been attributed to the influence of Alcibiades. Alcibiades indeed has been supposed by some commentators to have been no less the object of attack in the play than Socrates himself, and to have been designated under the name of Phidippides, the youthful and accomplished victim of the sophist. There are certainly some traits in the character of Phidippides, which would seem to point at Alcibiades, whom perhaps the poet, bold as he was, could hardly ven­ture to bring on the stage by name or closer description at this particular time. And we may perhaps justly allow some weight to party influence in neutralizing the effect of “ The Clouds” at its first exhibition. Still, when we ob­serve in other instances the great power which the comic muse could wield against a political opponent, as in the at­tack on Cleon in “ The Knights,” we cannot but think that there was some strong countervailing feeling in the estima­tion of Socrates himself. If the account of Ælian be true, Socrates could join in the laugh raised against him ; for he was present in the theatre during the acting of the play, and finding that he was the object of attraction, placed himself where all could command a view of him.@@1 He knew, and every one in Athens knew, that he was a very different per­son from the sophists with whom the play identified him. They indeed were corrupters of the young; for they un­settled every established principle in the minds of the young, and gave no substitute for what they profligately swept away. They left the young to be drifted away by the tide of their passions, with no criterion of truth or of right beyond the present opinion or the present interest. But Socrates, whilst he taught the young to inquire into the truth of their opinions, lessened their presumption and self-confidence, by shewing them how apt they were to mis­take mere assumptions for knowledge, and to be conceited of their ignorance. His object was truth, and accurate knowledge. He stated difficulties and objections, but not in the spirit of a sceptic, but in order to awaken curiosity, to clear away confusion of thought, and inculcate sound principles of judgment and conduct. He could well then laugh at the jest which glanced from him to its proper ob­jects, the sophists themselves, the very persons against whom his whole teaching was directed. He felt doubtless that he had a hold on the people at large, which the so­phists had not. They were for the most part known only to the great and wealthy ; those who could receive them into their houses, as they went from city to city through Greece ; who sought their society as patrons of literature, or aspirants after political distinction, and who could pay for their instructions.@@8 He on the contrary was accessible to all. He would receive no money from any one. He was the frequent guest of the rich ; but he was no less the as­sociate of the artizan and the poor. And too many must have been present in the theatre, when the Socrates of “ The Clouds” was amusing the audience by his sleight-of- hand philosophy, who would remember the real Socrates as a man of honesty, and truth, and disinterested benevolence, from whom they had received much useful counsel from time to time, and whom they had ever found affable, and at leisure to enter into their feelings and views with patience and kindness. If we compare the Socrates of the Memora­bilia of Xenophon with the Socrates of “ The Clouds,” we may judge how great was the contrast to those who com­pared the well-known philosopher of the agora with his por­trait as drawn by Aristophanes. If we can smile at the caricature of “ The Clouds,” and yet love the excellent mo­ralist of the Memorabilia, we may also conceive how harm­less the satire of Aristophanes would really be against the object of it ; whilst the jokes of the poet, true as to the per­sonal peculiarities of the philosopher, amused a volatile and clever people. For them to have confounded Socrates with the class of sophists, would have been in them the like palpable mistake, as it would be to confound the philosopher Bacon, on account of some points of resemblance, with the alchemist and empiric of the preceding ages.

It might seem matter of reproach against Aristophanes, that, in selecting the name of Socrates to represent the so­phistical spirit which had then so largely corrupted the education and the government of Athens, he pointed the shafts of the comic muse against the very person who was in truth its most successful antagonist. In such a view of the case, however, sufficient justice would not be done to the discernment of the poet. He shrewdly observed in Socrates the master genius which would ultimately cast into the shade all those busy professors of the art of edu­cation, who, under the name of sophists, or professors of all knowledge, were then attracting the notice of the world to themselves and their doctines. Socrates, in himself, Aris­tophanes could not but admire and recommend to the imi­tation of his country. He doubtless knew Socrates to be a true patriot no less than himself,—to be steadily aiming to bring back the Athenians to the purity of their institu­tions, from which they had so sadly degenerated, by his instructive conversations, as he was by the satirical strokes of the drama. Socrates, too, appears to have been his per­sonal friend ; for Plato introduces them in his Banquet as meeting on terms of intimacy, about the very time of the exhibition of “ The Clouds.” But with that freedom which the state of manners, under an absolute democracy, sanc­tioned and encouraged, Aristophanes did not scruple to bring even the revered name of Socrates on the stage, to give the due point to his satire. He overlooked the indi­vidual, the Socrates with whom he familiarly conversed, and presented before the spectators what he saw in Socrates, the living speaking impersonation of the influence of edu­cation on the character of a people, for good or for evil. Anaxagoras, or Protagoras, or Prodicus, or any other of the well-known philosophers or sophists of the day, might have occupied the foreground in the comedy of “ The Clouds ;” had the poet sought to give merely a fugitive sketch of the sophistical spirit of his times, or to single out for ridicule some of its external superficial features. This is what Plato has done on many occasions, and especially in that most animated picture in the dialogue entitled Protagoras, where he groups together the figures of the leading so­phists in such admirable relief with each other, and such happy contrast with the unpretending but dignified form of his own loved master and friend. Such a view, however, could not have answered the design of Aristophanes in his play of “ The Clouds.” His object was to seize the deep, influential characters of the system of education which was then extending itself throughout Greece, and especially as it was manifested at Athens, the great sch∞l of all Greece. Naturally, therefore, and wisely, he fixed his eye on an Athenian—and that Athenian, Socrates,—not only as the first Athenian who had appeared in the office of a philosophical instructor, but who, as an Athenian, gave to his lessons the character of Athenian civilization, and fitly ex­emplified the influence of philosophical education in the hands of an Athenian, and as operating on Athenians.

The poet, indeed, as addressing the eye and the ear of the ordinary observer, and not Athenians only, but stran­gers of the Grecian name from all parts, mingles with his colouring some playful lights borrowed from the forms of the well-known professional sophists of the day. But nei­ther are these representations, nor the allusions which he

@@@, Ælian, Var. Hist.

@@@’ Plutarch well characterises the teaching of Socrates, in speaking of him, as *ashpit aτvφ!a* rat aψ<λria μziλ<ra δ⅛ *φιλοσοφία\* iζavθpvnησa>τot.* De Socr. Gen. p. 301.