



# **The Civic Conversations of Thucydides and Plato: Classical Political Philosophy and the Limits of Democracy**

*Gerald M. Mara*

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*Argues for the contemporary importance of Thucydides and Plato for both democratic political theory and democratic citizens.*

This book argues that classical political philosophy, represented in the works of Thucydides and Plato, is an important resource for both contemporary democratic political theory and democratic citizens. By placing the Platonic dialogues and Thucydides' History in conversation with four significant forms of modern democratic theory—the rational choice perspective, deliberative democratic theory, the interpretation of democratic culture, and postmodernism—Gerald M. Mara contends that these classical authors are not enemies of democracy. Rather than arguing for the creation of a more encompassing theoretical framework guided by classical concerns, Mara offers readings that emphasize the need to focus critically on the purposes of politics, and therefore of democracy, as controversial yet unavoidable questions for political theory.

“...Mara does a great service in drawing theorists' attention to the necessity of engaging as seriously with the ancients as with contemporaries. In doing so, Mara's book promises to stimulate future conversations and to entice readers into precisely the open-ended, discursive conversations that he favors.” — Review of Politics

“Gerald Mara presents to the academic community a complex, insightful and quite difficult book, whose audience, it should be immediately said, could only be one of specialists.” — Bryn Mawr Classical Review

“Clearly written, creative, and original, this book is useful for political theorists interested in democratic theory and Greek thought.” — CHOICE

“Mara has a clear, though complex, plan in mind, and he carries it out from beginning to end with care and style. He shows that an active reading of Plato and Thucydides can provide a way out of some of the central dilemmas and dead ends that seem to plague various forms of modern and postmodern democratic political theory. In addition, Mara's dialectical ability shows itself not only in bringing ancients and moderns together in conversation but also in suggesting sharp and novel ways of bringing Plato and Thucydides into dialogue with one another.” — Stephen G. Salkever, author of *Finding the Mean: Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy*

Gerald M. Mara is Executive Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Professorial Lecturer in Government at Georgetown University and the author of *Socrates' Discursive Democracy: Logos and Ergon in Platonic Political Philosophy*, also published by SUNY Press.

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