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HPAH4005 - Cauldron of Democracy and Tragedy: Classical Greek History and Literature

Timeline Addition for 350-340 B.C – Demosthenes' Second Olynthiac.

Demosthenes opens by formally addressing his audience. Draws on the Heavens and the gods, and their influence on the outcome of such matters, a standard opening for Demosthenes¹. Demosthenes, goes on, and carefully lays the blame at the feet of the Athenian voters through the device of rhetorical questioning². The lack of action against Phillip, so far, having being detrimental to the polis of Athens and, in turn, to each individual citizen³. Demosthenes, also, appeals on behalf of the allies of Athens, this stresses the importance of the decision they have to make⁴.

An exhaustive list of Athenian inaction with regards to the movements of Phillip, of which Demosthenes tells his audience he will refrain from going into, suggests not just one, but multiple bad choices made, so far, on behalf of the voter. These 'facts' give credence to Demosthenes' earlier, first Olynthiac, speech⁵.

The speech continues with a character assassination of Phillip. Demosthenes claims it is not the favour of the gods or military prowess that drives Phillip on to victory after victory, but it is in fact the ins and outs of Athenian governmental process that has enabled Phillip to get so far⁶.

Demosthenes offers a situation where each individual, by making the correct decision, in Demosthenes' eyes, to move against Phillip of Macedon now, would enable the voters to lay claim to being the saviours of Athens and her allies⁷.

Word count 282

¹ Dem. Olyn. 1. 1; Dem. Olyn. 2. 1

² Dem. Olyn. 2. 3

³ Dem. Olyn. 2. 2

⁴ Pearson, 1975, p. 226

⁵ Dem. Olyn. 1; Dem. Olyn. 2. 3; Pearson, 1975, p. 227

⁶ Dem. Olyn. 2. 5-23; Sugar, 2009, p.1394

⁷ Dem. Olyn. 2. 31

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