

Heuristic Appropriation of Aristotle's Topos / Logos for Understanding Inscriptions of Persian Kings

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Abstract

With regard to the essential role and function of topos / place (in comparison with time) in the thinking, acting and speaking of the ancient individuals, it is possible to analyze the inscribed speeches of ancient Persian kings according to their conceptions of topos or place. For reaching to this aim Darius' inscriptions in Behistun (DB) will be chosen and they will be analyzed within an appropriate heuristically Aristotle framework.

Keywords: Topos; Logos; Action, Darius; Aristotle.

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Introduction

In the context of ancient empire building, this paper explores the process of Persian Empire - building by its builder on the basis of his own topos and logos. Accordingly, to analyze and understand this construct, the Aristotelian theoretical framework will be utilized (that may have practical utility for Alexander too).

It is obvious that the formation of this construct is not an easy and simple issue/matter. Therefore, there will predictably be different alternative ideas and positions for and against this formation. At the same time, according to Aristotelian terms, all these pertain to the field of practical thinking means that they are not pure abstract thoughts and speculations but have practical ends and aims. In other words, in the external domain, they are thought and speculated in order to lead and realize

something beyond themselves.

Accordingly, there are different agonistic and opposite parties that we can classify them to these two broad classes; those who seek to establish Persian empire and those who are totally against and want to undermine it. Broadly speaking, there are two opposite camps and on the basis of their related specific positions / topoi they will arrange their way of thinking, speaking / logos and communicating with each other and each one seeks to persuade the other camp to accept certain conclusions that affirm its alternative and negate its own favorite acceptable alternative.

Up to here, we have mentioned to the general background against which the Persian Empire building should take shape. Two agonistic camps or positions construct their own favorable ways of thoughts and speeches individually. To use

military terms and atmosphere (as the Aristotle terms in Topica, VIII remind them to our minds) each camp contrives and programs deliberately and strategically to maintain and defend its related position and at the same time to offend and attack the opposite position. On this basis, in both camps we have strategists in the fields of mind, language and military or in other words there are simultaneously thinkers / soldiers.

With regard to the above mentioned theoretical framework, we take Darius, inscriptions in Behistun (as text in five main and some minor columns) as our reference for the practical (biased) speculations of Persian Empire builder. He is in the "camp" or more properly is the representative and index of the "position" that introduces, promotes and defends empire building. Accordingly, it is

natural that the first line of the first column begins with his (biased) thesis – for he does not introduce the tentative one but in the beginning his proposed and accomplished thesis: "I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, King of countries ..." (1.1.1-3. Kent, 119). What is the origin of this thesis or in other words what are its supporting confirming assumption (s)? According to the spirit of the ancient time and age and the following lines of the Inscription, the confirming presumption is the "hereditary kingship" and Darius is the ninth in this chain of kingship (2.1.3-6; 3.1.6-8, Kent, 119) and we can consider the latter another "position" that can have its own supporters and oppositions - but it is another issue that will not be considered here. Therefore, it is his position and thesis that he is the king of king and, accordingly, should defend it and

expel the contrary and opposite positions and speculations or *topoi/logoi*.

According to our Aristotelian theoretical framework and in order to apply it, it should be possible to arrange his arguments in four interrelated levels: Past; Present; Future; and Quality / Size that all of them have relation with action and praxis (for we are in the sphere of “practical thinking” – thinking in order to act). It means that historically and on the basis of ancient way of thinking and speaking/ writing/ inscription we have to classify the Darius inscription into these four sets: What has or has not performed? What can or cannot perform? And what will or will not perform? And is quality/ size issue? Here the first three questions are invariable but the size is a variable factor that can be introduced or not dependent on the

related examined subject. Thus, we will arrange and order these five columns in these four classes.

What has or has not performed?

It is supposed that the defender of Kingship, who wants to defend his position and expel the other opposite position, should carefully and strategically arrange his arguments (in thought and speech/ writing) in four successive sets that begin with the past actions/ in-actions in small portion and then move gradually towards middle and large portions for present and future actions/ in-actions.

In regard to past actions/in-actions, Darius mentions positively to this fact that in the past they successively and apparently were nobles and kings without any problem and issue. Thereby, in the past there was no in-action in the form of opposition, revolt, offense,

and the like. Besides, it seems that the defense and stance of Persian Empire builder is based on the historical facts and common knowledge as accepted beliefs - in the context of this kind of argumentation that is not necessary which he refers to theoretical, metaphysical, and strict pure logical premises. In other words, for defending and maintaining his position Darius, as thinker/soldier, needs “accepted opinions” that his adversary camp knows them too, and on this commonality will keep and advance his position. But it is not sufficient. Therefore we have to move to the second level.

What can or cannot perform?

After the rather quiet period of past, the empire builder speaks about the “present” and what is or is not done. Here is its positive side that Darius presents a combination of casual

pivotal role of Ahuramazda and his own in doing some actions that will be mentioned. He speaks of his action during one year in nineteen wars against the opposite camp (DB IV: 52.2-31, Kent, 131). For any reasons now he refers a new factor and power that is absent in his argument of the past, named Ahuramazda. And it is through this new element that he does these actions: subjects the other people; get tributes from them; reward to the excellent and punishes the evils; requires them respect and do what he says (DB I : 7.1.17-20; 8.1.20-24, Kent, 119). Thereby at present with his presence there are done many things in different territories and countries. These afore mentioned actions are the result of a deliberate process in which the sayings of the person who has authority are considered and become judgments on different issues and subjects and

in this form shapes the laws that any action or in-action by the people should be based and justified with regard to them.

Quantity

According to our Aristotelian theoretical framework, quantity is a constant factor and we can realize that Darius in his position as the supporter of empire has a persistent emphasize of the quantity and size of his empire with their proper names and numbers (23 provinces. 6.12-17, Kent, 119). And mentioning to this fact may be attributed to the changes and comparisons that he want to make in contrast to the past. Therefore, after mentioning to the present actions and before moving to future, it seems primary and necessary to introduce the size or quantity as his vital position / topos that he is determined to defend from it in speech and action. Considering

that the adversary camp wants to introduce and defends his position each member is divided and presented according to its proper name and province as an instance of quality that covers the rest of all five columns.

It should be said that these three levels of actions and in-actions - in the past; present; and quality - shape the basic initial background, and little by little prepare its contemporary opposite camp, so readers for the argumentative parts that as foreground will come afterwards. But before introducing his arguments it is necessary to comment on what will happen or not happen in the future.

What will or will not perform?

With regard to the mentioned background information provided by Darius about past and present times, now in accordance with his primary

thesis he says wants to establish this empire by the favor of Ahuramazda. Therefore this is his decision for future and if does not do this somehow, it is an indirect questioning of his supporter. In other words, if he wants to defend from his position and thesis, he should do some future actions for reaching to this goal. But predicting future is not an easy task and there are many unforeseen intruding factors and events that should make him prudent about the complete realization of his initial proposed thesis – it is so or not we read the rest of related inscriptions. The rest of related three columns of Darius inscriptions in Behistun are a narration of his doings but when we reach to the important and crucial Fourth column (for our fourth topos) we can infer some clues about the things that can be done and not done in the future.

In the Fourth column as Darius’

“letter of doings” after one year and nineteen wars against nine rebellious territories and kings, he delineates the prospects of future with or without himself. According to the Darius wordings, it seems he thinks that it is possible for the king-related listener become doubtful about his “letter of doings” and a pessimistic and ambitious future takes shape. Although from the speaker and doer these actions have taken place, they may be doubtful for the future of Persian king (and any reader of this Inscription). Darius mentions to these conditions that he has a new unprecedented factor called Ahuramazda and besides the would-be king should be “convinced of his mentioned kingly actions. Moreover, a new somehow complex multilevel category called “Lie” is introduced that serious battle against it can maintain and preserve the initial proposed thesis in the future.

Accordingly the actions of “Lie” and its supporters can undermine the Darius thesis for the future and at the same time fighting with it and its camp can maintain the thesis too (DB IV: 54.4.33-36; 55.4.36-40, Kent, 131).

With these comments and recommendations of Darius, it is time to look at and examine his initial thesis once again. According to the initial thesis at the first line of the first column, he is “Darius the Great King, King of Kings, king in Persian, King of Countries...” (DB I: 1.1.1-3, Kent, 119). But now this general absolute attribution and title is transformed to a limited and conditional category for the future. What can be done in the future is dependent on the fighting with “Lie” and belief in the past doings and if there is success, there will be widespread Persian Empire. Otherwise, there will be a limited

kingship in Persia - thereby the initial thesis will be narrowed and appropriated.

Up to here, Darius’ four- level account formed the necessary background information for us as his readers. But as an interested party who wants to maintain a certain thesis, he should arrange his topoi in a rationale form versus the other party (that we take it as a whole) who is against him and wants to maintain his own thesis in a rationale form and fight with its alternative. And thereby we will move towards the argumentative part of discussion. According to our Aristotelian theoretical framework and the quality and genus of Darius inscription, there are some parties who are grouped into two basic ones called: a) supporters of a so-called thesis; and at the same time, b) opposition of the so-called thesis. Each camp wants to attack and also

preserve and defend of his position and, in other words, to convince his counterpart accept his position. Besides, simultaneously the opposite counterpart wants to attack and also maintain and defend of his topos and, in other words, to convince his adversary to his position. And all these form an argumentative matrix that is basically dialectical.

Dialectical Eristic Imaginative Argumentations

According to our Aristotelian theoretical framework, it is the high time to see how Darius arranges his topoi in a logical order that is or should be basically eristic, contentious or dialectical. For he confronts and attacks different adversary parties, it would be better to present his logical order with its different phases that has in the inscription. With this notion that Aristotle logical order in Topics

mainly has, these three components in the conclusion: opposites; cases; and more or less and likewise we can say that he constructs the related arguments with them. Accordingly we go towards the first phase is his argumentation with a Magian, Gautama by name.

Here the main importance and weights of Darius's arguments and conclusions as a supporter of empire rests on the opposition between a character who is by family king with the character who is not – thereby he uses the component of “contradictories” king, not king; Ahuramazda, not- Ahuramazda. Besides, for Gautama lies that he is son of Cyrus and brother of Cambyses accordingly Darius constructs his second argument by the component of “contrary” between lie and truth. Therefore there is no “relation” between father (Cyrus) and child (Gautama). Up to

here Darius conducts his argumentation on the basis of oppositions. But at the second level he refers to the “cases” and the difference between bestowing (by Ahuramazda), belonging, having or “possession” and “seizing”, occupying, removing, and taking away (without Ahuramazda). Thereby he shows that Gautama should be deprived of the kingdom and it be restored to the character whose family are kings (I.35-43; 1.43 - 48; 1.48-61, Kent, 120). This is the thesis of Darius as the defender of past hereditary order, what about the counter-thesis of opponent party under the name of Gautama?

In DB inscription there are a few lines of information about his adversary party but his thesis or more correctly counter-thesis is this: “I am Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, the brother of Cambyses” (the same

counter-thesis will be repeated later on in DB III: 3.21-28). According to this sentence, he is aware and conscious of the standard of kingship that his father and family should be king, but in truth he is not Smerdis therefore he tell lies. Actually he is not the referent of this sentence although the sentence is correct in itself. And on account of this counterfeit, he kills many people (as an index of his actions) in order to hide his true identity. Accordingly, there is an eristic (or imaginative) argument between these two opponent camps for then we read that Darius kills! him and his followers - this is a paradox that repeats itself in the following phases of argumentation too. By this killing, all things (from kingship and sanctuaries to the herd, pasture, house and property of the people) come back to the order they should be, but are not.

The second phase of Darius eristic Imaginative argumentation is with Acina. In this short phase of less than ten lines we have no background information about this opponent except that this is his thesis: "I am king in Elam" and there are no marks of the components of the logical order, therefore, we take it as a periphery). And the result of this imaginative argument is his killing! After this, Darius narrates the third phase of his argumentation with Nidintu-Bel from Babylon in more details; here and for the second time in DB III: 3.76-92(meanwhile with emphasis on possession and deprivation). Here of the three mentioned components pertinent to dialectical disputation, Darius uses mainly one of them that are opposites; firstly, the lie contrary to truth: Nidintu-Bel son of Ainaira (truth) in contrast to Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus (false). Besides,

the existence of Ahuramazda (as an indicator of victory and rightness) on the side of Darius and its absence on the side of Nidintu-Bel. But there is no information about the counter-thesis and actions of the Darius' opponent except that he is the occupier of kingdom in Babylon. Thereby, Darius makes use of the case pattern and compares the verbs and cases that apparently have the same meaning but it is not so: there is a big difference between the "possession" of kingship bestowed by Ahuramazda and "seizure" of it by lie and deceit. As usual this imaginative argumentation ends through death of the opponent by Darius as the supporter and defender of the status quo!

After this case, he mentions to nine counter thesis; some very brief (like DB II: 2.8-11, Kent 123) and some with details (like DB II: 2.13-17 to 2.18-29; 2.29-37 to 2.42-49;

2.49-57 to 2.57-63; and so forth). Putting aside the short case Darius mentions in DB: 2.8-11, we will explore his somehow detail argumentation with the opponent party from Media and its adherents as a camp (in DB II: 2.13-29; 2.64-78 on the man himself; and also from 2.92- 98 to DB III: 3.1-10 about his adherents). The argumentation pattern that Darius uses for defending his position/topos is based on the opposites and emphatically for the first time here the opposition of possession and privation and more details of his or agents (subjects) actions. Like the case mentioned in the last paragraph, Darius contrasts lie with truth for his opponent forfeits his name and family in this form: "I am Khshathrita, of the family of Cyaxares". Thus from the beginning, this Median, whose real name is Phraortes, lies and not truth about his own identity that wants to become

king. Accordingly, we can infer that he has not the support and confirmation of Ahuramazda and is deprived of this critical power for himself. But more importantly as we mentioned Darius in his logical that is dialectical eristic argumentation put stress on this point that he should be the only absolute possessor and nobody else can proclaim such a claim and title, therefore, they should be dispossessors (DB II: 2.18-29 two times. Besides he repeats this theme in the following cases). This forms a polarity in an eristic argumentation between one "individual" (for we read that Darius considers his own those actions which are done by his agents and subjects. As a very manifest example refer to DB III: 3.75-76) who is possessor and the others who are dispossessors, but as defenders of counter-thesis proclaim, they are possessors and also in comparison

with the other-before-mentioned adversary camps more in action. But the result of this argumentation is the same as before and leads to the killing of opponent. It is noteworthy that there is another case (about Armenia) that its opponent camp is a rebellious army not an individual (DB II: from 2.29-37 to 2.57-63).

After these chains of dialectic eristic argumentations, Darius narrates his general conclusions which are basically constructed through a chain of oppositions that can be grouped into thesis and counter-thesis such as Truth, Obedience, Loyalty, Reward, Favor (Ahuramazda), Rightness, Revelation, Friendliness, and Lie, Rebellion, Disloyalty, Punishment, Disfavor, Wrongfulness, Concealment, Hostility respectively.

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برای فهم کتیبه‌های داریوش

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