UNIT II

1. History-a Science or an Art

Opinions are very much divided on the question whether history is a science or an art.

History is a science in the sense that it pursues its own techniques to establish and interpret facts. Like other natural sciences such as the Physics and Chemistry uses various methods of enquiry such as observation, classification, experiment and formulation of hypothesis and analysis of evidence before interpreting and reconstructing the past. History also follows the scientific method of enquiry to find out the truth. Though historian uses scientific techniques, experiment is impossible since history deals with events that have already happened and cannot be repeated.

Arguments against History as a science

1. *No forecasting*: Rickman has rightly said, "History deals with sequence of events, each of them unique while Science is concerned with the routine appearance of things and aims at generalizations and the establishment of regularities, governed by laws."A historian cannot arrive at general principles or laws which may enable him to predict with certainty the occurrence of like events, under given conditions. A scientist on the other hand, looks at knowledge from a universal angle and arrives at certain generalizations that help him to control the present and predict the future.

2. *Complex:* The facts of history are very complicated and seldom repeat in the real sense of the term.

3. *Varied:* The underlying facts of history have wide scope. They are so varied that they can seldom be uniform.

4. *No observation and experimentation*: Historical data are not available for observation and experimentation.

5. *No dependable data:* Historical data are the products of human thoughts and action which are constantly changing. They therefore cannot provide dependable data for the formation of general principles and laws.

History is both a Science and an Art

History is a unique subject possessing the potentialities of both a science and an art. It does the enquiry after truth, thus history is a science and is on scientific basis. It is also based on the narrative account of the past; thus it is an art or a piece of literature. Physical and natural sciences are impersonal, impartial and capable of experimentation. Whereas absolute impartiality is not possible in history because the historian is a narrator and he looks at the past from a certain point of view. History cannot remain at the level of knowing only. The construction and reconstruction of the past are inevitable parts of history. Like the work of art, its wholeness, harmony and truth are inseparable from a concrete and vivid appreciation of its parts. History, in fact, is a social science and an art. In that lie its flexibility, its variety and excitement.

2. OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

In philosophy, **objectivity** is the concept of truth independent from individual subjectivity (bias caused by one's perception, emotions, or imagination). A proposition is considered to have **objective truth** when its truth conditions are met without bias caused by a sentient subject. Scientific objectivity refers to the ability to judge without partiality or external influence. Objectivity in the moral framework calls for moral codes to be assessed based on the well-being of the people in the society that follow it.[1] Moral objectivity also calls for moral codes to be compared to one another through a set of universal facts and not through Subjectivity.[1]

Objectivity of knowledge[edit]

Plato considered geometry a condition of idealism concerned with universal truth.[*clarification needed*] His contrasting between objectivity and opinion became the basis for philosophies intent on resolving the questions of reality, truth, and existence. He saw opinions as belonging to the shifting sphere of sensibilities, as opposed to a fixed, eternal and knowable incorporeality. Where Plato distinguished between how we know things and their ontological status, subjectivism such as George Berkeley's depends on perception.[2] In Platonic terms, a criticism of subjectivism is that it is difficult to distinguish between knowledge, opinions, and subjective knowledge.[3]

Platonic idealism is a form of metaphysical objectivism, holding that the ideas exist independently from the individual. Berkeley's empirical idealism, on the other hand, holds that things only exist as they are perceived. Both approaches boast an attempt at objectivity. Plato's definition of objectivity can be found in his epistemology, which is based on mathematics, and his metaphysics, where knowledge of the ontological status of objects and ideas is resistant to change.[2]

In opposition to philosopher René Descartes' method of personal deduction, natural philosopher Isaac Newton applied the relatively objective scientific method to look for evidence before forming a hypothesis.[4] Partially in response to Kant's rationalism, logician Gottlob Frege applied objectivity to his epistemological and metaphysical philosophies. If reality exists independently of consciousness, then it would logically include a plurality of indescribable forms. Objectivity requires a definition of truth formed by propositions with truth value. An attempt of forming an objective construct incorporates ontological commitments to the reality of objects.[5]

The importance of perception in evaluating and understanding objective reality is debated in the observer effect of quantum mechanics. Direct or naïve realists rely on perception as key in

observing objective reality, while [instrumentalists](#) hold that observations are useful in predicting objective reality. The concepts that encompass these ideas are important in the [philosophy of science](#). [Philosophies of mind](#) explore whether objectivity relies on [perceptual constancy](#).[6]

Objectivity in ethics[edit]

Ethical subjectivism[edit]

See also: [David Hume](#), [Non-cognitivism](#), and [Subjectivism](#)

The term "ethical subjectivism" covers two distinct theories in ethics. According to cognitive versions of ethical subjectivism, the truth of moral statements depends upon people's values, attitudes, feelings, or beliefs. Some forms of cognitivist ethical subjectivism can be counted as forms of realism, others are forms of anti-realism.[7] [David Hume](#) is a foundational figure for cognitive ethical subjectivism. On a standard interpretation of his theory, a trait of character counts as a moral virtue when it evokes a sentiment of approbation in a sympathetic, informed, and rational human observer.[8] Similarly, [Roderick Firth](#)'s [ideal observer theory](#) held that right acts are those that an impartial, rational observer would approve of.[9] [William James](#), another ethical subjectivist, held that an end is good (to or for a person) just in the case it is desired by that person (see also [ethical egoism](#)). According to non-cognitive versions of ethical subjectivism, such as emotivism, prescriptivism, and expressivism, ethical statements cannot be true or false, at all: rather, they are expressions of personal feelings or commands.[10] For example, on [A. J. Ayer](#)'s emotivism, the statement, "Murder is wrong" is equivalent in meaning to the emotive, "Murder, Boo!"[11]

Ethical objectivism[edit]

According to the ethical objectivist, the truth or falsehood of typical moral judgments does not depend upon the beliefs or feelings of any person or group of persons. This view holds that moral propositions are analogous to propositions about chemistry, biology, or history, in so much as they are true despite what anyone believes, hopes, wishes, or feels. When they fail to describe this mind-independent moral reality, they are false—no matter what anyone believes, hopes, wishes, or feels.

There are many versions of ethical objectivism, including various religious views of morality, Platonistic intuitionism, Kantianism, utilitarianism, and certain forms of ethical egoism and contractualism. Note that Platonists define ethical objectivism in an even more narrow way, so that it requires the existence of intrinsic value. Consequently, they reject the idea that contractualists or egoists could be ethical objectivists. Objectivism, in turn, places primacy on the origin of the frame of reference—and, as such, considers any arbitrary frame of reference ultimately a form of ethical subjectivism by a transitive property, even when the frame incidentally coincides with reality and can be used for measurements.

Moral objectivism and relativism[edit]

Moral objectivism is the view that what is right or wrong doesn't depend on what anyone thinks is right or wrong.[1] Moral objectivism depends on how the moral code affects the well-being of the people of the society. Moral objectivism allows for moral codes to be compared to each other through a set of universal facts than *mores* of a society. Nicholas Reschar defines *mores* as customs within every society (i.e. what women can wear) and states that moral codes cannot be compared to one's personal moral compass.[1] An example is the categorical

imperative of Immanuel Kant which says: "Act only according to that maxim [i.e., rule] whereby you can at the same time will that it become a universal law." John Stuart Mill was a consequential thinker and therefore proposed utilitarianism which asserts that in any situation, the right thing to do is whatever is likely to produce the most happiness overall. Moral relativism is the view where a moral code is relative to an agent in their specific moral context.[12] The rules within moral codes are equal to each other and are only deemed "right" or "wrong" within their specific moral codes.[12] Relativism is opposite to Universalism because there is not a single moral code for every agent to follow.[12] Relativism differs from Nihilism because it validates every moral code that exists whereas nihilism does not.[12] When it comes to relativism, Russian philosopher and writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, coined the phrase "If God doesn't exist, everything is permissible". That phrase was his view of the consequences for rejecting theism as a basis of ethics. American anthropologist Ruth Benedict argued that there is no single objective morality and that morality varies with culture.[13]

Critique of Moral Objectivity

Morals are created when the social norms in a society will influence an agent to perform an action.[14] Over time, agents will become attached to the approved behavior and will be rewarded in society for upholding the desired actions.[14] These norms force agents to think about what it takes to satisfy these norms.[14] From the reinforcement of the social norms, an agent can have the reasons for the norms ingrained in their decision-making process.[14] All of this can mean nothing to an agent if they do not consider what their future version of themselves will become.[14] Once that inconsideration of the future takes place, an agent might only care about the present and make decisions based on the advancement of themselves rather than being considerate of social norms.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity is a central [philosophical](#) concept, related to [consciousness](#), [agency](#), [personhood](#), [reality](#), and [truth](#), which has been variously defined by sources. Three common definitions include that subjectivity is the quality or condition of:

- Something being a *[subject](#)*, narrowly meaning an individual who possesses conscious experiences, such as perspectives, feelings, beliefs, and desires.[1]

- Something being a *subject*, broadly meaning an entity that has [agency](#), meaning that it acts upon or wields power over some other entity (an *[object](#)*).[2]

- Some information, idea, situation, or physical thing considered true only from the perspective of a [subject](#) or subjects.

These various definitions of subjectivity are sometimes joined together in philosophy. The term is most commonly used as an explanation for that which influences, informs, and biases people's judgments about truth or reality; it is the collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, and personal or cultural understanding of, and beliefs about, an external [phenomenon](#), that are specific to a [subject](#).

Subjectivity is contrasted to the philosophy of [objectivity](#), which is described as a view of truth or reality that is free of any individual's biases, interpretations, feelings, and imaginings.[1]

Philosophy[[edit](#)]

The rise of the notion of subjectivity has its philosophical roots in the thinking of [Descartes](#) and [Kant](#), and its articulation throughout the modern era has depended on the understanding of what constitutes an individual. There have been various interpretations of such

concepts as the self and the soul, and the identity or self-consciousness which lies at the root of the notion of subjectivity.[3]

Subjectivity is, for instance, frequently the implicit topic of existentialism, Sartre as one of its main proponents emphasizing subjectivity in his phenomenology.[4] Unlike his colleague Merleau-Ponty, Sartre believed that, even within the material force of human society, the ego was an essentially transcendent being- posited, for instance, in his opus *Being and Nothingness* through his arguments about the 'being-for-others' and the 'for-itself' (i.e., an objective and subjective human being).

The innermost core of *subjectivity* resides in a unique act of what Fichte called "self-positing", where each subject is a point of absolute autonomy, which means that it cannot be reduced to a moment in the network of causes and effects.[5]

Sociology[edit]

Subjectivity is an inherently social mode that comes about through innumerable interactions within society. As much as subjectivity is a process of individuation, it is equally a process of socialization, the individual never being isolated in a self-contained environment, but endlessly engaging in interaction with the surrounding world. Culture is a living totality of the subjectivity of any given society constantly undergoing transformation.[6] Subjectivity is both shaped by it and shapes it in turn, but also by other things like the economy, political institutions, communities, as well as the natural world.

Though the boundaries of societies and their cultures are indefinable and arbitrary, the subjectivity inherent in each one is palatable and can be recognized as distinct from others. Subjectivity is in part a particular experience or organization of reality, which includes how one

views and interacts with humanity, objects, consciousness, and nature, so the difference between different cultures brings about an alternate experience of existence that forms life in a different manner. A common effect on an individual of this disjunction between subjectivities is culture shock, where the subjectivity of the other culture is considered alien and possibly incomprehensible or even hostile.

Political subjectivity is an emerging concept in social sciences and humanities.[2] Political subjectivity is a reference to the deep embeddedness of subjectivity in the socially intertwined systems of power and meaning. "Politicality," writes Sadeq Rahimi in *Meaning, Madness and Political Subjectivity*, "is not an added aspect of the subject, but indeed the mode of being of the subject, that is, precisely what the subject *is*."[7]

3. GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY

HERODOTUS (c. 484 BC—c. 425 BC),

History (from Greek ἱστορία, *historia*, meaning "inquiry; knowledge acquired by investigation")[2] is the study of the past.[3][4] Events occurring before the invention of writing systems are considered prehistory. "History" is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events. Historians place the past in context using historical sources such as written documents, oral accounts, ecological markers, and material objects including art and artifacts.[5]

History also includes the academic discipline which uses narrative to describe, examine, question, and analyze a sequence of past events, investigate the patterns of cause and effect that

are related to them.[6][7] Historians seek to understand and represent the past through narratives. They often debate which narrative best explains an event, as well as the significance of different causes and effects. Historians also debate the nature of history and its usefulness by discussing the study of the discipline as an end in itself and as a way of providing "perspective" on the problems of the present.[6][8][9][10]

Stories common to a particular culture, but not supported by external sources (such as the tales surrounding King Arthur), are usually classified as cultural heritage or legends.[11][12] History differs from myth in that it is supported by evidence. However, ancient influences have helped spawn variant interpretations of the nature of history which have evolved over the centuries and continue to change today. The modern study of history is wide-ranging, and includes the study of specific regions and the study of certain topical or thematic elements of historical investigation. History is often taught as part of primary and secondary education, and the academic study of history is a major discipline in university studies.

Herodotus, a 5th-century BC Greek historian is often considered (within the Western tradition) to be the "father of history"[13], or, the "father of lies".[*according to whom?*] Along with his contemporary Thucydides, he helped form the foundations for the modern study of human history. Their works continue to be read today, and the gap between the culture-focused Herodotus and the military-focused Thucydides remains a point of contention or approach in modern historical writing. In East Asia, a state chronicle, the Spring and Autumn Annals, was known to be compiled from as early as 722 BC although only 2nd-century BC texts have survived.

Thucydides

Ancient Greek: Θουκυδίδης *Thoukūdídēs* [tʰuːkyːdídɛːs]; c. 460 – c. 400 BC) was an Athenian historian and general. His *History of the Peloponnesian War* recounts the fifth-century BC war between Sparta and Athens until the year 411 BC. Thucydides has been dubbed the father of "scientific history" by those who accept his claims to have applied strict standards of impartiality and evidence-gathering and analysis of cause and effect, without reference to intervention by the deities, as outlined in his introduction to his work.[3][4][5]

He also has been called the father of the school of political realism, which views the political behavior of individuals and the subsequent outcomes of relations between states as ultimately mediated by, and constructed upon, the emotions of fear and self-interest.[6] His text is still studied at universities and military colleges worldwide.[7] The Melian dialogue is regarded as a seminal work of international relations theory, while his version of Pericles' Funeral Oration is widely studied by political theorists, historians, and students of the classics.

More generally, Thucydides developed an understanding of human nature to explain behaviour in such crises as plagues, massacres, and civil war.

In spite of his stature as a historian, modern historians know relatively little about Thucydides's life. The most reliable information comes from his own *History of the Peloponnesian War*, in which he mentions his nationality, paternity, and birthplace. Thucydides says that he fought in the war, contracted the plague, and was exiled by the democracy. He may have also been involved in quelling the Samian Revolt.[8]

Evidence from the Classical period[edit]

Thucydides identifies himself as an Athenian, telling us that his father's name was Olorus and that he was from the Athenian deme of Halimous.[9] A somewhat doubtful anecdote of his early

life still exists. Whilst still a youth of 10-12 years, he and his father were supposed to have gone to the agora of Athens where the young Thucydides heard a lecture by the historian Herodotus. According to some accounts the young Thucydides wept with joy after hearing the lecture, deciding that writing history would be his life's calling. The same account also claims that after the lecture, Herodotus spoke with the youth and his father, stating: *Oloros your son yearns for knowledge*. In all essence, the episode is most likely from a later Greek or Roman account of his life. [10] He survived the Plague of Athens,[11] which killed Pericles and many other Athenians. He also records that he owned gold mines at Scapte Hyle (literally "Dug Woodland"), a coastal area in Thrace, opposite the island of Thasos.[12]

The ruins of Amphipolis as envisaged by E. Cousinéry in 1831: the bridge over the Strymon, the city fortifications, and the acropolis

Because of his influence in the Thracian region, Thucydides wrote, he was sent as a strategos (general) to Thasos in 424 BC. During the winter of 424–423 BC, the Spartan general Brasidas attacked Amphipolis, a half-day's sail west from Thasos on the Thracian coast, sparking the Battle of Amphipolis. Eucles, the Athenian commander at Amphipolis, sent to Thucydides for help.[13] Brasidas, aware of the presence of Thucydides on Thasos and his influence with the people of Amphipolis, and afraid of help arriving by sea, acted quickly to

offer moderate terms to the Amphipolitans for their surrender, which they accepted. Thus, when Thucydides arrived, Amphipolis was already under Spartan control.[14]

Amphipolis was of considerable strategic importance, and news of its fall caused great consternation in Athens.[15] It was blamed on Thucydides, although he claimed that it was not his fault and that he had simply been unable to reach it in time. Because of his failure to save Amphipolis, he was exiled:[16]

I lived through the whole of it, being of an age to comprehend events, and giving my attention to them in order to know the exact truth about them. It was also my fate to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis; and being present with both parties, and more especially with the Peloponnesians by reason of my exile, I had leisure to observe affairs somewhat particularly.

Using his status as an exile from Athens to travel freely among the Peloponnesian allies, he was able to view the war from the perspective of both sides. Thucydides claimed that he began writing his history as soon as the war broke out, because he thought it would be one of the greatest wars waged among the Greeks in terms of scale:

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it.[17]

This is all that Thucydides wrote about his own life, but a few other facts are available from reliable contemporary sources. Herodotus wrote that the name Olorus, Thucydides's father's name, was connected with Thrace and Thracian royalty.[18] Thucydides was probably connected through family to the Athenian statesman and general Miltiades and his son Cimon, leaders of

the old aristocracy supplanted by the Radical Democrats. Cimon's maternal grandfather's name also was Olorus, making the connection quite likely. Another Thucydides lived before the historian and was also linked with Thrace, making a family connection between them very likely as well.

Combining all the fragmentary evidence available, it seems that his family had owned a large estate in Thrace, one that even contained gold mines, and which allowed the family considerable and lasting affluence. The security and continued prosperity of the wealthy estate must have necessitated formal ties with local kings or chieftains, which explains the adoption of the distinctly Thracian royal name *Óloros* into the family. Once exiled, Thucydides took permanent residence in the estate and, given his ample income from the gold mines, he was able to dedicate himself to full-time history writing and research, including many fact-finding trips. In essence, he was a well-connected gentleman of considerable resources who, after involuntarily retiring from the political and military spheres, decided to fund his own historical investigations.

Later sources[edit]

The remaining evidence for Thucydides' life comes from later and rather less reliable ancient sources; Marcellinus wrote Thucydides' biography about a thousand years after his death. According to Pausanias, someone named Oenobius had a law passed allowing Thucydides to return to Athens, presumably shortly after the city's surrender and the end of the war in 404 BC. Pausanias goes on to say that Thucydides was murdered on his way back to Athens, placing his tomb near the Melite gate.[19] Many doubt this account, seeing evidence to suggest he lived as

late as 397 BC, or perhaps slightly later. Plutarch preserves a tradition that he was murdered in *Skaptē Hulē* and that his remains were returned to Athens, where a monument to him was erected in Cimon's family plot.[20] There are problems with this, since this was outside Thucydides' deme and the tradition goes back to Polemon, who asserted he had discovered just such a memorial.[21] Didymus mentions another tomb in Thrace.[22]

Thucydides' narrative breaks off in the middle of the year 411 BC, and this abrupt end has traditionally been explained as due to his death while writing the book, although other explanations have been put forward.

Inferences about Thucydides' character can be drawn (with due caution) only from his book. His sardonic sense of humor is evident throughout, as when, during his description of the Athenian plague, he remarks that old Athenians seemed to remember a rhyme which said that with the Dorian War would come a "great death". Some claimed that the rhyme originally mentioned a [death by] "famine" or "starvation" (λιμός, *limos*[23]), and was only remembered later as [death by] "pestilence" (λοιμός, *loimos*[24]) due to the current plague. Thucydides then remarks that should another Dorian War come, this time attended with a great famine (λιμός), the rhyme will be remembered as "famine", and any mention of "plague" (λοιμός) forgotten.[25][26]

Thucydides admired Pericles, approving of his power over the people and showing a marked distaste for the demagogues who followed him. He did not approve of the democratic commoners nor of the radical democracy that Pericles ushered in, but considered democracy acceptable when guided by a good leader.[27] Thucydides' presentation of events is generally even-handed; for example, he does not minimize the negative effect of his own failure at Amphipolis. Occasionally, however, strong passions break through, as in his scathing

appraisals of the democratic leaders Cleon[28][29] and Hyperbolus.[30] Sometimes, Cleon has been connected with Thucydides' exile.[31]
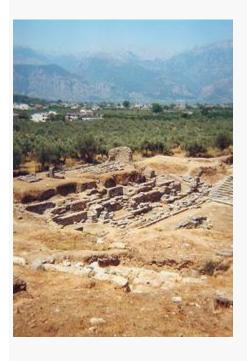
It has been argued that Thucydides was moved by the suffering inherent in war and concerned about the excesses to which human nature is prone in such circumstances, as in his analysis of the atrocities committed during the civil conflict on Corcyra,[32] which includes the phrase "war is a violent teacher" (πόλεμος βίαιος διδάσκαλος).

The *History of the Peloponnesian War*[edit]

Main article: History of the Peloponnesian War

The Acropolis in Athens

Ruins at Sparta

Thucydides believed that the Peloponnesian War represented an event of unmatched importance.[33] As such, he began to write the *History* at the onset of the war in 431.[34][35] His intention was to write an account which would serve as "a possession for all time".[36] The *History* breaks off near the end of the twenty-first year of the war and does not elaborate on the final conflicts of the war. This facet of the work suggests that Thucydides died whilst writing his history and more so, that his death was unexpected.

After his death, Thucydides's *History* was subdivided into eight books: its modern title is the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. His great contribution to history and historiography is contained in this one dense history of the 27-year war between Athens and Sparta, each alongside their respective allies. This subdivision was most likely made by librarians and archivists, themselves being historians and scholars, most likely working in the Library of Alexandria.

The *History of the Peloponnesian War* continued to be modified well beyond the end of the war in 404, as exemplified by a reference at Book I.1.13[37] to the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War (404 BC), seven years after the last events in the main text of Thucydides' history.[38]

Thucydides is generally regarded as one of the first true historians. Like his predecessor Herodotus, known as "the father of history", Thucydides places a high value on eyewitness testimony and writes about events in which he probably took part. He also assiduously consulted written documents and interviewed participants about the events that he recorded. Unlike Herodotus, whose stories often teach that a hubris invites the wrath of the deities, Thucydides does not acknowledge divine intervention in human affairs.[39]

Thucydides exerted wide historiographical influence on subsequent Hellenistic and Roman historians, although the exact description of his style in relation to many successive historians remains unclear.[40] Readers in antiquity often placed the continuation of the stylistic legacy of the *History* in the writings of Thucydides' putative intellectual successor Xenophon. Such readings often described Xenophon's treatises as attempts to "finish" Thucydides's *History*. Many of these interpretations, however, have garnered significant scepticism among modern scholars, such as Dillery, who spurn the view of interpreting Xenophon *qua* Thucydides, arguing that the latter's "modern" history (defined as constructed based on literary and historical themes) is antithetical to the former's account in the *Hellenica*, which diverges from the Hellenic historiographical tradition in its absence of a preface or introduction to the text and the associated lack of an "overarching concept" unifying the history.[41]

A noteworthy difference between Thucydides's method of writing history and that of modern historians is Thucydides's inclusion of lengthy formal speeches that, as he states, were literary reconstructions rather than quotations of what was said—or, perhaps, what he believed *ought* to have been said. Arguably, had he not done this, the gist of what was said would not otherwise be known at all—whereas today there is a plethora of documentation—written records, archives, and recording technology for historians to consult. Therefore, Thucydides's method served to *rescue* his mostly oral sources from oblivion. We do not know how these historical figures spoke. Thucydides's recreation uses a heroic stylistic register. A celebrated example is Pericles' funeral oration, which heaps honour on the dead and includes a defence of democracy:

The whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men; they are honoured not only by columns and inscriptions in their own land, but in foreign nations on memorials graven not on stone but in the hearts and minds of men. (2:43)

Stylistically, the placement of this passage also serves to heighten the contrast with the description of the plague in [Athens](#) immediately following it, which graphically emphasizes the horror of human mortality, thereby conveying a powerful sense of verisimilitude:

Though many lay unburied, birds and beasts would not touch them, or died after tasting them [...]. The bodies of dying men lay one upon another, and half-dead creatures reeled about the streets and gathered round all the fountains in their longing for water. The sacred places also in which they had quartered themselves were full of corpses of persons who had died there, just as they were; for, as the disaster passed all bounds, men, not knowing what was to become of them, became equally contemptuous of the property of and the dues to the deities. All the burial rites before in use were entirely upset, and they buried the bodies as best they could. Many from want of the proper appliances, through so many of their friends having died already, had recourse to the most shameless sepultures: sometimes getting the start of those who had raised a pile, they threw their own dead body upon the stranger's pyre and ignited it; sometimes they tossed the corpse which they were carrying on the top of another that was burning, and so went off. ([2:52](#))

Thucydides omits discussion of the arts, literature, or the social milieu in which the events in his book take place and in which he grew up. He saw himself as recording an event, not a period, and went to considerable lengths to exclude what he deemed frivolous or extraneous.

Philosophical outlook and influences[[edit](#)]

[Paul Shorey](#) calls Thucydides "a cynic devoid of moral sensibility".[42] In addition, he notes that Thucydides conceived of [human nature](#) as strictly determined by one's physical and social environments, alongside basic desires.[43] [Francis Cornford](#) was more nuanced: Thucydides' political vision was informed by a tragic ethical vision, in which:

Man, isolated from, and opposed to, Nature, moves along a narrow path, unrelated to what lies beyond and lighted only by a few dim rays of human 'foresight'(γνώμη/*gnome*), or by the false, wandering fires of Hope. He bears within him, self-contained, his destiny in his own character: and this, with the purposes which arise out of it, shapes his course. That is all, in Thucydides' view, that we can say: except that, now and again, out of the surrounding darkness comes the blinding strokes of Fortune, unaccountable and unforeseen.'[44]

Thucydides' work indicates an influence from the teachings of the Sophists that contributes substantially to the thinking and character of his *History*.[45] Possible evidence includes his skeptical ideas concerning justice and morality.[46] There are also elements within the *History*— such as his views on nature revolving around the factual, empirical, and the non-anthropomorphic—which suggest that he was at least aware of the views of philosophers such as Anaxagoras and Democritus. There is also evidence of his knowledge concerning some of the corpus of Hippocratic medical writings.[47]

Thucydides was especially interested in the relationship between human intelligence and judgment,[48] Fortune and Necessity,[49] and the idea that history is too irrational and incalculable to predict.[50]

Critical interpretation[edit]

Scholars traditionally view Thucydides as recognizing and teaching the lesson that democracies need leadership, but that leadership can be dangerous to democracy. Leo Strauss (in *The City and Man*) locates the problem in the nature of Athenian democracy itself, about which, he argued, Thucydides had a deeply ambivalent view: on one hand, Thucydides's own "wisdom was made

possible" by the Periclean democracy, which had the effect of liberating individual daring, enterprise, and questioning spirit; but this same liberation, by permitting the growth of limitless political ambition, led to imperialism and, eventually, civic strife.[51]

For Canadian historian Charles Norris Cochrane (1889–1945), Thucydides's fastidious devotion to observable phenomena, focus on cause and effect, and strict exclusion of other factors anticipates twentieth-century scientific positivism. Cochrane, the son of a physician, speculated that Thucydides generally (and especially in describing the plague in Athens) was influenced by the methods and thinking of early medical writers such as Hippocrates of Kos.[3]

After World War II, classical scholar Jacqueline de Romilly pointed out that the problem of Athenian imperialism was one of Thucydides's central preoccupations and situated his history in the context of Greek thinking about international politics. Since the appearance of her study, other scholars further examined Thucydides's treatment of *realpolitik*.

More recently, scholars have questioned the perception of Thucydides as simply "the father of realpolitik". Instead they have brought to the fore the literary qualities of the *History*, which they see as belonging to the narrative tradition of Homer and Hesiod and as concerned with the concepts of justice and suffering found in Plato and Aristotle and problematized in Aeschylus and Sophocles.[52] Richard Ned Lebow terms Thucydides "the last of the tragedians", stating that "Thucydides drew heavily on epic poetry and tragedy to construct his history, which not surprisingly is also constructed as a narrative."[53] In this view, the blind and immoderate behaviour of the Athenians (and indeed of all the other actors)—although perhaps intrinsic to human nature—ultimately leads to their downfall. Thus his *History* could serve as a warning to future leaders to be more prudent, by putting them on notice that someone would be scrutinizing their actions with a historian's objectivity rather than a chronicler's flattery.[54]

The historian [J. B. Bury](#) writes that the work of Thucydides "marks the longest and most decisive step that has ever been taken by a single man towards making history what it is today".[55]

Historian [H. D. Kitto](#) feels that Thucydides wrote about the Peloponnesian War, not because it was the most significant war in antiquity, but because it caused the most suffering. Indeed, several passages of Thucydides's book are written "with an intensity of feeling hardly exceeded by [Sappho](#) herself".[56]

In his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, [Karl Popper](#) writes that Thucydides was the "greatest historian, perhaps, who ever lived". Thucydides's work, however, Popper goes on to say, represents "an interpretation, a point of view; and in this we need not agree with him". In the war between Athenian democracy and the "arrested oligarchic tribalism of Sparta", we must never forget Thucydides's "involuntary bias", and that "his heart was not with Athens, his native city":

Although he apparently did not belong to the extreme wing of the Athenian oligarchic clubs who conspired throughout the war with the enemy, he was certainly a member of the oligarchic party, and a friend neither of the Athenian people, the demos, who had exiled him, nor of its imperialist policy.[57]

4. ROMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Livy[edit]

Titus Livius, commonly known as [Livy](#), was a Roman historian best known for his work entitled *Ab Urbe Condita*, which is a history of Rome "from the founding of the city". He was born in [Patavium](#), which is modern day Padua, in 59 BC and he died there in 17 AD.[18] Others referred to his writing as having "patavinitas". Little is known about his life, but based on

an [epitaph](#) found in Padua, he had a wife and two sons. We also know that he was on good terms with Augustus and he also encouraged [Claudius](#) to write history.

Ab Urbe Condita covered Roman history from its founding, commonly accepted as 753 BC, to 9 BC. It consisted of 142 books, though only books 1–10 and 21–45 survive in whole, although summaries of the other books and a few other fragments exist. The books were referred to as "decades" because Livy organized his material into groups of ten books.[19] The decades were further split in pentads:

- Books 1–5 cover from the founding to 390 BC.

- Books 6–10 cover 390–293 BC.

- Though we do not have books 11–20, evidence suggests that books 11–15 discussed [Pyrrhus](#) and books 16–20 dealt with the [First Punic War](#).

- Books 21–30 cover the [Second Punic War](#):

  o 21–25 deal with [Hannibal](#).

  o 26–30 deal with [Scipio Africanus](#).

- The wars against [Philip V](#) in Greece are discussed in books 31–35.

- The wars against [Antiochus III](#) in the east in books 36–40.

- The [Third Macedonian War](#) is dealt with in books 40–45.

- Books 45–121 are missing.

- Books 121–142 deal with the events from 42 through 9 BC.

The purpose of writing *Ab Urbe Condita* was twofold: the first was to memorialize history and the second was to challenge his generation to rise to that same level. He was preoccupied with morality, using history as a moral essay. He connects a nation's success with its high level of

morality, and conversely a nation's failure with its moral decline.[20] Livy believed that there had been a moral decline in Rome, and he lacked the confidence that Augustus could reverse it. Though he shared Augustus' ideals, he was not a "spokesman for the regime". He believed that Augustus was necessary, but only as a short term measure.

According to Quintillian, Livy wrote *lactea ubertas*, or "with milky richness".[21] He used language to embellish his material, including the use of both poetical and archaic words. He included many anachronisms in his work, such as tribunes having power that they did not have until much later. Livy also used rhetorical elaborations, such as attributing speeches to characters whose speeches could not possibly be known. Though he was not thought of as a first-rate research historian, being overly dependent on his sources,[22] his work was so extensive that other histories were abandoned for Livy. It is unfortunate that these other histories were abandoned, especially since much of Livy's work is now gone, leaving holes in our knowledge of Roman history.

Tacitus[edit]

Tacitus   was born c. 56 AD in, most likely, either Cisalpine or Narbonese Gaul. Upon arriving in Rome, which would have happened by 75, he quickly began to lay down the tracks for his political career. By 88, he was made praetor under Domitian, and he was also a member of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. From 89 to 93, Tacitus was away from Rome with his newly married wife, the daughter of the general Agricola. 97 saw Tacitus being named the consul suffectus under Nerva.[28] It is likely that Tacitus held a proconsulship in Asia. His death is datable to c. 118.

There is much scholarly debate concerning the order of publication of Tacitus' works; traditional dates are given here.[29]

- 98 – *Agricola (De vita Iulii Agricolae)*. This was a laudation of the author's father-in-law, the aforementioned general Cn. Iulius Agricola. More than a biography, however, can be garnered from the *Agricola*: Tacitus includes sharp words and poignant phrases aimed at the emperor Domitian.

- 98 – *Germania (De origine et situ Germanorum)*. "belongs to a literary genre, describing the country, peoples and customs of a race" (Cooley 2007).

- c. 101/102– *Dialogus (Dialogus de oratoribus)*. This is a commentary on the state of oratory as Tacitus sees it.

- c. 109 – *Histories*. This work spanned the end of the reign of Nero to the death of Domitian. Unfortunately, the only extant books of this 12–14 volume work are 1–4 and a quarter of book 5.

- Unknown – *Annales (Ab excessu divi Augusti)*. This is Tacitus' largest and final work. Some scholars also regard this as his most impressive work. The date of publication and whether it was completed at all are unknown. The *Annales* covered the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Like the Histories, parts of the *Annales* are lost: most of book 5, books 7–10, part of book 11, and everything after the middle of 16. Tacitus' familiar invective is also present in this work.

Tacitus' style is very much like that of Sallust. Short, sharp phrases cut right to the point, and Tacitus makes no bones about conveying his point. His claim that he writes history "sine ira et studio" ("without anger and partiality") (*Annales* I.1) is not exactly true.[30] Many of his passages ooze with hatred towards the emperors. Despite this seemingly obvious partisan style of writing, much of what is said can go under the radar, which is as Tacitus wanted things to be. His skill as an orator, which was praised by his good friend Pliny, no doubt contributes to his supreme

mastery of the Latin language. Not one to mince words, Tacitus does not waste time with a history of Rome *ab urbe condita*. Rather, he gives a brief synopsis of the key points before he begins a lengthier summary of the reign of Augustus. From there, he launches into his scathing account of history from where Livy would have left off.