

### Cleon and Pericles: A Suggestion<sup>1</sup>

The three 'notorious echoes between Cleon and Pericles'<sup>2</sup> in Thucydides all go back to Pericles' last speech made in 430 BC (Thucydides ii 60.1–64.5). The concepts and language of two successive Periclean statements from ii 63.2, viz.

ἥς οὐδ' ἐκοσῆναι ἐτι ὑμῖν ἔστω, εἴ τις καὶ τόδε ἐν τῷ παρόντι δεδιώς ἀπραγμοσύνη ἀνδραγαθίζεται· ὡς τυραννίδα γὰρ ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτήν, ἣν λαβεῖν μὲν ἀδικον δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἀφεῖναι δ' ἐπικίνδυνον

(on the relationship between action and virtue and on the Athenian empire as a tyranny) reappear in two statements by Cleon at iii 40.4 and iii 37.2 respectively. Even more striking—at least on the surface—is the claim of both men to consistency. In *ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι τῇ γνώμῃ* Cleon virtually repeats at iii 38.1 Pericles' *καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἐξίσταμαι* (ii 61.2). As if to confirm that the echoes are not accidental, Cleon's words all belong (like those of Pericles) to a single speech—that made by him during the 'Mylenean debate' of 427 BC.

It has not always been accepted however that the echoes are intentional and significant. Some scholars, looking at them in the wider context of all the echoes found in Thucydides, or speaking of them as typical of Greek oratorical practice, have contended that they are mere coincidence.<sup>3</sup> To support this view further they have referred also to the undoubted truth that Thucydidean speeches are not verbatim reports. The majority of scholars however have regarded the echoes as meaningful: while not denying that Thucydidean speeches are to a certain extent literary fictions, they have seen Thucydides (who is, whatever else one thinks of him, undeniably a very careful writer) as deliberately representing Cleon and his policies either as a *reductio ad absurdum* of, or as a caricature of, Pericles and the views he propounded.<sup>4</sup> Most of these latter scholars would go further and take it as a historical fact that Cleon to some extent aspired to follow in Pericles' footsteps. Following along these lines Gomme (on Thucydides iii 40.4) saw Aristophanes approximating Pericles and Cleon at *Equ.* 626 and noted that at *Equ.* 732 Cleon 'also appears to imitate Pericles' (cf. Thuc. ii 43.1); and recently too W. Robert Connor has drawn attention to the fact that in two separate anecdotes Plutarch tells how Pericles kept aloof from his friends during his political life (*Per.* 7.5) and how Cleon repudiated his friends when entering into political life (*Mor.* 806f).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Prof. J. K. Davies, Prof. A. A. Long and the late Mr C. W. Macleod for advice on this note. Mr Macleod informed me that he had independently noted the Cleon/Thersites link, as had Dr Angus Bowie.

<sup>2</sup> A. Andrewes, *Phoenix* xvi (1962) 75.

<sup>3</sup> Notably J. de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'impérialisme Athénien: La pensée de l'historien et la genèse de l'oeuvre* (Paris 1947) 143–6.

<sup>4</sup> So e.g. since 1960: A. G. Woodhead, *Mnemos.* 4 xiii (1960) esp. 298–9; Andrewes, *loc. cit.* (n. 2); W. Robert Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*, (Princeton 1971) esp. 119–21, 134; Henry R. Immerwahr, 'Pathology of power and the speeches of Thucydides' in *The Speeches of Thucydides*, ed. P. A. Stadter (Chapel Hill 1973) esp. 28; C. W. Macleod, 'Reason and necessity: Thucydides iii 9–14, 37–48', *JHS* xcvi (1978) 64–78, esp. 68–9. For earlier supporters of this view see de Romilly *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* (n. 4) 91–2, 119–21. Connor's historical conclusions—but

My concern here is not so much with the historicity of the Thucydidean and other resemblances between Cleon and Pericles, although I cannot see much point in them (if they are deliberate) unless they correspond with something in the real world. I wish rather to draw attention to something which confirms their deliberateness (which is in any case likely given their number and their verbal and contextual closeness) and illuminates them in other ways. This is the existence of another celebrated pair of ancient literary characters, one of whom echoes the other—Achilles and Thersites in Homer's *Iliad*. When attacking Agamemnon at *Il.* ii 225–42, Thersites makes some of the points already made against Agamemnon by Achilles in *Il.* i. Agamemnon is greedy (i 222 = ii 225–33, esp. 229); he takes the loot while others, especially Achilles and Thersites (!) do the work (i 163–8 = ii 229–33); it would be better to go off home, leaving Agamemnon at Troy (i 169–71 = ii 236–8); the Greeks are slack and worthless (i 231 = ii 235, cf. 241); Agamemnon brings harm to his people (i 231 = ii 234). In addition there are two places where Thersites repeats verbatim the actual words of Achilles: *Il.* ii 240 = i 356, *ἡτίμησεν· ἔλων γὰρ ἔχει γέρας, αὐτὸς ἀπούρας*; and *Il.* ii 242 = i 232, *ἦ γὰρ ἄν, Ἄτρείδη, νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο*.

The echoes of Achilles by Thersites attracted comment in antiquity. At Plato *Rep.* x 620c Thersites is described as putting on the soul of an ape in the afterlife. Proclus,<sup>6</sup> commenting on this passage (Kroll ii pp. 319.25–320.4) notes that the same types of life appear in it as in Plato *Phdr.* 248d–e and that in the Republic the ape soul donned by Thersites stands for the life of the imitator.<sup>7</sup> At a later point the echoes became a standard topic of discussion, as is shown by the passages quoted below from Quintilian and Libanius. In one myth often mentioned in literature Achilles eventually killed Thersites,<sup>8</sup> and there were standard contrasts and comparisons, literary and rhetorical, between the pair,<sup>9</sup> including Stob. iv 119 (attributed to Socrates): *οὔτε τὰ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ὄπλα τῷ Θερασίτῃ, οὔτε τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀγαθὰ τῷ ἄφρονι ἀρμόττει*. The association climaxes in the paradoxical encomium of Thersites by Libanius (Foerster viii pp. 243–51).

If Thersites' echoes of Achilles appeared in a minor poet or in one whose work had no connection with Thucydides, then the fact that both in Homer and in Thucydides an ignoble character apes the arguments and words of a noble character could be dismissed as fortuitous. But quite apart from the supreme importance of Homer in Greek culture, Thucydides mentions Homer near the beginning of his work (i 3.3), goes on (i 10–11) to declare Homer's subject—the Trojan War—to have been a comparatively small-scale event compared with his own subject—the Peloponnesian War, and gives a rationalising account (i 10) of what he thinks the Trojan War was really like. So it is clear that

not the similarity of the motif—are questioned by J. K. Davies, *Gnomon* xlvii (1975) 374–8.

<sup>6</sup> It would thus appear that the hesitation of Antonio La Penna, *Fra teatro, poesia e politica Romana* (Turin 1979) 164 n. 1, about whether Plato is necessarily referring to Thersites' imitateness is unnecessary.

<sup>7</sup> The ape notion (although perhaps referring more to Thersites' appearance) recurs when Thersites is described as *πιθηκόμορφος* at *Lyc. Alex.* 1000; cf. Schol. *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gebhard, 'Thersites', *RE* x (1934) 2455–71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 2466–7.

Thucydides had Homer in mind in his work,<sup>10</sup> and to back up the natural presumption that a writer as complex and self-conscious as Thucydides must have intended the resemblances between his Cleon and his Pericles, it can now be suggested that his model in this was Homer's treatment of Thersites' echoes of Achilles.<sup>11</sup>

As well as confirming that the Cleon/Pericles echoes were intentional, the model also helps us to see how Thucydides' audience would have understood them, since there are clear indications of how the Achilles/Thersites echoes were understood in antiquity. Commenting on the latter, Eustathius writes (209.10–11):

Θερσίτης δὲ διὰ τὸ ἄκαιρον τοῦ λόγου καὶ διὰ τὴν πῆρωσιν περιφρονηθεὶς οὐκ εὖ ἀπαλλάξει, ὡς καὶ ἐν ταῦθα προσαρμόσαι τὸ τραγικόν: 'λόγος γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς ἔκ τ' ἀδοξούντος ἑλθὼν', τοῦ Θερσίτου, 'καὶ ἔκ δοκούντος', τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως, 'οὐ ταῦτ' ἔδυνήθη'.

The tragic passage which Eustathius quotes in garbled form is Eur. *Hec.* 294–5:

... λόγος γὰρ ἔκ τ' ἀδοξούντων ἰὼν  
καὶ τῶν δοκούντων αὐτὸς οὐ ταῦτ' ὀφείλει,

and he refers to it as an economical way of conveying the standard ancient assessment of the Achilles/Thersites echoes, namely that the same words in Achilles' mouth and in Thersites' mouth did not have the same validity. Eustathius can do this all the more easily because the 'substance' of the two lines of the *Hecuba* '... was a commonplace both in the fifth century and later';<sup>12</sup> and from the Thucydidean point of view it is particularly interesting that the scholia on his contemporary Euripides take such tragic passages as referring to fifth-century Athenian politics.<sup>13</sup> It looks as though the commonplace and Thersites' exemplification of it were already linked and standard by Quintilian's time and as such capable of subtle *variatio*. Cf.

idem dictum saepe in alio liberum, in alio furiosum, in alio superbum est. verba adversus Agamemnonem a Thersite habita ridentur: da illa Diomedii aliive cui pari, magnum animum ferre prae se videbuntur. (*Inst. Or.* xi 1.37),

where there is a pointed failure to mention Achilles, himself also a notoriously flawed character. Libanius later achieves his original effect when using the concept by reversing the standard form of the topos through mock-innocent irony:

καίτοι πῶς οὐ δεινόν, ὅταν μὲν Ἀχιλλεὺς λέγῃ, μὴ εἶναι τὸν λόγον ἀνόητον, ὅταν δὲ ἕτερος; (Foerster viii p. 248. 9–11).

<sup>10</sup> In *Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung*, SB Heidelberg 1972, 1 Abh., Hermann Strasburger has many valuable observations on this topic. He rightly sees the influence of Homer on Thucydides as part of more general influence on all ancient historiography.

<sup>11</sup> Given that Hellenistic literary practices are frequently also found in earlier literature (see K. J. Dover, *Theocritus: Select Poems* [Macmillan 1971] lxxvi–lxxii; F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* [Cambridge 1979] 8–10) it may not be entirely fanciful to see what Thucydides does, i.e. imitates verbatim in one speech of Cleon three passages from one speech of Pericles, as *aemulatio* in the form of *imitatio cum variatione* of his Homeric model, who in one speech of Thersites imitates two lines from two different speeches of Achilles.

<sup>12</sup> Jocelyn on Ennius *fr.* 84.9 *q.v.*, citing Eur. *Andr.* 186–7; *fr.* 327; *Tr. Gr. inc. Fr.* 119; and Cic. *S. Rosc.* 2.

<sup>13</sup> So Jocelyn *loc. cit.*

In the set of terms explained above, Thucydides' original audience was meant to conclude that what Pericles said was right simply because he was Pericles and that what Cleon said was wrong, even if it was the same as what Pericles said, simply because Cleon was Cleon. The similarity or identity of the sayings would therefore have served to underline the contrast between the characters of the two men already established as dissimilar. Here the Stobaeus extract quoted above, which notes that excellence of spirit does not sit well upon a fool, is much to the point.

If this type of moral evaluation seems strange to us, it may be worth remembering that it was a normal ancient way of looking at such matters. Already in Homer himself there is an ethical code in which the character of the agent is seen as primary. 'Good' actions can only be performed by a 'good' man.<sup>14</sup> The Eustathian comment is thus true to Homer. The developed moral philosophy of Aristotle rationalised this traditional Greek moral view: in his ethical theory virtue is preeminent, and it consists in a disposition towards good actions, which take their moral status from the agent's virtuous character.<sup>15</sup> Stoic moral philosophy took the view to extremes. Both good and bad actions alike were indissolubly connected with the goodness and badness of the agent.<sup>16</sup>

To sum up: if the suggestion offered in this note is correct, four points can be made:

(1) the notion that Cleon's echoes of Pericles are accidental or meaningless can now be absolutely ruled out;

(2) an interesting literary feature of Thucydides, namely allusion to Homeric models in his portrayal of historical characters, has been detected;

(3) Thucydides intended his readers to keep Thersites in mind when evaluating Cleon and wanted to associate Pericles with Achilles;

(4) Thucydides is assuming as the background to his character portrayals a standard ancient type of moral assessment, in which actions and words take their worth from that of the actor or speaker.

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<sup>14</sup> But not the reverse since a 'good' man *can* perform evil actions. The difficulties of Homeric ethics are well known (*cf.* e.g. A. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* [Oxford 1960]; A. A. Long, 'Morals and Values in Homer', *JHS* xc [1970] 121–39); but I hope that the formulation here would be acceptable to all sides.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle*<sup>5</sup> (Oxford 1949) 192–7.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. H. von Arnim, *SVF* (Leipzig 1924) iv, index s.vv. σοφός, φαῦλος.

### *Periplus Maris Erythraei: Notes on the Text*

The sole reliable text of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* is H. Frisk's, published in 1927.<sup>1</sup> He not only re-examined the one important manuscript that has survived but brought to bear his knowledge of the language of the Greek papyri of Egypt, which is close kin to that written by the plain-spoken captain or merchant who com-

<sup>1</sup> *Le Périphe de la Mer Érythrée*, Göteborgs Högska Årsskrift xxxiii (Göteborg 1927). A translation based on this text has recently appeared: *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, trans. with comm., G. W. B. Huntingford, Hakluyt Society, series 2, cli (London 1980).