Ekaterina V. Haskins:

Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle

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Those of us who teach and study the history of ancient Greek rhetoric often face a problem: much of the primary material is in fragmentary form. In addition, names are numerous, extant works for many of them few. Obviously, studying the classical period is difficult, as is treating each thinker equitably both as an historical individual and as a contemporary influence on rhetorical studies. Fortunately, because Isocrates' works are relatively plentiful, they have recently inspired new translations and secondary scholarship.[1] To the latter belongs *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle*, a study which looks at Isocrates' non-canonical works in light of Aristotle's canonical ones. Grounded in historical and cultural context and focused on performance and agency, its author, Ekaterina Haskins, characterizes Isocrates' broad concept of civic rhetoric as a strong alternative to Aristotle's more limited, rule-bound vision. By recognizing Isocrates in this way, Haskins broadens our understanding of ancient Greek rhetoric and, in so doing, informs contemporary concerns in the history of rhetoric, among them the pedagogical.

To those ends, Haskins divides the study into five chapters, each of which is based on and examines a contrasting frame/theme: Orality/Literacy; Poetic/Rhetoric; *Kairos*/Genre; Identification/Persuasion; and Social Change/Social Permanence. Haskins' goal is not to essentialize these pairs, but rather to place the two rhetoricians' thoughts along the spectrum each pairing comprises. As she puts it,

> […] the right-hand categories represent a vision of a highly disciplined rhetoric in the sense of both academic disciplinarity and the social role played by discourse. Such rhetoric is more like a neutral tool than an identity-shaping performance. The left-hand column encapsulates a vision of rhetoric as ever-evolving social performance, rife with ambivalent ethical and political tendencies. My argument is, roughly, that Aristotle displays both possibilities but gravitates toward the stability implicit in the right-hand categories. He thus drastically limits the constitutive potential of rhetoric by making it subordinate to the putatively extrarhetorical knowledge (*episteme*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Isocrates, on the other hand, though avoiding disclosure of the negative side of rhetoric's constitutive power, nevertheless develops a strong version of the performative vision. (pp. 5-6)

To begin the reconstruction, Chapter 1 locates the two rhetors "Between Orality and Literacy", that is, at a moment when the so-called written/rational tradition was emerging out of the oral/ mythopoetic. This time of transitions is a good starting place for the inquiry because it situates a

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[1] *Isocrates vol. 1*, trans. David C. Mirhady and Yun Lee Too (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); *Isocrates vol. 2*, trans. Terry L. Papillon (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); Takis Poulakos, *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education* (Columbus: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

relatively unfamiliar subject within a better known one. As Haskins describes it, Aristotle "subverts" the mythopoetic; focusing on written rules, his rhetor must build arguments that portray a fixed worldview. Isocrates, the writer of speeches, blends the two traditions. By combining spoken and written practices, his rhetor performs the speech, thus creating for himself a political identity. Thereby rhetor and audience exist in an agonistic relationship which recalls the rhapsodes of old and avails itself of the new technology of writing. To illustrate this blend of performed and written elements, Haskins offers a reading of *Antidosis*; its presence adds a welcome depth to this relatively ignored and/or superficially discussed work and demonstrates how to read ancient texts with their historical context in mind.

The two Greek rhetoricians not only approach writing and speech differently in their works, their understandings of its practice and ends rest on different approaches to *mimesis* (imitation, representation). *Mimesis*, as Chapter 2, "Between Poetics and Rhetorics", reminds us, is a key ancient term involving meaning, truth, and awareness of them. Plato, of course, distrusts the layering of meaning that *mimesis* entails; and while Aristotle defends its role in poetry – it is poetry's *arkhe*/first principle – he does not expressly include *mimesis* in rhetorical practices. In this way, Aristotle separates poetry and rhetoric, restricting from the latter elements of performance. Because Isocrates' understanding of rhetoric retains a vital link between speaking and writing, he makes performance central to that understanding. Thus, Haskins argues, an Isocratean rhetoric offers a framework for a civic education, a lifelong pursuit which habituates students/citizens to a moral life.

This discussion of *mimesis* incorporates issues of style, music, and interesting and important aspects of ancient rhetoric all too often ignored or marginalized within other analyses. Their inclusion here emphasizes how historians of rhetoric must consider text and context together rather than separately (if both are considered at all). For Aristotle, music belongs to education – to the extent that certain modes help the young follow the path to virtuous adulthoods. However, Aristotle associates music with poetry, prohibiting another performative aspect of language in rhetorical practice. Not surprisingly, music belongs more centrally to an Isocratean civic education in rhetoric: it is part of the performative *agon* through which the rhetor (re)creates political identity.

Again, the chapter analyzes parts of *Antidosis* in context, here showing its dependence on mimetic, performative elements that blend poetry and rhetoric. Haskins demonstrates how Isocrates performs his speech in writing, as it were, to recall and re-instill past values in his audience. Thus, through this *agon*, he not only creates a political identity but also models appropriate rhetorical/civic practice for the audience.

In Chapter 3, "Between *Kairos* and Genre", Haskins suggests that Aristotle splits rhetoric into three genres to restrict political invention to another set of categorical imperatives. As a result, improvisation becomes an "excess", an addition to the rules on which the logical construction of arguments depend. This separation has had significant consequences for the subject of style in the history of rhetoric; once split from logic and aligned with rhetoric, style and rhetoric became deviant if not subversive entities by the seventeenth century. Isocrates makes no such break. He mixes genres, thereby creating or improvising each performance, speech by speech. Haskins suggests that, anticipating Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of 'speech genre', Isocrates' fluid, kairotic use of genres supports the link between rhetor and audience, and strengthens the speaker's attempt to evoke cultural memory and create political identity.[2]

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[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", in P. Bizzell and B. Herzberg (eds.), *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1990), pp. 1227-1245.

From cultural matters available to the rhetor, Chapter 4 turns to the audience's reception of those thoughts. "Between Identification and Persuasion" first traces the development of this latter concept from *peitho*/oral tradition to persuasion/Aristotle to identification/Kenneth Burke. Aristotle's "instrumental" notion of rhetoric denies the performative elements of the oral tradition; instead, his rhetoric entails a monologic view of the audience. If the rhetor follows the rules and discovers "the available means of persuasion", the audience will be persuaded. In contrast, Isocrates' "constitutive" rhetoric, dependent as it is on the *agon* between rhetor and hearer, is a performance, a kind of symbolic act; through his inclusion of elements of the older tradition, Isocrates' rhetoric produces something more like identification between participants. Again, the political identity of the rhetor emerges not from text-bound rules but from normative modes of performance. Isocratean identification becomes a social, productive function of language.

Chapter 5 considers where Isocratean rhetoric belongs in the continuum "Between Social Change and Social Impermanence", asking how his ideas inform recent disputes over rhetoric's role in education and culture. Building on her previous analysis, Haskins turns to another way in which Aristotle divides entities: he separates his philosophy of civic behavior from his notions of rhetoric and education. It takes Eugene Garver's reading of Aristotelian rhetoric, which subtly shapes that rhetoric to fit an ethical theory of character, to make it a philosophy applicable to all citizens and an inclusive educational structure.[3] But, Haskins argues, Isocrates' position fits that broader picture without any shaping. Ironically, then, Isocrates has been marginalized for doing what others have sought in Aristotle, namely linking audience and rhetor in order to teach and maintain values. "In many of his pamphlets, he deliberately blurs the terminological lines between democracy and its ideological 'others' in order to extend his addresses to multiple audiences", Haskins maintains (p. 127). In this way, Isocrates' rhetorical, civic education is available to everyone: it is a theory of political action in a democratic community that offers an alternative to the accepted model.

This Isocratean civic education, so "Classical Rhetoric and the Future of Democratic Education" concludes, also integrates with contemporary pedagogy better than Aristotle's model. While Aristotle separates rhetoric from the world, learning, and moral philosophy, Isocrates' vision blends all these elements within a performative act. As such, it can teach students to be responsible citizens in thought, word, and deed. It is not possible, of course, for individual teachers to change the world. However, "it is possible, by relying on the Isocratean vision of logos as an artificer of culture and identity, subtly to turn students toward an appreciation of their milieu as a complex process of inculcation of personal and social values" (p. 134). In concluding, Haskins leaves us to consider in more detail what an Isocratean pedagogy would look like.

Against a background of neglect and misconception, Haskins clarifies and complicates Isocrates' legacy to Western culture: clarifies by describing what it was and what it still can be; complicates by asking us to consider previously unexamined issues. In particular, she focuses attention on such important concerns as performance, agency, and the methods we use to study them. Because critics concentrated on Aristotle and subsequent interpretations of his corpus, rhetoric lost its connection with its performative, cultural, and educational roots. Following Isocrates, Haskins reminds us that we must practice what we preach by studying the history of

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[3] Eugene Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

rhetoric holistically – that is, in integrative and intertextual ways, and as part of ongoing academic debates, which inform civic and educational practices.

Haskins' concision allows her to focus rather than ramble. Some readers may prefer more discussion of the broader historical and scholarly issues to which she refers, since the study is about blending rather than separating; for example, is it problematic to call Isocrates' work a "theory" about "rhetoric"? Does the reader need more background on enthymemes, perform-ance, ancient music, and the so-called sophists? She also tends to praise Isocrates and blame Aristotle, thus creating a dichotomy that belies her attempt to locate their visions of rhetoric on several spectrums. It is not Aristotle who made his work canonical, nor are later interpretations necessarily what he might have intended. Nonetheless, Haskins' focus on her topic is not only a welcome respite from much academic writing, but also an approach which opens the door to continuing the lines of inquiry she addresses. It would be interesting, for example, to link Isocrates with new multi-modal pedagogies as well as to create and even implement an Isocratean model of education.

Logos and Power will not only appeal to scholars who are seeking fresh insights into Isocrates and his world, but also to graduate students beginning their study of ancient rhetoric. As a study of an individual sophist, it represents the kind of scholarship that classical studies in rhetoric lacks. In this regard, Haskins' analyses of texts are especially helpful; they provide deep insight into Isocrates' world and model good practices for students/scholars alike. The future of the history of rhetoric, so to speak, is in large part about giving its past some thickness, this through reference to long marginalized elements: this study adds a good bit to that depth.

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