

ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

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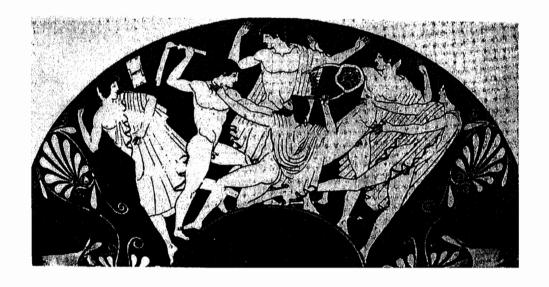


Fig. 1: The youthful Herakles attacks his tutor Linos, c.480 BC (Munich, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst 2646 (J371) $\sim ARV^2$ 437.128; reproduced from Beck, F.A.G., *Album of Greek Education*, pl. 5, no. 26 & p. 13).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the phenomenon of anti-intellectualism in Athens between c.450 and c.380 BC. Existing scholarship rarely does more than touch upon this subject and more involved studies tends to focus on individual aspects of Athenian society while ignoring the whole. Moreover, there is often a surprisingly uncritical approach to the sources. My object is to describe, analyse and explain the forms and significance of anti-intellectualism coherently and critically. This is not intellectual history but a history of social attitudes.

I examine the most prominent and interesting instances of negative characterisation of intellectuals; the apparently deliberate avoidance of intellectual techniques in certain genres; criticism of the intellectual process; and direct attacks, verbal and legal, that were made against individual intellectuals. It will be found that the ascription of certain characteristics and practices to intellectuals depends on the recognition or imputation of traits (which may then be generalised to the whole class), and their rationalisation in terms of common beliefs about human behaviour. This process can produce contradictory images: intellectuals can be depicted as avaricious and unworldly, cunning and impractical, and so on. This provides an approach to the implicit principles that underlie Athenian social, legal and political institutions.

Athenians' disquiet with the results of the intellectual process was persistent but rarely vehement, extreme or even explicit. No alternative means to truth was articulated. This was partly due to the lack of authoritative institutions, such as inspired prophets or a doctrinal religion, apart from the classical Greek state. Anti-intellectual phenomena are largely an effect of the failure of a world-view, which is convenient to call 'unsophisticated', to come to grips with the methods and claims of new intellectual techniques. The unsophisticated mind is perfectly able to reason but is direct, concrete, unanalytical, holistic and moralising. In this sense, anti-intellectualism is justifiable in its own terms.