Thucydides Between History and Literature

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Thucydides Between History and Literature

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Introduction

Thucydides might have been surprised or annoyed if his contemporaries called him a "historian". He is, however, responsible for the meaning Aristotle and Polybius (among others) gave to the term "history", although he avoided using it altogether; he did not want his readers to confuse what he was doing with herodotean *historiē*. Inversely, he coined the term we use today for all historians before him, that is *logographoi*, even though it is not clear whom he had exactly in mind when he used this composite oxymoron (which modifies Herodotus' *logopoios*, used for Herodotus' own predecessor Hecataeus); many believe that it was mainly Herodotus whom Thucydides had in mind, but it is Herodotus alone who escaped the fortune of becoming a *logographos*, not so much because he was the "father of history", but rather because he was seen as the father of the term "history".

Thucydides did not write *historiē*, and he was not writing *logoi*. The general from Halimous, who in other instances is creative with language and keen on his nominal constructions, contents himself by announcing that he "has composed in written form the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians", (*xynegrapse ton polemon*, 1.1.1). The result of Thucydides' work is "the war" – the war in written form. The work we read "is" the war; in other instances the account about individual events is *ergon*. Thucydides lets us know that he transformed experience into text. He transformed a long war he had lived from the very first beginning till the end to the written account we read, to the voice we hear talking to us.

If "literary termini technici and intellectual categories of differentiation… were not developed in the Greek world until the second half of the 4th century B.C. (in the Peripatos) or even until the age of Hellenistic scholarship (in Alexandreia or Pergamon)"[1], only the subtle study of each author's text can reveal his own understanding of what he envisaged to do, and how he worked towards its realization. Such questions have been the subject of a Conference on "Thucydides' techniques. Be-

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1   Engels 1998, 57.

tween Historical Research and Literary Representation", held in Alimos/Athens in April 2010 generously sponsored by the modern demos of the historian, the Municipality of Alimos. "Techniques" was privileged over "methods" in order to shift attention from the mind to the process of *xyngraphē* (both in its broader sense, as the outcome of a research project, and in the narrower sense of the construction of a text).

How does a war become a text? More specifically, how did Thucydides proceed in order to investigate the course of events and shape them as an elaborate narrative? How did he convince future generations that he was a "historian", if not "the" historian? Are there specific techniques, strategies, practices that can explain how Thucydides' "written composition of the war" both renovated a pre-existing literary tradition and influenced subsequent developments, despite evident discontinuities and dissonances?

Kurt Raaflaub goes after an old question, the utility of Thucydides' history, an idea which proved attractive for most historians of antiquity and became a topos in their works. His analysis seeks "patterns" in the presentation of events – their existence brings Thucydides closer to Herodotus (another one: "ranking the significance of similar events, paying less attention to less important instances, and reserving the most dramatic elaboration for the most important one"). He argues that Thucydides' coherent account indicates and presupposes knowledge of the outcome of the war. Moreover, this knowledge is a shaping factor of the account, and the key for demonstrating that the past can be useful and significant – for present and future audiences. He pays attention on the dialectic between the specific in Thucydides' work – exempla which invite direct imitation or avoidance and thus concern primarily moral attitudes and behavioral principles – and the general – patterns which invite critical thinking and analysis and deal primarily with political issues.

The shift from herodotean *historiē* to Thucydides' monograph on a single historical set of events eliminate the number of the persons involved in the narrative; in compensation, it makes them more prominent in the text. Mathieu de Bakker focuses on the authorial comments and narrative devices employed to introduce and evaluate the role of each figure in the work. He observes that Thucydides is sensible for the character of his heroes, preparing the peripatetic interest in ethos as a moving force of action and an object worth of study. Introducing a person and discussing his character is a way of both suggesting its im-

portance in the political scenery (military success is less decisive in this respect) and announcing critical historical turns. Special attention is paid to Book Eight: "underlying the stasis narrative in Book eight is his desire to highlight how the war led to political fragmentation in Athens, a process that, owing to external conditions, could only be halted by grave individual and collective sacrifices". The exceptional treatment of Antiphon is interpreted as resulting from Thucydides' strong personal view.

Melina Tamiolaki offers a reassessment of the well-known topic of motivation in Thucydides. She detects certain patterns in the presentation of motivation which distinguish Thucydides from Herodotus and shows how motives described in the speeches can be confirmed or undermined by the narrative of the historian. Motivation has also a political dimension, which can be observed in the reading of each other's motives by the protagonists of the Peloponnesian War. Although Thucydides did not offer a guide or a programmatic statement as to how to study motivation, his work suggests that motives should be seen as an integral part of the historical process.

Paul Demont shows that authorial statements and the narrative concerning the pest include echoes of other treatments of similar topics evoked by them. He argues that Thucydides enhances the interpretation that the plague was transmitted by contagion and uses this explanation to implicitly refute his contemporaries' claim that Pericles was to be held responsible for the fatal calamity that befell Athens and influenced decisively the course of the war.

Discussion of the past is revealing for both Thucydides' relationship with his predecessors and the recurring patterns that appear in his work. Jonas Grethlein studies two minor episodes in Thucydides' history (Phormio's two naval victories and the capture of Mytilene) and analyses the devices with which Thucydides "restores presentness to the past": tense, internal focalization, speeches and "sideshadowing". These devices help the reader re-experience the events described; they enhance the *enargeia* of the narrative and contribute to the openness of the past. Thucydides' history has also, however, a teleological aspect, which can be observed in proleptic passages, such as the praise of Pericles (2.65). Grethlein further underlines the importance of *enargeia* in Thucydides by comparing his history with Plutarch's *Lives*: "While in Thucydides an experiential narrative enmeshes us in the past, Plutarchan *enargeia* brings past virtues to us".

Tim Rood compares the Herodotean and Thucydidean version of the Kylon-episode and shows that correct understanding of the Herodotean version is a prerequisite for a correct understanding of Thucydides' account. Furthermore, he proposes a contrastive reading of the episode with the first five chapters of Herodotus. Thucydides' account recalls Herodotean elements and challenges Herodotean models. Rood also sees in Kylon a parallel to Alcibiades, who, like Kylon, threatens the existence of the political order in Athens.

Roberto Nicolai examines the way Thucydides introduces his readers to the historical prerequisites by both organizing the necessary information about the past in a coherent way and using the appropriate literary forms. The genealogies of these forms are found in the Homeric catalogue of the ships and in Herodotus.

From the focus on a comprehensive overview of the past, we move with Marek Węcowski to a single instance of past history, the account of the Samian revolt in Thucydides' *Pentekontaetia*. This is the last episode of the *Pentakontaetia* and receives a longer treatment, if compared with the sketchy account of most of the events described in this part of Thucydides' history. Węcowski explains this by analysing the Periclean ideology of the "growth of the Athenian empire", as this is attested in Pericles' Funeral Oration and in other sources of the 5th century BCE. He argues that "Thucydides followed Pericles and his ideology in ascribing the beginning of the 'imperial pinnacle' to the results of the Samian war…".

Whereas the organization of historical time and the coordination of events have been the subject of extensive study, the importance of space and its representations have been treated less extensively. Vassiliki Pothou discusses human interaction with the landscape, focussing on transformations of landscape (such as fortifications, burning of woods, redirection of the flow of a river etc.) and their implications. Thucydides' history shows an awareness of the importance of landscape in war: "in many war-situations warriors would not adapt the landscape to their military purposes, but, rather, they were forced to adapt themselves to the landscape".

Thucydides' history has long been considered a guide for political thought. Topics such as the role of the leaders and the masses in the democracy, the historian's judgments on the constitutions and the image of Pericles continue to attract scholarly attention.

Sarah Brown Ferrario explores how Athens was perceived by her enemies, namely Sparta and Corinth. Whereas the Spartans apprehended and tried to exploit the role played by individual leaders in the Athenian democracy, the Corinthians appear to have a limited view of this role. Thucydides' knowledge of the political situation, however, is higher than that of his protagonists, and this lends greater authority to his narrative.

Suzanne Saïd studies Thucydides' views on the masses and the Athenian democracy. After reviewing the vocabulary related with the masses, Saïd observes that Thucydides' use of it is neutral, whereas the orators in his history have recourse to a more marked terminology. This leads her to a reconsideration of the traditional approach which labels Thucydides as anti-democrat. Saïd concludes that for Thucydides, a regime was good, when it took into account the interests of the polis and its citizens.

Panos Christodoulou offers a contextualized reading of Thucydides' image of Pericles. He argues that Thucydides, by highlighting Pericles' leadership qualities, such as his avoidance of stasis and his concern for the interests of the city, reacted to his contemporaries who criticized him, as well as to those who had written treatises on constitutions. He remarks that the historian's presentation of Pericles oscillated "between historical research and observation of the Athenian general's personality and a theoretical, literary representation of the figure of the eminent statesman".

The next section is devoted to specific aspects of Thucydides' narrative. June Allison offers a close reading of three sections of Thucydides' Book 1 (the *Archaeology*, the *Pentekontaetia* and the second speech of the Corinthians) and shows that in these sections Thucydides aimed at creating an antithetical balance between Athens and Sparta.

Paula Debnar studies the role of indirect discourse in the assembly in Book 4, in which the Athenians must decide how to respond to the stalled operations in Pylos. Thucydides seems to exploit in part Homeric models in his presentation of indirect discourse. Debnar argues that indirect discourse has the ability to blur boundaries "not just between thought and speech, but also between discourse and narrative, as well as between Thucydides' judgments and those of historical agents…".

Anna Lamari focuses on intra-textual associations of passages (cross-references) in the Sicilian narrative. She detects three categories of cross-references (progressive cross-references, those providing diverse focali-

zation and encirclement cross-references) and shows that these narrative devices "work as mechanisms that add emphasis to events of crucial importance, as catalysts that boost the writer's objectivity, or finally as filters that confirm or annul information".

Hans-Peter Stahl studies Thucydidean epilogues, that is statements which close narrative sections. These epilogues include "a contrary-to-fact statement, 'almost' and 'as if' situations, epilogic dialogues, last minute rescues, devastating losses". Stahl shows that Thucydidean closures tend to give greater emphasis to the side of the defeated and thus reinforce the idea of the futility and sadness of the war.

Nikos Miltsios studies the (cumulative) evidence which suggests Polybius' familiarity with Thucydides. He argues that apart from verbal echoes and passages that express parallel views (which however are limited to very few, characteristic Thucydidean statements which may have been widely known and cannot prove immediate knowledge), especially the introductory books provide abundant material to sustain this view, both in respect of their structural design and in themes which are central to the argumentation.

The last section of this volume comprises essays which focus on the language of Thucydides. It has long been remarked that litotes is a stylistic feature which is favoured by Thucydides and Pindar, two authors who show an inclination for sophisticated style. Pierre Pontier challenges traditional approaches that considered litotes as an ornament of style and proves that its use has an impact on the creation of meaning. Litotes can suggest the presence of an idea in the mind of the person or an idea which is refuted, it can support emphasis – sometimes combined with authorial intervention –, or work in parallel with irony.

Maria Pavlou provides a detailed study of the various modes of the narrative setting of the speeches, analysing typological elements in the preambles and postscripts. Through them Thucydides "steers the reader to approach a logos from a specific point of view, and draws his attention to a particular aspect thereof".

Rutger Allan applies the linguistic concept of "narrative mode" in Thucydides' narrative. He distinguishes four categories (the displaced and immediate diegetic modes, the descriptive mode and the discursive mode) and argues that "each of the narrative modes… is associated with a particular narratorial persona…: Thucydides the Chronicler, Thucydides the Eye-witness, Thucydides the Painter and Thucydides the Writer-Analyst".

Antonis Tsakmakis and Charalambos Themistokleous contribute to the discussion about stylistic differentiation of Thucydidean speeches. They argue that apart from verbal and thematic parallels, stylistic parallels are also employed by Thucydides to link individual speeches together and suggest a contrastive reading. The paper focuses on the use of modality and exemplifies the use of patterns in the speech of Archidamus in 2.11.

Jonathan Price also argues in favour of a close study of style and content. Difficult statements are shown to reflect complex ideas, "troubled psychological states, or conflicting rhetorical demands on the speakers: they represent how confused or uncomfortable speakers may really have sounded".

In a similar vein, Daniel Tompkins argues that "different characters in Thucydides not only think differently, but that characters' discursive choices reflect different styles of thought". Tompkins studies the stylistic differentiation in Pericles' speeches: Pericles' syntax and diction serve to underline his intellectual capacities.

The editors thank Antonios Rengakos for his collaboration in the Organizing Committee of the Conference and for the publication of the proceedings as a *Supplementary Volume* of *Trends in Classics*. We would also like to thank Maria Pavlou and Sofia Tamiolaki for their help with the preparation of the indexes.

Antonis Tsakmakis, *Nicosia 2012*
Melina Tamiolaki, *Heraklion 2012*

I. Ideas of History

Ktēma es aiei: Thucydides' Concept of "Learning through History" and Its Realization in His Work*

Kurt A. Raaflaub

In an essay about the beginnings of Chinese historiography, Stephen Durrant mentions in the mid-Warring States Period (453–221 BCE) a shift

> toward more rational ways to regard human events, a shift congruent with the rise of Confucianism. After all, among those things Confucius supposedly "did not discuss" were "the strange" and "spirits" (*Analects* 7.21). Such a shift makes the past central to understanding the present and empowers those who preserve and can properly read that past. In *Analects* Confucius twice describes himself as someone who "is fond of antiquity" (7.1, 7.20) and elsewhere says "One who understands the present by reviewing antiquity is worthy to be a teacher" (2.11). Confucius thus becomes the inspiration of those who would turn to the past and encourages future followers to use the past as a key to understanding and discussing their contemporary political world.[1]

Knowledge of the past thus is crucial for understanding and educating the present. The description of past events serves the same purpose. In ancient China this idea is embedded in an ideology that generally views past experiences and persons (ancestors) with immense respect and considers them the measure for present behavior. On the other hand, Durrant concludes, in China "history became *too* important". Among other problems, history's function "as a source of exemplars and precedents" was pushed to an extreme; in David Schaberg's

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1 Durrant 2013.

words, history "was reduced to evidence". One constantly needs to keep in mind that "early Chinese historical writing was an important part of a dominant ideology of power and control".[2]

Here lies a major difference to early Greek historiography: at least before the Hellenistic period it firmly remained a private endeavor, and even later "official" histories in the service of kings or emperors were exceptions. Yet the Greeks too venerated their ancestors and generally looked to the past for guidance and illumination. For example, they long sought to realize a just social and political order by restoring an ancestral "good order" (*eunomia*) that was believed to have been lost. But Greek worldviews and political thought did not remain static; they were dynamic and soon permitted the anticipation of ideals that were to be realized through reforms based on communal legislation. As a result, there emerged not only complex constitutions but also designs of ideal states, conceived abstractly on the drawing board and culminating in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics*.[3]

Even so, the Greeks continued in various important ways to look to the past to derive lessons for the present or to stimulate thinking about it. Homer's epics already illustrate this impressively.[4] Tragedy, slightly predating historiography, is particularly interesting in this respect. Many of the extant plays reflect the poets' conscious efforts to confront problems that were "in the air" at the time and thus to provoke the audiences to think about these problems. The plays' subject matter was, with very few exceptions, chosen from a limited range of myths. These were well known to everybody and, as is typical of myth, malleable; hence they could be adapted for present purposes. Past and present were here dialectically connected: stories about the past were used to instruct the present but in order to serve this purpose these stories needed to be elaborated, reshaped, and reinterpreted on the basis of present experiences and needs.[5]

The early historians followed suit – for their own good reasons. In his famous method chapter Thucydides offers a remarkable definition of the purpose of his *History*: it is not fashioned primarily to please and entertain; rather, it is intended to be an "everlasting possession", a *ktēma es*

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2   Ibid., with reference to Schaberg 1999, 16.
3   On *eunomia,* see Meier 1970, 15–25; Ostwald 1969, 62–95. On constitutional thought, Raaflaub forthcoming.
4   On epic, see below at n. 46.
5   See, e.g., Meier 1993; Saïd 1998; Boedeker and Raaflaub 2005.

aiei (1.22.4).[6] History can be judged to be rather useful (*ōphelima*) because it enables those "who want to perceive precisely what happened", and thus to understand the past, to cope better with "events of this kind and similar ones (*toiauta kai paraplēsia*) that may be expected to happen in the future". Knowledge of the past thus improves a person's ability to deal with the future. Why? Because similar phenomena (not identical ones) are likely to recur. History thus does not repeat itself precisely (in identical events) but in patterns (similar events). Familiarity with such patterns helps us recognize them when they recur – as the historian says explicitly in the context of the plague (2.48) – and be prepared to cope with them. In this sense, history (knowledge of the past) is useful, and because of that it is an everlasting possession: its usefulness is not limited to a specific time, place, or context, but is universal.

This is a tall claim, particularly if we think of history as a kaleidoscope of an infinite variety of events, actions, and actors. It raises several questions. First, why and how is history capable of serving this purpose? What exactly can be learned from history? Second, why is it important or even necessary to emphasize this? And where does this idea come from? Third, how does the historian realize this idea in his own work? What does he want future generations to learn from it? And fourth, what consequences does this idea have both for the writing of history and for our understanding and use of such history? I do not think that such questions are simple, the answers obvious. I am aware that a huge weight of scholarly and not least theoretical discussion and constant redefinition of approaches (to historiography in general and Thucydides in particular) looms over this topic.[7] I deliberately push this aside for the moment, trying to reach basic understandings. At any rate, what I am tackling is too big for a brief chapter. I will thus limit myself here to laying the conceptual groundwork, essentially presenting an outline with a few examples and case studies that can be expanded later, and I will have to paint in broad strokes.

To begin with, two conditions are necessary to realize Thucydides' claim. The historian must be able to recognize patterns in history and use them to sort and organize the multitude of historical phenomena. In this he resembles a physician, ethnographer, or political scientist.

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6   This statement has been discussed frequently; see recently Grethlein 2010a, 268–79. Kallet 2006 pursues it in a different direction. Recently on Thucydides' method: Rood 2006.

7   Recently summarized concisely by Carolyn Dewald (2005, 1–22, 193–203).

As Rosalind Thomas has shown, the fifth-century historians interacted competitively with doctors, geographers, and sophists – Thucydides certainly no less than Herodotus: we need only think of his use of medical and other theories to see him drawing from a pool of shared ideas that were discussed intensely at the time, in and outside of Athens.[8] The second condition is that there must be something that guarantees, beyond the *existence* of patterns, their *recurrence*. The infinite variety of history, even grouped into patterns, must contain elements that are constant and force these patterns to repeat themselves, at least in similar forms. In Herodotean terms (1.5.4, 207.2), there must be factors that make history run not in a straight line, evolving ever further, but in waves or circles, and thus to become, if not cyclical, at least somewhat repetitive. In Thucydidean terms, as Pierre Vidal-Naquet suggests, phenomena do not repeat themselves in historical but in logical time.[9] Such factors might be found within the actors who make history happen, and/or in the framework in which these actors act such as communities and their constitutions; competition, war, and empire; material conditions and resources; and ideas or ideologies.

Thucydides acknowledges the importance of the factors constituting this framework throughout his narrative. The element he emphasizes in the passage that postulates the value of history as *ktēma es aiei* is the most basic, *to anthrōpinon,* human nature or the human condition.[10] Because this human element remains identical or stable, as the historian points out several times, people will react in similar ways to similar experiences.[11] Here again the historian's task is similar to that of the physician or anthropologist: he collects, categorizes, and analyzes human behavior in certain conditions, or human reactions to certain challenges, and can thus anticipate them. This is what imbues history with a certain predictive quality and didactic potential. The historian assumes the function of a teacher: he explicates to his readers what history itself teaches the attentive observers – and this can assist them in mastering future challenges.[12] Polybius makes all this even more explicit: humankind "possesses

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8 Thomas 2000, 2006a, 2006b; see also Finley 1942, ch. 2; Ober 2006.
9 Vidal-Naquet 1986, 46; Hornblower 1991, 61.
10 Hornblower 1991, 61 with ref. to Stahl 1966, 33; see Reinhold 1985.
11 1.84.4; 3.82.2; see de Ste. Croix 1972, 29 for further passages and discussion.
12 On Thucydides and his readers, see Yunis 2003. Hornblower 1991, 60–61 rightly does not exclude the possibility of oral recitations "of the more highly-wrought bits". But the issues discussed here concern not oral presentations

no better guide to conduct than the knowledge of the past". All historians claim "that the study of history is at once an education in the truest sense and a training for a political career" (1.1.1−2).[13] Scholars have debated whether in Thucydides such lessons from history serve purely intellectual or also practical or pragmatic purposes.[14] I do not see why they cannot do both, especially since, as Carolyn Dewald emphasizes, "Thucydides does not believe in the usefulness or even in the possibility of a political knowledge divorced from the exercise of personal and civic ambition".[15]

In order to achieve this purpose, though, Thucydides the historian needs to emphasize in his presentation what is repeatable in history, the patterns that emerge from his analysis and that he recognizes as crucial. The historian's insight and interpretation thus become decisive. They shape his presentation: through narrative and speeches, he highlights the patterns whose knowledge makes history useful, a possession for ever.[16] He presents such patterns in two ways: through analytical or rhetorical set pieces (most conspicuously the plague in Athens and *stasis* in Corcyra for the former, the Mytilenian and Sicilian debates and the Melian Dialogue for the latter) but also through continuing analysis that runs through a sequence of episodes and reveals underlying currents and developments.[17] The set pieces have drawn much attention; patterns have been mentioned frequently but, to my knowledge, not been analyzed systematically.[18] As I have tried to show elsewhere, we find the same emphasis on patterns and the same means of presenting and analyzing them, and for the same reasons, also in Herodotus, although he essentially applies this principle without defining it as a principle or discussing it in so many words.[19]

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of individual "pieces" but the entire work. "Audience" thus means "readers" throughout this chapter.

13 See also, e.g., 3.12; 3.31−32; 12.25a; for comments, Walbank 1957, 6−9; Sacks 1981, ch. 4; Eckstein 1995, 16−27.

14 For the former Gomme *HCT* I, 149−50; Hornblower 1991, 61; for the latter, de Ste. Croix 1972, 29−33 (with further bibliog.). See also below at n. 37.

15 Dewald 1985, 56.

16 On the interaction of narrative and speeches, see now Morrison 2006a.

17 Set pieces (in the sequence mentioned): 2.47−54; 3.82−84; 3.36−50; 6.8−26; 5.84−116. On continuing analysis, see below.

18 See, e.g., Connor 1984, 242−46.

19 Analytical and rhetorical set pieces, respectively: 1.96−100 (Deioces and the "tyrannical template": Dewald 2003); 3.80−82 (the "constitutional debate"); 7.5−18 (the debate at Xerxes' court: Raaflaub 2002a); repeated patterns:

Typical behavior, prompted by the human condition, applies to both individuals and communities. Of course, Pericles, Cleon, Nicias, or Alcibiades have different characters, and the historian portrays them accordingly.[20] But, I suggest, with only little exaggeration, in their capacity as Athenian leaders they ultimately have the same goals and pursue the same policies of Athenian security and greatness – even if they advocate different priorities and strategies to achieve these goals. Communities too have their own distinctive traits. Spartan and Athenian policies are shaped by their diametrically opposed collective characters (as portrayed by the Corinthians in 1.70−71). But, as Athenian ambassadors point out in Sparta (1.76) and Melos (5.105), faced with similar opportunities or challenges, both poleis will act in similar ways.[21] This dynamic tension between specific character and typical behavior or reaction, between specific circumstances and human condition, I suggest, is one of Thucydides' most productive insights.

In letting the human condition trigger among individuals and collectives, despite their different characters, similar actions and reactions, the other factors, the framework mentioned above, become crucial – most importantly community and constitution (*politeia*), power, empire, competition, conflict, and war (*dynamis* and *kratos; archē, hēgemonia,* or *tyrannis; agōn, stasis,* and *polemos*), resources and profits (*chrēmata* and *ōpheleia*), and ideas or ideologies, most conspicuously among these liberty and slavery (*eleutheria* and *douleia*). Lisa Kallet has demonstrated the importance of resources as conditions for power in Thucydides' thought; contrasting constitutions (oligarchy and democracy, whether real or pretended), as we know from Hartmut Leppin and others, not only set the hegemonial powers on opposite tracks but also trigger competition and *stasis* (illuminated by Jonathan Price) in many *poleis*, and determine choices and policies; power over others by hegemony or imperial rule, gained or maintained by war, forms the main line of the story, discussed by many; and, as Melina Tamiolaki teaches us in her recent book, freedom vs. slavery in their varying meanings serve as an ideolog-

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e. g., eastern autocracy (Lateiner 1989, ch. 8) or Persian imperialism (below at n. 58). On patterning in Herodotus, see Immerwahr 1966; Lateiner 1989, 165−67. On Herodotus's self-presentation and his reflection on his methods, see, e. g., relevant chs. in Boedeker 1987; Lateiner 1989; Christ 1994.

20 Westlake 1968; Gribble 2006 (with bibliog.).

21 The Athenian ambassadors in Sparta here emphasize something that could hardly be known at the time: Thucydides anticipates a recurring pattern; see below at nn. 25 ff.

ical battleground and provide the historian with interpretive tools.[22]
These factors (and some others, though hardly religion)[23] determine
Thucydides' questions and analysis and set the parameters within
which the patterns he observes and highlights develop, based on the
common element of the human condition.

This scheme plays on different levels, however, that are influenced
variously by these factors. Within poleis, leaders and groups pursue the
same goals but disagree on the methods or strategies to achieve them. In
the Mytilenian Debate, Cleon and Diodotus both want to maintain
Athenian control over the allies but disagree on whether to achieve
this by severity of threats and punishment or by generosity and leniency.
In Corcyra, both "democrats" and "oligarchs" fight with the same
methods for the same goal (political domination) but present themselves
with contrasting ideologies. In Sparta, Archidamus and Sthenelaidas
agree on the need to fight a war against the Athenians but differ on
when and how to fight this war. In Athens, Nicias and Alcibiades, fun-
damentally different personalities with different styles and methods of
leadership, both advocate the greatness and glory of their city but differ
vastly on the means by which to meet these lofty goals. Similarly, on a
higher level, Sparta and Athens could not be more different – in their
collective character, in their constitution and way of life (*politeia*), and
in their ideological orientation (to say it pointedly, freedom from tyran-
ny vs. freedom through tyranny) – but ultimately they aim at the same
goal: domination, rule over all others. Leaders in both poleis can rise
above personal ambition and achieve close to ideal leadership (Brasidas
and Pericles) or succumb to personal ambition and self-aggrandizement
(Pausanias and Themistocles or Alcibiades).[24]

Yet an examination of Thucydides' *History* along the lines I am pro-
posing here is handicapped in two ways. One is that the historian did
not complete his work and we do not know his interpretation of the
final stages of the war. The other is that he lived beyond the end of
the war and used his knowledge of the final phases and the outcome
to illuminate some of its earlier phases. To give just one example, the

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22 Finances: Kallet 1993, 2001; constitutions: Leppin 1998; cf. Pope 1988; Raaf-
    laub 2006; *stasis*: Price 2001; power etc.: e.g., Pouncey 1980; Rengakos 1984;
    Allison 1989; Hunt 2006; Tritle 2006; democracy and power: Raaflaub 1994;
    liberty, slavery: Tamiolaki 2010; cf. Raaflaub 2004, chs. 4–5.
23 Hornblower 1992; Furley 2006.
24 On individuals in Thucydides, see n. 20 above.

primacy of self-interest in Sparta's policies even at the expense of its al-
lies, a will to dominate that would culminate in imperial ambition,
emerged in the period of the Peace of Nicias, as Thucydides shows
(5.17 ff.), and even more starkly in the Ionian War, as we know from
Xenophon's *Hellenika*.[25] Yet Thucydides lets the allies – especially Cor-
inth, Sparta's persistent critic – express strong doubts about Sparta's
commitment to their shared interests already before the beginning of
the war. They have to push their *hēgemōn* finally to take action and
they blame Sparta for tolerating out of selfishness the enslavement not
only of the Athenian but also its own allies (esp. 1.69.1–2, 1.120.1).
Moreover, Athenian ambassadors claim not only in 416 at Melos
(5.105) but also much earlier, in 432 at Sparta (1.75–76; cf. 1.144.2),
that Sparta, if faced by the same challenges, would have acted towards
its allies in the same way as Athens had. One wonders, though, whether
at such an early stage the Athenians could really have stated this credibly
and as confidently as they do in Thucydides. Before the war, and in its
beginning, Sparta's reputation must have differed from that of Athens –
otherwise its "battle cry of freedom" could not have resonated so
strongly throughout the Greek world (2.8).

   The historian's effort to expose this as a propagandistic ploy right
from the start obviously draws heavily on hindsight.[26] Having experi-
enced Sparta's "dark side" and seen "the liberator" develop into an im-
perial power that ruled as oppressively as Athens had done, if not even
more so, he probably could not but interpret tensions during the Peace
of Nicias and even during the events leading up to the war from this late
perspective: the basis of his judgement of history quite naturally was the
time of his writing and revising his work.[27] Yet Thucydides was an adult
in 432, and he claims to have begun taking notes or even sketching his
account right at the beginning of the war (1.1.1). Hence what he writes
about allied criticism of Sparta in 432 either corresponds to what he ob-
served at the time or, if I am right that this is unlikely, to deliberate re-
writing under the impression of later developments. If so, the emphasis
he thereby placed on Sparta's imperial and tyrannical *potential* at an early
time, when this was hardly justified, served an important interpretive

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25 On the Peace of Nicias, see recently Lendon 2010, 323–67. On the formation
    of Sparta's empire: Cartledge 1987; Thommen 2003, chs. 10–12.
26 On Sparta's use and abuse of liberty in its propaganda, see Raaflaub 2004, 193–
    202.
27 I thank Deborah Boedeker for reminding me not to underestimate this aspect.

purpose. It alerted his readers that the curve in Sparta's development, triggered by an "imperial impulse" (which was still far in the future but known to them as well as himself), was going to be similar to that pursued earlier by Athens (and fully witnessed long before the war by all Greeks). Hints at this development in negotiations before the war thus serve as "pointers" precisely to the fact that Athens' transformation from *hēgemōn* to *polis tyrannos* was not unique but corresponded to a historical pattern.[28]

This view finds support in yet an earlier reference to an alliance affected by the leader's power politics. In the *Archaeology*, sketching aspects of earlier Greek history to prove that no war has ever come even close to the dimension and significance of the war he is going to describe, Thucydides talks about the Trojan War. He explains that Agamemnon exploited primarily his greater power, based not least on his superior fleet, and the fear it engendered in others, to forge the alliance that was to fight Troy (1.9). The emphasis he places here on the concepts of "power" and "fear" (which generally play such a crucial role in his historical interpretation) not only looks at the Trojan War from a new and unusual perspective but right at the beginning of the work makes the reader aware of constellations and factors that will prove important later on.[29]

Returning to Thucydides' early equation of Athens' and Sparta's "imperial impulses", we find the same kind of anticipation, and for a similar purpose, in Herodotus's pointed juxtaposition of Sparta and Athens as Greece's leading powers already at the time of the Lydian king Croesus in the mid-sixth century (1.56.2). Yet the historian's subsequent narrative (1.59 ff.) leaves no doubt that at that time Athens was still vastly inferior to Sparta and its rise to power was a consequence, much later, only of its liberation from tyranny, its transformation by Cleisthenes' reforms, its victories over Sparta, Thebes, and Chalcis in 506 (5.78), and its role in the Persian Wars (e.g., 8.3). I suggest that Herodotus wanted his audience to realize and keep in mind that what he was describing in his *Histories* was not only an event of greatest historical importance in itself but also the prelude to and cause of the rivalry of these two Greek superpowers whose fight for supremacy would bring so much misery to Greece in his and their own life time

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28 For a more detailed discussion of this particular pattern, see Raaflaub 2011.
29 Kallet 2001, 112–14; see also Vidal-Naquet 1986, 46.

(6.98).[30] This interpretation receives support from other passages that clearly allude to the later power struggle for supremacy in Greece.[31]

My point is precisely that Thucydides draws on hindsight, his knowledge of the outcome, to interpret and shape the history that produced this outcome – even if, as Jonas Grethlein shows, he then consciously presents this history as open-ended.[32] His intention here is to draw out patterns of the type I have in mind. Again to give just one example, Athens' defeat is attributed early on (in 2.65), and explicitly from hindsight, to the self-centered competition of ambitious leaders who fail to match the exalted example set by Pericles, the perfect democratic leader. Similarly, it is from the perspective of the democracy's loss of the war that the skillfully crafted sequence of increasingly flawed decision-making in the assembly receives its poignancy: from orderly, rational decisions under Pericles to a bad decision (reversed just in time) concerning Mytilene, to an emotional and crazy decision about the command at Pylos that surprisingly turns out well (even if the Athenians, tempted by *pleonexia,* squander peace opportunities they would have accepted earlier on), and finally to a decision with far-reaching consequences, about the intervention in Sicily, that is made under the influence of passion (*erōs*), greed (*pleonexia*), and boundless ambition, and that leads to disaster.[33]

In the pattern appearing in this sequence the Athenian collective character asserts itself ever more detrimentally. The portrait of the citizen-community Pericles offers in the Funeral Oration, already challenged by the brutal impact of the plague, reveals itself as an idealized construct. Willing victims of the competition among self-serving and unscrupulous demagogues, the Athenians succumb to *polypragmosynē* and *pleonexia*. Irrational decisions and mass hysteria increasingly push reason and moderation to the side. The *dēmos*, fickle and prone to overreacting anyway (2.65.2−4), yields responsibility for decisions to the politicians and ultimately proves to be incapable not only of governing an empire (as Cleon claims) but of governing at all (3.37). The paradox-

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30 On parallels between Sparta's and Athens' rise to power, see Raaflaub 1988, 213 n.73.
31 E.g. 7.162.1 with a quote from Pericles' much later Funeral Oration (perhaps in the war against Samos in 440/39): Munson 2001, 218−19; van Wees 2002, 341−42; Grethlein 2006b, 498−501.
32 Grethlein 2009, 164−171.
33 For details (also in the next paragraph) and bibliog., see Raaflaub 2006, 198−209.

ical conclusion is that democracy functions well when it is only nominal (*logōi*), when the ruling *dēmos* in fact (*ergōi*) yields rule to a dominant leader (*prōtos anēr*) who is motivated by responsibility, not lust for power (2.65.8–9). Democracy needs strong leadership to pursue sound and consistent policies and keep the people in check but, because of its obsessive concern with equality, it does not tolerate strong leadership. Pericles succeeds in reconciling this contradiction because he is totally incorruptible and a master in handling the fickle *dēmos* (ibid.) *and* (as other sources tell us) because he keeps a low profile and acts as if he were an equal among equals (Plut. *Per.* 7). Nicias, although also incorruptible, responsible, and free from lust for power (Thuc. 6.9), fails to master the *dēmos*'s emotions. Alcibiades, although capable of controlling the demos (8.86.5), fails and proves divisive precisely because he loves ostentation and refuses to accept democratic egalitarianism (6.15–16).

Obvious lessons are to be drawn here about the qualities needed for successful leadership in democracy and the conditions under which democracy can succeed at all. But Thucydides' picture here is overdrawn, too schematic in black and white, omitting the grey tones. The initial portraits of both Pericles and democracy are idealized, those of later leaders and democracy's failures too starkly negative, especially in their condensation into a few crucial episodes and their focus on a few essential aspects.[34] But patterning requires strong colors, sharp lines and contrasts, and simplification. If space permitted, it would be possible to pull out such patterns in other central aspects of Thucydides' interpretation of history, most especially in his analysis of war versus peace or empire and imperialism versus liberty.[35]

Let me turn at least briefly to the other questions I raised at the beginning. Why was patterning useful, even necessary? On the one hand, "the underlying assumption of regular patterns was a means to overcome the arbitrariness of chance, which was perceived as a threatening force".[36] On the other hand, as said before, it helped tie together and organize the historical material along specific lines, it created focus, and thus enabled the historian to convey meaning. In other words, it facilitated the historian's didactic function. I do not doubt that this func-

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34 Ibid. (as in n. 33).
35 For a brief discussion of war and peace, see Raaflaub 2007 and, more generally, 2009; imperialism and liberty: de Romilly 1963; Tamiolaki 2010.
36 Grethlein 2006b, 502.

tion also had a practical application and immediate purpose. Scholars have suggested this in Herodotus's case – for example, warning the Athenians (or any power with imperial aspirations) or providing orientation to an age that increasingly suffered from rapid change and serious challenges to values and traditions.[37] The pattern (just discussed) concerning democracy and democratic leadership gives one example of what this immediate purpose might have been in Thucydides' case but in my present context this is of secondary importance because here I am concerned primarily with this function as such.

To remain with Herodotus for a moment, I need to emphasize that, although lessons can and should be drawn from patterns, they are not quite the same as the "models to be imitated or avoided" offered in the kind of "exemplary history" that Livy emphasizes in his preface.[38] This difference requires more thorough investigation than I can offer it here, but in a preliminary way I would suggest that *exempla* invite direct imitation or avoidance and thus concern primarily moral attitudes and behavioral principles, while patterns invite critical thinking and analysis and deal primarily with political issues. Furthermore, in my view, what Herodotus does is *not only* an issue of "Herodotus pointing morals for his contemporary world" (which he certainly does) *but also* an issue of conveying political insight. Nor does it simply concern an either – or: "the present affecting the audience's reading of the past" or "the text pointing morals from the past to affect attitudes of the present". Rather, similar to tragedy (mentioned above), the relationship between past and present seems to me truly interactive especially on the political level: the historian's thinking about present experiences or problems influences the way he shapes his presentation of past events in order to make the crucial issues recognizable to his present audiences or readers, to stimulate their thinking and make them critically aware. The historian does not present the lessons to be learned on a silver platter: the reader has to draw them out himself. At any rate, this kind of didactic purpose does not seem to me incompatible with Herodotus's insight, pointed out by several scholars, that real knowledge and understanding are difficult to gain and true wisdom is elusive.[39] Even if the wise advi-

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37 Warning: Moles 1996; see also Stadter 1992. Orientation: Meier 1973, 1987.
38 Livy, *pref.* 9–10; Chaplin 2000; for general discussion, see Grethlein 2006a, 32–40, esp. 34.
39 See, with quotes and references, Pelling 2006a, esp. 141–42 with n.4, 146, 172–73; for a detailed analysis of the differences between Herodotus and Thu-

sors are mostly unsuccessful they still have to try; if Herodotus identifies himself to some extent with these advisors, as I think he does, he has to convey his insights and hope that somebody somewhere will listen and understand.[40]

In Thucydides there are no sages and advisors, only intelligent, rational, and articulate politicians.[41] Still, Thucydides too considers the didactic function of history highly important. Why, then, did both historians feel so strongly that history needed to be made meaningful to present audiences? The explanation, I suggest, lies in the fact that in the time of Herodotus and Thucydides the past was not interesting in and of itself. To say it pointedly, the Greeks had no museums (not even in the sense of "programmatic display" of pieces of art as the Romans did in the time of Augustus) and did not teach in their schools history as a separate subject; in other words, their culture did not comprise a widespread, broad, and comprehensive interest in history *as such*.[42] I am aware that this statement seems to collide head-on with a different view, that the Greeks were "in the grip of the past", and with the fact that virtually every genre of Greek literature included, in one way or other, considerations of the past.[43] Yet, I think, the two views do not really contradict each other. It is certainly true that the past was of concern to many and for any number of reasons but such reasons were usually connected with specific groups or situations. The past – whether historical or mythical, which is essentially a modern distinc-

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cydides in assessing "the relation between practical knowledge and action", see Dewald 1985.

40 Raaflaub 2002b, 178.
41 Dewald 1985.
42 On the "programmatic display" in the Temple of Concord, see Kellum 1990. Greek sanctuaries, of course, were crowded with votive offerings, and the attached inscriptions usually informed visitors of the donor and the occasion of the gift. Herodotus (see, e.g., Flower 1991) and Pausanias, among others, inform us of what could be learned from these about historical events. For the votive inscriptions on the Athenian Acropolis, see Raubitschek 1949. On the "Lindian Chronicle", inscribed in 99 BCE, that preserves a record of the votives to Athena Lindia on Rhodes, see Higbie 2003. See also, esp. on Olympia, Kreutz 2004. The difference is that such collections of "exhibits" in sanctuaries were the result not of a conscious intention to commemorate the past or convey a coherent political or historical message; rather, they were the accidental result of the generosity of the deity's worshippers. Interest in their historical significance followed upon the development of interest in history.
43 Grethlein 2010a, 2–3, with reference to van Groningen 1953 and other useful references.

tion[44] – drew interest mostly because it was sensational, etiological, or particularly meaningful to specific people (a person, family, group of citizens or settlers, *polis*, or ethnic community), not least in creating or confirming identities, or because it provided a set of familiar stories that could be adapted and exploited for various purposes.[45]

Already the epic poets knew this, weaving into their dramatic narrative of past events references to an even earlier past or dramatizing in that narrative concerns that were important to their audiences and communities; tragedians adapted and elaborated primarily well-known mythical themes to work through issues that agitated their public.[46] I am far from claiming, of course, that this didactic and political function of Greek poetry is the only or even the most important aspect. True works of art have multiple layers and meanings; but the one I am emphasizing here is essential to understanding what the early historians did. It explains not least why they focused on the history and politics of great wars and why it was natural to them to emphasize the immediate relevance to their audiences of the history they were describing. Poets had long been not only entertainers but also teachers and voices of communal conscience and concern. They also provided the model for how something important could be conveyed through specific interpretation of the past.

To sum up, the past was remembered if and as long as it remained relevant, usually to specific audiences. Memories that had no such function faded away; the past that lost its meaning for the present was forgotten or radically reshaped. The memory of even important events was sooner or later superseded by that of later ones. Curiosity was perhaps stimulated more by foreign places or peoples than by past events. All this posed serious challenges especially for the first historians who created a new genre – the prose history of important past events, whether

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44 In Herodotus (1.5) we find a different distinction: between a past that is verifiable through personal inquiry and a past that is not because it is too far removed in time; see also 3.122 and, e.g., Hunter 1982, chs. 2–3; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 45; Lateiner 1989, 63–67; Calame 1996; Marincola 1997, 117–27.

45 For discussion of "cultural memory", see, e.g., Assmann 1997; Assmann and Hölscher 1988; more generally, e.g., Vansina 1985; von Ungern-Sternberg and Reinau 1988; Thomas 1989.

46 Epic uses of the past: Kullmann 1999; Grethlein 2006a; political thought in epic and other archaic poetry: Raaflaub 2000; Hammer 2002; for "historical awareness" in the period when the epics "crystallized", Patzek 1992. Tragedy and the *polis*: above n. 5.

distant or recent, as "a multi-subjective, contingency-oriented account" – and had to establish its legitimacy. Although they found a distant predecessor in epic and imitated some of its features, they essentially entered uncharted territory and had to figure out not only how to organize their material and present their narrative but also how to capture the attention of their audiences and readers.[47] It is not surprising, therefore, that Herodotus and Thucydides, despite differences in age, approach, methodology, style and views, share many specific characteristics and features.[48]

One might object that neither the Persian nor the Peloponnesian War were in danger of being forgotten because both had a decisive influence on further developments in Greece, deeply affecting the history and identity of the participants. Yet the memory of these wars was necessarily fractured, differing greatly among those involved: different events were remembered and even main events were remembered differently from one *polis* to the other; the scope of universally accepted elements was minimal, essentially limited to the bare outline of the main facts. For the Persian Wars, where enough, even if scattered, evidence survives, David Yates demonstrates this impressively.[49] For the Peloponnesian War, where local evidence is much more scarce, a detailed investigation has not been undertaken but the results could hardly be very different.

In contrast to such local memories, Herodotus described the Persian Wars and their prehistory not from an individual and partisan but from a general and panhellenic (and, at least to some extent, also a Persian and even human) perspective. In this he resumed the panhellenic and even "pan-human" outlook of the *Iliad* that suppressed local preferences and specificities and treated the Trojans with equal sympathy, as "non-Greek Greeks". Still, he had to choose from among contrasting local traditions and sometimes contradict prevailing or popular views.[50] By his time, Greece, always composed of numerous "micro-states" that

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47   Historians and Homer: Strasburger 1972; Hartog 2000; Boedeker 2002; Marincola 2006; Pelling 2006b; see also Fornara 1983, 31; Lendle 1992, 3–5. On the origins of Greek historiography: Meier 1973, 1987; Boedeker 1998; Darbo-Peschanski 2007; of historiography more generally: Assmann and Müller 2005. Historiography as a new genre: e.g., Dewald 1985, 47; Lateiner 1989, ch.1, both with references. Quote: Meier 1987, 44.

48   See below, at nn. 59–61.

49   Yates 2009.

50   Lateiner 1989, 84–90 lists the evidence; contradicting popular views: 7.139.

were fiercely competing with each other, was more deeply fragmented than ever: ethnic, cultural, and political differences were emphasized in new, often absolute, and destructive ways. The panhellenic audience Herodotus was addressing was thus not a given: he had to create it. Nor could he expect automatic and general interest in his *Histories*: he had to stimulate that too by emphasizing aspects that were important not to individual *poleis* or specific groups of *poleis* but to all of them. Patterning focuses precisely on issues of universal significance; this made it essential to Herodotus. Thucydides too writes from an independent position, describing "the war of the Lacedaemonians and Athenians, as they fought against each other" (1.1.1), and he emphasizes that his exile gave him "rather exceptional facilities for looking into things" and enabled him to see "what was being done on both sides, no less on that of the Peloponnesians" (5.26.5) – even if for practical reasons his focus rests much more on Athens than Sparta.[51] He too obviously wants his work to be of interest not only to the Athenians but "to all who want to know precisely" what happened (1.22.4).

Herodotus thus emphasizes at the beginning of his *Histories* his purpose to keep "human achievements" from being forgotten over time and "great and wondrous deeds" by Greeks and non-Greeks from losing their glory (*kleos*) – an obvious allusion to the "imperishable glory" (*kleos aphthiton*) promised by the epic singer – especially, of course, the greatest and most wondrous of all deeds, the war between Greeks and Persians (pref.) that culminated in the campaign of Xerxes who led the greatest army ever assembled against Greece (7.20). The author's effort to justify this enterprise through the greatness and significance of the subject matter is obvious. It is repeated by Thucydides who claims that he believed from the beginning that the war he witnessed "was going to be a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past" (1.1.1), and then goes on to demonstrate elaborately that this was indeed the greatest war ever (1.1–19). As we saw, Thucydides combines this claim with another, to write a work that will be useful forever (a goal that Herodotus tries to realize without saying it explicitly).[52] And Thucydides too lets Pericles extol the value of great

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51 On the secrecy surrounding Spartan affairs: Th. 2.39.1; 5.68.2; on Thucydides and Sparta: Cartledge 1996; Cartledge and Debnar 2006; Raaflaub 2006, 216–20. On the importance of an outsider's perspective for early historiography, see Boedeker 1998. "Micro-states": Davies 1997.

52 See next paragraph and above at n. 19.

achievements that will result in ever-remembered glory of both individuals and communities (*doxa aieimnēstos*, 2.64.5).[53] Moreover, the notion of *ktēma es aiei,* as Gregory Crane points out, is in itself related to Homer's *kleos aphthiton*: "Thucydides replaces Homer as true giver of undying fame". Grethlein takes this a step further: "Whereas poetic works define their own eternity *via* their objects, Thucydides claims eternity in relation to his readers. Fame has been replaced with usefulness".[54] History thus combines the preservation of the memory of great deeds and particularly the greatest deeds ever (great wars) with the demonstration of their significance und usefulness for present and future audiences.[55]

Recent scholarship has placed both Herodotus and Thucydides firmly in the didactic and competitive intellectual environment of their time.[56] Herodotus's case is instructive: for example, he imposes on the farthest-reaching conquests of all Persian kings (from Cyrus to Xerxes) and even the Lydian king Croesus before the Persians a common pattern that could not but resonate in his contemporaries' minds. Using elaboration and even invention, he shapes the past (here the failures of excessive imperialism in Persian history) in a way that enables it to carry meaning for the present (here the problem of excessive imperialism on the part of Greek poleis and the dangers it posed).[57] He thus, as suggested above, in fact (and without saying it) makes his audiences critically aware: a condition for their ability to cope better with the present or future.[58]

All this differs greatly from our modern premises in dealing with history. Hence it is difficult to grasp fully what consequences this has for our understanding and use of ancient historiography and history. I have suggested elsewhere that if we fully accept what we have been learning about Herodotus's "professional principles" we lose a great deal of what we thought was past history while gaining a deeper understanding of the conditions and mentalities prevailing in his time. In Herodotus's case, this concerns especially the history of the more distant

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53 See also Hdt. 6.109.3 with Th. 2.41.4, 64.3.
54 Crane 1996, 215; Grethlein 2010a, 214.
55 On "rescuing the remarkable from oblivion", see Dewald 2007, 91–94.
56 See above at n. 8.
57 Raaflaub 1987, 2002a. See also Strasburger 1955; Fornara 1971; Hunter 1982, 176–225. On invention and its significance for Herodotus's interpretation of history, see Fornara 1971, 35–36; Raaflaub 2010b, 199–200.
58 See above at n. 19.

past.[59] Thucydides' subject matter is more contemporary, and he establishes and applies principles that seem to us to represent a progression from Herodotus and make us feel more confident in his "professionalism" as a historian. But it is precisely in his explicit efforts to make history useful for all times that he faced the same challenges as Herodotus did: his need to elaborate, to emphasize interpretation, and thus to manipulate history was no less urgent. Developing the "useful potential" in history, Thucydides penetrates as deeply as it takes to isolate the patterns we have been looking at. He certainly does this in the analyses he offers through the speeches. Whether he also shapes his narrative accordingly is likely but difficult to prove.[60] For he informs us of his methodological principles but does hardly ever allow us to observe him at work: his narrative is smooth but dense and complex, presenting the results of his analysis and reconstruction of the events but not the process by which he arrived at his interpretation. Moreover, Thucydides is driven by a strong desire to unmask political propaganda (on Sparta's as well as Athens' side) and to de-ideologize history.[61] In this effort too, "strong interpretation" is difficult to avoid. I see a challenge for future work on his *History* precisely in systematically tracing and exposing his efforts at patterning, as I have outlined them here.

Herodotus and Thucydides were contemporaries, despite their age difference. They drew from the same pool of ideas and theories that pervaded intellectual discussions in the second half of the fifth century, and reacted to the same events. As others have shown before and do so in the present volume, Thucydides also reacted to Herodotus.[62] The differences between the two authors are enormous in so many respects but still, the more I look at them side by side, the more I am struck by specific analogies in their dealings with the huge challenges posed by the task of composing major historical works – as if they had discussed them in the agora over a cup of wine. Patterning is only one of these. Ranking the significance of similar events, paying less attention to less important instances, and reserving the most dramatic elaboration for the most important one, is another.[63] And there are more.

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59 Raaflaub 2010b, 203.
60 See now Greenwood 2006.
61 Raaflaub 2004, ch. 5.
62 See, e.g., Hornblower 1996, 19–38; Rood 1999b; Rogkotis 2006; Rengakos 2006a, 2006c.
63 Thus in Herodotus the Persian expedition resulting in the defeat at Marathon, despite its importance to Athens, receives scant treatment compared to Xerxes'

Attempts were made in recent decades to replace Thucydides' traditional image as a truthful reporter with that of an artful or even deceitful reporter.[64] Artful, yes, because most ancient historians saw themselves no less as dramatic artists than as scholars; deceitful, no, because the principles directing his art were different from ours and he did not know the criteria by which some modern historians judge and condemn him; truthful, yes, because he aimed at truth in the sense of accuracy and full understanding, passionately and despite all difficulties, but his purpose went beyond that: to convey a deeper truth that uncovered in the past those meanings and lessons that made it useful to the present and future: truly "a possession for ever".[65]

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expedition (Raaflaub 2010a), in Thucydides the first Sicilian expedition of 427–424 compared to that of 415–413, although the former was far from insignificant (Raaflaub 2002a, 29–33).

64 Hunter 1973; Badian 1993b.

65 In the effort of uncovering a deeper truth, Tacitus is Thucydides' closest successor: Raaflaub 2010b, 190–94; on Tacitus in more detail: Raaflaub 2008.

Character Judgements in the *Histories*:
their Function and Distribution*

Mathieu de Bakker

Authorial judgements of individual characters are amongst the tools that Thucydides employs to explain and evaluate the course of events that he describes in explicit terms. His presentation of individuals is, however, influenced by his inclination to subjugate the role of the individual for the benefit of wider causal patterns.[1] This aspect characterises his narrative throughout, as we can see in the *Archaeology* (1.1–21), where Thucydides avoids the individual and describes the development of the Hellenic world in generic, abstract terms.[2] Equally, in battle-scenes, Thucydides tends to concentrate on the collective, as his narrative of the night-battle at the Epipolae near Syracuse exemplifies (7.42–44): he focuses on the movements of the hoplites and describes their increasing confusion, fear and panic without highlighting acts of individual excellence.

Thucydides' preference for wider causal patterns over the individual ties in with Aristotle's argument in his *Poetics* that a tragedy may lack ἦθος but certainly needs πρᾶξις to be successful.[3] If we follow the painting analogy that Aristotle uses to illustrate this statement,[4] Thucydides should be admired more for his abilities as a designer than as a painter as he has left us a clearly and coherently designed picture in which his choice of colours serves the larger whole. Indeed, Thucydides' comments on individuals are usually confined to aspects of their characters that influence the course of events as described in the narrative. Thus he mentions Brasidas' πραότης ("gentleness", 4.108.3) when it stimu-

1   Gribble 2006, 439–441. For patterns in general as an important tool of the method of the ancient historians, see also Raaflaub (this volume).
2   Cf. Kallet-Marx 1993, 33–5.
3   ἔτι ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγῳδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἠθῶν γένοιτ' ἂν (Arist. *Po*. 1450a).
4   Id. 1450a-b.

lates cities in the north of the Aegean to revolt against Athens. In a si-
milar way he refers to Alcibiades' νεότης ("youthfulness", 5.43.2) to
anticipate its use as an argument in the Athenian debate on the Sicilian
expedition (6.12.2; 6.17.1). Here the traits of an individual are at stake
in an antilogy that illuminates the increasing exacerbation within Athe-
nian politics. For aspects and consequences of Alcibiades' youthfulness
in the private sphere, however, we have to turn to other sources like
Plato's *Symposium* (212c3 ff.) or Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*.

    A second tendency that is observed in Thucydides' characterisation
of individuals is the uneven distribution of explicit character judgements
as they increase in the second half of his work and especially in the un-
finished last book.[5] Thucydides' reluctance to judge characters earlier in
his work stands in contrast to the overt, authoritative way of evaluating
the prominent Athenian oligarchs of the 411 revolution, Antiphon,
Phrynichus and Theramenes (8.68) and the qualification of Hyperbolus
as "a rascal" (μοχθηρὸν ἄνθρωπον, 8.73.3). In doing so he denies him
the more laudatory predicate ἀνήρ that he tends to use when he intro-
duces other individuals.[6] The question is why Thucydides so freely
commented on these four individuals while their impact on the course
of the war in Greece seems relatively unimportant. Why does Hyper-
bolus merit explicit comments? Why are they lacking in the cases of
prominent generals like Phormio or Demosthenes who play such a cru-
cial role in the events that Thucydides narrates?

    In his book on individuals in Thucydides, Westlake (1968) explained
the increase in character judgements from a development in the author's
general outlook and interests in the part of his work that succeeded his
second preface (5.26).[7] This approach was rejected by scholars like
Pouncey and Connor who suggested that compositional concerns
played a role, especially in the qualifications of the oligarchs in the
final book. Connor has noted that this part of the narrative stresses
the disintegration of the *polis*, a theme that gradually surfaces in the
course of the *Histories*. According to Connor, Thucydides introduces
his readers to a "large and brilliant" cast of characters while none of

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5   See Westlake 1968, 13–15.
6   1.139.4 (Pericles); 4.21.3 (Cleon); 5.43.2 (Alcibiades); 6.72.2 (Hermocrates);
     8.68.1 (Antiphon); 8.68.4 (Theramenes).
7   See Westlake 1968, 13–15.

them serves as a centre of focus:[8] "Individuals appear with momentary prominence and then swiftly disappear in disfavor, obscurity, or death".[9]

This paper will address the distribution of Thucydides' character judgements in the course of his work against the backdrop of Connor's evaluation of Book 8. It will be argued that although the Athenian oligarchs may only be of fleeting prominence, their character judgements carry a wider significance. In advance of this, however, a discussion is needed of the judgements as a generic feature of Thucydides' work. This will demonstrate that in spite of the prevailing concerns of his design, Thucydides' choice of colours adds a vivid touch.

1. Thucydides' explicit character judgements

There are fifteen individuals on whose characters and abilities Thucydides issues an explicit verdict. In the cases of Cleon, Brasidas and Phrynichus, two separate judgements are found and in the case of Pericles and Nicias even three, yielding a total of twenty-two.[10] These include the verdicts on three individuals that lived before the Peloponnesian War, Themistocles, Theseus and the Pisistratids and the "focalised" judgements where the narrator describes the impression that an individual's character makes upon others.[11] To the latter group belong the comments on Archidamus who "had a reputation for both intelligence and moderation" (1.79.2), Phrynichus who displayed intelligence and capability (8.27.5; 8.68.3) and Brasidas on whose qualities Thucydides explicitly comments in the midst of a narrative that describes how his reputation affected the course of events:

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8 Connor 1984, 214.

9 Id., 215. Compare Pouncey 1980, 143. The increased prominence of individuals is part of "the final stage of a planned recession to the ground of human nature in the human individual". Cf. Rood 1998, 252 and Gribble 2006, 443–444.

10 Archidamus (1.79.2); Pericles (1.127.3; 1.139.4; 2.65.8); Themistocles (1.138.2–3); Theseus (2.15.2); Cleon (3.36.3; 4.21.3); Brasidas (4.81.1–3; 4.84.2); Nicias (5.16; 7.50.4; 7.86.5); Alcibiades (6.15.2–4); Athenagoras (6.35.2); the Pisistratids (6.54.5); Hermocrates (6.72.2); Phrynichus (8.27.5; 8.68.3); Antiphon (8.68.1); Theramenes (8.68.4); Hyperbolus (8.73.3). Westlake 1968, 5–19 omits some of these.

11 Westlake 1968, 6–7 excludes some of these, but not Phrynichus.

… ἑαυτὸν παρασχὼν δίκαιον καὶ μέτριον ἐς τὰς πόλεις ἀπέστησε τὰ πολλά…

… it was his upright and moderate conduct towards the cities which caused most of them to revolt

(4.81.2)

This "focalised" verdict allows Thucydides to draw a link between Brasidas' abilities and their effects upon the outcome of the war: it was the excellent reputation of Brasidas that created a pro-Spartan feeling amongst many Athenian allies. In a similar way the "focalised" judgements of Archidamus and Phrynichus explain why they succeeded in persuading their audience to adopt their policies.

The explicit judgements can be divided into instances of those that consist of a single clause only and those with more in-depth reflections. The former are the majority and are found in the cases of Archidamus, Theseus, Cleon (twice), Athenagoras, the Pisistratids, Hermocrates, Phrynichus (twice), Antiphon, Theramenes and Hyperbolus.[12] The single clause judgements build upon the characterising methods of Homer and Herodotus who usually qualify their characters with single epithets and abstain from more in-depth reflections in their own voices, leaving it to the narratees to judge and evaluate a character on the basis of his words and deeds.

Within this group, three individuals are evaluated negatively. Cleon and his Syracusan counterpart Athenagoras are portrayed as demagogues with much influence on their assemblies (4.21.3; 6.35.2). In Cleon's case, Thucydides also mentions his "violent" (βιαιότατος) nature (3.36.6) which explains his proposals to kill the male inhabitants of Lesbos and Scione after their revolts (3.37–40 resp. 4.122.6).[13] The "rascal" Hyperbolus (8.73.3), as we saw above, measures up to Thersites' standards, which explains why he was ostracised in Athens.

The other individuals on whom Thucydides comments in single clause judgements receive positive qualifications. These consist of variations on the generic themes of "intelligence" (ξύνεσις) and "excellence"

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12 In the cases of Pericles (1.139.4) and Nicias (5.16.1) single clause observations on character are found in advance of more elaborate analyses.
13 Compare 5.16 where Thucydides describes Cleon's misgivings about making peace as it would bring to light his crimes and endanger his position in Athenian politics.

(ἀρετή),[14] one of which he usually replaces by a more specific trait like moderation (σωφροσύνη), as in the case of Archidamus (1.79.2), military experience and manly courage, as in the case of Hermocrates (6.72.2), trustworthiness, as in the case of Phrynichus (8.68.3) and political and oratorical abilities, as in the cases of Antiphon and Theramenes (8.68.1; 4). Before his maiden speech, Pericles is characterised as a man "most capable of speaking and acting" (λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος, 1.139.4) and thereby embodies the heroic ideal familiar of Homer's *Iliad* where Phoenix describes his aim to teach Achilles so that he becomes able in words and deeds.[15]

A new feature of Thucydides' work in comparison to Homer and Herodotus are his five more in-depth reflections upon individual characters. They too are built upon the themes of "intelligence" and "excellence" but are more elaborate and complex and the traits mentioned are usually more specific. Thus he describes Pericles as "incorruptible" (ἀδωρότατος, 2.65.8) – an important asset to his solid reputation as a general that enabled him to convince the Athenians of the advantages of his strategy. In the same vein, the historian mentions Nicias' superstition (7.50.4) to explain why he refused to leave Syracuse despite the desperate situation of the Athenian army. Brasidas is praised as a Spartan for his capacities as a speaker (4.84.2), along with his reputation of energetic perseverance at home and elsewhere (δραστήριον, 4.81.1). In Themistocles' and Pericles' cases the author mentions their adequate judgements and visionary foresight.[16] Thucydides' most ambiguous judgement concerns Alcibiades whose managerial capacities he recommends but whose extravagant private life causes fear and offence amongst his fellow-citizens (6.15.2−4).[17]

This brief overview of Thucydides' judgements on character and ability raises the question of relevance. Why does he use these judgements and why in these particular cases?

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14 Intelligence: Archidamus (1.79.2), Theseus (2.15.2), the Pisistratids (6.54.5), Hermocrates (6.72.2), and Phrynichus (8.27.5). Excellence: the Pisistratids (6.54.6) and Antiphon (8.68.1).

15 See Hornblower 1991, *ad loc.* for the reference to *Iliad* 9.443 and further literature.

16 Themistocles: κράτιστος γνώμων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων… ἄριστος εἰκαστής; προεώρα μάλιστα (1.138.3); Pericles: ἐγνώσθη ἡ πρόνοια αὐτοῦ; δυνατὸς ὤν… τῇ γνώμῃ (2.65.6; 8).

17 κράτιστα διαθέντι τὰ τοῦ πολέμου; φοβηθέντες… οἱ πολλοὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς… κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας (6.15.4).

An answer to the first question may be found in the verdict on The-
mistocles at the end of the digression about his fate after the Persian wars
(1.135–138). In this digression, Thucydides adopts a Herodotean fash-
ion of narrating and in doing so pays respect to his predecessor, round-
ing off the latter's narrative about the Athenian protagonist of the Per-
sian Wars.[18] In the verdict itself, however, he raises the language to a
higher level of complexity:

> Ἦν γὰρ ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς βεβαιότατα δὴ φύσεως ἰσχὺν δηλώσας καὶ διαφερόν-
> τως τι ἐς αὐτὸ μᾶλλον ἑτέρου ἄξιος θαυμάσαι· …

> Themistocles was a man who showed an unmistakable natural genius; in
> this respect he was quite exceptional, and beyond all deserves our admira-
> tion.

<div align="right">(1.138.3)</div>

As we know from the proem of Herodotus' *Histories*, the great and the
admirable merit a place within a historiographical work. With his char-
acter judgements, Thucydides lives up to this generic feature. This is
evident by the ample use of superlatives and other expressions such as
litotes[19] that stress the individual's excellence, as we see illustrated in
βεβαιότατα and διαφερόντως τι ἐς αὐτὸ μᾶλλον ἑτέρου above. An indi-
vidual of this eminence deserved to be eternalised for his excellence
and Thucydides uses language to underline his laudatory purpose adding
no fewer than six superlatives in the subsequent evaluation of Themis-
tocles' abilities.[20] The superlatives are reminiscent of Herodotus' style
and superlative expressions like πρῶτος τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν ("the first of

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18 Cf. Hornblower 1991, *ad* 1.128–135, with ample references to scholarship
    about this passage.

19 After the superlative, litotes is the second most used stylistic device in Thucy-
    dides' judgements of character. It is used to underline Brasidas' capacities as a
    speaker (4.84.2), Hermocrates' intelligence (6.72.2), Phrynichus' intelligence
    (8.27.5), Antiphon's excellence (8.68.1) and Theramenes' capacities as a politi-
    cian (8.68.4). See further on litotes Pontier (this volume).

20 Other superlatives in Themistocles' judgement: δι' ἐλαχίστης βουλῆς κράτιστος
    γνώμων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τοῦ γενησομένου ἄριστος εἰκαστής· …
    προεώρα μάλιστα… κράτιστος δὴ οὗτος αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὰ δέοντα ἐγένετο. Su-
    perlatives are also found in the verdicts on Pericles (1.127.3 δυνατώτατος;
    1.139.4 πρῶτος, δυνατώτατος; 2.65.8 ἀδωρότατος), Cleon (3.36.6 βιαιότατος,
    παρὰ πολὺ… πιθανώτατος; 4.21.3 πιθανώτατος), Brasidas (4.81.1 πλείστου
    ἄξιον), Alcibiades (6.15.4 τὸ μέγεθος τῆς… παρανομίας… καὶ τῆς διανοίας,
    κράτιστα), Athenagoras (6.35.2 πιθανώτατος), Nicias (7.86.5 ἥκιστα), Anti-
    phon (8.68.1–2 κράτιστος ἐνθυμηθῆναι… καὶ ἃ γνοίη εἰπεῖν… ἄριστα… ἀπο-
    λογησάμενος), Phrynichus (8.68.3 φερεγγυώτατος).

whom we know"[21]) a formula matched by Thucydides in his compassionate verdict on Nicias:

ἥκιστα δὴ ἄξιος ὢν τῶν γε ἐπ' ἐμοῦ Ἑλλήνων ἐς τοῦτο δυστυχίας ἀφικέσθαι.

a man who, of all the Hellenes in my time, least deserved to come to so miserable and end, …

(7.86.5)

Eternalising the great and the admirable, however, does not suffice as an explanation of Thucydides' *selection* of individuals that he subjects to a verdict. A likely – though ultimately not demonstrable – reason behind this selection may have been Thucydides' wish to position himself in the tumultuous debate in Athens after the war about the responsibility for the course of the events. Traces of this debate can be found in Lysias' and Andocides' speeches and given the fact that Thucydides did not avoid polemics on other subjects,[22] his character judgements may have been triggered by contemporary debate about the role of prominent Athenian politicians during the Peloponnesian War.

Once more the Themistocles judgement provides us with a clue. Although Thucydides pays an indirect tribute to his predecessor Herodotus by adopting his style and narrative habits in the preceding digression, he takes distance from the latter's evaluation of Themistocles as a cunning and demanding schemer who subjected Athenian allies to extortion to enlarge his private fortune.[23] None of this is found in Thucydides' judgement which shows sympathy for Themistocles as the architect of the Athenian empire and the precursor of Periclean nautical politics. Thus his verdict on Themistocles can be read as a corrective note placed in the margin of his predecessor's work and it compares to the positive judgement of the Pisistratids (6.54.5) which he uses to correct the Athenian *vox populi* that wrongly represented the facts about Athenian tyranny.

Thucydides' ambition to persuade could also be the reason for his selection of individuals on whose characters he comments. This would explain why generals like Phormio and Demosthenes are not included. These are capable men who fulfilled their duties outstandingly during the war. But as they were first and foremost skilled military

21 On this formula in Herodotus see Shimron 1973.
22 Cf. 1.20 and 1.97.2, where he targets Hellanicus.
23 On Herodotus' characterisation of Themistocles see Blösel 2004 and De Bakker 2007, 106–113.

commanders, their imprint on the political history of these years was less obvious than those of prominent politicians like the oligarchs, whose records remained controversial after the war and on whom the Athenian opinions were split. Thucydides writes his explicit judgements in particular with an eye to an individual's *political* merits and talents and, with the exception of Hermocrates (6.72.2), no other individual is praised explicitly for his military capacities.

Whereas contemporary polemical debate may explain the selection of individuals, the judgements also play a role within the internal structure of the historical narrative. The Thucydidean narrator usually remains covert,[24] which makes the passages where he voices his opinion all the more remarkable and worth taking into account. Whereas Thucydides elsewhere uses the techniques of Homer and Herodotus in characterising his individuals through their deeds and words, in these cases he adds poignancy and steers his narratees into an interpretative direction, as he presents them with an authorial framework with which to evaluate an individual's performance.

To explain the function of the judgements in the larger structure of Thucydides' work and to shed light on the individuals of Book 8 and the question of uneven distribution, first a discussion is needed of the timing of the judgements in relation to the careers of the individuals that are judged.

2. The timing of Thucydides' character judgements

The most likely places to insert character judgements are the introduction and the exit of the character. In the former case, the author presents a framework within which the subsequent actions and words of the character can be measured. In the latter case, the judgement may serve as a farewell or, in the case of the deceased, an epitaph of the narrator to a prominent character on whose abilities he wishes to pause. In the *Histories*, however, the timing is more varied. This is exemplified by Thucydides' judgement of Hermocrates which he inserts at the end of the first summer of the Sicilian War:

> ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐς τἆλλα ξύνεσιν οὐδενὸς λειπόμενος καὶ κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐμπειρίᾳ τε ἱκανὸς γενόμενος καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ ἐπιφανής

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24 Cf. Rood 2004b.

He was in every way a remarkably intelligent man, and in the war had not only shown the qualities that come from experience but also won a name for his personal courage.

(6.72.2)

This is not the first time that Hermocrates is mentioned in the narrative. He is introduced in Thucydides' fourth Book as a key figure in creating peace in Sicily when its security is under threat from the Athenian naval campaign in 424 BCE (4.59–64).[25] In fact, this Sicilian "aside" consists largely of Hermocrates' speech that convinces his fellow Sicilians to bury the hatchet. We meet him again as a speaker in the Syracusan assembly (6.33–34), where his warning against the Athenians is countered by Athenagoras. Thucydides' explicit recommendation of Hermocrates' abilities is found, however, when his role is most crucial just after the first battle between Syracusans and Athenians, when he tries to raise the spirits of the Syracusans who have just been outclassed (6.72.2–5).

As Hunter has argued, the contents of this speech are closely entwined with the surrounding narrative, since Hermocrates explains the defeat from a lack of skills rather than a lack of courage and thereby confirms the narrator's interpretation of the events (6.69.1).[26] Hermocrates points out that the organisation of the Syracusan army with its many commanders may have brought them harm (μέγα δὲ βλάψαι… τὴν πολυαρχίαν, 6.72.4) and advises them to entrust the military command to a smaller number of experienced generals whose task it is to arm and train the hoplites so that they become more experienced. These generals, he adds, should have special authorities, so that they will not be hindered by constitutional obligations in organising the defence of the city and can act and negotiate with more discretion (6.72.5). This time, Hermocrates does not meet any resistance in the assembly and the Syracusans adopt the piece of advice in its entirety.

The timing of Thucydides' verdict on Hermocrates is understandable when we look at the context. As Westlake has observed, Thucydides "has chosen to do so at the point where all the qualities to which he refers began to show themselves most prominently".[27] This could be re-

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25   For Hermocrates in Thucydides' narrative see also Westlake 1958.
26   Hunter 1973, 149–153. She compares Hermocrates' role to that of Phormio in Book 2. The interplay between the explicit judgement and the subsequent narrative can be seen as a variation on the *erga-logoi* combinations that she recognises in Thucydides' work.
27   Westlake 1968, 10.

formulated in stronger terms: Thucydides recommends Hermocrates'
abilities where they are the ultimate cause behind a crucial event
which contributes to Athenian defeat in Sicily. Hermocrates' timely
foresight concerning the Athenian attack on Sicily and his behaviour
in the war have already brought to light his intelligence, experience
and courage. Backed up by his increase in prestige, he is now able to
convince his fellow citizens that they can defeat the Athenians if they
train their intelligence in war, gain experience (ἔμπειροι, 6.72.4) and
rely on their courage (ἀνδρείας μὲν σφίσιν ὑπαρχούσης, 6.72.4). Thus
he persuades them to act in the spirit of his own character, to "Hermo-
cratize" themselves, and indeed the Syracusans hold on and win the war
because they add increasing experience – an important theme in Book
7[28] – to the courage they already possess. Thucydides, it appears, has
placed his tribute to the Syracusan general at the most effective spot
in his narrative: its reverberations and explanatory value cannot be
missed. Had he chosen to position this passage in the Sicilian aside of
Book 4 when he introduced Hermocrates, the explanatory dimension
would have been lacking.

A look at the timing of the character judgements in relation to the
careers of the individuals in the narrative (table 1) reveals a varied pic-
ture which indicates that Thucydides sought to place them where he felt
they were most effective.

Eight character judgements are found when an individual makes his
first appearance in the narrative. Apart from the individuals in Book 8,
this happens in the cases of Archidamus, Cleon and Athenagoras, whose
subsequent speeches can be measured off against their characters. Peri-
cles' case is more complicated: the introduction is interrupted by the di-
gressions on the Cylon-affair, Pausanias and Themistocles (1.126.2–
138), so that his second, "heroic", character judgement (1.139.4, see
above) closely follows the lengthy verdict on Themistocles' abilities
(1.138.3). Thus the resemblances between the two statesmen become
unmistakeable and the powerful words and actions of Pericles cannot
be separated from the foresight and improvising talents of his predeces-
sor.

At the other end of the scale there is Nicias whose character is not
praised until after his death, when Thucydides, as we saw above, tells us
that he was one that least deserved to die in such a pitiful way, "because
of his way of life, which he conducted wholly in accordance with high

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28 Cf. de Romilly 2009, 359–366.

Table 1. The timing of Thucydides' character judgements

	when the individual is introduced	somewhere in-between introduction and exit of individual	at exit of individual
Archidamus	1.79.2		
Pericles	1.127.3; 1.139.4		2.65.8
Themistocles			1.138.3
Theseus	2.15.2[a)]		
Cleon	3.36.6	4.21.3	
Brasidas		4.81.1−3; 4.84.2	
Alcibiades		6.15.2−4	
Athenagoras	6.35.2		
Pisistratids	6.54.5[a)]		
Hermocrates		6.72.2	
Nicias		5.16.1	7.50.4; 7.86.5
Phrynichus	8.27.5	8.68.4	
Antiphon	8.68.1		
Theramenes	8.68.4		
Hyperbolus	8.73.3[a)]		

[a)]In the cases of Theseus, the Pisistratids and Hyperbolus the individuals are not mentioned elsewhere in the narrative.

standards" (διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν, 7.86.5).[29] This judgement is placed as an epitaph and creates a pause in the narrative of Athens' greatest defeat emphasising the dire consequences that the decisions of the Athenian δῆμος had on one of its ablest generals who had to fight a battle against his will but did so to the best of his ability under excruciating circumstances. Nicias died because he refused to compromise his standards, living up to a heroic ideal similar to the one

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29   I follow the interpretation of Dover, *HCT* III, *ad loc*. He takes πᾶσαν and νενομισμένην with ἀρετήν.

that sealed Hector's fate in the *Iliad* which he expresses to Andromache
in the following words:

> οὐδέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς
> αἰεὶ καὶ πρώτοισι μετὰ Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι

> nor would my heart allow me [*to fight more cautiously*] as I trained myself to be
> always brave-hearted and fight in the front ranks amongst the Trojans.
>
> (Hom. *Il.* 6.444–445; my translation)

Like Hector, Nicias has acted in accordance with his own ἀρετή which
has brought him great successes but also his downfall. In doing so, both
heroes deserve praise and sympathy in spite of the fact that they should
have made other choices at various times.[30]

The explanatory value of Thucydides' judgements is most clearly il-
lustrated by the cases of Alcibiades and Pericles, whose characters and
abilities are explicitly brought into connection with the history of
Athens and its people. The two passages (2.65 and 6.15) can be said
to function as a "signpost" within the narrative. Thucydides uses
them to give guidance to an understanding of the cause of Athenian de-
feat.

In 2.65 Thucydides explains how Pericles kept the Athenians at bay
and by his specific capacities as a politician urged them to follow his
naval strategy. After his death, Thucydides explains, his successors failed
to continue this policy and sought to enlarge the Athenian empire for
the purpose of enhancing their prestige and capital. In this passage Thu-
cydides mentions the private ambitions and quarrels of rivalrous Athe-
nian politicians whose behaviour cost the Athenians dear:

> οὐ πρότερον ἐνέδοσαν ἢ αὐτοὶ ἐν σφίσι κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας διαφορὰς περιπεσόντες
> ἐσφάλησαν.

> They did not surrender before they had destroyed themselves by their own
> internal conflicts.
>
> (2.65.12)

An important word in Thucydides' signpost system is ἴδιος, which he
repeats in this chapter to stress the individual interests in Athens that
prevailed over the collective in the years that followed Pericles' death.

The contrast between the interests of the individual and the collec-
tive recurs in the judgement of Alcibiades (6.15), whose excellent hand-
ling of the collective interests of Athens is undermined by the offence he

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30 I owe this nice observation to Maurits de Leeuw.

causes in his private life. As a consequence, the interests of the city are harmed, a fact which Thucydides formulates in terms that recall his Book 2 analysis of Athens after Pericles' death:

… δημοσίᾳ κράτιστα διαθέντι τὰ τοῦ πολέμου ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστοι τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν αὐτοῦ ἀχθεσθέντες, καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπιτρέψαντες, οὐ διὰ μακροῦ ἔσφηλαν τὴν πόλιν.

Although in a public capacity his conduct of the war was excellent, his way of life made him objectionable to everyone as a person; thus they entrusted their affairs to other hands, and before long ruined the city.

(6.15.4)

This statement highlights the increasing lack of balance between the interests of the individual and the collective in the Athenian state.[31] Thucydides has chosen to place his judgement in the middle of the Athenian debate about the Sicilian expedition, in which the proper relation between individual and the collective itself is at stake. Nicias argues that a person who displays foresight on behalf of his private life and goods would also guide his city to safety and success (6.9.2) whereas in Alcibiades' case, this collective success emanates from his own private splendour and legitimates his special position (6.16).

Thus the two forceful authorial judgements that Thucydides inserts to commemorate Pericles' death and the decision to sail to Sicily serve as signposts to steer his narratees into an interpretative direction that explains the outcome of the war as the result of the gradual disintegration of Athens due to the private interest of her prominent citizens. The character judgements of the Athenian oligarchs in Book 8 may indicate the next step in this process of fragmentation.

3. The character judgements in Book 8

The narrative of Book 8 makes a complex, chaotic and at times confusing impression. Thucydides' concern in shaping this part of his work is to stress the growing fragmentation within the Hellenic world where the various warring parties had come under pressure from political rival-

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31   This statement to my mind applies to Alcibiades' performances both in the Sicilian episode and afterwards during the Ionian War. *Pace* Dover, *HCT* III, *ad loc.*

ry caused by ambitious individuals who acted without consent or con-
sultation of their people.[32]

The first incidents of this kind are related to Sparta (8.5–6) where
Thucydides mentions the strong position of the Spartan king Agis who
decides unilaterally which Athenian allies he will support first in their
revolt although the Spartans are negotiating a different agreement.
Later on Thucydides tells about Alcibiades' Spartan intrigues which
fuel the ambitions of Endius to forestall Agis in creating a profitable al-
liance with the Persian king (8.12). The Spartan general Astyochus
meets with the distrust of his colleague Pedaritus who sends a letter
to Sparta to discredit him (8.38–39). Indeed, he is later told to have
acted for the purpose of personal profit (8.50.3) when he betrays Phry-
nichus' warnings to Alcibiades. Ultimately he narrowly escapes being
stoned by his soldiers who blame him for not being paid (8.83;
cf. 8.73) and leaves the stage when he is replaced by Mindarus (8.85).

Other individuals that reach prominent but controversial positions
in this part of the *History* are the Syracusan Hermocrates, who fights
alongside the Peloponnesians until he is exiled by the Syracusans and re-
placed by other generals (8.85). On the Persian side, Thucydides men-
tions the rivalry between the satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus, each
envying for prestige as they seek to conclude an alliance with Sparta on
behalf of their king, thereby weakening the Peloponnesian position
within the Aegean.

The most detailed story, however, of political turmoil is that of the
Athenian oligarchic revolution in 411 BCE. More than elsewhere in the
narrative Thucydides focuses on the individual oligarchs, as exemplified
by his description of the fates of the hard-liners Pisander and Aristarchus
after losing their support in the city (8.97). It is a story about individual
people caught in a complex web of conflicting interests who often mis-
understand or suspect one another.

Of the three Athenians whose political intelligence Thucydides
praises explicitly in his judgements of chapter 8.68, Phrynichus and
Theramenes play a deeply ambivalent role in the narrative of the events.
Phrynichus initially resembles a wise advisor, as he speaks against Alci-
biades' proposal to overthrow democracy and install oligarchies in
Athens and its subject states. Thucydides confirms his correct foresight
explicitly (ὅπερ καὶ ἦν, 8.48.4) and later on describes the failure of Athe-
nian policy at Thasos which, although forced into an oligarchy, still

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32   Cf. Connor 1984, 210–230 and Rood 1998, 251–284.

wants to free itself from the Athenian empire (8.64). Of the same Phrynichus, however, Thucydides tells us that he is willing to betray his army to the Spartans so that it can be destroyed (8.50.5). His motives are personal as his life is in danger after a plot against Alcibiades has been brought to light by the Spartans. Once in Athens he joins the oligarchic revolution – in spite of his earlier advice – a regime that does not hesitate to kill and imprison its opponents at will (8.70.2).

Equally ambiguous is the role of Theramenes, on whose political abilities Thucydides comments in the same chapter as his judgements on Antiphon and Phrynichus (8.68.4). Almost ironically, however, Theramenes is implicated in the death of Phrynichus when the oligarchs have divided into moderates and hardliners (8.92).[33] The narrative of the killing in this chapter resembles that of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (6.54–59) in its emphasis on the individual. Thucydides presents a detailed description of the killing and the subsequent fate of the murderers.

The ambivalent, shifting behaviour that Thucydides ascribes to Phrynichus and Theramenes is also found in Alcibiades' case. Alcibiades re-enacts the role of Aristagoras of Miletus at the time of the Ionian Revolt against Persia since he lies to the Athenians about his influence upon the Persians satraps (8.81). In the same context, Thucydides praises him for saving the Athenian empire, when he persuades the angry democrats at Samos not to give up their strategic position and cancel their planned departure to Athens to overthrow the oligarchy (8.86.4).

The narrative of Book 8 shows that the course of the war becomes increasingly dependent on the choices and whims of individuals who look for resources to survive in an increasingly fragmented Hellenic world. Thus it ties in with Thucydides' overall explanatory framework which he outlined in the proleptic chapter on Pericles' death and its aftermath (2.65). Here, Thucydides thrice mentions Athenian discord following upon Pericles' death. At first, he refers to "personal intrigues" among the Athenian leaders (τὰς ἰδίας διαβολὰς, 2.65.11) and admits that they played an important role in the course of the Sicilian expedition. Next, he refers to the *stasis* in Athens that followed upon the Athenian defeat (2.65.12). Finally, he mentions the private conflicts to which the state fell victim (ἴδιαι διαφοραί, 2.65.12, see above).

To my mind, Thucydides' growing focus on the individual, the ἴδιος and his interests, is reflected in the uneven distribution of character

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33   τότε δὴ οὐδενὸς γεγενημένου ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ νεωτέρου… ὁ Θηραμένης ἤδη θρασύτερον (8.92.2).

judgements in his work as he adds them in this part of this work to in-
dividuals that are relatively minor in comparison to those in previous
episodes. Thucydides comments on Antiphon, Phrynichus, Theramenes
(8.68) and Hyperbolus (8.73), not because he considers them equal to
earlier prominent individuals who made a similar impact on the course
of events, but because he wished to underline the increasing importance
of multiple, rivalling individuals in this period of the war. In the case of
Antiphon, Phrynichus and Theramenes, the recommendations of their
abilities as politicians may have been meant to have a similar effect as
the praise of Nicias had after his tragic death in Sicily. In times of
peace they would have grown into powerful and talented statesmen,
from whose intelligence and insight the city would have profited.
The stressful times of war and *stasis*, however, and the increasingly er-
ratic behaviour of the Athenian δῆμος under the stresses of the war
had made this impossible. The only option left for these talented indi-
viduals was to look for alliances within and outside their city that
would guarantee their survival. Uniting Athens in Periclean style against
its common enemy was no longer an option and they had to adapt
themselves to the circumstances. In the passage about *stasis* in Corcyra
(3.82–84) Thucydides announces this development in abstract terms:

> ἐν μὲν γὰρ εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀγαθοῖς πράγμασιν αἵ τε πόλεις καὶ οἱ ἰδιῶται ἀμείνους
> τὰς γνώμας ἔχουσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ἀκουσίους ἀνάγκας πίπτειν· ὁ δὲ πόλεμος
> ὑφελὼν τὴν εὐπορίαν τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν βίαιος διδάσκαλος καὶ πρὸς τὰ
> παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ.

> In times of peace and prosperity cities and individuals alike follow higher
> standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have
> to do what they do not want to do. But war is a stern teacher; in depriving
> them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most peo-
> ple's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.

> (3.82.2)

The relation of this passage with the events described in Book 8 illus-
trate the coherence of Thucydides' overall structure[34] and proves, to
my mind, that underlying the *stasis* narrative in Book 8 is his desire
to highlight how the war led to political fragmentation in Athens, a

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34 See for an elaborate analysis of the ties between Books 3 and 8 and between the
    staseis in Corcyra and Athens Rawlings 1981, 207–215. For an overview of dif-
    ferent viewpoints compare Hornblower 1991, *ad* 3.82–83; 3.84–85. For an
    integral analysis of Thucydides' description of *stasis* see Price 2001.

process that, owing to external conditions, could only be halted by grave individual and collective sacrifices.

A final thought should be spent on Antiphon who receives Thucydides' most positive verdict after Themistocles, Hermocrates and Pericles, although his appearances in the remaining part of the narrative are limited to just one occasion. As Thucydides' work was left unfinished, he may have envisaged a larger role for Antiphon in the parts that were left unwritten. This does not seem likely, however, given Thucydides' indication that Antiphon played a spin-doctor's role behind the scenes while he avoided as best he could a more visible role in the political arena (8.68.1) and in this sense behaved differently from Phrynichus and Theramenes. Moreover, if we agree with the analysis of Westlake, Thucydides did not sympathise with Antiphon's political views.[35] Why, then, did Thucydides praise his character in such generous terms? Possibly, intellectual affinities played a role. Thucydides recommends Antiphon's great intellect which was feared by many (8.68.1) and ends his judgement with a reference to his famous oratorical performance after the war when he was charged by a democratic court. In a similar way to his last words on Nicias, he uses the Herodotean formula "the best up to my time", indicative of personal admiration:

> αὐτὸς … ἄριστα φαίνεται τῶν μέχρι ἐμοῦ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τούτων αἰτιαθείς, ὡς ξυγκατέστησε, θανάτου δίκην ἀπολογησάμενος.

> Antiphon was himself on trial for his life, charged with having helped to set up this government, his speech in his own defence seems to have been the best one ever made up to my time.

(8.68.2)

If Thucydides sympathised with Antiphon because of intellectual or oratorical affinities, although he rejected his political viewpoints, his judgement may be compared to Tacitus' analysis of the oratorical talents of emperor Tiberius (*Annals* 13.3) whose ambiguity and careful choice of phrasing match his own style.[36] If this interpretation is correct, Antiphon's judgement is exceptional as it is the only case in which Thucydides does not subject his private view of an individual to an overall concern for his larger narrative design.

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35 Westlake 1968, 11–12.

36 Tiberius artem quoque callebat qua verba expenderet, tum validus sensibus aut consulto ambiguus (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3).