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"Ideas-Men" (*Gnômotupoi Andres*)

Christopher Moore

Department of Philosophy, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802, USA; crm21@psu.edu

Abstract: This paper addresses the fifth-century comic coinage *gnômotupos*, which has not otherwise received scholarly attention. Translators of Aristophanes and Aristotle have typically glossed it into English as "maxim-coining" (with equivalents in other languages). This is a sensible inference from a fourth-century use of γνώμη, "maxim", and the verb τύπτειν, "stamping". It also tracks the importance of maxims to Sophistic-era adoption of wisdom-culture and the lore of the Seven Sages. Nevertheless, this typical gloss is incorrect. The term instead emphasizes "idea", as an insight, technique, or view relevant to some matter. "Stamping" (τύπτειν) an idea means coming up with an apt idea and giving it shape and articulacy. In a characteristic use of the adjective, Aristophanes speaks of *gnômotupoi andres* (*Frogs*). These are men who are skilled at "fashioning ideas", coming up with their content and their form. My claim is that Aristophanes has captured something crucial about the period we call the Sophistic movement or Greek enlightenment. The formulation, circulation, and competition of ideas is a matter of increasing self-consciousness in Athens. So too are those who formulate, circulate, and compete in them: intellectuals or, as *gnômotupoi andres* might be translated, "ideas-men." I even contend that those referred to as "sophists", *sophistai*, may in many ways be understood as *gnômotupoi andres*.

Keywords: sophists; intellectuals; Aristophanes; Aristotle; maxims

This paper addresses the fifth-century comic coinage *gnômotupos* (γνωμοτύπος) and the related verb, noun, and expertise adjective. While this family of terms has received no independent scholarly attention, translators of Aristophanes and Aristotle, the only Classical authors to use this word family, have had to deal with it. When they have, they have typically glossed it into English as "maxim-coining" (and equivalently in other languages). This is a sensible inference from a fourth-century use of γνώμη, "maxim", and the verb τύπτειν, "stamping." It also tracks the importance of maxims to Sophistic-era adoption of wisdom-culture and the lore of the Seven Sages.[1] The use of maxims is explicitly thematized in Plato's *Protagoras*, in Socrates' prelude to and analysis of the Simonides' song to Scopas, and then in Isocrates' *Nicocles* and *Demonicus* speeches and Aristotle's synthesizing *Rhetoric*.[2]

I argue that, in general, this typical gloss is incorrect. The first element, γνωμο-, does not in this compound word mean "maxim", as a pithy and general action-guiding observation shorn of the reasoning in its favor. It instead emphasizes "idea", as an insight, technique, or view relevant to some matter. It is a conception or course of reasoning for some end. "Stamping" (τύπτειν) an idea means coming up with an apt idea and giving it shape and articulacy. In a characteristic use of the adjective, Aristophanes speaks of *gnômotupoi andres*. These are men who are skilled at "fashioning ideas", coming up with their content and their form.

My claim is that Aristophanes has captured something crucial about the period we call the Sophistic movement or Greek enlightenment.[3] The formulation, circulation, and competition of ideas is a matter of increasing self-consciousness in Athens. So too are those who formulate, circulate, and compete in them: intellectuals or, as *gnômotupoi andres* might be translated, "ideas-men". I even contend that those referred to as "sophists", *sophistai*, may in many ways be understood as *gnômotupoi andres*. That is because the adjective-noun

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sophistês is built from the verb *sophizesthai*, "to reason something out, cleverly [i.e., distinctly well]", and when that reasoning is given shape, deployed in conversation or otherwise presented to the public, it becomes an "idea". So, though the family of the term *gnômotupos* is rare in the classical period, its very existence reveals a core element of "the world of the sophists", as W. K. C. Guthrie tagged the period: that it is a world of ideas and intellectuals.[4]

Let us begin with a passage in the *Clouds*, which contains the earliest extant use of the adjective *gnômotupos* in Greek literature. Pheidippides, the son of the play's protagonist, has entered Socrates' "Thinkery" to study one or the other modes of speech taught there.[5] The Chorus announces that he will watch a competition between the two instructors and only then decide which mode to pursue. It praises their intellectual chops and, as it does frequently through the play, does so by deploying a broad range of recherché dialectical vocabulary. In particular, in a way typical of this Sophistic age, it reveals a sort of metacognitive awareness: attention to the way thinking happens. Here is my translation, leaving merely transliterated the term *gnômotupos* (which here modifies the noun *merimnais*, provisionally translated "considerations"):

Aristophanes *Clouds* 949–54 (ed. Wilson)

νῦν δείξετον τὼ πισύνω	Now they will demonstrate—relying
τοῖς περιδεξίοισιν	on roundly-dexterous
λόγοισι καὶ φροντίσι καὶ	arguments and thoughts and
γνωμοτύποις μερίμναις,	*gnômotupois* considerations—
λέγων ἀμείνων πότερος	which will be revealed,
φανήσεται.	in speaking, as better.

In the Loeb Classical Library translation of *Clouds*, by contrast, Jeffrey Henderson renders the adjective–noun pair "maxim-minting ingenuity" (Henderson 1998, p. 139). Douglas Olson, in his recent commentary on the play, gives an argument for "maxim-minting" (Olson 2021, p. 181), appealing to the imagery of coin production and putatively parallel usage elsewhere in Aristophanes. This translation fits the pattern found in other English and non-English translations, including the recent "phrase-making" and the nineteenth-century "[using] sententious maxims".[6]

This is not, however, a translation of *gnômotupos* driven by the term's immediate surroundings. The Chorus has just said that the agonists are to compete on the basis of *logoi* and *phrontides* and *merimnai*, the latter of which *gnômotupoi* qualifies. What are these three factors? My translation "arguments, thoughts, and [a certain kind of] considerations" takes them as similar but logically distinct elements in reasoning. Justification for this interpretation comes from later in the play. There, Phidippides, who has heard the Chorus here, echoes this language: "I associate with subtle *gnômai* and *logoi* and *merimnai*".[7] He has just said that, post-Thinkery curriculum, he now partakes in "novel and clever maneuvers" (καινοῖς πράγμασιν καὶ δεξιοῖς) and "can see through established rules" (τῶν καθεστώτων νόμων ὑπερφρονεῖν δύνασθαι).[8] He takes these as his preparation for "explaining" (διδάξειν) what makes punishing his father consistent with justice. And then he goes on to give that explanation, by asking a series of questions, drawing inferences, appealing to parity of reasoning, anticipating objections, considering what is *eikos*, "probable" or "plausible", questioning the authority of earlier rule-makers, making analogies to the animal kingdom, and diagnosing disanalogies to the same.[9] In short, he uses a complete quiver of dialectical and argumentative arrows, many of them surely unfamiliar to his father.

In our target passage, *gnômotupos* modifies *merimna*. According to the consensus translation, these considerations are of a "maxim-minting" sort; I will go on to argue that they are instead of the "ideas-generation" sort. Here are three reasons for finding the consensus translation implausible. First, it is hard to see what rhetorical advantage comes from qualifying the "considerations" so narrowly. Second, in the parallel passage at line 1404, nothing about maxim-coining is mentioned, and while there is a reference to *gnômai*, the ensuing "explaining" does not really involve the invention or deployment of maxims.[10]

Third, and most importantly, the debate between the two personified instructors of rhetoric does not involve an exchange of newly minted or even long-recycled maxims.[11] Better Argument describes the Marathon-era mode of education by giving an extensive list of rules for young men, and then he explains the benefits of following his regimen.[12] He does not coin or deploy sayings, jingles, or other compressed pieces of insight. When it is Worse Argument's turn to respond, Worse responds that he will "confound (συνταράξαι) all that, with opposed *gnômai* (ἐναντίαις γνώμαισι)".[13] He explains that he will perform some cross-examination (ἐλέγξω), after saying that he was the first to come up with "arguing the opposite case, against what's lawful and just".[14] And this is in fact what he does: he undercuts Better's claims about the value of his rules, then gives positive reasons to ignore those rules (he argues for a sort of unbridled hedonism protected by rhetorical savvy: satisfy your urges now, confute your moralizing opponents later). So Worse is emphasizing the invention of ideas, argument schemes, and, in general, contributions to reflective disputation. In light of these three difficulties, a translation of *gnômotupos* as "maxim-minting" is simply not motivated. This matters because Aristophanes here gives his most direct description of the argumentative sort of people he associates with Socrates—whom he elsewhere in the play implies are "sophists".[15] He deploys this novel term to capture what he takes to be distinctive about them. It is not that they coin maxims—which presumably is not in fact novel, since it has been done by sages and other *sophoi* from time immemorial. It is that they have new conceptions (about education, morality, human psychology, and the power of speech) and new ways of linking the plausibility of those conceptions to positions that people already accept.

But why suppose *gnômotupos* ever even meant "maxim-minting"? For that we have Aristotle to blame, and specifically a pair of remarks in the second book of his *Rhetoric*. He is in the midst of speaking about special persuasive maneuvers. Here, he addresses the category of *gnômologia*, "speaking in *gnômai*." He starts by highlighting the particular usage of *gnômê* that determines for him the meaning of the compound word.

Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.21.1–2 1394a19–25 (ed. Ross)

Περὶ δὲ γνωμολογίας, ῥηθέντος τί ἐστι γνώμη, μάλιστ᾽ ἂν γένοιτο φανερὸν περὶ ποίων τε καὶ πότε καὶ τίσιν ἁρμόττει χρῆσθαι τῷ γνωμολογεῖν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις. ἔστι δὲ γνώμη ἀπόφανσις ... περὶ... καθόλου ... περὶ ὅσων αἱ πράξεις εἰσί, καὶ αἱρετὰ ἢ φευκτά ἐστι πρὸς τὸ πράττειν.	Regarding *gnômologia*, once we've said what a *gnômê* is, it'll be plenty clear about what and when and by whom it is fitting to put to use *gnômologein* in speeches. A *gnômê* is a statement ... about ... a generality ... concerning the content of actions, and what one should choose or avoid as pertains to action.

In this rhetorical context, a *gnômê* is precisely what we would call a maxim: a general declaration, *apophansis*, pertinent to action that has been shorn of the explanatory argumentation. Generality contrasts with claims about individual things. The content of action contrasts with the content of, say, mathematics. The sense of *gnômê* here is of self-standing putative truths about human life. Aristotle's first example is a doublet from Euripides (here translated clumsily to draw out its relevant features): "it should never be the case that a man who's sound of mind is to have his children taught to the point of excessive cleverness" (χρὴ δ᾽ οὔ ποθ᾽, ὅς τις ἀρτίφρων πέφυκ᾽ ἀνήρ, παῖδας περισσῶς ἐκδιδάσκεσθαι σοφούς).[16] The maxim applies to anybody in any situation; it concerns what should be done; and the reasoning is left out (Aristotle goes on to note that Euripides provides two lines of reasoning in the next pair of verses).[17] Some of Aristotle's examples do not directly commend any action, however. His next two, strikingly similar in form, make general statements about the human condition: "There is not a man who flourishes in all respects" (οὐκ ἔστιν ὅς τις πάντ᾽ ἀνὴρ εὐδαιμονεῖ) ανδ "τηερε αρε νο μεν ωηο αρε φρεε" (οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρῶν ὅς τις ἔστ᾽ ἐλεύθερος).[18] These do not directly counsel any action, but they do concern the objects of action—flourishing and freedom—and could be cited as part of a persuasive gambit. For instance, don't imagine that one is perfectly happy, or don't bemoan

some setbacks; don't plan to act exactly however you want, or don't presume that others act wholly on their own judgment. The next two examples, "For a man, health is best—so at least I think" (ἀνδρὶ δ᾽ ὑγιαίνειν ἄριστόν ἐστιν, ὥς γ᾽ ἡμῖν δοκεῖ) and "Νοβοδψ᾽ς α λοερ ωηο᾽ς νοτ αλωαψς φεελινγ φονδνεσς" (οὐδεὶς ἐραστὴς ὅς τις οὐκ ἀεὶ φιλεῖ), reinforce this interpretation: a general statement about humans that implies some action, namely the effort to stay healthy and not to countenance hot-and-cold relationships.[19]

So, Aristotle is using *gnômê* in a highly technical and particularized way, as his contrasting use of the term in the familiar sense of "judgment" or "thought" elsewhere in his work shows.[20] He may not have coined this technical sense, though there is no overwhelming set of fifth-century parallels for it.[21] The term *gnômologein* has no precursor to its appearance here. *Gnômologia*, which we will study again below, appears once, in Plato's *Phaedrus* (likely from only several decades before the *Rhetoric*), in Socrates' list of rhetorical innovations that he ascribes to Polus (διπλασιολογίαν καὶ γνωμολογίαν καὶ εἰκονολογίαν, 267c). At any rate, Aristotle's usage in the above paragraph looks largely unbound by precedent.

Aristotle continues, and this is where we find his sole use of the term *gnômotupos*, the use I believe has, through illicit retrojection, informed readers of the *Clouds*.

Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.21.9 1395a2–7 (ed. Ross)

ἁρμόττει δὲ γνωμολογεῖν ἡλικίᾳ μὲν πρεσβυτέροις, περὶ δὲ τούτων ὧν ἔμπειρός τις ἐστί, ὡς τὸ μὲν μὴ τηλικοῦτον ὄντα γνωμολογεῖν ἁπρεπὲς ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ μυθολογεῖν, περὶ δ᾽ ὧν ἄπειρος, ἠλίθιον καὶ ἀπαίδευτον. σημεῖον δ᾽ ἱκανόν· οἱ γὰρ ἀγροῖκοι μάλιστα γνωμοτύποι εἰσὶ καὶ ῥᾳδίως ἀποφαίνονται.	It is fitting to *gnômologein* for someone of an older age, on matters in which he has experience—because *gnômologein* doesn't suit those who haven't reached that age (just as it is with *muthologein*); being on matters not yet experienced, it's simpleminded and untutored. Here's proof enough: rural folk are especially *gnômotupos* and ready to display it.

Speaking in maxims befits older people, given their experience of life. Aristotle does not here explain the relationship between experience and practical maxims (he presents it in the form of a maxim shorn of argumentation!). But he implies that such speech is a feat of abstraction or accumulation, even a confidence that what applies in some cases applies in many more. He explains the efficacy of maxims against an unsophisticated audience (cf. φορτικότητα): "they enjoy it when someone, by speaking generally, hits upon the piecemeal beliefs that they already have."[22] They take the speaker as insightful on the grounds of his identifying the universality of their as-yet uncoordinated impressions. The comparison with "story-telling" (μυθολογεῖν) supports this view: the traditional tales gain force as exempla when recited by people mature enough to have sifted through what is available and then chosen what is apt for the present story-telling occasion. In either case, young people do not have the gravitas to present maxims or stories as true and pertinent based on their own experience of life. Should they cite either, they would do so vainly.

Despite not setting out this sort of reasoning, Aristotle does give one piece of explicit evidence for his claim, at least as he sees it. Country folk, *agroikoi*, he says, are especially *gnômotupoi* and are keen to show off their being so. This is the only post-Aristophanic use of the adjective. Immediately we must ask two questions: what is Aristotle saying about the country folk, and what does he take their character trait to be proof *of*? The two most prominent English translations of this passage—the Revised Oxford Translation and the Loeb Classical Library—as well as all the prominent lexicons say that the country folk are fond of "coining maxims" and then showing off those maxims. This contrast between "coining" and "showing" is evidently inferred from an implied contrast between the adjective, *gnômotupos*, and the verb, *apophainetai*. So, the thought is that rustic types would invent or construe generalized maxims and then bandy them about. Presumably, then, they would contribute to that body of memorable and prudential old-wives' lore, "a stitch in time saves nine." To be sure, there was a comic trope in fourth-century comedy

that could be described in this way. Our best evidence is from Menander: his rustic Gorgias, for instance, gives what he calls a "rather serious speech" (λόγον σπουδαιότερόν), which includes numerous generalities about "all people, whether successful or failures."[23]

But whatever exactly Aristotle implies about country folk, and whatever his reasons for thinking this about them, what does he take his thought to be evidence *for*? Does Aristotle equate rustics with mature people, those with experience—given that rustics in fact *gnômologein*, mature people should in fact *gnômologein*? That seems unlikely. More likely he is identifying the humor and absurdity of novel maxims being spouted off by those who are simple and *apeideutoi*, "uneducated." After all, later in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says that the *agroikoi*, the rustic folk, are the opposite of the *pepaideumenoi*, "educated."[24] On this assumption, he would be saying that young people should recognize how silly they would look in coining and deploying maxims by comparing themselves with the silliness of the stock comic characters who are equally innocent and naïve, rustic people, and who do so. But though more likely, is this really Aristotle's claim here? After all, many rustic people were old and surely had plenty of experience relevant to the maxims they were coining. Maybe it is notable that, as we saw, Aristotle thinks that maxims are effective in speeches *directed toward* unsophisticated people, since they see their private views being given public esteem. Perhaps Aristotle's intuition is that unsophisticated people likewise tend to maxim-ify their private views, in spite of their lack of experience with the wider world and its variety of people that such generalization would require. They think they are widely experienced, but in fact they are only narrowly experienced, and the maxims they tend to coin would require, for true authority, that wider experience. Their maxims, based on this view, would not be about horses and labor, topics they do in fact know about, but about human wellbeing and error, topics they have too little pluralistic exposure to for any confident generalization.

Still, or given the above, there is something quite unsatisfying about this passage: Aristotle is too curt, the characterological assumptions too undeveloped, the thinking about suitable grounds for maxim-coining and display too elided. Ancient scholars seem similarly puzzled. One such scholar tries his best to explain what Aristotle means, and in doing so goes quite far afield:

Anonymous *Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric* 127, 31–2 (ed. Rabe 1896)

γνωμοτύποι εἰσὶν ἤτοι πολύπειροι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ῥᾳδίως γνώμας ἀποφαίνονται.	They are *gnômotupoi*—that is, very experienced—and for that reason are ready to display *gnômai*.

This anonymous commentator, concerned with making Aristotle's argument in the present paragraph as seamless as possible, takes the "country folk" analogy to support the fittingness of older people to *gnômologein*. It could do so if *gnômotupos*, a term otherwise unexemplified in Aristotle or in fact any literature from the fourth century or later, simply meant *polupeiros*, "very experienced." He draws this idea from Aristotle's remark that older people are experienced (ἔμπειρός).

The fact that our commentator glosses *gnômotupos* as *polupeiros* tells us two important things about the word. First, the meaning of *gnômotupos*—or at least Aristotle's meaning here—is otherwise quite lost on a later age, which means that its morphosemantics are insufficient for determining its sense. The sense of the first element is indeterminate (the meanings of *gnôm(ê)* being highly disperse) and, as we will see, the value of the second element for readers of ancient script, which lacked accentuation, could be confusing. Second, *gnômotupos* could indeed accommodate the gloss "very experienced." Perhaps the thought is that the *gnômai*-typified person is such *precisely because* he has experienced a lot; "judgment" or "judgments" would be taken as a sort of automatic consequence of experience. At any rate, we may conclude that while Aristotle may well have meant "maxim-coining" when he described the *agroikoi* as *gnômotupoi* (whatever his reasoning in support of this), this could have been a tendentious or idiosyncratic use of the term, one not transparent to later readers and, more importantly, not a good guide to usage

several generations earlier. The term could have had different meanings for different ages or different contexts.

Before returning to the other Aristophanic usages, let us pause further on the interpretation made by our anonymous commentator. He might think that the first element, *gnôm-*, is not the object of the verb for stamping or minting (τύπτω). To be sure, *-tupos* < *tuptô* is a very productive second element. There is the hawk who strikes at the ground (χαμαιτύπος); the woodpecker who pecks wood (καλοτύπος); stone-cutting (λαοτύπος); copper-working (χαλκοτύπος); and buffeting in a wintry way (χειμωνοτύπος). Note, however, that these are all paroxytone adjectives (accented on the penultimate syllable, as the verb τύπτειν is).[25] Yet there are also numerous proparoxytone adjectives (accented on the antepenultimate syllable, in the first element), and in many of these cases, we must hear not an "*x* being struck by", i.e., τύπτω plus first-element object, but rather "of the type *x*", i.e., the first element qualified by the deverbal noun τύπος.[26] Consider just the following four instances: ζηλότυπος is not the production of jealousy but typified by jealousy; θεότυπος means after the fashion of god, not the creating or hitting of god; ἰδιότυπος describes not peculiarity-minting but something with a distinctive form; and χονδρότυπος refers to a type of cartilage, not the striking of it. Accordingly, our anonymous commentator, reading the unfamiliar ΓΝΩΜΟΤΥΠΟΙ, may have conjectured this word to be *γνωμότυπος (proparoxytone). That suppositious adjective would mean something like "a *gnômê*-kind of person", "typified by *gnômê* or *gnômai*". Aristotle would seem, based on that late and imagined reading, to be saying that rustic folk are particularly *gnômê*-ish, given their lives full of hard experience, and are keen to rattle off their discoveries.

Despite this theoretical possibility, should our anonymous commentator have in fact assumed the word was (limited in meaning to the one we would write as) γνωμότυπος, he would have been wrong as a historical matter. The single Aristophanic instance of the verb from the *gnômotup-* family confirms that our adjective is in fact paroxytone—reasoning from the assumption that Aristophanes would be operating with only one sense of *gnômotup-* or, if he knew two, that he would more carefully distinguish them—and so the compound word does in fact mean *tuptein* + the first-element object. The verb is in *Thesmaphoriazusae*, from 411 BCE. "He" refers to Agathon.

Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 54–8 (ed. Wilson)

κάμπτει δὲ νέας ἀψῖδας ἐπῶν,	And bending new loops of verse,
τὰ δὲ τορνεύει, τὰ δὲ κολλομελεῖ,	some he polishes down, some he joins;
καὶ γνωμοτυπεῖ κἀντονομάζει	he *gnômotupei*, and rewords,
καὶ κηροχυτεῖ καὶ γογγύλλει	and molds, and spins round,
καὶ χοανεύει—	and casts together. . .

Aristophanes likens the tragic poet Agathon, in this play associated with the innovative Euripides—and in Plato's *Symposium*, with Socrates—to a wheelwright or fine potter.[27] Dramatic artistry is not just a matter of inspiration and singing; it is a matter of technical, hands-on construction. So Aristophanes uses a term that parallels one applicable to smiths at foundries—Agathon "works" or "pounds" or "stamps out" *gnômai*.[28] To be sure, Aristophanes *could* intend his listener to hear *gnômai* as directly parallel to *epea*, compressed and generalizing statements. But nothing requires this. Every line of a poem should be polished down and joined, and few if any lines in a drama need to be "sayings."

The skilled-construction connotation comes out in an equation found in another late anonymous commentator, this time evidently something of an Old Comedy specialist.[29]

Anonymous Ῥητορικαι λέξεις #224 [on Ar. *Ran*. 820] (ed. Naoumidès 1975)

φρενοτέκτων] γνωμοτύπου	thought-building] *gnômotupos*

This commentator is glossing a term, *phrenotektôn*, found in an exaggerated description by the Chorus of Aeschylus' bombastic language. Aristophanes is again using construction language—"splinters of linchpins", "the residue of fine carvings"—to describe the results of Euripides' defense against a *phrenotektôn* man.[30] This adjective, known only from this

appearance, evidently means "building with the mind, ingenious" (though it could almost mean "building up the mind", based on a model with φρενοκλόπος, "stealing, deceiving the mind", if that had any meaning in the current context). According to the commentator, at any rate, *gnômotupos* means something having to do with building and mentality, and so *gnômotupos* must again fit the "construction" (and "thought"-centricity) mold.

Our commentator presumably has the rare word *gnômotupos* in mind just because it also appears in *Frogs*, and there it must mean something more general than "maxim-minting", since there is no reason to think—either linguistically or contextually—that *phrenotektôn* indicates maxim construction. But before we look at that key passage, we will consider one other usage in Aristophanes. This is what we might call an "expertise adjective", and it is the only instance known to us. It appears in *Knights* of 424 BCE, the earliest of the plays surveyed here. Demos is describing the politician Phaeax.

Aristophanes *Knights* 1375–80 (ed. Wilson)

τὰ μειράκια ταυτὶ λέγω τἀν τῷ μύρῳ, ἃ στωμυλεῖται τοιαδὶ καθήμενα· σοφός γ᾽ ὁ Φαίαξ δεξιῶς τ᾽ οὐκ ἀπέθανεν. συνερκτικὸς γάρ ἐστι καὶ περαντικός, καὶ γνωμοτυπικὸς καὶ σαφὴς καὶ κρουστικός, καταληπτικός τ᾽ ἄριστα τοῦ θορυβητικοῦ.	I mean these youths who, among the perfume shelves, sit around and blather on like this: "That's one smart Phaeax, cleverly not dying." For he's captious and conclusive, *gnômotupikos* and vivid and striking, supreme in silencing the uproarious.

Elsewhere, Eupolis calls Phaeax great at nattering (λαλεῖν) but bad at talking in a proper way (λέγειν).[31] This recalls much description of late fifth-century intellectuals. Here, Aristophanes loads up on the technical rhetorical descriptions.[32] The conceit is that Phaeax can defeat an opponent with his clever, punchy, incisive, and undermining dialectical moves. The second element of the word *gnômotupikos*, built from *tuptein*, evinces either the mad tinkerer or the pugilist. In either case, despite Henderson's clever translation as "aphoristically originative", nothing limits the spectator's interpretation of the word to the realm of maxims, proverbs, or sayings.[33] Aristophanes seems instead to highlight the intellectual novelty in his exchanges.

We may now turn wholeheartedly to Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where we meet for the first time the *gnômotupoi andres* of this paper's title. Just as the Chorus in *Clouds* introduced its *agôn*'s antagonists—the play's clearest instance of theorizing intellectuals in argument—by appealing to their *gnômotupoi merimnai*, here the Chorus in *Frogs* introduces its *agôn*'s antagonists, the most intellectually substantive and innovative poets of the previous generation (and approximate parallels for Better and Worse Arguments).

Aristophanes *Frogs* 875–84 (ed. Wilson)

ὦ Διὸς ἐννέα παρθένοι ἀγναὶ Μοῦσαι, λεπτολόγους ξυνετὰς φρένας αἳ καθορᾶτε ἀνδρῶν γνωμοτύπων, ὅταν εἰς ἔριν ὀξυμέριμνοι ἔλθωσι στρεβλοῖσι παλαίσμασιν ἀντιλογοῦντες, ἔλθετ᾽ ἐποψόμεναι δύναμιν δεινοτάτοιν στομάτοιν πορίσασθαι ῥήματα [or ῥήγματα][34] καὶ παραπρίσματ᾽ ἐπῶν. νῦν γὰρ ἀγὼν σοφίας ὁ μέγας χω- ρεῖ πρὸς ἔργον ἤδη.	You nine holy maiden daughters of Zeus, O Muses, who oversee the subtly-arguing intelligent minds of *gnômotupôn* men, when sharp-mindedly they come to quarrel, arguing with tricky maneuvers, you come and take a look at the power of these incredible mouths to provide phrases [or 'cracks'] and shards of verses. For by now the great contest of *sophia* has come into action.

The interpretation of our target word may at first look ambivalent. The emphasis in the first few lines is of fine-grained, effective, and sophisticated reasoning, in line with

a wrestling metaphor: a competition that requires knowledge of devices, not just brute strength. Later in the sentence, however, we see "cracks" or "phrases" and "shards" of verses (ῥήγματα or ῥήματα καὶ παραπρίσματ' ἐπῶν), language familiar from fifty lines earlier in the play, which suggests by contrast that they will be using poignant and succinct sayings. Maxims could be seen as razor-thin pieces of language sliced off from a much larger block. Further, Euripides, one of the two *gnômotupoi* men being described here, is the prototype of the sententious maxim-writer, as Aristotle's avid quotation of him to that effect shows.[35] And yet in the coming *agôn*, not once do the poets compete over what we would call "sayings" or "precepts" or "maxims." The closest to a "saying" comes in a single doublet at 1391–2, where Aeschylus and Euripides contend over the "weightiness" of lines. This is hardly enough to tip our interpretation of the word into "maxim-coining." What Aeschylus and Euripides do in their *agôn* is, instead, wrangle about opening lines, formulae, topical profundity, and the like. The focus is simply not on universalizing gnomic statements. And the evidence from the three other appearances of this word-family in Aristophanes should confirm the point.

What kind of men, then, are *gnomotupoi* men? Here our English-language scholars of *Frogs* have it right. Jeffrey Henderson renders it "men who mint ideas." Kenneth Dover speaks of those who "coin" "judgments, opinions."[36] These translations get at the humor of the compound word. It joins the immaterial, "ideas, judgments", which are usually thought to be spoken, imagined, intuited, or otherwise mentally entertained, with the material, "striking, pounding, minting", an action that belongs in the sooty, noisy, and all-too-tangible workshop. And so it befits the comic stage. Its coinage, so to speak, predates the *Knights* of 424 BCE, since here we are dealing with a derivative form (on the assumption that the verbal compound comes first). The term hardly needs any greater specificity than would activate the humorous polarity of abstract and concrete, mental item and physical process, cogitation and agitation. But the first element, *gnôm-*, must have sufficient particularity for it to be a conceivable (even if outrageous) object of *tuptein*, as well as especially apt for the speakers lambasted: the Thinkery's teachers in *Clouds*; Phaeax in *Knights*; Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae*; and Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs*. So, the end of this paper will concern the meaning of that, and the importance of this compound for thinking about the sophistic period.

But before we turn to the positive evidence for *gnômê* in our plays, we should settle the point about Aristotle. He is using the term *gnômotupos* in a special and technical way, one not reflective of its broad original comic use. He frequently posits an artificially narrow use of a term.[37] To confirm that, we may look at his other usage of a *gnôm-* prefixed term in the passages from *Rhetoric* 2.21 quoted above. In Aristotle, *gnômologein* is "to speak in *gnômai*", where *gnômai* are maxims; *gnômologia* is the action of *gnômologein*. But this is a particularly narrow construction, as we can see from two later authors.

Polybius uses the plural noun *gnomologiai* once, in reference to Ephorus' work. He says that his historical writing includes admirable digressions and "his own" *gnomologiai*, both of which supplement the history.

Polybius 12.28.10 (ed. Pédach)

ὁ γὰρ Ἔφορος παρ' ὅλην τὴν πραγματείαν θαυμάσιος ὢν καὶ κατὰ τὴν φράσιν καὶ κατὰ τὸν χειρισμὸν καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τῶν λημμάτων, δεινότατός ἐστιν ἐν ταῖς παρεκβάσεσι καὶ ταῖς ἀφ' αὑτοῦ γνωμολογίαις καὶ συλλήβδην ὅταν που τὸν ἐπιμετροῦντα λόγον διατίθηται.	For Ephorus, though amazing throughout his work—in phrasing and handling and reasoning of argument—is most impressive in his digressions and his personal *gnômologiai*; in a word, whenever he's giving some supplemental view.

It is not clear precisely what Polybius means: his remark appears in a section where he argues in favor of the historian's practical experience, though he also here gives an instance of what is admirable in Ephorus' comparison between writers of history and writers of

speeches. But it looks like Polybius means something like "presentation of his *gnômai*, judgments."[38] Nothing suggests that he refers to some treasury of sage maxims possessed or created by Ephorus or some proclivity to write in maxims.

Plutarch uses the term a few times.[39] Fabius Maximus' persuasive speech was spare, thoughtful, and replete with *gnômologiai*, and in this it was like Thucydides'.

Plutarch *Life of Fabius Maximus* 1.8 (ed. Ziegler)

οὐ γὰρ ἐπῆν ὡραϊσμὸς οὐδὲ κενὴ καὶ ἀγοραῖος χάρις, ἀλλὰ νοῦς ἴδιον καὶ περιττὸν ἐν γνωμολογίαις σχῆμα καὶ βάθος ἔχων, ἃς μάλιστα ταῖς Θουκυδίδου προσεοικέναι λέγουσι.	It [his speech] had no additional ornament, nothing empty, no marketplace charm, but instead it had its particular insight and deep character extraordinary in *gnômologiai*, which they say was most like Thucydides'.

Thucydides' writing is certainly quotable and extraordinary in its abstractions and general observations. It might even be thought the height of sententiousness. Is it full of maxims and sayings? That is harder to countenance. While Stobaeus, for instance, extracts many sentences from his work, we do not know of Thucydides' being considered a font of crisp practical insight in the form that Aristotle has in mind.[40] Elsewhere, Plutarch says that found arranged among Cato the Elder's *apophthegmasi* and *gnômologiai* is much that has been literally translated from the Greek: are these quotables? Plutarch had just said that Cato's writings, *suggrammata*, were peppered with "Greek thoughts and stories" (δόγμασιν . . . καὶ ἱστορίαις).[41] And about Greek New Comedy Plutarch says that it has "fine and simple *gnômologiai*" that reshape one's character for the better.[42] It is true that Menander was remembered robustly for his quotable *gnômai*, but Plutarch has also just been talking about the *pragmata*, the action.

Nothing in these passages suggests that *gnômologia* means exclusively "talking in maxims", even if some instances of *gnômologia* include doing so and some even incline to that sense.[43] So *gnômologiai* refers to instances of writing or speaking that involve the articulation of *gnômê*, judgment or ideas, but not necessarily *gnômai*, maxims. Just so, whatever is *gnômotupos* is typified by, or creates, *gnômê*, judgment or ideas, but not necessarily *gnômai*, maxims. Indeed, Hesychius intentionally conflates the two compound terms:

Hesychius *Lexicon* γ 747 (ed. Latte)

γνωμοτυπία] γνωμολογία	*gnômotupia*] *gnômologia*

Since no instance of the abstract noun *gnômotupia* is extant, we do not know the context of the instance that Hesychius here glosses. We also do not know the accuracy of this gloss. The importance of this gloss is to be found in two confirmations it makes: that *gnômotup-* has long had an uncertain meaning (such that it needs a lexicographer to explain it) and that, given that *gnômologia* does not mean "maxim-coining", neither does *gnômotupia*, at least according to Hesychius.

So what is *gnômê* (or its plural *gnômai*) in Aristophanes, such that the Thinkery's teachers and the *Frog*'s dramatists are stampers-out of them? The noun appears nearly two dozen times in *Clouds*.[44] The following list of uses (Table 1) is instructive:

Table 1. Uses of *gnômê* in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

157	Chaerephon asked Socrates for his *gnômê* on the source of gnat sounds.
169	Socrates had his great *gnômê* about orbits snatched away by lizard's poop.
317	The Clouds provide intellectuals *gnômê*, *dialexis*, and *nous*
321	Learning to stab a *gnômê* with a *gnômidion*
361	The chorus appreciates Prodicus for his *sophia kai gnômê*
432	With this education, Strepsiades will win many *gnômai*, "decisions", in the *dêmos*

Table 1. *Cont.*

477	Socrates is to test Strepsiades' *gnômê*, "capacity for judgment"
533	A positive *gnômê*, "judgment", from the spectators for *Clouds*
730	Strepsiades needs to find a fraudulent *gnômê*, "plan" (= 747)
744	With your *gnômê*, "mind", evaluate a *noêma*
761	Strepsiades is getting tangle in his *gnômê*, "thinking"
896	Worse—I am discovering new *gnômai* (*sophos* ideas for defeating opponents)
948	Worse—in response to whatever Better says, he will get stung by my *gnômai*
1037	Worse—I will ruin his claims with opposed *gnômai*
1045	Worse—What *gnômê* do you have for rejecting warm baths?
1084	Better—what *gnômê* will someone have for avoiding a certain treatment?
1315	Chorus—opposed *gnômai*
1404	Pheidippides—subtle *gnômai*, *logoi*, and *merimnai*
1440	Pheidippides—now consider this *gnômê*

The scene in which Strepsiades first comes to the Thinkery (φροντιστήριον) thematizes "ideas", *gnômai* among them. Indeed, it puts ideas ahead of oratory, lessons, or skepticism as the main content of Socrates' school. Our play's protagonist knocks at the door. An irate student answers, accusing him of being "ignorant" and failing to "think all around the issue."[45] In his noisiness, he says, he "caused to be aborted a newly discovered idea (φροντιδ')." [46] The student goes on to explain one of Socrates' ideas—a mechanism for answering a question driven more by curiosity than concerns for the practical. How is one to measure the distance a flea can jump in its own terms? Well, by measuring the flea's foot with something like a lost-wax method. Strepsiades expresses his great admiration for this: "By Zeus the king, what a subtle mind!"[47] The student hears Strepsiades' excitement and asks whether he would like to hear "another idea", a *phrontisma*. The terminology here is notable. His reference to a *phrontisma* is unique in the classical period.[48] It means, as simply as possible, an instance or outcome of *phrontizein*, "thinking." This is not specifically an answer or a solution, a product or an action, indeed nothing instrumental to something else at all; it is just some thinking itself. Strepsiades snaps up the offer. Chaerephon asks Socrates whether he has any "idea", *gnômê*, what part of a gnat's body produces its buzz? Socrates does, and it is a complicated one that relies on views about pneumatics and acoustics. Finally, the student says that Socrates was just "separated from his great idea, *gnômê*", by a lizard. He had been staring upwards, "studying the moon's paths and orbits", when the gecko befouled him.[49] Given statements made later in the play, he was probably working up an account of lunar or solar eclipses.

So these *gnômai* as "ideas" are coherent pieces of reasoning unified as something interesting to an audience. *Gnômai* are also steps in an adversarial argument used to advance or defeat a claim. These could be examples or counterexamples, inference or deduction, analogy or disanalogy, ideal or worse-case scenario, appeal to authority or ad hominem attack. They are what we have seen above called *merimnai*, "considerations." Of course, the very modes of argument may themselves prove interesting to an audience, as the works of Gorgias and Antiphon clearly show. We also see the subjective appearance of *gnômê* as "judgment", "cognitive capacity for reasoning", throughout the play. Paired with ideas is the proclivity or capacity to produce ideas; cleverness is the ability to formulate unexpected plans.

I propose that Aristophanes is dramatizing his awareness of a fresh cultural phenomenon: the interest, and traffic, in ideas. Socrates and Euripides, among others, are the leading representatives of this phenomenon. As coiners of ideas, they give handy, memorable, or provocative packaging of some cogent thought.

The value of thinking about "ideas-men" is that it requires that we think about "sophists" differently that we might have. What is distinctive about the Sophistic era might not only be in the teaching, or the taking of pay for courses in critical thinking, or the concern with rhetoric, or the interest in moral or theological skepticism, all features judged typically and definitive about the sophists.[50] It might instead be a combination of elements captured by the term *gnômotupos*. There is the seemingly specialized capacity to come up with new ideas—new conceptions of elements of the world enjoyable to think about, and new techniques of argument that support or refute positions taken on the world. In other words, bringing about new things to listen to, and new ways to talk.

As I mentioned above, I believe that *sophistês* derives from *sophizesthai*, "to deal with problems"; the label does not originally mean "teacher of wisdom" or something like that. Being *gnômotupos* means being able to pose, entertain, and solve problems of the intellectual type.

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Notes

1 For the lore, see esp. Diog. Laert. 1.22–115 and Stob. 3.1.172–3, with (Moore 2020a, pp. 94–96).

2 See Pl. *Prt*. 339a–47a. For a similar thematic in *Republic*, see (Tennant 2022).

3 For these concepts, see (Billings 2023).

4 (Guthrie 1971), 1. For this "world", see (Moore n.d.).

5 The modes of speech: Ar. *Nub*. 99 (etc.); Pheidippides' entrance: 816; a choice: 882–5.

6 (Johnston 2017; Hickie 1853). (Claughton and Affleck 2012, p. 77): "newly-minted maxims". (Van Daele 1934, p. 204): "frappées en maxims" ("struck in maxims"), and similarly in (Huart 1973, p. 59) (a study of *gnômê* and its compounds). The non-scholarly (Paduano 1999, p. 107) simply ignores the term ("in discorsi abilissimi, in pensieri e riflessioni"). (Marzullo 2003, p. 251, gives the interesting "idee squadrate come massime" (Marzullo); (Del Corno 1996, p. 117), "in detti coniati dal pensiero" ("in sayings coined by thought"). More neutrally than any others, (Grilli 2001, ad 954), "argomenti elaborati con la riflessione."

7 Ar. *Nub*. 1404.

8 Ar. *Nub*. 1399–400.

9 Ar. *Nub*. 1408–32.

10 A possible minor exception is Pheidippides' corruption of a line from Euripides' *Suppliants*: "children cry; but you don't think a father cries?" (~Eur. *Alc*. 691). This is a compact and clever claim, but not a universalizing judgment and hardly an important part of the argument.

11 (Pierre Huart 1973, pp. 113–14).

12 Ar. *Nub*. 961–83, 985–99, 1002–23. For a discussion, see (Moore 2023, pp. 11–14).

13 Ar. *Nub*. 1037. (Henderson 1998, ad loc.) switches the adjective–noun ordering, yielding "considered refutations", which would be even more consistent with my interpretation.

14 Ar. *Nub*. 1039–40, 1043.

15 Ar. *Nub*. 1111, 1308.

16 Eur. *Med*. 294–95; Arist. *Rh*. 1394a29–30.

17 Arist. *Rh*. 1394a33–34.

18 Eur. *Sthen*. fr. 661.1 and *Hec*. 864; Arist. *Rh*. 1394b2, 4.

19 Epich. fr. 250 PCG; Eur. *Tro*. 1051.

20 "Thought" is found at Arist. *NE* 1143a26; *HA* 576b15; *Po*. 1450a7, and elsewhere.

21 LSJ s.v. A.III.3 claims to find "practical maxim" at Heraclitus B78 (ἦθος γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον μὲν οὐκ ἔχει γνώμας, θεῖον δὲ ἔχει); Sophocles *Ajax* 1091 (Μενέλαε, . . . γνώμας ὑποστήσας σοφὰς); and Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.2.9 (τὰς δὲ τῶν σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν γνώμας ἀρετῇ πλουτίζειν τοὺς κεκτημένους), but none are correct.

22 Arist. *Rh*. 1395b2–3: χαίρουσι γάρ, ἐάν τις καθόλου λέγων ἐπιτύχῃ τῶν δοξῶν ἃς ἐκεῖνοι κατὰ μέρος ἔχουσιν.

23 Men. *Dys*. 269–98; cf. *Georg*. frr. 1–3. For later works and a bibliography, see (Konstantakos 2005, p. 3); and on Antiphanes' *Agroikos* ("The Rustic"), see (Konstantakos 2004). Cullyer (2006) discusses Aristotle's take on *agroikoi* in *Ethics* and *Politics*, where he focuses on their insensibility to pleasure and their lack of wit (Aristotle does not speak to maxim-coining there); see in particular Arist. *EN* 1128a9 and b1–3 (*agroikoi* are annoyed at people who joke around). Rosen (2006) adds the irony that much

classical Greek humor has its basis in rusticity. It is worth noting that Theophrastus does not lampoon the rustic in terms of sententiousness (*Char*. 4).

[24] Arist. *Rh*. 1408a32.

[25] For a compact background on the Greek accentuation system, see (Sihler 1995, pp. 235–39; Gunkel 2014).

[26] For τύπος as "form (of)", see LSJ s.v. VI–IX. For the alternative accentuation schemes of compounds, see (Smyth 1920, p. 252 (§894); Emde Boas et al. 2019, p. 271 (§23.40)).

[27] For the relevance of Agathon, see (Emlyn-Jones 2004, pp. 394–403; Worman 2016, pp. 520–22; Wardy 2023).

[28] Marzullo (2003, p. 621): "spara sentenze".

[29] This lexicography of 332 terms/entries draws principally from Pindar, Aristophanes, and Demosthenes.

[30] Ar. *Ran*. 819–20.

[31] Eupolis fr. 116 = Plut. *Alc*. 13.2. For Phaeax more generally, see (Murphy 2019, pp. 90–92).

[32] See (Peppler 1910, esp. 432–34).

[33] Henderson (1998), ad loc. Similarly, (Van Daele 1934, p. 140): "de sentences habile forgeur" ("skillful forger of sententious phrases") seems to go beyond the evidence. The "sentenzioso" of (Marzullo 2003, p. 177) is correct enough but too uninformative.

[34] ῥήματα codd.: ῥήγματα Francke Wilson

[35] See (Most 2003; Wright 2024).

[36] Dover 1993 ad loc. (Marzullo 2003): "immaginifici" represents the creative or generative aspect of these men.

[37] For another example, see (Moore 2020b).

[38] Mauersberger (1968, p. 398) gives "sentenziöse Ausführung in d. geschichtl. Darstellung", but Polybius' point does not really seem a stylistic one. Pédech (1961, p. 52) gives the more plausible "réflexions personnelles"; similarly, Walbank (1967, p. 411): "the expression of his own personal reflexions".

[39] Wyttenbach (1830, p. 358) surprisingly summarizes these uses: "ironice, intempestiva doctaque admonitio".

[40] Flacelière and Chambry (1964, p. 70) translate minimally, taking Plutarch to be saying that Fabius' "sentences" were very much like Thucydides'.

[41] Plut. *Cat. mai.* 2.4

[42] Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 712b.

[43] A possible special exception is the reference to Theognis' Γνωμολογίαι . . . λόγοι, his "gnomic writings", at *Quomodo adul. poet. aud. deb.* 2 16c.

[44] For more general comments about *gnômê* in Aristophanes, see (Huart 1973, pp. 54–67, 108–16).

[45] Ar. *Nub*. 135–6: ἀμαθής. . . ἀπεριμερίμνως.

[46] Ar. *Nub*. 137: φροντίδ᾽ ἐξήμβλωκας ἐξηυρημένην.

[47] Ar. *Nub*. 153: τῆς λεπτότητος τῶν φρενῶν.

[48] Olson (2021, ad 155): "the product of an important noun-formation strategy that was particular active in the late 5th century. . . perhaps supposed to sound amusingly eccentric ('thinkification')". No discussion in (Green 1868 or Dover). (Starkie 1911) cites Schol. V.: σόφισμα.

[49] Ar. *Nub*. 169–73: ζητοῦντος αὐτοῦ τῆς σελήνης τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ τὰς περιφοράς.

[50] For this sort of account, see (Billings and Moore 2023). For the other kinds of account, see, for instance, (Kerferd 1981) (secondary education) and (Bonazzi 2020) (study of language).

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