Isocrates’ Mimetic Philosophy

Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Isocrates was a philosopher and practiced philosophy, a view contrary to the majority of scholars, who view Isocrates solely as an orator or rhetorician. The study of Isocrates’ philosophy has been neglected primarily due to its dissimilarity to the philosophy of Plato, and Isocrates’ work has therefore not been regarded as philosophy, despite Isocrates’ frequent claims to practice philosophy. The goal of Isocrates’ philosophy is to improve decision-making in public affairs by attempting to arrive at the best course of action in any particular situation through a process of conjectures and approximations, which are founded in conventional wisdom.

A student of Isocrates’ philosophy learns what conjectures are suitable from exemplary men whom he takes as models for his own thought. For Isocrates, these men were successful Athenian politicians such as Solon, Cleisthenes, Themistocles, and Pericles, whom the community generally esteemed to be excellent. The best way to understand the thought of these men was through reading and imitating the speeches that they wrote. For Isocrates, speaking well and thinking well were inseparable, and therefore the construction of a speech, with thoughts parallel to those of his model, was both producing a philosophical text but also practicing philosophy. Having multiple models to draw upon is preferable in determining which excellent thoughts one should fit to the situation at hand in the speech.
As speech-writing is such an important aspect of his philosophy, a portion of his educational program consisted of learning the different figures of speech and methods of composition and how to suit and adapt them to the situation at hand to produce a speech that is persuasive to the audience. Isocrates believes that not everyone can do this complex interweaving of composition and situation effectively, however, his educational program will improve everyone’s abilities, though true ability is reserved for those with natural talent as well as training. Even if a speech is constructed well and contains excellent thoughts, it still may fail to persuade an audience. Isocrates believes that this can happen due to a poor reputation and the confusion or ignorance of the audience, factors which played a large role in his student Timotheus’ failure to obtain an acquittal on charges of treason despite being an excellent general and following Isocrates’ educational program.

Any student of Isocrates could achieve so much success that he could become a model for other students to imitate in their speech-writing. Isocrates provides an example of this in the *Nicocles*, which Isocrates writes in the voice of the tyrant Nicocles, who models his own speech after *Evagoras* and *To Nicocles*, two speeches by Isocrates written in his own voice. While many scholars have argued that in the *Antidosis* Isocrates imitates the philosophy of Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*, he actually only adopts the situation that Socrates was in and fits his own thoughts to it, exemplifying his philosophy in action. Through studying Isocrates’ philosophy, we can more fully understand the philosophical climate in Athens in the 4th century BCE.
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Isocrates’ Mimetic Philosophy

What is Isocratean philosophy and how does it work? These two questions have been addressed infrequently in modern scholarship for one primary reason: Isocratean philosophy is not, nor does it even vaguely resemble, Platonic philosophy. Whereas Plato’s philosophy is concerned with dialectic and the discovery of an objective truth, Isocrates’ philosophy is far more pragmatic, generally attempting to arrive at the best course of action in any given situation through a system of conjecture or approximation. This thesis seeks to articulate the way Isocrates’ philosophy works and more specifically the role of mimesis within it.¹

Much of the difficulty in understanding Isocratean philosophy lies in its inherent resistance to compartmentalization. This is partly due to the difficulty in understanding him as an individual. Rather than attempting to ascertain his objectives from his own educational programme and writings, scholars frequently contrast Isocrates pedagogically and stylistically with other Ancient Greek politicians, orators and philosophers, usually to his detriment. However, Isocrates is not solely a philosopher or rhetorician; he straddles the line between the two. As Alan Bloom has noted,

Isocrates’ anomalous position is the consequence of the fact that when he is looked upon as an advocate of the same pursuits as Demosthenes, he is found wanting; and when he is measured up against Plato, he appears trivial. Because he

¹ For a brief discussion of *mimēsis* in Isocrates as connected with gymnastics and *mousikē*, see Hawhee 142-162.
has eluded pigeonholing, his thought is almost never taken seriously anymore. Plato and Demosthenes are secure in their position because they are too obviously what they are to be completely misapprehended.²

It is therefore important in this paper not to evaluate Isocrates and his philosophy as better or worse than any competitor, nor to assume an impregnable boundary between rhetoric and philosophy. Instead, we shall see through internal analysis how Isocrates defines his own teachings, whom he intends to teach, and of course the why and how of his educational system. This is in keeping with what Edward Schiappa calls the nominal approach, which allows for any individual that identifies himself as philosophical, or is understood to be such by his contemporaries, to be considered part of the philosophical tradition.³ This approach is in strict contrast to what Schiappa terms the real approach, a more traditional method, whereby a definition of philosophy is constructed (typically based upon the Platonic understanding of philosophy) to which some individuals or ideas adhere, while those that do not are discarded from consideration. From the beginning, two things are quite clear about Isocrates’ perception of himself. First, he does not consider himself a rhētōr or a sophist, as he explicitly states in To Philip (81), To the Rulers of the Mytileneans (7.5) and the entire text Against the Sophists. Second, he instead identifies himself as a philosopher in the Panathenaicus (9), Against the Sophists (11-18), and To Demonicus (3), as well as in the Panegyricus and the Antidosis.

The next logical step is to determine what Isocrates understood to be philosophy. The term philosophia was still very much in flux during the fourth century, and Plato and

² Bloom 3-4.
³ Schiappa 38.
Isocrates used it to denote two radically different modes of thought. As mentioned before, Plato’s school relied heavily upon dialectic, and was not primarily concerned with addressing contemporary political or practical wisdom. Isocrates’ pragmatism is directly opposed to this conception of philosophy. Instead, it is aimed at refining the student's ability to deliberate well on issues of concern to public life, and at increasing their facility in public speaking. Schiappa has noted that, while both Plato and Isocrates are concerned with the proper method of rumination, Plato typically describes this method using the term *dialegesthai*, while Isocrates uses *bouleusthai*. This illustrates a crucial difference in the roles that private and public discussion play for the two writers.

Both *dialegesthai* and *bouleusthai* denote a process of deliberation and thought, but *dialegesthai* and later, dialectic, took on a sense of a private and often agonistic process, while *bouleusthai* suggests a more public and evaluative activity – one that has the goal of arriving at “advice” concerning public policy.

For Isocrates, philosophy must contain something relevant to the practical concerns of the *polis* and must correlate directly to decision making in public affairs. Due to the immense role that public speaking played in the determination of public policy and resolutions in democratic Athens, the cultivation of rhetorical skill was necessarily important, if only as a tool to decorate or embellish the more important reasoning of the argument.

I don’t think we should call what does not benefit at present our ability to speak or act ‘philosophy’. Instead I call such activity a ‘mental gymnastics’ and a preparation for philosophy - a more mature subject than what most children learn in schools but for the most part similar.

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4 See Nightingale, Ch.1 on how Plato and Isocrates used the contested term *philosophia*.
5 Schiappa 50.
6 *Antidosis* 266. All translations of Isocrates unless otherwise noted are from David Mirhady, Yun Lee Too and Terry L. Papillon, from two volumes on Isocrates in *The Oratory of Classical Greece* series edited by Michael Gagarin.
In the eyes of Isocrates, such “mental gymnastics” is futile, for it seeks an exact knowledge which can never be attained. Not only is the method of this philosophy impractical, its product is imaginary. Isocrates argues that this type of philosophy functions in much the same way as the study of geometry or astrology, serving only to force our minds to practice things which are difficult to learn as a sort of preparation for actual philosophy.\footnote{Antidosis 265.} He judges that the teachers of these subjects are not actually harmful to their students, but provide only a small benefit by training their students' minds in a type of critical thinking on unimportant topics:

Their students do not remember [these topics] for very long because they do not have a bearing on our lives, or help with our activities, but are in every respect nonessential.\footnote{Antidosis 262.}

Since absolute truth or certainty of action is unattainable from the perspective of Isocrates, we must rely on what generally seems to be true or beneficial for everyday life. Isocrates determines what is generally true and correct not through an interaction and understanding of the Forms (as in Platonic philosophy), but through public opinion and one’s own ability to approximate the best course of action in any given situation.

My opinion is quite simple. Since it is not in human nature to acquire knowledge that would make us certain what to do or say, I consider one wise who has the ability through approximation to attain the best choice: I call philosophers those that engage themselves with that from which this sort of wisdom is speedily grasped.\footnote{Antidosis 271 (adapted).}
He makes no comment as to whether or not an absolute truth exists; for his purposes this is irrelevant. His only concern is whether or not something is *generally considered* to be true, or, in the case of decisions, whether it is *generally considered* advisable.

The primary goal of Isocrates’ philosophy is to apprehend the ability to conjecture well, or in other words, to possess excellent *doxa* (plural *doxai*), which is then displayed in a speech in such a way as to persuade the listener to share the speaker’s opinion. I emphasize again that, while public speaking is an inevitable and essential part of Isocrates’ philosophical programme, it is not to be confused with what he understood as “sophistical” rhetoric, the instructors of which “do not attribute anything to the student’s experiences or his native ability, but they say that the science of speeches is like teaching the alphabet.”10

The sophistics have a twofold problem in the eyes of Isocrates. The first is that they are not particularly adept even at their own craft, which is involved solely with the technical composition of speechwriting (its rhetorical flourishes, word order, etc.), and which from the perspective of Isocrates is easily mastered. The second is that they have no understanding of the subject matter of the speech nor any desire to examine the opinions therein. The composition of a speech is not something which can simply be taught by the teacher and then memorized by the student, like the alphabet. It must be constructed and arranged so that it fits whatever the occasion (*kairos*) and the opinions (*doxa*) in the speech demand, something which can vary widely and can only be learned through careful study of previous speeches and the conjectures within them, with an

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10 *Against the Sophists* 10.
instructor at the ready to help with further explanation. In this way Isocrates considered facility in technical composition to be a natural byproduct of learning to conjecture well, rendering the pretended skill of the sophists both unimpressive and lacking the more important and necessary understanding of *doxa*.

It is important to note that what Isocrates is encouraging his students to conjecture is not what is truly the best decision in any given situation (according to some objective standard of truth), but what most people would generally agree to be the best decision based upon public opinion and past experience. In other words, Isocrates is not approximating a Platonic Form or absolute truth (*alētheia*), but rather conventional wisdom. As Poulakos states, “Isocrates made his case for improving judgments not on the basis of some higher level of knowledge, but on the basis of an intelligence associated with the stochastic skill.”

Past experience for Isocrates is particularly important because it is chiefly through the study of speeches of past political figures that he seeks to establish criteria for wise decision-making. This is closely connected to the Greek tradition of using past successes to predict future outcomes. This is present in Thucydides 1.22.4: “If [my history] be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the understanding of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content.”

However, Isocrates is not encouraging the study of the actual events *per se*, but the opinions and discourses of the triumphant figures involved in them. Through a close reading of the speeches of figures like Solon,

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11 T. Poulakos 54.
12 Thucydides 1.22.4, trans. Crawley.
Cleisthenes, Themistocles, and Pericles, men whom the Athenian population held up as exemplary, Isocrates believes that his students will be able to forge not only a deeper understanding of the way in which they wrote, but also the way in which they thought. In this way, the student will eventually be able to approach any given event with doxai comparable to those of the figures whom he has studied. Because the focus is on the past figure’s doxai rather than on the historical event itself, the present circumstances need not precisely mirror the past in order for the student to use the rationale of any exemplary figure. Although the present situation may differ quite dramatically from the one in the past, Isocrates determines that much can still be gained from reading the speeches of those involved, as there are always comparable elements to be found in each occurrence. For example, Isocrates might conjecture that although the period in which he lives (4th century Athens) differs radically from that of Themistocles during the Persian wars, Themistocles’ notion of a united Greek front against a common enemy should be pursued, as it was an overall benefit to Greece.

In the Areopagiticus, Isocrates calls for his audience to reinstate the democracy as it was under the supervision of Solon and Cleisthenes. The majority of this portion of the speech focuses upon the reasoning or doxai of the two leaders in their decision to promote their political agenda. This focus results in a speech that is particularly devoted to the intelligent reasoning of two men rather than the favorable outcome produced by that reasoning. That Athenian democracy under these men was better and should be

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14 Konstan p.115-117 reads the Areopagiticus as establishing fixed principles of virtue based on tradition by linking Isocrates’ ideas with the reforms of Solon. However, Konstan focuses on the connections with Solon’s actions but not with his doxai, as argued here.
restored is treated as a given in the speech, with Isocrates offering multiple points for comparison between the better days of old and the corrupt and lawless modern times:

The greatest proof is this: those who lived under it [the democracy under Solon and Cleisthenes], when they had accomplished many fine deeds, won fame from all men, and received the command from the Greeks, with their consent. In contrast, those who prefer the present constitution are hated by all, have suffered many terrible things, and were just short of undergoing the ultimate disaster. (*Areopagiticus* 17)

The real emphasis, however, is on how Cleisthenes and Solon thought about dealing with corruption and lawlessness in their own time, and how, through their powers of conjecture, they were able to arrive at a system which diminished it. Isocrates frames the institutions they created in terms of their thoughts: “They thought it wrong (*apodokimazein*) to regard good and bad citizens as deserving the same, and they preferred (*proaireisthai*) that equality which honors and punishes each according to what he deserved” (*Areopagiticus* 21-22). Isocrates follows this with more verbs reflecting their thoughts and beliefs: *elpizein* (22), *nomizein* (23, 25, 30), and *diagignōsko* (26). At times Isocrates explicitly provides the reasoning:

This was the understanding (*dianoēthentes*) of our ancestors when they considered (*hēgeisthai*) in the first place not how to punish the disorderly, but how to produce citizens who would not commit crimes meriting punishment. They regarded this as their main task and thought eagerness for punishment was appropriately left to people’s enemies. (*Areopagiticus* 42)

Solon and Cleisthenes’ system itself is wonderful, and Isocrates does not shrink from praising it, but it is only the product of the *doxa* of two wise men. Therefore what
Isocrates is attempting to encourage is not only the reinstatement of that political system but also, and more importantly, the type of reasoning which created it in the first place.\textsuperscript{15}

As stated above, for Isocrates, the most effective way of ascertaining what the doxai were of exemplary men (a group in which he includes himself) was through the study of what they had written. If, however, a particular exemplary man does not have any extant speeches, then the only recourse for understanding that person’s doxai is through his actions, although they may imprecisely reflect his doxai. Good speech automatically displays good reasoning for Isocrates, but a good action could be a fluke, occurring without any well-reasoned doxai beforehand. Therefore, interpreting one’s doxai through actions is reserved for extreme situations, as it is difficult to decipher the doxai of an individual without the presence of a speech for analysis.

One example of this is found in Isocrates’ imaginative arguments for the defense of Helen in his \textit{Encomium of Helen}. Earlier, Gorgias had defended Helen in his own \textit{Encomium of Helen} by attempting to offer a variety of alternative and justifiable reasons for her journey to Troy.\textsuperscript{16} Isocrates chastises Gorgias for not writing an encomium, but rather an apology,\textsuperscript{17} and declares: “In order to avoid the appearance of doing what is easy, criticizing others while making no point of my own, I shall try to speak about the same woman, leaving aside everything that others have said.”\textsuperscript{18} Needing to develop a new way of praising Helen, Isocrates lights upon the fact that Helen was abducted by Theseus, a

\textsuperscript{15} Areopagiticus 78.
\textsuperscript{16} Gorgias, \textit{Encomium of Helen} 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Isocrates, \textit{Encomium of Helen} 14.
\textsuperscript{18} Isocrates, \textit{Encomium of Helen} 15.
man who had achieved “complete virtue.” Isocrates explains why this abduction matters in praising Helen:

We cannot produce a more credible witness – or a more competent judge – of Helen’s good qualities than the insight of Theseus. However, in order that I not seem to be dwelling on the same topic because of a lack of material, exploiting the opinion (doxa) of a single man to praise her, I wish to continue with the subsequent events. *(Encomium of Helen 38)*

Isocrates’ evidence for Helen’s good qualities is solely based upon Theseus’ opinion (doxa) in relation to her, which no good Athenian would dare contradict, seeing that Theseus had become the national hero of Athens. But Isocrates gets at Theseus’ opinions through his actions, as seen in the parade of Theseus’ heroic exploits in *Helen* 23-37. Isocrates has no texts of Theseus to analyze, no speeches to mimic, and thus he is left only with Theseus’ actions and must extrapolate the doxai from them, a risky endeavor. Isocrates explains his reasoning for utilizing Theseus’ doxai:

For those who wish to praise Helen, I think that the strongest basis for argument will be if we can demonstrate that those who loved and admired her were themselves more admirable than the rest. It is reasonable that we judge events in our own time according to our own opinions (doxai), but for events that are so ancient, it is fitting that we show ourselves to be like-minded with the intelligent people of that time. *(Encomium of Helen 22)*

Isocrates states that it is more sagacious to conform his opinions about such an ancient time to those of one who was contemporary with (and in this case intimately involved with) the events at hand, namely, Theseus. Much like using the opinions of Solon and Cleisthenes as proofs for a restoration of the Areopagus, Isocrates adduces Theseus’ opinions as evidence for Helen’s character. It is no coincidence that Isocrates’

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praise of Helen, which ‘leaves aside everything that others have said’, utilizes his own philosophical program of using the doxai of paradeigmata.

Barring mythical or ‘ancient’ models, though, Isocrates educates his students by having them mimic speeches. However, the student does not simply pick up a speech and confront it himself; he must be instructed on how to approach the text. The teacher must also first ascertain the degree of natural ability that is present in the student. This ability consists not only in a solid grasp on the part of the student of grammatical constructions and public speaking, but also in good doxai, to whatever degree the student already possesses them. This assessment of the student’s natural ability is something which Isocrates expressly criticizes as lacking in the teaching of the Sophists, who claim that they can teach anyone anything regardless of any intrinsic talent. Isocrates immediately establishes that:

Abilities (dynameis) in speaking and all the other faculties of public life are innate in the well-born (euphyeis) and developed in those trained by experience (empeiria). (Against the Sophists 14)

The education which he provides at his school is able to benefit both groups, those with innate talent and those without, but with an important qualification.

Education can make such people more skillful and better equipped at discovery. It teaches those who now hit upon things by chance to achieve them from a readier source. But it cannot fashion either good debaters or good speechwriters from those who lack natural ability, although it may improve them and make them more intelligent in many respects. (Against the Sophists 15)

\(^{20}\) Against the Sophists 10.
In much the same way that this philosophy can enhance but not originate the ability to debate and compose speeches well, it cannot enhance the sense of virtue that arises from having good doxai, unless this sense is already present in the student.

Let no one think that I mean that justice is teachable; I contend that there is no sort of art that can convert those who by nature lack virtue to soundness of mind and justice. But I certainly do think that the study of political speeches can assist in encouraging and training these faculties. (Against the Sophists 21, adapted)

Once the abilities of the students have been established, Isocrates begins the process of teaching his philosophy. His educational programme (paideia, paideusis) is comprised of two distinct components, the ideai or eidē, or things that can be taught, and ta loipa ‘the rest’. Ta loipa are things that must be imitated. The synthesis and mastery of both components results in the student’s acquisition of power (dynameis).

In addition to having the requisite natural ability (physis), the student must learn the forms (ta eidē) of speeches and practice their uses. The teacher must go through these aspects as precisely as possible, so that nothing teachable (ta didakta) is left out, but as for the rest (ta loipa), he must offer himself as a model (paradeigma), so that those who are molded by him and can imitate (mimeisthai) him will immediately appear more florid and graceful than others. When all these conditions occur together, then those who practice philosophy will achieve success. (Against the Sophists, 17-18)

It is necessary first to discuss exactly what each component itself comprises. The ideai are the technical elements of speechwriting, as Sullivan has noted: Idea… describes a particular quantity of style, figures of thought or speech, but Isocrates uses the same word to refer to larger, structural, units of discourses, independent blocks of material that can be worked into a speech.  

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21 The two words are synonyms, as shown by Sullivan 2001.  
22 Sullivan 86.
Isocrates draws a parallel between the training for the mind and training for the body. He feels that, while the latter is inferior to the former, “these two disciplines are complimentary, interconnected, and consistent with each other…They [the ancestors] do not separate these two kinds of education but use similar methods of instruction, exercise and other kinds of practice.”\(^{23}\) Part of the training of the body involves the learning of the positions or forms (\emph{ta schēmata}), the analogues to which are the \emph{ideai} for philosophical training. These positions or forms are the rudimentary building blocks for the construction of a speech as a whole, much as the positions of an athlete must be synthesized in order for him to succeed in contests. Obtaining knowledge of these forms is simple, but, as Isocrates counsels,\(^{24}\)

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\ldots \text{to choose from these [forms] the necessary forms (ideai) for each subject, to mix them with each other and arrange them suitably, and then not to mistake the circumstances but to embellish the entire speech properly with considerations and to speak the words rhythmically and musically, these things require much study and are the work of a brave and imaginative soul. (Against the Sophists 16-17)}
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The process by which the student synthesizes these \emph{ideai} is the realm of the second component of Isocrates’ educational programme. As noted above, this process is something which cannot be taught explicitly, but rather requires the teacher to offer models for mimesis: either his own works, or the speeches of other men who are well-regarded (\emph{eudokimoi}). Much of this practice is involved with arranging the \emph{ideai} in such a manner that makes them fitting (\emph{to prepon}) for a variety of occasions (\emph{kairoi}).\(^{25}\) Isocrates

\(^{23}\) \textit{Antidosis} 182.
\(^{24}\) \textit{Against the Sophists} 16.
\(^{25}\) \textit{Antidosis} 184.
describes this most explicitly in the *Antidosis*, after explaining that physical trainers teach

*ta schemata* ‘rudimentary positions’ and philosophers teach the equivalent *ideai*.

When they have given them experience (*empeiros*) and detailed knowledge of these (*ideai*), they again exercise the students and make them accustomed to hard work, and then force them to synthesize everything they have learned in order that they may have a more secure understanding and their views (*doxai*) may be better adapted to the right moments (*kairoi*). (*Antidosis* 184)

In two different passages, Isocrates highlights the difference between his speeches and those of the Sophists:

The greatest indication of the difference is that speeches cannot be good unless they reflect the circumstances (*kairoi*), propriety (*to prepon*), and originality (*to kainon*). (*Against the Sophists* 13)

There is only one method for such compositions [of the Sophists], which it is not difficult to discover, to learn, or to imitate. But speeches of general import and credibility and the like are devised and spoken through many forms (*ideai*) and circumstances (*kairoi*) that are difficult to learn. Matching them is more difficult, just as being solemn is more difficult than making jokes, and being serious is more demanding than play. (*Encomium of Helen* 11)

Where the Sophists teach procrustean oratory, Isocrates teaches the ability to adapt according to the situation.

Matching the *doxai* to the *kairoi* is difficult, and requires the student to deliberate at length about the *doxai* of the model and to recreate in himself similar *doxai*, so that he may approach the construction of his speech in the same manner in which the *paradeigma* would if faced with a similar situation (*kairos*). The student therefore, not only aspires to *write* stylistically like the *paradeigma* but to *think* in the same manner by embodying their *doxai*. This process, Isocrates argues, is exceedingly difficult and laborious, since it relies strongly on the student’s ability to uncover the author’s thought process. The teacher may illuminate the various *ideai* in a speech, and even how they are
connected to one another, but it is up to the student himself to uncover the reasoning as to why the paradeigma chose to use those forms and connections to make his point. The students who possess natural ability (physis) will necessarily be better than the student who lacks physis at uncovering the paradeigma’s doxai, as well as constructing speeches of their own which utilize good doxai in a fitting and advantageous capacity. Isocrates adds to this by saying that it is only these students with natural talent who may perfect this ability: “Real ability (dynamēis) is found only in those who excel both in native talent (physis) and in training (epimeleiai)” (Antidosis 185). These dynamēis encapsulate a mastery of the two elements of Isocrates’ educational programme: a thorough understanding of the ideai, and the ability to uncover the doxai of a paradeigma and recreate them in his own speech.

It is therefore beneficial for the student to have multiple paradeigmata, as the more well-regarded figures he has at his disposal for study, the more opportunities there are for speeches to be studied which feature similar kairoi to his own. In this case, he can simply adopt the approach and implement it in his own speech. Even if the speeches of the paradeigmata do not concern similar kairoi to those of the student, nevertheless it is worthwhile for the student to have access to the doxai of multiple figures so that he may develop versatility in his own compositions by having a variety of approaches which he can apply to any kairos at hand. Furthermore, it is through the hybridization of different doxai or through the application of an old doxa to a new kairos that originality is born, as seen in Isocrates’ discussion of his own work Antidosis which he claims is both kainos 26 Antidosis 184.
“novel” and a *miktos logos* “mixed discourse”.\(^{27}\) The ultimate goal of the student is to assimilate himself to the *paradeigma* not only in terms of style, but also in terms of thought process, and it is the unity of composition (*ideai*) and thought process (*doxa*) which comprises power (*dynameis*). Everyone, therefore, can be trained, and both types of student with or without natural ability, as long as they are those “who are particularly attentive and can understand the consequences most often apprehend them,” (*Antidosis* 184) but only the student with natural ability can obtain the ultimate *dynameis*, as they are composed only partially of things which can be taught, while the majority depends on such things that only those with inborn talent can access.

For Isocrates, those that have attained these *dynameis* may also eventually become *paradeigmata* themselves, in that they both practice his philosophy, and create works which embody it. For the purposes of Isocratean philosophy there is no way to separate good speechwriting from good thinking, as a speech that is well-made can only be the product of one who has also thought well. In *Nicocles* 7, a passage repeated verbatim at *Antidosis* 255, Isocrates writes: “We regard speaking (*to legein*) well to be the clearest sign (*megiston sēmeion*) of a good mind (*phronein eu*), which it requires, and truthful, lawful, and just speech we consider the image of a good and faithful soul.” One example of this belief is expressed in *Antidosis* 277, where Isocrates discusses the philosopher’s natural preference for topics which are “important and noble and promote human welfare,” rather than topics which are “unjust or insignificant” and deal only with private arguments rather than public good.

\(^{27}\) *Antidosis* 1 and *Antidosis* 12.
Then from the evidence relevant to his topic, he will select the most appropriate \(\text{prepôdestatai}\) and advantageous. Someone who is accustomed to examine and evaluate such topics will have this same facility not only for the speech at hand but also for other affairs. As a result, those who are philosophical and ambitious in their devotion to speaking will at the same time \(\text{hama}\) speak well and think intelligently \(\text{to legein eu kai to phronein}\). (Antidosis 277)

The construction of a speech and the philosophizing happen simultaneously \(\text{hama}\), with the student emulating the good doxai of the paradeigmata in the production of a new speech which will contain isomorphic doxai to those of the model being studied. By homogenous I do not mean that the doxai contained in the original speech are \textit{identical} to those present in the new speech, as complete assimilation of the paradeigmata is an impossibility, as is the complete removal of the student’s own personality. Rather, because the doxai of the new speech are so expressly determined by those in the speech of the paradeigmata, they become parallels of each other.

Despite the student imitating the good and successful doxai of the paradeigma, he may find that his speech is not persuasive to the audience in his own time. This is due to the fact that, even if a philosopher has written a good speech, that speech will not necessarily \textit{persuade} an audience. This is not the fault of the philosopher but is entirely due to the effect of chance. Thus there are two elements that are involved in a persuasive speech that is actually successful: a good speech must display the highest dynameis, comprising good ideai and doxai properly suited to the kairos, but it is also highly influenced by chance. One can increase one’s odds of persuading an audience to align their views with the speaker by giving close consideration to both of these two elements.

To achieve the highest dynameis, Isocrates believes that the speaker (his student) must have natural talent and training, however, he also endeavors to classify what he
thinks are lower levels of ability.\textsuperscript{28} The lowest position on this scale are those who have natural talent but no training. After describing the characteristics of successful professionals in every art in the \textit{Antidosis}, he writes:

That is what I have to say about every art. If someone, leaving aside the other arts, should ask me which of these plays the greatest role in education in speaking, I would respond that nature (\textit{physis}) is paramount and stands far ahead of everything else. Someone must have a mind capable of inventing, learning, working hard, and memorizing; a voice and clarity of speech that has the capacity to persuade audiences not only by what he says but also by his harmonious diction; and furthermore, courage that does not signify shamelessness but prepares the soul with moderation so that it has as much confidence in addressing all the citizens as in deliberating with himself. Doesn’t everyone know that even if such a person does not acquire a thorough education but only a general education that is common to all, he would be such an orator that in my view no Greek could equal him? (\textit{Antidosis} 189-190)

While Isocrates realizes that natural talent is essential for attaining \textit{dynamis}, he states that those who possess training without natural talent are superior to those students who possess natural talent without training:

Furthermore, we know that if men whose natures are inferior to these apply themselves to practice and training, they become better, not just than they were but also than those who are naturally talented but are too complacent about themselves. Each of these [nature and training] would make one gifted at speaking (\textit{legein}) and at acting (\textit{prattein}), and both in the same person would make him unsurpassable by others. (\textit{Antidosis} 191)

Best of all, of course, is the combination of natural talent and training, and no other combination is able to attain true \textit{dynamis}. Yet even at the culmination of the Isocratean \textit{paideia}, there is still no guarantee that the student will persuade the audience.

\textsuperscript{28} This view is contra Marzluf, who thinks that in the \textit{Antidosis}, Isocrates withdraws from a \textit{physis}-driven aptitude, based on ‘his intimations of the dangers of relying solely upon innate ability, his enthusiasm for rhetorical instruction, and his narratives of the natural inadequacies of both himself and his favorite student, Timotheus.’ Marzluf does not analyze Isocrates’ system as a whole, and thus comes to different conclusions regarding a student relying only on \textit{physis} and Isocrates’ narrative of Timotheus, on which see below.
Even after the production of a speech which encapsulates perfectly the philosopher’s 
dynæmis, (in that it uses both good ideai and doxai suited to the kairos) he may still lose 
the argument through a lack of persuasive material which is external to the speech itself. 
This may include the opponent’s use of bribery, slander, or most importantly, the 
perceived reputations of both parties involved. An example of this can be seen in the 
liturgical case of Isocrates versus Megacleides. Isocrates, surely an example of natural 
talent and training in his own system, was forced upon losing the trial to assume a liturgy 
originally belonging to Megacleides. Isocrates’ failure to persuade the audience was not, 
he claims, due to his speech being poorly written, but because the audience had an 
incorrect assessment of him and due to chance. For Isocrates, this explains why students 
who have not had the benefit of a philosophical education or who lack natural talent may 
still be able to win arguments against those who do possess those qualities. This 
perspective casts further aspersions upon the Sophists who are only concerned with this 
persuasive element rather than the production of what Isocrates views as a truly good 
speech.

Isocrates’ approach to dealing with this complication is twofold. First, to do one’s 
utmost to procure a good reputation, and second, to attempt to align the audience’s doxai 
with one’s own. A good reputation is derived partially from any number of tangible 
services that a person has provided for the city, such as triremes, liturgies, etc, but is also 
influenced by the general perception of the individual, which is shaped by society’s 
implicit understanding of what it means to be good. Therefore, if the individual can align

29 Antidosis 4.
the society’s understanding of what it means to be good with his own he may quickly
gain a good reputation.

Acquiring a good reputation is extremely important, Isocrates notes, because the
audience may not be disposed to listen to a speech if they feel the speaker has a bad
reputation, even though the speech may be good, in that it contains good doxai.
Conversely, if the audience feels that the speaker has a good reputation, they will more
amenable to listening to the speech and agreeing with its doxai. As Isocrates says in
Antidosis 278:

Moreover, anyone who wishes to persuade others will not neglect virtue but will
devote even more attention to ensuring that he achieves a most honorable
reputation among his fellow citizens. Who could fail to know that speeches seem
truer when spoken by those of a good name than by the disreputable, and that
arguments acquire more authority when they come from one’s life than from mere
words. The more ardently someone wants to persuade his audience, the more he
will strive to be a gentleman and to have a good reputation among the citizens.
(Antidosis 278)

In this passage, Isocrates is not discussing the mechanics of how to create a good
speech, but instead how to persuade others. He implicitly realizes that a good speech
alone is not enough to guarantee the persuasion of the audience. Persuasion is outside the
process of adapting doxai to fit the kairos. In actuality, much of the persuasive element
which is so important for success rests in having procured a good reputation long before
the occasion for the speech to even be presented. This goal can be seen clearly in the
didactic speech To Demonicus, which Isocrates sends as a gift to Demonicus and which
provides a list of loosely connected gnomic statements, all designed to set out ‘habits
through which you may advance most toward virtue and win a good reputation

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(eudokimein) among all people.” 30 He says, for example, that venerating the gods will result in a good reputation,31 and encourages his reader to pursue pleasures that bring a good reputation (doxa).32 Most importantly, Isocrates explains that it is of more importance to have a good reputation than to actually be good: “Guard against slanders, even if they are false, for most people are ignorant of the truth and look only to reputation (doxa).”33

An example of someone who followed Isocrates’ program closely and failed because of a poor reputation was his student Timotheus. In a long section of his Antidosis (101-139), Isocrates writes that Lysimachus had discredited Timotheus, and by extension Isocrates himself. After presenting a narrative of the general’s successes in war, Isocrates claims that Timotheus was “astute in the matters which a good general must know about.”34 Isocrates lists the various thought processes that Timotheus had: “to be able to determine against whom war must be waged and whom one should have as allies” (117), and “to bring together an army suited to the current enemy, organize it, and use it advantageously” (119). These military strategies can be viewed as a metaphorically corresponding to the process Isocrates uses in crafting speeches: both are involved in the collecting, the organizing and the advantageous use of the components to create the whole in an effective way. Timotheus is next presented in terms of his thought processes: in section 121, he acted as a philosopher (philosophein); in section 122, he knew

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30 To Demonicus 12.
31 To Demonicus 13.
32 To Demonicus 16.
33 To Demonicus 17.
34 Antidosis 117.
(epistasai), he perceived (enthymeisthai), and he believed (nomizein); in section 124, he applied his mind (prosechein ton noun); in section 125, he thought (hēgeisthai). After he establishes Timotheus’ thought processes, he compares Timotheus to Lysander, the Spartan general who was in command during the battle of Aegispotami in 405 BCE, via a parallel word symbebēken.

It is truly necessary to regard him a good, even the best, general and not someone like Lysander, who achieved similar success by a single act of good fortune (miae tychēi) because no one else happened (symbebēken) to have the opportunity, but as someone who always acted correctly and showed good sense in many various and difficult matters. That was the way things turned out (symbebēken) for Timotheus. (Antidosis 128, adapted)

Lysander achieved success similar to that of Timotheus simply by being in the right place at the right time; the situation turned out well for him by luck (miae tychēi). Timotheus, on the other hand, always acted correctly and showed good sense, so much so that Isocrates deems him the best (aristos), and yet he did not ultimately achieve success, since he was ultimately charged with treason by Chares after the campaign against Byzantium in 357 BCE.35 His fellow commanders, Iphicrates and Menestheus, were acquitted; but Timotheus was fined a huge sum of money.36 How then does Isocrates explain the fact that Timotheus followed his philosophy, but still did not convince the citizens and obtain an acquittal? For Isocrates, there is a two-fold answer: chance and reputation.

If, looking to justice itself, you take thought in these matters, what happened to Timotheus must seem to everyone terrible and harsh. But if you factor in the ignorance (agnoia) that all men have, and the envy (phthonos) that arises in us, as well as the confusion (tarachē) and the disorder (tyrbē) in which we live, you will

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35 Mirhady and Too, translation of Antidosis, note 51, pg. 229.
36 Antidosis 129.
find that none of these things occurs unreasonably or lies outside of human nature (*anthrōpinē physis*); and Timotheus contributed some part to being improperly understood in these things. (*Antidosis* 130)

Thus we can see there are elements of chance involved with the makeup of any potential audience. If the majority of the audience members were of a similar philosophical mind to Timotheus and Isocrates (in that they possessed good *doxai*), his well-crafted speech would naturally be successful. However, the audience he was faced with was comprised of individuals who were filled with ignorance (*agnoia*), envy (*phthonos*), confusion (*tarachē*) and disorder (*tyrbē*), all of which obscure their perception of what is in actuality the superior speech. He claims that these elements are simply a part of human nature (*anthrōpinē physis*). Similarly, in *To Nicocles* 45-6, he includes envy and ignorance as a part of human nature.

If we wish to consider human nature (*physeis tôn anthrōpōn*) as a whole, we shall discover that most people do not delight in the healthiest foods, in the finest way of life, in the best actions, or in the most useful creatures; rather they enjoy pleasures that are in every way opposed to their own advantage…Accordingly, how could someone who advises, teaches, or says anything useful please such people? Besides the reasons I have given, they envy (*phthonein*) those who have sense, and think that those without sense are simple; accordingly, they flee the truth of the matter to the point of being ignorant (*oude isasi*) of their own interests… (*To Nicocles* 45-6)

Because of their envy, an audience will likely actively attempt to disregard the speech of the envied individual, irrespective of its quality. Isocrates states that some people can turn ‘savage and hostile’ through envy, and due to this they can destroy those they envy. 37 Envy is connected with a loss of reputation 38 and the creation of envy in the jury is what Isocrates fears in *Antidosis* 31, when he responds to Lysimachus’ accusation

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37 *Antidosis* 142.
38 *Panathenaicus* 21.
that he took large sums of money for his teachings. Similarly, confusion (*tarachē*) can mislead others, as in *Panathenaicus* 15: “most people have formed their opinion about us unjustly (*dikaiōs*), in confusion (*tarachōdōs*) and quite irrationally (*alogistōs*)”.

A good reputation may help alleviate the negative effects of this occurrence, whether through malicious envy, complete ignorance, or vague confusion and disorder. If a speaker is well regarded and well liked, there is no reason for the audience to feel envy. Therefore, if you adhere to the logic of Isocratean philosophy, a good reputation can alleviate ignorance, confusion and disorder. In this way, the audience is more likely to be persuaded by the speaker. However, there is still no way to completely eliminate this potential for failure.

Timotheus was faced with an audience who possessed many of these negative qualities, and held no positively perceived reputation with which he might counteract them, a combination which led to his downfall. Isocrates describes it in this way:

“Timotheus contributed some part to being improperly understood in these things.” The “some part” Isocrates speaks of is the part that could have been potentially eliminated with a good reputation. Isocrates notes that Timotheus “was as unsuited by nature to the cultivation (*therapeia*) of other men as he was talented in his management of public affairs.” Isocrates even attempted to educate him by saying:

“You have never concerned yourself with these things [benefitting the public with gravity and dignity], since you think that if you deal with matters outside Athens fairly, the citizens here will be well disposed toward you. This is not the case, but

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39 Morgan p. 135-146 focuses on *tarachē* as a symptom of Athenians in the *polis* who do not act consistently in the public arena, but she does not analyze it as an element involved in the persuasion of an audience.

40 *Antidosis* 130.

41 *Antidosis* 131.
the opposite generally happens. If you gratify the people, they judge everything you do not according to how things actually are (alētheia) but in whatever way helps your cause; they will overlook mistakes and will exalt your success to the heavens. Goodwill makes everyone behave in this fashion.” (Antidosis 133-4)

Isocrates was well aware of the malleability of reputation, and that it could change depending on others’ words. Elsewhere he notes that Agamemnon did not achieve as great of a reputation as his actions demanded due to those who delight in ‘false stories more than the truth’. While his actions were outstanding, the outcome of his reputation was dependent on the words of others. Similarly, Isocrates claims that slander makes ‘liars appear respectable (eudokimein)’. Being eudokimos is not a guarantee of success, for Isocrates describes how Timotheus was able to accomplish important things in a way much better than generals who were eudokimo. However, having a good reputation does lead to a greater likelihood of achieving success.

Because of the benefits of a good reputation both in terms of likelihood of attaining success and in terms of swaying public opinion, Isocrates explains that the eudokimo are good to mimic and those who lack a good reputation earn no imitators. Agamemnon lacked a good reputation (ouk eudokimein), and therefore garnered no followers. Isocrates describes the sophists as poorly-regarded (adokimos). On the contrary, in Evagoras, the model that Evagoras must use as an example is his ancestor

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42 Panathenaicus 75, 78.  
43 Antidosis 18.  
44 Antidosis 115.  
45 Panathenaicus 78.  
46 Panathenaicus 5.
Peleus, described as *eudokimos*. In *To Nicocles*, Isocrates encourages Nicocles to utilize well-respected poets and sophists:

“Don’t think you have the luxury of being ignorant of any of the famous (*eudokimountes*) poets or sophists. Listen to the former and study with the latter, and prepare yourself to be a critic of those who are inferior and a rival of those who are better. Through these exercises you would in the shortest time develop the qualities I determined you will need to rule correctly and to manage the city as is necessary.” (*To Nicocles* 13).

For speechwriting, Isocrates believes the best models are others which are well-regarded, and draws a comparison between the writing of speeches and the writing of laws. Lawmakers have at their disposal many pre-existing laws, and the way they judge which laws are good and should be implemented is by gathering together the laws which are well-regarded (*eudokimos*) elsewhere. Similarly, Isocrates encourages his readers to compare his speech with other speeches of well-regarded people: “You will know the power of these speeches if you set them beside others by authors who are well-respected (*eudokimountes*) and considered useful.”

Once the audience has listened to the speech, they will be further inclined to agree with the good *doxai* if they have been educated in the Isocratean philosophy where they will have been trained to evaluate what is good or bad based on Isocrates’ model. Isocrates educates kings, politicians, generals, and parents, all of whom in turn educate their subjects, followers, soldiers, and children. Isocrates’ ideal is a system which causes everyone to have the same *doxa*, thus decreasing the likelihood of a good speech failing because of chance. If the leaders of a community (who model their *doxa* on Isocrates’

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47 *Evagoras* 16.  
48 *Antidosis* 83.  
49 *Antidosis* 78.
speeches) and the community (who model their doxa on the leaders) have the same doxa, there is a strong likelihood of attaining success. As Isocrates says: “Imitate the manners of kings and follow their habits, for you will be thought to approve and emulate them and will thus achieve more distinction in the eyes of the multitude and more reliable goodwill from kings.”50 This aligns both kings and the multitude, and since the king ideally is following Isocrates’ views, those of good doxai begin to engender benefits for the city.

The best examples of how Isocrates’ philosophy works can be found in his instruction of kings. In the To Nicocles, Isocrates writes to the son of the deceased king Evagoras, and offers him instruction on how he might best rule his subjects and conduct himself. Isocrates first offers a series of gnomic statements (quite similar to those in the To Demonicus) on actions which he feels are befitting a good ruler, the culmination of which he states in section 32, is the procurement of a good reputation,

> Consider it more valuable to bequeath to your children a good reputation than great wealth. The latter is perishable and the former is immortal; and wealth may be gained through a good reputation but a good reputation cannot be bought by wealth. Even base men have wealth, but only those who are superior can possess a good reputation. (To Nicocles 32)

Isocrates then continues this admonition of what Nicocles ought to leave behind as a legacy. Nicocles should condition his thoughts no less than his actions, and to do so he should make frequent use of philosophia.51 This requires Nicocles to spend a substantial quantity of time focused upon examples of good action, not so that he may repeat the same deeds, but so that his mind, through constant familiarization with examples of good

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50 To Demonicus 36.
51 To Nicocles 35
action and the good doxai that led to them, will become accustomed to generate equally good actions through equally good doxai.

Practice speaking about fine pursuits, so that your thoughts may be conditioned to resemble your words. Accomplish in practice whatever seems best when you take thought. Imitate the actions of those whose thoughts you envy. (To Nicocles 38, adapted)

Although imitation of good action is meritorious, Isocrates qualifies this by noting that the actions worth imitating come from those figures whose thoughts were also worth imitating. Isocrates deliberately emphasizes the link between good thought and good action, but gives prominence to good thought, as it will incontrovertibly lead to good action. In addition, mimesis of good action, while provisionally beneficial, does not have the flexibility that good thought does, as good thought can lead to a variety of good actions, appropriate to a wide range of situations and circumstances (kairoi), while a replication of a particular good action requires that the circumstances be congruent.

This attention paid to mental vs. physical achievements is continued when Nicocles is instructed that he should not bequeath an image (eikon) of his body but of his virtue. “Prefer to leave behind images of your virtue rather than of your body as a memorial” (To Nicocles 36). The reasoning behind this counsel is directly connected to the importance of mimesis to Isocrates’ philosophy. While a statue may provide the viewer an idea of the physical elements of a deceased leader, that is the only thing it can provide; and even this, given the perishable nature of art, will last only briefly. What is truly important is the nature of the leader’s doxai, his thoughts, his ideas, and his intentions, all of which are evidence of his virtue. This remembrance of virtue is superior to a statue for two reasons. First, as it exists outside the physical world, it can be handed
down indefinitely and is therefore deathless, unlike the statue and the body it is meant to reflect. Second, because of this permanence, the *eikon* of a leader’s virtue has a great degree of utility which is utterly lacking in the *eikon* of his body. The *eikon* of virtue can be used in the application of philosophy, as this *eikon* is embodied in speeches, and can therefore be used as a model for mimesis. Furthermore, while a statue may provide those in the vicinity some emotional benefit, the words of a speech can be transmitted all across different nations, and could benefit locations hundreds of miles away from the actual vicinity in which it originated. The important combination of the immortality, utility and transmissibility found in this type of *eikon* is stressed to Nicocles again in the *Evagoras*:

Nicocles, I think that the statues of bodies are fine memorials, but that images of deeds of character and of character are worth much more, and one can observe these only in skillfully produced speeches. …statues necessarily remain among those who set them up, but speeches can be conveyed throughout Greece published in gatherings of men of good sense, and can be welcomed by those whose respect is worth more than that of all others. In addition to these things, there is the fact that no one would be able to make their own body a statue or a painting but it is easy for those who wish to take the trouble and are willing to be the best to imitate the character and thoughts of others that are represented in speeches. (*Evagoras* 73-75)

Much of Nicocles’ education relies on his ability to imitate various models of good *doxai*, many of which come from Isocrates himself. In the *Nicocles*, Isocrates constructs a speech where the student, who has understood and is using the philosophy of the teacher, now writes back to show what he has learned. It is has been noted by Too and others that the voice in which constructed Nicocles writes back is identical to that of his

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52 Too p. 149-150: “In the second work, *Nicocles*, the Cyprian king is made to speak like Isocrates. The tyrant’s language is virtually indistinguishable from that produced by the rhetorician in the earlier speech [*To Nicocles*] and deliberately recalls passages from *To Nicocles*. Too highlights the difference in voice between the two speeches in the genitive *Isokratous* in *Nicocles* 11, which identifies “Isocrates” as the voice of *To Nicocles*. Also, Too p. 190: “It also shows that the Cypriot tyrant has learned from his advisor
teacher Isocrates. Some scholars have viewed this as a failing on the part of Isocrates to fabricate an alternative persona which does not sound like himself. While it is noteworthy that the constructed Nicocles sounds like his teacher, this should not be viewed in any way as a rhetorical failing on the part of Isocrates. The choice to make his student possess the same voice as himself is deliberate with the speech as a whole meant to serve as an example of a successful education in Isocratean philosophy. Nicocles has studied the doxai of Isocrates so carefully that he is now able to recreate similar doxai in himself which are expressed in the speech he uses to respond to his teacher. Too has viewed the parallels in voice between the two speeches as an example of successful education as well, but she only maintains that the voice is the same, focusing upon rhetorical features and phrasing rather than the sentiments or the reasoning itself. That the rhetorical structures of the speech are homologous is noteworthy but ultimately inevitable, as the student who learns to think like his teacher through examination of his doxai will inevitably also reflect the style of the teacher as well in the way in which he writes, for in Isocratean philosophy, good thought and good writing style are inseparable from one another.

What is far more important is that Nicocles has learned to mimic the same sentiments and the same thought patterns as his teacher to such an extent that he is essentially no longer mimicking the paradeigma but has become one himself. The

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precisely by assuming an authorial voice which resembles Isocrates’ own. Just as Isocrates is to be the teacher of Athens, the ruler of Cyprus is to provide his subjects with his own character as a paradigm of social identity.”
speeches that make up the Cyprian trilogy, if viewed as one coordinated unit,\textsuperscript{33} encapsulate exactly how the Isocratean philosophical programme ideally functions. You begin with the Isocrates as the teacher, himself a \textit{paradeigma} constructing a speech which is the product of good \textit{doxai} and therefore contains within it thoughts and reasoning which are to be mimicked. Nicocles, the aristocratic student who possesses a high degree of natural ability,\textsuperscript{34} is then engaged in diligent study of these two works (\textit{Evagoras} and \textit{To Nicocles}) and practices imitating his teacher’s \textit{doxai} to the point where the \textit{mimēsis} taking place evolves into the student having almost entirely assimilated his own thoughts to those of the model.

Let us examine some examples of how \textit{Nicocles} mimics Isocrates’ \textit{doxai} as presented in the \textit{Evagoras} and \textit{To Nicocles}. Nicocles sets up his speech as the perfect counterpart to the speeches he has used as models. Whereas \textit{Evagoras} and \textit{Nicocles} educated kings in Isocrates’ philosophical programme, Nicocles decides that he will educate his subjects in the same \textit{paideia}. In \textit{Nicocles}, the king describes the best type of \textit{logos} and introduces the theme of his own speech:

I accept all discourses which have the capacity to benefit us even a little; however, I consider finest, most appropriate to a king, and especially suited to me, those discourses which advise me on conduct in general (\textit{epitēdeumata}) and on political matters (\textit{politeia}), and among these, those which teach dynasts how they should treat their people, and the citizens how they should regard their leaders.

\textsuperscript{33} Throughout the history of scholarship, scholars have developed different ways of grouping Isocrates’ works, as summarized in Too, chapter 1. \textit{To Nicocles} and \textit{Nicocles} are always lumped together as symbouleutic or hortatory, but \textit{Evagoras} has often been separated as epideictic. As Too argues, the majority of Isocrates’ works are in the genre of \textit{logos politikos}, and therefore, such classifications as symbouleutic or epideictic are arbitrary.

\textsuperscript{34} Nicocles’ father Evagoras was descended from heroes, and ultimately from Zeus (\textit{Evagoras} 12-18). Evagoras is described as \textit{euphystatos} ‘most naturally talented’ (\textit{Evagoras} 41). \textit{Evagoras} 81 describes Nicocles as having the same \textit{physis}, and being descended from Zeus.
Through these discourses I see cities becoming most prosperous and great. On the other topic of how one must rule as king, listen to Isocrates, but I shall try to outline what a king’s subjects must do. (Nicocles 10-11)

Nicocles considers the best discourses those dealing with politics and moral conduct, immediately representing himself as a follower of Isocrates’ programme of philosophical education. These particular types of discourse refer to Isocrates’ own corpus of work, as the majority of Isocratean speeches belong to the genre of logos politikos either directly or peripherally, many of which deal specifically with issues of moral conduct. However, the types of speeches that Nicocles prefers are those that offer rulers counsel on how to treat and instruct their subjects. As Isocrates has just offered (in the Evagoras and To Nicocles) two speeches which “define what sort of activities you should aspire to and which ones you should avoid in order to govern your city and kingdom in the best possible way”, 55 and which “set out what goals and concerns one should have [of being a monarch]”, 56 Nicocles’ statement should be viewed as a direct response to and endorsement of Isocratean doxai, particularly when intended ‘to give advice to rulers’. 57 Just as Isocrates taught kings ‘how they should treat their people’, Nicocles will teach citizens ‘how they should regard their leaders’.

In addition to fashioning a speech with the goal of educating citizens in Isocrates’ programme, Nicocles mimics additional themes reflecting Isocrates’ doxai which had previously been expressed in the Evagoras and To Nicocles: the goal of increasing his rule and the city’s prosperity (To Nicocles 9, Evagoras 47 and Nicocles 32, 63);

55 To Nicocles 2.
56 To Nicocles 7.
57 To Nicocles 8.
hereditary natural talent derived from Zeus (Evagoras 12-18, 41, 81 and Nicocles 26, 28, 30, 42); honor and virtue (To Nicocles 11 and Nicocles 29); gentleness (Evagoras 49, Nicocles 17, 32); justice and piety (To Nicocles 20, Evagoras 28, 38 and Nicocles 13, 32, 48); self-restraint (Evagoras 45 and Nicocles 39); the reversal of a terrible situation (Evagoras 26-32, 66-7 and Nicocles 31-2); planning (Evagoras 41 and Nicocles 17); the placement of the best people in positions of power (To Nicocles 16 and Nicocles 14-15); the use of kairoi (To Nicocles 33 and Nicocles 19); the best things to bequeath to one’s children (To Nicocles 32 and Nicocles 58); the benefits of using paradeigmata (Evagoras 12, 77 and Nicocles 37); and the praise of logos and the use of logos instead of bronze for memorials (Evagoras 4, 8, 73-8, To Nicocles 36 and Nicocles 5-9).

The student has not simply copied the voice, the stylistic forms, or the actions of the paradeigma that he has accessed through his speeches, but has integrated the thoughts of the paradeigma into his own thoughts, enabling him to utilize the good doxai in a new kairos although it differs from that of the paradeigma. The expression of this successful integration is evident in the speech he wrote back to the teacher, a text which itself can serve as a model for other students as it too is representative of good doxai. It is important to note how, when conducted successfully, the practice of philosophy and the production of new models for imitation happen simultaneously and may be reproduced at a fairly rapid rate. This is because, for Isocrates, there is no rift between thinking well and writing well, as writing well can only be the product of the union of proficiency in ideai and the possession of good doxai. Therefore, as Nicocles is writing well, he is inevitably thinking well, and the product of this activity is a good speech. The good speech is both a
physical representation of this whole process, and the philosophical process itself, as product and process are inseparable from one another. Furthermore, because Nicoles is a king, his speeches are able to be heard and imitated by a larger group of people than those of a private individual, potentially enabling him to effect the emergence of good doxai in an entire population. With this goal in mind, Nicoles even attempts to align his subjects’ doxai with his own, when in Nicoles 47 he praises those who have learned virtue through consideration (gnōmē) and their ability to reason (logismos), and offers himself as a model for his subjects to follow, encouraging them to “willingly and eagerly do whatever I advise and command”. Frequently, he directs his subjects to utilize his doxai as if they were their own, as in Nicoles 51: “May each of you know that whatever he himself is conscious of, I know too, and if I am not there in person, let him think that my consciousness (dianoia) is present at what is happening,” or in Nicoles 60: “In my absence, think the same things you would say in my presence.” The king actively acts as a paradeigma to his subjects, just as Isocrates was a paradeigma for him. The Cyprian trilogy is not meant to show how all students end up sounding somewhat like their teachers in terms of how they write; it is meant to instruct students in how they may become equal to their teachers in the way in which they think, and how they too will become paradeigmata, should they study Isocrates’ philosophy.

Many of the men that Isocrates cites as paradeigmata are traditionally well-regarded figures from Athenian history, man such as Solon, Cleisthenes, Themistocles, Pericles, etc. There are also more complex implicit models, such as Gorgias, where it seems that much of what Isocrates mimics is style rather than doxai. But the most
enigmatic of Isocrates’ models is Socrates. As many scholars have noted, Isocrates’ 
*Antidosis* has many parallels to the trial of Socrates as presented in Plato’s *Apology*. Both 
speeches are an apology on the part of the defendant for the charge of corrupting the 
youth, which each claims originated from the audience’s false understanding of the 
defendant’s life, character and the nature of his study. Additionally the points within each 
defense are also strikingly similar: that the relatives of their students are fully supportive 
of the indicted teacher, although each refuses to drag friends or children into the trial to 
provide testimony on their behalf; and that they feel that they have in fact benefited the 
city to the extent that they should be provided for at the Prytanaeum at the public’s 
expense. Too has noted other rhetorical parallels as well, such as that both claim they are 
inexperienced in speaking and lack rhetorical ability, and that both request forbearance 
from their jurors. However, these elements are common in most forensic oratory and are 
more likely standard rhetorical tropes than direct parallels between the two speeches. It 
is, of course, important to maintain that while the speeches contain similarities in 
circumstance, Isocrates’ *Antidosis* is not a speech written for a real trial, but rather is an 
epideictic response to his failure to win a previous case against Megacleides involving a 
property exchange. Isocrates’ construction of these parallels is therefore entirely 
deliberate.

58 By “real trial” I do not mean to suggest that Plato’s *Apology* is representative of what Socrates actually 
stated at his defense (nor that Plato’s representation of Socratic philosophy is an accurate one), but that 
at the very least the speech Plato constructs is one which relates to a trial that actually took place that 
contained the same charges brought against Socrates that are present in the *Apology*. On the other hand, 
the charges that Isocrates constructs as being brought against himself in the *Antidosis* have no 
foundation in reality, for he was never involved in a trial of the nature. Additionally, Isocrates (unlike 
Plato) states specifically in *Antidosis* 8 that the trial (and by extension, the defense speech) he constructs 
are entirely fictitious (*hypotíthēmi agōna kai kindyôn*).
Ober has conjectured that Isocrates mimics Plato’s presentation of Socrates, in an attempt to add credibility to his assertion that he is a philosopher. As a martyr Socrates is representative of a man who died for his beliefs, ones which he felt were intended to benefit the city. If Isocrates assumes a parallel role in the Antidosis he may express his commitment to philosophy as well, with the added benefit of not being in any real danger. In addition, Ober sees Socrates’ apology as the philosopher’s finest example of his instruction of the polis and theorizes that Isocrates desired to construct a similar opportunity, where he might educate the audience with a similar sense of gravity as was present at Socrates’ trial. This view is problematic as it assumes that Isocrates felt inferior to Socrates or Plato and that the only way he thought he could validate his position as a philosopher was to pretend (in only one single speech) that he was exactly the same as the most notorious philosopher in Athens. The insecurity that Ober would place on Isocrates seems unfounded for two reasons: first, there is nothing to suggest that Isocrates ever saw himself as anything other than a philosopher, since his other works express no such uncertainty and he does not try to assimilate himself to Plato or Socrates on any other occasion. Furthermore, at no point does Isocrates judge that Plato or Socrates has a higher reputation than he and therefore, there is no reason for him to attempt such an assimilation in reputation. Second, it would seem that Ober overlooks the point that the definition of what philosophy and philosophers are is still nebulous at this time, with Isocrates acting as a major player in molding that definition. Thus, Isocrates cannot be attempting to mimic philosophy, as he himself is working to construct philosophy. His

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59 Ober 21-43.
whole life has been dedicated to forming, practicing and disseminating a conception of philosophy which is *different* from those propagated by others, including Socrates and Plato. For him to believe that acting like Socrates is the only way to be a true philosopher would negate all of his belief in his own work and study. Similarly to Ober, Kennedy feels that Isocrates’ mimesis of Socrates comes from a desire to be viewed as a follower of Socratic philosophy.\(^{60}\) Nightingale sees the *Antidosis* ‘as a sort of failed parody’ of Plato’s *Apology*.\(^{61}\) All three scholars’ views disregard the tone of the entire Isocratean corpus, fabricating an inferiority complex and insecurity in Isocrates, which is not only absent in all his other speeches, but also quite the opposite of the assertive (and often egotistical) conviction he has in his own philosophy and the often unconcealed antipathy he has for that of others. The credibility required to define himself as a philosopher is derived entirely from his own person, and is also built on his contention that it is *distinct* from sophistic, eristic and Socratic philosophy.

Too recognizes that Isocrates has adopted some Socratic traits and believes that Isocrates is mimicking Socrates in a deliberate attempt to show how he is different from the philosopher.\(^{62}\) She assumes that a student of Socrates should naturally become *exactly* like Socrates, down to the point of not writing at all and undermining the authority of the written text. What Isocrates does, then, is assert his own autonomy and authority by being different. “As pupil, he does not become simply another Socrates, because refusing to become an exact copy of his implied model articulates a degree of autonomy and

\(^{60}\) Kennedy 1963, 182.

\(^{61}\) Nightingale, 59.

\(^{62}\) Too 192-4.
authority.”  

First, Too’s assumption that a student of Socrates should be exactly like Socrates is by its very nature incorrect, since such a complete assimilation is impossible. Second, if Isocrates desired to assert his own authority, why would he need to mention Socrates at all? Throughout the rest of his corpus he does not resort to such tactics when writing against other forms of philosophy, and nowhere else does he consider Socrates his teacher, as Too assumes.

Haskins takes a new approach in analyzing the mimesis of Socrates. She believes that Isocrates adopts a defensive posture ‘to amplify the attack on his educational programme’, thereby sharpening the contrast between his own views and those of Socrates and his followers, namely Plato. While the adoption of the fictive trial does by its nature increase the stakes for Isocrates, it does not follow that the point of such a creation is to contrast philosophies with those of Socrates or Plato. He could easily do so without a feigned trial, as he does in Against the Sophists. Isocrates does not seem to interact with Socrates’ thought at all, and any comparison with Plato that appears is simply a reflection of his own belief system, and therefore is no different than in any other speech in Isocrates’ corpus.

I assert that Isocrates is not attempting to mimic the philosophy of Socrates or Plato, and in fact, he is not attempting to mimic philosophy at all, but is simply reusing the actual circumstances associated with Socrates’ trial to frame his own position as a threatened and misunderstood figure in the eyes of the Athenian polis. The aspects which are similar to Socrates’ trial as portrayed in Plato’s Apology are not ones which are

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63 Too 193-4.  
64 Haskins 2004, 39-46.
involved with philosophy whatsoever, but rather situational (Socrates being charged with
corrupting the youth, his desire to be maintained at public expense in the Prytaneum) or
forensic rhetorical devices, some of which may be tropes (pleading a lack of experience
in speaking, requesting patience from the jurors, allowing their accusers to speak,
refusing to appeal to the audience using children and friends). At no point does Isocrates
commend Socrates’ philosophy even implicitly. If Isocrates were trying to associate
himself with Socrates or Plato, as Ober and Kennedy suggest, one would think that
throughout his corpus, or at the very least more frequently in the Antidosis, Isocrates
would represent himself as possessing a similar philosophical outlook to either of the two
men and his life’s work as a running parallel, but he does no such thing. In fact, in the
Antidosis he relies more heavily upon his own doxai than any other in his corpus, citing
infrequently the thoughts of other paradeigmata and employing his own past speeches as
evidence of his good thinking. Isocrates does not mimic Socrates in the same way that
Nicocles mimics Isocrates. In Nicocles, the king mimics the doxai and the circumstances
of Isocrates as given in his model speeches (Evagoras and To Nicocles), but Isocrates
only adopts the circumstances from Socrates, and then adapts his own doxai to those
circumstances.

What Isocrates is attempting to emphasize is not that his philosophical perspective
is related to that of Socrates or Plato, but that, like Socrates, he is in a precarious and
threatened position with respect to the Athenian populace. This impression of an
unfavorable position among the polis is most certainly derived from his recent loss in the
case regarding the property exchange with Megacleides, which came as something of a
shock to him. By representing himself as being in similar circumstances to those of Socrates in the *Apology*, it allows him to offer a lengthy and more egocentric account of his life and philosophy than would seem fitting for another (and more conventional) occasion. One of the most important elements for the practice of Isocratean philosophy is the act of suiting one’s *doxai* to the present *kairos*, but here in the *Antidosis* we find the opposite situation taking place: Isocrates has a speech containing all of the *doxai* he needs to convey, but no appropriate *kairos* for its presentation. Therefore, rather than the usual case of adapting the speech, he adapts (or more specifically appropriates) the *kairos*, so that he has a proper occasion to discuss all of the points he wishes to speak on. The mimesis that takes place is not of Socrates himself, but rather the state of affairs he found himself in. Once these Socratic circumstances have been adopted, Isocrates has the freedom to discuss his *doxai* freely in an appropriate setting without arousing confusion from the audience. The Olympian games or a public funeral would not be a suitable *kairos* for a defense of one’s philosophy and work, and so Isocrates is motivated to appropriate through mimesis one which allows him to give this final narrative. That this occasion is one involving Socrates is not wholly irrelevant, for Isocrates would have specifically sought an occasion involving a very public pedagogical figure like himself who claimed to have acquired an inaccurate and undesirable reputation. That Socrates was perceived of as a philosopher certainly would only help to show how Isocrates’ circumstances were comparable, but had another public figure fallen into a similar legal predicament, one might easily theorize that he too would have a prospective candidate for supplying the mimetic model. There is nothing present in the *Antidosis* that pays homage
to Socratic or Platonic philosophy, all elements that are mimicked are done so only to create an appropriate context for his own *doxai*.

The fundamental element of Isocratean philosophy is mimesis. This can include in depth study of rhetorical techniques and stylistic elements, but is primarily focused on the imitation of *doxai* as derived from exemplary men or *paradeigmata* whose thought patterns continually led them to make wise decisions that benefitted the *polis* time after time. Isocratean philosophy is highly generative as the practice of philosophy is inseparable from the act of writing and producing speeches. Therefore, if a person is practicing philosophy he is generating speeches that are both good (as they contain good *doxai*) and useful for future imitation. Isocrates’ philosophy is entirely capable of standing on its own, and the tendency for scholars to have it lean upon or contend with the Platonic school out of fabricated unease is unnecessary and illogical. There are many things that we can read into Isocrates’ character, but self-doubt is markedly absent. His goal was not to create carbon copies of past Athenian paragons, but to preserve and re-employ their superior reasoning, through the practice of thoughtful imitation so that each successive generation might benefit their present circumstances, no matter how much they differed from those past. By examining Isocrates’ philosophy we may as scholars develop a greater understanding of the diversity of the philosophical climate in 4th century Athens, and gain greater appreciation of all the figures involved in it. In studying the perspectives of those figures who identify themselves as philosophers during this period we can become more informed about the history and development of philosophy as a whole rather than view it as a discipline lineally inherited from Plato.
Bibliography


