

THE EPIPHANY OF DEMOSTHENES

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FEW PASSAGES IN GREEK are better known than Demosthenes' *De corona* 169 ff., where is described how the news of the capture of Elatea is brought to Athens. No one came forward to offer a policy, although the city was calling upon someone to speak for its own safety (170). The word σωτηρία is twice taken up by the cognate verb σώζω immediately (171), and the kind of man who should answer the city's call is described in a rhetorical definition (171–172). This dramatic picture of the city calling for a saviour is answered equally dramatically in the famous words: ἐφάνην τοίνυν οὗτος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγὼ καὶ παρελθὼν εἰς ὑμᾶς εἶπον . . .

After recounting the speech he made, in which he proposed how “to resolve the danger hanging over the city” (177), Demosthenes asks ironically what heroic role Aeschines wished to play, in view of the comic role that he had assigned to Demosthenes. In reality, so avers Demosthenes, Aeschines turned out to be useless: “I, the comedian, ἐφάνην πλείονος ἄξιος τῇ πατρίδι than you, the hero of tragedy.”

The commentary of H. Wankel is particularly good at illuminating Demosthenes' rhetoric, and the epiphanic overtones of these chapter did not escape his acumen;¹ in what follows I seek to justify at greater length this observation. In particular it seems to me that the repetition of ἐφάνην marks out the whole passage for us to appreciate as a coherent narrative, where we can be alert for further suggestions of cultic language. First, Demosthenes appears as the epiphanic saviour hero with saving words; finally the real stage hero Aeschines is denounced for his incompetent performance on the real stage of life. The soteriology of the dramatic self-presentation is contrasted with Aeschines' efforts at heroic appearance on the stage; the stage of life is contrasted with the theatre; the allegedly comic Demosthenes triumphs over the ineptly heroic Aeschines. Throughout runs the motif of heroic epiphany.

While it is true that φαίνεσθαι and its congeners are *termini technici* for the appearance of gods from Homer onwards,² the word is in general use for any appearance. What marks it out here is its context, its repetition, and its

¹H. Wankel, *Demosthenes: Kranzrede* 2 (Heidelberg 1976) 864, on section 173: “Denn als eine solche (sc. Epiphanie) ist das rettende Auftreten in der Tat vorbereitet und stylisiert.”

²H. Kleinknecht, *Die Gebetsparodie in der Antike* (Stuttgart 1937, Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 38) 23 and 79, Anm. 1 with index, s.v. In this and other important articles Kleinknecht like his teacher Weinreich adduced splendid parallels from hellenistic and imperial times, which I have largely omitted; nonetheless much later ceremonial and terminology existed in some form already in the fifth century.

use in the first person; it is no surprise that nowhere else does Demosthenes say "I appeared." He is here careful to suggest the associations of heroic epiphany, while avoiding language that might be considered blasphemous, or what was perhaps worse, offensively pompous.

Heroes in their epiphanies may be assumed to do three things: they come, they appear, and they speak,³ usually to announce who they are, and/or they do something to make their presence clear. A few illustrations follow. The Clouds are entreated by their high-priest Socrates at Aristophanes *Nubes* 266: ἄρθητε, φάνητε, to which they duly reply at 275: ἄρθωμεν φανεραί. The arrival, i.e., the epiphany, of the saviour sausage seller is described at *Equites* 146 ff. as follows:

ΝΙ. ἀλλ' ὁδὶ προσέρχεται
ὥσπερ κατὰ θεὸν εἰς ἀγοράν. ΔΗ. ὦ μακάριε
ἀλλαντοπῶλα, δεῦρο, δεῦρ', ὦ φίλτατε
ἀνάβαινε σωτὴρ τῇ πόλει καὶ νῶν φανείς.
ΑΛ. τί ἐστίν; τί με καλεῖτε;

in which almost every word belongs to cult language.⁴ In Aeschylus' *Persae* 658–659 the ghost of Darius is summoned: ἰκοῦ, ἐλθέ, and on his appearance, he says (692, 697): ἦκω, ἦλθον.⁵ Likewise Dionysus asserts his epiphany⁶ in Euripides *Bacchae* with ἦκω (1) πάρεμι⁷ (5), and ἦλθον . . . ἔν' εἶην ἐμφανῆς δαίμων βροτοῖς (20–22), with which we can compare φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμονα (42). Throughout Greek literature the saviour is summoned, as in Aristophanes *Ach.* 567: βοήθησον . . . φανείς and after his appearance greeted, e.g., Aristophanes *Eq.* 836: ὦ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις φανείς μέγιστον ὠφέλημα or *Eq.* 458: καὶ τῇ πόλει σωτὴρ φανείς ἡμῖν τε τοῖς πολίταις, or it is described in wonder,⁸ as in Aristophanes *Plutus* 1189: ὁ Ζεὺς ὁ σωτὴρ γὰρ πάρεστιν ἐνθάδε, αὐτόματος ἦκων. These examples should be enough to demonstrate that the scene sketched by Demosthenes has its parallels in cultic epiphanies, in terms of both action and language.

³Therefore the frequent "listen," with which their saving words begin; e.g., Ar. *Plutus* 78.

⁴This passage was the subject of an exhaustive study by H. Kleinknecht, "Zur Parodie des Gottmenschentums bei Aristophanes," *ArchRW* 34 (1937) 294–313, especially 307.

⁵L. Weniger, "Theophanien, altgriechische Götteradvente," *ArchRW* 22 (1923) 16–57, especially 43.

⁶O. Weinreich, "De dis ignotis quaestiones selectae," *ArchRW* 18 (1915) 1–52, especially 39 ff. = *Ausgewählte Schriften* 1 (Amsterdam 1969) 285 ff.

⁷The parallels adduced in the commentaries for this important word are incomplete: add Men. *Aspis* 494, *Epitrep.* 555 (379) Sandbach; [Eur.] *Rhesus* 890; Ar. *Plutus* 1189; Philemo fr. 91.3 K.; Iamata of Epidaurus, R. Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen von Epidaurus* (Leipzig 1931, *Philologus* Supp. 22.3) no. 25, p. 18.34 with F. T. van Straten, "Daikrates' Dream," *BABesch* 51 (1976) 1–27, especially 13, nn. 189 and 190; *PMG* 929b. There are valuable remarks by L. Robert in "Documents d'Asie Mineure," *BCH* 108 (1984) 457–532 at 482 ff.

⁸For wonder as a reaction to epiphany, see N. Hopkinson, *Callimachus: Hymn to Demeter* (Cambridge 1984) on line 60.

A study of Demosthenes' language only confirms this impression. Wankel has pointed out that by Demosthenes' time, the concept "saviour of the city" was already such a hackneyed metaphor that complaints were publicly made that the term was rightfully reserved for religious and not for secular purposes.⁹ We observe that Demosthenes has avoided referring to himself directly as a saviour, but has surrounded his appearance nonetheless with the language of soteriology (σωτηρία, σῶζω). Salvation is the first item in the formulaic prayer at Menander *Kolax* fr. 1.5:¹⁰ διδόναι σωτηρίαν ὑγίειαν, ἀγαθὰ πάντα.

The combination of "appear" and "salvation" is a strong reason to seek further indication of technical language. Thus the deictic οὗτος (ἐφάνην) finds its parallels in similar epiphanies:¹¹ ὁδὶ δὲ καὶ τὸς ἐστὶν (Ar. *Aves* 1718); πάρεστιν ἐνθάδε (Ar. *Plutus* 1189); Φοῖβος . . . ὅδ' ἐγγὺς ὦν (Eur. *Or.* 1624); οὗτος εἰμ' ἐγώ, Ἀῆρ (Philemo fr. 91.3 K.). Further the word παρελθών (εἶπον) can point in the same direction. It is obviously the proper term for a speaker ascending the podium; but about this time it is also becoming a "terminus technicus für die Epiphanie göttlicher Gestalten" as well.¹² Its special force here is rather in its implication of παρουσία and the coming of the divinity. A similar suggestion is probably implicit in the words of Brasidas at Thuc. 4.86.1: αὐτὸς τε οὐκ ἐπὶ κακῶ, ἐπ' ἐλευθερώσει δὲ τῶν Ἑλλήνων παρελήλυθα. To exemplify the importance attaching to the coming of the divinity, Kleinknecht pointed to the repeated προσέρχεται of Ar. *Aves* 1709 ff.¹³ The injunction to "come (hither)" in prayers¹⁴ is answered by the self-declarative "I am come"¹⁵ to which παρελθών here corresponds, just as ἐφάνην corresponds to the usual πάρεμι.¹⁶

There are therefore strong indications of epiphanic language, and there are no words that would be inappropriate to such associations. The fact that this kind of cultic language also belongs to serious theatre as well makes it easy and natural for Demosthenes to introduce the incompetent acting of Aes-

⁹Wankel (above, n. 1) 305 with massive bibliography, to which can be added Kleinknecht (above, n. 4) 307, n. 4, and especially W. K. Prichett, *The Greek State at War* 3 (Berkeley etc. 1979) 192 ff., where a bibliography on epiphany will be found.

¹⁰Cited by Kleinknecht (above, n. 2) 32: "offenbar formelhafte Verbindung" with parallels.

¹¹See E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Darmstadt 1965) 177 ff. on the "soteriologische Redetypus" οὗτος ἐστὶ: note especially Aristophanes *Vespae* 820; *Plutus* 132 ff. and 170-174 in the epiphany of Wealth; other parallels in Kleinknecht (above, n. 4) 300.

¹²G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum N. T.* 2 (Stuttgart 1935) 679.

¹³Above, n. 4. See also the note on the same phrase at Cratinus fr. 73 K-A.

¹⁴P. Fedeli, *Catullus, Carmen* 61 (Amsterdam 1983) 23.

¹⁵Weinreich (above, n. 6) 38 = *Ausg. Schr.* 1.285; "sehr häufig in den Selbstoffenbarungen von Gottheiten" says Kleinknecht (above, n. 4) 297, n. 4; cf. van Straten (above, n. 7) 13, n. 188, citing L. Robert, *Hellenica* 13 (Paris 1965) 128 ff., who gives excellent inscriptional evidence for "I am come," "I am," and the deictic demonstrative.

¹⁶For the self revelation "I am" see, e.g., the *Homeric Hymns* to Dionysus 56, Apollo 480, Demeter 268, with Richardson's notes; and especially Ar. *Plutus* 78.

chines as epiphanic hero, an idea that is really only effective if the audience has accepted Demosthenes' self-portrayal earlier. Moreover, since most of our evidence for classical epiphany comes from comic parody,¹⁷ it is to be assumed that the same humour is being employed at the expense of Aeschines.

Demosthenes' rhetorical purpose requires him to portray the news of defeat as totally unexpected in order to dramatize the suddenness of the emergency and his own consequent appearance. But the Athenians had obviously been waiting for news for some time, and it was not really likely that business had been going on totally as usual. The scholia on Ar. *Eq.* 1320 tell us that the Athenians sacrificed in the street for good news, but we are ill-informed of these matters,¹⁸ and of what actually happened when a messenger came. In addition a meeting of the people would normally require preliminary prayers and sacrifices;¹⁹ all of this remains unremarked by Demosthenes in the interest of dramatic narrative, and his self-portrayal.

As he tells it, the herald simply called for a speaker, and silence fell on the hapless populace as if *euphemia* had been demanded, and the way is prepared for religious language. The silence is set against the city's prayer (the text is not certain): καλούσης τῆς πατρίδος κοινῇ φώνῃ τὸν ἑροῦνθ' ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας, with which we can compare, e.g., Plut. *Them.* 13: οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν θεὸν ἅμα κοινῇ κατεκαλοῦντο φώνῃ. All is now ready for Demosthenes' dramatic entrance.

The general situation may well have further implications of ritual. Ar. *Eq.* 1316 ff. parodies in clearly religious language a scene of good-news bringing and epiphany,²⁰ and Kleinknecht was able to make a good case that epiphanies, even in classical times (later it was certainly so), must have been ceremonially introduced by a *hierokeryx* or an equivalent official. In the passage in the *Knights*, after the sausage seller has asked for *euphemia* and silence, he announces good news, whereupon the chorus treat him as a saviour:

ὦ ταῖς ἱεραῖς φέγγος Ἀθήναις καὶ ταῖς νήσοις ἐπίκουρε,
τὴν ἔχων φήμην ἀγαθὴν ἦκεις, ἐφ' ὅτῳ κίσιωμεν ἀγυιάς.

The sausage seller explains that he has rejuvenated Demos; in reply to a

¹⁷W. Horn, *Gebet und Gebetsparodie in den Komödien des Aristophanes* (Nürnberg 1970, Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft 38) 1, traces this observation back to A. Dietrich, "Ueber eine Scene der aristophanischer Wolken," *RhM* 48 (1893) 275–283 = *Kl. Schr.* (Leipzig 1911) 117 ff. Likewise E. Fraenkel cites Wilamowitz for a similar view in "Die Parabasenlieder," in: *Aristophanes und die Alte Komödie*, ed. H. J. Newiger (Darmstadt 1975, Wege der Forschung 265) 33.

¹⁸Prichett (above, n. 9) 198 ff.; Kittel (above, n. 12) s.v. euaggelion.

¹⁹S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Kristiania 1915) 97.

²⁰This whole scene was analyzed by Kleinknecht, "Die Epiphanie des Demos in Aristophanes' *Rittern*," *Hermes* 77 (1939) 58–65 (= *Aristophanes und die Alte Komödie* [above, n. 17] 144–154).

series of questions from the chorus,²¹ he says: "You will see," and Demos is revealed in formal language: ὁδ' ἐκεῖνος ὁρᾶν (1331); the chorus then greet him in equally formal terms: χαῖρε . . . ξυγχαίρομεν ἡμεῖς, τῆς γὰρ πόλεως ἄξια πράττεις.

So too Demosthenes concludes: ἄξιος ἐφάνην τῇ πατρίδι. The silence, the call for news, the recognition of the saviour, the saving words are all the same, save that Demosthenes is his own *hierokeryx*. If so, then Demosthenes was playing a very complex game with his epiphany theme. He had portrayed himself in the role of a σωτὴρ ἐναργής with his saving words; he had further turned it into a joke by contrasting Aeschines' incompetent stage appearance as a hero. But by suggesting his role as "bringer of good news" with his saving words, he has also reversed the real substance of the day, which was to deal with the arrival of disastrous news.

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²¹Compare the similar questioning in the evangelium of Ar. *Plutus* 626 ff.