

The Abuse of Religious Ideology in the Orators  
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As one traces the development of Athenian oratory, it is easy to detect an increase in the amount of invective used as time progresses. Early orators such as Antiphon and Lysias use almost no insulting language at all, while late orators such as Dinarchus and Hyperides use it nearly to the exclusion of all other methods of persuasion. As might be expected from the Athenians, given the colorfully antagonistic language of Aristophanic comedy, the extant forensic speeches contain quite a rich vocabulary of insulting terms. These terms collectively address a broad span of cultural values and expectations, ranging from the political to the sexual to more general critiques of morality and competence. One side of this invective language which may seem surprising to modern sensibilities, given its pervasive presence in the courtroom setting, is the use of terms which reflect religious (or what we today otherwise might term "magical") ideology. What exactly are Demosthenes and Aeschines doing when each derisively refers to the other as "sorcerer" (βάσκαρος, Dem. 18.119, 18.242, 18.132, 18.139; γόης, Aes. 2.124, 2.153, 3.137, 3.207)?

This paper will argue that in using these terms and others in a similar vein, the orators themselves exploit a popular suspicion of rhetorical skill, not only characterizing their opponents as ridiculous "quacks" (Worman, *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens* (2008), p. 235), but also casting them into the role of men who wield a dangerous power over the minds of men. The concept was not a new one, even in Demosthenes' day, but found expression as early as Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* (8-9). In other passages this characterization even suggests the possibility of the malignant speaker corrupting his audience and spreading his vile contagion among the people – a clear attempt to use the powerful concept of miasma to manipulate the jurors into regarding him with fear and revulsion. In either event this trope served an important role in the orator's overall strategy of alienating his opponent from the sympathies of the jurors by portraying him as both more and less than human, sorcerer and charlatan, pitiful yet dangerous.