


5-2009

# Justice and the Justification of War in Ancient Greece: Four Authors

Tristan K. Husby

Connecticut College, [thusby@conncoll.edu](mailto:thusby@conncoll.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/classicshp>

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), and the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Husby, Tristan K., "Justice and the Justification of War in Ancient Greece: Four Authors" (2009). *Classics Honors Papers*. 1. <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/classicshp/1>

This Honors Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Classics Department at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Classics Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact [bpancier@conncoll.edu](mailto:bpancier@conncoll.edu).

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Justice and the Justification of War in Ancient Greece: Four Authors

Tristan K. Husby  
Honors Thesis Classics Department

Connecticut College  
New London, Connecticut  
Spring 2009

*Acknowledgements:*

This work would not have been possible without the support of many within the Connecticut College library and Writing Center. I would also like to thank Dirk Held, who read drafts and discussed ideas.

## Contents:

Introduction	4
Historical Context	15
Herodotos	29
Thucydides	44
Plato	60
Aristotle	79
Conclusion	87
Bibliography	96

*War is both king of all and father of all, and it has  
revealed some as gods, others as men,  
it has made some slaves, others free.*  
Heraclitus, no. 22 fragment B53

*"You want to know what Classics are?" said a drunk  
Dean of Admissions to me at a faculty party a  
couple of years ago. "I'll tell you what Classics are.  
Wars and homos."*

*A sententious and vulgar statement, certainly, but  
like many such gnomic vulgarities, it also contains  
a tiny splinter of truth.*  
The Secret History, Donna Tartt

One of the hallmarks of St. Augustine's political thought was his elaboration of the idea of the Just War. His initial writings would later become the foundation of Just War Theory, a doctrine with numerous defendants and discreditors throughout the history of European thought. The most respected contemporary articulation of Just War tradition is, undoubtedly, Michael Walzer's "Just and Unjust Wars". However, in the opening of his book, Walzer denies that Just War Theory is only a European tradition: "As long as men and women have talked about war, they have talked about it in terms of right and wrong<sup>1</sup>." His comment suggests that there is an almost universal aspect to Just War Theory and that while there is a European Just War tradition, a Just War Theory could be constructed for other societies.

The Greeks talked about war and they talked about it in terms of right and wrong. But given the intensely military nature of Ancient Greek society and the fierce concern with justice in Greek philosophy, it is surprising that no Greek thinker fully articulated the idea of Just War. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to propose a reason for this curious lack in Greek discourse, but rather to tease out the discourse about the

morality of war that did occur in Greek texts. In short, I want to test Walzer's theory about the universality of humanity's concerns of the morality of war by applying it to Ancient Greece. I wish to do this by investigating the discourse about justice and war within the texts of Herodotos, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle. Before I embark on this analysis, I will first establish the historical context of these thinkers in relation to Greek warfare. For while the violence, sorrow and tyranny of warfare is one of the few intense experiences that still links contemporary readers to the ancient world, there is no essential nature to warfare. Because war does change with time, it is necessary to understand the types of war that these writers were thinking about when they wrote about war.

Historical context is important for these authors.

That Just War Theory has peace as its ultimate goal between all states is perhaps one of the primary reasons that the Ancient Greeks did not conceive of it. For while Aristotle wrote that the aim of war should be peace (*Politics* 1333b37), he nonetheless found the preparation for war an excellent chance to "exercise leadership (1333b37)". In other thinkers, and in Greek society in general, there is no doubt that war was celebrated, not only for the ends that it brought about, namely freedom, autonomy and plunder, but as an end. War was celebrated as war, not simply something that must be tolerated. In order to understand how war, one of the most feared events in our times and also in antiquity, could be celebrated, I suggest that we turn towards the idea of creative war.

Ruskin defines this curious term: "creative or foundational war... that in which the natural restlessness and love of contest are disciplined by consent, into modes of beautiful -though it may be fatal- play..."<sup>iii</sup> Creative war is warfare that has the consent of all its combatants and has little to no serious political outcomes. A creative war is one

that is both limited in its consequences outside the battlefield and is fought purely for the love of conflict<sup>iii</sup>. For Greek society, this term is essential for describing the ritualistic aspect of their warfare, whether Homeric warriors or the hoplite phalanx. For both the Homeric warrior and the citizen-hoplite were not only concerned with winning the war, but winning it with honor. However, while we have examples of limited wars in Ancient Greece, there is no evidence of purely creative warfare. By limited war I mean a war which although it has political consequences, such as the destruction or liberation of a city, nonetheless both sides follow conventions prevent the war from becoming total war. For even in the most extensive document on Homeric warfare, the *Iliad*, honor focused war had a serious political outcome: The destruction of a city.

The opposite of creative war is total war. Total war is unlimited in the sense of having no conventions concerning the proper reasons to go to war or the proper way to fight. Total war is fought not for the love of conflict but to gain political superiority. Walzer highlights that the significant difference between creative war and the experience of total war as being lack of consent<sup>iv</sup>. Creative war retains its playful nature by the consent of the fighters, while lack of consent makes total war a hell.

Greek authors, on the other hand, are capable of describing horrors of total war, while also praising war. Thucydides' description of the bloody revolution in Corcyra is remarkable not only because of its resemblance to 20th century massacres, but also because of his horror at the slaughter. In his writing, there is a sense that this war violated the participants. Nonetheless, Thucydides was also capable of defending the institution of war with concepts of *time*, *hybris* and other terms that are more at home in discussions of creative warfare. This combination suggests to me that the line between

creative war and total war was not clear in Ancient Greece. The lack of a clear distinction is not surprising, as Walzer's binary between total war and creative war was borne of the necessity to distinguish between the cruelties of World War II and the violence between two Native American tribes who were more concerned with honor than with victory.

Whether or not the Greeks had at some point a system of fighting that could be considered purely creative war, we do not know. However, with the establishment of the *polis*, battles began to take on more and more political significance. Nonetheless, *time* remained essential to understanding why and how battles were fought on the battlefield and how Greeks decided to fight. Herodotos and Thucydides would cite *time* in order to understand the origins of war and were uncritical of the idea that battle was necessary to improve the mettle of a man. For both Plato and Aristotle, training for war was essential for leadership. In short, none of these thinkers could accept the proposition that war should be avoided entirely, because war itself had some positive aspects, which could include for training new leadership or for proving manliness. These positive aspects are the remnants of the creative war tradition.

While the transition from creative warfare to total warfare had already begun with the establishment of the *polis*, the fifth century would bring many pivotal changes to how Greeks fought. I will show how the establishment of hoplite warfare, which began in the Archaic age, while departing significantly from previous forms of warfare, nonetheless had many vestiges of creative warfare. During the fifth century, hoplites began to lose their prominence within Greek military, due, amongst other factors, to the rise of importance of the navy. This shift away from hoplites also signaled that the stakes of war



were raised, that winning by any means would become more important than winning with honor. Previously, the hoplites had symbolized technological and organizational innovation, and progress towards total war. After hoplites, the transition towards total war symbolized by navies and lightly armed troops.

But while these authors were clearly influenced by the tradition of the hoplites and Homeric warriors, I am not so crude to suggest that these thinkers are merely the products of their times. There is no doubt that not only did they put their own stamp on their work but that their thinking acquired historical significance. For example, Plato and Aristotle argued that war should not be the *telos* of society, thereby critiquing the militaristic societies of Sparta and Crete. However, Plato and Aristotle were writing after a shift in Greek warfare. They knew from history that war could preserve Greek independence but also destroy Greek unity.

The reason for expressing this continuum of creative war to total war is to provide a context for Herodotos', Thucydides', Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts on war. There was a conflicting tradition of war as both art, something to practised for its own sake, and as a something that was merely a tool for domination. These writers were interested in many aspects of war, including theorizing the origins of all wars, not just a specific war. They also wrote about war in terms of right and wrong. But to reiterate one of the reasons for writing this paper, the way in which they wrote about war in terms of right and wrong is not explicit. Herodotos and Thucydides wrote much on war, but not on their conceptions of justice. Aristotle and Plato wrote much on justice, but comparatively little about war. Going in chronological order, I will start with Herodotos and end with Aristotle, who was explicit, but brief, on the relationship between justice and war.

As a historian, Herodotos was interested in the *aitia* of war, including the possible heavenly or fate based origins of war. Thucydides is usually credited as being the first to make a distinction between superficial and stated reasons for war, but Herodotos' characters talk openly of how declaring war is good for their own interests but not for the populace<sup>v</sup>. However, I see Herodotos presenting three different causes of war: Those that the rulers tell their populace, those that they tell themselves and also fate itself.

As Herodotos was chronicling the Greeks repulsion the Persian invasion, he did not elaborate much on the Greeks' decision to go to war. Defending one's sovereignty through force was, and still is, considered an obvious response to invasion. However, Herodotos did narrate the Persian kings' motives for invading Greece. These motives, which Herodotos explicitly stated in the conversation between Darius and his wife Atossa, are to distract the populace from local problems, unify the Persian empire, prove Darius's manliness and gain *timee* through victory. I will analyze what these motives mean in the context of a dialogue between Persian king and his wife, particularly how they imply that Herodotos felt that the Persians' war was unjust.

Then I will examine the motives for the Greeks' defense, for although it appears that the decision to fight the Persians was an obvious response, the Greeks constantly doubted their own cause. Herodotos was quite aware that war was hell as the former king Croesus explains: "No one is fool enough to choose war instead of peace (*Herodotos* 1.87)." Nonetheless the Greeks choose a war with little probability of success rather than to submit to the Persians. While Herodotos emphasizes the Greek love of *eleutheria* as primary motive of their resistance, it is not the only one. It is clear that *timee* was a

factor, as was fear and hatred of the Persians. While he thought that the Persians' war was unjust, Herodotos thought that the Greeks' war of defense was just.

Herodotos' fellow historian, Thucydides appears entirely unconcerned with justice. He was quite explicit about what he considered the cause of the Peloponnesian war: Sparta's fear of a stronger Athens. Thucydides disregarded the heavens and fate as possible beginnings of war. Rather than look outwards, he looked inwards, finding war's *prophasis* in human nature. In this way he seems to have turned Herodotos inside out: the cause of war is not outside humanity, it is within humanity itself. The origins of war, despite being rooted within humanity, could not be prevented or contained. War remained as inevitable as it was when the gods controlled it. A human, for Thucydides, was someone who acted primarily out of *philotimee*, fear and necessity. His hypothesis seems to be that if these desires are taken into consideration and without moralizing, the causes of human events can be properly explained.

So for Thucydides, the justifications for war are lies that politicians tell their constituencies that play on their sense of honor, greed and fear. These justifications are lies because the real *prophasis* for war has nothing to do with these factors. Rather, the Peloponnesian War broke out because Athens and Sparta, by nature, wanted the power that their enemy held. This complete separation of power and morality was most explicitly stated by the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue.

This famous dialogue is often read as a statement of the rules of power that Thucydides was presenting throughout his history. However, I want to problematize this interpretation by emphasizing the context of the dialogue within Thucydides' opus. For his text is not an entirely dispassionate and critical. *The Peloponnesian War* could be

read as a tragedy, starring Athens. This *polis* exhibits *hybris* by listening to war mongering demagogues rather than far-sighted Pericles; by choosing the adventurous Sicilian expedition rather than a conservative defense of Attica. In this context, the Melian dialogue is not the revelation of a horrible truth about humanity, but the Athenians' inauthentic justification that deserves the reader's contempt.

This reading explains the great lengths that the politicians went to avoid talking of their military actions as the unprovoked aggressions that they are. For if the Melian doctrine on human nature was correct, there would be no need for politicians to equivocate in concerns of aggression. But the Greek leaders either said that the opponent struck first, or they obfuscate the enemy's ability to do harm with their actually having done harm, or the continuation of peace with servitude to a foreign sovereign. Because of the obvious disparity between the leaders' words and their actions, Thucydides wanted us to see them as hypocrites. Hypocrites either because war cannot be just, as it is simply following the "rules of power" or because they are willfully ignoring a moral way to conduct war. If we take Thucydides at his word, the Peloponnesian war was amoral. If we judge the war according to the system of ethics that we can infer from his text, it was unjust. In either situation, war and justice seem irreconcilable.

Plato would reunite war with justice through his psychology. He, like Thucydides, saw human nature as the primary cause of war. But unlike Thucydides, he argued that this aggressiveness, *thumos*, could be controlled, fostered and limited. Limited because otherwise it would destroy the *polis* and fostered because without it the *polis* will be conquered. Plato discusses the proper cultivation of *thumos* in both the *Statesman* and the *Republic*. In the later, he elaborates what war would look like in a just

*polis*: wars should not be fought against Greeks, should not be motivated by desire for material gain but instead should be used as an opportunity to train young guardians. However, Plato did allow for wars to be fought to ensure that the *polis* has sufficient resources for independent existence. War is primarily necessary to insure that the *polis* remains independent, as it will be surrounded by unjust *poleis*. Additionally, war was necessary for the proper education would lead to the correct balance of the soul, which is the primary source of justice.

For all these reasons, war continued to have a place in the completely just society in Plato's *Republic*. The *Statesman* and the *Laws* are both much more straightforward than the *Republic* about the relationship of war and justice, but they also talk significantly less about war. Nonetheless, I will briefly examine both these other dialogues separately of the *Republic* as Plato's works do not easily compliment each other and generally demand to be considered in the context of the dialogue itself. However, these two separate investigations provide further evidence that Plato considered the origin of war to be the human soul and that any sort moral judgment of war requires the proper balancing of the human *psychee*.

Aristotle turns away from the soul as the connection between war and justice and turns towards the cosmos. For Aristotle viewed war as an activity, that if it is done for the proper *telos*, would be in harmony with the universe. It is Aristotle's concern about the *telos* of war that allowed him to begin to outline a system of ethics for total war. Thucydides earlier had documented the Peloponnesian war as a total war, but had wanted to avoid judging it ethically. As I said above, Thucydides nonetheless indirectly hinted at a way to judge war through the hypocrisy of politicians and his horror at massacre.

Aristotle in his *Politics*, on the other hand, stated explicitly that the proper *telos* of war should be peace. He then used this explanation of the purpose of war to critique overtly militaristic societies, like Sparta and Crete, and also to justify wars that either create or defend just *poleis*.

Like Plato, Aristotle identified military training as essential to constructing proper leadership. However, he was not so much interested in using it to properly balance the soul or to train children. Rather, Aristotle saw war as necessary for establishing a proper hierarchy. War should be used domestically to ensure that masters rule over slaves and externally to ensure that Greeks are not dominated by barbarians. This proper hierarchy is one of the requirements for Aristotle's just *polis*.

It becomes clearer that Aristotle is not the progenitor of Just War Theory when he stated further that war can be fought for the acquisition of property. Since St. Augustine, Just War Theory says that a just war can only be fought for defense. Declaring war in order to obtain wealth and slaves, which Aristotle argued for, would be labeled aggression. Aggression was the charge that procured a guilty verdict against the defendants at Nuremberg. The seriousness of that charge demonstrates the level of disconnect between Aristotle's system of ethical war and contemporary thoughts on Just War Theory.

Histories of Ancient Greece are often dominated by stories of war. While there is no doubt that war played a crucial part in shaping antiquity, I do not want to declare it the most important practice for understanding Ancient Greece. The Greeks honestly loved peace and all the activities conducted during it. However, it also cannot be denied that war was an integral part of their society. Despite the extensive importance of war to

Greek life, I believe that my approach to examine this topic, looking at the discussion of war and justice in four authors, will provide some new insight.

---

<sup>i</sup> Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, Fourth Edition*. Basic Books, New York NY, 2006. pg. 3

<sup>ii</sup> Ruskin, John. *The Crown of Wild Olive: Four Lectures on Industry and War*. Maynard, Mill and Co., New York NY, 1874. pg. 90-91.

<sup>iii</sup> Walzer, pg. 25

<sup>iv</sup> Walzer, pg. 24

<sup>v</sup> Shippey, Graham. "The Limits of War" *War and Society in the Greek World*. Routledge, New York NY, 1993. pg. 11

*War is not death to young men; war is life.*  
Look Homeward Angel, Thomas Wolfe

*Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars-  
and the short peace more than the long.  
You I advise not to work, but to fight.  
You I advise not to peace, but to victory.  
Let your work be a fight, let your peace be a victory!*  
Thus Spake Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche

In this chapter I will briefly examine the evolution of Greek warfare. Particularly, I am interested in describing Greek warfare as a continuum from creative warfare to total warfare. The distinction between creative warfare and total warfare is important to us in this paper because of the very different ethical concerns that each raise. Creative warfare has the consent of all its combatants and limits violence to the participating warriors. The outcome of creative warfare also has little to no political significance, in the sense that it does not affect the existence or freedom of a *polis*. Total warfare, on the other hand, has limitless possibilities for violence against both soldiers and civilians. Total warfare is primarily concerned with political concerns as the freedom and survival of a political community is at stake. Ancient Greece never saw a period of pure creative warfare or pure total war. But during the period from 700 BC to 338, there was a transition towards total war; that is, a shift towards wars fought primarily for political reasons. The Greeks never completed this transition to total war just as they never practiced pure creative war. I will examine this transition by first looking at warfare prior to 700 BC, what I will call Homeric warfare. The second period is 700-490 BC; the rise of the hoplite. The remaining period, 490-338 BC, follows the decline of the hoplite and the ascension of navies and numerous, lightly armed soldiers.



Whether the Greeks at any point practiced 'pure' creative warfare sometime during or before the Dark Age is uncertain. However, Homeric warriors fought for the explicit purpose of looting and enslaving the opposing population, as seen in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Unlike in pure creative warfare, these aristocratic warriors were as concerned with honor as they were with material gain. That these men were aristocrats is important to notice, as the identity of who fights in ancient Greece changes over time. The cost of arms, armor, chariot and horse limited warfare to the wealthy few who could afford it. The transition to hoplite warfare would not simply be an organizational or technological change, those who in Greek society fought and why they fought would also change.

Victor Davis Hanson outlines four stages of hoplite warfare<sup>vi</sup>. The first, 700-490 BC is one in which border disputes are resolved through a single hoplite battle. In the second, 490-431 BC, a variety of different troops fought in addition to hoplites on land while naval battles became increasingly important. Also during this period, multiple battles and military theatres replaced the single, agreed upon battles, which was the mode of fighting during the Archaic age. During the third period, 431-404 BC, hoplites fought and were honored but they were no longer prominent within the military. Lightly armored troops increased in importance and sieges and sea battles were more significant than a single watershed land battle. In the fourth period, 404-338, the position of hoplite was no longer restricted to citizens and is opened to metics. The hoplite phalanx became only a small part in a larger army. These numerous changes show us that there is no identity to the hoplite that transcends history. To present a harmonious picture of this heavy-infantry man and the phalanx, as Vidal-Naquet remarks, is to jumble over two hundred years of historical evolution<sup>vii</sup>.

The history of the hoplite is a history of the transition away from the Homeric warrior. The Homeric warrior was interested in individual glory and wealth. While the hoplite, like his aristocratic forbearer, was also interested in material gain, he was primarily motivated by the political safety of the *polis*<sup>viii</sup>. But the desire for *timee* was just as real as the desire for wealth. Lendon notes that this thirst for glory and the desire for revenge is hard for modern readers to understand. Modern readers often assume that economic and political motivations take precedence, even if they are not explicitly stated<sup>ix</sup>. To take this interpretation is to completely disregard a Greek interpretation of their own history and cultural practices.

Unfortunately, historical evidence for the Dark Ages is scarce and the Homeric poems are the primary textual sources. These sources are incredibly problematic as it is hard to discern what are descriptions of practices in the 8th century and what are descriptions of older practices. However, these descriptions are important not only because of their possible historical documentation, but because they influenced how all of Greece viewed war and honor. It is quite likely that when Aristotle described cavalry as being a tool of the aristocrats (*Politics* 1289b25) he was thinking of Patrocolos and Achilles riding chariots on the fields of Troy.

Despite the prominence of honor in Homeric thought, we should not classify Homeric warfare purely as creative warfare. For the Trojan War had devastating political outcomes: The razing of Ilium and the enslavement or death of the much of the population. We also must remember that the Greeks were not so honor-bound as to reject using the Trojan Horse rather than continue open battle. But while the Greeks fought on the Dardan shores for ten years, their dedication towards the common goal of capturing

Helen seems lacking. They seem more concerned with dueling, scrambling for booty and taking revenge. All of these acts are connected to the individual warrior's honor.

The Homeric warrior was not only fighting the enemy but also competing against his comrades in a contest of obtaining honor, *timee*<sup>x</sup>. The warrior could obtain *timee* by either performing an act of *aretee*, or taking booty or taking revenge on the enemy. *Aretee* could be any commendable military action, such as the capture or slaying of an important enemy. A prime example of *aretee* is when Diomedes, after having been blessed by Athena, rampaged through the Trojan forces (*Iliad*, 5.1). But it was not excellence alone that determined *aretee*. The action had to be seen by others, so that they can know that it was he who had performed such a feat. Taking revenge, or *timooria*, was another method of gaining honor. By shaming or defiling a corpse, a Homeric warrior transferred the dead man's honor to himself<sup>xi</sup>. Honor was a zero sum game: If your enemy was shamed, then you gained honor. Therefore, the spoils of war were not only valued for their economic benefit, but for the honor they would bring the holder. For taking the enemy's arms, armor and wares increased the warrior's honor by shaming the opponent and also giving the Homeric warrior the opportunity to dedicate the gifts to the gods, thereby proving his excellence further.

With all this attention to how one fought and the process of gaining honor, the warriors almost seem unconcerned with the outcome of the battle. For there can be no doubt that the dueling and looting that occurred in the midst of battle distracted from what modern readers would consider the primary point: winning the battle. But to take this view is to attempt to analyze Homeric warfare only through the lens of total warfare. Through these lenses, these actions seem both foolish and self-indulgent, given the high

stakes of battle. Indeed, during the 5th century, the Greeks would agree. For example, during the Battle of Marathon, the Greeks would not pause after battle to loot the Persian corpses, but rather continued on to raze the ships and then march back to guard Athens (*Herodotos* 6.115). The Spartans' refused to give Aristodemos the award of *aristeia* for his bravery against the Persians because Aristodemos had broken rank with the phalanx<sup>xii</sup>.

All three of these actions, *aretee*, *timooria* and looting, revolved around the Homeric warrior being noticed and applauded by the peers against whom he competed. The hoplite was not in competition with his peers. The hoplite phalanx required the full coordination and cooperation from each fighting man. The hoplite did not fight for himself, but rather for the *polis*. But the transition in Greece from aristocratic warriors to hoplite citizen-soldiers did not eliminate the importance of *time*, but rather changed the conception of honor. The hoplite's honor was first to the *polis* rather to himself. This shift in the conception of honor would mean war to be continued to be described in terms of honor but also that warfare was now more political.

Kurt Raaflaub characterizes hoplite battles during the Archaic age as: "brief, violent, almost ritualistic encounters of hoplite armies<sup>xiii</sup>." The battles were brief, in particular in comparison to modern warfare: "..If [we] were to total all the moments of [an Ancient Greek] man's life- time in which he actually attacked an enemy with spear and shield in the phalanx, it was surely an minuscule amount- sixty, three hundred, six hundred minutes...<sup>xiv</sup>" Mardonios testified to Xerxes the full brutality of this method of warfare:

...The Hellenes are in a habit of starting wars without the slightest forethought, out of obstinacy and stupidity. For whenever they declare war with one another, they seek out the finest and most level land and go

there and to fight, so that the victors depart from the field only after great damage has been done and I won't say anything at all of the defeated, for they are completely destroyed. (*Herodotos 7.9b*)

In addition to demonstrating a sense of Greek pride in the combination of brevity and brutality, this passage also indicated the ritualistic quality in hoplite warfare: that the two opposing forces agreed upon the time and place of battle. This agreement was necessary as the large and cumbersome phalanx is not suited to rocky Greece. In G.B. Grundy's words: "The typical Greek army was composed of a type of force which could not possibly have been effective in four-fifths of the area of the country."<sup>xv</sup> That the beginning of hoplite battles were determined by agreement demonstrates to us that hoplite battle retained creative war aspects despite an important transition towards total war.

Another ritualistic quality of hoplite warfare was the self-imposed limitation on its use. During the Archaic age hoplite battles were almost exclusively fought over territorial disputes. Raaflaub notes that before the Persian War, *poleis* were not particularly interested in either conquering other cities or destroying them<sup>xvi</sup>. Indeed, the only major military expansion during this period, Sparta's invasion of Messenia, resulted in such drastic changes to Spartan life that it probably did not inspire other *poleis* to do the same. Rather, *poleis* sought to expand their influence through hegemonic leadership in alliances and expansion of conquered land<sup>xvii</sup>. These limitations on both the purpose and extent of warfare would change after the Archaic age as Greek warfare continued to shift towards total war.

Hoplite warfare followed strict conventions and in many ways the fighting was as regulated as the justifications of war. The battle was fought on agreed upon ground, at an

agreed upon time and would last only a couple hours at most. The battle was fought between opponents who had agreed upon the proper weapons: Swords and spears. Polybios articulated the war conventions during this period: Fraud and deception were discouraged, as were missiles, both unseen and long distanced<sup>xviii</sup>. Hand-to-hand combat was considered the best as, it "gave clear results"<sup>xix</sup>. These conventions were a combination of religious doctrines and inter-*poleis* treaties. Herodotos wrote how the Spartans were late to Marathon because they had to observe the festival of Karneia (*Herodotos* 6.106). The geographer Strabo mentions that in his wanderings, he came across an inscribed pillar forbidding the use of missiles during battles on the Lelantine Plain<sup>xx</sup>.

In addition to being closely regulated by convention, hoplites came from a specific economic and political background. While the word *hoplites* simply means one who carries a *hoplon* shield, the name had both class and political connotations. Hoplites were so closely identified with their armor and spears, that Aristotle defined a middle class man as one who could afford hoplite arms and armor (*Politics*, 4.13). We should consider this description while remembering the aristocratic Homeric warrior. The rise of the hoplites meant that the aristocrats no longer had a monopoly on war as they had had during Homeric warfare and that from the Archaic age onwards, the middle class was involved in battle. The other particular distinction of hoplite battle was that it was primarily fought by citizen soldiers, most of whom were farmers. Sparta stood out as an obvious exception, with their entire class of *homoioi* dedicated to war and the preparation for war. But for most *poleis*, the hoplite was a citizen soldier who had little to no training. Hanson notes that not only did Greek farmers have little time to drill<sup>xxi</sup>, but also that hoplite weaponry was so easy to master that training was not necessary<sup>xxii</sup>. The idea

of a hoplite as a part-time, middle class soldier can only be a description of the hoplite during the Archaic age. In the 5th century, the role of the hoplite changed.

After the Persian wars, not only were more and more of the working classes involved in war, but the role of the soldier became specialized. Working-class men would rowed on Greek triremes or fought on land as lightly armored troops. Warfare expanded in other ways as well: Wars lasted longer and involved multiple armies rather simply being a fight between neighboring *poleis*. The Persian War and its aftermath completely changed Greek warfare. This war was against a common Greek enemy, which necessitated the creation of trans-*poleis* alliances, which had the purpose not of settling disputes, but for preserving Greek independence. Additionally, the Persians did not follow the same war conventions as the Greeks. They did not have a disdain for missiles or a preference for hoplite warfare. However, the Greeks' war traditions did not hinder them in battle. Afterwards the battles of Thermopylae and Marathon were hailed in Greek tradition as proof the Greeks' superior courage and military prowess.

The Persian war further shifted Greek wars towards total war, as the political independence of the Greek *poleis* was at stake. Despite the high stakes, many war conventions from the Archaic Age continued, such as the awarding of *aristeria*, the collecting of the dead and the collection of the booty. Herodotos recorded that *aristeria*, the process of awarding the man who fought the best that day, as happening not only after the land battles, but also naval battles (*Herodotos* 8.17). Another Homeric war convention that continued into the Persian war was concern over the dead. The proper treatment of the dead remained a high priority even during this war, as can be seen when the Spartans fought fiercely for the body of Leonidas during the battle of Thermopylae

(*Herodotos* 7.225). Gathering booty at the end of a battle remained important, as it was during Homeric warfare, but as Garlan notes, spoils were now the property of the *polis* rather than the individual<sup>xxiii</sup>.

Despite these continuities from Archaic hoplite warfare, the Persian war marked many changes in the manner that Greeks fought. Perhaps the greatest change was the increased importance of navies. While triremes were for the most part supplements to land forces, as both the Greek and Persian navies stayed close to the coast, Greece's freedom was determined by naval battles and naval misfortunes. The most obvious example is the battle of Salamis, after which Xerxes had to begin to withdraw his forces back to Persia. Earlier, the Greeks had gained a reprieve when Mardonios' ships were destroyed by a storm near Mt. Athos (*Herodotos* 6.44). Furthermore, navies changed the Greek warfare by changing the demographics of Greek battle and changing the importance of courage. For the navies were rowed by working class citizens, metics and slaves. Naval battles also relied more directly on technology and tactics and less directly on the courage that the Greeks valued so highly in hoplite warfare.

The other major changes to Greek warfare during the Persian war included the introduction of large coalitions of *poleis* and the extended duration of war. Hanson notes that during the Archaic period there were well over one thousand autonomous *poleis* all within 50,000 square miles<sup>xxiv</sup> and that the primary cause of battle between them was border disputes. The battles to settle these disputes were incredibly violent, but also short. It usually consisted of a single combat which lasted at most a few hours. While the Persian invasions of 490 and 480 were two different and distinct events, themselves lasting only a campaign season, it was understood that they were part of a continuous



assault upon the independent Greek *poleis*<sup>xxv</sup>. These *poleis* allied together and in doing so began a trend that would dominate the next major war between Athens and Sparta.

All these trends that we saw begin in the Persian war, the use of navies, the increased participation of working classes in warfare, the increased duration of warfare, the importance of trans-*poleis* alliances, continued during the Peloponnesian War. All of these factors indicate both a decrease of the importance of the hoplite in Greek warfare and also a further transition away from creative warfare and towards war primarily motivated by politics rather than by honor.

The name of the Peloponnesian war is itself an indicator the importance of *poleis* alliances: The war was between the coalition lead by Athens, consisting of the Delian League and other *poleis*, and the Peloponnesian League lead by Sparta. These coalitions had arisen out of the Persian war. Athens' *hegemonia* would not have been possible without the navy that had been initially created to fight the Persians. Sparta's position as leader of the Peloponnesian League was in part a result of their manipulation of the reputation that they had gained during the Persian War. Sparta's rallying cry against Athens during the Peloponnesian War was that Athens, like Persia before, was trying to enslave all of Greece (*Thucydides* 1.124). In announcing themselves the defender of Greek *eleutheria*, the Spartans were building upon their reputations they gained at Thermopylae and other battles during the Persian war.

Given the presence of these trans-*poleis* alliances, it should not be a surprise that war was now a much longer affair as war was no longer a matter of border disputes. Rather the origins of war consisted of the political concerns of *poleis*, often framed in terms of honor. But the increased size and complexity of Greek forces were not the only

factors for the extension of warfare. The use of sieges marked a shift away from the ritualistic brevity of hoplite battles. Hanson remarks that the relationship between the *polis* and hoplite battle in the Archaic age had been particularly distanced<sup>xxvi</sup>. But my emphasis on siege warfare during the Peloponnesian War should not suggest that there were no sieges prior to this war. For example, during the Persian war, the Athenians had had to flee their home in order to escape the Persians. However, during the Peloponnesian war, siege warfare had become such a standard practice such that it demanded constant consideration. For example, naval sieges were the Athenians' primary tool for ensuring control over the Delian League. However, the Athenians did not have a monopoly on this tactic: The Spartan king Archidamos besieged Athens at the outbreak of hostilities. Pericles' response to this siege was to abandon the farmlands and to put all trust in the Athenian navy (*Thucydides*, 2.55). The Periclean strategy was a complete rejection of the hoplite tradition of short, intense battles as he advocated for a soldier-less defense of Athens.

Warfare during the Peloponnesian war furthered de-centered the hoplite not only by taking war to the sea but also by taking it to the working classes. Greek triremes required many rowers. The ranks of the middle class and the upper class were not able to furnish all the bodies necessary for rowing, even if it had been considered honorable. Additionally, working class and metics began to take up arms in the infantry. Rather than cladding themselves in heavy hoplite armor, they instead took up slings, light spears and light armor (*Thucydides*, 5.6). After the Peloponnesian war, the hoplite still remained in the Greek army. But rather than being the force around which the entire military revolved, he was one type of soldier among many.

After the Peloponnesian war, the fifth century saw a decline of the hoplite and the citizen soldier. The Greeks were aware of the decline of the citizen hoplite and spoke out against it<sup>xxvii</sup>. Demosthenes lamented the loss of the hoplite tradition and lambasted the rise of mercenaries<sup>xxviii</sup> and Isocrates complained of the presence of metics within the remaining the hoplite phalanxes<sup>xxix</sup>. The increased use of mercenaries occurred at the same time that military tactics were becoming more complicated, thus favoring professional soldiers over citizen soldiers<sup>xxx</sup>. This professionalization of hoplites occurred while the military prowess of hoplites was becoming doubtful. Diodoros told how the Athenian Iphicrates thoroughly destroyed a phalanx of 600 Spartan hoplites with a troop of peltasts<sup>xxxi</sup>. During the Corinthian War and the numerous hostilities during the 5th century, the hoplite was a marginal figure in the military.

While the Persian and Peloponnesian wars would suggest that Greece had fully transitioned to total war, as the survival, rather than the honor of the *polis* was at stake, we need to remember that these wars were always framed in terms of honor. The Greeks had an opportunity to avoid war with the Persians: they could have submitted as many other *poleis* did. Those who did not called upon their citizens to resist based on the honor of being a free *polis*. Likewise, while Thucydides would have his audience believe that the only cause of the Peloponnesian war was Sparta's fear of Athens' growing power, the politicians in his history constantly frame aggression and defense as a matter of honor. The Greeks never completed the transition to total warfare, just as they never practiced pure creative warfare. These concepts, nonetheless, remain essential for understanding the evolution of Greek military history.

We must keep in mind the changing nature of Greek warfare when we consider the way Herodotos, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle commented on war and how justice related to war. They commented on war at different points during history, and therefore their points of reference were different. But the necessity of contextualizing their works is not the only reason that we must keep in mind the history of Greek warfare. For by looking at the history of Greek warfare in terms of creative and total war, we can see that these Greek writers had two ways to look at war: One through the lens of creative war and another through the lens of total war. These two different thoughts on war can explain why Herodotos wrote that "No one is fool enough to choose war instead of peace" (*Herodotos* 1.87) but also praised Leonidas for choosing to die fighting, even though Leonidas knew that he will loose Thermopylae to the Persians (*Herodotos* 7.220).

---

<sup>vi</sup> Hanson, David Victor. "Hoplite Battle as Ancient Greek Warfare" *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*. The David Brown Book Co., Oakville CT, 2000. pg. 223

<sup>vii</sup> Vidal-Naquet, Pierre. "The Young, the Warriors." *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1986. pg. 86

<sup>viii</sup> Ehrenberg, Victor. *The Greek State*. Methuen, London, 1969. pg. 21

<sup>ix</sup> J.E. Lendon "Homeric Vengeance and the Outbreak of Greek Wars." *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*. The David Brown Book Co., Oakville CT, 2000. pg. 2

<sup>x</sup> Lendon, pg. 4

<sup>xi</sup> Lendon, pg. 9

<sup>xii</sup> Vernant, Pierre. *The Origins of Greek Thought*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1982. pg. 64

<sup>xiii</sup> Raaflaub, Kurt A. "Father of All, Destroyer of All: War in Late Fifth-Century Athenian Discourse and Ideology." *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*. East Gate Book, Armonk NY, 2001. pg. 308

<sup>xiv</sup> Hanson, Victor David. *Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1989. pg. 220

<sup>xv</sup> Grundy, G.B. *Thucydides and the History of His Age*. London, 1948. pg. 245

<sup>xvi</sup> Raaflaub, pg. 308

<sup>xvii</sup> Raaflaub, pg. 308

<sup>xviii</sup> Hanson, "Hoplite Battle as Ancient Greek Warfare", pg. 204-205

<sup>xix</sup> Hanson, *Western Way of War*, pg. 15

<sup>xx</sup> Hanson, *Western Way of War*, pg. 16

- 
- <sup>xxi</sup> Hanson, *Western Way of War*, pg. 32
- <sup>xxii</sup> Hanson, *Western Way of War*, pg. 31
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Garland, Yvon, "War and Peace" *The Greeks*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 1991. pg. 59
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Hanson, "Hoplite Battle as Ancient Greek Warfare", pg. 215
- <sup>xxv</sup> Rosalind Thomas, "Introduction" *Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*. Pantheon Books, New York NY, 2007. pg. xi
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Hanson, *Western Way of War*, pg. 224
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Hanson, "Hoplite battle as Ancient Greek Warfare", pg. 214
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Hanson, "Hoplite battle as Ancient Greek Warfare", pg. 204
- <sup>xxix</sup> Hanson, "Hoplite battle as Ancient Greek Warfare", pg. 220
- <sup>xxx</sup> Fines, John. *The Ancient Greeks: A Critical History*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1983. pg. 532
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Fines, pg. 550

*...quamquam et apud Herodotum patrem historiae  
et apud Theopompum sunt innumerabiles fabulae.  
Cicero, De Legibus, 1.5*

Herodotos, the father of lies and history, was interested in many aspects of the Persian War: its beginning, the motivations of both the Greeks and Persians and much more. While Herodotos did not explicitly say what he considered made a war just or unjust, by examining how he describes the origins of the Persians' wars of conquest, I will argue that Herodotos considered wars of conquest unjust and wars of defense just. The reason for this difference between the wars has to do with Herodotos' cosmology. For Herodotos described the Persians' expansionist wars as failing in some way because they were wars of expansion. Because these political wars were the object of his *Histories*, we know that Herodotos had some understanding of total war. But the way that Herodotos described honorable actions suggests that he continued to look at war through the lens of creative warfare. Total war, and also improper gender roles, for Herodotos, were imbalances of the cosmic order.

Herodotos differs from the other writers I will examine because he believed that the Greek gods or fate must be credited as the first cause of all major events. Because of his belief in divine oversight, Herodotos believed that the unjust would be punished. The stories that Herodotos told about Persian wars suggest that he felt that wars for the sake of conquest were unjust and contrary to the nature of the cosmos. My reasoning behind this logic is not so much Herodotos' sympathy for those that the Persians attack, but that he always described the Persians' works of conquests failing in some way. As a follower of the Greek gods, Herodotos believed that the cosmos had a balance of justice. Fate would ensure that justice would be restored if the balance had been disrupted.

Herodotos' thoughts on war took place not only in the context of Greek theology and cosmology but also in the historical shift away from creative warfare and towards total warfare. For while Herodotos chronicled wars that ultimately destroyed or enslaved entire populations, these wars were often initiated to gather honor or to assert masculinity (3.120.3). Unjust wars were presented as a matter of *hubris*; of reaching for something that is not proper for mortals. Injustice as *hubris* differs from the common, contemporary conception of injustice as a violation. But Herodotos' conception of injustice was different and his characters talk of war primarily in terms of honor and manhood. In addition to warfare being framed in terms of honor, Herodotos also wrote of Greek war as ritualized, which is to say that certain war conventions were followed despite now obstructing victory. This ritualized element was more closely associated with creative warfare than with total warfare, suggesting that while a transition towards total war had begun, it was not complete.

In addition to total war, for Herodotos improper gender roles disrupted the natural balance of the cosmos. The Greeks, unlike the Persians and all other peoples that Herodotos mentioned, were neither unconfident in their masculinity nor hyper-masculinized. While Persian leaders declared war in order to prove their manliness to others, Greek leaders, confident in their virtuous position, could choose not to wage war. Persian leaders needed to prove their masculinity because of the expectations of their subjects and also the threatening nature of their enemy's gender. For the Persian enemies included queens and hyper-masculine kings who challenged the manliness of Persian leaders. The origins of war for Herodotos have to be understood in terms of gender as well as honor.

Herodotos began his work with a search for the *aitia* of the great war that he hoped to chronicle. This search quickly became a combination of politics and myth with an adaptation of the Trojan War that linked the abduction of Helen with the story of Io and Medea (1.3). After finishing this account, Herodotos wrote that this is the story that the Phoenicians and Persians told, but that he will offer a Greek account. However, in the middle of this Asiatic account, Herodotos interrupted himself and wrote, "Now the Persians think that the abduction of women is certainly an act only unjust men would perform, and yet once they have been abducted, it is senseless to make a fuss over it."(1.4) By chastising the Greeks for beginning the Trojan War over the kidnapping of a woman, he implied that kidnapping does not justify going war. This judgment implies that for Herodotos there was a rubric for judging the justifications for war and that Trojan War had failed it.

Herodotos' story of Croesos shortly follows that passage on the Trojan war. Herodotos noted that "Croesos was the first barbarian to known to us who subjugated and demanded tribute from some of the Greeks (1.6)" unlike the Cimmerians, who had invaded earlier, but had not subjugated Greek cities like Croesos had (1.6.2). This contrast suggests to us that for Herodotos there was a difference between a war for loot and a war for political dominance. From the context of the passage, for Croesos' actions were supposed to be the beginning of a Greek account for the Persian War, Herodotos implies that war for subjugation is worse, that is, more unjust than wars for loot.

Later, when Cyrus defeated Croesos, Herodotos gave a different interpretation of war. After Cyrus spared Croesos' life, Croesos exclaimed: "No one is fool enough to choose war instead of peace-in peace sons bury their fathers, but in war fathers bury sons.



It must have been heaven's will that this should happen (1.87)." This quote is a condemnation of all total wars. It does not condemn the creative wars that I have previously described because of Croesos' emphasis that war is the opposite of peace. Creative wars were seen as part of the natural order of life due to their ritualistic importance. Indeed, in societies that practice creative wars, if there was no war, many men would be genuinely unhappy. But Croesos described war as a complete inversion of everyday life: "in peace sons bury their fathers, but in war fathers bury sons." War's disruption of the balance of human life is so morally repugnant that Croesos declared that no rational man would choose it. Yet war exists, and is started by rational men like Croesos.

In his quote Croesos deftly escaped condemning his own actions (such as declaring war against Cyrus) by declaring that he was manipulated by fate like some tragic hero. Indeed, Croesos' story is very similar to that of a tragic hero: He misinterpreted the Delphic oracle concerning his victory because of *hubris* and was then punished accordingly. This narrative implies the futility of human knowledge, suggesting that forces beyond human comprehension influence the machinations of the human affairs. Yet after hearing Croesos's tale, Cyrus took him on as an advisor (1.88). By employing Croesos, Cyrus began the cycle of war again.

Let us return to the idea that the cause of war is outside human control. For modern readers, to argue that something is outside human control is to imply that that action should not be judged ethically. For it is reasonable to assume that only human actions can be judged ethically. Therefore, any sort of moral investigation of war implies that certain decisions about war are within human control. Croesos did not deny that war

is horrible; indeed, it is the least desirable of human conditions. But for him it is not possible for humans to prevent war, since war is determined by the divine and humans simply obey its dictates.

But we should not assume that because Herodotos thought war was inevitable that it could not be judged ethically. For Herodotos was writing in a fatalistic literary tradition. In Greek tragedies and epics, humans were ultimately not in control of their own destinies, as that was controlled by fate and by the gods. However, this lack of control did not absolve humans from the duty to be good. For example, Oedipus did not try to excuse his crimes by blaming fate. Rather, he recognized that he has done wrong and that he should suffer for it. Despite the interference of both the gods and destiny, humans were still expected to be just. Therefore, Herodotos could be a fatalist and also have criteria for what is a just or an unjust war.

Herodotos' condemnation of wars of conquest can be seen as a judgment of total war practices through the lens of creative war, with which he was more familiar. His chronicle of Median and Persian kings provides ample evidence of what he considered unjust and unjustified wars. These stories all implicitly conclude that Herodotos considered wars that had the *telos* of conquest were unjust. We could see this as a prototype of one of the fundamental ideas of Just War Theory: Wars of aggression are always unjust. This position is not surprising, for the Persian War was an important turning point for Greek warfare. During the Archaic Age, wars were primarily fought over land disputes and were not fought as a means of conquest. Therefore, we can understand Herodotos as reacting against the shift in Greek warfare towards total war and away from creative war.

Herodotos' stories on wars of conquest included the story of Darius' and Cyrus' rise to power. These kings initiated numerous wars with the purpose of conquering other people. Both Cyrus and Darius stood in contrast to both the Athenians and the Spartans, who were not described as expansionists. Such a contrast in the military purpose of those whom Herodotos supports, the Greeks, and those he does not, the Persians, makes it easy to read the Persians as bad because they are expansionists.

Cyrus was cast as an expansionist by nature when he attacked the Massagetae. Herodotos mentioned that there were many factors that inspired his ambition, but that the two primary ones were his belief in his superhuman origins and the success of his previous military campaigns (1.204). Those two reasons are not explanations for why Cyrus would want to attack the Massagetae; rather, they are reasons why Cyrus would feel confident that his attack would succeed. Herodotos did not make Cyrus' motives explicit and thereby naturalizes them. To naturalize these motives is to say that Herodotos made his readers assume that it is obvious that Cyrus would wish to go to war for the sake of conquest.

The Massagetae queen Tomyris understood that Cyrus desired her land and her sovereignty. Therefore she rejected Cyrus's offer of marriage (1.205). When Cyrus then had his forces move to the edge of her border, she sent him a message:

I advise you to abandon this enterprise, for you cannot know if in the end it will do you any good. Rule your own people, and try to bear the sight of me ruling mine. But of course you will refuse my advice, as the last thing you wish for is to live in peace. (1.206)

Tomyris' words reinforce the idea that Cyrus is by nature a conquest driven man, as he "will of course" dismiss this advice and does not desire to "live in peace." Tomyris told Cyrus that his desires are not only unjust, but may ultimately cause him harm. She

reasserted her right to her sovereignty of Massagetae while acknowledging that he has a right to his own territory. Cyrus' expansion disrupted this just balance of political power and it will bring Cyrus to a bad end, as he "cannot know if in the end it will do [him] any good." This passage not only reinforces Croesus's statement about the limited nature of human knowledge, it also argues that wars of conquest are against the just balance of the cosmos. But the cosmos balances itself, returning itself to justice: Cyrus, like Croesus, was punished for his war of conquest. In his account, Herodotos has the Massagetai kill Cyrus and then Tomyris herself took revenge upon his corpse by thrusting his head into a wineskin filled with human blood (1.214.4).

Herodotos repeated this moral with Cyrus' son, Cambyses. After conquering Egypt, Cambyses sets his sights on the land of the legendary Ethiopians. But the Ethiopian king immediately recognized Cambyses' agents as spies when they entered his court. He told them:

...That king of yours is unjust. Had he any respect for what is right, he would not have coveted any other kingdom than his own, nor made slaves of a people who did him no wrong.(3.21)

Cambyses, like his father, did not heed this warning. But although Cambyses attempted to make war against the Ethiopians, his armies never arrived at to their land (3.25).

The Ethiopian king, like Tomyris, had seen through the pretext of friendliness. They both rebuked the king for desiring more than what is due to him, of seeking an unreasonable desire: To dominate the people of another kingdom. To pursue this desire of conquest is to disrupt a just and natural order, just as the war that Croesus described disrupted the natural life cycle of fathers and sons. In both of these cases, the desire to go

to war was based on the desire for domination of more people and more territory.

Herodotos further chronicled the Persians as seeking war for even more unjust reasons.

    Cambyses had a satrap in Sardis named Oroites. Herodotos wrote that Oroites was determined to kill a certain Greek, Polycrates of Samos (3.120.1). Herodotos acknowledged that he did not know for certain why Oroites desired to kill Polycrates, as there are conflicting stories. The first explanation is that Oroites was quarreling with another Persian, Mitrobates, over whom was the better man (3.120.2). Enraged, Mitrobates said:

    Do you actually consider yourself a man? You who failed to add the island of Samos to the King's realm, although it lies adjacent to your province and is so very easy to subdue that one of its natives, who now rules it as a tyrant, revolted and took it with only fifteen hoplites?  
(3.120.3)

Previously Tomyris had naturalized Cyrus' desire of conquest by dismissing any claim that he might actually heed her advice. In this passage Mitrobates argues that Oroites would be expected as a man to expand his king's domain. According to Mitrobates, any real man would immediately seize the opportunity to crush a weak, neighboring sovereignty to further the glory of his king. Ultimately, Oroites did kill Polycrates and invaded Samos (3.121). Oroites, just like Cyrus and Cambyses, got his comeuppance. After Darius assumed the throne, one of his first acts was to have Oroites killed for authorizing the murder of Polycrates and the invasion of Samos (3.128). The cosmos has returned to the state of justice by punishing the unjust man whose appetites had disrupted the cosmic balance in the first place.

    Later in his reign, Darius decided to go to war with the Scythians and was persuaded by his wife to also make war with the Greeks. Atossa, Darius's wife, had

concealed an unnamed illness of hers out of shame. Eventually she turned to the famous doctor Democedes for a cure. Democedes promises her health in exchange for persuading her husband to invade Greece (3.133). Herodotos wrote that she said the following to Darius:

Sire, although you possess such great power, you are doing nothing to acquire new nations or additional power for Persia. It is reasonable to expect that a man who is young and the master of great wealth will display his power openly so that the Persians will know they are being ruled by a real man. There are actually two reasons why you should do this: not only so that the Persians realize their leader is a man, but also to keep them so occupied in war that they have no leisure to conspire against you. For now is the time, while you are young, that you can achieve something, since as the body grows, so does the mind, but as it ages, the mind ages too and thus loses its edge (3.134).

As with Oroites, Darius is expected to desire to conquer because of his gender and because of his position as a Persian leader. But in addition to naturalizing this desire, as Tomyris, the Ethiopian King and Mitrobates had, Atossa argued that this desire for conquest has many benefits. The desire for conquest was so naturalized in the position of a Persian leader that Persian subjects expected and demanded it. They would have thought less of a leader who did not seek to expand the empire. Atossa argued that Darius would be fulfilling a natural balance if he did seek war. He would have used his power as a leader and as a young man. Such use of power would be rewarded by nature through increased strength in mind and body. Such a pursuit of power would be rewarded by slavish obedience of the Persian populace. Atossa persuaded Darius that wars of conquest are natural and just and Darius agreed with her (3.134.4).

But when Darius invaded the Scythians, he could not conquer them. Herodotos explained that the Scythians were not sedentary people and were such expert horse riders and that the Persian army could not effectively fight against them (4.46). Eventually the

Persians are forced to retreat, having been out maneuvered and by the Scythians. The cosmic order reasserts itself by giving victory to the Scythians, despite the small size of their forces in comparison to the Persian army.

Let us return to the Persians' justifications for this war. While Atossa had succeeded in persuading her husband to go to war, she particularly wanted Darius to conquer the Greeks:

In my opinion, you should lead an army first against Greece. For I have heard accounts of that land and have set my heart on obtaining Laconian women to wait on me as servants, and I would also like to have Argive, Athenian and Corinthian women, too. (3.134.5)

Herodotos explained that Darius's invasion of Greece had been to satisfy the whims of his manipulative and conniving wife. By positioning this as a cause of Darius' invasion, Herodotos was able to condemn the Persian attack without analyzing possible Greek causes of the invasion. Such a description of the beginning of a war is shameful for the Persians as the primary instigator is a woman who wants to satisfy her base desires. Of course, within Herodotos' cosmology, this conspiracy between Atossa and Democedes is not the true *aitia* of the Persian war, as that had been decided by fate much earlier. Despite Darius being powerless before fate, Herodotos would have considered Darius unjust in his pursuit of war against both the Scythians and the Greeks.

Let us contrast how Herodotos portrayed the Persian preparation for war to that of the Greeks. Aristogoras of Miletus came to Sparta to convince the Lakedaemonians to invade Persia in what would later become the Ionian revolt. Herodotos had Aristogoras list various arguments for why King Kleomenes should support him. He claimed that the Ionians have become *douloi* under the Persians and that this position is shameful not only for themselves but also for the rest of Greece (5.49.2). The rest of his argument primarily

consisted of elaborations of how the Persians were wealthy but also weak in battle. Aristagoras noted that they "fight in trousers and turbans," proof of their military inferiority to the Greeks (5.49.3). But Kleomenes was not convinced. He asked for two days to ruminate on the subject. When they next meet, Aristagoras mentioned that his proposed expedition would take the Spartans on a three-month journey away from the sea. Upon hearing how much time would be spent away from Sparta, Kleomenes refused Aristagoras' offer (5.50). Despite the initial rejection, Aristagoras pursued the king again. Kleomenes listened to Aristagoras' further arguments in the presence of his daughter, Gorgo (5.51). Eventually, Aristagoras attempted to bribe the Spartan; offering him as much as 50 talents for military aid (5.51). But Kleomenes instead listened to his daughter, who said "Father, you had better go away, or the stranger will corrupt you (5.51)." So he did, leaving Aristagoras alone in the throne room.

Kleomenes did not explicitly explain why it was not possible for the Spartans to be so far from their *polis*, but he does stand on a long Spartan tradition of keeping foreign military expeditions to a minimum. This conservative, rather than expansionist, foreign policy stands in marked contrast to the Persians, who consider expansion to be a necessity of their empire. Additionally, Kleomenes displayed himself as a man in control of both his appetites and the desires of the Spartan nation, unlike the Persians and their leaders. Kleomenes, unlike any of the Persian rulers, resisted the temptation of conquest. Aristagoras' plan for conquest is presented as a temptation, a desire of the lower appetites, as he tempted Kleomenes with possible spoils and then outright bribery from his own coffers. But Kleomenes knew the importance of balance. To pursue the base desire of conquest would disrupt the just balance that rules the cosmos, which Darius and



other Persians had done. Kleomenes put the maintenance of this balance above the potential gain of great wealth and political power. To have Sparta remain just, he removed himself from the tempter Aristagoras.

The contrast between Darius's insatiable appetite and Kleomenes controlled appetite is not the only juxtaposition between these two passages. Darius followed Atossa's advice while Kleomenes followed that of Gorgo. Atossa, encouraging her husband towards conquest, was a secretive woman who used her husband's political powers for her own ends, both to get Democedes' medical assistance and to get more slaves. Gorgo, on the other hand, was an innocent child who did not care about her own desires and instead wants to see her father remain true to his Spartan honor. So while Gorgo completely aligned her interest with her father and her *polis*, Atossa had her own interests and no particular loyalty to the Persian empire.

In addition to their differing interests, Gorgo and Atossa also had differing degrees of power. Atossa was able to manipulate Darius into following her desires by persuading him with words and presumably (though not mentioned explicitly) her sexuality. While Kleomenes did follow Gorgo's advice, it was not because she held any power over him, but rather because she spoke as his conscience. Gorgo encouraged Kleomenes to do what he already knew what was right.

This gender analysis of power relates back to the idea of balance and therefore justice. Let us re-examine the previous examples. Cyrus fought Tomyris, a foreign queen and Cambyses attempted to fight the hyper-masculinized Ethiopians, who were so strong that they gave Camyses' messenger a bow no Persian could bend.(3.21.3) Oroites initiated a war in order to prove his masculinity to Mitrobates. Herodotos

considered these acts to be improper displays of gender, as the Persian men are attempting to prove their masculinity. The proper gender relationship is displayed with the Spartans: The man is the unquestioned ruler and father and the woman not actually woman but a de-sexualized child who has the honor and interest of her father in mind. Herodotos applauded Kleomenes' authority self-restraint, and noted that it was absent when Aristagoras went to ask for help from Athens.

After leaving Sparta, Aristagoras went to Athens and persuaded them to send twenty ships to support the Ionian revolt (5.97). Aristagoras again mentioned the Persian riches and their military inferiority, in a way reminiscent of how Mitrobates described the military inferiority of Samos to Oroites. Aristagoras also justified the war to the Athenians by emphasizing the common heritage of the Athenians and the Ionians. Herodotos did not say if any particular argument justified going to war for the Athenians, simply noting that "it would seem to be easier to deceive and impose upon a whole number of people than to do so to just one individual (5.97.2)." Later, he mentioned that the armada that arrived to aid Aristagoras also contains five triremes from Eretria. Eretria had fought alongside the Milesians because the Milesians had aided them in a war against the Chalcidians (5.99.1). While Herodotos noted that the Athenian expedition to Ionia, "was the beginning of evils for both the Greeks and barbarians, (5.97.3) nothing in the passages suggests that he thought this intervention was unjust, even if the Athenians were partially lured by the promise of Persian gold. Rather, the Greeks seem to be "helping their friends and harming their enemies (*Republic* 334b)", which Herodotos considered just. But to help one's friends and to harm one's enemies

were not the only just reasons for war. For what is just in war, for Herodotos, depends greatly on matters of honor.

Herodotos not only had his characters talk about initiating wars over honor, he noted that wars were fought according to certain codes of honor. Here it is worth remembering that Herodotos was describing a time period which shifted away from the honor-bound territorial disputes of the Archaic age to wars fought for more political reasons. While the Greeks fought the Persians over reasons of political independence, they fought them using the same honor-bound method in which they had fought the Archaic battles. Herodotos noted that the Spartan commander Amompharetos refused an order to deploy from king Pausanias on the grounds that it was dishonorable (9.53). Previously the Spartans had delayed themselves from arriving at Marathon because they had to observe the holy month of Karneia (7.206). Leonidas' decision to stay and fight at Thermopylae was described in terms of honor: He wanted a chance at everlasting glory and hoped through this sacrifice that the prosperity of Sparta would not be obliterated (7.220). During the battle of Thermopylae, the Spartan soldiers fought to claim Leonidas' body in a way that mirrored Homeric battles over corpses (7.225). While Herodotos mentioned night attacks (5.121) and surprise attacks (6.78), he also has Mardonios describe Greek warfare to Xerxes as a ritualistic, although exceedingly brutal, affair (7.9)<sup>xxxii</sup>. The importance of fighting a war in a honorable way for Herodotos should suggest to us that he would not have considered just any war that had been begun for dishonorable reasons.

Herodotos' history examined war and warfare from many different view points and also different levels. On the one hand, in his cosmology and theology, Herodotos

saw war as simply another event outside human control and governed by fate. But despite the origins of war being outside human control, Herodotos nonetheless judged some wars as having just causes and others having unjust causes. Rulers who fought wars conducted with the intent of conquest or the enslavement of another nation or ethnicity were condemned as being contrary to the natural balance of the cosmos. The cosmos would return itself to its just state by punishing these actors for their *hubris*: They would either die or their wars would fail and they would end up worse than before.

The Greeks, who fought instead for the sake of honor and kinship, did not disrupt this cosmic balance. Additionally, the Greeks, unlike the Persians, followed what Herodotos considered to be proper gender roles. While Herodotos portrayed the Persians as initiating wars either to due to scheming women or men attempting to prove their masculinity, Herodotos described the Greek men as having the power and authority proper for them and therefore did not need to fight to establish either. Greek men were also concerned with honor, even when fighting a war that would determine the political sovereignty of their respective *poleis*. In the next chapter, Thucydides will disagree with Herodotos on the importance of honor, arguing that wars originated from a system of power. However, Thucydides' system of power was as beyond the control of humans as Herodotos' fate. Both historians, while lamenting the horrors of war, did not see any way of preventing war.

---

<sup>xxxii</sup> Lee, John W.I. "Hoplite Warfare in Herodotus". *The Landmark Herodotus*. Pantheon Books, New York. 2007. pg. 799

*mooros de thneetoon hostis ekporthei poleis  
naous te tumbous th' hiera toon kekmykotoon,  
ereemia dous autous ooleth' husteron.*  
The Trojan Women, 95

Like Herodotos, Thucydides was concerned with how war began. However, he appears to have replaced Herodotos' fate and just cosmos with a system of power. His introduction and the Melian dialogues are showcased as the sketches of an ideology of power. In this interpretation, power is a system that operates outside the bounds of human custom and morality. Like Herodotos' fate, this system of power cannot be altered consciously by humans. This is to say that Thucydides and Herodotos found the cause of war to be beyond human control, as the later found the primary cause with the divine and the former found it as an unalterable part of human nature. But while Herodotos nonetheless had an ethical framework, despite being a fatalist, Thucydides stated that we can only understand the *prophasis* of the Peloponnesian war if we discard our ethics.

In such a reading of Thucydides, he appears entirely unconcerned with the justice of war. To take that interpretation is to dismiss the passionate portrayal of human suffering that is within his work. His descriptions of the brutality and inhuman cruelty during the Athenian plague or the revolution of Corcyra can only shock us if we realize that these events have violated some deep sense of human justice. Thucydides urged us to abandon our morals to understand how war begins but then played upon our sense of morality to describe how wrong this war was.

In a similar way readers become angry at the hypocrisy of the politicians even if they accept Thucydides' theory of how the Peloponnesian war began. The politicians listed numerous reasons for declaring war: the enemy has struck first, the enemy will do

us harm in the future, or the peace between us is not just because we are in servitude to them. In Thucydides' understanding, these are all lies because there is only one reason for war: the preservation or expansion of power. In the case of Thucydides' narration, the preservation and expansion of the power of the Athens.

If we look at Athens as a protagonist within Thucydides' narrative, rather than simply as an institution in a history, it becomes very easy to read *The Peloponnesian War* as a tragedy that stars Athens<sup>xxxiii</sup>. As in a tragedy, and many of Herodotos' stories, Athens committed acts of hubris. Hubris for Athens included choosing militarist and expansionist plans, such as the ones offered by Cleon and Alcibiades, over the far-sighted Periclean defense. The way that Thucydides juxtaposed certain events, (such as the plague immediately following the Periclean funeral oration and the invasion of Sicily following the Melian dialogue), suggests that these disasters are somehow linked to the preceding events. In his oration, Pericles placed Athens above all of the other *poleis* in Greece, in a way similar to how tragic heroes would seek to place themselves among the gods rather than with other mortals. In the Melian dialogue, the Athenians sought to excuse themselves from the moral rules that normally govern human affairs. Their justification for military expansion only brought the Athenians grief when they attempted to use that reasoning to conquer Sicily. This reading of *The Peloponnesian War* suggests that while Thucydides attempted to view the war amorally, he was drawn to write about it because he saw it as an historical tragedy.

The injustice that we find in Thucydides' descriptions of the catastrophes of war, the hypocrisy of politicians and the tragic interpretation of war all suggest that he thought that the Peloponnesian war was unjust. But this position is weakened by some passages

that find value in war itself; a value in war beyond simply a means to victory. Part of Thucydides' narration portrays the Peloponnesian war as total war; that is a war that obeys no morals or conventions. But Thucydides found some value inherent in war, saying, "war is a violent teacher (3.82.2)." This militarist tendency is a result of the creative war tradition. While creative war was primarily concerned about the accumulation of honor, creative war also trained the next generation of young men.

To summarize, I will be exploring the following ideas in this chapter:

Thucydides' argument that the *aitia* of war resides in human nature, as war results from humans following a system of power. Because humans are beings primarily concerned with power and the pursuit of power, we can only best understand human nature if we discard the lens of morality. Then I will argue that Thucydides' descriptions of the horrors of war suggest that there is some sort of system of justice, otherwise these horrors would not appear to be violations. Then I will show how the hypocrisy of the politicians implies a moral knowledge of what is just; otherwise it would not be hypocrisy.

Furthermore, the *Peloponnesian War* can be read as a tragedy and the hubristic acts of the Athens suggest that the war is unjust. Finally, despite these reasons, we cannot infer that Thucydides would have judged the Peloponnesian War as unjust, as he also drew upon the creative war tradition to suggest that war can be a positive force.

Like Herodotos, Thucydides searched for the cause of the war that he chronicled in his introduction. Also like Herodotos, Thucydides reached back into myth to find history old enough to properly frame the war. He wrote of Minos, Agamemnon and Menelaos as they were they were actual kings, so when he stated, "The real cause, however, I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth

of the power of Athens, and the fear which this inspired in Sparta, forced (*anagkasi*) them into war," Thucydides gives the impression that his theory of power is ahistorical; that it could just as aptly describe the past as it does the present. His comment that his work was intended not for the present, but as a "possession for all time (1.22.4)" further implies that this system of power does not change over time, much like Herodotos' fate.

This theory of power involves treating the various *poleis* of Greece as individual actors who seek to maximize human and material resources to in order to secure their own power or to expand their power<sup>xxxiv</sup>. In his introduction, Thucydides gave an account of the history of Greece in which the *poleis* seek to gain more *dunamis*. They seek to gain more *dunamis* by either conquering other *poleis* or gaining influence over them (1.8). As Josiah Ober notes, all the *poleis*, both weak and strong, appear to be acting as a rational actors following choices that correspond to an independent system of power<sup>xxxv</sup>. When Thucydides wrote that Sparta attacked Athens because of *anagke*, this aggression seems to be a choice that Sparta had to make in order to survive within the system of power.

The theory of power appears to be further articulated in the Melian Dialogue. The Athenians justify their intended hostilities against the Melians, saying:

Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. And it is not as if we were the first to make this law, or to act upon it when made: we found it in existence before us, and shall leave it to exist forever after us; all we do is to make use of it, knowing that you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do (5.105.2)

By presenting war as the result of human nature, and justice merely as a convention that could be overturned at any moment, the Athenians argued that justice and war have no relationship to each other. In order to understand human affairs, we must disregard any



moral considerations, as the true *prophrasis* of politics and war is the desire for power. Just as Croesos denied any control over the war that led to his ruin by saying that no man would choose war, that it must be caused by the gods, the Athenians avoided moral culpability by saying that the cause of war is this system of power. The Athenians said that they did not invent this system of power, nor can they alter events in any way to achieve a just outcome. Additionally, this system of power is something all humans have access to, therefore the Athenians cannot be faulted for using it. Indeed, they used this power for their own protection, as the Melians might have done the same to them if they had had the chance.

While Herodotos still demanded that his characters act justly despite finding the cause of human affairs to be determined by the divine, the Athenians said that they are not obligated to act justly. Indeed, according to their argument, they are acting justly by attacking Melos, for by doing so they are obeying the dictate to practice *arche* that applies to both humans and gods (5.105.1). War is beyond the dictates of justice, as war is a consequence of *arche*, which is required by a *phusis* that compels all of humankind (5.105.2).

The Melians pointed out the inhuman harshness of this reasoning, and also noted that such an obsessive pursuit of power was not advantageous for the Athenians. For such a philosophy only allows for alliance between people of equal power, while all others are either potential enemies or slaves (5.89). Therefore in this paradigm, all of the islands in the Delian League are slaves and wish for the destruction of their master, Athens. The Melians also pointed out that such a philosophy would not incline anyone to help Athens when fortune turns against them (5.98). The Athenians remained deaf to their pleas.

After a naval siege, all the Melian men were killed, the women and children were sold into slavery. Thucydides ended book five by noting that the Athenians colonized Melos with five hundred of their own people (5.116.4).

Thucydides knew that this description of the invasion of Melos was controversial. The ancient commentator Dionysius ardently denied that Athenians would be capable of describing their *polis* in such a way<sup>xxxvi</sup>. However, Thucydides did not attempt to hide this controversial statement. The shift into dialogue format, away from the paragraphs of speeches and descriptions of battles, grabs the reader's attention to this bold claim about the machinations of power. Because of this shift into format reminiscent of tragic plays and the furor that it inspired in ancient readers like Dionysus, F.M. Cornford argued that we should read the Melian dialogue as the justification of a tragic hero<sup>xxxvii</sup>. If we place the Athenians as such, the Melian dialogues become the justification of an unjust act rather than a revelation of some horrible truth.

The Athenians began the dialogue by saying that they can talk honestly because they are not in front of the Melian citizens (5.85). But by saying that they can only talk truthfully about human nature behind close doors, the Athenians contradict themselves. If this desire is the essential motivation of humankind, why is it esoteric knowledge rather than common sense? For if the desire to rule is mandated by human nature, why do they only dare to whisper it behind closed doors? In order for this statement about the futility of morals to be shocking, we must assume that the readers do value morality. If this claim were true, we would not be shocked to hear it.

The intense suffering that Thucydides described in his work can make a similar argument about how amoral statements require a moral system from which to be called

unethical. For in his description of suffering, there is a sense that the Peloponnesian war has violated the participants. This sense of violation would not be there if humans were primarily concerned with *archee*, as they would accept the viciousness as necessary for obtaining power.

The description of the revolution at Corcyra is a gradual crescendo of chaos and violence that disobeys all Greek conventions for war. The chaos is so overwhelming that afterwards Thucydides was forced to give an account for how this massacre was possible for humans to commit. The war began, according to Thucydides, with the release of Corinthian prisoners of war and also the trial against Peithas, a council member who was charged with treason (3.70). Peithas was acquitted at the trial but then murdered by a group of anti-Athenian oligarchs (3.70). The next day, both the democrats and the oligarchs recruited non-traditional troops: slaves joined the democrat faction while the oligarchs recruited 800 mercenaries from the mainland (3.73). Later in the day, women joined the battle by hurling roof-tiles (3.74). With the arrival of the Athenian navy, there was a temporary cessation of violence as the oligarchs withdrew to the temple of Hera (3.75). Eventually, the democrats, enthused by the Athenian support, demanded that the oligarchs submit themselves to trial (3.81). The fifty who submitted themselves were all put to death, causing those who remained in the temple to kill each other, to hang themselves or to commit suicide by other means (3.81).

After this description of mass suicide, Thucydides commented on the nature of the violence and also described even more horrific forms of violence: patricide, filicide and sacrireligious murder. He wrote:

Death thus raged in every shape; and, as usually happens at such times, there was no length to which violence did not go; sons were killed by their

fathers, and suppliants dragged from the altar or slain upon it, while some were even walled up in the temple of Dionysus and died there. (3.81.5)

This passage pictures an even more violent and unjust situation than the war Croesos had described. Rather than father burying sons, in Corcyra fathers murder their sons. While Thucydides remained silent on the matter of the gods, he noted that the sanctity of the temple grounds cannot prevent the slaughter. The temples, rather being a place for rejoicing in life, became catacombs for the living dead. Thucydides described a situation that is completely contrary to the just peace, the natural order of the cosmos, to which humans are accustomed.

The horror of this situation betrays a moral knowledge. In order for this massacre to shock the audience as it does, it requires a moral system that speaks to issues of justice in war. Specifically, this system of justice says that ideologies should not divide and destroy families and that wars should not violate sacred temples. Thucydides expected the scene at Corcyra to unsettle his audience so much that immediately following it he has to step back from the narrative and attempt to explain how such horrors could occur. From 3.82 to 3.85, Thucydides commented on the nature of humankind and the nature of life under war. Here he located the origin of war within human nature (*ee anthropia phusis*) and noted that it acted contrary to a system of justice (*para tous nomous adikein*):

Then, with the ordinary conventions of civilized life thrown into confusion, human nature, always ready to offend even where laws exist, showed itself proudly in its true colors, as something incapable of controlling passions. (3.84.2)

We can see clearly here that Thucydides felt that there was a proper relationship of war to justice, but that it was not followed in the Corcyrean revolution. He did not find this violence remarkable, as these actions are to be expected given the quality of human nature. From Corcyra, we can deduce that a just war for Thucydides would be one that

did not cut across family ties nor violate religious grounds. By noting what Thucydides considered unjust wars, we can construct a proto-theory of what Thucydides would have considered a just war.

The hypocritical nature of the politicians provides ample opportunities for what Thucydides considered unjust actions. As Walzer says, "Wherever we find hypocrisy, we find moral knowledge."<sup>xxxviii</sup> Just as a moral system is necessary for us to be shocked by atrocities, a common moral system is necessary for hypocrisy. Hypocrisy requires a common moral system that the hypocrite ignores but then argues that he followed. We can construct a theory of what Thucydides would consider proper *ad bellum* qualifications for a just war. For example, all of the politicians attempted to disguise the fact that they struck first in war or that they are fighting a war of aggression. We can understand from this that Thucydides felt that wars of aggression, that is, wars fought with the intent of conquest or political domination of another group of people, were unjust.

For example, when the Spartan king Archadamos said a prayer before invading Platea, he consciously avoided describing his army as an invading army:

Gods and heroes of the land of Platea, bear witness with me that from the beginning it was in no spirit of aggression, but only because these people had first broken their engagements with us, that we invaded this land in which our father offered their prayers to you before they defeated the Persians and which you made a place of good omen for the warfare of the Hellenes; nor, in our actions now, shall we be acting aggressively. We have made a number of reasonable proposals, but these have not been accepted. Grant us your aid, therefore, and see to it that the punishment for what has been done wrong may fall on those who were the first to do evil, and that we may be successful in our aim, which is a just revenge (2.74)

Archadamos believed that the divine guardians of Platea, their gods and heroes, would view his invasion as an unjust war of aggression. Therefore, he very carefully demonstrated that the Spartans are not invading Platea with the explicit purpose of enslaving the inhabitants or taking their resources. Archadamos instead emphasized that they were invading Platea because Platea had broken their treaty with Sparta. We can infer from this example that Archadamos knew that wars of aggression were unjust, otherwise he would not have had to disguise his invasion as revenge for a broken treaty. Thucydides attempted to explain the hypocrisy of leaders like Archadmos with his system of power. The leaders were willing to disregard any form of moral convention if to do so would enable them to obtain more power. However, while Thucydides attempted to describe the Peloponnesian war amorally, as Cornford noted, he drew upon tragic narratives and structures in order to do so<sup>xxxix</sup>.

To read the Peloponnesian war as a tragedy is almost to deny that Thucydides viewed the world any differently than Herodotos. In Greek tragedy, tragic humans live within an anthropocentric cosmos that responds to their moral decisions. But it is possible to read these elements into Thucydides' work. Cornford argued that while Thucydides consciously rejected inserting any sort of mythical element into his writing; because his only literary forbearers were either poets or tragedians, it was impossible for Thucydides to escape completely their influence<sup>xl</sup>. As the narratives within either epic myth or tragic plays often have a moral interpretation, we can find Thucydides' moral judgments about war if we view his work through the tragic lens that Cranford described.

To read the Peloponnesian war as a tragedy Athens becomes the protagonist. Thucydides began to talk of *poleis* as individual actors in his introduction and freely

interchanges discussion of *poleis* and the citizens of a *polis*. If we look at the *poleis* as individuals, we can adopt the systems of honor and hubris that had previously only been given to individuals. In this context, Thucydides appears as a despairing moralist, connecting the decline of Athens for her attempts to be more than she was sanctioned to be under the systems of honor.

While Thucydides practically mocked the oracular interpretations of the plague at Athens (2.54), in the segment before, he had Pericles articulate the many virtues of the Athenian citizens and their *polis* (2.41). Pericles even said, "Our city is an education to Greece (2.41)" and further cites the Athens' political power as proof of its greatness. The juxtaposition of the plague immediately after Pericles' speech suggests that cosmos did not agree that Athens was meant to be an education to Greece. Although Thucydides turned the readers towards doctors rather than priests to find the original cause of the disease (2.48), Thucydides made it easy for his readers to assume that Athens was being punished for hubris. Specifically, attempting to be more than just a *polis* but a *polis* for all of Greece.

The plague that struck Athens resulted in as a severe disruption of the cosmic balance as the Corcyrean revolution. Thucydides noted that, "Fear of gods or law of men there was none (2.53.3)," to explain the shortsighted hedonism that many men adopted. This description implies that the proper relationship between gods and men had been abandoned, just as it was during the scenes of sacrareligious murder at the temples in Corcyra. But more horrible than this shunning of the proper cultural mores was the dissolution of communal bonds. Thucydides noted that the contagious nature of the plague often caused the afflicted to die alone. For the plague would kill those who had

honorably offered aid to the sick (2.51.5) and households would even turn out their own family members, "worn out by the moans of the dying and succumbing to the force of the disaster." (2.51.6) The bonds of family and civic duty, which Pericles had so artfully extolled in his funeral oration, were completely unraveled by the plague. The close juxtaposition of Pericles' speech to this disaster implies some sort of causation, especially given the Greek tradition of interpreting sickness as divine retribution.

In a similar way, the disaster that the Athenians suffered due to the Sicilian expedition can be read as punishment for hubris. Thucydides foreshadowed the ill results with his descriptions of why the Athenians decided to go to war, hinting that the entire cause of the war was the base appetites of the Athenians:

There was a passion for the enterprise which affected everyone alike. The older men thought that they would either conquer the places against which they were sailing, or, in any case, with such a large force, could come to no harm; the young had a longing for the sights and experiences of distant places and were confident that they would return safely; the general masses and the average soldier himself saw the prospect of getting pay for the time being and of adding to the empire so as to secure permanent paid employment for the future. (6.24)

Here, both the old men and the youth commit the hubris of thinking themselves immortal (and thereby equivalent to the gods). The masses and the soldiers favor the war solely for monetary gain, implying that they support the Sicilian expedition as a war of conquest and domination. Thucydides described the Athenians as people who see themselves as being able to change the world for their own interests quite easily. That is to say, rather than seeking balance within the cosmos, these Athenians attempted to impose themselves on the universe.

Thucydides dived into the psyche of the Athenians during the destruction of the fleet at Sicily. At this event, Thucydides noted that the expedition has brought about the



completely opposite of which the Athenians expected. Rather than joy at victory, they feel "a profound sense of shame and deep feelings of reproach,"(7.75) rather than expanding the Athenian hegemony, they "were going away frightened of being enslaved themselves."(7.75.7) This complete destruction of morale occurred amidst a battle that violated many of the Greek war conventions:

The dead were unburied, and when any man recognized one of his friends lying among them, he was filled with grief and fear; and the living who, whether sick or wounded, were being left behind caused more pain than did the dead to those who were left alive...(7.75)

In addition to Athenians losing the Sicilian expedition, they lost the battle in a disgraceful way. Thucydides linked the Athenians' plans, the decision to invade Sicily, to the consequences of their action, the rout at Sicily. But he also connected the emotional intentions of the Athenians during the planning stage, their greed and arrogance, to their emotional state during the rout, grief and fear. In doing so, in a way Thucydides says that the consequence of greed and arrogance is grief and fear. This emotional consequentialism, of greed and arrogance turning into grief and fear, is the basic emotional narrative of a tragedy.

We have seen Thucydides describe the Peloponnesian War as tragic, unjust and inevitable. But Thucydides also wrote within the creative war tradition and because of this tradition, Thucydides found something valuable in war. During creative warfare, war was thought as an essential way to gain honor. However, rather than being concerned with gaining honor Thucydides found war as somehow connected to justice.

Thucydides began his work by writing that the Peloponnesian War was "a great war and more worthwhile writing about than any in the past."(1.1.1) This comment tells us that Thucydides was drawn to write about the Peloponnesian war because it was a war,

similarly to the ones about Homer and Herodotos wrote. Thucydides justified his fascination with war after his description of the Corcyrean revolution:

In peace and prosperity states and individuals have better sentiments, because they not find themselves suddenly confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes away the easy supply of daily wants and so proves a rough teacher (*didaskalos*) that brings most men's characters to their fortunes (3.82.2)

This passage recalls Heraclitus' praise of war, "war is the king of all... and has made some men slaves and some men free."<sup>xli</sup> So while Thucydides attempted to describe war only using the language of total war, as which war is only a means, he nonetheless found some value in war itself. He did not find war valuable because it allowed men to gain honor, which is the basis of the creative war tradition. Instead, Thucydides argued that war was essential to understanding human nature.

In order to do justice in documenting the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides quieted his narrative voice. But while he primarily documented events and recreated political speeches, he nonetheless intervened in the text and attempted to guide the readers to a specific interpretation of the war. In these interventions, Thucydides sought to describe the war as an inevitable and amoral result of a system of power. But, Thucydides can only do justice to the descriptions of these horrors by relying on the moral system that he had earlier rejected as inadequate for accounting for the origins of the war. In a similar way, in order for the audience to be indignant about the hypocrisy of the politicians, we must have a system of justice for them to violate. Additionally, for Athens to fall from being a *polis* that all of Greece to aspire and to become a *polis* that indulges the base appetites of its citizens, there must be some sort of justice from which they had strayed in order to create revulsion in the readers.

Thus despite his apparently dispassionate stance, Thucydides can tell us much about the relationship of justice and war. From the Corycrean revolution we can see that war is not supposed to break familial or civic bonds. Additionally, war is not supposed to cross religious boundaries: sanctuaries should be respected. Likewise, the boundaries of other *poleis* should be respected, wars of aggression are unjust. The unjust nature of wars of aggression can be seen the way that Athenian expedition is described: the fear and grief that the Athenians feel is a result of the greed and arrogance that initiated the expedition in the first place.

But finding a prototype of a just war theory within the *Peloponnesian War* is further complicated by the presence of the creative war tradition that continues to resonate within Thucydides' work. Thucydides found some positive aspects of war and thought that war was necessary for understanding the human condition. His description of war as a *didaskalos* suggests that even though war is responsible for a multitude of horrors, Thucydides also saw war as the origin of virtues such as justice. In the next chapter, Plato builds upon this idea, as he made the experience of war an essential aspect for the creation of a just *polis*.

- 
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Cornford, F. M. *Thucydides Mythistoricus*. Edward Arnold, London, 1907. pg. 139
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Ober, Josiah. "Thucydides Theoretikos/Thucydides Histor: Realist Theory and the Challenge of History" *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War.* ". East Gate Book, Armonk NY, 2001. pg. 275
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Ibid., pg. 277
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus; Prichett, Kendrick. *On Thucydides*. University of California, Berkeley CA, 1975. pg. 33 (393)
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Cornford, pg. 182
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, Fourth Edition*. Basic Books, New York NY, 2006. pg. 19
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Cornford, pg. 139
- <sup>xl</sup> Cornford, pg. 129
- <sup>xli</sup> Heraclitus, no. 22 fragment B53

...emon eie to dianapauesthai pukna en autais,  
 logois te allelous paramouthoumenous ten  
 odon apasan outo meta rastones diaperanai.

Laws, 625b

Plato saw war and justice as closely bound together. In the *Republic*, war is a necessary component for training the guardians, and therefore it is a necessary part of the composition of a just *polis*, the *kallipolis* (467b). Like Thucydides, Plato saw the ultimate cause of war to be human nature. But unlike Thucydides, who described war as a product of a system of power incompatible with justice, Plato argued that war could be controlled and that some form of justice could be formed from this human nature. For modern readers, the purpose of having this control over the beginning of war would be to eliminate war and create peace. However, Plato did not pursue creating continuous peace, as he saw war as integral to the creation and maintenance of justice. In requiring some sort of war to continue to exist for the sake of the human soul, Plato borrows from and reinvigorates the Greek creative war tradition.

However, due to structure of the Platonic dialogue, it is difficult to present Plato's thought on a complex subject such as creative war. In order to investigate Plato's dialogues thoroughly, I will examine *The Republic*, *The Statesman* and *The Laws* independently before examining his work as a whole and his thoughts on justice and war. Even if Plato can be said to rejuvenate the creative war tradition in the *Republic*, he also changed it in several key ways. For the warfare in the *kallipolis* serves the purpose of justice, while creative warfare was for the accumulation of honor. This subservient position of warfare to justice is explicitly stated in both the *Statesman* (305e) and the *Laws* (628d). In the *Statesman*, warfare is examined as a potential *episteme* worthy of ordering the *polis*. However, ultimately Plato argued that *politikee* should be superior to

warfare as warfare itself is not concerned with the proper ordering of the *polis*. Put another way, *politikee* is decreed superior to warfare because the *telos* of *politikee* is justice. Plato described a similar type of separation of the ends of warfare and politics in the *Laws*. In the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger challenged how war is posited as the *raison d'etat* of both Sparta and Crete. While the Athenian Stranger never doubted war was an effective way to protect a *polis*, he argued that war should not be the primary purpose of the *polis*, for to do so is contrary to the cultivation of human virtue. In all three of Plato's most explicitly political works, war is described as a tool in the service of justice.

In describing war and justice as a human endeavor, Plato departed from both Herodotos and Thucydides. For while Herodotos wished to judge humans for their just or unjust behavior, his writings reveal a faith in the ability of the cosmos to correct injustices. Like Thucydides, Plato had no such faith that the cosmos itself would correct injustice. However, Thucydides did not see justice as a meaningful way of viewing human affairs and instead argued that war and politics could best be understood as results of a system of power. Justice, for Thucydides, is meaningless. Plato had neither the optimism of Herodotos nor the pessimism of Thucydides. Rather, justice occurs as a result of conscious human decisions. *The Republic*, *The Statesman* and *The Laws* are all concerned about the types of human decisions, that can be consciously made, that are necessary for the construction of a just *polis*.

Given this belief on the human ability to create justice, why would Plato revive creative war traditions in the *Republic*? Before we consider his philosophical reasoning, I want to elaborate on Plato's historical and political context. Plato's writings were obviously influenced by the execution of his mentor Socrates, but we should also

remember that he was writing after the Peloponnesian war. While the Athenians had restored their democracy and to a lesser extent their empire, the war had long lasting impact on Athens, due to the massive loss of life to the war, to the plague and the instability of the Athenian government with the Thirty Tyrants' attempt to seize power. The Peloponnesian War was, as Thucydides noted, an event unprecedented to the Greek world. Plato's thoughts on the proper relation between justice and war may have been aimed to prevent another such war and to control *stasis* within the *polis*.

But while Plato may have been interested in preventing such an all encompassing war, he was not interested in preventing all wars. For even in the *kallipolis*, which is just, wise, courageous and moderate, there is still war. The *kallipolis* fights wars not only to protect itself, but also to train its guardians and to ensure that it has sufficient resources to provide itself with luxuries (*Republic* 373d). Plato outlined a Just War Theory for the *kallipolis*, detailing on what occasions it should go to war and how it should fight wars. However, the applicability of this theory to political decisions is unclear. For Socrates stated that his intention in describing this “city made of words” was ultimately to be able to describe the soul of a just man (369a). Because of this statement, and several other textual suggestions, we must remember that the imaginary just *polis* is primarily intended to explain how an individual should be just. Such a description is not devoid of political significance, as the psychological origins of war have political consequences. But even if discussion of justice in war is allegorical, we can nonetheless say that the *Republic* contains a proto Just War Theory. This discussion is significant for no other reason than it was the first explicit discussion of the connection between justice and war.

The Just City Just War Theory in the *Republic*, like the Just War Theory later developed along the framework developed by St. Augustine, can be divided into *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*. Plato did not intend for his thoughts on justice and war to be divided in such a way, as he approached the problem of war holistically. However, for the purpose of this paper, exploring the Greek dialogue on justice and war, we will make this division. *Ius ad bellum* outlines the particular ends for which it is permissible for the just city to go to war. The ends that Socrates names were: self-protection and conquering enough territory to ensure self-sufficiency. Both of these ends would suggest that war for the sake of war would not be just. But in a particular way, war is necessary for the continued existence of the *kallipolis* beyond simple defense, as it is an integral part of the guardians' training. Because war is essential to the continuity of the *kallipolis*, Plato's theory of war has many similarities to the Greek creative war tradition. For one of the key tenets of the Just War Theory that occurred after St. Augustine is that a just war should be fought for the sake of creating peace and that war should only be used as a last resort.

What is important to understand about *ius ad bellum* for the just *polis*, is that there are different types of wars fought for material gain. In Book II, Socrates argued that the *kallipolis* will have to:

...cut off a piece of our neighbor's land, if we are going to have sufficient for pasture and tillage, and they in turn from ours, if they let themselves go to the unlimited acquisition of money, overstepping the boundary of the necessary?...After that won't we go to war as a consequence? (*Republic* 373d)

In this passage, Socrates argued that war fought for resources that will make the *kallipolis* self-sufficient is justified. For Socrates, the difference between resources that make one



sufficient and one affluent, is an essential distinction, because unless the *kallipolis* is economically self-sufficient, it will not be able to create the policies necessary to achieve justice. Therefore, attaining the resources to be self-sufficient is paramount. However, Socrates seemed to have some feeling that the morality of war for material gain is suspect. The questionability of the morality of this type of war leads Socrates explicitly delay discussion about the justice of war, saying that "Let's not yet say whether war works evil or good ." (373e) However, later in the dialogue, Socrates stressed the importance of not fighting for material gain.

After the *kallipolis* has been founded, Socrates envisioned the *kallipolis* existing amidst unjust *poleis*. Because of this situation, the *kallipolis* will be forced to defend itself from other *poleis* which will seek to support their affluent lives by taking the resources of the *kallipolis*. Socrates argued that the *kallipolis* will be able to defend itself through its guardians and by allying with other unjust *poleis* (422d). From this passage we can deduce that Socrates considered wars of defense to be justified. Also, in this passage we see the essential difference for Socrates between resources for self-sufficiency and for affluence. According to Socrates, the *kallipolis* will easily find allies, for the guardians will be able to offer the allies all the spoils of war:

What if they sent an embassy to the other city and told the truth? 'We make use of neither gold nor silver, nor is it lawful for us, while it is for you. So join us in making war and keep the others' property' (422d).

In this passage it is clear that once the *kallipolis* has sufficient resources, it should not seek more. To do so would be unjust, as it would push the *polis* towards affluence and all the corresponding vices. What is interesting is that while this defensive war is just for the *kallipolis*, Plato gave the impression that he was not at all interested in making the unjust

*poleis* more just. For the guardians gather support for the just *polis* by manipulating the vices of other *poleis* and making no effort to correct their perversions.

However, a war is not just for the *kallipolis* simply because it passes *ius ad bellum* qualifications; the guardians had to fight wars in a specific way. However, the *ius in bello* guidelines for the guardians depend on whether or not the enemy is Greek. At this point in the *Republic*, Socrates redefined war. In Book V, he declared that war can only occur between two groups who are naturally opposed to each other (470c). Because of this reasoning, any fighting between Greeks is not war, but rather a form of *stasis*; civil war (470c). Reclassifying war in such a way, required the guardians to be: "...lovers of the Greeks. Won't they consider Greece their own and hold the common holy places along with the other Greeks?" (470e) Socrates used this classification in order to give the reasoning for the war conventions that he outlined for battles among the *kallipolis* and other *poleis*. The foundation for the *ius in bello* is the love that naturally occurs amongst Greeks and the enmity that occurs naturally between Greeks and barbarians.

When Socrates argued that Greeks can only be at war with barbarians, he said that all Greeks are friends by *phusis* (470c). Therefore, for Greeks to fight against each other is contrary to nature. This appeal to *phusis* for the foundation of a pan-Hellenic peace seems to run contrary to what Socrates had argued earlier in Book II. For in Book II, after saying that in order to found the just *polis* one would have to go to war in order to obtain sufficient land, he said "...we have found the origin of war- in those things whose presence in cities most of all produces evils both private and public (373e)." In order to reconcile these two statements, we must argue that in order to found the *kallipolis*, one is required to do an unjust act: make war against fellow Greeks. For as inferred in Book II,

and stated explicitly in Book V, the *kallipolis* can only come from a Greek society (470e). I will elaborate more about reconciling these two statements when talking about the applicability of the Just City Just War Theory.

But while war with fellow Greeks is contrary to human nature, it is in fact natural for the *kallipolis* to be at war with barbarians (470c). This naturalization of hostilities would mean that the *kallipolis* would not require a specified reason to be at war with non-Greeks. To put it another way, the *kallipolis* would not need to justify going to war with non-Greeks to their citizenry because their citizenry would always have *echthra* towards barbarians (470c). Therefore, in Just City Just War Theory, not only is there a distinction between fighting for material gain for self-sufficiency and fighting for material gain for affluence but also a distinction between fighting Greeks and barbarians. The *kallipolis* would not need as strong an argument to go to war with barbarians as it would to go to war with Greeks.

Socrates argued that the *kallipolis* would follow very specific guidelines for fighting wars against Greeks. These guidelines result from the logic that the guardians will view Greeks as their kin. Because the *kallipolis* views other *poleis* as family, they will not hate them, even in war. Therefore, the guardians, as Greeks,

won't ravage Greece or burn houses, nor will they agree that in any city all are their enemies- men, women and children, but there are always a few enemies who are to blame for the differences. And, on all these grounds, they won't be willing to ravage lands or tear down houses, since the many are friendly; and they'll keep up the quarrel until those to blame are compelled to pay the penalty by the blameless ones who are suffering (471a).

Socrates seems to be suggesting that in a war against another Greek *poleis*, the *kallipolis* will act more like a foreign police force rather than an enemy state. Because their focus is to destroy only those who had initiated war, guardians will not ravage the land nor

cause undue destruction and neither will they enslave any captured Greeks (469b) nor plunder the corpses of the enemy (469d). These guidelines for *ius in bello* for the *kallipolis* against Greeks seem completely contrary to the ruthlessness which was necessary for the guardians to defend themselves from invaders. For when the guardians were seeking allies, they were not concerned with correcting their allies' behavior. For if the guardians had fought this war it would be unjust. But it is apparently not unjust for the guardians to enlist other *poleis* in this war (422d). But while Socrates detailed specific ways later in which the *kallipolis* improves the lives of other *poleis*, the *kallipolis* has no obligation to make barbarians more just.

While Socrates was vocal about the proper way to fight Greeks, he did not describe any standard for fighting non-Greeks. We can, however, deduce from the way that he describes fighting against Greeks the standards for *ius in bello* against barbarians. After Socrates described the guidelines for fighting other Greeks, Glaucon said, "I agree that our citizens must behave this way towards their opponents; and towards barbarians they must behave as Greeks do now toward one another." (471b) Put another way, when the *kallipolis* fights barbarians, it is completely permissible to strip the enemy's corpse, to enslave an enemy and to burn and ravage their land.

Now that we have explored the guidelines that Plato wrote were necessary for the *kallipolis* both for *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*, we need to explore how war is integral to the survival of the city. I will delay questioning why this occurs until I discuss how the *kallipolis* is supposed to relate to political life. I have already shown that war is essential to the establishment of the *kallipolis*, now I will show that war is necessary for

its continuation. War is necessary not only for the proper education of the guardians, but also for ensuring all citizens in the *polis* have a common experience.

In Book V, Socrates discussed how the *kallipolis* will conduct all affairs in common. He argues that this unified experience is necessary because:

Then is the best governed which is most like a single human being? For example, when one of us wounds a finger, presumably the entire community- that community tying the body together with the soul in a single arrangement under the ruler? (462c)

One political experience that has the ability to unify the *polis* to such a great extent is war. In order to ensure that war is fought completely in common, the guardians will:

...carry out their campaigns in common, and, besides, they'll lead all the hardy children to war, so that, like the children of other craftsmen, they can see what they'll have to do in their craft when they are grown up (466e)

Fighting in the presence of children, for Socrates, not only has the advantage of unifying the city and teaching the children war craft, it will in fact further inspire the warriors to fight better. This ferociousness occurs naturally because "...every animal fights exceptionally hard in the presence of its offspring (467a)." From these passages we can see that to fight war is not simply necessary to establish peace for the *kallipolis*, but that it is necessary both for the education of warriors and also for the unification of the citizenry. Unlike, in the *Statesman* or the *Laws*, war in the *Republic* serves more functions in the creation of peace than simply the establishment of security; war is cast as both a teacher and a unifier for the *kallipolis*.

War teaches and unites *kallipolis*, but what affect does war have on a normal *polis*? To answer this question we must turn towards the question of how the *kallipolis* relates to everyday life. I have postponed this discussion because to answer it requires

some sort of analysis of the *Republic* as a whole. I will draw upon the work of C.D.C. Reeve, who argues that the *Republic* provides a consistent and systematic argument about justice. Afterwards, I will talk about how war is discussed in relation to justice in both the *Statesman* and the *Laws*. The transition from the *Republic* to the other texts will be easy because the sections of all three texts that I'm interested in concern not only war and justice but also Plato's study of the soul.

Reeve argues that Socrates goes about building his "city of words" in such a way that there are three distinct cities: The first city is mentioned in Book II, in which men and women live in-between poverty and affluence. The second city is described throughout Books III and IV; it is the city of the guardians. The third city is the city of the philosopher-kings<sup>xlii</sup>. Each *polis* contains all the social structures of the preceding city, but during the course of the dialogue Socrates is forced to make some fundamental change to the structure of the *polis* in order to account for a different aspect of the human *psyche*.<sup>xliii</sup> The simple city was not sufficient because it could not provide for the desires of honorific men. The guardian city was not sufficient because it could not provide for philosophers. What this tripartite division of the *kallipolis* allows us to see is that in each section in which war is discussed extensively, war is described in relation to either the simple city or the guardian city. Indeed, war is a necessary function of both the first *kallipolis* and the second *kallipolis*: War is required to gain sufficient materials to found the simple city while the guardians can only guard their city if they can fight war. While the *kallipolis* of the philosopher-king requires the philosopher-king to be knowledgeable of military affairs and also to have a courageous spirit (534c), war is not a necessity for this *kallipolis* as it was for the previous two. In order to understand this

division of the *kallipolis*, and how these divisions relate to life outside the *kallipolis*, we must turn to Plato's division of the soul.

One of the famous accounts in *Republic* is the division of the human *psyche* into rationality, appetite and the spirited element (493d-e). We can understand the three different *kallipoleis* to have been constructed in order to accommodate these various parts of the human *psyche*: The simple city to accommodate the appetites, the guardian city to accommodate the spirited element and the philosopher-kings to accommodate the rational element. We might be encouraged to view the cities in this way if we remember the original purpose of these cities: to locate justice within a single man (369a).

But if we are to view all the political discussion in the *Republic* as an allegory for the proper structuring of one's soul, does the *Republic* truly have anything to tell us about the relationship between war and justice? In a way, yes. For Plato has located the primary cause of war in the human *psyche*. The war is a result of the appetites or the spirited element. In a way, this is similar to Thucydides' location of the cause of war as human nature (*Thucydides* 3.84.2). But unlike Thucydides, Plato saw human rationality as a way to control the appetite and human spiritedness and therefore to control war. This control can then be used to create both peace and justice.

Rationality controls both appetite and spiritedness, striking a balance both within the two and between the two. The appetites in the *kallipolis* are satiated by the resources that the *kallipolis* had seized from other Greek *poleis* during its formation. But the appetites are not allowed to dictate the course of action; many steps are taken to ensure that the citizens of the *kallipolis* do not develop a taste for the extravagant. The spirited element polices the appetites and ensures that they do not overwhelm rationality. Just as

the appetites are neither underfed nor overindulged, the spirited element is neither underdeveloped nor overdeveloped. For if it is underdeveloped in the *kallipolis*, spirited and unjust men from other *poleis* will conquer the *kallipolis*. But if the spirited element is overdeveloped, the *kallipolis* will begin to value honor more than rationality, causing the just community's disintegration (548c).

Even if we read the *Republic* primarily as an explanation of how an individual may act justly, the dialogue also explains how a political community relates to justice and war. Put another way, if we attempt to read the *Republic* only as an exploration of individual psychology, the allegory of the *kallipolis* nonetheless presents political solutions to the problem of justice. These political solutions would involve the correct balancing of the souls of all the inhabitants within the *polis*.

Plato also found the cause of war inside the human *psyche* in the *Statesman*, in which he further elaborated the necessity of war being subservient to justice in the *Statesman*. However, he elaborated in an indirect way, as the *Statesman* is primarily concerned about exploring the various elements of *politikee*, statesmanship. But this dialogue is of interest to us because the Stranger has the Young Socrates come to the conclusion that statesmanship and the art of generals are distinct and separate. In addition to this conclusion, the Stranger argued that a *polis* must find some sort of balance between those who are inclined towards aggression and those who are inclined towards peace. Such a balance is of paramount importance because an imbalance threatens the safety of the *polis* both internally and externally.

But before the Stranger discussed the origins of war, he first showed the Young Socrates that the only knowledge which is appropriate for ruling the *polis* is *politikee*. He



considered several areas of knowledge, including that of the juror and the general (*Statesman* 305b and 304e). The other area of knowledge essential for the statesman is that of rhetoric and public speaking (304d). The Stranger argued that the craft of the statesman concerns all three of these knowledges (305e).

After establishing the proper role of statesmanship, the Stranger described both the origins of war and how to control it in order to create peace. The origin of war, like in the *Republic*, is in the human *psyche*. But the Stranger did not suggest a tripartite division of the soul, but instead made a bifurcation between those who are inclined towards aggression and those who are inclined towards peace (307c-e). Unlike the psychic division in the *Republic*, the Stranger did not advocate the superiority of a particular element of the soul. Rather, a balance must be struck between these two aspects. If a *polis* contains too many souls inclined towards aggression, "men come into violent conflict with one another on many issues (307d)." On the other hand, if a *polis* contains too many souls inclined towards peace, "they and their children and all the community to which they belong wake up to find that their freedom is gone and that they have been reduced to slavery." (307e) But while this psychology does not allocate rationality to a position with the *psyche*, the proper way to balance the soul nonetheless makes use of intelligence and rationality: the rationality of the statesman.

For in order to create a *polis* worthy of his craft, the Stranger argued that the statesman will manipulate the stock of his citizens in order to create a people who will neither thirst for war nor become cowards. In a passage reminiscent of the copulation ceremonies detailed in the *Republic* (459e), the Stranger explained the procedures necessary to generate this citizenry: A combination of breeding (310b), games and

competition, education and excommunication (308d-e). The Stranger did not describe what part of the statesman's soul will direct this weaving of the *polis* (308d). However, we can assume that the statesman will be using the knowledge, *politikee*, that the dialogue had spent so long defining. Use of this knowledge requires rationality.

Therefore we can say that in order to create a peaceful and just *polis*, the statesman, like the philosopher-king, needs to use rationality to control the human *psyche* and create justice. This justice is a balance between avoiding unnecessary wars while having the proper spiritedness available in his population to fight defensive wars.

Plato continued to argue that rationality can be used to create peace and justice and to avoid war in the *Laws*. The *Laws* appears to be constructing a completely opposite argument at the beginning of the dialogue, as Clinias the Cretan argued on behalf of his lawgiver that all states are in continuous war with one another. But the Athenian quickly intervened and argued that in constructing a *polis* in that way, with a *telos* of constant war, one loses the possibility of creating a *polis* that fosters all the virtues. Unlike the *Republic*, the virtuous *polis* that the three men construct is not ruled by philosophy. They also disregarded one of the central propositions in the *Statesman* (295c), that laws will never be an effective way to rule a *polis* because laws are blind. Rather than empowering a statesman to weave the proper elements of the *polis* together, the three men in the *Laws* see law as a reflection of the community. In this way, the *polis* uses its collective rationality, in the form of the laws, to overcome the aggression that inclines humanity towards war.

The Cretan Clinias began the dialogue by saying that his *polis* was designed to be at constant war with all foreign *poleis*. He bragged that the legislator who designed

Cretan laws was wise in seeing that "all [*poleis*] are engaged in a continuous lifelong warfare against all cities (626a)." Beyond praising the wisdom on the true nature of human affairs, Clinias said that, "the peace of which most men talk is no more than a name; in real fact, the normal attitude of a city to all others cities is one of undeclared war (626a)." The Athenian admitted that the advantage of legislating a *polis* in that way is that the *polis* will never be conquered and also cultivates the virtue of courage within the citizens (628d).

However, the Athenian doubted how accurate this analysis of the interactions of *poleis* is. He asked why should only *poleis* be at constant war with one another. Why not villages against villages, households against households or man against man (626c)? In fact, he went beyond social relations and asked: "Must we regard each man as his own enemy?"(626d) Surprisingly, the Cretan willingly accepted this deconstruction of his argument. The Cretan accepts this turn of events because he does not desire peace. Instead, he wished for the victory of the better part of an individual man, a household, a village and a *polis* (627a). Using these terms, the three men come to the agreement that the desirable state, of which the laws they will then detail will seek to construct, is one in which the better part of the *polis* is victorious (627b). The Athenian noted that this state, in which the better part of the *polis* is victorious, could result from either *stasis* or friendship and reconciliation (628b). Furthermore, the Athenian argued that this internal war is not a good, but a type of evil:

"But the best is neither war nor faction (*stasis*)- they are things we should pray to be spared from- but peace and mutual good will. And thus a victory of a city over itself turns out, it would seem, to be not so much a good as a necessity. It is as though one fancied that a diseased body which has been subjected to medical purgation were at its best in that condition, and ignored a body which as never stood in need of such treatment. So, if

a man takes a similar view of the happiness of the city, or indeed, of the individual man- I mean, if external wars are the first and only object of his regard- he will never be a true statesman, nor will any man be a finished legislator, unless he legislates for war as a means to peace, rather than for peace as a means for war (628c-d)

What I want to emphasize this passage is two things: firstly, that peace is the proper *telos* of war. Secondly, that war will not be eliminated. While it is an evil, it is necessary in order for the best part of the *polis* to conquer. Thus, like in the *Republic* and the *Statesman*, war is a result of a condition within the human soul. In all three texts war is a state that should be avoided, as peace is superior. However, despite the superiority of peace, war is necessary for the creation and continuation of a just *polis*. This proper balance of ensuring that war does not become the *telos* of the *polis*, while still fighting the wars that ensure that virtuous part of the *polis* survives.

The Athenian argued that the best way for the *polis* to obtain and retain this balance is through law. He compared the decision making process of a *polis* to that of an individual:

He has, besides, anticipations of the future and, these of two sorts. The common name for both sorts is expectation, the special name for anticipation of pain being fear, and for anticipation of its opposite, confidence. And on top of all, there is judgment, to discern which of these states is better or worse, and when judgment takes the form of a public decision of a *polis*, it has the name law. (644d)

Therefore, we can see that a form of rationality, law, will be entrusted to ensure that the *polis* has the proper mixture of aggression. This balance of aggressiveness ensures that the *polis* can survive attacks by unjust men and also not become unjust itself. Therefore, even though Plato found the origin of war, he did not wish to eliminate it.

In the *Laws*, Plato argued that *poleis* should primarily be concerned with the virtue of their citizens rather than be overly concerned with preparations of war. While

preparation for war is necessary in order to ensure that the *polis* exists, the *Laws* of the *polis*, as a form of collective rationality, must ensure that war is always fought for the sake of peace

It is this necessity of war in all three of Plato's texts, despite the acknowledged superiority of peace, in which I find that Plato reinvigorated the creative war tradition in Greece. For in the creative war tradition, war is desired because it is necessary for the accumulation of honor. Because the societies that practice creative war are honor focused societies, the warriors who participate in creative warfare are willing to risk their lives in order to have the chance to gather that honor around which their society revolves. In this society, the origin of war is the desire to attain honor. Plato acknowledged this desire for honor and for aggression, but rather than allowing them to become a focal point of a just society, he used them as tools for the construction of justice. Because this spiritedness was such an essential tool, a just *polis* could not exist without war.

However, while war could not be eliminated, it could be controlled. Plato lived during the Peloponnesian war and experienced its aftermath, which in addition to death and population displacement, caused great political unrest. No doubt in thinking about politics, he wished to avoid such a calamity in the future. It is quite possible that Plato recognized the difference between the Peloponnesian war and the Homeric wars: that the Peloponnesian war was fought for political reasons while Homeric warfare was concerned with honor. The Peloponnesian war was fought with an intense desire on both side to achieve victory, with a disregard for any sort of war convention. Plato did not put any faith in treaties among *poleis* as a way to prevent another Peloponnesian war. While he outlined rules of warfare for the guardians of the *kallipolis* to obey, he primarily

intended to avoid such a horrific war by creating a political situation in which wars were not fought for conquest or for the expansion of power. Rather, wars would be fought for the protection of virtuous *poleis*. Thus in order to protect itself, a just *polis* would require some degree of aggression.

This aggressiveness could be controlled in such a way that war does not rule human affairs. The key towards controlling this aggression is rationality. Rationality can then direct this aggression to the construction of justice. Aggression is necessary to the construction of justice because it is integral to ensuring that a just *polis* is not overthrown, from either within or without, by unjust men. But too much aggression is inimical to justice, as it causes unnecessary conflict. Rationality then is key to the establishment of the proper balance of aggression. However, the three different texts provide different accounts of what form this rationality takes. Both the *Republic* and the *Statesman* suggest that this rationality will take the form of a single man, whether a philosopher-king or a statesman, who will then properly order the *polis* such that aggression will not cause unjust wars. But in the *Republic* the philosopher-king, in addition to controlling the aggression of the city, must properly handle the appetitive aspect of the soul. If this aspect is not controlled, the *polis* will go to war for the resources necessary to obtain affluence. The philosopher-king and the statesman, by using their rationality, control the souls of the citizens in similar ways: Through education, breeding, contests, tests and excommunication. These extreme measures are not available in the *Laws*. Instead, law is used as a result of the collective rationality of the entire *polis*. In *The Republic*, *The Statesman* and *The Laws*, both rationality and aggression are necessary for the construction of justice.

Plato turned towards the human soul, rather than the divinities or the cosmos, in order to construct justice. In delving into the human *psyche* to search for guidelines for either living a just life or constructing a just *polis*, Plato also pointed out the origins of war: human aggression. However, unlike Thucydides, who had also found the origins of war in human nature, Plato did not despair about the possibility of creating justice, whether that means living a just life or creating a just *polis*. For while war could destroy a just *polis*, it was also necessary for the creation of a just *polis* in a similar way that a just man must have some form of aggression in him in order to stand up to forces of injustice. In the next chapter Aristotle would build upon this connection between justice and war in his *Politics*.

---

<sup>xlii</sup> Reeve, C.D.C. *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1988. pg. 170.

<sup>xliii</sup> Reeve, 171.

*Amicus Plato - amicus Aristotles- magis amicus veritas.*  
Quaestiones Quaedam Philosophicae, Issac Newton

Aristotle built upon the relationship among war, justice and human psychology that Plato had begun to outline. But what truly differentiates Aristotle from Plato in terms of justice and war is that Aristotle explicitly stated the proper relationship between the two. While Plato had begun to construct his theory about the proper relationship between war and peace in the *Laws* (628d), Aristotle plainly stated that war should always be fought for the sake of peace (*Politics* 1333a30). This peaceful *telos* of war, along with several other factors, leads us to see that Aristotle supported some of the central principles of what would become Western Just War Theory. However, several of the causes of war, such as war for the sake of enslavement and for resources, which are completely contrarian to Just War Theory, Aristotle argued were just by nature. But it is important to note that, regardless of the reasons that he gave, Aristotle wrote of war as something that needed to be justified ethically. The need for this justification implies that some wars are unjust, presumably those fought for the wrong *telee*.

Aristotle described several possible *telee* for just wars: the acquisition of property, the establishment of proper leadership and peace. The establishment of proper leadership includes enslaving those who are slaves by nature and also rulership over those who are incapable of ruling themselves (cite). Aristotle was content to define peace among *poleis* as simply the absence of war. However, peace within a *polis* is more complex. Within a *polis* peace is rather the establishment of an order that is in harmony with nature. In a way, Aristotle returned to a view of justice that is similar to Herodotos: humans are part of the cosmos and the cosmos is just. Unlike Herodotos, however,



Aristotle believed that neither fate nor the cosmos will establish peace and justice. Like Plato, Aristotle argued that humans must choose to construct peace and justice. For peace within a *polis* should properly be used for the pursuit of virtue. These virtues require an orderly structuring of the human soul.

Unlike Plato, however, Aristotle did not see war as something necessary for the proper cultivation of the human soul. While military training was necessary for the protection of the *polis*, war and military training had no intrinsic value for a virtuous soul. Because he rejected the possibility of war or military affairs having value in and of themselves, Aristotle departed from the Greek creative warfare tradition. We have seen evidence of military affairs having some sort of intrinsic value in Herodotos, Thucydides and Plato. For those writers, warfare was necessary for cultivating a certain toughness that was required for mere survival or for the maintenance of justice itself. But Aristotle could only justify war by its outcomes: the protection or establishment of a just *polis*. A just *polis*, in turn, was meant to produce conditions that cultivate virtues in the human soul.

While Plato had found the origins of war within the human soul, Aristotle saw war as a natural process, an activity that is potentially in harmony with the cosmos. Classifying war as such a process made sense for Aristotle, as humans were a type of animal, the *politikon zoon*, who have specific purposes as natural beings (1253a2). Therefore, as a natural process, war is acceptable for them to practice provided that they use it to achieve the *telos* that is in accordance with nature. But while war is a natural process, Aristotle did not place the origins of war with fate, as had Herodotos. Like Thucydides and Plato, Aristotle saw war as originating from humanity. But because he

saw humanity as part of nature, Aristotle was inclined to call human psychological impulses natural.

While Aristotle does not directly state that human nature is the origin of war, indirectly he mentioned two aspects of the human soul that could be called the origins of war: spiritedness and acquisition. However, unlike the spiritedness mentioned in any of Plato's works, which seems to be more of a willingness or desire for conflict, spiritedness for Aristotle is "a commanding and an unconquerable thing."(1327b36) War arises from spiritedness because of a person's desire either not to be conquered or their desire to command others. But Aristotle also saw war as arising from the need for acquisition. This acquisition is not like the appetite that Plato described in the *Republic*, as that appetite is used interchangeably to describe a desire for more resources and also the hunger for food and sex. Instead, this acquisition is concerned with the establishment of either a household or a *polis*. Aristotle mentioned how war arises from acquisition in his description of domestic affairs:

Accordingly, if nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, all animals must have been made by nature for the sake of men. It also follows that the art of war is in some sense a natural mode of acquisition (1256b15).

For Aristotle, acquisition is not so much about fulfilling some inner desire as it is taking what one is entitled to by nature. For in his view, there are objects, animals and other humans existing in nature that humans are entitled to use. War is justified for Aristotle if one intends to use these resources, from objects to humans, in accordance with nature.

To Aristotle, there is a political hierarchy that is justified by nature. I will not go into much detail about what Aristotle saw as the proper hierarchy, which included the social positioning of women and children. But what is important for us in this paper is that Aristotle thought Greeks were entitled to rule over barbarians, and that within the

Greek population there were some who were entitled to mastery while others were slaves by nature (1255a3). Because Aristotle saw this arraignment as justified by nature, he approved the use of war, a natural process, to attain this state.

Aristotle did not mention that there are any restrictions on the proper way to conduct this war. This lack of discussion of any sort of *ius in bello* is unusual, as it was mentioned explicitly by Herodotos and Thucydides. Plato gave detailed guidelines for *ius in bello* in his description of the *kallipolis*. But Aristotle did not make mention restrictions or guidelines for how to fight a war in the *Politics*. However, by explicitly outlining the proper reasons for going to war, which primarily concerns the *telos* of a war, Aristotle lays the groundwork for *ius ad bellum* thought.

A just war for Aristotle is one that seeks to establish the natural hierarchy of Greeks over non-Greeks and masters over slaves. A just war, then, is one that combines, in the proper way, the desire for acquisition and the desire to be unconquered and to command others. By combine properly, I mean that those who deserve to acquire by nature are allowed to do so and those who are spirited and deserve to remain unconquered are allowed to do so:

Training for war should not be pursued with a view to enslaving people who do not deserve such a fate. Its objects should be these: first, to prevent us from ever becoming enslaved ourselves; secondly, to put us in a position to exercise leadership, but leadership directed to the interest of those who are ruled, and not to the establishment of a general system of slavery; and thirdly, to enable us to make ourselves masters of those who naturally deserve to be slaves (1333b37).

It should be noted that even the principle that Aristotle shares with Just War Theory, that wars of defense are just, is argued in terms of this natural hierarchy. For in Just War Theory, wars of defense are framed as a sovereign power exercising its right to protect its

sovereignty. Aristotle does not have such a concept of sovereignty. A war is justified only if the power that fights it is justified by nature. This is to say, the only wars that are just are those which are concerned with either the defense of or the establishment of an Aristotelian government.

Because war is not a *telos*, but only something that can serve to either protect or establish a *polis*, *poleis* that view fighting war and the preparation of war as their primary purpose are unjust. In this way, Aristotle built upon the critiques of Sparta and Crete that Plato had begun in the *Laws*. Aristotle critiqued the Spartan constitution not only on purely theoretical grounds, but also by the current dissolution of its *hegemonia*:

Today the Spartans have lost their empire (*uparchei*); and we can all see for ourselves that they are not a happy community and that their legislator was not a good one... There is another reason why a city should not be considered happy, or its legislator praised, when its citizens are trained for victory in war and the subjugation of neighboring *poleis*. Such a policy involves a great risk of injury. (1333b5-29)

He goes on to argue that instead of focusing on dominating outsiders, a successful legislator should focus on dominating the inhabitants of his *polis* and establishing peace and justice. While modern readers would attribute such language to a totalitarian government, Aristotle emphasized, "Ruling over freemen is a finer thing and one more connected with goodness, than ruling despotically." (1333b28) But while Aristotle only considered as just those wars which are fought to establish or protect a particular political establishment, he did not seem to consider unjust wars particularly tragic.

While he did not lament over the horrors of war, Aristotle nonetheless condemned as unjust those *poleis* that do not fight wars for the sake of peace. Aristotle did not consider these wars to be unjust because they needlessly violate the peace of other *poleis* or even because they needlessly kill people, a central argument to modern critiques of

unjust wars<sup>xliv</sup>. Instead, those who initiated the war are fighting for the wrong reasons, as they are confused about the natural order of human affairs:

The whole of life is also divided- into work and leisure, and into war and peace; and of actions some are necessary and useful whereas others are noble. And in these actions it is necessary to make the same choice as regards the parts of the soul and the actions of those parts: War must be for the sake of peace, work for the sake of leisure and things necessary and useful for the sake of the noble (1333a30).

These noble things, which are only attainable with peace and leisure, Aristotle mentioned in greater detail in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but in the *Politics* he briefly described the life for which all strive: a life of virtue consisting of the goods of the body, goods of the soul and external goods, such as the wealth necessary to live a good life (1323a21).

Therefore, those who lead unjust wars are not unjust not so much because they are doing harm to others but rather because they are denying themselves the chance to attain a good life. Because this good life is one that is in harmony with the cosmos, for Aristotle, unjust wars are unnatural both for the aggressors and those whom they attack.

This passage also shows us that Aristotle did not find anything worthwhile in war itself. War is strictly a means to an end: the creation of peace. This rejection of any intrinsic value of war is another way that Aristotle laid the groundwork for Western Just War Theory. For Just War Theory frames discussion of war as something that is necessary for the establishment of either peace or freedom, never as something that is necessary for the human condition. Herodotos had seen war as necessary for the accumulation of honor. Thucydides saw war as needed in order to attain power, a natural human impulse. Plato needed some sort of militarism to ensure that the citizens' souls were properly fierce in order to ensure that a just regime could exist. But for Aristotle, war is only worthwhile as a process for the establishment of peace. The concerns of how

to attain honor or even the expenditure of human aggression through war are completely disregarded by Aristotle.

It seems that the only remnant of creative war tradition within Aristotle's thought is that of military training. Military training is necessary for the leadership, even if they never actually experience war (1333b37). Even this military training differs from creative warfare in an essential way: Aristotle justified this training by its *telos*, rather than finding something intrinsically worthwhile (1334a11). However, it could be argued that creative warfare is telological, as it is primarily concerned with the acquisition of honor. If we take this position, then if Aristotle justified military training by appealing towards honor, he would still be within the creative warfare tradition. But Aristotle does not. Like all other activities, Aristotle measured the usefulness of military training by its ability to produce a life of virtuous contemplation.

Aristotle saw the cosmos as amicable to peace and the cultivation of human virtue. War was a necessity in order to establish the *polis* in which humans could gather and attain the goods necessary to live a virtuous life: external goods, goods of the body and goods of the soul. Because war was necessary for this cosmologically ordained condition, it was in a sense justified. Aristotle did not explicitly condemn wars that do not have the purpose of establishing this type of regime. But given his arguments against regimes that are not centered around the goal of attaining this *telos* of human life, we can surmise that he would have considered those wars unjust. Because Aristotle saw the establishment of peace the only reason to fight a war, he placed himself against the Greek creative war tradition, in which fighting war had some intrinsic value. Aristotle did concede that military training is necessary for leadership, but not actual combat. By

describing war only as a means towards some goal, and in particular a means that needs to be justified, Aristotle began to lay the ground work for an ethical discourse that could be used to judge total war.

---

<sup>xliv</sup> Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, Fourth Edition*. Basic Books, New York NY, 2006. pg. 22

*echthistos de moi essi diotrepheon basilieon  
aiei gar toi eris te phile polemoi te machai te*  
Iliad 1.176

The purpose of this paper was to make explicit how Herodotos, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle wrote about war in terms of right and wrong. It was necessary to make this conversation explicit, for while all four authors wrote extensively on either war or justice, none of them discussed at length the proper relationship between war and justice. Before turning to the texts, I outlined two different ideas about war -creative war and total war- and showed that during the time period I examined, Greek warfare shifted from creative war towards total war. All four writers touched upon these two concepts, whether as an analysis of the wars they observed or the basis of a guideline of how wars should be fought. The concept of a just war is an idea that was present in all four authors, albeit in very different forms. The idea of what made a war just or unjust had to be inferred from the two historians. They presented their accounts as objective, but I believe that I was successful in teasing out how they wrote of some wars as right and others as wrong. My task for the other two authors, the philosophers, was different. For they had written about justice but not at length on what made a war just or unjust. Therefore, I examined what they had written about war and attempted to contextualize it within their thoughts on justice.

While there was a form of justice within the creative wars in Ancient Greece, it was a justice associated with the honor of the fighters. This is to say that justice was ensuring that the man who had earned a particular honor in life or death had received the proper respect. To provide men with the opportunity to accumulate honor through battle was the primary purpose of creative warfare. Therefore, in ideal creative warfare, there



are only willing participants and the results of the battle are of little significance. The result would be of little significance because the battle had not been fought in order to determine any political decision but rather solely for the accumulation of honor. All the participants would be willing because only those who were interested in gaining honor through fighting would fight. There is no tyranny in this war because no one is coerced into fighting and no one's livelihood is at stake.

However, there is no document of any pure creative warfare existing in ancient Greece. The longest text on Greek honorific warfare, the *Iliad*, makes clear both that there were many unwilling participants and that political outcomes lay in the balance as a result of the war. That the Greeks were willing to use a decidedly ignoble tactic to win the Trojan War shows that another concept also existed at this time: total war. Total war is the thought that war is fought for an expressly political reason, often for the purpose of obtaining freedom for oneself or for taking it away from another. Because what is at stake is a matter of either survival, liberty or both, there are no restrictions on how to fight.

The history of Greek warfare shows the shift towards total warfare and away from creative warfare. This shift can be seen by how honor decreased in importance on the battlefield while there was an increase in tactics that blurred the distinction between war and peace. An example of this blurred distinction is the use of siege warfare, which was clearly warfare but also did not resemble the hoplite battles that dominated Greek imagination. Part of the reason that the Greeks had focused on hoplite battles was because honor and fighting honorably remained important despite the increased political nature of this warfare. The rise of siege warfare showed the emerging desire to win at

any cost rather than win honorably. The decrease of the importance of honor can also be seen by the increased importance of dishonorable types of militaries, such as peltasts and navies. Both were seen as dishonorable not only because they were fought by the lower classes, but their fighting methods eschewed direct melee, which required an honorable sort of bravery in Greek thought. The peltasts fought from afar while the rowers did not even necessarily see their opponents. Greek wars were eventually primarily determined by navies that relied on the strength of lower class rowers, indicating a complete shift from aristocratic warriors that dominated Homeric war.

The multitude of changes that occurred within Greek militaries should remind us of the importance of the context of which these writers wrote. Therefore, we must consider that one of the reasons for the difference of opinion on the nature of the origins of war was the different wars that they either lived through or could call upon as examples. The importance of context also applies to what they thought were just wars. For example, Aristotle did not have seen hoplites in the same way as Herodotos. Herodotos recorded the battle of Marathon as a symbol of the superiority of Greek phalanx over Persian military. But for Aristotle, who wrote the *Politics* in the second half of the fourth century, hoplites were only one position amidst many in a military, for peltasts and navies were of great importance for militaries at that time.

While Herodotos recorded acts of Greek heroism, he also recorded a particular way of judging war. The stories that he told about the Persians indicate not only that he thought that their invasion of Greece was unjust, but also their wars of conquest over other people were unjust. For all the stories that Herodotos told about Persian leaders who began wars of conquest result with that leader either being killed, defeated or set

back in another way or form. This particular shape of his narratives is explained as a result of the cosmos. For Herodotos believed both in fate and divine intervention in human affairs. As the gods and fate were interested in establishing justice, the cosmos, given time, would avenge injustices, which in this case were unjust wars. Such actions Herodotos did not find particularly remarkable, as he believed that the cosmos was just and would act in such a way as to retain the harmony that had been lost when an injustice had occurred.

Aristotle also believed in the possibility of attaining a just relationship with the cosmos. Unlike Herodotos, he did not trust the cosmos to do this for humanity. Rather, humans must make the proper decisions in order to attain justice and other virtues and fulfill their natures in the best way. The virtue of justice resulted from living within a just community, which is to say a setting which provided one with the opportunity to become a virtuous person. War was necessary to found this community, as it required resources and slave labor, both of which can be obtained through war. War was also justified to protect this community. This community would have to be one in which the proper people were slaves and the proper people were rulers. Polities in which improper people were rulers would not be just and would not fight just wars, as they would be acting contrary to the interests of their regime. For Aristotle, an unjust regime could not fight a just war, as that war would not be concerned with creating a peace that would allow for the pursuit of virtue. Additionally, a regime, which had the potential to foster virtue, because it had the proper resources and people, that regime's wars could only be just if the wars were intended to establish peace. Wars fought for the sake of fighting war, even by a properly ordered regime, would be unjust. Like Herodotos, Aristotle saw nature and

the cosmos as the ultimate judge of whether something is just. But Aristotle required humans to follow a particular path in order to reach this harmony with nature.

Thucydides appealed to nature in order to explain human action. But unlike Aristotle, who saw a real possibility for justice to exist on earth, Thucydides appealed to human nature to explain the greed and fear that he saw as the primary motivators of human action. Because this flawed human nature was the primary cause of all wars and all political affairs, any attempt to find justice amongst humanity was futile; justice was only a word. In order to best understand human affairs one had to understand power. But while this emphasis on power is what Thucydides wrote explicitly, a nuanced reading of his text reveals that he was concerned with justice. For he attempted to shock his readers with the horrors at the Corcyrian revolution or with the plague of Athens. If humans viewed war in the amoral way that Thucydides suggested, why would his adverse reaction suggest that not only are these events unnecessary but could have occurred in a better, more just way? Why would the politicians need to lie and equivocate? For in the speeches that he recorded, Thucydides noted that politicians frequently lied about who attacked first and confuse the threat of an attack with an actual attack. Their hypocrisy demonstrates that there was a way to think morally about these military decisions. The resistance to thinking morally about war is thought to be best illustrated by the Athenians at Melos. But if their understanding of human nature is so accurate, why do they proceed to fail so horribly at Sicily? I suggested that readers may take the Melian dialogue as a condemnation of Athenian moral reasoning as the *polis* slides into *hubris* rather than a defense of an amoral understanding of politics. All these approaches to Thucydides' text suggest that there was some sort of moral understanding of war, what were just reasons to

go to war and what were just ways to fight war, all ideas against which Thucydides was writing. Thucydides had to write against them in order to establish the tragic sensibility about the impossibility of the attainment of justice in a world overrun by war.

Like Aristotle, Plato did not choose either the pessimism of Thucydides nor the optimism of Herodotos. Unlike Aristotle, Plato did not seek to define justice as being in accordance with the cosmos. Instead, justice is solely a human affair and its attainment requires the human soul to make some sort of harmony with itself rather than with the cosmos. In order for the human soul to become properly balanced, two aspects of the soul must be properly controlled: The appetites for worldly goods and human spiritedness. Aggression must be controlled but not eliminated, as without it neither a *polis* nor a person would have the necessary toughness to ensure that a just state is defended from unjust persons. The appetites must be controlled and not eliminated not only because humans cannot live without worldly goods but also because justice requires more than what is available in poverty. A balance of sufficiency should be struck between poverty and affluence just as a balance should be struck between meekness and aggressiveness. The key to attaining this balance is intellect. Plato saw intellect, or rationality, as the hope for establishing justice amidst humanity. For intellect, whether through the rule of the philosopher-king, the statesman or the laws, as a sort of collective rationality, could guide the souls of the *polis* to properly balance their spiritedness and appetites. Plato, like Aristotle, argued that war should always be fought for the sake of peace. But unlike Aristotle, who found such policies to have a justification in the cosmos, Plato examined at the psychological roots and effects of such policies when attempting to find the relationship between war and justice.

To attempt to find justice in war is a daunting enterprise. The cruelty and suffering which are the hallmarks of war seem completely irreconcilable with any notion of justice. For justice, in some fundamental sense, is about the ways humans should interact with each other. Creative warfare has an easy time reconciling these two concepts as that particular type of war has low political stakes and all the fighters are fighting voluntarily. But to attempt to find some way to relate justice to total war, which involves the risk of the destruction of your farmland and home, the loss of your family and friends and loss of your freedom, is much harder. Many say it is impossible, and take either pacifist or *realpolitik* positions that deny that justice is related to war in the slightest. However, there is a peculiar moral abhorrence about war, the way that it demands some form of resistance; for if one does not acknowledge war, one will be destroyed by it. Michel Walzer elaborates on this horror, explaining it as, "the ultimate tyranny: those who resist aggression are forced to imitate, and perhaps even to exceed, the brutality of the aggressor."<sup>xlv</sup>

As philosophers, Plato and Aristotle failed to convey the sense of violation that accompanies a war of aggression. Both were content to describe an unjust war as an unsuccessful way to achieve virtue. The historians Herodotos and Thucydides did manage to capture the magnitude of war and how much people suffered on its account. I noted at the beginning that the Greeks wrote extensively on war and on justice but failed to develop a coherent just war doctrine. Was Christianity, with its steadfast belief of justice in the afterlife, a requirement for the formation of a moral analysis of one of humankind's most immoral activities? I do not know. Perhaps the Greeks knew in some form that to think morally about war, which given their nuanced thinkers they were

perfectly capable of doing, would force them to reevaluate the entirety of their society. For no one can deny that the Greeks were a war-like people, and while they were also peace loving people, war was central to their society.

*The thin-lipped armorer,  
Hephaestos, hobbled away,  
Thetis of the shining breasts  
Cried out in dismay  
At what the god had wrought  
To please her son, the strong  
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles  
Who would not live long.*

The Shield of Achilles W. H. Auden

---

<sup>xlv</sup> Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, Fourth Edition*. Basic Books, New York NY, 2006. pg. 32

Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah,. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Aristotle, John Warrington. *Aristotle's Politics and the Athenian Constitution*. Everyman's Library. London: Dent, 1959.

Bat-Ami Bar On. "The Opposition of Politics and War." *Hypatia* 23.2 (2008): 141-54.  
<<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/v023/23.2.bar-on01.html>>.

---. "Introduction: Thinking about War." *Hypatia* 23.2 (2008): vii-xv.  
<<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/v023/23.2.bar-on.html>>.

Bekker-Nielsen, Tønnes, and Lise Hannestad. *War as a Cultural and Social Force : Essays on Warfare in Antiquity*. Copenhagen: Det kongelige danske videnskabernes selskab, 2001.

Beston, Paul, and Hans van Wees. *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*. London: Duckworth, 2000.

Bollingen Foundation (Washington, City of), Edith Hamilton, and Huntington Cairns. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*. New York:, 1964.

Coates, A. J. *The Ethics of War*. Manchester, U.K.; New York; New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Craig, Leon Harold,. *The War Lover : A Study of Plato's Republic*. Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1994.

Debra B. Bergoffen. "The just War Tradition: Translating the Ethics of Human Dignity into Political Practices." *Hypatia* 23.2 (2008): 72-94.  
<<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/v023/23.2.bergoffen.html>>.

Dionysius, and W. Kendrick Pritchett. *On Thucydides*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Ehrenberg, Victor,. *The Greek State*. London: Methuen, 1969.

Flory, Stewart. "Thucydides' Hypotheses about the Peloponnesian War." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 118 (1988): 43-56.  
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/284161>>.

Grundy, G. B. *Thucydides and the History of His Age*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1948.

Hanson, Victor Davis. *The Western Way of War : Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*. New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1989.



- Herodotus., Samuel Shirley , and James S. Romm. *On the War for Greek Freedom : Selections from the Histories*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2003.
- Mann, Bonnie. "How America Justifies its War: A Modern/Postmodern Aesthetics of Masculinity and Sovereignty." *Hypatia* 21.4 (2006): 147-63. <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/v021/21.4mann.html>>.
- McCann, David and Barry S. Strauss. *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War.* East Gate Book, Armonk NY, 2001.
- Nagel, Thomas. "War and Massacre." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1.2 (1972): 123-44. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2264967>>.
- Orend, Brian,. *Michael Walzer on War and Justice*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Plato, and Allan David Bloom. *The Republic of Plato*. 2nd ed. New York: Basic Books, 1991.
- Pritchard, David. "How do Democracy and War Affect each Other? the Case Study of Ancient Athens." *Polis: The Journal of the Society for Greek Political Thought* 24.2 (2007): 328.
- Reeve, C. D. C.,. *Philosopher-Kings : The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Reeve, C.D.C., *Plato: Republic*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2004.
- Regan, Richard J. *Just War : Principles and Cases*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996.
- Rich, John, and Graham Shipley. *War and Society in the Greek World*. London; New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Robinson, E. "Thucydides and Democratic Peace." *Journal of Military Ethics* 5.4 (2006): 243-53. Blis.
- Roshwald, Mordecai. "Perceptions of History. in Pursuit of the Absolute in Passing Time." *Diogenes* 47.2 (1999)
- Sealey, R. "Thucydides, Herodotos, and the Causes of War." *The Classical Quarterly* 7.1/2 (1957): 1-12. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/637567>>.

Syse, H. "Plato, Thucydides, and the Education of Alcibiades." *Journal of Military Ethics* 5.4 (2006): 290-302. Blis.

Thucydides., Robert B. Strassler , and Richard Crawley. *The Landmark Thucydides : A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. New York: Free Press, 1996.

Thucydides., Rex Warner , and M. I. Finley. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Harmondsworth, Eng.; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972.

Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: BasicBooks, 2006.

Welch, David A. *Justice and the Genesis of War*. Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Wells, Donald A.. "An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics." Greenwood Press. 1996.

Westlake, H. D. "The "Lysistrata" and the War." *Phoenix* 34.1 (1980): 38-54.  
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1087757>>.

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *Citizens to Lords : A Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. London ; New York: Verso, 2008.