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## **HISTORIOSOPHICAL COMPREHENSION OF TOLERANCE IN THE WORKS OF HERODOTUS, THUCYDIDES AND XENOPHON: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

### *Abstract*

The article is devoted to a historiosophical analysis of the concept of religious and cultural tolerance in ancient historiography, using the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon as case studies. It is demonstrated that the formation of notions of tolerance in the ancient world was closely linked to the transformation of political structures, the evolution of philosophical thought, and the development of historiographical tradition. Through the analysis of the aforementioned authors, it is shown that ancient historiography did not merely record events but also offered moral and political models for engaging with the «Other.» In the texts of Herodotus, one finds a profound respect for religious diversity and ritual specificity among different peoples, reflecting an early form of ethnocultural tolerance.

It is revealed that in Thucydides' work, the notion of tolerance acquires a rational dimension. His skeptical approach to religious beliefs and his focus on the logical analysis of historical causality provide a foundation for a critical understanding of political behavior and responsibility. Thucydides develops a new epistemology of historical science in which divine influence is replaced by human passions, fear, ambition, and the pursuit of profit.

It is highlighted that Xenophon imparts a distinct ethical significance to history. Through the image of the virtuous citizen and the wise ruler, he advances the idea that religiosity should be grounded not only in ritual but also in inner moral disposition. The concepts of piety, temperance, and communal usefulness

underpin his vision of tolerance as an element of civic self-cultivation and social harmony.

The interrelation between ancient models of thought and contemporary approaches to inclusivity and «cancel culture» is explored. It is emphasized that in ancient historiography, tolerance functioned as a mechanism of cultural memory that preserved alternative voices rather than erasing them. Such an approach fosters not unification but the deepening of moral dialogue between diverse traditions, underscoring the relevance of ancient experience in the context of modern challenges to intercultural coexistence.

**Keywords:** tolerance, ancient historiography, cancel culture, inclusivity, philosophy of history, history of philosophy, ancient Greek literature.

### *Introduction*

In classical historiography, the problem of religious tolerance emerges as a separate plane for comprehending social order and cultural interaction. Through the description of rituals, analysis of political conflicts, and evaluation of moral motives, ancient authors lay the concept that will later define the European tradition of understanding freedom of religion. Studying these texts allows one to trace how, within the framework of the ancient political paradigm, principles of balancing state stability with the recognition of cultural diversity were formed.

### *Methodology*

The research is grounded in a historiosophical analysis of the works of ancient thinkers, which makes it possible to trace the formation of religious tolerance in the political and cultic practices of the ancient world. The historical-comparative method is used to reconstruct the evolution of ideas about freedom of religion — from local polis cults to imperial systems of governance over multiconfessional communities. The argumentation is supported by a critical review of classical and contemporary literature, ensuring the verification of sources and the positions of leading scholars. The interpretation of key philosophical ideas is presented in the context of their influence on the development of concepts of tolerance, enabling an understanding of the mechanisms of their practical application. The work relies on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates philosophical, historical, and sociocultural aspects to provide a comprehensive elucidation of the issue.

### *Results*

In the ancient era, between the 7th and 5th centuries BC, the intellectual landscape of Hellas underwent a notable evolution: from fascination with heroic poems to the gradual emergence of philosophical-historical reflection. In the early, “epic” stage, the main treasure of collective memory remained

the poetic cycles – above all Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey – in which artistic imagery constructed ideas about the past, the moral code, and the pantheon of gods. However, already in the 6th – 5th centuries BC everything began to shift toward philosophy and history, developed by the logographers, authors of prose “descriptions” of lands and customs. And although philosophical influence was impossible to avoid, each philosopher presented had his own history and point of view on particular problems and events in the ancient world [1, p. 16]. Despite the common impact of sophistry and early natural philosophy, each of the named authors succeeded in producing an autonomous interpretation of pressing issues: from the nature of power and the right to wage war to the complex mechanisms of cultural exchange.

Herodotus of Halicarnassus begins his Histories as a traveler, displaying insight, without exception, toward all cultures and religions. Yet in his works he clearly formulates a critical and skeptical attitude toward popular beliefs.

Herodotus was a man of faith. The religious foundation we observe in his works truly serves as an irrevocable path that opens new horizons for understanding the culture, religion, and characteristics of other tribes and peoples of his time. The historian often and lovingly recalls various religious events that united people of different nationalities in a common sacred space. In particular, he describes in detail sacrifices [2, p. 57; 321-325], prayers, and other sacred actions.

At the same time there is also the “unspeakable,” about which the historian keeps a delicate silence, meaning relics that for centuries had been preserved as divine revelation: «...and I shall say about them what I am constrained to say by the course of my history.» (...τὰ δ’ ἄν ἐπιμνησθῆω αὐτῶν, ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου ἐξαναγκαζόμενος ἐπιμνησθήσομαι.) [2, p. 276-278]. Ancient Greek (ἐξαναγκαζόμενος) from (ἐξαναγκάζω) – to compel. Such restraint demonstrates the high moral principles and human qualities of the era which, despite their progressiveness, in some respects seem specific from the standpoint of modernity: «...but were I to declare the reason why they are dedicated, I should be brought to speak of matters of divinity, of which I am especially unwilling to treat; I have never touched upon such save where necessity has compelled me» [2, p. 351-352].

An analysis of these words makes it possible to see clearly how deeply Herodotus’ thinking was permeated with moral and ethical ideas about human relationships. Having studied the culture, religion, and politics of his time, Herodotus set about writing the Histories, whose central theme became the struggle of Asia with Europe – that is, the barbarian Persian monarchy with the democratic poleis of Hellas: «So much I say of this matter; may no god or hero be displeased with me therefor!» [2, p. 331-332].

Thucydides, unlike Herodotus, is a true representative of rational skepticism and Herodotus' direct successor. If for Herodotus religiosity is the "supreme principle," Thucydides thinks differently: he fundamentally eliminates the divine from explanations of historical events and tests all accounts with strict logic. He is skeptical toward Homer and the poetic tradition and does not trust the early logographers (λογογράφοι) – early prose historians – without meticulous verification of facts: « And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions» [3, p. 14].

Thucydides, destined to live through the Peloponnesian War, plunges the historical narrative even more deeply into the philosophical problematics of human choice and responsibility. In contrast to Herodotus, he consciously removes the divine factor, striving for "an accuracy equal to that of science," and thereby lays the foundations of the critical method that would become a benchmark for scholarship in the centuries to come.

Thucydides' work (The History of the Peloponnesian War) – focuses not on wonders or the will of the gods, but on human passions, political institutions, and rationally revealed causal connections. For the first time in Greek historiography, the author clearly separated facts obtained from personal experience or from eyewitnesses from inventions and rumors. He did not accept legends on faith but critically tested his sources. He was interested in the true motives of human actions, namely the three main drivers of human deeds: fear – φόβος (phobos), ambition – φιλοτιμία (philotimía), and the pursuit of profit – κέρδος (kérdos). He created his work not for momentary glory but as a useful legacy for future generations [4, p. 25-32].

Illustrative is his description of the plague in Athens: «τοσοῦτός γε λοιμός... οὐδαμοῦ ἐμνημονεύετο γενέσθαι» – such a devastating pestilence (plague) was nowhere remembered as having occurred [3, p. 31-36]. Thucydides rejects mythological explanations and presents clinical symptomatology, in effect creating an early example of an observant medical essay. For us this is a rational reconstruction of history, dominated by verified testimony, causal analysis, and limited trust in the traditional poetic narrative. Herein lies his greatest innovation: from now on, history becomes a science of human actions rather than a stage for the will of the gods.

Xenophon, in turn, adds a moralistic dimension; we see how ethical reflections emerge from the reality of ancient events. Like Herodotus, he was a man of faith, yet his view of the past is marked by a more pronounced ethical and pedagogical orientation. All his works display a deep conviction that history serves the moral improvement of the individual. For Xenophon, religiosity is not so much an external ritual as an inner attitude: the gods are to be revered, but the ultimate goal is the formation of a virtuous citizen: «For a person who trusts

in the gods and adheres to justice is capable of achieving success both in peace and in war» [5, p. 12, 13].

As already noted, the ethical component of Xenophon's oeuvre is evident throughout his writing. In the *Anabasis*, the story of the march of the Ten Thousand turns into a lesson in military morality, where everything is held together by mutual trust, discipline, and fear of god (φόβος θεοῦ). In the *Cyropaedia* the image of the ideal ruler is built not on divine charisma but on self-control, prudence, and justice — δικαιοσύνη. In the *Memorabilia* he conveys Socrates' principal moral maxim — “know thyself” (γνῶθι σαυτόν) — as the basis for inner growth. According to him, Socrates believed that anyone who does not know himself is unable either to rule others or to obey in a truly worthy manner [6, pp. 85-92].

Xenophon builds his ethical conception on several key notions. Temperance (σωφροσύνη) — appears as the primary condition for any virtue, for without inner control neither moral growth nor effective governance is possible. Usefulness to the community (χρηστότης) — is the measure of how truly virtuous an action is, because good is assessed not only by intentions but also by benefit to others. Fidelity (πίστεις) — is regarded as the foundation of relations between individuals and communities, and its reliability is ensured by religious consciousness, respect for the gods, and oaths. Thus Xenophon develops Herodotus' idea, yet transfers it into the realm of personal morality and practical political philosophy. For him, history is a school of character, in which religiosity, ethics, and self-knowledge form an indivisible whole capable of educating both ruler and citizen.

In the contemporary cultural space, two opposing tendencies appear ever more frequently: Cancel Culture and inclusivity. Cancel Culture is the practice of excluding from circulation books, names, works of art, or ideas that contradict present-day notions of morality, justice, or tolerance. It grows out of the desire to protect the community from harmful or degrading narratives. Inclusivity, on the contrary, seeks to expand the cultural space, to make it more open.

There is undoubtedly a difference between these approaches. Yet deeper reflection shows that there exists between them not only tension, but also the possibility of coexistence. At the center of both stands a common goal — namely, to rethink the past so that it does not inflict pain in the present. The problem that inevitably arises lies not in the essence of these approaches, but first and foremost in human will. What will a person choose: to follow cancellation, or to find a common language in the hope of engaging in dialogue? The ancient tradition offers examples of another approach. Historians of that time did not always share the beliefs or customs of those about whom they wrote, but they almost never erased a foreign voice from the narrative. They left room for

complex, often contradictory experience, understanding that to see oneself, one must look at the other [7].

Parrhesia (παρρησία) – meaning frank and responsible public truth-telling, when a person says what they believe to be true despite the risk of censure or loss and accepts responsibility for the consequences – is more than «freedom of speech,» because isegoria grants the right to speak, whereas parrhesia demands moral courage and an orientation toward the common good. In the Athenian politeia it operated together with isonomia (equal participation in power) and isegoria, and was realized in the agora as a political practice that tested decisions by the force of argument and the sincerity of intent, while simultaneously forming the citizen and cutting off demagoguery. The essence of parrhesia is to speak “upward” or against the majority, with an open appeal to the good of the polis and a readiness to accept reciprocal scrutiny; without it, procedural equality degenerates into empty ritual, and the public sphere into a line of those seeking mere effect. In contemporary terms, parrhesia makes inclusivity effective: it requires the stamina to hear what is unpleasant, to conduct honest dialogue, and to digest complexity without “cancellation,” relying on five unwritten criteria – truthfulness, real risk for the speaker, directedness toward power/norms, orientation to the common good, and a readiness to answer and to correct oneself in the light of counterarguments [8, p. 8-9].

Modern inclusivity requires not only the addition of new voices, but also the ability to endure those that are unpleasant or contradictory. This does not mean agreeing with everything, but it does mean not fearing to see everything – even that which provokes resistance or doubt. Instead of striking out parts of history that do not fit current ideas of what is right, we can make them a source for honest, attentive, and critical conversation. In this sense, the fundamentality of love as labor lies in its connection with such phenomena as memory and forgiveness [9, p. 35], for true tolerance, forbearance, and wisdom do not deny complexity, do not erase differences, but on the contrary allow us to live with them, to see in them a source of understanding and moral growth [10].

In this context, the historiosophical comprehension of tolerance in classical thought is especially important. A comparative analysis of these authors allows us to see different models of attitude toward the “other,” from moral trial to balanced dialogue. We can more deeply comprehend how tolerance in the historical dimension transforms from a gesture of permission into a mechanism of the internal resilience of culture.

### *Conclusion*

As a result, the ancient philosophers mentioned in the study, using the example of the Greek polis, show us how culture constantly changed and developed thanks to interaction with other peoples. The Greek language and

culture did not exist in isolation; on the contrary, they were enriched through mixing with other ethnic groups, which made Greek civilization so powerful and influential. The analysis shows that tolerance in ancient culture functioned as a regulator of interstate and internal politics and was based on a combination of empirical observation of foreign customs and rational clarification of causal relationships. For modern societies, this reminds us of the need to critically reconsider historical heritage, combining legal mechanisms for protecting freedom of conscience with ethical responsibility for preserving cultural diversity. Further study of the legacy of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon opens up the prospect of rethinking models of intercultural dialogue, deepening both academic and public understanding of tolerance.

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## **ІСТОРИОСОФСЬКЕ ОСМИСЛЕННЯ ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТІ В ДОРОБКУ ГЕРОДОТА, ФУКІДІДА, І КСЕНОФОНТА: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ**

### *Резюме*

Стаття присвячена історіософському аналізу концепту релігійної та культурної толерантності в античній історіографії на прикладі творів Геродота, Фукідіда та Ксенофонта. Доведено, що формування уявлень про релігійну та культурну толерантність в античному світі було тісно пов'язане з трансформацією політичних структур, еволюцією філософського мислення та розвитком історіографічної традиції. Через аналіз творів Геродота, Фукідіда та Ксенофонта продемонстровано, що антична історіографія не лише фіксувала події, а й пропонувала моральні та політичні моделі ставлення до «іншого». У текстах Геродота простежується глибока пошана до релігійної різноманітності та ритуальної специфіки інших народів, що відображає ранню форму етнокультурної терпимості.

Розкрито, що у Фукідіда поняття толерантності набуває раціонального забарвлення. Його скептичний підхід до релігійних вірувань і зосередженість на логічному аналізі причинно-наслідкових зв'язків в історії створюють підґрунтя для критичного осмислення політичної поведінки та відповідальності. Фукідід формує нову епістемологію історичної науки, де місце божественного витісняється людськими пристрастями, страхом, честолюбством і прагненням до вигоди.

Висвітлено, що Ксенофонт надає історії виразного етичного змісту. Через образ добродісного громадянина та мудрого правителя він розвиває ідею, що релігійність має ґрунтуватися не лише на ритуалі, а на внутрішній моральній поставі. Поняття благочестя, стриманості та корисності для

громади формують основу його візії толерантності як елемента громадянського самовиховання і соціальної гармонії.

Досліджено взаємозв'язок між античними моделями мислення й сучасними підходами до інклюзивності та «культури скасування». Підкреслено, що в античній історіографії толерантність функціонувала як інструмент культурної пам'яті, що зберігає інші голоси замість їхнього стирання. Такий підхід сприяє не уніфікації, а поглибленню морального діалогу між різними традиціями, підкреслюючи актуальність античного досвіду в контексті сучасних викликів міжкультурного співіснування.

**Ключові слова:** толерантність, антична історіографія, культура скасування, інклюзивність, філософія історії, історія філософії, давньогрецька література.

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