

An Interpretation of Thucydides' Book I, 1, 20–22: A Contemporary Understanding of the Historiographical Approaches of Thucydides

Thucydides in Book I, paragraphs 1, and 20-22 raises critical issues concerning historiographical approaches and concepts. Thucydides believes that the art and science of history (historiography), the writing of events – very past or immediate events – should follow some specific methods. His statements may not be entirely accurate, nevertheless, some of the issues he raises need critical interpretation to find out how Thucydides conceives of the art, science, and the writing of past events. By interpretation and juxtaposing Book I, 1:20-22 of the Peloponnesian War, the article demonstrates, from a contemporary standpoint and concepts of historiography, that we can assume that contemporary discussions and concepts of historiography are the developments and adaption from Thucydides' conception of historiography by contemporary historians although Thucydides did not openly declare his conception of historiography to us as we have conceived today.

Keywords: Approach, Contemporary, Historiography, Juxtaposition, Interpretivism, Philosophy of History

Introduction

The historical writing of the Greeks (and Romans) covers some 800 years: from Herodotus' *Histories* (written in the mid to late fifth century BCE to the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus who composed his history in the late fourth century CE.¹ Within these periods, a lot of people tried to create some record of their past, either of the early past or immediate past events (or of their own or earlier times), in a variety of formats.² It is well acknowledged that of the vast historical pieces of literature, only the smallest possible portion has come down to us. Besides, whereas the extant literature represents some good eras in Greek culture and historical past, others hardly represented at all.³ Whatever the case may be, so far as historical writings of the Greeks are concerned, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon are considered by most ancient Greeks⁴ and contemporary alike as the three greatest historians whose works have preserved the socio-cultural and socio-political practices of the Greeks and non-Greeks.

On one hand, we get to know very much about the ancient Greek history and the historiographical approaches used by the ancient writers by relying on the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon since their works were not

¹J. Marincola, *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography Volume I*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 2.

²Ibid; A. Rengakos, "Thucydides' Narrative: The Epic and Herodotean Heritage," In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edit. A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 279ff.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid; S. Usher, *The Historians of Greece and Rome* (Great Britain, Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1969).

in fragmented form.⁵ So, in researching into finding how and what methods and techniques were used by ancient Greek historians in recording and preserving their histories; the understanding of history and historiography, it is appropriate to consult the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon.⁶

Fortunately, on the part of the ancient Greek historians and us, it is Thucydides who attempts to let us know his conception of history, historiography, and the appropriate methods that are needed for writing a factual account. Thucydides tries to tell us how history should be written by making some claims in Book I. 1, 20-22. In Book I. 1, Thucydides declares his aim for writing the *Peloponnesian War*. First, he believed that the war was going to be great than any other war fought in history because it affected most parts of the Greekland and also because it focused on contemporary issues of warfare. Second, Thucydides declares that due to the remoteness of the cause of the war, he cannot acquire a precise knowledge of the distant past or of the history preceding his own time, nonetheless, the little retrospective check he has made leads him to conclude that those preceding periods were not great in warfare or anything else.⁷ By implication, the works of his predecessors, especially Herodotus, lack empirical evidence except for hearsays, oral, or mythical.⁸

It is well acknowledged that the historical writing of the Greeks was a gradual process, starting with the mainland Greek poet – Homer,⁹ and the Ionian Greek logographer – Hecataeus in the periods of 800 to 600 BC until the period Herodotus came into the scene (*ca.* mid-fifth century BC).¹⁰ Thucydides, who later joined the school of Greek historiographers, touched on how history should be done or written; by way of direct and indirect disapproval of the methods of his predecessors as attested from the quotations below:

⁵I. M. Finley, *The Greek Historians* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1959); N. Austin, ed. *The Greek Historians* (Canada and New York: American Book Company, 1969); J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (New York: Macmillan Co., Limited, 1909).

⁶J. Marincola, *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography Volume I*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 2. In the opinion of John Marincola, the knowledge of the numerous ancient Greek writers is supplemented in part by fragmentary evidence. Besides, the available information are of several types which include testimonies from informational remarks made by surviving writers (not only historians) about the scope, arrangement, and nature of lost historical works. There are also fragments from citations (either verbatim or otherwise) by later writers that inform us of the contents of lost works.

⁷Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954) Book I.1-17, 35; J. Ober, "Thucydides and the Invention of Political Science," In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edits. A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 131-159.

⁸Ibid. Book I, 21, 2-8; I, 22, 1ff.; E. Baragwanath, and M. de Bakker, eds., *Myth, Truth, & Narrative in Herodotus* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2012); E. J. Bakker, "Contract and Design: Thucydides' Writing," In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edited by A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 108-129.

⁹Homer. *The Iliad*, trans by E. V. Rieu (England: Clays Ltd., 1950).

¹⁰M. F. Blogs, *History and the Divine Sphere: Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides* (n.p., 2014), Available at <https://adversusapologetica.wordpress.com/feed/> ; A. Corcella, "The New Genre and Its Boundaries: Poets and Logographers." In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edit. A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 33-56.

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2 People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way –
3 even when these stories concern their own native countries...(Thuc. I, 20,
4 1ff.)...the evidence which I have put forward. It is better evidence than that of
5 the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose
6 chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth,...whose authority cannot
7 be checked, and whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly
8 lost in the unreliable streams of mythology (Thuc. I, 21, 2-8)....And with regard
9 to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to
10 write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my
11 own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have
12 described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked
13 with as much thoroughness as possible. ...[my history] is absence of romantic
14 element...(Thuc. I, 22, 1ff).

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16 If we re-examine the statements above, it becomes obvious that
17 Thucydides raises critical issues concerning the methods of writing historical
18 account. It is based on this that I have tasked myself to interpret the claims
19 from a contemporary point of view.
20

21 22 Methodology

23
24 I have used content analysis from both primary sources in translation, as
25 well as secondary sources on concepts of historiography. Key among the
26 primary sources are Rex Warner's translation of the *Peloponnesian War*,
27 Benjamin Jowett's translation of the *Peloponnesian War*, George Rawlinson's
28 translation of the *Histories*, T. Griffith. All Thucydidean quotations are taken
29 from Rex Warner's translation. The article ultimately employs interpretive, and
30 analytical approaches all of which are some aspects of the qualitative research
31 method.¹¹ I have used the interpretive approach since it centres on how
32 historians make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it¹², and
33 recognize the individual historians' interpretation and understanding of
34 historical or past events and their own time.¹³

¹¹J. McKee. "Using Normative Research Methodology and an Information Architecture Model to Create a More Useable Strategic Plan." *Proceeding of International Conference on Business Management & Information Systems & IS* 1, no. 1 (2013). ; R. Hardin. "Normative Methodology." *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, (September 2013): 1ff; Routio (2007); Tracy, J. S. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (1st Edit.). (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013): 28-29; G. Ryan, "Introduction to Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical Theory," *Nurse Researcher* 25, no. 4 (2018): 41-49.

¹²D. Addae, and K. P. Quan-Baffour, "The Place of Mixed Methods Research in the Field of Adult Education: Design Options, Prospects and Challenges," *International Journal of Education and Research* 3, no. 7 (July, 2015): 156ff; S. Albusaidi, "Critiquing a Qualitative Study Using Tracy's Big-Tent Criteria," *Research in Social Sciences and Technology (RESSAT)* 4, no. 1 (2019): 105-122.

¹³S. R. Shah, and A. Al-Bargi, "Research Paradigms: Researchers' Worldviews, Theoretical Frameworks and Study Designs," *Arab World English Journal* 4, no. 4 (2013): 256.

By these methods, I have interpreted Thucydides' claims in Book I.1,20-22 and his perceived¹⁴ understanding of historiography and what should undergo historical writing by juxtaposing his claims with a contemporary conception of historiography, history, philosophy of history, the link between historiography and science, factual representation in historiography, and attaining facts of the past, especially from E. H. Carr's perspective.

The Place of Thucydides in Contemporary Concepts of Historiography, History, and philosophy (idea) of history

Thucydides' Understanding of Historiography

In general terms, *historiography* could mean the writing of history or written history.¹⁵ Stated differently, historiography is the history of historical writing, together with a discussion of the methodological questions raised by the construction of historical accounts.¹⁶ Thus, historiography mainly deals with the method, process, and various modes of writing a history of past human events.¹⁷ In this sense, unlike Herodotus who do not declare to his readers his historiographical methods apart from stating that he writes to preserve the wonderful actions of the Greeks and non-Greeks¹⁸, Thucydides in Book I.22.1 informs his readers about his historiographical approach:

... with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. ...[my history] is absence of romantic element...(Thuc. I, 22, 1ff).

It obvious from the above that Thucydides, who probably knew what historiography in our contemporary conception is about, enlightened us on his methods. He understood historiography as the embodiment of a factual

¹⁴I have used the term "perceived" since Thucydides did not openly tell us he knew what historiography is about or any definition whatsoever. However, from contemporary point of view, we can deduce from Book I of Thucydides's account that he generally knew about how history should be written.

¹⁵Collins Dictionary of Sociology. "Historiography," *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, 3rd ed. (2000).

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷B. Kumar, and T. Karunakaran, "A History of Historiography: A Review and Critique of the Modes of Writing History from Antiquity to Contemporary," *Research Scholar An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations* 2, no. 1. (February 2014): 203; The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1979).

¹⁸ Herodotus. *Histories*, ed. Tom Griffith (Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999), book. I; Herodotus. *Histories*, trans. G. Rawlinson (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996), book I, 3; Herodotus. *The Histories* (Oxford: Pax Librorum, 2010), Available at <http://www.paxlibrorum.com/books/histories>

representation of events in a scientific approach (devoid of fantasies and hearsays), from an empirical or eye-witness source.¹⁹ Although Thucydides in his account gives us a gist of what historiography is about, some contemporary historians have equally found some problems associated with the approach(es) Thucydides used to conduct his research.²⁰ For example, M. I. Finley in his introductory notes of Rex Warner's translation of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* has pointed it out that apart from a passage on the unreliability of eyewitness testimony, the way Thucydides went about his work is also unknown, since he [Thucydides] says little about his methods (Thucydides, I, 22).²¹ To find supporting evidence of Finley's assertion is to consort Herodotus' account of history; whereas Herodotus would mention names of his informants or sources, Thucydides would not mention the names of his informants, especially, after his exile in 424 and thereafter (Thucydides, IV, 104-7).²² Nonetheless, it could be said that Thucydides knew what he was doing and had conceptualized historiographical methods from our contemporary point of view since he outlined the approaches he had used for his histories, and how history is supposed to be done.

Thucydidean Historiography and Science

In the opinion of Špiláčková (2012), historiography is historical research which means the investigation of elements from history.²³ In this sense, since historiography involves investigation into past events, the term *investigation* makes any historical research scientific and sometimes as a basic qualitative research method.²⁴ As a result, historiography which is also seen as historical research, as reiterated by Špiláčková, is a critical investigation of events (be it past or contemporary), development and experiences of the past, which involves careful consideration of past testimonies from the perspective of information sources, validity and subsequent interpretation of the concerned testimonies investigation of events.²⁵ Per the definition given, where can we place Thucydides' historiographical methods so far as scientific methods are concerned? We need to repeat an excerpt of Book I and then take a closer look:

¹⁹C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, 2nd ed., (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited, 1990).

²⁰L. Kallet, "Thucydides' Workshop of History and Utility Outside the Text," In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, eds. A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 335ff.

²¹Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954), 11; I. M. Finley, *The Greek Historians* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1959).

²²Ibid; Thucydides. *Peloponnesian War*, 2nd Revised Edition, Trans. B. Jowett (London: Clarendon Press, 1900); D. Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History* (London: Penguin Group, 2009): 1ff.

²³M. Špiláčková, "Historical Research in Social Work – Theory and Practice," *ERIS Web Journal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 23.

²⁴Ibid.; on qualitative research methos, see Tracy (2013) 1ff.

²⁵M. Špiláčková, "Historical Research in Social Work – Theory and Practice," *ERIS Web Journal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 23.

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2 ...with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a
3 principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be
4 guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events
5 which I have described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I
6 have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. ...[my history] is absence
7 of romantic element...(Thuc. I, 22, 1ff).

8
9 From the excerpt, it could be realized that Thucydides did not want to
10 write anything that he could not prove. That is why he claimed that he had
11 made it a principle not to write whatever he hears unless he has been a witness
12 to it or from a vicarious eye-witness which he has cross-checked with much
13 thoroughness as possible.²⁶ This is one main objective of scientific research –
14 evidence is all that matters, not hearsays that cannot be proved. The scientific
15 approach of inquiry includes facts presentation and careful analysis which
16 conforms with Thucydides' method of historiography as he states in the
17 extract.

18 Nonetheless, although Thucydides' approach of the term historiography
19 involves itself with a scientific approach, his approach only differs from other
20 purely scientific activities by the subject matter of history (past or
21 contemporary events) which is difficult to reverse or wholly capture, and
22 sometimes its accompanied difficult task of interpretation which is liable to
23 relativity and subjectivity and especially by the influence of the nature of the
24 unique subject matter (past or historical events and themes).²⁷ However, *history*,
25 whether being considered as *pseudo-scientific* (in terms of methods) or
26 otherwise, the subject matter of history [which is *ιστορία* – inquiry] makes
27 history “scientific research” in its context. In line with this, Thucydides'
28 approach is scientific and corresponds to our conception of the scientific
29 method of historiography.
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²⁶T. Rood, “Objectivity and Authority: Thucydides' Historical Method,” In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edit. A. Rengakos and A. A. Tsakmakis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 189-222.

²⁷M. Špiláčková, “Historical Research in Social Work – Theory and Practice,” *ERIS Web Journal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 23; S. Hornblower, *Thucydidean Themes* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010).

Thucydidean Conception [Philosophy] of History in Perspective

The term “history” in itself is a Greek word *ιστορία*²⁸, which denotes an inquiry or an investigation.²⁹ History could also either mean a set of written records of the past human actions, or as an academic discipline (a course or subject) that uses a narrative to represent the past human actions and events, and studies the chronological records of events affecting people or nation(s).³⁰ Ultimately, unlike historiography that mainly deals with the method, process, and various modes of writing history, “history” deals with past human events which are not limited to politics, governance, culture, religion, and social practices.

In a more contemporary perspective and conception of “history”, Edward Hallett Carr (1961), in his *What is History?* gives a trendy definition of history as both the inquiry conducted by the historian and the facts of the past into which he inquires (thus, it is a social process, in which individuals are engaged as social beings) ... “The reciprocal process of interaction between the historian and his facts, a dialogue between the society of today and the society of yesterday”, but not a dialogue between abstract (or Divine) isolated individuals.³¹

Thucydides’ claim and understanding of history can be interpreted from a contemporary perspective – from the contemporary conception of history given by scholars examined in this article. Thucydides may have perceived that history cannot be written anyhow or be accepted anyhow. This can be deduced from the statement:

People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way – even when these stories concern their own native countries...(Thuc. I, 20, 1ff.)...the evidence which I have put forward. It is better evidence than that of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth,...whose authority cannot be checked, and whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology (Thuc. I, 21, 2-8).

Thus, from the quote, we can project that Thucydides understands that history is not any history unless it follows investigation as its name suggests in the Greek term, *ιστορία*. It should be about humans, not gods, or anything from the mythical past. In this sense, Thucydides would be E. H. Carr’s favourite for his use of non-human abstractions as causal agents of events in human history and outcome of events in his *Peloponnesian War*.

²⁸H. G Liddell, et al., *Greek and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 312.

²⁹B. Kumar, and T. Karunakaran, “A History of Historiography: A Review and Critique of the Modes of Writing History from Antiquity to Contemporary,” *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations* 2, no. 1. (February 2014) 204.

³⁰Ibid; R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946 & 1961).

³¹E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), 32.

1 Nonetheless, in another viewpoint, history is all about what the
 2 historiographer finds worthy, or that which has a direct effect on the present
 3 age.³² In this case, Thucydides' criticisms on accounts drawn from mythical
 4 past or far distant past cannot be fully supported since history is what the writer
 5 finds worthy. Thus, whereas Thucydides endorses history about humans, other
 6 writers may fancy oral history³³, far distant history, or past events about
 7 humans and their gods so far as the account influences the present situation.
 8 Either way, with the same shared belief of Burckhardt, Carr states that history
 9 is 'the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another'.

10 By implication, Carr believes that the historiographer and his historical
 11 facts become intelligible to the living only in the light of the present. This is
 12 because the living can fully understand the present only in the light of the past.
 13 If that is what the predecessors (especially Herodotus) of Thucydides
 14 conceived, then history cannot follow one particular method of inquiry. The
 15 investigation can be done from the past, mythical, heroic, or contemporary.
 16 Carr believes that 'to enable man to understand the society of the past and to
 17 increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of
 18 history.'³⁴ Thus, historiography (the writing of history) does not only involve
 19 gathering data from the past or using method X or Y to unfolding the past but
 20 collecting historical data by a historiographer or a historian is only an aspect of
 21 historiography.³⁵ In this sense, Thucydides' understanding of history is valid as
 22 well as his predecessors.³⁶ The only difference will be how the accounts are
 23 interpreted and supported with evidence.

24 What then does Thucydides consider as the ideal history? Is it
 25 contemporary issues, or what any historian considers worthy of writing? We
 26 need to expand the discourse further to answer this question. Long before the
 27 idea of "history", almost every society that had existed had some sort of
 28 historical antecedents to narrate to the current generation. These past
 29 antecedents or events were retold orally. Thus, up until the art of writing or
 30 literacy, the oral account became the major source by which past events were
 31 made known to the existing generation. When man gained the knowledge of
 32 arts and letters, people began to write down their past events which became
 33 known as historical recordings or writing. At this stage, most writers in
 34 antiquity did not concern themselves with the accuracy and reliability of
 35 sources. All that was required of the writer was to just write down what he
 36 believed had taken place or what the traditions recount. This may be a result of
 37 the fact that the early writers of past events did not know or have much insight
 38 about historical facts account, past accounts, or the idea of history.

39 However, as time went by, writers like Thucydides began to rationalize the
 40 past events with accuracy, reliability, possibilities, and trying to differentiate

³²Ibid.

³³A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1934).

³⁴E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), 32-40.

³⁵M. Špiláčková, "Historical Research in Social Work – Theory and Practice," *ERIS Web Journal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 23.

³⁶T. Rood, "Thucydides and his Predecessors," *Histos* 2, (1998): 230-67.

between historical fact accounts and mythology by way of indirect and direct disapprovals of his predecessors as we testify in his comment:

People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way...³⁷.
... of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth,...whose authority cannot be checked, and whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology³⁸

By implication, ancient writers who preceded Thucydides did not fully understand the idea of history and how historical accounts should be written.³⁹ However, during the period of Thucydides, the idea of history became more evolving and interesting; man became more involved in understanding the society that he lives in and tried to find meaning and understand the present from the past, and tried to draw a link between the old world and the new world. The attempts made in trying to understand the present from the past, and man's role in his society, how events began and progressed (or ended) culminated into what is termed as the idea or philosophy of history. From the above quote, we get the gist of what Thucydides considered as a philosophy of history: rationalizing the present human activities from the past; the interplay of human activities in warfare, and its outcome. Ultimately, from his speeches, Thucydides' idea or philosophy of history is "contemporary events".⁴⁰

After the era of Thucydides, as history and the way it is done (historicism) became more interesting, theorists, philosophers, and scholars began to bring out their perception of the "philosophy of history". There came different ideas such as the *cyclic theory of history*; *progressionist's theory of history* (of St. Augustine, Kant, etc.); and *Hegel's idealistic concept*. As I shall demonstrate in due course, out of these ideas, we see a clear understanding of Thucydides' philosophy of history, especially, from Hegel's point of view.

According to the **cyclic theory** of history, the "philosophy of history" is cyclical.⁴¹ The **progressionist theory** of history holds a different view from that of the cyclic theorist. According to the **progressionist theory**, history finds its root in the early dominance of religious thinking as the foundation of

³⁷Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954), I.20. 1ff.

³⁸Ibid. I.21. 2-8; BRIA. "Herodotus and Thucydides: Inventing History," *Bill of Rights in Action* 24, no. 3 (winter, 2009); Clay, H. "Herodotus and Thucydides: Inventing History." *Constitutional Rights Foundation Bill of Rights in Action* 24, no.3. (2009), Available at <http://www.crf-usa.org/teachers/teacher-s-lounge.html>

³⁹C. L. Stecchini, "An Analysis of Herodotus in The Persian Wars: Herodotus and His Critics," *The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (CAIS)* (n.d.). Available at <http://www.cais-soas.com>

⁴⁰Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954), Book I.1; M. C. Lemon, *Philosophy of History: A Guide for Students* (London: Routledge Print, 2003).

⁴¹C. Maduka, and L. Otoide, "Interplay Between Philosophy and History: Additional Justification for Course Enrollments Across Disciplines," *African Journal History and Culture (AJHC)* 1, no. 2, 3 (2010): 35.

the doctrine of history and progress.⁴² This theory or idea of history is well attested in the work of St. Augustine of Hippo (1972) and its unrestricted influence in the middle ages and beyond.⁴³ For St. Augustine, history is never cyclical as he reiterates: *While they, the impious pagans, might go in circle, as the Psalmist had written, the sound doctrine of the Christian lay in a straight line.*⁴⁴ Kant later in his discourse also believed history to progress. However, he summarises history as being the “idiotic course of all things human”⁴⁵.

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel (1977) treats the development of consciousness as the key to historical change.⁴⁶ Ultimately, Hegel’s claim was that from the logical presupposition of any thought whatsoever (pure being); he could generate a logical progression that culminated in a concept (the Absolute Idea)⁴⁷ which was a synthesis of the entire cycle of development. Thus, for Hegel, the general definition that can be given is that the “*philosophy of history* means **nothing but the thoughtful consideration of it**. ‘Reasoning’ is, indeed, essential to humanity. It is this that distinguishes us from the brute”.⁴⁸ We are told that Karl Marx, in later times, builds his materialistic theory of history on Hegel’s dialectics.⁴⁹

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid, 36; for criticisms on Augustines idea of hisyory, see L. Rubinoff, “Reviewed Work: Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine’s Philosophy of History by G. L. Keyes,” *Phoenix* 22, no. 2 (Summer, 1968): 173-176. According to Rubinoff, G. L. Keyes has viewed the most fundamental presupposition of St. Augustine’s philosophy of history as his conception of reality as consisting essentially of God’s eternal purpose. As a result, therefore, it is needless to have essential difference between history and nature, and no essential difference between the science of *res naturae* and the historical sciences of *res gestae*; and that everything, according to St. Augustine, **is an expression of God’s single plan**. For this reason, Keyes argues that, it is quite different from the programme of scientific history which seeks primarily to test and hypotheses by appealing to the facts of experience. (See full discourse from Keyes, G. L. (1966). *Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine’s Philosophy of History*. Pp. 206, xi. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).

⁴⁵J. Kent, “The Finding of Voice: Kant’s Philosophy of History,” *COLLOQUY Text Theory Critique* 30 (2015): 84; J. P. Kain, “Kant’s Political Theory and Political History,” *Clio* 18 (1989): 325-45; B. T. Wilkins, “Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History,” *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966): 172ff. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2504513>

⁴⁶C. Maduka, and L. Otoide, “Interplay Between Philosophy and History: Additional Justification for Course Enrollments Across Disciplines,” *African Journal History and Culture (AJHC)* 1, no. 2, 3 (2010): 37.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Hegel, G. *The Philosophy of History*, (n.p., n.d.), 11ff. Available at <http://www.blackmask.com>; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001); S. Sedgwick, “Philosophy of History,” edit. Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal. *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (2015).

⁴⁹G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001); W. L. Adamson, “Reviewed Work: Karl Marx’s Theory of History. A Defence by G. A. Cohen; Marx’s Interpretation of History by Melvin Rader; Marx’s Theory of History by William H. Shaw,” *History and Theory* 19, no. 2 (February 1980): 186ff.; C. Maduka, and L. Otoide, “Interplay Between Philosophy and History: Additional Justification for Course Enrollments Across Disciplines,” *African Journal History and Culture (AJHC)* 1, no. 2, 3 (2010): 38.

Just like Hegel, Thucydides believed that the idea of history is rationalism – pure reasoning of events. Thus it is through rationalism, reasoning, or thought that one can understand past events. This may be the reason why he stated that his predecessors believed everything in an uncritical manner (Thuc. I, 20, 1ff.); and since he had a fair idea of history, Thucydides made it a principle to factually report on events of the war through reasoning and a thorough check on causation which became part of Thucydides' treatment of sources. In effect, the history that is guided by one's impression is no history since emotions may downplay the facts of the account (Thuc. I, 22, 1ff).

Factual Representation in Historiography: Thucydides in Contemporary Discourse

Kumar and Karunakaran (2014) state that, the methods or approaches of writing history are largely characterized by several modifications with the evolution of human civilization and culture at various phases of human history.⁵⁰ Consequently, the act and art of writing history (historiography) of a specific era are, most often than not, noticeable with some key or important features that are brought to it by several causes such as human values, morality, and ethics.⁵¹ In line with this, the historiography of a particular historical period becomes, apparently, different from other epochs of human history, although there may be similar themes of these different periods in human history. By this, we do not expect the historiography of Thucydides and his predecessors to be the same. Whereas they wrote on past events⁵², Thucydides wrote on a contemporary event as he claimed in Book I that “I saw, too”.⁵³ It can be understood that Thucydides was not writing on any event except those he could testify and prove. The question that comes in mind is: How does Thucydides, per his methods and techniques, want historians to write and present historical accounts?

To reiterate, history (ιστορία), in the Greek world (and in Herodotean rendition) means the narration of stories (λογοι).⁵⁴ Whereas some [His...] stories may be recorded as a true event, others are classified as fictional or quasi-history. These classifications emanate from the methods by which [his...] stories are recorded as human events and the sources of the account. Meaning, it is not every historical event/account that can be presented as factual especially those that dwell heavily on oral and mythical past.

⁵⁰B. Kumar, and T. Karunakaran, “A History of Historiography: A Review and Critique of the Modes of Writing History from Antiquity to Contemporary,” *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations* 2, no. 1. (February 2014) 203.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Herodotus. *Histories*, ed. Tom Griffith (Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999).

⁵³Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954), Book I.6-7.

⁵⁴G. Pasamar, “The Traditional Forms of the “History of the Present” from Herodotus to Humanist Historians,” *História da Historiografia: International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography* 5, no. 10 (December 2012): 166.

1 Thucydides draws our attention to this in his statement: "... of the poets, who
 2 exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose chroniclers, who are
 3 less interested in telling the truth,...whose authority cannot be checked, and
 4 whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the
 5 unreliable streams of mythology" (Thuc. I.21.2-8).

6 Neville Morley in the *Writing Ancient History* (1999), states that ancient
 7 [Greek] historians pursued the craft (historiography) from the evidence of
 8 existing literary texts, works of art, remains of buildings, pottery shards, and
 9 coins. All these sources of reconstructing the historical past were available to
 10 the Greek historians such as Herodotus, and Thucydides. But the major
 11 concern, so far as Greek historiography is concerned, is how they went about
 12 reconstructing and representing the facts of past events. So, in what way(s)
 13 should a historian gather and treat his facts in the space of historiography?

14 Carr (1961) states that History involves a body of facts. But not every
 15 single fact(s) are historical facts or are treated by a historian as a fact. For
 16 example, the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian wars between Sparta and
 17 Athens (431 – 404 BC) is a fact but not everything that happened in the past
 18 becomes a historical fact. Thus, the basic principle in History involves a body
 19 of accurate pieces of evidence. The Historian could get his facts from
 20 documents, inscriptions, and the like.⁵⁵ This makes one become a good
 21 historiographer. That is what Thucydides seems to do as we understand from
 22 his comment:

23
 24 ...with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a
 25 principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be
 26 guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events
 27 which I have described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I
 28 have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. ...[my history] is absence
 29 of romantic element...(Thuc. I, 22, 1ff).

30
 31 Thus, from a contemporary point of view, we can say Thucydides had the
 32 conviction that a good historian is the one who gets his fact(s) accurate and
 33 gets praised for providing factual evidence in his recordings or narrations.⁵⁶
 34 Just as Carr (1961) reiterates, the facts (or basic facts) are set of raw data or
 35 materials of the historiographer rather than of history itself; and that, the most
 36 important thing for the historiographer and his source(s) of information (raw
 37 materials/facts) is not about how to get access to the facts but how a priori
 38 decision of the historian is set based on the information at hand. Thus, the duty
 39 and aim of the historiographer and what historiography seeks to do, from
 40 Thucydides and contemporary points of view, are not just about the writing of
 41 past events but how, the historian, with the basic facts or materials at hand,

⁵⁵E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), 3.

⁵⁶Ibid; C. L. Becker, "What are Historical Facts?" *The Western Political Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Sep. 1955): 327ff.

1 suggests the probable effects of a known cause or using the general principle to
2 suggest likely effects.⁵⁷

3 Some contemporary historians such as Carr (1961) have in mind that,
4 ignorance should be the first requisite of a historiographer, and that ignorance
5 must make things easier and make clear, decide on that which is necessary and
6 omits that which is not.⁵⁸ By extension, it is suggestive that the modern
7 historian should enjoy and cultivate the advantages of in-built ignorance
8 necessary for himself to come nearer to the accuracy of the facts and his
9 times.⁵⁹ By inference, that is exactly what Thucydides did. He allowed his
10 ignorance about what was happening in the Athenian and Spartan camps to
11 motivate his incessant check of facts thoroughly as possible so that he can
12 write an account well supported with evidence.⁶⁰ Thus, the inherent ignorance
13 should help the historian to discover the few significant facts and turn them
14 into facts of history, and to discard the many insignificant facts as
15 unhistorical.⁶¹

16 It is believed that no material or document can talk for itself or be
17 presented as a historical fact until the historiographer works on the material(s)
18 and decode it. This means that no matter where the historian gets his facts, they
19 still need to be processed by the historian before he can make the necessary use
20 of the facts, and how he makes use of them. This is what Edward H. Carr calls,
21 "the processing process"⁶² which is evidenced in Thucydides Book I.22 as he
22 (Thucydides) says he has thoroughly checked his sources and rationalized it
23 appropriately, and finally processed by way of recording for future generations.
24
25

26 Conclusion

27
28 To summarise, the article has demonstrated that Thucydides was not just
29 any ordinary writer of Greek history but also a historian who knew how
30 historiography is supposed to be done by drawing our attention to some issues
31 he raises in Book I of his histories. By interpreting his comments and
32 juxtaposing them to contemporary understanding and concepts of
33 historiography, especially from E. H. Carr's point of view, we can undeniably
34 say and understand with Thucydides that in matters of historiographical
35 approach, his predecessors came less close to Thucydides conception of
36 historiography. Thucydides tried to demonstrate to his contemporaries in Book
37 I.1, 20-22 that he knew about what undergoes historiography just as we
38 conceive of historiographical elements today. In line with this, we can assume

⁵⁷E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), 4.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁹E. V. Lebedev, "Theoretical and Methodological Conceptualization of the Western Historiosophical Thinking," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 4, S1 (July 2015): 406-414.

⁶⁰Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner trans (Great Britain: Richard Clay, The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1954), I.22.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), 6.

that contemporary discussions and concepts of historiography are the developments and adaption from Thucydides' conception of historiography by contemporary historians and historiographers.

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