

ABSTRACT

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b) Language

English

c) Title of the paper

The Persuasive Power of the εἰκός Argument: the Case of Isaeus III.

(Panel 5: The Powers of Persuasion)

d) Abstract

W. Wyse in his great edition of Isaeus (*The Speeches of Isaeus*, Cambridge 1904) considered the third speech, the longest one in the orator's *corpus*, as an example of Greek oratory that leaves on the mind a disagreeable impression of trickiness and dishonesty, whose composition is crude and its verbosity and repetitions are offensive to a reader. However, there is strong indication that the client of Isaeus was successful at the action for false witness, on whose occasion he delivered this speech, since he had earlier successfully brought an action for perjury against another witness for the same controversy, when he had presumably advanced the same argumentation. A careful reading from the perspective of the *advocatus diaboli* and an assessment of the strength of the case reveal weaknesses in the arguments of Isaeus III, which extensively rely on probabilities (ἀκ τῶν εἰκότων), and observe that the opponent's claim rests on solid evidence.

In the present paper we are attempting a fresh reading of the arguments of Isaeus III (choice, type, development, structure, order, presentation, diction, support by evidence and law), aiming at detecting the tactics by which a fairly doubtful case has been (in all probability) won. We conclude that a series of well-structured arguments of probability combined with good knowledge and manipulation of the Athenian law and the prejudices of the middle Athenians who comprised the ranks of the jury, could prevail and secure success in a legal dispute.