

346 BCE

Philippus or To Philip, by Isocrates

Isocrates was an Athenian born in 436 BCE to the owner of a prosperous flute-making factory (Norlin 1928:xi). Despite losing his patrimony after the Peloponnesian War, Isocrates spent most of his life in Athens as a logographer and teacher of oratory (Laistner 1927:12-13).

Little is known about Isocrates' early life and education, however there is a definite relationship with the rhetoric style of Gorgias (Norlin 1928:xiii) who he supposedly studied under in Thessaly (Cic.Or.176). Norlin (1928:xvi) identifies a close relationship with Socrates, based on evidence from Pseudo-Plutarch (Mor.838F). Laistner (1927:26) identifies a connection with the works of Thucydides, based on examples of word use.

Philippus was written as a political pamphlet suggesting that Philip II lead a Panhellenic League against Persia (Laistner 1927:19-20). It was published between April and July 346 BCE when Isocrates was 90 years old (Isoc.5.9;12; Laistner 1927:19-20). The Peace of Philocrates had recently been signed but the Third Sacred War was ongoing (Laistner 1927:19-20). Buckler (2003:454), correctly, suggests public opinion of Philip was largely positive, based on evidence from Isocrates (Isoc.5.8)

Isocrates identifies two purposes of *Philippus*: to persuade Philip to champion Isocrates' ideal (Isoc.5.10;12) and to show by example the ineffectiveness of oratory (Isoc.5.12).

Isocrates' disdain for oratory is described in detail (Isoc.5.12). He claims his works are meant to be read rather than spoken and more intellectual than speeches using other persuasive tools (Bons 1993:162-4).

Isocrates' ideal, Panhellenism, is the most noble and fulfilling thing he can consider (Isoc.5.10). It is the only way to achieve permanent peace: Greece united under Philip to reclaim Asia Minor (Isoc.5.8-9). Within *Philippus*, Philip is presented as powerful. When an associate (Norlin) or student (Laistner) – identified by Laistner (1927:129) as Theopompus – tried to persuade Isocrates not to write the pamphlet (Isoc.5.17-21), Philip was described as having wealth, military power and advisors from across Greece (Isoc.5.18-21). Though little is known about the individuals, foreign advisors were common in the Macedonian court and included several of Isocrates' pupils (Laistner 1927:130).

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