



Metus hostilis and fear appeals in 4th c. BCE rhetoric

[1] Arist. *Rhet.* 1382a21-22 ἔστω δὴ ὁ φόβος λύπη τις ἢ ταραχὴ ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ: οὐ γὰρ πάντα τὰ κακὰ φοβοῦνται, οἷον εἰ ἔσται ἄδικος ἢ βραδύς, ἀλλ' ὅσα λύπας μεγάλας ἢ φθορὰς δύναται, καὶ ταῦτα ἐὰν μὴ πόρρω ἀλλὰ σύνεγγυς φαίνεται ὥστε μέλλειν. τὰ γὰρ πόρρω σφόδρα οὐ φοβοῦνται: ἴσασι γὰρ πάντες ὅτι ἀποθανοῦνται, ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐκ ἐγγύς, οὐδὲν φροντίζουσιν.

Let fear be defined as a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain; for men do not fear all evils, for instance, becoming unjust or slow-witted, but only such as involve great pain or destruction, and only if they appear to be not far off but near at hand and threatening, for men do not fear things that are very remote; all know that they have to die, but as death is not near at hand, they are indifferent.

[2] Arist. *Rhet.* οὐκ οἶονται δὲ παθεῖν ἂν οὔτε οἱ ἐν εὐτυχίαις μεγάλας ὄντες καὶ δοκοῦντες (διὸ ὑβριστὰ καὶ ὀλίγωροι καὶ θρασεῖς, ποιεῖ δὲ τοιοῦτους πλοῦτος ἰσχύς πολυφιλία δύναμις), οὔτε οἱ ἤδη πεπονθέναι πάντα νομίζοντες τὰ δεινὰ καὶ ἀπευγμένους πρὸς τὸ μέλλον, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀποτυμπανιζόμενοι ἤδη: ἀλλὰ δεῖ τινα ἐλπίδα ὑπεῖναι σωτηρίας, περὶ οὗ ἀγωνιῶσιν. σημεῖον δέ: ὁ γὰρ φόβος βουλευτικούς ποιεῖ, καίτοι οὐδεὶς βουλεύεται περὶ τῶν ἀνελπίστων: ὥστε δεῖ τοιοῦτους παρασκευάζειν, ὅταν ἢ βέλτιον τὸ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτούς, ὅτι τοιοῦτοί εἰσιν οἷον παθεῖν (καὶ γὰρ ἄλλοι μείζους ἔπαθον), καὶ τοὺς τοιοῦτους δεῖκνύναι πάσχοντας ἢ πεπονθότας, καὶ ὑπὸ τοιούτων ὑφ' ὧν οὐκ ὦντο, καὶ ταῦτα ἂ καὶ τότε ὅτε οὐκ ὦντο.

Those experiencing, and thinking they experience, great good fortune do not think they might suffer. Therefore, they are insolent and belittlers and rash (wealth, strength and an abundance of friends makes them so); nor are those afraid who think they have already suffered all dreadful things possible and have become coldly indifferent to the future, like those actually being done to death. For fear to continue there must be some hope of being saved from the cause of the agony. And there is a sign of this: fear makes people inclined to deliberation, while no one deliberates about hopeless things. The result is that whenever it is better for a speaker's case that the members of the audience experience fear, he should make them realize that they are liable to suffering.

[3] Thuc. 2.40 [2] μόνου γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν, καὶ οἱ αὐτοὶ ἤτοι κρίνομεν γε ἢ ἐνθυμούμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα, οὐ τοὺς λόγους τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἠγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδραχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ἃ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν. [3] διαφερόντως γὰρ δὴ καὶ τότε ἔχομεν ὥστε τολμᾶν τε οἱ αὐτοὶ μάλιστα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἐπιχειρήσομεν ἐκλογίζεσθαι: ὁ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀμαθία μὲν θράσος, λογισμὸς δὲ ὄκνον φέρει. κράτιστοι δ' ἂν τὴν ψυχὴν δικαίως κριθεῖεν οἱ τὰ τε δεινὰ καὶ ἡδέα σαφέστατα γινώσκοντες καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μὴ ἀποτρεπόμενοι ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων.

“We, Athenians, in our persons, take our decisions on policy and submit them to proper discussion. The worst thing is to rush into action before consequences have been properly debated. And this is another point where we differ from other people. [3] We are capable at the same time of taking risks and assessing them beforehand. Others are brave out of ignorance; and when they stop to think, they begin to fear. But the man who can most truly be accounted brave is he who best knows the meaning of what is sweet in life, and what is terrible, and he then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come”.

[4] Dem. *Third Phil.* [Κατὰ Φιλίππου Γ] 9.29-30 ἐπεὶ, ὅτι γ' ὥσπερ περίοδος ἢ καταβολὴ πυρετοῦ ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς κακοῦ καὶ τῷ πάντῳ πόρρω δοκοῦντι νῦν ἀφεστάναι προσέρχεται, οὐδεὶς ἀγνοεῖ.

“For that Philip, like the recurrence or attack of fever or some other disease, is threatening even those who think themselves out of reach, of that none of you are ignorant.”



[5] Dem. *Third Phil.* 63-64 τί οὖν ποτ' αἴτιον, θαυμάζετ' ἴσως, τὸ καὶ τοὺς Ὀλυνθίους καὶ τοὺς Ἐρετριέας καὶ τοὺς Ὠρεΐτας ἥδιον πρὸς τοὺς ὑπὲρ Φιλίππου λέγοντας ἔχειν ἢ τοὺς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν; ὅπερ καὶ παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅτι τοῖς μὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ βελτίστου λέγουσιν οὐδὲ βουλομένοις ἔνεστιν ἐνίοτε πρὸς χάριν οὐδὲν εἰπεῖν: τὰ γὰρ πράγματ' ἀνάγκη σκοπεῖν ὅπως σωθήσεται: οἱ δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς οἷς χαρίζονται Φιλίππῳ συμπράττουσιν. ... οἱ μὲν ἐφ' οἷς χαριῶνται, ταῦτ' ἔλεγον, οἱ δ' ἐξ ὧν ἔμελλον σωθήσεται.

“Perhaps you wonder why the people of Olynthus and Eretria and Oreus were more favorably inclined to Philip’s advocates than their own. The explanation is the same as at Athens, that the patriots, however much they desire it, cannot sometimes say anything agreeable, for they are obliged to consider the safety of the state; but the others by their very efforts to be agreeable are playing into Philip’s hands ... It is the same tale everywhere, one party speaking to please their audience, the other giving advice that would have ensured their safety.”

[6] Isoc. *Ph.* 75 ταῦτα φλυαροῦντες καὶ φάσκοντες ἀκριβῶς εἶδέναι, καὶ ταχέως ἅπαντα τῷ λόγῳ καταστρεφόμενοι, πολλοὺς πείθουσι, καὶ μάλιστα μὲν τοὺς τῶν αὐτῶν κακῶν ἐπιθυμοῦντας ὧν περ οἱ λογοποιοῦντες, ἔπειτα καὶ τοὺς οὐδενὶ λογισμῷ χρωμένους ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν, ἀλλὰ παντάπασιν ἀναισθητῶς διακειμένους καὶ πολλὴν χάριν ἔχοντας τοῖς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν **φοβεῖσθαι καὶ δεδιέναι** προσποιούμενοι, ἔτι δὲ τοὺς οὐκ ἀποδοκιμάζοντας τὸ δοκεῖν ἐπιβουλεύειν σε τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν αἰτίαν ταύτην ἀξίαν ἐπιθυμίας εἶναι νομίζοντας.

By speaking this rubbish, by pretending to have exact knowledge and by speedily effecting in words the overthrow of the whole world, they are convincing many people. They convince, most of all, those who hunger for the same calamities as do the speech-makers; next, those who exercise no judgement about their common welfare, but, utterly obtuse in their own perceptions, are very grateful to men who pretend **to feel alarm and fear in their behalf**; and lastly, those who do not deny that you appear to be plotting against the Hellenes, but are of the opinion that the purpose with which you are charged is a worthy ambition.

[7] Dem. *Third Phil.* 33 καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὥσπερ τὴν χάλαζαν ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσιν θεωρεῖν, εὐχόμενοι μὴ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ἕκαστοι γενέσθαι, κωλύειν δ' οὐδεὶς ἐπιχειρῶν.

“They seem to watch him just as they would watch a hailstorm, each praying that it may not come their way, but none making any effort to stay its course”.

[8] Dem. *Third Phil.* 36-37 οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ λόγου καὶ δικαίας αἰτίας οὔτε τόθ' οὔτως εἶχον ἐτοίμως πρὸς ἐλευθερίαν οἱ Ἕλληνες οὔτε νῦν πρὸς τὸ δουλεύειν. ἦν τι τότ', ἦν, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐν ταῖς τῶν πολλῶν διανοίαις, ὃ νῦν οὐκ ἔστιν, ὃ καὶ τοῦ Περσῶν ἐκράτησε πλούτου καὶ ἐλευθερίαν ἤγε τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ οὔτε ναυμαχίας οὔτε πεζῆς μάχης οὐδεμιᾶς ἠττάτο, νῦν δ' ἀπολωλὸς ἅπαντα λελύμανται καὶ ἄνω καὶ κάτω πεποίηκε τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πράγματα. [37] τί οὖν ἦν τοῦτο; οὐδὲν ποικίλον οὐδὲ σοφόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι τοὺς παρὰ τῶν ἄρχων βουλομένων ἢ διαφθεῖρειν τὴν Ἑλλάδα χρήματα λαμβάνοντας ἅπαντες ἐμίσησαν, καὶ χαλεπώτατον ἦν τὸ δωροδοκοῦντ' ἐλεγχθῆναι, καὶ τιμωρία μεγίστη τοῦτον ἐκόλαζον, καὶ παραίτησις οὐδεμί' ἦν οὐδὲ συγγνώμη.

“For not without reason, not without just cause, the Greeks of old were as eager for freedom as their descendants today are for slavery. There was something, men of Athens, something which animated the mass of the Greeks but which is lacking now, something which triumphed over the wealth of Persia, which upheld the liberties of Hellas, which never lost a single battle by sea or land, something the decay of which has ruined everything and brought our affairs to a state of chaos. And what was that? 9.37[It was nothing recondite or subtle, but simply that] men who took bribes from those who wished to rule Greece or ruin her, were hated by all, and it was the greatest calamity to be convicted of receiving a bribe, and such a man was punished with the utmost severity [and no intercession, no pardon was allowed].”



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[9] Isoc. *Archid.* 107 ἔστι δ' ἀπλοῦν τὸ καλῶς βουλευέσασθαι περὶ τούτων. ἦν μὲν γὰρ ἐθέλωμεν ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπὲρ τῶν δικαίων. οὐ μόνον εὐδοκιμήσομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἐπίλοιπον χρόνον ἀσφαλῶς ἡμῖν ἐξέσται ζῆν: εἰ δὲ **φοβησόμεθα τοὺς κινδύνους**, εἰς πολλὰς ταραχὰς καταστήσομεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς.

Now it is a simple matter to reach a wise decision on this question. For if we are willing to die for our just rights, not only shall we gain renown, but in time to come we shall be able to live securely; but if we show that **we are afraid of danger**, we shall plunge ourselves into endless confusion.

[10] Dem. *Third Phil.* 20 βούλομαι δ' εἰπεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐξ ὧν ὑπὲρ τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτω **φοβοῦμαι**, ἴν', εἰ μὲν ὀρθῶς λογίζομαι, μετάσχητε τῶν λογισμῶν καὶ πρόνοιάν τιν' ὑμῶν γ' αὐτῶν, ...

"I wish to tell you the grounds for my alarm about our condition, so that if my reasoning is sound, you may adopt it as your own and take forethought for yourselves, ..."

[11] Dem. *Third Phil.* 67-68 μωρία καὶ κακία τὰ τοιαῦτ' ἐλπίζειν, καὶ κακῶς βουλευομένους καὶ μηδὲν ὧν προσήκει ποιεῖν ἐθέλοντας, ἀλλὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐχθρῶν λεγόντων ἀκροωμένους, τηλικαύτην ἡγεῖσθαι πόλιν οἰκεῖν τὸ μέγεθος ὥστε <μηδέν>, μηδ' ἂν ὀτιοῦν ἦ, δεινὸν πείσεσθαι. ... πόλλ' ἂν εἰπεῖν ἔχουεν Ὀλύνθιοι νῦν, ἃ τότε' εἰ προεῖδοντο, οὐκ ἂν ἀπώλοντο.

"It is folly and cowardice to cherish such hopes, to follow ill counsel and refuse to perform any fraction of your duties, to lend an ear to the advocates of the enemies and imagine that your city is so great that no conceivable danger can befall it. ... Many things could be named by the Olynthians today, which could have saved them from destruction if only they had foreseen them."

[12] Dem. *Third Phil.* 75 εἰ δ' ὁ βούλεται ζητῶν ἕκαστος καθεδεῖται, καὶ ὅπως μηδὲν αὐτὸς ποιήσει σκοπῶν, πρῶτον μὲν οὐδὲ μήποθ' εὔρη τοὺς ποιήσοντας, ἔπειτα δέδοιχ' ὅπως μὴ πάνθ' ἅμ' ὅσ' οὐ βουλόμεθα ποιεῖν ἡμῖν ἀνάγκη γενήσεται.

But if every man sits idle, consulting his own pleasure and careful to avoid his own duty, not only will he find no one to do it for him, but I fear that those duties that we wish to shirk may all be forced upon us at once.

Isoc. *Ant.* 121-122 ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐχομένοις δικαίως ἂν τις αὐτὸν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπαινέσειεν. ὀρῶν γὰρ ὑμᾶς τούτους μόνους ἄνδρας νομίζοντας, **τοὺς ἀπειλοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐκφοβοῦντας** τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις καὶ τοὺς αἰεὶ τι νεωτερίζοντας ἐν τοῖς συμμάχοις, οὐκ ἐπηκολούθησε **ταῖς ὑμετέραις γνώμαις**, οὐδ' ἠβουλήθη βλάπτων τὴν πόλιν εὐδοκιμεῖν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐφιλοσόφει καὶ τοῦτ' ἔπραττεν, ὅπως μηδεμία τῶν πόλεων αὐτὸν **φοβήσεται** τῶν Ἑλληνίδων, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαι θαρρήσουσι πλὴν τῶν ἀδικουσῶν.

But the facts which I now give entitle him to even greater praise. For although he saw that you respected only the kind of generals who threatened and tried to terrify the other cities and were always for setting up some revolution or other among your allies, he did not fall in with your prejudices, nor was he willing to enhance his own reputation to the injury of Athens; on the contrary, he made it the object of his thought and of his actions to see to it that no one of the cities of Hellas should be afraid of him, but that all should feel secure excepting those which did wrong. [122] for he realized that men who are afraid (τούς τε δεδιότας) hate (μισοῦσι) those who inspire this feeling in them, and that it was due to the friendship of the other cities that Athens rose to great power and prosperity, just as it was due to their hatred (τὸ μῖσος) that she barely escaped the most disastrous fate. Bearing in

[122] ἠπίστατο γὰρ τοὺς τε δεδιότας ὅτι μισοῦσι δι' οὓς ἂν τοῦτο πεπονθότες τυγχάνωσι, τὴν τε πόλιν διὰ μὲν τὴν φιλίαν τὴν τῶν ἄλλων εὐδαιμονεστάτην καὶ μεγίστην γενομένην, διὰ δὲ τὸ μῖσος μικρὸν ἀπολιποῦσαν τοῦ μὴ ταῖς ἐσχάταις συμφοραῖς περιπεσεῖν. ὧν ἐνθυμούμενος τῇ μὲν δυνάμει τῇ τῆς πόλεως τοὺς πολεμίους κατεστρέφετο, τῷ δ' ἤθει τῷ αὐτοῦ τὴν εὐνοίαν τὴν τῶν



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ἄλλων προσήγετο, νομίζων τοῦτο στρατήγημα
 μεῖζον εἶναι καὶ κάλλιον ἢ πολλὰς πόλεις
 ἐλεῖν καὶ πολλὰκις νικῆσαι μαχόμενος.

mind these facts, he used the power of Athens
 in order to subdue her enemies, and the force
 of his own character (τῷ δ' ἤθει τῷ αὐτοῦ) in
 order to win the goodwill (eunoia) of the rest
 of the world, believing that this is a greater and
 nobler kind of generalship than to conquer
 many cities many times in battle.

[13] Isoc. *On the Peace* 138 ἦν τε γὰρ δόξη τῶν
 πόλεων ταῖς προεχούσαις ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν
 ἀδικημάτων, ἡμεῖς τούτων τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὴν αἰτίαν
 ἔχομεν: ἦν τ' ἐπιχειρῶσιν ἀδικεῖν, ἐφ' ἡμᾶς
 ἅπαντες **οἱ δεδιότες** καὶ κακῶς πάσχοντες
 καταφεύζονται, πολλὰς ἱκετείας καὶ δεήσεις
 ποιούμενοι, καὶ διδόντες οὐ μόνον τὴν ἡγεμονίαν
 ἀλλὰ καὶ σφᾶς αὐτούς.

For if the foremost states resolve to abstain from
 acts of oppression, we shall have the credit for this
 blessing; but if, on the other hand, they attempt to
 oppress others, then all **who fear them** and suffer
 evil at their hands will come to us for refuge, with
 many prayers and supplications, offering us not
 only the hegemony but their own support.

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