

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

THUCYDIDES' REPRESENTATION OF BRASIDAS BEFORE AMPHIPOLIS

εἰ γὰρ δείξειε τοῖς ἐναντίοις τό τε πλῆθος καὶ τὴν ὀπλισιν ἀναγκαίαν οὖσαν τῶν μεθ' αὐτοῦ,
οὐκ ἂν ἡγείτο μᾶλλον περιγενέσθαι ἢ ἄνευ προθύεως τε αὐτῶν καὶ μὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος
καταφρονήσεως.

[Thuc. 5. 8. 3]

A. W. Gomme described 5. 8. 3 as "one of the most difficult of Thucydides' sentences"; and many other editors, translators, and readers have agreed, even when they have not said so in so many words.¹ There is a way, however, to read the sentence so that it yields good sense and fits its context. In the present paper, it is suggested first that Thucydides in other sentences used a mode of coordination very much like that of 5. 8. 3. Once that mode is identified and observed in these other contexts, it can be used to explain 5. 8. 3. Then, when 5. 8. 3 becomes comprehensible, Brasidas' soliloquy, as he assesses his chances at Amphipolis, shows a propriety and a consistency that readers in the past have wished for but not found. Finally, a welcome corollary of this new aspect of Brasidas is that it illustrates Thucydides' painstaking care when representing principal figures in his history.

1. A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1956), pp. 642-43. The following, selective list with its summaries and examples of varying approaches documents a persistent intransigence. Σ sc₂ (C. Hude) ἡγουν οὕτως ἐνόμισε περιγενέσθαι Κλέωνος καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ἐπιτιμησόμενος κρύφα, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ἄνευ προθύεως, καὶ μὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ φανεροῦ ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ καταφρονήσεως τοῦ ὄντος. L. Valla in H. Stephanus' second edition of Thucydides (Paris, 1588) translates, "... haud arbitrabatur magis proficere quam si improvisus esset ac vere contemptus." Thomas Hobbes in 1629 (ed. Richard Schlatter [New Brunswick, N.J., 1975]) translates: "For if he should have showed to the enemy both his number and their armour, such as for the present they were forced to use, he thought that thereby he should not so soon get the victory, as by keeping them out of sight and out of their contempt until the very point." Thomas Arnold in his commentary (Oxford, 1832) says Thucydides has tried "... to make the same words express two different things." E. F. Poppo begins a survey of explanations in his edition and commentary (Leipzig, 1835) with the words, "Haec verba magna laborant difficultate," and ends, "ut vides igitur, nobis magis, quid falsum, quam quid verum hic sit, videntibus nulla horum verborum enucleandorum ratio omnino satisfacit; meliorem tamen quum proponere nequeamus, vos, qui haec legitis, homines eruditissimi, ut difficultatem quam negatio parat ... felicius expediat, impense opto" (3.3:448). L. Herbst, *Zu Thukydidens Erklärungen und Wiederherstellungen*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 135-39, says early in his discussion, "Man sieht nicht wie der Schriftsteller sich verständlicher hätte ausdrücken können ..."; but then he offers no translation or paraphrase, fails to reconcile his explanation with the larger context of the immediate narrative, invokes a disputed phrase in Soph. *Ant.* 4 to justify his version, and finally confesses that he has not perhaps written the last word on the subject. J. Classen and J. Steup in the third edition of their commentary (Berlin, 1912) translate, "wenn er den Feinden seine Schwäche zeigte, glaubte er weniger auf den Sieg rechnen zu können als wenn diese sein Heer nicht vorher erblickten, und er nicht mit Nichtachtung der tatsächlichen Beschaffenheit der beiderseitigen Streitkräfte vorgehe." D. Mervyn Jones, "The Scholiast on Aristophanes *Knights* 438 and Three Passages of Thucydides," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 177 (1951): 23-24, proposes either to regard μή as redundant or to supply οὐσης with καταφρονήσεως (Göller's solution, which Jones favors slightly). J. de Romilly in her edition and translation (Paris, 1967) describes her own paraphrase correctly as "assurément difficile" (p. 186). The standard English translations of today—R. Crawley's in the Modern Library (New York, 1934), Rex Warner's in the Penguin series (Bungay, 1954), and B. Jowett's (ed. P. A. Brunt [New York, 1963])—follow Hobbes for the sense of the passage.

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The key to understanding 5. 8. 3 lies in a way of speaking that can be illustrated as well in English as in Greek. Sometimes in English a speaker will reinforce his message by adding a negated, opposite conception. For example: "Come on time and don't be late." At other times—more often than not, in fact—the same speaker, in the interest of variety, takes one further step in his mind and leaves the mere opposite conception unspoken. Instead, he illustrates it with some attendant circumstance or result or specific instance. Thus, in the sentence, "Come on time and don't disappoint us," the prohibition, "Don't disappoint us," is not the opposite of "Come on time." It is a possible result of the implied opposite conception, "Don't be late." That is, before disappointment can become an issue, lateness must be present either in the words or the mind of the speaker.

Demosthenes' address to his troops at Pylos (4. 10. 2) contains a good example of Thucydides' use of this sort of antithesis:

ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ τὰ πλείω ὁρῶ πρὸς ἡμῶν ὄντα, ἣν ἐθέλωμέν τε μέναι καὶ μὴ τῷ πλήθει αὐτῶν
καταπλαγέντες τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ἡμῖν κρείσσω καταπροδοῦναι.

Demosthenes says, "I even see that most of the circumstances are on our side, if we are willing to stand fast and not betray our existing superiorities by being dismayed at the number of the enemy." In this sentence, as in the English example in the foregoing paragraph, two notions are presented in a way that might at a glance suggest a polarity. Under the strictest interpretation, however, the polarity does not exist. "Stand fast" and "not betray" are connected, to be sure, by *τε . . . καὶ μὴ*, which is a form of coordination often used to bind opposites together, but "not betray" is a specification or result of some conception like "flee," which is the exact opposite of "stand fast." We infer this opposite from the phrase, "not betray"; but, as in the English example the notion of lateness must precede disappointment, so here betraying cannot become an issue unless the notion of flight is in the mind or words of the speaker. The sequence can be illustrated in the following manner, where angle brackets enclose the unuttered, implicit opposite: ". . . if we are willing to stand fast and not (flee and thereby) betray," etc.

A few more examples (these, however, without *τε*) will help to establish this sort of elliptical antithesis as a characteristic Thucydidean formulation. 2. 39. 1: "We present a city that is open to the world, and we do not (keep it to ourselves and, for example) prevent people from seeing and learning," etc.² 3. 39. 6: "Let them now be properly punished for this crime and not (escape proper punishment, as they will, for example, if you) blame the few and let the demos go." 3. 40. 3: "For it is right to feel pity for people like yourselves and not (for people unlike yourselves, namely) for people who will not feel pity in return and who are fated to be our enemies forever." 3. 40. 3: "The orators who give you pleasure by their speeches will hold their contest in other, lesser circumstances and not (in these important circumstances) where the state will pay a lot for a little pleasure." 6. 10. 5: "One must consider and not (fail to consider, and thereby) require the city to risk danger while on the high seas and to reach for another empire before securing the one we have."

2. Classen-Steup, ad loc.: "*καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε . . . εὐψύχῳ* ist die Ausführung des *κοινὴν τὴν πόλιν παρέχομεν*." Essentially the same thing could be said, mutatis mutandis, concerning all the examples listed in this paper.

To return to 5. 8. 3, the relationship between the two elements associated by τε . . . καὶ μὴ can be expressed in exactly the same way: Brasidas thought he would not more likely prevail than he would without their seeing his troops beforehand and not with (their having seen his troops beforehand, which would result in) their becoming contemptuous as a result of their awareness of his true situation.³

Brasidas, in other words, is relinquishing one possible advantage, a feeling of contempt on the enemy's part, in favor of another, the element of surprise. Cleon might well feel contemptuous on making out the high number of peltasts in the total troop strength of the Peloponnesians, and Brasidas as a good general is weighing all possible advantages against each other. Thucydides does not say whether Brasidas regrets having to relinquish that possible advantage; he just shows Brasidas reckoning what he can and what he cannot have.

The reckoning that Thucydides abstracts and compresses may have been somewhat as follows: "I cannot count on the strength of my troops if we oppose the enemy face to face. We are about equal in number, but the Athenians and their allies have too many hoplites, and we on the other hand have too high a proportion of peltasts. Peltasts, no matter how brave, cannot stand against well-trained hoplites here. Now, if the Athenians see my men beforehand, they may fall into being contemptuous, since they are as aware as I am of the fundamental difference between light-armed and heavy-armed troops, and that treacherous feeling could lead them into some error that would be to my advantage. But I had better keep my troops hidden until the last minute. That way I may lose a tactical advantage, namely, the enemy's contempt—granted it would arise from seeing my actual numbers and armor—but surprise is best."

Thucydides 5. 8. 1-3 can then be translated: "Immediately as Brasidas caught sight of the Athenians in motion, he himself went down from Cerdylion and into Amphipolis. He did not go out in a regular line of march for pitched battle, because he was anxious concerning his own equipment, believing his men to be inferior, not in numbers—the numbers were about equal—but in quality, for the real Athenians had come out on this expedition and the best of the Lemnians and Imbrians. Brasidas, therefore, devised a trick attack. For if he was going to show the enemy both the number and the scanty armor of his troops,⁴ he thought he would not be more likely to prevail than he would without the Athenians seeing his men beforehand, and not as a result of Athenian contempt for his true situation."

When construed in this way, 5. 8. 3 no longer conflicts with Brasidas' reflections before battle on the number and quality of his troops as compared to those of Cleon. In the past, students of Greek history have found Brasidas' reflections inconsistent and finally, therefore, merely confusing.⁵ But it may be that 5. 8. 3

3. Τοῦ ὄντος is an objective genitive that defines the phrase μὴ ἀπὸ . . . καταφρονήσεως; μὴ rather than οὐ because a condition is implied. Cf. R. C. Jebb ad Soph. *Ant.* 23 (3d ed., Cambridge, 1900), who paraphrased ἀνευ προθύεως . . . αὐτῶν with εἰ μὴ προΐδοιεν αὐτοῖς. For the sense of ἀπὸ καταφρονήσεως, see LSJ⁹, s.v. ἀπὸ III, 6.

4. I take this to mean, if Brasidas was going to take his troops out of Amphipolis at all that day and commit them to battle (*pace* Gomme, ad loc.).

5. See, e.g., Gomme, 3:643: "Together with the contradictory hints about Brasidas' numbers (§§ 2, 4), the difficulties of this sentence make the whole chapter extremely puzzling."

was the principal cause of confusion. Readers who were uncertain how the sentence should be understood could not be confident with related sentences. In any case, a coherent account of Brasidas' reasoning can now be attempted.

Cleon had 1,500 Athenians (1,200 hoplites plus 300 mounted troops), 30 ships, and more than 1,500 allies (5. 2. 1). At Scione, he added hoplites from the garrison there to his own number (5. 2. 2). At Torone, he left a garrison and sailed toward Amphipolis (5. 3. 6). Inasmuch as we do not know how many troops he added at Scione, or how many he left at Torone, or how many more than 1,500 allies he had, we cannot put an exact number on his total force. At Eion, he sent emissaries to Perdiccas, who was to bring an army, and to Polles, in an effort to bring as many Thracian mercenaries as possible to his aid (5. 6. 2).

Brasidas had 1,000 peltasts from Myrcinos and Chalcis, in addition to those in Amphipolis. His total hoplite force came to about 2,000, plus 300 Greek mounted troops. Of these,⁶ he had 1,500 with him on Cerdylion. The rest of his troops were stationed in Amphipolis with Clearidas (5. 6. 4-5). We never learn whether the Thracians and Edonians Brasidas was summoning arrived in time for the battle. Presumably they did not. As in the case of Cleon, we cannot give an exact figure for Brasidas' forces: the peltasts (?) or Myrcinian horse (?) in Amphipolis, however many they may have been, are not counted in the 3,300 troops which Thucydides explicitly mentions.⁷

When, therefore, Thucydides has Brasidas estimate that Cleon's forces and his own are about equal in number (5. 8. 2), we must be content with approximations. On the one side there are 1,500 Athenians plus more than 1,500 Lemnians and Imbrians (and, in addition, the unknown number of troops from Scione, less those left as a garrison at Torone). On the other side there are Brasidas' 3,300 plus some unknown number.⁸

Now it is time to present a summary of Brasidas' comparisons in order. At 5. 6. 3 Brasidas can expect Cleon to despise his numerical strength: Brasidas has only 1,500 of his troops on Cerdylion, and Cleon therefore will think he has more than twice the number of Brasidas' troops. At 5. 8. 2 Brasidas reckons that Cleon's forces no longer outnumber him; Brasidas has by this time gone down from Cerdylion to rejoin Clearidas and the others in town. His perspective has changed, for the numbers now are about equal.

Why then should Brasidas regard his troops as inferior? Why should he think that Cleon might be contemptuous first upon looking at his partial force of 1,500 troops on Cerdylion, but then upon his total force as well? The answer lies in the kinds of troops that make up those numbers and their inferior armor. Cleon has troops of the best quality to pose against an enemy force of comparable size, one-third of which is peltasts. Brasidas (and almost any other Spartan) knows that these light-armed troops are inferior to hoplites and cavalry.

Brasidas' troops therefore need a special advantage. One possible advantage is that, if Cleon sees the enemy troops, he may become contemptuous and hence

6. Whether the antecedent of *τοῦτων* is "hoplite force" or "hoplites and peltasts" does not affect the present argument in any essential way.

7. J. Kromayer, *Antike Schlachtfelder*, vol. 4 (Berlin, 1931), pp. 203-4, refers only to peltasts. See Classen-Steupe and Gomme, *ad loc.*, on the possibility of textual corruption here.

8. Kromayer, *Schlachtfelder*, 4:203-4, estimates 4,000 to a side.

overconfident. But Brasidas decides no. If he is going to commit his troops, he has a better chance with a staggered surprise attack. He accordingly eschews the putative benefits of making his enemy contemptuous (5. 8. 3). Also, he assumes or knows that Cleon expects reinforcements.⁹ Brasidas will accordingly attack before any reinforcements can arrive. This will be the sense in which Cleon's troops are *μεμονωμένους* at 5. 8. 4.

Finally, when Brasidas, addressing his troops before the battle (5. 9. 3), alludes to Athenian contempt, he is again back in the context of the Athenian view of him and his 1,500 troops on Cerdylion, when the Athenians did not have any means of forming an accurate estimate of his troop strength.¹⁰ They never do, in fact, until too late, when Clearidas bursts out of the Thracian Gate in the second phase of Brasidas' successful battle plan.¹¹

To sum up, Thucydides does not lose his way when he tells us what Brasidas is thinking. Whether Brasidas is soliloquizing or addressing troops, his assessment at each point of the narrative is in accordance with what it should be at the time and place stipulated. Thucydides, as he writes, seems to put himself inside Brasidas, a position from which he can gauge how Brasidas would change responses as position and circumstances changed. It is such attention to detail that distinguishes the best writers.

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9. *Βρασίδης δὲ πυνθανόμενος ταῦτα . . .* (5. 6. 3).

10. The phrase *ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος καταφρονήσεως* at 5. 8. 3 stipulates contempt arising from the true situation (*τοῦ ὄντος*) because, as 5. 9. 3 shows, Brasidas can also encourage his troops with the hope that Cleon will be contemptuous out of a false notion of Brasidas' strength.

11. It is by no means a necessary inference from 5. 10. 2 that Cleon, who was outside the city, could count all of Brasidas' troops in the city.

AN UNNOTICED RULE OF PLAUTINE METER

In a regular lyric meter in Plautus whose normal form contains two consecutive *longa*, if the verse is syncopated by omitting one of these *longa*, then (a) the syllable omitted will be the second of the two, and (b) a word break will occur at that point. The rule has two unequivocal applications, one in cretic and one in bacchiac systems. Most cretics in Plautus come in tetrameters:

— ◡ — | — ◡ — || — ◡ — | — ◡ — [Capt. 239]
nam secun- dum patrem tu's pater proxumus.

There is a diaeresis between the two halves of the verse; otherwise, word breaks may occur, or fail to occur, at any point. Occasionally we meet a shortened form, in which only one *longum* occurs at the juncture of the third and fourth feet:

— ◡ — | — ◡ — || — ◡ — ◡ — [Pseud. 1285]
uox uiri pessumi me exciet foras.