (1201), and includes her in the final procession. There is no evidence that Chremylus himself has experienced a conversion to the merits of polite speech in particular, but the scene with the Old Woman nevertheless explores with a subtlety that is unique in Aristophanes the question whether there is more to politeness than hypocrisy.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the editors for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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48 For the 'ironic' interpretation of *Wealth*, see (e.g.) Flashar (1967); Barkhuizen (1981); Bowie (1993: 284–291).

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