CHAPTER 7

Herodotean Philosophy

In 1953, the Herodotean scholar John L. Myres wrote that "in the collection of facts about Man, and in the interpretation of them, Herodotus is the only 'pre-Socratic' writer who is preserved in full."[1] The preceding chapters have all attempted to consider how the *Histories* can be read alongside contemporary intellectual culture with Herodotus interpreted as a Presocratic thinker in his own right. This final chapter shifts to the implications of reading Herodotus in this way by looking to his reception in the early fourth century in the *Dissoi Logoi*. What questions does Herodotus raise for subsequent debates? How does allusion to the *Histories* in a treatise that is explicitly philosophical expand our understanding of Herodotus' project? What is the consequence of this for his position in a tradition of inquiry? The *Dissoi Logoi* offers a case study in the reception of the *Histories* as an example of its prominence in intellectual culture. The second half of the chapter reprises the conclusions of the book and reexamines the value of reading what will become early Greek "historiography" alongside philosophy.

Reading Relativism in the *Histories*: Allusion and the *Dissoi Logoi*

Chapter 2 surveyed the ways in which Herodotus' *Histories* interrogated a contemporary debate on relativism. In the near-contemporaneous *Truth* or *Overthrowing Arguments* by Protagoras, the Abderite pursued relativism in a subjective framework, where individual perception is absolutely true, and also in a cultural framework, where a society's norms are ethical for that people. We saw that there is good evidence for a preoccupation with

[1] Myres (1953), 43. He is followed by Benardete (1969), whose cover blurb is often cited: "Herodotus' *Inquiries* should be regarded as our best and most complete document for pre-Socratic philosophy." More impressionistic is Cochrane (1929), 15, "Thucydides is the most scientific, as Herodotus is the most philosophic of Greek historians."

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relativism in Athenian drama, as Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Euripides' *Aeolus* and *Phoenissae*, among others, attest. In these plays, relativism poses a threat to social order for its exposure of *nomos* as grounded solely in the unstable compact of community consent. Subjective relativism, meanwhile, dramatizes an even more disturbing viewpoint in its determination that individual conduct is answerable only to said individual's suppositions about what is moral.

The *Histories* is inscribed with philosophical observations evocative of Protagorean cultural relativism: whatever *nomos* exists for a given culture, it is appropriate for it. Yet the critique that Athenian drama offered on the problem of the contingency of *nomos* as legitimated only by communal consent is partially realized in the *Histories* as well. *Nomos* does authorize the acts of the Great King, whatever they are. Still, Herodotus articulates a distinctive approach to the challenge of cultural relativism and the instability of *nomos* by relating it to the subjectivism of rulers such as Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. Communities emerge as stable and reliable entities for generating custom, but individual monarchs display a tendency to unravel consensus and traditional morality through their forceful command of *nomos*. This phenomenon is scaled up in the context of imperial peoples to encompass the relation of the monarchical populace over its subjects.

In different ways, tragedy and comedy illustrate the negative implications of cultural and subjective relativism. By contrast, Herodotus works out the apparent contradictions in cultural relativism and the contingency of *nomos* by pointing to the problem of maintaining communal consensus and tradition in the context of one-man or imperial rule. Operating alongside this criticism is a persistently neutral representation of differing human groups' *nomoi*. These *nomoi* accentuate the ubiquity of cultural difference and habituate the audience of the *Histories* to accept cultural horizons far beyond their own.

The *Dissoi Logoi* offers an opportunity to chart interaction between sophistic arguments on relativism and the *Histories*. This incomplete sophistic treatise is written in a Doric dialect (with a mystifying admixture of Atticism and Ionicism) and has been transmitted in select manuscripts of Sextus Empiricus.[2] It is traditionally dated to the early fourth century and presents twofold arguments on a series of concepts:[3] the good and the

[2] For the dialect, see Weber (1897); Robinson (1979), 51–4.

[3] Its dating is made on the basis of (1) a reference to a "recent" war fought between Athens and her allies against the Lacedaemonians, with the latter victorious, which is interpreted as the Peloponnesian War and (2) a mention of a single son of Polycleitus who has been successfully instructed in the art of sculpture by his father. Extrapolating from these internal references, a

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bad, the seemly and the unseemly, the true and the false, and so on. These formal antilogies eventually shift into monologic meditations on wisdom and ignorance, virtue and its teachability, and other sophistic *topoi*. The philosophical arguments it contains have been associated variously with the sophists Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, and Socrates.[4] At times these commonalities have been used as proof of authorship, although no one candidate has won many supporters. Until new evidence is forthcoming, the author will remain unknown. What is plain is that the author was wholly embedded in sophistic debates. As a small sample, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s use of antilogy and relativism is evocative of some reports of Protagoras; the doctrine of *kairos* recalls Gorgias; the discussion of justice, Plato's Socrates; the emphasis on the universality of the sophist's knowledge is in keeping with the doctrine of Hippias. Considering this intellectual cosmopolitanism and the initial dialogic structure of argument, which fails to resolve into support for one view, it seems preferable to see the text as surveying questions *dans le vent*, rather than adapting the playbook of a single known figure.[5]

The notion that the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* was aware of the *Histories* has long been doubted. This is surprising, since in the argument for the identity of the "seemly" and the "unseemly," the *Dissoi Logoi* consistently recalls the *Histories* as it builds a case for relativism. These passages have often been identified with ethnographic exempla familiar from Herodotus but have been interpreted as independent and drawing upon a common philosophical source that does not survive. Walther Kranz, for example, explains:

composition at around 403–395 BCE seems probable. For this dating, seminal are Robinson (1979), 34–41, (2003); and Untersteiner (1954), 148, 152. It is favored by Taylor (1911), 93–4; Dupréel (1921), 29; Kranz (1937), 227; Levi (1940), 292; Ramage (1961), 423–4; Sprague (1968); Gera (2000), 22; Ford (2001), 90; Becker and Scholz (2004), 16, 113; Schiappa (2005), 146; Graham 900; Lachance (2016), though hesitantly; and Wolfsdorf (2020). There are a minority of dissenting voices who support earlier and later periods, e.g., Mazzarino (1966), 289–90, dating it to ca. 440 on an understanding of the victory as taking place over the Athenians at Tanagra in 457; this is followed by the recent commentary of Maso (2018). For a Byzantine dating, see Conley (1985); this is convincingly rejected by Robinson (2003), 240–5.

[4] For a summary of those opinions, see Robinson (1979), 41–73; (2003), 238–40. Kranz (1937), 227, "hier ein Schüler, nicht ein Meister spricht." ("Here a student and not a master speaks.") Attempts to treat the author as a Pythagorean, Rostagni (1922), or a neo-Eleatic, as Taylor (1911), have largely fallen out of fashion. For the sophistic cosmopolitanism of the author, see Levi (1940).

[5] The text's mystery is exaggerated, to my view, by Bailey (2008), 249–50. N.b. Robinson (2003), 243, argues that internal evidence suggests some apparently antilogic arguments are preferred by the sophist.

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> Ethnographic material, which is important for proving the relativity of moral views, was collected by Protagoras and his ilk: from them it came to Herodotus and the Dorian [sc., the *Dissoi Logoi*]... who presents these sophistic ideas in a particularly pointed form.[6]

The conception of the *Dissoi Logoi* as only groping toward real philosophy has a long pedigree,[7] and it overlaps with an outdated scholarly interpretation that saw Herodotus' own engagement with sophistic thought as entirely derivative. More circumspect is Wilhelm Nestle, who wondered whether the author of the philosophical treatise took his ethnographic exempla from Herodotus directly or through an intermediary; yet even Nestle ultimately sided with the latter option as more probable on the grounds that one of the *nomoi* recorded in the *Dissoi Logoi* on the Lydians is not found in the *Histories*.[8] Along with Kranz, he favored Protagoras as the lost source of both.[9] But Protagoras was not the only superior mind to whom these ethnographic episodes were attributed; elsewhere, they were traced to shadowy historicizing prose figures such as Hecataeus, Dionysius of Miletus, Charon of Lampsacus, and even more implausibly, Damastes of Sigeum, and Xanthus of Lydia.[10] Others suggested an origin in Hippias.[11] A recent commentator on the *Dissoi Logoi*, Stefano Maso, continues this interpretative paradigm of rejecting engagement between the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories*: "it was information that was known to most people or Herodotus took these examples from an older source also known to the

[6] Kranz (1937), 228: "Das für den Beweis der Relativität moralischer Anschauungen wichtige ethnographische Material ist von Protagoras und seinen Gesinnungsgenossen gesammelt worden: von ihnen ist es zu Herodot und zum Dorer ... gelangt, der diese sophistischen Gedanken sogar in besonders zugespitzter Form bringt." There are exceptions, cf. Taylor (1911), 95, who notes in passing that, "one may add, as minor personal touches, that the writer had read his Herodotus." Before him, Theodor Bergk's posthumous piece in 1883 on the authenticity of the text added in a footnote on the subject of what the author had heard from their instructor, 136 n. 1, "Die Beispiele sind unverkennbar zum Theil aus Herodot entlehnt; dieses Werk konnte Gorgias ebenso gut wie sein Schüler benutzen" ("The examples are unmistakably in part borrowed from Herodotus; Gorgias could use this work as well as his student").

[7] E.g., Diels (1907), 635, he is "talentlos," as noted by Iordanoglou and Lindqvist (2018), 77; Graham 877, "At best it is a second-rate work." An exception is Kranz (1937), 227, who calls it "unschätzbar" ("priceless").

[8] Nestle (1942), 437–8. In fact, this Lydian *nomos* does appear to have Herodotean provenance.

[9] Nestle (1942), 440–1. Nestle was revising the position taken by Aly (1929), 119–20, who had argued that they both derived from Hellanicus (as is clear from Maso, this remains influential). Aly's suggestion is cited by Untersteiner (1954), 160, who questions the dependency of the *Dissoi Logoi* on Herodotus and posits a common source.

[10] Mazzarino (1966), 292. [11] Untersteiner (1996), 465.

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anonymous author of the *Dissoi Logoi*: Hellanicus, for example."[12] That is, Herodotus and the *Dissoi Logoi* are reporting generic information or else they were both again drawing upon a more venerable authority.

Even close correspondence has been taken as evidence of independent composition. Santo Mazzarino offered the paradoxical inference that the "independence of the *Dissoi Logoi* from Herodotus can also be deduced from those passages in which the *Dissoi Logoi* seems to concur with Herodotus," as, for example, in the addition of a detail absent from the *Histories*.[13] The prominent commentator T. M. Robinson agrees, clarifying that "some of the statements coincide with what can be found in Herodotus, but it would be rash to assume that the author has copied directly from him, since on a number of occasions he offers detail not found in Herodotus."[14] "Copying," or direct textual adaptation is taken as the standard of authentic interaction and deviation from strict reproduction is viewed as evidence of non-interaction. In fact, there is no evidence that the *Histories* is adapting ethnographical material from earlier source material. Indeed, the older assumption that Herodotus wove together a series of written texts has been displaced by a recognition of his place in a predominantly oral culture. Additionally, an obstacle to the proposal that both drew upon cultural commonplaces is the fact that the two at times preserve uncommon ethnographic details.

Renewed attention to the way in which allusion and intertext function in ancient poetry and in prose also complicates the earlier references to direct "copying" as the signal of interaction or independence. Copying implies the subordination of the alluding text to its source material. Allusion, which will be of central concern here, does not depend upon linguistic identity or hierarchy. It is the "teasing play between revelation and concealment."[15] Allusion adapts and reconfigures language, relying upon the audience's familiarity with the source text. These linguistic modifications, in addition to their new context, alter the sense of the alluding text's meaning and this in turn changes the way in which the source text itself is read, which lends allusion its dynamism. This series of hermeneutic moves enriches the act of listening and reading by allowing the audience to command a powerful role in the construction of meaning.

[12] Maso (2018) on 2.9: "[La datazione 'alta' qui adottato per i *Dissoi Logoi* implica] che si trattasse di notizie ai più note o che Erodoto riprendesse tali esempi da una fonte più antica conosciuta anche dall'Anonimo dei *Dissoi Logoi*: per esempio Ellanico."

[13] Mazzarino (1966), 291: "Questa indipendenza dei *Dissoi Logoi* da Erodoto può dedursi anche da taluni luoghi in cui i *Dissoi Logoi* sembrano concordare con Erodoto stesso."

[14] Robinson (1979), commenting on 2.9.

[15] Hinds (1998), 23.

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Through attending to allusion, the audience generates an implied authorial intention.[16] Allusion draws out the way in which the *Dissoi Logoi* activates Herodotus as a philosophical model.

In the argument that the seemly and the unseemly are the same, the author begins with situations that command common Greek assent, as in the view that it is seemly for a wife to have sex with her husband but not another woman's (DK 90 B 2.5). The examples explicitly shift from the conduct of individuals to ethnographic studies of peoples and nations in a hodological frame: "I will go on (εἶμι) to what both cities and peoples (ταὶ πόλιές τε . . . καὶ τὰ ἔθνεα) consider unseemly" (B 2.9). The narrator-as-traveler metaphor perhaps evokes Herodotus most readily,[17] but the reference to cities and peoples recalls the thematic interests of early prose writers, who, according to the famed report of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, wrote history by "dividing up by peoples and by cities" (*Thuc.* 5.21: κατ' ἔθνη καὶ κατὰ πόλεις διαιροῦντες). The sense that one is entering into a travel narrative is confirmed by the spatial organization of what follows. The narrator begins in Sparta, and from there moves north to Thessaly, Macedonia, and Thrace, east toward Scythia, Massagetes, and Persia, and southwest to Lydia and Egypt. The circular progression evokes the circumnavigation familiar from *periodos ges* treatises.[18]

After the *Dissoi Logoi* departs from Greece, it moves to the examples of cultural relativism evident in Macedonia and in Thrace.[19]

> Μακεδόσι δὲ καλὸν δοκεῖ ἦμεν τὰς κόρας, πρὶν ἀνδρὶ γάμασθαι, ἐρᾶσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ συγγίνεσθαι, ἐπεὶ δέ κα γάμηται, αἰσχρόν· Ἕλλασι δ' ἄμφω αἰσχρόν. τοῖς δὲ Θραιξὶ κόσμος τὰς κόρας στίζεσθαι· τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις τιμωρία τὰ στίγματα τοῖς ἀδικέοντι. (DK 90 B 2.12–13)
>
> Among the Macedonians it appears to be seemly that their young women, before they marry a man, conceive a passion for and have sex with a man; whenever she marries, it is considered to be unseemly. To Greeks both are unseemly. And among the Thracians it is decorous for their young women to be tattooed. To others, tattoos are a form of retribution for delinquents.

The allusion in the *Dissoi Logoi* to the *Histories* is activated through its geographical specificity in Thrace and its use of the same verb for tattooing

[16] For a lucid defense of the intention of the "author" in terms of allusion, see Hinds (1998), 47–51.
[17] See Chapter 6 n. 62, on such spatial imagery in Herodotus.
[18] That it follows the pattern of a circumnavigation of the earth is observed by Skinner (2018), 211 n. 102.
[19] See Barnes (1979), ii.214–20, for a discussion of moral relativism in the *Dissoi Logoi*.

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(στίζω).[20] During Megabazus' conquest of Thrace, Herodotus pauses the narrative to give a description of the people's *nomoi*. The Thracians sell their children, keep no eye on their daughters, but guard their wives, who are paid for dearly, with great care. Next, Herodotus records that their "being tattooed is judged a mark of nobility, while being without tattoos is ignoble" (5.6.2: τὸ μὲν ἐστίχθαι εὐγενὲς κέκριται, τὸ δὲ ἄστικτον ἀγεννές).

The *Dissoi Logoi* also evokes the chorus leader in Aristophanes' *Birds*, who opposes what is shameful (αἰσχρά) according to the *nomos* of the Athenians to its seemliness and beauty (καλά) among the culture of the birds (755–6). He then affirms that a tattooed (760: ἐστιγμένος) runaway slave in Athens among the birds is simply called "dappled" (761: ποικίλος). Aristophanes corresponds closely to the sophist's statement on the punitive nature of this practice in Greece, by explicitly noting that it is used to torture the bodies of the enslaved. The parodic reversal of cultural values plays upon the same relativizing themes.

Elsewhere, Thracian women's tattooing is not relativized but explained as a punishment in origin, an aetiology that reveals the pull of universal moral values. The late fourth-century philosopher Clearchus apparently expanded upon the story of the tattoos by relating that the Thracian women had been tattooed once by Scythian invaders. These invaders, Clearchus says, were the first people to adhere to "common laws" (νόμοις κοινοῖς), although they later became extremely arrogant in their actions toward foreigners, cutting off the noses of those peoples who they invaded.[21] Likewise, the Scythian women pricked the bodies of Thracian women with needles, marking them with their designs. Later, the Thracian women tattooed over these insults with their own patterns, converting them into "ornamentation" (F 46 Wehrli: κόσμου) and masking their stigma.[22] In another variant, the Thracian women were tattooed by their husbands as punishment for their violent murder of Orpheus.[23]

Above all, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s allusion gestures to the *Histories*. There, the oppositional μέν . . . δέ recreates an antilogic narrative structure, which is reinforced by the contrast of "noble" (εὐγενές) and "ignoble" (ἀγεννές).

[20] This is the only instance in which εὐγενής is used in the text; ἀγεννής also at Hdt. 1.134.1. For the Thracians, cf. Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 14.19; Artem. 1.8. Cratinus composed a comedy, *The Thracian Women*; from F 81 he seems to have parodied Thracian tattooing by making reference to a tattooing in regard to Callias' debts. Aeschylus too wrote a *Thracian Women* about which little is known.

[21] N.b. Intaphrenes, in a fit of hybris, cut off the nose and ears of Darius' enslaved attendants, 3.118.2.

[22] Clearchus includes the "Scythian saying"; for which, see Hdt. 4.127.4.

[23] See Phanocles F 1 Powell = Stob. *Flor.* 4.20b.47 Hense-Wachsmuth, where it is a punishment from Thracian men for their wives' murdering of Orpheus as a reminder of their deeds. Cf. Plut. *De sera* 557d.

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These antithetical predicates introduce a strong moral dimension into the practice. For Herodotus, this opposition is wholly internal to the Thracians, marking out divisions within the populace as praiseworthy or otherwise. The gender of the individuals is unmarked but, given the ensuing discussion of male occupations of farming and warmongering, it is difficult to restrict it to women alone. Finally, there is an understated nod to the comparative alterity of this behavior in the statement that caps the passage: "these are the most remarkable of their *nomoi*" (5.6.2).

The alluding text of the *Dissoi Logoi* activates the implicit cultural relativism present in the *Histories*. For the philosopher, the internal differentiation among Thracians turns into an external opposition of Thracians and "others." The juxtaposition of nobility and ignobility in tattooing changes into what is seemly and unseemly for Thracians and non-Thracians. The subtle nod toward the alterity of this norm according to Herodotus becomes wholly explicit in the clarification that this is a punishment for wrongdoers elsewhere. Further, there is a correction of the source text in terms of gender; elsewhere this practice is predominantly associated with women, and the *Dissoi Logoi* revises the *Histories* here too.[24]

There is a second innovation upon the source text in this passage. Herodotus discusses Thracian sexual mores in the sentence prior to his statement on tattooing. The Thracians, he explains, do not guard their young unmarried women but do guard their wives closely since they buy them at a great price (5.6.1: τὰς παρθένους οὐ φυλάσσουσι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐῶσι τοῖσι αὐταὶ βούλονται ἀνδράσι μίσγεσθαι. τὰς γυναῖκας ἰσχυρῶς φυλάσσουσι· ὠνέονται τὰς γυναῖκας παρὰ τῶν γονέων χρημάτων μεγάλων). Like Herodotus, the philosopher moves from the case of young unmarried women (τὰς κόρας/τὰς παρθένους) and their sexual freedoms (ἐρᾶσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ συγγίνεσθαι/ἀλλ᾽ ἐῶσι τοῖσι αὐταὶ βούλονται ἀνδράσι μίσγεσθαι) to consider the very different behavior expected of wives, whose sexuality is policed with care (ἐπεὶ δέ κα γάμηται, αἰσχρόν/ τὰς γυναῖκας ἰσχυρῶς φυλάσσουσι). The same themes are treated in precisely the same sequence.[25] The *Dissoi Logoi*'s reference, however, revises its location,

[24] In the *Histories*, the tattoos are associated with those of "noble rank." Immediately following is a reference to what is most honorable (not to work) as a profession and least (to till the soil), with the qualification that most honorable of all is to make a living by war and plunder. These vocations are associated with men, so there is reason to interpret Herodotus' inked Thracians as men. This is followed by, e.g., Str. 7.5.4; Cic. *Off.* 2.7; Eust. *in D.P.* 332 Müller.

[25] Robinson (1979) ad loc. does not observe the connection with the *Histories*. He suggests that there is a difference between premarital and extramarital intercourse and hypothesizes that premarital

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affirming that it is practiced among the Thracians' neighbors, the Macedonians.[26] This alteration is only apparent if the audience returns to the *Histories*, a fact that suggests that the *Dissoi Logoi* is cultivating a vigilant reader.

Allusion to ethnographic detail found in the *Histories* continues in references to Scythian scalping, funerary cannibalism among the Massagetes, filial sex work in Lydia, and the Egyptians' inclination toward what is elsewhere treated as unseemly. In each case, the argument in support of the relativity of the "seemly" and the "unseemly" uses cultural relativism as a framework. In drawing upon the static ethnographic exempla found in the *Histories*, the treatise defuses the critique that cultural relativism cannot account for the diachronic and arbitrary change of customs based on communal consensus. Additionally, it nowhere employs the morally radioactive position of subjective relativism.

When the *Dissoi Logoi* comes to Persia, tellingly, it is to affirm the relativity of incest.

> τοὶ δὲ Πέρσαι ... καλὸν νομίζοντι καὶ τᾷ θυγατρὶ καὶ τᾷ ματρὶ καὶ τᾷ ἀδελφᾷ συνίμεν· τοὶ δὲ Ἕλλανες καὶ αἰσχρὰ καὶ παράνομα. (2.15)
>
> The Persians consider it seemly ... to have sex with their daughter, mother, and sister; but the Greeks consider this both unseemly and contrary to *nomos*.

This sounds like the Euripidean sentiment that "the whole barbarian race is like this: | father has sex with daughter, son with mother, | and sister with brother ... and no *nomos* forbids any of these things" (*Andr.* 173–6). Indeed, the scholiast notes of Euripides' line that "all Persians have such customs."[27] Antisthenes apparently stated that Alcibiades was a transgressor of the law (παράνομον) in terms of his behavior with women, "as he had sex with mother, daughter, and sister, like the Persians" (Ath. 5.220c: συνεῖναι γὰρ καὶ μητρὶ καὶ θυγατρὶ καὶ ἀδελφῇ, ὡς τοὺς Πέρσας). In contrast with these negative depictions of the practice as unlawful, in

intercourse could refer to "trial marriage" among the Macedonians. Yet the parallel clarifies that trial marriage is not at stake; instead, daughters are free to have sex with whomever they please outside of the marriage bond.

[26] There is a potential trace of this practice in the term κορινᾶος, "son of unmarried girl," which is preserved by the historian Marsyas, who may be identified with a historian of Macedon, *FGrH* 135–6 F 24. Thracian men were known for having sex with multiple women, see Eur. *Andr.* 215–17; Σ in *Andr.* 217; *FGrH* 12 F 10 for the *nomos* that one man could sleep with many women in Thrace, according to Asclepiades' Thamyris.

[27] Σ in Eur. *Andr.* 174: πάντα Περσικὰ ἔθη.

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the *Dissoi Logoi* Persian incest is not morally depraved. Its unlawfulness is pointedly only valid among the Greeks.[28]

Persian incest offends Greek moral and legal sensibility, as it is both "unseemly" and, in the only instance of this term in the text, "contrary to *nomos*." As discussed in Chapter 2, Herodotus narrates the rise of the Persian *nomos* legitimating incestuous marriage between siblings in his account of the reign of Cambyses. In that passage, Cambyses searched for a *nomos* allowing him to marry his sister, which culminated in the ratification of sibling marriage for Cambyses, a custom explicitly deemed unlawful among the Persians before this (3.31.4). The *Dissoi Logoi* simplifies the portrait of relativism, eliminating the pressure from the despot in this process and its conflict with traditional Persian *mores*. The *nomos* is made static and unchanging, erasing the monarchic challenge to the stability of communal custom. This obviates the critique of those protesting relativism's arbitrariness. So too, in the alluding text "the Persians" as a populace replace Herodotus' Cambyses, and his desire to marry his sister is luridly extended to include mothers and daughters as well, in a violation of all injunctions against incest.[29] The allusion smooths over the justification of what is traditionally immoral in Persia and instead treats the *nomos* as yet another instance of a neutral case study in cultural difference.

The argument for relativism culminates in a hypothetical experiment and a quotation from an unknown poet:[30]

> οἶμαι δ', αἴ τις τὰ αἰσχρὰ ἐς ἓν κελεύοι συνενεῖκαι πάντας ἀνθρώπως, ἃ ἕκαστοι νομίζοντι, καὶ πάλιν ἐξ ἀθρόων τούτων τὰ καλὰ λαβέν, ἃ ἕκαστοι ἄγηνται, οὐδὲ ἕν <κα> καλλειφθῆμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντας πάντα διαλαβέν. οὐ γὰρ πάντες ταὐτὰ νομίζοντι. παρεξοῦμαι δὲ καὶ ποίημά τι·
>
> καὶ γὰρ τὸν ἄλλον ὧδε θνητοῖσιν νόμον
> ὄψῃ διαιρῶν· οὐδὲν ἦν πάντῃ καλόν,
> οὐδ' αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ ταὔτ' ἐποίησεν λαβών
> ὁ καιρὸς αἰσχρὰ καὶ διαλλάξας καλά.
> (DK 90 B 2.18–19)
>
> I think that if someone ordered all peoples to gather together the things that each one considered unseemly and then to take away from the heaps those

[28] Xanthus of Lydia, *BNJ* 765 F 31, wrote that the Magi could have sex with their mothers, daughters, and sisters. Ctesias, *FGrH* 688 at F 44a and F44b, claimed that the Persians slept with their mothers openly. See too Philo *Spec.* 3.13.

[29] Similar are the anxieties of Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 28.1, when he condemns the diversity of human *nomoi* in oppositions of Greeks versus Persians (on the Oedipus complex) and foreigners versus Romans (on pederasty).

[30] For a discussion of this experiment, see Gera (2000), 35–8.

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> things that each one considered seemly, nothing would be left, but everything would be divided up by everyone. For all people do not think the same things. I shall also cite some verses:
>
> For you will see, if you distinguish, a different law | for mortals, like this: nothing is seemly in every regard, | nor unseemly, but the right occasion (*kairos*) takes the same things | and makes them unseemly and, changing them, seemly.

The conclusion of the argument reintroduces an intrusive first-person *persona loquens* in a hypothetical experiment in which all bring together what is blameworthy and take away what is praiseworthy, with nothing left behind. This reinforces the earlier references to the relativity of cultural norms by scaling up to *all* humans. The moral predicates "seemly" and "unseemly" are not pegged to general standards of action. The verses bolster this case but do so paradoxically by invoking a universal *nomos* for humans – something that has been challenged by the preceding ethnographic studies – that "right occasion" alone dictates the referent of the seemly and the unseemly.

Structurally, the argument proceeds from hypothetical experiment to supporting poetic verse. The generic setting of a gathering and exchange of items by all peoples and the use of a verse as a closural formula to bolster claims on relativism artfully alludes to Herodotus and his reasoning on the madness of Cambyses and the relativity of religious *nomoi*.[31] Recall that Cambyses was alienated from Persian and Egyptian norms and deemed mad by Herodotus:

> εἰ γάρ τις προθείη πᾶσι ἀνθρώποισι ἐκλέξασθαι κελεύων νόμους τοὺς καλλίστους ἐκ τῶν πάντων νόμων, διασκεψάμενοι ἂν ἑλοίατο ἕκαστοι τοὺς ἑωυτῶν· οὕτω νομίζουσι πολλόν τι καλλίστους τοὺς ἑωυτῶν νόμους ἕκαστοι εἶναι ... ὡς δὲ οὕτω νενομίκασι τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόμους οἱ πάντες ἄνθρωποι (3.38.1–2)
>
> For if someone were to put a proposition before all men, ordering them to select the noblest *nomoi* for themselves from all *nomoi*, after examining them thoroughly each people would choose those of their own. So each

[31] Gera (2000), 37, noting the parallels in ethnography, rightly points out that "it is possible that the historian was also the inspiration for the theoretical trial," although this is modified at n. 54 and n. 66 with reference to scholars identifying a Protagorean hypotext. According to Gera, Herodotus' experiment is simpler than that found in the *Dissoi Logoi* as "he does not stress the relativity of values." While it is correct that Herodotus' experiment is "simpler," describing their difference in these terms occludes more than it reveals.

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> people consider that by far the noblest are their own *nomoi* . . . this is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi*.

Both hypothetical experiments use a future less vivid conditional and begin with an anonymous organizer (τις/τις). In the *Histories*, this individual orders (κελεύων) all men (πᾶσι ἀνθρώποισι) to select the most praiseworthy *nomoi*;[32] in the *Dissoi Logoi*, he orders (κελεύοι) all men (πάντας ἀνθρώπως) to bring together what they consider (νομίζοντι) unseemly and take away the seemly. In these hypothetical gatherings, each (ἕκαστοι) departs with what is desirable for him. The *Dissoi Logoi* reworks Herodotus' statement that "this is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi*," affirming that "all men do not observe the same things." After providing a further case study in the juxtaposition of Callatian (a *nomos* found also in the *Dissoi Logoi* but of the Massagetes) and Greek burial practices, Pindar is wheeled out for support in the quote of F 169a, via the intrusive "rightly, it seems to me," ὀρθῶς μοι δοκέει. The *Dissoi Logoi* follows the narratorial interjection with παρεξοῦμαι, "I will furnish," and then quotes the words of the unknown poet.[33] Stefano Maso has commented on the *Dissoi Logoi* that this kind of poetic source attribution is a "typical sophistic practice." No doubt this is correct. Yet the quotation's context and linguistic correspondences suggest that the *Dissoi Logoi* is continuing a pointed play on and reshaping of Herodotus' *Histories*.

The interaction is picked up on by Maximus of Tyre, who alludes to both in his oration, "Plato on God." In a preamble to the statement that all humans believe in a sovereign higher power, Maximus too envisions a hypothetical gathering: "if you were to order (εἰ . . . κελεύοις) a collection of experts in an assembly and command all gathered (ἅπαντας ἀθρόους)" to speak about god, then all – Scythians, Greeks, Persians, and Hyperboreans – would say the same thing (*Or.* 11.4), he argues.[34] Initially, this tells against the relativism that the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories* advocated for; however, a counterfactual follows. In every other respect, men express differences in opinion from one another. As examples,

[32] Gera (2000), 38, attractively suggests that this might refer to the Persian ruler as the organizer of the hypothetical experiment.

[33] Cf. Ar. *Av.* 755–6: ὅσα γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχρὰ καὶ νόμῳ κρατούμενα, | ταῦτα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν καλά ("For all the things that are shameful here and dominated by *nomos*, all of these things are seemly among us birds"). Interesting in connection with this is the rejection of an instance of relativism among foreigners and Greeks at Eur. *Andr.* 243–4.

[34] Cf. Hdt. 2.3.2.

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the good is not the same thing for all, nor the bad, "nor the unseemly or the seemly" (οὐ τὸ αἰσχρόν, οὐ τὸ καλόν). The sentiment captures the subjects of the first two antilogies in the *Dissoi Logoi* while evoking the second antilogy's assembly of seemly and unseemly things. Maximus then continues with a reference to *nomos* and justice (νόμος μὲν γὰρ δὴ καὶ δίκη), which are also concepts that meet with human disagreement. In these terms, nations, cities, and even individuals are all at a variance with one another. In making reference not solely to moral predicates, but also custom and justice, nations, and cities, Maximus weaves together Herodotus' use of a nomological marketplace to endorse the differences in human *nomoi* and the necessity for tolerance that such difference should elicit. The structural play on the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories* concludes, as might be expected, with another learned quotation – in this case, from *the* poet, Homer (*Od.* 18.136–7).

If Herodotean ethnography and argumentative structure are present in the case that the *Dissoi Logoi* makes for relativism, it is telling that the opposing position, which is also expounded by the philosopher (on the distinctiveness of the seemly and the unseemly), rejects the validity of ethnography and the hypothetical marketplace. The "identity thesis," or the notion that the seemly and unseemly are the same, is pushed to an absurd conclusion: if the seemly and the unseemly are truly the same, then they should be able to be so at the same time with reference to the same group. This is a premise that the first speech would reject, but it is nonetheless used to produce the *reductio* that if it is praiseworthy for Spartan women to exercise, then it is also blameworthy for them to exercise. The second speech also cites category confusion as a weakness of the relativists: moral categories have stable identities much like horses, cows, sheep, and people do. Bringing moral categories into a hypothetical marketplace does not have the power to alter this stable, underlying constituent any more than individuals each bringing horses into an agora will lead away something other than a horse. In its rejection of the relativism of these moral predicates, the *Dissoi Logoi* discards the potential of ethnography to shape moral intuitions and the applicability of a hypothetical marketplace of *nomoi*. Interpreted alongside the first speaker, Herodotus emerges as his flawed precursor. Even the reference to learned quotation comes under fire as misleading: "they call the poets in as witnesses, who compose for pleasure, not truth" (B 2.28).

Through these interactions, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s arguments on relativism announce themselves as highly allusive. The treatise reworks Herodotean themes of ethnographic difference, narratorial neutrality, and a cultivation

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of tolerance in the audience. The philosopher follows the *Histories* in highlighting the power of cultural relativism and in eliding the implications of subjective relativism in the argument – unlike Protagoras' apparent method of using both to make his case. The persistence of the allusion endows the *Dissoi Logoi*'s brief argument in favor of the relativity of the moral predicates "seemly" and "unseemly" with the heft of Herodotus' much more expansive ethnographic progression. Rereading the source text positions it as a philosophical precursor to the *Dissoi Logoi*. Herodotus' narrative assumes a polemical and sophisticated intellectual dimension that is appropriated in the Dorian treatise. The engagement of the *Dissoi Logoi* is, however, creative through its implicit elision, condensing, and correction of the *Histories*. Additionally, its protreptic purpose allows no individual to threaten communal norms, in contrast to Herodotus' description of the rulers of Persia or the imperial pull of its people on their subjects.

The *Dissoi Logoi* and Herodotus participate in the same philosophical tradition on the nature of relativism and its implications for communities. The treatise engages with select passages from the *Histories* on the cultural practices of foreigners and explores the persuasiveness of relativism by making a defense of and an attack on this philosophical position. But it is not simply the case that they are part of the same tradition; *Dissoi Logoi*'s recurrent allusiveness acknowledges Herodotus' place within that tradition.

As for Herodotus, taking part in contemporary debates necessitates an understanding of the human experience across space. This case study has sketched out only one example in the early reception of the *Histories* to demonstrate the potential connections to be made between the *Histories* and philosophical texts and concepts. The reception of Herodotus as a philosophical thinker might have equally been undertaken in, for example, an analysis of relevant sections of Plato's *Laws* 3, the *Timaeus-Critias* dialogues, or the first book of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. This circumscribed exercise offers a window into an alternative history of historical inquiry, one in which Herodotus was part of a larger community of Presocratic thinkers experimentally extending the boundaries of the known world.

The *Histories* and Intellectual Culture

Mihi h. l. videtur historiae pater Demaratum ea facere dicentem, quae tunc temporis a Graeciae sapientibus maxime agitabantur inque scholis et conventibus maxime disceptabantur: talia enim afferre ab

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> *Herodoti consiliis haudquaquam alienum fuisse arbitror, Graeciae laudes celebraturi.*
>
> Johann Christian Felix Baehr (1856–61), s.v. 7.102

> It seems to me that in this passage the father of history had Demaratus say those things that were at that time debated most of all by the wise men of Greece and treated most of all in their schools and at their gatherings: in fact, I suppose that to bring in such things was not at all foreign to the plan of Herodotus, since he was going to celebrate the praises of Greece.

In his monumental commentary on the *Histories*, the nineteenth-century German philologist Johann Christian Felix Baehr regularly draws attention to sources and sketches out the connections between Herodotus and the philosophers. In this lemma on Demaratus' response to Xerxes in Book 7, Baehr expands his focus to remark on the wider plan of the *Histories*. In his view, Demaratus' words on Greek poverty, virtue, wisdom, and *nomos* exemplify the philosophical discourse of the day. Herodotus' memorialization comprises, then, not simply a record of the deeds and events associated with the Greco-Persian Wars but also the intellectual sophistication of the age.

Baehr's judgment, while valuable, can be nuanced in several ways. As we have seen, Herodotus emerges less as an encomiastic inheritor of philosophy in the *Histories* and more as a creative competitor in the Presocratic marketplace of ideas. His Demaratus is no puppet for an anachronistic Academy. Further, contemporary debates are to be situated within the arc of the narrative, rather than treated as fragments of sophistic influence, as Baehr and his successors imagined. Still, Baehr's fundamental insight on the "plan" of the *Histories* as intentionally opening a window into intellectual culture is a persuasive one. From Sicily to Miletus, the vitality of thinkers – who included individuals who would now be classified as biologists, mystics, logicians, ethicists, astronomers, geologists, and orators, among many more post-Platonic designations – resulted in an astonishing body of inquiry. In its encyclopaedic breadth, the *Histories* reflects this multiplicity.

This book began with a discussion of the problematic generic status of Herodotus' experimental prose work. In the absence of a genre of historiography, its affinities with scientific and medical prose treatises situate the *Histories* within the dynamic intellectual culture of the fifth century BCE. Herodotus' place in this context has often been associated with empiricist inquiry and, on this reading, removed from the more theoretical debates preoccupying the Presocratic thinkers. Herodotus'

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engagement with empiricism *is* an essential component of his project and is manifest in his emphasis on personal autopsy and on material remains, as well as in his discussions of ethnography, earth science, and geography. Yet he also explores debates that are not restricted to sensory experience. The preceding chapters attempted to demonstrate this through a series of case studies on the themes of relativism, egoism, nature, and narrative authority and epistemology, which are familiar from Presocratic thought. While the *Histories*' interaction with Presocratic philosophy does not exhaust its affinities with contemporary prose and poetic genres, it does remain a vital lens through which to examine Herodotus' *historie*. An even stronger outcome of this book has been the contention that the genres that will become historiography and philosophy were not severed from one another in the fifth century BCE; instead, they cross-fertilized and responded alike to the vibrant intellectual milieu characteristic of the period. Of course, the *Histories* is not reducible to a *peri physeos* text on the model of the so-called natural philosophers – Herodotus' work is more pioneering than this – but neither are the texts of the Presocratics themselves so narrowly conceived, as we have seen from Chapter 1.

Herodotus' *Histories* discloses a space for philosophical knowledge, and he is evidently engaging with the Presocratic milieu in a much more sustained manner than has previously been observed. His narrative shapes a new medium in which this material can be assessed in historical time. In processing debates on relativism, egoism, nature, and epistemology in the context of the long march bringing Persia into mainland Greece, Herodotus raises the stakes of these philosophical questions by leveraging an abstract set of issues on concrete moments of human action in the past. The generative interaction of historiography and philosophy showcases the power of scientific discourse in the fifth century and the ability of the new study of the past to reflect forcefully upon Herodotus' present. Historiography, then, does more than re-present the past. Its lessons for the historical present are equally important, as is clear from the prominence of the set-piece on well-being and the limits inherent in the human condition as discussed by Solon and Croesus – these issues will motivate philosophical treatises for the whole of antiquity.

We can contrast this with the philosopher Empedocles and his description of the wise man, who he treats as one aware of the lived experiences of numerous men:

> There was a certain man among them who knew very much, | who acquired the greatest wealth (πλοῦτον) of the mind. . .for when he reached out with

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> all his mind, | he easily saw each of all the things that are | in ten and twenty lives of men (ῥεῖ᾽ ὅ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον | καί τε δέκ᾽ ἀνθρώπων καί τ᾽ εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν). (DK 31 B 129).

Porphyry, who preserves the passage, reports that Empedocles was here referring to Pythagoras. This might be thought apposite, as Pythagoras was said to have remembered his past lives.[35] Yet Empedocles' remark generalizes; the sage does not view things that took place in ten or twenty of *his own* past lives, but of "men." Knowledge of the lived experience of men is a wealth of its own. It is also a kind of historical understanding. For Empedocles, as for Herodotus, it is an aspiration worthy of the *sophos*.

This insight evolved beyond Herodotus and the Presocratics, on the one hand, in the *History* of Thucydides, who is by no accident regularly considered a "child of the sophistic movement."[36] In this respect, Thucydides is more a continuator of his predecessor than a trailblazer. On the other hand, the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon deploy what are ostensibly historical interactions to demonstrate the immediacy of the philosophical questions that they raise. And, as we have seen throughout the book, they regularly take up and explore issues also raised by Herodotus. Even the gulf that eventually emerged between philosophy and historiography as they became distinct genres continued to be bridgeable, even if it was not always bridged. The works of Polybius, Posidonius, Diodorus Siculus, and Plutarch, for example, are preoccupied with philosophical questions and debates, even as they are firmly "historical." In this respect, Herodotus' inquiry made its mark on the genre of historiography, even if this requires unthinking that genre to become alive to this. However, this *Nachleben* takes us well beyond the purview of this study and must remain only a tantalizing nod to the success of Herodotus' work as a triumph of Presocratic thought.

[35] In citing this passage, Tor (2017), 323, refers to him as an "epistemological hero."
[36] Handley (1985), 445; he is also referred to as its "major surviving representative."

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