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ISOCRATES  
VOLUME I



*Translated by*  
GEORGE NORLIN

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# ISOCRATES

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY  
GEORGE NORLIN

VOLUME I



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## PREFACE

THE text of this edition is based on that of Baiter-Sauppe (Zürich, 1839), but advantage has been taken of the work of other, especially of later, editors. Minor changes have been made in the orthography. Important departures from the Baiter-Sauppe text are indicated in the foot-notes.

In the translation, the aim has been to produce a version at once faithful and readable. Occasionally the long sentences of Isocrates have been broken up into smaller units for the sake of clearness, but generally the sentence structure is deliberately preserved even in the face of the current English usage. It was not found possible, however, to carry over the Isocratean figures of language throughout without producing an effect in English so curious as to be un-Isocratean. It seemed more important to preserve the general tone and the rhythmical quality of the original.

I am under obligations to Mr. Floyd A. Spencer,  
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## PREFACE

Associate Professor of Greek in Ohio Wesleyan University, and to Miss Maud E. Craig, Assistant Professor of Classics in the University of Colorado, for valuable assistance in the preparation of the first volume.

GEORGE NORLIN.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

At the age of ninety-seven, a year before his death, Isocrates published the *Panathenaicus*, one of the most ambitious of his discourses. He had been interrupted in the composition of it by a three years' illness, and it was only upon the urgency of his friends that he rose above his weakness and carried it through to completion.<sup>a</sup> It is not up to the level of his earlier work; his powers have manifestly declined; above all, the strong vanity of his artistic temperament,<sup>b</sup> whose frank expression elsewhere often offends the modern reader,<sup>c</sup> here falls into a senile querulousness as he sees the labours of his otherwise fortunate life failing of universal approval and acclaim.<sup>d</sup>

Yet the discourse is remarkable not so much for its senility as for its unflagging devotion to Athens. It is significant that the last discourse as well as the first great effort of his career, the *Panegyricus*, extols the noble history of the city of his fathers. Love of Athens is the one passion of his dispassionate

<sup>a</sup> *Panath.* 267 ff.

<sup>b</sup> Croiset, *Hist. de la Litt. Grecque*, iv. p. 466: "Avec l'esprit d'un artiste, il en a le caractère," etc.

<sup>c</sup> The ancients were tolerant of self-laudation. See Hermogenes, *Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος*, 25.

<sup>d</sup> *Panath.* 7 ff.

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nature ; and second only to this is his love of Hellas. Or rather, both of these feelings are blended into a single passion—a worship of Hellenism as a way of life, a saving religion <sup>a</sup> of which he conceives Athens to be the central shrine <sup>b</sup> and himself a prophet commissioned by the gods <sup>c</sup> to reconcile the quarrels of the Greeks and unite them in a crusade against the barbarian world.

The course of events during the distressing period of history through which he lived accorded badly with his dreams. His own writings as well as those of his contemporaries reflect the fatal incapacity of the Greek city-state either to surrender any degree of its autonomy in the interest of a national unity or to leave inviolate the autonomy of other states. Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, each in turn held for a time a place of supremacy only to provoke by aggression general hatred and rebellion. The several states came to feel more bitter against each other than against their common enemy, the Persian Empire, and did not scruple to court the favour and use the aid of the "Great King" in their selfish rivalries and wars.<sup>d</sup> Indeed, the hope of a united Hellas became more and more the shadow of a shadow, until at last all Greece, exhausted and demoralized by mutual warfare, submitted herself perforce to the leadership of Philip of Macedon.

Yet Isocrates never to the end of his life gave up his purpose,<sup>e</sup> and it was doubtless this disinterested enthusiasm for a great cause, together with unusual

<sup>a</sup> Croiset, *op. cit.* iv. p. 480 : " Une image idéale de la grandeur hellénique, une belle idole, à laquelle il rend un culte qui tient de la religion et de la poésie."

<sup>b</sup> *Paneg.* 50 ; *Antid.* 295-299.

<sup>c</sup> *Philip* 149.

<sup>d</sup> *Panath.* 158-160.

<sup>e</sup> See *Epist.* iii. 6.

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"health of body and soul" <sup>a</sup> and a degree of philosophical detachment from the heat and dust of conflict, which extended the span of his life over a century of extraordinary vicissitudes and disenchantments.

Much of the tradition regarding his life must be received with caution. The formal biographies of him which have come down to us are late compilations <sup>b</sup> in which gossip is so confused with fact that we can safely credit them only when their statements are confirmed by his contemporaries or by Isocrates himself. <sup>c</sup>

He was born in 436 B.C., five years before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, and died in 338, after the battle of Chaeronea. He was one of five children—four boys and one girl. Of his mother we know only that her name was Heduto. His father, Theodorus, carried on a business in the manufacture of flutes, and was prosperous enough to perform expensive services for the state and to give his children a good education. <sup>d</sup> Isocrates says in the *Antidosis* that he himself had such advantages in this regard as to give him greater prominence among his fellow-students than he later enjoyed among his fellow-citizens. <sup>e</sup>

This little is all we know with certainty about his

<sup>a</sup> *Panath.* 7.

<sup>b</sup> That of Dionysius of Halicarnassus prefixed to his essay on Isocrates; that of Photius; that attributed to Plutarch, in the *Lives of the Ten Orators*; and the anonymous *Life*, sometimes attributed to Zosimus; also the article by Suidas. See Westermann, *Biographi Graeci*, pp. 245-259.

<sup>c</sup> Some of his works are largely autobiographical, especially the *Antidosis*, the *Panathenaicus*, and the letters.

<sup>d</sup> See Jebb, *Attic Orators*, ii. pp. 2, 3.

<sup>e</sup> *Antid.* 161.



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formal training. We have from his biographers the tradition that he profited not only by the established education of the Athenian youth of his time but also by the new learning which the sophists had introduced as a preparation for citizenship and practical success.<sup>a</sup> Indeed, he is said to have gone to school to almost all of the professors of wisdom of his generation<sup>b</sup>—which can be true only in the sense that he made himself acquainted with all the intellectual forces which were stirring in his day and was stimulated by their influence.

He has, however, a rather clear relationship to two of the greatest teachers of this period. One of these was Gorgias of Leontini, the most renowned sophist of the rhetorical school, under whom it is likely that he was at one time a student.<sup>c</sup> Gorgias had visited Athens as a special ambassador from Leontini in 427, when Isocrates was a boy, and had then carried the Athenians off their feet by the brilliance of his oratory<sup>d</sup>—an oratory that was hardly prose but akin to poetry: rhythmical, ornate, and making its appeal, not to the intellect alone, but to the senses and the imagination as well. Later he spent some time in Athens, where his lectures were immensely popular.<sup>e</sup> Next we hear of him as the orator at the Olympic Festival of 408, pleading with the assembled Greeks to reconcile their quarrels and

<sup>a</sup> The term sophist had not until later times any invidious associations. It was applied indiscriminately to all professors of the new learning—lecturers on literature, science, philosophy, and particularly oratory, for which there was great demand in the democratic states.

<sup>b</sup> Jebb ii. p. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Blass, *Die attische Beredsamkeit*, ii. p. 14.

<sup>d</sup> Diodorus xii. 53.

<sup>e</sup> Plato, *Hippias major* 282 B.

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unite in a war against the barbarians. Afterwards he settled down in Thessaly, where Isocrates is said to have heard his lectures.<sup>a</sup>

Isocrates was without doubt greatly influenced by Gorgias. He probably owes to his teaching and example the idea which he later made peculiarly his own, namely, that the highest oratory should concern itself with broad, pan-Hellenic themes, and that the style of oratory should be as artistic as that of poetry and afford the same degree of pleasure.<sup>b</sup>

But when we attempt to estimate definitely what he took from Gorgias in the matter of style we are on uncertain ground. The speeches of Gorgias, which startled his contemporaries, are lost, and we owe the fragments of them which we possess to the accident of their having been quoted to illustrate the extreme qualities of his rhetoric. If we may judge by these alone, his oratory sought to depart as far as possible from the language of common speech: it was as artificial as poetry and even more bold in its diction, its imagery, its figures, and its constant effort to strike the grand note; in fact, Gorgias attempted to be a Pindar or an Aeschylus in prose. His untamed rhetoric has its close analogue in the exuberant style of the Elizabethan Age, particularly that manifestation of it which is known as "Euphuism."<sup>c</sup> When Macbeth in Shakespeare says, "Our monuments shall be the maws of kites," he uses a daring phrase which might serve as a translation of a frag-

<sup>a</sup> Cicero, *Or.* 176.

<sup>b</sup> *Antid.* 46, 47.

<sup>c</sup> This is pointed out by Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, i. p. 478. Other scholars have actually held Gorgias and Isocrates responsible for Euphuism. See Whipple, "Isocrates and Euphuism" in *Mod. Lang. Rev.* xi. p. 15.

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ment of Gorgias ;<sup>a</sup> and when Falstaff, primed with sack, harangues Prince Hal : “ Now I do not speak to thee in drink but in tears ; not in pleasure but in passion ; not in words only but in woes also,” his parody of “ Euphues ” is quite in the Gorgian manner, although it is, in fact, less extravagant than Gorgias himself could be. What, for example, could be more artificial than his “ Shameful was your sowing, baneful was your reaping,”<sup>b</sup> in which we have not only poetic metaphor, alliteration, and balanced antithesis, but a close parallelism in sound—assonance—which is rare even in poetry ?

Now Isocrates did not attempt the grand manner, and did, in fact, avoid the Gorgian excesses of style.<sup>c</sup> He uses the Gorgian antitheses both of language and of thought with better effect and with more concealing artifice ; and he employs alliteration and assonance with greater continence.<sup>d</sup> He abstains even to excess from the language of metaphor, and he very seldom uses poetical or obsolete words or unusual compounds, confining himself rather to the words of current speech, using them with nice precision and combining them in a manner to produce an effect of dignity and of distinction. Blass quotes in illustration of this a sentence of the *Evagoras* : “ He destroyed such numbers of the enemy in battle that many of the Persians, grieving for their own misfortunes, do not forget his valour,” where the

<sup>a</sup> γῦπες ἐμψυχοὶ τάφοι.

<sup>b</sup> αἰσχροῦς μὲν ἔσπειρας, κακῶς δὲ ἐθέρισας.

<sup>c</sup> For the style of Isocrates see Blass, *Die attische Beredsamkeit*, ii. p. 130 ff. ; and Jebb, *Attic Orators*, ii. p. 51 ff.

<sup>d</sup> He is most Gorgian in his *encomia* (Blass ii. p. 132) but less rhetorical in his later speeches.

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difference between the language of Isocrates and a bald statement that he killed many of the Persians is a difference not of diction but of imagination.

While Gorgias relies for his effect upon striking words and phrases, Isocrates subordinates the individual words and clauses to a larger unity. He is an architect, looking to the effect of the whole edifice, not to that of single bricks or stones,<sup>a</sup> and taking infinite pains with composition—the smooth joining of part to part. He avoids studiously the clash of harsh consonants and all collocations of vowels at the end and the beginning of successive words—hiatus; and he has everywhere an ear sensitive to rhythms—not the exactly recurring rhythms of verse, but such as carry the voice buoyantly through the sentence upon wave after wave of sound without obtruding themselves upon the attention of the audience; for melody and rhythm are for Isocrates as important to artistic prose as to poetry.

The structural unit in Isocrates is the involved periodic sentence. This is extraordinarily long, sometimes occupying a page; often a half page; but it is so skilfully built that the parts in relation to each other and to the whole are easily grasped; for Isocrates, no matter how often he balances clause against clause to round out his period, is always clear. The reader, however, even while marvelling at the architecture, is apt at times to weary of it, especially when Isocrates is so concerned about the symmetry of the sentence that he weakens the thought by padding, and, in straining for the effect of amplitude, becomes diffuse and tedious.

He is no less careful in the transitions from sen-

<sup>a</sup> Demetrius, *Περὶ ῥημῶν* 13.

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tence to sentence and from division to division of the discourse : all is smooth and arranged according to plan. He does not dwell too long upon a single aspect of his subject, lest he fatigue the mind. He opens with a sort of prelude which is not too closely pertinent to the theme, and digresses judiciously for the sake of variety. But all the parts of the discourse are rigorously subordinated to the design of an organic whole.<sup>a</sup>

Thus Isocrates took from Gorgias a style which was extremely artificial and made it artistic. In so doing, he fixed the form of rhetorical prose for the Greek world, and, through the influence of Cicero, for modern times as well.<sup>b</sup> And if the style of Gorgias lost something of its brilliance and its fire in being subdued by Isocrates to the restraints of art, perhaps the loss is compensated by the serenity and dignity of that eloquence which Dionysius urged all young orators to study who are ambitious to serve the state in a large way,<sup>c</sup> and which Bossuet singled out as a model for the oratory of the Church.<sup>d</sup>

The other teacher who left his impress upon Isocrates was the philosopher Socrates. In the conversation at the close of Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Isocrates is mentioned as his "companion,"<sup>e</sup> Socrates speaks with warm admiration of his brilliant qualities, and prophesies a very distinguished future for him in the field of oratory, or in the field of philosophy should "some diviner impulse" lead him

<sup>a</sup> The *Panathenaicus* is an exception.

<sup>b</sup> See Jebb ii. pp. 68 ff.

<sup>c</sup> *Critique on Isocrates*, 4.

<sup>d</sup> See Havet, Introduction to Cartelier's translation of the *Antidosis*, p. lxxxvi. For the "noble tone" of Isocrates see Jebb ii. p. 42.

<sup>e</sup> *ἐταῖρος*.

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in that direction. The passage indicates that there was at one time a close relationship between the young Isocrates and his teacher.<sup>a</sup> Nor is there any reason to doubt that Isocrates cherished throughout his life a warm feeling for the philosopher.<sup>b</sup> The studied effort with which he echoes the striking features of Socrates' defence in his own *apologia pro vita sua*—the *Antidosis*—is evidence enough of his high regard.<sup>c</sup> Furthermore, certain characteristics of his life and work reflect the influence of Socrates : his aloofness from public life ;<sup>d</sup> his critical attitude toward the excesses of the Athenian democracy, and his hatred of demagogues ;<sup>e</sup> his contempt for the sham pretensions of some of the sophists ;<sup>f</sup> his logical clearness and his insistence on the proper definition of objectives and terms ;<sup>g</sup> his prejudice against the speculations of philosophy on the origin of things as being fruitless ;<sup>h</sup> his feeling that ideas are

<sup>a</sup> This is, however, debated. See Karl Münscher's excursus "Die Abfassungszeit des Phaidros" in his revision of Rauchenstein's *Ausgewählte Reden des Isocrates*, p. 187.

<sup>b</sup> The statement in [Plutarch] *Lives of the Ten Orators*, 838 F, that Isocrates grieved deeply over the death of Socrates and put on mourning for him is doubted, mainly on the ground of Isocrates' colourless reference to Socrates in *Busiris* 4. But his reference to Gorgias in *Antid.* 155 ff. is also uncoloured by any personal feeling.

<sup>c</sup> See *Antid.* 21, 27, 33, 89, 93, 95, 100, 145, 154, 179, 240, 321.

<sup>d</sup> In *Antid.* 150 he says that, while he performed all the public services required of him by Athens, he held no office, shared no emolument, and abstained from the privileges of the courts, preferring a life of peace and tranquillity.

<sup>e</sup> See especially the *Areopagiticus* and the *Peace*.

<sup>f</sup> *Panath.* 18 ; *Against the Sophists* 3.

<sup>g</sup> *Peace* 18 ; *Antid.* 217 ; *Epist.* vi. 7-9.

<sup>h</sup> *Antid.* 261, 268.

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of value only as they can be translated into action, and that education should be practical and aim at right conduct in private and in public life ; <sup>a</sup> his rationalism in religion combined with acquiescence in the forms of worship ; <sup>b</sup> his emphasis upon ethics and his earnest morality—now the prudential morality of the Socrates of Xenophon, again the idealistic morality of the Socrates of Plato <sup>c</sup>—, all these he has in common with his master. If Gorgias intoxicated him with the possibilities of style, Socrates was a sobering influence and touched his life more deeply.

If we may rely upon the essential truth of the half-playful words of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, two careers beckoned to one who possessed the genius and the promise of Isocrates—that of the orator and that of the philosopher. Each, however, at once attracted and repelled him. The one tended to plunge him into the conflict of practical politics from which his sensitive nature shrank ; the other led into the realm of pure ideas to which his practical sense attached no value. In the end he attempted to be a philosopher and a statesman in one, avoiding what he regarded as the extremes of both. He endeavoured to direct the affairs of Athens and of Greece without ever holding an office, and to mould public opinion without ever addressing a public assembly, by issuing from his study political pamphlets, or essays in oratorical form, in which he set forth the proper conduct of the Greeks in the light of broad ideas.

<sup>a</sup> *Antid.* 285.

<sup>b</sup> *Busiris* 24-27 ; *To Nicocles* 20 ; *Areop.* 29 ff.

<sup>c</sup> Compare *To Demonicus* and *To Nicocles* in general with *To Nicocles* 20 ; *Nicocles* 59 ; *Peace* 31-34 ; and *Antid.* 281, 282.

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The result of this dwelling on the "borderland between politics and philosophy" <sup>a</sup> was not altogether happy for Isocrates. In the *Panathenaicus* we see a disappointed old man: he had been shut out from the fellowship of either camp; he had missed the zest of fighting, like Demosthenes, in the press of Athenian affairs, and he had been denied the consolation of retiring, like Plato, into a city of his dreams.

Isocrates usually gives as his excuse for remaining aloof from public life that he lacked the voice and the assurance which one had to possess in order to harangue the multitude and bandy words with the orators who haunt the rostrum. <sup>b</sup> But deeper than these physical handicaps which he might perhaps have overcome, even as Demosthenes is said to have risen above similar disabilities, lay the obstacle of his temperament—his "love of peace and the quiet life." <sup>c</sup>

Two activities were therefore open to his retiring nature—that of the writer and that of the teacher; and since the former was not more lucrative than it commonly is to-day, there were reasons why he embraced them both. He tells us in the *Antidosis* that he lost in the Peloponnesian War all the property which his father had left to him, and that in order to repair his fortune he took pupils for pay. <sup>d</sup> In other words, he embarked on the career of a

<sup>a</sup> μεθόρια φιλοσόφου τε ἀνδρὸς καὶ πολιτικοῦ, Plato, *Euthydemus* 305 c. The nameless critic here described is undoubtedly Isocrates. See Thompson's essay on "The Philosophy of Isocrates and his Relation to the Socratic Schools" in his edition of the *Phaedrus*, p. 181.

<sup>b</sup> *Phil.* 81; *Panath.* 10; *Epist.* i. 9, viii. 7.

<sup>c</sup> *Antid.* 151.

<sup>d</sup> 161, 162.



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sophist and opened a school. This was probably in the year 392.<sup>a</sup> Before this, however, must be placed the decade in his life <sup>b</sup> during which he wrote speeches for others to deliver in the law courts.<sup>c</sup> We cannot easily set aside the authority of Aristotle on this point and reject as spurious the six forensic speeches which are included in our manuscripts ;<sup>d</sup> and when Isocrates appears to discredit this phase of his activity <sup>e</sup> and expresses repeatedly his contempt for this kind of writing, we must interpret his words to mean that he wishes this episode in his work to be forgotten, and that he dates his true career from the opening of his school.

Although Isocrates classes himself with the sophists, yet he sets himself sharply—and at times rancorously—apart from the other teachers of his age. He criticizes his rivals and praises his own system mainly in two of his essays : *Against the Sophists*, which he issued shortly after the opening of his school as an advertisement of his programme ; and the *Antidosis*, which he published near the end of his career, forty years later, as “ an image of his life and work.”

He denies a high place in education to teachers

<sup>a</sup> Jebb ii. p. 8.

<sup>b</sup> The first of the forensic speeches is dated 403 ; the last, 393. See Jebb ii. p. 7. Jebb accepts the tradition of Isocrates' school in Chios and assigns it to the year 403 ; but this rests on the authority of a very careless statement of [Plutarch], and is regarded as very dubious by Blass, ii. p. 17.

<sup>c</sup> Every man was his own lawyer in the Athenian courts ; and when he did not feel competent to prepare his own plea he paid a professional speech-writer, λογογράφος, to compose one for him.

<sup>d</sup> See Jebb ii. pp. 7, 8.

<sup>e</sup> *Antid.* 36.