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# Pre-Aristotelian Theories of Argument: Isocratean Vocabulary and Practice

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**ABSTRACT:** This essay contributes to our understanding of pre-Aristotelian concepts of argument by examining the works of the Attic rhetorician Isocrates. Isocrates employed a quasi-technical vocabulary and described conditions under which various types of arguments more or less proper. By careful abstraction we can see what he meant by these terms and conditions. Though not an original argument theorist, *per se*, Isocrates provides us with a window into pre-Aristotelian argumentation.

**KEY WORDS:** Isocrates, sophistic, Classical Greek, analogy, sign inference, example

It is generally understood that contemporary theorists of argumentation have drawn heavily from the resources of the rhetorical treatise tradition of classical antiquity. However, most studies of the historical roots of classical argument theory reach a terminus in the careers of Aristotle and, to a lesser extent, Plato. This is so for reasons that are easy to understand. Aristotle provides us not only with the earliest complete surviving treatises on argumentation but extraordinarily robust treatments of the subject. On the other hand, other earlier theorists, such as Protagoras, are represented only by fragments and *testimonia*, and the reconstruction of their systems remains highly speculative (Kerford, 1981; Schiappa, 2003).

This essay contributes to our understanding of pre-Aristotelian argumentation by means of a close examination of the works of the Attic rhetorician Isocrates. The works of Isocrates have three features that make them good candidates for this study. First, the Isocratean corpus is large, consisting of thirty rhetorical discourses, and is expressed in a variety of forms. Secondly, all of the Isocratean discourses are explicitly argumentative, his literary remains being a mixture of propaganda and polemic aimed at the literate Athenian public. Thirdly, and most importantly, for a variety of reasons Isocrates makes extensive commentary within his works about the propriety and purposes of his compositional choices. Germane to this study, he makes a number of doctrinal comments regarding his argumentative practices. Though it would be over-reaching to suggest that Isocrates was an argument theorist, *per se*, it is safe to say that he operated within a conventional or normative notion of what argument was and how it should precede. It will be seen that Isocrates employed a quasi-technical vocabulary to describe types of arguments, and accepted conditions that made the use of these more or less proper as well. In other passages he describes what he has written or is about to write, as being a particular type of argument and by careful abstraction we can see what he meant by the term. Accordingly, Isocrates provides us with a uniquely clear window into pre-Aristotelian concepts of argumentation.

The larger part of the scholarship attending to pre-Aristotelian argumentation specifies that the major mode of sophistic argument is that of the argument from probability, or *eikos*

(Kerford, 1981; Bons, 2002, pp. 16-17; Goebel, 1989). During the classical period itself, Plato (*Phaedrus* 273A-274A) and Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 2.24.10-11) both roundly criticized sophistic concepts of probability. From this it would be easy to assume that argument from probability is the signature sophistic form of inference. We would also assume that we could expect that there would be many arguments based on probability in the works of Isocrates. To be sure, there are explicit arguments from probability in Isocrates. For instance, in *Against Callimachus* (16), one of Isocrates' forensic speeches, he puts in his litigants' mouth this expression of confidence in his case.

I think, however, that even if there had been neither arbitration nor witnesses to the actual facts and you were under the necessity of considering the case in the light of probabilities (*ek tôn eikotôn skopein*)...would you have difficulty in arriving at a just verdict.<sup>1</sup>

However, this study will show that there are many more instances of argument based on two other forms of inference, sign inferences and inferences based on parallel cases. The general structure of these inferences can be induced from Isocrates' regular practice when deploying them. The remainder of this essay will describe how Isocrates describes and deploys arguments based on these forms of inference.

A remarkable number of arguments in Isocrates' works are explicitly described as being based on a sign relationship between evidence and a claim. Isocrates calls these signs *tekmêria* and *sêmeia*.<sup>2</sup> The word *tekmêrion* is used thirty-three times by Isocrates. The word derives from an older word, *tekmar*, which means, in its simplest sense a boundary marker or fixed sign.<sup>3</sup> *Sêmeion*, similarly, derives from the older *sêma*, which means sign, mark, or omen. The pairing of either of these words with *de* or *megiston de* intensifies the meaning, yielding in English 'The proof of this is...' or 'The strongest proof of this is...' The word *sêmeion*, used thirty-nine times by Isocrates, is virtually interchangeable with *tekmêrion*.<sup>4</sup> For instance, in *To Demonicus* (2) we find this passage.

So then, since I deem it fitting that those who strive for distinction and are ambitious for education should emulate the good and not the bad, I have dispatched to you this discourse as a gift, in proof (*tekmerion*) of my good will toward you and in token (*sêmeion*) of my friendship for Hipponicus; for it is fitting that a son should inherit his father's friendships even as he inherits his estate.

We know with certainty that Isocrates considered these as 'forms of proof' due to a passage in *Antidosis* (280) where Isocrates discusses the power of ethos (Sullivan, 2001). He says that his disciples understand that a reputation for uprightness not only makes one's words persuasive, but adds luster to one's deeds as well. In contrast, they know that 'probabilities' (*ta eikota*), 'signs' (*ta tekmeiria*) and 'all the other forms of proof' (*pan to tôn pisteôn eidōs*) only help that part of the matter upon one might be speaking at the moment. *Tekmêria* and *sêmeia* are, then, correspondent with probabilities and are forms of proof. Similarly, in a passage in *Against Euthynus* (4) Isocrates discusses *tekmêria* as constructs from which one can compose arguments.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay I use the translations of Norlin and Van Hook from the Loeb editions.

<sup>2</sup> We also see the terms *elenchus*, and *pisteis* used in much the same way. However, they do so in a less regular fashion and seem not to have the same specificity of theoretical force as the terms under consideration. See Gillis (1963), pp. 245-263, 288-293.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.17 makes the same etymological point regarding *tekmeria*. On Aristotle's concept of sign logic see Allen (2001), pp. 13-79.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Demonicus* 13; *Panegyricus* 101; *Callimachus* 15; *Trapeziticus* 36.

In that speech the speaker notes that his case is inherently problematic because he can produce no witnesses to his having left a deposit with the defendant, Euthynus, saying; ‘thus neither from torture nor from witnesses can one come to know about these things, but it is necessary for us to show (and for you to judge) from signs (*ek tekmêrion*) which is telling the truth.’ The signs that follow are rather familiar commonplaces; sycophants are poor but clever speakers while Nicias is rich and inept as a speaker, and so on. The signs in this case then are inferential proofs. Similarly, in *To Philip* (106) Isocrates encourages Philip of Macedon to adopt his Panhellenic program. One of his most powerful arguments is that Philip should see this as being consistent with Macedonian tradition. Isocrates says that Philip’s ancestors would urge him to this course of action. On behalf of this claim, Isocrates says that he will take his inferences (*chromai de tekmêrious*) from the actions of Philip’s ancestors and then lays out their Panhellenic military actions in a historical narrative.

There are, of course, a few instances in Isocrates’ works where *tekmêria* or *sêmeia* express the simpler sense of being a physical or metaphorical mark. For instance, in *Against Lochites* (14) Isocrates has his litigant rail against an adversary wishing that such evil men should be born with a mark (*sêmeion*) by which they could be known.<sup>5</sup> In other cases, however, we see the terms refer to ‘evidence’, as in *Against Callimachus* (66) where the speaker makes a pathetic appeal to the audience claiming that his good deeds in the past are a sign (*tekmêrion*) of the litigant’s good character.<sup>6</sup> In *Archidamus* (49) Isocrates has the young king say, ‘There are those that condemn war and dwell on its precariousness, employing many other proofs (*tekmêriois allois te pollois chroumenoi*), and especially our own experiences...’ Here then one’s own experiences, the evidence of one’s own eyes, as it were, rise to the level of *tekmêria*. Similar uses occur twice in *Against Euthynus* (18-19). There he argues that the jury should find for his or others will claim that others who have paid back only a small part of a debt will produce that as evidence (*tekmêrion*) that they paid back the total. Similarly, in the same speech, he points out that if Nicias had not admitted that Euthynus had given him two talents, he could have claimed that Euthynus had given him nothing at all and Euthynus would not have had the evidence he now employs.

In several cases, though, Isocrates explicitly describes *tekmêria* and *sêmeia* as signs or indications from which inferences can be drawn.<sup>7</sup> A compact expression of the use of sign logic can be found in a passage from *Antidosis* (33-34) where Isocrates advances the claim that his writings have caused no harm to the city.

Now, in fact, no citizen has ever been harmed either by my ‘cleverness’ or by my writings, and I think the most convincing proof (*megiston einai tekmêrion*) of this is furnished by this trial; for if any man had been wronged by me, even though he might have held his tongue up till now, he would not have neglected the present opportunity, but would have come forward to denounce me or bear witness against me. For when one who has never in his life heard a single disparaging word from me has put me in so great peril, depend upon it, had any suffered injury at my hands, they would now attempt to have their revenge. For surely it is neither probable nor possible (*out’ eikos oute dunaton*) both that I, on the one hand, have wronged many people and that those, on the other hand, who have been visited with misfortune through me are silent and refrain from accusing me; nay, are kinder to me when my life is in peril than those who have suffered no

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Panathenaicus* 240.

<sup>6</sup> The words *tekmêrion* and *sêmeion* mean a sign as evidence in *Callimachus* 14; *Demonicus* 2, 45; *To Nicolces* 26, 31, 42; *Panegyricus* 139; *Archidamus* 7, 92; *Evagoras* 4; *Panathenaicus* 54, 123, 127; *Antidosis* 249, 322.

<sup>7</sup> Isocrates is not alone in this. Among many instances, see *Lysias* 24. 12, 2, 14, *Antiphon* 5.28, 61-63, and Gagarin (1990).

injury, especially since all they have to do is to testify to the wrongs I have done them in order to obtain the fullest reparation.

Note the structure of the argument that Isocrates advances here. The passage begins with a clear central claim, that no one has ever been harmed by Isocrates writings. Isocrates adduces on behalf of this claim the proof that no one has spoken against him at his trial. The relationship between the sign and the conclusion is then elaborated. Interestingly, an inference based on probability is nested within this elaboration, but it is clearly subordinate to the sign relationship of the evidence (lack of denouncers) and the claim (Isocrates has harmed no one).

The same form and subordination of probability to sign can be seen in an argument from *Trapeziticus* (53-54).

Although, men of the jury, my claims to justice are so many, I think that the strongest proof (*megiston einai tekâmêrion*) that Pasion defrauded me of my money is this--that he refused to surrender for torture the slave who knew about the deposit. And yet, in respect to contracts where banks are concerned, what stronger proof (*elenchos*) could there be than this? For witnesses certainly we do not use in contracts with banks. I see that in private and public causes you judge that nothing is more deserving of belief, or truer, than testimony given under torture, and that while you think it possible to suborn witnesses even for acts which never occurred at all, yet that testimony under torture clearly shows which party is telling the truth. Pasion, being aware of this, wished that in this affair you should judge by conjecture (*eikazein*) rather than know the exact truth. For he certainly would not be able to say that he was likely (*ouk eikos*) to be at a disadvantage if torture should be used and that for this reason the surrender of his slave could not reasonably be expected of him.

Here, again there is a clear central claim, that Pasion defrauded the speaker. The sign that Isocrates uses to establish this claim is a sign, that Pasion refused to turn over his slave witness to the speaker for torture. This is then elaborated and an inference based on probabilities is nested within this auxesis.<sup>8</sup>

The verbal form of *tekâmêrion* is *tekmaïromai* and in at least one case it refers explicitly to the action of drawing an inference from signs. In *Areopagiticus* (74-75) Isocrates argues the claim that the Athenians are the bravest and most virtuous of all the Greeks.

For I know that while other regions produce varieties of fruits and trees and animals, each peculiar to its locality and much better than those of other lands, our own country is able to bear and nurture men who are not only the most gifted in the world in the arts and in the powers of action and of speech, but are also above all others in valor and in virtue.

This conclusion we may justly draw from the ancient struggles which they carried on against the Amazons and the Thracians and all of the Peloponnesians, and also from the wars which they waged against the Persians, in which...they were victorious over the barbarians and were adjudged the need of valor.

Hence we could say that it can be inferred from certain signs, their victories in past wars, that the Athenians are the most effective and brave warriors of the Greeks.

Isocrates also makes statements that argue against the propriety of certain kinds of sign arguments. In *Panathenaicus* 149-150 for instance, he claims that in the past the Athenians were

<sup>8</sup> Similar sign relationships are laid out in several speeches, including passages using *tekâmêria* at *Areopagiticus* 17, 68; *On the Peace* 95, 131 *Evagoras* 51, 58; *Panathanaicus* 52, 160, 258; *Antidosis* 195, 313; *Trapeziticus* 31, 36 *Aigineticus* 51; *Against Euthynus* 11; *Against Callimachus* 58; *Helen*: 8; *Panegyricus* 68; and *sêmeia* at *Panegyricus* 86; *Panegyricus* 107; *Evagoras* 8; *Helen* 12.

satisfied with their constitution. As proof of claim: (*sêmeion de*) he points out that unlike other cities Athens did not experience stasis or revolutions for the entire period from the reign of Theseus to the coup of Pisistratus. He then follows this with an elaboration on the nature of traditional myths as evidence.

But perhaps some may object--for nothing prevents breaking into my discourse--that it is absurd (*atopon*) for me to presume to speak as though I had exact knowledge of events at which I was not present when they transpired. I, however, do not see anything unreasonable (*alogon*) in this. I grant that if I were alone in relying on traditions regarding what happened long ago or upon records which have been handed down to us from those times I should with good reason be open to attack. But in fact many men--and men of discernment, too--will be seen to be in the same case with me. But apart from this, were I put to the test and the proof I could show that all men are possessed of more truth gained through hearing than through seeing and that they have knowledge of greater and nobler deeds which they have heard from others than those which they have witnessed themselves. Nevertheless it is wise for a speaker neither to ignore such false assumptions--for they might perhaps confuse the truth were no one to gainsay them--nor again to spend too much time refuting them, but only enough to indicate to the rest of the audience the arguments by which they might prove that the critics speak beside the mark, and then to go back and proceed with the speech from the point where he left off.

It should be noted that Isocrates here, just as Aristotile (*Rhetoric* 1. 15. 16-18) claims that ancient testimony is more credible than contemporary observation, saying that we learn more from 'hearing' than 'seeing.'<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the sign inferences described above, Isocrates also uses and discusses many arguments based on parallel cases. In these cases some current and controversial claim is illuminated by reference to a similar case, often from the recent or mythical past. It is Isocrates' general practice to signal the use of this kind of argument with the word *paradeigma*, and we can see that Isocrates means in these cases to refer to a variety of arguments by parallel cases. Isocrates uses the word *paradeigma* twenty-five times, often in combination with a metaphorical verb such as *kathistimi*, in which something literally 'stands' as a pattern or model. Isocrates' uses all refer, in some sense, to an pattern or model of some sort, but a more nuanced account reveals three subtly different shades of meaning; example, pattern fit for emulation, and analogy.

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric* (1.2.8), also uses the term *paradeigma* as a technical term of argument. In his first discussion he describes it as the rhetorical counterpart of induction, just as the enthymeme is the rhetorical counterpart of logic's syllogism.

But for purposes of demonstration, real or apparent, just as Dialectic possesses two modes of argument, induction (*epagoge*) and the syllogism, real or apparent, the same is the case in Rhetoric; for the example (*paradeigma*) is induction, and the enthymeme a syllogism, and the apparent enthymeme an apparent syllogism. Accordingly I call an enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism, and an example (*paradeigma*) rhetorical induction (*epagogen rhêtorikên*).

However, in his much fuller discussion of the *paradeigma* in Book 2 (*Rhetoric*, 2.20) Aristotle clearly describes it as a kind of analogy, calling it a matter of relating things in the present to things that happened in the past (Lloyd, 1966).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Archidamus* (24) also contains an interesting statement that the use of mythological evidence is not considered generally appropriate for deliberative speeches.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the similar treatment in Anaximenes' *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 8.

There are two kinds of examples (*paradeigmaton*); namely, one which consists in relating things that have happened before, and another in inventing them oneself...It would be an instance of the historical kind of example, if one were to say that it is necessary to make preparations against the Great King and not to allow him to subdue Egypt; for Darius did not cross over to Greece until he had obtained possession of Egypt; but as soon as he had done so, he did. Again, Xerxes did not attack us until he had obtained possession of that country, but when he had, he crossed over; consequently, if the present Great King shall do the same, he will cross over, wherefore it must not be allowed. Comparison (*parabole*) is illustrated by the sayings of Socrates; for instance, if one were to say that magistrates should not be chosen by lot, for this would be the same as choosing as representative athletes not those competent to contend, but those on whom the lot falls; or as choosing any of the sailors as the man who should take the helm, as if it were right that the choice should be decided by lot, not by a man's knowledge.

Aristotle further specifies that such analogies are of particular use to deliberative speakers because for the greater part the future will unfold in a way similar to the past (*homoia gar hos epi to polu ta mellonta tois gegnosin*), a formula that we will see in Isocrates' works, most of which were written well before Aristotle composed *Rhetoric*.

The simplest sort of parallel case argument is that of the example. Isocrates uses *paradeigma* in this sense three times. In *Against Callimachus* (55) Isocrates has his litigant describe his opponent Callimachus as an example (*paradeigma*) of sycophancy and malice. In *Evagoras* (12) Isocrates says that Evagoras is equal to the greatest examples (*paradeigmasi*) of nobility, and in *Panathenaicus* (16) Isocrates complains that the sophists use his discourses as examples (*paradeigmasi*) of style.

Another, rather more complex, nuance can be seen when Isocrates uses *paradeigma* to describe patterns fit for emulation. In *To Demonicus* (9-12) Isocrates makes a great deal of how the recipient should use the discourse he has sent him 'If you will but recall your father's principles, you will have from your own house a noble example (*paradeigma*) of what I am telling you.' Continuing in this vein Isocrates tells the young man the reason for producing this account (*To Demonicus* 11)

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 (*paradeigma*), 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.

Of course, the paraineseis, as a genre, recommends models for emulation, so we should not be surprised to find so many mentions of this purpose within them. For instance at *Nicocles* (25-26) we have the following description of how examples demonstrate argumentatively.<sup>11</sup>

...And again, we know that while the Carthaginians and the Lacedaemonians, who are the best governed peoples of the world, are ruled by oligarchies at home, yet, when they take the field, they are ruled by kings. One might also point out that the state which more than any other abhors absolute rule meets with disaster when it sends out many generals, and with success when it wages war under a single leader. And, indeed, how could any one show more convincingly than through these instances that monarchy is the most excellent of governments? For we see that those who are permanently ruled by kings have the greatest powers; that those who live in well- conducted oligarchies, when it comes to matters about which they are most concerned, appoint one man, in some cases a general, in others a king, to have full powers over their armies in the field; and that those who abhor absolute rule, whenever they send out many leaders, fail to

<sup>11</sup> Other examples of *paradeigma* being used to describe models fit for emulation will be found at *Demonicus* 51; *To Nicocles* 31, 37; *Evagoras* 77; *Panegyricus* 39; *Archidamus* 83; *To Philip* 113; *On the Peace* 49.

accomplish a single one of their designs. And, if there is need to speak also of things old in story, it is said that even the gods are ruled by Zeus as king. If the saying is true, it is clear that the gods also prefer this regime; but if, on the other hand, no one knows the truth about this matter, and we by our own conjecture have simply supposed it to be so, it is a proof that we all hold monarchy in the highest esteem; for we should never have said that the gods live under it if we did not believe it to be far superior to all other governments.

The most complex and sophisticated sense of *paradeigma* emerges in those cases where Isocrates specifies that by the term he means what we would call an analogy. We will see that Isocrates' notion is strikingly similar to that laid out in Aristotle's treatment of the *paradeigma* in *Rhetoric* Book 2. Isocrates says in *Demonicus* (34) 'In your deliberations let the past be an exemplar (*paradeigmata*) for the future; for the unknown may soonest be discerned by reference to the known.' A very similar description of argument by analogy is also seen in *Archidamus* (59) where the Spartan king argues that the city's best defense is to deal fairly with all of its allies, as that has led to good outcomes in the past (*eiper chrê peri tôn mellontôn tekmairesthai tois êde gegnemenois*). Isocrates makes explicit his belief in the strength of argument by analogy in a passage (*On the Peace* 113-115) that admonishes the Athenians for failing to see the connection between their desire for hegemony and the passions (and bad ends) of despots that he has previously described.<sup>12</sup>

And naturally so; for they know well that those who held despotic power before them have been put out of the way, some by their parents, some by their sons, some by their brothers, and some by their wives and, furthermore, that the lineage of these rulers has been blotted out from the sight of men. Nevertheless they willingly submit themselves to such a multitude of calamities. And when men who are of the foremost rank and of the greatest reputation are enamored of so many evils, is it any wonder that the rest of the world covets other evils of the same kind

But I do not fail to realize that while you accept readily what I say about the rule of despots, yet you hear with intolerance what I say about the empire of the sea. For you have fallen into a most shameful and careless way of thinking, since what you see clearly in the case of others, this you are blind to in your own case. And yet it is not the least important sign (*sêmeion*) of whether men are possessed of intelligence if they are seen to recognize the same course of conduct in all cases that are comparable. But you have never given this a thought; on the contrary, while you consider the power of a despot to be harsh and harmful not only to others but to those who hold it, you look upon the empire of the sea as the greatest good in the world, when in fact it differs neither in what it does nor in what it suffers from one-man-rule. And you think that the affairs of the Thebans are in a bad way because they oppress their neighbors, but, although you yourselves are treating your allies no better than the Thebans treat the Boeotians, you believe that your own actions leave nothing to be desired.

In another important passage Isocrates uses the verb *tekmaïromai* to describe the process of drawing a conclusion from an analogy. In *Panegyricus* 140-144 Isocrates argues that the Greeks can conjecture concerning what to do in the future by reference to things that have happened in the past

Nay, it is obviously not fair to estimate the power of the King from those exploits in which he has joined forces with the one or the other of us, but rather from the wars which he, unaided, has fought on his own behalf.

Take, first, the case of Egypt: since its revolt from the King, what progress has he made against its inhabitant?...Next, there is his campaign against Evagoras. Evagoras is ruler over but a single city; he is

<sup>12</sup> Passages where Isocrates makes explicit, extended, arguments by analogy will be found at *Areopagiticus* 5-7; *To Philip* 57-58; *Plataicus* 40-41; *Archidamus* 41-43.

given over to the Persians by the terms of the Treaty; his is an insular power and he has already sustained a disaster to his fleet; he has, at present, for the defense of his territory only three thousand light-armed troops; yet, humble as is the power of Evagoras, the King has not the power to conquer it in war, but has already frittered away six years in the attempt; and, if we may conjecture the future by the past (*ei de dei ta mellonta tois gegnemenois tekmairestai*), there is much more likelihood that someone else will rise in revolt before Evagoras is reduced by the siege--so slothful is the King in his enterprises...So no one can say that I am not fair in my use of instances (*ou dikaiôs chrômai tois paradeigmasin*), nor that I dwell upon the minor undertakings of the King and pass over the most important...I have striven to forestall just such a complaint, and have recounted the most glorious of his exploits.

Note that here Isocrates is aware that analogies can be criticized for their lack of precision or salience, responding, as he does, to a charge that he has based his argument that the King of Persia is unlikely to attack Greece by referring only to a limited sample of his military campaigns. If the illuminating element of his analogy consisted only of a sample of minor Persian military setbacks, for instance, he could be accused of composing an unfair argument. By focusing on times when the King's main forces have been defeated, Isocrates can argue that war against the Persians might well lead to a good outcome for the Greeks. Isocrates also knows that analogies can be critiqued as being non-parallel. In *Against the Sophists* (12-13) he attacks sophists who have been claiming that the art of discourse can be taught in the same mechanical fashion as spelling or grammar.

But I marvel when I observe these men setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy (*paradeigma*) of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process. For, excepting these teachers, who does not know that the art of using letters remains fixed and unchanged, so that we continually and invariably use the same letters for the same purposes, while exactly the reverse is true of the art of discourse? For what has been said by one speaker is not equally useful for the speaker who comes after him; on the contrary, he is accounted most skilled in this art who speaks in a manner worthy of his subject and yet is able to discover in it topics which are nowise the same as those used by others. But the greatest proof (*megiston de sêmeion*) of the difference between these two arts is that oratory is good only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality of treatment, while in the case of letters there is no such need whatsoever. So that those who make use of such analogies (*toioutois paradeigmasi*) ought more justly to pay out than to accept fees, since they attempt to teach others when they are themselves in great need of instruction.

Clearly, then, Isocrates not only had a relatively robust account of argument by analogy but understood the bases by which such inferences could be criticized.

In conclusion I would argue that these findings are significant for the following reasons.

1) I believe that the forgoing has established that Isocrates used sign and analogistic inferences as major modes of argumentation. Isocrates had a relatively stable, what we might call quasi-technical, vocabulary by which he describes these sorts of inferences. He also expresses beliefs, probably conventional, about the proper uses of these forms of inference. It is important to note that I am not claiming that Isocrates was an argument theorist, *per se*, nor do I argue that he was an innovator in such matters. I would, in fact, argue the opposite position, that Isocrates' argumentative practices and beliefs were almost entirely conventional. In a way, that makes his practices even more important and interesting, in that we have in his works a window into the world of argumentation that existed immediately before the radical theoretical innovations of Aristotle.

2) Seeing how Greek intellectuals considered argumentation in the period before Aristotle forces us to consider anew the astonishing impact of Aristotle on the field. Isocrates lived and argued in a world without syllogisms, categories, inductions, propositions, or topics. The

translation of Aristotelian concepts into rhetorical forms such as enthymemes, epichiremes, or stasis, hadn't happened yet and so those resources were simply not there to be exploited by him. Nearly every generation of Western intellectuals after him would approach argumentation in a different way.

3) The standard accounts of pre-Aristotelian Greek rhetorical argumentation focus in the main on the use of probability and antilogy. To be sure, Isocrates does occasionally use arguments from probability, but they are by no means his main mode of inference. Such theorizing may have been going on in some sophistic workshops, but we see a very moderate of it appearing in this large and varied corpus. Given the amount of sign and parallel case reasoning in Isocrates, the explicitness of his discussion of these modes, and the treatments of the same by both Aristotle and Anaximenes, it seems likely that there was a good deal of discussion of these inferential forms in antiquity. To that degree, the standard account of pre-Aristotelian argumentation should be revised.

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