

The Role of *Doxa* in the Philosophical Pedagogy of Isocrates and Plato

This paper explores the function of *doxa* as a pedagogical and philosophical concept in the contemporary Greek authors Plato and Isocrates, with special attention to the relationship between *epistēmē* and *doxa*. The term *doxa* ('notion, opinion, judgment') derives from the verb *dokew* ('to think, suppose, imagine') (Held 117). By the time of Plato and Isocrates, *doxa* had acquired at least two different significations. In the political sphere it denoted an imprecise, secularized form of situational decision making, while in the philosophico-religious tradition it signified judgments about the world which could be true or false (Poulakos 2001: 66-67; Poulakos 2004: 44-48).

To uncover the place of *doxa* in Isocrates' thought and Plato's, the paper begins with an examination of the different historical and theoretical associations of the term current at the time. Next, a comparison is made of the ways Isocrates and Plato use the concept of *doxa* within the broader context of their philosophy and pedagogy. Plato's much-debated reference to Isocrates in the *Phaedrus* is examined briefly, with special attention to Howland 1937 and Brown and Coulter 1971. Plato's understanding of *doxa* and its relation to *epistēmē* is elaborated through a close reading of *The Republic* Bk. 5, 471a-480a, with reference to several other dialogues (e.g. *Theatetus* 194b; *Meno* 97b-c; *Gorgias* 11-13). By drawing together Isocrates' comments in the *Antidosis* (e.g. 183-84,271) and *Against the Sophists* (esp. 2-8,17-18), it is shown that Isocrates, unlike Plato, places *doxa* above *epistēmē* (cf. Held 118-119).

An explanation for this divergence is offered in the last part of the paper. Isocrates conceives of more highly of the pedagogical value of *doxa* largely because of his specifically rhetorical framework, while Plato's negative evaluation of *doxa* as probabilistic knowledge reflects the unique philosophical contours of his thought (Lanfrance 1981; cf. Mojsisch 21-22),

particularly his objections to the philosophy of Parmenides and other Presocratics (Turnbull 1983). The different roles of *doxa* in Isocrates and Plato can be accounted for partly by divergent understandings of the role of *logos* in education. Isocrates, like the Sophists, relates *logos* to political deliberation, but through his nuanced appraisal of *doxa* as an integral part of *phronēsis* or practical intelligence (cf. Poulakos 2001: 68-70), he provides a grounding for political oratory which aims not at mere persuasion but at practical wisdom in the context of the *polis*.

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