



EDITED BY

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≡ The Oxford Handbook of
THUCYDIDES

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
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Edited by

RYAN K. BALOT, SARA FORSDYKE,

and

EDITH FOSTER

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ATL B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor. 1939–1953. *The Athenian Tribute Lists*. 4 vols. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- CT S. Hornblower. 1991–2008. *A Commentary on Thucydides*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- DK H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. 6th Edition, 1951. Berlin: Weidman.
- FGrH F. Jacoby et al. 1923–2199. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. i–iii, Berlin; 1940–1958. Leiden: The Netherlands; 1998–. FGrH, iv, Leiden, Boston: Cologne.
- EGM R. L. Fowler. 2000–2013. *Early Greek Mythography*. i. *Text and Introduction*, ii. *Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HCT A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover. 1945–1981. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, i–v. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- IG I³ D. Lewis, with L. Jeffery and E. Erxleben. 1981–1988. *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Vol. 1, 3rd ed., *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores*. Berlin.
- IG II² J. Kirchner. 1913–1940. *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Vol. 2, 2nd ed., *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores*. Berlin.
- Kassel-Austin Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin, eds. 1983–. *Poetae Comici Graeci* (PCG). 12 vols. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.
- ML R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis. 1988. *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions: To the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RO P. J. Rhodes and R. G. Osborne. 2003. *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 B.C.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- TrGF B. Snell, R. Kannicht, and S. Radt. 1985–2007. *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, i–ii², iii–v. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- West M. L. West. 2003. *Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Century BC*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Translations

- Crawley Robert B. Strassler, ed. *The Landmark Thucydides. A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. New York: Free Press, 1996.
- Lattimore *The Peloponnesian War*, translated, with introduction, notes and glossary by Steven Lattimore. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co. 1998.
- Mynott J. Mynott. *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*. Edited and Translated by Jeremy Mynott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.









THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
THUCYDIDES

INTRODUCTION

IN the past century, Thucydides' ideas of power, justice, and freedom have played a critical role in both political and academic discourse. From Thucydidean interpretations of the Cold War to contemporary debates about the so-called "Thucydides Trap," the Athenian historian has hardly ever disappeared from consciousness. We share the belief that we have much to gain from studying Thucydides' *History* and have assembled a range of chapters designed to provide an accessible and useful, but also suitably broad and deep, introduction to Thucydides' ideas. Our goal is to bridge traditionally divided disciplines in order to approach Thucydides' oeuvre as a whole, highlighting not only Thucydides' foundational role in the development of the practice of history but also his importance as a thinker and writer whose simultaneous depth and innovativeness have been the focus of intense literary and philosophical study since classical antiquity. Thus, our forty chapters focus on Thucydides as a historian, literary artist, and philosopher, while also elaborating upon his intellectual context and influence on other ancient thinkers.¹ The juxtaposition of historical, literary, philosophical, and reception studies will allow, we hope, for a better grasp of the whole of Thucydides' ambitious and complex project.

The first section, "Thucydides as Historian," analyzes Thucydides' historical methods and assesses the strengths and limits of his *History* in documenting and explaining the fifth-century Greek world and beyond. With a view to uncovering Thucydides' particular qualities as an historian, the first two chapters examine Thucydides' methods of historical inquiry. In the first chapter, "Thucydides' Historical Method," Sara Forsdyke weighs Thucydides' claims to have described what actually happened against the evidence for his authorial selectiveness, interpretation, and intervention. For all his rhetoric of factual accuracy, Thucydides shaped his account in ways that engage the emotions of his readers in order both to persuade and to move them. Forsdyke observes that Thucydides made explicit the difficulties of uncovering and evaluating historical evidence and shows how he developed methods of critical inquiry designed to reduce inaccuracies caused by partisanship and the imperfections of memory. Nevertheless, Forsdyke emphasizes that Thucydides was keen to rival the literary achievement of his predecessors (especially Homer and Herodotus), in part by maximizing the dramatic impact of his account. She concludes that while these two aspects of Thucydides' method

¹ Translations are the authors' own, unless otherwise specified.

are in tension, both are essential to the historical craft bequeathed by Thucydides to modern practitioners from Leopold von Ranke onwards.

In “Thucydides on Early Greek History,” Hans van Wees examines the opening chapters of the work—known by scholars as the “Archaeology” (1.1–1.21)—and argues that its immediate purpose was to prove Thucydides’ claim that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war compared to previous wars. Van Wees suggests that Thucydides sought not only to establish the relative impoverishment of previous generations, but also to explain the role of resources and technology in driving growth. Furthermore, he points out that the Archaeology provides a developmental model of historical progress and an analytical history of power that was both innovative and influential. Yet Thucydides’ originality and objectivity should not be overstated: according to van Wees, this model was based on Athenian perspectives on their own power at the time of the Peloponnesian War. The model itself required Thucydides to suppress evidence that did not fit. Van Wees concludes by arguing that Thucydides’ account of early Greek history is inaccurate and can be corrected by using evidence from other sources, including Herodotus.

After exploring Thucydides’ historical methods, we turn to the various aspects and stages of the war as he presents them. Of particular importance are Thucydides’ selective coverage and emphases—questions that deserve investigation because of the possible gaps and distortions in his account. In certain cases, scholars are able to compare Thucydides’ account with other contemporary evidence, including literary treatments and epigraphy. In other cases, authors illustrate the importance of evaluating Thucydides’ positions critically and judging whether his representation of the war is plausible or convincing. In still other cases, scholars conclude that we have insufficient evidence either to confirm or to refute Thucydides’ presentation. In general, the chapters in this section provide diverse assessments, occasionally criticizing Thucydides for his omissions and misguided emphases, but often vindicating his interpretations and explaining that his apparent partiality results from his special argumentative aims.

Lisa Kallet’s chapter, “The Pentecontaetia,” on Thucydides’ account of the fifty years between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, falls into this latter category. Modern scholars have criticized this section of the history for its vague chronology and its failure to mention events such as the Peace of Callias or the transfer of the Delian League’s treasury to Athens. Kallet argues that this criticism is ill founded, since it fails to take into account the purpose of the digression, which is not simply to provide a catalogue of events, but rather to provide support for Thucydides’ own explanation of the cause of the war, namely, the growth of Athenian power and the fear that this growth induced in Sparta. She also argues that discrepancies between Thucydides’ account and epigraphical sources for the war—which were once used to impugn Thucydides’ accuracy—are often explicable by the different information provided by these two distinct types of evidence. Furthermore, as Kallet notes, the epigraphical evidence itself is currently being reassessed in light of a “tectonic shift” in scholarly dating and reconstruction.

Ellen Millender takes a more pessimistic stance on Thucydides’ historical accuracy in a chapter that examines Thucydides’ representation of the Spartans (“Sparta and the Crisis of the Peloponnesian League in Thucydides’ *History*”). Millender argues

that Thucydides fails to mention the sound strategic aspects of Spartan war policy and downplays Spartan successes. In particular, she suggests that Thucydides does not credit the Spartans with a serious naval policy. Such omissions reinforce Thucydides' presentation (in speeches and authorial comments) of the Spartans as cautious, fearful, and incapable of innovation. Thucydides' portrait of Sparta's relations with her allies, however, does seem to capture the ways in which Spartan defeats and failures of leadership undermined the unity of the Peloponnesian League during the Archidamian War. This unity was restored only with the decisive defeat of Athens and its allies at Mantinea in 418 BCE, a turning point whose significance Thucydides himself understood and acknowledged in his narrative.

In "Thucydides on the Athenian Empire and Interstate Relations," Polly Low takes a similarly critical position on Thucydides' treatment of the Athenian Empire. Low argues that the empire was a more complex phenomenon than is suggested by Thucydides' bleak portrait of the ruthless extension of power. By looking at a range of other sources, Low demonstrates that Thucydides' account of the machinery of empire and its development over time presents only a partial view. Furthermore, Low shows that on some topics, we are well informed neither by Thucydides nor other sources. Low concludes that "there is almost certainly another story of Athenian imperial development . . . to be told, even if we are not yet in a position to tell it."

The next three chapters provide a more positive assessment of Thucydides' historical account. Eric Robinson argues in "Thucydides on the Causes and Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War" that Thucydides' explanation of the "real cause" of the war is more convincing than the various competing accounts proffered by modern scholars. While not entirely discounting the explanatory power of the most prominent modern theories (including those at the opposite ends of a spectrum, such as G. E. M. de Ste. Croix's condemnation of the Spartans and Ernst Badian's indictment of the Athenians), Robinson shows that such one-sided explanations are less satisfactory than Thucydides' more balanced assessment, which is captured in the twin subjects of his explanatory sentence "the growth of the power of Athens" and "the alarm that this inspired in Sparta." Thucydides' point is that both Athens and Sparta were responsible for the outbreak of hostilities.

In his chapter on "Thucydides on the First Ten Years of War" Peter Hunt gives a largely positive assessment of the accuracy of Thucydides' account. Although Hunt finds minor mistakes and omissions, he argues that these do not have a significant effect on our understanding of the war. On the question of Thucydides' choice of emphasis, Hunt provides a more mixed evaluation. For example, on the one hand, Hunt suggests that Thucydides' emphasis on the conflict of a land versus a sea power (or as Hunt colorfully puts it "an elephant and whale") allows his readers to make sense of the myriad of disparate events that made up the first ten years of the war. On the other hand, Hunt criticizes Thucydides' claim that the Athenians would have won the war if it had not been for Pericles' successors, who abandoned his policy of refraining from expanding the empire during the war. Hunt points out that Periclean and post-Periclean leadership were not as different as Thucydides suggests, and, in any case, it is unclear how Athens could have won the war with an exclusively defensive strategy. Similarly, Hunt

argues that Thucydides overplayed the breakdown of social mores resulting from the plague. In fact, the Athenians continued to pursue the war aggressively in ways that belie Thucydides' depiction of rampant lawlessness (see also Balot, "Was Thucydides a Political Philosopher?" chapter 19 in this volume).

Cinzia Bearzot discusses "Mantineia, Decelea, and the Interwar Years (421–413 BCE)" and argues that Thucydides was justified in his interpretation of the war as one long war rather than two wars interrupted by an unstable peace. Furthermore, Bearzot reads the distinctive features of this part of Thucydides' narrative (e.g., the presence of transcribed documents and the complex accounts of failed negotiations) not as signs of the incompleteness of the work, as some scholars have argued, but as support for Thucydides' argument that the peace was not a real peace. Finally, Bearzot shows that Thucydides' narrative of the interwar years is linked thematically to the rest of his account of the war and therefore contributes substantially to the unity of the work.

In her examination of the Athenian invasion of Sicily in "Thucydides on the Sicilian Expedition," Emily Greenwood adopts a more critical tone. Greenwood notes the largely Athenian focalization of Thucydides' narrative and the ways that it is shaped as an Athenian epic on the model of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, with the Athenians playing the part of both the Achaeans and Trojans in turn (see also Fisher and Hoekstra, "Thucydides and the Politics of Necessity," chapter 22 in this volume). Furthermore, Greenwood observes that the divergent experiences of different peoples in Sicily are left largely undocumented, and that a digression on the massacre of the people of Mycalessus, a small town in Boeotia, only underscores the lack of alternative perspectives in the rest of the narrative. Greenwood argues that Thucydides frames the war in Sicily as a transgressive act, even though he does not suggest that the tragic outcome was inevitable. Indeed, Greenwood notes that Thucydides uses several techniques to allow the reader to experience the uncertainty of events in "real time" even though the actual outcome of the war was known.

The section concludes with a chapter, "Thucydides on the Four Hundred and the Fall of Athens," by Andrew Wolpert, who argues that Thucydides was right to identify civil unrest, rather than the defeat in Sicily, as the cause of Athens' downfall. Focusing his analysis on the final incomplete book of the *History*, Wolpert suggests that despite modern criticism, Book 8 effectively explains both why the Athenians were able to hold out for almost ten years after their defeat in Sicily and also what new obstacles led to their ultimate defeat. Wolpert compares Thucydides' account of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred with that of the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* and shows how these two sources represent different perspectives that can be used to correct or supplement each other. Ultimately, however, Wolpert observes that Thucydides takes a far more negative view of the constitutional changes of 411, and argues that Thucydides' pessimistic view provides a better explanation for the short duration of the oligarchy.

The second section of this volume, "Thucydidean Historiography," comprises eight papers on the literary and rhetorical qualities of Thucydides' writing. Although these qualities were closely analyzed, and (as this volume shows) both admired and deprecated in ancient times, modern analysis of Thucydides' writing was delayed by the

nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century tendency to define (for example, von Ranke) or to disparage (for example, Eduard Schwarz) Thucydides' *History* according to the standards of a modern conception of the historical sciences. These standards were developed by scholars who wished to claim for historical studies the same status and prestige as had by then accrued to the natural sciences, and were inimical to the literary analysis of ancient historiography. Their power began to evaporate after World War Two. Writers from war-torn nations (for example, Jacqueline de Romilly, Helmut Strasburger, Hans-Peter Stahl, and others) led the way, offering close readings that were attentive both to the complexities of Thucydides' style and also to how these complexities might be interpreted in order to approach Thucydides' meaning. In the following decades the pace of literary analysis of Thucydides and the other ancient Greek historians quickened considerably. Seminal works interpreted the text from the perspective of reader response theory (Connor 1984) and detailed the historian's techniques of persuasion (Woodman 1996). They cleared the field for further study and promoted a renewed focus on rendering close interpretation of Thucydides' writing accessible to the wider audience of readers and thinkers.

Further papers in this tradition are offered here, beginning with three chapters on the structure of Thucydides' *History* by Hunter Rawlings, W. R. Connor, and Jeffrey Rusten. Hunter Rawlings shows in "Writing History Implicitly through Refined Structuring" that the *History* displays many organizational options. In addition to dividing his account into seasons, Thucydides constructs parallelisms, juxtapositions, and antitheses on both a large and small scale. These may provoke the reader to compare, contrast, or relate entire episodes, sections of episodes, or words and clauses in particular sentences. For instance, a series of contrasted passages, such as the sequence of the Funeral Oration, the description of the plague, Pericles' final speech, and Thucydides' assessment of Pericles' life (2.35–65), which juxtapose diverse treatments of Periclean leadership and its contexts, may through its structure help the reader to understand Thucydides' view of Pericles and his role at Athens.

W. R. Connor's essay, "Scale Matters: Compression, Expansion, and Vividness in Thucydides," builds on this approach by providing an analysis of Thucydides' techniques of compression and expansion. Connor shows that Thucydidean sentences can be stripped down accounts of a sequence of events, but can also expand into elaborate constructions that include, for instance, superlatives, figures of speech, and the relation of vivid details. Likewise, longer passages can expand through narrative retardation, slowing down from an account according to summers and winters to become a narrative of day-by-day events; still other passages feature expansion through thematic repetition. As Rawlings also shows, sensitivity to such techniques can help us to reflect on Thucydides' purposes. If the length of an episode is proportionate to its significance, then it may be especially telling that Thucydides elaborates extensively upon episodes that might otherwise seem unimportant, such as (for instance) the Thracian attack on Mycalessus. Connor argues that such expansion is often an "indicator of intense suffering" (see also Forsdyke, "Thucydides' Historical Method," chapter 1 in this volume).

Jeffrey Rusten offers “The Tree, the Funnel, and the Diptych: Some Patterns in Thucydides’ Longest Sentences,” a further chapter on Thucydidean structure. All who have read Thucydides in close detail know the frustrations of trying to construe Thucydides’ long sentences, which may be hundreds of words long and contain many interrelated parallel and subordinate clauses. Rusten’s chapter analyzes three common types of long sentence in Thucydides, offering schematic charts of each sentence in order to explain both the overall structure and the relation of the clauses. His analysis is founded on Thucydides’ presentation of the main action of each sentence: “tree” and “funnel” sentences represent the main action at the beginning and end, respectively, of a sentence; in “diptych” sentences “the main action is a hinge which opens to the reader two tableaux, a “before” and “after,” and displays how they contrast with or mirror each other.” Thucydides’ accounts of complex events and many-layered motivations required a nuanced and subtle sentence structure, and sometimes great length. Rusten’s chapter endeavors to make the historian’s long sentences more approachable.

Rawlings, Connor, and Rusten address structures and devices that the reader must perceive and understand independently of any overt direction from the historian. However, Thucydides does offer authorial comments throughout the *History*. Mathieu de Bakker’s chapter, “Authorial Comments in Thucydides,” addresses the functions of Thucydides’ authorial comments, pointing to their value for the evaluation of characters and events, as well as to their potential for framing the beginning and end of narrative episodes. Authorial comments may also highlight mythological or ethnographic observations; this fact suggests that interpreters of Thucydides should not slight these topics in their overall appreciation of Thucydides’ priorities. Finally, de Bakker’s chapter addresses the prominence of authorial comments in Book 8 of the *History*, arguing that Thucydides’ presentation of the increasing fragmentation of Greece and of the conflicting interests of private individuals required firmer authorial control if it was not to become incoherent.

Rosaria Munson’s chapter, “Thucydides and Myth: A Complex Relation to Past and Present,” makes a related observation, showing that myth in Thucydides is subject to close authorial control. Indeed, she shows that Thucydides’ speakers never refer to mythological figures or stories, so that the formation of mythical themes is restricted to the historian. Moreover, she explains a difference in attitude between Herodotus and Thucydides: whereas in Herodotus mythical material is the subject of narrative presentation, in Thucydides it may become the subject of argumentation, as, for instance, in the *Archaeology*. However, Thucydides also turns mythical material to other purposes. For instance, he employs mythological themes to support social analysis, as, for instance, in his treatments of the origins of the myths of the Athenian tyrannicides or of the Spartan commander Brasidas, passages that display how passionate attachments solidify into stories or rites that ultimately have significant political effects. In addition, he employs myth to evoke empathy, as when he weaves the story of Theseus’ unification of Attica into his description of the Athenians’ painful immigration from the outlying countryside in the face of the Spartan invasion of 431 BCE.

Antonis Tsakmakis's chapter on the speeches in Thucydides emphasizes their diversity and their "multifarious, dynamic relation to their narrative contexts, immediate or remote." Consolidating our sense of living in time with the war, the speeches do not rise above the limited conceptual horizons of the speakers. At the same time, they display a variety of speakers, audiences, themes, communicative situations, and effects, to mention only some of the criteria Tsakmakis reviews. To conclude "Speeches," Tsakmakis analyzes Thucydides' statements about how he composed the speeches (1.22.4), arguing that these statements are consistent with both the exercise of authorial control and also the dynamic historical responsiveness of the speeches we find in the *History*.

Philip Stadter's complementary chapter, "Characterization of Individuals in Thucydides' *History*," argues that Thucydides restricts his presentation of individuals to aspects that will help the reader to understand the course of the war. Stadter discusses in particular Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, Brasidas, and Thucydides, who features as a character in his own account. Stadter explores how Thucydides represents both their words and their deeds and delineates the networks of similar and contrasting traits that help us to understand their roles in the *History*.

Finally, Edith Foster's chapter on "Campaign and Battle Narratives in Thucydides" looks specifically at Thucydides' accounts of military actions in the war. Since campaign and battle narrative make up at least half of Thucydides' *History*, we can assume that these carefully formulated stories of warfare were a priority for the historian. The chapter discusses their function in the *History*, and to this end analyzes the prologues, actions, and speeches of the war narratives. Finally, it inquires into the usefulness and significance of Thucydides' campaign and battle accounts for the reader.

Foster's investigation of the "usefulness" of the *History* leads to the third section of this volume, "Thucydides and Political Theory." Should we think of Thucydides as both a historian and a political philosopher? As a writer who not only documented historical processes for a particular postwar audience, but also addressed general political questions for audiences of every time and place? Because of the universalizing ambitions of the *History*, Thucydides' own answer to such questions was, at least implicitly, affirmative. The third section of this volume is therefore devoted to interpreting the relationship between Thucydides' universalizing ambitions and the historical events that he described and explained. As he stated in his introduction (1.22), Thucydides discerned in the anarchic world of politics and warfare an inner logic that would remain stable, he anticipated, precisely because human nature itself is unchanging. Although Thucydides observed an apparently meaningless whirl of historical characters and events, he maintained that what he saw discloses permanent truths about humanity—if only the observer has keen enough vision to see them. Yet, as the first two parts of this volume reveal, interpreting history as it unfolds is almost impossibly difficult for spectators and political agents alike. Nature—including human nature—is not a generous parent who makes herself readily intelligible to her children. Hence, natural processes and human behavior require significant efforts of judgment and discernment. Within this framework Thucydides presents himself as a sophisticated educator and expositor, who proves superior not only to previous writers (such as Homer and Herodotus), but

also to the statesmen and citizens who make political decisions within the *History* itself. Seemingly without effort, he glides from the particular to the universal and back again, and in doing so he purports to teach enduring lessons to those interested in human psychology and behavior as they are empirically found.

Thucydides wrote, of course, before disciplinary distinctions between history, historiography, and political theory were invented. Yet, given the shape of contemporary discourses in these fields, it is useful to begin again by re-establishing Thucydides' own view of himself as a preeminent theorist of lasting political questions. The third section's first essay is "Was Thucydides a Political Philosopher?" In it, Ryan K. Balot argues that Thucydides took up the foundational question of the good regime both in his remarks on Athens' mixed regime (8.97) and in his critical presentations of Athens and Sparta. Instead of imagining a naturally healthy polis, like Plato or Aristotle, Thucydides held up to scrutiny the arguments and actions of Athenians and Spartans, who believed that their cities, respectively, provided superior frameworks for human flourishing. Balot stresses that for Thucydides both Athenians and Spartans tended toward self-delusion. The Thucydidean world of suffering and incessant warfare suggests the likely falsity—and even dishonesty—of political idealism.

The next four essays treat the problems and questions that Thucydides himself presents as most fundamental to the understanding of politics in every time and place: power, human nature, necessity, and the regime. For Thucydides, politics is unthinkable apart from natural human drives to gain power and the constraints placed upon those drives either by the material world, by human nature, or by other human agents. In "*Kinēsis*, Navies, and the Power Trap in Thucydides," Arlene Saxonhouse shows that for Thucydides, as for his translator Hobbes, power is kinetic rather than katastematic, or idle; the ambitious are constantly in motion, as the possession of power necessarily leads to the desire to expand power ceaselessly. Unlike Hobbes, however, Thucydides concretely illustrated this account of power by offering an "archaeology" of naval imperialism. The navy is the paradigmatic symbol of limitless aggression and therefore of unsatisfied aspirations. As Saxonhouse argues, the only remedy for power's frustrations is Thucydides' own enduring rational account of humanity's limitations and possibilities.

Developing Saxonhouse's theme of motion and rest, Clifford Orwin's chapter, "Thucydides on Nature and Human Conduct," situates Thucydides between "pre-Socratics," who were interested in the natural world at large, and "Socratics," who concerned themselves chiefly with ethics and politics. For Orwin, Thucydides dramatizes a contest between Athens and Sparta, which are respectively characterized by motion and rest. He thereby directs his readers' attention to large questions about justice, piety, and freedom, and their relationship to nature. Seen in this light, Thucydides' *History* constitutes a deep meditation on human responsibility in a world that both promises freedom to human beings and yet imposes harsh and apparently irresistible constraints on them. Thucydides' narrative, as Orwin shows, continually provokes readers to reflect on political life and its relationship to nature or the cosmos, without reassuring them that the

cosmos is a purposeful or intelligible whole, and yet without denying the existence of patterns or regularities within it.

Orwin's expansive interpretation provides a helpful framework for Mark Fisher and Kinch Hoekstra's chapter, "Thucydides and the Politics of Necessity," which investigates human freedom and the diverse shapes of necessity in the *History*. When is "necessity" unambiguously compulsory, and when is it merely a self-serving artifact of international rhetoric—and how can political actors know the difference? While finding their way to a more optimistic conclusion than Orwin's ("Thucydides on Nature and Human Conduct," chapter 21 in this volume), Fisher and Hoekstra too appreciate the radically limited scope of our human capacity either to control desire or to predict and master contingency. With respect to these large questions of power, human psychology, and the cosmos, the "regime" (*politeia*) and its culture establish the political framework in which the transition from cause to consequence originates. Yet is Thucydides (like most other Greek political authors) convinced that this analytic category is the appropriate lens for exploring his central questions, or does he avoid consideration of internal dynamics in his eagerness to assimilate the activities of one regime to another in the international theater of war?

In initiating a series of discussions of the internal politics of Thucydides' diverse regimes, S. N. Jaffe offers "The Regime (*Politeia*) in Thucydides," a nuanced response that illustrates Thucydides' interest both in interstate dynamics and in the divergent cultural contexts that characterized the protagonists of his narrative. While Jaffe employs a broadly Aristotelian framework for distinguishing Thucydides' different regimes, he also pinpoints Thucydides' special interest in the rule of law and in what Jaffe calls "the rule of the wise." Jaffe interprets Thucydides as a quasi-Socratic theorist whose interests reach as far as identifying the best regime, without, however, neglecting the unstable and dangerous international environment in which any such regime will inevitably be located. Conversely, Michael Palmer's essay, "Stasis in the War Narrative," focuses on the seemingly inexorable disintegration of regimes throughout the *History*. Unlike many of his philosophical successors, however, Thucydides had no illusions about the possibilities of creating an enduringly healthy political world. Consequently, as Peter Euben (1990) once argued, one entry point into Thucydides' thinking about the good regime, or even the constituents of any regime, is to consider what falls apart during moments of civil conflict. Palmer's chapter explores Thucydides' various uses of the Greek word *stasis* (literally, a "standing") on his way to illuminating the full military and discursive parameters of the notorious conflict at Corcyra, as well as the impact of civil tensions and civil war at Athens. Palmer's distinctive contribution is to emphasize the role of individual leaders, such as Brasidas and Alcibiades—the first in potentially disrupting even-tempered Sparta, and the second in helping to remedy the problems created by civil tensions in the first place.

Further elaborating upon the operations of domestic politics, Paul Rahe addresses the role of "Religion, Politics, and Piety" in the *History*. "Politics and religion," or "civil religion," is a topic with which political theorists have begun to concern themselves in

earnest, as the world's great monotheisms continue to expand, and as the liberal consensus on governmental neutrality increasingly finds itself under pressure. Building on the writings of Strauss and Orwin, Rahe distinguishes between the pious attitudes of the Spartans and the unconventionally irreligious attitudes of many Athenians, including its intellectuals and political leaders (not to mention Thucydides himself). His central question is whether political communities that abandon tradition, or long-standing attachments to ancestral gods and religious rituals, can withstand the pressing demands of warfare. That question may shed light on Thucydides' willingness to admire Sparta, despite his own apparent distaste for religious explanations and sensibilities—and on his ultimate ambivalence toward the startlingly innovative achievements of his native city.

The quest to view humanity through the lens of justice and necessity was rarely an exclusively cerebral one; instead, it was usually shot through with passions, which both informed and often disrupted ordinary political life. In exploring these connections, Victoria Wohl's essay, "Thucydides on the Political Passions," argues for the pervasiveness of politics throughout the *History*, even in the social construction of the passions, of rationality, and of their interrelations. Politics goes "all the way down" into human subjectivity and quintessentially manifests itself in Pericles' hyper-rationalistic approach to the passionate Athenian demos. The tense equilibrium between Periclean reason and demotic anger breaks down when Pericles dies, leaving the Athenians ever more subject to a self-destructive conspiracy of leaders and people, as post-Periclean Athens strives to satisfy acquisitive thirsts that are, in principle, unquenchable. Ultimately, Wohl proposes that Thucydides vindicates his own authority through opposing his historical rationality to the passions of war. In that sense, his own *logos* perpetuates the frequently tragic conflict between reason and passion that haunts Athenian politics throughout the war.

Any investigation of "passionate politics," and particularly Wohl's, naturally raises questions about the general relationship between leaders and ordinary citizens: how do leaders manage their citizens' passions? Are the passions of ordinary citizens merely chaotic and destabilizing, or do they also constitute an important medium through which citizens exercise political power? In order to address these and other questions of leaders and ordinary citizens, Mary Nichols and John Zumbrennen focus, respectively, on leadership and on "crowds." Like Palmer on *stasis*, Nichols's essay, "Leaders and Leadership in Thucydides' *History*," highlights Thucydides' focus on the "great men" of his narrative, who are charged with the nearly impossible responsibility of cultivating, and then realizing in practice, a spirit of freedom among ordinary citizens. Intriguingly, Nichols finds three eminent Athenians and only one Spartan—Brasidas—worthy of consideration in this respect. Her account reveals the ways in which Thucydides teaches his readers to judge leaders on the basis of their capacity to shape the mores of their followers, not in accordance with standards internal to the regime itself, but rather with an eye to natural standards of human ethical and political potentiality.

Leaders make no sense without followers, as John Zumbrennen's reconsideration of the crowd, or "mob" (*ochlos*), makes clear. With a special focus on the Athenian democracy, Zumbrennen calls into question scholars' attempts either to attribute sophisticated

epistemic capacities to the demos, à la Aristotle, or to envision crowds reductively as Platonic “many-headed beasts.” Instead, Zumbrunnen argues in “Thucydides and Crowds” that the Athenian demos had the capacity to moderate and calm itself so that citizens could listen attentively to the arguments of speakers, and hence make effective judgments. The Athenians’ capacity—and, indeed, their need—to listen to others suggests not a Thucydidean argument for the “wisdom of the masses,” but rather a complex Thucydidean picture of the deliberative process that unfolds dynamically in the relations between the political elite and ordinary citizens.

Turning from internal political dynamics to “global” politics in “Thucydides, International Law, and International Anarchy,” Arthur M. Eckstein addresses Thucydides’ presentation of international relations and the causes of war. As Eckstein shows, Thucydides’ own treatments of these issues should never be simply or unqualifiedly translated into terms familiar from later discourses. Instead, Thucydides’ own examination of justice among states might lead to a rethinking of the categories that have come to seem familiar or natural. Viewing Thucydides as a model for later realists, but also qualifying the realist tradition, Eckstein argues that Thucydides presents international relations as an anarchic and inhospitable ecology characterized by violent conflict and continuous aggression. In his focus on the power of cities or states as collective units, and in his presentation of justice as a merely political or ideological construct, Thucydides is less interested in internal political relationships than readers may have thought.

Paul Ludwig’s essay, “Xenophon as a Socratic Reader of Thucydides,” by contrast, qualifies the ascription of realism to Thucydides: instead of being a thesis that Thucydides accepts, realism is a political outlook whose strengths and weaknesses Thucydides explores. Ludwig illustrates this main point through reading Thucydides in the light of his historical successor, Xenophon. As a Socratic thinker, and as a cautious and even elusive writer, Xenophon’s focus on rational piety and ethical agency helps to bring out previously unnoticed ethical facets of Thucydides’ own text. One key difference remains Xenophon’s Socratic focus on human affairs—a domain entirely separate from the rest and motion of the natural world that (as Saxonhouse shows in “*Kinēsis*, Navies, and the Power Trap in Thucydides” and Orwin in “Thucydides on Nature and Human Conduct,” chapters 20 and 21 in this volume) features subtly but significantly in Thucydides’ text. On the other hand, Xenophon’s investigation of piety, justice, and nobility leads readers to understand the persistence of these psychological factors even among those, such as the Athenian envoys at Melos, who most intransigently disclaim them. The relationship between the ethical and the political remains decidedly open as a result of the dialogue among Eckstein, Ludwig, and a number of earlier essays.

That openness, according to Gerald Mara’s essay, “Political Philosophy in an Unstable World: Comparing Thucydides and Plato on the Possibilities of Politics,” is precisely the posture that we should adopt as readers of Thucydides and Plato, who offer resources for what Mara calls “conversational political theory.” Against those who would remove Plato from the turbulence of politics, and equally against those who regard Thucydides as a quasi-scientist of natural compulsions, Mara proposes that both authors invite

dialogical responses to their texts—responses that also enable us to set their texts into a dialectical relationship with each other. They do so, in particular, through their multivocality: that is, their own self-conscious and critically informed presentation of diverse speeches, made on specific occasions and with specific intentions in mind, which invite their audiences to subject the characters' ideas to critical judgment. In elaborating this point, Mara shows that Plato and Thucydides can be read alongside each other, as mutually engaged participants in a conversation about the necessities of war and the epistemic significance of studying situations of extreme duress. For Mara, the activities of Thucydides and Plato as thinkers are continuous with the pragmatic judgments and historically situated conversations of both citizens and statesmen.

Mara's construction of the relationship between theory and practice is appropriately complex, given the mysteries that continue to surround Thucydides' own stance toward such issues. His reflections lead us outward, once again, to the largest questions of philosophy and political life. Should we conceive of the best human life as that of the actively engaged citizen or as that of the searcher for wisdom, remote from the world of politics? What role should a thinker or writer play with respect to civic education or political ideology? More specifically, is Thucydides himself friendly to the democratic project of open dialogue among citizens, or is he a stalwart critic of people power? Does he invite multiple responses to his own text, or does his apparently seamless narrative tend to shut down questioning and to establish the author's own voice as an authoritative political guide? Our way of approaching these questions says a great deal about our understanding of the teachings that might be available for audiences, classical or contemporary, of Thucydides' lasting historical and theoretical efforts. Our own theoretical engagement with his text leaves little doubt that Thucydides' universalizing ambitions, and his detailed interpretation of historical particularities, will continue to elicit thoughtful conversations among students of politics, now and in the future.

The fourth and final section of the volume, "Contexts and Ancient Reception of Thucydidean Historiography," seeks to place Thucydides in a variety of literary and intellectual contexts both before and after his time. The initial chapters show that Thucydides both drew on and diverged from his predecessors in his literary techniques as well as in his intellectual orientation. Despite his often critical stance, Thucydides was thoroughly immersed in the Greek literary tradition, including comedy, tragedy, and epic, as well as in the new intellectual movements of his own times, as represented above all by those traditionally called "sophists." For all of his immersion in that tradition, however, Thucydides was also an innovative thinker and writer whose thought and often idiosyncratic style were both reviled and revered by later writers. The chapters in this section treat Thucydides' reception in the Greco-Roman world and beyond, among historians who wrote in Greek and Latin, under both republican and monarchical constitutions, and before and after the advent of Christianity.

In surveying the works of Thucydides' predecessors and contemporaries, Leone Porciani's chapter, "Thucydides' Predecessors and Contemporaries in Historical Poetry and Prose," stresses a distinction between those on whom Thucydides relied for information (Homer, Hellanicus, and Antiochus) and those who were his "true predecessors"

in methods and form (Hecataeus and Herodotus). Porciani diverges from recent scholarship that tends to see a fluid field of historical memory in the late fifth century, and instead asserts a stronger conception of generic boundaries than is currently fashionable. Furthermore, Porciani challenges recent attempts to discern in the *History* poetic allusions to Pindar, Mimnermus, and others, noting that the existence in Thucydides' text of poetic tropes such as "reversal" should not lead us to question the "genre-based specificities" of historical prose. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, Porciani suggests that the institution of the funeral oration—in which the past is seen as a vehicle for exalting the present—was a key part of the background that led to the emergence of the genre of history.

Rosalind Thomas, by contrast, argues for a looser set of generic conventions and shows in "Thucydides and His Intellectual Milieu" that Thucydides was part of a diverse group of individual thinkers ("sophists") who did not necessarily fit into neat categories of "philosopher," "rhetorician," "doctor," or "historian." Thucydides himself sometimes borrowed, sometimes criticized, and sometimes improved upon ideas in circulation at the time. For example, Thomas observes that Thucydides' account of the plague of 429 BCE featured a critique of both traditional ideas about the causes of disease and the latest medical theories. Yet in presenting his interpretation of the causes and social effects of war, he transfers ideas originally developed to describe the effect of disease on different individuals to explain the particular manifestations of civil war in the diverse circumstances of contemporary states. Furthermore, Thomas suggests that, in his emphasis on precision (*akribeia*), Thucydides signals his adherence to a principle central to the method of the early Hippocratics.

Similarly, Thomas shows that while Thucydides is often critical of deceptive rhetoric, he also demonstrates his deep familiarity with rhetorical techniques through the speeches he composed for his characters. Furthermore, Thomas argues that Thucydides used speeches such as those of the Plataean debate to experiment with radical ideas, including the overthrow of *nomos* in favor of the "natural" impulse to pursue self-interest. Despite such experiments, Thomas argues that Thucydides was not a moral relativist and that in fact his portraits of social decay such as the Corcyrean stasis imply that he valued the role of *nomoi* in holding communities together.

Tobias Joho's chapter, "Thucydides, Epic, and Tragedy," and Jeffrey Henderson's chapter, "Thucydides and Attic Comedy," explore not only Thucydides' debts to and differences from other writers of his own day, but also his creative adoption of patterns from the past. Joho begins by discussing Thucydides' adoption of Homeric structural mechanisms and continues with a comparative discussion of the poet's and the historian's strategic juxtapositions of longer and shorter narrative units. Joho's analysis complements the chapters of Rawlings ("Writing History Implicitly through Refined Structuring") and Connor ("Scale Matters: Compression, Expansion, and Vividness in Thucydides"), who also reflect on the ways in which Thucydides structures his material. Joho further addresses Thucydides' use of tragic irony, reversals, and narrative brinkmanship ("almost episodes"), strategies that were familiar from both epic and tragedy, before concluding with a discussion of Thucydides' use of Homer and tragedy in the Sicilian

narrative. Overall, Joho's essay provides evidence for Thucydides' close familiarity and engagement with epic and tragic paradigms.

Jeffrey Henderson's chapter, "Thucydides and Attic Comedy," interprets Thucydides and the comic playwrights in the context of the contemporary personalities and events to which they responded. A dynamic relation between the two genres emerges. Henderson points, on the one hand, to comedy's engagement with political issues, and outlines "the narrative of Athens' decline after the death of Pericles" that is characteristic of both Attic Old Comedy and Thucydides. In addition, the comic and historiographic treatments of Athenian demagogues or of Athens' relation to her subject allies display important commonalities. On the other hand, Old Comedy's presentation of Pericles himself and of the causes of the war, for instance, differs from Thucydides' in important respects. Nevertheless, the relationship between the comic poets and the historian is closer than one might think, and Henderson argues that Thucydides often silently takes comic material into account when formulating his narrative.

The next series of chapters turn from Thucydides' predecessors and contemporaries to those who followed him, including both Greek and Roman writers. Vivienne Gray examines works that continued and completed Thucydides' unfinished history. Gray argues in "Thucydides and His Continuators" that although the authors of these works took Thucydides as their starting point, they did not adopt his narrative style or his outlook on the war. Xenophon, for example, whose *Hellenica* constitutes the first and only fully surviving continuation, not only extends his work beyond Thucydides' projected end point and thereby abandons his monographic focus on a single war, but also assumes a more determinately ethical perspective on events. Cratippus, on the other hand, both engaged in a sustained critique of Thucydides' inclusion of speeches and extended his narrative beyond Thucydides' end point. In doing so, Cratippus was able to end on a more positive note (the recovery of Athenian sea power c. 394 BCE) and is even said by ancient commentators to have glorified Athens. Moreover, Gray suggests that Theopompus' *Hellenica* was more influenced by Xenophon's completion of Thucydides than by Thucydides himself. The same may be true of the anonymous *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*. Gray concludes her chapter with an analysis of Diodorus' continuation of Thucydides, and suggests that the Sicilian drew not only on Ephorus but also on several of the other continuators.

With the exception of Diodorus, Thucydides' continuators were writing for a Greek audience that was relatively close in time to the events depicted in Thucydides' *History*. Since we lack consistent evidence for Thucydides' influence in the early Roman Republic (but see Samotta 2012), our examination begins with the late republican period. Casper de Jonge's essay, "Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Thucydides," discusses Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a critic and historian who lived at Rome during the first century BCE and left behind several detailed discussions of Thucydides. De Jonge's paper highlights the importance of taking Dionysius' late republican readership into account. Dionysius' relationship to this audience is puzzling: Thucydides was popular among aristocratic late republican readers, including Dionysius' own patron. Nevertheless, Dionysius criticized Thucydides for his style and subject matter, although he praised the elder

historian's devotion to the truth. De Jonge argues that this mixture of praise and blame can be understood if we remain aware of Dionysius' aims, and of the fact that both his conception of historical truth and also his style of rhetorical historiography differed from Thucydides'.

While De Jonge analyzes Dionysius' explicit assessment of the *History*, Nicolas Wiater investigates Thucydides' influence on republican historiography. Wiater's essay, "Polybius and Sallust," first reviews the effect of Thucydidean historical methods and conceptions of historical causation on Polybius, who composed his *Histories* in the second century BCE. Wiater then discusses the importance of Thucydides' example for Polybius' historiographical style. Moving forward to the first century BCE, Wiater introduces Sallust, a near contemporary of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He begins with Sallust's famous imitations of Thucydidean style, particularly of Thucydides' density of expression and continues with an examination of passages that were adapted from Thucydides, pausing on Sallust's adaptation of Thucydides' description of the perversion of linguistic usage during the revolution at Corcyra. Wiater concludes that Thucydides' vocabulary and analytical categories offered Sallust a conceptual toolkit with which to interpret and describe the disintegrating Roman republic.

Whereas Polybius wrote in the middle republic, and Sallust wrote toward its end, Tacitus wrote in imperial times, and could by that time base his work on a long tradition of Roman historiography. Nevertheless, Cynthia Damon points out in "Writing with Posterity in Mind: Thucydides and Tacitus on Secession" that, from afar, Tacitus seems to be a Thucydidean. His focus on political and military affairs, his commitment to writing the truth about grim abuses of power, and his realistic grasp of imperial affairs, for instance, seem to suggest Thucydidean leanings. However, direct Thucydidean influence on Tacitus has rarely been traced; as Damon argues, to observe that an author stands in a certain tradition is not the same thing as the observation that one author read and studied another. In this chapter, Damon connects the two historians through a detailed review of their accounts of two revolutions, namely, Thucydides' account of the revolt of Mytilene from Athens and Tacitus' account of the revolt of the Batavians from Rome. She discerns Thucydidean structures and conceptual foundations without insisting on their priority for Tacitus, who may have transformed Thucydidean analyses to meet his own aims.

In the final chapter, "Thucydides, Procopius, and the Historians of the Later Roman Empire," Conor Whately describes Thucydides' influence on late antique historiography. Whately explores the imitation of Thucydidean language and structures among classicizing historians of the fifth and sixth centuries CE, and argues for the thoughtfulness and independence of their use of Thucydidean paradigms. Whately shows that Procopius' *History of the Wars of Justinian* provides both the most complete and the most interesting example of this thoughtful mimesis of Thucydides. Finally, Whately shows that Thucydides' influence passed into the early Middle Ages through the popularity of Procopius and his peers, fittingly ending the volume by introducing a largely unexplored epoch of Thucydidean influence.

While there is much more to be said about the reception of Thucydides in the early modern and modern period, such an extension of the volume would make an already long book unwieldy. We leave it to future scholars to explore this topic, along with other as yet unexamined avenues of research on Thucydides and his reception, and we close by drawing the reader's attention to the lively current discussions of the reception of Thucydides, including Harloe and Morley (2012), Fromentin et al. (2013), Meister (2013), Morley (2014), Morley and Lee (2015), and Thauer and Wendt (2015, 2016).

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SECTION I

THUCYDIDES
AS HISTORIAN

CHAPTER 1

THUCYDIDES' HISTORICAL METHOD

SARA FORSDYKE

Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

As the recent boom in scholarship on Classical Reception attests, one cannot properly understand an ancient text without taking into account the ways that our current interpretations are based on past receptions (Porter 2008). In the case of Thucydides, perhaps no other reception has had such profound influence on our interpretation of his methods as those of the late nineteenth century, when the conception of history as a science emerged and Thucydides was hailed as the ancient forebear in this approach (Novick 1988; Muhlack 2011; Morley 2012). At this time, history was first being institutionalized as a university discipline, and many of the leading practitioners, such as Leopold von Ranke and Wilhelm Roscher, drew on Thucydides for the formulation of the methods of this new discipline (Morley 2012).

In what is now recognized as a one-sided interpretation, both Thucydides and von Ranke became known, especially in America, for an emphasis on history as the pursuit of the truth about the past, based on rigorous inquiry into the facts and free from any bias or partisanship (Iggers 1990, 2011; Novick 1988). While it is true, as we shall see, that Thucydides places emphasis on the impartial investigation of the facts, nevertheless, this interpretation of his methods underemphasizes not only the role of Thucydides' own judgments and interpretations, but also ignores the importance of narrative artistry in his presentation of the facts. While ancient critics already recognized literary "vividness," alongside the quest for the truth, as distinctive features of Thucydides' historical

practice, it has taken until the second half of the twentieth century (with the notable exception of Cornford 1907) for modern scholars to give sufficient attention to these aspects of his craft.¹

Arguably, this relatively recent focus on Thucydides' literary skill, fueled by postmodern skepticism about the idea of a "real" past that we can recover, has caused the pendulum to swing too far the other way. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to achieve a balance between these two intertwined aspects of Thucydides' historical method. I shall suggest that Thucydides does indeed seek to distinguish himself on the basis of his accurate account of the past, yet for him this truthfulness is not a matter simply of uncovering facts that then speak for themselves. For Thucydides, the key to accuracy is his interpretation of the facts—the use of critical reasoning to assess the realities, especially about the causes of events. Furthermore, Thucydides wanted his readers *to experience events* as he perceived them and thereby also experience the validity of his interpretations of the past. In other words, Thucydides wished to show, not tell, his readers what happened.

Indeed, Thucydides invested a great deal of effort in the literary presentation of events, selecting and emphasizing those aspects that he thought essential to the truth about the past, and shaping in his presentation in order to provoke emotional responses that would induce his readers to accept his version of the past. This latter aspect of Thucydides' historical method brings his practice into line with those of his predecessors (especially Homer and Herodotus) from whom he vehemently attempted to distinguish himself. As we shall see throughout this chapter, despite Thucydides' claims to superiority, in fact, he drew heavily on the methods of inquiry and the literary techniques of those who preceded him.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, EVIDENCE, AND THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PAST

The aspects of Thucydides' history outlined above—his quest for the truth and his rivalry with (as well as dependence on) his predecessors—are evident in the opening chapters, and indeed in the opening line of his work.

Thucydides, an Athenian, composed the war between the Peloponnesians and Athenians, describing how they fought one another and, starting right away when the war began, expecting that it would be great and the most noteworthy of all previous wars. (1.1)

¹ For ancient critics, see Dion. Hal., *On Thucydides* 8; Lucian, *How to Write History*, with Canfora (2006); Plutarch, *On the Glory of the Athenians* 347a, with Walker (1993). For modern appreciation of Thucydides' literary craft, see (besides Cornford 1907), for example: Hunter (1973, 1982); Connor (1984); Rood (1998); Greenwood (2006); Grethlein (2010, 2012).

Just as Herodotus did before him, Thucydides proclaims his identity in the opening sentence and states his intention to write about how two peoples fought one another. While Herodotus, however, set out to write about “great and marvelous deeds,” Thucydides seeks to surpass Herodotus’ subject by stating that he writes about a war that is not only “great” but also “the most noteworthy of all previous wars.” As becomes clear in subsequent pages, these previous wars include both the legendary Trojan War memorialized by Homer and the more recent Persian Wars that were the subject of Herodotus’ *Histories*. In this regard, then, Thucydides seeks right from the outset of his work to establish his subject as greater than those that preceded him (Marincola 1997). This assertion of the greatness of his subject matter is only the first of many such claims throughout his work—a feature that, as we shall see, often involves the deployment of considerable literary and rhetorical embellishment, despite his own protestations that he has avoided such entertaining flourishes and has concerned himself only with discovering the truth (ἡ ἀληθεία, τὸ σαφές) on the basis of the facts themselves (ἀπ’ αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων) (1.21–22).

Alongside this rhetorical boast of the greatness of his work in this first sentence, Thucydides lays claim to an important distinction of method from his predecessors. Whereas Homer and Herodotus wrote about events that took place before their own lifetimes, Thucydides tells us right away that he wrote about the war as it happened (1.1), a claim that he repeats in his “second introduction” midway through the work:

The same Thucydides also wrote this account, in order (ἐξῆς), as each thing happened by summers and winters (ὥς ἕκαστα ἐγένετο κατὰ θέρη καὶ χειμῶνας), until the Spartans and their allies put an end to the empire of the Athenians and captured Piraeus and the Long Walls. (5.26.4–5)

While this statement is striking, once again it must be qualified. As just noted, for example, Thucydides’ claim to write about a contemporary war is immediately followed by an inquiry into previous wars—that is, the remoter past—in order to prove that the current one was the greatest. Furthermore, although the bulk of Thucydides’ account treats events from 431 through 411 BCE (when the account breaks off), the opening chapters are not the only digressions on earlier history (Munch 1935; Potou 2009). There are also significant digressions on the fifty years between the Persian and Peloponnesian War (the so-called Pentecontaetia, 1.89–117), the early history of Sicily (6.1–5) and the Pisistratid tyranny (6.54–59), as well as numerous smaller digressions on matters of legendary history (2.15, 2.68, 2.102, 3.96.1, 4.24.5, 6.2.1). It seems that Thucydides was not content to write contemporary history, but was keen to rival his predecessors and contemporaries also in their accounts of the remote past (see de Bakker, chapter 14, and Munson, chapter 15, in this volume).

There are several other ways in which Thucydides’ claim to write contemporary history must be qualified. First of all, a key part of Thucydides’ implicit argument regarding the superiority of contemporary history rests on his claim to have dated events more accurately. Indeed, Thucydides is openly critical of his predecessors for dating events by

the year of magistrates in office (5.20.1–2) and in other imprecise ways (τοῖς χρόνοις οὐκ ἀκριβῶς, 1.97). Thucydides boasts that he uses a more refined system of dating events by summers and winters (2.1) and, in fact, in practice, sometimes indicates even more minute calibrations, such as the point within a season (that is, the beginning, middle, or end of summer or winter: for example, 5.52.1, 5.57.1). While already in ancient times critics noted that this system of dating imposed a rigidity on the narrative and made for choppy presentation (Dion. Hal., *On Thucydides* chapter 9), Thucydides clearly viewed it as an advance on the practices of his predecessors and contemporary rivals such as Hellanicus (1.97.2).

For Thucydides, this precise dating system was an essential motivation for his decision to write contemporary history since, as we have seen, he repeatedly claims to have written down each event as it happened in turn by summers and winters (1.1, 2.1, 5.26). But there are several indications that these characterizations of his practice are not entirely true. First of all, Thucydides inserts comments on later events at certain points in his narrative (for example, 2.65, 5.26, 6.15.4; cf. Dunn 2007, 116), and therefore it is clear that the surviving narrative is not simply an account of events told from the perspective of a person living through them at the time. Secondly, Thucydides himself acknowledges that he did not write down everything that happened, but lets slip at one point that he made “mention of only of those events that are especially worthy of record” (ἃ δὲ λόγου μάλιστα ἄξια . . . τούτων μνησθήσομαι, 3.90.1; cf. 1.1.1). It is hard to believe that this judgment about the most noteworthy events was made entirely without the benefit of hindsight.

Finally, and most importantly, Thucydides admits that the difficulties of evidence were quite formidable, even for one doing contemporary history, and that therefore it was not always a straightforward process to write down what happened. Thucydides explicitly discusses the problem of evidence throughout his introduction, noting that, in both the case of the past and in that of contemporary events, it was difficult (χαλεπόν, 1.20.1, 1.22.1) to get accurate evidence (ἀκριβὲς σημεῖον, 1.10.1) and thereby determine the truth (ἡ ἀληθεία, 1.20.3; cf. ἡ ἀκριβεία, 1.22.1). While the reasons for the difficulties were slightly different in the case of the remote past compared to contemporary history, the problem of evidence persists in both cases. For the distant past, the remoteness in time (χρόνου πλῆθος, 1.1.3; cf. 1.20.1, 1.20.3) as well as the literary embellishments of the works of poets and prose chroniclers (1.21.1) meant that there was little reliable evidence. For contemporary events, Thucydides notes that even eyewitnesses tended to give different accounts of the events that they experienced because of partisanship (εὐνοία) or lapses of memory (μνήμη) (1.22.3).

Given these difficulties, Thucydides was compelled, as he tells us, to examine the evidence critically. Thucydides’ verb of choice for this critical examination is σκοπεῖν (1.1.3; cf. 1.10.5, 1.22.4) but he uses a range of other verbs and phrases to suggest that he engaged in a careful and exhaustive examination of the evidence (τεκμήρια, σημεῖα). Moreover, he contrasts his rigor with the sloppy efforts of others. For example, he states that

I did not think it right to write down the events of the war after learning them from whoever happened along, nor did I write them down as they seem to me to have

happened. Rather, even for events at which I myself was present, as well as those I heard about from others, I made an examination as far as possible with precision concerning each event (ὅσον δυνατόν ἀκριβείᾳ περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελθών). And it was toilsome work (ἐπιπόνως δὲ ἡύρίσκετο). . . . (1.22.2)

By contrast, Thucydides states that “men in general accept what they hear from their ancestors without testing it (οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγεννημένων . . . ἀβασανίστως . . . δέχονται)” (1.20.1) and “for most men the pursuit of the truth is lacking in rigor (ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας)” (1.20.3).

Despite Thucydides' explicit acknowledgement of the difficulties of evidence and his vivid description of his apparently Herculean labors, it is still rather unclear from these passages alone exactly what his process of critical examination entailed. What constitutes “evidence” for Thucydides and against what standard is it examined and tested? As we shall see from the following examples, Thucydides is sometimes able to uncover new pieces of evidence from his own personal observation (ὄψις), but, somewhat ironically, he relies largely on the evidence of oral tradition and hearsay (ἀκοή) and even Homeric poetry itself (of which he is so critical). Moreover, it is largely Thucydides' own judgment (γνώμη) of what is probable (εἰκός) that leads him to reconstruct what happened in one way rather than another. That is to say, it was not sufficient for Thucydides to discover “the facts” to find out the truth about what happened, but Thucydides' own judgments and interpretations played a vital role in his efforts to discover the truth about the past (cf. Kallet 2006, and earlier bibliography cited therein).

As noted above, in the opening chapters Thucydides digresses into the remote past to prove that his war is greater than any previous war.² In order to prove this greatness, he gathers evidence of various sorts, including his own personal observation (ὄψις) of current customs and conditions, oral traditions (ἀκοή), and Homeric poetry itself. For example, to prove that there were no settled populations in earliest times, he reasons that the differing fertility of different regions (known to him presumably from observation of current conditions) led to the movement of peoples (1.2). Similarly he infers the prevalence of piracy and weapon-bearing in ancient times from the continued existence of this way of life in certain regions in his own time, as well as the evidence of “the poets” who depict pirates as unashamedly admitting their profession (1.5–6). Moreover, Thucydides explicitly cites the evidence of Homer to prove his point that early Greece was weak in noting that Homer has no collective name for the Greeks. The absence of the word “Hellenes” in Homer then serves as the basis for his claim that the Greeks lacked unity and strength in early times (1.3; cf. Van Wees, chapter 2 in this volume, for a critique of Thucydides' reasoning here).

It is worth stressing, from these examples, that although Thucydides can be scathing in his criticism of the poets for their embellishment of the facts (1.21.1), he also often depends on these literary accounts to construct his own “more accurate” version. The

² On the opening chapters, or “Archaeology,” and its methods, see Gehrke (1993); Tsakmakis (1995); Luraghi (2000); Rood (2006); and Van Wees, chapter 2 in this volume.

key difference for Thucydides is that he subjects these earlier accounts to critical examination against other pieces of evidence, including his own observations (ὄψις) and judgment of what was likely (εἰκός). The use of critical reasoning sometimes leads him to accept the evidence of Homer, and sometimes to reject it. For example, he argues strenuously that the physical remains of Mycenae visible in his own day should *not* be taken as proof that it was a powerful city compared to contemporary cities, since on the basis of physical remains alone, people today might overestimate Athens' power relative to that of the Spartans (1.10.1–2). Rather, Thucydides argues, it is reasonable (εἰκός) to trust Homer and to examine the actual power of cities (evident in Homer's catalogue of ships), rather than their physical appearance (1.10.3).

By contrast, in his account of early Sicilian history, Thucydides refuses to confirm the testimony of poets with regard to the earliest inhabitants of the island (6.1.2). Instead, he uses etymology to deduce that the Sikanoi were the first settlers of Sicily. Specifically, he argues that the island was first settled by people from the region of the river Sikania in Spain and that these settlers not only took their name from the river, but also originally called the island "Sikania." It is likely that Thucydides' knowledge of this early place name and its origins in Spain is derived from his familiarity with the now fragmentary work of the fifth-century Sicilian historian Antiochus (Luraghi 1991; cf. Tsamakis 1995, 166; Alonzo-Nunez 2000, 72; Pothou 2009, 134–41).

A final example will illustrate the way that Thucydides uses oral traditions (ἄκοή), physical evidence from personal observation (ὄψις), and reasoning from likelihood (εἰκός) to establish the truth about the past. In one of his digressions on earlier history, Thucydides aims to show that the Athenians do not speak accurately (ἀκριβὲς οὐδὲν λέγοντας) about events in the final years of the tyranny that existed some one hundred years before his own times (6.54–59; cf. 1.20 and recently, Meyer 2008). A key aspect of the Athenians' ignorance, according to Thucydides, is that they think that Hipparchus was tyrant when he was murdered by the pair of lovers, Harmodius and Aristogiton. In fact, Thucydides argues, Hipparchus was the younger brother of the tyrant, as is evident from both Thucydides' own better knowledge of oral tradition (ἄκοή) and from his use of reasoning from probability (εἰκός) about a piece of physical evidence that he himself has seen.

Thucydides notes that an inscription on the acropolis lists Hippias first of all the children of Pisistratus, and that only Hippias is recorded as having children of his own. On the basis of this observation (ὄψις), Thucydides reasons that "it is likely (εἰκός) that the oldest son married first" and that "it is furthermore not unreasonable (οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπεοικότως) that Hippias was listed first because he was the eldest and ruled as tyrant" (6.55.1–2). It is noteworthy that in this digression, Thucydides refers to hearsay or oral tradition (ἄκοή) as a source of knowledge three times (6.53.3, 6.55.1, 6.60.1), but also subjects this hearsay to testing against physical evidence (inscriptions) and his own critical reasoning (what is probable).

As has been widely discussed, much of the language and methods of critical enquiry is shared by Thucydides and other intellectuals of the second half of the fifth century, including historians, sophists, rhetoricians, and medical writers (Thomas 2000, 2006,

and chapter 33 in this volume). For example, Herodotus refers to his methods using identical or similar terms to those used by Thucydides: hearsay (ἀκοή), personal observation (ὄψις), and judgment (γνώμη) (Luraghi 2001). Indeed, many of the historians/ethnographers of fifth-century Greece, including Hecataeus, Herodotus, and Thucydides, made extensive use of oral tradition, or what “is said” (λέγεται with Westlake 1977), yet also subjected these traditions to critical examination against other sources of knowledge (other oral and written sources, as well as their own personal observations) and made judgments about what was likely (εἰκός) to be true.³

It is worth commenting on Thucydides' rationale for needing to scrutinize for accuracy the accounts of eyewitnesses, since in this justification he introduces the idea of bias, which has played such an important role in the construction of the ideal of historical objectivity.

It was difficult work because those who were present at each event did not report the same things about them, but rather they spoke according to their goodwill (εὐνοίας) towards either side or their memory (μνήμης). (1.22.3)

Thucydides' explicit recognition of the deficiencies of memory and particularly the distortions introduced by partisanship has been fundamental to his reputation as the founder of scientific or objective history until well into the twentieth century. On this interpretation, Thucydides' position—at least after 424—as an exile from his own city is taken as further evidence of his objectivity because, as he tells us, he had the leisure to be present on both sides of the conflict and better perceive events as a consequence of his leisure (5.26.5). Whether or not Thucydides achieved anything close to objectivity (an impossible ideal, according to most modern historians), there is no doubt that he sets out the ideal of impartiality in these passages and advocates a strongly critical attitude to eyewitness testimony, including his own. This recognition of the potential for bias can only have helped him approach historical truth, if not wholly obtain it.

If we turn now from discussion of Thucydides' methods in reconstructing events, to his treatment of formal speeches, we can see that there are both similarities and differences of method. As in the case of the events of the war, Thucydides notes how difficult it was for him and for others to remember exactly what was said in formal speeches:

As for what each side said either right before the war or during the war itself, it was difficult to remember the precise words spoken (χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτῆν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι), both for me, when I myself heard them, and for others who reported them back to me from one place or another. (1.22.1)

Later in the work, Thucydides has his character Nicias acknowledge the same problem of memory regarding speeches when he wishes to send a message back to the Athenians

³ Fowler (1996); Bertelli (2001); Luraghi (2001); Schepens (2011). Contrast Nicolai (2011) and Thomas (2000, 173n19), who believe that scholars have overestimated Hecataeus' rationalism.

about conditions in Sicily (Morrison 2004). Nicias does not trust that his words will be reported accurately, even in the relatively short time that it would take a messenger to cross from Syracuse to Athens.

[Nicias] was afraid that the messengers would not report the reality of the situation (τὰ ὄντα), either because of their lack of skill in speech or their forgetfulness (μνήμης ἑλλιπείς γιγνόμενοι) or because they wished to please the mob. Therefore, he wrote a letter, believing that in this way most of all the Athenians would learn his argument (τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην), with nothing lost in transmission (μηδὲν ἐν τῷ ἀγγέλω ἀφανισθεῖσαν) and would deliberate on the basis of the truth (περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας). (7.8.2)

The problem of remembrance was therefore common to Thucydides and generals in the field like Nicias, who needed to ensure that his message reached the Athenians intact. In the case of the speeches of the war as a whole, however, Thucydides did not have the same ability as Nicias to make use of written documents. There were no transcripts of assembly debates at Athens, let alone speeches given in other states and in the field. As a result, Thucydides concedes that the speeches have been composed

as it seemed to me (ὥς . . . ἂν ἔδοκοῦν ἔμοι) each speaker would say what was necessary for the occasion (ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν), while holding as closely as possible to the whole argument of what was actually said (ἐχομένῃ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων). (1.22.1)

Scholars have subjected this sentence to extensive discussion, not least because there seems to be a tension between the two halves of the sentence. What concerns us here, however, is that Thucydides admits the impossibility of knowing the precise words of the speeches, including those that he himself heard. As a consequence, he was forced to compose speeches according to what seemed to him to be “necessary for the business of persuasion—that is to say, the arguments needed to convince hearers to adopt the speaker’s suggestions.” (Marincola 2001, 78, citing Macleod 1983, 52; Tsakmakis, chapter 16 in this volume). While this admission seems radical according to the (unrealistic) strictures of the nineteenth-century notion of scientific history (that is, history based strictly on the evidence), it is in fact what most Greek and Roman historians did without apology. The difference with Thucydides is that he is explicit about his method, and that his approach to speeches is in some tension with his equally explicit—and even strident—claims to historical accuracy and truth (Hornblower 1997, 59).

While acknowledging some tensions here, it is important also to credit Thucydides for his openness about the difficulties and the compromises that he had to make. This transparency is evident throughout the work as Thucydides frequently reminds his readers of the gap between his account of speeches and what was actually said. For example, in his introductions to the speeches, he often writes that a speaker said “the following sort of thing” rather than that a speaker “gave the following speech” (for example, 3.36.6, 6.8.4,

6.32.3). Furthermore, Thucydides also explicitly acknowledges that his representations of assembly debates provide only a few of the speeches that were given at the time, and even specifies that he has selected for representation only the two most opposed positions (for example, 3.36.6, 6.32.3).

Thucydides' treatment of one of the major events of the war—the Battle of Mantinea in 418—provides an interesting parallel to his treatment of speeches insofar as he admits the impossibility of knowing the precise facts but nevertheless feels free to render the battle in a way that approximates or comes “as close as possible” to what actually happened. In this account, Thucydides acknowledges that he cannot give an accurate account of the numbers of troops on each side and—in a jab at Homer (Hornblower 2008, 180)—also criticizes the tendency of men to exaggerate.

I was not able to write down accurately (γράφαι . . . ἀκριβῶς) the numbers either of the individual contingents on each side or all of them together. For the number of the Spartans was unknown due to the secrecy of their political system, and the number of the others was untrustworthy (ἡπιστεῖτο) on account of the human tendency to exaggerate (τὸ ἀνθρώπειον κομπῶδες) with regard to their own forces. (5.68.2)

On the matter of Spartan secrecy, Thucydides similarly notes that it was difficult to learn the truth (τὴν ἀλήθειαν) about their casualties (5.74.3). Yet, on the other hand, Thucydides does not give up altogether on estimating the size of the armies, and in fact provides a detailed calculation (λογισμός) based on the size of the various divisions of the Spartan army (5.68.2–3). This detailed knowledge of the units and chain of command of the Spartan army (5.66.3–4) was presumably part of the rigorous investigations (despite Spartan secrecy) that he conducted in the Peloponnese during the period of his exile (5.26.5). On this basis, he not only is able to provide a calculation of the size of the Spartan force, but also concludes his account of the entire battle with the claim that “such was the battle, or approximately such” (τοιαύτη καὶ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τούτων) and confidently states that it was the “greatest battle among Greek states for a long time and involved the most highly reputed cities (ἀξιολογωτάτων πόλεων)” (5.74.1).

We can compare Thucydides' claim that his account of the Battle of Mantinea comes “as close as possible” to what actually happened to his similar claim that his speeches were “as close as possible to the whole argument of what was actually said.” (1.22.1). While Thucydides does not tell us who his sources for the battle were, his account is focalized from the Spartan perspective and it is likely that he interviewed Spartans (Hornblower 2008, 180). Yet oral sources need to be examined critically, and even then one only approximates rather than reaches the truth. This example shows Thucydides once again using his critical reasoning to determine the truth about the past, or—as in the case of the speeches—as close as possible to the truth about the past.

A final aspect of Thucydides' explicit historical methodology (before we turn to his literary shaping) is his interest in causation and particularly his distinction between

superficial and underlying or true causes (see Robinson, chapter 6 in this volume). Toward the end of his introduction, Thucydides makes clear that he is not only interested in describing *what* happened but also in explaining *why* it happened:

The Athenians and the Peloponnesians started the war after breaking the Thirty-Years Peace that was made after the capture of Euboea. I wrote down first *the reasons that* they broke the Peace (διότι δ' ἔλυσαν τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα) so that no one will ever in the future ask the cause (ἐξ ὅτου) of so great a war among the Greeks. (1.23.5)

As many have observed, Thucydides is original in neither his choice to write about war nor in his interest in the causes of war (Marincola 1999, 2006; Marincola et al. 2012). Herodotus also stated in his interest in explaining the “reason that (δι’ ἣν αἰτίην) the Greeks and Barbarians fought one another” (preface) and spends a large part of his history explicating the deep cultural and political roots of the conflict. It even might be said that this interest in the causes of conflict goes back to Homer, who began his great poem about the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon with a call to the Muse to explain, “What god drove them to fight in bitter strife?” (*Iliad* 1.8).

Against this tradition of interest in the causes of conflict, however, Thucydides makes an explicit distinction between what he calls “the truest cause” and the openly cited causes proffered by each side.

I think that the truest cause (τὴν ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν), but the one that was least cited openly (ἀφανεστάτην λόγῳ), was that the growth of Athens and the fear that it induced in the Spartans forced them to fight. The causes that were openly cited by both sides (αἱ δ' ἐς τὸ φανερόν λεγόμεναι αἰτίαι) for the dissolution of the Peace treaty and the beginning of the war were as follows. . . . (1.23.6)

While Thucydides is very explicit about this distinction between true and alleged causes, it is important to recognize that his predecessors were also aware of this difference. Herodotus began his history with the diverging accounts of the hostility between Greeks and Barbarians, only to dismiss them in favor of his own understanding of the true cause of the hostilities:

This is what the Persians and the Phoenicians say. I am not going to say that these things happened this way or some other way, but I after indicating who I know to have begun the wrongdoing against the Greeks will go forward in my narrative. . . . (1.5.3)

Interestingly, both Herodotus and Thucydides choose to give space in their narrative to the “alleged” causes of events, even if they themselves believe the “true” cause to be different. Indeed, immediately following his revelation of the “true” cause of the war (1.23), Thucydides launches into a narrative illustrating the alleged causes of the war—the disputes over Epidamnus (1.24–55) and Potidaea (1.56–65)—and then concludes with a reiteration of his earlier point that the true cause of the war was the Spartans’ fear

of the growth of Athens' power (1.88). Thucydides uses the terms *prophasis* and *aitia* in the same way as the medical writers, and it is clear that in this usage, as well as in other aspects of his terminology and methods, he is influenced by the medical writers (Rawlings 1976, Thomas 2006).

When we seek the basis of Thucydides' judgment about the "truest cause" of the war, we are forced again to acknowledge the role of his own judgments of what was likely (εἰκός) in the circumstances. While Thucydides does not provide an explicit formula for determining what was plausible in all circumstances, it is clear from passages throughout his work that one important principle is his view of human nature, and particularly the tendency for the strong to dominate the weak (see Saxonhouse, chapter 20, and Orwin, chapter 21, in this volume). This principle appears as the basis of his historical judgments already in his discussion of the legendary past when he reasons that Agamemnon was able to compel the other Greeks to follow him not because of the oath of Tyndareus, but rather because of their fear of his naval supremacy (1.9.3). Similarly, Thucydides provides a blunt analysis of the naval empire of King Minos of Crete, stating that:

In the quest for gain, weak states put up with slavery to the stronger, and the powerful, who have surpluses, make the weaker states subjects. (1.8.3)

The idea of the domination of the weak by the strong guides Thucydides' reasoning not only about the King Minos and Agamemnon, but also the behavior of the protagonists in the Peloponnesian War, as Thucydides represents them (cf. Van Wees, chapter 2 in this volume). As Book 1 progresses we learn of the growth of Athenian power that threatens to enslave the Greek world, as well as Spartan fear of domination that ultimately leads them to declare war (see Robinson, chapter 6, and Kallet, chapter 3, in this volume). By the time we reach Book 5, the guiding principle of the behaviors of states is stated in its most raw form by the Athenians as they deal with the tiny island of Melos:

We know as well as you do that in discussions of human affairs, justice enters only when there is a corresponding power to enforce it; but the powerful exact what they can, and the weak have to comply. (5.89, transl. Hornblower)

The parallels between the legendary past and the behaviors of states in the current war form the context for Thucydides' famous statement about the future value of his work. This statement also importantly illustrates the key role that Thucydides' understanding of human nature (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον) plays in his reasoning about what happened in the past:

Perhaps the absence of the story-telling element in my accounts will make them less enjoyable. Yet it is enough that they will be judged useful to whoever wishes to examine the truth (τὸ σαφές) of these events that will recur in a similar way in future due to human nature (κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον). (1.22.4)

This emphasis on human nature places Thucydides' understanding of causes distinctly in the human realm (Thomas 2006, 87; Thomas, chapter 33, and Rahe, chapter 25, in this volume). Unlike Homer, who asked "what god" caused the strife between Achilles and Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.8), and unlike Herodotus, who frequently emphasizes the divine causes of events (Harrison 2000), Thucydides avoids supernatural explanations of events (cf. 5.26.3–4 with Thorburn 1999). While he does mention some apparently miraculous occurrences (see especially 1.23.2–3, discussed below, and 3.87.4, 4.52.1) and religious behavior (for example, the purification of Delos 3.104), he does not cite the gods as causes of these events or describe the gods as responsive to religious practice (Marinatos 1981; Hornblower 1992; Furley 2006).

These passages demonstrate the significant role that Thucydides' own judgment (γνώμη) of plausibility (εἰκός) based on human nature (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον) played in his interpretations of the causes of events. Moreover, when we consider that his judgment regarding causes influences his decision as to which events to include in his narrative, it becomes abundantly clear that he is not reconstructing the past strictly according to the facts. Rather, he is shaping the material according to his own judgment of what is likely to have happened, based on his own understanding of human nature.

For example, in his account of events in Sicily in the 420s, Thucydides states explicitly that he would relate only those events that were most worthy of record (3.90.1, cited above). One criterion of Thucydides' selection of events appears to be their role in illustrating what he believed to be the real reason for Athenian involvement in Sicily, namely, their desire to make the island subject to themselves:

The Athenians sent [ships to Sicily] on the pretext (πρόφασις) of kinship, but really because they desired that grain not be brought from there to the Peloponnesus and also because they wished to perform a test to see if affairs in Sicily could come under their control. (3.86.4)

Summing up, it is clear that Thucydides' interpretations and judgments play an important role in determining the content of his history. It remains to demonstrate the ways that Thucydides gives the work literary form and shapes the emotions of his readers to align with his judgments and interpretations of the causes and significance of events.

NARRATIVE ART, EMOTIONS, AND THE SHAPING OF HISTORY

It is impossible, of course, to give full treatment to the topic of Thucydides' narrative art in this short chapter. Many excellent book-length studies, let alone chapters of this

volume, have been devoted to this topic.⁴ Yet it is important to emphasize that this aspect of Thucydides' craft is *part of his historical method*, since it is just as fundamental as his more explicit methodology regarding the process of historical research. Indeed, Thucydides believed that in order to convince his readers of the truth of his interpretations, they needed to experience events for themselves through his vivid representations. A few examples will illustrate how Thucydides artfully shapes episodes in his history to persuade his readers of his most striking claim, namely that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war that ever took place.

We have already discussed how, at the outset of his history, Thucydides claims that his war is the greatest of all previous wars, and how he seeks to outdo his predecessors and contemporaries in both the greatness of his subject matter and the sophistication of his methods. Despite protestations to the contrary in his introduction (see 1.22.4, cited above), this rivalry extends to the literary quality of the work. That Thucydides succeeded in rivaling his predecessors in his literary brilliance was recognized already by the ancients. Indeed, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (see de Jonge, chapter 37 in this volume) wrote in the first century BCE:

the special features of his style include compactness and solidity, pungency and severity, vehemence, the ability to disturb and terrify and above all emotional power (τὸ δεινὸν καὶ τὸ φοβερόν ὑπὲρ ἅπαντα δὲ ταῦτα τὸ παθητικόν). (*On Thucydides* 8.24, Pritchett 1975, transl. S. Usher)

Similarly, F. M. Cornford, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, viewed the obvious literary qualities of Thucydides' work as in conflict with his claim that it would be less enjoyable:

If contemporaries were warned that the history would be "rather unattractive," what attraction would it retain for us today? Yet it does attract and move us strangely; and this appeal is a thing to be reckoned with and explained. (Cornford 1907, 80)

Many episodes illustrate the ability of Thucydides' narrative to "move us," and there have been numerous scholarly analyses of the brilliant literary features of such major episodes as the plague narrative, the sack of Plataea, the revolt of Mytilene, and the launching and destruction of the Sicilian expedition (see, for example, Finley 1967; Connor 1984; Grethlein 2010). Each of these episodes is retold with a vividness and immediacy that allows the reader to experience events themselves, including the peaks of Athenian ambition and the valleys of Athenian despair. Less frequently discussed, however, are the ways that Thucydides shapes even minor episodes of his history to echo and support his claim that his war was the greatest war that has taken place.

⁴ See, for example, Cornford (1907); Hunter (1973, 1982); Connor (1984); Rood (1998); Greenwood (2006); Grethlein (2013b); in this volume, see especially Greenwood (chapter 9), Joho (chapter 34), and Connor (chapter 12).

As observed at the beginning of this essay, Thucydides elevates the subject of his history by claiming that the war was the most noteworthy of all previous wars (1.1.1). In stark contrast to the rigorously analytical methodological paragraphs that follow, moreover, he expands on this claim in the final paragraph of his introduction in a choice piece of rhetorical hyperbole:

The length of this war was great (μέγα), and sufferings chanced to occur in Greece itself such as had not happened elsewhere in an equal amount of time (παθήματα τε ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τῇ Ἑλλάδι οἷα οὐχ ἕτερα ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ). [In previous wars], there were not so many cities conquered and deserted . . . nor were so many men banished and murdered. . . . [In the present war] there were more frequent and stronger earthquakes, and more frequent eclipses, and great droughts among some and, as a result, famines and—that which did not the least harm and killed some portion of men—the plague. (1.23.2–3)

This passage is striking for its apparent conflict with Thucydides' own critique of embellishments and exaggerations just two paragraphs before (1.21.1). Even the fact that he comments on phenomena such as earthquakes, eclipses, famines, and plagues is jarring, since these subjects were often connected with popular belief about the role of the gods that Thucydides otherwise strictly avoids (see above). Moreover, this is not a one-time occurrence, since, elsewhere in the history, Thucydides emphasizes the degree of suffering as "the greatest" in various ways for events both great (for example, the Sicilian expedition 7.85.4, 7.87.5) and small (see episodes discussed below). As a result, the reader is constantly reminded of the theme of the greatness of the war, and more importantly, Thucydides repeatedly invests his account with emotional power (τὸ παθητικόν), thus stirring his readers' emotions and drawing them into the experience of the war.

This aspect of his work is especially clear in seemingly minor episodes in the war, and particularly in passages in which Thucydides draws out the suffering through the invention of characters and dialogue. In such episodes, it becomes manifest that Thucydides was not simply reporting what happened. Nor are his criteria for selecting "the most noteworthy events" simply based on the significance of events for illustrating his interpretation of the causes and outcome of the war. Rather, he also selects events for their dramatic potential, and invests them with emotional power through vivid detail, direct discourse, and evocative language.

Let us take two examples. The first falls in Thucydides' account of events in Amphilocheia in 426–425 BCE. This region of northwest Greece was a minor theater of war, and the events that took place here had little impact on the major players in the war. The episode occurs in the aftermath of a battle between two minor players in the Peloponnesian War, the Ambraciots (supported by the Spartans) and Acarnanians (supported by the Athenians) (3.113). After an initial battle in which the Ambraciots are defeated by the Acarnanians, a second battle takes place between some Ambraciot reinforcements, who had arrived too late to participate in the first battle, and the Athenians, who had come in support of their allies the Acarnanians. This second group

of Ambraciots is defeated by the Athenians just as a herald arrives from the survivors of the first group of Ambraciots in order to request permission to recover their dead.

In a remarkable mini-dialogue between the unnamed Ambraciot herald and an anonymous bystander, the enormity of the Ambraciot losses is dramatically revealed in a scene reminiscent of Sophoclean tragedy (Stahl 2003). As the Ambraciot herald gazes in wonder the number of arms lying on the battlefield, an anonymous bystander asks him why he is amazed, thinking he knows the outcome of the second battle. The herald estimates the number of dead to be 200, but the anonymous bystander responds in direct discourse that “these are not the weapons [of so few] but rather of more than one thousand” (3.113.4).

The herald then concludes, still in direct discourse, that then “the weapons do not belong to the men who fought with us,” to which the bystander responds that the weapons do indeed belong to those men, “if you fought on Mount Idomene yesterday.” The dialogue then speeds up, without any intervening indications of the speaker: “But we did not fight yesterday, but the day before during our retreat. And we fought these men who came with reinforcements from the city of the Ambraciots yesterday.” The narrative then continues in the third person:

The herald, when he heard this and realized that the reinforcements from the city had perished wholesale, lamenting and stunned by the enormity of the present disaster (ἀνοιμώζας καὶ ἐκπλαγείς τῷ μεγέθει τῶν παρόντων κακῶν), he went away without accomplishing anything and did not even request the corpses of the dead. For this catastrophe was the greatest of those that occurred in a single Greek city in the same number of days during this war (πάθος γὰρ τοῦτο μᾶ πόλει Ἑλληνίδι ἐν ἴσαις ἡμέραις μέγιστον δὴ τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τόνδε ἐγένετο). (3.113.6)

By representing this episode in the form of a dialogue in direct discourse, Thucydides dramatizes for his audience the herald's gradual realization of the extent of the Ambraciot losses. This literary technique, borrowed from Greek drama, is reminiscent of a messenger's speech, as H.-P. Stahl (2003, 134) has observed. As in Greek tragedy, this condensed recognition scene allows the audience to experience for themselves the protagonist's growing awareness of the extent of his own misfortune.

Furthermore, Thucydides' subsequent description in the third person of the herald's reaction to this realization is calculated to shock his audience so that their emotion echoes and replays the herald's own stunned amazement. By describing the herald as so overwhelmed that he forgets to request the corpses of the dead, Thucydides shocks his own audience, for whom the importance of proper burial of the dead was paramount (cf. the similar impact of Sophocles' *Antigone*, produced in the late 440s). This episode, moreover, recalls Thucydides' earlier description of the decline of funeral customs as a result of the plague (Thuc. 2.52.3-4; Stahl 2003, 134). Both this minor episode in Amphilochoia and the plague narrative would have evoked emotions of shock and horror, and play a similar role in illustrating the larger theme of the fragility of human institutions in the face of the brutality of war.

The absence of burial is not the only way that this minor episode is given emotional impact and woven into the larger themes of the history as a whole. Also significant is the language with which Thucydides emphasizes the enormity of the tragedy, since it recalls the introduction to his history where he expands on the greatness of the Peloponnesian War in relation to all other wars (1.23.2–3, cited above). In each passage, Thucydides claims that the sufferings that took place were unparalleled in the same space of time (ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ, 1.23.2; ἐν ἴσαις ἡμέραις, 1.113.4). This method of emphasizing the greatness of suffering by claiming it was “the greatest” “in so short a time” or “in numbers of people affected” or “for such a small place”—turns out to be a favorite rhetorical technique of Thucydides, which he uses on several other occasions. This technique—a variety of hyperbole—is effective because it allows Thucydides both to stir the pity of his readers for the suffering involved in a particular episode of the history and at the same time to recall the larger theme of the greatness of the Peloponnesian War and, by implication, of his account of it.

A second example of Thucydides’ use of minor episodes to support his interpretation of the greatness of the war occurs in the later part of the history, specifically Book 7, in the eighteenth year of the war, after the occupation of Decelea in Attica by the Spartans in 413. At this point in the war, the Athenians found themselves hard pressed by their enemies and hard up for cash. With the Spartan army occupying their territory, the Athenians had to import supplies from abroad, and were effectively fighting a war on two fronts, since they had already sent a large fleet to Sicily and had also to fight the Spartans in Greece, including in their own territory.

In these conditions, a group of 1,300 Thracian mercenaries, who were to have sailed to Sicily with the Athenians, arrived in Athens. Since they had reached Athens too late and the Athenians were in any case short of money, it was decided to send them back home. The Athenian Diitrephes was set in command over the mercenaries with instructions to escort them back to Thrace and to make use of the mercenaries to injure the enemy if possible on the way back.

This is the context of Thucydides’ description of a brutal raid conducted by these mercenaries on the small town of Mycalessus in central Greece.

The Thracians, attacking Mycalessus, destroyed both the houses and the temples. They murdered the people of the town, sparing neither the old nor the young, but killing everyone in turn whomever they encountered, including children and women. They even killed oxen and whatever other living thing they saw. For in fact the Thracian race, like most of the barbarian race, is very bloodthirsty in situations in which it has no fear. There was great confusion and every form of death (ιδέα πάσα . . . ὀλέθρου). They even attacked a school, the largest one there, and cut down all the students who happened to have just entered. This misfortune affecting the whole city was as great as any other (ξυμφορὰ τῇ πόλει πάσῃ οὐδεμιᾶς ἦσσαν μᾶλλον ἑτέρας), and it occurred unexpectedly and with terrible effect (ἀδόκητός τε ἐπέπεσεν αὐτῇ καὶ δεινῇ). . . . A large portion of the population was lost. Such was the fate of Mycalessus and, considering the size of the city, it was worthy of pity as much as any other that took place during the war (τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν Μυκαλησσὸν πάθει χρησαμένην οὐδενὸς ὥς ἐπὶ μεγέθει τῶν κατὰ τὸν ἦσσαν ὀλοφύρασθαι ἀξίω τοιαῦτα ξυνέβη). (7.29–30)

This episode is remarkable for several reasons. First, the raid, involving as it does some otherwise insignificant Thracian mercenaries in an otherwise insignificant town, was “peripheral to the war” and “a minor event that could easily have been omitted or relegated to a sentence or two” (Kallet 2001, 74). Instead, Thucydides chose to elaborate on this minor episode in high literary style. The phrase “every form of death,” for example, is one we encounter in “purple” passages in the work, including Thucydides’ account of the civil war at Corcyra and other episodes of high emotional intensity (cf. 1.109.1, 2.19.1, 3.81.5, 3.83.1, 3.98.3; cf. Flory 1988).

Furthermore, and most importantly, the language of the Mycalessus episode recalls the theme of the greatness of the suffering caused by the war, and in turn, the greatness of Thucydides’ account of the war. Using the same rhetorical technique of hyperbole that he used in his account of the aftermath of the battle in Amphilochia and at the beginning of his work, Thucydides sums up his account of the brutal raid on Mycalessus by emphasizing its greatness relative to the small size of the city:

this misfortune affecting the whole city was as great as any other (ξυμφορὰ τῇ πόλει πάσῃ οὐδεμιᾶς ἥσσω μᾶλλον ἑτέρας) and considering the size of the city, it was worthy of pity as much as any other that took place during the war (τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν Μυκαλησσὸν πάθει χρησαμένην οὐδενὸς ὡς ἐπὶ μεγέθει τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἥσσω ὀλοφύρασθαι ἀξίω τοιαῦτα ξυνέβη). (7.29–30)

By carefully selecting a criterion by which the extent of suffering can be shown in comparatively powerful light, Thucydides, like any good public speaker, is able to emphasize the importance of the subject matter at hand (compare Winston Churchill’s fondness for hyperbole). Whether he is establishing the importance of the war itself, or of a single minor incident in the war, this technique allows Thucydides not only to evoke his readers’ emotions in a powerful way, but also to create thematic unity across the myriad of major and minor incidents in the history. This is just one technique that illustrates the artistic unity of the work, but there are many others that one could explore in more detail if space permitted.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began by noting that the reception of Thucydides since the nineteenth century has been dominated by the idea of scientific or fact-based history. While not discounting Thucydides’ efforts to establish the facts through critical examination of evidence, this chapter has aimed to provide a balanced presentation of his methods that also recognizes the role of interpretation as well as literary styling in his historical toolkit. Indeed, Thucydides’ brilliant *combination* of methodological rigor, insight, and literary style has ensured that he has had a continuing impact on the practice of history. Moreover, as Kurt Raaflaub (2013, 2016) has recently argued persuasively, for Herodotus and Thucydides, fiction was necessary to convey historical insight—that is, elaboration

and shaping of the past can impart a deeper historical truth than the dry narration of a series of facts. Good historical writing requires literary skill, and penetrating historical insight can be conveyed only through the selection and shaping of the past. On both these counts, Thucydides succeeded magnificently.

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CHAPTER 2

THUCYDIDES ON EARLY GREEK HISTORY

HANS VAN WEES

THE introduction to Thucydides' history was wrong-headed and stylistically inept, according to the historian and literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus. This "proem" would have been much better, he thought, if Thucydides had not "stretched it out to 500 lines" but skipped straight from chapter 1 to chapter 21. So convinced was Dionysius that he proceeded to quote the whole of the remaining introductory text to show how well it read without the padding (*On Thucydides* 19–20). No modern reader will agree: the text that our critic wanted to edit out, a sweeping history of Greece known as the "Archaeology" (*archaiologia*, "account of ancient times"), is now universally regarded as a landmark of historical analysis.

But Dionysius did have a point: a more conventional introduction along the lines he preferred could have worked perfectly well. Thucydides could have begun with his claim that the Peloponnesian War was the "greatest" war ever fought (1.1.1–2), addressed the difficulty of finding reliable evidence (1.1.3, 1.21–22), and concluded that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war because it lasted much longer than the previous greatest conflict, the Persian War, and involved "sufferings" (*pathēmata*) greater than ever before in the same span of time (1.23.1–3). Notable "sufferings" were certainly an important feature of Thucydides' narrative, dramatically evoked, carefully analyzed, or both, as in the case of civil war and plague (see Forsdyke, chapter 1 in this volume). So what need was there to insert a long account of early Greece?

The purpose of the Archaeology is to introduce another dimension of Thucydides' history: the analysis of power. The Archaeology defines the greatness of the Peloponnesian War not by the damage suffered but by the power deployed: the war involved greater military resources and larger numbers of Greeks than any other (1.1.1, 21.2).¹ Thucydides is not content merely to measure the scale of military power, but seeks to explain how it

¹ Some argue that in Thucydides' mind the scale of power and the scale of suffering were closely linked (Gomme 1945, 89–90), and that the ultimate purpose of the Archaeology is to explore the destructive consequences of armament (Foster 2010, 4–43), but there appears to be no hint at this link in the Archaeology itself. One may note that some of the "sufferings" listed are attributed to "barbarians"

came into being. Rather than a list of earlier, less impressive, wars, the Archaeology is an ambitious analysis of the growth of Greek power over nearly a millennium. This chapter explores both the nature and the factual reliability of Thucydides' model of historical development.

MILITARY RESOURCES AND MODERNITY: THUCYDIDES' CRITERIA OF DEVELOPMENT

Thucydides states that from the outset he expected the war to be a great conflict “on the evidence that both sides were at a peak of complete preparation (*paraskeuē*) for it” and the whole Greek world was being drawn in (1.1.1). The Archaeology expands on this statement and tries to demonstrate that “this movement (*kinēsis*) was the greatest among the Greeks and a part of the barbarians, indeed, one might say, among most of mankind” (1.1.2). The closing sentence of the Archaeology (1.21.2) states clearly that the war itself was “great” (contra Tsakmakis 1995, 41–45) but the choice of the word “movement” here, rather than simply “war,” shows that Thucydides meant to include the preparation for war and mobilization of allies as “great” in their own right (Hammond 1952, 130–33). “Preparation” is a term often used by Thucydides, with a range of meanings difficult to render into English (Allison 1989): in a military context, it corresponds closely to “armament,” both the process of getting ready to fight and the resulting resources made ready for war. The Archaeology thus aims to show that the armaments and allies gathered and deployed in 431 had never been surpassed.

The result is, according to some, a one-sided history “which leads from barbarism to the Athenian empire” (Romilly 1956, 285). Others see a scrupulously maintained balance between the development of Athens and Sparta (Allison 1989, 14–27; Tsakmakis 1995, 44–46). Neither view seems quite right. The histories of Athens and the Peloponnese (not just Sparta) are indeed juxtaposed and balanced quite carefully, but ultimately the two are structurally unequal because the growth of Greece is described almost entirely as a matter of moving closer and closer toward the military strengths of classical Athens, while the weaknesses of early Greece coincide exactly with the relative weaknesses of Peloponnesian armament at the start of the war, as identified by a series of speakers in Thucydides' account.

In 432 BCE, the “intelligent” Archidamus of Sparta (1.79.2) tells his people that they are “unprepared” to make war, and will need two or three years to get ready (1.80.3,

(1.23.2) or to natural and supernatural causes (1.23.3), so are not linked to Greek armament. Moreover, the Archaeology is closed off by ring composition at the end of 1.21 (e.g., Hornblower 1997, 59; Nicolai 2001, 264–66), and thus separated from the comments on suffering (contra e.g., Connor 1984, 30–31; Ellis 1991, 362–65, who identify a “ring” enclosing the whole of 1.1–23).

82.2, 5). They have better and larger land armies (1.81.1), but the Athenians “are highly experienced at sea and are very well equipped in every other way, with private and public wealth and ships and horses and weapons and a mass of people not matched in any other single place in Greece, and they also have many allies who pay tribute” (1.80.3, 81.4, 86.3). Sparta falls far short in number of ships, has no public funds, and its citizens are unwilling to contribute their own money (1.80.4), yet “war is largely not a matter of weapons, but of expenditure which enables the use of weapons” (83.2). Moreover, the Peloponnesians do not all share the same goals, and a war would serve only the “private interest” of some (1.82.5–6). A Corinthian speaker counters that the coastal and inland cities of the Peloponnese do, in the long run, have shared interests (1.120.2, 122.2, 124.1) and that Spartan leadership will ensure unity (1.120.1, 121.2; cf. 2.11.9). They insist that the Peloponnesians enjoy military superiority on land (1.121.2, 4), and will be able to find funds to create a navy, from the cities’ own resources and by borrowing from the temple treasuries at Delphi and Olympia (1.121.3, 5); with practice they will eventually match Athenian naval skill (121.4). The Peloponnesians thus accept that their resources are inferior to those of Athens, even if they disagree on how serious their weaknesses are. Accordingly, they spend a year preparing for war (1.125.2), in part by raising ships and money from Sparta’s allies in Italy and Sicily (2.7.2; cf. 1.82.1).

Armament is revisited in a speech attributed to Pericles, who says that the Peloponnesians may have a larger army (1.141.6, 143.5), but “they have no private or public money,” and as a result can wage only brief wars against one another, no long wars overseas (1.141.3). Sustained warfare requires “surplus” (*periousia*), not ad hoc levies (141.5; 142.1). If the Peloponnesians somehow do raise funds to build a navy, they will still not have a chance to acquire naval expertise, or any access to professional crews (1.142.5–9, 143.2). Moreover, they “do not use a single Council hall” (1.141.6), so each state will pursue its own interests (1.141.7). In a second speech, Pericles sketches Athens’ strengths, above all a large “surplus of money,” mainly derived from tribute and other revenue from allies (2.13.2–5). This surplus funds a large and highly proficient navy (1.142.7), consisting of 300 triremes; in addition Athens has more than 30,000 troops, more than half of which guard 20 miles (178 *stadia*) of fortification wall (2.13.6–8). Thucydides notes shortly afterwards that the population of Attica had been politically unified since the days of the “intelligent” king Theseus, who had forced them to “use a single Council hall and *prutaneion*” (2.15.2), and that Pericles managed to preserve Athenian unity despite Sparta’s best efforts to foment internal division (2.20.1–22.1).

This state of armament on both sides explains why the Archaeology is by and large interested in only two criteria of greatness and weakness: growing financial surpluses and navies, and increasing unification of Greek states under powerful leaders. These features of the Greek world are pursued as far back as the generation after the Flood. Thucydides does not adopt Herodotus’ strategy of dismissing legends as beyond knowable history and confining himself to “the human age” (Hdt. 1.5–6; 3.122.2; cf. 2.118.1). Instead, he tackles tradition head on and argues that the military resources of the Greek world of his own day are even greater than those of the heroic past. The Archaeology thus represents history as a story of progress that culminates in a superior modern

world, a conception that has been widespread in western culture since the nineteenth century but was unusual in antiquity.

Although modernity is measured primarily in scale of armament and degree of unification, the Archaeology also reflects a broader sense of “cultural” modernity felt by late fifth-century Athenians. For instance, comic plays of the 420s BCE mock as old-fashioned a certain hairstyle for men, which had fallen out of use sometime after the Persian War.² This kind of awareness of recent cultural change explains why Thucydides devotes a lengthy passage of the Archaeology to contemporary dress, which is otherwise barely relevant to his theme. After describing the traditional “luxurious” appearance of older Athenians, he notes that “the Lacedaemonians were the first to adopt moderate dress in the modern style” (τὸν νῦν τρόπον, 1.6.4). They were also the first to exercise naked rather than in loincloths, as was the Greek custom until “not many years” (οὐ πολλὰ ἔτι) ago, and still is the non-Greek custom (1.6.5). Thucydides’ conclusion reveals why the apparent digression has been included: “one could point out many other ways in which the ancient Greek people lived in the same manner as barbarians do now” (1.6.6). In other words, habits of (un)dress illustrate how Greeks have continued to develop while other nations have stood still.

The idea that developments in Greece represent something fundamentally new in history helps explain why Thucydides claims that armament, alliances, and the war were the greatest “among most of mankind.” To an extent, this claim is justified by some interventions by non-Greeks, especially the attacks in 429 BCE of a coalition of non-Greeks in the northwest as allies of Sparta (2.80–81) and of a huge Thracian army as allies of Athens (2.95–101), but such episodes hardly amounted to the participation of “most of mankind.” If Thucydides meant, however, that most of the world had never witnessed such a mobilization of resources, his claim is less absurd (Hornblower 1997, 6, 62). Elsewhere, he hints at comparisons between Greek and other powers. The Thracians of the Odrysian empire are, he notes, the greatest power in the north, with a large army and “the greatest revenues of money” (2.97.5), but, we may understand, no navy. The Persian empire had been defeated, according to the Athenians, by the superiority of the smaller but better Greek fleet (1.73–5). According to another version, the Persians had lost because large military expeditions tend to “fail on foreign soil from a lack of supplies” (6.33.5–6; cf. 1.69.5), suggesting that even the Persians suffered from inadequate “preparation”. A similar criticism is made by Thucydides himself of the Scythians who, if united, would have a greater army than either the Thracians or the Persians, “but they are not at all the equal of others in sound thinking or intelligence as far as their means of living are concerned” (2.97.6), that is, as nomads they have no surpluses of wealth to fund warfare. For different reasons, then, none of the greatest powers of Europe and Asia could match the sophistication of “modern” Greek, or at any rate Athenian, armament.

² Aristophanes, *Knights* 1324–34; *Clouds* 984–85. Also: Asios frag. 13 West; Heracleides of Pontus (cited by Athenaeus 512bc; Aelian *VH* 4.22).

PACIFICATION AND UNIFICATION: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

The navy is the engine of growth for Thucydides. Navies pacify the seas, which leads to private and public material prosperity, which produces the funds to wage naval wars, which leads to the unification of states under the greatest naval power, which produces greater security and revenues for all, and so on in a virtuous circle of growth. The three main elements of this model—public finance, naval power, and political unification—are thus closely connected, but for clarity and convenience will be discussed separately.

The Growth of “Surplus” and Public Finance

Thucydides imagines that the earliest Greeks “had no strength in size of cities or other armament” (1.2.2), because their lives were constantly disrupted by violence. Plundering raids forced men to carry weapons at all times (1.5.1–6.2), “civil wars” (*staseis*) divided communities and made them vulnerable to outside attack (1.2.4, 6), and whole populations were forced to migrate away from danger (1.2.1). As a result, “they all used their own territory only as far as necessary for survival and they had no surplus of money and did not plant the earth, since they never knew when someone might attack and they were unfortified as well so another might take it from them” (1.2.2; cf. 1.6.1). The absence of planting does not mean that agriculture did not exist: the verb “to plant” (*phuteuein*) denotes cultivating vines, olives, and fruit trees, as opposed to grain.³ Moreover, Thucydides refers to “power” derived from “good land” even at this very early stage (1.2.4). He evidently believed that the earliest Greeks were subsistence farmers but were unable to produce wine or olive oil, crops that require long-term investment (Marshall 1975, 32), on account of endemic violence.

Sea travel was not safe at this stage (1.2.2, 1.6.1), but it was possible: Thucydides stresses its importance in later stages of development, but never describes it as a new phenomenon; he merely says that it became more common (1.3.4, 5.1, 7.1, 13.1 and 5). However, “there was no trade” (*emporía*, 1.2.2), presumably because this would have involved primarily the exchange of high-value produce such as wine and olive oil by sea: in the beginning, violence curtailed both the use of trade routes and the production of commodities to be traded.

Conditions changed when Minos of Crete “acquired a navy” and used it to clamp down on “piracy” (*lēisteia*), i.e., seaborne plundering expeditions, a common and acceptable way to make a living at the time (1.5.1–2), which caused cities to be founded a long way from the sea (1.7). “The pirates, naturally (ὥς εἰκός), he cleared from the seas as much as he could, so that more revenues would come to him” (1.4; cf. 1.8.2). Thucydides may

³ E.g. Hesiod *Works and Days* 22, 780–81; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 3.2.10; *Cyropaedia* 1.5.10.

have in mind the two actions undertaken by Athens near the start of the Peloponnesian War: the protection of Euboea from Locrian plundering raids in 431 (2.32) and the protection of merchant shipping from the Levant from attacks by Peloponnesian pirates in 430 (2.69.1). Such measures created a safer environment in which people could accumulate “greater surpluses of money” (1.7; cf. 1.8.3), and afford to build fortified settlements on coasts and isthmuses “for the sake of trade” (1.7). Evidently, a reduction of raiding made more profitable forms of production possible while the suppression of piracy at sea boosted trade, and both kinds of economic growth enabled Minos and others rulers to raise more taxes, duties, or tribute.

This image of Minos as a peacemaker is quite a departure from the Athenian legend that he was a despot who demanded tributes of human victims for the Minotaur (e.g., Hellenicus frag. 164 Fowler), or even from the Cretan version of the legend, which represented him as a straightforward conqueror, who did not expel the natives but integrated them into his navy (Hdt. 1.171.2–5). Whether Thucydides found his version in another source or formulated it himself, his picture of Minos reflects Athens’ self-image as an enemy of pirates. In addition to the two anti-piratical actions already mentioned, Athens expelled the Dolopians from Scyros in 475 BCE (1.98.2), and in so doing eliminated a notorious pirates’ nest, according to a later source (Plutarch, *Cimon* 8.3–6). In the mid-fifth century Athens is said to have tried to organize an international congress to discuss “how everyone might sail safely and keep the peace at sea” (Plut. *Pericles* 17.1). These claims may or may not be true (de Souza 1999, 26–30, 38–41), but the parallel with the policies attributed to Minos shows that they reflect a fifth-century *ideal* of sea power, which Minos had supposedly put into practice.

Not only is classical Athens foreshadowed here, but early Athens itself is imagined as playing a special role in the process of pacification. From the start, the city was an exception to the rule of violence: Attica had only “thin soil,” but this lack of agricultural potential meant that civil war and migration did not occur (1.2.5); instead, exiles and migrants from the rest of Greece moved to Athens “because it was stable,” so that the population grew (1.2.6). In view of their stability, it is no coincidence that “the Athenians were the first to put down iron,” i.e., stopped carrying weapons in daily life, and, “relaxing their lifestyle, changed to something more luxurious” (1.6.3). The context suggests that this is supposed to have happened before the Trojan War. A plausible period for the adoption of more peaceful habits is the time of Theseus’ unification of Attica, which put an end to internal wars (2.15.1–2).

Although financial resources were growing, they were still relatively small by the time of the Trojan War, Thucydides argues, and this limited the scale and effectiveness of Greek armies. He calculates that 102,000 Greeks came to Troy, but concludes that this is “not many, given that they were sent out from the whole of Hellas collectively” (1.10.5). More manpower would have been available but “lack of money” (ἀχρηματία) and “a shortage of supplies” (τῆς γὰρ τροφῆς ἀπορία) meant that Agamemnon brought only as many men as could be sustained from local resources, by raiding and by cultivating land in the Chersonese opposite Troy (1.11.1). “If they had come with a surplus of provisions,” the Greeks would have overwhelmed Troy, but the manpower devoted

to ad hoc provisioning undermined the war effort (1.11.2). All other Greek powers also remained “weak on account of a lack of money” (ibid.). Thus early Greece shared the most serious weakness in the armament of the contemporary Peloponnese, and suffered the same lack of supplies that in one version of events had caused the Persian invasion to fail. Athens, by contrast, was able to pay wages which its soldiers and rowers used to buy provisions from merchants or in local markets, or on occasion even from shiploads of supplies sent along by the city itself (Thuc. 6.21.2–22).

Thucydides states simply that “it is apparent” that a lack of finance forced the Greeks at Troy to cultivate their own food as well as raid for supplies. This is remarkable because, although raids are often mentioned (e.g., *Il.* 9.328–29; *Od.* 3.105–6), the epics say nothing about farming the Chersonese. I would suggest that this story was a local Athenian tradition, because an ancient commentator on Thucydides (1.11.1) explains that the cultivators “were led by Acamas and Antimachus,” and Acamas was a son of Theseus, who ought to have been at Troy but, embarrassingly for the Athenians, was not mentioned in the *Iliad*. The story may thus have been invented in order to provide a respectable reason for Acamas’ absence from the action, while simultaneously staking a claim to ownership of the Chersonese, which was colonized by Athens from c. 550 BCE onward (Hdt. 6.34–39).

After the Trojan War, Thucydides imagines, Greece once again suffered civil wars (1.12.2) and migrations, “so that they could not experience growth in tranquillity” (ἡσυχάσασαν ἀνέξηθῆναι, 1.12.1). It took a long time for Greece to be “stably pacified” again (1.12.4) and reach the next level of economic prosperity: people “engaged still more than previously in the acquisition of money” and “revenues became greater” (1.13.1). Corinth led the way: always “powerful in wealth” owing to transit trade by land, they made the most of the rise of seafaring: “acquiring their ships, they put down piracy and by providing a trading post (*emporion*) for land and sea, they kept their city powerful through revenues of money” (1.13.5). Again, the suppression of violence, especially maritime raiding, stimulates the growth of private and public wealth, especially through trade and taxes on trade.

At this point, the story of economic growth ends, but the story of the development of navies and the unification of Greek states continues, and accelerates.

Ships and Navies

For most of Greek history, navies consisted of the same type of ship used by pirates and raiders. Thucydides demonstrates this in detail for the vessels in the *Iliad*’s Catalogue of Ships, which mentioned crews of 120 and 50 men (*Il.* 2.510, 720–21), “indicating, it seems to me, the largest and the smallest,” consisting of soldiers who did their own rowing (*Il.* 2.720–21), and leaving no room for passengers because their vessels were not “enclosed,” i.e., with decks, but “built in a more piratical style in the ancient manner” (1.10.4). During the Trojan War and for many centuries thereafter, even the greatest navies were formed of such “pentekontors and long ships” (1.14.1, 3). The implied contrast is with the classical

Greek warship, the trireme, which had crew of 200, mostly specialist oarsmen, and enough room on deck for up to 40 “passengers” (Hdt. 6.15.1; Morrison et al. 2000, 107–26). The only advantage which early navies had over pirate fleets would thus have been their size, but Thucydides does not go into the details of their scale or organization.

After the first creation of a navy by Minos, the next major development took place only when the highest level of economic growth was reached:

Greece equipped navies, and they embraced the sea more. The Corinthians are said to have been the first to handle matters relating to ships in much the same way as we do now, and triremes were first built in Greece at Corinth. (1.13.1–2)

Since Thucydides has told us very little about the nature of earlier navies, it remains obscure to what innovation, apart from the building of triremes, he refers. The verb “to handle” (μεταχειρίσασθαι), however, suggests a change in organization, and such a change would certainly have been necessary when triremes replaced pentekontors. Pentekontors were used in private raiding ventures, and early navies almost certainly consisted simply of privately owned ships mobilized for public expeditions, so that little central naval organization was required. The trireme, by contrast, with its large crew and small number of soldiers, was too expensive for almost all private ship owners and unsuitable for piratical activity. Building and maintaining triremes required public intervention, and this centralization of naval resources is surely what Thucydides had in mind (van Wees 2013).

The creation of navies is closely associated with the establishment of “tyrannies,” “as revenues grew larger; previously there were hereditary kingships with agreed privileges” (1.13.1). The precise connection between tyrants and navies is left obscure, perhaps because Thucydides will later show tyrants in a negative light and does not want to give them credit for playing a positive role here, but the elliptically expressed idea is evidently that some individuals acquire so much wealth that they are able to acquire a position of greater power than traditional rulers were able to wield (Hornblower 1997, 42). Tyrannies thus represented a centralization of power, and this facilitated the development of modern navies.

The third stage of naval development involved the complete replacement of pentekontors by triremes, which had initially been built only in small numbers. This happened in Sicily and Corcyra c. 490 BCE (1.14.2), and at Athens shortly before 480 BCE, when Themistocles instigated expansion and modernization of the fleet (1.14.3), so that the Athenians “became naval people” (*nautikoi*, 1.18.2); he “was the first who dared propose that they embrace the sea” (1.93.3–4). In 480 BCE Athens contributed “a bit less than two-thirds” of 400 Greek vessels in total (1.74.1), i.e., 250 triremes, which for Thucydides was as large as the Athenian fleet ever became; he records that 250 ships, including 100 patrol vessels, was the highest number of Athenian ships at sea during the Peloponnesian War (3.17).

Straining to find any further naval development after the Persian War, Thucydides can only point to the trivial fact that triremes acquired “full-length decks” (1.14.3), and,

as we have seen, to the high level of skill acquired by the Athenians in naval warfare (1.18.3). The most significant development after the Persian War was a new kind of political unity.

“Slavery for the Sake of Profit”: The Unification of Greece

“It seems to me,” says Thucydides (twice), that Greece was originally so divided that it did not even have the name “Hellas” yet, but each region was named after its own “tribe”; hence non-Greeks were not yet collectively known as “barbarians” either (1.3.2–3). This personal opinion is based on a skewed reading of the evidence, as we shall see, but the notion that Greece moved from extreme division and lack of any collective action to the point where the whole Greek world was involved in the Peloponnesian War is central to his model of history.

The first step towards unification was the spread of the name Hellenes from the subjects of Hellen, son of Deucalion, in Phthiotis (1.3.3) to other places, “as Hellen and his sons grew strong . . . and they were brought in by the other cities to their benefit” (1.3.2). In other words, cities asked powerful outsiders for help, presumably to settle internal disputes or to provide military aid—much as Athens and Sparta later intervened in other states and brought these under their leadership (see e.g., 1.19; 1.75.2)—and this created a sense of unity.

Minos unified much of the Aegean by conquest, and expanded the Greek world by expelling native Carians from Cycladic islands and settling the first Greeks there (1.4; 1.8.2). This was only one example of a more general phenomenon: “for in their desire for profits the lesser put up with slavery to the stronger, and the more powerful with their surpluses made the smaller cities their subjects” (1.8.3). Thucydides here offers a striking vision of an international order that is based on coercion—rich cities convert their wealth into military power and conquer poorer cities—but is nevertheless materially advantageous even to the subjects. Political “slavery” is a price worth paying for greater security and prosperity. The contemporary parallels with the hierarchical leagues of Athens and Sparta are obvious, and the Athenians liked to stress that their alliance benefited all members (Thuc. 1.73.2–75.2).

The process of integration by force culminated in Agamemnon’s leadership of all Greeks. “He predominated in power,” contrary to the legend that said he merely led a coalition of his peers (1.9.1). “Because he had a stronger navy than the others,” he assembled an army “not so much by asking favors as by inspiring fear” (1.9.3), and “we must infer from this expedition what the earlier ones were like” (1.9.4). In other words, unity was achieved by submission to the greatest naval power, and any earlier wars uniting part of Greece must also have been led by sea powers. Once again, Thucydides flags up this notion as his own (μοι δοκεῖ, twice, 1.9.2–3), and it is indeed unusual. A more obvious approach would have been to treat Agamemnon as a forerunner of Sparta’s hegemonic position, achieved primarily by land-based expansion. This notion was cultivated by Sparta itself and reflected in Spartan cults for Agamemnon’s son and his herald

Talhybius (Herodotus 1.67; 7.134, 159). Archaic poets even called Agamemnon king of Sparta (Stesichoros frag. 216; Simonides fr. 549 Page). Thucydides, however, ignores all this and makes Agamemnon a thalassocrat, like Athens.

After the Trojan War, the Greek world expanded. “The Athenians settled the Ionians and most of the islanders; the Peloponnesians most of Italy and Sicily and some places in the rest of Greece” (1.12.4). This formulation again departs from tradition, which linked the so-called Ionian migration from Athens with the migrations of Thessalians, Boeotians, and Dorians not long after the Trojan War. Thucydides notes the early dates of the latter, 60 and 80 years after the fall of Troy, and treats these movements as evidence of instability (1.12.1–3; cf. 1.2.3–6), but he does not date the Ionian migration, associates it with the much later colonization of southern Italy and Sicily (cf. 6.2.3, 5), and treats it as evidence of growth and prosperity (1.12.4; cf. 1.2.6). Thucydides does not mention the post-Trojan War migration of Aeolians at all, although he is aware of it (3.2.3; 7.57.5; 8.100.3). Migration traditions are thus manipulated to give the impression that Greek expansion was evenly shared between the protagonists of the Peloponnesian War: Athenians went east; Peloponnesians went west.

In this new, larger Greek world, the new, modern navies built by Corinth and others again coerced communities into larger political units. Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, “made the other islands subject” (1.13.6), the tyrants in Sicily also acquired considerable power (1.17), and generally naval warfare “increased strength in revenues of money and rule over others” (1.15.1). However, the tyrants did not use their funds and fleets as much as they might have done, because they were interested only in personal security and private wealth, so “they administered their cities as much as possible in safety,” rather than wage war. The pursuit of self-interest also prevented unity among states: “everywhere, Greece was for a long time in a condition where it could achieve nothing conspicuous collectively, and individual cities were quite risk-averse” (ἀτολμοτέρα, 1.17). The inhibiting effect of self-interest is, as we have seen, repeatedly identified as a key Peloponnesian weakness in 431BCE, too.

Even more remarkable is Thucydides’ claim that the main strength of the Peloponnesian coalition, its infantry army, had contributed nothing to the political unification of Greece.

On land, no war took place that resulted in any increase in power. Such wars as did occur were all fought by cities against their own neighbors, and the Greeks did not venture out on foreign campaigns far from their own territory in order to conquer others. Subjects did not unite with the greatest cities, nor did the latter campaign together as equals, but they waged war by themselves, each against their neighbors (1.15.2).

This bold statement is in direct contradiction with what Thucydides himself says elsewhere about Sparta, which had “strength on land” (1.18.2) but lacked a navy and public funds, yet somehow “occupied two-fifths of the Peloponnese and led the whole of it as well as many external allies” (1.10.2), having put down tyrannical regimes across the

Greek world (1.18.1), and made itself “preeminent in power” in Greece by 480 BC (1.18.2). Sparta’s role in Thucydides’ model is not as an expansionist power in its own right, but as a facilitator of development in other states by removing the control of self-interested tyrants and so enabling the liberated cities to make full use of their financial and military potential. Sparta is able to intervene in this way, not because of its great army, but because it avoids all internal conflict. The Spartans have enjoyed “good order” and absence of tyranny for “a little more than 400 years until the end of the present war . . . and because of this they were able to regulate matters in other cities, too” (1.18.1). This radical denial of the role of land warfare shows just how crucial naval power is in Thucydides’ thinking, along with political stability.

The final stages of political unification are the creation of Athens’ league of former subjects of the Persian Empire, described in much more detail later (1.94–97.1), and the process by which the Greek world outside the Spartan and Athenian alliance systems gradually joined either side (1.18.2). One last time the superiority of Athenian power is emphasized. Sparta did not levy tribute, but imposed on their allies “an oligarchic regime orientated towards the Spartans alone” (1.19; cf. 1.144.2). Athens, by contrast, used its power to generate more money and military resources. “Over time, the Athenians took the ships from the cities . . . and ordered everyone to contribute money. And their individual armament for this war was greater than when they were at their most flourishing while the alliance was intact” (1.19). Despite the ambiguous wording, the general drift of Thucydides’ argument makes its meaning clear enough: by 431 BC, Athens alone possessed greater resources than the whole Greek alliance had done at the time of the Persian War (Hornblower 1997, 56).

In short, navies pacify and unify the Greek world, by force but ultimately to the benefit of all, because greater stability and unity afford greater opportunities for individuals and cities to pursue “profits,” albeit at the cost of political “slavery.” This vision reflects Thucydides’ perception at the start of the war that Athens’ financial resources, armaments, and even aspects of its way of life represented a peak of power and modernity, while their opponents remained to some degree stuck in the past. Until summer 424 at least, most Athenians will have shared this view: “they thought nothing could stop them, and they would achieve the possible and the quite unfeasible alike, just as easily with great as with inadequate armament” (4.65.4); they even set their sights on the conquest of Carthage.⁴ Soon after, the first military setbacks occurred, and Thucydides himself was exiled as a result, but even so the city remained in a position of great strength when the Peace of Nicias was concluded in 421. The Archaeology’s criteria of historical progress had not yet been seriously undermined.

Athens’ superiority was much less obvious after the failure of the Sicilian expedition in 413, let alone after the final defeat of the city, when Sparta had acquired public funds and a large navy thanks to Persian funding. After 413 or 404, one might have expected Thucydides no longer to see the Athenian empire as the culmination of Greek history. A less positive attitude to naval power and public finance can indeed be detected in

⁴ Aristophanes, *Knights* 1303–304; cf. Thuc. 6.15, 90; Plut. *Pericles* 20.3.

the second part of his history (Kallet 2001). However, if the Archaeology was written not long after 421 BCE—the end of “the first war,” as Thucydides originally conceived it before he decided to cover later events as well (5.24.2–26.4)—it is not surprising that in Thucydides’ vision contemporary Athens was the model for all earlier powers, and ancient Athens a leading force for progress.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND EARLY GREEK HISTORY

Thucydides tries to persuade the reader that he was right to think, from the start, that the Peloponnesian War would be the greatest conflict ever. In order to do so, he needed to refer as much as possible to historical “facts” with which his audience was familiar, rather than rely on obscure or unorthodox traditions (Luraghi 2000), and to select and interpret his material in a way that supported his particular argument, rather than to give a balanced, comprehensive survey of history. The result is in many respects a seriously distorted account of early Greece.

The Skewed Chronology of Cultural History

Modern scholars have tended to accept Thucydides’ argument that a collective “Hellenic” identity did not yet exist in Homer’s time (especially Hall 2002, 125–34; Ulf 1996). Yet this is a clear instance of Thucydides’ eagerness to play down the level of development in earlier ages getting the better of him. While it is true that Homer does not use “Hellenes” for all Greeks, it is incorrect to say that he has no single name for all Greece or the Greeks. In Homer, “Argos” often refers to the whole of Greece, rather than to the city of that name (e.g., *Il.* 1.30; 2.115; *Od.* 3.263; 4.99), and “Achaean” is used almost 700 times as a collective designation of all Greeks (e.g., *Il.* 1.2; *Od.* 1.90); “Argives” (inhabitants of Argos) and “Danaans” (descendants of the daughters of Danaos) are also frequently used as a common name for all Greeks. Indeed, the Greeks at Troy are described as “Pan-Achaean” (e.g., *Il.* 2.404; 7.73; 9.301; *Od.* 1.239; 14.369; 24.32), which implies a strong claim to shared identity. As Thucydides could have known, the poet Hesiod, generally regarded as a near-contemporary of Homer’s, did already call the Greeks of his own day “Panhellenes” (*Works and Days* 527–28), yet usually called the Greeks of the Trojan War “Achaean” (*Works and Days* 651–53; frags. 23(a).17; 165.14; 198.16; 204.47; cf. frag. 130 M.-W). Thucydides—and modern scholars—should have drawn the conclusion that for Homer and Hesiod the Greeks, although not yet all called Hellenes, were at the time of the Trojan War already a single ethnic group (“Achaean”) with a defined territory (“Argos”) and shared descent from Danaos’ daughters.

This misuse of Homer to support the historical model is compounded by the omission of Homeric evidence when it is in conflict with this model. The custom of bearing arms in daily life is crucial evidence for the theory that in the earliest phases of development violence was pervasive but was much reduced in the wake of Minos' elimination of piratical raiders. Yet Homer still portrays his heroes as being armed at home (*Od.* 4.307–11), at feasts (*Od.* 21.119; 22.74), at games (*Od.* 8.403–6) and at dances (*Il.* 18.597–98); they carry spears in public even for informal visits to the agora (*Od.* 20.124–57) and attendance at formal assemblies (*Il.* 2.42–47; *Od.* 2.2–14). Whether one takes this as evidence for the time of the Trojan War or the time of the poet, it does not fit the chronology of the model and is accordingly ignored. Instead, Thucydides cites “ethnographic” proof of his view: the Ozolian Locrians, Aetolians, and Acarnanians, as well as many non-Greeks, still “bear iron” today, a relic of what was once universal custom (1.5.3–6.2). This evidence had two advantages for Thucydides: it could not be chronologically fixed, and it was familiar to Athenian audiences in or shortly after 426 BCE, when Athens in alliance with Acarnanians and Ozolian Locrians attempted to conquer the Aetolians (Thuc. 3.94–98), whose “warlike” culture and habit of living “scattered far apart in unfortified villages” drew attention at the time (3.94.4; cf. 97.1).⁵

The true date of the change from “bearing iron” to a more relaxed and luxurious lifestyle, as described by Thucydides, is indicated by early Greek art. Men with swords and spears in nonmilitary contexts are commonly depicted in Late Geometric vase painting (c. 750–700 BCE); swords are still occasionally worn by men in “civilian” dress in art down to c. 650 and spears are carried by “civilians” in Attic vase painting as late as c. 530 BCE. Men stopped carrying swords when they adopted a new type of cloak, wrapped around the body in a way that severely restricted movement, and they stopped carrying spears when dress styles became still more luxurious (van Wees 1998). Thucydides' history of Greek dress is thus accurate in broad outline, but implies a date many centuries too early for the major change.

Conversely, the innovations attributed to the Spartans appear to be dated much too late. The narrative suggests that a moderate lifestyle was introduced at Sparta not long before luxurious dress and hairstyles were abandoned at Athens after the Persian War, and the introduction of athletic nudity is said to have occurred “not many years” ago. Yet Sparta's famous “austerity” was universally attributed to the reforms of Lycurgus, which Thucydides himself dates to “a little more than 400 years before the end of this war” (c. 825 BCE, if he means the Peace of Nicias; 1.18.1). As for Spartans exercising naked, the observation that athletes had previously worn loincloths “even at the Olympic games” (1.6.5) clearly alludes to the story that athletic nudity was invented by a sprinter at one of the earliest games, and Thucydides must have in mind the version in which this runner

⁵ Similarly, Thucydides' evidence for Carians living in the Cyclades was a discovery of 426/5, when the Athenians purified Delos and found that “more than half” of the exhumed graves were Carian (1.8.1; Cook [1955, 267–69], shows that they mistook for “Carian” Greek burials of the Geometric period). The evidence from “the ancient poets” for the acceptability of piracy (1.5.2) included the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (452–55; also *Od.* 3.71–74; 9.252–55), later quoted at length (3.104), probably performed after the purification at the revived festival of Apollo.

was Acanthus of Sparta (Dion. Hal. 7.72.2–4). This event was normally dated as early as 720 BCE. “Not many years ago” is an odd way to describe three centuries, but rather than assume that Thucydides adopted an idiosyncratic date, we should recognize the phrase as a rhetorical gambit: it suits his model of progress to suggest that all things modern were recent innovations, and in a span of almost a millennium one can just about claim legitimately that 300 years is a relatively short time.⁶

When these changes really happened is a matter of debate. In Homer, boxers and wrestlers still wear loincloths (*Il.* 23.685, 710; *Od.* 18.67, 76), and the earliest naked athletes appear in art c. 650 BCE (McDonnell 1991), so this change is likely to have happened at about the same time as the abandonment of “bearing iron.” The reforms attributed to Lycurgus, which established a uniform dress code and lifestyle at Sparta, however, have been assigned widely different dates by modern scholars: some make it around 650, but others favor a date around 550, and a few have argued for a still later date, c. 500 BCE (see van Wees 2017a; 2017b).

A Grudging History of Corinth

What Thucydides tells us about Minos, Agamemnon, and the heroic age derives from legends and epic poetry and is of little value as evidence for Bronze Age history. The Dorian, Ionian, and other migration stories, too, are in the realm of legend rather than Early Iron Age reality (MacSweeney 2013). Greek expansion into Italy and Sicily is the first unquestionably historical event, but although Thucydides later reveals a detailed knowledge of Greek settlement in Sicily (6.1–5), he does no more than touch upon it in the Archaeology. Much more significant for his model is the subsequent establishment of tyrannies and navies across the Greek world, and, for better or worse, his discussion of these developments has had a deep impact on modern accounts of the history of archaic Greece.

The potted naval history of Corinth that opens Thucydides’ discussion poses particular problems of interpretation and chronology. It begins with the comment that the Corinthians “are said” to have been the first to create a “modern” navy (1.13.2), and continues:

It is indeed apparent that Ameinias, a Corinthian shipwright, made four ships for the Samians; it is about 300 years before the end of this war that Ameinocles came to the Samians (13.3). The oldest naval battle of which we know was waged by Corinthians against Corcyraeans; this too is about 260 years down to the same time (13.4).

This is followed by a discussion of how Corinth had always benefited from trade even before sea travel was common, and had subsequently turned itself into a wealthy naval

⁶ An alternative version made the athlete a Megarian (Pausanias 1.44.1; *IG* VII.52.5–6), but Thucydides apparently preferred the symmetrical juxtaposition of Athens and Sparta. Plato, *Republic* 452cd also dates the change “not long ago”; see further McDonnell (1991).

power (13.5). At first glance, it may seem that the first three sentences (1.13.2–4) list a series of events in chronological order, so that the first “modern” trireme navy was constructed before the export of ships to Samos, c. 721 BCE (if “the end of this war” refers to the Peace of Nicias), and the first naval battle, c. 681 BCE. However, this interpretation is difficult to reconcile with Thucydides’ later statement that there were “few triremes” anywhere in Greece until c. 490 (1.14.1) and with the lack of contemporary evidence for triremes in Greece until the late sixth century BCE (e.g., Casson 1995, 43–81). Closer attention to the text suggests a different reading.

Thucydides does not make the claim in the first sentence about Corinthian priority on his own authority, but reports it as something that “is said” (λέγονται). Only here in the *Archaeology* do we find this noncommittal expression (Westlake 1977, 357–61; Rood 2006, 244–6), which contrasts sharply with the certainty and precision of the next two statements: “it is indeed apparent” (φαίνεται δὲ καὶ)⁷ that Ameinocles went to Samos 300 years ago and “we know” (ἴσμεν) of a sea battle 260 years ago. In other words, Thucydides does not list three events of equal status in chronological order, but first reports a major claim that he uniquely avoids endorsing, and then moves on to cite a couple of firmly stated and dated “facts” about Corinth’s naval history. Moreover, the vessels that Ameinocles built and those that fought the first naval battle are not explicitly triremes but simply “ships” (ναῦς; Meijer 1988). It is therefore possible that no chronological sequence is implied, but rather a contrast between Corinth’s reputation as a great innovator in naval matters, and the lesser, conceivably earlier, naval achievements that Thucydides is prepared to accept as fact.

Corinth, more than Sparta, had been Athens’ main enemy since 460 BCE (Thuc. 1.103.4), so it would not be surprising if Athenians wished to play down the pioneering role of the Corinthian navy. The Athenian version of the battle of Salamis claimed that the Corinthian ships had fled before the battle even started, whereas “the rest of Greece testifies” that they actually “fought among the foremost” (Hdt. 8.94). Corinth, for its part, tried to make political capital from having been a greater naval power than Athens by reminding the Athenians that once, before they became enemies, they had graciously let them have twenty vessels (Thuc. 1.41.2; Hdt. 6.89). Thucydides thus probably prefers not to endorse what “is said” so as not to lend support to Corinthian claims in a politically charged matter.

The other Corinthian achievements, by contrast, could be unambiguously accepted because, if anything, they were politically charged *against* Corinth. The first-ever naval battle was “waged by the Corinthians” (γίγνεται Κορινθίων), and is thus presented as an act of aggression against the Corcyraeans. Athens had made an alliance with Corcyra against Corinth in 434 (Thuc. 1.31–55), so the story of the battle may

⁷ φαίνεται plus participle, “it is apparent,” indicating certainty (as opposed to φαίνεται plus infinitive, “it seems,” indicating uncertainty), is a favorite expression in the *Archaeology*: 1.2.1, 3.1, 9.4, 10.5, 11, 13.3, 14.1. Its significance is noted by Hornblower (1997, 44).

have circulated in contemporary political discourse as an example of long-standing Corinthian aggression against Athens' new ally (cf. Hdt. 3.48–53). As for Ameinocles, his shipbuilding is in itself hardly a spectacular historical feat, and one suspects that the point is rather that a Corinthian “came to the Samians” and worked “for the Samians.” In 440 BCE, Athens had fought a hard war against Samos, and the Corinthians claimed credit for preventing a Peloponnesian intervention at the time, arguing that Athens should repay the favor by not intervening against Corinth in support of Corcyra (Thuc. 1.40.5, 41.2). Thucydides does not tell us how the Athenians countered that argument when they chose Corcyra's side, but one imagines that they would have seized upon any evidence of Corinth being friendly with Samos. The story of Ameinocles may have surfaced in that context.

On this reading, Thucydides gives no further clue to when the first modern trireme navy was created, since Ameinocles and the naval battle may well date to an earlier period, just as Corinth's revenues from trade by land, mentioned next, originate at a much earlier time. The sole indication of when public triremes were first constructed is the position of the episode after the colonization of Italy and Sicily, and at the same time as the rise of tyrants. Later sources tell us that Periander, tyrant of Corinth c. 625–585 BCE, “continually mounted expeditions and was warlike; he built triremes and made use of both seas,” i.e., the Aegean and the Ionian sea (Nicolaus of Damascus *FGrH* 90 F 58.3; cf. Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 179). His revenues from trade were so great that he never imposed any other form of taxation (Aristotle frag. 611.20 Rose). The centralization of power and revenues in Corinth under this tyrant fit Thucydides' model perfectly, and it is likely that the historian was aware of this tradition but preferred not to credit Periander explicitly, partly in order to remain vague about Corinth's main naval achievements and partly also because in his model tyrannical regimes were supposed to inhibit development, not act as a driving force for modernity.

We have no other evidence for the three naval achievements attributed to Corinth, but it seems plausible that Periander was the first to build public triremes, since his contemporary, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho (610–594 BCE), built triremes in Egypt (Hdt. 2.159) and Corinth may have been part of a wider development. On Thucydides' dates, the first naval battle and Ameinocles' shipbuilding predated Periander and occurred under the oligarchy of the Bacchiads (to which he alludes at 1.24.2; 6.3.2).⁸ A naval battle between Corinth and Corcyra at this time is possible, given that the two are said to have been enemies from the foundation of Corcyra onward (Hdt. 3.49; cf. Thuc. 1.25). Samos may have needed state-of-the-art ships (probably biremes, Casson 1995, 53–60) in the late eighth century to defend Samian settlers at Nagidus and Celenderis in Cilicia from Assyrian expansion; both contemporary Assyrian records and later Greek sources mention naval battles with “Ionians” in this region.⁹

⁸ There is no justification for the common modern view that Thucydides' dates are based on unrealistically long forty-year generations and that these events happened much later.

⁹ E.g. *State Archives of Assyria* 19 025; Abydenos *FGrH* 685 F 5; Berossos *FGrH* 680 F 7c.