# Socrates and Dionysus

# Socrates and Dionysus:
# Philosophy and Art in Dialogue

Edited by

Ann Ward

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Edited by Ann Ward

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***For Mark,*** *in loving memory*

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During the time I was developing the core concepts that have brought this collection of essays into being, my father, James Mark Allen, was gravely ill and had been suffering from sickness for quite some time. During the summer of 2012 as the workshop was taking place, he took a turn for the worse and, despite the dedicated care of my mother, finally succumbed after a long illness. The death of my father is a personal tragedy for both me and my family, and has opened up a longing in my soul that, although I am often distracted from it, seems always to be there and to which I always return. My father meant many things to me. Yet, if I could be brief, it is my father who taught me most of all love and loyalty to family, even through hard times, integrity, even in the face of fearful corruption, and dedication to truth, even if it is painful. His example shows that the good can be hard and take a long time, even a lifetime, to make itself felt, but that such an understanding reveals an underlying hope in life rather than despair.

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Regina, March 2013
Ann Ward

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## ANN WARD

Friedrich Nietzsche argues that his work *The Birth of Tragedy* addresses what he identifies as 'the problem of science'. According to Nietzsche science conquers art, especially the tragic art of the Dionysian poet of ancient Greece. The Greek tragedian, Nietzsche claims, embraces life in all its pain by indulging in the '*craving for the ugly*'. Embodied by the satyr chorus as the physical image of Dionysus, the 'ugly' is understood to be the low, animal passions of human beings. Appealing to the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the knowledge of culture, Dionysian tragedy gets us in touch with our bodies and their deepest longings. Strictly speaking, tragedy invites us to feel the presence of the god, not simply to see or hear him.

Tragedy, Nietzsche argues, is opposed and eventually destroyed by science. Associated with the 'Socratism' of the theoretical man, the response of science, or philosophy, to pain is quite different from the response of tragedy. Craving the 'beautiful' rather than the ugly, science and philosophy celebrate the human mind in particular and the mind or rationality of the universe more generally. Moreover, although Plato, according to Nietzsche, preserves the tragic art form in his dialogues, it is Euripides, another student of Socrates, who destroys the Dionysian entirely. Euripides, himself a tragedian, destroyed Greek tragedy by bringing the *demos* along with their everyday reality onto the stage. By doing so he brought the human individual, separated from their god, into view. Nietzsche argues that Euripides celebrated the unadorned individual because only the individual is intelligible or accessible to human reason; he insisted that art be comprehended by mind or that it be rationally understood. Euripides was possessed of such a rationalizing drive, Nietzsche claims, because his primary audience was Socrates. It is Socrates, therefore, who is the true opponent of Dionysus; Euripides is just his vehicle.

Following Nietzsche's bifurcation between philosophy and art, postmodern political philosopher Richard Rorty rejects the tendency of philosophy to posit absolute, universal truths and turns to the concept of ‘redescription’ which he associates with the ‘wisdom of the novel’. The novel is wise because it posits the relative truths and perspectives of the various individuals, societies and cultures that it represents. The novelist can give full hearing to all particular persons, actions and situations; they are neither right nor wrong but merely different. The novel as an art form can therefore include every possible perspective of every particular situation, event or person.

New interdisciplinary fields in politics, literature and film, have given rise to an expanding community of scholars who disagree with the approaches taken by Nietzsche and Rorty. These scholars are increasingly shedding light on the ways in which philosophy and art are friends rather than enemies. They seek to bridge the theoretical and ethical gaps between the world of ‘fiction’ and the world of ‘fact’, of art and science. Art enables us to confront the contingencies of life by answering the immediate question: what’s happening and what is going to happen next. Science also attempts to answer this question. However, there appears to be a fundamental tension between the literary-artistic and scientific projects. Whereas the artist seeks to recreate human experience, thereby evoking basic ethical issues, the scientist seeks ethically neutral, evidence-based facts as the constituents of our knowledge of reality. Chapters in this volume will consider how artists, philosophers and film-makers have addressed and attempted to reconcile the artist’s language of normativity and the scientist’s language of facticity.

This volume builds upon recent scholarship on the relationship between philosophy and poetry, science and art, at the same time adding to it in significant ways. Martha Nussbaum conceives of Socrates and Plato as advocates of philosophy understood as rational self-inquiry and apprehension of universal, abstract truths. The narrative artist’s literary form, in contrast, gives scope to the concrete particularity and complexity of human life, with special emphasis on the role of emotion in self-examination and ethical decision making. Nussbaum explores ancient tragedy in *Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and the modern novel in *Love’s Knowledge* (1990), to illustrate what she regards as the alternative truths revealed by art. Although indebted to the works of Nussbaum in many ways, this volume will locate attention to emotional experience in philosophic inquiry within the Socratic-Platonic corpus itself, and view the Platonic dialogue as bridging rather than solidifying the divide between philosophy and art. It will also include chapters on the ancient authors Thucydides, Euripides, and Aristotle.

In *Political Emotions: Aristotle and the Symphony of Reason and Emotion* (2006), Marlene Sokolon also investigates the place of emotion in classical political philosophy. Aristotle, Sokolon argues, understands human beings as political animals not only because they possess reason but also because they experience emotions. Like rational inquiry human emotions are essentially political phenomena because they are judgments of and responses to the particulars of our sociopolitical environment. Sokolon denies, moreover, the strict dualism between body and soul and the rational and non-rational in Aristotle's political philosophy. For Aristotle, individual and political excellence requires not the suppression or obedience of emotion to reason, but rather the partnership or symphony of reason and emotion. Like Sokolon's work, the chapters in this volume will acknowledge the place of the emotional and the physical in both classical political philosophy and art. It will go beyond Sokolon's work, however, by focusing not simply on the role of emotion in Aristotle's philosophy but on the latter's reliance on poetry as well.

In the field of politics and literature, Catherine Zuckert, in *Natural Right and the American Imagination* (1990), argues that the major motif of the American novel—the hero's withdrawal from civil society to live in nature—is a reflection on the "state of nature" philosophy on which America was explicitly founded. Presenting not only a fictional rebellion against established laws and customs, this motif also considers new grounds on which a just community may be established. Moreover, Zuckert argues that in contemplating the natural foundations of political order, novelists are in fact exploring the central issue of political philosophy: the relation between nature and convention. In S*hakespeare's Political Wisdom* (2013), Timothy W. Burns, reading five of Shakespeare's plays—*Julius Caesar, MacBeth, The Merchant of Venice, King Lear,* and *The Tempest*—through the lens of political philosophy, argues that these plays provide serious reflection on moral and political questions, namely: Who should rule and what is justice? Tim Spiekerman, in *Shakespeare's Political Realism* (2001), provides fresh interpretations of Shakespeare's English history plays. He argues that through these plays Shakespeare teaches modern audiences about the essence of politics. Focusing on the relation between Shakespeare's poetry and Machiavelli's political philosophy, Spiekerman explores the conflict between ambition and justice in the plays, concluding that Shakespeare has an even more pessimistic view than Machiavelli of the limits of politics.

Although not exploring the political philosophy of the American novel, as Zuckert does, this volume will explore the novels of Simone De Beauvoir and Milan Kundera, and the philosophical foundations of contemporary American film. It suggests that the best of modern American film reflects not on the liberal ‘state of nature’ theories of the Founders, but rather displays the destructive, yet life-affirming, creative impulse that Nietzsche maintained was present in the Dionysian wisdom of pain. Moreover, the volume considers the relation between the political philosophy of Machiavelli and the modern Italian film of DeSica rather than the plays of Shakespeare. Yet, it will conclude, much as Spiekerman does about Shakespeare, that DeSica’s view of political possibilities is more pessimistic than Machiavelli’s.

This volume takes a unique interdisciplinary approach with fourteen chapters from scholars in the fields of Philosophy, Political Science, Visual Arts and Languages. The contributors teach and research in Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia. Part one explores the relationship between philosophy, politics, poetry and poetic history in the ancient world. In chapter two Bernard Dobski gives careful attention to the broader architecture of Thucydides’ *History* to reveal a dialectical movement from the tensions within political justice as the Greeks understood it, to a presentation of nature as a standard for morality and politics. But, Dobski argues, in Thucydides’ hands nature as a standard by which one can judge politics and moral virtue must ultimately be exchanged in favour of a return to the standard of Greek—and especially Athenian—politics, albeit a return mediated by the foregoing reflections on the limits of political life and human nature. The necessity of this return to the conventions of Athenian politics is thus at once occasioned and conditioned by an awareness and acceptance of the fundamental limits to the moral and political categories that define human life, an awareness reflected in the puzzling conclusion to the History. According to Dobski, an ending that seems so problematic to so many scholars and readers of this epic appears less so when one refuses to impose on Thucydides a view of what his work is or should be. Attentive to the artistry of the *History*, Dobski enters into the dialogue to which the *History* beckons. By doing so, Dobski foregrounds the work’s artistic aspects that remain under-theorized by contemporary scholarship on Thucydides.

Marlene Sokolon, in chapter three, argues that in the *Ion* Euripides reworks the story of Athenian founding by bringing together two competing myths of origin. The Athenians identified as Ionian and recognized Ion as the progenitor of the migrant Ionian people. Competing with this Ionian story, however, was a founding myth that recognized Athenian autochthony; the Athenians believed that they literally sprang from the earth itself. In synthesizing these myths, Euripides reveals how foundation stories reflect much more about the needs and desires of the present, than provide an accurate record of the past. For our own present, his retelling remains useful as it simultaneously exposes the necessary role of foundation stories in crafting political identity, as well as the limitations of such stories to provide an unambiguous understanding of the political self. Sokolon argues that as Euripides locates the heart of foundation stories in the desire to be ‘ruled by one’s own’, he reveals the political problem embedded in determining ‘who is one’s own’.

Patrick Cain and Mary Nichols, in chapter four, argue that Aristotle finds in Homer’s account of Achilles a model for his own presentation of moral virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle, according to Cain and Nichols, agrees with Homer in his reservations about the self-sufficiency of nobility, even while placing moral virtue and nobility among the elements that constitute the human good. Moreover, like Homer, Aristotle finds a tension between nobility and friendship, while ultimately showing their dependence. Cain and Nichols argue further that Aristotle’s *Ethics* builds on Homer’s presentation of the beautiful, following his lead by using the ‘falsehoods’ characteristic of poetry to invoke the wonder that initiates philosophy. In doing so, Aristotle defends poetry against a philosophic critique. Cain and Nichol’s exploration of the contribution that poetry makes to the pursuit of wisdom proceeds by examining several of Aristotle’s frequent allusions to Homer, and especially to the events surrounding Hector’s death at the hands of Achilles, in his discussions of courage, magnanimity and friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Part two explores how Enlightenment philosophers make use of artistic narrative to pose a scientific view of the world and the religious toleration to which it gives rise. In chapter five, Timothy W. Burns argues that in his poetic work *New Atlantis*, Francis Bacon provides a justification for his new scientific method. For Bacon, according to Burns, the old science understood nature as disclosing final causes or purposes. Directed explicitly against such teleological thinking that was resistant to human attempts to transform the given world so as to impose on it the fulfillment of human purposes, above all that of vastly improving humankind’s physical condition, Bacon’s new science needs to dispose of the wish that reality is at bottom governed by a benign divinity. Bacon’s answer to this need, Burns argues, lies in his hopes for the practical success and popular impact of the new science. Through what has come to be called ‘technology’, the new science will correct nature’s stingy accommodation of human needs. As humankind progresses steadily away from its naturally vulnerable situation, the consequence will be that all of humanity will increasingly be ready to admit that our natural situation is not purposefully ordered. People will be less prone to hope for a divine purpose in, and a possible divine redemption from, humankind's natural misery. The mastery over nature to relieve the human estate will lead eventually to the disappearance of the misdirected hopes for a world intrinsically ordered by a beneficent but mysterious divinity. Burns argues that it is in the *New Atlantis* that Bacon paints most vividly this vision of a scientifically and technologically satisfied humanity.

Lee Ward, in chapter six, focuses on a less well documented aspect of Rousseau's contribution to the political and psychological features of modern democracy; the democratic character of his views of natural theology as they are expressed in his narrative 'The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar' contained in his masterpiece *Emile*. The Savoyard Vicar's profession, according to Ward, offers Rousseau's fullest reflections upon natural theology and the moral implications flowing from his foundational premise of the natural goodness of human nature. Ward argues that the Vicar presents a moral vision that rejects both scientific materialism and dogmatic orthodoxy, while providing metaphysical support for an egalitarian and tolerant democratic political order. Moreover, according to Ward, the Savoyard Vicar offers a particularly powerful demonstration of Rousseau's use of the literary form. In the context of the larger work the *Emile*, the Vicar is not only the proponent of a particular philosophical position but a character whose life plays a role within the larger narrative about the natural education of Emile. As such the Vicar emerges as a kind of democratic hero, whose narrative illustrates a literary form that Rousseau intends will replace the traditional textual authority of scripture and philosophical treatises. For Ward, the narrative form of the Vicar's speech causes the reader to reflect upon both the democratic character of modernity and the meaning of a text.

Art and its role in expressing the human condition in the thought of late modern and contemporary philosophers is the topic investigated in part three. In chapter seven, I explore Nietzsche's understanding of the unique materialism of Dionysian tragedy by considering his reflections on the origins of tragedy in the tragic chorus. I then turn to the Dionysian confrontation with science or the mind of philosophy. Nietzsche claims that the Greek tragedian embraces life in all its pain by indulging in the '*craving for the ugly*'. Embodied by the satyr chorus as the physical image of Dionysus, the 'ugly' is understood to be the animal passions of human beings. Appealing to the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the knowledge of culture, Dionysian tragedy gets us in touch with our bodies and its deepest longings. Nietzsche, I argue, claims that tragedy is opposed and eventually destroyed by science. Associated with the 'Socratism' of the theoretical man, science, or philosophy, craving the ‘beautiful’ rather than the ugly, celebrates the human mind and the rationality of the universe. Although Plato preserves the tragic art form in his dialogues, it is Euripides, according to Nietzsche, who destroys the Dionysian entirely. Euripides destroyed Greek tragedy by bringing the *demos* along with their everyday reality onto the stage. By doing so he brought the human individual separated from their god into view. Nietzsche suggests that Euripides celebrated the unadorned individual because only the individual is intelligible or accessible to reason; he wanted art to be comprehended by mind or rationally understood. Euripides was possessed of such a rationalizing drive, Nietzsche claims, because his primary audience was Socrates. It is Socrates, therefore, who is the true opponent of Dionysus.

Anne-Marie Schultz, in chapter eight, argues that Nietzsche’s primary charge against Socrates is that he abandons the Dionysian elements of experience in favour of the Apollonian. Like many scholars, Schultz argues that Nietzsche mischaracterizes Plato’s presentation of Socrates. However, to make this case Schultz focuses on a different aspect of the Platonic portrait of Socrates. She explores three autobiographical narratives that Plato’s Socrates tells: his account of his testing of the Delphic oracle in the *Apology*, his report of his lessons of love from Diotima in the *Symposium*, and his description of his turn from naturalistic philosophy to his own method of inquiry in the *Phaedo*. These autobiographical narratives illustrate a profound sensitivity to the role of emotional experience in philosophical inquiry. In Nietzsche’s terms, Schultz argues that they offer a synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian modes of existence because, alongside dependence on the experience of Dionysian ex-stasis, they uphold the importance of rational inquiry. As such, these three narratives, according to Schultz, provide a therapeutic model of self-knowledge as self-care that Nietzsche himself imitates in his own autobiography *Ecce Homo*.

In chapter nine, Susan Gottlöber brings together phenomenologist Max Scheler’s remarks on art and the artist to investigate their role in his overall personalist value theory. Gottlöber argues that for Scheler the work of art, phenomenologically speaking, contains something of the spiritual and individual essence of the artist, which means, practically speaking, the person. The person, however, stands at the heart of his own value cosmos and is at the same time part of the whole value universe of the time that can speak to us through history. Thus, according to Gottlöber, when we value certain aesthetic aspects in a piece of art, these values appear not simply for us but we also understand the other person, people, and time period better who valued them as well. Through valuing, which is a loving, affirmative act, we can get to know the person in the way they reveal themselves to us in their acts of preferring some values over others. In this way, art contributes to Scheler's personalist value ethics.

Robert Piercey, in chapter 10, explores what Paul Ricoeur can contribute to the rethinking of the boundaries between art, science, and philosophy. Piercey first explicates Ricoeur's view of natural science against the backdrop of an influential criticism advanced by Brian Leiter. Piercey defends Ricoeur and shows that he sees science as a thoroughly creative and interpretive enterprise that has much in common with artistic production. This view of science is not only less naïve than Leiter claims; it shares quite a bit with the pluralistic, hermeneutically sophisticated philosophy of science now ascendant in the academy. Piercey then argues that Ricoeur does not merely claim that scientific explanation resembles artistic creation in key respects, but rather that his position is more subtle: while there is indeed a sense in which science is artistic, there is also a sense in which art is scientific. The relation between art and science in Ricoeur's thought takes the form of an antinomy. Art conditions science, but at the same time science conditions art. Piercey concludes by maintaining that while Ricouer thinks art and science are dialectically interrelated, this dialectic does not require the two to be on an equal footing. Drawing on work by Boyd Blundell, Piercey argues that Ricouer sees the dialectic between art and science as asymmetrical. It is a genuine interrelation, but an interrelation in which one pole is more fundamental than the other.

Doing philosophy through literature and the cinematic experience are the themes of part four. In chapter 11 Anna Mudde explores the ways that Beauvoir's description of philosophical novels reveals her understanding of consciousness as a particular sort of 'ambiguity': that which not only gives the world meaning, but which also, necessarily, finds meaning in the world through the values, ideas, and objects given to it by others. It is through the philosophical (metaphysical) novel, Mudde argues, that Beauvoir finds a medium for the philosophical communication of ambiguity, or, that is, a medium for writing human being. More specifically, Mudde considers the metaphysical stance Beauvoir is able to describe because of her commitment to philosophical literature. In writing and reading fiction, what is manifest is both found and given, discovered and created; and the metaphysics of the novel offers a way to read philosophy as poetry in the sense of bringing-forth or revealing worldly meaning, in ways that are ambiguously particular and universal.

Paul Howard, in chapter 12, seeks to understand the challenge to liberalism from within European civilization by turning to dissident writers and philosophers who lived under Communism. Although less prominently associated with dissident writing than Vaclav Havel or Jan Patocka, Howard argues that Milan Kundera's works deserve serious consideration within the cannon of dissident literature and by political theorists trying to understand the modern attraction of totalitarian regimes. According to Howard, Kundera's novels allow us to understand that the appeal of salvific politics for modern human beings is rooted in their erotic nature—the desire for self-completion, self-mastery, and recognition. Focussing in particular on the novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Howard argues that Kundera reflects on two different types of forgetting. One is the inability of the human mind to recall the past in all its complexity, and thus life recedes from us even as we experience it. The second type of forgetting is not a failure of memory but the conscious act of setting horizons of meaning, which Kundera depicts as a reflection of the inherent human drive for autonomy and self-mastery. Howard argues that Kundera, through the central character of Mirek, shows how the attempt to rewrite history into a closed horizon or linear narrative reflects our desire to control our own personal narratives. The most powerful attraction of any salvific ideology, such as Communism, is that it feeds the need of the self for meaning in the world, as its adherents are lionized as the vanguard of the utopia.

In chapter 13, Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery and Paul T. Rubery investigate the political realism of Niccolo Machiavelli and the later cinematic 'neo-realism' of Vittorio DeSica. Undertaking a close analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, Rubery and Rubery focus on the philosopher's and the film maker's differing presentations of central characters and the consequently diverse political solutions they might suggest to the brutal inequities of our world that result from the misrule of political leaders and imperial aggression. Rubery and Rubery find that salient character features that emerge are the relationship between the subject and traditional concepts of moral order, the notion of heroism and heroics on a personal and societal scale, and the subject's participation in time as concerned with the interaction of the past, present and future. In *The Prince*, according to Rubery and Rubery, Machiavelli offers his readers Cesare Borgia, an imperfect yet noteworthy near prototype for his ideal 'new founder', and Agathocles the Sicilian, the criminal prince of Syracuse. De Sica, Rubery and Rubery suggest, seems to imply that in the post-WWII world there is no longer a place for traditional heroics in Italian culture. Moreover, figures in De Sica's work firmly exist in the now while standing in more complicated relationships to present, past, and future. Despite this contrast, Rubery and Rubery maintain that heroism is at the heart of the prescription for both, even if the idea of heroics will manifest differently in each and cause diverse reactions amongst audiences.

Andreas Wansbrough, in chapter 14, explores the ways in which Nietzsche's conception of the tragedian can enrich our understanding of tragic artists portrayed in cinema. According to Wansbrough, Nietzsche's philosophy is concerned with how we can affirm life given the existence of suffering and death, 'the ugly and the disharmonic'. In the absence of the Christian religion and the failure of supposed objective world-views, Nietzsche turns to the hope for a fusion of art and life in which life can be experienced and perceived in an affirmative way. One image he uses to suggest the potential for this integration of art and life is the tragedian or 'tragic artist', who becomes a substitute for God. Nietzsche asserts that the tragic artist, through tragedy, is able to present us with a sense of terror and suffering that is at once justified through, and overcome by, joyful creation. By examining Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, Oliver Stone's *The Doors* and Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*, Wansbrough shows that cinema portrays artists who embrace suffering in order to transform their lives into art. Cinematic techniques are also used to further identification between the audience and the tragic artist in a way that allows us to experience the tragic artist's triumph. Wansbrough seeks to provide an understanding of Nietzsche's conception of the artist as a type of god in a way that will also further insights into the tragic artist on screen.

The chapters in this volume seek to engage and recast the boundaries between poetry and philosophy, art, science, and film. Part one explores how artistic history and tragedy in the ancient world engages with political and philosophic questions, and how the philosophy of Aristotle draws from the poetry of Homer to understand the life of moral virtue. In the second part we learn how early modern and Enlightenment thinkers use literary narrative to promote the causes of scientific progress and religious toleration. Part three investigates the role of art and the artist in expressing the human condition in post-modern analyses of ancient tragedy and philosophy, and in Max Scheler's phenomenological anthropology. It also considers the dialectical relation between art and science in the philosophy of Paul Ricouer. The volume concludes by reflecting on how doing philosophy has evolved in contemporary times into writing literature and making film. Chapters in part four explore Beauvoir's understanding of the philosophical novel and the political theory expressed in the novels of Kundera. They also consider how the philosophies of Machiavelli and Nietzsche are adopted by and transformed through modern film. The volume thus seeks to mediate between the world of 'fiction' and the world of ‘fact’; between the artist’s ethically grounded recreation of human experience and the philosophic-scientific reconstruction of our knowledge of reality.

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# PART ONE:

# HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND POETRY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

# CHAPTER TWO

# THE INCOMPLETE WHOLE: THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THUCYDIDES' HISTORY

## BERNARD J. DOBSKI

The History of Thucydides concludes in the middle of a sentence about the 21st year of a war that spanned 27 years. We can resist the temptation to conclude that Thucydides' work is unfinished not only because our author informs us that he lived several years after the war ended (V.26, II.65.12, I.1)[*], but because the structural outline of his work shows why its abrupt and apparently incomplete conclusion is necessary. Careful attention to the broader architecture of Thucydides' work reveals a dialectical movement from the tensions within political justice as the Greeks understood it to a presentation of nature as a standard for morality and politics. But in Thucydides' hands, nature as a standard by which one can judge politics and moral virtue must ultimately be exchanged in favour of a return to the standard of Greek—and especially Athenian—politics albeit a return mediated by the foregoing reflections on the limits to political life and human nature. The necessity of this return to the conventions of Athenian politics is thus at once occasioned *and* conditioned by an awareness and acceptance of the fundamental limits (intelligible and otherwise) to the moral and political categories that define human life, an awareness reflected in the puzzling conclusion of the History.

An ending that seems so problematic to so many scholars and readers of this epic appears less so when one refuses to impose on Thucydides a view of what his work is or should be. For those who insist on calling his work a "history" would do well to observe that his work has no official title, that the Greek word for history *never once* shows up in the work, and that the classical definition of history from which our modern conception derives appears first in Aristotle's *Poetics,* which is to say some two generations after Thucydides wrote. We must therefore relax our expectations that his work should cover the full 27 year war and all that happened in it. If we instead approach the History more naively, allowing ourselves to wonder why Thucydides includes and omits what he does – that is, if we are attentive to the *artistry* of the History, then we can enter into that dialogue to which his History constantly beckons us. Attention to the artistic elements at work in the History is hardly ground-breaking. This path to the political wisdom of the History has already been charted by its best readers (Hobbes 1989, 577; Rousseau 1979, 239; Nietzsche 1977, 559-59). By following in their footsteps, I merely hope to foreground elements of the work's artistic polish that all too often remain under-theorized by contemporary scholarship on Thucydides.

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[*] Thucydides' work has no official title. I follow convention by referring to it as the History. All references to Thucydides' History are in standard book, chapter, and, where relevant, sentence, form. Translations are mine and based on the Jones and Powell Oxford Classical Text.

## The End and Beginning of the History

In the last sentence of the book, Thucydides reports that the Persian satrap Tissaphernes "went to Ephesus and offered sacrifice to Artemis" (VIII.109). This final sentence, whose concluding word is "Artemis," recalls the first words of the History which are "Thucydides an Athenian." If we take seriously Thucydides' artistry in composing the History in the way that he does, then we are entitled to wonder what he intends his readers to think by opening his work with his own name, the name of an Athenian male, and by concluding it with the name of a goddess, the twin sister of Apollo, whose temple is in Persia and who represents the power of generation (see Munn, 2000). Scholars of the History have long noted the presence of dyads within the History, some more obvious than others: peace-war, motion-rest, Greekness-barbarianism, Athens-Sparta, justice-necessity (see chiefly Strauss 1963). But if we take seriously this pairing of Thucydides and Artemis, a pairing that would substitute our author for the embodiment of divine reason, then we might add to the list the following dyads: human-divine, male-female, and reason-generation. Since they open and close the History, Thucydides invites us to wonder what these dualities mean for everything that comes between them. The immediate contexts of both the beginning and conclusion of the History shed light on this question.

Tissaphernes goes to Ephesus to sacrifice to Artemis because he needs to heal a breach between himself and the Spartans, his nominal allies in what had become a joint war against Athenian imperialism. Among the many reasons for this breach is the fact that the Spartans had been helping Greek cities in Asia Minor defect from Persian rule. The citizens of one in particular, Andtandrus, sought help from the Spartans because one of Tissaphernes' lieutenants slaughtered the leading men of their neighbours, the Delians, and he did so under the thinnest of pretexts. Naturally, the Antandrians feared that they might be next (VIII.107-09). The Delians, however, were not Persians but Greeks. They had moved to the Aeolic city of Attramyttium because the Athenians had driven them from their homes in an earlier effort to purify (yet again) the holy island of Delos (V.1), *the* center of worship for Apollo. Tissaphernes thus sacrifices to Artemis to propitiate the goddess on behalf of his lieutenant's slaughter of the inhabitants of her twin brother's holy island.

As with "Artemis," this story about the Delians draws our attention to the beginning of the History, in this case to the archaeology wherein Thucydides charts the emergence and growth of Greek civilization out of a pre-Hellenic past whose "greatest achievement" belonged to Minos: he subdued the rampant practice of piracy in the Mediterranean by seizing for himself and his sons the Cycladic islands (of which Delos was one), expelling their inhabitants (at that time, the Carians of Asia Minor), colonizing them and "outlawing" any future piracy (I.4). It is by virtue of Minos' successes here that later generations could come to view piracy as a shameful thing (I.8; Burns 2010, 36). But by casting Minos as little more than the most powerful and successful pirate of his day, Thucydides also revises the mythopoetic account of the archaic past wherein divine justice governed the affairs of men. In its place, Thucydides intimates that men were governed by the force of internal necessities and thus lacked the moral freedom that would make divine justice intelligible. The concluding scene of his History would suggest that affairs in the Mediterranean are returning to this pre-Hellenic (i.e., barbaric) past. Not only are Greek powers upsetting the affairs of those from Asia Minor, with Athens reprising the role of Minos, but Tissaphernes, using a religious ceremony to advance his political career, subordinates piety to the political interests of his satrapy. The calculus of power recommends this move. At the end of the History, the compulsory considerations of self-interest, and not piety or divine justice, appear authoritative.

While Minos helps establish the peace and commerce that makes Greekness possible, neither he nor his rule are "Greek." What distinguishes Greekness from all other pre-Hellenic life (as well as its barbaric future), is a paradoxical love of victory. For the Greeks, as opposed to the barbarians, victory—in political life (I.6.4) or in Olympic contests (I.6.5)—is sought as confirmation of one's superior nature. Such natural superiority is revealed primarily through (what appears to be) the voluntary restraint of one's own power, a trait that Thucydides describes as “measured” (*metria*). The Spartan political elite revealed their superior self-sufficiency to those they would rule by voluntarily adopting a style of dress worn by the poor. The Olympic wrestlers did so by competing nude. And the wealthy Athenians did so by discarding the adornments that honored their autochthonous gods (*tettigon*, I.6.3; see Hornblower 1991, 26-27), distancing themselves from such deities, their ties to their particular land that those gods represented and the neediness that both their gods and their land signified. On the basis of such openness to nature, and thus to the truth, the self-sufficient life-in-common that defines Greek politics becomes possible (Dobski 2007, 100-2; 2010, 143-47). But this also means that the core of Greek politics emerges from an unstable combination of the desire to display openly one’s radical freedom, such as one often finds in tyranny or imperial rule, with the need to devote one’s self freely to the law. This is a volatile mix whose darkest implication suggests that what we understand to be both injustice *and* justice originates from the same source, namely the concern to overcome our fundamental and enduring human neediness. That such a political antithesis should share a common origin resonates poetically with many of the dyads interwoven throughout the History, but none more so than the “twin” bookends discussed above. But it remains unclear how Thucydides understands the Greek openness to nature, at work in the desire to disclose one’s greatness for all with eyes to see, to cohere with its concomitant need to demonstrate such greatness through a public display of voluntary self-sacrifice.

Thucydides’ final framing chapters point to a possible, if puzzling, solution even as, or precisely because, they recall the opening of the History. Just before his conclusion about Greek affairs in Persia, Thucydides notes the emergence of the regime of The Five Thousand in Athens, praising it as the best government the Athenians had in his lifetime (VIII.97.2). This government was known for being “measured” (*metria*) in part because it effected in its form a judicious mix of the one, the few and the many. This remarkable, if short-lived, regime managed to accommodate the ambitions of Alcibiades and the need for the consent of both the oligarchs and democrats and it did so without either permitting the tyrannical excess of one or subjecting all its parts to the rule of a single principle. The “measured” quality that defined Greekness seems here to consist in effecting a balance of particular contending forces, one that recognizes their independent integrity within the entire community and thereby refrains from trying to impose a single dominant view on its multiple, discrete parts. But if this is true, then it seems the meaning of Greekness has changed; in contrast to those early, wealthy Athenians, the parts that make up The Five Thousand do not attempt to display their complete freedom which, in their case, might come through the mastery of the city and its empire. And the balance that this regime effects between the parts of the community is, unlike the Spartan elite, *not* predicated on the belief that the voluntary sacrifice of one's power (i.e., agreeing to accept one's limited role within the new order) constitutes the means by which one part of the city can demonstrate its greatness and thus its claim to rule over the others. What happened to produce this change in Greekness?

## Thucydides' Speech

We can begin to unravel Thucydides' approach to the "measure" of Greekness by understanding Thucydides' *logos* and how that *logos* is revealed through the political action of the History. Much ink has been spilled over Thucydides' programmatic statements about his handling of speeches and deeds (I.20-22) and justly so (Orwin 1989). Given the difficulty of this famous passage, we shall limit ourselves here merely to observing that Thucydides' statements effectively blur the distinctions between speeches and deeds, on the one hand, and between his concern with historical accuracy and his own view of what was necessary on the other, distinctions that he is so careful to draw and on which his explicit remarks here insist. If we assume that Thucydides is in control of his work, as he surely is, then we must resolve this apparent contradiction. One possibility suggests itself. By insisting on such distinctions, his explicit remarks compel us to question their integrity, thereby effectively blurring the differences between them. By doing so, he can point to the true character of such distinctions in a manner faithful to their absence while avoiding the very fallacy he seeks to correct. Such indirectness might prove unbelievable were it not for the argument, placed in the mouth of one of the work's most humane actors, showing the necessity of such deception (III.43).

Now the significance of such blurring comes into focus when we consider that Thucydides presents his historiographical principles in competition with the *logoi* of the poets, and in particular the poetry of Homer (I.10, 21). According to Thucydides' presentation in the archaeology, poets like Homer tend to magnify or adorn the truth. Later, Thucydides links Homer to the political psychology defining Greekness when he informs us that Homer sought victory in his own contests at Delos (III.104); like the Olympic wrestlers whose self-display follows the emergence of Greek politics, the blind poet wanted to display his superior