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## **The Influence of Herodotus on the Practical Philosophy of Aristotle**

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### **Abstract**

*The approach of this paper is a retrospective one. It is an attempt to show that many important ideas of Herodotus, a great ancestor of Aristotle, have influenced his practical philosophy. The paper focuses specially on several topics from the Histories of Herodotus, which have found a resonance in the Nicomachean ethics and in the Politics of Aristotle. The main ones in respect of the ethical theory are: the different forms of justice and the just as for example the super-human justice, the just in the family relations, the judicial just and the just in the polis or the larger human community. Book Epsilon of the Nicomachean Ethics is indebted to Herodotus in several points. In respect of Aristotles' political theory, there are two topics in the History of Herodotus which deserve a special interest: firstly, the conversation of the three noble Persians, who discuss the six basic types of political order and organization of power-and-submission in a state or city-state (in book III, 80-82); this becomes a paradigm for the next typologies of Plato (in the Republic and the Statesman) and Aristotle (in the Politics); secondly, the importance of personal freedom, the equity of the speaking (discussing?) men on the agora, and the supremacy of law for the well-being of any community and its peaceful future. The legacy of Herodotus is obvious in many anthropological and ethical concepts of Aristotle, especially in his most read and quoted ethical writing and in his Politics.*

**Keywords:** Aristotle, Herodotus, justice, the just, anthropology, ethics, political theory, freedom, equity, law

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### **1. Contextual introduction**

The *History* (or *The Histories* in some translations) of Herodotus (484-425 BC) is an encyclopedic source for the later anthropology and the practical philosophy of Aristotle. Its value is immeasurable and of utmost importance as a source for the Greek-Persian conflict in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and for its pre-history. However, the text is much more than the alpha of historiography. The immediate narrative of the warfare begins just in the last quarter of the work and in the other three preceding quarters Herodotus narrates about many different historical persons, powerful families, important dynasties and significant events. In detail and very attentively, he describes all possible aspects of the way of life of dozens of human

communities. Some of them are Hellenic (Athenians, Euboeians, Spartans, Corinthians), others are not (Lydians, Medians, Persians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Massagetae, Pelasgians, Scythians, Thracians). He describes without any cultural predilections and prejudices their dietary habits and/or the men's hairdresser-fashion and the clothes they wear. Even more precious than these life-style descriptions are his accounts of the customs and the habits, the mythological beliefs and the images of the gods they worship. In short, he provides voluminous material for all major peculiarities in the worldviews and the everyday practices of tens of communities in the decades, contemporary with the rise and decline of the Persian Empire.

Another remark is to be added: The father of the idea of history has to be respected as the founder of anthropology, as well. The nine books of his work, called by him after the nine Muses, are labeled *History* much later, and even their translation in English as *The Histories*, in the plural, by George Rawlinson, is quite indicative<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the abundant historical material and the accurate insights into the multiple dimensions of human existence, they are an extraordinary encyclopedia of the origin of the Greek knowledge of geography, zoology and of everything related to Egypt.

Last, but not least, the method of the historiographer is the weaving of the 'great' political history with the hundreds of smaller personal, family and/or dynasty stories – countless narratives mainly not of full biographies, but of telling episodes of fatal importance for the destinies of the humans, engendering the fabric of the 'great' history. Thus, the writing acquires depth and value not only as anthropological and historical chef-d-oeuvre but also as a sketch of the ancient philosophy of life and philosophy of history.<sup>2</sup>

Why it is worth looking back at Herodotus as an ancestor of some ethical ideas in Plato and Aristotle?

The influence of Herodotus on Plato and on the practical philosophy of Aristotle, conceived as inseparable unity of political, ethical and anthropological thinking is obvious, although in different facets. Its traces are more visible and explicit in Aristotle, and somewhat hidden in the delicate texture of the Platonic dialogues. In contrast to the *De anima*, whose book Alpha abolishes with devastating criticism absolutely everything, proposed by the previous thinkers on the soul-body problems, the practical philosophy of Aristotle is indebted to many of his predecessors, mainly to Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles and

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<sup>1</sup> This text quotes his translation. Herodotus. *The Histories*. Translated by George Rawlinson (1858) with an Introduction by Rosalind Thomas. London: David Campbell Publishers, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> More on this point in Karl Reinhart's *Vermächtnis der Antike* (see Reinhart 1960) and Richard Winton's "Herodotus", (see Winton 2000)

Plato. Maybe the most impressive concept in the heritage, left by Herodotus for both Plato and Aristotle is the differentiation between ἡ δικαιοσύνη and τὸ δίκαιον: ἡ δικαιοσύνη is justice, the individual autonomous self-sufficient *virtue*, whereas τὸ δίκαιον is the *correlational* ethical, juridical or political *result* of interpersonal interaction between at least two agents<sup>3</sup>.

Two great ideas from the thesaurus of Herodotus are cherished only by Plato and neglected by Aristotle: the first one is the causal theonomy in the course of the historical events and the second is the relativity of the human narration of the past. The latter is easier to explain, because it is stated clearly in the very first pages of the *History*: the Hellenes, the Persians and the Phoenicians have three completely different versions for the causes, the origin, the happening and the development of the same events. Herodotus stays at a distance from the epic and mythology. For him the real events and the real persons are unmasked in their deeds and "*human happiness never continues long in one stay*" (I, 5).

The causal theonomy mentioned above is striking in the instructive stories of the rise and fall of the greatest Lydian and Persian kings: Croesus the Lydian, Cyrus the Great, his son and successor Cambyses; Darius and Xerxes. Herodotus summarizes the moral of them in the sentence:

ὥς τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλα εἰσι καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν. *When great wrongs are done, the gods will surely visit them with great punishments* ( II, 120, 10).

It is not difficult to see how these stories of the fall of rulers, who are punished for their cruel atrocities, and even for the deeds of their far remote predecessors, are echoed in the final myths of the *Republic* (614b-621d) and the *Gorgias* (522e-527a). Indeed, Plato mirrors the moral of Herodotus' stories of the severely punished rulers with a greater emphasis on the deserved retribution, provoked by their own wickedness, rather than on the family guiltiness.

As a distinguished mark of this causal theonomy-framework of the stories, especially of the rulers, the reader of the masterpiece encounters several astonishing examples of the power of the providence and its prophecy in dreams, oracles and signs. The credo of Herodotus is expressed in the famous: "ἐν τῇ γὰρ ἀνθρωπινή φύσει οὐκ ἐνῆν ἄρα τὸ μέλλον γίνεσθαι ἀποτρέπειν. *It is impossible for men to turn aside the coming fate* (III, 65, 10-11). Some examples are to be mentioned: 1. The death of the son of Croesus (I, 34-45); 2. The failed attempt of Astyages to change his destiny (after a dream of a sexual intercourse with

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<sup>3</sup> The largest possible mapping of the wider context of the Greek thinking of justice and the just is available in the several volumes of Erik Wolf's. *Griechisches Rechtsdenken*. (see Wolf 1950-1970).

his daughter; which was a prophecy that his grandson will run over Asia, but will deprive him of the power as well. (I, 107, 108). 3. Cambyses, frightened by a dream, also tried to escape from the predicted future. 4. Also, the unveiling of the future through the bird-prophecy for the new-coming dynasty: the seven pairs of hawks tearing the two pairs of vultures (III, 76).

This part of the paper should be finished, however, by pointing out that Plato and Aristotle remained indifferent to some admirable sparks of humanism, expressed by the sophists and Herodotus, who was a close friend at least with one of them, Protagoras. These ideas, unfortunately neglected by Plato and Aristotle, are Herodotus' convictions and statements that there is *one and universal human nature*, which is inherent in all human beings, irrespectively of their origin and tongue. The readers find the relevant passages on the human nature in plenty of stories:

a) to begin with, in the conversation between Solon and Croesus (I, 29-33);

b) in the conversations and the letters, exchanged between the tyrant Periander and his son Lycophron, and between Lycophron and his anonymous sister (III, 52): the passionate appeal of the anonymous sister brings the message that the fatal feuds in a family must be ended, because *we are all just mortal humans*;

c) in the conversations between Xerxes and his uncle Artabanus (VII, 45) and between Xerxes and Demaratus (VII, 101-104);

d) in the unbelievable reversals in the life of the Egyptian Amasis and his golden sink (II, 172); and,

e) the letter of the same Amasis to the tyrant Polycrates (III, 40). Although his personal story is one of the very few examples in the *Histories* for the generosity of the benevolent fate, the happy vicissitudes have not deprived him of the sober wisdom concerning not only the uncertainty of power, but also the fragility of human beings in every aspect of their existence. *πᾶν ἔστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορή. Hence man is wholly accident* (I, 32)<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Fundamentals of the thinking of ἡ δικαιοσύνη and τὸ δίκαιον in the *Histories*

For the sake of conciseness in this paper several fundamental ideas of Herodotus, adopted later by Aristotle, will be briefly sketched as follows. Let's begin with the unjust as *casus belli gerendi*, with which the chain of the great conflict is conceived: one unjust deed was followed by another, by a third and then by one more unjust deed (I, 2, 1-3). Herodotus is positive: the sequence of unjust events and the sequel of reciprocal acts of revenge do not

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<sup>4</sup> Compare with Pindar, VIIIth Pythian Ode.

lead to a just solution and do not resolve any conflict righteously. See (in I, 2) the report of the successive kidnappings of Io and Europe; of Medea and Helen. This message sounds already as conviction in the second book, where Herodotus proposes an alternative to the epic of Homer with his version of the real and true story of the beautiful Helen. It is worth comparing Herodotus' apology of Helen in this alternative story (II, 113-115) with the *Enkomion for Helen* by Gorgias Diels-Kranz 1934, 288, 294.

### 3. The just as a result of subjective human judgment

There are at least three examples in the *Histories*, which might be read as the foundation of the Greek juridical and philosophical thinking of the subjective role of the person who judges properly (or not) for the attainment (or the failure) of a justified decision: a) The verdict of the judge Proteus in Egypt, reported in the true history of Helen and Menelaus; Proteus issued what is to be done after the awful crime, committed by Alexander in Egypt; b) the story of the gradual rise of Deioces from a humble judge to the power of authoritarian ruler (I, 100); c) the depiction of the merciful Egyptian ruler Mycerinus, son of Cheops (II, 129).

If we remove all the details from these stories, we will see that beneath them lies an important idea, later developed by Aristotle in book Epsilon of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as one of the forms of the just. The just in the decision of any judge is a possibility, which might be actualized, but also might not be. (II, 31) NE, E: ὁ γὰρ δικαστῆς βούλεται εἶναι οἷον δίκαιον ἔμψυχον (1132a21-22). *A judge is meant to be, as it were, justice personified*<sup>5</sup>, sums up Aristotle. The readers familiar with Herodotus are reminded at this point of the prototypes or the impressive personifications of the embodiment of the just, portrayed by Herodotus.

There are also shocking pages in the *Histories* of quite the opposite. Let's recall this horrifying episode: Cambyses punishes cruelly the corrupt judge Sisamnes, but puts his son Otanes in his place (V, 25): *Therefore Cambyses slew and flayed Sisamnes, and cutting his skin into strips, stretched them across the seat of the throne whereon he had been wont to sit when he heard causes. Having so done Cambyses appointed the son of Sisamnes to be judge in his father's room, and bade him never forget in what way his seat was cushioned.*

Another similar, but not analogical example is the punishment, imposed by Darius, who ordered the crucifixion of Sandoces, but later interrupted the torture (VII, 194) because the punishment must be commensurable with the crime. The commensurability of the crime

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<sup>5</sup> Here and elsewhere in the paper the translation of Roger Crisp is quoted (see Aristotle 2000).

(or in milder cases of the unjust deed, the wrong doing with the punishment becomes one of the milestones in the NE, book Epsilon. The just solution of any case is in the middle between the wrong or the unjust deed and becoming a victim of wrong or unjust judgment.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. The just in the family

Earlier in this text, in the mapping of the relevant passages with regard to the idea of the (universal) human nature in the *Histories*, the correspondence between Lycophron, the son of Periander, and his anonymous sister was mentioned. A passage from her appeal is worth quoting:

παῦσαι σεαυτὸν ζημιῶν. φιλοτιμίη κτήμα σκαιόν. μὴ τῷ κακῷ το κακὸν ἰδῶ. πολλοὶ τῶν δικαίων τὰ ἐπιεικέστερα προτιθεῖσι. πολλοὶ δὲ ἤδε τὰ μητρώια διζήμενοι τὰ πατρώια ἀπέβαλον.<sup>7</sup> ... *cease to punish thyself. It is scant gain, this obstinacy. Why seek to cure evil by evil? Mercy, remember, is by many set above justice. Many, also, while pushing their mother's claims have forfeited their father's fortune* (III, 53, transl. by Rawlinson).

The message of the compassionate sister, who remains unnamed, deserves very attentive inspection, because in these several lines it sketches the prototype of two conceptions, later enriched by Aristotle. One of them is the appraisal of the merciful just, the indulgent, τὸ ἐπιεικές, as the supreme form of the just in the NE. In the English translations of the NE ( see Rackham 1996, Chase 1934, Crisp 2000) *the equitable* prevails as a rendering of τὸ ἐπιεικές. The same Latin root is seen in the term, used in the French translation by sister Pascale-Dominique Nau: *l'équitable*<sup>8</sup>. The translation in German by Franz Dirlmeier uses *das Gütige* for τὸ ἐπιεικές and *das Gerechte* for τὸ δίκαιον (Dirlmeier 1979).

In the newest translation in English, done by Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe τὸ ἐπιεικές is translated as *the reasonable* (Broadie and Rowe 2002). Other possible options, suggested by the context might be *the indulgent, the merciful, the milder just, the temperate*. In the address of the anonymous sister to her brother it is said that *mercy is*

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<sup>6</sup> ἡ δικαιοπραγία μέσον ἐστὶ τοῦ ἀδικεῖν καὶ ἀδικεῖσθαι (1133b 29-30) *Acting justly is a mean between committing injustice and suffering it* (transl. by Crisp); this is the conclusion of an argument from a previous chapter.

<sup>7</sup> τὰ ἐπιεικέστερα in the *Histories* is reflected in the Nicomachean Ethics (NE, E, ch. 14) as the more abstract concept τὸ ἐπιεικές: the supreme form of the just is the indulgent, which is not the proper and the commensurable judgment, but the merciful and milder one (NE 1137a 30-1138a2).

<sup>8</sup> Available on the internet (see [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/%C3%89thique\\_%C3%A0\\_Nicomaque](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/%C3%89thique_%C3%A0_Nicomaque), accessed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2017).

above justice, as quoted above. Precisely this is the point of Aristotle's reasoning in a very long chapter in book Epsilon of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE 1137a 31-1138a3), in which he discusses τὸ ἐπιεικές. The essence of his understanding is that the supreme, the best, the unsurpassable form of the just is the milder, the merciful, the indulgent just.

κρεῖττον τὸ ἐπιεικές. διὸ δίκαιον μὲν ἔστι, καὶ βέλτιόν τινος δικαίου, οὐ τοῦ ἀπλῶς δὲ ἀλλὰ τοῦ διὰ τὸ ἀπλῶς ἀμαρτήματος. καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ φύσις ἢ τοῦ ἐπιεικοῦς, ἐπανόρθωμα νόμου, ἧ ἔλλειπει διὰ το καθόλου (1137 b 24-27). *What is equitable, therefore, is just, and better than one kind of justice. But it is not better than unqualified justice, only better than the error that results from its lacking qualification. And this is the very nature of what is equitable – a correction of law, where it is deficient on account of its universality.* (trans. by Roger Crisp)

The other remarkable idea in the appeal of the anonymous sister is the supremacy of the rights and the power of the man-and-the-father in the family. This idea is exposed briefly as consideration about τὸ πατρικὸν δίκαιον in the NE (book E, ch. 6) and at a considerable length in book Alpha of the *Politics* (book A, ch.12) as one of the unquestionable principles of the political science according to Aristotle.

Another tricky question from the thematic circle of the just in the family, found in the *Histories*, concerns the heir of the throne: when a ruler has a polygamous family and many spouses, which one of his sons, born of different mothers, has the right to inherit the father? The eldest of all the children or the first one born after the father's ascension to the throne? The just solution of this question has triggered feuds and bloodshed in many dynasties throughout the millennia. Herodotus reports reservedly, without any partial comments, that the decision was taken according to the following definition, borrowed from Spartan law: the son, who was born after his father had become the actual king, should be heir to the empire, rather than the sons, born before him by the other spouses, because at their birth the father still was a private person and did not rule the state (VII, 2-4).

## 5. The just in the human community

The real foundation of the political thinking on the different types of the self-organization of a community is discussed on several significant pages of the *Histories* (III, 80-82), in the famous dialogue, in which collocutors are Otanes, Megabyzus and Darius.

The first to speak is Otanes, the unhappy child, who has witnessed the terrible death of his corrupt father: it is no wonder that after such a shocking experience in his childhood the first speaker should glorify τὸ πλῆθος opposed to μουναρχίη. Indeed, we cannot expect argumentation and concepts, clarified by definitions in Herodotus. He narrates short rather

suggestive stories, bearing sense, which will later engender political or ethical concepts. It is not by chance that the speech in favour of the rule of the many should be delivered not by anyone else but by Otanes. This reveals the talent of the historiographer, who is a writer as well. Otanes is the judge who has inherited the position of his corrupt and severely punished father. His accusation of the excesses of the unbounded monarchic power is to be expected and the motives for it are both negative and psychological. The power of the one is detrimental to himself, because it is the source of arrogance, cruelty and disdain. In the speech of Otanes the accent is laid on the psychological degradation of the ruler, who enjoys absolute power. Its devastating effects fall much more on himself, than the arbitrariness and the atrocities, which destroy the lives of his victims. Of course, Otanes combines the denial of the one form with a praise of another and offers a positive enumeration of the five essential merits of the opposite to the monarchy: the rule of the many.

The rule of the many, on the other hand, has, in the first place, the fairest of names, to wit, isonomy; and further it is free from all those outrages which a king is wont to commit. There, places are given by lot, the magistrate is answerable for what he does, and measures rest with the commonalty. I vote, therefore, that we do away with monarchy, and raise the people to power. For the people are all in all. (III, 80)

After him, Megabyzus praises the rule of ἀρίστων δὲ ἀνδρῶν, opposed to ὀλιγαρχίη. The speech of the second noble collocutor provides a real example of dialectical *Aufhebung*, because it partially preserves and partially discards what has been already said: the monarchy is bad, he agrees, but at the same time he disagrees that the supreme power should be concentrated in the majority.

For there is nothing so void of understanding, nothing so full of wantonness, as the unwieldy rabble. It were folly not to be borne, for men, while seeking to escape the wantonness of a tyrant, to give themselves up to the wantonness of a rude unbridled mob... Let the enemies of the Persians be ruled by democracies; but let us choose out from the citizens a certain number of the worthiest, and put the government into their hands. (III, 81)

Darius is the last to speak in the trialogue and his speech is also dialectical development of the previous statements: he supports the negative evaluation of the rule of the many, proposed by Megabyzus, but rejects the appraisal of the aristocracy as the best form of political governance. On the day after, he will become the new king with treachery and falsification, because he convinces the other four participants who remain silent in the dispute, but are entirely persuaded by him and vote in favour of his opinion: thus the champion



in the debate is Darius, who proclaims the monarchy as the best form of governance, opposed to the power of the people/demos (III, 85).

The third opinion is also much more psychologically grounded than politically elaborated. Like the first speaker Otanes, the third one Darius emphasizes the personal degradation of the ruling figures, who inevitably become the first victims of the concentration of power not only in the hands of a minority, but even in the rule of the many. The disastrous consequences of the oligarchic and the democratic political orders likewise according to Darius, tooq are much more detrimental to the ones, who rule than to the human community governed by them.

In oligarchies, where men vie with each other in the service of the commonwealth, fierce enmities are apt to arise between man and man, each wishing to be a leader, and to carry his own measures; whence violent quarrels come, which lead to open strife, often ending with bloodshed... Again, in a democracy, it is impossible but that there will be malpractices: these malpractices however do not lead to enmities, but to close friendships, which are formed among those engaged in them, who must hold well together to carry on their villainies. (III, 82)

The closer inspection of the precise words, used by the three noble Persians in this political debate on the best form of governance, supports more decisive observations and conclusions: the six basic political forms – the three good ones and their three opposites, later laid down as fundamental by Aristotle, are sketched in this conversation. The speech of Otanes points out the advantages in the rule of the majority, τὸ πλῆθος - the rule of the many, later called democracy, and to the enormous dangers in its contrary, which he labels μουναρχίη, but in fact means its distorted form, the tyranny. Megabyzus advocates the rule of ἀρίστων δὲ ἀνδρῶν – the aristocracy and blames the power of the unbridled mob, later labelled the bad or the deviated democracy. Darius properly describes the psychological mechanisms in the group of the ruling men, which in his view transforms any aristocracy into oligarchy, and declares that monarchy is the best.

The conversation of the three Persians is reflected with some variations and new arrangements by Plato in the *Republic* (in the VIIIth book, with the addition of timocracy to the forms of the political orders) and in the *Statesman* (291d-292e), but there is no complete coincidence, because in the *Republic* one more type is added, whereas in the *Statesman* one form (not surprisingly the good form of the rule of the many) is missing. These six forms, sketched by Herodotus in the dialogue of three Persian noblemen, are the focal points of Aristotle's meticulous analysis, developed at length in the *Politics* from the middle of the third book to the end of the sixth.

## 6. The just in the rule of the majority

The Aristotelean account of the great advantages of democracy, the rule of the many, called *politeia* in his typology in the *Politics*, is greatly influenced by Herodotus: 1. In the view of Otanes the inherent feature of the rule of majority is stated to be *ισονομική* – literally, the equity of all in respect of the requirements of the laws; the germane idea of the rule of law; 2. What a monarch does, never occurs under the rule of the many. The bitter experience of Otanes and his childhood trauma obviously influenced him to insist on this, but in tens of other stories in the *Histories* Herodotus narrates that there are perilous consequences of the unlimited power of a person first on himself. The boundless power of a ruler leads him to madness and disaster. 3. Another valuable characteristic in the rule of the many, according to Otanes, is the distribution of many public duties, positions and responsibilities by the lot - *πάλλω μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὰς ἄρχει*. 4. Even more important is the responsibility for these responsibilities, or translated into our modern parlance, the accountability of the persons, who have been in charge: *ὑπεύθυνον δὲ ἀρχὴν ἔχει* – the power is held into account, it is responsible. 5. Last in the speech of Otanes is the mode of decision-taking: all problems are discussed and resolved in common *βουλευματα δὲ πάντα ἐς κοινὸν ἀναφέρει*. This might be read as the first advocacy of the deliberative democracy.

Later on in the fifth book of the *Histories*, two other important factors for the democratic developments in Athens and its subsequent leadership among the city-states are mentioned: *ἡ ἰσηγορίη ὡς ἐστὶ χρῆμα σπουδαῖον... ἀπαλλαχθέντες δὲ τυράννων μακρῶ πρώτοι ἐγένοντο* ( V, 78)<sup>9</sup>. Firstly, *ἡ ἰσηγορίη*, the equity-and-equality of the citizens on the agora, the participation of the citizens in the arguing and the decision-making of the public matters; and, secondly, the abolishment of the tyrants' regime, the hostility and the resistance to many despotic authoritarian practices - these are the healthy strengths of the Athenians, which lead their city-state not only to the economic prosperity, but also to the military and the political supremacy among the Greek communities.

The abolishment of the tyranny, which is the worst of all political orders, made Athens the mightiest Greek polis in the military aspect. The freedom of the citizens and the chances they received to work for the fulfillment of their private entrepreneurs enhanced the economic prosperity of the city as well. The work for the family property and the personal household, and not for the tyrant, who would expropriate the gain, became the

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<sup>9</sup> See the pertinent commentaries of Robert W. Wallace and Paul Cartledge on this subject in *The Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. (Raaflaub, Kurt A., Josiah Ober, and Robert W. Wallace 2007).

basis of the Athenian polis. Another meaning of the concept ἡ ἰσηγορία is to be pointed out. It means not only *equity of the free men on the agora*, the *right to be equally eligible and to elect* like all the rest free citizens. It signifies also *the equity to participate and to cooperate* in the exertion of the political power. Last, but not least it means *freedom of speech*, the equity of all deliberative positions of all free citizens, expressed in the public debates, in the discussions and the taking of decisions, especially the ones, passed by the assembly.

All of them are marked as the inner engines of the glory and the positive changes in the polis by Aristotle in *The politeia of the Athenians*. Once more we see how brilliant examples of stories, used as instruments by the narrative method in the *History* of Herodotus, become implicit concepts in an Aristotelian text. In the institutional history and the constitutional stages in the development of Athens, the warfare is just mentioned: the Greek-Persian wars and the Peloponnesian war are just referred to, because *The politeia of the Athenians* was meant to be a sketch of the successive forms of the institutional self-governance of the city-state and not a political history. In this brief survey of the constitutional progressive development of Athens many of the explanations of the political evolution of the city-state are in harmony with the ones, proclaimed as the most influential ones by Herodotus.

## 7. Conclusion

Herodotus is a true anthropologist, political and ethical thinker, and philosopher of history. He is not just a modest historiographer of chronicles, because in all the stories he looks for the real understanding of man and the causes of the events. His main concern always is the answer to the question "why did it happen", and not just "what and how did it happen". He is confident in the answers for the causes of the victory (VII 138-139): the Athenians saved the whole Hellas, because they were free. Earlier in the same book (VII 102) he writes that in contrast to the enormous wealth and territory of the empire of the invaders<sup>10</sup>, poverty was always a neighbor to Hellas, but nevertheless the virtue of the Greeks was firm and invincible. However, the liberty of the majority of the Greek city-states, and the resistance to the despotic and authoritarian rules in the bigger part of them<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The number of the invaders is exactly 5 283 220 (VII, 186).

<sup>11</sup> "Surely the heaven will soon be below, and the earth above, and men will henceforth live in the sea, and fish take their place upon the dry land, since you, Lacedaemonians, propose to put down free governments in the cities of Greece, and to set up tyrannies in their room. There is nothing in the whole world so unjust, nothing so bloody, as a tyranny" (V, 92). There are 'small' exemplary stories (of some deeds) of more than 50 tyrants in more than 50 Greek polices in the *History*.

never was a source of anarchy, because the master which all of them obeyed unconditionally was the law (104). The divided and competing city-states reached some form of unity not only because they were threatened by the mighty enemy, but also because of the underlying bonds between them. For the shaping out of the united Hellas VII (136), the engendering prerequisite was that all those formerly conflicting city-states were inhabited by people, who have the same blood, the same tongue, the same sanctuaries and temples devoted to the same gods; the same habits, rituals and traditions (VIII, 144; see also Fritz 1967, 243 and Jäger 1973, XV). However, his most important moral is:

There was nothing they had so much at heart as the salvation of Greece, and they knew that, if they quarreled among themselves among the command, Greece would be brought to ruin. (VIII, 3)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> See also Christopher Pelling on *Le Miroir d'Hérodote* (Pelling 1988).

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