HERODOTUS AND DIO CHRYSOSTOMUS:
PARITY, DISPARITY AND POINTS OF VIEW ON SPORT

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Abstract

Both Herodotus and Dio Chrysostomus were ancient Greek authors who placed high value on the men who had achieved outstanding result in the territory of the traditional Greek competitive sport. For Herodotus, the facts concerning sport and the historical role of sportsmen had great importance, because he was a historiographer, while Dio treated the impact of sport activity upon men when he wrote his discourses having philosophical values. Herodotus, who sometimes referred to the psychical qualities beside the physical ones only faintly, honoured the sportsmen and competitive sport without any doubt. Dio did not speak highly of competitive sport itself but only of athlete who had high qualities both in respect of body and morality. The conclusions of this study on attitude taken by Herodotus and Dio to competitive sport are drawn basically through the comparison of Herodotus’ story on Cleobis and Biton and Dio’s representation on Melancomas.

Key words: external and internal beauties; connection between the honest behaviour and the character; nobility of soul and bodily strength

It was just three decades ago when I analysed the ruler cult of Demetrius Poliorcetes and took note of the very interesting information in the work of Diodorus. Describing the siege of Rhodes led by Demetrius Poliorcetes in 305-304 B. C., the historiographer informs us that Demetrius and his father, Antigonus Monophthalmus, had earlier received much honour from the inhabitants of the island in return for their benefactions and their statues had been erected. But the public feeling changed during the siege:

"Thereafter, when an assembly had been convened, some advised that the statues of Antigonus and Demetrius should be pulled down, saying that it was absurd to honour equally their besiegers and their benefactors. At this the people were angry and censured these men as erring, and they altered none of the honours awarded to Antigonus, having made a wise decision with a view both to fame and to self interest. For the magnanimity and the soundness of this action in a democracy won plaudits from all others and repentance from the besiegers..."(XX. 93. 6-7.)

I have observed an interesting parallel between Diodorus and Dio Chrysostom. The latter, the Bithynian orator originated from Prusa in the period of the Roman Empire (lived about from 40/50 to after 110 A. D.) treated a similar ethical problem in his discourse XXXI., called Rhodiacus, that is, how must the memory of the excellent people who had received statues in the past should be taken care of. For in the first century A. D., in the time of Roman rule a bad practice was assumed by the Rhodians in the capital of the island. They erased the names of the previously honoured persons from the bases of their sculptures and engraved on them those of the recently honoured people. This way of “thriftiness” was condemned by Dio. His arguments were very similar to those of the Rhodians who have been mentioned by Diodorus to act on behalf of the statues of Antigonids.

In his discourse, Dio emphasizes:

"...I think it is our duty to conduct all the affairs of life justly and honourably, and especially it is the duty of those who do anything in the name of the people; not only because official acts are more readily observed than private misdeeds, but also because while the mistakes of
persons in private station do not at once put the city in a bad light, improper action in public affairs inevitably causes every individual citizen to be looked upon as a knave. For in a democracy the character of the majority is obviously the character of the state... “(XXXI. 5.)

Consequently the people, who wounded the memory of the benefactors, do wrong to the whole state and repudiate the old traditions “for you never formally approved nor has the practice ever been officially sanctioned”. (XXXI. 14.)

Dio expresses his opinion about the injurious Rhodians:

“But to let the memory of the noblest men be forgotten and to deprive them of the rewards of virtue cannot find any plausible excuse, but must be ascribed to ingratitude, envy, meanness and all the basest motives.” (XXXI. 25.)

Dio quotes more examples of outstanding deeds made by excellent men for the survival of their fame. Thereafter he explains that the numerous beautiful and good acts which were realized in the past cannot be forgotten because of the unfairness of posterity. For the sport historian, the following part of his discourse is peculiar attractive:

“You see what hardships these athletic competitors endure while training, spending money, and finally often even choosing to die in the very midst of the games. Why is it? If we were abolish the crown for the sake of which they strive, and the inscription which will commemorate their victory at the Olympian or the Pythian games, do you think that they would endure for even one day the heat of the sun, not to mention all the other unpleasant and arduous things which attach to their occupation?“(XXXI. 21.)

Of course, Dio gives a negative answer. In this case the competitions would not be interesting for anyone. It is not by chance that Dio chose some of his arguments from the territory of sport. He evidently very well knew about the glorious sport traditions of the Rhodians and could rightly think that the memory of the famous athletes would touch his audience. The city of Rhodes gave the Hellenic World many Olympic champions. Among them we can find the boxer Diagoras, the victor in 464 B.C., one of his sons, the pancratiast Damagetus, victor in 452 and 448, his other son, the boxer Acousilaus, champion of boxing in 448, and his third son, the pancratiast Dorieus, the triple victor in 432, 428 and 424. Later his grandsons, the boxer Peisidorus (or Peisirodus) and Eucles also became Olympic champions. In addition, the Rhodians evidently cultivated the memory of the other Olympic champions of the city. Among those are that of Micinas, the winner of stade in 324 B.C., Callippus, the victor of boxing in 296, Dorotheus, the champion of stade in 216, Cleitostratus, the winner of wrestling in 192, and Aristomenes the champion of wrestling and pankration in 156. But the most outstanding sport hero of Rhodes was Leonidas who won the stade, the diulos and the race in armour at four successive Olympic festivals between 164 and 152.

In another part of his discourse Dio mentions Dorieus and Leonidas by name (XXXI. 126.). Reminding his audience of such outstanding compatriots, he could rightly expect their recognition. This is the reason that he emphasizes: “You doubtless know that the Olympian crown is of olive leaves, and yet this honour many people have preferred to life itself…”(XXXI. 110.)

To have a statue can be of vital importance too. Through the story of Theagenes, Dio explains the danger that can arise if somebody is deprived of his statue. Theagenes of Thasos is identified by Dio as a triple Olympic victor. In reality, this athlete won the boxing in 480 B.C. and the pankration in 476. The ancient sources ascribe to him more than 1200 victories. He was such a versatile athlete that could also win the dolichos at the Hecatombaea at Argos and Phthia. After his death, the inhabitants of Thasos erected a statue of him. But there was a citizen who hated even the memory of Theagenes, and this man whipped the statue of him every night. Once the sculpture crashed down and killed the infamous citizen. After that the Thasians threw the “killer” statue in the sea. But the consequence of this deed was very tragic. Grave famine started to punish the inhabitants of Thasos. They sent holy envoys to Delphi to ask the sanctuary of Apollo for advice. The council was that they would have to restore the exiled people. They were obedient to the
council but the famine remained. Finally they lifted the statue of Theagenes out of the sea and replaced it. The famine passed and after that the famous athlete received a heroic cult.  

From the text of the *Rhodiacus* it is clear that Dio placed high value on the men who had achieved outstanding results in the territory of the traditional Greek competitive sport. In this respect, he is similar to Herodotus whose work was certainly not unknown to him (see Or. XVIII. 10; XXXVII. 7; XXXVII. 18; LII. 9.). In the following pages, I will analyze Herodotus’ work on the Greek-Persian War and explain the attitude of this author to sport. Besides I will compare Herodotus’ attitude to sport with that of Dio, taking basically Dio’s two discourses, *Melancomas I.–II.*, into consideration.

Herodotus, the „father of historiography” (c. 484-426 B. C.), made known his work on the history of the Greek-Persian War for the first time at Olympia, in the time of the Games. It is remarkable that according to J. König „*Dio’s Olympic Oration (Or. XII) seems to have been delivered at the Olympic games of A.D. 97, probably in sight of Pheidias statue of Zeus which is its subject*”. It was not by chance that Herodotus chose this place. As early as the 5th century B. C., a great number of participants and spectators visited the Olympic Games from distant territories of Hellas which provided a good opportunity to popularize a literary work two millennia before the invention of printing. But Herodotus was also motivated by another reason when he started to read his work in the temple of Zeus at Olympia. This reason was his indisputable enthusiasm for sport. Our study has set the analysis of all remarks of this outstanding author regarding sport as its aim and then to draw some conclusions about his ideas on sport.

We must emphasize that Herodotus, wherever he was or went in imagination, if he had received any information regarding sporting activity, he made a note of it. Today it is a subject of scientific discussions whether or not Herodotus really visited all of the places that he mentioned. Specifically he stressed several times, that he saw this or that with his own eyes, and if he could not visit any places, in this case spoke of these to trustworthy persons to justify the authenticity of his work. He wanted to leave the impression that his work is based upon his own experience. Following his claims, he went to Babylon (I. 183), Egyptian Memphis (II. 2), Thebes and Heliopolis (II. 3), and the country of Lake Moiris (II. 148), Týrus in Phoenicia (II. 44), Syrie (II. 106), country of the Scythes (IV. 81) and to the Greek inhabited areas of Thasos (II. 44), Zácyntos (IV. 195), Pitane (III. 55). Moreover he was born in Halicarnassus, became a member of the circle of friends of Pericles in Athens and died in Thurii in South Italy. So we can suppose that he was a real globetrotter. F. Jacoby took him for a globe-trotting historiographer, but several historians do not think that Herodotus really travelled so very much. Wido Sieberer summarizes the current discussions as follows:

„Der in dieser Arbeit herausgestellte geringe Umfang exakter geographischer Kenntnis und der schematische, spekulative Gehalt seiner geographischen Beschreibungen spricht vielmehr dafür, daß Herodots Geographie in einem viel größeren Ausmaß als gerne angenommen auf Schriftquellen basiert, die der älteren griechischen Tradition verpflichtet sind.”

Consequently it is disputable whether Herodotus travelled very much. But it is indisputable that when writing about different outstanding persons, local customs and religious festivals he attached a special importance to sport.

The conversation between Solon and the Lydian king, Croesus, is a very beautiful part of Herodotus’ work (Herodotus I. 30-32.). The Greek legislator and the ruler, who was proud of his wealth, analysed the secret of happiness of the people. Solon explains the well-known Hellenic point of view: we are able to state if we were happy or were not only at the end of our life because the gods are able to be disastrous to us in every minute of our life. A similar opinion is stressed by Plutarchus in the biography of Solon. A similar theory is expressed in the legend of the famous runner at Marathon. In this story, the messenger dies at the moment of the performance of his task that is at the meridian of his happiness. Herodotus thinks that only the most talented people can merit the lucky and happy death which results from obtaining the glory. But who are the people who have such a fortune? In Herodotus’ opinion they are the brothers from Argos, Cleobis and Biton. They drew the carriage of their mother to the temple of Hera instead of the oxen. After reaching the sanctuary they died as a
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result of the effort that they made for the sake of the honour of their mother and the Gods. And what kind of character did these excellent young men have? „...they had enough property and such large physical ability that both of them had gained the victory in different competitions.” (“toufois gar eousi genos Argeioisi bios te arkeon hypen kai pros touto rhme somatos toiede aethlophoroi te amphoteroi homoios esan.”) Herodotus uses for them the epithet „aethlophoros” (gaining the prize) and states that they had the „rhome” (physical power). He evidently reckoned that the exercised body and the ability to reach the victory in the competition were among the most honourable human qualities. In addition, to have some property is a lucky thing because the purity tempts evil but the richness protects it. This is the theory of Aristotle which he made clear, as he wrote on the „kalos kai agathos aner”. The previously mentioned brothers from Argos and Croesus were consciously set opposite each other by Herodotus. The brothers had both property and excellent qualities, whereas Croesus had only the richness – until he was made wiser by his tragedy. The excellence of Cleobis and Biton was manifested itself firstly through their successes in sport competitions and secondly by the goal for which they sacrificed their energy.

Beside the physical strength other outstanding qualities were also characteristic of Melancomas, the hero of Dio’s two discourses; that is beauty of body, courage, a stout heart, self-possession and the good fortune of never having been defeated. This boxer was able to surpass even Theseus or Achilles who had not one of these qualities (XXIX. 17-18.). And what happened at the end of his life? The very same happened that we could observe in the case of Cleobis and Biton at Herodotus. Dio writes:

“And it seems to me that the gods loved him exceedingly and honoured him especially in his death, in order that he might experience none of life’s great sorrows.” (XXVIII. 13.). (“kai moi dokousi sphodra auton agapesai hoi theoi kai malista te teleute timesai, hos an medenos peiratheie ton chalepon. »)

Dio thought also, like Herodotus, that the beautiful death and the real happiness was the reward of the outstanding qualities. Dio repeats once more this idea:

“But the man who actually gained all the blessings found among mankind must be worthy to be accounted happy in his death also.” (XXIX. 19.). (“all’ hos de panta ta en anthropois agatha ektesato, aksios an eie kai te teleutes eudaimonizesthai. »)

Writing on Melancomas Dio characterizes him to be the most beautiful man (kallistos) several times (XXVIII. 5, 13; XXIX. 3, 6.) and emphasizes that the external and internal beauties interact. One can only achieve this entire beauty through sport:

“He therefore, recognizing that, of all the activities conducive to courage, athletics is at once the most honourable and the most laborious, chose that.” (XXIX. 9.)

Dio gives information on Melancomas’ method in training and competition:

“At any rate, although boxing was his speciality, he remained as free from marks as any of the runners; and he had trained so rigorously and went so far beyond others in toilsome exercising that he was able to remain for two whole days in succession with his hands up, and nobody could catch him letting them down or taking a rest, as athletes usually do. Then he used to force his opponents to give up, not only before he himself had received a blow but even before he had landed one on them.” (XXVIII. 7.)

According to Dio, Melancomas became worthy of the appreciation through the synthesis of achievement and human values. The thesis that the sport activity could express the excellent human qualities was supported by Dio through the example of Melancomas’ father. This man “stood out conspicuous among all men of his time for those fairest gifts – nobility of soul and bodily strength. This is proved by the victories that he won, both at Olympia and in the other games.”(XXIX. 3.)

Herodotus also supposes that there is a close connection between the honest behaviour and the character of sportsman. When he writes about the unsuccessful activity of colonization in Sicily made by Dorieus, the unlucky son of Anaxandridas, the king of Sparta, mentions that in the society of Dorieus Philip from Croton was also found. We learn from the writer that Philip was able to win in Olympia and in the whole of Greece he was taken for the
most beautiful man; because of his beauty he was honoured by the inhabitants of Egesta rather than anyone else; they established a Heroon at his grave, and he was commemorated by them with funeral sacrifices. Philip was a brave fighter and so rich that he could support the action of Dorieus with a triremes that he had armed. Also the reason for his participation in the undertaking merits our recognition. Because he did not want to swindle his fiancée who originated from Sybaris, the city that was hostile towards Croton, he preferred to leave Croton. In addition, this man, who had a wealth of physical and mental qualities, was the “kallistos Hellenon” that is the most beautiful man among the Greeks. With this statement, Herodotus expresses the theory that the external and internal beauties interact and his conclusion is the similar as that of Dio in the case of Melancomas.

In Dio’s orations Melancomas seems to have all the virtues which were individually possessed by the heroes of Herodotus. The orator calls the boxer the most beautiful (kallistos) man (Or. XXVIII. 5,13; XXIX. 3,6;) similarly as Herodotus names Philip from Croton, and he emphasizes that his beauty is a clear mark of his virtues because Melancomas combined the beauty of body with the beauty of soul: “Indeed, it seems to me that his soul vied with his body and strove to make herself the means of his winnings a greater renown.” (Or. XXIX. 9.) Dio dedicates his oration XXI. entirely to the question of beauty. In this speech he expounds in detail that sometimes to have beauty is a great danger for its owner. But as we are aware from the orations written on Melancomas’ glory, this boxer succeeded to avoid these dangers. The reason of his success was the fact that he possessed the manly courage (andreia), stout soul (eupsychia) and self-possession (sophrosyne) and he was invincible (aettetos) (Or. XXVIII. 12.). According to Dio in this way could be realized his beauty and this beauty was acquired by sport: “He therefore, recognizing that of all the activities conducive to courage, athletics is at once the most honourable and the most laborious, chose that.” (Or. XXIX. 9.)

J. König rightly states that “Melankomas is also made into an icon of Cynic virtue, in terms which recall Diogenes’ struggles against pleasure and against hardships…” In his orations VIII. and IX. Dio represents the visit of Diogenes in the Isthmian Games. We are informed that the Cynic philosopher crowned himself with wreath made from branch of a pine, which is the usual prize of the winner there, and proclaimed with pride that he deserved it, because could also win over the difficulties (ponoi) and enjoyments (hedone) (Or. IX. 10-13.). Such a victory is much worthier than that of the athlete whom even the cowardly hare could be able to outrun in the footrace. This is the reason that he fights, in contradiction to athletes, not “for celery as goats or for branch of olive and pine but for happiness and virtue” (Or. VIII. 15.)

Dio’s orations of Diogenes and Melancomas represent well the ambivalence of the orator against competitive sport, for he gives in Diogenes’ mouth his doubts about the athletics which are not declared in connection with Melancomas. Now I refer to statement of J. König: “There is thus a sustained tension between approval and disapproval of athletic activity running through Dio’s work.”

But let me return to Herodotus. The historiographer claimed that the most important fact of the life of Philip was that he was an Olympic champion. This fact is mentioned by him in the first place. L. Moretti supposes that Philip won in Olympia 520 B. C., but he does not know the exact event. The fact that the brave fighter, the faithful man and the outstanding sportsman was received into the Heroic cult after his death, was a general phenomenon of this period. Similarly Cleomedes from Astypalaea and Theagenes from Thasos, Olympic champions, were received into the Heroic cult after their death and also the Elder Miltiades, an uncle of the victor of Marathon, was honoured by the Dolonci after his death, and his greatest merit was the victory gained by him at the quadriga race in Olympia. Following L. Moretti, it is very likely that the Elder Miltiades won 560 B. C. In Herodotus’ eye, it has great importance that he was an Olympic champion. He demonstrates with this factor that Miltiades became the ruler of the Dolonci rightly.
Herodotus regarded the champions and above all the Olympic winners as admirable people. Perhaps Cylon from Athens who won the two stadium race in 640 B.C. was the only exception. This politician executed a plot in 632 B.C. because he had wanted to be a tyrant but was expelled. Herodotus does not express any opinion about him. Because he does not want to scold an Olympic champion and can not praise him.32

The writer did not have any similar problems in the case of another champion. This sportsman is Eualcides, the commander of Eretrians, who was killed by the Persians during the time of the Ionian Revolt. He could win many times in the different competitions, and Simonides of Ceos commemorated him with a poem.33 Eualcides gained the victory in the boxing competition of the youth at Olympia, but we do not know the exact date.34 Characterizing him, the writer emphasizes that he was many times champion, consequently he was an excellent man. Pausanias writes about him as a many times Olympic champion among the youth but states that he originated from Elis.35

The former Spartan king, Demaratus, also is mentioned by Herodotus in the line of Olympic champions. Demaratus was expelled from Sparta by his enemies who had calumniated him to be a bastard. The writer introduces his fate with sympathy. He emphasizes that Demaratus was the only Spartan king who could win in Olympia, namely in the quadriga race.36 L. Moretti puts his victory at 504 B.C.37 In Herodotus’ opinion, this sport success proved indisputably that Demaratus had suffered an undeserved harassing.

After Athens had attacked the island of Aegina, Argives gave support to the inhabitants. The commander of the Argives was Eurybates, the famous pentathlete.38 Herodotus writes that he killed three enemies but was murdered by the fourth one. To characterize his notability for Herodotus was enough the empty fact that he had been a leading sportsman. We know from Pausanias that Eurybates won the pentathlon in the Nemean Games.39

Before the description of the Battle of Marathon, Herodotus introduces the course of life of Miltiades, and in the first place he mentions that his father, Cimon, was a triple Olympic champion in the quadriga race. With this fact, the writer prepares the reader for the military success of Miltiades since the son of a triple champion could not be unsuccessful in the battlefield. The writer notes in addition that only the horses of the Spartan Euagoras could achieve a similar glory as those of Cimon.40 This remark is good evidence for us that Herodotus always makes use of the occasion to give any information on sport. Also is written by the author that Cimon gave up his second victory to Peisistratus, the tyrant of Athens, and the latter allowed him to return into the city.41 For us, this interesting fact is very good evidence of the political importance of the Olympic victory.42

The Athenian Callias took part in the overthrow of tyranny. In Herodotus’ opinion, with this action he merited the respect of posterity. But moreover he was able to win the first place in riding and the second place in the two-horse chariot racing at Olympia, and the victory in Delphi (likely in the quadriga race).43 This outstanding man had more good qualities. He was generous and allowed his daughters to choose their own husbands.44 Characterizing Callias, Herodotus sets an example of the harmony between the physical and psychical prominence again. (Generally professional riders took part physically in the equestrian event but the owners of the horses and chariots won the prize of victory. We can suppose that those who kept horses were also good riders.)

Similarly Phayllus from Croton could be counted among the sport heroes. He won the victory three times in Delphi, namely twice in pentathlon and once in the stadium race.45 What is more, in the naval battle of Salamis he commanded a warship of Croton against the Persian and so set an example of physical and psychical virtue.46 The sport historiography wreathed his figure with some legends although Herodotus’ less fantastic information had enough laudation. Phayllus is interesting in another respect, too. According to the ancient data, he jumped longer than 16 meters. The investigation of the literary sources about him contributed to the modern reconstruction of the technique of the ancient long jumping.48 The Athenian Hermolycus was like Phayllus in his bravery. He fought very bravely against the Persians in the battle at Mycale. According to Herodotus, Hermolycus was a well-known pankratiast.49
In Herodotus’ view, it was a very great honour to be in the company of excellent people. This is the reason that he writes about the physician of the Persian king, Darius I. This man, Democedes from Croton, went back to Croton without the permission of the king and married the daughter of Milo, the five times adult and once young wrestler Olympic champion. After this, he sent a message of marriage to Darius that informed the king of the great prestige he had.50

Naturally also the groom usually had to be a good sportsman. Herodotus writes about the tyrant of Sicyon, Cleisthenes, with great appreciation. This statesman had a raceway and palaestra built for the suitors of his daughter because he wanted to choose the best from the competing young men to be his son-in-law. From this story, it is clear that the Greeks considered an excellent sport achievement as evidence of good character. This way of choosing a son-in-law went well with the past of Cleisthenes since he was Olympic champion in the quadriga race.51

To Herodotus, the Olympic glory was an important measure of human qualities, and he adjudged everything that had disturbed the harmony of the Olympic Games to be unpleasant. This is the reason that he criticized Pheidon, the tyrant of Argos with harsh words because this man had expelled the judges from Elis and organized the Olympic Games himself.52 On the other hand, he emphasizes that the Greeks organized the Games during the time of the greatest dangers during the battle of Thermopylae.53 Just the real excellence of his Greek enemies became clear to Xerxes when he obtained knowledge of the fact: “they fight for no money but glory of victory”.54 Of course we are aware of the reality that the victors received several financial rewards returning home.55 But the empty fact that in the place of the Games they received only a wreath, is enough to Herodotus to show the prominence of the Greeks in comparison with the Persians.

Because for Herodotus sport is one of the most suitable manifestations of the Greek spirit and above all he takes Olympia for the symbol of Hellenic identity, he pays attention to the visit of the Eleian delegation arriving in the Egyptian court of Psammis. The delegation went to Egypt with the aim of asking for the opinion of Egyptian priests concerning the rules of the Olympic Games. It is very instructive for us that they considered the rules to be fair except the function of native judges in the case of native participation in competitions.56

Herodotus’ latter note is good evidence of his precise knowledge on Olympic rules and Olympic history. He sought to make use of this information in his work. We are aware from him that the Macedonian king, Alexander I, had his Hellenic origin recognized by the Olympic judges and thereafter gained the second place in the contest of stadium race.

I attempted to establish the exact year of this visit, namely that Alexander I journeyed to Olympia for the first time in 476 B.C. Following the suggestion of R. M. Errington, I considered the biographical data of the young Alexander as follows: he acceded to the throne in about 498, surrendered to the Persians in 492, and co-operated with them until 479. In 479 he joined the Hellenic anti-Persian coalition and visited Olympia 476. I supported this opinion with the following arguments: 1. Herodotus calls the Olympic judges Hellanodikai, a title that J. Ebert and P. Siewert believe these officials adopted in about 480 and perhaps specifically in 476. 2. U. Sinn and others consider the Olympic Games of 476 to be a significant festival from a political point of view. Alexander could have used timely propaganda during his visit to Olympia in this year to “prove” his Hellenic origin. 3. After an analysis of Pindar’s poems, we can assign to the years 470/460 the fragments of his poetry that refer to the sporting victory of Alexander I during his second visit to Olympia.57

Similarly we know from Herodotus that the clan of Alcmeonids gave more excellent men to Athens and among them was Alcmeon who could win in the Olympian quadriga race.58 Writing on the discussion between Themistocles and the Corinthian naval commander, Adeimantus, before the battle of Salamis Herodotus notes that Adeimantus compared his partner with an athlete, who is flogged because he had started before the signal.59 The name of Micythus is mentioned as the governor of Rhegium who was expelled from his native land. But, for the author, the fact is really interesting that he dedicated numerous statues in Olympia.60 Herodotus took it for noteworthy if somebody competed with the hope of victory in Olympia but had no success. He informs us about the Eleian Tisamenus who received a
prophecy in Delphi. It was foretold that he would gain five great victories. Thereafter he started in the contest of the pentathlon but could not win because he was defeated in wrestling.\textsuperscript{61}

Describing the history of the Hellenic and other territories, Herodotus gives further evidence of his interest in sport. As an eyewitness, he renders account of the competition established in the Egyptian Chemmis. W. Decker stated that there had been a sanctuary of Min, the god identified with Pan by the Greeks and for this reason later the city had got the name Panopolis.\textsuperscript{52} Herodotus misunderstood a surname of the Egyptian god and misinterpreted it as the name of Perseus. So he describes the festival organized there as the feast of Perseus. During the festival, the inhabitants competed in bar climbing and the best competitors gained different prizes.\textsuperscript{63} Herodotus similarly gives an account of the custom of the inhabitants of Agylla in Etruria. From him, we learn that these people organized athletic and equestrian competitions in honour of the fighters from Phocaea murdered by them.\textsuperscript{64}

Describing the customs of the Thracians, he informs us of the practice at the burial of rich men. As a part of the funeral feast, the Thracians organized sport competitions.\textsuperscript{66} From this information and other parts of the work of Herodotus, it is clear that he knew the connection between the genesis of competitive sport and the funeral cult.\textsuperscript{66}

We have to mention some interesting but less important information of Herodotus with respect to sport. Reporting the competitions organized in honour of Apollo in Tripium, he informs us that the victors received bronze tripods but were prohibited to bring home them. They had to offer them to Apollo.\textsuperscript{67} Listing the events of the Greek-Persian War the writer gives some notices concerning the sporting life of the Persians. He describes the rowing competition of the ships of the Persian fleet organized by the Persian king at Abydus in 480 B. C. In the contest a warship of Sydon could gain the victory.\textsuperscript{68} Xerxes organized a horse-race between Persian and Greek horses in Malis and the Persian ones succeeded.\textsuperscript{59}

Finishing my analysis of Herodotus' work, I would like mention the information from the historiographer concerning Pheidippides' race. The Athenian messenger ran from Athens to Sparta to ask for military help against the attacking Persians.\textsuperscript{70} For me, this information is conclusive to verify that the famous Marathon race was not a real event. Herodotus, the sports fan, would have noticed the Marathon runner if he had lived. Yet he did not write about him, though he knew the names of several participants of the battle. Moreover Herodotus was an excellent dramaturgist. He started to describe the battle of Marathon with Pheidippides' race. It would have been very attractive to finish the description with another race that is the Marathon. Only one reason can explain that he did not make it. The Marathon race was only a creation of fantasy.\textsuperscript{71}

Summarizing my conclusions on writings of Herodotus and Dio, I can state that both Herodotus and Dio took high interest in sport and men who had cultivated competitive sport. For the former, the facts concerning sport and the historical role of sportsmen had great importance, because he was a historiographer, while the latter treated the impact of sport upon men when he wrote his discourses having philosophical values. One can observe this difference in the usage of the two authors. Herodotus used the word \textit{gymnazo} with meaning “to perform gymnastics” or “to exercise in general” only once while in texts of Dio we can find this word in fifteen cases. Besides the latter author uses this word three times in connection with \textit{philosophy} and once concerning the military art.\textsuperscript{72}

It is very likely that Dio's figure of Melancomas was influenced by the story of Herodotus on the case and youthful death of Cleobis and Biton. We can suppose it all the more, since Plutarchus, contemporary with Dio, knew this story too as it is proved through his biography written on Solon. It seems to be also evident that the generation of Herodotus and that of Dio formed the ideal type of the figure of leading sportsman in another way. Herodotus was a historiographer who sometimes referred to the psychical qualities beside the physical ones only faintly. On the other hand Dio was a philosophical orator who emphasized the ideal harmony of the bodily and mental qualities of his hero. Herodotus honoured the sportsmen and competitive sport without any doubt and as a matter of course
took the champions for worthy of praise. Dio did not speak highly of competitive sport itself but only of athlete who had high qualities both in respect of body and morality.

Notes

5. L. Moretti (1957) no. 469.
6. At the same place no. 516.
7. At the same place no. 582.
8. At the same place no. 607.
9. At the same place no. 629-630.
I. Kertész: Herodotus and Dio Chrysostomus... 37
der Glaubwürdigkeitsdiskussion. (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, Sonderheft 84), Innsbruck 1993.
18. Plutarchus, Solon 27.
21. Herodotus, I. 30-32. Cf. M. P. Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, München 1974, I. 737. See my study titled “The Brothers from Argos and Melancomas of Caria”, in: Sport, Nation, Nationalism. Proceedings of 8th ISHPES Seminar and International Conference on Social Science and Sport Ljubljana 24-27. augoust 2006, ed. T. Pavlin, 77-85. In his excellent study is stated by D. Sansone on the twins: “They are young men who die prematurely, even in the prime of life, and yet they are held up as a model of blessedness. But it is just this ambivalence that is, for the Greeks, characteristic of both sacrifice and sport. Both sacrifice and sport seek to mediate between life and death: In the former, life is taken in order that life may be assured; in the latter, energy is expended as an affirmation that energy is renewable. Both sacrifice and sport seek to mediate between the powers above and that which is here below: In the former, the sacrificial victim is presented as a ‘gift’ that is thought to be pleasing to the god. To this extent, both the athlete and the sacrificial victim participate in the divine. And so the athletes Cleobis and Biton are identified both with the sacrificial oxen and with the divine Dioscuri.” – D. Sansone, Cleobis and Biton are identified both with the sacrificial oxen and with the divine Dioscuri.
22. J. W. Cohoon refers to L. Lemarchand in the second volume of his translation of Dio as he put the question: “Therefore, may not Dio, who was an ardent Hellenist, and who looked with disapproval on the cruel gladiatorial exhibitions, have wished to increase the interest in athletics by creating and describing this ideal athlete, this gentle boxer, who would not think of injuring his opponent by striking him with his fist armed with the terrible caestus?” (n. 1, p. 358). Melancomas was very likely a historical person although this is discussed by some historians. L. Lemarchand, Dion de Pruse. Les oeuvres d’avant l’exil, Paris 1926, 30 ff. refuses to believe the historicity of Melancomas; M. B. Poliakoff, Melancomas, ek klimakos and Greek Boxing, American Journal of Philology 108 (1987), 511-518 inclines to think the historicity of the boxer; M Golden (2004) 101: “It is... possible that he is an invention or at least that his tactics owe much to our source’s desire to portray him as a model of the Cynic sage, master of his passions.” The majority of the historians are thinking the reality of the story of Melancomas: D. Matz (1991) 70-71; W. Rudolph, Olympischer Kampfsports in der Antike. Faustkampf, Ringkampf und Pankration in den griechischen Nationalfestspielen, Berlin 1965, 18; W. Decker (1995) 90; Jean-Paul Thuillier, Sport im antiken Rom, Darmstadt 1999 (transl. W. Decker) 117. D. Matz (1991) 97 writes on the wrestler Timasitheus: “He employed a tactic of avoidance, apparently inducing Milo to engage in chasing him, thus fatigueing the older man. (Compare the similar strategy used centuries later by the boxer Melancomas.)” The statement of Matz could be a clue to the solution of discussion. If we take the story of the bought between Milo and Timasitheus for reality (conf. J. Ebert, Griechische Epigramme auf Sieger an gymnischen und hippischen Agonen, Berlin 1972, 182-183), then we have no reason to doubt that imitating the tactic of the Greek wrestler also Melancomas was able to exhaust his opponents through avoiding their hits. On Melancomas' person in literature see J. König (2005) 97-157. On the death of Melancomas see J. Jüthner, Zu Dio Chrysostomus XXVIII, in: Wiener Studien. Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie 25 (1904), 151-157. The author supposes that the reason of the death of Melancomas was a stroke.
23. Herodotus, V. 47.
in Corpore Sano? Body and Mind in Ancient Greece, The Int. Journal of the History of Sport 22, No. 1, January 2005, 22-41) express their opinion that the popular theory of the versatile personality of the Greek athletes, which was more developed than that of the athletes today, is wholly false as it is false also to think that the Greeks would had sought to reach both the intellectual and physical excellence. But I think so that the people characterized by Herodotus and Dio as outstanding sportsmen also did have other qualities beside the physical power and virtues necessary for realizing their power. This phenomenon is more characteristic of Dio’s figure than that of Herodotus. Conf. D. Hawhee, Bodily Arts. Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Athens, Austin 2004. She stresses in p. 21: “Characteristics of arete… included glory, honor, courage, and bodily strength.” And she states in p. 19: “For ancient Athenians, physical beauty and moral superiority were inextricably tied. This double force of arete is suggested by the phrase for nobility, kalos kagathos, “<the beautiful and good>.”

26. J. König (2005) 144. Melancomas’ self-possession frequently mentioned by Dio was an integrant part of the Cynic and Stoic philosophy (see J. König 136) and was taken for an ancient virtue which gives ethical superiority for the man who has it. In Herodotus’ work Xerxes, the Persian king, who has flogged the sea and violated the Greek temples, is rightly defeated because he had no self-possession and committed a crime against the gods (Herodotus VII. 35.). On the other hand, the people worthy to our praise were educated according to Xenophon’s Cyropaedia so that having the self-possession (the author uses the words karteria and egkrateia) they would be able to suffer the difficulties of life, freeze, hunger and thirst – conf. Ch. Mueller-Goldingen, Untersuchungen zu Xenophons Kyrupädie, Stuttgart und Leipzig 1995, 81 ff. According to the reports of ancient writers the list of names of sportsmen, who were famous of their self-possession, is not very long. Usually the self-possession meant the abstaining from the desire for sensual lust in their cases, since it was a generally accepted theory that sexual asceticism supports the sport success – see W. Fiedler, Sexuelle Enthaltsamkeit griechischer Athleten und ihre medizinische Begründung, Stadion XI (1985), 137-175. Plato, Clement of Alexandria and Aelian mention namely only Iccus from Taras, Astylus from Croton, Crison from Himera, Aristoteles (Eubatas?) from Cyrene and Cleitomachus from Thebes (conf. Moretti [1957] about Iccus no. 307, Astylus 178-179, 186-187, 196-198, Crison 294, 306, 312, Aristoteles 347, 421, Cleitomachus 584, 589). All the above mentioned athletes represented the long past. Only Dio’s Melancomas was a child of the first century A.D. We are reported by Dio that he “have remained undefeated not only by his opponents but also by toil and heat and gluttony and sensuality (aphrodisia).” (Or. XXVIII. 12.)
27. L. Moretti (1957) no. 135.
31. L. Moretti (1957) no. 106.
33. Herodotus, V. 102.
34. L. Moretti (1957) no. 958.
35. Pausanias, VI. 16, 6.
38. Herodotus, VI. 92, IX. 75.
1. Kertész: Herodotus and Dio Chrysostomus...  


41. Herodotus, VI. 103. Cimon’s grandson and the son of the victor at Marathon, Miltiades was Cimon. This Athenian general was called by Plutarchus “a well fighting athlete” (hospes athletes deinos), for the historiographer commemorated the fact that his grandfather had been a triple Olympic champion (Plutarchus, Cimon 13.). Similarly Aelius Aristeides called the son of the triple Olympic champion Philip II, Alexander the Great “an outstanding athlete (agonistes) of the struggle for kingdom” (XXVI. 25.) – s. I. Kertész, Studies on Ancient Sport History, Acta Ant. Hung. 43, 2003, 47-58, 50.


44. Herodotus, VI. 122.


46. Herodotus, VIII. 47.


53. Herodotus, VII. 206.


55. See D. C. Young (1985).


63. Herodotus, II. 91.


67. Herodotus, I. 144.


70. Herodotus, VI. 105. Herodotus writes that during his run Pheidippides met the god Pan at the slope of the mountain Parthenium near Tegea. The god sent a message to Athenians by him. In the message, he promised that he would help them after they will cultivate his divine cult. The Athenians were obedient to the god, and later erected a temple to Pan and commemorated this event with sacrifice and a torch race – see D. G. Kyle (1987) 193. My excellent colleague, the sports doctor Robert Frenkl, directed my attention to the medical connection of this story. According to him, Pheidippides could really have had hallucination. Namely during the long distance running can result hypoxia and the same symptom can be observed in the case of anorexia nervosa. Under such circumstances the organism produces endorphin which has a similar effect as the morphin that is possibility of hallucination exists. Cf. Boross László-Sajgó Mihály, A biokémia alapjai (The Bases of the Biochemistry), Budapest 1993², 36.
