TOWARD KNOWING THUCYDIDES

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ANY ESSAY on this subject must be tentative, the evidence being internal the interpretation subjective, and is just as likely to irritate as to enlighten. Furthermore, the essayist is embarrassed as well as helped by a host of predecessors: Thucydides having attracted so many admirers, what more can be said both new and possibly true? Nevertheless, the interest he inspires compels the attempt.

Critics from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, "Longinus," Plutarch (*de glor. Ath.* 347a-c, *Nic.* 1), Marcellinus to Macaulay[1] have been impressed by Thucydides' artistic power, and their eloquent appreciation has been shared and extended by many modern scholars. But here an oddity is to be noted: according to the common view, the author himself did not share this opinion of his work. Most seem to accept without question that Thucydides in writing *καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται* (1.22.4) was acknowledging that his work was rather dull. For example, Gomme: "And when Thucydides adds that his work will be less attractive because it has nothing of *τὸ μυθῶδες* in it,"[2] and Lesky: "Thucydides himself is well aware that the severity of his ideals will make it impossible for his work to be widely attractive,"[3] and Brunt, after paying appropriate tribute to "the literary merits of his work," goes on: "But Thucydides himself expected immortality only because the accuracy of his researches had enabled him, as he thought, to produce useful guidance for the future,"[4] and even Badian: "Thucydides 1.22.4, the famous passage where Thucydides admits that his work will not please the listeners as much as others."[5]

Such interpretations ignore *ἴσως* and *φανεῖται* and so can hardly be accepted as satisfactory. Thucydides is not admitting that his work is

The following works are referred to by author's name only: Schmid-Stählin, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur* 1.5 (Munich 1948), and O. Luschnat, *Thukydides der Historiker* (Stuttgart 1971) = *RE Suppl.-Band* 12 *s.v.* Thukydides.

[1] T. B. Macaulay, "History," *Edinburgh Review*, May, 1828; G. O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* 1 (New York and London 1875) 387: "I do assure you that there is no prose composition in the world . . . which I place so high as the seventh book of Thucydides. It is the *ne plus ultra* of human art."

[2] A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1954) 117.

[3] A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, translated by J. Willis and C. de Heer (London 1966) 474.

[4] P. A. Brunt, *Thucydides* (New York 1963) ix.

[5] E. Badian, "Archons and *Strategoi*," *Antichthon* 5 (1971) 23, n. 59.

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less attractive, but is preparing to make a point in argument, and only incidentally advising his readers that they won't be getting what they're used to: ". . . perhaps the absence of τὸ μυθῶδες in my work will make it seem less attractive, but if serious readers find it useful, I shall be content" (reading a comma, not, with edd., a semi-colon between the μέν and δέ clauses). In 1.22.4 Thucydides is engaging in polemic, not making a considered statement on the literary quality of his work; if the predecessors he criticizes are *dulces*, he must be *utilis*—hence the lofty dismissal of literary considerations with ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν, the high-minded devotion to utility, the same prim, self-righteous tone as appears in chs. 20 and 21. Not that this is not the result of deep conviction, entirely sincere, but obviously we should not take this polemically-inspired unconcern with the literary aspect of his work as representing Thucydides' real feelings on this point. Conceivably he may have overvalued the scientific quality of his work as compared with the artistic—authors are not always the best critics of their works, but it is hard to believe that he was quite unaware that he had written, or was still writing, προσαγωγότερόν τι (21.1). It is also natural to suppose that such awareness would have revealed itself, however indirectly, in his foreword to the reader, and in fact, concern with the literary aspect of his work is shown by his carping at the charms of the poets and logographers (instead of simply attacking their unreliability), by coming back to it a few lines later (the third point in his foreword, after speeches and narrative), and by his very insistence that his composition is not an ἀγώνισμα; he doth protest too much—literary, artistic considerations were very much on his mind, he wanted his work to be a popular success.

Schmid, however, is not alone in seeing Thucydides as a formidable, self-willed person, reminiscent of figures like Heracleitus and Pindar, who despised the *profanum vulgus* of sensualists (*der Geniesser*) and intentionally scared them away.[6] No author who writes like Thucydides is trying to scare away readers. This seems too obvious to require arguing. Kitto suggests an interesting parlour-game where guests would be asked to list Thucydides' "vividly descriptive passages,"[7] and almost all writers on Thucydides have felt impelled to give such lists, the "great passages," which go far beyond the needs of "scientific history."

The foregoing interpretation may, at least partially, explain one of the lacunae in 1.22, the *Methodenkapitel*, deplored by Luschnat, Thucydides' failure to refer to the literary-artistic sphere, to speak of his art;[8] the argument led him to claim his work was *utile*, and he did not choose to add (after missing the natural transition) that it was also *dulcius*, indi-

[6]Schmid-Stählin 201.

[7]H. D. F. Kitto, *Poiesis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1966) 271.

[8]Luschnat col. 1182 f.

cating in a few words how he had made it so. But whether or not something new has been seen in 1.22, it is generally recognized that Thucydides was a great artist. It does not seem so certain, however, that the prominence of the artist in Thucydides as compared with the scientist[9] has been sufficiently recognized, and so I propose, in the first part of this paper to consider briefly some aspects of his work, not the "great passages," or the broad designs and the over-all plan or composition variously seen by various critics, but simpler characteristics, which seem more consonant with the artistic than the scientific, in the hope that this may contribute something to our knowledge of Thucydides and his work.

We may, to start, say that the artist is intensely, emotionally involved in his subject, whereas the scientist is expected to show a more objective coolness and restraint. Thucydides is commonly thought to score well as a scientist on this test, but hard to accommodate to the idea of a consistently cool and judicious Thucydides is his predilection for the superlative; though often noted,[10] this characteristic does not seem to have received the attention it deserves for an appreciation of Thucydides. His superlatives are not to be regarded as just a literary convention,[11] or the reflection of a general zest and enthusiasm,[12] but are to be coupled with his taste for the hyperbolic,[13] both intensifying, a consequence of the artist's absorption in his subject, his conviction of its importance, and his urge to communicate this conviction to his readers. They contribute to Thucydides' success in catching the reader up in his own belief in the importance of the Peloponnesian War and by so doing affording him, to borrow an expression of the young Berenson and apply it rather loosely to literature, a "life-enhancing" experience, the distinctive effect of great art and a principal reason for the appeal of Thucydides' work.[14] By the prominence of the superlative and the hyperbolic in his work the artist in Thucydides is revealed as distinct from the scientist.

[9]I hope I may use these terms in a very general sort of way without giving offence; and I am conscious of the artificiality of drawing a sharp line between them.

[10]E.g., W. H. Forbes, *Thucydides Book I* (Oxford 1895) xxiii: "He has a curious habit, which almost amounts to a mannerism, of noting not only the largest armies or navies or the greatest battles by land and sea etc.;" cf. K. J. Dover on the superlatives of 6.31.1: "unless perhaps Thucydides is misleading us in his love of exaggeration" (K. J. Dover, *Thucydides Book VI* [Oxford 1965] 41).

[11]Schmid-Stählin 196; cf. 1.2, 567.

[12]Like a Pepys' or a Chaucer's; cf. R. Latham and W. Matthews, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1970) cxi.

[13]Schmid-Stählin 202.

[14]Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*[2] (New York and London 1902): "the heightening of vitality which comes to us when we keenly realise life" (51), "we feel as if the elixir of life, not our own sluggish blood, were coursing through our veins" (55).

The strength of this tendency in Thucydides is illustrated by the following few examples. At 2.8.4 we see him straining for emphasis:

> ἔρρωτό τε πᾶς καὶ ἰδιώτης καὶ πόλις εἴ τι δύναιτο καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ ξυνεπιλαμβάνειν αὐτοῖς· ἐν τούτῳ τε κεκωλῦσθαι ἐδόκει ἑκάστῳ τὰ πράγματα ᾧ μή τις αὐτὸς παρέσται.

and the same expression is repeated at 4.14.2, more aptly, I should think, in spite of the literalist objections of Grossman, Wilamowitz, and Gomme, and a good deal less hyperbolically.[15] At 3.81.5 a comparable straining for emphasis: οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ ξυνέβη καὶ ἔτι περαιτέρω. In the same category is his use of ἔκπληξις μεγίστη; the Athenians are so affected at 2.94.1: οὐδεμιᾶς τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐλάσσων, at 7.71.7: οὐδεμιᾶς δὴ τῶν ξυμπασῶν ἐλάσσων, and at 8.96.1: μεγίστη δὴ τῶν πρὶν παρέστη (and cf. 8.1.2); the Spartans at 4.55.3: καὶ ἅμα τὰ τῆς τύχης - - - αὐτοῖς ἔκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε, and at 5.66.2: μάλιστα δὴ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐς ὃ ἐμέμνητο ἐν τούτῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐξεπλάγησαν. And at 6.24.3 an instance trivial but indicative: καὶ ἔρως ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁμοίως ἐκπλεῦσαι—but a few lines later we learn that an unspecified number disapproved; πᾶσι does contribute to a superlative scene, but the scientist would presumably have written τοῖς πολλοῖς or τοῖς πλείοσι. The straining to heighten the significance of events can lead to grotesque results, as in his comparing, even with ὡς μικρὸν μεγάλῳ εἰκάσαι, Sphacteria to Thermopylae (4.36.3), and the Athenian disaster at Syracuse, without any qualification, to that of the Spartans at Pylos-Sphacteria (7.71.7).

A technique of qualifying allows Thucydides to indulge his addiction to the superlative without offense to ἀκριβεία, e.g.: the battle of Sybota (1.50.2), his praise of 120-odd Athenian hoplites killed in Aetolia (3.98.4),[16] the Ambraciot disaster a little later (3.113.6), the oligarchic seizure of Megara (4.74.4), the battle of Mantinea (5.74.1), the Athenian armada (6.31.1), the disaster at Mycalessus (7.30.3), the final battle in the Great Harbour (7.70.4). This piling on of superlatives and δήs underlines the intensity with which Thucydides regarded the war, "his war" as has been well said,[17] and contributes appreciably to keeping the emotional temperature high. Thucydides' unrelenting concentration captures his reader: no relaxation, the broader view, like Herodotus' εἴη δ'ἂν πᾶν (4.195.2) and γένοιτο δ'ἂν πᾶν ἐν τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ (5.9.3).

The end of Book 7 calls for superlatives and Thucydides rises magnificently to the occasion. The hyperbolic tone of the Funeral Speech[18] sub-

[15] A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 3 (Oxford 1956) *ad loc.*

[16] The strangeness of this judgement has provoked considerable discussion (cf. Gomme, *Commentary*, *ad loc.*), but I guess there is no special explanation—just a Thucydidean superlative.

[17] V. H. Galbraith, *An Introduction to the Study of History* (Oxford 1964) 18.

[18] Schmid-Stählin 202.

serves the truth, enlarges understanding, and the same may be said, in spite of valid objections,[19] of Thucydides' description of the consequences of the Plague. Other instances have been criticized as leading Thucydides into exaggeration,[20] and while his assertion that the Peloponnesian War was the biggest ever is hard to quarrel with, still his hyperbolic bent leads him to a mode of argumentation which here and there is disreputably *ex parte* and culminates in the doubtful claim of 1.19 (*fin.*). Gomme and most other commentators refuse to believe that Thucydides is here saying that Athens and Sparta separately in 431 were militarily stronger than together, as allies, in 480, but this meaning should certainly be accepted, with Classen, Crawley, and Croiset, Thucydides' instinct for the hyperbolic supporting the natural run of the passage.

Gomme is also unwilling to accept two other Thucydidean judgements of superlative hue, the praise of Chian *sophrosyne* (8.24.4) and of the 5000 (8.97.2): "but this particular praise of Chios for this particular action is exaggerated in relation to that action, as is that of the government of the 5000; and I think Thucydides could have modified both in a final revision of Book VIII."[21] Gomme underestimates, I think, the strength of Thucydides' instinct for the superlative; he is not so sober and "scientific" as Gomme, here at least, apparently sees him. Finley too seems to allow insufficiently for this characteristic of Thucydides when he takes certain superlatives of Book 7 as evidence that these passages were written after the war (29.5, 44.1, 56.4, 75.7, 87.5): "To say that Thucydides made these statements in ignorance of what might presently take place is to liken him to the poets and logographers whose uncritical stories he attacks I 21."[22] Given Thucydides' way with the superlative, this argument is of little weight; and Finley might have remembered that, while Plato attacked the poets, he was not himself altogether unpoetical.

A riskier idea suggests itself: are all of the striking, the melodramatic coincidences which add appreciably to the glamour of Thucydides' account of the war related *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, or are some, at least, to be connected with his propensity for the superlative, the hyperbolic, a common characteristic of the natural story-teller?[23] The Corinthians and

[19]Gomme, *Commentary*, at 2.53.1.

[20]For example 2.65.7 (Gomme, *JHS* 71 [1951] 70 f., and *Commentary*, *ad loc.*), 1.23.1–3 (Gomme, *Commentary*, *ad loc.*). At 8.26.1 Thucydides refers to Leros as *τὴν πρὸ Μιλήτου νῆσον*. Since it is about 40 miles distant from Miletus, Goodhart (H. C. Goodhart, *The Eighth Book of Thucydides' History* [London 1893] *ad loc.*) concludes: "No doubt however Thucydides would not have used this phrase unless he had thought it was much nearer to Miletus than it actually is." Is it perhaps more likely that Thucydides knew where Leros was, but is exaggerating to heighten the excitement?

[21]A. W. Gomme, *More Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford 1962) 164.

[22]J. H. Finley, "The Unity of Thucydides' History," *HSCP* Suppl. Vol. 1 (1940) 261.

[23]Cf. Arist. *Poetics* 1460 a 17 f.: *τὸ δὲ θαυμαστὸν ἡδύ· σημεῖον δέ, πάντες γὰρ προστιθέντες ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὡς χαριζόμενοι.*

their allies after routing the Corcyraeans at Sybota spent a considerable time tidying up before reassembling and sailing against the Corcyraeans to deliver the *coup de grâce*. It was now late, the paean had been sung for the attack when suddenly the Corinthians backed water on sighting twenty ships approaching which they suspected were Athenian—a matter of split seconds, the Perils of Pauline with a vengeance. Would the discipline and training of the Corinthian and allied fleet (ca 120 ships?) have been so good as to arrest the attack at such close quarters and to effect without mishap the dangerous manoeuvre of disengaging by backing away from the enemy's prows (1.50–51)?

Peloponnesian storming techniques having proved ineffectual against Plataea, the attackers decided before accepting the grim necessity of circumvallation (i.e., for Greeks: cf. Polyb. 6.42) to try to burn them out. Much wood was piled up, in and outside the wall, and touched off, resulting in "the biggest-ever hand-made blaze," which almost succeeded, and would have if the favouring wind, hoped for by the Peloponnesians, had come up. To this completed account Thucydides adds a Croesus-like storm which put an end to the danger, introduced, to be sure, by λέγεται, but by its inclusion revealing Thucydides' taste for melodrama, and showing that the austere scientist was not always in the driver's seat (2.77).

Paches, sitting or standing in his H.Q., has "only just had time to read the decree" (Crawley) of the Athenian people ordering him to put to death all adult Mytilenaean males and sell their women and children into slavery, and is about to carry out his instructions, when the second ship with countermanding orders sails into the harbour of Mytilene and saves the city from destruction: παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν ἡ Μυτιλήνη ἦλθε κινδύνου (3.49.4). Enormously picturesque and exciting and no doubt substantially correct, but Thucydides' account may exaggerate the drama and the danger. Kitto writes: "Thucydides does not try to conceal it from us that Mytilene escaped judicial massacre, after two debates, only by a few votes and a few minutes"[24]—the impression, certainly, that Thucydides wished to create, but presumably it would have taken some time for Paches with a drastically reduced (3.35.2) and scattered (?) (3.30.2) force to round up (3.28.1) and massacre all adult males.[25]

The Syracusans, depressed and discouraged, are about to meet in

[24]H. D. F. Kitto (above, note 7) 308.

[25]A lesser, but not contemptible, coincidence occurs when the man wishing to warn the Mytilenaeans of the Athenian surprise-attack crosses over to Euboea, goes overland to Geraestus and finds a merchantman putting out to sea: ὁλκάδος ἀναγομένης ἐπιτυχών (3.3.5). Themistocles, towards the end of a thrilling chase, reaches Pydna overland from Molossia and finds a merchantman putting out to sea, bound for Ionia: ἐν ᾗ ὁλκάδος τυχὼν ἀναγομένης ἐπ' Ἰωνίας (1.137.2). Thucydides does not tell us that the posse is still on his heels, but nothing to prevent our thinking so. (Why hasn't Hollywood filmed an epic on Themistocles?)

assembly to discuss putting an end to the war, i.e., surrendering, when Gongylus, with a single ship, arrives from Leucas and puts a stop to proceedings by telling them that other ships are coming and Gylippus as commander; he had started weeks earlier and Gongylus could have had no idea of his whereabouts but there he was when the Syracusans marched out to meet him, and Syracuse was saved: *παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν αἱ Συράκουσαι ἦλθον κινδύνου* (7.2). But Thucydides has told us some time before (6.103) that the Syracusans in a state of demoralization were holding peace talks among themselves and making overtures to Nicias (and there this information greatly enhances the drama of Gylippus' arrival in Italian waters: a real peripety). The precise coincidence of the convening of the critical assembly (for the agenda of which Thucydides could scarcely have had documentary evidence), and the arrivals of Gongylus and Gylippus does strain credence, and the Syracusan response to Gongylus' information is hardly that of men ready to surrender.

And the Eclipse, was it the very night set for the withdrawal? Thucydides does not say so in so many words, but his words are usually so understood (7.50.3-4).

In the foregoing instances I am not for a minute suggesting any serious distortion of the facts, but the artist's job is to improve on nature, and even admitting the drama of events, it seems possible that Thucydides is doing just that, the artist *qua* story-teller making a good story better.[26]

Thucydides loves to tell a story, and is drawn to subjects which invite the exercise of this aspect of his genius—Pausanias, Themistocles, Plataea, Phormio's fights, Pylos-Sphacteria (including the Assembly at 4.27-28), the daring deed of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, etc., etc. The severe critic may object that this sometimes leads to "a lack of proportion;" it is certainly evidence for the strength of Thucydides' artistic instinct.

Other evidence of the artist in Thucydides in his sure eye for vivid detail: the Plataeans under siege dropped great beams suspended by iron chains to break off the noses of the battering-rams—enough for the scientist, but Thucydides gives us more: *ἀφίεσαν τὴν δοκὸν χαλαραῖς ταῖς ἁλύσεσι καὶ οὐ διὰ χειρὸς ἔχοντες*—"let 'er rip" (2.76.4). The Plataean garrison planning escape must make scaling-ladders. To determine their proper length many men, many times, counted the courses of bricks in the surrounding wall where it happened not to be whitewashed. This detailed account, with its glimpse of prison-camp psychology, brilliantly anticipates our own escape literature following World War II (3.20.3-4). And

[26]We may note here Dover's suspicion that the story of Egesta's hoodwinking of Athens (6.46.3) is likely exaggerated, "and that Thucydides accepted the story in this form without realizing that it was nonsense" (in Gomme, *Commentary, ad loc.*). Perhaps his critical faculties were dulled by his love of a good story; perhaps the embellishment was his own.

a little later the Peloponnesian torches on Cithaeron, a memorable detail (3.24.1). At 4.25.4 ἀποκολυμβησάντων is an unnecessarily picturesque touch (cited by *LSJ* only in this passage and from Dio). The battered defenders at Pylos did not simply surrender, but lowered their shields and waved their hands (4.38.1; according to Classen-Steup, *ad loc.*, the waving of the hands only here "*in guter Zeit*," and in Dio). Before Brasidas' sortie from Amphipolis many feet of horses and men could be seen under the gates (5.10.2). The face of the ephor (1.134.1), the expression of Hippias (6.58.1).

Two small illustrations of Thucydides' narrative skill, which extracts all the drama from a situation, may be noted here. The Athenians move against Syracuse from Catane, meaning to seize Epipolae, but though the Athenian move starts the action, Thucydides' account is started from the Syracusan side, which enables him to get all the colour and drama from the incident (6.96-97). His account of the exchange of messengers between Plataea and Athens (2.6) has received a heavy-handed mauling from some eminent commentators, including Wilamowitz and Gomme: "certainly confused."[27] It is, on the contrary, natural and dramatic, and clear enough for any reader who does not require the stylistic approach of a railway timetable; one should think long before criticizing Thucydides' narrative tact.[28]

A few more characteristics of Thucydidean historiography which seem, perhaps, more consonant with the artistic than the scientific may be briefly mentioned. The first is Thucydides' lack of apparent system in giving geographical information, names of ambassadors or envoys, or speakers, information about the military or financial resources of the combatants. This is not a case of "what Thucydides takes for granted" or "his self-imposed limitations,"[29] but his erratic reporting of categories of information that he does include. The complaints are too familiar to dwell on,[30] and in fairness to Thucydides may be partially explained as a result of, and at the same time evidence for, the long and discontinuous composition of the history, and the lack of a thorough revision.

Thucydides' resolute suppression of all information about his sources (except for 2.48.3 and his *strategia*) must be deliberate, and is hardly "scientific;" very possibly artistic considerations, or instinct, enter in.[31] He seems on occasion almost to flaunt it: where certain transactions are

[27]Gomme, *Commentary, ad loc.*

[28]Thucydides can achieve high drama within the confines of a single sentence; e.g., the second sentence of 1.18.2, 1.20.2.

[29]Gomme, *Commentary*, 1.1–29.

[30]Gomme, in his *Commentary*, pays particular attention to this matter.

[31]"Thucydides . . . presented the finished work to the public, as the architect presents the building . . . without the scaffolding" (Gomme, *The Greek Attitude* [above, note 2] 140: "I take the metaphor from Cornford").

designated as κρύφα (1.67.2, 1.101.2, 1.107.4, 1.128.5, 2.101.5, 4.79.2, 4.108.3, 8.50.2); where it is said of the contents of Pausanias' letter to the Great King ὡς ὕστερον ἀνηυρέθη (1.128.6), of his intrigues with the Helots καὶ ἦν δὲ οὕτως (1.132.4), and ὡς λέγεται of his Argilian ex-παιδικά's turning informer (1.132.5); the council of the generals after the failure on Epipolae (7.48-49); the positive assertions that Athens did have supporters, Nicias' informants, in Syracuse (7.48.2, 7.49.1, 7.73.3); the tortuous manoeuvring between Phrynichus and Alcibiades, with a ὡς ἐλέγετο to remind the reader of the problem (8.50-51); secret diplomacy at 5.36-38 (cf. Polybius' comments on the difficulty for the historian of secret diplomacy and his own way of dealing with it [29.5]); Thucydides claims access to the most accurate tradition but does not tell us how or what (6.55.1).

In spite of his announced purpose (1.22.4), he is never obtrusively didactic, the death of art; and in spite of his prospectus at 2.1 he is no chronicler—detail, in the interest of completeness, is not allowed to clog his narrative, to detract from the effects he wishes to create; he selects as an artist as well as a scientist. Dover, at 7.78.5, alludes to "Thucydides' characteristic imprecision in his account of the fighting," and at 7.71.4 comments: "This splendid and lucid incoherence does justice to the subject.... Contrast the frigid correctness of Xen. *Cyr.* VII.1.40."[32] This brings to mind Tacitus, "le plus grand peintre d'antiquité" (Racine),[33] but not the best military historian.

As for the speeches, Gomme writes: "without them Thucydides would have had, in the modern manner, to have written pages of explanation of what he thought was their [Melos, Mytilene, Plataea] significance; with the speeches he can let the events explain themselves in the artist's manner."[34] Credit for this device is of course not all Thucydides', but he assigns to speeches a very prominent part in his history in spite of their admittedly being contrary to scientific exactitude (1.22.1), and no doubt costing him a great deal of labour. In addition to the formal speeches, Thucydides' brilliant use of scraps of dialogue marks him most clearly as artist, story-teller, not austere scientist.[35]

There is a further consideration which might be thought to magnify Thucydides *qua* artist as against Thucydides *qua* scientist-thinker, and I advance it with great hesitation. When circumstances connected with the antecedents of the war and with the war itself must have been inter-

[32]K. J. Dover, *Thucydides, Book VII* (Oxford 1965).

[33]For Thucydides as painter cf. Plut. *de glor. Ath.* 347a–c.

[34]A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude* (above, note 2) 143. Cf. modern historians agonizing over the problem of how to combine "narrative history" and "analytical history," "the problem of rescuing narrative from the charge of superficiality without breaking the flow and exasperating the reader" (G. R. Elton, *Political History* [London 1970] 165).

[35]A useful conspectus in Luschnat coll. 1163–1166.

minably canvassed,[36] and when Thucydides' manner of expression, and his thought reflect those of a period of intense intellectual activity, evidence for which though largely lost survives in sufficient quantity to prove their influence on Thucydides, or his debt to them,[37] there is an uncomfortable uncertainty how far his thought was original, how far derivative, and the possibility that his intellectual achievement might lose *some* of its impressiveness if surrounded by all the original hills and peaks. There is no such uncertainty about the originality of his artistic achievement, and the cerebral Thucydides should not obscure the artistic-emotional.

Adcock is undoubtedly right in saying that "the primary, the main purpose" of Thucydides' history "is intellectual enlightenment,"[38] but we are not to suppose (in spite of 1.22.4—cf. above, 81–82) that he was indifferent to giving his readers pleasure, an emotional experience. Such a stereotype represents a sad failure to appreciate his text. In all this I have simply been arguing that the artistic component in Thucydides' nature was very strong, and while it usually, and brilliantly, collaborated with the scientific, it remained independent and sometimes even worked against the scientific, and that Thucydides' artistic achievement is fully equal to his scientific or intellectual.

II

Professor Luschnat is quite right in saying that "the character of Thucydides remains, in the final analysis, barred to us,"[39] but this does not exclude it as a proper subject for investigation. Thucydides' *strategia* in 424, as one of the few facts known about his life, has been much discussed, and obviously, if the truth about it could be recovered, would throw much light on his character (and conversely, if we knew more about his character, it would help us choose among the various theories advanced about his *strategia*). Gomme, after making all the possible excuses to absolve Thucydides from responsibility for the loss of Amphi-

[36]Cf. Thuc. 2.13.9: ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ ἄλλα οἷαπερ εἰώθει Περικλῆς ἐς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ περιέσεσθαι τῷ πολέμῳ; and Cleon's invective, 3.38; and Pohlenz, *Kleine Schriften* 2.305 (= "Die thuk. Frage im Lichte der neueren Forschung," *GGA* 198 [1936] 281–300): the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις was current in Periclean times and must have been familiar to Thucydides already in 431.

[37]Cf. Schmid-Stählin 1 ff.; Luschnat 1229 ff.; W. H. Forbes (above, note 10) xl-lxxx; J. H. Finley, "Euripides and Thucydides," *HSCP* 49 (1938) 23 ff., *Thucydides* (Ann Arbor 1963) 36 ff.; G. Grossman, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (Diss. Basel 1950); W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 3 (Cambridge 1969).

[38]F. E. Adcock, *Thucydides and his History* (Cambridge 1963) 12.

[39]Luschnat col. 1102.

polis, concludes by agreeing with Grote that he was at fault: "Thucydides, I feel, was conscious not only of his failure, but of his partial responsibility."[40] This, I believe, is the most likely conclusion, and the one that best accords with Thucydides' account of the matter. The details, of course, cannot be recovered, but it seems not unlikely that on taking up their command Thucydides and Eucles by mutual agreement divided their responsibility for the Thraceward District, the one establishing his H.Q. at Amphipolis, the other at Thasos, Eucles as senior (i.e., the older), as is probable, drawing Amphipolis. When Brasidas appeared on the scene, Thucydides, with or without Eucles' approval, should have transferred his H.Q. to Eion or Amphipolis, he should have "thrown away the book."

That is what Themistocles would have done: *τῶν τε παραχρῆμα δι' ἐλαχίστης βουλῆς κράτιστος γνώμων - - - καὶ τὸ ξύμπαν εἰπεῖν φύσεως μὲν δυνάμει, μελέτης δὲ βραχύτητι κράτιστος δὴ οὗτος αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὰ δέοντα ἐγένετο* (1.138.3), and this gift of his for quick, and the necessary, decision emphasized at the beginning and end of Thucydides' encomium, is illustrated at 1.74.1 (Salamis), 90.3 (the wall episode), and 136.1 ff. (his escape, his appeal to Admetus, his handling of the crisis off Naxos). Themistocles for Thucydides was a splendid "man of action," and if it is true that people tend to admire in others qualities they feel they lack themselves, then I suggest that a principal reason for the unique ardour of Thucydides' admiration of Themistocles was that Thucydides was an "intellectual," 1.138.3 an intellectual's tribute to a man of action. And I suggest further that Thucydides' admiration of this particular quality in Themistocles throws light on his own performance in 424, supporting the theory accepted above.[41]

Lamb's judgement: "He was himself a man of action who turned his brain and hand to writing,"[42] should, I think, be reversed: "He was himself an intellectual who briefly turned his brain and hand to playing the man of action," his election as *strategos*, as often suggested, not so much the result of proved competence as of position and family connec-

[40]Gomme, *Commentary* 3.587.

[41]Thucydides expresses admiration for other men, but there does seem to be something special in his admiration of Themistocles, a lowering of his guard, a crack in his reserve, which one is tempted to use as a peephole (or an open door). In the striking emphasis he lays on the potency of Themistocles' natural powers, his native wit, his *easy* and sure decisiveness, I do not think it is just fanciful to see self-revelation, revelation of deficiencies a sensitive intellectual might have felt in himself when he considered a man like Themistocles—almost a self-portrait in reverse. (If Themistocles had taken up the writing of history, would he have used 300-odd parentheses to clarify his meaning? [Schmid-Stählin 184 f.]).

[42]W. R. M. Lamb, *Clio Enthroned. A Study of Prose-Form in Thucydides* (Cambridge 1914) 168.

tions. The opening of his history, which clearly shows the instincts of a student, strongly supports this view of Thucydides. K. Ziegler argues that the excursuses in Thucydides which are in contrast with their surroundings were written by Thucydides as a student prior to the outbreak of the war. The war ended his period of studies and Thucydides immediately decided to write its history[43]—whether or not correct in detail, very persuasive.

Other men of action Thucydides admires include Brasidas (4.81.1), not only in the North, but perhaps even more revealingly for his quick decisiveness at Methone (2.25.1-2) and Pylos (4.11.4), Pericles (1.139.4), Hermocrates (6.72.2), Phrynichus (8.27 and 68.3), Alcibiades (8.86.4-5), and even a Thucydides of Pharsalus is immortalized for possessing this quality (8.92.8). One reason for his dislike of Cleon was that he masqueraded as a man of action (cf. 2.61.4);[44] this particularly irritated Thucydides, a failed man of action himself—Cleon could not even control his troops (5.7.2). Consistent with his admiration of men of action is his liking for daring deeds: disapproval of Peloponnesian failure of nerve which led to their abandoning the reckless scheme to raid the Peiraeus (2.94.1), Teutiaplus' bold advice honoured by a powerful short speech (uniquely introduced by *τάδε*), and withering contempt for Alcidas' leaden disposition (3.30-31), repeated at Corcyra (3.79), approval of Lamachus' advice (7.42.3), disapproval of the Spartans (8.96.3-4), and even the Sicilian Expedition is not without appeal to this side of his nature (2.65.11).

Pericles and Alcibiades, thanks to their being men of action, could restrain, control the masses, the mob; Thucydides' approval is not only part of his admiration for such men and such ability, but the expressions he chooses, *κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος* (2.65.8), and *κατασχεῖν τὸν ὄχλον* (8.86.5: the heroic *ναυτικὸς ὄχλος*) vividly illumine his feelings about radical democracy, tell us more about him. While his reservations about and dislike of democracy are generally recognized,[45] I have not noticed any particular attention to these two expressions and think they deserve it. Thucydides could understand and sympathize with Pericles' idealism about the free individual in a free society, and felt pride in the great and powerful Athens this had helped to produce, and was aware of the allure of individual liberty (7.69.2), but temperamentally, emotionally he was more Platonic: the *ὄχλος* was a great beast (Pl. *Resp.* 493a, c) that had to be restrained, controlled by a strong leader if it was not to get out of hand,

[43]K. Ziegler, "Thuc. u. Polybios," *Wiss. Zeitschr. d. Univ. Greifswald* 5 (1955, 1956) 161–170; cited, and summarized approvingly by Luschnat, coll. 1106 ff.; not seen by me.

[44]Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 391 f.

[45]Cf. 2.21.3, 2.59, 2.65.4, 4.28.3, 6.1.1, 6.63.2, 8.1.4, 8.68.1.

the irrational in control (3.45.6). κατέχειν is highly indicative of his temperament, his real feeling about the Athenian *demos*.[46]

This was not simply a matter of political theory, the best constitution; in city-states elemental passions were near the surface, the masses were potentially dangerous. Thucydides, a reserved, upper-class intellectual, shrank from mob violence. Pericles controlled such tendencies in the masses, an important part of his charm for a man like Thucydides; he kept things comfortable—he controlled the masses ἐλευθέρως (2.65.8), not τυραννικῶς: τὸ μὲν Ἀττικὸν κατεχόμενόν τε καὶ διεσπασμένον ὑπὸ Πεισιστράτου (Hdt. 1.59). Cleon, on the other hand, encouraged such tendencies; himself βιαιότατος (3.36.6), the sponsor of brutal acts, the virtuoso of smear, the cause and centre of rowdy and tumultuary scenes in the Ecclesia: we see him in action at 4.27-28—shouting ensues[47] (the ναυτικὸς ὄχλος at Samos was shouting until restrained by Alcibiades [8.86.2]). Cleon, in Thucydides' opinion, degraded the tone of public life; war and Cleon were both teachers of violence (3.82.2).

Thucydides' conservatism in politics is answered by his conservatism in other spheres of life,[48] and notably that of morals. As Luschnat puts it, "Thucydides highly valued the traditional moral foundations of states (Steup, *Thuc.* 1[5] 67: 2.53, 3.82 f.)—his standards did not deviate from the conventional."[49] Over the years many readers have failed to understand this because of the cynical and amoral sentiments they find in his speeches —a veritable Machiavelli, and the absence of explicit condemnation of such doctrines or practice embodying them. But there can be no question but that this is simply Thucydides' manner, his style; his decency and humaneness are adequately attested and widely recognized. Gomme very forcefully quotes 3.83 as eloquent refutation of the view that Thucydides was "indifferent to the moral issue."[50] Thucydides' verdict on Nicias

[46]Solon in defending his archonship against his conservative critics (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 12) twice uses κατέχειν for his restraint of the revolutionary *demos*, once with κέντρον ("here the symbol of strong control," Sandys *ad loc.*); Theognis keeps the κέντρον but improves on κατέχειν: "kick thou the empty-headed commons, prick them with a sharp goad" (Edmonds' translation in the Loeb ed., 847 f.).

[47]Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 274 ff.

[48]Cf. Adcock (above, note 38) 64 f.: "Now and again, as A. Bauer has argued [*Philologus* 50 (1891) 401 ff.] he reveals a forward-looking attitude towards some sides of war, of the value of cavalry and well-trained light armed troops and regrets their absence, but he takes the means of war as they existed . . . ;" cf. Hdt. 7.9.2 βf. A small illustration of Thucydides' conservative turn of mind is his unquestioning acceptance of the practice of setting up trophies to celebrate victory. At 5.69.2 Spartan practice induces a mild sarcasm on pre-battle harangues, but he scrupulously reports all the falderal about trophies without a trace of impatience or amusement.

[49]Luschnat col. 1251.

[50]A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude* (above, note 2) 125 f.

(7.86.5), after recounting in detail his criminal bungling, used to greatly puzzle me (class-loyalty seemed an inadequate explanation); Dover's note[51] opened my eyes—the sensitivity of Thucydides. Certainly this is part of his attractiveness, his appeal to readers;[52] Thucydides was a sensitive man, and, because of his usual reserve, when he does reveal his feelings (often in superlatives), the effect is powerful.

Thucydides loved Athens and lost no love on Sparta[53]—he was conservative enough to be a sincere patriot, a fact that adds enormously, for most readers, to the emotional power of his work.[54]

Thucydides was a very great artist, and an intellectual, intensely alive to the ferment of his times but of strongly conservative bent. His work is to be enjoyed and admired in a more straightforward way than many of his critics seem to have thought—not spoiled by hypercritical fuss.

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[51]Dover (above, note 28) *ad loc.*

[52]Cf. F. W. Walbank, "Political Morality and the Friends of Scipio," *JRS* 55 (1965) 11: "It is a pretty ruthless approach; but Polybius was ruthless, and success was apt to be his main criterion. This can be seen by his lack of sympathy for failure in peoples or individuals."

[53]This is another reason for his liking of Themistocles (cf. 1.90–91, esp. 91.4–7). Pericles was a moderate war-monger because he was dealing with Spartans (2.65.5, 1.127.3). Cf. the distaste of 1.76.2, 1.77.6, 2.67.4, 3.32.2, 3.68.4, 3.93.2, 8.84.1–3—deviousness, hypocrisy, brutality, stupidity.

[54]As to Athenian imperialism, Thucydides' conservatism and patriotism caused him to accept it with little questioning; *παρὰ τὸ καθεστηκὸς ἐδουλώθη* (1.98.4) receives no development—in fact, it is quickly cancelled out by *ὧν αὐτοὶ αἴτιοι ἐγένοντο οἱ ξύμμαχοι κ.τ.λ.* (1.99.2), almost the Aristotelian justification of empire (*Pol.* 7, 1324b36 ff.). Imperialism shared with domestic politics the deterioration Thucydides saw consequent on the death of Pericles and the prolongation of the war, and for some of its more extreme manifestations he indicates his dislike, but certainly we are not to expect any attack on Athenian imperialism *per se* from Thucydides.