



ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

Guy Gilbert Olding

Discipline of Classical Studies, in the
Centre for European Studies and General Linguistics, at the
University of Adelaide, South Australia.

Submitted November 2002 (corrected October-November 2003).



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

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	<i>page</i> 1
1. Introduction	1
2. Definitions	5
3. Chronological and Geographical Scope	11
4. Literature Review	13
5. Methodologies	23
6. The Nature of the Sources	29
Chapter 2: Case Studies	47
1. Attic Old Comedy	47
2. Diopeithes' Decree	71
3. Tragedy	75
4. Anti-Intellectual Motifs in Oratory	97
5. Kleon's Mytilene Speech	109
6. The Trial of Nikomachos	117
7. The Trial of Sokrates	123
8. Polykrates' Accusation of Sokrates	139
9. Intellectuals in Art	153
Chapter 3: The Assimilation of Myth	161
Chapter 4: The Essence of Anti-Intellectual Attacks and their Underlying Assumptions	177
1. Uselessness	177
2. Irreligion	187
3. Immorality	195
4. Anti-Democracy and Disloyalty to the State	215
5. Summary of Chapter 4	229
Chapter 5: The Anti-Intellectuals	233
Chapter 6: Conclusion	259
Chapter 7: Appendices	277
A. Trials and Fictions	277
B. Athenian Attitudes towards Education	291
Notes	303
Bibliography	389

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.