

WHY DID ATHENIANS TRUST DEMAGOGUES? THE POWER OF BEING ΠΙΘΑΝΩΤΑΤΟΣ  
(PITHANOTATOS)

1. Thucydides 1.139.4 (Pericles being introduced prior to his speech on behalf of maintaining the Megarian blockade):

παρελθὼν Περικλῆς ὁ Ξανθίππου, ἀνὴρ κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον πρῶτος  
Ἀθηναίων, λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος, παρήνει τοιάδε

Pericles, the son of Xanthippus, a man first of Athenians at that time, most capable in both speaking and acting, came forward and said the following.

2. Thucydides 3.36.6 (Cleon being introduced at the Mytilenian Debate):

Κλέων ὁ Κλεαινέτου . . . ὢν καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα βιαίωτατος τῶν πολιτῶν τῷ τε δήμῳ  
παρὰ πολὺ ἐν τῷ τότε πιθανώτατος, παρελθὼν αὐθις ἔλεγε τοιάδε

Cleon, son of Cleaenetus, being not only the most violent of the citizens, as concerned other things, but also at that time by far the most persuasive/credible to the people, came forward again and said the following.

3. Thucydides 4.21.3 (Cleon being introduced at the peace negotiations over Sphacteria):

μάλιστα δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐνήγε Κλέων ὁ Κλεαινέτου, ἀνὴρ δημαγωγός κατ' ἐκεῖνον  
τὸν χρόνον ὢν καὶ τῷ πλήθει πιθανώτατος.

The one who most encouraged them was Cleon, son of Cleaenetus, a man, a demagogue of that time and most persuasive/credible to the masses.

4. **Thucydides 6.35.2 (Athenagoras being introduced at the Syracusan discussion of Athens' armada's heading toward Sicily):**

παρελθὼν δ' αὐτοῖς Ἀθηναγόρας, ὃς δήμου τε προστάτης ἦν καὶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι πιθανώτατος τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἔλεγε τοιάδε

But Athenagoras, who was a leader of the people at that time and most persuasive/credible to the many, came forward and spoke to them as follows.

5. **Aristophanes, *Knights* 628-29-19 (The Sausage-Seller to the chorus of Knights, describing the things that Paphlagon, representing Cleon, was saying to the Athenian *boule*):**

ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἔνδον ἐλασίβροντ' ἀναρρηγνὺς ἔπη  
 τερατευόμενος ἤρειδε κατὰ τῶν ἰππέων,  
 κρημνοὺς ἐρείδων καὶ ξυνωμότας λέγων  
πιθανώταθ'.

And inside, breaking out thunderous phrases, talking marvels, he railed against the knights, heaping up mountains, saying you are conspirators, most persuasively/credibly.

6. **Euripides, *Orestes* 902-08 (a Messenger describing a demagogue-like hired orator to Orestes, Electra, and Pylades):**

καπὶ τῷδ' ἀνίσταται  
 ἀνὴρ τις ἀθυρόγλωσσος, ἰσχύων θράσει·  
 Ἀργεῖος οὐκ Ἀργεῖος, ἠναγκασμένος, 905  
 θορούβῳ τε πίσυνος κάμαθει παρρησία,  
πιθανὸς ἔτ' αὐτοὺς περιβαλεῖν κακῶ τι.  
 ὅταν γὰρ ἡδύς τις λόγοις φρονῶν κακῶς  
 πείθῃ τὸ πλῆθος, τῇ πόλει κακὸν μέγα·

Then some man stood up, a ceaseless babbler, strong in his brashness; he was an Argive but no Argive, working under compulsion, driven by noise and ignorant frankness, persuasive/credible enough to involve them in some future misdeed. For whenever someone who thinks basely but is charming with words persuades the mass, it is a great misfortune for the city.

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