

# Notes on Quiz #6: History, Tragedy, and Comedy

## 1. What were the most important events that helped end the Thirty Years' Peace after only fifteen years?

Long-term causes include: (a) Diverging ideas about what it means to be Greek (warrior Sparta, cosmopolitan Athens, etc.); (b) Trade rivalries between Athens and Corinth; (c) Class tensions between the few (aristoi) and the many (demos) throughout the Aegean world, exacerbated by the emergence of democracy in Athens; (d) A trend toward domination by both Athens and Sparta over their allies, weakening the autonomy of the polis.

Short-term sparks: (a) Corcyra's rebellion against its mother city, Corinth, a Spartan ally, drawing in Athens on the side of Corcyra; (b) Potidaea, strategically located and an Athenian ally but a Corinthian colony, was besieged by Athens after an ultimatum to sever ties with Corinth; (c) Megara, an Athenian ally between Athens and Corinth, was suspected of favoring Corinth and was banned from all ports of the Athenian Empire.

## 2. How was Thucydides's approach to writing history different from Herodotus's? What did they have in common?

Both were early historians living in fifth-century Greece who pioneered the writing of history. Herodotus wrote about the Persian wars; Thucydides wrote about the Peloponnesian wars.

Herodotus tends to explore human nature and behavior through anecdotes of the customs of various peoples, apparently partly derived from travel in various lands. Thucydides practices something closer to the modern historical method, advancing meticulously researched primary source evidence in support of arguments explaining historical events, so that future generations can understand why those events occurred. Thucydides also tends to focus on Athenians' motivations, whereas Herodotus looks to contrast the natures of Greeks and other peoples.

## 3. For today you read the first part of *Clouds*. (a) Why does Strepsiades go to the Thinkery? (b) How does "Socrates" first enter (physically appear on stage)? Why do you think the playwright, Aristophanes, introduces him like this?

Strepsiades goes to the Thinkery to learn how to argue away the debts his son piled up. "Socrates" appears descending from above, much like gods at the end of a tragedy descending to dispense wisdom and justice ("deus ex machina"), only "Socrates" talks not about the wisdom of the gods but the "natural functions" and physical processes of the temporal heavens.

### EC1. All of the following describe classical theories about the natural world EXCEPT:

- (a) Anaxagoras said that material objects are made of particles held together by a force he called nous
- (b) Democritus said that matter was made up of indivisible atoms that collide in a void
- (c) Hippocrates said that disease was caused by mundane factors that can be understood through observation
- ✓ (d) Gynecos argued that the womb and the liver are in fact the same organ

### EC2. What is a tragedy? Pick one of the three main surviving tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. How was his work distinctive—different from the others? What did his work have in common with them?

Aeschylus pioneered tragedy, most famously with plays about the house of Agamemnon.

Sophocles explored fate and judgment in tragedies, including a trilogy about the house of Oedipus.

Euripides challenged traditions about heroes, reason, and passion, especially with the murdering heroine Medea.

Generally, tragedies served to reinforce collective wisdom regarding an individual's responsibility to society. This included the importance of justice for the greater good of the community, the burden for which shifted somewhat in Euripides's plays from the gods more toward humanity.