

"DO NOT DO TO OTHERS WHAT WOULD ANGER YOU IF DONE TO YOU BY OTHERS."

— ISOCRATES (436-338 BCE)

RHETORICISM — An Overview

Inception: Isocrates (436-338 BCE)

Adherents: [EBI Estimate]

Primary Value Proposition: Clarifying the truth.

The Word of (about and/or attributed to) God:

- The noblest worship is to make yourself as good and as just as you can. - Isocrates
- Of all possessions wisdom alone is immortal. - Isocrates
- What is got over the devil's back is spent under his belly. - Isocrates

Core Beliefs: Isocrates' program of rhetorical education stressed the ability to use language to address practical problems, cases where absolute truth was not obtainable. He considered natural ability and practice to be more important than rules or principles of rhetoric. Rather than delineating static rules, Isocrates stressed "fitness for the occasion" and the rhetor's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and situations.

Isocrates saw the ideal orator as someone who must not only possess rhetorical gifts, but possess also a wide knowledge of philosophy, science, and the arts. The orator should also represent Greek ideals of freedom, self-control, and virtue. In this, he influenced several Roman rhetoricians, such as Cicero and Quintilian, and also had an influence on the idea of liberal education.

On the art of rhetoric, he was also an innovator. He promoted a clear and natural style that avoided artificiality, while providing rhythm and variation that commanded the attention of the listener. Like most rhetoricians, he saw rhetoric as a method of clarifying the truth, rather than of obscuring it.