

The *Antidosis* of Isocrates and Aristotle's *Protrepticus*

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The independent rediscovery in the nineteenth century of two important ancient works, the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle and the *Antidosis* of Isocrates, has brought to light a rarely discussed but remarkable fact: Aristotle's *Protrepticus* was in part a defense of the Academic concept of philosophy and education against an attack of the kind that Isocrates delivered in his own defense of rhetorical education, the *Antidosis*. In this paper we explain the history of the recovery of the two texts (in part I); and give a synopsis of Isocrates' conception of philosophy as rhetorical education, and its position in the disputes about education in the early fourth century (in part II); before discussing the interrelationship between the two texts (in part III). We contrast their positions on the proper conception of the ends and means of philosophy (III.1 and III.2), and conclude with a detailed study of their disagreements in the philosophy of political science (in part IV).

I. The recent recovery of the *Antidosis* and the reconstruction of the *Protrepticus*.

In the ancient world, the *Protrepticus* was probably the most famous work of Aristotle, and perhaps one of the most famous works of philosophy by any author. We are certain that Aristotle wrote a work with that title, as the title appears on all three of the lists of Aristotle's works that have survived from antiquity.

Aristotle's *Protrepticus* was written in the late 350s in polemical response to a work by the Athenian philosopher and teacher Isocrates called the *Antidosis*. In this work, Isocrates contested the application of the word philosophy to the kind of abstract and speculative mathematical preoccupations current in Plato's Academy. For him, education and philosophy meant training men to become effective political leaders, and the means to this was training in rhetoric. Speculation about advanced mathematics, astronomy, and the "elements" or "principles" of nature were useful as "mental gymnastic" for the young but, according to the argument, in adulthood become distractions from the important business of military, political, and legal action. In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle responded to Isocrates' attack on Academic philosophy by defending the search for the elements and principles of nature as the best means not only for political science, but for every other goal in life as well.

Until the nineteenth century, scholars had almost no access to either work. All of the popular or exoteric works of Aristotle failed to be copied; only the so-called esoteric works have survived. Isocrates' works fared better, but because in the *Antidosis* he indulged in auto-citation of large chunks of his other works, at least one ancient copy was truncated by a scribe who declined to reduplicate the labor, causing whole families of its descendent manuscripts to be truncated as well. The result was that for the entire renaissance and early modern period, up until the end of the 18th century, the *Antidosis*

¹ We would like to thank audiences at the Pacific division meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Portland, Oregon (2006), and at a philosophy department colloquium at Yale University (2007). We have also benefitted from extensive comments by David Blank (UCLA).

was known only in its introduction and its peroration. But Andreas Mustoxydis discovered manuscripts that enabled him in 1812 to publish the first complete edition of the *Antidosis*, and the work was immediately accepted as the completion of the Isocrates corpus, with publications based on further manuscripts in the next year by Angelo Mai, then the following year by Orelli in Zurich, then in the first truly complete edition of the works of Isocrates by Immanuel Bekker in 1822/23, based on the best manuscript evidence.²

The second half of the same century saw the beginning of a process of recovering the lost work of Aristotle. In 1869, the young Oxford scholar Ingram Bywater noticed that the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 240-325 AD) had apparently used Aristotle's *Protrepticus* in the construction of his own *Protrepticus*. The latter work is a compendium of protreptic speeches from Pythagorean and Platonic sources, along with unattributed passages from two sources, one of which turns out to be Aristotle, and the other one is still unknown and so is referred to as 'Anonymous Iamblichus'.³

Bywater was right to announce that he had identified passages of the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle in the book of Iamblichus. But his procedure for determining the nature and extent of the Aristotelian material embedded in Iamblichus' book was methodologically flawed: he compared the material in Iamblichus with the fragments of another lost work, the *Hortensius* of Cicero. Although his identification of the material was undeniably brilliant and crucially important for our understanding of Aristotle, he did not provide a solid basis for reconstruction of the work. He offered no way of determining the beginnings and endings of the cited passages, so that one is left uncertain whether any given passage is in the voice of Aristotle or the voice of Iamblichus. He did no systematic analysis of the way that Iamblichus cited from the works of Plato. Nor did his successors who, struggling to reconstruct a lost Greek work by means of comparisons to a lost Latin work, also failed to revive the *Protrepticus*.⁴ This is one of the reasons that the *Protrepticus* has been called by Glenn Most 'the swampiest of the many swampy zones in Aristotelian studies.'⁵

Yet it has turned out to be possible to resurrect the work from this limbo, and in an article published in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*,⁶ we have started this process of revivification. We studied this type of citation in the book of Iamblichus, where large stretches from Plato's works are also cited in the same way. Our conclusions were bold to the point of being almost incredible: we have found the construction technique of Iamblichus to be so mechanical that we can run the mechanism in reverse,

² G. Norlin, 'General Introduction', *Isocrates*, volume 1 (Loeb Classical Library, 1928), xlviii-xlix.

³ On which see the new edition and commentary by M. Mari, (ed.), *Anonimo di Giamblico, La pace e il benessere. Idee sull'economia, la società, la morale* (Milano, 2003) (With introduction and commentary by M. Mari and preface by D. Musti.)

⁴ Later 19th century philologists searched the works of later authors for evidence of Aristotle's lost works, and they made some progress. The most important of these fragment collections were those of V. Rose. Although Rose held that the dialogues were all spurious, it was on the basis of his three successive collections that W. Jaeger advanced his influential developmental hypothesis, and it was on the basis of Rose that all 20th century collections of the fragments of Aristotle are based, such as those of R. Walzer, and W. D. Ross, and more recently that of O. Gigon in 1987. (See bibliography for details.)

⁵ G. Most, 'Some New Fragments of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*?' *Studi e testi per il Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini*, 6 (1992), 189-216 at ???.

⁶ D. S. Hutchinson & M. R. Johnson, 'Authenticating Aristotle's *Protrepticus*' ['Authenticating?'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005); 193-294.

which generates more than a dozen substantial fragments which have been cited accurately from a manuscript of Aristotle's work, distinct fragments which are neatly arranged as if strung on a pearl necklace, in just the same order as they were found in Aristotle's text. The newly authenticated fragments in their newly established order amount to about 25 magnificently well-argued and well-written pages in which Aristotle reasons with impressive rhetorical panache for the value of philosophy.

Some of these citations can be reliably attributed, not just to Aristotle, but also to his *Protrepticus*. Since Iamblichus never returns to a work previously cited or to a passage previously found in his citations, it follows that every intervening citation between ones that should be attributed to the *Protrepticus* should also be attributed to the *Protrepticus*. And since there is in fact a rich network of cross-references connecting all chapters, including the end chapters 6 and 12, we have to conclude that all the citations come from the one work of Aristotle, his *Protrepticus*. And these citations are in the original order, like the remains of a vertebrate creature fossilized in shale: the relative position in which we textual paleontologists find the pieces is also the relative position of the pieces in the original literary organism.

Unlike with Plato, where Iamblichus had to assemble a set of protreptic-themed passages from various dialogues, with Aristotle Isocrates found it all ready-made in the brilliant and famous *Protrepticus*, which he needed only to excerpt.

The only major modification that Iamblichus made to excerpts he selected from Plato was the excision of dialogue, for example the responses of interlocutors to a line of Socratic reasoning. The same thing may very well have happened in the case of Aristotle, if the *Protrepticus* was a dialogue, something we do not know and cannot know for sure. Thus we do not know whether there were different speakers in the work, nor do we know much else about its literary structure. Consequently, we must be open to the possibility that the *Protrepticus*, like so many of Plato's dialogues, represented contemporary intellectuals, such as Isocrates, but putting words and speeches in their mouths. We must be open to the further possibility that Aristotle wrote himself a part in the dialogue, as Cicero approvingly reports that he did.⁷ We need to remain aware, of course, that much of Aristotle's lost work remains lost to us, despite these and other discoveries. We do not know how much remains lost; in other words, we don't know how long the work originally was.

However, it seems clear that the *Protrepticus* was written in the late 350s, in Athens, as a reply to a particular speech of Isocrates called the *Antidosis*. We now know this to a high degree of probability, despite it being a relatively recent discovery. The suggestion that the *Antidosis* inspired the *Protrepticus* was argued by the German Werner Jaeger in 1923, and then made independently by two scholars in 1936, the Italian Ettore Bignone⁸ and the American Benedict Einarson.⁹ It is now suggested by *The Cambridge*

⁷ "My recent compositions follow the Aristotelian pattern, in which the other roles in the dialogue are subordinate to the author's own" (Cicero, *Letter to Atticus*, 326.4 (XIII.19.4), trans. D. R. Shackleton-Bailey, *Cicero: Letters to Atticus* Volume IV (Cambridge, MA and London, 1999)). Cicero also tells us in Letter to Atticus 89 (IV.6.2) that Aristotle included argument summaries within his dialogues, and it is very possible that the *Protrepticus* included that as well.

⁸ E. Bignone, *L'Aristotele perduto e la formazione filosofica di Epicuro* [*Perduto*] 2 vols. Firenze, 1936.

⁹ B. Einarson, 'Aristotle's *Protrepticus* and the structure of the *Epinomis*' ['Protrepticus and Epinomis'], *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 67 (1936); 261-85.

*Ancient History*¹⁰ that Aristotle's work is a reply to that of Isocrates, and as you will come to see soon when we lay out the evidence and some of the parallels, the case is really extremely strong. When we see the connection with the *Antidosis*, and when we appreciate the significance of Isocrates, we come to see the *Protrepticus* as an enormously important document in the history of classical Greek philosophy, a text that carries on the process of defining the enterprise of philosophy while at the same time championing its virtues and advertising its value. But no discussion has been devoted to the interaction between the two texts since 1940, despite a number of new studies both of Isocrates and even of the relationship between Isocrates and Aristotle.¹¹ But since Isocrates and his conception of rhetorical education are not familiar enough to modern scholars of Plato and Aristotle, we sketch his career and approach to philosophy before focusing on the particular passages where we see Aristotle's work responding to Isocrates.

II. Isocrates and Philosophy in Athens in the 4th century.

Plato's Academy was not the only school in Athens that offered training in philosophy, nor was it the first one. Plato's contemporary Isocrates also offered a form of higher education which he called philosophy, and which he insisted on distinguishing from the activities of other pedagogical experts, called 'sophists' or 'professors'. Isocrates was about 10 years older than Plato, and he wrote his first works and welcomed his first students before Plato wrote any works or had any students. About the year 390, Isocrates opened up a school in Athens, and advertised it by publishing a sort of educational manifesto called *Against the Sophists*, in which he highlighted the advantages to be

¹⁰ "Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, or 'Exhortation to Philosophy', may be read as a challenge to Isocrates' political influence, patronage, and intellectual following on the island of Cyprus. Having befriended and memorialized Eudemus, a political exile from Cyprus, Aristotle seems to have taken it upon himself to try to counteract Isocrates' standing among the Cypriot Evagoris by offering to Themison, a prince or minor Cypriot king, a vision of *paideia* and the philosophical life different from that presented by Isocrates in his *Antidosis* of 353 by emphasizing the primacy of the 'theoretical' over the 'active' life, the possibility of precise knowledge about human values analogous to mathematical knowledge, and the pleasure of devoting one's energy and life to intellection (*phronesis*)" (M. Ostwald and J. P. Lynch 'The Growth of Schools and the Advance of Knowledge' = Ch. 12a of *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume 6, The Fourth Century BC*. 2nd ed. D. M. Lewis, John Boardman, Simon Hornblower, M. Ostwald (Cambridge, 1994), 592-633 at 619).

¹¹ While there are numerous studies of the relationship between Isocrates and Aristotle, there are surprisingly few of Isocrates and the *Protrepticus*. The only direct discussions that we can find which relate Isocrates's *Antidosis* to Aristotle's *Protrepticus* are: E. Bignone, *Perduto*, 1 or 2, 98; B. Einarson, 'Protrepticus and *Epinomis*'; P. von der Mühl, 'Isocrates und der *Protreptikos* des Aristoteles', *Philologus* 94 (1939-40), 259-65; and I. Düring, *Aristotle's Protrepticus* (1961), 20-23, 33-35. Recent studies of Isocrates and Aristotle that fail to mention the *Protrepticus* include: W. Benoit, 'Isocrates and Aristotle on Rhetoric', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 20 (1990), 251-60; Y. L. Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, power, pedagogy [Identity in Isocrates]* (Cambridge, 1995); T. Poulakos, *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education* (South Carolina, 1997); and E. V. Haskins, *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle* (South Carolina, 2004). There are a few older discussions of Isocrates and protreptic speeches of the Socratic school, including: F. Dümmler, 'Platon und Isokrates (Hippias I). Antisthenes Protreptikos berücksichtigt von Isokrates, Platon und Xenophon' = ch. 4 of *Akademika* (Giessen, 1889), 52-68; and von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 'Platon und Isokrates' = ch. 10 of *Platon: Beilagen und Textkritik* 3 (Berlin, 1962), 106-125 at 122-3.

expected from his education, and castigated the foolishnesses of his competitors in the teaching market.

These ‘sophists’ or ‘professors’ against whom Isocrates was competing in 390 included Alcidas and other teachers of the art of improvisation in spoken discourse, teachers of pure rhetoric who promised the moon to their students in terms of power and success. Also different from Isocrates were Antisthenes and other followers of Socrates, as well as other teachers who could also be called ‘eristic’, in that their instruction also proceeded by question and answer. Alcidas and Antisthenes both knew that they were attacked in this speech, and both of them published replies.¹² Isocrates was attacked on all sides because he was in the middle: he believed in the value of logic-chopping eristic, but only as training in a preliminary phase of higher education; he believed that higher education made a man morally better, though he agreed that virtue could not be instilled in the wicked nor could excellence be developed in the untalented.

So when Plato set about opening his Academy, probably in the early 380s, he had to find his niche in a market already dominated by these three players; and his dialogues show many signs of his polemical engagement against these competing teachers. We see Plato battling against Antisthenes in *Lesser Hippias* and elsewhere, and we see him battling Aristippus of Cyrene in the ‘Second Apology’ of the *Phaedo* and elsewhere; but these Socratic schools did not prosper much or greatly expand, and they soon enough stopped being the object of Plato’s competitive rivalry. The school of Alcidas continued to attract a steady stream of students, it would seem, and there were other teachers of rhetoric in the 4th century; but it was the school of Isocrates that really thrived. Over the course of the next 50 years or so, Isocrates taught hundreds of students and became very rich as a consequence, notoriously rich. Dozens of his students are known to posterity as outstanding individuals in one way or another, sometimes as active politicians, more often as writers, historians, and scholars.¹³

In the development of his own philosophy and educational system, Plato looked to his older contemporary Isocrates as his main reference point. For this reason, Isocrates is the contemporary person most often and most viciously attacked in the works of Plato.¹⁴ Plato never devoted an entire work to Isocrates, and only once mentioned his name; and Isocrates conducted himself in the same way, finding relevant occasions, in

¹² von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, ‘Platon und Isokrates’, 113-5.

¹³ There is no monograph in English on Isocrates as a philosopher among philosophers; the current standard is: C. Eucken, *Isokrates: seine Positionen in der Auseinandersetzung mit den zeitgenössischen Philosophen* (Berlin, 1983); see also S. Usener, *Isokrates, Platon, und ihr Publikum: Hörer und Leser von Literatur im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Tübingen, 1994). In English, see D. S. Hutchinson, “Doctrines of the Mean and the Debate concerning Skills in Fourth-Century Medicine, Rhetoric, and Ethics”, in *Method, Medicine, and Metaphysics: Studies in the philosophy of ancient science*, ed. R. J. Hankinson; = *Apeiron*, 21 (1988): 17-52; and, for a more recent treatment, see: A. W. Nightingale, ‘Plato, Isocrates, and the property of philosophy’ = chapter 1 of *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the construct of philosophy* [Genres] (Cambridge, 1995), 13-59.

¹⁴ But we must not let Plato mislead us: it was not all hostility between the two of them, as they both shared a common enemy in the teachers of mere rhetorical technique, without any attempt to develop the wisdom of the speaker. The type of education that focused on this wisdom was called ‘philosophy’ by Isocrates, from whom Plato borrowed this word ‘philosophy’ to designate his own science of wisdom, as Nightingale has argued in *Genres in Dialogue*. Isocrates had also set out to analyze the parts and aspects of spoken discourse into ‘forms’, and it is arguable that Plato’s famous doctrine of ‘Forms’ gets its name and its inspiration, though not its content, from Isocrates, as Jaeger argues in *Paideia*.

the course of other works, to insert hostile comments against Socratic philosophers and ‘eristics’, comments in later years directed against Plato as having become the leading Socratic and the leading ‘eristic’.

Plato’s only mention of Isocrates comes at the end of his *Phaedrus* (279a), and at first glance it seems at least somewhat favorable. Socrates presciently foresees a fine future for the young Isocrates, who will make “everyone who has ever attempted to compose a speech seem like a child in comparison. Even more so if such work no longer satisfies him and higher, divine, impulse leads him to more important things. For nature, my friend, has placed philosophy in his mind.” But this is damning with faint praise, as Plato is clearly saying that Isocrates is wasting his time on less important things.

Also damning with faint praise is Plato’s treatment of Isocrates at the end of *Euthydemus*, Plato’s exploration of the tradition of protreptics to philosophy. Isocrates is not mentioned by name,¹⁵ but he is clearly indicated by Crito as “someone who has a high opinion of himself for wisdom and is one of those clever people who write speeches for the law courts,” and as a known critic of eristic philosophy, who said that such people are “chattering and making a worthless fuss about matters of no consequence (that’s more or less what he said)” (304d-e). Socrates labels him as dwelling in the hinterland between philosophy and politics and to be moderately well versed in each of these subjects; but he is not as good as philosophers at philosophy, and not as good at politics as politicians, coming in third, not first. Still, let’s not be too angry with him, as sometimes he says something sensible, and he is trying manfully hard (305d-306d).

Isocrates is the direct object in view in the *Meno*, the dialogue between Socrates and Meno, who studied with Gorgias in Thessaly, as Isocrates is said to have.¹⁶ The question with which the dialogue begins, whether virtue comes from birth, training, or teaching, is Plato’s way of asking whether Isocrates is correct in his three-part educational philosophy of virtue. The attack is even sharper in *Gorgias*, which attacks the orator Gorgias and through him Isocrates; rhetoric is not a skill, says Socrates (463a), but a pursuit of a “vigorous and opinionated mind,” which is an unmistakable reference to a passage in a work of Isocrates which we will examine in due course.

Plato took particular exception to the claims of Isocrates to be a philosopher, and blamed the poor contemporary reputation of philosophy on Isocrates, whom he accuses (500b) of being a party crashing drunk, one of “those outsiders who don’t belong and who have burst in like a band of revelers, always abusing one another, indulging their love of quarrels, and arguing about human beings in a way that is wholly inappropriate to philosophy.”

The attacks went back and forth until the *Antidosis* of Isocrates, written in 353/2 when he was about 75 and Plato was about 65, a work that Isocrates dedicated to defending his teaching life and career against an imaginary hostile prosecution. Isocrates recognized that the comments were directed against him, as he replied to the charge of making enemies in a section aimed at Plato in this work (260). In the *Antidosis* the counterattacks are now clearly directed against the educational program of the mid-4th century Academy of Plato, especially its stress on the abstract mathematical sciences, including geometry and astronomy. At the time Isocrates was attacking Academic

¹⁵ The identification of Plato’s target in *Euthydemus* as Isocrates was secured by W. H. Thompson, in his *The Phaedrus of Plato* (London, 1868), 170-83, where the *Phaedrus* passage is also discussed.

¹⁶ On which see Too, *Identity in Isocrates*, 235-239.

philosophy, Plato was probably working on his *magnum opus*, the *Laws*. He did not personally respond to this attack, perhaps leaving it to his friend and student Aristotle, then about 35 years old, to compose a devastating reply. Aristotle's devastating reply to the *Antidosis* was his *Protrepticus*. This is the interpretation we propose to develop in the present paper.

Soon enough we will show you some of Aristotle's devastating responses, but first we need to set the stage by putting into the picture some of the pedagogical convictions that Isocrates argues for. One issue that divides him and Plato is the commercialization of education. Plato abhorred the taking of money for education, but Isocrates, like all modern North American philosophers, takes it to be right and proper, and even regards a low tuition fee as a sign of small educational value.

Thus when one of the public who is reasoning through (*sullogisamenoî*) all these things observes that those teaching wisdom and handing over success are themselves much in need and yet charge small fees, that they keep watch over contradictions in words but are blind to those in deeds, that they pretend to know the future but are unable either to speak or counsel about what must be done in the present, that those relying on their opinions are more in agreement and more correct than those proclaiming to have science, then I think he likely has contempt for such occupations, considering them chatter and small talk, not a discipline of the soul. (*Against the Sophists* 7-8)

Here we see the emphasis placed by Isocrates on action, his disdain for what he considers mere verbal and logical consistency, and his preference for practical consistency and practical success over the pursuit of 'exact knowledge'. He expands on his method in a later section of the same work.

But I want, since I have proceeded this far, to speak more clearly about these things. For I assert that to get knowledge of the forms (*ideôn*) out of which we compose and deliver all discourses does not present great difficulties, if someone delivers himself not to those who make easy promises, but to those who know something about these things. But to [select] from these [forms] those it is necessary to provide, and to mix (*mixai*) them with others, and order (*taxai*) them according to the topic, and further not to miss opportunities, but to fashion the whole speech appropriately with reasoned thoughts (*enthymêmasi*), and to deliver these words musically and with cultivation—these things require much preparation (*epimeleias*) and are the function of a mind that is assertive and opinionated (*psychês andrikês kai doxastikês*)¹⁷. But for this it is necessary for the student to have the natural talent (*physin*), just as it is requisite to learn the forms of discourse (*ta eidê ta tôn logon*), and to practice (*gymnasthênai*) usages of them; but [it is necessary for] the teacher to go through these things so accurately that nothing is left out which could be taught, and for what remains he must himself supply the kind of model (*paradeigma*) [18] that those who are able to pattern and to imitate (*mimêsasthai*) will immediately appear more brilliant and splendid than others in speaking. When all these things come together, those who do philosophy

¹⁷ Cf. Pl. *Grg.* 463a: *psychês stoichastikês kai andrikês*.

will be in a state of perfection, but to the extent that anything I have mentioned has been left out, it is necessary for their associates to be in a condition of deficiency. (*Against the Sophists* 16-18)

The crucial aspects of this method, then, are to identify ‘forms’ of speech, and to compose discourses appropriate to the audience and topic, artfully arranged. The student is to learn how to accomplish this by ‘imitating’ the ‘paradigm’ of the teacher. Like Plato who taught philosophy to students, Isocrates felt that his teaching promoted the acknowledged virtues; he claimed that studying his method of constructive political discourse could definitely improve the moral character of the student.

And indeed, those willing to submit to the requirements of philosophy would be enjoined to fairness (*epeikeian*) much more than to rhetoric. And no one should suppose me to be saying that it is possible to teach justice (*dikaïosunê*).¹⁸ For in general I do not think there is any kind of art that could implant self-control (*sôphrosunên*) and justice in the one who has grown up badly disposed towards excellence. Nevertheless, I do think that practice (*epimeleian*) in political discourses would best co-stimulate (*sumparakeleusasthai*) and co-assist (*sunaskêsthai*) [one to practice these excellences]. (*Against the Sophists* 21)

Philosophy for Isocrates, then, is the skilful construction of effectual political speech; and philosophy is a teaching skill that develops the virtues of students—in those students in whom the virtues of character can be developed, however, not in every actual student.

The specific skill that philosophy promotes is increased facility in conceiving and composing socially significant human speech. The power to utter socially significant speech is the key marker that differentiates human beings from non-human animals, according to Isocrates, and philosophy, the advanced power to construct significant speech, is lacking in barbarians but present in Greeks, because the Greeks were taught it by the Athenians, again according to Isocrates, who advances a pro-Athenian viewpoint in all his work. This is especially true of his acknowledged masterpiece, the *Panegyricus*, which is a speech of Athenian propaganda composed as if delivered at the Festival of Olympia, the Olympic Games.

Philosophy, moreover, which has helped to discover and establish all these institutions, which has educated us for public affairs and made us gentle towards each other, which has distinguished between the misfortunes that are due to ignorance and those which spring from necessity, and taught us to guard against the former and to bear the latter nobly -- philosophy, I say, was given to the world by our city. And Athens it is that has honored eloquence, which all men crave and envy in its possessors; for she realized that this is the one endowment of our nature which singles us out from all living creatures, and that by using this advantage we have risen above them in all other respects as well; she saw that in other activities the fortunes of life are so capricious that in them often the wise fail and the foolish succeed, whereas beautiful and artistic speech is never allotted to ordinary men, but is the work of a mind with good intelligence, and that it is in

¹⁸ Cf. Pl. *Prt.* 328d: *tên aretên phês didakton einai*.

this respect that those who are accounted wise and ignorant present the strongest contrast; and she knew, furthermore, that whether men have been liberally educated from their earliest years is not to be determined by their courage or their wealth or such advantages, but is made manifest most of all by their speech, and that this has proved itself to be the surest sign of culture in every one of us, and that those who are skilled in speech are not only men of power in their own cities but are also held in honor in other states. And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood.

(*Panegyricus* 47-50, trans. Norlin)

Isocrates here offers a protreptic, or exhortation, to his kind of education, which he sees as pre-eminent among those on offer by the Athenians, and no less than a gift from Athens to the rest of the Greeks and the rest of humanity.

Isocrates offers exhortations to his philosophy not only in his early work *Against the Sophists* in 390 and in his *Panegyricus* of 380, but also in many other works down through his long career. One of the most important genres in the corpus of Isocrates is what we might call “works of advice” directed to prominent young people, works which combine some degree of flattery of the young man, some praise of his ancestors, an exhortation to study (or keep on studying) philosophy in the tradition of Isocrates, and a relevant collection of wisdom sayings. For example, Isocrates had praised Evagoras, the late king of Salamis in Cyprus, in his eulogy *Evagoras*, after having advised his son prince Nicocles about his new royal duties in his advice *To Nicocles*. In a companion speech written by Isocrates as if in the voice of Nicocles addressing his new subjects, a speech of advice *To the Cyprians*, sometimes also called ‘*Nicocles*’, ‘*Nicocles*’ (i.e. Isocrates) begins by defending the educational program of Isocrates (1-10), and then establishes the authority of the rule of Nicocles (11-47), ending with a declaration of the duties of his subjects (48-64). Together these three works, which were written in the second half of the 370s and early 360s, are referred to as the ‘Cyprian orations’.

Even more relevant to our theme is a different advice speech, dedicated *To Demonicus*, a work of uncertain date, but probably later than the Cyprian orations. This *Demonicus* does not seem to belong to a Cyprian royal family, and the advice that Isocrates offers him is more suitable to a man in private station than to a king. But he does have a respectable or even distinguished father called Hipponicus.

Since I consider it suitable for those who desire reputation and strive for education to imitate the respectable and not the despicable, I have sent you this speech as a gift, evidence of my goodwill towards you, and a token of my affiliation with Hipponicus, for sons are expected to inherit their fathers’ friends, just as they inherit their property. And I see as well that fortune is co-operating with us, and that the present opportunity is on our side, for you have an appetite for education, and I undertake to educate others; you are in your prime for doing philosophy, and I direct those who do philosophy. Now those who compose protreptic speeches for their own friends are indeed undertaking fine work, and

yet they are not occupied with the most powerful part of philosophy; but those who introduce to the young not the means with which to train their cleverness in speaking but the ways in which the character of their behaviour are thought to be naturally respectable are benefiting their auditors so much the more, insofar as the former only issue encouragement, whereas the latter direct their behaviour. (*To Demonicus* 2-4)

Isocrates found occasion in almost all his works to slip in an exhortation, an advertisement or ‘infomercial’ for his school of philosophical education, not only his manifesto *Against the Sophists*, and these three speeches of advice. In a comment on the turbulent political scene of the 350s, the speech *On the Peace*, he issues an exhortation to his younger readers to follow his lead and compose similar speeches that will have valuable political effects.

My subject is not exhausted; there are many excellent things to be said upon it, but I am prompted by two considerations to stop speaking: the length of my discourse and the number of my years. But I urge and exhort those who are younger and more vigorous than I to speak and write the kind of discourses by which they will turn the greatest states--those which have been wont to oppress the rest--into the paths of virtue and justice, since when the affairs of Hellas are in a happy and prosperous condition, it follows that the state of learning and letters also is greatly improved. (*On the Peace* 145, trans. Norlin)

Not only in this speech, written when he was about 80, but also in his major speech *Antidosis* written a few years later, he exhorted his readers to Isocratean philosophy. And when he was in his 90s and Alexander the Great was not yet great but a boy of about 14 under the tutorial guidance of Aristotle, Isocrates wrote a *Letter to Alexander*, exhorting him away from Academic philosophy towards his own more sensible philosophy.¹⁹

These passages, we hope, have given an outline idea of the method and purpose of the kind of rhetorical education that Isocrates offered and advertised as true philosophy, as opposed to the worthless and damaging sophistry of those professors who were his rivals.

III. The *Protrepticus* of Aristotle as a response to Isocrates.

To read Isocrates’ *Antidosis* and the remains of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* side by side is to see that one work is answering the other as a whole and by means of a multilevel counterattack. Here we will have to focus on just three themes: the ends of philosophy, the means of philosophy, and a special case of political science. Aristotle apparently took Isocrates at his word when the latter said: “the discussion and the judgment in which we are engaged is about no small thing, rather it is about the greatest things: for you are going to cast a vote not only about me, but also about an occupation to which many youngsters are giving their attention” (Isocrates, *Antidosis* 173). Aristotle deploys the

¹⁹ See Merlan, ‘Isocrates, Aristotle, and Alexander’, 60-81; J. M. Cooper, ‘Plato, Isocrates and Cicero on the independence of oratory from Philosophy’, *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1986), 77-96 at 87.

same trope on Isocrates when he says the following in the *Rhetoric*: “You are going to judge not about Isocrates, but about an occupation, whether it is necessary to do philosophy” (ii 23, 1399b). That “one must do philosophy” turns out to be the frequently repeated conclusion of his *Protrepticus*.²⁰

The competitive rivalry between Isocrates and the Academy resulted in pointed criticisms, in both directions. Our ancient sources testify to this. For example, several sources report that Aristotle stated something like: “it is shameful to be silent, while allowing Isocrates to speak.”²¹ Apparently, Aristotle’s criticisms provoked a response by one of Isocrates’ students, Cephisodorus:

Cephisodorus, when he saw his master Isocrates being attacked by Aristotle, was ignorant of and unversed in Aristotle himself; but seeing the repute which Plato’s views enjoyed, he thought that Aristotle was following Plato. So he waged war on Aristotle but was really attacking Plato. His criticism began with the Ideas, and finished with the other doctrines—things which he himself did not know; he was only guessing at the meaning of the opinions held about them. This Cephisodorus was not attacking the person he was at war with, but was attacking the person he did not wish to make war upon. (Numenius, apud Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* XIV vi 9-10)

In what follows, we hope to show that at least part of this controversy was based on what Aristotle had said in his *Protrepticus* in reply to what Isocrates had said in his *Antidosis*.

1. *The ends of philosophy: instrumentally or intrinsically valuable?*

The longest and most direct criticism of Academic practices on Isocrates’ part comes in the *Antidosis* 261-9.²² The complaint turns on the usefulness of mathematical, logical, and natural speculation.

²⁰ The conclusion that “one should do philosophy” occurs in Iamblichus’ excerption of Aristotle at 68.2, 68.11-12, 71.20-1, 78.21, and 89.22-3. It is also the point most frequently mentioned in ancient reports about Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*, including: Alex. Aphr. *In Top.* 149.9-15 Wallies (cf. Suda s.v. *philosophein*, Φ 414 Adler); David, *Prolegomena to Philosophy*, 2-12 Busse; Elias, *Prolegomena to Philosophy*, 3.17-23 Busse; Elias, *Prolegomena to Philosophy* 3.17-23 Busse; Olymp. *In Alc.* 144 Creuzer; Anonymous scholion to Aristotle’s *APr.* in the margin of fo. 263r (Cod. Par. gr. 2064). For these, see Düring, *Attempt.*

²¹ Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.141; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.1.13-14; Syrianus, *Commentary on Hermogenes Peri Staseon* 2.59.21 ff. Rabe; Diogenes Laertius 5.3. Many of these are collected in Part III, chapter 5 of Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (“fragments” 31-33, pp.299-314).

²² Another significant statement of the criticism of Isocrates is the following: “Now in fact, so far from scorning the education which was handed down by our ancestors, I even commend that which has been set up in our own day—I mean geometry, astronomy, and the so-called eristic dialogues, which our young men delight in more than they should, although among the older men not one would not declare them insufferable. Nevertheless, I urge those who are inclined towards these disciplines to work hard and apply themselves to all of them, saying that even if this learning can accomplish no other good, at any rate it keeps the young out of many other things which are harmful. Nay, I hold that for those who are at this age no more helpful or fitting occupation can be found than the pursuit of these studies; but for those who are older and for those who have been admitted to man’s estate I assert that these disciplines are no longer suitable. For I observe that some of those who have become so thoroughly versed in these studies as to instruct others in them fail to use opportunely the knowledge which they possess, while in other areas they

I believe that the teachers who are skilled in disputation and those who are occupied with astronomy and geometry and studies of that sort do not injure but, on the contrary, benefit their pupils, not so much as they profess, but more than others give them credit for. Most men see in such studies nothing but empty talk and hair-splitting; for none of these disciplines has any useful application either to private or to public affairs; nay, they are not even remembered for any length of time after they are learned because they do not attend us through life nor do they lend aid in what we do, but are wholly divorced from our necessities. But I am neither of this opinion nor am I far removed from it; rather it seems to me both that those who hold that this training is of no use in practical life are right and that those who speak in praise of it have truth on their side. If there is a contradiction in this statement, it is because these disciplines are different in their nature from the other studies which make up our education; for the other branches avail us only after we have gained a knowledge of them, whereas these studies can be of no benefit to us after we have mastered them unless we have elected to make our living from this source, and only help us while we are in the process of learning. For while we are occupied with the subtlety and exactness of astronomy and geometry and are forced to apply our minds to difficult problems, and are, in addition, being habituated to speak and apply ourselves to what is said and shown to us, and not to let our wits go wool-gathering, we gain the power, after being exercised and sharpened on these disciplines, of grasping and learning more easily and more quickly those subjects which are of more importance and of greater value. I do not, however, think it proper to apply the term “philosophy” to a training which is no help to us in the present either in our speech or in our actions, but rather I would call it a gymnastic of the mind and a preparation for philosophy. It is, to be sure, a study more advanced than that which boys in school pursue, but it is for the most part the same sort of thing; for they also when they have labored through their lessons in grammar, music, and the other branches, are not a whit advanced in their ability to speak and deliberate on affairs, but they have increased their aptitude for mastering greater and more serious studies. (*Antidosis* 261-7, trans. Norlin)

The urgent recommendation for political speech over eristic speech²³ is very concisely summarized in the letter that the elderly Isocrates wrote to the young Alexander, in which

are less cultivated than their students—I hesitate to say less cultivated than their servants.” (*Panathenaicus* 26-8, trans. Norlin) See also: *Against the Sophists* 7-8, 20; *Helen* 5, *Letter to Alexander* 3.

²³ Another example: “You should not judge serious matters or sensible men by the criteria of pleasure but should value them for their useful actions, especially since philosophers disagree over the cultivation of the soul, some saying that their pupils will become wiser through eristic discourse, others through political speech, and others through some other speech. Everyone agrees, moreover, that the well educated individual should clearly be able to offer counsel in all of these areas” (*To Nicocles* 50-1, trans. Mirhady). A Platonic reply to this last claim about whether the well-educated person is a generalist is to be found in [Plato], *Rival Lovers*; no, argues the Socrates of this dialogue, as all such generalists are like pentathletes who will never be the best at any particular event, and so will never have the right to take positions of political leadership, unlike those who follow the Socratic-Platonic tradition (on this dialogue, see P. Merlan, ‘Das Problem der Erasten’, in his *Kleine Schriften*).

he labels the Platonic and Academic approach to philosophy as ‘eristic’,²⁴ a faulty system of philosophy, says Isocrates.

And of our philosophies you do not at all reject the one that is concerned with disputations but on the contrary are convinced that it can help you gain advantage in private pastimes, and yet you do not regard it as fitting either for those who lead the masses or for those who hold the powers of a monarch, for it is neither useful nor appropriate for those who have more intelligence than others either to engage in their own disputes with fellow-citizens or to allow others to contradict them to their faces. (*To Alexander* 3)

One of the fundamental lines of division was between the idealism of Plato and the motivational realism, or cynicism, of Isocrates. Isocrates held that the sources of human motivation are pleasure, honor, and profit.²⁵ He further holds a utilitarian line that activities are pursued not for their own sake but only for the sake of what results from them: “In all our tasks we are not so much mindful of the beginning as we are sensible of the end; for we do most things in life not for themselves; it is rather for the sake of what results from them that we carry on our labors” (*To Demonicus* 47, trans. Norlin). Aristotle utterly rejects this view, arguing throughout the *Protrepticus* that the activity of observing nature—theorizing or speculating about philosophical matters perceived to be of no worth—is valuable for its own sake, and is not done for the sake of anything further, including pleasure, honor, and profit. He argues that Isocrates’ demand that every activity has some other result or benefit is infinitely regressive. We need to see this comment from Aristotle as a direct reply to Isocrates:

To seek from every kind of knowledge something other than itself and to require that it must be useful is the demand of someone utterly ignorant of how far apart in principle good things are from the necessities; they are totally different. For among the things without which living is impossible, the ones which are liked on account of something else should be called necessities and joint causes, while all those that are liked for themselves, even if nothing else results from them, should be called goods in the strict sense; for this is not valuable because of that, and that for the sake of something else, and this goes on proceeding to infinity – rather, this comes to a stop somewhere. So it is absolutely ridiculous, then, to seek from

²⁴ John Cooper has neatly summarized the targets of these attacks on the “eristics”: “Now these so-called eristics, about whom Isocrates complains in this vein as early as 391 B.C. (*Against the Sophists* 1) and as late as 342 (*Letter to Alexander* 3-4) and 339 (*Panathenaicus* 26-29), is a somewhat fluid group, but there can be no doubt that he always means some or other of those successors of Socrates who in their different ways developed Socratic dialectic . . . into the method of philosophy par excellence. Thus in 391 (before Plato has himself come on the scene) Isocrates’ target is presumably Antisthenes and Megarians like Euboulides and Euclides; by about 370 (the presumptive date of the *Helen*) they clearly included Plato as well; and in the *Letter to Alexander* (342 B.C.) he is obviously referring especially to Aristotle, who took up his appointment as Alexander’s tutor about that time.” (Cooper, ‘Independence of Oratory’, 87). See also: S. Usher, ‘Isocrates: Paideia, Kingship and the Barbarians’, in *The Birth of the European Identity: The Europe-Asia contrast in Greek thought 490-322 B.C.*, ed. H. A. Kahn. (Nottingham, 1993), 131-155 at 132.

²⁵ “I maintain that everyone does everything which he does for the sake of pleasure or gain or honor; for I observe that no desire springs up in men save for these objects” (*Antidosis* 217, trans. Norlin)

everything a benefit beyond from the thing itself, and to ask ‘So, what’s the benefit for us?’ and ‘What’s the use?’ For it’s true what we say: such a fellow doesn’t seem like someone who knows noble goodness, or who distinguishes between a cause and a joint cause (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* IX 52.16-53.2 Pistelli)

Aristotle develops out of this criticism a general organization of knowledge and an axiology of science that distinguishes between productive and practical knowledge, on the one hand, and theoretical knowledge on the other. Practical-Productive knowledge is valued for its results, while theoretical knowledge is valuable for its own sake.

Earlier in the *Protrepticus*, he had denied that the ultimate function or job of a human being could be practical-productive knowledge.

Thus according to this argument too, it is impossible for this to be productive knowledge; for the end must be better than the thing which comes to be, and nothing is better than intelligence, unless it is one of the things that have been mentioned and none of those is a function distinct from it. Therefore a certain observational knowledge is what one should name this kind, since it is surely impossible for production to be its end. Hence being intelligent and observant are a function of the virtue, and this of all things is the most valuable for humans, comparable, I think, to seeing for the eyes, which one would choose to have even if there wasn’t anything different that was going to result from it beyond the vision itself. (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VII 43.14-25)

Aristotle indeed holds, in both his extant and lost works, that the ultimate function of being human is to observe the cosmos and speculate about its nature, and that such an activity has intrinsic worth. Other things are done for the sake of philosophy; it is wrong to expect that philosophy should yield some dividend of another kind. The discussion about what sort of worth to attribute to theoretical or observational wisdom was carried on in terms of the Greek festivals that attracted observers from far and wide. In the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates repeatedly complains that private citizens (he has himself in mind) who work for the good of the community are not valued to the same extent as those who are victorious in panegyric festivals and athletic competitions, even though they provide a much greater benefit.

I have often marveled that those who established panegyric festivals and set up athletic contests considered athletic success worthy of such great prizes but established no such prize for those who work as hard as private citizens for the public good and prepare their own lives so that they can benefit others. They should have given more thought to the latter, for even if the athletes acquired twice their current strength, there would be no greater benefit for the people, while if one person has good ideas (*eu phronēsantos*), all who wish to share in those ideas would benefit” (*Panegyricus* 1, trans. Papillon).

This is a theme that is also developed in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (36d), which Isocrates knew extremely well; in fact he designed much of his own *Antidosis* as an 'Apology of Isocrates', using numerous themes and motifs from Plato's work.²⁶

Aristotle seizes on this comparison, arguing that such spectacles as the Olympic Games and the Festival of Dionysius are valued not as boosters of spirit²⁷ or for any other benefit, but because watching the competitions is an intrinsically valuable activity.

It is not weird at all, then, if it does not seem to be useful or beneficial; for we don't claim it is beneficial but that it is itself good, and it makes sense to choose it not for the sake of something else but for itself [53.15-18 / 83.16-19]. For just as we travel to Olympia for the sake of the spectacle itself, even if nothing more is going to accrue from it (for the observing itself is better than lots of money), and as we observe the Dionysia not in order to take something away from the actors (rather, we actually spend on them), and as there are many other spectacles we would choose instead of lots of money, so the observation of the universe, too, is to be honoured above all things that are thought to be useful [53.19-26 / 83.19-27]. For surely we should not travel with great effort to see people imitating women and slaves, or fighting and running, and yet not think we should observe the nature of things, i.e. the truth, without payment. (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* IX, 53.15-54.5)

This argument seems targeted specifically at Isocrates, as two of Isocrates' most famous orations were constructed as if to be delivered at festivals: the Olympic (*Panegyricus*) and the Dionysia (*Panathenaicus*).

When Isocrates and Aristotle debated back and forth about the nature of philosophy in terms of Greek festivals, they were taking part in a larger contemporary tradition of expounding the nature of philosophy in terms of this model. This traditional model or motif has been recently explored in Andrea Wilson Nightingale's enlightening book *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*.²⁸ At roughly the same time,

²⁶ The numerous parallels are conveniently noted in the Loeb edition of Norlin. See also: J. Ober 'I, Socrates...The Performative Audacity of Isocrates' *Antidosis*, *Isocrates and Civic Education*, ed. T. Poulakos and D. Depew (Austin, 2004), 21-43.

²⁷ Isocrates had analyzed these festivals in terms of the self-respect and pride of the participants and spectators: "The time spent here is not wasted, for either the private observer or the superior athlete . . . neither group is unmoved but each takes pride: the observers in seeing the athletes competing on their behalf and the athletes in knowing that all are there to see them compete. Such are the benefits we derive from these gatherings, and here too our city is not inferior. For it has many very fine spectacles, some outstanding for their expense, others notable for their artistry, still others superior in both these regards." (*Panegyricus* 44-5, trans. Papillon)

²⁸ [*Spectacles*] Cambridge, 2004. One of the most important adaptations of this motif, discussed in the third chapter of her book, is Plato's 'Myth of the Cave', in which Plato reverses the traditional story; instead of descending from society and the realm of light to a dark cave to receive a spiritual revelation and returning to their fellow citizens above ground, the observers ascend from a social realm in darkness to a revelation of light above ground and return to their fellow citizens in the cave to (try to) communicate the enlightening revelation. Another clear case is *Timaeus/Critias*, whose setting is a discussion about an idealized ancient Athenian history between Athenian and foreign statesmen who have come together to observe the Panathenaic festival (26e); similar is the mise-en-scène of *Laws*, where foreign dignitaries exchange co-operative state-building wisdom in the context of a pilgrimage from Cnossus to the sanctuary on Mount Ida of the birthplace of Zeus (625a-b).

another philosopher with connections to Plato's Academy, Heraclides of Pontus, offered another elaborate comparison between philosophy and the Olympic games:

The life of man resembles the festival [at Olympia] celebrated with the most magnificent games before a gathering collected from all of Greece. For at this festival some men trained their bodies and sought to win the glorious distinction of a crown, and others came to make a profit by buying or selling. But there was also a certain class, made up of the noblest men, who sought neither applause nor gain, but came for the sake of spectating and closely watched the event and how it was done (quoted in Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* V.3).²⁹

In this metaphor by Heraclides we can perceive a form of the traditional 'three lives' motif: in this festival of life some people aim for wealth, but others aim for distinction, and others (the best ones) aim for an accurate observation of life itself. Aristotle too used the 'three lives' motif in his *Ethics* and *Politics*; he also used it to structure the overall argument (or one of the major arguments, at any rate) of the *Protrepticus*. Possibly 'Heraclides' expressed this view as a character in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, and thus Aristotle may have been Cicero's source.

Part of the idea in this motif is that sometimes it is necessary to travel to distant places to seek wisdom, whether in the form of religious revelation, or public festival with opportunities for exchanges of views, or foreign educational institutions, the Athenian schools of Plato and Isocrates. Isocrates often boasted that his students sail the high seas to study with him: "Do not hesitate to travel a long road to those who profess to offer some useful instruction; for it were a shame, when merchants cross vast seas in order to increase their store of wealth, that the young should not endure even journeys by land to improve their understanding" (*To Demonicus* 19). While Isocrates here stresses the benefits of traveling to study with him,³⁰ comparing them to the profits of a sea-merchant, Aristotle in the *Protrepticus* turns this protreptic commonplace into the direction of his non-utilitarian conception of education.

So one ought not to flee from philosophy, since philosophy is, as we think, both a possession and a use of expertise, and expertise is among the greatest goods; nor should one sail to the Pillars of Heracles and run many risks for the sake of property, while for the sake of wisdom devoting neither effort nor expense. (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 40.1-6).

Thus in the dispute about the ends of doing philosophy, which raged in the fourth century to a much greater extent than it does now, Isocrates and the Academy clashed, and Aristotle, as a representative of the Academy, put forward a defense that philosophy as

²⁹ Trans. Nightingale, *Spectacles*, 17. Heraclides put this comment in the mouth of Pythagoras, which is presumably why a similar comment appears in Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 58, without attribution to Heraclides; see chapter 2 of H. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus* (Oxford, 1980).

³⁰ Isocrates also offers a self-promoting challenge: "I should like to ask those who disapprove of me what they think about the students who cross the sea from Sicily, from the Pontus, and from other parts of the world in order to enjoy my instruction . . . these students cross the sea and pay out money and go to all manner of trouble because they think that they themselves will be the better for it and that the teachers here are much more intelligent than those in their own countries" (*Antidosis* 224-226).

not only the best training for whatever practical or productive ends one might have (a view which Isocrates, with some qualifications, agrees to) but, much more importantly, as an intrinsically valuable activity, and perhaps the only activity in which humans engage in their unique and final function.

2. *The means of philosophy: elements and principles, or artfully arranged opinions?*

For our purposes here, Isocrates can be considered a utilitarian as far as his views about the purpose of philosophy are concerned, and an empiricist in respect of his concept of the method of philosophy. We have been discussing a debate about the ends of philosophical education, and now we turn to the issue of means. It is true that Isocrates once describes philosophy as a “pursuit that has the power, not only to legislate, but also to discover the nature of what exists” (*tēn physin tōn ontōn zētēsai*),³¹ but this is ultimately only lip service to the idea of something like natural science, which Isocrates appears to have only an inkling of.³² Certainly Isocrates’ philosophy, whatever its indirect impact on the development of education and science, issues in nothing even remotely comparable to the achievements in natural science of, for example, Eudoxus, Aristotle and Theophrastus. But Isocrates does invoke trendy philosophical jargon, as in the following advice to Cyprians.

I think everyone would agree that moderation and justice are the most esteemed virtues. They not only benefit us in themselves, but if we wish to consider their nature and their power (*kai tas physeis kai tas dunameis*), and their utility in practical affairs, we will discover that those who do not participate in these forms (*metechousas toutōn tōn ideōn*) are causes (*aitias*) of great evils, whereas those who demonstrate justice and moderation greatly benefit human life. (*To the Cyprians* 29-30, trans. Too, modified).

By expressions like by “the nature of what exists”, Isocrates means no more than the “nature” of practical affairs and virtues. Thus he uses the concept of nature in a quite conventional way, as opposed to luck, typically with reference to talent.³³

But, as we have seen, Isocrates perceives no intrinsic value of philosophical speculation along the lines of natural science. And he also sees no methodological value in what he calls ‘eristic’, the Platonic process of interrogative research into principles of nature or reality. In fact, he considers the search for principles and elements absurd.

³¹ *Busiris* 22; see Cooper, ‘Independence of Oratory’, 86.

³² But see: A. Massaracchia, ‘Isocrate e le scienze’, *Saggi di storia del pensiero scientifico dedicati a Valerio Tonini* (Rome, 1983): 23-46.

³³ “It is right to admire men who are orderly by nature, but even more so those who are such because of their ability to reason. Those who are moderate by chance and not by thinking might be persuaded to change, but it is evident that those who are so by nature, and in addition have learned virtue is the greatest good, will remain moderate for their whole lives” (*To the Cyprians* 46-7, trans. Too). He most often invokes nature in its meaning of congenital endowment, frequently in the context of talent for speaking, as opposed to cultivated skill or, again, chance; an example: “men who were by nature born to be great” (*Panath.* 84).

I would, therefore, advise young men to spend some time on these disciplines, but not to allow their minds to be dried up by these barren subtleties, nor to be stranded on the speculations of the ancient sophists, who maintain, some of them, that the sum of things is made up of infinite elements; Empedocles that it is made up of four, with strife and love operating among them; Ion, of not more than three; Alcmaeon, of only two; Parmenides and Melissus, of one; and Gorgias, of none at all. For I think that such curiosities of thought are on a par with jugglers' tricks which, though they do not profit anyone, yet attract great crowds of the empty-minded, and I hold that men who want to do some good in the world must banish utterly from their interests all vain speculations and all activities which have no bearing on our lives. Now I have spoken and advised you enough on these studies for the present. It remains to tell you about "wisdom" and "philosophy." It is true that if one were pleading a case on any other issue it would be out of place to discuss these words (for they are foreign to all litigation), but it is appropriate for me, since I am being tried on such an issue, and since I hold that what some people call philosophy is not entitled to that name, to define and explain to you what philosophy, properly conceived, really is. My view of this question is, as it happens, very simple. For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course, and I hold that man to be a philosopher who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight. What the studies are which have this power I can tell you, although I hesitate to do so; they are so contrary to popular belief and so very far removed from the opinions of the rest of the world, that I am afraid lest when you first hear them you will fill the whole court-room with your murmurs and your cries. Nevertheless, in spite of my misgivings, I shall attempt to tell you about them; for I blush at the thought that anyone might suspect me of betraying the truth to save my old age and the little of life remaining to me. (*Antidosis* 268-72, trans. Norlin)

This is a direct frontal attack on the tradition of philosophy that Aristotle sees as a predecessor and forerunner of his own.

It is also a counterattack against Plato, with many elements borrowed from his *Apology of Socrates*. Aristotle responded directly to this, arguing that no kind of knowledge—including the kind of knowledge about discourse for which Isocrates claims preeminence—is even possible without knowledge of principles and elements.

Similarly too for the natural sciences; for wisdom about the causes and the elements is necessarily about the things that are posterior; for these are not among the highest, nor do the first principles naturally grow from them; rather it's from those that all other things come into being and are evidently constituted. For whether it is fire or air or number or any other natures that are the causes and first principles of other things, it would be impossible to be ignorant of these things and to recognize any of the other things; for how could anyone either be familiar with speech who was ignorant of syllables, or have knowledge of these who

understands nothing of the letters? (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 38.22-39.8)

As for Isocrates' endorsement of opinion in his method of assembling choice opinions into elegant and persuasive arrangements, Aristotle parries it with an *a fortiori* argument in defense of his own concept of intelligence which he calls a "kind of wisdom" (XII 59.27-28).

Further, if true opinion is similar to intelligence, since having true opinions is valuable in that and insofar as it is similar to intelligence on account of its truth, if this exists more in intelligence, then being intelligent will be more valuable than having true opinions. (*Protrepticus* VII 44.4-9)

Aristotle was a master of the logic of comparative arguments, and he uses (or develops) this mastery to great effect in various places in the *Protrepticus*, especially chapter 11, where he argues that philosophers enjoy a higher form of existence and truer pleasures than others enjoy.

IV. Philosophy of political science: understanding the ideal or imitating the real?

So much for the most general differences between the two conceptions of philosophical higher education: let us now take up a special and central case study of educational method: Isocrates advocates a method of imitation of exemplary individuals. His funeral eulogy *Evagoras* was carefully judged both philosophically as well as rhetorically, and included an exhortation to philosophy.³⁴ His advice speech *To Demonicus* proceeds to an exhortation of the son Demonicus by means of praise of his father Hipponicus, very much set forth as the exemplar for the son to live up to.³⁵ As he says in the voice of Nicocles: "Exhort the young to virtue (*protrepete tous neōterous ep' aretēn*), not only by teaching but also by exhibiting (*hypodeiknentes*) to them how good men should behave" (*To the Cyprians* 57).

³⁴ "For these reasons especially I have undertaken to write this discourse because I believed that for you, for your children, and for all the other descendants of Evagoras, it would be by far the best incentive, if someone should assemble his achievements, give them verbal adornment, and submit them to you for your contemplation and study. For we exhort young men to the study of philosophy by praising others in order that they, emulating those who are eulogized, may desire to adopt the same pursuits, but I appeal to you and yours, using as examples not aliens, but members of your own family, and I counsel you to devote your attention to this, that you may not be surpassed in either word or deed by any of the Hellenes" (*Evagoras* 76-7, trans. Norlin).

³⁵ "But all time would fail us if we should try to recount all his activities. On another occasion I shall set them forth in detail; for the present however, I have produced a sample of the nature of Hipponicus, after whom you should pattern your life as after an example, regarding his conduct as your law, and striving to imitate and emulate your father's virtue; for it were a shame, when painters represent the beautiful among animals, for children not to imitate the noble among their ancestors. Nay, you must consider that no athlete is so in duty bound to train against his competitors as are you to take thought how you may vie with your father in his ways of life. But it is not possible for the mind to be so disposed unless one is fraught with many noble maxims; for, as it is the nature of the body to be developed by appropriate exercises, it is the nature of the soul to be developed by moral precepts. Wherefore I shall endeavor to set before you concisely by what practices I think you can make the most progress toward virtue and win the highest repute in the eyes of all other men" (*To Demonicus* 11-12, trans. Norlin).

As for Plato so for Isocrates: what holds for individuals holds for cities. For cities, Isocrates advocates looking to existing exemplary models, such as the constitutions of Athens or Sparta, in devising legislation. As he says in his advice speech to Nicocles, “Move and change the established ordinances and activities which are not good, and in particular, either originate what is best, and if not, imitate what works for others” (*To Nicocles* 17, trans. Mirhady). Indeed, for Isocrates, political science is nothing else than selective imitation, which is why he sees his own rhetorical activity as more difficult than legislation, because orators must invent new discourses, while legislators have only to look for the best among existing laws. He sees little room for real theoretical innovation in social and political systems.

Men who make it their duty to invent discourses of that kind <sc. on questions of the public good> should be held in higher esteem than those who propose and write down laws, inasmuch as they are rarer, have the more difficult task, and must have superior qualities of mind. Especially is this true in our day; for, at the time when the human race was beginning to come into existence and to settle together in cities, it was natural that their searching should have been for much the same thing; but today, on the other hand, when we have advanced to the point where the discourses which have been spoken and the laws which have been laid down are innumerable, and where we single out the oldest among laws and the newest among discourses for our praise, these tasks no longer call for the same understanding; nay, those who have elected to make laws have had at their service a multitude of laws already made (for they have no need to search for new laws, but only to put forth the effort to collect those which are approved in other states, which anyone who so desires can easily do), while those who occupy themselves with oratory, seeing that most subjects have been seized upon and used by others before them, are in the opposite case; for if they repeat the same things which have been said in the past, they will be regarded as shameless babblers, and if they seek for what is new, they will have great difficulty in finding it. (*Antidosis* 79-83, trans. Norlin)

It is well understood that Aristotle rejected this concept of philosophy as a program for education in political science in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that he had Isocrates in mind when he dismisses those who class the political art “as inferior to rhetoric” or who “thought it easy to legislate by collecting the laws that are well thought of.”³⁶ In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle responded to this method by criticizing those who would imitate the actions of mortals or frame laws with an eye only to existing constitutions, since this would be imitation of the imperfect.

As an alternative, Aristotle advocated looking to nature and the divine as real models that the legislator should understand and take as a point of reference.

³⁶ “Those of the sophists who profess the art [of politics] seem to be very far from teaching it. For they do not even know what kind of thing it is nor what kind of thing it is about; otherwise they would not have classed it as identical with rhetoric or even inferior to it, nor have thought it easy to legislate by collecting the laws that are thought well of; they say it is possible to select the best laws, as though even the selection did not demand intelligence and as though right judgment were not the greatest thing, as in matters of music” (*NE* X 1181a9-12, trans. Ross rev. Urmson, ROT).

In the other skills people do not generally know their tools and their most accurate reasonings by taking them from the primary things; they take them from what is second or third hand or at a distant remove, and get their reasonings from experience, whereas the imitation is of the precise things themselves only for the philosopher, for the philosopher's vision is of these things themselves, not of imitations. So just as no one is a good builder who does not use a ruler or any other such tool, but approximates them to other buildings, so too presumably if someone either lays down laws for cities or performs actions by looking at and imitating other human actions or political systems, whether of Sparta or Crete or of any other such state, he is neither a good lawmaker nor is he an excellent man; for an imitation of what is not noble cannot be noble, nor can an imitation of what is not divine and secure in nature be immortal and secure. But it is clear that the philosopher is the only producer to have both laws that are secure and actions that are right and noble. For he alone lives looking at nature and at the divine, and, just like some good helmsman, ties the first principles of his life onto things which are eternal and steadfast, goes forth and lives as his own master. (Aristotle apud Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* X 55.7-56.2)

We know that Aristotle compiled or caused to be compiled “collections of laws and constitutions (*tōn nomōn kat tōn politōn hai sunagōgai*)” that “can be of good use to men capable of theory and judgment concerning what is noble (*theōrēsai kai krinai ti kalōs*)” (*NE* 1181b6-8), and so it cannot be the case that Aristotle totally rejected all empirical methods of political science, even if it is equally unlikely that he is a proto-positivist on this score, as he is sometimes made out to be. It does not seem necessary to understand this as a case of Aristotle's development from a Platonic perspective into his own more positivistic perspective, as Jaeger did, making much of the present passage.³⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear that on some level Aristotle is in agreement with Plato on the importance of idealism in political science, or at least some kind of naturalized idealism. Christopher Rowe has observed that Plato is a silent dialectical partner in Aristotle's discussions of constitutions, and that Aristotle is often in agreement with Plato, even when he seems to suggest otherwise. And even where there is difference, “the very development of individual arguments, and of treatment of particular topics, often resembles a conversation with Plato as a silent partner. This is nowhere more true than in the case of the topic of constitutions.”³⁸ An examination of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* would not only seem to support this idea that Plato is a dialectical partner with Aristotle on the philosophy of constitutional thinking, but also to show that Isocrates was as well. As von Fritz and Kapp noted, “to determine as exactly as possible in what respects the Aristotle of the *Protrepticus* agrees and in what respects he disagrees with the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is most important for a full understanding of the

³⁷ W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (1st ed. Berlin 1923; 2nd ed. 1955); English translation *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the history of his development* by R. Robinson, (Oxford, 1948, 2nd ed., 1961), 90f.

³⁸ C. Rowe, ‘Aristotelian Constitutions’, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. C. Rowe and M. Schofield (Cambridge, 2000), 366-389 at 368.

relation between Aristotle's historical studies and his final political theory."³⁹ We thus have in the *Protrepticus* an opportunity for decisive progress in our understanding of Aristotle's political philosophy, especially in light of its relationship to Isocrates.

**An argument from Aristotle's *Protrepticus*
exhorting the youth to the conclusion that
it is necessary to do philosophy**

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Isocrates, *Antidosis* 173.

Ἔστιν δ' οὐ περὶ μικρῶν οὐθ' ὁ λόγος
οὐθ' ἡ κρίσις ἐν ἧ καθέσταμεν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων·
οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἐμοῦ μέλλετε μόνον τὴν ψήφον διοίσειν, ἀλλὰ
καὶ περὶ ἐπιτηδεύματος, ᾧ πολλοὶ τῶν νεωτέρων προσ-
έχουσι τὸν νοῦν.

But it is not about small things, either the argument or the judgment in which we are engaged, rather it is about the greatest things. For you are going to cast a vote not about me alone, but also about an occupation to which many of the youth are applying their mind.

Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.23.1399b9-11.

καὶ ὅλως δὲ τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐξ ἐκάστου λαμβάνειν
ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ αἰεὶ· “μέλλετε δὲ κρίνειν οὐ περὶ Ἰσοκράτους
ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐπιτηδεύματος, εἰ χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν”.

And in general, [another kind of rhetorical argument is] the taking the result of each to be the same always; [for example:] “You are going to judge not about Isocrates but about an occupation, whether one must do philosophy”.

Comment: Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* reformulates Isocrates statement, substituting “Isocrates” for “me” in his own illustrative example of the trope. It is prima facie likely that the question mentioned by way of example here in the *Rhetoric*—whether one must do philosophy—was directly discussed in the *Protrepticus*. This likelihood is amply confirmed in several reports of an argument from Aristotle's *Protrepticus* exhorting the youth to the conclusion that one must do philosophy. The earliest echoes of the argument are to be found in Clement of Alexandria, without attribution to Aristotle, and Lactantius, who read Cicero's

³⁹ K. von Fritz and E. Kapp, *Aristotle: Constitution of Athens and Related Texts* (New York, 1950), 33.

version of the same argument in his dialogue the Hortensius, which was probably modeled on Aristotle's Protrepticus. Alexander of Aphrodisias directly attributes the argument to Aristotle's Protrepticus, and later writers add that the argument was made by Aristotle in the Protrepticus "in exhorting the youth to philosophy", apparently indicating that the argument was voiced by the character Aristotle appearing in his own dialogue, in a scene perhaps similar to that in Plato's Euthydemus, Clitophon, Charmides, Gorgias, Parmenides, etc. where Socrates speaks to a group of loosely assembled youths. The youths he addresses are presumably those in the same condition referred to by Isocrates in Antidosis 173, those considering how they should occupy their time, whether in pursuing the kind of education offered by Isocrates, or that offered by the Academics.

11. $\chi\rho\eta\ \phi\iota\lambda\omicron\sigma\sigma\omicron\phi\epsilon\iota\nu$: cf. Alex. 149.11-12: $\chi\rho\eta\ \phi\iota\lambda\omicron\sigma\sigma\omicron\phi\epsilon\iota\nu$.