

Demosthenes the Accountant

George Kennedy calls Demosthenes' *Against Aphobus I* "a remarkable product, as much a piece of accounting as of rhetoric" (1994, 69). Through a series of calculations in the first half of the speech, Demosthenes seeks to establish both the original value of his father's estate and the income it should have generated if it had been properly managed. In my presentation, I plan to develop Kennedy's insight and show how Demosthenes uses these calculations as a central element of his rhetorical strategy, portraying himself as an honest accountant happy to disclose his finances to public scrutiny. He creates a contrasting persona for Aphobus, who is suspicious of public knowledge and strives to conceal what Demosthenes is eager to disclose.

Previous scholarly approaches to Demosthenes' calculations have considered how they might have persuaded jurors with little financial experience (Pearson 1976, 44-47; cf. MacDowell 2009, 42) and how they complement Demosthenes' other methods of proof (Mirhady 2000, 186-190). My argument departs from these approaches by analyzing the calculations as part of a consistent rhetorical strategy that centers around what Aristotle calls *ēthos*.

My presentation will begin with an overview of *ēthos* in *Against Aphobus I*. Christoff Rapp has recently argued that Aristotle conceives of judgments based on *ēthos* as rational processes independent of logical judgments. In other words, jurors can rationally reject logically sound argumentation if they conclude that the speaker lacks credibility (2012, 604). One of Demosthenes' primary goals in *Against Aphobus I* is to establish his credibility to the jurors so that they are more likely to accept his arguments than Aphobus'. From the beginning of the speech, Demosthenes presents himself as the jurors' ally. Unlike Aphobus, who Demosthenes

claims has avoided an arbitration because he wishes to take advantage of the jurors' ignorance, Demosthenes is simply going to state the facts that the jurors need to make their decision (2-3).

Second, I will show that the abundance of financial information Demosthenes provides contributes to the impression of a purely factual exposition. Demosthenes is not presenting the results of an audit, however, but portraying himself as a meticulous accountant, revealing his calculations to the jurors in an ostensibly transparent way. He underscores this transparent honesty by asking the jurors to add up his father's assets along with him: "If you look it over, you'll find that the total comes close to fourteen talents" (11). Since Demosthenes has taken care that his arithmetic is correct, the invitation to check it is designed to increase the jurors' faith in his presentation.

Third, I will show how this self-conscious numerical transparency contributes to a rhetorical strategy that contrasts Demosthenes the revealer with Aphobus the concealer. The section on the bed-making slaves serves as an illuminating case study. While Aphobus may have had legitimate reasons for not presenting the slaves or the income they generated to Demosthenes, Demosthenes describes it as an act of concealment. Aphobus and his fellow guardians are "making the slaves invisible," while Demosthenes' own presentation is "manifest" (23-24). Along the same lines, Demosthenes describes Aphobus' arguments as a *κενότατος λόγος*, "a totally empty *logos*" (25). He wants the jurors to associate Aphobus with someone who makes trivial arguments devoid of content and of witnesses, while he keeps the real facts invisible, just like Demosthenes' slaves.

At the end of my presentation, I will place this rhetoric of revealing and concealing within the broader context of financial mathematics in the Athenian democracy. Serafina Cuomo has demonstrated that "collective, public counting" was "a pervasive practice in Classical Athens"

(2001, 24). I suggest that Demosthenes' insistence on transparent calculations mirrors the public nature of monetary transactions, which often took place before witnesses in the agora. By presenting a public accounting of his father's estate, Demosthenes is behaving in a culturally normative way, while Aphobus' attempt to conduct business behind closed doors is not only deceitful but also culturally transgressive.

Bibliography

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