Thucydides and Force

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The Greek text of Thucydides throughout is based on Alberti's, the rest on the editions used in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Editions, commentaries, and translations are cited in the form indicated at the start of the bibliography. Unfortunately, it was only at a very late stage that I became aware of the excellent online resource available in the form of the Thucydides Lexicon at Lexeis.org. Discussions of word usage and frequency are thus based instead on a combination of Bétant's lexicon and the TLG. Entries in the former are sometimes cited.

Abstract

I argue that the representation of events in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* is framed by an ontology and a representation, not of power, but force: if power is something we possess, force possesses us. There are forces, plural, in the sense of the means by which power may be exercised and sustained (e.g. violence, charisma, debt). But of every such means the internal constitution, the ontological composition, is such that eventually it transforms not only what it is exerted upon, but what exerts it: the means expands, reproduces, and grows ascendant. That is force, singular. By force I do not mean some higher will or thought that governs history like providence. Nor am I referring to any static nature or constant principle underlying change. Its sense is formal. Force is the process by which, in revealing itself to be different than it appeared, each individual means of subsistence, domination or enjoyment changes us and sets new terms for our existence.

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Introduction

> *In a constantly revolving circle everything is simultaneously a point of departure and a point of return.*
>
> Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 2.*

> *A bunch of wood catches fire. The flame keeps going until it destroys what causes it.*
>
> Simone Weil, *Notebooks.*

Human beings for Thucydides are not self-sufficient or closed entities: they must live together and inhabit a world that is part of them and by which they are encompassed. That is the world of force. Force is the assemblage of processes by which each thing is exerted, exhausted, and transformed. We often speak of human relations using a vocabulary of power. But power depends on the exercise of an instrument or means. This dependence on a means is power's limit. No means is identical with itself: rather, it is a medium in which conflicting processes and intentions are brought together. The equation of power becomes imbalanced through the natural reconstitution of its elements. The tyrant Hippias of Athens rules and wins consent by being accessible to the people. His vulnerability leaves him open to attack. Surviving an assault by chance, he becomes distant and repressive, thus despised and overthrown. For generations Sparta is engulfed by civil war. It emerges by imposing the strictest customs on its people and only allowing seldom outer contact. In this way it develops the most stable and powerful community in Greece, but against the Athenians its stability proves inertia, traditions weakness. The subjection of human affairs to fortune is not because things are random, but because they are related in countless and unforeseeable respects. These relations only become manifest when we perceive a transformation has taken place.

I argue that the representation of events in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* is framed by an ontology and a representation, not of power, but force: if power is

something we possess, force possesses us. There are forces, plural, in the sense of the means by which power may be exercised and sustained (e.g. violence, charisma, debt). But of every such means the internal constitution, the ontological composition, is such that eventually it transforms not only what it is exerted upon, but what exerts it: the means expands, reproduces, and grows ascendant. That is force, singular. By force I do not mean some higher will or thought that governs history like providence. Nor am I referring to any static nature or constant principle underlying change. Its sense is formal: force is the process by which, in revealing itself to be different than it appeared, each individual means of subsistence, domination or enjoyment changes us and sets new terms for our existence.

The concept of force is vertical in the sense that it arises at every stage, so to speak, from the bottom floor of individual experience to the top one of great and sweeping phenomena. It is also, and importantly, a mode of understanding the position of individuals in a collective: how their attitudes and horizons are shaped by the choices of the past and the collective ideals and struggles of the present. Under the umbrella of force, the discussion here addresses roughly three layers of historical cause or significance: the natural, sociological, and psychological. The first and third of these are not unusual in Thucydidean scholarship, but the second is, and is therefore part of the contribution made here. The sociological, in Thucydidean terms, has roughly two layers. First: objective social processes and conditions have historical force, and sometimes it can even meaningfully be said that systems act through people. Second: people's values, and even their basic coordinates of sense, are largely constructions of society. Thus they are often tied to particular social formations and arrangements of power, or may be used or subverted like weapons in any situation where people's wills conflict.

Lastly, force has to do with the way things turn out: the form of their existence in time, a two-way ladder between necessity and vitality. In our dealings with the world force breaks the illusion of the illusory. It is the ephemeral stuff of realisation, experience, desire. Against it there can be no turning to any sort of idealism that takes comfort in diminishing the authenticity of the fatal. We turn and discover ourselves buoyed by force, beaten down and ripped apart by it, bound to earth by it. In these terms I conceive and argue for an understanding of Thucydides' intellectual project as an effort to think through paradigmatic events, with their relationship to each other and to larger entities and progressions, in terms of existential questions about what the world is and what it means to inhabit and share the world for human beings. In the following sections I situate my reading against the trends of existing scholarship; outline the methodology used here, contextualising my approach in terms of the ancient Greek context; and finally, summarise the contents of each chapter.

Genre and Ways of Reading

In his essay 'A Post-Modernist Thucydides?' Connor wrote that "the problem of Thucydides' attitudes and judgements appears to have replaced the composition problem as the Thucydidean question."[1] It is ironic that Connor himself in his later monograph, according to Rood, was the one who "made questions like 'Did Thucydides approve of Perikles?' or 'What was Thucydides' judgement of Nikias?' seem too narrow."[2] What Connor successfully brought out was the contingency and multi-sidedness of things and people as represented in the *Peloponnesian War.* Even if this were not so, the search for authorial attitudes is

[1] Connor 1977A, 295.

[2] Rood 1998, 23 (in reference to Connor 1984). I will argue likewise in Chapter 5 that we should be less interested in whether Thucydides believed this or that regime to be up to a particular moment than his broader analysis of the transcendent political realities to which he shows they are all subject.

inherently based on a simplistic notion of the self, particularly the writing self. "A book," writes Proust, "is the product of a different self than the one that we show in our behaviours, in society, in our vices."[3] One could say that a book is not a self at all: it is instead a thought, a product of a self. Connor's two problems of attitude and composition, in their original framing, both arise from the error of equating items in the text with capricious and idiosyncratic (and in this case, it should be stressed, virtually unknown) elements of the author's life-story.

But this conflation affects scholars in other areas too. There is a common tendency to find in Thucydides' narrative a sermon: for example, the message that human affairs should be approached with a kind of disembodied intelligence, one with its facts straight, one that knows its history, indeed an intelligence not unlike Thucydides' own.[4] It is perhaps unfair to be suspicious that this moral lesson aligns closely with the interests and mission of a historian in the modern academy. More importantly these scholars conflate the nature and disposition of an object, the *Peloponnesian War,* with those of its creator and reader. As *logos,* the *Peloponnesian War* is an intellectual object or artifact: it evokes feelings but does not itself have them. Even where it does cause an affective response or seem to take on a certain tone, this is part of a broader representation that invariably limits the reach of emotions by placing them in some sort of context.[5] For the human being who writes, as opposed to the textual result, *logos* cannot be separated from everything else – one may have the sensation of working "arduously" (cf. 1.22.3: ἐπιπόνως) and not without despair in the face of difficulties, as well as satisfaction (cf. 1.22.4: ἀρκούντως) when the task is finally complete. The intellectual act is always only the surface on a great swell of

[3] Proust 1971, 221-2: "*Un livre est le produit d'un autre moi que celui que nous manifestons dans nos habitudes, dans la société, dans nos vices*."
[4] E.g. Schneider 1974, 87-94; Rawlings 1981, 90-117; Farrar 1988, 126-91 (esp. 144-52); Meyer 2008; Grethlein 2010, 214-20.
[5] In de Romilly (1956) this observation is programmatic.

experience, but to conflate this with its product is an error. *Logos,* as Diodotus explains (3.42.2 – see p. 248) is the faculty for dealing with what is neither present nor obvious; so that even when it seems "all-powerful" (4.108.4: αὐτοκράτορι), and perhaps at such moments more than any other, it is the servant of a will and a desire. Conversely, the so-called irrational aspect of human beings, as I shall observe several times throughout these chapters, may be tied up with a perfectly reasonable perception of one's circumstance and calculation of possibilities. In any specific case, from the retrospective position of the (re)reader, it may be clear of what the truth consists, or how and why this action had that consequence. But an important theme of this text is how little can be known at first-hand. In life, the pressures of reality and immediacy make the sermon of the historian just that, talk – how are we supposed to live the way it preaches? Are we certain the attempt would not destroy us?

The problem of abstraction equally affects the inverse reading: for example, Stahl's claim that the *Peloponnesian War* demonstrates how history is not "under rational control," and clarity of human beings merely a "supposed clarity" as they act for reasons other than what they think.[6] Like many interpreters, Stahl reduces historical causation in the *Peloponnesian War* to the level of psychology and human nature, while ignoring sociology or the way that collective truths, identities, desires, and structures organise the field of personal calculation and historical action. At this level, without denying Stahl's point that the clarity of the one who acts is specious, it may be possible to identify a sort of rationality in people's behaviours. Stahl does not go beyond an understanding of rationality which has to do with people's assessment of likely outcomes and how these may affect their individual interests. But we may choose instead to see the rational logic of a social system, which conditions people's understanding of their

[6] Stahl 2003, 10.

choices. This systemic definition of rationality can be applied also to nature. Nature's law is subversion ("that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation"): settlement breeds expansion and conflict (e.g. 2.102.2-6), poverty security (1.2.5), abundance weakness (1.2.4).[7] In this regard, claims about the irrationality of history are either too narrow in their perspective of what counts as rational, or too sweeping since they ignore the generative and progressive aspect of the real.

The question of what knowledge or lesson is at stake in the *Peloponnesian War* is often framed in terms of the more marketable one of genre. At the turn of this century, debates about genre in Thucydides centred on efforts to delineate or reconcile history and literature, drawing from a broader crisis in the concept of history precipitated by the (re)discovery of rhetoric.[8] 'History' in this debate stood for the truth-value of the work's contents and the sincerity and rigour of the author in developing them; 'literature' for the emotional and the decorative, and by extension the risk of forgery and manipulation. Some of the most respected work in the field addressed itself to this problem by applying the principles of narratology. First introduced as a means of challenging aspects of Thucydides' historical construction, narratology became the ground of a rearguard action on the side of 'Thucydides-as-history:' the literary construction and motifs of the *Peloponnesian War* were rehabilitated as a means of guiding the reader through an experience and interpretation of history.[9] The paradigm of the literary Thucydides was thus incorporated into the historian.

[7] Beckett 1978, 1.

[8] Connor 1977A surveys the emergence of the conflict. See also Dover 2009. On the more general dispute see White 1984, 1987; Ankersmit 2001.

[9] Above all Rood 1998, who combines narratology as developed by Genette (1972, 1983, 1997, 1999) and Bal (1981, 1999), with a roughly phenomenological concept of historical understanding based on Mink (1987), Ricoeur (1990), and to a lesser extent Veyne (1984). See also Greenwood 2006 (who is not a card-carrying narratologist and retains a sense of narrative construction as manipulation); the essays in

More recently in its place has emerged the challenge of Thucydides the philosopher or political theorist.[10] It is an amalgamation of four strands in contemporary scholarship. First, the influence of political science and philosophy departments the United States, where Thucydides has been placed alongside Plato and Aristotle as a thinker of issues such as democracy and governance.[11] Second, the celebrated twentieth-century books of Connor and Stahl emphasising the complex and tragic dimensions of the work.[12] Third, an increasing tendency to read Presocratic influences into Thucydides.[13] Fourth, a more general readiness to see hybridity of genre in Greek texts: we now have books treating Herodotus as a Presocratic, tragedy as philosophy, Plato as a stylist, Plato as a political activist, the Presocratic philosophers as poets.[14] This last trend is to be welcomed inasmuch as generic distinctions are anachronistic, but should be approached with caution insofar as genres delineate between varieties of knowledge and ways of reading whose differences should not be glossed over.[15]

Grethlein and Krebs (eds 2012) and Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki (eds 2013). In a sense these all amount to a renewal of de Romilly (1956). Grethlein has recently sought to develop a more embodied and experiential sort of narratology (see 2015, et al. eds 2020, 2023) in a manner principally consistent with Rood's earlier formulation, though the latter's response has been cautious (Rood 2022). For the earlier use of narratology as historical criticism see Hornblower 1994A.

[10] On the philosophical Thucydides see especially Ober 2006; Shankse 2007; the essays in Thauer and Wendt (eds) 2016A and 2016B; Ponchon 2017; Müller 2022. The shift can be observed by examining the section-headings of the recent Oxford and Cambridge companion-volumes. The *Oxford Handbook* (Balot et al. eds 2017) contains 'Thucydides as Historian,' 'Thucydidean Historiography,' 'Thucydides and Political Theory,' and 'Contexts and Ancient Reception of Thucydidean Historiography.' The *Cambridge Companion* (Low ed. 2023) contains 'Context and Methods,' 'Themes and Content,' and 'After Thucydides.' By contrast, in the earlier Brill companion (Rengakos and Tsakmakis eds 2006), the history/literature debate is central: 'Author Contexts, Ideas,' 'The Art of Thucydides,' 'Wie Es Eigentlich Gewesen?' and 'After Thucydides.'

[11] Examples: Strauss 1964; Farrar 1988; Orwin 1994; Ober 1996; Crane 1998; Monoson and Loriaux 1998; Zumbrunnen 2008; Balot 2014; Nichols 2015.

[12] Connor 1984; Stahl 2003.

[13] Hussey 1985; Golfin 2007; Parmeggiani 2018A; Ponchon 2019; Joho 2021; Müller 2022. Hammond (1952, 139) noted parallels between the language and argumentative structure of Thucydides Book 1 and Melissus.

[14] Respectively: K. S. Kingsley 2024; Billings 2021; Schofield 2023; Allen 2013; Mackenzie 2021.

[15] Likewise, although it is certainly true that "the distinction between Thucydides as literature and Thucydides as history would have meant nothing to Thucydides himself" (Rood 1998, 4), a great deal of conceptual work is required before it is able to mean nothing to us.

If the results of such work so far have not entirely satisfying, this has partly to do with their excessive attachment to previous frameworks and binaries, partly with an inadequate sense of how the so-called philosophical and historical aspects of Thucydides might fit together.[16] Philosophical readers have tended to demarcate themselves by approaching the *Peloponnesian War* with general, as opposed to particular, questions in mind: what is a human being? How should society be organised? Morley describes the problem with their stance by contrasting 'universalist' mode of more philosophical interpretations, which abstracts from the contents of the text to develop "*Theory*" (perhaps even a theory of direct and present relevance), with the 'contextualist' mode associated with Thucydides-the-historian, which seeks "*Data*" about the events narrated.[17] The question posed by the relationship between philosophy and history is thus equivalent to that of the particular and the general: a concentration on the general inevitably distorts and effaces the particular, while prioritising the particular means losing or dishonestly effacing the sense afforded by its relationship with the general.

In this regard, the problem of how to integrate the historian with the philosopher resembles the earlier one of how to reconcile history and literature. Scholars have in each case found themselves faced with a boundary imposed as a structuring principle of historical knowledge, at least in its modern form of a disciplined reconstruction of the past. With the literary Thucydides, the 'outside' of rhetoric – those inherent aspects of language and its products that are not reducible to transparent signification – which had been banished to the literary as a means of preserving the integrity of the historical, was revealed as 'inside,' even self-consciously so for the ancient Greek historian.[18] The rise of the philosophical

[16] See Rood's reviews of Shanske (2008) and Ponchon (2019 – cf. lxxiv: "For all the strengths of Ponchon's work, the overall Thucydides that emerges does seem rather familiar").
[17] Morley 2016 (quoted from 28, his italics).
[18] Cf. Cassin 1995, 9 (on the similar boundary-relationship between sophistry and philosophy). See also Cassin 2014 (31: "sophistical doctrine obliges philosophy to reflect on itself").

Thucydides should force us to rethink another of the constitutive boundaries of historical knowledge, what Simmel labelled "nomological."[19]

The modern discipline of history in effect excludes the formulation of general laws or principles as the preserve of philosophy at best, historicism and superstition at worst.[20] A corollary of this point is that traditionally history delineates its subject within the exclusively human; nature and the universe are beyond its scope.[21] It would be very eccentric for a modern historical encyclopaedia to begin with observations such as those of Diodorus the Sicilian: "[They say] the initial state of things was that the earth and heaven were a single entity."(Diod. Sic. 1.7.1: Κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῶν ὅλων σύστασιν μίαν ἔχειν ἰδέαν οὐρανόν τε καὶ γῆν.) Conversely, modern Anglo-American philosophy often tends to define its subject as entirely universal rather than particular, based on the same flawed conflation of the universal with the unchanging, such that a genuinely philosophical insight must be proven to hold the same sort of uniform validity as a mathematical statement that brooks no exceptions. Indeed, the notions of a world that is unfathomably multiform and shifting, and an understanding that must be constant if it is worth the name, are opposites that rely for their existence on the boundary delineated by the other. For some practising historians, this dichotomy provides the justification for their discipline's superiority. However implicitly, they affirm a sort of scientistic nominalism that characterises the world as an empty stream of dissolute data

[19] Simmel 1977, 40.

[20] Connor 1984, 250: "Those who are not content with the limits of history as a form of literature and as a mode of thought will always be dissatisfied with such restraint and either reject Thucydides' work or seek to impose upon it grander constructions."

[21] Cf. Strasburger 1982, 2.527. Strasburger tells a story of teleological development starting with Greek myth and Homer, culminating in the birth of history more or less in its modern form with Thucydides. He contrasts Herodotus and Thucydides, "through whose eyes we see [respectively] the older and the younger epoch" (2.543: "*durch deren Augen wir die ältere und die jüngere Zeit sehen*"). My point in citing these words of Strasburger is not to argue with a ghost but to highlight the extent to which outdated notions survive as the uninterrogated bases of scholarly assumptions.

upon which the mind sketches correlations and imposes causal structures: data are essential, theories contingent.[22]

As I believe the dichotomy to be neither useful nor true, I do not aim here to arrive at a philosophical Thucydides any more than a historical Thucydides, but rather to develop a characterisation of the work that transcends this distinction by reframing the relationship between historical and philosophical understanding. For adherents to the distinction in its current form the problem is not simply that Thucydides, with all his generalisations, clearly does not perceive himself as constrained in the same manner.[23] Nor that questions too broadly formulated take us far from the text, while equally too rigorous an eschewal of generalisation – too much shirking back from the risk of hazarding an insight – may leave us with nothing but empty morals such as 'know your history.' Chiefly the problem is that all forms of historical narrative and explanation already incorporate some form of nomological understanding. Rood writes that "to see Thucydides' *History* as a fragmented and precise (or imprecise) assembly of facts is to ignore its interpretative function, its striving to explain what happened, and what might happen."[24] All historical literature has this interpretive function, however implicitly – that is not entirely my point. My point is that this interpretive function necessarily involves assumptions and speculations about historical reality. These may be very elaborate in some cases, rudimentary in others. They may not necessarily be worked out of the events themselves, which is to say that they are not always original and may serve, just like literary or rhetorical modes, as little more than inheritances or markers of an ideological moment. For Polybius, Rome's destiny is tied to its character (Polyb.

[22] Morley's (2016) use of 'data' and 'theory' (above) is telling in this regard. So too is the way he sums up his argument as a (37) "traditional historians' lament that "it's much more complicated than it looks"."
[23] I argue this directly with an analysis of 1.22.4 in Chapter 2 (pp. 90-8).
[24] Rood 1998, 5.

1.1.5); for Zosimus, no human act or being can outrun what the stars and God ordain (Zos. 1.1.1-2). These authors are from different times, and that fact comes through in the basic nomological premises of their work, which in turn are each grounded in a vision of the link between history and nature. Recent thinkers have appropriated Heideggerian concepts such as temporality and historicity in an effort to understand how historical representations may be informed by different constitutions of time.[25] The methodological choice of a great modern historian like Fernand Braudel to choose a place (the Mediterranean), or an economic structure (Capitalism), and then chart its course over a timeline of centuries in which individuals do not figure more than briefly, requires and develops a committed and sophisticated stance on the nature of the world in which history takes place.[26] Equally this choice allows Braudel in various ways to refine and challenge the conclusions of less historically-grounded, more theoretical studies of these same phenomena, as with his revisions of Marx's account of the rise of capitalism.

In the modern academic tradition this ontological or world-disclosing aspect of historical knowledge is often seen as something of a residual effect and, where too pronounced, a mark perhaps of the author's idiosyncrasies and failings. But at least for Herodotus and Thucydides it was the other way around, and the examination of past events and historical processes was conceived as a way of understanding the world that pervades and transcends them, including the superhuman world. In this sense, once again as with the earlier confrontation between history and rhetoric, to bring the issue of history and philosophy to bear on the ancient Greek historians will eventually lead us to recognise an aspect of their work that was suppressed in the modern delineation of history and

[25] See for example Koselleck 2004, 2018; Hartog 2015; the essays collected in Lianeri (ed. 2011); Kennedy 2024.
[26] See Braudel 1972-3, 1983 (he lays out and justifies his position in Braudel 1958).

philosophy as separate disciplines. The generality of sense of the word *historia*, and of the contents of Herodotus' *Histories*, need hardly be stressed. In Thucydides *historia* does not appear: instead of 'history,' 'enquiries,' or even 'results,' we are promised "the war" (1.1.1).[27] The specificity of the subject means that perhaps more than with Herodotus it is tempting to believe Thucydides does not aim at anything more than to recount these great events. But the work almost immediately refutes this impression by placing the war in the context of all human history (1.2-21). These chapters, the statement of mission (1.22.4), and its structural and thematic priorities which I will elaborate, all point to a way of reading the war as representative or metonymic of the world according to Thucydides.[28] The delineation of the war as a subject does not constitute a boundary, but a threshold.

In this regard, the two questions of earlier scholarship, mentioned by Connor in the essay I quoted at the start of this section, are sides of a single issue: the immediate attitudes and judgements of the author, whatever they might have been, are sublimated in a composition that transcends them in a larger representation of the world. It is, however, a property of this world to be split between irreconcilable points of view, and for each perspective or entity it contains to be inconsistent, fragmented, and changing. Not, therefore, the day-to-day opinions and work practices of Thucydides, but the elusive and kaleidoscopic composition that results. Not the psychology of the author, but the ontology of the work. The historical form incorporates a sense of time that destabilises any straightforward notion of what is – if the *Peloponnesian War* provides a way of thinking about the world, it is a means of doing so through

[27] In an effort to follow this aspect of Thucydides, I refer to the *Peloponnesian War* throughout instead of the *History*. This matches the title of Hammond's Oxford World Classics translation (2009). The title of Mynott's recent translation, *The War of the Peloponnesians and Athenians* (2013) is more accurate, but more awkward.

[28] Shanske (2007, 8-12) speaks of Thucydides "founding" a world.

time – necessitating a more elaborate and ambivalent construction. This is what we find explored for example in Peter Handke's literary response to Thucydides, a group of prose-poems depicting an almost stream-of-consciousness series of individual perceptions, mostly of change and processes in the natural and physical environment.[29] The challenge here is to replicate something like Handke's move in a scholarly form: to develop a Thucydidean picture of the world which accommodates both the order and the inscrutability of change. From a conceptual point of view, the problem of change is that it erodes the principle of identity: what changes is non-identical with itself. To grasp the unity of a changing concept therefore requires a methodology suitable to the task redrawing it in the shape with which Thucydides himself represents it in the narrative.[30]

Dialectical Interpretation

I therefore propose a dialectical methodology. The word 'dialectic' encompasses multiple and varied traditions in both ancient and modern thought, whose present reputations are mixed.[31] Modern dialectical philosophy is sometimes reduced, even by its admirers, to a schematic process of developing syntheses from antitheses. It will become obvious that I do not mean any such thing here. In ancient times the origin of dialectic as a mode of philosophical argumentation was disputed.[32] The Greek verb διαλέγεσθαι simply meant conversation or discussion; later, including in the text of Thucydides, it meant something like

[29] Handke 1990 (see also Morley 2012).
[30] The post-Aristotelian basis of modern Anglo-American philosophy and social science makes them inadequate in this regard. Cf. Polanyi (2001, 35): "Nowhere has liberal philosophy failed so conspicuously as in its understanding of the problem of change."
[31] Jameson 2009, 3: "Innumerable introductions to the dialectic have been written, although the tempo seems to be slowing down today."
[32] See Fink 2012, 2n3.

'debate' or 'intellectual dialogue.'[33] In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle it became formalised as a mode of intellectual discussion. Although superficially it refers to a Socratic-style method of doing philosophy via questions and answers, for Plato himself dialectic became a (somewhat) systematic methodology and – especially in the so-called later dialogues – something of an ontology.[34] The scholarly study of Platonic dialectic is essentially concerned with the problem of how to sort through these overlapping definitional layers. In the *Republic* Socrates appears to represent "dialectic" (τὸ διαλέγεσθαι) as a path of mystical ascent towards the good (509a-11e, 532a-e).[35] The so-called later works tend to use the more periphrastic expression "the power [or ability – faculty?] of dialectic" (ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις).[36] In the *Philebus* the power of dialectic becomes a way of apprehending being (Pl. *Phlb*. 57e-8a):

> ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις (…) τὴν γὰρ περὶ τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ ὄντως καὶ τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἀεὶ πεφυκὸς πάντως ἔγωγε οἶμαι ἡγεῖσθαι σύμπαντας ὅσοις νοῦ καὶ σμικρὸν προσήρτηται μακρῷ ἀληθεστάτην εἶναι γνῶσιν.
>
> The power of dialectic (…) I at least am absolutely convinced that everyone – even those who are endowed with a small intellect – would consider what is concerned with being and what really exists and is always of the same nature to be by far the truest form of understanding.

[33] On semantics see Sichirollo 1966, 19-33. She notes (32) that Thucydides uses it with the more specific meaning (5.59.5, 8.93.2).

[34] Many studies of dialectic in Plato go wrong by (variously) interpreting the dialectic as solely a methodology and overlooking the pivot towards ontology in the *Republic* and so-called later works. Thus Denyer (2018, 42) "getting people to answer (…) questions."

[35] I say 'appears' partly because I do not think this is true. Broadie (2021) has recently claimed that the structure of the good, as represented by Plato in the *Republic*, is interrogative rather than hypothetical or substantive, so that rather than moving towards the good dialectic makes contact with it by utilising the good and being used by it: "a resource mobilized – without itself being an object of attention – in the process of exploring or contemplating something else" (40. For a very long list of scholars who prefer the 'ascent' view see 67n95). This fits well with the portrayal in later dialogues such as *Philebus* and *Parmenides* of dialectic as a kind of productive philosophical negation (see below).

[36] He also seems to have "invented" the term *dialektikē* – see Kahn 2013, 132.

This passage from the *Philebus* represents a fundamental paradox of dialectic in Plato: it seems to involve "both the format of question and answer and the concern of unchanging essences."[37] The problem posed by this paradox has to do with the relationship between dialectic as methodology in Plato and as ontology.[38] The solution must be to revise one's understanding of 'unchanging essence' so that, at least for us in the changing world, its form somehow incorporates an element of transformation.[39] This is clarified above all by Plato's *Parmenides,* probably the most significant text for the ancient theory and practice of dialectic, and an important influence on Hegel's thought.[40] Kahn states that the *Parmenides* "has some claim to be the most problematic item in the Platonic corpus."[41] But one thing it lays out very clearly is a procedure of dialectical thought with three stages: (1) Selecting or designating concepts (*Parm.* 135c-d: ῥίζεσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς (…) ἓν [135d] ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν),[42] (2) Examining the development of what follows from these concepts and their implications (*Parm.* 135e-6a: χρὴ (…) εἰ ἔστιν ἕκαστον ὑποτιθέμενον σκοπεῖν τὰ συμβαίνοντα ἐκ τῆς ὑποθέσεως), and then (3) Positing its contrary and repeating the process (*Parm.* 136a: καὶ εἰ μὴ ἔστι τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὑποτίθεσθαι). Schematic as this may appear, the effect of the procedure is almost purely negative: it is a method of assaulting whichever concept or theory was chosen at the outset. The dialogues

[37] Kahn 2013, 133.

[38] Compare Kahn (2013, 156): "how can dialectic (…) be applied to cosmology and the realm of Becoming without ceasing to take unchanging Being as its proper object."

[39] Thus Kahn's effort (2013) to get out of the problem by relying on a version of the phenomenal/noumenal distinction is less convincing than Broadie's (2021) to conceive a structure that can accommodate both aspects.

[40] *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 71 (tr. Miller 1977, 44): "Plato's *Parmenides* (surely the greatest artistic achievement of the ancient dialectic)." On the *Parmenides* and Hegel see Coltelluccio 2010. For comparison and contrast between ancient and modern dialectic see Sichirollo 1966; Gadamer 1976, 1980**.** Hegel had read Thucydides and regarded Pericles as the greatest statesman who had ever lived (see Banfi 2003, ix). On the influence of tragedy upon Hegel and his contemporaries see Billings 2014.

[41] Kahn 2013, 1.

[42] Cf. Rawlings (2010, 255) on the pattern whereby the Thucydidean narrator and several speakers each "reject a traditional way of observing and interpreting events in favour of an explicitly new means of analysis, one that depends upon the distillation of individual events and characteristics into general types." The narrative deployment of steps 2) and 3) will be shown in the succeeding chapters.

where Plato discusses dialectic in the most explicit and mysterious terms are the ones where he also presents it most clearly as an interrogative and anti-schematic mode of thought.

It is not a coincidence, moreover, that Plato's most sophisticated explications of dialectic are accompanied by some his closest engagements with his Eleatic predecessors.[43] Arguably the structured procedure of the *Parmenides* simply formalises an implicit way of working through ideas that unites a great many diverse genres of Greek literature and thought. A quick examination of fifth-century literature turns up a ubiquity of antithetical forms and a frequent emphasis on the unity of opposites.[44] In Thucydides, scholars have observed the use of antithesis at a variety of levels from syntax to narrative construction to the representation of his most significant characters and events.[45] In this regard, and in general, for any reconstruction of Thucydides' intellectual background the problem is an excess of partial affinities.[46] A thesis such as this might have claimed Thucydides to be a 'Heraclitan,' 'Parmenidean,' or simply 'Presocratic' author. I have not done so, in part because I feel there is always something arbitrary and restrictive about delimiting influences in this way. But mostly because I have preferred to foreground what most distinguishes the *Peloponnesian War*, including from the *Parmenides*, because I claim in this regard the work is sufficiently original and distinct. Here we do not have a philosophical argument

[43] Scholars such as Charrue (1978) and Austin (2007) have claimed that dialectic from Parmenides through Plato to Plotinus involves a procedure of systematic negation in some respects anticipating the tradition of negative theology.

[44] Cf. Denniston 1952, 70-7 (70: "It is characteristic of Greek thought to view an idea in the light of its opposite"); Finley 1967, 55-117. On dialectic in the Athenian drama see Billings 2021. On polarity and analogy in pre-Platonic thought see Lloyd 1966.

[45] See Monoson and Loriaux 1998. Cf. Rood (1998A, 267): "Thucydides' narrative, so alive to paradox."

[46] Cf. Thomas 2017, 568: "[It is] potentially misleading and difficult to talk of Thucydides' intellectual milieu, unless we agree that he is in, but not of, any one milieu." See also Thomas 2006. A spread of recent work has attempted to draw connections between the *Peloponnesian War* and the questions and doctrines of different Presocratic thinkers: Hussey 1985, Golfin 2007, Parmeggiani 2018A, Ponchon 2019, Joho 2021, Müller 2022. Hammond (1952, 139) sees parallels between the language and argumentative structure of Thucydides Book 1 and Melissus.

or a treatise that compares contraries. Instead, Thucydides embeds ideas in narrative or situational contexts, as well as a progression of time, that variously subvert or challenge any assertion which identifies any object or principle with itself. In Chapter 8 I discuss the opening debate between the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians (1.32-43, see p. 309ff.). There, although the arguments of the former have largely to do with expediency, the latter justice, the opening word of the former speech is 'right' or 'just' and the latter 'necessary' or 'expedient.' Elsewhere (as for example with the participants in the Melian Dialogue, discussed in Chapters 4 and 8) these subversions, rather than being nested in a situational context, may emerge over the course of the narrative, which conveys a notion of historical development as things naturally reveal their own self-contradictory aspect in time.[47]

The importance given to time is a commonality between Thucydides and modern dialectical philosophy: Jung has argued that both Thucydides and Hegel were influenced in this regard by Classical tragedy.[48] In any case, Thucydides and the modern dialectical tradition both take the subversive and revelatory course of time as the ground of their representations of reality. A fundamental critique of both standard philosophical and ordinary common-sense thought by modern dialectical philosophy is that these consider their own concepts as if they were timeless, whereas in truth every concept has a history, by which it transforms and what is latent in its meaning becomes patent. Dialectic in the modern sense is therefore not simply a method of judging propositions or of training oneself to think, but an ontology of the concept through the analysis of its unfolding and inevitable, albeit inadvertent, transformation through time. Oppositions are

[47] Cf. Jameson (2010, 3): "to inscribe time and change in our concepts themselves, and to show how some all-too-human longing for timelessness obscured the inadequacy of our mental categories and filtered out the glare of our contradictions as such."
[48] Jung 1991.

fundamental for dialectic not in the sense of structuralist binaries, nor of any reasoning-from-antitheses-to-synthesis, but because dialectical thought posits that every truth in some sense relies on its own negation. Opposites can teach us that the exclusions or boundaries that delineate a phenomenon or concept must not be taken at their word, as in fact each thing is implicated in what it excludes.[49] The dualities of dialectic have less to do with the unity of opposites than the shifting and divided nature of the one. It is in that sense that the dialectical method of reading in what follows is conceived, not as a way of anachronistically bringing two traditions together, but of restoring an important aspect of the world in this text.

Dialectic, Potentiality, and Force

A common story about ancient dialectic is that Plato gradually developed the practice as a mode of philosophical reasoning that was formalised and transcended by its incorporation into Aristotle's logical system.[50] But Aristotle's orientation is more open than is sometimes believed.[51] Dialectical or no, a line from the *Physics* may serve usefully to encapsulate what this thesis argues. Aristotle defines *kinēsis* (movement or change) as follows (*Phys.* 3.1 = 201a10f.):

> ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια ᾗ τοιοῦτον κίνησις ἐστιν.

[49] Cf. Adorno (2004, 5): "Dialectics is the consistent sense of non-identity."
[50] On this "traditional view" see Hamlyn 1990, 465. On the development of dialectic up to Aristotle see the essays in Fink (ed.) 2012 and in Gourinat and Lemaire (eds) 2016. For a recent restatement of the point see Barnes 2016 in that volume. On Aristotle's dialectic in general see Evans 1977 (37: "For Plato, the dialectician and the philosopher are identical, whereas Aristotle, in the *Topics* no less than in the *Metaphysics,* rejects this identification" although [50] "Aristotle preserves the Platonic idea of dialectic as unrestricted in its scope"); Hamlyn 1990; and the volumes already cited.
See the *Topics* (esp. Book 1) for Aristotle's explicit treatment of dialectic (cf. Evans 1977, 1: "Aristotle's official presentation of the theory of dialectic"), which by the Middle Ages had become formalised in education as one of the seven liberal arts (Curtius 1953, 37).
[51] See Rose 1996, 8; Agamben 2015A.

The realisation of being in potentiality as such is change.

"Uncompromisingly, this means that change is real, as real as anything else actual is real" but "the definition is obscure in both its formulations, and the examples [which follow in the text] do nothing to make it clearer."[52] The line has provoked debate.[53] But what concerns me here is the relationship it draws between potential and actual being.[54] It is illuminating to read the central noun, *entelecheia,* in terms of its etymology (*en* + *telos* + *echein,* with *entelēs* a common adjective) – that is, *in* + *end* + *have,* with the adjective meaning something like complete or perfect.[55] The word can thus have a double sense of something that reaches its end and something that contains its end. The passage may be paired with Aristotle's earlier definition of nature (*physis*) as an object's principle of change (3.1 = 200b), and Byrne refers to how "change always takes place in a substratum that is already something in its own right."[56] But applying the metaphor of layers or *strata* obscures the point by positing changing actuality and fixed potential as distinct entities, risking tautology because potential is thus defined purely in terms of itself (change is the potentiality of potential),[57] or question-begging because the relation between potentiality and actuality is not explained (change is the actuality of potential). I prefer to think of a fold across which being is continuous and one-sided like a mobius strip. The difference

[52] Waterlow 1982, respectively 109 and 112.
[53] See Kosman 1969; Waterlow 1982, 93-131; Graham 1999; Heinaman 1994; Roark 2011, 63-7; Byrne 2018.
[54] The problem continued to provoke discussion much later (e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.5) – by those who like Aristotle's predecessors grappled with the issue of "how the concept of change could invoke 'not-being' without thereby consigning itself to its own non-being and absurdity" (Waterlow 1982, 109).
[55] Lang 1998, 57: "the crucial point rests on the relation between the potential and the actual such that the potential is actualized, i.e. becomes actual (…) for Aristotle, an account of motion is nothing other than an account of the relation between what is potential and what is actual."
[56] Byrne 2018, 15.
[57] So claims Heinaman 1994. His argument depends on treating *entelecheia* as identical in meaning to *enargeia.* He cites many similar passages but insufficiently attends to the immediate context of the passage 201a, where Aristotle's elaboration shows that he is not making a tautology. See also Waterlow 1982, 113n16 on the distinction.

between potential and actual is in some sense illusory because potentiality is a quality of actuality and the latter, insofar as it results from change, is only realised according to its potential. Conversely, potential being is made manifest only by its appearance in actual being, but exceeds it so that actual being is always arguably inferior.[58] Scholars have accused Aristotle of circularity, but his point is that in change (we would say 'in time' – a word he specifically uses for the *measurement* of change) potential and actual are each only partial and slanted conceptions of a single process.[59]

In the *Peloponnesian War* likewise the events of the narrative unfold as historical entities reveal their nature by a process of subversion. This does not mean that as the narrative progresses a false meaning is displaced by a true one: rather it is that each thing ends up defined fundamentally as an ambiguity or a relationship between different meanings. For example, Allison writes that "Thucydides establishes the importance of a navy as a weapon of power against [the] city as a reservoir of power, the one dynamic, the other solid and unmoving."[60] More precisely Allison's point could be taken to refer to the city walls. Ships and walls are mysteriously connected already in the oracle of the wooden wall reported by Herodotus (Hdt. 7.140-4). For Thucydides, if walls permit the Athenians' naval empire to grow (1.93), it is ships that allow the city to bury itself behind walls (1.143). The Athenian strategy is not one of these two but both. In Book 8, after the oligarchic coup in Athens, the city behind the walls and the one at sea will become divided. Ships and walls are thus ultimately caught up in the work's other oppositions such as that between movement and rest or expansion and

[58] Cf. Graham 1999, 61: "potentiality is essentially incomplete." On the relation of actuality and possibility cf. Berardi 2017.
[59] The definition of change, however, is not circular: see Waterlow 1982, 112-5. On the difference between time and motion for Aristotle see Roark 2011, 41-62.
[60] Allison 2005, 10.

rootedness.[61] In their case what might have appeared to hold some power, a resource to be relied upon, turns out to be a site of interacting forces that shape and trap people, and of which now one, now the other is ascendant. There is no power as such in ships or walls, only potential. Allison has sought to understand power in Thucydides by equating it with the term *paraskeuē,* a word that can be defined as the means at one's disposal: whether a quantity of fighting-age men, military resources, or money. "*Paraskeuē,*" she writes," preparedness, the possession of it and the exertion of it, is precisely what it is to be powerful. *Dynamis* is purely an abstraction in the *History* and denotes the capability of carrying out an action."[62] Later she writes (and this is the main thesis of her book), "to be successful *paraskeuē* must contain a *logos* (…) [it] is not simply a substitute for *ergon.*"[63] Allison thus shows how a superficial notion of *paraskeuē* as an amassed quantity of materials and men is displaced in the text by a more profound one encompassing the authority under which they are gathered and the ends toward which they are directed. But even this, I argue, must be understood in terms of how these ends are thwarted and surpassed by the very means deployed in their service. The *logos*-aspect of power is neither self-consistent nor reducible to the intentions of whoever wields power in its material form.

It is thus no coincidence, despite Allison's scepticism, that Aristotle's definition above uses *dynamis,* a word encompassing both possibility and power that for him denotes an entire field of being.[64] In Thucydides the noun appears 138 times.

[61] I discuss this in more depth in Chapters 2 and 4.
[62] Allison 1989, 5.
[63] *Ibid.* 48.
[64] On *dynamis* in Aristotle see Lefebvre 2018, who traces the concept from its Homeric origins. He elucidates two senses of the term distinguished by Aristotle, roughly parallel to the distinction between force and power above. The first is an ontological principle that governs beside the actual. The second is a property of a given substance it does not possess, or an action it does not perform, but of which it is capable.

The Greek word is of extremely broad scope encompassing everything from personal strength or talent to political power to natural forces.[65] Its meaning can range from someone's bodily strength or health (2.49), to their individual qualities or character (1.138.3), to a whole state or people in the archaic English sense of 'a power' (1.2.5), to the full range and quantity of resources possessed by that people (1.11.1).[66] Thucydides often uses *dynamis* periphrastically in expressions such as "foremost in *dynamis*" (1.9.1: δυνάμει προύχων), "in the same *dynamis*" (5.105.2: ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ δυνάμει), "from their current *dynamis*" (6.102.4: ἀπὸ τῆς παρούσης σφίσι δυνάμεως).[67] In these cases the nuance implies less the subject's possession of a quantity than their condition in relation to a force or entity. What Allison finds uncomfortable about the word is in fact its strength, namely that it treats human and political power as but one form of something much broader and more complex. This ontological representation of the reality in which the acquisition and loss of power takes place is what the abstraction of *dynamis* points to. In what follows, I emphasise how much the possession of a power can make one become possessed by the dynamics inherent to what one has: in the examples of walls and ships above, it is ultimately not so much that they confer power as that people exploit and eventually become constrained by the possibilities inherent to both ships and walls as a medium. For this reason, I argue that the Thucydidean terms would be to think not of power as an abstract quantity that can be owned and stored like treasure, but of every means of power as a force that one wields always with a certain risk (Chapters 4, 7 and 8), and to which one acts by making oneself subject at every degree of scale (Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6).

[65] Lefebvre (2018, 31) cites the long LSJ list and adds to it.
[66] Bétant gives a longer analysis of its range (1.275-81).
[67] These examples are all from passages discussed in what follows. I take this as a further example of the ascendancy of abstract terms in Thucydides as discussed for example in Macleod 1983, 123-39; Allison 1997; Joho 2022.

In this regard, just as Allison's philological analysis of *paraskeuē* ultimately led her to a conclusion beyond the limits of philological interpretation, since it required an analysis of change and of patterns and relations in the narrative, a thematic study of force in Thucydides cannot begin and end with a philological analysis of the word *dynamis.* Instead it must break open the dynamics – natural forces, sociological pressures, individual choices – that go into this word and every other Thucydidean synonym for power. [68] In his study of Aristotle's concept of *dynamis*, Lefebvre argues that the notion of power as force, associated with action, is an anachronism which imports Latin associations into the Greek.[69] I use the term force not for its mechanical sense of mass multiplied by acceleration, but in part for its very different associations of violence, substance, impact. The sense of force as something vital, something we both suffer and enjoy, should not be divorced from a more mechanical description of its logic. Thucydides aims to represent both: suffering and the will to live, necessity and the order of truth, on the hinge between the human being and the human life.[70]

Chapter Summaries

[68] Woodhead (1970, 108) names the "five essential elements" of Athenian power as "*kratos, dynamis, gnome* [sic]*, periousia, and tharsos.*" *Kratos* means something like domination, *periousia* financial wealth. *Gnōmē* (reason or judgement) is discussed in Chapter 7; *andreia,* a synonym of *tharsos* (courage), is discussed in Chapter 6. In enumerating these Woodhead conceives power as a sort of personal quality of the Athenians.

[69] Lefebvre 2018, 28-30.

[70] Here I wish to say something about the how the title and argument of the thesis relates to two other works. Late in the day I was alerted to the existence of Battistini's *Thucydide L'Athénien: Le Poème de la Force* (Battistini 2013). An introduction for general readers rather than a scholarly monograph, Battistini's book understandably tends to summarise rather than claim and argue. Nevertheless, in identifying force as the work's overarching principle he intends, as I do not, to echo what the Athenians say in the Melian Dialogue at 5.105.2 (see p. 176-7 of this thesis). Battistini's title alludes directly, as mine does indirectly, to a writer by whom I have been greatly influenced: Simone Weil, and in particular her essay '*L'Iliade,* ou *Le Poème de la Force* (here cited as Weil 2003, in reference to J. P. Holoka's critical edition). I discuss and extend Weil's ideas explicitly in Chapter 4.

The first chapter provides a commentary on the first sentence (effectively the title-sentence) of the *Peloponnesian War*, with two goals in mind. The first is to show how Thucydides, with little preparation or explication, pulls the reader very quickly into a world whose terms they do not yet understand. Already at the beginning the sense of these terms is shifting. The reader's entry into the text is therefore a disorienting one, and what follows will be a gradual and endless process of orientation, of coming to terms with a textual reality that refuses to be pinned down. In this regard, Chapter 1 has an important place in my thesis as a scholarly ground-clearing exercise. The academic tradition around Thucydides has in some places hardened around concepts (authority, autopsy, vividness, tragedy) and binaries (Greek/barbarian, writing/speech, history/theory, *logos*/*ergon*, stability/chaos) that have lost much of their animating force. Too often, instead of facilitating an encounter with the text, they impose a distance. I therefore seek to clear away these concepts or breathe life into them as necessary. It is thus an exercise in orientation with respect to the terms and strategies by which Thucydides constructs his account, but also my approach of using dialectical analyses to show the way concepts exceed themselves and are often caught up in much larger and more complex relations with each other than has been appreciated.

The rest of the chapters are ordered roughly with two exegetical concerns. First, to match both the progression of Thucydides' narrative, so that the initial chapters deal with early books and the subsequent with later ones. Second, to zoom in slowly from the outer level of the sweep of history and nature (as well as the framing of these in the composition of the text); to the conditions and forms of the *polis* as a historical and political institution; to the values, psychology, and interpersonal relations of its inhabitants.

The second chapter argues that the Archaeology, the work's paradigmatic opening sequence, lays out a notion of civilisational growth as imperialist expansion, so that the means of domination are self-perpetuating and those who use them subordinate themselves to its logic. It also argues that the sequence depicts a world imbued by quality, by experience and disappearance, in which things like sense and value are social constructions, and therefore political ones of empire. I finish with a close reading of 1.22.4 which shows it supports a generalising and ontological interpretation of Thucydides, and of the Pentekontaetia to demonstrate how the paradigmatic representation in the Archaeology is extended to account for the outbreak of war between Athens and Sparta.

The third chapter extends this analysis of paradigms by interpreting the style and structure of the narrative proper. An initial section on prose-style argues that its variations have a thematic purpose, allowing the reader to experience multiple meanings, or in some cases to recognise *logos,* perhaps seductively, as force, thus developing a broader understanding of the politics of experience (which is fully described in Chapter 7). In this regard, the middle section on the thematic significance of the work's structure argues that it is a way of representing time. The division of the war into years, seasons, and events is serial: together they form a list. This allows for a vertical representation of time in which a combination of experience and disappearance – that is, the moment – constitutes the deepest layer, in which contingency and necessity are joined. This I argue develops the Archaeology's tension between large-scale historical machinery and the personal intimacy of experience, which tends towards oblivion. I extend this analysis into the conclusion, analysing narrative variation in Thucydides (following Dionysius I call this Thucydides' narrative principle of *anōmalia*). This

I claim follows a logic of distribution of vividness in the text that seeks to highlight the dramas and inadequacies of historical experience.

The fourth chapter begins with the dichotomy of motion (or change) and rest, a well-known Thucydidean motif. I first argue that these are dialectically related, so that one cannot exclude the other and a stable equilibrium is impossible. At the wide-angle lens of history, we observe a constancy of motion. Within the narrative, Pericles' policies aim at securing Athens and protecting it from change but end up producing the tumult in later books. Thus, I develop my characterisation of force as an ontological principle. All actions involve the use of a means to achieve an end, but this makes the agent subject to a means whose properties change by nature. In the last section, I discuss the concept of nature via the *physis*/*nomos* distinction, arguing that nature for Thucydides is not a substrate or essence, but a process expressed through people's behaviours including *nomoi.* In this regard, nature is a principle of change, and it is possible to speak of a *nomos* of *physis.* The unity of opposites, I argue, is the real natural law of power.

The fifth chapter takes up the issue of human agency in a world of force, reinterpreting the tyrannicide excursus to argue that Thucydides highlights the inherent instability of the tyrant/subject dynamic in ancient tyranny instead of personally condemning Harmodius and Aristogeiton. I argue that Thucydides shows unstable dynamics of this sort to be inherent to all three of the major Greek political arrangements (tyranny, oligarchy, democracy), and that therefore all are prone to weaknesses and collapse. In this sense Thucydides represents political regimes, not as constitutional forms, but systems of power to which people become subject just like any other means. I reframe the analogy between the city and the body, drawing on Plato's *Republic,* to claim that for Thucydides every city is a sort of phlegmatic body and the analysis of its constitution a pathology.

The sixth chapter develops an implicit thread of the fifth, that the three political arrangements all concern the distribution of power between fighting citizen-men. The virtues of beauty and goodness, I argue, among Greek men are recognised by Thucydides to be tied to the hoplite mode of warfare, which itself is unrealistic and inadequate. He shows that these values exert historical force as appearances and impressions, but also how they cause people to make mistakes. The beautiful and the good do badly in Thucydides, and in this regard, there is a strong sense of tragedy. But this is deepened by a recognition of their failings, and the contingent or even counterfeit nature of beauty and goodness in this form. An analysis of *andreia* shows how these are tied to an ethic of masculinity that is often destructive and self-harming. It may thus seem as if intelligence is the supreme Thucydidean virtue, but in the conclusion, I show that he thinks little of intelligence without real goodness – about which he is circumspect.

The seventh chapter takes up the notion of beauty as a force and generalises it by discussing the manipulation of appearances, and *logoi*, as ways people gain power over each other. In this way, I argue that Thucydides depicts notions of rationality and order as incorporating a sense of chaos and overwhelming disorder by which it commands people's assent; he thus represents political power as something grounded in spectacle. Thucydides frames this with a psychology of experience which emerges most clearly in the Sicilian books from the concept of *ekplēxis.* To undergo *ekplēxis* is to have one's faculties overwhelmed by the torrential force of in which one's own self threatens to be annihilated; this may result in a feeling of terror or desire. The paralysis and subordination that *ekplēxis* yields is not only destructive in that it may, for example, weaken the resolve of an army; it is generative in that it facilitates structures of political power and the organisation of the boundary between sense and nonsense. Spectacle, the usurpation or pretence to power one does not have, is thus shown

to be the basis of political regimes. I argue these latter claims with reference to the Funeral Oration/Plague sequence in Book 2.

The eighth and final chapter argues that, although Thucydides does not give a moral theory or philosophy, his work offers a sort of moral anthropology: that is, a vision of the place and source of morality and the ground of justice in human relations. The chapter focusses on the speeches, noting the frequency with which we are confronted by clashing, specious, and self-interested justifications. This raises the prospect of a nihilistic view that justifications are always pretexts, but more importantly a question: given that they are specious, why are they necessary at all? I argue that justice, the system of obligation, organises and tames people's recognition of each other. Recognition I claim is what the performance of obligation enacts. By rendering you what I owe, I acknowledge you as the one to whom it is owed. But also, recognition is inherently destabilising because it has a potentially absolute force. Thus, it is the counterpart of self-interest as a structuring element and a limit in human relations: morality and justice take place on the fold of these.

"No one can say without being comical that he is getting ready to overturn things: He must overturn, and that is all."[71] Let us therefore proceed quickly to the first chapter, a commentary on the *Peloponnesian War's* first sentence, where my aim is to overturn some existing scholarly definitions and binaries.

[71] Bataille 1988, 10.

1. Shifting Terms: Opening and Backdrop

The *Peloponnesian War* begins as follows:[72]

[Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος]^{1} [ξυνέγραψε]^{2} [τὸν πόλεμον]^{3} [τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων,]^{4} [ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου]^{5} [καὶ ἐλπίσας]^{6} [μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων,]^{7} [τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι ἀκμάζοντές τε ἦσαν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμφότεροι παρασκευῇ τῇ πάσῃ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ὁρῶν ξυνιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους, τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον.]^{8}

[Thucydides an Athenian]^{1} [wrote up]^{2} [the war]^{3} [of the Peloponnesians and Athenians]^{4}, [how they fought each other, beginning as soon as it was established]^{5} and expecting]^{6} [it would be large and the most worthy of a *logos* of all those which had come before;]^{7} [taking as proof, first, that both sides were at the height of their power entering into it with their entire force; second, that he could see the rest of Greece setting itself up on either side – some immediately, some waiting.]^{8}

[72] Immerwahr (1966, 44): "A characteristic feature of early Greek literature is its refusal to conceive unity in the abstract; instead, it perceives it in the concrete development of a series. Hence the unity of the work must be established by looking at the whole chain of logoi, rather than by analysis of the proem." This statement is both right and wrong as applied to Thucydides. It is right because the thematic stance of the work is not expounded in the proem; indeed, more fundamental than any stance, as such, are the changes of stance or position which are forced by narrated events and anachronistic ironies. But the proem carefully outlines the thematic range of the work, introducing its central problems without defining them or even explaining why they are problems (that is what I seek to prove). On the intense interest in the proem during later antiquity, see Tsakmakis (1995, 26n1). It was apparently the subject of a lost treatise by Porphyry.

[1] *Thucydides an Athenian* / Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος

"One thing we can say with confidence about Thucydides is that he was an Athenian."[73] This can be doubted in two respects:

Background

In Book 4 Thucydides introduces himself as a historical character, the Athenian general "Thucydides son of Olorus." (4.104.4: Θουκυδίδην τὸν Ὀλόρου). The orthography of his father's name has been questioned, and there seems to have been no one else in the region of Attika called Olorus.[74] If correct, it supports the standard view which runs as follows.[75] Herodotus records the existence of a Thracian king, Olorus, whose daughter married Miltiades, son of Cimon, during the latter's brief stint as a tyrant in the Chersonese (Hdt. 6.39, 6.41.2). This Miltiades became the famous Athenian general at Marathon (Hdt. 6.104).[76] Miltiades had a son called Cimon, himself a major figure in Athenian politics (and the subject of a biography by Plutarch): the father of Thucydides, named after the king, was a less prominent member of this family.[77] Plutarch states there was a monument to Thucydides among those of Cimon's family in Athens (Plut. *Cim.* 4). Both Cimon and Miltiades came to ruin politically in part because of disputes with members of the Alcmaeonid family stretching over multiple generations: first Xanthippus and second his son, Pericles (Hdt. 6.136, Plut.

[73] Low 2023, 1. Cf. Nichols 2015, 169: "Why Thucydides calls himself an Athenian at the outset of his history is as perplexing as his view of his role as a historian." Nichols claims that Thucydides does not call himself Athenian again – he does, in fact, at 5.26.1.

[74] Canfora 2006, 3-6 (cf. Hobbes 8.xiii-xiv).

[75] The standard (and probably very late) ancient biography, by so-called Marcellinus, is very loose. See Maitland 1996. See also the family tree cited by Wade-Gery 1932, 210 – and Gomme's objection (3.578) "[this] scheme, however, does not make an easy fit; others are obviously possible." See Will 2003, 223-9; Sonnabend 2004, 9-16; Canfora 2016, 7. Malitz (1982, 260) doubts the story told here.

[76] Cf. Hdt. 6.109: Miltiades was one of ten *strategoi* leading alongside the polemarch, Callimachus. His own family was of Aeginetan origin and claimed descent from King Aeacus (Hdt. 6.35).

[77] Proctor (1980, 33) claims Thucydides was Miltiades' great-grandson.

Cim.).[78] It is thus ironic that Pericles, one of Cimon's rivals, is such a major and respectable figure in the work (see esp. 2.65).[79] It is also ironic that Thucydides apparently enjoyed his position as a highest-ranked Athenian, a *stratēgos,* in an area where he was sent specifically, one assumes, due to links arising from the non-Athenian element of his background (4.104-105.1).[80]

"Thucydides (…) was above all a rich and powerful magnate."[81] The author himself explains that he held the right to work the Thracian goldmines (4.105.1), probably by inheritance.[82] The awful conditions inside the mines are a matter of later record (Lucr. 6.806-17).[83] But Thucydides' connections with Thrace were neither wholly familial nor economic. Marcellinus claims he married a Thracian wife (Marcellin. 19). Indeed, Sears has argued that late fifth-century Athens saw the rise of a class of 'Thrace-goers' (θρᾳκοφοῖται), who tended to be among the wealthiest and most politically ambitious Athenians.[84] Thrace provided material resources to exploit and become rich. These in turn brought political power and a certain freedom. It became a refuge for political exiles (including Alcibiades: Plut. *Alc.* 23), and a playground where such men could live like pseudo-Homeric kings and cultivate a society that was completely different from the Athenian.[85] In the city of Athens, Thracians were common particularly as slaves, and were

[78] Cf. the rivalry between Pericles and Thucydides the son of Melesias, who might have been a grandfather of the author Thucydides through his mother's side (Wade-Gery 1932; Canfora stresses the link: cf. 2016, 26).

[79] So too the Peisitratid tyrants (6.54.5) who persecuted Miltiades' family (Hdt. 6.103.1). It has been argued that Thucydides diverged from the views most associated with his background because Periclean policies favoured Thucydides' financial interests (Will 2003, 224).

[80] There were several such Athenians granted important positions in Thrace during the fifth-century: see Sears 2013, 74-89. Thucydides' election to this position in the Athenian democracy should not be taken as a sign of support for the regime (see Canfora 2021, 52).

[81] Canfora 2016, 11 ("*Tucidide (…) fu innanzi tutto un ricco e potente signore*"), cf. 46-51 ; Kallet-Marx 1993, 174-5.

[82] On the value and importance of these mines see Canfora 2016, 30-4.

[83] Cited and discussed by Canfora (2016, 39-40).

[84] Sears 2013. The term comes from a fragment of Aristophanes.

[85] Cf. Thuc. "In many other respects also it can be shown that the way of life in ancient Greece was like that of barbarians today." (1.6.6: πολλὰ δ᾽ ἂν καὶ ἄλλα τις ἀποδείξειε τὸ παλαιὸν Ἑλληνικὸν ὁμοιότροπα τῷ νῦν βαρβαρικῷ διαιτώμενον).

orientalised; they provoked revulsion and fascination.[86] They were seen as "an exotic, slavish, strange, and ferocious people (…) with admirable skills in war, childcare, and music."[87] Thucydides narrating the massacre at Mykalessos describes Thracians as "equal to the most bloodthirsty of the barbarians when in fighting spirit" (7.29.4: τὸ γὰρ γένος τὸ τῶν Θρᾳκῶν ὁμοῖα τοῖς μάλιστα τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἂν θαρσήῃ, φονικώτατόν ἐστιν).[88] In Book 2 he describes Thrace in a rare ethnographic excursus on the scale of its land, people, resources, and disunity (2.96-7).[89]

What was between Athens and Thrace may have been, in some respects, analogous to a modern colonial relationship.[90] Therefore an obvious place to turn to understand elite Atheno-Thracian identity is Homi Bhabha's seminal concept of hybridity.[91] Hybridity is a multi-faceted notion, but one important aspect is its emphasis on how the identity and culture of the coloniser is not bounded, but instead permeated or even defined by the colonial other. It seems that for Thucydides barbarians provided a way of linking the Athenian present with the distant past (e.g. 1.6.6, 2.97.4), which helped him to read social phenomena in terms of a perceived overarching universal human condition (e.g. 1.24.4, 3.82.2). We may recall the sophist Antiphon's argument that Greeks and barbarians were of the same essential nature, "since to a man we all breath by our mouth and nose

[86] On the Greek and Athenian view of Thracians see Sears 2013, 140-57; Hall 1989, 103-13, 134-8, 151-2; Skinner 2012, 83-6. On the number of Thracian slaves in the city see esp. Sears 2013, 156-7.
[87] Tsiafakis 2000 (the quote is from 388).
[88] The massacre at Mykalessos has been much discussed by scholars (see the references at Fragoulaki 2020, 38n2). Kallet (1999, 240-1) calls this statement 'gnomic' and downplays its force. Fragoulaki (2020, 42-51) claims the barbarousness of the Thracians is an important theme of the episode.
[89] On Thucydides' "complex range of opinions" regarding Thracians generally, cf. Sears (2013, 172-3). On Thracian ethnography in Herodotus and Thucydides see Irwin 2007A, esp. 56-83.
[90] Compare this with Moreno's (2007) argument, that the Athenian democracy's grain supply came from cash crops around the Black Sea controlled by very wealthy Athenians and local royal families with whom they fostered deep connections. As a result, he emphasises (322) "how much control [of Athenian affairs] really belonged to an elite of Athenian politicians, and to its powers of leadership, organization, distribution, and persuasion." On Greek colonisation in Thucydides, see de Romilly 1990, 13-60.
[91] Bhabha 1994.

and all eat using our hands" (DK B 44 *Col. II:* ἀναπνέομεν τε γὰρ εἰς τὸν ἀνέρ<α> ἅπαντες κατὰ τὸ στόμ<α κ>αὶ κατ<α> τὰς ῥῖνας κ<αὶ ἐσθίομεν> χερσὶν ἅ<παντες...>). In Chapter 8, I will return to this point and argue that Thucydides imagines a sort of shared but unequal human condition. For now, it will be useful in support of the claims about universality I build to in the final part of this section of the commentary. Another important aspect of this colonial confrontation, as depicted by Bhabha, is that the challenge posed by an encounter with the other to the coherence of the coloniser's system of meaning can be interpreted by the coloniser as a challenge to sense as such, a threat of nihilism.[92] Though not tied to a colonial other specifically, there is an ostensibly nihilistic presence in the text at moments of civic collapse (2.47-54, 3.81-4), and personal terror (7.69.2).[93]

A large scholarly consensus claims that the notion of Greek ethnicity became especially prominent, in Athens and elsewhere, through the Persian Wars; Greekness developed alongside and in contrast with a sense of Barbarian otherness.[94] More recent work has emphasised the dialectical nature of this contrast: its result was not just polarity, but also various hybrid forms and interactions.[95] Others have demonstrated the importance of ethnic distinctions within Greece.[96] How much would any of this have mattered for Thucydides? He would have grown up in the shadow of Pericles' law that restricted citizenship

[92] Bhabha 1994, 124: "the sign of identity and reality found in the work of empire is slowly undone (…) What emerges from the dispersal of [this] work is the language of a colonial nonsense that displaces those dualities in which the colonial space is traditionally divided: nature/culture, chaos/civility."

[93] This sense of collapse, however, should not be treated as a climax where the curtain falls away and the truth appears: rather, it is just one more moment or appearance in a much broader and more elusive reality, as I will argue in the seventh chapter, and below.

[94] Hall 1989; Cartledge 1993; the essays in Malkin (ed.) 2001; Hall 2002; Isaac 2004; Kim 2009. Saïd 1979 is an important influence.

[95] Gruen 2011; Skinner 2012; Boardman 2015; Provencal 2015; Harrison 2019, 2020 (an excellent survey of the debate); Kim and Konstan 2022. An important recent strand is the analysis of networks: see e.g. Constantakopoulou 2007; Vlassopoulos 2007; Malkin 2011.

[96] Hall 1997. On ethnic (and other) kinship in Thucydides see Hornblower 2.61-80; Fragoulaki 2013.

to people with two Athenian parents (*Ath. Pol.* 26.4).[97] The official belief in Athens was that citizens were autochthonous – that their ancestors were birthed directly from the ground of Attika – a notion to which Thucydides himself pays ersatz homage (1.2.5-6, cf. 2.36.1).[98] Whether most Athenians believed in autochthony is uncertain;[99] and Plato's use of the 'noble lie' in the *Republic* suggests that, for his part, he did not (*Rep.* 414d-15). But autochthony need not have been universally and individually believed to be respected as a public or political truth. Generally speaking, group identity is not a personal fact but a collective and centripetal force, so that members of the group orbit a centre from which they are in varying degrees displaced.[100] Athenian-ness was not only a civic status; it was a social language and a worldview with which people had to come to terms. Perhaps for many the result was not exclusively a relation of affinity but involved a certain distance and even a sense of alienation. Thucydides' family origins *might* have mattered enough to create something of this distance from full Athenian-ness. His own Thracian connections certainly did.

Exile

[97] On Athenian ethnocentrism in art see Cohen 2001.

[98] Elsewhere he flatly rejects the autochthony of the Sikanoi in Sicily (6.2.2).

[99] See Hall 1997, 51-6; Anderson 2018, 138-43. See also Carlo Severi on the anthropology of belief in general (2015, 233-43). 241: "Typically enough, it is never a certainty that something is true that produces the strength of a belief. Except in extreme or exceptional cases, such a certainty never exists in a believer. What almost always does exist, though, is an *absence of certainty* that this or that phenomenon or state of affairs that is declared through the belief is actually false. This ambiguous state of the image in which one believes can never be described correctly as a decision to believe; rather, it is a *reticence not to believe*."

[100] Farenga 2006 offers a study of Athenian (and Greek) selfhood by developing the notion of a citizen-script people could perform and be validated by others. We learn more, I think, by reflecting on how the script may not have served its performer; that is, where tensions in and around the script cause some aspect of the performance of citizen to fail. My analysis of virtue in Chapter 6 shows that Thucydides considered the script at least sometimes to be self-defeating.

Thucydides was exiled from Athens after the loss of Amphipolis ("psychologically devastating for the Athenians")[101] to Brasidas, we are told in the work's second preface (5.26):[102]

> [1] γέγραφε δὲ καὶ ταῦτα ὁ αὐτὸς Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος (…) [5] ἐπεβίων δὲ διὰ παντὸς αὐτοῦ αἰσθανόμενός τε τῇ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ προσέχων τὴν γνώμην, ὅπως ἀκριβές τι εἴσομαι· καὶ ξυνέβη μοι φεύγειν τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ ἔτη εἴκοσι μετὰ τὴν ἐς Ἀμφίπολιν στρατηγίαν,[103] καὶ γενομένῳ παρ᾽ ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς πράγμασι, καὶ οὐχ ἧσσον τοῖς Πελοποννησίων διὰ τὴν φυγήν, καθ᾽ ἡσυχίαν τι αὐτῶν μᾶλλον αἰσθέσθαι.
>
> [1] This part was written by the same Thucydides, an Athenian (…) [5] I lived through all of [the war] and was both old enough to perceive what was going on, and paid attention so that I could know with a degree of accuracy: also, it happened that I was exiled from my home for twenty years, after my general-ship at Amphipolis, and so because I had been around for things on both sides, not less those of Peloponnesians due to my exile, I could perceive something of them with more ease.

Ancient tradition holds that he did not return from exile: either he was murdered on his way home (Paus. 1.23.9); or else simply died in the Thracian settlement of Skaptē Hulē (Plut. *Cim.* 4.2), or somewhere in Italy (Marc. 25, 33). Stroud has argued that Thucydides spent much of his exile and writing life in Corinth.[104] Hornblower speculates that after the war he may have returned to Athens; and

[101] Sears 2013, 89.
[102] Canfora (2016, 159-75) argues somewhat tendentiously that this passage was written by Xenophon.
[103] There is debate as to the precise character (voluntary or forced? Cf. Canfora 2006, 16-7; refuted by Hornblower 3.50f.) and duration (is twenty years a later insertion in the text? Hornblower *ibid.*) of Thucydides' exile. "This passage is a vexing one," writes Sears (2013, 89n105), because of its vagueness. This (typical) vagueness puts the accent on the contingency of the event and the primacy of historical forces rather than individuals.
[104] Stroud 1994.

Canfora has recently produced a book on Thucydides' exile where he claims the events recounted in the text are in large part ones he actually witnessed.[105] Plutarch's reasons for putting Thucydides in Thrace after his exile are obvious, but perhaps suspicious by that same token.

Wherever he may have been, Thucydides presents his exile to us as an advantage.[106] Exile, travel, leaving one's home in whatever circumstances will become an important detail in the biography of many ancient historians.[107] According to Thucydides himself, it means he could observe the war from both sides, *kath'hēsychian.* It is very likely that this Greek phrase, with connotations of rest and silence, conveys a certain neutrality or non-participation in the war (whose motif is movement, or *kinēsis:* 1.1.2), and perhaps more profoundly a contemplative distance from social and political forces (also characterised by movement), which allowed for a greater clarity of perspective.[108] Thucydides' own emphasis on time spent among the Peloponnesians may indicate that he viewed his 'Athenian-ness' as a potential problem, one which his exile helped him to overcome enough to produce the work we are reading to a standard we can trust. The implication that this work requires a different sort of identity and approach from the normal civic one becomes even more pronounced where Thucydides is read against what survives of his genre (see below). In that sense Plutarch (Plut. *De Exil.* 605c) highlighted something real about the text by adding to its opening line "Thucydides an Athenian wrote up the war of the

[105] Hornblower (3.50-3); Canfora 2016.
[106] For remarks on the significance of exile for Thucydides: Syme 1962, 40 (his generalisations are qualified by Dillery 2007); Malitz 1982, 267-70; Hornblower 1987, 27; Flory 1988A, 53; Greenwood 2006, 48; Schelske 2013; Christodoulou 2017.
[107] Malitz 1982, 267 (see n54 for a list). I go into this point in more depth in the discussion of motion and rest at the beginning of Chapter 4.
[108] Gomme, *Comm.* 4.15; Hornblower 2004, 61; Christodoulou 2017. And see the Scholiast, *ad loc.*

Peloponnesians and Athenians," the un-Athenian words "in Thrace near Skaptē Hulē."

But Thucydides chooses to call himself an Athenian – and to write in the Attic dialect of orators and sophists, rather than the Ionic prose of Herodotus[109] – yet, paradoxically, this choice serves precisely to erase the biographical element. Indeed, the opening epithet, while affirming his Athenian-ness in one sense, serves ultimately to divest him of both his civic and personal identities.[110] It describes a condition that later Lucian made a requirement for being a good historian: "city-less, a law unto oneself" (*Hist. conscr.* 41: ἄπολις, αὐτόνομος). Many have noticed that Thucydides' initial words match the openings of earlier works by Hecataeus "the Milesian" and Herodotus "of Halicarnassus," and thus signify, perhaps more than the author's Athenian-ness, his status as the member of a genre or tradition.[111] The variety of origins and personal connections among these three, and the use of the city by all as an identifier, suggests an intended readership from many cities and perhaps beyond: the imagined audience is at

[109] Cf. Ros 1969, 2. On the rise and fall of the Ionic dialect in prose see Dover 1997, 84-7.

[110] See Dewald (2009, 129) on the opening's "severely impersonal third-person narrative."

[111] See Woodman (1988, 6-7) and Moles (1993, 99-100) for a more detailed list of verbal correspondences between this opening and Herodotus' proem. For contrast see Dewald 2009; Tsakmakis 1995, 30; Węcowski 2008. See Fowler 1996 for details about other contemporaries. A popular recent way of reading these opening statements, and historiography in general, is through the lens of 'authority,' for which see especially Marincola 1997 (which constructs the paradigm); as well as the essays in Kingsley et al. eds 2022) and Marques and Santagelo (eds 2023). A drawback of Marincola's method is its synchrony, which means sometimes treating words and techniques as if they meant the same thing from Herodous to Herodian (see Hornblower 1995 on Thucydides' fourth-century reception; Matijaŝić 2018 on the formation of the historiographical canon). Another is its narratological emphasis on the rhetorical or formal aspects of writing at the expense of discussing its thematic content. Marincola's claim that authority is a rhetorical construction comes from his choice to examine rhetorical techniques *qua* rhetoric without essential content or context; he finds what he has chosen to look for. See O'Sullivan 2023 on the limits of applying narratological analysis both to Thucydides and in general. See also the remarks of Moles (1993, 116-8).

least pan-Hellenic.[112] In a sense it is even more than pan-Hellenic. The orientation of all three is:

> (1) Secular.[113] By this I am referring specifically to each author's self-presentation and the structure and stated purpose of their narrative.[114] As the opening words in each case suggest, these works are not attributed to the Muses but the authors.[115] This results in a necessity to define the purpose of composition; the divinely inspired Homeric poems do not demonstrate a concern on the speaker's part to explain why they were composed. The stated purpose of writing is at least in part *so that people will know what happened* (Hdt. 1.1-6; Thuc. 1.22.4, 1.23.6). The adopted perspective is that of an individual human subject. The more panoptic point of view that develops in each work is framed by this personal introduction.
>
> (2) Global. In this regard they can be distinguished from local historians, who became prominent especially after the fourth century, and compared usefully with later encyclopaedic historians such as Ephorus and Diodorus (though here 'global' is not yet necessarily a synonym for encyclopaedic).[116] Hecataeus' major work was called *The Circuit of the Earth.*[117] Herodotus narrates the wars and societies of Greeks and barbarians both, including descriptions of India, Scythia, and the territories South of Egypt alongside the Athenians and Spartans.[118]

[112] On Herodotus' Ionian background see Thomas 2000, 9-16.
[113] This does not mean atheistic or even unreligious. On the complex subject of religion in Herodotus see Harrison 2000. I discuss Thucydides and religion in Chapter 4.
[114] Analysed by Dewald 2006. See also Cartledge 1993, 18-35; Gehrke 2023.
[115] On this shift see Purves 2010; Garcés 2023.
[116] On the local historians: Thomas 2019 (cf. Jacoby on the Atthidographers). On Ephorus and Diodorus (and their milieu): Clarke 2008, 96-140; Parmeggiani 2024 (Ephorus).
[117] On Hecataeus see the references in Marincola 2001, 15f.
[118] Skinner 2012.

> Thucydides' war is ostensibly more local, but the argument from size at the beginning (1.1-21) is intended partly to refute this impression. He claims that the war in some way or other involved most of humanity (1.1.2). From a generic point of view the works of Herodotus and Hecataeus set a precedent of internal diversity of subject and outlook – their works are global, not only in scope, but in a more formal sense of method and subject. Thucydides similarly mixes speculative history with contemporary narrative, elaborate speeches, and pages which observe no line between description and theorising (e.g. 3.82-4). He replicates by different means the global ambitions of Hecataeus and Herodotus.[119]

The so-called historians conceived an intellectual community that transcends borders. The works of this tradition offer themselves to an imagined community of readers interested in interrogating global truths about the human condition and civilisation broadly so conceived (perhaps more literally broad in Herodotus and more figuratively so in Thucydides), who are in every sense Greek, but not specific to any place or time – both Herodotus and Thucydides project this community into the future (Hdt. 1.4.3-4, Thuc. 1.22.4).[120] In later antiquity the idea of universal kinship or citizenship is identified with Socrates and Plato (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 5.37.108; Plut. *De Exil.* 600f).[121] As a statement of intent, and of the author's membership of the (perhaps still-to-be-born) community that his readers signify within the logic of the work, this opening signature ('Personal Name/City of Origin') divests each author of their local identity and signals their membership of an international community. Any notion of historiography as a new genre or a break has been strongly qualified by scholars who have stressed the

[119] See Woodman 1988, 6-7.
[120] In the case of Thucydides, Loraux (1986A, 157-8) argues that the indefinite language is strategic and helps him to create the kind of reader he wants. See also Rood 2004A, 121-3.
[121] On cosmopolitanism in the Platonic corpus see Brown 2000.

permeability between historiography and other genres, and how these texts attach themselves to other traditions such as epic.[122] But this generic emphasis on the Greek past only enhances the tension between a Greek and a global identity and worldview, as well as that between the scope of its ambition and its audience of (probably) a few elites. There is also a further tension between the specificity of the author and the generality of their work. If Thucydides tends to smudge the first two of these, about the final one he is emphatic: the third-person singular noun conveys this, so too the conceptual gap in the first clause between the words 'Athenian' and 'Athenians.'[123]

These opening words are thus marked by the struggle between what is said and what is unsaid. The tension between experience and text is signalled clearly, as the opening signature marks a break between the living author and the written one.[124] The reader's beginning is the end-point of the author's process of experiencing the war and composing the work's contents.[125] But the living author's suppression does not equal disappearance, and as Nicole Loraux points out, Thucydides' presence in this passage in the nominative case (as opposed to Herodotus for example, who puts himself in the genitive), emphasises his role as agent, as living being, whose experience and writing of the war is recreated implicitly in the reader's own experience.[126] As soon as the author's experience opens up we can begin to see real-life tensions underneath the text; when it closes

[122] See for example: Woodman 1988, 1-69; Hartog 2000; Corcella 2006; Grethlein 2010; Rutherford 2012; the essays in Constantakopoulou and Fragoulaki eds 2020 and Kingsley et al eds 2022; Gehrke 2023.
[123] Rood claims the opening serves to "boost his authority by establishing his close link [with its subject]," (Rood 2006A, 230), but arguably by Thucydides' own logic at 1.20-2 it threatens to undermine his authority.
[124] Compare with Hartog's (2000, 392) account of the situation of Odysseus while he listens to Demodocus' song in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 8.521-31): "this brief moment when he is no longer Odysseus and not yet Odysseus is a poetic translation of a painful discovery of the non-coincidence of oneself with oneself (or self with self?)"
[125] On the semantics of verb tense in Thucydides see Bakker 1997, 2007A and the essays in Lallot et al. eds 2011.
[126] Loraux 1986A, 142-4.

they are suppressed and the text envelops us. The transfer of the real into the written, and of vitality into textuality, is an important theme of this text, and the subject of this clause's main verb.

[2] *Wrote Up* / ξυνέγραψε

Thucydides translated the war into written prose, a declaration which has struck many as over-confident, though its sense has been poorly understood. Nicole Loraux rightly contrasts the word ξυγγράφω with 1.22.2 where Thucydides refers to his practice of writing up the war with the simple *graphō* – this seems to demonstrate the importance of this word's prefix to its sense.[127] Its status as the final word of most years narrated in the war (which close with the words " so ended the X year of the war that Thucydides wrote up") attests to its importance.[128] The Greek compound verb ξυγγράφω seems to connote both an act of conversion into writing and a kind of text whose use is not strictly performative: it may be an architectural blueprint (IG I3 35.6-8), a visionary poem about the structure of the universe (Pl. *Prm.* 128a), ca significant fact or collection of facts (Hdt. 3.103.3), a set of instructions (Xen. *Eq. mag.* 2.2), or a speech written down or copied for individual perusal (Pl. *Phdr.* 235c).[129]

The contrasts between orality and literacy, and between prose and poetry, which have underpinned scholarly thinking on this Thucydidean verb have been long since been debunked, and separately shown not to apply to ancient Athens.[130]

[127] *Ibid.* 148.
[128] For a list of years in which the final words do and do not appear see Ponchon 2017, 48.
[129] Bakker 2006.
[130] See Finnegan 1977, 246-61 for a canonical rebuttal of the notion of 'oral culture' (and more recently Severi 2015). See further Finnegan (2005, 110-4) for a survey of responses to the orality/literacy distinction among anthropologists, with references; Missiou (2011, 1-2) on the fate of Eric Havelock's (1963) ideas about writing among historians of ancient Greece. On writing, politics and culture in archaic and classical Greece see Detienne ed. 1988; Thomas 1992; Steiner 1994; Gehrke 2023. On literacy levels in Classical Athens see also Pritchard 2013, 58-66.

Instead, the precise contrast Thucydides sets up implicitly here, later with explicit force (1.22.4), is between public performance and individual use. The war has become a text; its place in the work's opening clause as a direct object of the verb 'to write up' conveys the certainty that a translation has been done. The standard interpretation is that of Edmunds (following Loraux on one side, Havelock via Gentili on the other), for whom Thucydides conceived prose writing as a new technology allowing him to record events better than anyone had done previously: and that in this moment he claims to have achieved a symmetrical and mute correspondence between his written account and the lived material.[131] Edmunds puts this eccentric mistake down to the way some people's enthusiasm for the nouveau-powers of a technology cause them to exaggerate (he mentions Richard Dawkins' twentieth-century zealousness about floppy discs).[132]

Following Edmunds, the consensus position has been that Thucydides had a very superficial concept of the medium he was working with based on a view of writing as new 'technology.' It will be useful to explore the concept of 'technology' – a modern one – briefly. Technology, in Edmunds' essay and in general, is implicitly aligned with novelty and progress as the offspring of invention. Technology advances by definition. What technological advancement means is an improvement in the effectiveness of instruments. Technology is thus a way of conceiving objects or practices which, as instruments, empties them of their mediative significance: conceived as technology or instrument, every tool is simply a way of achieving a certain end, so that a shovel and a combine harvester

[131] Edmunds 2009; Loraux 1986A (cf. 142: "*la pure exposition transparente*"); Havelock 1963; Gentili 1988; the essays in Cerri and Gentili eds 1988 (see also Morrison 2006A). Edmunds' view is affirmed and expanded variously by Crane 1996; Yunis 2003; Greenwood 2006, 11-7; Morrison 2006A, 13-21; Skinner 2012, 235-7; Rawlings 2021.

[132] Edmunds 2009, 106. The choice of example tells its own story (cf. Edmunds 1975A, 146 – "the scientism of Thucydides"). A better analogy, I will go on to argue, would be with the response to the television of philosophers such as Debord (1967) and Baudrillard (1981, 1994; see Merrin 2005 for a general overview). These, like Thucydides, studied the new medium in order to develop "an interpretation of reality which also interprets the possibilities of interpretation" (Parry 1981, 10).

for example are both merely ways of getting something from the ground. But this way of thinking is not very Greek, and a society of shovels and a society of combine harvesters are two very different places and in each the act of digging is a very different operation. To interact with something via an instrument is to find it and oneself both shaped by that instrument. Indeed, technology shapes and is shapes by broader social, economic, cultural, and political factors (it is the constitution of society that determines whether a combine harvester or a shovel is available or necessary for someone who makes their living from the ground).[133] There is no instrument, no means, which is not also a medium through which different relations such as these are embedded and transformed.[134] It is hard not to feel palpably how the scholarly consensus here relies on the old myth of Thucydides the scientist-historian, harbinger of progress (in this case analytical prose as technological development): Thucydides, the mirror by which certain modern proclivities are reflected and transformed into universally valid categories.

In Plato's *Phaedrus,* Socrates makes up a story (275b) about the invention of writing in ancient Egypt by Theuth, who presents it to the King Thamos (Ammon) and refers to it – not as a new technology – but as a *pharmakon,* a drug that will help with memory and learning (274c-e).[135] The passage and what follows are open to a large variety of interpretations.[136] But for my purpose the actual interpretation of the passage is less important than its superficial content, the challenge it raises. To Theuth, whose word choice of *pharmakon* is already

[133] On this subject generally see Ingold 2000, 312-22; Latour 1993, 1996; Descola 2013. For specific examples of the interrelation of these concepts in ancient Greece see Lēvēque and Vidal-Naquet 1960; Detienne, 157-88 in Vernant ed. 1968.
[134] On this and the previous sentences see Braudel 1983, 1.334-5.
[135] Ponchon (2017, 48-53) treats this part of the *Phaedrus* as a response to the naïve Thucydides of Edmunds' depiction, taking Socrates' words literally.
[136] See the discussions and citations in Ferrari 1987, 204-31 and Yunis (ed.) 2011 *ad loc.*

ambiguous, Thamos quickly replies that this invention, writing, will change people's relationship to memory and learning for the worse (275a):

> τοῦτο γὰρ τῶν μαθόντων λήθην μὲν ἐν ψυχαῖς παρέξει μνήμης ἀμελετησίᾳ, (…) σοφίας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς δόξαν, οὐκ ἀλήθειαν πορίζεις.
>
> It will cause there to be ignorance in the minds of learners because they will be unpractised at memory (…) You are providing a semblance of wisdom to learners, not truth.

Billings: "On the whole, the myth [of Theuth] suggests a pessimism concerning invention, a concern that advances in human technology could prove setbacks in human culture as a whole."[137] This again imposes the concept of technology on the ancient text and suppresses its more immediate concern with how writing alters one's relationship with the signified knowledge-object. Writing is not an instrument or mere means to an end, but a *pharmakon* that drugs its user. Derrida showed this is not just colourful language.[138] It is conceptually important: as a way of conceiving both the good and the bad writing brings; but more fundamentally as a demonstration of how it is writing that captures us and not the other way around. Soon afterwards, Socrates compares written things to characters in a painting that appear lifelike but are mute, unable to answer questions; written words are subject to corrosive misinterpretations, unable to justify themselves; writing is condemned always to say exclusively what is written (275c-e). But obvious ironies abound such as that this point is made in a written text: indeed, a written dialogue. The interpretation on which Ferrari ends up settling places an emphasis on a philosophical *approach* as the way through the problem of illusion raised by writing/speech: an approach that plays around

[137] Billings 2021, 25.
[138] He lays great stress on the word in his seminal reading of the dialogue (1981, 63-171).

with and highlights the constraints of both media to create an experience of thought that goes beyond them.[139]

The *Phaedrus* brings us closer to Thucydides' milieu and towards a much more developed concept of the medium of writing than Edmunds' evocations of Richard Dawkins. Thucydides is less optimistic than Socrates at least purports to be about speech and memory (1.22.1-2). He is likewise pessimistic about personal experience through the senses (1.10.1-2, 6.31.1). But it does not follow that he is more optimistic than Socrates about writing or that he is insensitive to its challenges. The inadequacy of the written account with respect to what really happened is a theme to which he constantly returns. Something that has thrown many interpreters into error is the fact that, once the war itself begins, the speeches of its characters are embedded into a narrative that is sometimes juxtaposed as a reality principle against their professions and strategies.[140] What breaks this are Thucydides' intrusions into the narrative – at heightened moments[141] – where the limits, tensions, and self-consciousness of his project are carried into the text by his voice. But even the narrative proper contains many shifts of mode.[142] "Thus we get Thucydides the Chronicler; Thucydides the Eye-witness, Thucydides the Painter and Thucydides the Writer-Analyst."[143] This diversity is hardly captured in the conventional gloss of the main verb. Perhaps more fruitful than an idea of the text as a recording is one of it as a translation (something which has passed from one medium into another). Translated from

[139] As above: 1987, 204-31.
[140] Equally the preponderance of speeches introduces an array of other perspectives than the narrator's, so that the reader is obliged to construct their own. On the purpose of the speeches and their interaction with the narrative see Immerwahr 1973 (esp. 23); Rood 2004A, 124-8; Morrison 2006B; Barker 2009, 203-63; Luraghi 2011; Rengakos 2011; Jaffe 2017, esp. 12-15.
[141] See Gribble 1998; Allan 2007 (discussed in Chapter 3).
[142] Bakker 1997; Allan 2007, 2013. Allan, drawing on Bakker, calls the latter the "*displaced* diegetic mode" (373). Sertcan (1997, 271-2) helpfully distinguishes between objectivity as an attitude towards the historical object and objectivity as a relationship with the reader. See also Pébarthe's (2018) thoughtful response to Nicole Loraux's famous maxim, 'Thucydides is not a Colleague' (cf. Loraux 1980).
[143] Allan 2013, 372.

lived existence into narrative prose, much is gained for the war and much is lost. This third word of the text, with an aorist signalling a complete action, affirms that the translation has been performed – of what? Of the war.

[3] *The War* / τὸν πόλεμον

Thucydides announces that the subject of his text will be the war without explaining what that is.[144] It will become clear that the war should be defined as a total phenomenon that stands above the participants and exceeds all their individual actions.[145] Readers might assume that the word 'war' refers simply and straightforwardly the events and interval between a declaration and a treaty. They will find this definition ruled out by the second preface (esp. 5.26.2).[146] More broadly, the range of phenomena adduced to compare this period with the Persian Wars suggests a much broader one (1.23.1-3):[147]

> τούτου δὲ τοῦ πολέμου μῆκός τε μέγα προύβη, παθήματά τε ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τῇ Ἑλλάδι οἷα οὐχ ἕτερα ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ. [2] οὔτε γὰρ πόλεις τοσαίδε ληφθεῖσαι ἠρημώθησαν, αἱ μὲν ὑπὸ βαρβάρων, αἱ δ᾽ ὑπὸ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἀντιπολεμούντων (εἰσὶ δ᾽ αἳ καὶ οἰκήτορας μετέβαλον ἁλισκόμεναι), οὔτε φυγαὶ τοσαίδε ἀνθρώπων καὶ φόνος, ὁ μὲν κατ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν πόλεμον, ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ στασιάζειν. [3] τά τε πρότερον ἀκοῇ μὲν λεγόμενα, ἔργῳ δὲ σπανιώτερον βεβαιούμενα οὐκ ἄπιστα κατέστη, σεισμῶν τε πέρι, οἳ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἅμα μέρος γῆς καὶ ἰσχυρότατοι οἱ αὐτοὶ ἐπέσχον, ἡλίου τε ἐκλείψεις, αἳ πυκνότεραι

[144] A shift of emphasis compared with Herodotus who centres the act of enquiry: see Meier 2005, 332.
[145] On the distinction between 'the war' and 'the history of the Athenians and Peloponnesians during the war' (Thucydides' subject is the first), see de Miguel Jover 2015, 264-5. See also Bauslaugh (1991, 142-6) on the Melian Dialogue as an illustration of the failure of neutrality during the war.
[146] Sonnabend 2004, 6-9; Libermann 2017, 35-9.
[147] Important discussions of this passage in Furley 1990; Meier 2005.

παρὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ πρὶν χρόνου μνημονευόμενα ξυνέβησαν, αὐχμοί τε ἔστι παρ᾽ οἷς μεγάλοι καὶ ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ λιμοὶ καὶ ἡ οὐχ ἥκιστα βλάψασα καὶ μέρος τι φθείρασα ἡ λοιμώδης νόσος· ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα μετὰ τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου ἅμα ξυνεπέθετο.

The length of this war was great, and calamities resulted from it across Greece of a sort that was unlike those of any previous events in an equal amount of time. [2] Never had so many cities been captured and emptied out: whether by barbarians or by their own hands as they fought against each other (in some cases the captured cities were colonised), nor so many men sent into exile and murdered, whether because of the war itself or *stasis*-conflicts. [3] Things previously said by hearsay and very rarely confirmed in fact were no longer incredible: earthquakes both affected the largest share of the earth and were the strongest they had ever been; solar eclipses happened more often than had been recalled from previous times; there were large droughts and from these famine and, far from least in respect of the harm it did and the share of people it destroyed, the pestilent disease: all these together at the same time compounded this war.

The war extends even into the realm of nature (and here it is impossible not to think of the Greek gods who are formally present in this passage if not literally). More generally, once we start interrogating phenomena such as force, violence, and conflict, even in purely Greek terms, we may soon come to the view that they are ubiquitous in both war and peace time.[148] We might point to the shield of Achilles' representation of war and peace in terms of a continuity governed by *eris* (strife: *Il.* 18.490-540; cf. Hes. *Op.* 11-32), for which Herodotus substitutes the

[148] Foufas 2019 sets out to construct a Thucydidean version of this perspective.

word *stasis* (Hdt. 8.79.2). Or Heraclitus' statement that war is the father of all (DK B53).[149]

But this opens the separate risk of turning the war into an empty referent, a catch-all word for what is everywhere and nowhere in the text at once. So let us briefly examine the historical context of the events Thucydides describes. In the preceding generations Athens and the Peloponnesians had fought several times, but they had also worked together (Herodotus counted four invasions of Attika, two for war and two for the good of the Athenian people: Hdt. 5.76.5). They cooperated especially during the Persian Wars, which are always in the background of this text and sometimes bleed into the foreground (e.g. 3.54-9).[150] The fifth century saw *xenia* ties between prominent Athenians and Peloponnesians, including between Pericles and the Spartan King Archidamus (2.13.1), as well as efforts to prevent war that extended into the early stages of the conflict (1.80-85.2, 2.18.3). That Athens and the Peloponnesians were rivals does not mean they were bitterly opposed: it is, after all, with one's rivals and enemies that one makes peace. But Thucydides himself shows that in the intervening decades of the fifth century relations grew considerably worse between Athens and the Peloponnesian cities with outbursts of conflict (1.89-118).[151] He declares the ulterior, long historical process of Athens' growth and the fear this provoked in Sparta to be the war's truest cause (1.23.6).[152] Yet even still, the beginning of war is marked specifically and only at the time when the Athenians and Peloponnesians stop exchanging heralds (2.1).

The contrast between war and peace for Thucydides is not a legal contrast, but a practical and porous one: those at peace are committed to finding ways to live

[149] For references on *polemos* in Heraclitus see Gianvittorio 2010, 7.
[150] See Rood 1999.
[151] I discuss the *Pentekontaetia* at the end of Chapter 2.
[152] I discuss 1.23.6 in chapter 4.

together whereas people at war are committed to finding ways to destroy each other. It mirrors the part of Herodotus' *Histories* where the defeated Croesus tells Cyrus: "in peace sons bury their fathers, in war fathers bury their sons" (1.87.4: ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ [εἰρήνῃ] οἱ παῖδες τοὺς πατέρας θάπτουσι, ἐν δὲ τῷ [πολέμῳ] οἱ πατέρες τοὺς παῖδας).[153] Let us call this Croesus' definition. More recently Carl von Clausewitz famously defined war as "the continuation of policy by other means (…) a true political instrument (…) The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."[154] This modern understanding negates the special status of war insofar as wars often begin and end for political motives. A war may be a means of forcing a concession, changing a dynamic, extending one's dominance over a weaker power, or overthrowing one's masters. But Croesus' definition emphasises how these ends are exceeded and surpassed by the struggle to destroy that they inaugurate. All other things being equal, in war, the victor will be the one who goes to a greater length: that is, the one who is more willing to risk their own destruction to ensure the destruction of their opponent. War is thus *planned destruction*, where the adjective and noun refer each to both end and means. To be at war is to be conquered by it, in the grip of what the surest judgments of Pericles (1.140.1: τῆς μὲν γνώμης, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, αἰεὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἔξομαι) serve only deepen and prolong, what the raving notions of Cleon (4.39.3: μανιώδης) swell out to premature exhaustion.

War and what is separately labelled politics (diplomacy for example) might be waged for the same end, but war is politics by a completely other means.[155]

[153] In Corcyra fathers murder their sons (3.81.5). On the theme of intergenerational conflict in Thucydides see Strauss 1993, 130-78.
[154] Clausewitz 2007, 28f.
[155] Cf. Streeck 2024, 293: "*Wars are about killing and getting killed.* This makes them passionate affairs, bordering on the metaphysical." Mainstream contemporary scholarship on war tends to be framed by jurisprudential questions of individual and group ethics. For contemporary analyses of war as a process

Individually people's motives may be as various as they are in peacetime, but they inhabit a form of social existence and a basis of social interaction where the risk of individual death is high and all deeds tend toward destruction: it is itself a form, a medium that shapes what takes place within it and whose unfolding reveals its guiding principles.[156] This new ascendancy of a principle of destruction, which may be absent from individual motives and behaviours during the war but is clearly discernible once they are examined collectively, marks a different epoch and introduces the time period of 'the war.'

All the same, this epoch contains a paradox that should not be resolved into any self-consistent falsity. The war is an event, a disruption of the natural and previous order, yet it is also a continuation of that order among these cities which are organised and trained for war.[157] In a contrary sense, therefore, this war should be understood as an extension of its present epoch of Greek cities, and a ritual of contemporary social practice like the religious festivals to which Thucydides contrasts it (3.104).[158] To understand things properly we must therefore examine the society that produced this conflict and the concerns of those who fought, as the sentence leads us.

[4] *Of the Peloponnesians and Athenians* / τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων

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and a systemic phenomenon related to overarching political structures it is necessary to consult Marxists: e.g. Arrighi 1994; Harvey 2000; Streeck 2020, 2024.

[156] Compare with Macleod's very perceptive analysis (1983, 124) of the effect of war as described by Thucydides in his generalising description of *stasis* (3.82.1-2) – war, he claims, makes a whole range of new actions *possible,* and in that sense empowers people; separately it also makes these actions *necessary,* and in that sense removes people's agency. The result is a competitive and escalating violence, a situation where "the ideas and skills which war or faction breeds in men may seem to them to be an advantage, but in fact take control of them and help to destroy humanity."

[157] In Chapter 4 I will argue that the state of *stasis* for the Greek *polis,* according to Thucydides, rather than constituting a reversion away from the peaceful rule of law, marks a kind of exception-within that results from and reveals a fundamental truth about that law.

[158] In Chapter 6 I will argue that Thucydides shows an awareness of the historical contingency of the masculine ethics of war in Greek cities and takes a critical view that regards these ethics as self-destructive. Cf. Bruzzone 2021, 2: "War was partly worthy of memorialisation for the Greeks, as for subsequent people, because of its centrality in shaping a sense of identity."

The war will be 'of' far more people than the Peloponnesians and Athenians of this compressed phrase.[159] But it will remain 'of' these two in the strict sense that their commitment to destroy each other is the ultimate source of conflict and its basis elsewhere (2.2.1, 3.82-4). The expression recognises their hegemony over other cities, which the text portrays prominently as a shocking secret against the backdrop of allusions to a much more euphemistic and propagandistic supremacy.[160] The Athenian and the Peloponnesian and Spartan vassal cities are normally referred to as allies.[161] But at the start of the war, we are told that many cities believe the Athenians act like rulers over others and deny their freedom (2.8.4-5; cf. 1.89-118, 3.9-14). We must wait for the Athenian speakers in the Melian Dialogue to voice the fully cynical view of Sparta (5.105.4, cf. 3.68.1-4):[162]

> Λακεδαιμόνιοι γὰρ πρὸς σφᾶς μὲν αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰ ἐπιχώρια νόμιμα πλεῖστα ἀρετῇ χρῶνται· πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἄλλους πολλὰ ἄν τις ἔχων εἰπεῖν ὡς προσφέρονται, ξυνελὼν μάλιστ᾽ ἂν δηλώσειεν ὅτι ἐπιφανέστατα ὧν ἴσμεν τὰ μὲν ἡδέα καλὰ νομίζουσι, τὰ δὲ ξυμφέροντα δίκαια.
>
> When it comes to their own mutual interactions and internal rules the Spartans are very scrupulous: towards others a great deal could be said about how they act, but essentially it would prove that of all the peoples we know they are the ones most inclined to treat easy actions as noble and self-interested ones as right.

[159] At 2.1 a repetition of almost the same phrase includes a reference to the allies: ὁ πόλεμος (…) Ἀθηναίων καὶ Πελοποννησίων καὶ τῶν ἑκατέροις ξυμμάχων.

[160] See Loraux (1986, 81-2 esp. n31) and Strasburger 2009 on euphemism in the Funeral speeches at Athens. Recently Mills (2020) has argued that the Athenians generally represented themselves in much more flattering and less cynical terms than Thucydides characterises. Cf. Low 2005 on euphemistic and subtle language in fifth-century Athenian imperial inscriptions.

[161] The word ξύμμαχοι appears more than 500 times.

[162] See Fragoulaki's (2013, 162-79) reading of the dialogue through the theme of kinship. Connor (1984, 149-50) compares Melos with the Plataean debate and subsequent destruction of the city by Sparta (3.52-68). *Pace* Strasburger (2009, 212-4) who perceives the Spartans as sincere actors.

Speaking on his own behalf Thucydides gets to the point. In the Archaeology, he baldly contrasts the forms of domination experienced by cities under Athens and Sparta (1.18-9). Forms of domination they are both. These words of the opening sentence already imply this.

The genitive plural ('Athenians,' 'Peloponnesians') rather than a singular noun referring to states ('Athens,' 'Sparta,' 'Corinth'), is standard throughout the work and points to the author's abiding interest in the ontology of civic entities.[163] The plural anticipates Nikias' much later claim that a city is its "men" (7.77.7: ἄνδρες): a rallying cry for Athens to an audience of soldiers mostly from non-Athenian cities (cf. 7.57). This identification of the city with its men also precedes the destruction of a large share of Athens' fighting population (7.86). The issue was a live one in Thucydides' intellectual milieu. The preoccupation of Socrates for example when building his utopia in the *Republic* (even though he includes women among the guardian class), and the boast of Pericles in the Funeral Oration (2.39-41), are each to do with the city's methods of reproducing without incident the men who successively compose it like the boards of Theseus' ship. They are men of war: trained to fight and destroy, prepared to die. But in each case – that of Socrates and Pericles – there is something else for which they fight: the city whom they admire as lovers (2.43.1), whose territory they regard as their truest mother (*Rep.* 414d-15). Socrates calls this a noble lie, but it would be truer to say it is these men's creation, with a force of reality that disappears only when it ceases to be imagined (see Chapters 4 and 7).[164] The concept of the city is a lie most true. Above all it is a mystification of the urges and driving forces of the

[163] In a large percentage of the sentences with which he introduces a particular or event or unit of action, the subject is a masculine plural such as 'the Athenians,' 'the Peloponnesians,' 'the Spartans' – see Dewald 2005, 37-8. On the general Greek tendency to refer to city-states with plural nouns see Hansen 1998, 56-7 (cf. Hansen 1996). But Thucydides does sometimes use the feminine singular (e.g. 3.49.4; see discussion pp. 113-14).

[164] For Athenian perspectives in general on noble lies and their civic value see Hesk 2000, 143-201.

men whose war this is (and the *Lysistrata* cleverly points this out: the war is not between women). In Chapter 6 I will argue that the *Peloponnesian War* is informed by a notion of the city as a male warrior collective, and an understanding of both the war itself and the masculine virtues of war as historically contingent phenomena arising out of this underlying structure. At the opening here it is significant that Thucydides here uses the genitive *masculine* plural.[165]

[5] *How They Fought Each Other, Beginning As Soon As It Was Established* / ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου

With this clause a new representation of time is superimposed on the initial one advanced by the preceding verb. Edmunds argues that the prior verb *wrote up,* in the aorist, creates a permanent present-time within the text and beyond its contents which he calls its *hic et nunc.*[166] But this new phrase opens what was closed shut by that word, *xunegrapsen,* namely the period of composition, which corresponds directly to the linear progression of the text from start to finish.[167] In this clause, the contradictory strain of both presence and progression is intensified by the participle *kathistamenou,* a carefully chosen synonym of *arxamenos* that represents the war as a state of affairs or an overarching condition.[168] But this state of affairs is an upheaval (1.1.2), a dramatic change, and

[165] Cf. Loraux 1995, 235: "War is men's business."
[166] Edmunds 2009, 94-100.
[167] On time and perspective in this clause see Tsakmakis (1995, 28f), and in the sentence in general Rusten 2017, 228.
[168] Cf. Parry (1981, 99) on compounds of ἵστημι in the Archaeology: "The nodal points of [the Archaeology's] development of power are largely indicated by compounds of ἵστημι. These verbs signify the putting into a position of something, or the taking up of a position." See also Joho's (2022, 58-60) analysis of their use in the *stasis* description. Lucian's variant, συνισταμένου (*Hist. Conscr.* 15, noted in Alberti 1.25) would give a sense of the beginning as a confluence of factors more than a state of affairs established. It is, however, not preferable because a form of it appears a few lines down and would thus result in repetition.

the *hōs* clause makes us imagine a process that corresponds with the unfolding sequence of the text.[169]

Thucydides often dwells in the paradox of being and becoming (Allison has drawn attention to his frequent and often abstract uses of the verb *gignesthai*).[170] Loraux and Edmunds rightly observe that the timeline of perception and composition gives way to the closed timeline of the written *logos*. But they do not sufficiently appreciate how this then opens and becomes the internal timeline of the war *as logos*. By positioning himself here at the start of the war, Thucydides establishes a point of view that can and will change with the new impressions and expectations that result from its development.[171] Implied here is the collapse of the opposition between motion and rest – an established situation characterised by motion, a state of affairs characterised by change.[172] The war 'established' is like its cognate word *stasis,* civil war, which implies both division or agitation and yet fixity in a single place or state.[173] The war is like the barley drink of Heraclitus (DK B125), which holds together and keeps its substance while stirred and moving, and when lying still it comes apart. The paradox of movement and rest reintroduces the tension of the opening words between timelines, but now as a clash of perspectives: to see the thing as one caught in its ceaseless development, its flow, or as one who can observe the war in its static entirety? The reintroduction of the subject with a participle in the next word brings back these fundamental issues and develops them in a new way.

[169] Allison discusses the 'Process-Product Ambiguity' inherent in the dual sense of the word *paraskeuē* (1989, 30-8). In fact, this ambiguity recurs throughout and the interrelation of product and process is a theme.
[170] Allison 1997, 114-9.
[171] On this part of the proem see Hammond 1952, 130.
[172] I discuss this opposition in more depth at the beginning of Chapter 4.
[173] See Loraux 1997A, 104-8 (and 108-11 where she discusses Heraclitus' barley drink).

[6] *Expecting* / καὶ ἐλπίσας

The verb of expectation takes up again the opening theme of judgement (analysis leading to decision and action),[174] bringing us to an important and controversial question about this text: does it offer an implicit doctrinal theory of everything or merely a particular description of one thing?[175] A recent essay by Neville Morley has demonstrated the intractability of the question posed in this form.[176] At the worst it comes to a dispute between vulgar notions of history-as-record and philosophy-as-dogma. Gribble has noted that the problem of the relationship between the particular and the general is one that affects all historical writing and was discussed even by Aristotle (*Poet.* 9.1451a36-b11).[177] The above definition of war provides a way out of the impasse. The war occurs in a particular time and place, but its unfolding causes a shift in the consciousness of the observer or participant; it changes the way they look at everything, and in that sense it is general. The concept of the war as a medium can lead us towards a solution of the history/theory problem by means of the very shrewd definition of theoretical understanding that Clausewitz offers.[178] He contrasts the idea of theory *as doctrine* with that of theory *as study*. Theory as doctrine leads to the development of general laws that are supposed to describe reality but are often distant from it.

[174] Numerous scholars have emphasised and discussed the logical arrangement of the clause that follows, in which a claim (in this case, an expectation) is advanced and then substantiated by supporting evidence: Hammond 1952 (esp. 129-30); Latacz 1980, 87-9; Tsakmakis 1995, 29n5. In this context 'expecting' and not 'hoping' is clearly the preferred translation. Hammond claims (140-1) that "the bulk of Book 1 was composed before his exile (…) [and] he did not tamper seriously with his work in the light of later experience gained during the course of the twenty-seven years' war." I have no opinion on this (it hardly makes a difference whether the text's changes of outlook result from retrospective planning or progressive composition) except to say that Hammond's observation need not contradict the unitarian claims of (e.g.) Rood 1998A. Cf. Strauss 1964, 162: "War is a violent teacher not only of everyone except Thucydides but also of Thucydides himself. Taught by that teacher Thucydides presents the war as it unfolds."

[175] 'Fact-grubber or philosopher?' as Whitehead (1980) asks (cf. de Romilly 2005, 31-40f; Soares 2021; Cartledge 2022). Cf. Dover 2009 who wonders about 'literature' instead of 'philosophy.' On judgement see Dewald 2009, 130.

[176] Morley 2016.

[177] Gribble 1999, 159-6.

[178] In Clausewitz 2007, 72-132.

The common-sense idea that theory and practice are completely distinct spheres or planes that correspond with different kinds of knowledge results from this inadequate notion of theory. Mystified statements by scholars about the lack of any theme or clear lesson of the war ("Well, what is the lesson?" asks Munson on behalf of a generation of readers), are based on the same everyday miscomprehension.[179] By contrast, if one engages with theory as part of a practice of study it leads to a critical awareness (whose extent is the real measure of one's theoretical understanding), which involves a capacity to analyse situations by developing as rigorous as possible an understanding of both the causes of a given phenomenon and the situation within which the phenomenon occurs.[180] Analysis and insight brought to bear on a situation or circumstance are the real applications of theoretical knowledge. The participle briskly relates a procedure of insight resulting in action: the composition of the work.[181]

Nicole Loraux characterises this opening, and the kind of intellectual activity that it seems to imagine, as little more than a "pure exaltation [by the intellect] of its own power."[182] Loraux may be right insofar as the intellect and its object (the world) may be detached or have an illusory connection; but this would make its power false, since the intellect's only strength and value derives from the unity of thought and substance or from thought's potential as a way of being in the world. Her remark is better as a limit or a litmus-test for the kind of understanding this work offers than a full description. Castoriadis stresses the

[179] Munson 2023, 89.

[180] Cf. de Romilly (2005, 29): "He wanted to make the real itself take on a philosophical manner and to express the most authentic philosophy" ("*Il voulait obliger le réel lui-même à prendre une portée philosophique et à exprimer la philosophie la plus authentique*"). On the importance of prediction in Thucydides see de Romilly 2005, 79-88. The point is strongly qualified, and the nature of the understanding involved turned on its head, in the course of the text (see esp. Stahl 2003 and Orwin 1994) – this will emerge in the course of what follows. See also Sommer 2006 on the idea of politics as a *technē* in Thucydides and elsewhere.

[181] See Lang 1995 (esp. 49).

[182] Loraux 1986A, 154: "*pure exaltation de son propre pouvoir.*"

Greek political virtue of *autarkeia,* self-sufficiency, which he argues that Thucydides transforms into the intellectual one of self-awareness, the understanding of oneself and one's world which is necessary in order to change it as one would like.[183] Those who do not properly see the causes and specific character of a situation are doomed to perpetuate them as they act. There is a risk in the idea of knowledge-as-power that Castoriadis proposes and adapts from Pericles, in that ultimately it uses knowledge to support an understanding of oneself as sovereign, independent. In the third part of Chapter 7 I analyse the sequence in Book 2 where this illusion in its Periclean form is shattered. From a philosophical point of view, Hegel demonstrated, with his Lord-Bondsman paradigm, (among other things) how much the notion of a completely closed and autonomous subject is delusion based on forgetting about others whom society turns into mere instruments.[184] To avoid succumbing to this trap of the intellect we must for the moment, like Thucydides, set aside all hopes of using knowledge for some benefit or action and commit ourselves instead simply to analyse, to observe. Thucydides thus predicts the nature of the war and responds by seeking to comprehend and to reproduce it for the benefit of later times.[185] The perspective of those later times, and the interest that this text might hold for them, no less than the events from which it was produced, is what he will now introduce.

[183] Castoriadis 2011, 27-56, 83-109. See also Scanlon 1994, 145-64; Vlassopoulos 2007, 74. On *autonomia,* or political independence, and the Greek *polis* (an ideal that has been overstated, and may not have been particularly important), see Hansen 1995.

[184] *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 178-98 (tr. Miller 1977, 111-8). Foufas (2019, 86-7) compares the Hegelian parable with the Periclean Funeral Oration on the grounds that, in both cases, the Lord or the stronger party becomes in a sense trapped.

[185] See especially my analysis of 1.22.4 at the end of Chapter 2 (pp. 90-8).

[7] *It Would Be Large and The Most Worthy of a* logos *of All Those Which Had Come Before* / μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων

These words express a link between size and significance that incorporates a sense of the relation between quality and quantity, and more profoundly between *logos* and *ergon* (arguably *the* fundamental Thucydidean binary).[186] Let us follow this chain down. *Megas,* "large," eventually will signify a correlation between catastrophe, scale, and thematic significance (1.23.1-3, above) which incorporates a traditional Greek literary way of thinking that seeks to interpret the quotidian by means of the exceptional, and the small by means of the large.[187] Many people will never experience a day as awful as that most fateful one in the life of Oedipus, but somehow in *Oedipus at Colonus* his story invites the reflection from the chorus that "Not to be born is best – but failing that, second-best is to go back where you came from as fast as possible." (1224-7: μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νι-/κᾷ λόγον· τὸ δ᾽, ἐπεὶ φανῇ,/βῆναι κεῖθεν ὅθεν περ ἥ-/κει, πολὺ δεύτερον, ὡς τάχιστα). In the *Republic,* Socrates applies a similar sensibility introducing the question of what a just city might look like to the text's previous discussion about what justice is and whether it is worth having (368d-369a). He compares it to how reading a bunch of letters that are small and distant becomes simpler after reading a version of the same letters enlarged and up close. Thucydides, as we will see (esp. Chapter 2) argues at some length that the Peloponnesian war is the largest of all, both materially and in terms of the suffering involved (1.1-23). He

[186] The terms *megas* (large) and *axiologos* (worthy of a *logos*) overlap in a sense but are each individually important. The second is at least partly justified by the first, the war's size makes it worthy of a *logos*; although not wholly, perhaps, since the second is a superlative and the first only a simple adjective. In a number of places towards the end of the Archaeology Thucydides clearly means that this war is the 'largest' ever (1.21.2, 1.23.1-3). On size as a fundamental and 'dynamic' concept of Thucydidean historiography see Canfora 1977, 458-61.

[187] Syme (1960, 41) – events are "selected, enhanced, and invested with exemplary significance." As well as the examples given, see Holmes 2007, for an argument that the *Iliad* conveys the total pain and suffering of those fighting in the war by taking as representative the wounds inflicted upon its aristocratic characters.

claims that the events he describes encapsulate, more or less, constant truths about the nature of events and human beings (1.22.4, 3.82.2).[188] The war writes the human condition in large letters. In that regard, both adjectives, *large* and *most worthy of a* logos, participate in the opening's dialectic of greatness, in which greatness of magnitude and glory is transformed by greatness of suffering.[189] The second term is used by Herodotus to describe how the Athenians fought at Marathon (6.112.3), and how the Spartans fought at Thermopylae (7.211.3).[190] The conventional equivalence between fighting and glory is certainly an aspect of Thucydides' point (he describes the Syracusan victory over Athens as "most illustrious" [7.87.5: λαμπρότατον]). But there is more – the meaning of *axiologos* is very different when he uses it to refer to those Spartans who, under a secret truce with Demosthenes the Athenian, run away from a fight-against-the-odds and abandon their Ambraciot allies to their death (3.109.2: ἀξιολογώτατοι).[191] In the context of this outer framing, the irony is directed at more than just the Spartans; it is the notion of worth itself, understood in a sort of militaristic sense of greatness, that comes under scrutiny, as I will argue in Chapter 6.

Thucydides here identifies his own work as a *logos*.[192] He uses the adjective *axiologos* ten times in total; four in the superlative, six with a clear implicit reference to the *logos* of the *Peloponnesian War*.[193] Besides being a *logos* itself in the

[188] Cf. Syme on the speeches (1960, 42): "He will insert a pair of speeches that lead to no action whatsoever (…) eager to expound a general problem that goes beyond the mere time and place."
[189] Connor 1984, 30-2; Parry 1989, 288-9; Stahl 2003, 27-30.
[190] Less directly there may be an echo of Hdt. 1.4.3: the Persians said that they themselves made "no *logos*" (λόγον οὐδένα), when their women were kidnapped from Asia, whereas because of Helen the Greeks besieged Troy.
[191] Demosthenes agrees to allow them pass specifically because he wants to discredit the Spartans among the Greeks generally as people who would give up others to save themselves (3.109.2).
[192] I cannot agree with Beasley (2023, 45): "Thucydides' work is *ergon* (work or deed). Of course, Thucydides' text is also by definition *logos,* since it is a linguistic production. But Thucydides nonetheless presents it as a *logos*-which-is-not-*logos,* as a monumental *ergon,* in order to convey its categorical difference from and superiority to the temporary inaccurate and agonistic speech of poets and logographers."
[193] Superlatives: 1.1.1, 2.10.3, 3.109.2, 5.74.2. Implicit reference to the text: 1.1.1, 1.14.3, 1.17.1, 4.23.1, 4.48.6 5.74.3. Others: 6.60.2.

form in which it comes down to us, the war contains a number of individual *logoi* – both speeches and symbols or widespread ideas – which are somehow contrasted with the events as they develop. This needs to be understood in terms of the distinction in Greek thought between *logos* – the act and contents of speech, writing, reason, and the world-order – and *ergon* – facts, deeds, events or monuments – they form an antithetical pair. Adam Parry made an important study of the antithesis in Thucydides, where he claimed that ultimately *logos* retreats before the war which is *ergon "par excellence."*[194] At first glance, this may seem true. But having been translated into writing in the text, the war and its contents, what Parry studied, has become a *logos* so that the opposite claim (the war itself is the ultimate *logos*) might have equal validity. Within the logic of the text, the war's events may indeed have the force of an *ergon* that undermines the arguments and truth-claims of individual characters; but this only further underscores its sense as ultimate *logos;* that is, as the source and measure of meaning, the totality of what is expressed by the text as a speech-act and the final yardstick against which individual passages are measured. The written war is both *logos* and *ergon:* as the reader gropes with the simulated *erga* of the narrative what they are grappling with is not the war as an *ergon,* but the war as a *logos.*[195] The collapse of this distinction within the text raises the question of whether it was truly there in the first place in lived reality – or whether, like the oaks and stones Socrates mentions in the *Phaedrus* (275b-c), the war itself as *ergon* also involved a sort of natural underlying *logos*. Flipping the process by which the war as *ergon* becomes identified with the war as *logos,* the proem entire is arguably based finally on a conception of the textual *logos* as *ergon*: a written text as the

[194] Parry 1981, 92.

[195] Jaffe (2017, 15) refers to the text's "master λόγος – omnipresent but hidden in the deep background." It is not hidden deep in the background.

work of an individual consciousness and a sort of object that Thucydides later calls a *ktēma,* a possession (1.22.4).

To deem war an *ergon* is to claim it excludes or defies *logos*: it is concrete where the former is abstract, it resists definition and defeats interpretation. For all that he complicates the distinction between *logos* and *ergon*, Parry still concludes by claiming that Thucydides "sees the world in terms of an essential division between words and things, between thought and reality."[196] But at this level it must be recognised that the idea of senselessness only makes sense, so to speak, as the product of an organised system of sense that projects senselessness as its other. This is why nihilism is ultimately a conservative idea, and indeed the gnostic doctrine of many conservative thought-systems. At the end his book *Truth and Truthfulness,* Williams makes a remarkable about-face:

> Doubtless people will continue to make sense of the world in terms that help them survive in it. But the question is how truthful those terms can be (…) The narrator in *Heart of Darkness* says about Kurtz and his dying words:
>
> > "This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it (…) He had summed up – he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth."

[196] *Ibid.* 6.

> Conrad, as so often, shows a truth and celebrates the courage of truthfulness. But this truth, the one that Kurtz saw at the last moment of his life, is not one that left to itself could keep anyone alive.
>
> The hope can no longer be that truth, enough truth, the whole truth, will itself set us free. But it is a lot more than the hope, merely, that the virtues of truth will keep going – in some form or other, they are bound to keep going as long as human beings communicate. The hope is that they will keep going in something like the more courageous, intransigent, and socially effective forms that they have acquired over their history; that some institutions can exist that will both support and express them; that the ways in which future people will come to make sense of things will enable them to see the truth and not be broken by it.[197]

It is no accident that Kurtz comes to this realisation in the Congo. Chinua Achebe has shown that *Heart of Darkness* takes place within an Africa that is constructed as an inverted image of European society, and which validates Europe's ordering principles even as it holds out the terrifying image of a world whose truth is chaos.[198] Kurtz arrives at a nihilism internal to the European system of thought which is poised against it and where it occupies the position of Other. Above, Williams repeats this gesture by imagining a philosophy of truth as a foundation of shared meaning and a way of surviving and resisting an essential chaos (a chaos of which he allows only a glimpse), or as Pericles might call it, the world's stupidity (1.140.1). Reality's emptiness is to be conquered, repressed, and perhaps secretly worshipped and disclosed to the initiated few. To claim Thucydides conceives the war finally as an *ergon* means attributing to him this mould of thought. As Rood puts it: "[Thucydides] suggests that our desire to

[197] Williams 2002, 268-9.
[198] Achebe 1978.

make the world meet our concerns is dangerous, that our desire for safety deprives us of (material and moral) safety."[199] The implied conclusion is that we must accept the essential danger of the world, the impossibility of its meeting our concerns – or else, framed differently, like de Romilly's Athens we must pick ourselves up and continue the ascent of more perfect failure.[200]

In the seventh chapter I will argue that, while this sort of nihilistic attitude is certainly present in Thucydides (most notably where military adversity or the threat of destruction cause a collapse in people's sense of stability of meaning), it is not the final word, but just another moment in the work's portrayal of the shifting bounds of sense. Here I argue that whatever its nihilistic and tragic appeal, the above grain of interpretation works too hard the distinction between *logos* and *ergon*. It is true that generally speaking in Greek literature and rhetoric these terms are opposites.[201] But in Thucydides' work they are entangled, and Loraux was right to call for readers to go beyond "the constraints of the opposition between *logos* and *ergon*."[202] For now let it suffice for me to give three examples of how *logos* and *ergon* in the text can be conceived as unified rather than opposed concepts:

1. They are often simply identical. *Logos* is *ergon, ergon* is *logos.* The act of speaking (or writing) is an *ergon* that changes the course of reality, and every action or event is something that must be perceived described and comprehended as such, particularly with regard to aspects that might be

[199] Rood 1998A, 293, with reference to the earlier Williams 1993.
[200] 1951, 295.
[201] Parry 1981, 15-61 gives a thorough overview of their use. Later (76-103) he distinguishes helpfully between the popular distinction (where *logos* is speech/thought/falsehood and *ergon* is action/event/truth), and the literary one (where *ergon* is the world and *logos* is the way humans construct the world in order access it), arguing that Thucydides incorporates both.
[202] Loraux 1986B, 16. See also Jaffe 2017, 10: "If, indeed, [*logos* and *ergon*] is truly an antithesis at all."

latent.[203] This essential relationship is laid out explicitly in the text by Diodotus (3.42.2 – see p. 248).

2. Each is both a cause and an effect of the other. "Rhetoric is the medium of thought about politics embodying a rational approach to practical questions and designed to answer them in the best possible way" – Macleod thus emphasises how much rhetoric, *logos* par excellence in the text, is conceived in response to *erga* and also by the desire to shape them.[204] If Brasidas is like Achilles, as some have said, then he is an Achilles of *logos* and it is *logoi* that are his most impressive *erga* (cf. Chapter 4, pp. 165-7).[205] Conversely, *erga* may be part of a strategy and their most important result may have to do with the strategic and emotive thoughts of others.[206] More generally, *erga* can be effects of an intelligible cause or process. Many speakers stress the random nature of the war when it suits their argument (e.g. 1.78, 1.140.1, 4.18.3-4, 5.104). But very often the narrative's most random or disparate events prove comprehensible in terms of larger structure or process, explicit or implicit. In several of the chapters that follow I identify and analyse such structures – civilisational development (Chapter 2), nature and natural forces (Chapters 3 and 4), political systems (Chapter 5), civilisational and social systems (Chapter 6).

[203] See Gagarin 2006. Immerwahr (1960) claims that for Thucydides *ergon* refers to acts and facts, whereas for Herodotus it means 'monument' – this is to be accepted along with qualifications of Rood (1998B, 250). Several scholars (Jung 1991, 49-50; Tsakmakis 1998, 243) have argued that at 1.22.1-3 *logoi* and *erga* are represented as a complementary pair, aspects of the single *ergon* of the text. This may be compared with the increasing interest in indirect speeches in Thucydides (see discussion and references in Greenwood 2023A, 63-4). Cf. Martin 1989 on Homeric speech as an act of self-presentation and self-fashioning. Another genre where the line becomes difficult to draw is the inscription or monument – for the influence of these genres upon Thucydidean writing see Loraux 1980; Moles 1999; Bruzzone 2018.
[204] Macleod 1983, 68.
[205] I argue this when discussing the figure and arc of Brasidas in Chapter 4.
[206] I argue this in Chapter 7.

3. Each conditions the historical form of the other. Rhetoric, the Greek form of political deliberation; written prose; and even the particular concepts and attitudes of this particular text, were historical developments conditioned by the events (*erga*) that caused them to be possible and/or necessary. There are overtones of this point in the Archaeology (see Chapter 2). Conversely, according to Thucydides the truest cause of the war (1.23.6), *ergon par excellence,* was twofold: (1) The growth of the Athenians, whose foundation in a *logos* which organises society around the drive to conquer is revealed in the Funeral Oration (2.35-46 – I argue this in Chapter 7); (2) The fear of the Spartans which constitutes a perception and a judgement (1.23.6). Even the plague is conditioned by history, since it relates to the crowding of Athenians inside the walls to escape Spartan attacks: a fact of which Thucydides seems aware (2.51.5-6, cf. 2.14-17). The specific form of an *ergon* in a place or time is linked with historical circumstances shaped by *logos,* and vice versa. Greenwood claims that throughout "Thucydides undertook a nuanced analysis of the constructed, instrumental nature of polis-based cultural and ethnic identities."[207] The *erga* of each *polis* he thus implies are produced by its internal structure as *logos*: its system of education, laws or constitution, identities (in Chapter 6 I argue Thucydides depicts and responds to this shaping influence).

All of these intuitions are beneath the surface of the final clause, which follows, as objects and quantities are shown as proof of the individual intentions and larger historical processes that have caused them to amass on either side,

[207] Greenwood 2021, 16.

throughout Greece, as preparations for war. They are also treated as signs of the events to come.

[8] *Taking as Proof, First, that Both Sides Were at the Height of Their Power Entering into It with Their Entire Force; Second, that He Could See the Rest of Greece Setting Itself up on Either Side – Some Immediately, Some Waiting.* / τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι ἀκμάζοντές τε ἦσαν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμφότεροι παρασκευῇ τῇ πάσῃ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ὁρῶν ξυνιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους,[208] τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον.

This final part of the sentence progresses from the discussing the quantities of force on each side to the intention and outlook. It reads minds: particularly those in Greece who delay joining the war on either side but are prepared to join it. Here and throughout the analysis of quantity and force is treated inseparably from that of psychology and motivation. In Chapter 3 I will argue that Thucydides' prose style, especially his sentence-structure, often carries semantic content. The above clause exemplifies that point as it unfurls expansively over Greece enacting the sense of scale which it describes. The term 'taking as proof' has specific technical importance in later handbooks of rhetoric, but here its meaning is probably more general and closely bound up with the interpretation of signs or *sēmeia*.[209] Scholars are often struck by Thucydides' focus on material and quantity. The key word in this regard is *paraskeuē,* components of power amassed, which I already referred to in the introduction. Let me quote again this remark by Allison: "to be successful *paraskeuē* must contain a *logos* (…) [it] is not

[208] Some manuscripts omit the phrase on either side ("πρὸς ἑκατέρους" – see Alberti 1.25). The phrase disrupts the grammatical simplicity of the passage and may have been removed by some for that reason. It does, however, clarify the sense of ξυνιστάμενον, and for that reason should be retained.

[209] See Hornblower 1987, 100-6. Cf. Ponchon's (2017, 47) French translation: "*déchiffrer les signes.*" On signs in Thucydides see Reynolds 2009, with discussion below in the chapter on the Archaeology. On the poetic roots and philosophical legacy of this concept, see Struck 2004.

simply a substitute for *ergon* [defined implicitly as that which excludes *logos*]."[210] *Paraskeuē* means not just material such as ships or money: it conveys the framework and direction within which these materials are accumulated. It is these materials as signs of war-readiness. Here and elsewhere, for Thucydides, the emphasis on materials is really a symbolic materialism that treats objects as conductors of strong and complex currents of thought and feeling.[211]

But still quantity, as they say, has a quality of its own, and the emphasis on preparedness and mobilisation is not just a symbol for what people thought and felt, but a substitute for these which sometimes obscures them, and this too is important. A contrary aspect of Thucydides' text, its vividness, was praised by Plutarch (*De. Glor. Ath.* 347a):[212]

> ὁ δ᾽ οὖν Θουκυδίδης ἀεὶ τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς ταύτην ἁμιλλᾶται τὴν ἐνάργειαν, οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα περὶ τοὺς ὁρῶντας ἐκπληκτικὰ καὶ ταρακτικὰ πάθη τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἐνεργάσασθαι λιχνευόμενος.
>
> Indeed, Thucydides always strives in what he writes for this vividness, such that he yearns to make the listener an observer to render as vivid as possible for readers those terrible events that were so *ekplēktika* and so disturbing for the people who witnessed them.

These words of Plutarch correspond well with an abiding scholarly interest in autopsy, or direct observation, as the gold standard of authority in Thucydides and later historiography.[213] But our eyes often deceive us, particularly once an

[210] Allison 1989, 48.
[211] Foster 2010 lays great stress on this point, and particularly on the unreliability of materials themselves as a basis for the understanding of power.
[212] Cf. Plut. *Vit. Nic.* 523c. On this concept see Zanker 1981; Woodman 1988, 27-8; Calame 1991; Walker 1993; Rood 1998A; Bakker 2005, 154-76 (directly comparing Homer and Thucydides); Gazis 2018, 1-13; Huitink 2020.
[213] See for example Schepens 1975, 1980; Hartog 1982, 2015A; Nenci 1995; Hald 2019.

image has passed through time and become a memory. Thucydides tells us he was personally present for at least some of the events narrated – and caught the plague (1.22.1-2, 2.48.3, 4.104.4). By doing so in some degree, of course, he makes an authority-claim. But we do not know which events he was present for, he masks this. And for those events where he was present, he tells us, he did not just accept his own account but combined and corrected it with other people's (1.22.2). In the narrative, the theme of untrustworthy appearances is very significant; during speeches and battles, especially, experience can be overwhelming, making it hard to judge what is happening for oneself. The manipulation of appearances in this way is an important weapon of war, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

Direct experience is therefore an important, but insufficient, and at times misleading epistemological criterion; as a narrative mode, the sort of scene that Plutarch describes is in fact only occasional, and often surrounded by passages much less vivid. Dionysius of Halicarnassus complains of "the unevenness of the author's treatment" (*Thuc.* 19: τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐξεργασίας τοῦ συγγραφέως ἀνώμαλον) with some scenes highly detailed and involved, others barely represented or skipped over.[214] Dionysius' criticism of the choice to record the Funeral Oration for the few Athenians who died early in the war, rather than the massive numbers who died later such as in Sicily (*Thuc.* 18), perhaps read less convincingly.[215] But in general his response points to how the inclusion of some moments of great vividness introduces a question as to why this (and not that) moment is given such space. The *technique* of vividness once acknowledged gives way to the *artistic* and *political* questions of how and where to distribute vividness

[214] On Dionysius' assessment of Thucydides in this work and others see Grube 1950; Hornblower 2004, 354-72; Weaire 2005; Irwin 2015; de Jonge 2017.

[215] Dionysius himself speculates that Thucydides chose this oration because it allowed him to make Pericles the speaker.

in the text. In the *Peloponnesian War* some things are recounted in microscopic detail, some are reduced to the status of moving entities, some are silent.[216] Already I have discussed the importance of the paradigm in this text as one large event (defined broadly) is made to imply and incorporate the rest.[217] Here I want to develop that point by referring to what I call this text's interplay between vividness and boredom. In Alberto Moravia's novel, *Boredom,* the protagonist gives the following definition:

> Boredom, for me, is literally a kind of insufficiency or inadequacy or scarcity of reality (…) My boredom could be defined as a malady of the objective, consistent with a wilting or an almost immediate loss of vitality; like seeing in a few seconds, through successive and extremely rapid changes, a flower pass from the bud to wilting and into dust.[218]

Moravia's description suggests a way to thematise the contrast between some of the text's more workmanlike sequences (esp. Books 5 and 8) and striking passages such as the battle-scenes, the Funeral Oration, the description of *stasis* at Corcyra. That is – they are different kinds of readerly experience commensurate with different strategies of representation, and it is the reader's task to draw the links. Conversely, even in battles where Thucydides' representation becomes highly vivid as with Mantinea, Pylos, and the Great Harbour of Syracuse, the text does not lose sight of the strategic and technical considerations on which the outcome is poised. Properly speaking, therefore, the

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[216] Cf. Morrison 1999 (*passim,* but see esp. 97-8). I discuss this in O'Sullivan 2024A, esp. 75-6.

[217] This applies in general to events within the text and will be discussed in particular situations where it arises (cf. Schwinge 2008, 164-5).

[218] Moravia 1964, 7 ("*Per molti la noia è il contrario del divertimento; e divertimento è distrazione, dimenticanza. Per me, invece, la noia non è il contrario del divertimento; potrei dire, anzi, addirittura, che per certi aspetti essa rassomiglia al divertimento in quanto, appunto, provoca distrazione e dimenticanza, sia pure di un genere molto particolare. La noia, per me, è propriamente una specie di insufficenza o inadeguatezza o scarsità della realtà.* (…) *la mia noia potrebbe essere definite una malattia degli oggetti, consistente in un avvizzimento o perdita di vitalità quasi repentina; come a vedere in pochi secondi, per transformazioni sucessive e rapidissime, un fiore passare dal boccio all'appassimento e alla polvere*").

text's formal aesthetic principle is not vividness, but an alternation between insufficiency and excess: not *enargeia,* but *anōmalia*.[219]

Conclusion

"We are forced to grope in the dark, armed with highly abstract and seemingly *a priori* concepts we have very little understanding of, working from perspectives we are not yet in a position to evaluate."[220] From the very beginning, we find ourselves caught in an array of concepts and perspectives which have long preceded us, already changing before our eyes. It is the concept and not the mind, the perspective and not the viewer, which is empowered and holds sway. If the opening sentence "distributes roles and places" as Loraux claims, then what must be stressed is the shifting and unsteady nature of the roles.[221] Connor concludes his study of Thucydides writing:

> The anatomy of power in the first book remains valid within limits of which we become increasingly aware. It is not rejected but transformed. Naval power and financial strength continue to be important throughout the work but they result not in progress and security but in expansion and vulnerability. Walls come to symbolize not security but siege and defeat. Boldness and innovation are crucial constituents of Athens' growth but also of her overextension and defeat. Greatness characterizes the war throughout, but comes to describe suffering, not accomplishment. Thus we are constantly led to see the other side, the unexpected application of qualities and terms.[222]

[219] Allan (2007, 96) refers to the text's "striking alternation of narrative styles."
[220] Harvey 1999, 2.
[221] Loraux 1986A, 139: "*elle distribue les rōles et les places.*"
[222] Connor 1984, 246. See also Edmunds 1975A, 143-204.

This chapter has shown that the transformation of which Connor speaks is there from the very start. *Logos* and *ergon,* land and sea, movement and rest, writing and speech, war and peace (to name a few) – we achieve insight into the way Thucydides represents these fundamental aspects of his world only if we can follow the dialectical rigour of his presentation.[223] Each is posited, not strictly as a contrast, but as a question – how are these distinct? How might they be connected?[224] This is the world according to Thucydides: where the organic unity of opposites derives from their ontological instability, their subjection to force. The next chapter takes up this point, separating the layers that constitute this outlook by means of an analysis of the paradigmatic opening pages of the *Peloponnesian War,* the Archaeology.

[223] The understanding of dialectic here is to be distinguished from the very schematic Alker 1988. See also Bodin 1940 who claims the Mytilene debate has a dialectical (though he seems to mean antilogistic) structure.

[224] Cf. Jaffe 2017, 11: "Thucydides uses extremes to reveal that which lies between them – such is one purpose of his famed reliance on antithetical formulations."

2. The Archaeology: Principles and Process

The opening pages of the text are united by a single narrative and argument concerning the development of the parallel institutions of *polis* and *archē,* City and Empire; the struggle of the author to theorise this development, by reading the traces of the past which appear in the present; the analogies between figures and societies past and present, making thematic connections that suggest universal themes corresponding with the scope of Thucydides' authorial ambitions (1.22.4). It would be wrong to limit the Archaeology exclusively to the purpose Thucydides openly declares for it: namely that of proving that the Peloponnesian War was the largest to have happened up to that time (1.21.1-2). The term Archaeology for the work's opening sequence is a later coinage (neither the scholia nor Dionysius of Halicarnassus use it),[1] but the word is a classical one for a genre of writing about the past (see Pl. *Hp. mai.* 285d), and appropriate here, as I will argue.[2] Normally its etymology is given as *archaios* + *logos,* i.e. '[Written] Account' of 'The Past,' where the adjective carries a sense of orienting oneself in relation to the past, and derives from *archē,* meaning origin or first principle.[3] Beginnings, as Thucydides himself notes, are obscure. But Greek thought is characterised frequently by the pursuit of *archē*: whether in the sense of a beginning, as with Herodotus' account of the origins of the dispute between Greeks and barbarians (Hdt. 1.1); or of a fundamental principle, which was an intellectual tendency observed and criticised by iconoclasts as various as the author of *Ancient Medicine* (*VM* 1 = Loeb 1.8) and Philolaus (DK B3). *Archē*

[1] Cf. Rood 2015, 474-5; Irwin 2007B, 194 (she instead calls it the 'proem').

[2] See Corcella 2006, 33-56. For precedents of the Archaeology in Homer and Herodotus see Nicolai 2001, 2013; Saïd 2011. Compare also the Sikelika (6.2-5, discussed in Chapter 4) which some scholars claim is drawn from a work by Antiochus of Syracuse (see Corcella 2006, 50n58).

[3] Van Wees 2017, 39. Casevitz 2004 distinguishes between *archaios,* meaning something ancient with links in the present, from *palaios,* meaning something ancient with which has none.

encompasses both origin and cause.[4] It has a third meaning, active throughout the opening sequence of this text, as a synonym of the modern word Empire. *Archē* thus signifies rule or reign, the establishment of order, and the sort of power that may be held by Minos in one context and a material such as fire in another. Mediating between these three definitions is a fourth sense of *archē,* as an overarching order or condition in which things are inscribed, the lever of a system; and a fifth meaning of *archē* as a process or *enactment* which is not reducible either to stability or change because it is a principle of change.[5]

In this chapter I argue that Thucydides' Archaeology enacts the word *archē's* slide between these definitions, bringing us finally towards an emphasis on the latter meanings of the term: the framing and culmination of its progressive narrative represent the conditions of the world where human history takes place. The Archaeology (1.1-23) depicts historical events and practices vertically. That is, on multiple related levels: as individual experiences, as expressions of the social system or super-system within which these events take place and have meaning, and as part of the broad ontology or outer world that permeates these both.[6] It is a beginning that reflects on origins and completely redefines their significance while setting its portrayal of human power within a much larger frame.[7] I begin by examining the representation of time at the outer frame of the sequence. Then I discuss the story it tells and show that the growth of institutions and increase

[4] Cf. Derrida 1998, 1-2. Cf. Golfin 2022, 154-5.

[5] Cf. Connor (1984, 102n58) on retaining the pair *aition/archē* in the disputed text of 3.82.8: "If (…) the manuscript text is retained and ἀρχή extended to a new range – to refer not to empire or origin or political office but to the dominance which stands behind these manifestations – the sentence is a powerful statement of an idea thoroughly consistent with other aspects of the text." On *archē* in Herodotus and Thucydides see Spahn 2016; Golfin 2022.

[6] For an account of various receptions see Rood 2015.

[7] Irwin 2007B is correct that the Athenian Empire is thereby (and particularly via the analogy between Minos and Athens) made to appear a natural result of human society and an expression of a universal human condition (as the Athenians themselves claim – 1.76.3, 5.105.2). But it is very narrow to equate this with a defence of Athenian imperialism (and sometimes leads far away from the text, as in the analysis of piracy at 196-7). The question is not so much whether this or that item of propaganda is true as whether its truth makes any difference.

of quantity from past to present is mediated through a more constant kind of power as *archē*: an Empire based in sovereign rule over others. I then show the importance of vitality of the sequence and turn to how Thucydides underscores this indirectly with his emphasis on disappearance, unconscious action, and obscurity as he details throughout his difficulties with reconstructing the past. Then I argue that a productive tension between disappearing vitality and a sort of constancy in symbolism drives the methodology pages and particularly Thucydides' own understanding of his work's utility. The conclusion looks ahead to show that the Archaeology's concerns are paradigmatic for the entire text.

Scholars have variously shown how the sequence works as an argument within the structure of Book 1,[8] as an introduction of methods and concepts,[9] as a narrative detailing the development of Greek power and/or civilisation and the forces that made this war inevitable.[10] Over time these forces may begin to look like constants, and some scholars have recognised the constancy of power, or the tension between change and constancy, to be a fundamental theme of this section.[11] I agree with the latter group and argue here that the Archaeology introduces us to the text's implicit political ontology (my description of that ontology is the contribution this chapter makes). Roughly speaking the world in the text can be divided into an internal, political super-order of the system that produces empires, and an external, metaphysical reality within which the former is inscribed. Although these are not portrayed with equal clarity, they are nevertheless clearly distinguished. At the same time, it is simply that one of these is 'inside' and one is 'outside' the human world. In many respects the 'outer'

[8] Erbse 1970; Ellis 1991; Sonnabend 2004, 59-74; Schwinge 2008, 13-20 (see also 'Postcript' below).
[9] Farrar 1988, 138-44; Allison 1989, 11-27; Gehrke 1993; Luraghi 2000; Rood 2006A; Reynolds 2009.
[10] De Romilly 2005, 41-78; Luraghi 2000; Price 2001, 333-77 (cf. (1) below). Tsakmakis (1995, 43-5) emphasises that the development in the sequence is strictly of power.
[11] Hunter 1982, *passim;* Stahl 2003, 23-35; Foster 2010, 8-43.

world is a more intimate part of daily life than the impersonal 'inner' system of politics and culture. Equally, both are mediated through the system of empire in that sense of *archē*. But the 'outer' world is ontologically that which contains and transcends the social system, and therefore marks a limit to the one envisioned and mapped out by society: it is most apparent as a limit and an intrusion.

In the beginning there was the world – the Archaeology begins by anchoring its apparent subject (the relative power and broader condition of past societies) in a more inherent truth (1.1.3-2.1):

> **τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαίτερα σαφῶς μὲν εὑρεῖν διὰ χρόνου <u>πλῆθος</u>** ἀδύνατα ἦν, ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει οὐ μεγάλα νομίζω γενέσθαι οὔτε κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους οὔτε ἐς τὰ ἄλλα. [1.2] φαίνεται γὰρ ἡ νῦν Ἑλλὰς καλουμένη οὐ πάλαι βεβαίως οἰκουμένη (κτλ.)
>
> **It has been impossible through the mass of time** to find anything for sure about things that happened in the past and those from even more ancient times. From the evidence I have ended up trusting after a very long investigation, I have come to believe they were not very great, neither in terms of wars nor anything else. Since it appears that long ago what is now called Greece was not inhabited in a fixed way (etc.)

Scholars reading this passage tend to focus on the latter, methodological lines – but to understand the Archaeology's framing it is necessary to read closely the highlighted portion at the beginning.[12] *Plēthos* conveys a sense of indefinite multitude. It is tempting, because of the surrounding use of words with

[12] There has been some debate about how pessimistic the language in the highlighted portion is meant to be (see Marincola 1997, 96n166). Ultimately, my point here is not affected either way since it depends on the accumulation of such pessimistic lines throughout the sequence and their centrality to the framing. But Marincola's optimistic interpretation of this passage is based on a belief that elsewhere, at 1.22.4, Thucydides uses the phrase *to saphes* to refer to his own account. That belief is mistaken (see below).

implications of sight, light, and seeing (*saphōs, phainetai*), to imagine a cloud, or fog – something whose mass makes it impossible to see through.[13] Later, when referring to the recent period of the Pentekontaetia, Thucydides uses a contrasting metaphor for the period of time between the Persian War and his own: "In all my predecessors **there was a gap in this space:** their work either dealt with what happened in Greece before the Persian War, or the Persian War itself" (1.97.2: τοῖς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἅπασιν **ἐκλιπὲς τοῦτο ἦν τὸ χωρίον** καὶ ἢ τὰ πρὸ τῶν Μηδικῶν Ἑλληνικὰ ξυνετίθεσαν ἢ αὐτὰ τὰ Μηδικά). Here Thucydides speaks of a period of time as a territory with defined boundaries in a written record. But the spatial metaphor applies, strictly speaking, to the period of time as constituted within the larger framework of, on the one hand, the Persian War, and on the other hand, this war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians. A spatial metaphor is projected onto this given expanse of time through which it is possible to delineate locations and measurements. Likewise, in the latter part of the Archaeology, he begins to use numbers of years to specify with more precision when the events took place (1.12.3-4, 1.13.3-4, 1.18.1-2). Space, measurement and number, highly correlated in Aristotle, are thus brought together by Thucydides in delimiting the fifty-year period of the Pentekontaetia, and implicitly in making other chronological conjectures.

The time-periods to which these descriptions correspond are different. The latter stretch of time encompasses a few decades all close to living memory when the work was composed, the former was more obscure and stretched far back beyond

[13] The word *plēthos* is used more than 100 times in the text to refer to things such as a huge army of soldiers (2.98.3), an amassed quantity of money (1.9.2), a fleet of ships (3.16.3), or the rabble of a city (4.104.4). It conveys the notion of a large multitude. The sequence of the Archaeology plays with vocabulary of sight and light throughout. For example, the verb *phainomai* appears eleven times, the adjective *saphēs* three times (including the adverb), the verb *skopeō* five times, the verb *horaō* once in the first sentence.

the reliable record of events.[14] But these differences of scope result in different temporalities or modes of representation, "regimes of historicity" in Hartog's phrase.[15] In the latter, time is a space to be traversed and perhaps settled upon by the author who records it; in the former it is a mass that gathers and makes things disappear, like fog. In Chapter 1 I referred to the epistemological principle avowed by Socrates in the *Republic* (368d-369a): that one must look at the enlarged to discover the truth of the small. Perhaps this could also be said of expanses of time. Enlarged beyond calendrical measure, time is revealed to be something very different from how the calendar makes it look. I will have more to say about time in Chapter 3 – suffice it to say here that although measurements and calculations of time are contained within the Archaeology's narrative, it is the image of time as a crowd, as well as the ceaseless movement of the earth's inhabitants and their unwalled communities, that provides its framing. In the Archaeology there are several distinct temporalities each connected with a different layer of the representation. We have seen how Thucydides organises the relation between these temporalities so that the near and inner is framed by the far and outer, and the known by the unknown. But equally this outer temporality is made to correspond with the most intimate minutiae of daily life. The example of time is thus reflective of how the entire sequence demonstrates what de Romilly called Thucydides' tendency "to recognise in every event the

[14] The unreliability of the written record and individual memory is a theme of this part of the text (see esp. 1.21), but the period described at 1.2.1 seems to have come before even what is accounted for in these.

[15] Hartog 2015. Purves (2010) does not discuss Thucydides in depth, but the analysis here supports her point that, generally speaking, whereas in the Homeric poems the narrator traverses time and space in a single panoptic view, fifth and fourth century prose more self-consciously identifies the narrator's perspective with a human subject caught in the expanse of time and space, seeking to come to terms with them. See also Marcaccini 2017, who argues that Thucydides conceives the past as a construction of the present (my view as outlined above is that this is not *all* he conceives it to be).

traits by which it resembles the largest possible number of events," which means a tendency "towards the most profound interpretation."[16]

This tendency is what drives the narrative sequence of the Archaeology – charting the development of city-states and the tools and institutions of political power – which many scholars have sought to read by isolating material elements: (A) Money[17] (B) Ships[18] (C) Walls.[19] But Allison recognised that these measures of quantity, although important, are only one side of the Archaeology's representation of power, and on the other side a qualitative element of power is needed to amass and direct these. Alongside money and ships she adds a third term, which she associates with Sparta rather than Athens, and calls "governmental stability."[20] Allison's concept of stability is seductive but not entirely to the point. Regimes can be stable for very different reasons (compare: 1.2.5-6, 1.18.1), and stability has to do with continuity of power more than growth or composition of power – indeed, if like Sparta one does not grow then other rising powers may be a threat (1.23.6). Equally, the stability of Athenian power in the text arguably comes from growth, a destabilising force (e.g. 1.70, 6.19.6-7). Stability is therefore a more multifaceted and less secure foundation for an

[16] De Romilly (1956, 32): "*à reconnaître dans tout événement les traits qui l'apparentent au plus grand nombre possible d'autres événements*" and "*à l'interpretaiton la plus en profondeur.*" The French may mean either 'profound' or 'in-depth.' In context the former is more appropriate. Cf. Foufas 2019, 36-46.

[17] Some scholars claim Thucydides represents power primarily as a matter of money and ships (e.g. Kallet-Marx 1993, 21-36; Erbse 1961, 26-7; Alonso-Núñez 2000, 19-55; Reynolds 2009; Kopp 2017). Foster (2010, 8-43) turns this analysis on its head by suggesting that the narrative of material progress is one of increasing destructive capability.

[18] Historians tend to argue Thucydides distorted and overestimated the influence of sea power (Starr 1989, Engels 2016). Starr 1978 criticises the lack of analysis of sea power beyond the Archaeology. The emphasis on sea power is partly explained by the fact that Thucydides regards land warfare as irrelevant since it had mostly to do with local conflicts between neighbours (1.15.2). These criticisms are based on what Allison (1989) argues – correctly, I think – is an unbalanced reading of the Archaeology, that does not say enough about the analysis of Spartan power. In the ancient world communities were generally more strongly and easily linked by sea routes than by land (see Hansen 2000, 143).

[19] De Romilly (2005, 261-2), with caveats and some internal distinctions, places the elements in a progressive sequence that runs: Navy → Money → Walls, resulting for those who reach the end in the capacity to dominate others. See also McNeal 1970, 312 (discussed below).

[20] Allison 1989, 21.

analysis of power than it may seem. This I will show is because it depends on something else, which I propose to call sovereignty – the power of coercion mixed with the prestige of hierarchy.[21] Sovereignty is the mediating force that connects all the elements of power listed above. Scholars who view power as material in the Archaeology tend to conclude it narrates a historical, civilisational progression. But this progression is balanced against a framing of sovereign power as a sort of constant.[22] To say that sovereignty is a constant is not to claim that it is always the same: rather, it is that sovereignty works as a force of organisation and growth, a kind of *perpetuum mobile* that brings the elements of power together. In this sense sovereignty can be an unstable dynamic that may threaten to capsize those who are on its current.

This paradox of sovereignty as both a constant and a changing force is especially visible in the Archaeology's description of broadest sweep of history (1.13-15), covering the growth of cities, from the period after the migrations following the Trojan War (1.12), up to when the Persians reach Ionia after the defeat of Croesus (1.16), and the reigns of Cambyses and Darius (1.14.2). For example (1.15.1):

> τὰ μὲν οὖν ναυτικὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοιαῦτα ἦν, τά τε παλαιὰ καὶ τὰ ὕστερον γενόμενα. ἰσχὺν δὲ περιεποιήσαντο ὅμως οὐκ ἐλαχίστην οἱ προσσχόντες αὐτοῖς χρημάτων τε προσόδῳ καὶ ἄλλων ἀρχῇ·

[21] This is to be distinguished from Jaffe's treatment of the Archaeology as an illustration of Thucydides' political psychology (2017, 139-59, taking the Athenian statement at 1.75.3 as programmatic). Cf. Orwin (2017, 370-2) on politics, nature, and the divine in Thucydides (370: "[Human nature] participates in a natural dynamic that Thucydides shows to be neither wholly intelligible to us nor wholly subject to our control.") Thus Jaffe 2017, 6: "Thucydides' account of human nature is a political psychology." These interpreters observe and connect two distinct dynamics: (1) Human, (2) Natural. I observe three: (1) Human, (2) Social or Political, (3) Natural. The advantage of sovereignty is how it leaves space for all three of these, instead of jumping straight from nature to individual psychology to historical process.

[22] Cf. Stahl (2003, 24): "Thucydides himself saw the value of the insight supplied by the Archaeology not in the concept of change ('progress'), but in the continuous, unchanging factor of power (or perhaps the desire for power)."

ἐπιπλέοντες γὰρ τὰς νήσους κατεστρέφοντο, καὶ μάλιστα ὅσοι μὴ διαρκῆ εἶχον χώραν.

Such were the navies the Greeks had [i.e. they were insubstantial], both in ancient times and afterwards. All the same, those who had applied themselves to them gained no small amount of strength from the collection of tribute-money and the rule of others: since they sailed against and subjugated the islands,[23] especially if they themselves did not have enough of their own land.

In this passage ships, money, and men are represented as mutually supportive, their combined growth autonomous, and it would be arbitrary to arrange them into a hierarchy of significance. Money, ships, and men are each material causes of power. As these grow the pressure of insufficient material (in this case land) becomes acute, leading to a collective action against the islands, expanding the realm's materials in every sense, and bringing strength – with renewed pressures, but also the capacity to grow and exert greater force. What is narrated here is a cycle among materials, but the force that moves from one part of the cycle to another is not material: it is the organised collective that responds to pressures and makes decisions, actions, using money, men, and ships as instruments of power.[24]

What develops from this force is a system that may usefully be termed Empire.[25] This word has been often used to describe the Athenian political hegemony,

[23] Gomme (*Comm.* 1.126) seems to accept Classen's suggestion to add ἐπικειμένας ('nearby') here, which would make the point clearer but less accurate. The sentence is sweeping, and thus rather than specifying individual cases treats them as a single phenomenon encompassing the islands in general.

[24] Allison (1989) and Tsakmakis (1994, 42) note that a large diversity of materials are subsumed under the concept of *paraskeuē* as things usable and useful in the war.

[25] Specifically, Empire in Greece: Marincola (1997, 35n3) notes that "Thucydides deliberately shies away from treating the non-Greek world" in the Archaeology.

which in Greek was called an *archē*.[26] A much broader definition of the term has been offered by the modern theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in the first book of their trilogy on twenty-first century power (*Empire*):

> The concept of Empire is characterised fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilised" world.[27] No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for all eternity (…) Third, the rule of Empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world.[28]

As they go through these elements in turn, Hardt and Negri discuss the suspension of history by conceiving "the initial and implicit source of imperial right in terms of police action and the capacity of the police to create and maintain order."[29] This imperial notion resembles Hobbes' famous claim in *Leviathan*.[30] But instead of developing a normative contrast (like Hobbes) between a lawless state of permanent war and one of guaranteed safety in a peace guarded by the sovereign, Hardt and Negri make the point into a description of the medium of

[26] Thus Meiggs' (1972) classic textbook is called 'The Athenian Empire.' Some prefer to leave the Greek word untranslated: on difficulties of naming see Low 2008, 9-12.
[27] This should not be taken too literally. Cf. Harris 2016, 112: "The Romans may seem confused to us because they often said that the whole world was under Roman control even though the governing class knew that this was false, and indeed often indicated, at least down to a certain date, that plentiful outsiders were still there to be conquered."
[28] Hardt and Negri 2000, xiv-v. See also Hardt and Negri 2019. From the relative distance at which the Archaeology is poised, some aspects of this definition are obviously unverifiable with respect to the early Greek powers, but see Chapter 5.
[29] *Ibid.* 17. See also 14: "Peace, equilibrium, and the cessation of conflict are the values towards which everything is directed."
[30] On the Hobbesian reception and tradition of Thucydides see Schlatter 1945; Johnson 1993; Iori 2020.

self-justification, and to some extent of the very existence, of imperial power. The sovereign acts as the guarantor of a peace and safety which are seamlessly joined with the stability of their rule. Thucydides writes (1.4):[31]

> Μίνως γὰρ παλαίτατος ὧν ἀκοῇ ἴσμεν ναυτικὸν ἐκτήσατο καὶ τῆς νῦν Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐκράτησε καὶ τῶν Κυκλάδων νήσων **ἦρξέ** τε καὶ οἰκιστὴς πρῶτος τῶν πλείστων ἐγένετο, Κᾶρας ἐξελάσας καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ παῖδας ἡγεμόνας ἐγκαταστήσας· τό τε ληστικόν, ὡς εἰκός, καθῆρει ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐφ᾽ ὅσον ἐδύνατο, τοῦ τὰς προσόδους μᾶλλον ἰέναι αὐτῷ.
>
> Indeed Minos was the most ancient of those whom we know by hearsay who acquired a navy and subjugated most of what is now the Greek Sea; who **ruled** the Cycladic islands and was the first colonist of most of them, because he drove out the Karians and installed his own children as rulers: who apparently put an end to piracy on the seas as much as was in his power so that more tributes would go to himself.

Compare the latter part of the above sentence with a much later remark of Epictetus (Arr. *Epict. diss*. 3.13.9):

> Ὁρᾶτε γὰρ ὅτι εἰρήνην μεγάλην ὁ Καῖσαρ ἡμῖν δοκεῖ παρέχειν, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐκέτι πόλεμοι οὐδὲ μάχαι οὐδέ ληστήρια μεγάλα οὐδὲ

[31] Thucydides' description of Minos' Empire has several verbal caveats that convey that this is a reconstruction rather than a story of which he is certain: see also Herodotus' relegation of Minos to the mythic and spurious, which allows him to say that Polycrates of Samos was the first thalassocrat (Hdt. 3.122.2 – buts see also 1.173).
Nevertheless the Minos story has been an embarrassment and a challenge to those invested in the of Thucydidean historical rigour and objectivity (see the discussion and notes at Irwin 2007B 190-1). Luraghi (2000, 233) argues that Thucydides does not believe in Minos' historical reality but rather "takes for a moment the standpoint of someone who does believe in it, In order to argue that also from that standpoint the sea-powers of the past had been those of the present times."

> πειρατικά, ἀλλ' ἔξεστιν πάσῃ ὥρᾳ ὁδεύειν, πλεῖν ἀπ'ἀνατολῶν ἐπὶ δυσμάς.
>
> Since you see that Caesar seems to provide for us a great peace: because there are no longer anymore wars nor battles nor large gangs of bandits or pirates, instead you can sail from east to west at any season.

Yet the elimination of piracy is also a monopolisation of piracy, and vice versa: it is not strictly one or the other.[32] Minos' position allows him to begin a process of colonial and dynastic expansion; it also allows him to accumulate wealth (monopoly).[33] But this very fact (that the forced extraction of wealth has become a monopoly), results in qualitatively different conditions for those who make their lives on the Aegean Sea.[34] After a digression on the prevalence of piracy (of which he remarks that it was not disreputable in those times: 1.5.1) and people's habits of dress (see below), we get the following (1.8.2-3):

> καταστάντος δὲ τοῦ Μίνω ναυτικοῦ πλωιμώτερα ἐγένετο παρ᾽ ἀλλήλους (οἱ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν νήσων κακοῦργοι ἀνέστησαν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, ὅτεπερ καὶ τὰς πολλὰς αὐτῶν κατῴκιζε), [3] καὶ οἱ παρὰ θάλασσαν ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον ἤδη τὴν κτῆσιν τῶν χρημάτων ποιούμενοι βεβαιότερον ᾤκουν, καὶ τινες καὶ τείχη περιεβάλλοντο ὡς πλουσιώτεροι ἑαυτῶν γιγνόμενοι· ἐφιέμενοι γὰρ τῶν κερδῶν οἵ τε ἥσσους ὑπέμενον τὴν τῶν κρεισσόνων δουλείαν, οἵ τε δυνατώτεροι περιουσίας ἔχοντες προσεποιοῦντο ὑπηκόους τὰς ἐλάσσους πόλεις.
>
> With the onset of Minos' navy people sailed more between each other (the dangerous people [i.e. pirates] on the islands were driven out by him when

[32] On the "fluid" border between piracy and state monopoly see Kopp 2017, 63 ("*fliessend*").
[33] Indeed Saxonhouse 2017 argues that the Archaeology outlines a system whereby those with power are *forced* to accumulate even more.
[34] On Minos as a Leviathan-figure see Jaffe 2017, 146.

> he colonised many of them), [3] and the people by the sea made more money and lived more safely, and some of them even put up walls as they became richer: the weaker, because they desired riches, put up with enslavement to the strong, and the more powerful used their surplus to make lesser cities subordinate to them.

In these passages Minos' navy is a condition for the establishment of a new world-order, so to speak, in this micro-world of the Cycladic islands and their surrounds.[35] The second part of the passage quoted (1.8.3) forms a hinge (continued briefly and made explicit at 1.8.4), between Minos (who vanishes without ceremony) and Agamemnon. In the generalisation that takes us from one to the other, it emerges that what is being narrated is a sweeping process of which Minos' life and reign is but a moment.[36] In the language of Hardt and Negri, from within his vaguely defined borders Minos exercised his sovereign right of the police to develop a state of secure permanence where his descendants would rule the Aegean indefinitely. This made possible the further growth of wealth and naval power, which itself caused a surplus that led to further and more generalised expansion extending beyond Minos' death. The reasons for the collapse of the reign established by Minos are not discussed, but the momentum produced by these forces continued afterwards. For subordinated peoples, the price of security and the resulting wealth was domination by a stronger power.

The construction of walls (above: 1.8.3) marks an expansion or intensification in the degree of power that is also a change in kind. Protected by walls, cities are

[35] The association of imperial peace with Minos is ironic given his cultural status in fifth-century Greece as "a quintessentially lawless figure" (Irwin 2007B, 203).

[36] Cf. Saxonhouse 2017 on the 'power trap' entailed by the accumulation of expense and force in the Archaeology (339): "in which the possession of power demands that those with power ceaselessly search for more – and then more" (cf. 350: "The movement described in the Archaeology away from chaos and weakness to a civilized life entailed the acquisition of power by some, but that very acquisition came to control the cities of Greece, granting quiet to none"). Cf. Orwin's (1994, 30) note about the absence of any claims to do with justice or injustice from the Archaeology.

defensible against pirates and other invaders; communities are more stable; a new kind of state becomes possible. But walls are enabled in the first place by the riches that result from Minos' removal of the threat of piracy, and the imposition of a stable society based on tribute-extraction, with hierarchies of strong and weak and a system of hereditary rule (above: 1.4). Walls are an inflection point.[37] They result from an ulterior process, but as they come into being they intensify this process – in that way, walls illustrate how the process of Empire depicted in these books is an outwardly expanding loop, a force that creates the conditions of its own development. As such they have more to do with Athenian power than Spartan. The Spartans have no walls around their city (1.10.2), whereas foreshadowing the defeat of Athens Thucydides writes metonymically that the Spartans seized the Long Walls and the Piraeus (5.26.1).[38]

Though walls can embody the tension between the abstract process of Empire and the physical and vital world that it organises, this comes first into the Archaeology by a separate means, the figure of Agamemnon. The Homeric king illustrates how the expansionist impulse developed at 1.8.3 puts pressure on the link between imperial domination and imperial peace.[39] In short (and here the positive Leviathan-aspect of Empire is severely undermined), although imperialist subjects may be secure from piracy, they are coerced into fighting

[37] But not "the ultimate symbol of power" (McNeal 1970, 312).

[38] Or possibly "tore down" – see Hornblower 3.46. Cf. the building of these walls in the *Pentekontaetia* (1.1.89.3-93.8 – discussed below). On that episode Foster writes (2010, 97): "[It] is designed to instantiate the walls in the minds both of the eternal reader and also of Thucydides' contemporaries, for whom the evidence Thucydides adduces is a visible reminder of the Themistoclean period at Athens."

[39] The mini-Archaeology of the power of Pelops and his descendants (1.9.2), introduced like the overarching one as proof of a larger claim (that the Achaeans joined in the Trojan expedition mostly because of their fear of Agamemnon's power), locates the beginning of the cycle not with the navy, as in Minos' case, but with money coming from Asia; subsequently, fear of the Heracleids among the Mycenaeans leads them to break dynastic succession and appoint Atreus king. Only with Agamemnon is there a mention of the navy (1.9.3-4).

wars. Thucydides makes a polemical but nuanced analysis of the motivations of the Trojan expedition (1.9.1-3):

> [1] Ἀγαμέμνων τέ μοι δοκεῖ τῶν τότε δυνάμει προύχων καὶ οὐ τοσοῦτον τοῖς Τυνδάρεω ὅρκοις κατειλημμένους τοὺς Ἑλένης μνηστῆρας ἄγων τὸν στόλον ἀγεῖραι. (…) [3] ἅ μοι δοκεῖ Ἀγαμέμνων παραλαβὼν καὶ ναυτικῷ [τε] ἅμα ἐπὶ πλέον τῶν ἄλλων ἰσχύσας, τὴν στρατείαν οὐ χάριτι τὸ πλέον ἢ φόβῳ ξυναγαγὼν ποιήσασθαι
>
> I believe it was because Agamemnon was the foremost person of his time in power and not so much because the former suitors of Helen were bound by the oaths of Tyndareus that he gathered and led the expedition (…) [3] I believe Agamemnon, because he inherited this [the power of the Pelopidae] and in addition had a stronger navy than the others, was able to gather and lead the expedition not more because of a favour owed than because of fear.

The development between the Minos and Agamemnon chapters is thus not simply a temporal development, but also a deepening of Thucydides' account of the imperial system, as he brings his analysis to bear on events recorded in more detail. It is important, as Hornblower notes in his commentary, to recognise that the contrast made twice in this section is not between mutually exclusive elements.[40] Thucydides is careful in his phrasing to accommodate both fear and favour, ships and oaths – one might say, in more modern language, coercion and ideology – as reasons why people gathered under Agamemnon to invade Troy. It should be noted that the oath of Tyndareus does not appear in the Homeric poems, although it may be assumed; on the other hand, the power of Agamemnon (which is in a sense greater than that of Achilles who is the strongest

[40] Hornblower 1.31-2.

fighter on either side by far) is one of the first things with which the reader is confronted in the *Iliad*. Thucydides is not correcting the Homeric story: he is commenting upon it.[41] Possibly, as with other instances (e.g. his analysis of the causes of the war at 1.23.6), the force of the oath and of Agamemnon's power respectively act as pretext and a subtext. I will have much more to say about this later, but it is important to make note of the phenomenon here at the beginning, just as Thucydides does in his Archaeology. Empire as depicted in the Archaeology relies on a system that mediates the relation between pretext and subtext, and by extension, between the historical subject and their situational context.

Sovereignty is the essential element in this mediation because it joins the threat of force to a basis for the distribution of power and collective action: ships and money are at last only important as a means of acquiring the force to impose, sustain, intensify or expand an imperial dominion. This leads Thucydides to a direct analogy between the power of Mycenae that of Sparta (1.10). Mycenae's power, Thucydides, states, cannot be reconstructed by looking at its comparatively meagre remains in his own period. Likewise, Spartan power, which gradually comes into focus in the second half of the Archaeology, is not naval (1.18.2), not backed up by money nor organised around the collection of tribute (1.10.1-3, 1.19), but instead consists solely of the power to dictate the internal affairs of cities by direct military intervention or the implicit threat of such force (1.18.1, 1.19.1), supported by an ideological expression of commitment to general freedom (1.18.1, 2.8.4).[42] Here the relationship between pretext and subtext is of central importance. Thucydides stresses the relative dearth of money

[41] Cf. Odysseus' words in favour of Kingship (*Il.* 2.200-6) with Kahane's (2022, 26-30) discussion of *archē* in Homer and its philosophical reception.

[42] On the delicate balance between the different kinds of power possessed by Athens and Sparta in the Archaeology see Allison (1989, 11-27; 2013).

and ships possessed by the forces of Agamemnon, and subsequent powers, compared with the quantities of his day (1.11-4). But he is careful to emphasise all the same that this did not reduce their capacity to rule over others, since they would only have needed a relative superiority in order to exercise sovereignty and develop a system of Empire. This point comes into focus with the passage I quoted earlier (1.15.1).

Thucydides several times interrupts the Archaeology to detail the problems with any attempted reconstruction of the past.[43] The past, in his own retelling in the Archaeology, becomes merely the outline of a process: it is devoid of a vitality whose loss Thucydides carefully underscores.[44] One way he deals with the problem of the past's obscurity, to recall the imagery of the first lines, is by attempting to reconstruct it using signs and analogies from his own time. This aspect of the Archaeology, in which many have recognised something like what we call historical research, leads de Romilly to call the sequence "a rationalist manifesto in every sense of the word."[45] A common response of scholars since has been to point out that this reconstruction, in the service of Thucydides' claim that the Peloponnesian War is the greatest of all, has basically a rhetorical function, including the pejorative sense of that word, i.e. the statement is of dubious credibility.[46] But these interruptions are vivid snapshots of life and

[43] Irwin (2007B, 194) goes so far as to claim: "Thucydides' past times are very much the creative projection of his and his audiences' present time. This aspect of the proem is so integral to its design that, once recognised, the conclusion seems inevitable that Thucydides intended to provide a clever implicit demonstration to his more sophisticated audiences of precisely how specious such exercises in reconstructing the past are."

[44] Golfin (2022, 157-9) demonstrates that Thucydides prefers variants of the more distant word *palaios* to the more personal *archaios* in the Archaeology. He claims this indicates a "devaluation of origins" (177: "*dévaluation des origines*") on the part of Thucydides, since the past is barely recoverable and approached from the standpoint of the present (cf. 186-7), and since the primary causal factors are constants (189).

[45] De Romilly (1956, 251): "*un manifeste rationaliste dans tous les sens du mot.*"

[46] For example, see Loraux 1986A; Woodman 1988, 5-69; Luraghi 2000. Reynolds 2009 is a recent defence of the Archaeology's intellectual seriousness.

include for example some ethnographic observations about dress habits.[47] But Thucydides was not so chauvinistic as to dismiss the importance of these things (1.6.3-5):[48] changing fashions, he tells us, are attributed to the new social institutions of the *polis*, which bring safety and individual wealth, but also precarious internal dynamics, specifically in this case between rich and poor – all of which influence how people dress.[49]

What the signs in the Archaeology (1.21.1: ἐκ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων σημείων) have in common is that they are stitched into the fabric of ordinary life in the present: "forests of symbols/that watch [us] with familiar looks."[50] The adjective Thucydides uses to describe them, 'clearest' or 'most apparent' ("ἐπιφανεστάτων"), has an ironic flavour.[51] One such sign is the name, the *onoma*, Greece (1.3.1-2), whose absence from the Homeric text is taken as a sign of the disunity and overall weakness of the Greeks in that period.[52] Another is the custom of carrying around weapons in daily life, which in certain parts of Greece was still in practice (1.5.3-6.2). Another is the way people dress and exercise (1.6.3-5). Another is the corpses exhumed by the Athenians at Delos who turn out to have been Karians, identifiable by their equipment and manner of burial (1.8.1).[53] Interspersed with these are incidental usages and details of the poets, especially Homer (1.4.3, 1.5.2, 1.9.4, 1.10.3-5). These signs may be apparent in the

[47] Some readers have found these details suspect: see for example the analyst response to the note about the carrying of weapons at meals (1.5.3-6.2), cited by de Romilly (2005, 254). From ancient times see the complaints of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Thuc.* 19). But they are presented in the service of an overarching historical thesis (see Luraghi 2000; Reynolds 2009).

[48] Nor Herodotus: cf. Hdt. 5.87-8.

[49] See Foster's discussion of this passage (2010, 23-6).

[50] Baudelaire: "*des forêts de symboles/Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.*" For a fuller discussion and analysis of the vocabulary of signs and inferences in the Archaeology, see Erbse 1970, 56-7; de Romilly 2005, 242; Schwinge 2008, 14; Reynolds 2009. Marincola (1997, 67), citing Thucydides' famous statement about the truest cause of the war (1.23.6), says that he is "concerned (…) with underlying realities that are not always apparent or easily perceived."

[51] I take the superlative to have a relative force ('the *relatively speaking* most apparent'). Cf. Hobbes' translation (8.24): "the most evident signs that can be."

[52] See Zirah 2019.

[53] Delos is a place of recurring importance throughout the text (Schirripa 2015, 159-72).

sense that they are part of the make-up of the world in which Thucydides makes his enquiries, but they are very far from explicit. They are buried literally under the familiar ground of Delos in the case of the Karians. But the other signs are also buried, in the sense that they form part of the daily life and social landscape of the present, apparently without revealing their origins or significance until these are noticed by Thucydides. Those who simply repeat these customs and poems – just like how there will be always people who believe their own war is the largest ever (1.21.2) – behave as vehicles for the expression of broader forces without truly knowing what they are doing or why.[54] These signs have an objective existence that is lived through many people's individual human existence: but they also exceed this vital boundary because, unaware to most, they are all that truly remains of the past. For people who notice they come to stand more as markers of what is missing than a means of recovery. They evoke something that is not there, namely the past. What puts even more weight on this point is that – just as he has done at the beginning of the Archaeology – at the middle (1.10) and end (1.20) of the sequence Thucydides speaks at length stressing the unreliability of the evidence he himself uses.[55]

Analyses of the Archaeology tend to underscore its significance as a display of method, arguing that its pessimism of outlook is ultimately a way of demonstrating the superiority of Thucydides' mode of enquiry (1.20-1).[56] But this

[54] A point made more emphatic by the observation that the Athenians completely misremember the murder of Hipparchus (1.20.2).

[55] Moreover, as it happens, with respect to the Karian graves at Delos, Thucydides may have misidentified graves from the geometric period (see Hornblower, *Comm.* 1.30). Thus the signs may be unreliable in other ways he did not foresee.

[56] See de Romilly 1956, 240-98; Cogan 1981, xii-xiii; Gehrke 1993; Luraghi 2000; Nicolai 2001; Reynolds 2009; Rawlings 2010, with references *passim*. Grethlein (2010, 206-9; see also Grethlein 2004) makes an interesting case that the term *logographoi* applies to orators. But he goes too far in stating that Thucydides' rejection applies *only* to orators *and not*, for example, Herodotus. Nothing in the Greek forces these to be mutually exclusive alternatives. A few lines earlier (1.20.3), Thucydides seems to offer explicit corrections of Herodotean mistakes (see Hornblower *Comm.* 1.57-8) – a point Grethlein does not discuss. On the importance of allusions to Herodotus in the Archaeology see also Luraghi 2000.

point has been overstressed. Even the most ambitious aspects of the methodological pages (1.20-3) are couched in this broader pessimism, so that far from claiming historical truth or infallibility for the text (or even arrogantly declaring it will last forever) they continue the preceding emphasis on the difficulties for any recovery of the past. The failings of other writers, poets, and storytellers at 1.20-1 are repeatedly accounted for in terms of a collective human failing: of people in general who trust what they hear without interrogating it (1.20.1), of "most people" who do not expend much effort investigating the truth (1.20.3: τοῖς πολλοῖς), and of human beings who tend to misjudge the relation between their present and the past (1.21.2). An important theme of what follows is the failure of memory (1.22.1-3):[57]

> καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν (…) [2] τὰ δ᾽ ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν (…) [3] ἐπιπόνως δὲ ηὑρίσκετο, διότι οἱ παρόντες τοῖς ἔργοις ἑκάστοις οὐ ταὐτὰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔλεγον, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἑκατέρων τις εὐνοίας ἢ μνήμης ἔχοι.
>
> As for what each person said in speech either in the leadup to war or during, it was hard to remember the precise detail of what was said (…) [2] As for the actions which occurred during the war, I chose not to record whatever I came across by chance (…) [3] Finding these was hard work, since those present for each of the events did not describe the same things the same way, but differed based on their goodwill and recollection.

[57] I discuss the main scholarly debate surrounding this passage in Chapter 8.

The first three sections of 1.22 make a ring.[58] Pelling says "it is striking that (…) he thinks that there is a problem, and fears his audience might not understand."[59] This sense of a problem emerges naturally from the opening's reckoning with time as a force that makes things disappear in the Herodotean vein (cf. Hdt. 1.1-6). It is also grounded in a feeling for the unconscious or inadvertent nature of people's customs, as depicted throughout the Archaeology in its treatment of signs. Thucydides is claimed by historians as a founder of their discipline and his text an important moment in the development of historical methods – for this reason, it is understandable that the more positive or confident aspect of the methodological chapter (1.22) is often emphasised. But forgetfulness and miscomprehension, and indeed the laziness of most of us, each an aspect of the entire human condition rather than of one particular mass or group, are not merely presented as things to be gotten around or surpassed by this new method of understanding. The account of the truth here includes a theory of falsehood and the disappearance of truth. This continues to inform the representation of human beings throughout the text and is sometimes treated as very intuitive. When the Athenians first hear of the Mytilene revolt, they are fatigued by the war and recent plague, and perceive that the revolt would cause them great difficulty, so they fall prey to a natural torpor that causes them to disbelieve the truth (3.3.1):

> οἱ δ᾽ Ἀθηναῖοι (ἦσαν γὰρ τεταλαιπωρημένοι ὑπό τε τῆς νόσου καὶ τοῦ πολέμου ἄρτι καθισταμένου καὶ ἀκμάζοντος) μέγα μὲν ἔργον ἡγοῦντο εἶναι Λέσβον προσπολεμώσασθαι ναυτικὸν ἔχουσαν καὶ δύναμιν ἀκέραιον, καὶ οὐκ ἀπεδέχοντο τὸ πρῶτον τὰς κατηγορίας, μεῖζον μέρος νέμοντες τῷ μὴ βούλεσθαι ἀληθῆ εἶναι.

[58] The Archaeology is full of rings and arguably itself (1.2-22) a ring: see Connor 1984, 30n29; Woodman 1988, 7-9; and the references at Jaffe 2017, 140n62.
[59] Pelling 2001, 114. See also 2022A, 22-9; 2022B.

> The Athenians (since they were exhausted by the plague and the war which had recently begun and was at its height) thought it would be a huge task to fight Lesbos whose navy and power were intact, and did not credit the initial warnings they received, giving more weight to the fact that they did not want them to be true.

In the Archaeology, the growing "tone of confidence" Connor identifies in the latter sections is matched by increasingly precise and vivid references to human failings.[60] But this pessimism is tied to a much broader portrayal of human limits and the strangely unconscious character of so much of ordinary life. The world-building aspect of the Archaeology is fundamental and even permeates the closing methodological discussion. The Archaeology's internal timeline is the strictly local one of the *polis* as an institution, rather than any natural or universal one encompassing all of humanity. Noting the many similarities between former-day Greece and the Barbarians of his time (1.6.6), just as with his much later remarks about the strength of the Scythians if they were ever united (2.97.5-6), Thucydides underscores that the development of society in its Greek form is a contingent phenomenon based on underlying given factors.[61] His representation of Greek society is from a hybrid position: from within, in the sense that it is self-involved, and from without in the sense that he perceives it to be conditioned by much broader forces – and not to have escaped these forces in any sense. It is important that both Greek and barbarian societies are inscribed within a common human condition, that permeates the entire text, but whose outline is never quite drawn explicitly. The development of the *polis* for Thucydides is not truly the development of culture out of nature.[62] If on one level the sequence distinguishes

[60] Connor 1984, 29.
[61] He does refer to barbarian *poleis* (6.88.6 – Hansen 2000, 174n38 (cf. Hansen 1997, 2007)).
[62] I map out the way Thucydides conceives the *physis/nomos* binary in chapter 4.

Greek society from all the rest, on another it makes them equal. The methodological chapter concludes with this statement (1.22.4):[63]

> καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἕξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται.
>
> And maybe to listen to their lack of embellishment will seem less pleasurable, but in future anyone who wants to look into the clarity both of what happened and of what will happen again sometime, because of the human condition – these sorts of things and similar ones – finding them helpful will be enough. They are brought together as a something to keep for all time rather than just a competition piece to listen to on the spot.[64]

For modern readers, a problem with this passage is that two apparent opposites are brought together as in a koan that makes them complementary or continuous with each other.[65] The opposites are: (1) Factual detail about a specific event, (2) Broad principles that stand above and account for all specific events in some respect.[66] Kennedy compares the universality of the human condition to Parmenides' representation of Being.[67] It should be noted that this tension properly belongs not to ancient but modern historiography, which tends to locate the truth of an event in its specific or local content and de-emphasise patterns and

[63] At O'Sullivan 2024B (64-8) I cite and contest a large body of scholarship that discusses the distinctions between pleasure and use and hearing and eyesight. It seems to be that these distinctions are couched in much weaker terms than others claim.
[64] The plural 'they' refers to the ἔργα of the previous clause 1.22.3: see Rawlings 2021, 193-4. In O'Sullivan 2024A I discuss the (misunderstood) significance of pleasure in this passage.
[65] As with the rest of 1.22 (cf. Chapter 8).
[66] Cf. Moles 1993, 108: "This fundamental tension in [all] historiography."
[67] Kennedy 2024, 46.

analogies that may be read across multiple events.[68] In this regard modern historiography is Aristotelian: in the *Poetics* (1451b3ff.), Aristotle contrasts history and poetry claiming that the latter is more philosophical and more rigorous because its subject is universal. But perhaps, just as Aristotle's *Poetics* are the key to many a modern television episode but surprisingly few Greek tragedies, his opinion of historiography is a poor guide to what the ancient historians were attempting.[69] By contrast, an important tendency in Latin Medieval historiography (for example) was to view individual events as utterances from a timeless lexicon of gestures, symbols, and relationships whose abstract form constituted an event's real or profound significance.[70] This did not prevent Medieval chronographers and historians from placing great store on chronological accuracy and the precise dating of events. But the immediate or local content of a historical event was treated as a relevant but often superficial aspect of its meaning when compared with its analogical content. Similarly, de Romilly has argued that objectivity among Greek historians was conceived in terms of one's approach to general ideas and truths rather than to particular items of data.[71] Elsewhere de Romilly has examined the tendency towards generalising statements and reflections in Thucydides, particularly among the speeches.[72] Raaflaub has noted the importance of patterns in Thucydidean historiography.[73]

[68] On differing conceptions of historicity see Koselleck 2004, 2018; Hartog 2015; the essays collected in Lianeri (ed. 2011); Kennedy 2024.

[69] Thomas (2011, 229) remarks that "Thucydides might have been surprised or disappointed" by Aristotle's comparison.

[70] Cf. Goetz (2002, 155): "On the one hand, the authors acknowledged and noted change and development, and they distinguished between epochs or phases in history; on the other hand, their perceptions of the events leave the amazing impression of a certain "timelessness" that ignored a real difference in the epochal character insofar as this went beyond the political succession of power, reign, and kingdoms." He cites many examples. See also the essays in Lianeri (ed.) 2011.

[71] De Romilly 2005, 31-40.

[72] De Romilly 1990, 61-104.

[73] Raaflaub 2013. He draws on Vidal-Naquet's (1986, 46) distinction between historical (linear) and logical (circular) time, which is helpful, though not completely appropriate to Thucydides`s layered representation of time as explicated here throughout the first three chapters. See also Hammond (1973, 49-50): "it was the universal deductions to be made from particular occasions which interested [Thucydides] as a historian."

But interpretations of Thucydides, and 1.22.4 in particular, go wrong where they fail to recognise with sufficient clarity that one cannot simply project back one's own learned sense of temporality and historical truth. A second problem is the tendency of scholars to cluster around a single method: that of attempting to construe the precise nuance of each word by looking at how it is used elsewhere. This is to some extent useful, but often leads to a focus on individual words with insufficient attention to the broader context and qualifications of the sentence. It especially obscures things if the words (as here) are properly ambiguous, and their real referent – a long and rather complicated book – is left unexamined.

Taking up this latter point, the paradox may provide with a means of thinking through the broader form of the Archaeology (and later the text). Historical literature in the modern understanding is very generally characterised by two things: a set of methods or procedures for developing historical material, and a conventional literary form or arrangement of that material. In principle, to practise the method of historical research need not result in a specific literary form, but the intellectual context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made it natural to associate historiographical writing with the literary genre of realism and the academic conventions of the new social sciences. Much of the anxious debate around words like 'postmodernism' and 'narrative' has resulted from the realisation (which began in literary criticism) that so-called realist literature has no privileged claim to reality but is rather a symbolic construction based on formal principles.[74] Insufficient distinction between historical research and historical writing has made this seem like a bigger challenge to the possibility of historical truth than it really is.[75] What was overturned by these developments

[74] More precisely, a narrative construction: the paradigm-shifting texts are White 1984, 1987. On the link between these broader developments and changes in Thucydides scholarship see the survey in Dewald (2005, 1-22).

[75] See Ankersmit 2001 (cf. Macleod 1983, 69 on Cézanne).

was a naïve concept of historical truth which assumes that certain literary forms are invariably more realistic than others. This idea is naïve because it misunderstands that literary forms are not primarily representations of a given story-content, but enactments in the reader's consciousness of a form of literary experience.[76]

The *Peloponnesian War* is not a realist text in the formal sense that is typical of modern historical narratives. It does not even try to imitate the war it describes as much as to reduce it to a minimum number of elements. Seen this way, the work's elaborate structure of parallels and verbal echoes gains a very different importance than simple literary flourish or provocation to judgement. It constitutes an internal textual present that stands over and above the chronology of events within the text, and equally provides the basis of an outlook from which they and other events external to the text might be viewed. The collected details are in the service of this outlook rather than the other way around; it is self-conscious. There is no line here between representation and creation: the work fabricates an experience for the reader while making them conscious of a past which is not there (evoked as an absence) and inviting them to reflect on the multifaceted relation of these two. At this upper level of comparison and contemplation, the particular events of the war appear (including sometimes in the form of things which have disappeared) as *particulars* arising in the broader world as seen following the adjustment made to it by the work. The general, developed from yet encompassing the particular in dialogue, is the work's semantic aspect.[77] Likewise, what we call Greek myth, often tied to occasions of

[76] A useful text to consult in this regard is Barthes 1974, which provides a deconstruction of realism and an essentially semiotic or symbolic interpretation of literary *mimesis.* Although I have problems with the overly schematic, generalising, and scientistic thrust of Genette's narratological system (see O'Sullivan 2023), his work is also useful in this regard (see Genette 1972, 1983, 1997, 1999).

[77] See de Romilly (1956, 88-106) on the tendency of Greek authors to convey deep meanings subtly through literary arrangement.

ritual and performance, consisted not so much of narratives or one master-narrative as a store of gestures, symbols, and parallels repeated through successive events and generations.[78] Greek myth was a vast overdetermined structure where each element and story connected with every other and was a window into them all. Roberto Calasso gives the following definition:

> Mythical figures live many lives, die many deaths, and in this they differ from the characters we find in novels [scil. insofar as these are not mythical], who can never go beyond the single gesture. But in each of these lives and deaths all the others are present, and we can hear their echo. Only when we become aware of a sudden consistency between incompatibles can we say we have crossed the threshold of myth.[79]

Just as Thucydides accepted and refashioned stock figures such as Minos and Agamemnon, he developed and deployed a version of this analogical aspect of myth in the service of his overall project.[80] That is how, in the Archaeology, the figure of Minos collapses into that of Agamemnon. Both rulers acquire a navy and then great power as a result, with each strengthening the other (1.4, 1.9.3 – in Agamemnon's case the imbalance of a lack of money was a source of weakness: 1.11.1). Minos founds a dynasty, Agamemnon inherits one. Agamemnon and Minos, use their positions to develop navies and subsequent empires. But hereditary rules, including the ones they themselves found, exploit their citizens without expanding their imperial societies: Thucydides does not name these

[78] On the dialectical origins of the ancient and modern concepts of the mythological ('reason' invents 'myth' in order to debunk and analyse it thus proving itself to be reason), see Detienne 1981.
[79] Calasso 1993, 22. See also Veyne 1988; Doniger 1999.
[80] Thucydides has a more complicated relationship with myth and myths than is sometimes supposed (see the overview in Rood 2019B). The first and most famous scholar to draw connection between Thucydides and some sort of mythic outlook was Cornford 1907. The classic opposition between *mythos* and *logos* (restated and defended by Fowler 2011) has been challenged in various ways, and scholars have stressed the frequent co-existence of the two modes (see Morgan 2000 and the essays in Buxton ed. 2007 and Wians ed. 2009; cf. Detienne 1981).

rulers but says they did "nothing worthy of a *logos*" (1.17, cf. 1.13.1).[81] The cities seem to fight each other, and many are subjugated by the Persians (1.14-16). In this period, almost a regression to pre-Greekness, "Greece was everywhere and for a long time held down so that it neither did anything in common that stands out; and also, city by city, it was less daring." (1.17: πανταχόθεν ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον κατείχετο μήτε κοινῇ φανερὸν μηδὲν κατεργάζεσθαι, κατὰ πόλεις τε ἀτολμοτέρα εἶναι). From this emerges suddenly Athens, in the shadow of Themistocles (1.14.3), and Minos; and Sparta, whose parallels to Agamemnon I have already unearthed. Earth and water – what Darius demanded of the Greek cities (Hdt. 6.48.2) – respectively are each the province of these opposed cities: Sparta, the land power whose constitution has been unchanged for centuries (1.18.1); Athens, the sea power whose land for centuries has been occupied by the same inhabitants (1.1.2.5-6, 1.18.2).[82] The Archaeology's descriptive sequence closes with the opposition between Athens and Sparta, but this has already been proven superficial by what came before.[83] The unfolding network of correspondences and parallels across time reveals unexpected kinships.

What kind of status are these supposed to have? An early book by Lloyd studies the widespread use of polarity and analogy in early Greek thought; in the conclusion he argues it was Aristotle who first distinguished by gradations between analogy and sameness, which early Greek thought had a tendency to

[81] Foster (2010, 39) notes that the preceding paragraphs suggest these tyrant cities *do* still fight wars against their neighbours. Nicolai (2001, 274) suggests Thucydides sees these rulers as constrained by necessity resulting from their position as tyrants. See Chapter 5.

[82] Foufas 2019, 73: "What distinguishes Athens from Spartan is its relationship with time: Athens looks towards the future and Sparta towards the past" ("*Ce qui différencie la cite d'Athènes de Sparte est son rapport avec le temps: Athènes regarde vers l'avenir et Sparte vers le passé.*"). See Alonso-Núñez 2000, 19-54 on the land/sea opposition.

[83] Another well-known example of this, arguably present in the Archaeology, is the opposition between movement (Athens) and rest (Sparta), addressed fully below, which recent scholarship has shown to be much more complicated than it seems. See Loraux 1997A 104-11; Debnar 2021; Joho 2021.

collapse into each other.[84] Between Athens and Sparta, in this case, rather than simple equivalence or contrast, the relationship between the two is unsettled, a question before the reader that does not resolve. They share a kind of sameness that does not stick but serves to collapse any simple notion of the two as distinct or opposed powers; itself a notion partly encouraged by the text. But the placement of these cities in a web of analogies across time also deepens a sense of mystery that is not exhausted by the above analyses. Their representation is properly elusive.[85] With the above remarks offered as a corrective to the modern assumptions with which readers have approached 1.22.4 in the past, they in turn can be supported by a closer reading of the Greek passage.

The most important item in 1.22.4 for my purpose here is the main infinitive in the *de* part of the '*men…de*' construction. *Skopein* despite its rudimentary sense of looking or watching out here means something like 'study,' 'investigate,' 'examine.'[86] The '*te...kai*' construction makes clear that controversial term *to saphes*, 'the clear truth,' applies to both past and future occurrences, albeit with a qualification to clarify that future events will not be exact repetitions.[87] In what follows, the action of reading (or listening to) the text is not equated with 'studying the clear truth:' the text is offered hopefully as a means of assisting someone who wants to do this (ἀρκούντως ἕξει).[88] Indeed the very fact that t*o saphes* and not *ta genomena* is the object of *skopein* qualifies the remark by displacing the historical events: in other words, the fact that *ta genomena* ('what happened') is not the object, indicates a certain distillation or translation of this

[84] Lloyd 1966 (433-6 for Aristotle).
[85] Cf. Jameson (2011, 14): "[A dialectical solution] will not dissipate the strangeness of the initial paradox or antinomy by way of a dry and rational unmasking, but preserve the strangeness of the problem within the new strangeness of the dialectical solution."
[86] Cf. Moles 1993, 110; O'Sullivan 2024B, 65-6. Bicknell (1990, 173) has "contemplate."
[87] For the debate on the meaning of this noun see Woodman 1988, 25-8; Marincola 1997, 96n166; Scanlon 2002; Kallet 2006; Scardino 2007, 413n63. Lesher (2010) gives a good account of its semantic development from Homer to Plato, though without discussing Thucydides.
[88] Cf. Kallet 2006.

neuter plural into a neuter singular form that, while more general in scope, displaces something of the original.[89] The paradox of this passage, which should be kept in the open insecurity with which it is presented, is thus that the 'clear truth' is offered to the reader and then pulled back. Truth and the struggle for truth are joined. The passage 1.22.4 has its own vocabulary and terms of reference, but formally speaking as an instance of enactment it resembles the purported opening of Heraclitus' philosophical work (DK B1):[90]

> τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι, καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι, καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν ἐοίκασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὕδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται.
>
> Of this *logos* which exists always people are uncomprehending, both before they have heard it as well as after the first time: even though everything happens according to this *logos,* they are like people who have no experience of it, but they have experience in thoughts and practice of a sort I will explain by dividing up each thing according to its nature and explaining how it is. What other people do when they are awake escapes them, just as they forget what they do in sleep.

[89] At 1.1.1, where the object of ξυνέγραψε is that which the author has worked on rather than that with which the reader makes contact, it is τὸν πόλεμον directly in the accusative.

[90] See Kirk 1954, 33-46; Kahn 1979, 96-100; Lebedev 2017 (esp. 231-3). On possible affinities between Thucydides and Heraclitus see Parmeggiani 2018A; Ponchon 2019.

Heraclitus posits something that is there, namely the *logos,* according to which everything occurs, and in which both past and future share alike.[91] He then states that most people, perhaps all, are uncomprehending of this *logos*, and experience great difficulties when they attempt to do so. Reading (or listening to) Heraclitus, he informs us at the beginning, will be an experience of missing what is essential. One implication of the beginning seems to be that Heraclitus' text will reward repeated reading.[92] But this very sense results from the fact that miscomprehension, and therefore the struggle to perceive and understand, are as much permanent features of human life (cf. ἄνθρωποι) as the *logos* itself. The analogy, almost identity, between form and content or between the method and object of enquiry, which becomes so important for a thinker like Plato (as we saw in Chapter 1) is already a prospect for Heraclitus – and for Thucydides. The *Peloponnesian War* does not aspire to a clarity that transcends the barriers to knowledge and correct interpretation, but one that erects these very same before the reader and makes the latter go through a process of error and hard-won realisations. A crucial aspect of the knowledge Thucydides wins from the past and displays in the Archaeology is the understanding of how little truth withstands time.

Conclusion

What has emerged from the above discussion is, in some ways, a composite picture of the Archaeology: historical narrative, investigation and argument, figurative symbolism. But what unites these is the ontology they elaborate.

[91] The ambiguity of ἀεὶ (which I attempt to replicate above in translation) is famous and was noted, and probably misinterpreted, by Aristotle (*Rh.* 1407b). On Aristotle's logic and linguistic thought as a reaction against polysemy see Cassin 1995, 333-408.

[92] See Kahn 1979, 87-94; Gianvittorio 2010, 33-58. Rawilngs (2016) has likewise recently argued that in 1.22.4 Thucydides encourages repeated reading. However, to exclude the sense of 'for all time' from αἰεὶ would be to ignore the word's immediate context and the overarching theme of the passage.

Indeed, in the above discussion, it was demonstrated how in each case the text's initial presentation of a subject gave away upon further analysis to an opposing view. The autonomous, material growth-principle the sequence depends on something more vital and immaterial, which persists even among powers who do not depend on money, ships, and walls: namely, the force of the paradoxical relationship between pretext and subtext (or ideology and coercion) that characterises the dynamic between the rulers and the ruled. This is what *archē* points to. Money and ships may be a means of causing this dynamic to come about, and of causing it to become more expansive and encompass more people. They might be the difference in many cases between a stronger and a weaker power. Still, they are both finally inert substances whose meaning is determined only by their place in a power dynamic.

The portrayal of this vitality that finds expression in oaths and cataclysmic struggle is developed alongside a depiction of daily life, customs, and habits in which people's behaviours were often survivals of a forgotten circumstance. The social world that we glimpse in the Archaeology is permeated with unconscious signs, which, for someone who investigates carefully, might yield a shadowy comprehension of the people that gave rise to them. But these signs are not necessarily reliable, and what they mark is not a recovery of the past. The signs may be used as signs, but they are not signs as such: they are simply things which have transcended their purpose and developed their own lifespan, as such – indeed, their own secrets. The recovery of the (even recent) past, which was performed by Thucydides in the composition of his text, has proven partial, prone to error, and ultimately something of a very different kind than what it corresponded to, which was a world: that is to say, something lived and always disappearing.

Lastly, the Archaeology deploys a principle of reason in a very unexpected way: to identify relationships between past and present that subvert simple oppositions or parallels between present figures or events, and hint towards a deeper comprehension that collapses these and the past and future together into a flux without making them equal. Without erasing entities such as Minos, Athens, Sparta, and Agamemnon, the Archaeology makes them resistant to interpretation, and to some extent even delimitation. This process, identified by Connor (whom I cited at the end of the introduction) as an aspect of the trajectory of the entire work, takes place even within the Archaeology itself: the transformation of symbols into their opposites, and the result negation of their meaning which paradoxically affirms their truth beyond meaning. In the Archaeology, and the *Peloponnesian War* in general, two affective and intellectual stances are contemplated, but neither one is affirmed: mute symbolism and vital terror (with its counterpart eroticism). There is a certain stripping away and a disillusionment which is central to the work's performance. But what remains, when all that is stripped away, is by no means nothing. What remains is rather the living symbolism of the gestures and characters, enclosed around the meaning of the war, which make possible its translation from experience into writing.

Altogether the Archaeology brings us from the earliest people to the outbreak of war leading through the methodology passages into the dispute over Epidamnus (beginning at 1.24.1). Later in Book 1, after a long narrative taking us through the pretexts and assembly debates leading to war, Thucydides returns to his claim about the truest cause being the growth of Athenian power (cf. 1.23.5-6) and narrates the period of Athenian growth between the Persian wars and the

outbreak of the present one (1.89-118).[93] Scholars have long recognised that the sequence marks a return and a deepening of the paradigmatic themes of the Archaeology.[94] He divides the sequence into two sections clearly demarcated at 1.97.2, the first narrating the transition from Spartan hegemony to Athenian dominance after the Persian War, the second its intensification and expansion.[95] The growth of Athenian power is depicted in terms of the triad ships/money/sovereignty. The construction of Athenian walls marks a significant inflection point, paradoxically enabling the city to take on the boundless form in which we find it during the war itself.[96] The rushed building-process and Themistocles' efforts to hide this from the Spartans, who would prefer Greece entirely unwalled (1.90.2), are narrated in dramatic detail (1.90-2). Thucydides then discusses the walls protecting the Piraeus harbour (1.93.3-4):

> ἔπεισε δὲ καὶ τοῦ Πειραιῶς τὰ λοιπὰ ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς οἰκοδομεῖν (ὑπῆρκτο δ᾽ αὐτοῦ πρότερον ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ἀρχῆς ἧς κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν Ἀθηναίοις ἦρξε) νομίζων τό τε χωρίον καλὸν εἶναι, λιμένας ἔχον τρεῖς αὐτοφυεῖς, καὶ αὐτοὺς ναυτικοὺς γεγενημένους μέγα προφέρειν ἐς τὸ κτήσασθαι δύναμιν (τῆς γὰρ δὴ θαλάσσης πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν ὡς ἀνθεκτέα ἐστί), καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν εὐθὺς ξυγκατεσκεύαζεν.

[93] On its place and the structure of Book 1 in general see Hammond 1952; Walker 1957; Schneider 1974, 60; Stadter 1993; Tskamakis 1995, 64-71; Moles 2010; Rusten 2020. I discuss 1.23.5-6 in Chapter 4. I omit discussion of Badian's criticisms of the Pentekontaetia on grounds of accuracy and objectivity (collected in 1993, 73-107 and 163-9 (chronology), 125-62 and 171-85 (disguising Athenian injustices and responsibility for the war); see also Will 2003; Luginbill 2011; Irwin 2015). These are addressed by Pritchett 1995, 1-131 (chronology); Sertcan 1997 and Rood 1998A, 214-48 (dishonesty). Allison (2013) has claimed that with deliberate omissions of other events and peoples the Pentekontaetia focusses on the opposition between the Athenians and Spartans.

[94] Finley 1942, 137; Connor 1984, 46; Ellis 1991, 348-50; Tsakmakis 1995, 96-100; Rood 1998A, 225-48; Taylor 2010, 11; Jaffe 2017, 139-40.

[95] The dual structure of the sequence raised alarm during the textual debates of the twentieth-century, but see Rood (1998A, 229): "This break is central to the argument of the Pentekontaetia, not a cause of alarm."

[96] Taylor 2010, 33-40.

> Themistocles also convinced [the Athenians] to wall off the rest of the Piraeus (which had been started previously by himself the year he had the Athenian archonship), since he believed that the location was good: it had three natural harbours and now that they had become sailors it would help them considerably in acquiring power (Themistocles was the first to dare to say that they needed to acquire the sea), and he straightaway put the first steps in place.[97]

By this point the fears of Sparta's subordinates are already high because of the Athenian navy assembled during the Persian Wars (1.90.1), but Spartan relations with Athens are more complex, a mix of friendship and wariness.[98] Tensions will continue to grow and trust to collapse in the succeeding decades. The walls consolidate Athenian gains and permit further expansion via an "independent foreign policy."[99] The construction is one of a pair of coups by the Athenian side in the first section of the Pentekontaetia. The second involves the collapse of Spartan hegemony over the anti-Persian league and the rise of the Athenians to a position of unassailable power over its other members. After the Persian invasion, at first the Greek allies are led by Sparta, but the Spartan leader Pausanias begins to behave tyrannically like a Persian-style despot, so the cities turn away from Sparta towards Athens (1.95).[100] According to Thucydides'

[97] The end of this sentence is hard to translate (is ἀρχή 'empire' or 'beginning'?) The commentators both discuss the problem and conclude it means 'empire' (Gomme 1.262-3, Hornblower 1.140). The word εὐθύς makes this uncomfortable since it implies a closer logical connection to the previous clauses than 'empire' would give. But the word is clearly ambiguous, and Themistocles' action furnishes both the Piraeus and an Empire. I have tried to retain this ambiguity rather than looking for a specific referent.

[98] On Spartan trust in the opening chapters of the Pentekontaetia see Jaffe 2017, 121-7.

[99] Foster 2010, 101.

[100] The Spartans recall Pausanias send a new commander named Dorkis with a small army, but the allies refuse him the leadership, so – afraid in any case that more of their people will be corrupted like Pausanias if they remain part of the league – they withdraw (1.95.6-7). Tsakmakis (1995, 77-8, cf. 95-6) perceives an implicit rebuke of Spartan political decisions, particularly its isolationism, throughout the sequence. Allison (2013, 265-7) emphasises the diversity of Spartan motives and behaviours. The Pentekontaetia no less than an account of Spartan fear is one of Spartan delay. Jaffe (2017, 137): "For years, Sparta clearly wished to check Athenian power (…) but in each case countervailing pressures conspired to keep her at rest."

careful description of how Athens wins sovereignty over the member-cities of the Delian League (1.96-8), their fear and desire to avenge the Persians, combined with their hatred of Pausanias, leads the allied cities to create an Athenian war machine powerful enough to turn around and subjugate them.[101] The Athenians treat these justifications as a pretext to seize power and pursue their own ambitions. By handing over to the Athenians such military and financial resources as are collected by the *hellenotamiai* the allies create a force strong enough to coerce them – this is what happens to the Naxiots.[102]

There are parallels between Thucydides' representation of Athenian rule and the characterisation of oriental despots in Herodotus.[103] Dewald argues that in the *Histories,* the reign of figures such as Croesus and the Persian Kings follows a standard narrative pattern which emphasises the structural reasons for their most significant errors.[104] The representation of Greek tyrants such as Peisistratus and Polycrates is much more idiosyncratic.[105] A specific example may be the process by which Deiokes becomes King of the Medes on pages marked by the same numbers in Herodotus' *Histories* (1.96-101). Deiokes provides the Medes with something they need (justice, which is to say arbitration of crimes and torts),

[101] Cf. Stadter on 1.96-9 (1993, 49): "Thucydides does not here describe a league in which Athens was an equal member, but a hegemony in which Athens offered protection and reprisals against Persian territory, and the allies supported Athens with ships and money." Kallet (2013A) argues from the historical record that the Athenians straightaway began to appropriate the resources of the Delian league for their own purpose.

[102] On the importance of the Naxian revolt (Kallet 2017, 72): "Revolts signify empire. Members of a free alliance do not "revolt," but subjects in an empire do."

[103] On this episode and its Herodotean context see Hartog 1988, 330-9; Dewald 2003; Thomas 2012; Provencal 2015, 62-5 and 220-5. Scanlon (1987) further notes the analogy between the Persian war and the Peloponnesian war (Athens is like Persia) and identifies a "consistent tyrant type" (301) in the *Peloponnesian War*. He emphasises the personality and figure of the tyrant, whereas I – and Dewald in the essay quoted below, with respect to Herodotus – claim the text depicts a tyranny as a structure that follows a similar pattern even among tyrants who have different personalities.

[104] Dewald (2003, see esp. 42-5). Herodotus uses 'King' and 'Tyrant' more or less interchangeably for these rulers: see Parker 1998, 161-4.

[105] Dewald 2003, 48-9: "these tyrants and others like them are not examples of the larger systemic violence of imperial despotism (…) [they] are rather put in the context of the same ferocious and highly intelligent individualism with which other independent and talented individuals are endowed in the *Histories.*

and then, as part of his scheme to become the ruler of the Medes, suddenly stops (1.97.1-2). Faced with lawlessness, the Medes decide to appoint a King to keep order and allow them to continue their daily lives: they choose Deiokes (1.97.3-98.1). Then he shuts himself away and forces the Medes to build what culminates in the large and elaborate seven-walled city of Ecbatana, a monument to grandeur and human slavery. Thus the desire of the Medes for political order leads them to create the figure of the king powerful enough to create and wield that order, which also empowers him to manipulate that order to subjugate the Medes. Like Thucydides at the beginning of the passage above, Herodotus emphasises with a kind of pointed solemnity how the subjugated party hands power to the ruler willingly: "By saying this [i.e. by agreeing with each other that they should appoint a king] the Medes convinced themselves to be ruled under a king." (1.98.1: ταῦτά κη λέγοντες πείθουσι ἑωυτοὺς βασιλεύεσθαι.). Like Athens, while taking power Deiokes is deceptive and hides his true intention. Likewise, the perhaps ironic tone of Herodotus' remark is amplified by Thucydides' direct blame of the subjugated cities for the fact that they deprived themselves of military force strong and experienced enough to take on the Athenians, preferring instead to avoid war and contribute money to the alliance – which rendered the Athenians rich and powerful, the allies when they revolted unprepared and inexperienced (1.99.2-3). The sequence of continued expansion and growing hostility ends with an emphasis on Athenian power via the revolt of Samos (1.115.2-17.3), which Kallet calls "a brilliant test case of the state of Athens' imperial might."[106]

[106] Kallet 2017, 73 (on the importance of this episode in the broader narrative see Węcowski 2013). Cf. Kohl (1977, 1): "the highpoint of Athenian power" ("*Höhepunkt der attischen Macht*). An epilogue recapitulates the themes and returns to the narrative present in which Sparta, despite a slow response (1.118.2), at last have decided to pursue war (1.118.3).

Does this comparison imply a *hubris/nemesis* arc? Deiokes himself does not experience a downfall, as in Herodotus the swing of the despotic pendulum may be deferred by several generations: his great-grandson Astyages receives the blow, when Cyrus leads the Persians in revolt against him; helped to victory by the Mede, Harpages, whose son Astyages once killed and served to him as a meal (1.119). The arc of the moral universe is shorter in the *logoi* of the Kings Croesus and Cyrus, whose empires constantly expand until they underestimate an opponent whom they invade and at whose hands they meet their downfall. Croesus, formerly King of Lydia, is nearly burned on a pyre by Cyrus but is saved by Apollo; afterwards he becomes an attendant at the Persian court (1.86-90). Cyrus, formerly King of Persia, invades the Massagetae and is killed at the crucial battle: afterwards Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae, cuts off his head and places it in a wineskin filled with human blood (1.214.3-5). In these models the process is more specific than the standard Greek tragic one: Power leads to Abuse/Overreach which leads to Downfall. They draw a connection between the tyrannic system – specifically, an orientalised despotic system in which the usual features of Greek tyranny are heightened and dramatised – and a logic of endless expansion that links the rise to prominence with the overreaching act that causes failure.[107]

What complicates this dynamic in Athens' case is that the city is not a king, but a polity with many citizens. The latent implication that the system, and not a person, is driving things in Herodotus is much more overt in Thucydides. The disaster in Sicily has clearly to do with the logic of Athenian imperialism (see

[107] Cf. Macleod (1983, 62) on the Athenian attitude in the Melian Dialogue: "[Their] ruthlessness should not be confused with *hybris,* if that term implies an overweening conviction of superiority, because they are at pains to stress that their actions conform to the normal pattern of men and perhaps even gods."

Chapters 4 and 8), but equally so does the city's unexpected survival through Book 8. The text cuts off before Athens' real downfall. According to Rood:

> Thucydides suggests a continuity between Athens' dynamism before the war and Athens' dynamism within the war, a path from Salamis to Syracuse. But he also suggests a continuity between that dynamism and the spirit of endurance which enabled Athens recover from the disaster in Syracuse from which 'few out of many' returned home.[108]

Thus while Thucydides evokes a familiar narrative pattern, he moulds it into something more complex, a dialectical analysis of Athenian politics and power organised, we might say, around the ambiguous Greco-English word Rood has chosen, 'dynamism.' Herodotean fable is repackaged as Thucydidean theory. To fill out the picture, analysis is required, first of the natural forces at play (see Chapter 4); second of how the two levels of Athenian power, external imperialism and internal democracy, fit together (see Chapter 5). But before these it will be necessary first to refine our understanding of the manner in which Thucydides frames this picture and means by which he fills it out. Chapter 3 therefore takes on the issue of the form, specifically by examining the style and structure, of the work as a whole.

[108] Rood 1998A, 247. This accounts in part, he claims, for the verbal correspondence between the Athenian disaster in Egypt in the Pentekontaetia (1.110.1) and the closing words of Book 7 (7.87.6).

3. The Ontology of Form: Style, Seriality

This chapter argues that the *Peloponnesian War's* style and overarching structure have a thematic function in that they contribute to the ontological representation underpinning its contents and events. In the first section below, I argue that the work's style exhibits how reality is a psychological construction imbued with a sense of possibility and contingency, and how appearances and *logos* in general are forces – the discussion here lays ground for further ones in Chapter 4, on force and nature, and Chapter 8 on language, appearances, and manipulation. The work's structure, I show in the second section, is serial and conveys how time imbues things as both a cause and limit. These together reintroduce from a new perspective the tension identified in the previous chapter between the personality and vitality of human existence and the autonomous sweeping forces that give it shape. In the conclusion I argue that the sometimes-dramatic shifts in perspective through the main Books 2-8 (notable especially in direct interventions and the transition in and out of vividly narrated military episodes) are calibrated to reproduce this tension.

It will be useful first to situate this chapter methodologically. Even now perhaps the most common scholarly approaches to Thucydides are the ones identified by Connor in his essay, 'A Post-Modernist Thucydides?': the close analysis of individual narrative threads, and the study of "Thucydidean terms, especially the contrasts between clusters of concepts."[1] These methods are both ways of studying the text's content. The former has to do with the represented contents, the events depicted of the war; the latter with the conceptual outlook that inheres in these narrated events. I use these methodologies myself in other chapters. But far fewer attempts have been made to study the text's form through an

[1] Connor 1977A, 295-6 (quote: 295).

interpretive lens. Dover has observed that form and function are especially bound up in Classical Greek contexts where notions like 'art' and 'literature' had no straightforward equivalents: "there is no sharp boundary," he writes, "between stylistics and sociolinguistics."[2] All the same, scholars of Thucydides have been guided by an excessively utilitarian approach to interpreting the formal architecture of his work (I highlight specific examples below). I also give some intellectual context that seeks to justify interpreting form as a means by which Thucydides shapes his representation of reality. Dover sometimes shows a tendency to treat the 'literary' and 'artistic' aspects of a text as if they could only have to do with enjoyment as opposed to serious intellectual activity. In recent decades scholars have moved away from such distinctions. Narratology, the study of the narrative *per se,* has become a venerable aspect of Thucydides scholarship, although mainly used for historical and textual criticism or to buttress pre-existing critical ideas.[3] Likewise, Thucydides' prose style has often simply been complained about, but gradually scholars have begun to recognise its deliberate thematic orientation.[4] Others (less relevant here) have shown how it is sometimes carefully constructed to clarify aspects such as character, cause, motivation, and point of view.[5]

In contrast with these methodologies, this chapter's is conceived partly in dialogue with the recent trend of ancient Greek literary scholarship towards

[2] Dover 1997, 21-5.

[3] Some exceptions (including Rood 1998A and the essays in Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki eds 2013) are discussed below where relevant. For an overview of narratology and its place in Thucydides scholarship see O'Sullivan 2023.

[4] Macleod 1983, 131-5; Parry 1989, 177-94; Price 2013; Rawlings 2017; Joho 2021 (see also Allison 1997; Hornblower 2004, 354-72). There are some other, very early studies of Thucydides' prose-style including Lamb 1914; Ros 1938.

[5] Tompkins (1972, 2013, 2017), has written about Thucydides' use of style as a characterisation technique, especially to give speakers individual voices (and cf. Pavlou 2013 on 'attributive discourse' in Thucydides' framing of speeches). See Trédé 1975 on how Thucydides structures his syntax to distinguish between multiple levels of cause; Lang 1995 on how participial clauses convey motivation (cf. Schneider 1974, Tamiolaki 2013); Bakker 1997 and Wakker 1997 on point of view.

reading in terms of a 'politics of form,' a term and an approach derived from the work of Fredric Jameson.[6] To analyse the politics of form in a text is firstly, of course, to read with an insistence on the interpretive priority of form over content. But as distinct from traditional formalist literary criticism (as well as standard narratology) this method of interpretation treats form as a thematically and politically significant aspect of the text, produced by and contributing to a set of social relationships – whether between individuals, between the individual and the community, or between communities, that may be within the text or among its audience, as the case may be. It thereby incorporates insights from political and historicist approaches. That said, like any approach the 'politics of form' sets a line of enquiry which is also a limit. For Jamesonian 'politics of form' readers, the last analysis always involves explaining any gesture in terms of the composite system of social relations within and around the text and the distribution of power between parties. For example, Billings argues that a speech by Theseus in Euripides' *Suppliants* (195-249), narrating the progressive development of human civilisation, becomes a sort of broad canvas on which the play's much more negative representation of politics through its central conflict is intensified (he himself regards this opposition as dialectical) – the result is a complex and interrogative statement about the horizon of political possibility.[7] Readings such as this are a useful way to unearth the political meaning of ostensibly non-political gestures and situations.[8] But what is de-emphasised by a stress on political relationships and semiotics is an analysis of the ontology of power and of the broader world within which the network of social relations is embedded. Just as Billings ties back and subordinates the sweeping

[6] Examples include Wohl 2015, Goldhill 2020, Billings 2021, the essays in Vasunia ed. 2022. Macleod's essay on form in the Melian Dialogue (1983, 52-67 – cf. 57: "a battle") is arguably a precursor. From Jameson see, e.g. 1981, 1991, 1992.

[7] Billings 2021, 64-72.

[8] And thus its utility in fields like modern cultural criticism and film criticism is more immediate than with the study of ancient texts.

anthropology of Theseus to the more immediate conflict of the play, at its worst the 'politics of form' can end up relying on an implicit, unstated ontological outlook that views power as an abstract quantity and translates every gesture into a binary language where it either subverts or reinforces the present power-arrangement (whatever that is taken to be). Without excluding or seeking to erase an analysis of the political significance of form, I have here chosen to subvert the usual emphasis of such approaches and treat the form of the work as an ontological element: as something to do with the world in which its representation of politics is embedded. This is also centrally related to the overarching claim of my thesis: for Thucydides, human power has only a secondary reality against the backdrop of force that conditions and limits life and all human entities. For Thucydides power cannot really be understood without an appreciation of this ontological fact.

Interpreting Style

Syme calls Thucydides' style "individual, wilful, elaborate, and non-contemporary."[9] Previous scholars have used stylistic interpretation to make judgements about Thucydides' character.[10] Stylistic comparisons have also been used to argue or refute the case for intellectual debts, especially to the sophists Gorgias and Antiphon.[11] But instead of using style to understand something about the conditions of the text's production, I am arguing that style is an important means through which the text thematises its own contents. Style can

[9] Syme 1960, 40.

[10] Collingwood 1946, 29: "What is the matter with the man, that he writes like that?" See also Ros 1969, 7; Loraux 1980, 1986A. On the notion of Thucydides as a "fascist" writer whose difficulty was a means of policing the boundary of his readership see Hornblower 2004, 371-2.

[11] See Finley (1967, 55-117) who cites and discusses earlier authors), who tends to stress the broader milieu rather than making individual connections, although he sees clear points of comparison between Thucydides and Antiphon. See also Scardino 2007, 450-3. Ros (1968) meanwhile stresses Thucydides' uniqueness (cf. Denniston 1952, 73: "Thucydides' attitude towards antithesis is highly individual").

offer a means to say something complex about the object or event concerned by gesturing towards a broader reality; it may cause the reader's experience to resemble that of characters in the text; or it may give rise to a sensation or a feeling that should provoke further reflection. I will demonstrate below that for Thucydides it has all three of these functions.

The notion that the style of a work conveys something of its meaning is a familiar concept for scholars of other ancient texts.[12] In her study of Simonides, Carson emphasises how Simonides, like Heraclitus, uses the sentence as a site of tensions and conflicting meanings "that reenacts the reality of which it speaks."[13] He uses form to convey content and achieve what she calls "the profoundest of poetic experiences: that of not seeing what is there."[14] Barrett has similarly argued that the poem of Parmenides makes its point not only argumentatively, but formally, as its semantic difficulties and ambiguities are analogous with the poem's vision of being.[15] In modern terms we may be reminded of an author like Proust, Joyce, or Virginia Woolf.[16] Silk cites various examples of stylistic 'enactment' in several ancient verse when outlining his theory of 'poetic interaction' (a theoretical account of poetic imagery and metaphor putting emphasis on the movement of comparison rather than things compared).[17]

More recently, scholars have begun to apply similar notions to Thucydides. Hornblower, following Dionysius, has compared the stylistic tendencies of Thucydides and Pindar.[18] There he makes the following general remark about Thucydides' style:

[12] If "ancient literary critics take for granted the distinction between content and form," as Dover has remarked (1997, 16), the same does not seem to have been true of many ancient authors.
[13] Carson 1999, 52.
[14] *Ibid.* 62.
[15] Barrett 2004.
[16] On Woolf and the Greeks see Koulouris 2011.
[17] Silk 1974, 138-44 (see also 2007, 188-9).
[18] Hornblower 2004, 354-72. Cf. Kakridis 1961, 19..

> Scholars and commentators (myself included) have, in their eagerness to solve problems (….) failed to notice that the very existence of a problem can sometimes be a sort of problem: why did Thucydides, in this crucial area, not make his meaning clear? Herodotus does not detain his commentators in quite this way.[19]

This point was already made forcefully by Macleod in his analyses of the *stasis* episode ("we need to consider the wording of the passage not merely as a tangle of textual, grammatical, and exegetical problems, but as the shape or expression of its meaning"),[20] where he argues the description is calculated to show the ascendancy of autonomous forces and collective ideas,[21] and to obscure the difference between sides. Joho has recently expanded and developed this point across the text.[22] Although, in Chapter 1, I have already disputed the Havelockian premise of scholarship in the critical reader vein, its adherents are clearly right that the *Peloponnesian War* is made so as to demand a lot of its reader.[23] Thus increasingly scholars have begun to recognise that where a sentence is difficult, it is very possible that the difficulty is not there to obscure the point. Rather, it *is* the point.

Some objections might be raised to this approach. Rood has recently advised caution against over-simplistic attributions of stylistic enactment to Thucydides, particularly if used to claim that he makes the reader like a participant in the events.[24] More generally, style is a very ambiguous term, and it can be difficult to

[19] Hornblower 2004, 368. But for interpretations of Herodotean style cf. n11.
[20] Macleod 1983, 123. See also Price 2013 (cf. 437: "tortured syntax and odd grammar should challenge not the emender's ingenuity so much as the reader's powers of psychological analysis").
[21] Cf. *ibid* 124: "The ideas and skills which war or faction breeds in men may seem to them to be an advantage, but in fact take control of the and help to destroy humanity."
[22] Joho 2022.
[23] Yunis 2003; Morrison 2006, 13-21; Rawlings 2016 (though I disagree with his reading of 1.22.4 – see O'Sullivan 2024B). Similar claims are advanced in earlier work such as de Romilly 1956B and Connor 1984.
[24] Rood 2022.

say what counts as style in this period and genre of writing.[25] Dover helpfully distinguishes between "levels" of style, a useful way of clarifying which aspects of style are under discussion and to which ones an observation may or may not apply.[26] Of the five basic units with which Ros analyses Thucydides' style – dialect, word choice, sentence construction, rhetorical figures, and rhythm – word choice and rhetorical figures are the most frequently discussed in present scholarship.[27] The discussion here will have to do with sentence construction and rhythm.[28]

In this regard, the first thing to note is the large variety of styles (greater than often supposed), and the contexts that determine these. Thucydides is best known for long and very worked sentences, but sometimes he eschews this and opts for a short and fast phrase, usually while summing-up.[29] After the Mytilene Debate in Book 3, the Athenians reverse their order to kill and enslave the city's populace. A frantic ship and crew rush to intercept the original decree. The winds are favourable, they row fast. When Paches, Athenian *stratēgos* who is already at Mytilene, reads aloud the original instructions and prepares to carry them out, the ship arrives with countervailing orders. Thucydides (3.49.4):

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[25] See Dover's (1960) outline of the problem with attempting to interpret emphasis or meaning based on ancient Greek word order. However, "it is now widely accepted that surface word order in both Greek and Latin is conditioned by discourse factors" (Goldstein 2016, 35). This opens the ground for some tentative steps. In terms of genre, even if the text is read very conservatively as a historical record, one does have to be a post-modernist to recognise the importance of style as a reality-shaping element of the text. Apart from the previous studies of Thucydides cited here, those of Herodotus' style with a thematic emphasis include Immerwahr (1966, 46-78), Lang (1984), Bakker (2007B) and Kirk (2021, 78-109).

[26] Dover 1997, 2-4. Distinctions between levels of style are heuristically rather than objectively valuable and I make my own here instead of Dover's (cf. the five elementary *Stilkomponenten* identified by Ros 1968, 7-8).

[27] Ros 1969 1-8. For citations on word choice see n4 above. I have already referred to dialect in Chapter 1.

[28] A rhythm of thought or "*Gedankenrhythmus*" (Ros 1969, 8) rather than hexameters, although there are some of those in Thucydides as well, for example in Brasidas' speech at Acanthus (4.85.5, see Hornblower 1994B, 67-9; 2.46-7, 279). On determining sentence-breaks in ancient Greek see Dover 1997, 27-32 (and see the discussion of Aristotle below).

[29] See Stahl 2013.

παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν ἡ Μυτιλήνη ἦλθε κινδύνου.

By that much Mytilene approached danger.

At the start of Book 7, when help arrives for Syracuse on the point of surrender (see Chapter 7), he writes (7.2.4):

παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν αἱ Συράκουσαι ἦλθον κινδύνου.

By that much Syracuse approached danger.

Amid long sentences and vivid narrative on either side, these short ones are like sharp breaths. Scholars have mostly stressed the feeling of contingency that draws the reader into these sentences: 'Look how close…'.[30] Grethlein in particular cites it as an example of Morson's useful concept of sideshadowing – the opposite of foreshadowing – in which a sense of temporal openness and historical contingency is restored to a narrative event that may otherwise seem a foregone conclusion.[31] But this very emphasis reinforces the opposite sense that the maximum of danger has been reached: 'This much but no further...'[32] We are at a turning point. The drama is increased by the rare use of a feminine singular noun for each city: Mytilene itself, Syracuse itself was at stake. The sense of contingency may be greater in Book 3, as we learn that Mytilene has been saved – only just – whereas since long before Book 7 we will have known the ultimate outcome for Athens and Syracuse (at least since 2.65).[33] But each contrast

[30] See the discussion and references in Greenwood 2017, 167 and Grethlein 2010, 250.
[31] Grethlein 2010, 248-50. See also Morson 1994 (more below).
[32] Poppo/Stahl *ad loc.* highlight that Hermocrates uses the same expression in a speech (6.37.2), with confidence: 'by so very much.' See also Hunt (2006, 409), and Connor (1984, 187), who writes: "This sentence (…) is one of the most astonishing in the Histories. The danger to Syracuse is at this point far from over (…) But the sentence sets the continuing action in a different perspective. We are reminded now that any Athenian success will not be lasting." Viellefond (1987, cxix), in the introduction to his edition of *Daphnis and Chloe*, observes that Longus parodies these lines at Long. 2.19.1; see also Trzaskoma (2005, 76-7) who observes something similar at Long. 1.22.1, and offers a more detailed interpretive discussion.
[33] Hau 2013, 84: "Book 7 uses foreshadowing to create a sense of doom, small doses of sideshadowing to hint at possible alternative outcomes at the very moment when they are no longer possible, and

reinforces the ambiguity, as the allusion to the other passage supplies an emphasis which is missing in the immediate context.[34] What gives these sentences their power is compression: they evoke both possibilities and realities without naming them so that each gains a charge of significance. This compression does not reduce the range of significance but increases it.

Despite his tendency to go on, sometimes at length, indulging in nuance after nuance, a fundamental attribute of Thucydidean writing is compression.[35] Goldhill claims the unique ability of prose writing "to make its own rhetorical strategies seem natural and transparent," caused it to "'[take] the stage" in fifth-century Greece "as a trendy, provocative, modern and highly intellectualised form of writing."[36] This point presupposes an unconsciousness in the act of reading that must be learned, and therefore likely presupposes a modern upbringing. It is not clear why hexameter poetry in consistent metre with standard epithets, for someone who had been taught a similar unconsciousness in the act of hearing it, should seem less natural or transparent to the listener. Early prose texts by Heraclitus and Gorgias are manifestly self-consciousness of their own internal conditions, and in each case the reader's self-conscious navigation of these is a part of the exercise. It will prove not less so in the *Peloponnesian War.* For my purpose here the most relevant change between the Homeric literature and the *Peloponnesian War* – indeed the change from poetry to

teleological backshadowing to make the Athenian disaster seem inevitable." Compare with Rood (1998A, 278-80) on the use of counterfactuals in Book 8.

[34] Hau 2013, 84-5: "It is this interplay of inevitability and the impossible possibility of an alternative outcome that makes reading Thucydides such a devastating experience; this is what makes his historiography feel so close to tragedy."

[35] Dover (1973, 10) remarks on his "extreme reluctance to risk saying one word too many." Connor (1984, 7-8), broadly compares Thucydides' manner of description in the *Peloponnesian War* with a newspaper report detailing the consequences of the American invasion of Vietnam (see also Dewald 2005, 1-2). The principle behind both is that reducing things in writing to the baldest and clearest description possible, using the smallest number of elements, fills them with power and energy by evoking what is not there as an absent presence. See also Connor 2017, 213-15. On compression in the narrative see e.g. Will (2003, 22-5) on the treatment of Gylippus.

[36] Goldhill 2002. Quotes combined from pages 43, 1.

prose – is not the gain of literacy, but the loss of the poetic line.[37] This refigures the problem of how to construct and link units of thought. Denniston has argued that classical Greek prose is generally made up of lots of small elements, even where the sentences are long ("The edifice, lofty though it may be, is built of bricks not of huge blocks of Cyclopean masonry").[38] In the *Rhetoric,* Aristotle addresses the problem of how to organise a block of prose by distinguishing between the 'strung together' and 'constrained' prose-styles (3.9.1 = 1409a20-10b5: [λέξιν] εἰρομένην (…) κατεστραμμένην).[39] Prose that is strung together goes on with no natural endpoint, like a list, whereas constrained prose has clearly marked distinctions and is divided into sentences (*periōdoi*) which may themselves be partitioned in separate clauses (*kōloi*).[40] But this is very schematic, and as Denniston wrote: "Most Greek writing uses both types."[41]

What Aristotle and Denniston are both grappling with is how, due to the nature of its conventions and linguistic form, an essential problem of writing Greek prose is that how to structure the relationship between the overarching idea and its individual components (since the latter have a greater priority of emphasis than modern English with its detailed conventions of syntax and punctuation). Thucydides' answer to this problem is his own, and has centrally to do with antithesis, a way of ordering a sentence by placing its components in opposition with one another.[42] Denniston remarks on the "highly individual" use of

[37] Rhetorical prose in particular could be self-conscious and sometimes self-critical in its relation to poetry (see de Romilly 1975, 7-9).
[38] Denniston 1952, 61 (but see 61-6).
[39] Aristotle imposes a chronological scheme on this distinction stating that the strung together style is older (he gives the first sentence of Herodotus as a paradigmatic example) and the constrained more recent, but essentially the difference he identifies is between varieties of sentence structure. Fowler (1982) insists that Aristotle is defining these units 'logically' rather than 'rhythmically.' Often, as we will see, for Thucydides what is important is the interplay of these both.
[40] Cf. Dover 1997, 37-8. Bakker (2007B) calls these modes of writing 'paratactic' ('strung together') and 'syntactic' ('constrained') – technical terms of modern literary criticism.
[41] Denniston 1952, 60.
[42] Mittelstadt 1985, 59; Monoson and Loriaux 1998, 286. Cf. the discussion of antithetical style in Chapter 3, and individual antitheses here throughout.

antitheses in Thucydides' writing.[43] Antitheses such as μέν/δέ, τε/καί, οὔτε/οὔτε, or οὔτε/τε are almost ubiquitous, but rarely are the clauses balanced or the terms of a unit straightforwardly antithetical. Nor are they strictly ornamental. "While Thucydides often uses a far-fetched antithesis to point an epigram," writes Denniston "he has no love of elaborate antithesis for the sake of merely formal regularity."[44] Antithesis may be thematic and descriptive, as in the typically compressed aftermath of the Battle of Epipolae (7.44.8):[45]

διωκόμενοι κατά **τε** τῶν κρημνῶν [οἱ] πολλοὶ ῥίπτοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἀπώλλυντο, στενῆς οὔσης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν Ἐπιπολῶν πάλιν καταβάσεως, **καὶ** ἐπειδὴ ἐς τὸ ὁμαλὸν οἱ σῳζόμενοι ἄνωθεν καταβαῖεν, οἱ **μὲν** πολλοὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ὅσοι ἦσαν τῶν προτέρων στρατιωτῶν ἐμπειρίᾳ μᾶλλον τῆς χώρας ἐς τὸ στρατόπεδον διεφύγγανον, οἱ **δὲ** ὕστερον ἥκοντες εἰσὶν οἳ διαμαρτόντες τῶν ὁδῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἐπλανήθησαν· οὕς, ἐπειδὴ ἡμέρα ἐγένετο, οἱ ἱππῆς τῶν Συρακοσίων περιελάσαντες διέφθειραν.

> Pursued down the cliffs many [Athenians and allies] threw themselves off and died, since the path was narrow leading back down from Epipolae; then, of those who safely reached level ground, many of them, including those from the earlier force [under Nikias] who better knew the place, escaped back to the camp, but those from the later force [under Demosthenes] in some cases took the wrong roads and got lost wandering around the place: at daybreak when the Sicilian cavalry went around these were killed.

[43] Dennison 1952, 73 (see 73-4).
[44] Denniston 1952, 73-4. The far-fetched moments tend to happen in the speeches.
[45] With thanks to a student, Samara, whose remark in a class made me look at this passage differently.

In an essay on the preceding battle, Biffi remarks on its "extraordinary expressive intensity."[46] Here, the brief units of the sentence, held together by the antithetical particles in bold, allow for a rapid succession in which we learn of a mass of different individual fates, all detailed enough to evoke a vivid picture for the reader, none fully described.[47] We are given only the barest sense, for example, of how many people do or do not make it back to base; no one's name, background, or character. We hear that those who knew the area were more able to escape – a valuable strategic detail, but also a poignant one, since it means that most of the people killed were those under Demosthenes and had only just arrived.[48] Thus, compression.

Although the passage uses antithesis, it avoids symmetry between juxtaposed elements. The antitheses are paratactic, in the sense not only that are they unbalanced, but that each element is distinct and introduced separately in its place: in fact, the passage is structured chronologically. On the other hand, these antitheses allow for the easy combination and distinction into parts of the Athenian force as the retreat causes it to break up into groups that take different (wrong) turns. Antithesis without symmetry is a feature of Thucydidean prose that Hornblower attributes to a desire to be unpredictable, to raise the focus and attention of a listening audience.[49] But here it may be read thematically as enacting an important tension inherent in the retreat. The army is united by the common act of each man attempting to save himself, but this means its single

[46] Biffi 2008, 91 ("*la straordinaria intensità espressiva*"). See also Paul 1987. On sensory aspects of the battle-description see Hald 2019. Hornblower (3.617) links it with *Iliad* Book 10.
[47] Cf. Macleod 1983, 88: "Reality is portrayed realistically, through a portrayal of the minds of those who were part of it."
[48] Hornblower (3.630) hears echoes of the aftermath of Delium (cf. 4.96.7).
[49] Hornblower 2004, 364-5 (drawing on Pfeijffer 1999, and cf. Kakridis 1961, 20).

force is dismantled into a mass of individual fates. In retreat the army is defined by a new relationship between the one and the many.[50]

The use of enactment by Thucydides makes the question of mode particularly important for any passage under discussion. I want to close this section by arguing for the importance of what I call the *ekplēktic* mode, which I will introduce here and return to subsequently after discussing the concept of *ekplēxis* in Chapter 7.[51] Writing in the *ekplēktic* mode exhibits Plutarch's vividness-principle (*De. Glor. Ath.* 347a, cf. Chapter 1), taken to an extreme. Its distinguishing characteristic is density: the reader becomes overwhelmed, and this experience is instructive for what a scene or episode is thematically trying to accomplish. For example, in this sentence of Funeral Oration, Pericles refers to the Athenians who have died in battle and whose collective funeral is the occasion for the speech (2.42.4):[52]

> τῶνδε δὲ οὔτε πλούτου τις τὴν ἔτι ἀπόλαυσιν προτιμήσας ἐμαλακίσθη οὔτε πενίας ἐλπίδι, ὡς κἂν ἔτι διαφυγὼν αὐτὴν πλουτήσειεν, ἀναβολὴν τοῦ δεινοῦ ἐποιήσατο· τὴν δὲ τῶν ἐναντίων τιμωρίαν ποθεινοτέραν αὐτῶν λαβόντες καὶ κινδύνων ἅμα τόνδε κάλλιστον νομίσαντες ἐβουλήθησαν μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ τοὺς μὲν τιμωρεῖσθαι, τῶν δὲ ἐφίεσθαι, ἐλπίδι μὲν τὸ ἀφανὲς τοῦ κατορθώσειν ἐπιτρέψαντες, ἔργῳ δὲ περὶ τοῦ ἤδη ὁρωμένου σφίσιν αὐτοῖς ἀξιοῦντες πεποιθέναι, καὶ ἐν

[50] Cf. other retreats and massacres where the description moves a similar way by making careful and brisk distinctions between the fates of those who took different paths or fell into different hands during a retreat: Aetolia (3.98), Amphilochia (3.112.6-8), Amphipolis (5.10.9-10), the Great Harbour of Syracuse (7.71.6), Euboea (8.95.5-7). The Battle of Mantinea does not result in such a retreat and Thucydides specifically explains this is because the Spartans do not pursue their enemies at much length after they win a battle (5.73.4).

[51] Allan (2007) divides Thucydides into what he calls the displaced and immediate modes (cf. Bakker 1997 on 'mimetic' and 'diegetic'; Schneider 1974, 46-52 on mimesis). In what I call the *ekplēktic* mode, features Allan identifies as displaced (e.g. hypotaxis, participial clauses) are put into the service of a mimetic description where the reader's experience conveys an important part of the sense by analogy.

[52] Pearson 1943 (399: "This difficult sentence really contains the central thought of the whole funeral speech"). See also Kakridis 1961, 77-82.

> αὐτῷ τῷ ἀμύνεσθαι καὶ παθεῖν μᾶλλον ἡγησάμενοι ἢ τὸ ἐνδόντες σῴζεσθαι, τὸ μὲν αἰσχρὸν τοῦ λόγου ἔφυγον, τὸ δ᾽ ἔργον τῷ σώματι ὑπέμειναν καὶ δι᾽ ἐλαχίστου καιροῦ τύχης ἅμα ἀκμῇ τῆς δόξης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ δέους ἀπηλλάγησαν.
>
> But as for these men: of those who had wealth not one turned coward because he preferred to prolong its enjoyment, nor did any pauper, hoping he could yet escape his poverty and become rich, postpone the dread moment. But taking the victory over their enemies to be more desired than that, and believing this the most glorious of risks, they were willing to pursue the victory at this risk, while delaying the rest, deciding to hope for prosperity in a future that was uncertain, but resolving to take in hand personally what confronted them now; and, recognizing that resistance and death were involved in it rather than surrender and survival, they fled from disgrace, but faced up to their task with their lives; and through the fortune of the briefest instant, at the height of glory rather than fear, they departed.

Rusten, whose "somewhat free" translation I use here, calls this "a prime candidate for the title "most exasperating sentence" in Thucydides."[53] Indeed, no translation can do justice to the inextricability of the Greek. The three basic problems are: (1) What do the various pronouns and articles refer to? (2) Why are *those two things* (whichever they are) being contrasted? (3) How should the clusters of genitives and datives be organised? If editors have tended to alter this passage, hardly ever due to actual variants in the manuscript, commentators

[53] Rusten 1986, 78 ("somewhat free," 58, in reference to 2.41.3-4). Following Rusten's later schema (2017, 230) this is clearly a 'funnel' sentence culminating in its "decisive" final verb.

have remarked upon it with indignity or resignation.[54] Its exceptionally elaborate style approaches the incomprehensible.

Here we should step back and ask, how much is it *supposed* to be comprehensible? These syntactic complexities result from the sentence's carefully constructed form which is a semantic vehicle of its own. Kakridis notes the accumulation of paired or contrasting elements.[55] But many of these contrasts are misleading and overwhelm the grammatical sense. The penultimate clause, for example (τὸ μὲν αἰσχρὸν τοῦ λόγου ἔφυγον, τὸ δ᾽ ἔργον τῷ σώματι ὑπέμειναν/"they fled the disgrace of [other people's] *logos,* against the task [*ergon*] with their bodies they stood their ground") deploys a familiar *logos*/*ergon* contrast which obscures the more fundamental one between the verbs.[56] But amid this obscurity and resistance to parsing, the general thrust could not be clearer: all sorts of people, all Athenians, from different backgrounds, with a variety of thoughts and experiences, chose an exalted destiny.[57] For the reader, it may feel as if sentence runs past them; they want to slow it down and isolate the individual bits of meaning, but in doing so they work against its apparent grain which runs everything in the same direction faster than our ability to comprehend. The tension between all of the contrasted elements is smoothed over by how it proceeds, building towards the grand conclusion of a final verb that seems to efface everything: "they departed" (ἀπηλλάγησαν).

The last word is significant. Nicole Loraux has argued that, with its substitution for 'they died' (which would be ἀπέθανον), ἀπηλλάγησαν euphemises of the

[54] Gomme (2.131ff.) is colourful. See also Hornblower 1.310 and de Romilly 2.98.
[55] Kakridis (1961, 79). A few examples will suffice to show he is correct: "οὔτε πλούτου (…) οὔτε πενίας"/"πλουτήσειεν (…)ἐποιήσατο"/"τοὺς μὲν τιμωρεῖσθαι, τῶν δὲ ἐφίεσθαι"/" ἐλπίδι (…) ἔργῳ."
[56] Kakridis 1961, 81.
[57] Pearson (1943, 399) calls this sentence 'the central thought of the whole funeral speech, for it is here that Pericles explains and justifies the heroism of those who have fallen.' In other words it is where the connection between the dead soldiers and the city is finally made explicit.

death of the soldiers into a blissful passing away.[58] The 'beautiful death,' in which the male hero dissolves into the nobility of feeling they inspire by some virtuous fatal action and become a symbol, linking death with the achievement of desire, is a familiar part of the ancient Greek ideological lexicon.[59] But here the beauty is collective rather than individual: dying for the city, the soldiers are subordinated to it, becoming a part of the image it projects to is citizens, the thing for the sake of which and by means of which it commands them.[60] In prose – in speech – Pericles makes the city what he projects it to be.[61] But we should not read to the end straightaway: the syntactic journey to the end paradoxically reinforces the sense of unity by creating an impression of dizzying variety. Price has argued that generally in the speeches difficult passages of Greek should be taken to reflect psychological trouble and rhetorical awkwardness; more broadly it could be said that the difficulty of a speech should be interpreted in light of the situation where it appears.[62] As with the retreat from Epipolae, the syntax here dramatises the relationship between the one and the many, or the parts and the whole, in a way that reinforces its thematic sense.[63] The difficulty of distinguishing and comprehending individual sense-items in the buildup to the final word is matched by the erasure of all these distinctions in the moment of death where they become one. The overwhelming tumult of the many, the mute simplicity of the one: what carries this drama through is a mode of writing that overwhelms the reader, and it is this overwhelming mode which I call *ekplēktic*.

[58] Loraux 1986B, 341n8. Cf. Pritchard (2024, 38): "The funeral oration idealised Athenian *polemos.* Epitaphic Athenians were only ever courageous and were almost always victorious."
[59] See Loraux 2024 and the essays collected in Vernant 1989, which explore the trajectory of the concept from Homer to the Classical Greek city.
[60] See Loraux 1986B, 337.
[61] On this double-edged symbolic achievement of immortality see Wohl 2002, 54.
[62] Price 2013.
[63] Cf. Dewald (2005, 20) on Thucydides' "dialogic depiction of reality."

Many scholars have claimed the Funeral Oration conveys both an ideal (*this* is Athens, what the city is and stands for) and a sense of order or unity (we are all members of a single, continuous and intelligible entity called Athens).[64] The above demonstrates that, if this is true, then paradoxically the Funeral Oration achieves this effect with a style that for many and at first glance conveys the opposite, a rush of sounds and combinations of words that overwhelm their referents.[65] Elsewhere I have drawn parallels between this sentence from the Funeral Oration and other passages with very elaborate writing, notably the description of *stasis* at Corcyra, (3.82-4), and the Book 7 battle at Epipolae (7.43-4) and the Great Harbour of Syracuse (7.70-1).[66] Here is an example (7.70.6): [67]

> ξυνετύγχανέ τε πολλαχοῦ διὰ τὴν στενοχωρίαν τὰ μὲν ἄλλοις ἐμβεβληκέναι, τὰ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐμβεβλῆσθαι, δύο τε περὶ μίαν καὶ ἔστιν ἣ καὶ πλείους ναῦς κατ᾽ ἀνάγκην ξυνηρτῆσθαι, καὶ τοῖς κυβερνήταις τῶν μὲν φυλακήν, τῶν δ᾽ ἐπιβουλήν, μὴ καθ᾽ ἓν ἕκαστον, κατὰ πολλὰ δὲ πανταχόθεν, περιεστάναι, καὶ τὸν κτύπον μέγαν ἀπὸ πολλῶν νεῶν ξυμπιπτουσῶν ἔκπληξίν τε ἅμα καὶ ἀποστέρησιν τῆς ἀκοῆς ὧν οἱ κελευσταὶ φθέγγοιντο παρέχειν.
>
> In many places because of the narrowness of the space the ships were ramming one side, rammed on the other, two to one and sometimes even more forcibly stuck together with the helmsmen protecting one side, threatening the other, these not one at a time but all together at the same

[64] Some examples of each. First: Ober 1989; Wohl 2002. Second: Loraux 1986B; Foster 2010; Orwin 2016, 2017. (All *passim*).
[65] On the overall frequency of "abrupt and challenging" clauses in Pericles' speeches see Tompkins 2013, 452.
[66] O'Sullivan 2024B, 81-5.
[67] Pelling 7.221: "A magnificent sentence." On the style and literary construction of 7.70 see Woodman 1988, 27; Grethlein 2015, 125-9; Bruzzone 2018; Rood 2022, 383-9.

> time, and the huge noise from so many ships crashing together led to terror as well as drowning out the orders of the captains.

The rapid influx of details through the passage makes it resemble the experience of the sailors in battle, where a lot of things happen simultaneously and where life and death each hang in the balance.[68] A similar effect is at work in 6.100, analysed by Yagunima, who claims that in the narrative often Thucydides deploys long sentences to convey several actions happening simultaneously (or "one action or one event (…) in its multifaceted entirety").[69] Especially for the first-time reader the result can feel like a blur. Elsewhere in the discussion of the Archaeology, I discuss occasions where Thucydides writes with a sense of insufficiency, a focus on materials, signs, and movements which is imbued with an awareness of something missing. I will expand on the point below in the conclusion. By contrast, what we find here is an excess of reality that takes on a force of its own. That such material often proves with repeated readings to convey a highly nuanced message is beside the point here. The next question which arises is how we should understand this force, and what it means: that I will address later, during the broader discussion of *ekplēxis* and Pericles, in Chapter 7. The above analysis has shown the sort of questions or priorities with which Thucydides comes shapes his account and made some concrete observations that will be developed in later chapters. Tensions between particular and general, many and one, concrete and abstract, possible and actual, are at the forefront of these sentences and the interpretive problems they pose – just as they are central thematically in the work.

Seriality: The Years

[68] *Pace* Rood 2022, 383-9, who stresses how soldiers' individual contributions are distinguished.
[69] Yaginuma 1990 (quoted from 284).

By 'seriality' I am referring to the way in which, apart from the introductory phase in Book 1, Thucydides organises his account paratactically, listing the events that took place in each year of the war.[70] Events are listed in each year, and years are listed. Although it is unclear when and how the book divisions in the text were made, it is likely this was not by Thucydides.[71] The serial, annual structure was probably how he intended the *Peloponnesian War* to be divided. Thucydides generally opens each event, and closes each year, with one of a few formulaic expressions.[72] In this section I argue that his choice of seriality should be regarded as much more than simply a way of organising material, it is thematically significant.[73] Specifically, here I will argue that this arrangement causes time to inhabit the work's contents in a way that makes us conscious of every event and figure as a moment: here, gone. This is distinct from the inevitably numerous individual expressions and conceptions of time which occur in the ordinary grammar of the sentences, or individual evocations in speeches of the 'plupast.'[74] But it corresponds with the overarching temporality of the Archaeology which I described in Chapter 2. There, the 'outer' image of time as an inscrutable mass corresponded with an 'inner' characterisation of elements of daily life as unconscious survivals of a forgotten past. Here, the position of the reader (who, unlike the characters, perceives the work's contents together and

[70] A serial, not a linear fashion (as claimed by Garcés 2023, 4); the units of time are discrete, not continuous. The implications of seriality are discussed in this section. The sort of year in question is a solar year – on the nature and sources of the Thucydidean concept of the solar year see Pritchett 1995, 173-204.

[71] Hemmerdinger (1948) argues each year had its own papyrus roll with the title coming at the end (as was normal in the Hellenistic period); see Gomme 5.390f. for a rebuttal. On the history of the book divisions, such as it can be known, see Hemmerdinger (1948, 1955) and more recently Liberman 2017, 19-34.

[72] For a detailed examination of these formulae see Dewald 2005, 179-89

[73] Cf. Dewald (2005, 20): "The narrative structure of Thucydides' *History* is fashioned out of Thucydides' determination to convey to us, his readers, that what is narrated is not one story, or a story from one standpoint, but an account that seriously tries to take account of the multiple consciousness of many different actors who in real time reacted to each other, with many different aims and opinions and ways of proceeding."

[74] On this see the essays in Lallot et al. eds 2011; George 2014, 60-117. On the plupast see the essays in Grethlein and Krebs (eds) 2012.

from a distance) allows them uniquely, guided by the work's form, to experience time as a quality of the events as they unfold.

Thucydides imposes the serial form at a certain point in the text and announces when he does this at the beginning of Book 2 (2.1-2.1):[75]

> ἄρχεται δὲ ὁ πόλεμος ἐνθένδε ἤδη Ἀθηναίων καὶ Πελοποννησίων καὶ τῶν ἑκατέροις ξυμμάχων, ἐν ᾧ οὔτε ἐπεμείγνυντο ἔτι ἀκηρυκτεὶ παρ᾽ ἀλλήλους καταστάντες τε ξυνεχῶς ἐπολέμουν· γέγραπται δὲ ἑξῆς ὡς ἕκαστα ἐγίγνετο κατὰ θέρος καὶ χειμῶνα.
>
> [2.1] τέσσαρα μὲν γὰρ καὶ δέκα ἔτη ἐνέμειναν αἱ τριακοντούτεις σπονδαὶ αἳ ἐγένοντο μετ᾽ Εὐβοίας ἅλωσιν· τῷ δὲ πέμπτῳ καὶ δεκάτῳ ἔτει, ἐπὶ Χρυσίδος ἐν Ἄργει τότε πεντήκοντα δυοῖν δέοντα ἔτη ἱερωμένης καὶ Αἰνησίου ἐφόρου ἐν Σπάρτῃ καὶ Πυθοδώρου ἔτι δύο μῆνας ἄρχοντος Ἀθηναίοις, μετὰ τὴν ἐν Ποτειδαίᾳ μάχην μηνὶ ἕκτῳ καὶ ἅμα ἦρι ἀρχομένῳ Θηβαίων ἄνδρες (κτλ.)
>
> From this point the war begins between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians, as well as the allies on either side, during which they no longer had exchanges with each other nor received heralds, and were all the way through on a war-footing: it is written from start to finish in the order that each thing happened by Summer and Winter.

[75] Cf. Rusten 2023, 87: "from this point on disjunctions between events and their corresponding shifts in style are not perceived to be occurring at the whim of the historian but as belonging to the nature of war itself." More tendentiously Bakker (1997, 29): "Winters and seasons come and go in Thucydides' narrative in a way that has perhaps more to do with the method of narrative presentation and organization adopted by the historian than with the actual experience of those participating in the war." On the first part of this passage see Price (2001, 277-83). It seems that the beginning may be the second half of a sentence that the book division cuts down through the middle (cf. 1.146). The "exceptionally elaborate" (Dewald 2005, 26) sentence of 2.2.1 cuts against Price's claim that the beginning of the war, for Thucydides, in fact occurs with the Spartan invasion of Athens (2.12.4). In fact looking for the precise incident with which the war begins may be as pointless as seeking to identify which pretext or flashpoint (Corcyra, Potidaea, Megara) was the true cause of war.

> 14 years had gone by since the 30-year treaty that was made after the capture of Euboea:[76] in the fifteenth year of this, when Chrysis was in her forty-eighth year as the priestess in Argos and Ainesias was ephor and Sparta and Pythodorus had two months left as archon of the Athenians, in the sixth month after the battle of Potidaea just at the beginning of Spring, some Theban men (etc.)

A clear preoccupation in this passage is exactitude: the stacking up of temporal markers narrows down more precisely the day on which the outbreak of war occurred. Bernard Williams claimed "Thucydides invented historical time" which "provides a rigid and determinate structure for the past. Of any two real events in the past, it must be the case either that one of them happened before the other or that they happened at the same time."[77] Yet readers including Dionysius of Halicarnassus have rather found that the Summer-Winter structure causes the chronology of events to be confused (*Thuc.* 9.4-5).[78] This sense is compounded by Thucydides' variations of narrative order, speed, and even method, as shown by Dewald and Rood.[79] Rather than ease or accuracy, what Thucydides gains with his method of ordering events is a sense of temporality, the assertion of a temporal frame or structure in which the events are contained, and of time as a substance by which they are imbued. Seriality is thus a crucial means through which the work's ontology comes to be. But here we must be careful. Williams (rightly) avoids drawing any equivalence between what he calls historical time

[76] Cf. 1.87.6 where Thucydides uses this treaty to mark when the Spartans vote for war.

[77] Williams 2002, 162. See also Sattler's (2017) claim that the early Greeks did not possess a unified concept of time – by which she means what Williams says. On local methods of marking time in the Greek *polis* see Clarke 2008.

[78] Cf. Hunter (1982, 239): "[Thucydidean temporal markers] are most imprecise and often serve little more than to bring order to the narrative" and Irwin (2015, 126): "The fragmentation of events brought about by Thucydides' seasonal division of the war is palpable." For a discussion of how Thucydides seeks to overcome the challenges to clarity posed by his seasonal structure see Rood 1998A, 111-15.

[79] Dewald 2005; Rood 2007. In some cases the structure may facilitate the drawing of parallels between events (Rood 1998A, 120).

and natural time; the annual calendar, according to Herodotus, was a human invention, by the Egyptians (Hdt. 2.4). But what we have here is even more specific than Williams allows: that is, rather than a global historical temporal frame, Thucydides is depicting that of the war itself.[80] Carson admires how Thucydides lists seven different local ways of telling time in Greek cities: the implication, she argues, is that the war comes to stand above these and possess its own temporal frame.[81] Greenwood has remarked on how the passage zooms in from a time-period of decades into years, months, and finally a moment on a single night.[82] Here local timelines converge and are superseded from the perspective of a phenomenon that will encompass the greater part of humanity (1.1.2). In linear terms, "the beginning of Spring" makes a change of basis: seasons are the coordinates from which he will map out the war as a new temporal subspace.

In principle as a timespan the war could be indefinite, but this does not change the fact that the war's temporal plane is a construction limited by its bases. When the treaty between Athens and Sparta ends the Archidamian War he reintroduces local timeframes (5.19.1). A useful contrast may be with the much later Eusebius' dating of the birth of Christ (*Hist. eccl.* 1.2-3), where he similarly uses several different imperial temporal markers to identify the very moment that inaugurates the timeline of the Christian Church, which is also the subject of his history. Unlike Christ's birth for Eusebius, the outbreak of the war for Thucydides does not trigger a new universal or cosmic timeline. Rather it inaugurates (albeit of a different supranational order) a new socio-historical timeline, just like the earlier timeline of the treaty of Euboea, or the more local

[80] The approach here should be distinguishes from linguistic approaches to the question of temporality in Thucydides: see e.g. Bakker 1997, 2007A (cf. Allan 2013); the essays in Lallot et al. eds 2011; George 2014, 60-117.
[81] Carson 2000, 3 (cf. Clarke 2008, 90-2).
[82] Greenwood 2006, 46.

but much longer and more encompassing one of Athenian archon-list. All the named institutions at the start of Book 2 post-date the earliest period mentioned in the *Peloponnesian War*, "[when] what is now called Greece was not inhabited (1.2.1: ἡ νῦν Ἑλλὰς καλουμένη οὐ πάλαι βεβαίως οἰκουμένη). The Archaeology of Book 1, and later the history of Attika in Book 2 (2.14-17) and the Sikelika in Book 6 (6.2-5), provide an outer frame that places, not only the war, but also these previous ways of marking time within a much broader and more obscure temporal outline.[83]

One text whose material is similarly ordered is Xenophon's *Hellenica*.[84] As a result it proves a useful additional point of contrast. The current consensus is that Xenophon rarely introduces the year in his account, but instead the Greek text of the *Hellenica* is full of what scholars have judged later interpolations that give the year at its beginning along with several other temporal markers. For example (1.6.1):

> τῷ δ᾽ ἐπιόντι ἔτει, ᾧ ἥ τε σελήνη ἐξέλιπεν ἑσπέρας καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς νεὼς ἐν Ἀθήναις ἐνεπρήσθη, [Πιτύα μὲν ἐφορεύοντος, ἄρχοντος δὲ Καλλίου Ἀθήνησιν]…
>
> In the next year, in which there was an eclipse of the moon one evening and
> the old temple of Athena in Athens was burned, [when Pityas was ephor, and Kallias was archon at Athens, and the war had lasted twenty-four years,]…[85]

[83] Both the history of Attika and the Sikelika are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
[84] Traditionally the work was considered a continuation of Thucydides – it begins not long after where Thucydides leaves off – but this has been problematised. See Rood 2004B: he argues that Xenophon was engaged in a complex, and perhaps competitive, literary judgement of Thucydides by imitation and omission. What I suggest here may sit well with that idea.
[85] Tr. Krentz 1989, 49.

What is and is not interpolated is less important here than the basis for comparison the text provides as given; Clarke has described how the Olympic games gradually became a standard universal chronological measure among Greek historians.[86] Never does Thucydides show this passage's preoccupation with placing the year in a broad calendar of ordinary and extraordinary events.[87] Instead he introduces every unit of narrative, including the beginning of a year, by means of one of a few stock phrases.[88] Likewise, events in his narrative are not dated exactly, but only vaguely with regard to the year and season within which they take place.[89] In the Xenophontic text the year is framed as a basic natural unit of chronology in which multiple events occur which are thus temporally connected. Local and broader social-historical timelines are encompassed by a single naturalist temporality of succeeding years that do not necessarily have a number. By contrast, in Thucydides, the basic annual structure is framed as being conditioned by the war which is the text's subject. A more naturalist interpretation may seem to fit with the defence Thucydides makes of his year-by-year structure in a passage joined to his second preface, after recording the treaty which ends what scholars call the Archidamian war (5.20):

> [1] αὗται αἱ σπονδαὶ ἐγένοντο τελευτῶντος τοῦ χειμῶνος ἅμα ἦρι, ἐκ Διονυσίων εὐθὺς τῶν ἀστικῶν, αὐτόδεκα ἐτῶν διελθόντων καὶ ἡμερῶν ὀλίγων παρενεγκουσῶν ἢ ὡς τὸ πρῶτον ἡ ἐσβολὴ ἡ ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν καὶ

[86] Clarke 2008, 109-21. On the conception of time in the *Hellenica* see Golfin 2004 – as the work develops the annalistic frame becomes looser and (Golfin argues: 78) he approaches the kind of narrative organised by subject rather than chronology that was practised by Ephorus and would influence later authors.
[87] Cf. Hornblower 2.318-9.
[88] Dewald 2005, 179-89. Hornblower (*Comm.* 2.493): "In the Hellenistic period, people like Timaeus and Polybius used Olympiads [for dating purposes]; Th.'s own references to Olympic victors (…) are an anticipation of such systems." In fact, the two such references in Thucydides are both to Olympiads where important political events take place – a speech by the revolting Mytilenaeans to the Peloponnesians requesting help (3.8), and the barring of the Spartans by the Eleians from participating in the games (5.49). In each case the mention of athletic victors draws an enigmatic contrast.
[89] To do otherwise would seem to have been extremely difficult because of the complexities of overlapping local calendars: see Pritchett 1964, 26-8.

ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ πολέμου τοῦδε ἐγένετο. [2] σκοπείτω δέ τις κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους καὶ μὴ τῶν ἑκασταχοῦ ἢ ἀρχόντων ἢ ἀπὸ τιμῆς τινὸς τῇ απαριθμήσει τῶν ὀνόματα ἐς τὰ προγεγενημένα σημαινόντων πιστεύσας μᾶλλον. οὐ γὰρ ἀκριβές ἐστιν, οἷς καὶ ἀρχομένοις καὶ μεσοῦσι καὶ ὅπως ἔτυχέ τῳ ἐπεγένετό τι. [3] κατὰ θέρη δὲ καὶ χειμῶνας ἀριθμῶν, ὥσπερ γέγραπται, εὑρήσει, ἐξ ἡμισείας ἑκατέρου τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὴν δύναμιν ἔχοντος, δέκα μὲν θέρη, ἴσους δὲ χειμῶνας τῷ πρώτῳ πολέμῳ τῷδε γεγενημένους.

[1] This treaty occurred when Winter was ending[90] at the start of Spring straight after the festival of Dionysus, when 10 years had passed with only a few days in the difference from when the first invasion of Attika and the beginning of the war took place. [2] People should reckon according to the times given and not those measured by the archons or whichever position is used in each place for the dating of past events, and rely more on counting than systems that use names to denote past events. Since it is not accurate with regard to whether it was when people had begun their archonship, were in the middle, or whenever it may be, that an event took place. [3] Indeed, counting up the number of Summers and Winters, as written here, they will find – with each having the force of being one in two parts of the year[91] – that the first war lasted ten Summers and an equal number of Winters.

But careful examination of the passage leads to the conclusion that Thucydides goes beyond any such perspective. Numbering in this passage has a thematic resonance, as Rood observes, which brings "a sense of completion" to the

[90] On the Greek genitive absolute cf. George 2014, 46 (ex. 52).

[91] The convoluted expression may reflect the fact that Thucydides' Summer and Winter are not precisely halves of the year, because his Summer is longer and includes the Spring and Autumn (the 'Summer/Winter' distinction is a contrivance based on the campaign season). See references below.

narrative of the first war: which in turn, however, will be undermined in the course of the second preface by subtle variations of repeated formulae and echoes from both the beginning of Book 1 and the earlier passage above from the start of Book 2, as discussed by Rood.[92] In this way authorial comments such as the above (5.20, 5.25-6) are interspersed with treaties (5.17-19, 5.21-4) in a section that delicately balances an emphasis on continuity with the marked beginning of a new phase. In general – as for example with the device Hornblower labelled tragic *akribeia,* by which the statement of an exact number enhances the *pathos* of a description – there is a correlation for Thucydides between number and completeness or closure (as well as of course magnitude).[93] But if number signifies closure, repetition and sequence by contrast signify openness and indeterminacy. Above, numbering furthermore belies a rather shaky chronology (particularly the '10 years with only a few days in the difference' at 5.20.1),[94] giving rise to some scholarly dispute.[95] Andrewes observes the need to distinguish between the claims at 5.20.1 and 5.20.2-3.[96] In the first, Thucydides counts the length of the Archidamian war. In the second, he argues for the superiority of his own system of counting – based not on information in the passage's first section, but rather on the fact that a quirk in the Athenian archon-calendar (as opposed to the Thucydidean solar-year system) would have caused the period to be recorded as eleven and not ten years.

[92] Rood 1998A, 86-7.
[93] See Hornblower 1987, 34-7 (cf. Rubincam 1979, 1991, 2001). On the thematic significance of numbers in Herodotus see Garcés 2023, 5-11.
[94] There has been some debate about whether this is supposed to mean the war lasted a few days more or less than 10 years (see Hornblower, 2.490-1). Hornblower seems confident that it is 'more,' but essentially in Greek the phrasing is ambiguous.
[95] See especially Pritchett (1964, 1995); Meritt 1962; Andrewes (Gomme 3.17-23), alongside the appendix 'On Summers and Winters' (3.699-715)*;* Rawlings (1981, 35-6); Hornblower *ad loc.*; Clarke 2008, 93-6. Several different emendations have been proposed in response to interpretive difficulties. Above I cite the text as it appears in Alberti's edition.
[96] In Gomme 3.17-23.

The question, therefore, becomes how to interpret the temporal organisation of the narrative, not purely in historical terms, but as an interpretive gesture and implicit judgement. In an important study of Thucydidean narrative, Dewald has shown that the annual structure is just one aspect of a layered chronological arrangement that goes up from units of action into seasons, years, and finally the war itself.[97] Although across these the units of action may be joined by narrative threads and verbal echoes, those connections are a discrete textual layer separate from its account of the events in time. Dewald reworks Aristotle's paratactic/hypotactic distinction and claims that the narrative in most of the work is paratactic. Almost every unit of action is introduced with a formulaic sentence, and every year ends with a concluding statement.[98] The beginnings and ends of a season are usually proximate to descriptions of strange natural phenomena.[99] These formulaic sentences vary, but only a little.[100] This gives the impression voiced by Syme when he refers to "the shackles of the annalistic method."[101] Dewald's overarching thesis in her book is that the narrative organisation changes at the turning point in Book 5 between the end of the so-called Archidamian War and the second phase of treaties and subsequent conflict (5.25-6). In Book 5, the balance between episodes changes as time speeds up during the period of cold war and diplomatic tensions.[102] "The Sicilian narrative (…) forms a polished essay," as any reader of the book knows, and the work becomes much

[97] Dewald 2005. Developed from a PhD thesis submitted in 1975, Dewald's work precedes the development of narratology, so that the terms and concepts she formulates to understand the narrative are worked out of the text. For applying her observations interpretively to Thucydides this ends up being an advantage.

[98] The tenth year is close to an exception as it ends with a statement concluding all ten years of the first Archidamian War: "For these ten years the first war lasted continuously and has now been written." (5.24.2: ταῦτα δὲ τὰ δέκα ἔτη ὁ πρῶτος πόλεμος ξυνεχῶς γενόμενος γέγραπται).

[99] Dewald 2005, 30-1.

[100] Dewald counts 119 units of action. Of these (2005, 43), "four patterns account for 99 (83%)" of the opening sentences." Also "105 (88%) include a phrase of time, and 93 (78%) display it as one of their first two elements." These phrases are "striking and repetitive." Here evidence is gathered in the appendices: 165-91.

[101] Syme 1960, 41. Cf. Dewald (2005, 27): "the regularity of the introductory sentences (…) is very striking."

[102] Dewald 2005, 115-16 (but cf. 120: "it is important not to overstate the differences."

more focussed around this singular event.[103] Equally, in Book 8, especially where the narrative becomes split between the Spartans in the Aegean, Athenians at Samos, and oligarchic Athenians in the city, all chasing each other's tails as well as their own, scene shifts become less marked and the units at once more chaotic and more integrated.[104] This change need not signal any shift in Thucydides' own perceptions of the war or approach to writing as much as a response to different sorts of material. Dewald's point is also made to seem more emphatic because she focusses on the beginnings of scenes rather than the ends of years (which continue to be marked through Books 6-8). The sense of an annual time running alongside the narrative one continues. Her claim should also be qualified by taking note of the few subject shifts that do occur, for example, in Book 6 (6.7, 6.95, 6.105), alongside continued references to seasonal – not only annual – markers (6.7.4-8.1, 6.30.1, 6.62.5-63.1, 6.93.4-4.1, 6.96.1). In context, these are enough to evoke the more emphasis-laden structure of the previous books.

We should therefore seek to explain the work's structure less in terms of modern historical priorities (i.e. the organisation of material for chronological clarity and accuracy), than thematic ones embedded in the work. Thucydides uses seriality to temporalise the material in his work, to show the way in which time permeates them, to make it palpable. But the work's ontology of time should not be equated with or reduced to the passing of the seasons: rather, the seasons, bound up with the passing years and the sequence of narrative events, are suggestive of time in a deeper sense. What the work's serial form gives us, essentially, is a high-level and in some ways elaborate version of a very familiar ancient Greek literary device, the list. Lists can be found in almost every genre of Greek writing from Homer to Herodotus to instruction manuals to inscriptions. At one time the only

[103] Dewald 2005, 144.
[104] Dewald 2005, 147-52. On Book 8 see the discussion and references in Chapter 4.

sort of list which attracted serious attention was the epic catalogue, especially Homer's catalogue of ships, but a recent body of scholarship investigates the ubiquitous Greek poetics and semantics of listing.[105] Lists were taken very seriously and could be profoundly affecting for a Greek audience. Thucydides himself uses catalogues at moments of heightened emotional impact such as the climax of his Sicilian narrative (7.57-59.1).[106] The most important recent study has been Athena Kirk's book *Ancient Greek Lists,* which takes a panoptic view of Greek writing and applies to various forms of list an interpretive framework largely drawn from an essay by Richard Gordon and a book by Umberto Eco.[107] I want to highlight two insights that she develops. First is that the list is a way of counting which creates a sense of mass not tied to the concept of a specific number. Kirk says that items on a list are "rhetorically and potentially infinite," by which she means to convey that lists express mass and multiplicity qualitatively (rather than quantitatively) as abundance.[108] The list's items are enumerated separately, its objects brought into focus without eliding each other; the list's lack of natural endpoint gives a sense it could go on and keep generating new components without cease. The second insight is that often lists are much more than a device or occasion within a Greek text: they are an ordering principle. One highlight of Kirk's book is the chapter on Herodotus where she argues that his paratactic style, his descriptions, and his narrative tangents are all organised around a concept of display where the variety and splendour of the world is laid open for the reader to observe and contemplate.[109] The progression of the narrative of Persia's rise and invasion of Greece is inscribed within the

[105] See Kirk 2021 and the essays collected in Montanari and Rengakos eds 2021.
[106] Visser (2021) would call this a 'Type A' catalogue: i.e. a list of names rather than of items or category-sets. See also Nicolai (2001, 2013) on the Archaeology as a catalogue.
[107] Kirk 2021 – see Gordon's (1999) article for a volume on ancient magic, and Eco's (2009) book made to accompany an exhibition in the Louvre: *An Infinity of Lists*.
[108] Kirk 2021, 44.
[109] Kirk 2021, 78-109.

overarching structural and thematic priority of enumerating the contents of the world so they become available to the reader as its riches. I already noted in the first chapter that Hecataeus, Herodotus and Thucydides all seem to have global ambitions: each text promises its reader access to the whole. Herodotus projects a sense of infinity that makes the reader feel his text conveys the totality of the world. In the *Histories*, the global is the resplendent infinite as implied by the listed mass or multitude of empires and tyrannies that amass "stacks of ethnographical loot."[110]

Kirk does not provide a discussion of Thucydides – I will do that here and take the opportunity to present more ideas about what the ancient list is doing. Let me start with Henri Bergson's concept of a qualitative multiple (introduced as part of a much broader set of claims).[111] Bergson argued that human beings are cognitively limited by a tendency to need to translate things into spatial terms in order to properly conceive them.[112] This, he further argued, impedes our ability to understand time – whose form is not spatial.[113] Normally to observe and speak about time we measure it using space (cf. Aristotle's famous definition of time as the number of motion and essentially a spatial phenomenon [*Ph*. 4.12/221b]).[114] But the serial form of the list provides a way of representing time as a non-spatial entity through the mechanism of repetition, which is rhythmic and marked by qualitative change. To elaborate on the notion of time that results from this representation I want to return to Plato's *Parmenides* and examine a riddling sentence that characterises the relation between the one and time (155c):

[110] Henderson (2007, 295).
[111] Bergson 1971.
[112] Bergson's thesis arguably is based on treating assumptions from the tradition of Western thought as universal facts of human psychology. This objection stands but will prove irrelevant for my purposes.
[113] Compare Morson 1994, 17-20.
[114] See Sattler 2020.

τὸ ἓν αὐτό τε αὑτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πρεσβύτερον καὶ νεώτερον ἔστι τε καὶ γίγνεται, καὶ οὔτε πρεσβύτερον οὔτε νεώτερον οὔτ᾽ ἔστιν οὔτε γίγνεται οὔτε αὑτοῦ οὔτε τῶν ἄλλων.

The one itself compared to both itself and other things both is and becomes older and young, and also neither is nor becomes neither older nor younger than itself nor other things.

The paradox in which the *Parmenides* revels is the idea that the one both is and is not in time, that the passage of time somehow incorporates both change and constancy like a metronomic beat. But in ancient philosophy up to and including Aristotle, time was considered to be nothing more than a category of motion, so that the problem of the order and structure of time was subordinated to the one of whether and how things move – or how things change, since movement and change were virtually indistinguishable concepts.[115] The standard Greek technical word for 'motion' is *kinēsis,* which encompasses both 'motion' and 'change,' and may be translated as either one.[116] The most infamous and sophisticated fifth-century treatment of the problem directly were the paradoxes of Zeno, a follower of Parmenides and character in a Plato's dialogue of the same name. Zeno apparently composed many paradoxes defending aspects of Eleatic monism, but most of the surviving ones attempt to prove the unreality of motion by demonstrating the absurdity of a position which holds that motion exists.[117]

[115] Thus Sattler 2020, 18: "Only with Aristotle – and, in some respects, only after Aristotle – are time and space seen as quantities on the same footing, with the result that we can start to understand the motions we are talking of as motions in time and space."

[116] Aristotle does also use *metaballein* (a more distinct word for 'change'): cf. where he parses between these two terms in Book 5 (*Ph.* 5.1.224b35-225a).

[117] Of the surviving paradoxes others refute concepts such as plurality and place. See Sattler 2020, 134-6. The main source for the paradoxes of motion is Aristotle's *Physics.* See Faris 1996, 2-4. For the rich modern reception of the paradoxes among philosophers and mathematicians, see the essays collected in Salmon (ed. 2001).

The *Parmenides,* Plato's dialogue, rejects and collapses the distinction between motion and rest (156-7, cf. 145e-6a). What is required to make sense of this refusal to distinguish between the two is a medium that can encompass both principles and/or reveal them to be true each in a different sense. The *Parmenides* provides such a medium with the notion of τὸ ἐξαίφνης, or the instant (156d):

> τὸ γὰρ ἐξαίφνης τοιόνδε τι ἔοικε σημαίνειν, ὡς ἐξ ἐκείνου μεταβάλλον εἰς ἑκάτερον. οὐ γὰρ ἔκ γε τοῦ ἑστάναι ἑστῶτος ἔτι μεταβάλλει, οὐδ᾽ ἐκ τῆς κινήσεως κινουμένης ἔτι μεταβάλλει· ἀλλὰ ἡ ἐξαίφνης αὕτη φύσις ἄτοπός τις ἐγκάθηται μεταξὺ τῆς κινήσεώς τε καὶ στάσεως, ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδενὶ οὖσα, καὶ εἰς ταύτην δὴ καὶ ἐκ ταύτης τό τε κινούμενον μεταβάλλει ἐπὶ τὸ ἑστάναι καὶ τὸ ἑστὸς ἐπὶ τὸ κινεῖσθαι.
>
> The instant seems to signify something like this: that there is a change from one thing into another. Since [scil. 'a thing'] does not yet change out of standing still, nor does it yet change out of a movement stirred-up: but the instant nature itself is something strange that sits in the middle between movement and rest, and is not in time, but from each of these into the other changes what is moved into something stationary and what is stationary into something moved.

Sattler's point that any solution to the problems described by Zeno involves keeping motion and rest strictly separate may be true from a conceptual point of view (if one accepts Bergson's cognitive claims), but it is untrue of reality as described in the *Parmenides*, in which things participate in both motion and rest via the mediating figure of the instant.[118] The instant is "an atemporal and a-spatial structure immanent to spatio-temporal individuals."[119] This may seem abstract, but it is an attempt to conceptually define and universalise an individual

[118] Sattler 2020, 318.
[119] Sanday 2015, 141.

and personal feeling of reality with its combination of the present and passing time. As for Thucydides, Morrison has discussed the "punctuated" quality of events in the text as they follow the pattern of "presentation, interruption, and resumption."[120] In Rood's study of time and perspective in the narrative of the *Peloponnesian War,* he remarks: "It is the confrontation of past, present, and future, that is the touchstone of human reality – that, and the unremitting passing of seasons."[121] What these scholars are noticing is how Thucydides enact what Plato describes. The serial form of the text conveys at once the sense of each moment in its static and all-encompassing reality, and the sense of sweeping time in which these moments are incorporated and lost. In this sense the war as a temporality gives a certain structure and appearance to time as a natural phenomenon which allows us more acutely to perceive its force.

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze has written: "*the serial form is necessarily realized in the simultaneity of at least two series*."[122] *The Peloponnesian War* contains an internal series of narrated episodes framed by the external series of the years each with a formulaic marker at the end, and with similar markers at the beginning of most individual episode placing it somewhere within the year. The multiplicity of structures allows for a verticality of representation as time appears at each level different. Throughout the text are interwoven several complete narratives (in principle these could stand alone), such as the stories of Plataea, of Corcyra, of the Athenians and Sicily. These may be entered and traversed at will "like a sequence of corridors," but to close the door as one enters a particular narrative does not change what is outside – indeed, now and then the door swings open.[123] Scholars have normally paid a great deal more attention to the internal series, to

[120] Morrison 1999, 104.
[121] Rood 1998A, 130.
[122] Deleuze 2021, 39. His italics.
[123] "Like a sequence of corridors" – Rood 1998, 114 (translating Delebecque 1965, 38).

the narrative and the expanded sequences within, than to the external one within which the narrative is inscribed. This touches on a more general point. "Thucydides," Stahl writes, "is known for his reluctance to break the chosen mould of the impersonal and detached third-person narrator."[124] Despite this reputation a great deal of scholarly work has gone into showing the inverse: Thucydides frequently and strategically chooses to break this mould for an intended effect.[125] My argument in these last pages of the chapter – which brings together the above point about the serial structure of the text with the more familiar ones about its narrative structure and the pose of its narrator – is that to understand the narrative strategy of this text means interpreting the relationship it draws between the exception and the rule. It corresponds (I argue) to that between the historical event and the historical structure. Equally the layers of narrative framing, at bottom the seriality of time, correspond – just as I have shown that they do in the Archaeology – to different socio-political and natural structures that Thucydides describes.

Stahl describes the Corcyra narrative in Book 3 as "an extraordinarily detailed, almost day-to-day report, with subdivisions even indicating daybreak, day, dusk, and night actions."[126] As many have observed, the shift of emphasis and scale in something like the Corcyra episode lends a great vividness, but of equal importance is the shift back out to the broader narrative, the return from expansion to compression. In other words, the effect comes not just from how the usual pose is broken at moments like Corcyra, but how it is taken back up. After the famous generalising sequence (3.82-4), and a short epilogue (3.85), the subject

[124] Stahl 2013, 209.
[125] See Gribble 1998; Rood 1998A, 2006A; Bakker 2006; Greenwood 2006; Allan 2007; and the essays in Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki eds 2013 (including Stahl's cited above), but also much earlier work in English such as Wallace 1964; Kitto (1966) 257—354; Hunter 1974; Connor 1977A. On exegetical interventions see Gribble and Ridley 1981.
[126] Stahl 2013, 312. Full discussion at 311-5.

changes and the norm is reintroduced with a standard formula: "As the same Summer was ending the Athenians sent twenty ships to Sicily" (3.86.1: **τοῦ δ᾽ αὐτοῦ θέρους τελευτῶντος** Ἀθηναῖοι εἴκοσι ναῦς ἔστειλαν ἐς Σικελίαν). A sequence follows of very brief episodes with similar standard openings (3.87.1 [the year ends at 3.88.4], 3.89.1, 3.90.1, 3.91.1) before gradually once again the serial frame recedes and a narrative one emerges concerning the campaigns of Demosthenes (cf. 3.91.1, 3.92.1, 3.93.1 – the next change of scene is at 3.99). A reader of 3.86 may think of the Athenian disaster at Sicily in Books 6 and 7, and certainly it is notable here that the machine-like movements of ships and men foreshadow what is to come.

In the succeeding episode 3.87 Thucydides reintroduces the plague: "The following Winter the plague fell a second time upon the Athenians" (3.87.1: τοῦ δ᾽ ἐπιγιγνομένου χειμῶνος ἡ νόσος τὸ δεύτερον ἐπέπεσε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις), but dwells in no way upon the suffering caused, but instead concentrates on the effect on Athenian *dynamis* of the loss of so many soldiers (3.87.2-3). The initial plague narrative (2.47.3-54) is clearly intended to map onto this one, and Thucydides compares the two events explicitly (3.87.1), but this is not to say that the calamity of those earlier pages, with the destruction and the collapse of individual and collective will, slots perfectly beneath the level of description here in this later narrative. The horror of its initial appearance and the terse summary of its political effect show a tension between – as it were – the plague's force of substance and its place in the overarching political story which encompasses it and leaves it behind. Similarly, in the narrative surrounding the first plague we are shown, always very briefly, how it forces a decline of the Athenian ability to exercise force and of the general perception of Athenian power, which Thucydides foreshadows earlier (2.31.2), and which is an important factor in the revolt of Mytilene (cf. 3.3.1, 3.13.3).

There is a way in which this tension is between subjective and the objective, between personal experience and the mass and flow of material forces. But more fundamentally it has to do with the dialectic between event and the two ostensibly closed structures – that of politics, that of nature – in which the text's vivid and climactic moments are inscribed. At the political or social level of interactions between states during the time of war, those with power use it with the result that it grows or weakens, or else they simply see it diminish, all in response to events. The structure is a dynamic that continually changes as it incorporates events within itself and causes one thing to lead into another, guides this cause into that outcome. But equally the events that shape and are shaped by the structure are those of real life. They incorporate other forces that go beyond the structure – microbiological or divine forces to take two examples – and are imbued with the passionate dynamics of real life. Politically the contrast gives a sense of imbalance in two directions. It may cause people to overstate the consequence of an event, as with the Athenian disaster at Sicily which Thucydides stresses the Athenians' capacity to absorb (e.g. 2.65.12, 8.24.5, 8.106.2).[127]

At the deeper level, the structure of the seasons encompasses the flow of time as a succession of moments in which contingency and necessity are not easily distinguished. The necessity of change, the contingency of change. Change is constant. Among the contents of the work, there are events of capital importance for the structure and those of no importance – in other words, decades where nothing happens and weeks in which decades happen. But these are framed by the moment which may be conceived abstractly as a fundamental constituent of

[127] See Strasburger (1982, 1.155-70) on Thucydides' characterisation of the effect of the Sicilian defeat on Athens. Indeed this is one of the ways Thucydides emphasises contingency, avoiding what Morson calls 'backshadowing' (1994, 13): "the past treated as if it had inevitably to lead to the present we know and as if the signs of our present should have been visible to our predecessors.

time, its vessel, so that – as for Plato – eternity is encompassed by a single night. The seasons bring a succession of little eternities (rather like infinitesimals) in the form of moments that seem to stand out of time; but are all encompassed as they disappear, and the next one emerges. Likewise, even in the narrative some event may seem unique and earth-shattering but is quickly re-incorporated into the malleable structure of events.

Conclusion

My argument in this chapter has been that the text's formal organisation is adduced as a way of explicating its ontology. The first section showed that compression for Thucydides can be a way of allowing several meanings to sit together at once as possibilities. The analysis of vividness in particular showed that, although it is certainly a characteristic of some parts of the work, it is a subordinate one in that some places are more vivid than others, and these according to a logic that seeks to develop readerly experiences which are later challenged or serve as the subject of thematic contemplation. This lays the groundwork for an element of the next chapter to which I will repeatedly return in later ones: the idea that *logos* is a kind of force that people manipulate and to which they can be subject. The first section in general points to a sense of meaning whose structure is like the relationship between possibility and actuality as discussed by Aristotle, which I quoted in the introduction. Rather than a single, ascendant, actual meaning, we have instead a cluster of possible meanings (some perhaps even contradictory) which unfold and reveal themselves in time. Likewise, the second section on seriality showed how the concrete events which make up the narrative, and even its time-markers – for example the ripening of corn – are churned together to develop a sense of the moment as both inner and outer constituent of time. Inner, in the sense that the moment is immediate and

intimate. Outer, in that it stands for the openness and contingency of abstract time as an event, as well as the constraint of time as a necessity. Thus, the ontology of form.

I want to close here by extending the analysis of Thucydidean narrative with which the last section closed, and taking up a thread from the end of the first chapter: that is, the notion of *anōmalia,* unevenness, and how we might interpret this as an overarching principle of narrative organisation. In a key episode at the end of Book 3 a large portion of the Ambraciots' male citizen population is massacred in three days: the initial army is defeated in battle, isolated and massacred, and then the following night the reinforcement army in turn is ambushed and massacred (3.105-114). The start and end flag to us that the Ambraciots will be the main subject: "That same Winter the Ambraciots […] sent out an army" (3.105.1: τοῦ δ᾽ αὐτοῦ χειμῶνος Ἀμπρακιῶται […] ἐκστρατεύονται) – an emphasis repeated by the episode's closing words: "That was what happened with Ambracia." (3.114.4: τὰ μὲν κατ᾽ Ἀμπρακίαν οὕτως ἐγένετο). What happens to the Ambraciots is a straightforwardly tragic reversal: they begin as a very large and impressive force, the very best in battle, Greeks – and by a string of miscalculations and inevitabilities they are brought to destruction. Their fall is hard and fast. Thucydides emphasises the massacre as an event of great emotional significance in terms that closely parallel how he describes the destruction of the Athenians in Sicily at the end of Book 7 (3.112.8-113). As Hornblower notes, Thucydides' use of the phrase "few people out of many made it back safe to the city" (3.112.8: ὀλίγοι ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐσώθησαν ἐς τὴν πόλιν) anticipates the almost-closing words of the Sicilian narrative of Books 6 and 7: "few people out of many made it home" (7.87.6: ὀλίγοι ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐπ᾽

οἴκου ἀπενόστησαν).[128] At the close of his account Thucydides does not record the numbers killed because he says it was "unbelievable relative to the size of the city" (3.113.6: ἄπιστον […] ὡς πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως).[129] But he does claim that if the Amphilochian Argives, Acarnanians and Athenians under Demosthenes had then advanced against the city they would have taken it easily (1.113.6). The intervening sections (3.113.1-5) stage a dramatic interruption of the narrative when an Ambraciot herald comes to collect the corpses of the dead. The herald is one of the Ambraciots who had managed to escape from Olpae during the first massacre, when they were abandoned by the Peloponnesians at night – he does not know the second massacre has taken place.[130] On arriving he is amazed at the number of Ambraciot weapons. Thucydides stages a dialogue, between the herald and an unidentified person who assumes he represents those killed during the second massacre – he asks the herald why he is so amazed. A dialogue ensues in direct speech, culminating in the herald's discovery (3.113.5):

> ὁ δὲ κῆρυξ ὡς ἤκουσε καὶ ἔγνω ὅτι ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως βοήθεια διέφθαρται, ἀνοιμώξας καὶ ἐκπλαγεὶς τῷ μεγέθει τῶν παρόντων κακῶν ἀπῆλθεν εὐθὺς ἄπρακτος καὶ οὐκέτι ἀπήτει τοὺς νεκρούς.
>
> As for the herald, when he heard this and realised the reinforcements from the city had been killed, he cried out and was dumbstruck because of the magnitude of the horrors and left straightaway and gave up asking for the corpses.

[128] Hornblower, *Commentary* 1.533. On the richly allusive (epic, lyric, tragic) flavour of this passage see Rood 1998B.

[129] On this second detail see Gray 2011, 85-6. Thucydides suppresses the actual number and says it is unbelievable, not because he disbelieves in it, but for dramatic effect. Hammond (1967, 502) estimates the Ambraciots "had at least 6,000 men of military age in the hoplite class." The size of the first force Thucydides gives as 3,000 (3.105.1); he does not number the reinforcements, but says it is "the whole city" (3.105.4: "πανδημεί").

[130] Lateiner (1977A, 47-51; 1977B esp. 101), makes an important effort to re-centre this scene in reading Thucydides.

The combination of stichomythic dialogue and a discovery scene is highly and obviously indebted to tragic drama.[131] Moreover, the play of mistaken identities between the herald and the bystander continues the motif from the preceding battle and two massacres. This is brought to a dramatic resolution as the discovery of the herald's identity by the bystander, and the bystander's meaning by the herald, also involves the discovery by the herald that virtually the entire relief force – and therefore most of the Ambraciot male population – is dead. In effect, it is a recognition that the Ambraciots have been destroyed (3.113.6). So totally overwhelmed is the herald by this news that he gives up his intended mission of asking for the dead to bury, it seems they are just left behind.

Stahl uses the scene to justify his claim that, for Thucydides, the innate tragedy of certain events is as much an objective fact as the names or quantities concerning them.[132] The final horror of this episode, depicting the slaughter of most of an adult male population of a city – the horror of *the* war – becomes *the horror of war.* The detail of forgetting about the corpses is particularly wrenching in this regard. After the Athenians lose the battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse, for example, they also are so consumed by the horror that they forget to collect their dead. There Thucydides uses the same language, attributing it to "the magnitude of these horrors" (7.72.2: οἱ δ᾽ Ἀθηναῖοι **ὑπὸ μεγέθους τῶν παρόντων κακῶν** νεκρῶν μὲν πέρι ἢ ναυαγίων οὐδὲ ἐπενόουν αἰτῆσαι ἀναίρεσιν). The non-burial of corpses is an important index throughout the *Peloponnesian War* of the scale of an outrage or catastrophe: outrage if enemies do not hand them over, catastrophe if survivors are too appalled to collect them.[133] But the non-burial of corpses is also a common motif from tragic drama whose

[131] Stahl makes this comparison (2003, 134); as does Hornblower (*Commentary* 1.533).
[132] Stahl 2003, 129-38. Comparing the scene with the massacre of the Mykalessians at 7.29-30, he writes (137, his emphasis): "*in the suffering* at Ambracia and Mykalessos, *we grasp the war as Thucydides himself saw it*."
[133] See Lateiner, 1977B.

inclusion here matches the tragically dialogic form of the scene. Similarly, Thucydides uses tragic-style dialogue in the dispute between the Athenian and Theban heralds in Delium, where unburied corpses are centrally at issue (4.89-101).[134]

But the framing of the episode highlights on several levels that the world continues regardless of what has happened. In tragic terms, the meaninglessness of the Ambraciots' loss makes for a catharsis denied. Indeed the tragic aspect of this scene comes not from the primary narrator's perspective, but through that of an unnamed character who vanishes as soon as his narrative purpose has been fulfilled.[135] By the narrator tragic impressions are conveyed through statements about the numbers killed: that is, remarks that produce something in the reader without betraying the narrator's sentiments.[136] After the herald disappears, the narrator comments on the numbers killed and briefly their significance; then moves on (3.113.6). Then there is a further page covering the final actions during that year of Demosthenes' force and the people in Western Greece.[137] Afterwards when the episode has finished, the narrative returns to events in Sicily (3.115), the eruption of Mount Aetna (3.116), and finally the end of the year (3.116.5). In the books that follow the Ambraciots go virtually unmentioned as if forgotten.[138]

[134] The only other time he uses it is the Melian Dialogue.

[135] Lateiner (1977B, 101) calls this purpose "literary, not political or military" – and from a historian's perspective Hammond (1967, 503) traduces the scene's vagueness.

[136] Hornblower (1987, 35) comes up with the term "tragic *akribeia*" to describe this effect. But the scholar who has understood and conveyed it best, as far as I can see, remains Connor in his introduction (1984, 3-19). See also Tamiolaki 2013, 70-1. From 3.113.6 this tone continues through Thucydides' reckoning of numbers to the end of 3.114.

[137] Much of that material is epilogue: it deals with the distribution of spoils among the victors; the improvement of Demosthenes' prospects at home; the new hundred-year treaty between the surviving Ambraciots, the Acarnanians, the Amphilochian Argives, and the Peloponnesians; the arrival in Ambracia of men from their own colonial metropolis, Corinth (3.114).

[138] They send three ships to help the Syracusans against the Athenians (6.104.1), apparently because of a kinship tie (7.58.3: κατὰ τὸ ξυγγενές).

The herald's suffering is drowned in the indifferent record of what follows: ships, armies, and generals like abstractions moving from one place to another and making peace and war with time passing.[139] The narrative voice, which was never part of the Ambraciot herald's suffering in the first place, continues virtually as if it did not happen at all. The destruction of the Ambraciots thus manipulates the tension between the perspective of those who suffer and the narrator's perspective to inscribe the horror of individual human experiences within a broader view of the general condition in which they share. The greatness of the Ambraciots soon becomes their vanity, their military strength becomes their tactical weakness, their human scale becomes the scale of their disaster, and their suffering silence. I will delay a fuller consideration of how far we should take the tragic Thucydides until the conclusion of the final chapter when the full backdrop of these tragic moments has been elaborated. For now, I will repeat the gesture of looking away and passing from event to structures: to show the latter's part in the constitution of historical figures and events is my aim in the next three chapters.

[139] The point here echoes Foster's (2009) claim about the Thucydides uses material objects and their diverse associations to colour in his narrative.

4. Forces, Nature, and the Law of Power

Orwin writes that "No reader of Thucydides can fail to note the recurrence throughout his work of the dyad [motion and rest]."[1] But only recently have scholars begun to grant this dichotomy some interpretive weight.[2] The key words are *kinēsis* and *hēsychia,* which respectively mean motion and rest, and *stasis,* whose literal and etymological meaning transcends this opposition and conveys both agitation and immobility.[3] *Kinēsis* has provoked considerable discussion especially focussing on Thucydides' initial description of the war as the "largest *kinēsis*" (1.1.2: κίνησις γὰρ αὕτη μεγίστη δὴ).[4] *Hēsychi*a was a sort of pro-Spartan/oligarchic/anti-Athenian factional label in the fifth century, and often in Thucydides the word has been simply construed as an endorsement of this sense, but recently Taylor has shown its proper depth and range; her analysis concentrates exclusively on the political semantics of the word, but her appendix detailing the more than 100 uses of its variants shows that a translation such as 'rest' or 'wait' is usually the most appropriate.[5] Stylistically speaking, Bakker has described how Thucydides frequently uses the imperfect tense to give events a feeling of dynamism and incompleteness.[6] Various studies of the famous

[1] Orwin 2017, 367.

[2] *Kinēsis*: Lateiner 1977A; Furley 1990; Schmid 1998; Meier 2005; Munson 2015; Rusten 2015; Saxonhouse 2017; Müller 2022. *Hēsychia*: Demont 1990 (esp. 191-252); Taylor 2022. Both: Fragoulaki 2013, 59 (on the Archaeology); Orwin 2017; Joho 2021. These are anticipated by Strauss 1964, see esp. 155-6. For a review of earlier studies (which concentrate especially on *kinēsis* at 1.1.2) see Müller 2022, 26-46. On motion as a theme in Greek art, literature and philosophy see Hutchinson 2020; Sattler 2020. On *hēsychia* as a philosophical theme in Plato see Gocer 1999.

[3] See Loraux 1997A, 104-8. On the difficulty of defining political *stasis,* and Thucydides' trans-historical definition, see Price (2001, 30-9). On 'standing' as a way of "moving narrative forward" (118) in the Homeric poems see Purves 2019, 117-52.

[4] Recently Rusten 2015 (recalling attention to the overlooked Latacz 1980) has claimed this refers in fact to the build-up of forces at the beginning of the war and not the war itself. The responses (Munson 2015, 41-2; Müller 2022, 184-91 and 357-64) claim that the word's semantic range is very wide, and it should be interpreted as a way of connecting the war and its events with broader social and natural phenomena. The thematic significance of movement and rest throughout the text, as discussed here and in the work cited above, bears out this point.

[5] Taylor 2022.

[6] Bakker 1997, 2007A (see also Allan 2013); cf. Allison (1997, 114-9) on the verb *gignesthai* in Thucydides.

description of *stasis* in Corcyra and beyond (3.8-4) note its incorporation of the language and concepts of disease – both his description of the plague (2.47-54), and Hippocratic medicine – emphasising its agency as a force or quasi-natural phenomenon.[7] But also the two antagonists of the war, Athens and Sparta, are characterised in antithetical terms as respectively standing for restless activity and ponderous inertia (cf. 1.18.1-2, 1.70-1, 8.96.5) – an opposition that comes under pressure in the narrative.[8] Overall these concepts provide a bridge between individual behaviours and decisions, wide-ranging historical events and trends, and physical phenomena.[9]

The following several chapters take these territories in reverse order (nature, historical events, individual behaviours and decisions), seeking to demonstrate how they are linked. In this present chapter I begin by showing how the concepts of motion and rest come to the fore particularly when the narrative takes on a broader civilisational scope. At this level, in an important sense, motion is clearly the rule. I then develop the narrative concept of force (as opposed to power), applying and reflecting the translation of *dynamis* at the end of the first chapter. If power is something we possess, force possesses us. To wield a force is to be changed by it; in that way, the exercise of power is conditioned by the nature of the force that one uses. I show with examples from the narrative how the

[7] E.g. Connor 1984, 99-105; Price 2001, 22-67. For a more cautious view of what Thucydides believed any politician-as-doctor could do see Hornblower 2004, 67-71.

[8] This theme has been much discussed (see Joho 2021, 20n8 for references). Sahlins (2004, 46-9) argues that the two cities evolved "against one another, as cultural antitypes." Müller (2022, 254-73) emphasises its continuation in Book 6. The opposition is at the heart of Strauss' (1964) interpretation of the text which seeks to discover an ideal reconciliation of the two, and of Luginbill's (1999) analysis of Thucydidean national psychology, developed considerably by Jaffe 2017. But the narrative paints a more complex picture than has been appreciated. Connor on the Pentekontaetia (1984, 146): "we move beyond the generalizations of the Corinthians to an understanding of some of the mechanisms of power and the patterns that contribute to or detract from the effectiveness of the two major states." See Jaffe 2017, 66-73 (cf. 72: "Athenian acquiring and Spartan maintaining"). Joho (2021, 20-34) emphasises how often the pursuit of motion or rest by either side leads to the other. Müller (2022, 274-334) notes the various important individuals on either side who subvert their national stereotype (I discuss this too below).

[9] Cf. Orwin 2017, 371: "[Human nature] participates in a natural dynamic that Thucydides shows to be neither wholly intelligible to us nor wholly subject to our control."

conditions of force constrain and define the characters in the text and even produce their downfall. The concept of force can thus unite the more naturalistic margins of Thucydides' text with the political struggles at its centre, offering a more elaborate concept of the relation between nature and human agency. Finally, at the heart of that relation is the question of *nomos* and *physis,* law and nature, a classic problem in fifth-century Greek thought. I discuss this in the final section. I argue that the connection between nature and human history is grounded, not simply in a few bridging concepts, but in a complex metaphysics or ontology of force and limit.

Civilisation and Motion

According to Joho, political order is characterised by how it keeps the forces of motion and rest in "equilibrium," whereas in dire situations (the two he especially highlights are the world before cities at the beginning of the Archaeology and the war itself) things are "disrupted by the equally dismal alternatives of incessant flux and paralysing inaction."[10] But this analysis transposes the dichotomy between motion and rest into a higher one between 'equilibrium' or 'disruption,' or a situation where the relation of motion and rest is 'at rest' versus one where it is 'in motion.' In other words, Joho's is a sophisticated way of saying that, for Thucydides, the ideal political order is one at rest. This view should be rejected. For one thing, rest may be harmful and disruptive: Stahl for example reads the Archaeology as a treatment of power, and the drive for power, as a stable motor of history.[11] For another, it should be remembered that the culmination of the Archaeology's trajectory is not only the

[10] Joho 2021, 18. "Equilibrium" – 20. See also Luginbill 1999, 36-48; and Orwin (201, 367) who describes the Archaeology as "centuries of accumulation of rest."
[11] Stahl 2003, 23-5 (and see Kopp 2017, 66-7).

political form of the *polis* but the cataclysm of war: this trajectory is a movement culminating in a movement. The line between 'progressive' and 'disruptive' movement is in the end a fiction (1.1.2).[12]

Much can be learned about Thucydides' understanding of motion and rest, as before with his concept of time, by zooming out from the immediate focus of the war and taking in where Thucydides represents this phenomenon from a much wider perspective. In Chapter 2 we saw him claim that the first people lived in communities without walls: if they were attacked, they simply moved somewhere else (1.2.1). Although early communities were eventually established, he makes clear that the process of displacement continued as they grew, especially where the land was good, and they sometimes broke apart due to internal conflicts – this is the first appearance of *stasis* in the text – as well as invasions by the surrounding peoples (1.2.4). In Athens, where the land is poor, people lived continuously until their community became too big for the territory of Attika to support, and they sent out some people as colonisers to form new cities in Ionia (1.2.5-6). He uses the normal word for colony: *apoikia* (1.2.6), literally 'away-from-home.' A subsequent list in Book 6 of migrations to Sicily (the Sikelika) has a different emphasis from the beginning of the Archaeology because it opens with a measure of the island's size and then concentrates on the amalgamations of peoples that have resulted in the island's contemporary political geography (6.2-5).[13] The Sikelika is meant partly to convey the

[12] Connor (1984, 103) notes that Thucydides uses the same verb meaning 'progress' or 'advance' to describe the development of Ionian power in the Archaeology and of *stasis*-conflict in Corcyra (προχωρέω: 1.16, 3.82.1). This parallel suggests that comparisons between the latter and Hippocratic terminology should not be over-stressed (e.g. Hornblower 1.480; Price 2001, 14-30): *stasis* is not necessarily to be imagined as a disease, but rather all three of the following – civilisational development, *stasis,* and disease – are to be understood as varieties of motion. Words from *piptō* have a similar significance (see Joho 2022, 67-73).

[13] However, many scholars have noted a continued emphasis on colonisation: Kallet claims the sequence presents the Athenian expedition as a "colonizing venture" (25 – cf. Avery 1973, 8-13; Pothou 2009, 134-41). Tsakmakis (1995, 157-75) emphasises how socio-cultural facts such as the island's name are shown to be a direct result of historical conquests and upheavals.

extraordinary magnitude of the Athens' undertaking to invade and conquer the island (6.1).[14] But even if there are fewer displacements of people in Sicily than in Book 1's narrative of early Greece (there are some: cf. 6.3.2-3), many of those who establish themselves in Sicily are represented as fleeing from elsewhere (e.g. 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4, 6.2.6, 6.4.5-6, 6.5.3).[15] It would be a misreading to focus too narrowly on these parts of the text, in Book 1 and Book 6, as mere narratives of cause and effect that depict the source of the text's present political situation. Between cause and effect, so to speak, there is the medium or instrument of action. In both the Archaeology and the Sikelika, the gain and use of land is the medium or instrument of historical cause and effect. But it is precisely this which leads to the loss of land and upheaval for an entire city whether from internal disputes or external invasions. An analogy may be drawn between the large-scale representation of human societies in these sequences and these lines of Pindar (*Nem*. 6.1-4):

> ἓν ἀνδρῶν, ἓν θεῶν γένος· ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ πνέομεν
> ματρὸς ἀμφότεροι· διείργει δὲ πᾶσα κεκριμένα
> δύναμις, ὡς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὁ δὲ χάλκεος ἀσφαλὲς αἰὲν ἕδος
> μένει οὐρανός.
>
> There is one race of men, another of Gods. We draw breath
> from a single mother. Our allotted power is different in every way.
> For the first there is nothing. For the second there is the seat
> of bronze, unmoving, eternal heaven.

[14] On this passage in its historical and intellectual context see the collection of essays in Congiu et al. (eds 2012).

[15] The opening of Book 6 clearly recalls the Archaeology in Book 1 (see Rawlings 1981, 65-7; Canfora 2016, 14-17), but refines this aspect of the earlier discussion. Cf. Kallet 2001, 24: "One conspicuous difference between the two archaeologies (…) is that while the argument in book 1 aims above all to demonstrate a relationship between money and power, the opening of book 6 sends no such clear message." Tsakmakis compares the sequence to the Pentekontaetia (1995, 166-75). Alonso-Núñez (2000) compares it with both the Archaeology and the history of Attika in Book 2 (see below).

The emergence of *polis* communities in the text eventually obscures this point but does not reduce its essential veracity, as Thucydides highlights, particularly with his representation of Athens. In fifth-century Athens a mainstream idea was that the Athenians were autochthonous, born from the earth of Attika (cf. Thuc. 1.2.5; Pl. *Menex.* 237e-238a).[16] In the *Republic* Socrates represents autochthony as a 'noble lie' (414b-c: γενναῖόν τι ἓν ψευδομένους), that would usefully make members of his ideal city think they were siblings all born from mother earth as well as moulded by God to correspond to their respective stations of life (*Resp.* 414c-417).[17] In the *Peloponnesian War* Thucydides treats the notion of autochthony very creatively.[18] Pelling calls the Thucydidean allusion to autochthony a "Thucydidean flip (…) not anything to be particularly proud of anymore, not a feature of the Athenians' own civic virtue, but just a consequence of their not being worth invading."[19] Much later the description of slaughter on the Assinarus River marks a grotesque return of the notion of autochthony as the blood of the Athenians is mixed with the water and mud (7.84.5):[20]

> οἵ τε Πελοποννήσιοι ἐπικαταβάντες τοὺς ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ μάλιστα ἔσφαζον. καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ εὐθὺς διέφθαρτο, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲν ἧσσον ἐπίνετό τε ὁμοῦ τῷ πηλῷ ἡματωμένον καὶ περιμάχητον ἦν τοῖς πολλοῖς.
>
> And the Peloponnesians went down and slaughtered a great many of them in the river. And the water immediately became foul but nonetheless

[16] The passage from the *Menexenus* suggests autochthony may have been an important piece of democratic ideology. For more on this, and other sources suggesting the same, see Rosivach 1984; Anderson 2021, 138-45.

[17] That Socrates would say so leaves the impression that many Athenians may have held similar opinions about the myth of autochthony: Anderson is therefore wrong to take it completely seriously, and Pelling right to conclude that (2009, 478) "So much of autochthony is about rhetoric and image."

[18] See Rechenauer 1992; Pelling 2009. At 6.2.2 he flatly rejects the idea that the Sikanoi, a Sicilian people, are autochthonous.

[19] Pelling 2009, 476.

[20] See Furley 1990, 182; Vivian 2021, 395. On water and landscape in Thucydides see Pothou 2013.

they drank it still, bloodied and mixed up with earth, many of them fought over it.

The Copenhagen Polis Centre identified roughly three ways that Greek sources, sometimes with self-conscious ambiguity, define the *polis*: as a place, a group of people, and a set of laws or customs.[21] In Thucydides all these definitions are called into question as the narrative challenges the idea of Athens – and by extension of all cities (cf. 1.22.4) – as a fixed entity of one place or people. Already the Athenians had been expelled from Athens by the Persian invasion, their city destroyed.[22] When Athens becomes an imperial power in the Aegean, and subsequently enters the war as a naval power, abandoning the countryside of Attika becoming like islanders in the walls of the city and Piraeus harbour (cf. 1.143.4), the question "What is [the] city?" grows increasingly significant. Pericles' efforts in Books 1 and 2, to convince his audience to view Athens as an island-like sea-power, are based on an appearance/reality distinction, where the fact that its people are walled up together inside the city must be weighed lightly against what they do abroad.[23] In the Funeral Oration he emphasises Athenian customs and laws instead of land or history, and in various ways declares Athenians' home to be the entire world (2.38.2, 2.41.4, 2.43.3).[24] In his last speech he tells the Athenians that the whole sea lies open to them: that the land of Attika is like a mere front lawn, a decoration (2.62.3: κηπίον καὶ ἐγκαλλώπισμα πλούτου), compared with the abundance of territory and autonomy that is theirs (2.62.2-3). Accepting this comes at the cost of the Athenians' connection with the earth. Before the first Peloponnesian invasion of Attika, Thucydides describes

[21] See Hansen 1998. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1276a17-27.
[22] Thucydides narrates the reconstruction in poignant detail (1.89.3).
[23] You could make an analogy with the way Thucydides points out that future observers may underestimate Sparta's power because of its small and unimpressive wooden buildings, whereas the huge marble buildings of Athens by the same token might cause them to overestimate Athenian dominance (1.10.2).
[24] Pelling 2009, 476-8.

how people flee into the city with their wives and children taking everything they own, even the frames of their houses (2.14.1: αὐτῶν τῶν οἰκιῶν καθαιροῦντες τὴν ξύλωσιν). The narrative sequence is very emotive (2.14-17): Thucydides narrates the history of the land's unification by Theseus (2.15) which gives a sense of significance to the present upheaval and the painful feelings of those displaced (2.16.2).[25] He tells of how they established themselves everywhere they could find within the walls, including the shrines and sanctuaries (2.17.1-2). The scene recalls the earlier displacement of a previous generation of Athenians, who evacuated the city during the Persian wars and moved to Salamis (cf. 2.16.1). The displacement removes all easy identification between Athens, Athenians, and the earth of Attika. After this great commotion the Athenians are stuck inside the city, a number of them displaced. Joho has previously discussed the importance and indeed the unity of motion and rest in the battle of minds and armies between the Spartans led by Archidamus and the Athenians led by Pericles in the early part of Book 2.[26]

Pericles' policy, causing the Athenians to abandon the land and entrust their city to its walls and navy, comes to a sort of twisted fulfilment in Book 8.[27] Following a democratic revolution in Samos (8.21),[28] the Athenians effectively use the island

[25] Alonso-Núñez (2000) treats this as an 'Archaeology' alongside those of Books 1 and 6.
[26] Joho 2021, 20-6.
[27] The notion that Book 8 as a whole is somehow inferior or less finished than the other books (prevalent also in antiquity: Marcellin. 43), has been sufficiently refuted by scholars that it no longer bears mention in the main body of the text. Apart from the commentaries (Andrewes in Gomme 5.361-83 makes the case for "incompleteness;" in contrast see the much more moderate Hornblower 3.1-5), see Erbse (1989, 1-82) on the careful shaping of Book 8's thematic contents in direct response to Andrewes. Rood (1998A, 272-3) for an analysis of the narrative and "the skill with which Thucydides shifts between Samos and Athens" during this sequence (272). More recently see Liotsakis 2017, though he concentrates exclusively on the naval war narrative and has little to say about events in Athens, which "transforms the book from a relatively simple story of Athenian endurance to what Thucydides has already indicated was the source of Athens' ultimate defeat [faction]" (Connor 1984, 214 – see his full discussion 210-30). Kallet (2001, 227-84), though she declares Book 8 to be *both* unfinished *and* thematically coherent, studies the importance of finance and logistics as the Spartans attempt to sustain a fleet and the Athenians try to survive (cf. Allison 1989, 121-31). Dewald (2005, 144-54) draws parallels between the narrative strategies in Book 8 and Sicily. Greenwood (2006, 83-108) reads Book 8 in dialogue with Sophocles' *Philoctetes.*
[28] Erbse (1989, 3) hears echoes of Corcyra in this description.

as their base for the naval war that develops around the islands and the Ionian coast (e.g. 8.25.1, 8.26.4, 8.30, 8.33.2-4, 8.35.3-4). The military leaders plan to overthrow the democracy and convince those in the city to reluctantly accede with a promise of Persian support if they change regime (8.47.3, 8.53). The Persian support, which was in fact little more than an empty promise from Alcibiades (8.56.2-4), does not materialise, but the overthrow continues apace regardless (8.63.3-71.3). Efforts to convince the army fail, however, so much that the Samians and Athenian soldiers create their own democratic regime together (8.75.2-3). Greenwood draws parallels between the displacement of people in Attika in Book 2 and the Athenian split in Book 8.[29] Thucydides writes of the newly elected commanders that "they stood up and encouraged each other in several ways, including by declaring that was no need to lose heart just because the city was in revolt from them." (8.76.3: καὶ παραινέσεις ἄλλας τε ἐποιοῦντο ἐν σφίσιν αὐτοῖς ἀνιστάμενοι καὶ ὡς οὐ δεῖ ἀθυμεῖν ὅτι ἡ πόλις αὐτῶν ἀφέστηκεν). The commanders go on to highlight several strategic advantages of their position on Samos (8.76.4-7). In particular (8.76.6):

> βραχύ τέ τι εἶναι καὶ οὐδενὸς ἄξιον ὃ πρὸς τὸ περιγίγνεσθαι τῶν πολεμίων ἡ πόλις σφίσι χρήσιμος ἦν, καὶ οὐδὲν ἀπολωλεκέναι, οἵ γε μήτε ἀργύριον εἶχον ἔτι πέμπειν, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτοὶ ἐπορίζοντο οἱ στρατιῶται, μήτε βούλευμα χρηστόν, οὗπερ ἕνεκα πόλις στρατοπέδων κρατεῖ· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τούτοις τοὺς μὲν ἡμαρτηκέναι τοὺς πατρίους νόμους καταλύσαντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ σῴζειν καὶ ἐκείνους πειράσεσθαι προσαναγκάζειν, ὥστε οὐδὲ τούτους, οἵπερ ἂν βουλεύοιέν τι χρηστόν, παρὰ σφίσι χείρους εἶναι.

[29] Greenwood 2006, 96-7.

> [They said] their city was a small thing and its use was worthless in the effort to defeat the enemy, and they had lost nothing, since the city had no more money to send them and they themselves were the source of soldiers; nor had they lost good advice for the sake of which the city had power over the army:[30] instead, even in this regard those in the city had done wrong by overthrowing the ancestral laws, while they themselves were conserving them and would try and force the others to do the same, so that not those in the city, but they themselves were equipped to advise well, and with the others they would be worse off.

The emotional shock of losing the city of Athens makes the commanders all attempt to rouse each other's spirits.[31] Likewise the ordinary soldiers, the *ochlos*, must on numerous occasions be held back from sailing directly to the Piraeus to take back the city (a move that would give Ionia and the Hellespont to the enemy and cost them the war: cf. 8.75.1, 8.82.1, 8.86.4-5). The depiction of the city echoes Pericles' dismissal of the city's territory. For the Samian generals, the material city is regarded simply as a store of wealth, men, and ideas – all things to be put to use – the identity of the city as such seems to consist in its ancestral laws and customs. This too is questionable, given the relatively young age of the democracy (8.68.4), and more generally Thucydides' emphasis on the gap between what is envisioned by constitutional regimes and their political realities (which I discuss in Chapter 5).[32] But their argument assimilates the identity of Athens into that of the *ochlos* of its navy, and the security sought by Pericles in

[30] On this see Hornblower 3.889-90.

[31] The remark about walls at the end may be compared to a fragment of Heraclitus (DK B44) in which he compares a city's rule of law (*nomos*) to its wall. See Raaflaub 2017, 105-8.

[32] At 1.18.1 he notes that Sparta is exceptional in having kept the same *politeia* for such a long period of time.

transforming the citizens into islanders is undermined by a transposition of the *demos* onto an island.

These political realities are informed by natural ones. I will therefore move onto these in the next section and leave the discussion about the nature of cities here, to be taken up again explicitly in Chapters 5 and 6. What matters for the moment is that a version of the movement/rest dynamic plays out both at the largest timescale and by analogy in the representation of Athenian upheavals. In both cases, the tension between the two is a key political dynamic, and no clear equilibrium is possible.

Force and Vitality

There thus arises the problem of how to understand the relationship of agency between individual actions and these overarching phenomena. In a sense, the latter seem to act for people, like Homeric Gods; but whereas in Homer the entities are either humans or the anthropomorphic (thinking) Gods, in Thucydides what stands for the divine 'co-agent' is an elemental condition.[33] The ostensible choice is thus between, on the one hand, positing forces like 'movement' and 'rest' – a scientistic alternative to Cornford's more poetic range of entities such as *elpis, phobos, hybris* – as historical agents interacting according

[33] Without stressing or depending on the point, I am sympathetic to the idea that Thucydides may have had an element in his thought that could fairly be described as religious, but much closer to presocratic philosophy than the traditional pantheon (cf. Xenophanes DK B23, Heraclitus DK B67). The debate about religion in Thucydides has sometimes tended to view the choice as between either traditional religion or atheism with a focus on his treatment of oracles, morals, and generally the absence of references to the divine as either agent or pretext compared with Herodotus and Homer (see Badian 1993, 109-23 (esp. 112); Furley 2006; Hornblower 2011, 25-53; Rahe 2017). Those who have left more room for ambiguity include Oost 1975; Marinatos 1981; Jordan 1986; Meier 2005; Kallet 2013B; Bruzzone 2017A. Marinatos draws attention to several allusions to some sort of natural *sympatheia* (Marianatos 1981, 17-28; see esp. Thuc. 1.23.3). Interpreting these as one-upmanship against Herodotus does not do enough to explain why they are there (cf. Furley 2006, 421-3; Rusten 2013). More generally on religious or sacred themes and motifs in the text see Hornblower 2011; Schirripa 2015.

to an independent logic (either at the expense of human agency, or as co-agents alongside the latter); or, on the other, assimilating them into a nihilistic vision of reality as *ergon par excellence*.[34] Neither of these can unite the two elements of contingency and structure or process. Both end up reducing one to the other, resulting in the false totality of a perspective in which, moreover, human responsibility and agency are denied or glossed over. With respect to human beings and Gods in the *Iliad,* Brouillet has argued that we should think in terms of 'co-agency,' in which multiple agents are not mutually exclusive nor even necessarily distinguishable in the act.[35] For Homer, from an anthropological and linguistic perspective, this may satisfy, as it may be a fair representation of how agency is treated in the poems. But from a philosophical point of view, it tells us little about the kind of relationship this or that entity has to an action: in other words, it does not tell us what it means to be an agent. The above section has shown that in Thucydides' work, perhaps unlike Homer's, these problems are centrally at issue.

The concept of force makes it possible to reconceptualise agency and exit the impasse. In the introduction I made a distinction between force and power. Whereas power suggests that the one who wields it controls it, force implies that the possessor is controlled by what they wield. But what distinguishes this from a simple schematic of force-as-agent is its essential grounding in a medium. Let us imagine that I freely and successfully carry out an action. To carry out the action I must use some means at my disposal. In the exercise of this means, I wield power, but in exchange there is some sense in which I become subject to those means. These means do not have the properties of a substance, but a medium: that is, they are non-identical with themselves, and what I am therefore

[34] Cornford 1907.
[35] Brouillet 2019 (cf. Stocking 2023, 184-7). On causal multiplicity in Thucydides see Trédé 1975.

subject to is their changing nature. Safety becomes imprisonment, expansion inertia. The combination of the achievement of my will and my subjection to the means getting it are thus both sides of a single operation, that of force. I use force to achieve mastery and by turn I am mastered. Force, like power, is a matter of relations and identity, but also it threatens to destabilise the very relations and identities it determines. In this regard, the concepts of force and medium no less incorporate the sense of overwhelming concreteness that is attractive in the notion of *ergon par excellence*: medium is stuff, force impetus. Motion and rest are not only abstractions, but each signify a condition of being. One can be whisked into motion, jerked to a halt. This vital aspect of movement and rest is equally significant to the conceptual dimension. Motion and rest are an index of force at work.

Thucydides did not develop his representation of force in a vacuum, and in that regard, it will be useful to consult the characterisation of force in the *Iliad* by Simone Weil in her now famous essay, "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force."[36] One of the twentieth century's most original thinkers, and a very wide and deep reader of ancient Greek, Weil avoids some key pitfalls around this subject and helps us to appreciate more fully the stakes of Thucydides's representation. Weil proceeds from a definition of force as "that which turns anyone who is submitted to it into a thing."[37] To be turned into a thing is to exit society and be made an obstacle or instrument purely constituted and ignored by others. In its ultimate form to become a thing is to die.[38] But those who wield force also end up carried along by an illusion of absolute power that comes from their position as the agent of force instead of its victim. Things yield to them, which causes them to expect this

[36] See Weil 2003. Piovan 2015 compares Weil's work on political parties with Thucydides' portrayal of factions in *stasis.*

[37] Weil (2003, 19): "*La force, c'est ce qui fait de quiconque lui est soumis une chose."*

[38] But this is not the only form – to be under threat of this changes one's enough to make one difficult for others even to look at (Weil 2003, 21-4).

from the world. But their place is far more contingent than they believe, their ignorance is liable to contribute to what turns them from agent to victim.[39]

The essay's reception has been mixed.[40] One problem perhaps is that Weil provides no specific philological anchor for her concept. Stocking later finds one in the word *damazō* – and it should also be said that concepts do not necessarily need philological anchors to be interpretively valid if they are sufficiently grounded in other aspects of the text.[41] This is particularly the case with overarching concepts where the text may be organised around a relational or narrative logic it has no word for. Another objection has to do with Weil's dependence on a concept of the subject as soul, a "Christian" or "Judeo-Christian" notion that is, at best, "anachronistic."[42] But it is important to understand Weil's own sense of this word without importing those of faith-traditions or stereotypes. Someone's soul, for Weil, is in no sense their self, and is closer to a synonym for their life.[43] In 'The Poem of Force' she writes: "Force wielded by another is imperious on the soul like extreme hunger as soon as it consists of a perpetual power of life and death."[44] The analogy with extreme

[39] See esp. Weil 2003, 27-8.

[40] Schein 1984 (82-3), 2016 (151-6, 166-70); Holoka 2002; Murnaghan 2004 (echoed in Schein 2016 – see the reply of Mackinnon 2004); Holmes 2015; Purves 2015; Thalman 2015; Gold 2016; Canevaro 2018, 30-1; Stocking 2023 (esp. 169-87). Praised in very glowing terms by earlier Homerists such as Jasper Griffin and Colin Macleod (see Munaghan 2004), more recently there has been a frustrating tendency to dismiss Weil by making pejorative references to her biography (e.g. Holoka 2004, 63: "the zeal [?] with which she lived her life") or spiritual outlook (e.g. Purves 2015, 75: "strong [?] belief in the duality of body and soul") without engaging with her argument's substance (let alone its context within her broader intellectual project and frame of reference: Hammer and Kicey 2010 provide some of this, drawing on other essays; however the notebooks, probably her most important work, are glossed over). Schein (2016, 167n36) at one point astonishingly blames a 'mistranslation' of a word in Priam's supplication of Achilles Book 24 on "[Weil's] own experience as a kind of (rejected) suppliant for legal assistance on behalf of her imprisoned brother." We need a higher standard of argument than this. Stocking 2023 is a welcome, if deficient, improvement in this regard, and is discussed.

[41] Stocking 2023, 167-8.

[42] "Christian" and "anachronistic" – Schein 1984, 83. "Judeo-Christian" – Stocking 2023, 168.

[43] This is made especially clear in her essay on (and against) the notion of human personality, translated in Miles tr. 2005, 69-98. Stocking discusses other works by Weil but not this essay, which is a shame given its importance on this point.

[44] Weil 2003, 25: "*La force maniée par autrui est impérieuse sur l'âme comme la faim extrême, dès qu'elle consiste en un pouvoir perpétuel de vie et de mort.*"

hunger indicates that Weil's point has not to do as such with 'things fine and spiritual' and her concept of the soul is continuous with material life. In this regard, for Weil, Plato is *the* important influence.[45] This should be emphasised. In intellectual terms Simone Weil was arguably a Platonist first and a Christian second. In her notebooks she approvingly cites the programmatic statement of the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue as an encapsulation of the general law that normally governs human interactions (5.105.2: see p. 176-7). To the extent that Weil's perspective clashes with the Homeric one – her dismissal of the significance of gods, for example – it can perhaps be reconciled more easily with a fifth-century point of view.[46]

Stocking writes that "Weil operates with a view of the person that is quite anachronistic and distinct from Homeric representation."[47] His own idea of the person as an effect of discourse is worked out of late twentieth-century thinkers such as Derrida, Bourdieu, and Harraway. In one place he approvingly cites a passage from Benveniste which approaches an I/Thou theory of subjectivity and writes that the "constitution of the self as a speaking subject (…) [arises] through the dialectic that is established between the speaking subject and his or her addressee."[48] He does not cite Buber or Hegel.[49] For these foundational thinkers of the I/Thou dichotomy, the emergence of the subject has chiefly to do with the friction between language and other aspects of the person such as consciousness

[45] Plato's theory of the soul is a massive topic covered explicitly in several dialogues: a standard introduction to the subject is Robinson 1970.

[46] Stocking's strongest objection to Weil is that she dismisses the Gods (2023, 8), whereas her notion of mediation – which makes the medium of force the agent of violence – is inconsistent with the poem's tendency to assign co-agency to gods and human beings (based on Brouillet 2019), so that the gods act through the mortal characters. This objection disappears in translating Weil's concept from Homer into Thucydides.

[47] Stocking 2023, 183-4.

[48] Stocking 2023, 41.

[49] Stocking briefly mentions Hegel (216-7) as a source particularly for Bruno Snell's (1953) idea of civilisational development but does not engage substantively with Hegel's thought (and in particular with his concepts of the self and of negativity).

and vitality, a point they express through concepts such as being and negativity. Equally missing from the citations of Derrida in the bibliography is his late *The Gift of Death,* where he affirms that the individual (future) experience of death is an essential constitutive element of the subject.[50] This missing piece in Stocking's background philosophy of subjectivity corresponds with a hole, not only in his book, but the entire present orthodoxy on the subject of force in the *Iliad.* Present studies emphasise that force is not singular, but multiple, and should be understood within a complex system of social relations encompassing, humans, gods, and other entities (such as rivers).[51] Stocking writes:

> These relations [of force] are primarily conceptualized as objects of exchange in a more general embodied economy shared between the human and nonhuman.[52]

Economy is the key word: Stocking's analysis treats violent interactions like commodity exchanges.[53] It is worth pausing to understand what is at stake in this metaphor. Classic texts in the philosophy of money variously emphasise how, by its role as a medium of exchange, it establishes a conceptual or symbolic plane on which incommensurable things are stripped of their identities and transformed into quantities of value – so that quantity of, say, wool can have a price X which is equal to a separate quantity of cheese (If Wool = X and Cheese = 2X then 2(Wool) = Cheese or 2X = 2X) – so that economic exchanges are always *qua* economic an exchange of equals. In principle this makes it possible to view every economic object purely as a commodity – that is, as a store of value (Aristotle warned against this) – rather than as something to be used or enjoyed (as Marx

[50] Derrida 1995.
[51] Holmes 2015; Purves 2015; Thalman 2015; Stocking 2023.
[52] Stocking 2023, 5.
[53] See also Holmes 2007, which gestures further by proposing that the *Iliad* depicts an economy of exchanges between pain and honour but from a critical point of view.

put it). Georg Simmel claimed this applies not only to commodities, but the people with whom we exchange them: the ascendancy of money, he argued, made possible new forms of social ties and weakened others as the logic of exchange has permeated how we approach each other and understand our own subjectivity.[54] In Classical scholarship, Seaford has made a more direct and ambitious version of this argument by claiming that the development of money in ancient Greece made possible the intellectual tradition of pre-Socratic philosophy starting with the Milesians, for which key uniting concepts include the notion of Being as a singular or abstract substance and a sense of the unity and interchangeability of opposites.[55]

What is special about money is that it makes equivalents out of incommensurable things. In modern capitalist society this tension between empty process and vital force has become acute with the latter becoming increasingly suppressed.[56] But Seaford has shown that to some extent this paradox can be significant even in more rudimentary exchanges of reciprocity such as violence (e.g. 'an eye for an eye').[57] An important aspect of Weil's thinking on the *Iliad* is the way she draws out this tension in the *Iliad's* economy of force (where force stands in the place of money as the medium of exchange). Structured though they may be in some regard, violent interactions in the *Iliad* are not just exchanges of reciprocal value. A hegemonic social system of relations might well structure how force is wielded in the *Iliad*, but this hegemony is unstable to the extent that what is wielded is overwhelming and inherently destabilising. The point applies even with a broader definition of force than Weil's. If someone is extremely persuasive, for

[54] Simmel 2004.
[55] Seaford 2004 (see also the essays collected in Seaford 2018).
[56] This tension returns at every level of the system described in Marx's *Capital.* But Lyotard's (1993) criticism of Marx is that even he did not give sufficient weight to these vital forces.
[57] Seaford (1998, 65-73) depicts the drama of Achilles in the *Iliad* in terms of the attempt to navigate this paradox.

example, I am liable to believe anything they might say regardless of what I may previously have felt to be true and obvious. Yet equally the force of their persuasion threatens the stability of my own sense of the world – hence the symbolic connection between persuasion and ranged warfare (see below).[58] For Weil, violence in the *Iliad* ruptures the very social fabric it weaves, by destroying (or threatening to destroy) those who are subjected to it, and teaching those who wield it to regard their victims as things to be walked over. Her 'distinct' view of the person is manifested chiefly in this essay as a focus on the way violence puts life and death at stake. Some Homerists object that this causes her to treat material objects as "essentially dead," and to raise the barrier between life and death, or between a person and a thing, to something more absolute than it is in Homer.[59] But this anthropological criticism goes too far if it erases the significance of death in the poem. Ironically, contemporary scholarly treatments of violence in the *Iliad* therefore tend to suppress its violent character and concentrate exclusively on the relational aspect by applying an economic metaphor. It is Weil who recognises how the *Iliad* achieves a depiction of force in human relations while doing justice to both its violent and relational components.

What must be added to Weil's account is an explicit appreciation of the range of means that can be used to exert force; the latter is not reducible to violence. In Book 3 of the *Iliad,* Antenor likens a speech of Odysseus to a snowstorm, and implicitly to ranged warfare (*Il.* 3.216-2). Compare this with Antenor's description of when Odysseus spoke as an emissary to the Trojans (3.216-24):

[58] Hammer and Kicey (2010, 83-4) emphasise the aspect of meaning in Weil's thought on language: "the world reaches into us as we read it." To read is to be penetrated by another's meaning. Attention, a central concept in Weil's ethics, is the effort of focussing on the other's meaning and not my own.

[59] Purves 2015, 75. But on personhood/thinghood in Weil's essay see Canevaro (2018, 30-1). Between life and death there is clearly some sort of a barrier and a "taboo" (Gazis 2018, 14) between the living world and Hades, where the dead go, leaving their 'selves' behind (cf. *Il.* 1.3-5) – on the representation of Hades in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* see Gazis' recent study.

ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ πολύμητις ἀναΐξειεν Ὀδυσσεὺς
στάσκεν, ὑπαὶ δὲ ἴδεσκε κατὰ χθονὸς ὄμματα πήξας,
σκῆπτρον δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ὀπίσω οὔτε προπρηνὲς ἐνώμα,
ἀλλ᾽ ἀστεμφὲς ἔχεσκεν ἀΐδρειϊ φωτὶ ἐοικώς·
φαίης κε ζάκοτόν τέ τιν᾽ ἔμμεναι ἄφρονά τ᾽ αὔτως.
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ ὄπα τε μεγάλην ἐκ στήθεος εἵη
καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίῃσιν,
οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτ᾽ Ὀδυσῆϊ γ᾽ ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος·
οὐ τότε γ᾽ ὧδ᾽ Ὀδυσῆος ἀγασσάμεθ᾽ εἶδος ἰδόντες.

But when Odysseus with all his wits got up,
stood there, stared down fixing his eyes on the ground,
wielding the sceptre neither back nor forward,
keeping it stiff, like someone with no experience:
you would have said he was dour and a fool.
But as soon as he let out the great voice from his chest
and words like snowflakes in a storm
no other mortal person could compare with Odysseus:
then, we no longer wondered at how he looked.

Elsewhere in the *Iliad* the same metaphor of a snowstorm is used to describe the onslaught of ranged weapons (*Il.* 12.154-9, 12.278-88). In general, the *Iliad* emphasises the form rather than the content aspect of speech's power: broadly speaking, it ignores the truth or legitimacy claims of individual speeches, and instead places speech and physical violence on the same level within a reality that is constituted and changed by different kinds of force.[60] Much later

[60] Stanford (1963, 14-17) observes this lack of emphasis when he claims that, in the *Iliad,* Odysseus is represented as someone conscious of the drawbacks of his reputation for clever speaking, who tries to avoid seeming too smart or slippery.

Herodotus vividly describes the tactical debate between the Greek generals at Salamis as an "*ōthismos* of words" (8.78: ὠθισμὸς λόγων), evoking the shoving characteristic of hoplite battles. But here it is hard to go beyond the theorising of Gorgias, particularly in the *Encomium of Helen*.[61] In treating the issue of responsibility for Helen's elopement Gorgias lists an array of supernatural agents (*Tuchē*, Gods, *Anankē*) and a triad of forces: violent, *logos*, and *erōs* (Gorg. *Hel.* 6). He treats the supernatural ones together (*Hel.* 6), and the others separately. While he uses no word for what encompasses divine power, violence, *logos*, and *erōs*, clearly, he regards these all as varieties of something, and by virtue of this they are each potentially an *aitia* (*Hel.* 5). The question of responsibility frames the *Helen's* central discussion, and together these alternatives are represented as part of a world where things act on and through people who do not really act for themselves – enough that Helen may be judged innocent of what she does (*Hel.* 20). Most of these possible *aitiai* are things that may be thought of conventionally as instruments – force, persuasion, even the plan of a God (cf. *Il.* 1.5) – or as powers exerted by one person over another. Yet Gorgias de-emphasises the person wielding the power and speaks of each instrument or medium in itself as a cause.

For Thucydides speech is likewise a sphere of power and a medium of force. When Thucydides introduces the first speech of Pericles, he calls him "the most powerful [of the Athenians] at both speaking and acting" (1.139.4: λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος), and earlier notes that it was Pericles in particular who pushed for war with Sparta (1.127.3). For as long as he is alive, by manipulating the *dēmos* Pericles controls it such that Athens is a democracy in name only: in fact, it is ruled by Pericles (2.65.9). The Athenian general Phrynichos, fearing

[61] On the *Encomium* see for example Segal 1962; de Romilly 1075, 1-22; Porter 1993; Wardy 1996, 25-50; Schappa 1999, 114-32; Gagarin 2001 (although his scope is broader); Valiavitcharska 2006; Giombini 2012; Pratt 2015.

harm from Alcibiades if he returns to the Athenian side (8.50.1), writes a letter to the Spartan Astyochos attempting to discredit Alcibiades by pointing to his attempts to influence the Persian Tissaphernes in favour of the Athenians (8.50.2).[62] Astyochos gives the letter to Alcibiades, who sends it to Samos demanding that Phrynichos be killed (8.50.3-4). Phrynichos, now very much distressed and in danger (8.50.5: θορυβούμενος δὲ ὁ Φρύνιχος καὶ πάνυ ἐν τῷ μεγίστῳ κινδύνῳ), sends another letter to Astyochos encouraging him to attack Samos since it is unwalled and hardly defended.[63] Then Phrynichos warns those in Samos of an attack impending and leads them quickly to build a wall and shore up their defences. When Astyochos confronts Alcibiades with Phyrnichos' second letter, he writes to the Athenians claiming Phrynichos has sold out the garrison at Samos; to the Athenians it looks as if Alcibiades is trying to slander Phrynichos (8.50.5-1.3). Phrynichos thus discredits Alcibiades while securing his own safety and authority. Hornblower calls this an example of "a favourite Thucydidean narrative category, the clever trick."[64] Indeed there is a Herodotean flavour to this episode that comes specifically from its depiction of *mētis,* cunning intelligence, as a political virtue and a source of individual power.[65] Clearly this is a virtue on the side, as it were, of *logos.*

[62] Discussions of the episode include Westlake 1956; Schindel 1970; Lang 1996; Greenwood 2006, 92-3; Palmer 2017, 418-9. Earlier studies tend to try to penetrate through to historical sources and reality, later ones tend to incorporate it into broader thematic discussions (as I do here).

[63] Schindel (1970, 282) draws attention to the motivating power of fear in this case. This is true of Phrynichos in general (see Lang 1996, 291).

[64] Hornblower 3.901. One problem with the account as given is that Phrynichos runs the risk of Astyochos attacking Samos straightaway after reading the letter. Andrewes may be right that implicitly we are meant to take it Phrynichos was prepared to betray the Athenians in this case (see Gomme 5.119 – Hornblower disagrees, 3.906-7). Alternatively, it may be that Phrynichos confidently took advantage of Spartan slowness (cf. 8.96.5).

[65] On this trait in Herodotus (and its source, the *Odyssey*) see Marincola (2007, 29-31) who believes the trait is exemplified by Themistocles in both Herodotus and Thucydides (cf. Hornblower 1.136-7 on Thuc. 1.89-92). For a comparison between Herdotous' and Thucydides' treatment of the theme see Rogkotis 2006, 65-71. On the concept in general see Detienne and Vernant 1978.

Scholars reading Gorgias, in particular, have found the *Helen's* depiction of *logos* interesting and puzzling for what it might say about the relation between reality and our representations of reality. I deal with this subject in Thucydides explicitly in Chapter 7, and consequently defer discussion until then. What matters here is the characterisation of *logos* as a means and, ultimately, a force that can be used to exert power but by which the one who wields it is also captured. This last element of the argument I will develop in more detail in with reference to Thucydides in the next chapter. For now, I will do so briefly by turning to the figure of Brasidas. In a discussion on the importance of perspective and point of view in the *Peloponnesian War*, Emily Greenwood has shown that characters sometimes exploit or manipulate appearances to gain the upper hand; she focusses especially on Brasidas' tactics and the chain of events culminating in the battle of Amphipolis: (4.124-5.11).[66] What these instances show is that the line between appearance and reality is especially unclear in contests of power, as appearance exerts a force of its own. Its effect is not necessarily just to instil terror, or to force a mistake by leading someone to act on false or partial information. Likewise, in Book 4 Brasidas arrives at Acanthus just as the crops ripen (4.84.1), with an army set on capturing the city.[67] Although a siege and the destruction of the city's crops is a real prospect (4.88.1), Brasidas – "not unpowerful at speaking for a Spartan" (4.84.2: ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἰπεῖν) – seeks to win over the city by persuasion. In his speech (4.85-8), he strikes a careful balance between encouraging the Acanthians to join him while threatening to

[66] Greenwood 2006, 26-33 (see the full discussion at 26-41). See also Howie 2005, 231-60. The same could be said of the capture of Torone (4.110-14). In Chapter 7 I discuss this theme more fully with reference to the Sicilian books.

[67] Some scholars have taken an imbalanced view of the characterisation of Brasidas in the text as very positive drawing attention to parallels with heroes such as Achilles and the Homeric narrative form of the *aristeia* (Will 2003, 10-22; Howie 2005; Hornblower 2.38-60; Plant 2023). For a more rounded and realistic view see Wylie 1992; Rood 1998A, 59-77; Burns 2011). Sears (2020) has argued that Thucydides exaggerates the difference between Brasidas and other Spartans, and elsewhere compared him to Pausanias (2024, 140-1).

take the city by force if they do not comply.[68] Here and in Amphipolis – in general – Brasidas' considerable powers have to do with manipulation and self-presentation. These methods are brilliantly successful across Thrace, and Brasidas' individual talent is a part of the story. But a more significant factor is the array of (mis)calculations of Thracian cities that lead them to decide on a break with the Athenians, which also means enthusiastically adopting Brasidas. Thucydides intervenes in the narrative to explain (4.108.3-4):[69]

> [3] καὶ αἱ πόλεις (…) μάλιστα δὴ ἐπήρθησαν ἐς τὸ νεωτερίζειν, καὶ ἐπεκηρυκεύοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν κρύφα, ἐπιπαριέναι τε κελεύοντες καὶ βουλόμενοι αὐτοὶ ἕκαστοι πρῶτοι ἀποστῆναι. [4] καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἄδεια ἐφαίνετο αὐτοῖς, ἐψευσμένοις μὲν τῆς Ἀθηναίων δυνάμεως ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ὅση ὕστερον διεφάνη, τὸ δὲ πλέον βουλήσει κρίνοντες ἀσαφεῖ ἢ προνοίᾳ ἀσφαλεῖ, εἰωθότες οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὗ μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἐλπίδι ἀπερισκέπτῳ διδόναι, ὃ δὲ μὴ προσίενται λογισμῷ αὐτοκράτορι διωθεῖσθαι.
>
> [3] The other cities (…) were very much excited and stirred up to revolt and made overtures to Brasidas in secret, asking him to come to them and each wanting to be the first to revolt. [4] Since indeed it seemed to them like there was nothing to fear: they were mistaken in the power of the Athenians to the extent that it later showed itself, and judging more from a vague wish than sure insight. What they desire people tend to entrust to hope without any consideration, what they do not they push away with all-powerful reason.

[68] For more commentary and bibliography on this speech see Sears 2015. Bosworth (1993, 36-7) calls it "propaganda." There is a moment in the speech where Brasidas appears to lie about previously narrated events in Megara (4.85.7; cf. 4.73.4 and Hornblower 2.280). This is notable because lying is not quite what he is doing in the speech. He openly threatens to take Acanthus by force if they do not accede to him (4.87.2-3). In this sense the line between *logos* and *ergon* is not a straight one.

[69] Cf. Gribble 1998, 59-60; Joho 2022, 295-9.

All the same, increasingly, from here to his death at the beginning of Book 5, the notion of Brasidas as the liberator of Greece develops a force of its own, including perhaps over Brasidas himself. After the capture of Lekythos, he makes an offering at the temple of Athena suggesting it was divinely ordained (4.116.2). When Scione revolts from the Athenians he arrives there and accepts a golden crown (4.121.1). He comes into conflict with Spartan authorities, who resent his standing, and believe it harms Spartan interests to offer increasingly unsustainable support to revolting cities (4.108.7). This breaks into the open when Brasidas endangers treaty negotiations by refusing to hand back Scione to the Athenians and accepting the revolt of Mende (4.122.3-23.4). Unsupported by Sparta and later bogged down in a conflict with the Macedonian ruler Perdiccas (4.124-8), Brasidas fails to keep his promise of protection to Scione and Mende: both cities fall to the Athenians (4.129-131).

Brasidas arrives in Northern Greece presenting himself as a liberator. But eventually, buoyed by his own rhetoric, and encouraged by miscalculating cities, he prolongs the war to no benefit culminating in the battle where he is killed (5.10.11). "It is a harsh and bitter ending" writes Connor of the battle of Amphipolis "for a story that centers on the Achilles among men, the man who did most for Sparta."[70] Brasidas' power of noble gestures turns out to be a force that leads him to act against his own and his allies' interests, ultimately proving destructive for both. The story of Brasidas encapsulates the broader dialectic of power in the text and demonstrates the ascendancy of force. I will close this section by showing how this dynamic informs the representation at a larger scale, with an analysis of Thucydides' famous passage on the causes of the war (1.23.5-6):

[70] Connor 1984, 140. Their death clears the way for peace in Book 5 – cf. 5.16.1.

διότι δ᾽ ἔλυσαν, τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα πρῶτον καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, τοῦ μή τινα ζητῆσαί ποτε ἐξ ὅτου τοσοῦτος πόλεμος τοῖς Ἕλλησι κατέστη. [6] τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν· αἱ δ᾽ ἐς τὸ φανερὸν λεγόμεναι αἰτίαι αἵδ᾽ ἦσαν ἑκατέρων, ἀφ᾽ ὧν λύσαντες τὰς σπονδὰς ἐς τὸν πόλεμον κατέστησαν.

I have first written the causes for why [the treaty] was broken and the disputes so that no one will ever have to investigate from what arose a war of such scale among the Greeks. [6] The truest explanation, least apparent in what was said, I consider to be that the expansion of the Athenians along with the fear this caused in Sparta made war inevitable: but these were the openly stated causes of each side, because of which they broke the treaty and established the war.

The large bibliography around this passage is especially concerned with the meaning and boundaries of the Greek terms *αἰτία* and *πρόφασις* (here 'cause' and 'explanation').[71] At first glance this may seem like mere stylistic variation.[72] But the words are carefully chosen,[73] and a consensus has developed around the idea that the intended contrast is between two distinct levels of cause, the immediate and the underpinning or latent.[74] At stake here is not the (more

[71] For further detail and more references than the ones cited below see Ostwald 1988, 1n2; Rood 1998A, 208n9; Liberman 2017, 65-9; Moles 2010. Parmeggiani (2018B) claims Thucydides is asserting that neither the Athenians nor Spartans are really responsible. The passage is a celebrated one among international relations theorists: see the references at Jaffe 2017, 4n7.

[72] See Ros (1938, 104) and the scholiast *ad loc.* (= Hude 1973, 26).

[73] On other careful choices see Allison 1997, 114-9. She is especially good on γιγνομένους (lit. 'becoming') and refers to "Thucydides' keen sensitivity to usage of these common but philosophically potent verbs" (115).

[74] For the helpful notion of categories see Rechenauer 1991, 104 (full discussion 38-111).

familiar modern) distinction between specious pretext and truth.[75] A second problem with the passage has to do with of what exactly the 'truest explanation' refers to. This has been answered convincingly by Ostwald's analysis, in his study of the concept of ἀνάγκη or 'necessity' in Thucydides: that *both* Athenian growth *and* Spartan fear "created a situation of which war was the necessary consequence."[76] "To avoid war," he later writes:

> The Athenians would have had to relinquish their imperial rule and the Spartans would have had to remain indifferent to Athenian expansion. Neither for Athens nor for Sparta would these alternatives have been acceptable or even possible; the war was inevitable, because both Athenians and Spartans realised that it was.[77]

Ostwald is less acute in a later chapter where he appears to suggest that freely taken individual action and overarching structural necessity are mutually exclusive possibilities.[78] He is much better where he insists that the necessity described here is not external. It involves no "recourse to supernatural intervention or inscrutable transcendental forces."[79] The last remark about 'transcendental forces' is unfortunate in light of the analysis presented here; but Ostwald is still correct in the sense that basic forces like movement and rest, and political ones like violence, speech, and empire, are not external to, but rather immanent within, the narrative's events. To the degree that one characterises them as independent entities, one turns them into concepts or objects of one's

[75] This does seem to be more like the sense in other place where Thucydides uses the term 'truest explanation:' describing Athenian motives for invading Sicily (6.6.1). But even there, the pretexts are "not negligible by any means" (Hornblower 3.300). Cf. The earlier decision to send ships to Leontini (3.86.4).
[76] Ostwald 1988, esp. 1-5. See also Rood (1998A, 208n9): "[Thucydides'] 'truest *prophasis* is conceived as a process." Previously scholars tended to view the passage as either blaming Athenian imperialism or Spartan paranoia (see discussion at Ostwald 2-3, and Rood's broader discussion 207-24).
[77] Ostwald 1988, 19.
[78] *Ibid.* 33-52.
[79] *Ibid.* 21.

own thought. It is in the world and not as concepts that they act.[80] With these caveats, what is emphasised at 1.23.6 is the confluence of forces.[81] As we saw in Chapter 2, the retrospective narratives of Book 1 give historical substance to this point by describing the process leading to the war's outbreak. In both these and the narrative proper, the general interplay of means and forces, depicted via modal concepts such as motion and rest, also give it ontological substance. But to speak of ontology or metaphysics brings us inevitably to the concept of nature or *physis* (and its counterpart culture or *nomos*), an important crux in this text. In the following section I discuss the text's representation of nature as that which underpins the activities of human beings. Scholars have long observed that Thucydides believes it does, but what is new here is my claim about *how* it does, and indeed what nature *is,* as well as crucially and finally its relationship with *nomos.*

Nature and Culture

As I claimed already in the introduction, one thing that transcends the opposition between motion and rest is *stasis,* by which nearly all of Greece becomes engulfed (3.82.1: πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη). *Stasis* is a commotion that disrupts "language, values, and the view of the past, the future, and of history."[82] And yet "*Stasis*," writes Macleod, "(…) is the undoing of human progress by the very means of that progress – the same pattern as is revealed in [Thucydides'] account of the Athenian empire, which is led to disaster in Sicily by the same

[80] On the self-awareness with which Thucydides deploys abstraction see Allison 1997, 119.

[81] In Chapter 2 I argued that the Archaeology and Pentekontaetia in Book 1 give scope for a much deeper understanding of these forces than the terse statement of 1.23.6 might initially suggest, though it is implied here too.

[82] Connor 1984, 104. Rusten (2015, 34-5) argues that the 'movement' in Corcyra is simply a mobilisation of the warring factions of *stasis* against each other. Even if he is right, this must be combined with the other upheavals narrated in the *stasis* sequence to (and indeed constancy, cf. 3.82.2) to make a general impression.

qualities as made it great."[83] A much-discussed theme of the *stasis* description (3.82-4) is the collapse of *nomos* and ascendancy of an autonomous and destructive human *physis.* The former disappears so that the latter (which abhors a vacuum) rushes in. *Nomos* and *physis,* then, are opposites. Yet this is combined in the text with an assertion of continuity between *stasis* and both pre-*stasis* Corcyra and, in a different sense, all human life everywhere: "things which had happened before and will always happen, for as long as human nature (*physis*) remains the same" (3.82.2: γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ).[84]

In other words, although the outbreak *stasis* marks a disruption, both in the cities where it takes place and within the flow of the text, the narrative buildup in Corcyra and the generalising *stasis* description both emphasise the continuity between *stasis* and the order that preceded it.[85] An examination of the buildup of the Corcyra narrative (3.70) will also prove this. The outer narrative of moving armies depicts a Spartan effort to reach Corcyra in *stasis* with a navy ahead of any significant Athenian force (3.69.2). Then the narrative turns back on itself – "The Corcyraeans began to be in *stasis* when the captives returned from the sea-battles around Epidamnus after they were released by the Corinthians" (3.70: οἱ γὰρ Κερκυραῖοι ἐστασίαζον, ἐπειδὴ οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι ἦλθον αὐτοῖς οἱ ἐκ τῶν περὶ Ἐπίδαμνον ναυμαχιῶν ὑπὸ Κορινθίων ἀφεθέντες) – released deliberately on the part of the Corinthians so that they turn the city against its alliance with Athens (3.70.1).[86] Under the law they prosecute Peithias, a pro-Athenian and

[83] Macleod 1983, 125.

[84] Scholars tend to distinguish between the *anthrōpinon* of 1.22.4 and the *anthrōpeia physis* (see the references at Scardino 2007, 414n64), claiming that the former is 'open' and the latter 'closed' (and the former with religious, the latter scientific connotations; also cf. the more vague 1.76.2: "ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου τρόπου"). I will claim that *anthrōpeia physis* is also 'open' and thus for my purpose here their overlapping point of reference is more significant than the distinction.

[85] On gender, justice and goodness in the *stasis* description see Chapter 6.

[86] There is some debate as to when exactly the *stasis* began based on this narrative (see Hornblower 1.467-8).

leader of the *dēmos,* for enslaving the city to the Athenians; he is acquitted and in turn prosecutes five of his richest opponents on a technicality, they are so heavily fined that they go to the temples as suppliants (3.70.4-5).[87] Peithias convinces people to deny the supplication and "put the law into practice" (3.70.5: ὥστε τῷ νόμῳ χρήσασθαι). Blocked by the law and primarily by Peithias himself, the anti-Athenian faction bring daggers into the assembly and murder Peithias along with up to sixty of his associates (3.70.6). They take over the city (3.71),[88] but conflict breaks out between the conspirators and the pro-Athenian *dēmos* (3.72.2-3). This unleashes a cycle of extraordinary violence. At first glance, the murder of Peithias and his associates is the key moment when the conflict ceases to be constrained by the city's *nomoi.* But the narrative is "very carefully managed" to show that this follows naturally from what came before, and indeed pales in comparison to what comes after (see esp. 3.81.5).[89] The early narrative is marked by the following features: (1) Efforts by each side to ruin the other; (2) The absence of any distinction between escalation and self-defence; (3) A cycle of reciprocity that shifts the territory of the conflict; (4) The involvement of foreign powers emboldening each side and raising the stakes throughout.[90] *Stasis* properly begins not with the murder of Peithias, but the return of those captured from Epidamnus. The narrative thus defies any simple distinction between the conflict that takes place under the laws and the one that breaks out through and beyond them. *Nomos* appears not so much a condition of order or stability as a set of practices through which people exercise power over each other – the power to

[87] Palmer (2017, 411) refers to "the use and abuse of sacred things, such as temples."

[88] They send an embassy to the Athenians, who apprehend the ambassadors as insurrectionists and deposit them on Aegina (3.72.1).

[89] "Very carefully managed" – Hornblower 1.469.

[90] Rood emphasises the role of foreign powers in Corcyra (1998A, 155-7). But even this should not be treated as the 'real' or 'truest' cause of the *stasis*-conflict, since it goes back to the earlier dispute between Corcyra and Corinth over Epidamnus, which in turn goes back in one sense to the Corcyraean refusal to help the Epidamnians (1.24.7), and in another sense the longstanding enmity between Corinth and Corcyra (1.13.4, 1.25.3).

regulate and limit, but also (as a necessary corollary) the power to subjugate and destroy. *Nomos* is something to be *used,* and its conditions of use are dictated by more fundamental things such as the relations between internal factions and external pressures from foreign powers, the scarcity and distribution of resources, and the degree of threat to people's individual safety. Any identification of *nomos* with equilibrium is superficial and unobservant of the actual circumstances where it exists and of the forces with which it is entwined. The famous description of *stasis* supports and generalises the emphasis on continuity (3.82.2):

> καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα καὶ τοῖς εἴδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται. 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.
>
> Many terrible things befell the cities under *stasis* – things which have happened before and will always happen for as long as human nature remains the same, in forms that will be different and may be harsher or more gentle as determined by the vicissitudes of circumstance: in peace and good circumstances, both cities and ordinary people have better judgements because they do not fall prey to necessities against their will;

> war, by removing day-to-day welfare, is a violent teacher and causes the impulses of most people to match the situation.[91]

Rechenauer emphasises the "reactivity" of human nature as represented by Thucydides in this passage.[92] Concrete circumstances bring out different aspects of human nature: in good circumstances things are better, bad ones worse, where the term signifies the continuum.[93] What is different is the situation – war – which, itself, has resulted from the natural flows of power within and between cities (1.23.6).[94] The implication of this passage is not only that there will 'always' (for as long as human nature remains the same) be versions of the behaviour seen at Corcyra, but that there will always be war and peace, and by extension situations that soothe or exacerbate ordinary resentments, hatred, greed (cf. 3.82.1).

Joho interprets the Corcyra episode as "an account of what the relapse from civilisation to the raw State of nature looks like" – a throwback to the restless inertia of pre-polis Greece.[95] In other words, *stasis* marks a sort of civilisational collapse from the societies of Greek cities back into the state of nature. This is too Hobbesian.[96] *Stasis* is not a pre-political phenomenon; it is a political one and a

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[91] On the abstract language of the *stasis* description see Macleod 1983, 123-39 (expanded upon by Poschenrieder 2011 and Joho 2022, 46-75) – Thucydides emphasises abstract forces over human subjects and situational dynamics over individual actions.

[92] Rechenauer 1991, 145 ("*Reaktivität*"). See also Farrar 1988, 135; Farenga 2006, 439-45; Visvardi 2015, 68-71, who all conceive it in terms of the *gnōmē/orgē* opposition.

[93] Compare Diodotus on the existence of crime in all societies: "Everyone by nature both privately and publicly does wrong, and there is no law whatsoever that can prevent this, since in fact human beings have gone through every possible penalty in an effort to reduce the wrong they suffer from evildoers." (3.45.3: πεφύκασί τε ἅπαντες καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ ἁμαρτάνειν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι νόμος ὅστις ἀπείρξει τούτου, ἐπεὶ διεξεληλύθασί γε διὰ πασῶν τῶν ζημιῶν οἱ ἄνθρωποι προστιθέντες, εἴ πως ἧσσον ἀδικοῖντο ὑπὸ τῶν κακούργων).

[94] Prosperity, as Orwin has pointed out (1988, 834), is no guarantee of peace according to Thucydides, and prosperous societies may be all the more likely to choose war.

[95] Joho 2021, 34. Cf. Mittelstadt 1989, 65-9; Thomas 2011.

[96] Hobbes may have translated Thucydides, but recent work in philosophical anthropology has done much to historicise and expose the limits of the early modern concept of nature – with explicit reference to Hobbes. Two classics are Latour 1993 and Descola 2013. Still, for a more robust concept of 'anarchy' connecting the two authors see Brown 1987.

characteristic danger of Greek political community.[97] Just as there can be good *eris* (Hes. *Op.* 11-26), there can be good *stasis* (cf. Hdt. 8.79.2, Isoc. *Paneg.* 79), and the community is organised less around the expulsion of *stasis* than its incorporation, for both better and worse, into the social fabric. Joho attributes his view of nature (*physis*) in Thucydides to Rechenauer, who identifies four characteristics of *physis* according to Thucydides (and the Hippocratics): it is not reducible to something else, it has an independent causal structure, it is a substrate beneath the surface of ordinary events, and it is constant.[98] Recent decades have seen an explosion of interest in *physis* and a broad reframing of the concept.[99] Naddaf, arguing based on careful study of the word's etymology and its use in Homer and the Presocratics, says that "*phusis* must be understood dynamically as the "real constitution" [sic] of a thing as it is realised from beginning to end with all its properties (…) It is never employed in the sense of something static, although the accent may be on either the *phusis* as origin, the *phusis* as process, or the *phusis* as result."[100] Macé places more emphasis on the variety of meanings, but sees three components or categories of *physis:* "a whole, made up of Heaven and Earth; the order displayed by the whole (or the "ordering" it underwent); and the *phusis* of each and every thing within it."[101]

[97] Thucydides notes that *stasis* was a common feature of pre-*polis* societies due to the conflict over resources (1.2.4), but it also arose in *polis* communities such as Sparta (1.18), Epidamnus (1.23.3), Athens (1.126.2), and Colophon (3.34.1 – which occurs near the beginning of the war but is unrelated to it). Beyond the text of Thucydides, Nicole Loraux argues (see esp. 1997A, 1997B) that the *stasis*-drive was of central if repressed importance in the classical Greek *polis*. Arcena (2020) has argued that Thucydides avoided mention of several known *stasis*-conflicts that took place during the period of the war but did not directly pertain to it.

[98] Rechenauer 1991, 112 (cf. 156-7). See also Jung 1991, 120-42; Swain 1994; Pelling 2000, 101-3; Reinhold 2002, 45-53.

[99] Studies of particular authors and instances abound, but for studies of the concept itself see Naddaf 2005, 2023; Macé 2012, 2013, 2016; Grecchi 2018.

[100] Naddaf 2005, 3. Grecchi 2018 sees more variety in the concept, but compare – "a dynamic process of entities and relations in which the beginnings, processes, and final outcomes are linked together in a systematic way through causal nexuses, inherent as such in the immanence of natural reality" (34: "*un processo dinamico di enti e relazioni in cui I principi, I processi e gli esiti finali sono fra loro collegati in maniera sistematica tramite nessi causali, insiti appunto nella immanenza della realtà naturale*").

[101] Macé 2017, 208.

Macé argues that *physis* and its development must be understood alongside that of several Greek words of order and coherence (especially *kosmos*) whose meanings were in constant interaction with each other.[102] Thus he claims that more speculative fifth-century uses of the word rely on the integration of three earlier schematic modes of thought: "the two aspects of the schema of orderly action, namely sorting and distribution, plus the schema of growth."[103] Holmes has described meaning of *physis* in Hippocratic medicine as being variously "the principle that guides the creation of a human being (…) the structure that stabilizes the organism and is sustained through maturity (…) [and] the force behind the body's automatism."[104] Scholars have thus shifted away from Rechenauer's understanding of the term towards one that emphasises its composite character above or alongside its irreducibility, its essential dynamism instead of constancy, and its holistic sense of reality-in-action rather than a division between surface and substrate.

These scholars tend not to discuss Thucydides, but an examination of the 30 uses of forms of the word reveals a variety of significances depending on who is speaking and to what or whom the *physis* is attributed. Of central importance for Thucydides is the widespread fifth-century distinction between *physis* and *nomos,* nature and law or custom.[105] Most of all this distinction is associated with the sophists, especially Antiphon, so to anticipate the argument that follows I will highlight Cassin's interpretation of Antiphon that emphasises the unity of nature and custom in his texts (cf. DK. B 44).[106] She describes a "bend between nature and law inscribed in the heart of the law."[107] The law does not exclude nature but

[102] See esp. Macé 2013.
[103] *Ibid.* 213.
[104] Holmes 2010, 160 (see discussion 160-2).
[105] See Kerferd 1984, 111-30.
[106] Cassin 1995, 151-91. Cf. Wohl 2010, 147-54; Agamben 2015B.
[107] *Ibid.* 190: "*[La] torsion entre nature et loi inscrite au cœur de la loi*. »

incorporates the latter into itself. Cassin's interpretation of the *physis*/*nomos* distinction in Antiphon is thus dialectical in the sense that it incorporates both a unity and an opposition between its terms. As for Thucydides, to understand and separate the levels on which he deploys the opposition, a useful starting point is the distinction Parry makes in his analysis of the *logos*/*ergon* dichotomy between 'popular' and 'literary' uses (here we shall call the latter 'philosophical').[108] Most examples of *physis* in the text count as 'popular.' The six 'philosophical' uses incorporating the term *anthrōpeia physis* are all complex and significant enough that a full treatment is beyond me here. It will be enough to show that an interpretation of *physis* along the lines of more recent scholarship is available in these instances. Its definition on the two occasions where it is used by Athenian speakers may be summarised, in the words of the Athenians at Melos, as "wherever one is stronger, one rules." (5.105.2: οὗ ἂν κρατῇ, ἄρχειν).[109] The identification of nature as a principle to which both human and divine are

[108] Parry (1981, 15-61). 'Popular' uses of *physis* are the majority and mean it as a synonym for 'character,' 'potential,' or 'tendency' – 1.121.4, 1.138.3 (x2), 2.35.2, 2.45.2, 3.64.4, 3.74.2, 4.3.2, 5.103.1, 6.16.3, 6.17.1, 7.14.2, 7.14.4, 7.48.4. Almost all these involve named speakers (1.138.3 (x2) and 3.74.2 are the narrator), and often the word is paired with an adjective (on the contrast between 'nature' and 'learning' in fifth-century Greece see Macé 2013, 63-5). The notion of acting beyond or contrary to one's nature is expressed three times referring to women and the young (2.45.2, 3.74.23, 6.17.1), and once to human beings in general (2.50.1), with the clear sense that this is possible if not exactly desirable. Hermocrates uses the noun three times with racial connotations (Ionians/Dorians: 4.60.1, 6.79.2 (x2)) – and the verb once with a racial connotation, once without (4.61.3 [racial], 4.61.5).
'Philosophical' uses mostly involve the term *anthrōpeia physis* (5.105.2 is a variation on this – "ἡγούμεθα γὰρ τό τε θεῖον δόξῃ τὸ ἀνθρώπειόν τε σαφῶς διὰ παντὸς ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαίας"). The speakers are unnamed Athenians (1.76.3, 5.105.2), Diodotus (3.45.2) and the narrator (2.50.1, 3.82.2, 3.84.2). These are each complex enough to warrant individual discussion.
The verb is used seven times in generalising statements by named speakers about a specific people or about human beings (3.45.3, 4.19.4, 3.39.5, 4.61.3, 4.61.5, 1.70.9 – the exception is Pericles 2.64.3 which is even broader, see below).
[109] Woodhead (1970, 39): "*Dynamis* leads to *arche* by a process of κρατεῖν. The superior strength expressed by this verb and employed in this process is *kratos,* and having successfully employed it you may be described by the superlative adjective κράτιστος." See Scardino (2007, 419n80) and Ponchon (2017, 255-75) for poetic and philosophical precedents. On Athenian justifications of imperialism throughout see de Romilly 1947, *passim*; Forde 1986; Orwin 1994; Jaffe 2017, 86-101 (on the speech in Sparta, 1.73-7). Some scholars have claimed that statements such as this illustrate a development in Athenian thinking and discourse on power throughout the work (Andrewes 1960, Rengakos 1983 (this is Rengakos' overarching thesis, but see esp. 101-2)). That is, in my view, an overstatement, insufficiently attentive to differences of context.

beholden is a recognisably Presocratic move. The Athenians can articulate this principle of nature as a maxim, yet for them this maxim's truth is contained not in its abstract formulation but in the concreteness of events perceived from a particular point of view. Its truth is not given but realised in the historical progression of individual *archai* which incorporate the power of sovereignty and the assertion of right. Human nature is thus coeval with the process of human culture and human law (cf. 1.22.4).[110] And yet, as a principle that regulates and limits people's actions, human nature is a *nomos* (5.105.2):

> καὶ ἡμεῖς οὔτε θέντες τὸν νόμον οὔτε κειμένῳ πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι, ὄντα δὲ παραλαβόντες καὶ ἐσόμενον ἐς αἰεὶ καταλείψοντες χρώμεθα αὐτῷ, εἰδότες καὶ ὑμᾶς ἂν καὶ ἄλλους ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ δυνάμει ἡμῖν γενομένους δρῶντας ἂν ταὐτό.
>
> And we neither made this *nomos* nor are we the first to use it: it exists, we have taken it up; it will always exist, and eventually we will leave it down; we use it knowing that you or anyone else, if you ended up with the same capability, would do the same.

This, apart from the Corcyra episodes, is the most speculative and profound individual use of the *physis*/*nomos* distinction, in which ordinary *nomos* is conceived as an expression of human *physis* which in turn is subject to a higher *nomos* – the distinction collapses.[111] Passages like this, treated as a statement of Thucydidean doctrine, have given rise to his reputation as "a cruel and ruthless writer."[112] But the narrative implies something even more profound, since the

[110] Cf. Hunter 1982, 163: "Process is the key to Thucydides' *History*."
[111] For Battistini (2013, 133) this is the ultimate meaning of force in the work: "Whoever, for the moment, wields *kratos,* is, in the universe of *praxis* and of action, subject to the same necessity as the weak. They are both victims of this force of nature that the discussion here [i.e. in the dialogue] is concerned with." ("*Celui qui, provisoirement, dispose du* kratos, *est, dans l'univers de la* praxis *et de l'action, soumis à la même nécessité que le faible. Ils sont victimes tous deux de cette force de nature dont il est question ici*").
[112] Syme 1960, 52.

Athenians will come undone as a natural consequence of their own actions and the necessities these impose on them.[113] Some readers have attempted to respond to the Melian dialogue by taking sides.[114] But a variety of scholars have claimed that the dialogue's form, and its place in the work's broader contextual backdrop, are both ways of making room for a third perspective: the reader's (and implicitly the author's) who can see the merits and limits of both sides.[115] In general, scholars who emphasise the failure of dialogue between the Athenians and Melians, the sense in which they talk past each other, tell only a part of the story.[116] The degree of sublation in the analysis from the Melian Dialogue makes clear that the ordinary *physis*/*nomos* distinction is primarily rhetorical and distinguishes a certain kind of *physis* from a certain kind of *nomos*, without foreclosing the possibility of a deeper link between these terms via more fundamental counterparts. This clarifies the instance where Diodotus sums up a *tour de force* argument against the idea that the death penalty can be a deterrent, saying that no law (*nomos*) can be a block against something "when human nature is enthusiastically driving it" (3.45.7: τῆς ἀνθρωπείας φύσεως ὁρμωμένης προθύμως τι). Diodotus works with the popular concept of *nomos* as a check against nature and something opposed to it, but in fact his argument speaks to the ascendancy of a drive affecting equally both individuals and cities, and thus makes civic policies and customs appear to be no less a result of *physis* than

[113] Cf. de Romilly 1947, 281: "When Thucydides formulates the law of force he therefore expresses a principle (…) that teaches us less about what one should think than about what imperialists do think." ("*Quand Thucydide formule la loi de la force il exprime donc un principe (…) qui nous renseigne moins sur ce qu'l faut penser que sur ce que les impérialistes pensent en fait*"). On the Thucydidean tendency to weave the most profound ideas implicitly through the narrative see Connor 1984, Rawlings 2017.

[114] Two relatively recent examples: Bosworth 1993 (anti-Melian, pro-Athenian); James 2024 (anti-Athenian, pro-Melian).

[115] Macleod 1983, 52-67; Morrison 2000 (and on the intellectual context of the dialogue's form see Hudson-Williams 1950; Hornblower 3.219-20). On the dialogue's narrative context see also Erbse 1975; Hornblower 3.216-8.

[116] E.g. Wasserman 1947; Macleod 1983, 52-67 (though his point is more elaborate than this); Scardino 2007, 469-70; Greenwood 2008. Boyarin 2012 reads the dialogue as a (pro-rhetorical, anti-dialogical) commentary on prevailing modes of enquiry in Athens.

transgressive individual behaviours.[117] Perhaps the most convincing basis for drawing a hard opposition between human nature and *nomos* is this passage near the end of *stasis* description (3.84.2):[118]

> ξυνταραχθέντος τε τοῦ βίου ἐς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον τῇ πόλει καὶ τῶν νόμων κρατήσασα ἡ ἀνθρωπεία φύσις, εἰωθυῖα καὶ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους ἀδικεῖν, ἀσμένη ἐδήλωσεν ἀκρατὴς μὲν ὀργῆς οὖσα, κρείσσων δὲ τοῦ δικαίου, πολεμία δὲ τοῦ προύχοντος· οὐ γὰρ ἂν τοῦ τε ὁσίου τὸ τιμωρεῖσθαι προυτίθεσαν τοῦ τε μὴ ἀδικεῖν τὸ κερδαίνειν, ἐν ᾧ μὴ βλάπτουσαν ἰσχὺν εἶχε τὸ φθονεῖν.
>
> With life thrown into upheaval faced with this new situation in the city, and human nature proving stronger than the laws – which even normally it transgresses by doing wrong – it showed itself to be gladly unrestrained of anger, stronger than justice, an enemy of all those superior: people would not have placed revenge before reverence and seeking gain before avoiding wrong, except that resentment had a damaging strength.

But Reeve's analysis of 3.84 as a whole argues that the passage continues the emphasis of 3.82-3 on the force of circumstance that determines which aspects of human nature become ascendant in a given place and time.[119] He further claims that the oppositions at the end of the passage quoted – between revenge and reverence, seeking gain and avoiding wrong – should be read such that in each case both terms encompass an aspect of human nature (with the situation determining which one is ascendant).[120] This suggests that the rhetorical position

[117] Diodotus is also, of course, responding "point by point" to Cleon (Macleod 1983, 99). Orwin (1994, 180n21) calls the discussion of *stasis* "Diodotean."
[118] Many believe this chapter is inauthentic (see Hornblower 1.448f; Alberti brackets it [2.75-6]). Connor (1984, 102n60) suggests it may have been an earlier draft that slipped into the final text somehow by accident. Here I treat it as authentic, since it would be a weak response to the challenge it poses my argument to fall back on charges of inauthenticity.
[119] Reeve 1999. See also Lebow 2001 (esp. 553-4).
[120] *Ibid.* 439.

of *physis* in this passage – opposed to *nomos* – may be different from its analytical position in the overarching thought expressed. As with 3.82-3 (and 5.105.2) human nature appears not simply as a destructive force that breaks down communities, but also one that is expressed in their ordinary life and collective decisions, as well as their broad trajectory of development.

Perhaps rather than Hobbes we should compare Thucydides' implicit portrayal of human *physis* to Hegel's remark that "human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds."[121] But in this regard, the *stasis* episode reveals that the community of minds of the Greek *polis* incorporates a principle of self-destruction as a permanent aspect of its being.[122] The forces that cause *stasis* are permanent aspects of civic life. One problem with Price's claim that Thucydides treats *stasis* as a civic disease is the implication that there is such thing as a healthy body.[123] A more precise understanding of how Thucydides weaves Hippocratic concepts into his understanding of civic forms may be drawn from an analogy with Plato's *Republic*.[124] After describing a 'healthy' city in a kind of state of nature (reminiscent perhaps of Hesiod's golden age), without many of the comforts of urban life – which Glaukon mocks by calling it a city for pigs (372a-e, cf. 372d: "ὑῶν πόλιν (…) κατεσκεύαζες") – Socrates concedes to his interlocutors and develops the famous portrait of a more elaborate city ruled by the guardians.[125] He later says that in time the form of society he lays out will naturally degrade

[121] *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 69 (tr. Miller 1977, 43).
[122] Cf. Orwin (1994, 184): "for Thucydides the depths of politics are far more daunting than the heights."
[123] Price 2001, 37-9. On the development of the body as a political metaphor see Brock 2006. These words of Marshall seem apt to me (1990, 168): "[Thucydides uses medical terms] for the sake of [their] medical background but in a loose, non-technical way."
[124] For careful discussions of the influence of medical writing upon historiography see Swain 1994; Thomas 2006, 2017; Jouanna 2005 (esp. his criticisms of Rechenauer 1991). On Plato's response to Hippocratic thought see Levin 2014.
[125] The question of how the 'city for pigs' and the utopia of the *Republic* actually relate to each other is complex and controversial – see Kozian 2022 for a summary of the debate and an interpretation of how Plato conceives the development from one to the other. For my purpose, the question of how seriously we should take the characterisation of the first city as 'healthy' is less significant than the point that the more detailed utopia clearly is not 'healthy,' and that a *polis* fundamentally cannot be.

into something worse (546a). But what is consistent between the ideal form of city in the *Republic* and the degenerate ones of his contemporary Greece – democracies, oligarchies, tyrannies – is the notion of the city itself as an agglomeration of surplus resources and pleasures that create a dynamic of inconstant flow (373a-c).[126] In this sense the ideal city of the *Republic* is already a compromise with its interlocutors because it conceives a city in conventional Greek terms. Socrates introduces it using medical imagery (372e):

> οὐ πόλιν, ὡς ἔοικε, σκοποῦμεν μόνον ὅπως γίγνεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τρυφῶσαν πόλιν (…) ἡ μὲν οὖν ἀληθινὴ πόλις δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι ἣν διεληλύθαμεν, ὥσπερ ὑγιής τις· εἰ δ᾽ αὖ βούλεσθε, καὶ φλεγμαίνουσαν πόλιν θεωρήσωμεν· οὐδὲν ἀποκωλύει.
>
> It seems we are not only looking for a city as such, but for a city full of luxuries (…) I believe the true city is the one we have just outlined, so to speak a healthy one: but if you want, we will also look at a phlegmatic city: there is nothing to prevent us.

Of this city he casts himself as a doctor prescribing a healthy regimen (373d), but this and his later descriptions must be understood in terms of this outer frame where the city is characterised as essentially 'phlegmatic.' The flows and forces that pass through the city are uneven, equilibrium is not attainable, and a truly healthy state only exists in a fantasy of nature. We have already seen how similarly Thucydides conceives the implications of the state/body metaphor, in the discussion of the plague above, and will return to this point in more depth in the next chapter when discussing the mutilation of the herms. In the debate between Alcibiades and Nikias in Book 6, the question of the 'healthy regimen' is equated with that of what course of action the city should take, but both sides

[126] In modern scholarship this is an important and hotly debated idea (seen the discussion and references in Hansen 2004; Vlassopoulos 2007, 123-41).

propose a sort of regimen, and neither is completely convincing.[127] The metaphorical application of medical thinking to politics in no way necessitates an idea that the political body can be cured or even effectively managed in the long run.[128]

Returning from *physis* to *nomos* (though to speak of one is always to imply the other), Thucydides establishes the defining feature of each side (movement/Athens, rest/Sparta) as both its absolute strength and its greatest weakness. Sparta's stability is the very source of its power (1.18.1), but this very fact makes them woefully underprepared (1.80-6) and the least effective opponents of Athens possible (8.96.5), so that Pericles was not unjustified in his belief that the Athenians would win the war easily (2.65.13).[129] But the Athenians themselves are victims of their own mistakes (1.69.5), and their restless energy and desire for more (1.70) leads them to eschew peace at a crucial time after Pylos (4.21.2) and make disastrous moves such as the invasion of Sicily – but more fundamentally according to Thucydides it results in a procession of leaders who attempt ambitious and glorious exploits rather than choosing what conserves and consolidates their strength (Demosthenes, Cleon, Alcibiades), and political rivalries that consume the internal politics and eventually result in *stasis* (cf. 2.65).[130] This same rule affects Corcyra. In a sense the *stasis* episode marks the perverse fulfilment of Corcyra's historic neutrality in bipolar Greece: neutrality

[127] See Jouanna 2012.

[128] Jouanna 2012, 34-5: "If there is close agreement between Thucydides and the author of *Regimen in Acute Diseases* [scil. Hippoc. *Acut.*], it is because they both dramatized, in their own way, the problem of habit and change." Like Thucydides, Herodotus also drew deeply from medical concepts and terminology (Thomas 2000, 28-74).

[129] See Woodhead (1970, 114) on the contrast between Athens and Sparta – "if [power] does not expand it must contract. While Athenian *dynamis* became more and more dynamic, and in the process increased itself, that of Sparta [which remained static] was likely to decline."

[130] Kopp (2017, 70-2) links Athenian strength weakness with strength in this regard, claiming these qualities underpin the city's maritime supremacy. Here should be noted also Palmer's claim (2017, 414-7) that the tension between Brasidas and the Spartan leadership in Books 4-5 builds implicitly towards the prospect of *stasis* among the Spartans, avoided by chance because of Brasidas' mortal wound at Amphipolis (5.10.8).

becomes internal division.[131] Wilson stresses the emphasis in Book 1 that the Corcyraeans were "isolationist" as a matter of "deliberate policy," avoiding alliances with states and achieving prosperity by dealing with all.[132] From this it results that they are alone facing an existential threat from the Corinthians and are forced into a radical change of policy; they seek an alliance with the Athenians (1.31.1-2). This naturally causes controversy among the Corcyraean citizens, and things are intensified by the direct involvement of the Corinthians, who attempt to strengthen the anti-Athenian side by releasing their prisoners of war who had turned pro-Corinthian into the city as a fifth column (3.70.1). It is therefore Corcyra's genuine neutrality in taking *neither* side and the pressure this comes under that causes the city to dissolve and become a front of the war – with foreign powers intervening at almost every stage of the narrative from 3.70-81[133] – so that its citizens are divided and take *both* sides.

This strange coincidence between the strongest and weakest aspect of the civic powers in the text must be reckoned with alongside the *physis*/*nomos* distinction. What the examples of Athens, Sparta, and Corcyra suggest is that the most effective communities also contain the seeds of their own demise – that the 'principle of destruction' that makes *stasis* possible in each case is not one single abstract principle, but a force that directly corresponds to that city's 'principle of power' – and thus the law of expansion of the Melian dialogue has its counterpart in the narrative's law of limit. To characterise these two laws as contradictory would be a mistake. They are the same law: the law by which everything exerts its strength is no different from the one by which this strength must, by the very process of being exerted, transform into weakness (cf. Pericles, 2.64.3: πάντα γὰϱ

[131] Dewald's (2005, 38-9) statistical analysis shows how cities other than Sparta and Athens come more and more into focus as the narrative progresses, indicating how the war expands over time.
[132] Wilson 1987, 25 (see 25-9). See also Rusten 2011; Bruzzone 2017B.
[133] See Rood 1998A, 155-7.

πέφυκε καὶ ἐλασσοῦσθαι).[134] Here the distinction between *physis* and *nomos* collapses at a different level than the one at which it collapsed in the Athenian statements of the Melian Dialogue. We might compare this with Herodotus' statement that the creatures which are prey far outnumber the predators, subverting the balance between weak and strong so that both survive (Hdt. 3.108.2).[135] The law of power is the unity of opposites.[136]

Conclusion

Political theorists and readers of Thucydides often theorise about politics through the prism of a concept like 'equilibrium,' 'stability,' or 'order.'[137] But the concept of order is a mirage to the extent that it projects an image of permanence upon an entity (political or social) which is constantly changing as it persists in time. To think 'in time' one must be able to assert the priority of change over stability and of motion over rest. Indeed, scholars are often guilty of a bias towards rest over motion, inferring one way or another that the former means peace and stability, the latter war and instability. The truth is more complicated and results partly from the fact that both are ubiquitous and inextricable (making the simple pursuit of one naïve and dangerous).

[134] Foufas (2019, 89-91) claims 2.65 is intended to prevent any easy link between a city's rise and its downfall, and to show that Athens could have avoided it (cf. Grethlein 2013A, 29 on "the deforming impact of teleology"). This is correct but incomplete since *some* sort of downfall, even in the case of victory, would have been inevitable. The relation between contingency and necessity throughout the work is complex and my view becomes much clearer in Chapter 5.

[135] Provencal (2015, 47-8) attributes this idea to Protagoras.

[136] Erbse's study (1989, 106-30) of power in the text is shrewd in recognising that power is ubiquitous – biologically universal – but goes wrong by insisting on the distinction between those who rightfully possess power and those who wrongfully misuse it. That there is no such distinction in the human sphere at least, and one necessitates the other, is a reason why power cannot be unlimited.

[137] See for example the recent interdisciplinary two-volume collection of essays edited by Thauer and Wendt (2016A and B), proceedings of a conference which aimed to bring together "classicists, philologists, International Relations scholars, political philosophers, and scholars of Intellectual History" (Thauer and Wendt 2016B vii-viii), titled 'Thucydides and Political Order.'

Another way of expressing the point is that to think in terms of order or stability is to seek control. The art of maintaining control has clearly to do with the exercise of power. Perhaps, no less than Socrates when imagining the 'city for pigs,' the most innocent versions of such thoughts involve a desire to live without politics: that is, without the interplay of forces in the struggle over the means and meaning of life. But the fantasy of ending politics is continuous with the desire to impose a political supremacy. Hawthorn writes: "We may agree that we live in a world that aspires to administrative rationality and generality and, in many quarters, to universalizable moral principles (…) But we have also to agree that this continue to be a world of political actors, trying more or less imaginatively to achieve what they want through the exercise of one or another kind of power."[138]

Perhaps a decade later it is more obvious that the first of these – rationalisation, establishing principles – represents an intensification of the second rather than a flight from it. We hardly need Thucydides to tell us this. What I have tried to show in this chapter is something different. I moved from a discussion about the importance of the concepts of movement and rest in the narrative – how their dialectical relation is enacted and realised in the course of events – to an analysis of the concept of force as the way in which those who wield power are in some sense subordinate to the means by which they do so; force in this sense includes things encompassed by *logos*. Force also thus helps us to appreciate the continuities between open war and the more various and latent struggles of peacetime. Laws and civilisation are no refuge from, but constitute another moment in, the war of all against all. The Hobbesian idea of the state of nature is completely in contrast with the representation of nature in Thucydides. You and I live in the state of nature – that is the point. Nature for Thucydides is not a

[138] Hawthorn 2014, 238.

discrete time-period; nor is it a substance or an underlying condition. Rather, it is a dynamic associated with the incompleteness and the limitedness of all things. Insofar as there can be said to be a law of nature it is a principle of change and limit. The force of nature is imperceptible apart from the inexorable way that forces seem to exhaust and take control of the ones who wield them. What this discussion has shown more generally is that, to the extent that there is an analysis of power in the *Peloponnesian War*, it places human power in perspective and includes all the ways in which, individually and collectively, we are powerless. This is not to say we *are* powerless in the sense that we are all passive. But the agency in a world of force and medium, as I described it at the beginning of the second section above, is complex and often self-defeating. This point needs to be developed more in reference to the next and adapted to include an understanding of how political systems and broader social conditions fit into the picture. The following two chapters do this: first, an analysis of political regimes and individual actions within them; second, how the historical form of the *polis* conditions values (e.g. goodness, beauty).

5. The Pathology of Political Regimes

In the last chapter I analysed *stasis* using the Socratic medical metaphor of the *polis* as a phlegmatic and unhealthy body, prone to collapse due to its own immanent weaknesses. The *stasis* episode thus served to demonstrate how Thucydides depicts outbreaks of political violence as arising naturally from political dynamics, which are composed of tensions that play out over time and produce historical events. This chapter argues that Thucydides' general representation of the standard political forms (tyranny, oligarchy, democracy) should be viewed against this backdrop: all three are unhealthy, phlegmatic systems of rule. In this regard, to ask which one he prefers is the wrong question. The good qualities of each are at best partial. I begin by offering a new interpretation of the tyrannicide excursus in Book 6. The standard view puts blame on the tyrannicides themselves for incompetence and lack of forethought, but I argue that their actions are best viewed as a natural result of the tyrant/subject dynamic in which tyranny inherently results. I sketch out this dynamic taking as a model Xenophon's *Hiero,* a dialogue by one of Thucydides' closest readers and interpreters.[1] I then analyse the place of the excursus in Book 6 and the representation of Alcibiades and the Athenian democracy, demonstrating that the latter introduces a dynamic between citizens which is inherently unstable and even destructive. In the conclusion I discuss Thucydides' treatment of oligarchy in Book 8. The resulting claim of this chapter as a whole is that, for Thucydides, political regimes are unhealthy dynamics.

[1] The connection between Thucydides and Xenophon is clearest in the latter's *Hellenica,* which seems to begin by presenting itself as a direct continuation of where the *Peloponnesian War* leaves off – for a recent study of the Thucydidean background to the *Hellenica* see Rood 2004B. Marcellinus (Marcellin. 43) records a tradition of readers in antiquity who believed Xenophon was the one who had written the eighth book of the *Peloponnesian War.*

The Murder of Hipparchus

A digression near the middle of Thucydides Book 6 narrates the murder of Hipparchus during an attempted overthrow of his brother, the Athenian tyrant Hippias, by the pederastic lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The tyrannicides were considered heroes and were symbols of great ideological importance for the Athenian democracy. A passage from Herodotus may serve as one of dozens of examples.[2] Before the battle of Marathon, when Miltiades speaks to the polemarch Callimachus trying to convince him to vote in favour of meeting the Persian force in battle, he says (Hdt. 6.109.3):

> ἐν σοὶ νῦν Καλλίμαχε ἐστὶ ἢ καταδουλῶσαι Ἀθήνας ἢ ἐλευθέρας ποιήσαντα μνημόσυνα λιπέσθαι ἐς τὸν ἅπαντα ἀνθρώπων βίον οἷα οὐδὲ Ἁρμόδιός τε καὶ Ἀριστογείτων λείπουσι.
>
> It is in your power now, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens or to make it free, and to leave a monument that will last for as long as there are human beings, of a sort not even Harmodius and Aristogeiton left behind.

Thucydides debunks the popular narrative and describes the killing as an *alogistos tolma,* an irrational act of recklessness.[3] The truth, he says, is that Harmodius and Aristogeiton killed Hipparchus because of an "erotic incident" (6.54.1: δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν).[4] Indeed, the reigning tyrant of Athens was not

[2] For more see Dover's survey in Gomme 4.321-3; Raaflaub 2003, 64-7; Slings 2000; Ferrario 2014, 18-25. The tyrannicides received cult honours at their tombs and their descendants were given free meals at the Prytaneum.

[3] The same expression is used in the *stasis* description (3.82.4), which I discuss more in the next chapter. Forde (1989, 18) argues that Thucydides uses this word implicitly to draw an analogy between the tyrannicides and the Athenians. On *tolma,* daring, as a special (positive) Athenian characteristic see Avery 1973, 6-8.

[4] "Incident" – Pelling 6.223.

Hipparchus, but his brother, Hippias, and the result of the murder was that Hippias' tyranny, which was previously benevolent, became far more oppressive.

The standard scholarly interpretation of Thucydides' excursus reads it as a classic demonstration of the bad consequences of choosing passion over reason and emotion over thought. This rationality is taken to correspond with Thucydides' own: allegedly, that of the historian who investigates thoroughly and sees things clearly. The excursus is thus said to offer a paradigmatic display of method and a performance of the historian's professional virtue.[5] Equally paradigmatic, according to this view, is the failure and stupidity of the tyrannicides whose killing of Hipparchus is essentially random and a result of their irrational eroticism. Here I posit an alternative reading of the excursus. Thucydides represents the tyrannicides' actions as consequences of a political dynamic, which is inherent to tyranny, in which desire and paranoia constantly co-exist. The tyrant inspires fear and induces love from his subjects (and vice versa). Tyranny for Thucydides is an unstable political dynamic organised around this tension.[6]

Starting with the excursus: the distinctiveness of my approach can be clarified with reference to two key passages, from the beginning and the end. Thucydides starts by saying, "Indeed the reckless act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton was committed because of an erotic incident" (6.54.1: τὸ γὰρ Ἀριστογείτονος καὶ Ἁρμοδίου τόλμημα δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν ἐπεχειρήθη), later summing up he says, "In this way it was because of erotic grief that the origin of the conspiracy and the irrational and reckless act due to momentary paranoia of Harmodius and

[5] E.g. Schneider 1974, 87-94; Rawlings 1981, 90-117; Farrar 1988, 126-91 (esp. 144-52); Meyer 2008; Grethlein 2010, 214-20.

[6] Cf. Canfora 2021, 58-9 (comparing Thucydides and Machiavelli): the ruler must be above everyone else without being in opposition to them.

Aristogeiton came about" (6.59.1: τοιούτῳ μὲν τρόπῳ δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν λύπην ἥ τε ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς καὶ ἡ ἀλόγιστος τόλμα ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα περιδεοῦς Ἁρμοδίῳ καὶ Ἀριστογείτονι ἐγένετο). In both these passages Thucydides clarifies that the excursus has two levels: first the polemic, where he refutes the ordinary Athenian narrative of what happened, and second the analysis of the cause – note: διά – which explains why it happened. The orthodox interpretation stops at the first level, the refutation, so that the act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton appears as some unaccountably irrational act or just a failing of their intelligence.[7] Ironically, this itself is a way of not thinking through the excursus which gives a lot of attention to the question 'why,' and shows that an act such as this which may appear irrational from an individual point of view is intelligible from a systemic one.

Let me summarise the contents: Hipparchus makes a sexual advance at Harmodius, a beautiful young man (6.54.2: ὥρᾳ ἡλικίας λαμπροῦ), who rebuffs and denounces him to his lover Aristogeiton (6.54.3: καταγορεύει) – who, "anguished and afraid at the power of Hipparchus in case he should forcibly take Harmodius" (6.54.3: ἐρωτικῶς περιαλγήσας καὶ φοβηθεὶς τὴν Ἱππάρχου δύναμιν μὴ βίᾳ προσαγάγηται αὐτόν), begins plotting to overthrow the tyranny.[8] In fact, Hipparchus, who makes a second advance on Harmodius and is refused again, has no intention of using force, but tries to avenge himself by

[7] Allison (1997, 182): "[The story is] a parable about the dangers of allowing irrational passions to control one's actions." See also Rhodes 2006 (esp. 529-30).

[8] Thucydides includes the qualification that Aristogeiton plotted "using what influence he had" (ἀπὸ τῆς ὑπαρχούσης ἀξιώσεως), which is to say not overmuch since he was "a man from the town, an ordinary citizen" (6.54.2: ἀνὴρ τῶν ἀστῶν, μέσος πολίτης) – further drawing attention to his middling social position (Cf. Hornblower 3.442-3), although Davidson suggests the reference may in fact be to Aristogeiton's age since he was, according to Herodotus, "a member of the *genos* Gephyraioi" (2006, 41). In any case, Rawlings (1981, 103-5) takes it much too far in characterising the reference to his class as a "slur" and an "indictment against Aristogeiton," which could only be true if one automatically considers it disgraceful not to be an aristocrat (Pericles does not: cf. 2.37.1, 2.40.1). Thucydides' emphasis rather serves to underscore the power difference between Hipparchus and Aristogeiton, and consequently the dynamic between all three, as I describe below.

smearing Harmodius publicly (6.54.4, 6.56.1). Thucydides elaborates (6.54.5: γὰρ) by explaining that the tyrants were generally not oppressive towards the majority of people; they ruled by consensus, decently, intelligently (6.54.5: ἀνεπιφθόνως […] ἐπετήδευσαν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον δὴ τύραννοι οὗτοι ἀρετὴν καὶ ξύνεσιν).[9] He further clarifies that the tyrant was actually Hippias (6.54.6-55.4).[10] As the story resumes, Hipparchus finds a means of revenge: the tyrants ask Harmodius' sister, a young girl, to a carry a special basket in a procession, then change their minds saying she is undeserving of the honour (6.56.1).[11] This increases the lovers' determination to act (6.56.2). They organise their attack on the day of the Panathenaic Festival. The conspirators are few, but they hope to take the advantage of surprise (6.56.2-3). During the procession, Harmodius and Aristogeiton notice one of the conspirators speaking with Hippias – since he is approachable by all – and become terrified, thinking the conspiracy has been betrayed (6.57.2: ἔδεισαν καὶ ἐνόμισαν). Hoping to do some damage before they are killed (6.57.1-3), They run into (6.57.3: περιέτυχον) Hipparchus and kill him, "with all the fury of a passion that was caused for one by desire, the other by offence" (6.57.3: ὡς ἂν μάλιστα δι᾽ ὀργῆς ὁ μὲν ἐρωτικῆς, ὁ δὲ ὑβρισμένος). They are caught and killed. Hippias learns of the attack and exposes the other conspirators (6.58). Like most Thucydidean narrative the digression ends with a summing-up and an epilogue (6.59.1-2):[12]

> τοιούτῳ μὲν τρόπῳ δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν λύπην ἥ τε ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς καὶ ἡ ἀλόγιστος τόλμα ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα περιδεοῦς Ἁρμοδίῳ καὶ

[9] 6.54.5-6 he gives more details. See below re. the part in ellipsis.

[10] A function of interludes such as these in the excursus may be to give the impression of passing time (cf. Lang 1984, 9-10 on digressions in Herodotus; Dewald 2005, 90 on "A-B-A Formations").

[11] It is not clear what this means – scholars tend to take it as implying either that she is sexually compromised (i.e. not a virgin) or else that her family is of too low standing – see Lavelle 1986A; Meyer 2008 17n28.

[12] These are not the last words of the digression – the epilogue continues (6.59.3-4) with some further proof that Hippias, and not Hipparchus, was the tyrant, and a very brief narration of what he did up to the battle of Marathon when he tried to return to Athens with the Persian army.

> Ἀριστογείτονι ἐγένετο. [2] τοῖς δ᾽ Ἀθηναίοις χαλεπωτέρα μετὰ τοῦτο ἡ τυραννὶς κατέστη, καὶ ὁ Ἱππίας διὰ φόβου ἤδη μᾶλλον ὢν τῶν τε πολιτῶν πολλοὺς ἔκτεινε καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἔξω ἅμα διεσκοπεῖτο, εἴ ποθεν ἀσφάλειάν τινα ὁρῴη μεταβολῆς γενομένης ὑπάρχουσάν οἱ.
>
> Thus it was because of erotic grief that both the start of the conspiracy itself, and Harmodius and Aristogeiton's crazy act of recklessness (arising out of a momentary terror), occurred. [2] For the Athenians afterwards the tyranny was more oppressive, and Hippias was more paranoid and killed many of the citizens, and looked abroad for somewhere that would be safe for him in the event of a conspiracy.

Dover is one of very few readers to notice that the "erotic incident" (ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν), to which Thucydides attributes the conspiracy, refers not to the relationship itself between Harmodius and Aristogeiton, but rather to the attempted seduction of Harmodius by Hipparchus.[13] Summing up the narrative Thucydides uses the parallel expression ἐρωτικὴν λύπην, which seems once again to refer not to any *feeling* one might expect, such as jealousy, but the *circumstance* of mutual offence and upset that gave rise to those feelings.[14] Thus, the *erōs* that sparks the tyrannicide refers not so much to individual feelings as to an act of attempted seduction and the broader dynamic between Hipparchus and the two lovers. The dynamic is emphasised in the passage I quoted earlier – Aristogeiton is "anguished and afraid at the power of Hipparchus in case he should forcibly take Harmodius" (6.54.3: ἐρωτικῶς περιαλγήσας καὶ φοβηθεὶς τὴν Ἱππάρχου δύναμιν μὴ βίᾳ προσαγάγηται αὐτόν). Aristogeiton is not *jealous* that someone has tried to seduce his lover – he is *afraid* of the *power* of

[13] Gomme 4.317f. Fornara (1968, 401) is also very clear that it was Hipparchus who "initiated the quarrel." On the destructive *erōs* of tyrants as a Herodotean theme – and perhaps echo – see Rogkotis 2006, 82-5.
[14] Cf. 2.44.1, 2.44.2, 7.75.3 – the only other uses of the word in the text, all three of which refer to grief for the dead; Hdt. 7.152.3 refers to the Argive situation on the verge of losing a war against the Spartans.

Hipparchus, and fears that Hipparchus will force Harmodius to become his lover.[15]

This sense of Hipparchus' power is reinforced by the fact that Thucydides' characterisation of the tyranny is very slippery. Thucydides never really explains why it is necessary for Aristogeiton to kill Hippias and overthrow the tyranny in order to destroy Hipparchus – the former seems to be collateral damage.[16] But closer reading reveals the assumption behind this omission. Thucydides' remark about the tyranny's benevolence contrasts with his earlier one that throughout Greece tyrants behaved exclusively in the interests of their own personal wealth and pleasure without doing anything much for their cities (1.17). The limiting plural "these tyrants" (6.54.5: τύραννοι οὗτοι), may indicate a contrast against the backdrop of that earlier remark. More fundamentally, Thucydides' praise seems to include Hipparchus, whom he has just stressed was not a tyrant (6.54.2). In one version of the beginning of 6.54.5, Thucydides even seems to imply Hipparchus alone was tyrant – "since in general he was not harsh in ruling over people" (οὐδὲ γὰρ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρχὴν ἐπαχθὴς ἦν ἐς τοὺς πολλούς) – this is now generally viewed as corrupt and changed to "they were not harsh" (ἐπαχθεῖς ἦσαν), which remains plural.[17] As the narrative develops, it seems, some of the tyrant's power leaks into Hipparchus, and Hipparchus' personal will seems to direct the tyranny's actions. The humiliation of Harmodius' sister is performed by a third-person plural (6.56.1).

The tyrannicides therefore believe that the only way to secure and avenge themselves against Hipparchus is to destroy the tyranny. In the movement from

[15] On fear in Thucydides see de Romilly 2005, 223-30; Huart 1968, esp. 336-46; Desmond 2006 (they are discussed below).

[16] For this reason, Dover challenges Thucydides' emphasis on the causal link between *erōs* and the conspiracy (G. 3.318): "In ensuring that we understand the seed from which the conspiracy grew Thucydides does nothing to make us understand the fact that it did grow."

[17] The emendation is Hude's: see G. 3.319; Alberti 3.52.

cause (attempted seduction) to effect (conspiracy), both *erōs* and the tyrannical power are depicted as centrally involved.[18] And they are characterised relationally, as interpersonal forces in the dynamic between the human participants rather than individual feelings or attributes possessed by one or more persons. The excursus thus charts the development of a situational dynamic, a convergence of forces, from the love-triangle to the tyranny's downfall (6.59.3-4).

Tyranny as a Political Dynamic

To theorise this dynamic, let me turn to a more abstract representation: Xenophon's *Hiero*.[19] In effect, the *Hiero* is structured as a pair of monologues by two characters: Hiero argues that the life of a tyrant is much worse than that of an ordinary person, in fact it is terrible, Simonides argues that if one does the job correctly it is much better to be a tyrant, really it is wonderful. The discussion proceeds according to a list of the pleasures and pains that tyranny, or private citizenship, can offer, but in truth the heart of the difference between Hiero and Simonides is how they represent tyranny as a system. According to Hiero, tyranny is a system of escalating 'fear' (*passim:* φόβος) – "fearing the crowd, fearing solitude, fearing to be without protection, fearing the protectors themselves" (*Hier*. 6.4: τὸ δὲ **φοβεῖσθαι** μὲν ὄχλον, **φοβεῖσθαι** δ᾽ ἐρημίαν, **φοβεῖσθαι** δὲ ἀφυλαξίαν, **φοβεῖσθαι** δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς τοὺς φυλάττοντας) – the tyrant is afraid of being overthrown, the subject is afraid of the tyrant's power, and the city becomes a labyrinth of paranoia with the tyrant trapped at the

[18] Cf. Tsakmakis (1995, 192): "Macht in Politik *und* Liebe *sind die Grössen, die auf den zwei Achsen angezeigt werden sollen.*"
[19] I develop this interpretation of the *Hiero* in more detail in O'Sullivan (forthcoming).

centre.[20] Hiero claims the tyrant would be better off committing suicide (*Hier.* 7.13). Simonides replies by claiming that the good tyrant establishes a system of escalating 'love' (*passim:* φιλία), in which the tyrant bestows favours that earn the gratitude and goodwill of his subjects who in turn bestow favours on the tyrant. Near the end he uses a cluster of φιλία-words (*Hier*. 11.9-14), and tells Hiero, "If you are victorious over your friends in good deeds, your enemies will be unable to resist you" (*Hier*. 11.15: ἐὰν γὰρ τοὺς φίλους κρατῇς εὖ ποιῶν, οὐ μή σοι δύνωνται ἀντέχειν οἱ πολέμιοι). He ends by declaring (*Hier*. 11.15):

> κἂν ταῦτα πάντα ποιῇς, εὖ ἴσθι, πάντων τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις κάλλιστον καὶ μακαριώτατον κτῆμα κεκτήσει· εὐδαιμονῶν γὰρ οὐ φθονηθήσῃ.
>
> If you do all these things, understand, you will have gained the most beautiful and blissful of all human possessions, since you will be well-off without being envied.

Scholars tend to respond to the dialogue by validating one or the other image of tyranny – normally they follow Simonides in claiming that whether a tyranny is 'good' or 'bad' comes down to the tyrant's individual skill or wisdom.[21] I will argue that 'good' and 'bad' tyranny, rule based in 'love' and 'fear,' Hiero's and Simonides' respective visions, are not different; in fact, the monologues of the *Hiero* are two complementary descriptions of a single scenario. The tyrant's

[20] See Dover (1997, 135) on repetition "where clarity demands consistent terminology (…) where the intellectual requirement of clarity is not in evidence, recurrence is an instrument of affect." Here it seems to be both.

[21] Modern scholarship on the *Hiero* probably begins with Leo Strauss' claim (see the essays and papers collected in Gourevitch and Roth eds 2000) that the dialogue is a paranoid effort on Hiero's part to conclude Simonides wishes to usurp his power and on Simonides' part to navigate this and convince Hiero to rule as he would like. Much of the most important interpretive work since has been motivated by an attempt to cancel out Straussian readings (e.g. Gray 1986, 2010; Dorion 2021 [he is particularly good on Strauss' flaws]; Bandini and Dorion eds 2021). But these are often trenchant in their insistence on treating as one Xenophon's intention, the dialogue's meaning, and the unquestioned words of Simonides. Whitmarsh 2018, 59-83 (esp. 67-71), on the *Cyropaedia*, gives an important rebuttal of Gray's approach in particular. Here I attempt to lay out a way of reading which avoids the pitfalls of both Strauss and his detractors.

coercive power, and the citizens' insurrectionary potential, are each a constant fact in tyranny, and exert a pressure towards paranoia. The way for the tyrant to deal with this is to downplay and euphemise their power, as Simonides advises explicitly (9.3):[22]

> ἐγὼ οὖν φημι ἀνδρὶ ἄρχοντι τὸν μὲν ἀνάγκης δεόμενον ἄλλοις προστακτέον εἶναι κολάζειν, τὸ δὲ τὰ ἆθλα ἀποδιδόναι δι᾽ αὑτοῦ ποιητέον. ὡς δὲ ταῦτα καλῶς ἔχει μαρτυρεῖ τὰ γιγνόμενα.
>
> I say that for the man in charge anyone needing punishment should be giving to other people to punish, and the handing out of prizes he should do himself. The facts show that this works well.

Simonides' advice for the tyrant is not to eschew punishment (and by extension the threat of punishment), but to insulate their own image from its negative associations. The real-world tyrant is (someone to be) loved *and* feared: he inspires fear and induces love. In society, he wields the power of creation and destruction with the bestowal of favours and the use of force. In a tyranny, the position of everyone, including the tyrant, is inherently insecure: on both sides the constant threat of destruction breeds paranoia, which (as Hiero himself observes) is itself destructive of the well-being of the city, citizens, and individual tyrant. To some extent this may have been a familiar view in Classical Greek political theory. "We know," Plato's seventh letter says, "that requests from tyrants are mixed with coercion" (*Ep.* 7 329d: τὰς δὲ τῶν τυράννων δεήσεις ἴσμεν ὅτι μεμειγμέναι ἀνάγκαις εἰσίν). Plato elaborates at some length, especially in Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic,* on the lonely and impotent position

[22] Cf. Kojève's reply to Strauss (137 in Gourevitch and Roth eds 2000): "In order to come to power, the tyrant necessarily has to take, let us say, 'unpopular' measures (…) Simonides does not say how to go about abrogating the 'unpopular' measures without immediately imperilling the tyrant's life or power (…) or even the State's existence as such."

of the tyrant.[23] Equally, in Herodotus' Deioces *logos* (Hdt. 1.96-101), the first king of the Medes builds and hides in the walled city of Ecbatana, so that the people he had grown up with would not realise their own equality with him but instead consider him a sort of being apart (1.99.2).[24] Like Herodotus, Xenophon in the *Hiero* shows the dependence of a particular system of one-man rule on ideological foundations. But rather than shutting himself off in the palace, Simonides advises Hiero to go out and court his citizens by displaying himself as their benign better. The way out of the destructive cycle of paranoia which is always threatened by a power imbalance between individual of this degree, for both tyrant and citizens, is to indulge in a fantasy of consenting love and where their relationship is based on mutual giving.

Two examples from the dialogue pertain directly to the excursus in the *Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides is careful to mention that Hippias had bodyguards (6.56.2, 6.57.1). In Hiero's depiction of tyranny, the tyrant, like a man at constant war with his own citizens, is afraid they will kill him and must go everywhere with weapons and an armed escort (*Hier.* 2.8). These armed guards are a constant source of paranoia because they might betray the tyrant (*Hier.* 6.11). Later Hiero complains that the tyrant must charge citizens for their upkeep, a source of constant resentment (*Hier.* 8.8-10):

> ἐξ ὧν ἀπεχθάνονται ἄνθρωποι, ἡμᾶς πολὺ πλείω τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἀνάγκη ἐστὶ πραγματεύεσθαι. [9] πρακτέον μέν γε χρήματα, εἰ μέλλομεν ἕξειν δαπανᾶν εἰς τὰ δέοντα, ἀναγκαστέον δὲ φυλάττειν ὅσα δεῖται φυλακῆς, κολαστέον δὲ τοὺς ἀδίκους, κωλυτέον δὲ τοὺς ὑβρίζειν βουλομένους (…) [10] ἔτι δὲ μισθοφόρων μὲν ἀνδρὶ τυράννῳ δεῖ·

[23] On Plato's representation of tyranny see Arruzza 2021.
[24] On this episode, with analysis of the sophistic background and other references, see Provencal 2015, 62-5.

τούτου δὲ βαρύτερον φόρημα οὐδέν ἐστι τοῖς πολίταις. οὐ γὰρ τυράννοις ἰσοτιμίας, ἀλλὰ πλεονεξίας ἕνεκα νομίζουσι τούτους τρέφεσθαι.

Much more than ordinary people we must do things that cause people to be hated. [9] We must charge money, if we want to have enough to spend on necessities: to guard what needs to be guarded, punish wrongdoers, prevent those wanting to commit crimes (…) [10] Also a tyrant needs mercenaries: by the citizens there is no burden borne more heavily than this. Since they consider [mercenaries] to be maintained for the tyrant's greed instead of for the sake of equality.

Simonides in reply admits the tyrant will always need bodyguards (Hier. 10.2-3):

οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ὥσπερ ἐν ἵπποις οὕτως καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώποις τισὶν ἐγγίγνεται, ὅσῳ ἂν ἔκπλεα τὰ δέοντα ἔχωσι, τοσούτῳ ὑβριστοτέροις εἶναι. [3] τοὺς μὲν οὖν τοιούτους μᾶλλον ἂν σωφρονίζοι ὁ ἀπὸ τῶν δορυφόρων φόβος.

I know that just like with horses, it is this way with some human beings: the more they have their needs fulfilled, the more they become filled with hubris. [3] These sorts of people indeed would be brought to their senses by fear of the bodyguards.

He suggests the guards should be employed to protect people's property and lives – slaveowners from slaves (*Hier.* 10.4), farmers and labourers from bandits (*Hier.* 10.5), the city from potential invaders (*Hier.* 10.6-7) – since that way people will recognise their use and be willing to pay themselves for their upkeep (*Hier.* 10.8). The bodyguards would thus be tasked not merely with protecting the tyrant and his position, but more generally with protecting people and

preserving the social hierarchy and property relations.[25] Simonides emphasises that the bodyguards will be especially welcomed by the aristocrats, "by the *kaloi kagathoi*" (*Hier.* 10.3: τοῖς δὲ καλοῖς κἀγαθοῖς) since they will benefit most from this protection.[26] Simonides thus claims citizens will gladly pay for the bodyguards when they perceive their work to be of public good: the issue of resentment or refusal he thus never anticipates will arise.

Some scholars have emphasised Simonides' proposed changes to the funding-source and duties of the tyrant's bodyguards as proof that the dialogue's two systems of tyranny are fundamentally different.[27] But the positive and liberatory value of the guards in Simonides' prescription has been overstated. In both scenarios the tyrant will have bodyguards, and in both these will be paid for by a citizenry who do not directly benefit from that function. At best Simonides' idea consists of amalgamating some pre-existing powers of the tyranny into a single force to deepen the conflation between the tyrant's authority and the civic order. Simonides' suggestion obscures and euphemises but does not remove the undercurrent of fear that both creates that need for bodyguards and is enhanced by their presence.

The second example – an illustration of what Parks calls the "genuine-affection problem (…) [that] plagues the tyrant in all his interactions and relationships"[28] – Hiero complains a tyrant can never enjoy pederastic sex because they do not know if they are forcing the boy to be with them (1.37-8):

[25] Cf. Farrar 1988, 145 (on the Archaeology): "Thucydides' account suggests that one man's capacity to wield power is complemented by another's need for protection or wish to participate in the benefits of hegemony; in order to wield greater power, the ruler must preserve a sense of social interdependence and harmony."
[26] I discuss this phrase in some depth in the next chapter. But on its meaning in general see Bourriot 1995, and on its meaning in Xenophon see Roscalla 2004.
[27] Parks 2018 (esp. 401-6); Unruh 2023, 85.
[28] Parks 2018, 401.

καὶ γὰρ δὴ τῷ μὲν ἰδιώτῃ εὐθὺς τεκμήριόν ἐστιν, ὅταν ὁ ἐρώμενός τι ὑπουργῇ, ὅτι ὡς φιλῶν χαρίζεται, διὰ τὸ εἰδέναι ὅτι οὐδεμιᾶς ἀνάγκης οὔσης ὑπηρετεῖ, τῷ δὲ τυράννῳ οὔποτ᾽ ἔστι πιστεῦσαι ὡς φιλεῖται. [38] ἐπιστάμεθα γὰρ δὴ τοὺς διὰ φόβον ὑπηρετοῦντας ὡς ᾗ μάλιστ᾽ ἂν δύνωνται ἐξεικάζουσιν αὑτοὺς ταῖς τῶν φιλούντων ὑπουργίαις. καὶ τοίνυν αἱ ἐπιβουλαὶ ἐξ οὐδένων πλέονες τοῖς τυράννοις εἰσὶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν μάλιστα φιλεῖν αὐτοὺς προσποιησαμένων.

Clearly for an ordinary citizen, whenever the boy they want to have sex with yields to them, that is instant proof they are doing it out of love because the citizen knows the boy is under no obligation to service them; but for the tyrant there is never certainty they are loved. [38] Since, as we know, people who perform services because of fear in some way can make themselves really resemble those who do them out of love. Indeed, plots against tyrants come from nobody more often than the people who most pretend to love them.

Later Simonides replies (8.6-7):

[8.6] καὶ μὴν παιδικά γε, ἐν οἷς δὴ καὶ σὺ μάλιστα κατεμέμψω τὴν τυραννίδα, ἥκιστα μὲν γῆρας ἄρχοντος δυσχεραίνει, ἥκιστα δ᾽ αἶσχος, πρὸς ὃν ἂν τυγχάνῃ ὁμιλῶν, τούτου ὑπολογίζεται. αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ τετιμῆσθαι μάλιστα συνεπικοσμεῖ, ὥστε τὰ μὲν δυσχερῆ ἀφανίζειν, τὰ δὲ καλὰ λαμπρότερα ἀναφαίνειν. [7] ὁπότε γε μὴν ἐκ τῶν ἴσων ὑπουργημάτων μειζόνων χαρίτων ὑμεῖς τυγχάνετε, πῶς οὐκ ἐπειδάν γε ὑμεῖς πολλαπλάσια μὲν διαπράττοντες ὠφελεῖν δύνησθε, πολλαπλάσια δὲ δωρεῖσθαι ἔχητε, ὑμᾶς καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον φιλεῖσθαι τῶν ἰδιωτῶν προσήκει;

> As for pederasty, in respect of which more than anything you complain about tyranny, the old-age of the ruler causes the least issues, and likewise any sense of modesty about whom one is associating with scarcely causes this to enter the equation. Since the fact that the tyrant is such an honoured person does a great deal to make him more attractive, meaning his less pleasant features are dampened and his better ones shine the more brightly. [7] And given that you reap more gratitude from the same good deeds [as ordinary citizens: cf. 8.1-4], how could it not be, when you are able to confer so many times more benefits and services, when the gifts you can bestow are so much greater, that compared to ordinary citizens you are likely to be so much more loved?

There is nothing to prevent these from being alternative descriptions of a single interaction. A tyrant seeks to become romantically involved with a boy, granting him favours, yet both know the tyrant *can* achieve the same end by force if he wishes, equally the boy's love may always be a cover for fear and hatred. In their dynamic fear and love are not completely separable. It may seem at first glance that fear and love are opposites, but where they come together is at the level of representation or interpretation. Between both descriptions, the hinge – what differs – is what causes the boy to become sexually available to the tyrant. In Hiero's version it is a euphemised and possibly inadvertent "taking by force" (*Hier.* 1.33: βίᾳ δὲ λαμβάνειν), in Simonides' it is because the boy finds the tyrant beautiful since "being honoured is itself very much an adornment" (*Hier.* 8.8: αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ τετιμῆσθαι μάλιστα συνεπικοσμεῖ). The tyrant's honour arises from his coercive hold over the citizens but wields a power all its own. Force bestows honour and honour exerts force. Once again Simonides' claims obscure and complicate the issue of consent, but do not fundamentally change it, since

the tyrant's beauty has its origin in the same thing by which the boy knows he can take what he wants: his power.

The Excursus Reconsidered

Following Thucydides' initial distinction, scholars treat the love-triangle and political motives in the excursus as two mutually exclusive explanations for the conspiracy and murder. But under tyranny, as characterised in both the *Hiero* and the excursus, the personal and political have porous boundaries. The conspiracy develops out of the attempted seduction of Harmodius, an ordinary (if probably high-born) young Athenian male citizen, by Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant. The details of this seduction – how much Hipparchus tried to make himself sexually and romantically appealing to Harmodius, or how much he tried to force himself on him – are compressed into a single word: "Harmodius **was approached [lit. "attempted"]** by Hipparchus" (6.54.3: **πειραθεὶς** δὲ ὁ Ἁρμόδιος ὑπὸ Ἱππάρχου). This ambiguous word is repeated when Hipparchus makes a second advance on Harmodius (6.54.4: αὖθις πειράσας).[29]

Keeping the *Hiero* in mind, we may ask – does Hipparchus try to seduce Harmodius or to rape him?[30] The situation in the excursus differs in two ways from the one described in the *Hiero*. First, in Athens the boy refuses the advance (this is not contemplated by the *Hiero*). Second, but relatedly, Harmodius and his lover become afraid *because he has refused the advance.* But the *Hiero* may lead us to conclude that the ambiguity of this question is more significant than the answer. The reality of the question is what puts Harmodius and (especially) Aristogeiton

[29] On the ambiguity of *peirasthai* see Hornblower 3.443.

[30] Meyer's claim (2008, 16) that Hipparchus obeys the normal rules for an *erastēs,* whereas Aristogeiton does not, takes insufficient account of Hipparchus' power and its significance here. Moreover, it is worked out from twentieth-century schemas rather than the text (Dover 1974 and esp. 1978 – see Davidson 2001).

in the position of insecurity from which they are determined to act.[31] The elements of Hiero's description of tyranny come into the foreground as Aristogeiton is "**afraid** of **Hipparchus' power** in case he takes up with the boy **by force**" (6.45.2: **φοβηθεὶς τὴν Ἱππάρχου δύναμιν μὴ βίᾳ** προσαγάγηται αὐτόν).

The paranoia of the tyrannicides thus comes from an accurate perception of Hipparchus' power and of the coercive aspect which accompanies the Peisistratids' ostensible benevolence. Harmodius and Aristogeiton misunderstand how Hipparchus intends to use it, but they are correct as to the risk.[32] The apparently combined defamation of Harmodius' sister by Hipparchus and Hippias, which constitutes a use of tyrannic prestige to exert revenge, thus ironically serves both as an apparent limit to Hipparchus' revenge, but also an intensification of the lovers' fear of reprisal (6.56.1-2, cf. 6.54.4).[33] The force of paranoia that causes the conspiracy to arise in the first place equally results in its failure, as during the planned day of the attack – the Panathenaic festival – Harmodius and Aristogeiton notice one of the conspirators speaking with Hippias and falsely believe they have been found out (6.57.2: καὶ ὡς εἶδόν τινα τῶν ξυνωμοτῶν σφίσι διαλεγόμενον οἰκείως τῷ Ἱππίᾳ (ἦν δὲ πᾶσιν εὐπρόσοδος ὁ Ἱππίας), **ἔδεισαν καὶ ἐνόμισαν** μεμηνῦσθαί τε καὶ ὅσον οὐκ ἤδη ξυλληφθήσεσθαι". Wanting to kill get revenge on the person who put them in this position before they are captured (6.57.2),[34] they run into Hipparchus and murder him "very much in anger: for one because of *erōs*, for the other because

[31] *Pace* Azoulay (2017, 20): "the entire [tyrannicide] sequence rests upon a cycle of actions and reactions in which outrage occupies a decisive place." The notion of a 'cycle of outrages' is very insightful but underestimates the importance of paranoia.

[32] On the frequently cognitive or rational aspect of emotions in Classical Greece see Wohl 2017, 445.

[33] See Meyer (2008, 15-6) on the unusually strong vocabulary with which the excursus narrates Harmodius' denunciation of Hipparchus.

[34] The narratives of 6.57.3 and 1.20.2 are not completely consistent. The excursus implies a greater degree of intent to kill Hipparchus specifically before the conspirators run into him. In any case both emphasise randomness.

of humiliation (6.57.2: ὡς ἂν μάλιστα δι᾽ ὀργῆς ὁ μὲν ἐρωτικῆς, ὁ δὲ ὑβρισμένος).[35] This causes both Harmodius and Aristogeiton to be pursued and killed, and leads to the exposure of the conspiracy (6.58.1).

Above I use the word 'paranoia' frequently.[36] The translation of Greek affective vocabulary is a very controversial issue, and there is no reason to think a Greek word or emotion should map onto a contemporary English one.[37] It will thus be necessary to clarify the inferences I am making from the above evidence. By paranoia I mean to convey not mental illness or pathology, but an overarching subjective stance, an orientation towards suspicion and the search for ulterior motives.[38] Paranoia, conceived in terms of fear, *thinks for* the subject by interpreting the other's acts and gestures as signifying somehow a threat that lurks beneath. This does not mean it should be viewed strictly as an aberration or a failure of perception in some regard. A paranoid stance may be either warranted or caused by an objective interpretation of events. The "genuine-affection problem" outlined by the *Hiero* results from the objective situation of both tyrant and subject where they are divided by the chasm of the tyrant's power and the inscrutability of each other's minds.[39] This means at every moment

[35] Tsakmakis (1995, 190-8, with citations from earlier scholars) interprets the 'erotic incident' as specifically a love-dispute between Aristogeiton and Hipparchus over Harmodius, who is represented as a passive figure. But from 6.56.2 he is clearly an active enthusiastic party to the conspiracy, especially because of the tyrants' insult to his sister (cf. ὑβρισμένος) which arises in the first place out of his rejection of Hipparchus. The phrase δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν thus describes the origins of the conspiracy in general, not just the motives of Aristogeiton, and the text does not foreground his role to the extent Tsakmakis concludes.
On the ironies of chance here see Meyer (2008, 18): "Hipparchus had insulted Harmodius' sister to get at Harmodius; Harmodius and Aristogeiton had planned to kill Hipparchus' brother in response to actions undertaken by Hipparchus; and now circumstances force the principals to meet face to face instead."
[36] Scholars have distinguished generally between *deos,* or fear accompanied by some kind of intuition or reflection, and *phobos,* which is more instinctive (de Romilly 2005, 223-30; Huart 1968, 336-46; Desmond 2006). In the above examples from the excursus arguably these words are interchangeable.
[37] On these issues (and fear specifically) see Wohl 2017, 444-5.
[38] Here I am particularly influenced by Sedgwick 2003, 123-52.
[39] Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000, 5-6) approaches the issue of the tyrant's power by distinguishing between institutional or structural power (control of resources) and personal power (which has to do with charisma, may be completely informal, and is more easily refused). The above has to do with structural

of interaction between the tyrant and subject a paranoid interpretation is conceivably true, which creates an urge towards a paranoia stance: that is, towards generally reading the other's gestures in a suspicious light.[40] To the extent that this takes hold, it may provoke someone to take what they perceive to be a defensive action which in turn activates the paranoia of the other. In this way the paranoid element is both (1) A permanent possibility and a force in the tyrant-subject dynamic and (2) Where it becomes ascendant, destructive of their trust and consequently of their safety from each other, finally of the regime.

It is well-known that Thucydides praises the tyrants near the beginning of the excursus for keeping taxes low and interfering as little as possible with the established laws (6.54.5-6). These remarks must be taken in their full complexity alongside others (I have already mentioned 1.17). One of the arguments he gives for why Hippias, and not Hipparchus, must have been the tyrant of Athens has to do with his capacity to restore control after the attack (6.55.3):[41]

> διὰ τὸ πρότερον ξύνηθες τοῖς μὲν πολίταις φοβερόν, ἐς δὲ τοὺς ἐπικούρους ἀκριβές, πολλῷ τῷ περιόντι τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς κατεκράτησε καὶ οὐχ ὡς ἀδελφὸς νεώτερος ὢν ἠπόρησεν, ἐν ᾧ οὐ πρότερον ξυνεχῶς ὡμιλήκει τῇ ἀρχῇ.
>
> As he was already a source of fear for the citizens and strict with his guards, he gained control with the significant advantage of his secure position and was not some kind of younger brother at sea without a thorough previous habituation to command.

power, but the structure is sovereignty rather than scarcity: that is, instead of the distribution of resources, it has to do with the power of life and death.

[40] Cf. Farrar 1988, 151-2: "Thucydides' analysis suggests that the position of the tyrant is constantly under threat, because tyranny involves a basic conflict of interests between ruler and ruled."

[41] Cf. 1.9.1-3. This suggests not that Hippias "acted so coolly in crisis" (Meyer 2008, 19), but that political passions were part of what drove the tyrants and the tyranny even before the attack.

Rather than portraying a tyrant or tyrants who "in general rested lightly on the people,"[42] the above suggests a relationship between the tyrant and the people in which fear played a central role. Paired with Thucydides' eulogy of the tyrants, this makes a paradox, perhaps no less than the one of the tyrant, surrounded by bodyguards (6.56.2-7.1) who is approachable by all (6.57.2). The conspirators' choice of the Panathenaic festival for the attack is because it is the only a day where a group of armed men will not arouse suspicion (6.56.2).[43] Following the conspiracy, as the latent paranoia of the regime becomes overt, Thucydides writes (6.59.2):

> τοῖς δ᾽ Ἀθηναίοις χαλεπωτέρα μετὰ τοῦτο ἡ τυραννὶς κατέστη, καὶ ὁ Ἱππίας διὰ φόβου ἤδη μᾶλλον ὢν τῶν τε πολιτῶν πολλοὺς ἔκτεινε καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἔξω ἅμα διεσκοπεῖτο, εἴ ποθεν ἀσφάλειάν τινα ὁρῴη μεταβολῆς γενομένης ὑπάρχουσάν οἱ.
>
> Afterwards the tyranny became harsher on the Athenians, and Hippias, now more fearful than previously, killed many of the citizens and also tried to look beyond the city to see if there might be some place of security for him in case he was overthrown.

Thucydides makes clear that the act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton was counterproductive and caused an intensification of the tyranny rather than its overthrow.[44] In this sense the act was not one of heroism but a "completely

[42] Meyer 2008, 16.

[43] After the conspiracy is discovered all those with more than the standard processional arms are seized (6.58.1-2).

[44] Farrar (1988, 147): "Hippias (…) responds to the killing of his brother with ruthless force, as if it had been a real political threat." Tsakmakis (1995, 201-2) draws attention to Thucydides' euphemistic language when describing the tyranny before the attack (with an emphasis on *archē*), but it is superficial to conclude, as he does, that this means that before the attack of Harmodius and Aristogeiton it was not really a tyranny. Xenophon's *Hiero* uses the same mix of euphemistic and negative language to refer to the two sides of tyranny (see Higgins 1977, 64). On the whole this may be likened to the assessment of Alcibiades at 6.15.3-4, where Thucydides' thrust was that the Athenians were wrong to be invest Alcibiades with so much power and influence, but also wrong afterwards when they stripped him of these. On the connection between the excursus and Alcibiades see Vickers 1995.

senseless endeavour" (6.59.1: ἀλόγιστος τόλμα).[45] The fears that drove them were based in a misreading of what Hipparchus planned. But this point does not culminate in the empty sermon that it is better to understand than to misunderstand and to act carefully instead of rashly. Running beneath the polemic there is the analysis of why this all happened (cf. 6.59.1: δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν λύπην). Thucydides shows that the act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton arose not from their individual failings but from a situational logic where inherent dynamics of ancient tyranny, as theorised by other thinkers such as Xenophon, come into play. Not only does the murder of Hipparchus arise directly from the conspirators' response to the latent coercive and paranoid aspect of the regime, but as a result this paranoia becomes overt. Taken alongside the account of Herodotus (5.65.1-2), Thucydides' implication becomes even clearer that the worsening of Hippias' tyranny established the eventual conditions of his downfall where previously there had been no such prospect.[46] The portrayal of a tyrant increasingly at war with his own citizens builds up to very end of the excursus and the image of Hippias at Marathon joining an invading army against the Athenians (6.59.4):[47]

> τυραννεύσας δὲ ἔτη τρία Ἱππίας ἔτι Ἀθηναίων καὶ παυθεὶς ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ ὑπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ Ἀλκμεωνιδῶν τῶν φευγόντων, ἐχώρει ὑπόσπονδος ἔς τε Σίγειον καὶ παρ᾽ Αἰαντίδην ἐς Λάμψακον, ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ὡς βασιλέα Δαρεῖον, ὅθεν καὶ ὁρμώμενος ἐς Μαραθῶνα ὕστερον ἔτει εἰκοστῷ ἤδη γέρων ὢν μετὰ Μήδων ἐστράτευσεν.

[45] In Chapter 6 I discuss the Corcyra passage echoed here, arguing that Thucydides attributes the violence to a distortion of *andreia* which is, however, indissociable from the virtue even in its most positive form. In this way I argue that in both cases the word is addressing a systemic rather than a strictly personal failure.

[46] See also Tsakmakis 1995, 204.

[47] This epilogue with the wanderings of Hippias also serves to bring us back to the sweeping impersonality of the text proper (see the discussion in Chapter 3). Hippias is like a figure on a chessboard moving from one place to the next as decades of his life are melted down into a sequence of few moments.

> Hippias was tyrant of the Athenians for three more years – in the fourth he was overthrown by the Spartans and Alcmaeonid exiles, and left under a treaty for Sigeion, then to Aiantides in Lampsakos, and from there to the court of Darius the King; from which twenty years later, an old man, he set out with the Persian army and was among those at Marathon.

We thus return to the implicit dialectic of structure and event which was detailed at the end of Chapter 3: the combination of structural factors and other circumstances produce an event that transforms the structure and is incorporated into it. The most direct cause of the conspirators' behaviour is therefore neither personal irrationality nor erotic blindness, but a systemic force: the essential ambiguity of the tyrant-subject relationship leads to devastating consequences arising from an ostensibly insignificant and unpolitical chance-event.[48] Indeed, Stahl argues that Thucydides' emphasis on *erōs* is partly a way of emphasising the private, personal, non-political (which is to say *small*) character of events that paradoxically turn out to have far-reaching public impact.[49]

"In his own search for unambiguous clarity," Stahl writes of the excursus, "the historian discovers that the actions of human nature (…) are guided by merely supposed clarity; the result is behaviour which is no longer under rational control and so causes the death or suffering of these afflicted."[50] Like many readers, Stahl emphasises individual rationality in his reading of the excursus.[51] But I argue it is more intelligible as a representation of how human actions and historical

[48] Revolutions of this sort were not uncommon among Greek city-states: cf. Ar. *Pol.* 1303b-1304b.
[49] Stahl 2003, 1-12. Cf. Ludwig 2002, 160-1 on how even the myth of the tyrannicides, the one Thucydides debunks, emphasises the private motive and the link between the personal and the political. Monoson (2000, 21-50) argues that the relationship between public and private was one of the central themes of the story in Athenian popular discourse.
[50] Stahl 2003, 10.
[51] Cf. Wohl 2017, 457: "historiographical reason, like political, sustains itself by producing emotion as its opposite and enemy, a conflict with enduring consequences for the theory and practice of historiography, and one that reason can never finally win."

events are conditioned by systems that structure their desires and relationships with each other. The notion of a systemic logic and that of society dominated by political passions are not mutually exclusive. The novelty of my claim is its emphasis on the social and political context, and more broadly on the different levels of social and political structure, that give form to the passions. Thus, what is proposed here is an important addition to what Gribble calls the "strands of historical causation" in Thucydides:[52]

> On the one hand generalizations about human behaviour (…) on the other the actions of individuals (…) and in between, the characteristics of national groups (…) Though few would maintain that these strands are actually opposed, there is large scope for debate about their relationship and their relative weight.[53]

What cuts across all of these are the dynamic political and social structures that both contribute and develop in response to complex situations as they arise. Properly speaking the three elements listed by Gribble are not essential but contingent. They *emerge.* Individuals are relevant in his narrative not in themselves but as factors: their power, position, and the passions they evoke and act upon are conditioned by societal structures at various levels.

Tyranny and Democracy

This point can be taken further to address an important scholarly question: that of how the excursus relates thematically to the surrounding text.[54] The thematic connection takes place on multiple levels. At one level, the zooming-out of the

[52] Gribble 1999, 166.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] The old view that it was completely incidental is no longer held (see discussion and references at Connor 1984, 178).

epilogue quoted above (6.59.4: τυραννεύσας δὲ ἔτη τρία Ἱππίας ἔτι Ἀθηναίων…/" Hippias was tyrant of the Athenians for three more years…") replicates the tension I laid out in my introduction, and discussed especially in the second half of Chapter 3, between excess and insufficiency: that is, between minutely narrated episodes where the emotions of the subjects are in full view, and a more sweeping narration of materials and movements. The formal device of the epilogue (not to mention the earlier mention of the tyrannicides at 1.20.2) is a sign that the excursus should be taken, not only in the immediate context of Book 6, but more broadly as another example of the human condition with the several layers of meaning that entails. In this way it mirrors the general Thucydidean pattern, as I argued at the end of Chapter 3 with reference to the massacre of the Ambraciots.

A second level is the immediate context of the passage in connection with the mutilation of the Herms, the alleged private celebration of the mysteries, and the panicky self-destructive attempts at prosecution via informants.[55] Vickers draws a link between Hipparchus (killed) and Alcibiades (sentenced to death in absentia: 6.61.7).[56] Connor and Ludwig draw it between Hippias (who became terrible after the murder of Hipparchus) and Alcibiades (who plotted with the Spartans to overthrow the Athenians after they convicted him over the Herms).[57] Pearson sees parallels between Hippias and the Athenians, and equally Connor stresses how the *dēmos* behaves like a tyrant towards its own citizens in response to the mutilation of the Herms.[58] Rood argues it reflects a general theme in Book

[55] Bloedow (1991A, 4) notes that Alcibiades does not strictly seem to have been charged with the mutilation of the Herms – "It may be legitimately argued that, had not Alcibiades been involved in profanation of the Mysteries, he would not have been recalled." Equally, however, the narrative seems to imply that without the mutilation of the Herms (and the resulting atmosphere) he would not have been charged either.
[56] Vickers 1995. Some of the bases for this analogy are tenuous. See also Palmer 1982.
[57] Connor 1984, 180; Ludwig 2002, 162.
[58] Pearson 1949; Connor 1984, 180.

6 of "Athenian instability."[59] These are each insightful in varying degrees, but ultimately unsatisfying as the Athenians of Book 6 are taken to be now Aristogeiton, now Hippias. The range of possible analogies makes the choice of one or another seem arbitrary. Rawlings and Meyer stress the link between the excursus and 1.22, particularly 1.22.4 (based on the mention of the tyrannicides at 1.20.2), arguing that both highlight the dangers of being wrong: in particular, of not knowing one's history.[60] Naturally, it is worse to be wrong than right. However, in Thucydides' own description before the excursus the Athenians were correct in what they "knew by hearing" (6.53.3: ἐπιστάμενος (…) ἀκοῇ): the tyranny became very harsh and was toppled from without by the Spartans rather than from within (6.53.3).[61] It is their fear of possibly being subjugated by a tyranny that causes the Athenians (6.53.3: γὰρ) to descend into paranoia (6.53.2: πάντα ὑπόπτως ἀποδεχόμενοι), arresting good people on the evidence of bad informants. This last detail evokes catastrophes like the plague (2.47.4, 2.51.5) and *stasis* (esp. 3.82.7-83.4), where the most decent, intelligent, or expert people were the ones most likely to suffer harm. It may recall the parts of the *Hiero* in which Hiero says the tyrant must ally with the city's best people to destroy its worst, since the latter pose the greatest threat (*Hier.* 2.7, 5.2). If the former examples imply catastrophe and breakdown, the latter implies that the cause of this breakdown is embedded in the peculiar situation of the Athenian *dēmos* rather than occurring due to some outside force such as illness.[62] In this case it would seem that a reasonably held fear, on the basis of something true, causes the Athenians to descend into a suspicion that parallels the paranoia of the tyrant in

[59] Rood 1998A, 180-1 (more references: 1998A, 180n80).
[60] See for example Rawlings 1981, 115-7 (cf. 258: "fundamental errors in the oral tradition had a disastrous influence upon the city of Athens in 415")**;** Monoson 2001, 46-9; Meyer 2008; Pothou 2009, 141-51.
[61] See Hornblower's entry on this passage (3.432-3). Sight is less trustworthy for Thucydides and hearing more so than has been properly appreciated by the tradition – see Kallet 2001, 22 (cf. O'Sullivan 2024B, 64-8).
[62] Although I argued in Chapter 4 that Thucydides represents the cause of *stasis* as equally immanent.

Xenophon's *Hiero* and also that of the citizens Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the excursus (I have just argued).

Extending this point, I wish to prove that in general the story of Alcibiades in Book 6 concerns how the *demos,* based on a reasonable assessment of risk to their own power and a threat of tyranny, act with a sense of urgency and violence that proves self-destructive.[63] Alcibiades makes his first appearance in the middle of Book 5, opposing peace with the Spartans, for the two reasons (Thucydides says) that he thinks it would be disadvantageous and because he cannot take credit for it (5.43.2-3).[64] This strange pair of motives is consistent with the "double-edged" characterisation of Alcibiades throughout.[65] Later he leads the Athenians and Argives who invade Epidauros on a pretext (5.53), and the long sequence of events that follows culminates in the Battle of Mantinea, an Athenian blunder. In Book 8 he lies his way back to power in Athens by overstating his influence with the Persian commander Tissaphernes (8.81.2-2.2), but saves the Athenian war effort by convincing the soldiers to remain at Samos after the oligarchic coup in Athens (8.86.4.)[66] Alcibiades is thus instrumental in the erosion of the treaty with Sparta and ill-fated return to war (cf. 6.16.6), and subsequently is a key voice in favour of the invasion of Sicily (6.15-23), driven above all by a desire for personal gain (6.15.2, cf. 6.12.2-3). As Gribble observes, the way Alcibiades pushes the Athenians into conflict echoes Thucydides' comments at 2.65 about Athenian

[63] The essential work out of a very large bibliography is Gribble 1999, 159-213 – especially for his criticisms of earlier work which tends to rely on sources, compositional stages, or a narrow sense that Thucydides must have come to a judgement about him (usually that he was either 'good' or 'bad' in some way).

[64] Hornblower (Comm. 3.101) says "the first [reason] should not be overlooked." That said, the unusual and rather worked conjunctive expression "[he thought it would be better,] *however not separately* [he wanted etc.]" (5.43.2: οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ), together with the extended treatment of the second motivation that follows, clarifies that somehow it encompasses the first. If the motivations had simply been a contrasted pair, probably Thucydides would have used a μέν/δὲ construction.

[65] "Double-edged" – Gribble 1999, 186. He argues Thucydides is reacting to contemporary debates (188-91).

[66] Thucydides says no one but Alcibiades could have held the soldiers back at the time (8.86.4-5). See Rood 1998A, 281-2.

leadership after Pericles.[67] Athenian attitudes towards Alcibiades change, Thucydides says, after his appointment to command in Sicily and the mutilation of the herms. People begin to fear his unusually lavish lifestyle and vaunting character, believing they indicate his desire to become a tyrant, so they turn on him – and lose an extremely talented commander to the city's detriment (6.15.3-4), not least because he ends up advising the other side (6.89-92). Meyer stresses the contrast between Athenian attitudes and Pericles' earlier insistence on the irrelevance of people's private lives to their public standing in his idealised Athens of the Funeral Oration (2.37.3).[68] But it is Alcibiades himself, in the speech that follows Thucydides' remark, who politicises these aspects of his private life and character and draws considerable attention to them (6.16-7.1).[69] In essence, the Athenians lose Alcibiades and harm their own interests in response to a credible threat of tyranny from someone who, Thucydides' general portrayals of tyranny aside (see above), is inclined to put the city's safety at risk for his own personal benefit.[70] On the connection between the tyrannicide excursus and Alcibiades, Gribble writes:

> The question of how to deal with the tyrannical individual in the city (…) is left open. Once such powerful figures have arisen in the city, it may be just as dangerous to remove them as it is to allow them to stay. The potential benefit their successes may bring the city must be balanced against the polis-threatening private power such success puts into the hands of the individual.[71]

[67] Gribble 1999, 175-88.
[68] Meyer 2008, 22. On the Funeral Oration as an exercise in utopian thinking see Greenwood 2018.
[69] Gribble 1999, 193: "his excessive speech at 6.16-19 is designed to illustrate the sort of tyrannical *dianoia* which led to Athenians so to fear him." Cf. Macleod (1983, 71) on Alcibiades' "aggressive and entirely unapologetic tone." On the "icy pragmatism" of this Thucydidean view see Goldhill 2002, 38.
[70] But also for the disreputable motive of political gain among Alcibiades' enemies in the city (6.28.2).
[71] Gribble 1999, 193.

The analogy in Book 6, between the contents of the excursus and the events in Athens surrounding the mutilation of the Herms and subsequent prosecution of Alcibiades, has to do with paranoia – and above all, in the scholarly analysis, with its effects in each case ironically detrimental. My above analysis of the tyrannicide excursus emphasised the cause rather than the effects and the system rather than individuals Here I want to step back and consider the popular image of the tyrannicides in more detail. Ludwig emphasises, in contrast with previous interpreters, that the passionate and erotic aspect was already stressed in the traditional Athenian patriotic story.[72] Azoulay claims that Harmodius' features were distorted to make him look younger (in fact he was married with children), so that the relationship would seem like a pederastic relationship.[73] Wohl notes that commemoration placed much greater emphasis on the – artificially – young and beautiful, maybe even aristocratic, Harmodius, allowing most Athenian men (she argues) to project themselves into the image of Aristogeiton: "The representation of Aristogeiton as a middling citizen," she writes, "offers an easy conduit for the fantasised identification (…) [through which] the demos can imagine itself as both an erotic and a political elite, lover of pretty aristocratic boys and slayer of tyrants."[74] This may be one reason why Thucydides when summarising Athenian popular memory refers to "they themselves [the *dēmos*] and Harmodius" (6.53.3: ὑφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν καὶ Ἁρμοδίου).[75] These elements of eroticism and self-identification for the Athenian viewer were incorporated into an image that placed the act of killing at the centre – that is, of taking one's freedom, taking control, fighting.[76]

[72] Ludwig 2002, 160-2.
[73] *Ibid.* 42-4.
[74] Wohl 2002, 8.
[75] Cf. Azoulay (2017, 42) on the general tendency to elide Aristogeiton.
[76] Cf. Forde 1986, 440-2.

In this regard the tyrannicides make "a node that binds together the diverse and often contradictory layers of ideology."[77] Azoulay, in his study of the two monuments to the tyrannicides which occupied the Classical Athenian agora, draws attention to their common emphases: the visual unity of the pair and their stance as if in movement, in the act of killing.[78] Many scholars have noted that the tyrant was rarely present in any form of popular commemoration during the Classical period.[79] The act of killing by Harmodius and Aristogeiton gained a "universal significance (…) separating it from its original context" so that patriotic unity, eroticism, control, and the violent seizure of liberty were fused together.[80] Wohl thus claims "Harmodius and Aristogeiton (…) provided the model for a democratic eros that defined the Athenian citizen as socially autonomous and sexually dominant."[81] This notion can be developed by examining other symbols. A body of scholarship contends that the herm statues represented a symbolic male democratic body: equal (because homogenous, shorn of aristocratic beauty standards), and virile (because of the erect penises).[82] The force of this identification was strong enough that the mutilation of the herms was treated as an attack on the city, and the removal of its phallus may have been understood to be a symbolic castration of the *polis*.[83] The force of this association may have been all the more significant for the fact that it was not fully explicit, nor perhaps completely understood, as Wohl has claimed.[84] In any case people regarded the mutilation, Thucydides says (without quite explaining why), as a

[77] Wohl 2002, 2.
[78] Azoulay 2017, 39-42. Cf. Monoson 21: "[The tyrannicides story] associates the achievement of freedom, democracy, and steadfast opposition to tyranny with the principle of political equality, the maintenance of unity among citizens, and a vigorous relation of mutual exchange between individuals and the city as a whole – even the accomplishment of individual citizens' personal and private interests."
[79] See the references at Kosmin 2015, 147.
[80] Azoulay 2017, 44.
[81] Wohl 1999, 351. See also Wohl 2002.
[82] Osborne 1985; Winkler 1990A; Quinn 2007.
[83] Osborne (1985) 66: "the mutilators chose as their target objects whose destruction was most certain to unman the Athenians and render them impotent." On castration compare Hdt. 3.48.
[84] Wohl 2002, 22-3.

bad omen for the invasion of Sicily (6.27.3), and Wohl argues that the mutilation of the herms in the *Peloponnesian War* serves implicitly to transcribe the Athenian loss in Sicily as an emasculation.[85]

These ideological markers can teach us about the nature of Athenian democracy. Instead of a way of granting freedom and autonomy to its members – a constitutional order like the one many Western nations profess to have, although better because the collective will has more direct influence, and worse because women and slaves are excluded from participation – Athenian democracy appears as a means of channelling the libidinal energies of Athenian males into a fantasy of "freedom, mastery, autonomy, and virility."[86] The tyrannicides are one of the symbols that represent and enact this process. A recent study by Billows argues the ideological and political community of the *polis* should above all be construed as a male warrior collective whose rules and systems are so organised as to distribute power within this class and ensure that it reproduces itself.[87] This underlines the paradox inherent to the notion of freedom that the tyrannicides embody: it is conceived as a sort of dominating vigour. The image of the tyrannicides is fantasy in which two lovers are frozen together in the act of winning their autonomy by murdering the tyrant, which becomes conflated with the act of taking power. Raaflaub argues that the dominant strain of fifth-century Athenian thinking conflated the idea of freedom with that of mastery: freedom was the opposite of slavery, and at least with inter-state politics the contest between cities was zero-sum.[88] Viewed this way, the tyrannicides have a lust for power and control that is no less than the tyrant's: but whereas the tyrant dominates his subject, the tyrannicides express devotion to each other in the task

[85] Wohl 2002, 205-14.
[86] Wohl 2002, 210-1.
[87] Billows 2023.
[88] Raaflaub 2004, 118-202.

of dominating someone else. The democracy they stand for is, properly speaking, a civic relationship founded on a collective drive to acquire and sustain *kratos,* that is to dominate.[89] Obviously Harmodius and Aristogeiton are an idealised pair: they give a pair of faces and a historical lineage to a democratic fantasy of conquest based on mutual love and competition between citizen-conquerors. The fantasy is expressed in a particularly clear form in these famous remarks by Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium* (*Symp.* 178e-9a):[90]

> εἰ οὖν μηχανή τις γένοιτο ὥστε πόλιν γενέσθαι ἢ στρατόπεδον ἐραστῶν τε καὶ παιδικῶν, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἂν ἄμεινον οἰκήσειαν τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἢ ἀπεχόμενοι πάντων τῶν αἰσχρῶν καὶ φιλοτιμούμενοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ μαχόμενοί γ᾽ ἂν μετ᾽ ἀλλήλων οἱ τοιοῦτοι νικῷεν ἂν ὀλίγοι ὄντες ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν πάντας ἀνθρώπους.
>
> If there was some way to arrange things so that there was a city or an army of lovers and beloved boys, there is no way things could be better managed than that: they would stay away from everything disgraceful and vie with each other for honour, and if they were fighting side-by-side even a few of them would be all-conquering, so to speak.

The story and reception of Harmodius and Aristogeiton demonstrates that such a city did exist in the Athenian political imaginary, just as the tyranny imagined by Simonides existed in many places including Athens under the Peisistratids. The classic studies of ancient Athenian pederasty together develop a portrait of a practice whose social function was the reproduction of the hoplite class.[91]

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[89] See Loraux 1997A, 66-9 (citing Benveniste).

[90] Elsewhere in the dialogue Pausanias mentions the tyrannicides, claiming there is an inherent link between love and liberty and for this reason barbarians consider the former disgraceful (182b-c). On this "conventional attitude" see Monoson 2000, 38-9.

[91] Dover 1978; Foucault 1990; Halperin 1990 (and the essays in Halperin ed. 1990); Winkler 1990B, 45-70. Hoplite here should be construed broadly as an ideological system of values that many forms of soldier may aspire and seem to embody (cf. Arrington 2015, 104).

Thucydides, as we have seen, connects the drive that makes Athens stand out (1.70) with the fundamental cosmic reality of movement and its connection with the human condition. But we have also seen that the association is not straightforward since the line between motion and rest can never easily be drawn. Now we can see more clearly that the characterisation of Athenians as insatiable and daring is grounded in fundamental political and ideological realities of the democracy. A democracy conceived as a constant collective performance of tyrannicide slips easily into a logic of perpetual conquest. In this sense the democracy and the empire have the same foundation.

Elsewhere, I discuss how the sequence from the Funeral Oration through the plague represents a change in the significance of the Athenian body from an expression of individual power and character to a site for the action of impersonal agents, from a notion of the body as sculpture to one imagining the body as territory.[92] Thucydides' revision of the tyrannicide narrative has a similar force. It changes a story of individual (and collective Athenian) sovereignty and mastery into one of impotence where people are subject to much larger and more sweeping forces. Impotence plays an important role the characterisation of the *dēmos* that leads Thucydides subsequently to introduce the tyrannicide excursus (6.53.3):

> ἐπιστάμενος γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἀκοῇ τὴν Πεισιστράτου καὶ τῶν παίδων τυραννίδα χαλεπὴν τελευτῶσαν γενομένην καὶ προσέτι οὐδ᾽ ὑφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν καὶ Ἁρμοδίου καταλυθεῖσαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὸ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων, ἐφοβεῖτο αἰεὶ καὶ πάντα ὑπόπτως ἐλάμβανεν.
>
> The *dēmos* since it knew from hearing that the tyranny of Peisistratos and his children became harsh at the end, and moreover that it was not

[92] O'Sullivan 2024A, 73-4.

> overthrown by themselves and Harmodius but by the Spartans, were constantly afraid and regarded everything with suspicion.

The parallel between Aristogeiton (at 6.54.2) and the Athenians, in this case, is not only the fear that leads to paranoia but the sense of impotence that drives this fear. The insecurity of the *dēmos,* in other words its own sense of the falsity of the identification between itself and the image of the tyrannicides it has constructed – the falsity even of this very image – is what drives the paranoid response to more recent events. For both the tyrannicides in the excursus and the Athenians in Book 6, the grim awareness that they are *not in control* that causes them to try and *take control* by actions that prove harmful to themselves (a fact that in neither case diminishes the real risks they would have run by doing nothing).

This brings me to the first of three thematically important levels on which the analogy between the *demos* and the tyrannicides operates.[93] Speaking in terms of the ideological image rather than the excursus, the relationship of the lovers-turned-conspirators risks becoming a paranoid dynamic where each is afraid of being sold out by the other. In the excursus the relationship between the lovers is not paranoid, but that between the lovers and the other conspirators is very much so. The entire conspiracy fails because the pair see one of the conspirators talking with Hippias and jump to the conclusion that he has given them away (6.57.2). As we have seen, the whole conspiracy is first set in motion by a paranoia that comes from the subject's sense of impotence under tyranny. But there is a different kind of paranoia between conspirators, and more narrowly in the *dēmos'* version of this story where there were only two conspirators, between lovers. One may become suspicious that one's lover is false, that they have sold one out, that they are self-interested. This is exactly the kind of distrust that in Book 8 will

[93] This is the comparison the Athenians themselves make (6.53.3), as Lang observes (1955, 396).

leave the *dēmos* unable to prevent the oligarchs from taking power (8.66.2-5). Two lovers, a collection of citizens selflessly devoted to each other and united in the act of murdering a tyrant – may sometimes ask, 'Can I trust this person?'

Connor writes of the chapters surrounding the excursus that "in seeking to protect itself from a tyranny Athens begins to become a tyrant (…) whose effects are felt not so much by its subjects as by its own citizens."[94] Continuing the analogy between the Athenians and the tyrannicides rather than the Athenians and the tyrant(s), a second layer nevertheless ironically has to do with the way Athens in the text is like a tyrant over other cities.[95] This is emphasised in the earlier books where individual speakers on both the Peloponnesian and Athenian sides several times compare Athens to a tyrant.[96] It is easy to understand why Athens' opponents would say this, but harder to understand why the Athenians would say it about themselves. The reason, Connor argues, is that popular Greek opinion held that tyranny is bad for its subjects but good for the tyrant.[97] A subsequent essay by Raaflaub argues that Connor is wrong, and the tyrant-figure was completely anathema for the Athenians.[98] Raaflaub adduces a wealth of evidence that in public life people were at pains to dissociate themselves from tyranny and considered duty-bound to resist it; the tyrannicides and their descendants were greatly honoured.[99] Of the moments in the

[94] Connor 1984, 180.
[95] Aside from the discussion below, Barceló (1990, 405) makes an analogy I do not mention: like Athens, Greek tyrants are associated with sea power. This is clear in the Archaeology, but also in the figure of Polycrates whom Thucydides does not much mention.
[96] Connor 1977B. Discussions of Athenian attitudes towards tyranny, and the notion of Athens as a tyrant city, incude Hunter 1974; Connor 1977B; Raaflaub 1984; Tuplin 1985; Wohl 2002, 215-69, and the essays in Morgan (ed.) 2003. On the semantics and significance of tyranny in Thucydides and beyond see Scanlon 1987; Parker 1998; Ramou 2021.
[97] Connor 1977B, 98-104.
[98] Raaflaub 2003.
[99] See n1 above. On Athenian representations of tyranny see also Lanza 1977.

Peloponnesian War when Athenians speakers tell Athenian audiences that their city is a tyrant, he writes:

> [They are] nasty polemics, not normal political discourse (…) the tyrant metaphor, evoking the negative associations inherent in the concept – above all, the constant danger from resentful subjects – serves, in extreme situations, to arouse the citizens' determination to pursue their city's harsh policy of imperial domination.[100]

This does not answer the question – if the Athenians were so opposed to tyrants, how come they set themselves up and acknowledged themselves as tyrants? It sidesteps the issue by claiming that only in exceptional situations did they do so. But surely these situations are the ones that count. They are the key moments where someone cuts through the lie and exposes the truth ('the truth' here being an ideological formulation with a mutually dependent relationship to 'the lie,' just as with fear and love in the *Hiero*). The admonishments of Pericles after the plague (2.63.2-3), or of Cleon during the Mytilene debate (3.40.4-5), are framed exactly this way: 'You will not want to hear this, but…' They are expressions of stark reality: unfortunately, they say, you are tyrants and therefore under threat, so now you must behave like tyrants or else suffer disaster. We have seen how a property of tyranny as depicted in the *Hiero* and the excursus of Book 6 is to conceal and euphemise the coercive nature of the regime. Many more speakers in the text characterise Athens' dominion over other cities as an *archē* – a word which, as we have seen, is also used for the Peisistratid tyranny in the excursus and by Simonides in the *Hiero*.[101] The juxtaposition of euphemistic fantasy and

[100] Raaflaub 2003, 80-1.

[101] On this word in Thucydides see the discussion and references at the beginning of Chapter 2 (p. 70). In this chapter see n39 above. Spahn (2016, 65) counts 49 uses in relation to Athens, including a direct statement by Thucydides (2.65.11).

paranoid violence is what allows Pericles to say this in the Funeral Oration (2.40.4-5):[102]

> [4] καὶ τὰ ἐς ἀρετὴν ἐνηντιώμεθα τοῖς πολλοῖς· οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὖ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους. βεβαιότερος δὲ ὁ δράσας τὴν χάριν ὥστε ὀφειλομένην δι᾽ εὐνοίας ᾧ δέδωκε σῴζειν· ὁ δὲ ἀντοφείλων ἀμβλύτερος, εἰδὼς οὐκ ἐς χάριν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐς ὀφείλημα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀποδώσων. [5] καὶ μόνοι οὐ τοῦ ξυμφέροντος μᾶλλον λογισμῷ ἢ τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῷ πιστῷ ἀδεῶς τινὰ ὠφελοῦμεν.
>
> [4] And we are good, in contrast to many others: we gain friends not by receiving favours, but by doing them. Whoever does a favour is more the secure, because the debt is guaranteed by the goodwill of the one to whom he gave it: the person who owes a favour is weaker since he knows that his good service is not in exchange for gratitude but in remission of a debt. [5] Indeed, we alone give out unstinting help not more from calculation of our advantage than from trust in freedom.

Equally it allows him to change his tone altogether in his final speech (2.63.2-3):

> [2] ἧς [ἀρχῆς] οὐδ᾽ ἐκστῆναι ἔτι ὑμῖν ἔστιν, εἴ τις καὶ τόδε ἐν τῷ παρόντι δεδιὼς ἀπραγμοσύνῃ ἀνδραγαθίζεται· ὡς τυραννίδα γὰρ ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτήν, ἣν λαβεῖν μὲν ἄδικον δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἀφεῖναι δὲ ἐπικίνδυνον. [3] τάχιστ᾽ ἂν τε πόλιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἑτέρους τε πείσαντες ἀπολέσειαν καὶ εἴ που ἐπὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν αὐτόνομοι οἰκήσειαν· τὸ γὰρ ἄπραγμον οὐ σῴζεται μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δραστηρίου τεταγμένον, οὐδὲ ἐν ἀρχούσῃ πόλει ξυμφέρει, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ὑπηκόῳ, ἀσφαλῶς δουλεύειν.

[102] On 2.40.5, see Gomme (2.124): "No sentence in the Funeral Speech is loftier in tone than this; and none was more often contradicted, not only by Athenian deeds, but by Athenian words as recorded by Thucydides, including Perikles' next speech." The contradiction between this passage and the next is discussed by a perplexed Connor (1977B, 96; cf. 1984, 184).

> [2] From which [empire] you can no longer extricate yourselves just because someone of you now may be afraid and wish to withdraw from things and be a lover of mankind: at this point you are tyrants, and if it was wrong for you to take power, it is dangerous to surrender it. [3] Straightaway those sorts of people once they had convinced others would destroy this city, as they would any other they set up and ruled autonomously by themselves. The inactive faction only survives because of the setting up of those who act – it is of no benefit to cities which have power, only a subordinate one that finds safety in enslavement.

Thus representations of Athens as a power that brings benefits to its subjects, one that spreads freedom and protects the weak and is loved, are completely consistent with a self-understanding of tyranny.[103] This is not to say that the Athenians professed themselves to be tyrants over other cities or considered it polite or acceptable to be so: it is to say that implicitly they understood this well enough that in extreme situations the appeal to their status as tyrants had an effect. One might draw an analogy with what Thucydides identifies as "the truest reason" for the war (the growth of Athenian power and Spartan fear of this), but "the least said openly" (1.23.6: τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ).[104] Indeed, Thucydides himself draws nearly this exact

[103] One apparent bridge between these two representations is the Athenian speech to the assembled Peloponnesians in Book 1 (1.73-8). See Hunter 1974, 121. Spahn (2016, 75) claims references to tyranny are best explained as "literary stylization and rhetorical intensification" on the part of Thucydides.

[104] I would answer in a similar way a point such as that of de Ste Croix (1954 – with a recent defence by Canevaro and Lewis 2024 – see responses by Bradeen 1960; de Romilly 1966), that contrary to what Thucydides claims (e.g. 2.7.4) the Athenian Empire was popular among its most of its subjects (because it often installed democracies in cities where it ruled), and despised by oligarchs (Sparta did not extract wealth or manpower from its cities but tended to impose oligarchies: 1.19, cf. 3.82.1). But taking this to be true, it would have meant Athens offered/imposed internal supremacy for the *dēmos* at the price of subjugation to an external power. For my purpose here the ambiguity is more significant than how it shakes out in any individual case.

analogy in Book 6, echoing 1.23.6 in his outline of the Athenian motives for the campaign (6.6.1):[105]

> οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι στρατεύειν ὥρμηντο, ἐφιέμενοι μὲν τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ προφάσει τῆς πάσης ἄρξαι, βοηθεῖν δὲ ἅμα εὐπρεπῶς βουλόμενοι τοῖς ἑαυτῶν ξυγγενέσι καὶ τοῖς προσγεγενημένοις ξυμμάχοις.
>
> The Athenians were eager to send an army, desiring – in the truest reason – to rule all [of Sicily], and also euphemistically because they wanted to help their kinsmen and longstanding allies.

Wohl, in an argument during which she calls the tyrant "the "Other" of Athenian democracy,"[106] nevertheless claims that the taboo against tyranny – the sense in which the figure of the tyrant completely inverts Athenian civic values – entailed a surreptitious desire for tyranny which was the cause of Alcibiades' strange and polarising appeal.[107] In any case, Thucydides shows throughout the entire text how Athens, through the very same ideological forces that shaped its veneration of the tyrannicides, came to be a tyrant over other peoples. Rood, drawing on Cleon's remark that democracies are least effective at ruling over others (3.37.1), sees the herms episode and the internal conflicts it foreshadows of later years as proof of how Athens' empire threatens its democracy: "harshness abroad breeds (…) harshness at home."[108] Like Rood, a variety of modern political theorists with very different outlooks have perceived an essential tension between democracy

[105] This description of Athenian motives recalls Herodotus' various accounts of Persian motives for invading others (cf. Hartog 1988, 38 and the Pentekontaetia section in Chapter 2)
[106] Wohl 2002, 224. And see *ibid.*: "In his uncontrollable appetite, his love of finery, his tendency toward deception and artifice, he is like a woman; the ostentation and autocracy of his power equates him with an Eastern despot; in thrall to the demands of his own pleasure and the necessities of his rule, he becomes a slave."
[107] Wohl 2002, 124-70. She thus goes beyond a debate between Connor (1977B) and Raaflaub (1984), about whether Athenians believed it was good to be a tyrant, by affirming both sides of the argument and claiming the Athenian attitude was ambivalent.
[108] Rood 1998A, 181.

(ancient and modern) and empire.[109] But the idea that empire threatens democracy need not necessarily contradict the (all the same) contrasting observation of this chapter. The analogy between the Athenians and the tyrannicides exemplifies the link between its democracy and its empire: that in some sense these are mutually supportive.

Connor claims Thucydides does not share his characters' view that Athens is like a tyranny because of the difference between his own description of early tyrants in the Archaeology (cf. 1.17: they enriched and protected themselves without ever enriching their cities or expanding beyond their borders), contrasted with the characterisation of Athens by the Corinthians as a restless, constantly expanding power (1.68-72).[110] The description at 1.17 may be a characterisation specific to that period rather than of tyranny in general.[111] But even if it is intended to refer to all tyranny, it may underscore the uniqueness and the irony of the Athenian position. Connor, and later Wohl and Ludwig, each claim there is an important analogy between the acts of Harmodius and Aristogeiton to the Athenian decision to invade Sicily.[112] Let me therefore conclude by briefly returning to the framing of the tyrannicide excursus, and in particular the speech of Alcibiades in the assembly in support of the campaign. In the debate between Nikias and Alikibiades (6.9-23), the core strategic question is whether it is safest for Athens to try and conserve what it has or continue to try and conquer new peoples and

[109] See the discussion and references at Zumbrunnen 2008, 3.

[110] Connor 1977B, 104-6.

[111] Earlier Thucydides tells us Agamemnon could assemble the expedition to Troy because he was powerful enough that the other Greeks feared him (1.9) – thus Agamemnon seems to combine activity and tyranny. Van Wees 2017 demonstrates how early expansion and military and economic development is linked with tyranny throughout the Archaeology narrative. In general, what makes the issue more complex is vocabulary – are Kings the same as tyrants? Parker (1998, 164) claims Thucydides is the first author to make a hard distinction between the two, along much the same lines as we do now. Which is to say, for Thucydides, the distinction is that a tyrant is the autocratic ruler of a *polis,* and a King is the autocratic ruler of a non-Greek or pre-*polis* Greek society (with anachronistic exceptions such as Sparta). The distinction, therefore, is not thematic for Thucydides. See Barceló (1990, 404), Dreher (2016, 91-2).

[112] Connor 1984, 176-80; Ludwig 2002, 160-9. The invasion is anticipated by events in earlier books: see Kohl 1977, 1-4.

territories. While Nikias is worried about Athens' safety from physical threats to Athenian power in Greece, for Alcibiades the issue is how the Athenians can conserve their present condition. At the heart of this, scholars have agreed, is a divide between hardness and softness, age and youth, which is present throughout the debate and makes its real terms one of character.[113] The two antagonists each spend a considerable part of their speeches characterising themselves rather than strictly discussing the matter of hand (cf. 6.9.2, 6.13.1; 6.16-17.1).[114] In choosing the strategy of Alcibiades over Nikias, the Athenians thus implicitly reveal something about their own character as depicted throughout the work, their affinity with Alcibiades over Nikias.[115] Near the end of his speech, Alcibiades echoes the earlier statement of Thucydides (6.6.1), voicing its implication of an endless desire for power, by claiming that conquering Sicily might make it possible to bring all of Greece under their rule (6.18.4). Summing up his speech Alcibiades makes an argument based on the character of the Athenian polity (6.18.7):

> παράπαν τε γιγνώσκω πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα τάχιστ᾽ ἄν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ διαφθαρῆναι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσφαλέστατα τούτους οἰκεῖν οἳ ἂν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἤθεσι καὶ νόμοις, ἢν καὶ χείρω ᾖ, ἥκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν.
>
> In conclusion, then, I would say that a city which is accustomed to activity would be very quickly destroyed by a change to inactivity, and that the people who live in the greatest security are those who most respect their

[113] de Romilly 2005, 147-57; Wohl 2002, 171-83. Nikias is at pains to deny this in his own speech (6.9.2, 6.10.2).
[114] Cogan (1981, 95): "Personalities are more important in this debate than in any other in the history."
[115] See Gribble (1999, 194-6) on how Thucydides compresses and distorts the political events, and removes certain important figures, from the history of Athens in this period to focus on the opposition between Nikias and Alcibiades.

existing character and institutions, whatever their shortcomings, in the way they manage their affairs.

The passage clearly develops the thematisation of (and drawing of an equivalence between) movement and rest as discussed in the previous chapter. The Corinthian remark that the Athenians' only rest is in exertion is reflected here (1.70.8). But it also demonstrates how the expression of this theme in Athenian character and policy is mediated through political, social, and ideological forces rather than directly coming from some sort of natural imperative. Alcibiades' opposition to ἀπραγμοσύνη ('not doing anything') echoes and twists the last speech of Pericles (2.63.2-3), just as the call for continued expansion resembles the portrait of a continuously expanding city drawn by Pericles at the start of the Funeral Oration (2.36.1-3).[116] ἀπραγμοσύνη he characterises as a μεταβολή – a strong word for changes of circumstance or fortune (2.82.2, 2.43.5), which can also refer to a revolutionary overthrow of the political system (6.20).[117] Several scholars have highlighted the implicit use of medical reasoning in this section of Alcibiades' speech (perhaps in response to a rhetorical flourish at the end of Nikias': 6.14).[118] Jouanna observes specifically that the above passage applies the Greek medical notion of a habitual regimen and the disastrous health consequences of a sudden change.[119] This may recall Joho's claim that the ideal political order for Thucydides is an "equilibrium" between motion and rest – a

[116] Macleod (1983, 83) resists the rhetorical move Alcibiades attempts here and downplays the similarity between Pericles' and Alcibiades' ideological visions. But it is Pericles above all who pushes the rising power of Athens to go to war and not to yield to Sparta (1.127.3). Thucydides suppresses many details of Pericles the imperialist (see Pouncey 1980, 72-4) but keeps this point in view. Pericles' thinking more than Alcibiades' is careful and strategic and has the whole *polis* rather than just himself in mind (Macleod 1983, 80 – but see Chapter 7), yet both operate on a similar ideological basis. Macleod himself sees this point – 86: "Pericles' strategy is in contrast with his ideals" – stating that Nikias and Alcibiades each represent one half of the tension or paradox of the Periclean stance in Books 1-2.

[117] Macleod (1983, 85-6) thus argues that Alcibiades is here slandering Nikias by suggesting he wishes to overthrow the laws of the city.

[118] de Romilly 2005, 147-57; Kohl 1977, 79-82; Jouanna 2012 (and references at 23n5).

[119] Jouanna 2012, 26.

notion which, I showed in the last chapter, asserts the priority of rest over motion at the higher level of their relationship (i.e. is the relationship between motion and rest 'in motion' or 'at rest?').[120] The irony is thus that Alcibiades conceives the only possible stability or continuity for the Athenians via the perpetual motion of empire. In search of one they turn to the other, in many respects its opposite.

In the excursus Thucydides praises the tyrannicides by saying they did not interfere with the Athenians' established laws and customs (6.54.5-6). The notion this dispels of the tyrant as lawless, as a force of μεταβολή – based on the standard ancient opposition between tyrants and the law – is equal to the danger outlined by Alcibiades in his speech.[121] Likewise, the crisis in Athens results from fears of an overthrow of the democracy (6.27.3). The point in the overarching narrative of these books is much more ironic than this, and more profound. The historical consequences of the mutilation of the Herms will be, in the end, much smaller than those of the invasion of Sicily. The eventual calamity will have much less to do with some outside force or dramatic and violent change in the Athenian principles or civic order. It will result directly from fundamental currents in the Athenian system as exemplified by the tyrannicides. In this light the view of the Corinthians may be inverted: rest and not motion is the crisis for Athens in these books – not the threat of change, but the fact that things will be the same.

Conclusion

A first point that emerges clearly from the above discussion is the Thucydidean tendency to treat individual actions and figures by situating them against the ground of the political regime and the tensions it embodies.[122] Secondly, although

[120] Joho 2021, 20.
[121] Cf. the last speech of Pericles (2.61.2-4).
[122] See also Macleod 1983, 123-39; Wohl 2002; Joho 2021.

several scholars have characterised Thucydides' representation of political regimes in terms of the erotic forces that they harness and channel, I have argued that the ones represented in Book 6 incorporate a suppressed but fundamental paranoia.[123] If erotic unity is what they project outwards and aspire to, paranoia results from the inherent necessity of boundaries: between tyrant and subject, between citizens. As systems and ideologies tend to develop in time, or come to be inhabited by different figures, their initial contradictions become increasingly apparent. For Thucydides, actions that may appear individually irrational are often rational in the sense that they are natural consequences of a given situational structure. Conversely, ostensibly reasoned actions are in truth derived from collective political passions. For Thucydides, political systems are organised pathologies, and it is only ever in a certain sense that an individual agent is the one who performs a political act.[124]

This brings us inevitably to the question of how Thucydides might have perceived the general merits and disadvantages each of the main political systems, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy – a question often posed by asking, which one did he support? A crucial point is that throughout the *Peloponnesian War* Thucydides places little emphasis on institutions or constitutions, and sometimes directly intervenes in the narrative to point out where the constitutional form of Athenian politics is different from its reality (e.g. 2.65.7, 8.65-6, 8.92.11).[125] What we have seen in this case is that rather than highlighting

[123] See for example Monoson 2000 64-87; Ludwig 2002; Wohl 2002.

[124] This is in contrast with Ferrario's discussion of historical agency in Thucydides (2014, 106-44) where agency is imagined to be something that could only belong either to an individual or a group (conceived as a mass of individuals). Ferrario approaches my claim here when she speaks of the text's (120) "delicate negotiation between individual and group historical agency," implying that the relation between the two is mediated by a third principle. Cf. Gribble on Alcibiades (1999, 204): "The qualities he displays are not those of the great man who exercises a decisive influence on history, but rather those of the man who influences historical events in a way not foreseen or intended by himself."

[125] Cf. Macleod 1983, 129: "he represents constitutions and their ideologies as the instruments or playthings of greed and of circumstances, as part of the war and its workings on human nature."

fundamental contrasts between the Peisistratid tyranny and fifth-century democracy in Athens, and without being insensitive to their structural differences, Thucydides emphasises continuity. In the *Republic* Plato represents tyranny and democracy as very proximate systems (*Rep.* 563e-564a), and Thucydides himself says that under Pericles the Athenian democracy was a monarchy in practice (2.65.10). In his description of *stasis* at Corcyra he says that both the democratic and oligarchic sides fought under "a nice-sounding label, for the sake of the political equality of the masses or an aristocracy of sensible government" (3.82.8: οἱ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι προστάντες μετὰ ὀνόματος ἑκάτεροι εὐπρεποῦς, πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς καὶ ἀριστοκρατίας σώφρονος προτιμήσει). The thrust of 3.82.8 is to draw an equivalence between both sides based on their actions.

If tyranny and democracy are alike, the missing third element is oligarchy; Thucydides' social background, combined with several direct statements in praise of Spartan and Chian government (1.18.1, 8.24.4-5, 4.74.4), as well has his many and varied criticisms of Athenian democratic society (see e.g. above) would suggest oligarchic tendencies.[126] But just as to conceive Thucydides as an anti-democrat is "too limiting," as Saxonhouse has claimed, any notion of an oligarchic Thucydides must be strongly qualified.[127] The failure of the new Spartan colony at Heracleia is due in no small part to the rulers' fear of the many and the poor decisions that resulted (3.93.2). But the fullest treatment of oligarchy

[126] Thucydides notes when cities have had a stable government without *stasis* for a long time (see Connor 1984, 229n38). It is clear he views this as desirable, but not necessarily more so than other things (contrast his praise of Sparta at 1.18.1 and 8.24.4-5 with his criticism at 8.96.5). If "what [Thucydides] approved of was set-ups which avoided *stasis*" as Hornblower claims (3.1036), the idea that *stasis* is an inherent force in the city may have something to do with the half-heartedness of his political prescriptions. It should be remembered that in the Archaeology *both* Athens *and* Sparta are presented as stable in this way (1.2.5-6, 1.18.1). On Spartan/oligarchic decision-making, Raaflaub (2006, 217-20) notes that in Book 1 the Spartans ignore the wise Archidamus and take advice from the bloodthirsty Sthenelaidas.

[127] Saxonhouse 1995, 86. On Athens in Book 8 Connor (1984, 221-30) is particularly good. Cf. 221: "the criticism of oligarchy is inescapable, and cleverly executed." On this episode see the recent monograph Canfora 2021. For a summary of events see Shear 2011, 23-5.

is in Book 8. Connor argues that there oligarchy is represented first as a promise of something better, a resolution of issues plaguing the democratic regime; but it turns out only to intensify these problems and add new ones: the narrative is an arc.[128] The regime of the four hundred takes power in Athens via a false promise of Persian support (8.53), and clandestine murders creating an atmosphere of terror and mutual distrust among the citizens (8.65.2-66.5, cf. 8.92.11).[129] The change is characterised as a serious mistake by the Athenian general Phrynichos (8.48.4-7; for self-interested reasons he later joins the oligarchs until he is assassinated: 8.68.3, 8.92.2), since it will end up introducing *stasis* rather than oligarchy (it does – cf. 8.96.2) and causing Athenian-controlled cities to revolt (it does – 8.64.3-5). Throughout this sequence, the sailors on Samos, who break away from the city and install their own democratic regime, are depicted as an unruly and passionate mass easily manipulated (e.g. 8.74-5.1, 8.82.1, 8.86.2, 8.86.4).[130] At length Thucydides emphasises the considerable talent and ruthlessness of the oligarchs, which enabled them to succeed; he also stresses the loss of freedom for the Athenians (8.68.1-4).[131] Unlike the Peisitratids, whose shrewd gentle touch he praised, the oligarchs substantially overhaul many aspects of the society (8.70.1). Their downfall comes in no small part from their internal struggle for supremacy, a tendency "by which indeed most of all an oligarchy that emerges from a democracy is destroyed" (8.89.3: ἐν ᾧπερ καὶ μάλιστα ὀλιγαρχία ἐκ

[128] Connor 1984, 210-30.

[129] Connor (1984, 223, see esp. n27 and n28) emphasises the parallels with other "moments of political extremism in Athens" discussed in this chapter – the tyranny of Hippias after Hipparchus' murder, and the democracy after the mutilation of the herms.

[130] On implicit criticisms of democratic deliberation see Yunis 1996, 59-116 (esp. 87-116). On crowds and the masses in Thucydides see Hunter 1988 (26: "A negative picture? Yes, entirely"); Visvardi 2015 (esp. 44-93). *Pace* Saïd 2013, who perceives a more positive representation. Taylor 2002 emphasises the complicity of the Athenian *dēmos* in Book 8 in giving away their own freedom to the oligarchs. But the latter is best explained as shrewd psychological analysis rather than condemnation (see Canfora 2021, 47).

[131] For Connor (1984, 224-5) the praise is very qualified while the reference to Athenian freedom is a *pathos* statement. See also McCoy 1973 on the prominent but little discussed figure of Peisander.

δημοκρατίας γενομένη ἀπόλλυται).[132] Connor hears the echoes of Thucydides' earlier description of Athenian life after Pericles (2.65.11), which suggests that oligarchy in fact intensifies the earlier problem of the democracy under figures like Cleon, Demosthenes and Alcibiades.[133] "Nowhere," writes Connor, "in the account are we encouraged to admire or even to sympathize with the oligarchic regime."[134]

After tumultuous events in Athens and the Piraeus, including the loss of Euboea, the Athenians replace the regime of 400 with one of 5,000. Thucydides remarks (8.97.2):

> καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα δὴ τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ Ἀθηναῖοι φαίνονται εὖ πολιτεύσαντες· μετρία γὰρ ἥ τε ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ξύγκρασις ἐγένετο καὶ ἐκ πονηρῶν τῶν πραγμάτων γενομένων τοῦτο πρῶτον ἀνήνεγκε τὴν πόλιν.
>
> And for the first period the Athenians clearly organised their politics by a means not inferior to any of those in my lifetime: there was moderacy with a combination of both the few and the many, and from a situation where things had become dire it was the first[135] thing that righted the city.

Thucydides goes on to describe the regime's sound decisions including the recall of Alcibiades and efforts to repair relations with the democrats on Samos (8.97.2-3). Book 8 cuts off, unfinished, before we get Thucydides' description of the regime's trajectory and downfall. The passage has been much debated as the

[132] Thucydides here is observing how a "characteristic weakness of oligarchy" is particularly intense in those which arise from democracies (Macleod 1983, 129 – see especially the sources he cites, n43, which show that the competitiveness of oligarchies was a common idea in Greek political thought). His point is not "strictly limited" to this case (Hornblower 3.1011; cf. 1987, 161) since it does not exclude others and may be taken to imply them – directly if μάλιστα modifies ὀλιγαρχία rather than ἐν ᾧπερ, indirectly if not.
[133] Connor 1984, 226.
[134] *Ibid.* 224. Cf. Shear on Phyrnichus (2011, 26-7): "[He] does not come off well in Thucydides' narrative."
[135] I take this to be proleptic to the Athenian victory at Cynos Sema (cf. 8.106.5).

extent of the praise and its relation to other episodes is unclear.[136] The Greek is also very ambiguous. "It is remarkable," writes Hornblower, "that excellent scholars of Greek, and excellent historians, can disagree so markedly as to how to take this passage."[137] Semantically the translation of τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον is controversial and much debated – 'for the first time' or 'during the first period [of the regime]?' The former would mean much stronger praise. Philologically the evidence weighs toward the latter translation (given above).[138] But the former seems more intuitive at first glance, maybe even in Greek. Hornblower writes: "It is surely impossible (…) not to take the immediately juxtaposed elements τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον and ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ together."[139]

Perhaps, in a sentence where the main verb is φαίνονται ("show" but also sometimes to seem), a range of meanings should be given force, which would reflect how appearances shifted in the course of time.[140] In Chapter 3 I showed that Thucydides tends at crucial moments to express his ideas formally by shaping the reader's experience to conform with his message. In this passage the wide scope of praise may come to seem narrower on closer reading and based on subsequent events. The text cuts off before these events can take place.[141] But even

[136] Donini 1966 is a book devoted to the subject. See also Canfora's 2021 monograph on the Book 8 oligarchic revolution as a whole.
[137] Hornblower (3.1036).
[138] See Donini 1969, 4-7; Andrewes in Gomme, 5.331-40 (the issues have not changed). Most recently George (2012, 69-70) has argued for the translation printed on the basis that χρόνον must be a duration and cannot be like the French *fois* or Italian *volta* (thus also Donini, and cf. Classen/Steup *ad loc.*). For the first time' may seem more intuitive at first glance, but the philological point has not been refuted by its proponents. This throws up the question of what to do with ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ – Hornblower is wrong that this question is "fatal" (3.1035), and Donini's explanation is satisfactory (1969, 5-7) that it relates to the comparative force of οὐχ ἥκιστα δὴ (he notes the emphatic particle).
[139] Hornblower (3.1033). Connor likewise interprets based on intuition (1984, 228n34), while stressing the peculiarity of the phrasing. A solid point on this side is the fact that the regime's duration was so short (cf. Andrewes in Gomme 5.333), which raises the question of which period Thucydides would have been referring to.
[140] Hornblower in fact speculates that 8.97 may be an example of (3.1036) "deliberate 'polyinterpretability'."
[141] The fall of the 5,000 is referenced in the *Athenaiōn Politeia* ([*Ath. Pol.*] 34.1). The openness of this narrative thread is one reason why the text is clearly unfinished in my view (which does not mean Book 8 was a rough draft).

from the narrative itself we know that the idea of a regime of 5,000 began as a smokescreen behind which the 400 took power (8.65.3-66.1, 8.67.3), then the call for a real decision-making body of 5,000 became a way for members of the 400 to try and usurp power from the others (8.89.2-3), along with those as yet unprepared to show their true intention of restoring the democracy (8.92.11). When this call succeeds and the 5,000 overthrow the 400 leaders of the latter abandon the city and attempt to join its enemies (8.98). The benefits and good decisions described by Thucydides may be real, but perhaps ultimately ephemeral, like the revived Athenian confidence in victory after the naval battle of Cynos Sema (8.106.5).

The passage at 8.97 may thus stylistically enacts a trajectory from admiration to disenchantment that resembles the general treatment of oligarchy in Book 8 as described by Connor.[142] It carefully echoes the praise of Pericles' monarchic democracy (2.65.5: μετρίως, φαίνεται/8.97.2: φαίνονται, μετρία), which Connor has argued is double-edged.[143] In both cases, it seems, the city was governed not by one or the other of democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny, but a mix. With the latter, at 8.97 we seem to arrive at a theoretical point about the wisdom of the Athenians' mixed constitution.[144] Given the *stasis*-conflict from which this constitutional arrangement arises, and in which it will be eroded, its treatment as an ideal compromise has a very ironic flavour. The government of the 5,000 is not so much a golden mean as one of the internal convulsions by which, according

[142] On "stylistic enactment" see Hornblower 3.36, 551-3 (and n above).

[143] See n132 above. A significant dilemma posed by 8.97.2 for interpreters has been that of how to reconcile Thucydides' superlative praise with his opinion of Pericles. The apparent contradiction results from an unnuanced view that Thucydides made a positive 'judgement' about Pericles. See also Pontier (2013, 357-60) on the "cautious" litotes of the phrase οὐχ ἥκιστα at 8.97.

[144] Canfora (2021, 43): "We depart from the concrete situation" ("*Partiamo dalla situazione concreta*"). See Hornblower (3.1035) on the theory of the mixed constitution in antiquity after Thucydides, Connor (1984, 229) on medical and sympotic connotations. The participle πολιτεύσαντες implies a reference to constitutional arrangement that progresses naturally in 8.97 to a description of the regime's general conduct (see Andrewes in Gomme, 5.331). Donini (1969, 8-12) is more forceful claiming its sense is not to do with constitutional arrangement.

to Thucydides (2.65.12), Athens lost the war. Here with the 5,000, no less than with Pericles or the Peisistratids, it is at a moment of praise that Thucydides reveals himself most "alive to paradox."[145]

In general, therefore, Thucydides' thought is not grounded in the constitutional frameworks of his contemporaries (e.g. Hdt. 3.80-3), but a survey of the political patterns and problems that he brings to bear and uses to judge all systems more or less inadequate.[146] The perspective of Thucydides is clearly that of an elite citizen rather than someone of the lower classes.[147] From a sociological perspective, the foundations of this viewpoint probably have something to do with Thucydides' own experience and his place in society, as I discussed at the beginning of the first chapter. We should pay less attention to their answer to a given question than to what can be learned from how they arrive there. In modern times perhaps it has been a Cold War tendency to define politics and political entities primarily in terms of constitutional arrangements rather than to consider the actual substance and distribution of power more closely.[148] The insistence on categorical distinctions may also have something to do with the tendency of 'modern mythmaking' about Athenian democracy, which pervades in scholarship as elsewhere.[149] In one of his seminars on Thucydides, Castoriadis insists that we should understand politics in terms "not of municipal elections (…) but of the whole institution of society, without a restriction of principle."[150]

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[145] Rood 1998A, 267

[146] Raaflaub's writes (2006, 222): "it is precisely the extreme challenges that reveal the true quality of a person or a constitution. Both radical democracy and radical oligarchy failed this test." To this list perhaps also 'moderate' should be appended.

[147] Cf. Canfora (2021, 52). The 'mixed' constitutional system he praises at 8.97.1 is hard to interpret as anything but elitist in fact (de Ste. Croix 1956 thinks it was radically democratic – but see in reply Andrewes in Gomme, 5.323-8; Hornblower, 3.1033-6).

[148] See Connor (1984, 3-7) with admirable candour on how political events in the 1950s and 1960s shaped his interpretation of Thucydides. See also my remarks elsewhere (O'Sullivan 2024A, 56n18) on Jacqueline de Romilly.

[149] See Saxonhouse 1995.

[150] Castoriadis 2011, 28: "*non pas des élections municipals* (…) *mais de l'institution totale de la société, sans restriction de principe*."

The treatment by Thucydides of historical events such as the murder of Hipparchus (including its subsequent place in Athenian historical memory), may be compared with the Maussian concept of 'total social facts:' objects of study through which the entire assemblage of political and social relations, and their mutual dependence, comes into focus.[151]

[151] Mauss 1990, 100-1. Compare Cassin's claim (1995, 162) that Antiphon writes neither as an oligarch nor a democrat, but as someone concerned with showing what conditions either regime, and more generally how formal and institutional politics ("*la politique*") are inscribed within transcendent divisions and forces of the community ("*le politique*").

6. The Sociology of Virtue

> *'ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις, καὶ οὐ τείχη οὐδὲ νῆες ἀνδρῶν κεναί.'*
>
> *'Men are the city, and not walls or ships emptied of men.'*
>
> Thuc. 7.77.7.

In Chapter 4 we saw how any single definition of Athens in the text, and by extension of the *polis* as such, comes under pressure. But one important definition of the ancient *polis*, offered by Nikias above, is that it is a community of men, specifically of male fighters. Immerwahr calls this remark "the height of absurdity," although the idea would probably have been a familiar one and there are a good few poetic precedents.[1] Nikias says that to survive in extreme circumstances the army must "become good men" (7.77.7: ἀνδράσιν ἀγαθοῖς),[2] and the Athenians especially must hope to "right their city's great power which has fallen" (7.77.7: τὴν μεγάλην δύναμιν τῆς πόλεως καίπερ πεπτωκυῖαν ἐπανορθώσοντες).[3] Earlier in the speech Nikias says (7.77.4):

> ὁρῶντες ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς οἵοι ὁπλῖται ἅμα καὶ ὅσοι ξυντεταγμένοι χωρεῖτε μὴ καταπέπληχθε ἄγαν, λογίζεσθε δὲ ὅτι αὐτοί τε πόλις εὐθύς ἐστε ὅποι ἂν καθέζησθε καὶ ἄλλη οὐδεμία ὑμᾶς τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ οὔτ' ἂν ἐπιόντας δέξαιτο ῥᾳδίως οὔτ' ἂν ἱδρυθέντας που ἐξαναστήσειεν.
>
> So look at yourselves – what manner of hoplites you are, and how many of you are going together in formation – and do not be too much paralysed by terror: think about how you are yourselves a city wherever you set

[1] Immerwahr 1973, 31. See also Croally 1994, 168; Allison 2005, 10-11. On Greek definitions and understandings of the *polis* see Hansen 1998. Hornblower stresses that Thucydides "is deploying extravagant rhetoric in an extreme situation" and "is not offering a definition or 'diagnostic' criterion for *polis* status" (3.720). But the idea's implications go beyond its immediate rhetorical context and Nikias' point interacts with other parts of the text, as I show. Extreme situations do not make false the things people say in them, though very often when words are calculated for emotional impact they shed light on aspects of the prevailing ideology.

[2] Like those remembered in the Funeral Oration (2.35.1).

[3] Another echo of Pericles' Funeral Oration (2.43.1), and last speech (2.64.2).

> down, and no other city in Sicily could easily take an attack from you nor remove you wherever you set down.

With admirable clarity this passage sweeps away all geographic and material notions of the city and conceives it simply as a community that springs up where fighting men settle (and in this regard echoes the Sikelika at the start of Book 6 (6.2-5)). The truth of what Nikias says, both of the city's power and its real composition, is challenged or at least strongly qualified by events following the disaster at Sicily, as the Athenians manage to survive and even challenge the Spartans once more (8.106.5).[4] The city's money (8.1.3, 8.15.1), naval supremacy (8.1.3, 8.106.2), and sovereign position over other states (8.4) play no small part in its survival. But Nikias' remark may lead us to formulate a different challenge around the question of who and what composes the ancient city. Athens' walls were hurriedly constructed, not just by men, but also by women and children (1.90.3). Obviously, Nikias' statement is ideological in the pejorative sense, made in tough circumstances alongside other discreditably ideological appeals to hope and the Gods (7.77.2-4).[5] But the ideology of hoplite greatness and male soldier supremacy depends on the basic fact that warfare between men was central to life within and between Greek *poleis* in a way that cut across ethnic and political divides.

I will argue in this chapter that Thucydides can be read (perhaps surprisingly) as someone who perceives and thinks about this truth of the ancient Greek city: that is, about the virtues derived from war as contingent results of historical forces, often of dubious worth for oneself and the community. His narrative challenges the ideology of Greek warrior masculinity on multiple levels, and makes its values appear contingent upon the historical and political structure of the Greek

[4] Arguably it also goes against the grain of Nikias' own actions in Book 7: see Hornblower 2011, 226-49.
[5] See also 7.69.2 (quoted and discussed on pp. 287-8ff.).

city that they produce and are produced by (cf. 1.5.1-2). I start by focussing on two passages: the massacre of the Athenians in Aetolia (3.94), and the image of the Peloponnesian army before a battle against the Argives that was scuppered by diplomacy (5.60.3). What is at stake in both passages is the figure of the hoplite. In the above quoted passage Nikias tells his men to remember "what manner of hoplites" they are. Despite disagreements, what is clear from the scholarship on Greek sexuality is that the figure of the hoplite incorporates *both* male desire *and* identity: the beauty and ethical standards of the hoplite are continuous.[6] The hoplite is both beautiful and good, *kalos kai agathos*. Thucydides, whom one scholar has described as "resolutely unsexy," is sometimes read as if completely detached from this phenomenon.[7] But here I will show that the hoplite's desire and desirability are an important theme of his text. Thucydides takes this desire seriously and sympathetically, but also deconstructs it in ways that reflect his broader portrayal of society and social institutions. This is particularly so during the middle books of the war, and it is these which provide the primary passages for the discussion that follows. I argue that he thus represents the *polis* as such as an entity organised politically and culturally around the perfection and reproduction of this defective and even harmful figure. The *Peloponnesian War* thus carries a reflection on both the contingency and inadequacy of goodness in the form in which it was understood by the mainstream *polis* culture. This might be expected lead us to a familiar view of Thucydides as someone who prizes intelligence above all else. In fact, as I show in the conclusion with an analysis of the *stasis* sequence, Thucydides is dismissive

[6] Here I am influenced by the classic scholarly works on Athenian pederasty: Dover 1978; Foucault 1990; Halperin 1990 (and the essays in Halperin ed. 1990); Winkler 1990B, 45-70.

[7] Compare Loraux (2000, 79): "love – the word, and even more the phenomenon – is remarkably absent from the Thucydidean historical universe."

of intelligence on its own. He contrasts it, not with hoplite goodness, but a different sort about which he is circumspect.

Beauty and Goodness: Hoplites

In Book 3 the Athenian *stratēgos,* Demosthenes, leads a force of Athenians and local allies to attack Leukas, an island in the Peloponnese, meeting little resistance (3.94.1-2); the Acarnanians want him to besiege the city, but instead he is convinced by the Messenians to break off fighting and cross the sea to attack Aetolia in the North (3.94.2-3).[8] The Aetolians gather strength from all around the province, and Demosthenes is too complacent: finally, in the ensuing battle, the Aetolians are able to pick off the Athenians slowly with long-ranged weapons, until the Athenian ranks break and the battle becomes a massacre (3.96.3-98.1).[9] The Athenian soldiers are pursued and attacked by the Aetolians: they fall into ditches and crevices with no way out, they do not know the land (3.98.1). Many Athenians are killed there and then during the retreat, but some get lost or end up trapped in the woods: the Aetolians set fire to the trees, and they are burned alive (3.98.2). Thucydides gives this epilogue (3.98.4):

> ἀπέθανον δὲ τῶν τε ξυμμάχων πολλοὶ καὶ αὐτῶν Ἀθηναίων ὁπλῖται περὶ εἴκοσι μάλιστα καὶ ἑκατόν. **τοσοῦτοι μὲν τὸ πλῆθος καὶ ἡλικία ἡ αὐτὴ οὗτοι βέλτιστοι δὴ ἄνδρες ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τῷδε ἐκ τῆς**

[8] On literary allusions in this episode see Finglass 2013.

[9] Connor gives a good account of how Thucydides narrates this entire episode. He gives the tactical story of the battle from start to finish and then – when he seems about to move on – he goes back for the psychological and emotional story of the massacre. Connor calls this "reprise" (2017, 219). Stahl also devotes an essay to this phenomenon in Thucydides (2013, 309-28), in which he observes it in Thucydides' treatment of the Ambraciots discussed above (325-7).

> **Ἀθηναίων πόλεως διεφθάρησαν**· ἀπέθανε δὲ καὶ ὁ ἕτερος στρατηγὸς Προκλῆς.
>
> Those who died included many of the allies and about 120 Athenian hoplites. They were that many and the same age: **truly, they were the best men out of all the Athenians who were killed in this war.** Procles, the other *stratēgos* [not Demosthenes], also died.

Second, in Book 5, there is an aborted almost-battle between the combined Peloponnesian force and the Argives before what will later be called the Battle of Mantinea. In this instance the armies meet, but at the last second the Argive leaders and the Spartan King Agis make a deal without their armies' consent. Thucydides describes the Spartans' fury at Agis, then says (5.60.3):

> **στρατόπεδον γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο κάλλιστον Ἑλληνικὸν τῶν μέχρι τοῦδε ξυνῆλθεν**· ὤφθη δὲ μάλιστα ἕως ἔτι ἦν ἁθρόον ἐν Νεμέᾳ, ἐν ᾧ Λακεδαιμόνιοί τε πανστρατιᾷ ἦσαν καὶ Ἀρκάδες καὶ Βοιωτοὶ καὶ Κορίνθιοι καὶ Σικυώνιοι καὶ Πελληνῆς καὶ Φλειάσιοι καὶ Μεγαρῆς, καὶ οὗτοι πάντες λογάδες ἀφ'ἑκάστων, ἀξιόμαχοι δοκοῦντες εἶναι οὐ τῇ Ἀργείων μόνον ξυμμαχίᾳ ἀλλὰ κἂν ἄλλῃ ἔτι προσγενομένῃ.
>
> **Because truly this [Peloponnesian force] was the most beautiful Greek army ever assembled up to that time:** it looked best while still assembled in Nemea where the Spartans were in full force as well as the Arcadians, Boeotians, Corinthians, Sikyonians, Pellenians, Phleiasians, and Megarians, and of all these they were each the chosen men, and seemed ready to fight not only against the Argive alliance but whomever else they might meet.

The Argives, angered for their part because "they believed the Spartans had escaped, when they themselves could **never have had a finer chance** [to defeat

them]: since the battle would have been in front of their own city and with many good allies" (5.60.5: νομίζοντες κἀκεῖνοι **μὴ** ἂν σφίσι **ποτὲ κάλλιον** παρασχὸν Λακεδαιμονίους διαπεφευγέναι· πρός τε γὰρ τῇ σφετέρᾳ πόλει καὶ μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ξυμμάχων τὸν ἀγῶνα ἂν γίγνεσθαι.), are furious and stone their general Thrasylus until he seeks refuge at an altar, then they impose a fine (5.60.4). Likewise, in Book 3 the decision of Demosthenes to invade Aetolia comes after the Messenians convince him that "it would be beautiful since an army had gathered of such size to attack the Aetolians" (3.94.3: ὡς καλὸν αὐτῷ στρατιᾶς τοσαύτης ξυνειλεγμένης Αἰτωλοῖς ἐπιθέσθαι).

Although neither of these passages are in Gribble's list of narrator interventions in Thucydides, they share two things he cites as characteristic features of Thucydidean narrator intervention: superlative and anachronism.[10] In these passages we are invited to step outside the immediate narrative level and, alongside the narrator, take in the entire war. In relation to that whole, the items given have some superlative significance. Both are epitomising moments: the first is part of an epilogue; the second is from a transition from one phase of the narrative in Book 5 to the next. Numerous scholars have demonstrated that there are rules for how Thucydides "shifts gears" between layers of narrative.[11] But in each case the narrator's intervention does not draw us *out* of the passage but calls us to dwell *in* the moment it creates, with an enhanced awareness that comes from the evocation of the whole. This drawing-in is both times conveyed by a strictly speaking unnecessary demonstrative pronoun ('these people,' 'this army'), and the emphatic particle *dē* (which I translate as 'truly'), a formulation Denniston describes as "a favourite of Thucydides."[12]

[10] Gribble 1998.
[11] de Bakker 2017, 241.
[12] Denniston 1953, 207.

The few scholars who discuss these passages tend either to gloss over the superlatives or downplay them. To the first passage scholars tend to respond by looking for an objective answer to the question 'Why are *these* 120 young men the 'best' of *all* those who came from Athens in the entire war?'[13] Hunt's claim is the most convincing: these men are hoplites, in other words elites; and there is a taste of class prejudice in how these are the men Thucydides eulogises, and not, for example, the many Athenian ship's crew members who died during the war.[14] But even Hunt overlooks the emotion of the sentence, which makes his point about the avoidance of similar eulogies for naval figures question-begging.[15] Indeed, in general reading these commentators (who – it should be said – are often genial and interesting in what they write), it is hard not to feel bound by their implicit circumscription of what Thucydides must have meant by *beltistos*; or at any rate, which sorts of meaning is useful or acceptable to consider. Their comments break the usually assumed rule in Thucydides that it is the reader who must make the connections, comparing scenes and finding holes in the narrative to create the *Peloponnesian War* for themselves. Here implicitly the reader is directed to smooth out tensions in the narrative and let the narrator pass by unimpeded, thus protecting the traditional understanding of what constitutes the Thucydidean. If too much stress is placed on *beltistoi* as an expression, not just of the military prowess of these men killed, but instead or also of Thucydides' own

[13] Gomme, *Commentary* 2.408: "Either Thucydides means, very succinctly, almost silently, that these 300 [the size of the original hoplite force] had proved themselves a specially gallant body of young men (…) or there is something missing from his narrative." Rhodes (1994, 254f.) similarly concludes "[this] looks like an example of Thucydides' tendency to pile superlatives on disasters." Hornblower (1.514) comments on the passage without discussing this key word.

[14] Hunt 1998, 126. Gomme however suggests they may have belonged to the thetic class (*Commentary* 2.407), which if true would dilute the force of Hunt's claim significantly.

[15] Cf. Arrington 2015, 104 (with references at 104n47): "The conspicuous avoidance of naval imagery [in Athenian memorials] was not just a political choice rooted in class distinction. The Athenians conceived of and characterized naval warfare as dependent on regular training and acquired skill rather than fearless courage and innate virtue. (…) These were not the associations the Athenians wanted when remembering their dead. They preferred to consider everyone an elite cavalryman or a valiant hoplite who confronted death face-to-face." And see below.

(strong) personal admiration, maybe even affection – well, Thucydides might start to sound like Socrates.

Dealing with the description of the Peloponnesian army (5.60.3 above), scholars have been drawn to the word ὤφθη ('it looked or appeared') in the second line, comparing this to the spectacular launch of the Athenian fleet later against Sicily (6.30-2.2) – which is firm ground because there has been a lot of study of the politics and epistemic limits of visuality in Thucydides.[16] Dover writes: "κάλλιστον is a striking word to use, and cannot be divorced from the army's appearance (cf. Sappho 16 LP); but Thucydides, in the preceding sentence and through most of this, is concerned with its strength."[17] Dover's citation is of Sappho 16 which ostensibly may be read in opposition to the passage from Thucydides (here is the beginning):

> Ο]ἰ μὲν ἰππήων στρότον, οἰ δὲ πέσδων,
> οἰ δὲ νάων φαῖσ' ἐπ[ὶ] γᾶν μέλαι[ν]αν
> ἔ]μμεναι κάλλιστον, ἐγὼ δὲ κῆν' ὄτ-
> τω τις ἔραται
>
> Some say it is an army of horses, or men
> or ships which on the whole black earth
> is the most beautiful thing – I say: it is
> the person you love

But even the Sapphic poem complicates itself in the next verse by introducing Helen – whose beauty caused a war – collapsing the association between love and peace of its surface argument. The poem thus subverts its own initial

[16] Hornblower 3.157. On 6.31 see Jordan 2000; Kallet 2001, 21-84 (at 63 she distinguishes, wrongly I believe, between the 'positive' and 'negative' framing of beautiful appearance in these two passages); Hornblower 3.381-95. Stroud (1994, 291) thought the verb could be best explained if Thucydides was actually there at Nemea to see it.
[17] See Gomme 4.85.

distinction between the militaristic and the erotic. Ultimately Sappho gives no reason to think that one excludes the other, very much the opposite. Likewise, for Thucydides no distinction between military strength and erotic appeal should be made at once, but their precise relation must be carefully examined.

In general, *beltistos* is a common word in the *Peloponnesian War,* especially as a neuter plural, with a broad range of meanings from 'best course of action,' to 'best ships,' to 'most talented people.[18] *Kallistos* has a similar range from 'most expedient,' to 'most glorious,' to 'most spectacular.' But the correct sense of the words to the common fifth-century Greek notion of *kalokagathia*, 'goodness-beauty,' which these passages clearly evoke, especially when taken together. The stereotype is that this refers to an aristocratic concept for what makes the prettiest richest Greek men superior to all the rest. But the most important study of the expression, by Félix Bourriot in two volumes, refutes many aristocratic interpretations of the concept (particularly where the words appear individually or in adjusted form), emphasising the often primary ethical or virtue-content of the formula, and consequently stresses the need to attend to context and avoid falling back on generic definitions.[19] The term is evoked by Pericles for example in the funeral oration to praise the war dead and support his vision for Athens as a kind of democratic republic of virtue (2.42.4, 2.43.1). It is very controversial to what extent this indicates elite capture of Athenian institutions or democratic appropriation of aristocratic cultural markers.[20] Recent evidence may support either side.[21] But what is clear is that the traditional academic stereotype

[18] E.g. 2.24.2, 6.39.1, 7.19.3, 8.47.2, 8.108.4.

[19] See Bourriot 1995 (see Gomme 1953 for its use in Thucydides).

[20] Loraux 1986, 172-220; Ober 1989; Castoriadis 2011, 235-6; Lenfant 2024, 365-9. See also the next footnote.

[21] E.g. Moreno 2007 on elite control of the Athenian grain supply; Roubineau 2015 on hierarchy and exclusion in the Greek *polis* in general. Conversely, Arrington 2015; Pritchard 2018A, 2024 on how the Athenians esteemed and memorialised their proletarian naval crew. Although Hunt 1998 for example cites 3.98.4 as an example of Thucydides' class prejudice, on the basis that he eulogises hoplites and not

associating the 'hoplite' with the upper classes in opposition to the naval member of the *ochlos* is too sweeping.[22] For Thucydides the word 'hoplite' does not necessarily convey an elite soldier (cf. 8.92-3, esp. 8.92.5). Likewise, the term *kaloi kagathoi* is used and clearly marked as a political label or slogan in an indirect speech by Phrynichos where refers to the Athenian oligarchs (8.48.6).[23]

Another important aspect of *kalokagathia* in Thucydides is its clearly ironic strain.[24] But perhaps the most significant use is at the end of the Pylos narrative in Book 4, which broadly deconstructs the 'Spartan mirage' – the ancient and modern belief that Spartans were superhumanly brave and strong – and narrates the widespread disillusionment across Greece and loss of Spartan self-confidence after they are defeated at Pylos (4.40), restored only after the Battle of Mantinea (5.75.3).[25] The Pylos sequence culminates in a battle between the Athenian force and some Spartan hoplites besieged on the tiny island of Sphakteria. Demosthenes, now redeemed following success in Amphilochia (3.114.1), and integral to the early part of the Pylos narrative (4.3-14), plans to lead the Athenian force onto the island to capture the Spartan hoplites who are trapped there. He is cautious: the island is wooded, and the Spartans will know it much better, so they will be able to attack from better positions and hide in the woods. "Following the disaster in Aetolia," writes Thucydides, "which was partly because of the woods, these were not small concerns for him" (4.30.1: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Αἰτωλικοῦ πάθους, ὃ διὰ τὴν ὕλην μέρος τι ἐγένετο, οὐχ ἥκιστα αὐτὸν ταῦτα ἐσήει).[26] The problem

members of the Athenian navy, it should be borne in mind that remembering hoplites and praising their *kalokagathia* is neither inherently aristocratic nor democratic in Thucydides' text, nor are such labels exhaustive of their sense.

[22] See e.g. Finley 1942, 89-91.

[23] Bourriot 1995, 1.114f., 1.178-88.

[24] Compare de Bakker 2015, who argues that to be *agathos* in Herodotus is represented as an insufficient and sometimes harmful personal quality unless tempered and supplemented by other virtues.

[25] On the 'Spartan mirage' in Thucydides and beyond see Cartledge and Debnar 2006, 584-7.

[26] Furthermore, during the initial landing on Sphakteria at night (4.32.1), the Athenians kill the Spartan guards in their beds, which recalls the second massacre of the Ambraciots (discussed in Chapter 3, pp. 143-5).

disappears as most of the woods are burned down by accident (4.30.2-3). Then Kleon arrives with reinforcements and the Athenian side attacks – the Spartan hoplites are surrounded and harassed by ranged weapons: "bows, javelins, rocks, slings" (4.32.4: τοξεύμασι καὶ ἀκοντίοις καὶ λίθοις καὶ σφενδόναις), they cannot get close enough to attack (4.33); the soldiers on the Athenian side become increasingly bold, the Spartan hoplites increasingly panicked, being unused to this kind of battle (4.34); the Spartans end up cornered on an edge of the island (4.35), where some Messenians climb up behind them and, surrounded, after being allowed to consult those back in Sparta, the hoplites surrender (4.36-8). A common interpretation sees the Pylos episode and the massacre in Aetolia together as an expression of how Demosthenes learned from his mistakes.[27] Some even go as far as saying that Demosthenes behaves like an ideal reader of Thucydides, drawing lessons from the past to make good changes in the future – and lessons like this are a central point of the *Peloponnesian War,* a hope its author dangles in front of the reader, and a justification for reading the text full-stop.[28] But direct mention of Aetolia notwithstanding, in Pylos much greater stress is placed on the indirect comparison as both episodes depict the thematic and ethical opposition between hoplite and ranged warfare. Liotsakis notes how the Athenian side's ranged combat "neutralises both the bravery and the techniques of the traditional hoplites."[29] Concluding the episode Thucydides writes (4.40):

> παρὰ γνώμην τε δὴ μάλιστα τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτο τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐγένετο· τοὺς γὰρ Λακεδαιμονίους οὔτε λιμῷ οὔτ᾽ ἀνάγκῃ οὐδεμιᾷ ἠξίουν τὰ ὅπλα παραδοῦναι, ἀλλὰ ἔχοντας καὶ μαχομένους

[27] Rawlings 1981, 214-5.
[28] E.g. Rhodes 2011, 20. Contrast with Stahl 2015, and with Wendt in a piece defending the idea that Thucydides was writing a manual for statesmen (2016, 155): "[Thucydides] acknowledges implicitly that only exceptional individuals are gifted enough to act as competent predictors of future developments, as visionaries of an adequate political strategy."
[29] Liotsakis 2017, 69.

ὡς ἐδύναντο ἀποθνήσκειν. [2] ἀπιστοῦντές τε μὴ εἶναι τοὺς παραδόντας τοῖς τεθνεῶσιν ὁμοίους, καί τινος ἐρομένου ποτὲ ὕστερον τῶν Ἀθηναίων ξυμμάχων δι᾽ ἀχθηδόνα ἕνα τῶν ἐκ τῆς νήσου αἰχμαλώτων εἰ οἱ τεθνεῶτες αὐτῶν **καλοὶ κἀγαθοί**, ἀπεκρίνατο αὐτῷ πολλοῦ ἂν ἄξιον εἶναι τὸν ἄτρακτον, λέγων τὸν οἰστόν, εἰ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς διεγίγνωσκε, δήλωσιν ποιούμενος ὅτι ὁ ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς τε λίθοις καὶ τοξεύμασι διεφθείρετο.

This was the most surprising thing that happened in the whole war as far as the Greeks were concerned: they did not expect the Spartans to give up their weapons, not even if they were starving, nor compelled in any other way. They held onto them and fought as much as possible to the death. [2] They could not believe those who had surrendered them were the same sort of people as those killed. Later, when an Athenian ally mocked one of those who had been taken prisoner, asking if it was only those killed who were **good and beautiful**, in response he said it would be an amazing *atraktos* (which means arrow) that could pick out the good people, which was his way of saying those killed were just the ones who happened to be struck by the stones and arrows.

Atraktos, 'spindle,' has feminine connotations and is probably intended to be derogatory.[30] But, in this case it is the chauvinistic Spartan whose hoplite mode of warfare has turned out to be inadequate and unrealistic, even fatal, as it does continually throughout the text. Thucydides narrates the shock among Greeks generally, and collapse of Spartan confidence, as their reputation for extraordinary strength, discipline, and military effectiveness turns out to be

[30] Hornblower 2.196 (cf. Gomme 1953, 68).

something of a bluff (4.40.1, 4.55).[31] The Spartan veteran's reply makes patent what was latent in the massacre at Aetolia: hoplites are ideal men whose frequent defeats in the text are an emasculation, that strips their manhood of its significance, and demonstrates its contingency as an historical and social institution. In both Pylos and Aetolia this is demonstrated by archery specifically. Rood has written that an important theme of the middle books is how "the shove of hoplite against hoplite, and reliance on mere strength of numbers, begin to seem strangely outmoded."[32] But this is not quite right. In both Aetolia and Pylos, it is the latter – hardly a technological innovation, and even associated with the backwardness of Aetolia where people live in unwalled communities and eat uncooked food (cf. 3.94.4-5)[33] – that both defeats the hoplites and presents a challenge to their system of virtue. Ranged warfare is as old a variety of warfare as can be. Rood's remark is against the backdrop of the Archaeology's opposition between land army and naval power (cf. 1.18.2), but the conflict on land emphasises the opposition between close and ranged warfare. In this way the hoplites are assaulted, so to speak, by the future of ships and navies *and* by the past with slings and bows.

Tragedy and Anōmalia

This tension between a deeply felt sense of beauty and goodness, on the one hand, and a dialectic of strategy and destruction on the other, is a supported by a tragic narrative mode that Thucydides develops with his characteristic

[31] Greenwood (2021, 5-6) notes that this happens even during the battle of Sphakteria itself as the Athenians gradually become more emboldened (cf. 4.34).

[32] Rood 1998A, 9. See also Sears (2024, 100-41) on the dismissive Athenian response to Spartan military virtue ethics.

[33] Connor (1984, 107) has observed that the latter part of Book 3, the sixth year of the war, is broadly characterised by thematic time-travel into the past. The Thracians who commit the massacre at Mykalessos are peltasts (7.27.1).

technique of *anōmalia* (what follows in that sense provides further support to the claims in Chapters 1 and 3).[34] The deaths of the Athenians in Aetolia were not random in that they were caused in an important sense by the blunders of Demosthenes. But in another way, they exemplify a Thucydidean awareness of meaninglessness and futility: they have died in vain and are forgotten, so that now their personal qualities are irrelevant. They are dead. Apart from the reference to their number and age (presumably the prime of life), and their masculinity (which I will return to) we do not know anything specific about these men nor why they were so important to Thucydides. Our author's date of birth, Canfora has argued, was likely before 455BCE (because Thucydides was very likely over 30 while an Athenian *stratēgos*).[35] If it was close to 455, that would make Thucydides roughly the same age as some of those killed. He could have known them – why not? If we ourselves know nothing, it is because the passage says so little. The phrase *beltistoi andres,* both pause and epilogue, lingers over a silence, a place with 'something missing' – and readers may feel tempted to supply other details for themselves, whether speculatively or circumspectly. But this does not close the gap. What ignites the passage is the sense of friction between a highly emotive and brief phrase describing the hoplites, and a deliberate and self-conscious act of distancing Thucydides performs in the

[34] There is a twisted irony, for example, in how Demosthenes' last fight is lost the same way – encircled and pursued by the Syracusans, the Athenians are picked off with ranged weapons until they surrender (7.81.4-82.1). He tries to keep the soldiers organised in a battle arrangement, but the Syracusans surround them and trap them on a piece of ground with a wall, some trees, a road on either side, and attack them from all sides with missiles (7.81.4). Thucydides remarks that the Syracusans were sensible (7.81.5: εἰκότως), to use ranged warfare instead of close combat, since victory was inevitable and there was no point risking their lives. See Allison (2005, 9-10) on the Homeric flourish with which this passage creates a sense of inevitability and *pathos.* If Demosthenes' use in Pylos of the tactic that defeated him in Aetolia is meant to indicate some sort of pedagogic approach to political and military affairs in the text, then one of its lessons must be the narrowness of that sort of pedagogy.

[35] Canfora 2006, 3. His reason is that Thucydides' own account at 1.1.1 implies his political judgement was mature from the beginning of the war. However, at 5.26.5 where he refers directly to his age at the beginning of the war, he says only that he was "old enough to perceive it" (αἰσθανόμενός τε τῇ ἡλικίᾳ), which could mean a lot of things. In other words, there is simply not enough evidence to form a clear judgement on when Thucydides was born. See also the entry for these words in Hornblower's commentary (3.50).

narrative voice: it is a play of tension between narrative voice and narrative silence, reproducing the tension between individual life or suffering and death. The description conveys a sense of lost vividness.

It may be objected that nowhere does Thucydides give any sense of the soldiers as unique entities with individual characters and social ties. Thucydides does not name the dead: he only names the *stratēgos*, Procles, who may or may not be included among the *beltistoi andres*. In the *Iliad,* deaths are frequently portrayed for example like that of Simoeisios: we learn the story of how his mother gave birth to him and her subsequent grief is foreshadowed (*Il.* 4.473-9).[36] Thucydides offers no such personal or family histories – although he does do something similar to Homer at a larger scale, in his capsule biographies of cities, as I discuss in another chapter. But even in the massacre of Aetolia his narrative does elaborate on the ways people run away and die with a sense of vividness that conveys something of their experience (3.98.1-3). The personal life of individuals is represented, not as a capsule-biography or carefully chosen detail, but as a rush of experience and a gap of silence in the narrative itself.

Many scholars agree that in general Thucydides' narrative is an effect of what Crane calls his 'minimalism:' his compositional principle of describing the world around him using the smallest possible number of elements.[37] De Romilly has shown that this principle is fundamental to understanding Thucydides' authorial method; it is where his creative and intellectual control of the work's contents is most pronounced.[38] Thucydides' narrative is mostly a shuffling around of armies and named generals, ships, walls, and speeches; numbers killed, trophies raised,

[36] On the interweaving of *pathos* and objectivity in general throughout the *Iliad* see Griffin 1980, 103-43; Holmes 2007.
[37] Crane 1996, 76. See also Connor 1984, 19: "objectivity for Thucydides was not a principle or a goal but an authorial stance."
[38] de Romilly 1956.

corpses gathered, and speeches. The first effect of this is that when something interrupts the sequence – a detail, a pause, a scene – it is filled with an unprecedented energy, as it stands, not only for itself, but implicitly for everything excluded from the narrative. The second is an effect of emphasis and, consequently, theme: it circumscribes those interruptions within a large frame of indifference. They are brief. They disappear and the narrative goes on: more ships, more walls, more trophies, more speeches – and the dead, the interruptions – and so on. Already in the discussion of the Archaeology I have remarked on Thucydides' sensitivity to what disappears, which is not only the methodological concern of a proto historian, but a thematic aspect of his portrayal of the human condition.[39] The emphasis on loss in this passage lends greater poignancy and depth to the opening sequence (1.10.1-2):[40]

> καὶ ὅτι μὲν Μυκῆναι μικρὸν ἦν, ἢ εἴ τι τῶν τότε πόλισμα νῦν μὴ ἀξιόχρεων δοκεῖ εἶναι, οὐκ ἀκριβεῖ ἄν τις σημείῳ χρώμενος ἀπιστοίη μὴ γενέσθαι τὸν στόλον τοσοῦτον ὅσον οἵ τε ποιηταὶ εἰρήκασι καὶ ὁ λόγος κατέχει. [2] Λακεδαιμονίων γὰρ εἰ ἡ πόλις ἐρημωθείη, λειφθείη δὲ τά τε ἱερὰ καὶ τῆς κατασκευῆς τὰ ἐδάφη, πολλὴν ἂν οἶμαι ἀπιστίαν τῆς δυνάμεως προελθόντος πολλοῦ χρόνου τοῖς ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸ κλέος αὐτῶν εἶναι.
>
> Indeed, the fact that Mycene was small, or if any of the settlements of that time does not now seem worthy of much, would not be a valid proof for someone to disbelieve there was a force [that invaded Troy] of the size the poets claimed and that tradition affirms. [2] Since if the city of the Spartans

[39] Greenwood (2023B, 16): "What we find in Thucydides' *History* is the complex intertwining of (a) a political logic of exemplary, "classical" failure and loss; (b) a hegemonic imperial mood; and (c) a cultural script – associated with Greek tragic thought – that binds victory and defeat in a close, circular reciprocity."

[40] Allison (1997, 134-42) analyses the language and structure of the Athens/Sparta comparison here comparing it to a Homeric simile.

> was abandoned, leaving only the shrines and foundations of buildings, I think in the course of time there would be a lot of disbelief among people who lived afterwards about the story of Sparta's power that would reach them.

But the passage also makes the point, in Crane's words, that "symbolic values are (…) unimportant and irrelevant in the calculus of power."[41] Likewise the ethical and gender values of warriors are emphasised for *pathos*, but their actual significance in war is shown to be very little. Matthieu de Bakker has claimed that in Herodotus "the phrases *andres agathoi/aristoi* often involve a death including personal glory but lacking permanent success."[42] In Aetolia the sense of personal glory is further de-emphasised, and of loss further underscored, with the effort to make readers feel the sheer abstracted vitality and desirability of these men. The phrase *beltistoi andres* carries a certain force of lament. But it is not vivid: here and throughout it is the displacement of vividness that brings the effect of tragedy.

Tragedy and Failure

But the failure of hoplites in Pylos and Aetolia is not simply tragic. It also comes down to issues of ethics and understanding. Ranged warfare is of course significant in the *Iliad,* which stresses particularly the analogy between archery and certain forms of speech. Holmes observes that "it is primarily the archer who gains his advantage by striking from outside his victim's field of vision and whose own vision is often stressed (…) like a sophistic argument, archery permits the weaker to tackle the stronger."[43] Although later, in some circles, sophistic

[41] Crane 1998, 151.
[42] de Bakker 2015, 60.
[43] Holmes 2010, 50-1.

arguments will be specifically designated this way (and already in Chapter 4 I examined representations of *logos* as a kind of force), the original analogy is even broader than this and refers to any sort of deceptive speech. Cretans, for example, were especially famous in antiquity for two things: archery and lies.[44] In Athens during the war the archers were an important part of the army, but often drawn from the lowest social ranks and looked down upon by the others.[45] As well as being deceptive or contrary to appearances, archery is a sort of violence which avoids contact.[46] It does not require the same level of risk and consequently of bravery, and may come from someone who is physically weaker and strike its target unexpectedly.[47] In Chapter 4 I highlighted how both speech and ranged weapons in the *Iliad* are compared to snowstorms (*Il.* 3.216-24, 12.154-9, 12.278-88). The effect of both ranged warfare and persuasive speech in the poem is to call into question the validity of appearances: that is why some characters are suspicious of both forms. But what makes speech even more suspicious than archery in this regard is that it calls appearances into question, not just formally as an instance of power arising from the ostensibly powerless, and violence that comes from an invisible place, but by its content, because often a speaker tells deliberate lies with an ulterior motive. Famously Achilles says that those who speak one thing and hide another in their minds are more hateful to him than the doors of Hades (9.312-3).[48] If archery exploits the limits of human perceptiveness and the body's reach in open space to attack someone unexpectedly from afar, speech (besides doing this) causes people's very perceptions to become moulded

[44] Cretan archers were often mercenaries and used composite bows. See Haft 1984 (esp. 290f.). Cf. also for example Paus. 4.8.3, Thuc. 6.43. Lies include the famous paradox of Epimenides (a Cretan who supposedly once wrote that all Cretans are liars), a commonplace to which Callimachus refers at the start of his hymn (Callim. *Hymns* 1.8-9). The actual cause that provokes this statement about Cretans, by both Callimachus and allegedly Epimenides, is that they deny the immortality of Zeus.

[45] Pritchard 2018B.

[46] Calasso (2021, 53): "The arrow eliminates physical contact. The virginity of Artemis: the avoidance of contact. The place where things do not touch – the mind – becomes supreme."

[47] Pritchard 2018B, 93-6.

[48] Stanford (1963, 18) interprets this as a veiled attack on Odysseus.

by the speaker's words, which might be false. The notion of speech as a kind of power is a theme in the text, and is expressed for example by Diodotus in his speech to the Athenian assembly (3.42.2):

> τούς τε λόγους ὅστις διαμάχεται μὴ διδασκάλους τῶν πραγμάτων γίγνεσθαι, ἢ ἀξύνετός ἐστιν ἢ ἰδίᾳ τι αὐτῷ διαφέρει· ἀξύνετος μέν, εἰ ἄλλῳ τινὶ ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος **δυνατὸν** εἶναι καὶ μὴ ἐμφανοῦς φράσαι, διαφέρει δ᾽ αὐτῷ, εἰ βουλόμενός τι αἰσχρὸν πεῖσαι εὖ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἂν ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μὴ καλοῦ δύνασθαι, εὖ δὲ διαβαλὼν ἐκπλῆξαι ἂν τούς τε ἀντεροῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀκουσομένους.
>
> Anyone who contends that words [*logoi*] are not teachers of the truth of things is either stupid or has some ulterior motive: they are stupid if they think in some other way it is possible to consider the future and what is not visible; they have an ulterior motive, if they want to convince people of something disgraceful, and believe that they could not argue it well, because it has no merit, but they might be able to cast enough aspersions to stultify other speakers and listeners.

For Diodotus, there are two kinds of *logos:* one that seeks to explain and convince, another that tries to distract and deceive.[49] But my point is about what encompasses these both. Diodotus makes clear that the faculty of *logos* is a part of the ordinary [human] way of being in the world: it is a thread that joins the future to the present, so that from within the latter people can shape the former; it is a way of expressing the invisible, which could mean anything from the contents of the past and future to the forms of overarching principles or laws to speculations of motive or probability. *Logos* is a way of traversing the invisible and changing appearances by investing them with what is not there. The

[49] A scholarly debate takes up the question of whether Diodotus' own is the former or the latter kind: see e.g. Debnar 2000; Manuwald 2009; González 2021.

adjective in bold, which I translate as 'have control,' is also in its various forms the key term in Thucydides that means 'power,' often in the hardest material sense of the word.[50] *Logos* is a variety of power. Here and elsewhere, Thucydides presses the Homeric understanding of speech's power (i.e. its distinct but complementary representations in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) into something broader-reaching. To take with full seriousness the power of speech is to hang a question-mark over one's entire sense of reality. It is simply not good enough either to equate reality with appearances or to distinguish them altogether. Our (human) understanding of reality is always discursive (i.e. it is an *account* of reality). Equally, therefore, to treat all discourse as merely instances of power is also implicitly to threaten the validity of any individual discursive account. As a result, any account of a phenomenon that aims at establishing a true representation of it (and/or of convincing the audience that this representation is true), always risks being exposed as merely the expression of either the speaker's or someone else's will.

In this regard the beauty and ethical standard of *kalokagathia,* and the implicit understanding of warfare on which it is based, are shown to be entirely inadequate for the war in which the text's combatants find themselves, and probably for any war. Thematically both archery and *logos* introduce concerns that directly bear on the passages with which this discussion began. One is the unreliability of appearances and the danger of believing in them too strongly, since these may be deceptive or simply wrong. But this is not simply a warning: very often an appearance *has a force,* like archery – a force of appearance – that directs the recipient of the appearance to behave in a certain manner. Appearance has power no less than ships and swords have power. Equally, in the *Iliad* a

[50] Allison 1989 provides a book-length study of the word in Thucydides emphasising a sense of raw materialism.

significant kind of force is the seductiveness of personal beauty (cf. *Il.* 1.500-1, 3.156-60, 14.313-28).[51] Characters in the poem want to possess and enjoy the beautiful, which means that beautiful people (particularly women), often become passive victims of violence from those whom they attract. But sometimes beauty can distract, draw favour, or ease resentment from those towards whom it is directed. It can be powerful. A force of beauty is at work likewise in the passage about the Spartan army (5.60.3), which I will quote again:

> **στρατόπεδον γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο κάλλιστον Ἑλληνικὸν τῶν μέχρι τοῦδε ξυνῆλθεν·** ὤφθη δὲ μάλιστα ἕως ἔτι ἦν ἁθρόον ἐν Νεμέᾳ, ἐν ᾧ Λακεδαιμόνιοί τε πανστρατιᾷ ἦσαν καὶ Ἀρκάδες καὶ Βοιωτοὶ καὶ Κορίνθιοι καὶ Σικυώνιοι καὶ Πελληνῆς καὶ Φλειάσιοι καὶ Μεγαρῆς, καὶ οὗτοι πάντες λογάδες ἀφ' ἑκάστων, ἀξιόμαχοι δοκοῦντες εἶναι οὐ τῇ Ἀργείων μόνον ξυμμαχίᾳ ἀλλὰ κἂν ἄλλῃ ἔτι προσγενομένῃ.
>
> **Because truly this [Peloponnesian force] was the most beautiful Greek army ever assembled up to that time:** it looked best while still assembled in Nemea where the Spartans were in full force as well as the Arcadians, Boeotians, Corinthians, Sikyonians, Pellenians, Phleiasians, and Megarians, and of all these they were each the chosen men, and seemed ready to fight not only against the Argive alliance but whomever else they might meet.

The right sense of *kalliston* in this passage is conveyed by the subsequent deployment of a list. In Chapter 3 I already spoke about lists and cited a number of recent discussions of the ancient form; one aesthetic affordance of lists not mentioned there is that they allow for the pleasure of contemplating and imagining each item in turn. Thucydides himself makes a list of the combatants

[51] On forces of desire and pleasure in the poem, and of the poem, see Staten 1995; Lesser 2022

to highlight emotive moments including the beginning of the war Book 2 (2.9), and before the climax of the events in Sicily (7.57-9.1). In this case the narrator intrudes with a forceful superlative and then a seeing-verb, introducing a list that parades these hoplites before the reader's imagination. We are told these were the chosen men of each group, and, with another verb of seeming (*dokountes*), that they could have fought not only the Argives but anyone – *dokountes* seeming clarifies that this speculation is offered, strictly speaking, as a definition of the hoplites' appearance. It also echoes Pericles' warning to the Athenians that the Peloponnesians could probably defeat the whole of Greece together in a single hoplite battle (he advises wearing them down in a protracted war instead: 1.141.6). The narrative intervention thus works here like a pause button where the narrator invites the reader to sit back and admire the beauty of these assembled hoplites, here and now, in the moment before they break up and dissolve and events continue. There is something comic about how the most beautiful Greek army was dispersed without fighting. The army breaks up and abruptly goes home, and a new one has to be gathered later for the Battle of Mantinea. But more substantively the episode emphasises the force and danger of appearance, since on both sides, beauty creates a lust for battle that turns resentful and violent when it is thwarted (and a form of the word is repeated when Thucydides describes the reaction on the Argive side, 5.60.5: "κάλλιον").[52] The situation of Agis and the Argive leadership resembles that of Archidamus and Pericles during the first invasion of Attika (2.10-23) – in each case, on both

[52] Of the Spartan army at 5.60.3, Thucydides writes that "they seemed worthy to fight not only against the Argive alliance but whomever else they might meet." (ἀξιόμαχοι δοκοῦντες εἶναι οὐ τῇ Ἀργείων μόνον ξυμμαχίᾳ ἀλλὰ κἂν ἄλλῃ ἔτι προσγενομένῃ). On the force of appearance, Hornblower (3.157) compares this passage with the departure of the Athenian fleet for Sicily (6.30-1), which Thucydides calls "the most expensive and beautiful [*euprepēs*] of all those up to that time" (6.31.1: παρασκευὴ (…) πολυτελεστάτη δὴ καὶ εὐπρεπεστάτη τῶν ἐς ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ἐγένετο). The avoidance of *kalokagathia* words may have to do with how this is a naval force rather than a collection of hoplites: cf. Hunt 1998, 83-101a; Strauss 2000; Arrington, 2015, esp. 104-5 (incl. notes).

sides, commanders are reluctant to enter a battle on unfavourable terms.[53] The force of appearance in each case is a historical one with real consequences, even as the beauty of the hoplites is shown to be an irrelevant concern.

The second issue raised by arrows and by speech is the notion of pure meaningless death and destruction, not only in themselves, but as somehow standing for the way of the world. War is not the beautiful death – it is the indifferent spindle. Peeling away the Spartan's sarcasm at 4.40, one might ask: how does the arrow pick someone out? The answer is to some extent that the archer does, but the archer no more than the arrow knows whom they hit: it will just be whomever comes into their sights. There is a randomness and a meaninglessness evoked against which someone's beauty or goodness counts for nothing. The idea is put forward in early remark of Pericles (1.140.1):

> ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὰς ξυμφορὰς τῶν πραγμάτων οὐχ ἧσσον ἀμαθῶς χωρῆσαι ἢ καὶ τὰς διανοίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· δι᾽ ὅπερ καὶ τὴν τύχην, ὅσα ἂν παρὰ λόγον ξυμβῇ, εἰώθαμεν αἰτιᾶσθαι.
>
> Since the outcomes of things tend to go not less unintelligently than the notions of human beings: for what goes contrary to plan, we are used to putting the blame on fortune.

The subject is a recurring one in the speeches leading up to the war, and is treated by Thucydides himself when he intervenes in the narrative to sympathise with the Chians and their ill-fated attempt to revolt from Athens (8.24.5):[54]

[53] A second aborted battle (5.65.1-6) repeats the problem and brings out a contrast between the sides. Agis, eager to atone, ends up nearly provoking a battle on unfavourable terms and is reprimanded by one of the elders for trying "to heal one wrong with another" (5.65.2: "κακὸν κακῷ ἰᾶσθαι"). The Spartans retreat, and the Argives do not pursue, leading to yet more reproaches against their commanders (5.65.5-6).

[54] Cf. Rood 1998A, 280 on authorial interventions in Book 8: "these bring out themes suggested by the narrative, and raise its emotional charge."

καὶ οὐδ᾽ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀπόστασιν, εἰ τοῦτο δοκοῦσι παρὰ τὸ ἀσφαλέστερον πρᾶξαι, πρότερον ἐτόλμησαν ποιήσασθαι ἢ μετὰ πολλῶν τε καὶ ἀγαθῶν ξυμμάχων ἔμελλον ξυγκινδυνεύσειν καὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἠσθάνοντο οὐδ᾽ αὐτοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἔτι μετὰ τὴν Σικελικὴν ξυμφορὰν ὡς οὐ πάνυ πόνηρα σφῶν [βεβαίως] τὰ πράγματα εἴη· εἰ δέ τι ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρωπείοις τοῦ βίου παραλόγοις ἐσφάλησαν, μετὰ πολλῶν οἷς ταὐτὰ ἔδοξε, τὰ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ταχὺ ξυναναιρεθήσεσθαι, τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ξυνέγνωσαν.

Not even this revolt – even if they seem to have opted against the safest course of action – did they dare to undertake except before they had many good allies prepared to risk it with them, and noticed that the Athenians themselves were not even disagreeing after the disaster in Sicily that their affairs were in an awful state: if, in some way, they were tripped up by the human and unexpected things of life, they shared that mistake with many others of the same view – that the Athenians would quickly be destroyed.

But the sense is different between the Periclean and Thucydidean remarks: for Pericles, things going wrong is the fault of events themselves and their unaccountable stupidity; for Thucydides, in the case of Chios at least, the problem is that events are unreadable in practice and errors therefore inevitable (though they might still be intelligible *in principle,* and in hindsight they certainly are).[55] The failure of the Chians is inscribed as a human failure: namely, the human failure to perceive and calculate the truth.[56] In other words, the most general level is not where the narrative remains. Failures are specific and

[55] Edmunds 1975A is a very clear and sophisticated explication of the Periclean view treating it as nearly equivalent to that of Thucydides (see also Farrar 1988, 158-87; Pothou 2011). Contrast e.g. Rood (1998A, 27) on the role of *tuchē* in the Pylos narrative (less significant than has sometimes been claimed).

[56] Cf. Orwin 1994, 202: "Cities are called on to act not on certainties but on probabilities. This very fact fosters the human proclivity for entrapment by improbabilities."

analysable, and in that sense, Thucydides goes beyond a merely tragic outlook and anthropology.

Failure and Masculinity

Indeed, the portrait of the hoplites' inadequacy cuts more deeply than this and can be turned against the notions of beauty and goodness themselves in the specific form in which they appear. Thucydides calls the massacred Athenians in Aetolia the "best *men*" (βέλτιστοι δὴ ἄνδρες). Discussions of this passage tend to overlook the word 'men,' which suggests that the superlative conveys something more than narrow objectivity: these soldiers are not just the *best* of the Athenians, but the *best men: the best at being men.* The use of *andres* is striking and may recall for example the Iliadic expression *aneres este* ('you are men'), used as an exhortation to those fighting in battle.[57] In speaking of the Athenian soldiers 'as men,' Thucydides refers to their *andreia,* their manliness conceived as a virtue in terms that sometimes modern scholars translate as 'courage.'[58] So it will be worth examining more broadly the virtue of *andreia* in Thucydides' narrative, which is sometimes translated as courage or bravery.[59] Bassi argues that in fifth-century Athens (which often dealt with the Homeric tradition by drawing abstractions from it), the concept of *andreia* changes: "[it] begins as an observable act of facing death on the battlefield in epic poetry and becomes a defining ethical

[57] See Bassi 2003 for this and more synonymic phrases from Homer.
[58] See Balot 2014 for a study of this concept in these terms. Balot is understandably reluctant to join the Socratic game in the *Laches* by hazarding a definition of 'courage,' but unfortunately a lack of definitional rigour leads him to overlook the social and historical context of the virtue in both ancient Athenian and modern contexts. He ends up working with a superficial definition that seems to link very different interpretations of the concept without explaining them. For other words associated with courage in both Plato and Thucydides see de Romilly 2005, 231-43.
[59] See also n29 above.

characteristic of the citizen in the fifth-century *polis.*"[60] *Andreia* was a defining aspect of the character of the hoplite. In the Funeral Oration Pericles uses a neuter noun, *to andreion,* to mean the sphere of hoplite training and combat in broad terms (2.39.1). *Andreia* is an important quality in battle and helps the Spartans to triumph at Mantinea despite their lack of experience (5.72.2). But the ability of the Spartans at Mantinea to get by on *andreia* alone is an exception that proves the rule. It is of fundamental interpretive importance that the Battle of Mantinea is a completely traditional hoplite battle and therefore takes place on terms highly skewed towards the Spartans. Even the choice to fight the battle is an Athenian blunder (cf. 1.141.6). But still Thucydides introduces discordant notes, including examples of Spartan incompetence (5.72.2).[61] Above all he makes some demystifying remarks of hoplite battles in general – Agis, he tells us, makes the Spartan ranks march slowly and with musical accompaniment to stay together and to avoid veering right (5.71.1):[62]

> τὰ στρατόπεδα ποιεῖ μὲν καὶ ἅπαντα τοῦτο· ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ κέρατα αὐτῶν ἐν ταῖς ξυνόδοις μᾶλλον ἐξωθεῖται, καὶ περιίσχουσι κατὰ τὸ τῶν ἐναντίων εὐώνυμον ἀμφότεροι τῷ δεξιῷ, διὰ τὸ φοβουμένους προσστέλλειν τὰ γυμνὰ ἕκαστον ὡς μάλιστα τῇ τοῦ ἐν δεξιᾷ παρατεταγμένου ἀσπίδι καὶ νομίζειν τὴν πυκνότητα τῆς ξυγκλήσεως εὐσκεπαστότατον εἶναι· καὶ ἡγεῖται μὲν τῆς αἰτίας ταύτης ὁ πρωτοστάτης τοῦ δεξιοῦ κέρως, προθυμούμενος ἐξαλλάσσειν αἰεὶ τῶν

[60] Bassi 2003, 26.
[61] Moreover, see Strauss' analysis of Spartan incompetence during the battle (1962, 224f.) – 225: "the section of his work which shows the complete restoration of Sparta's renown and exhibits the beauty of her order of battle (…) reveals at the same time most clearly and specifically Spartan ineptness, the Spartan comedy."
[62] Cf. Schneider 1974, 53-4.

ἐναντίων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γύμνωσιν, ἔπονται δὲ διὰ τὸν αὐτὸν φόβον καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι.

Every army tends to do this: as they move together they veer towards the right wing, and both sides end up stretching out further than the opposite left wing because people are afraid, so that each person puts the exposed part of their bodies as much as possible behind the shield of the person on their right, believing that a tightness of the ranks affords them the best protection: indeed, the leader of this mistake is the rightmost person, who is always trying to draw the exposed part of himself away from the enemy; out of the same fear, the others follow him.

This disillusioning information suggests that what is going on, even in Mantinea, is very different from the idealised masculinist display of excellence of hoplite ideology. In general, the *Peloponnesian War's* characterisation of *andreia* is ambivalent. In military matters it is a necessary but insufficient virtue for success and is regularly opposed to thinking and knowledge or experience (6.69.1: ἐπιστήμη; 5.72.2, 6.72.2: ἐμπειρία). The opposition is most pronounced in the antilogy of speeches by Brasidas and Phormio, respectively emphasising *andreia* and experience, before the battle of Naupactus (2.87-9).[63] Although both sides put up trophies after the battle (2.92.4-5), morally and strategically it is a clear Athenian victory (2.92).[64] In the Funeral Oration, Pericles praises the *andreia* of the Athenians (2.39.4) but soon follows by insisting also on the quality of their

[63] Cf. Brasidas: "Knowledge (…) if it has *andreia* will also have the recall in a dire situation to put into practice what it has learned, but without courage no learning can stand up to danger" (2.87.4: ἡ ἐπιστήμη (…) ἀνδρείαν μὲν ἔχουσα καὶ μνήμην ἕξει ἐν τῷ δεινῷ ἐπιτελεῖν ἃ ἔμαθεν, ἄνευ δὲ εὐψυχίας οὐδεμία τέχνη πρὸς τοὺς κινδύνους ἰσχύει). Phormio: "Many armies have been defeated by lesser ones because of a lack of experience, and sometimes because of a lack of courage" (2.89.7: πολλὰ δὲ καὶ στρατόπεδα ἤδη ἔπεσεν ὑπ' ἐλασσόνων τῇ ἀπειρίᾳ, ἔστι δὲ ἃ καὶ τῇ ἀτολμίᾳ). He goes on to insist the Athenians have both experience and courage.

[64] See the two discussions of the sequence culminating in the battle of Naupactus by de Romilly (1956, 138-50) and Stahl (2003, 83-95) – it provides a very good point of comparison between their respective interpretations of the text as a whole. On Brasidas' speech see also Debnar 2001, 174-5.

insights and calculations (2.40.3). One of the arcs of Books 6-7 is how the Syracusans, who begin only with *andreia,* must gain *epistēmē* to defeat the Athenians - their courage alone is not enough.[65] Hermocrates, the most talented of all the leaders of Syracuse according to Thucydides, has both sufficient *empeiria* and outstanding *andreia* (6.72.2). The final battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse (7.70-1), is decided partly by Sycrausan improvements to their ships and how the narrowness of the space prevents the Athenians from their normal manoeuvres, a fact very much highlighted in the preceding narrative (cf. 7.35.1-5, 7.49.2, 7.62.1, 7.67.2-3, 7.70.4).[66] *Andreia* is thus not only insufficient without experience and knowledge, but is very probably the inferior of the two, and *andreia* even poses a severe risk if unchecked by these. The speech of Archidamus in Book 1, where he insists that it should not be regarded as *anandria* – a lack of *andreia* – to delay fighting (1.83.1: καὶ ἀνανδρία μηδενὶ πολλοὺς μιᾷ πόλει μὴ ταχὺ ἐπελθεῖν δοκείτω εἶναι), implies that striving towards *andreia* may have the negative result of causing people to make rash or risky choices without thinking things through. Indeed, this is what happens as the Spartans enter the war without taking his advice. The self-destructive force of *andreia* bursts out catastrophically during the *stasis* at Corcyra (3.82.4):

> καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει. τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθὴς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν· τὸ δ᾽ ἐμπλήκτως ὀξὺ ἀνδρὸς μοίρᾳ προσετέθη, ἀσφαλείᾳ δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὔλογος.

[65] In a key moment during the first battle (6.70.1), thunder and lightning and rain fall from the sky, striking terror in the less experienced soldiers. Thus even courage is depleted by a lack of experience.
[66] See also Liotsakis 2017, 75-8.

> And they substituted the customary value of words with respect to actions in accordance with what they thought was right. Irrational recklessness was considered partner-loving manliness, delay and foresight dressed-up cowardice, careful thinking a pretext for unmanliness, cleverness in all things laziness: to be brutally fierce was thought to be a man's part, to look out for one's own safety a euphemistic excuse for desertion.

The first sentence has drawn attention from scholars attracted by the idea that Thucydides be approaching modern theories about the arbitrariness of the sign;[67] but its fulcrum is actually *dikaiōsis*, and what ties together the "semantic inversions" of 3.82.4 with the "inversion of norms" of the succeeding sections is the underpinning change of values.[68] Specifically, as Edmunds writes, in the above passage: ""Manliness" is the prime virtue, "cowardice" the prime vice under conditions of stasis."[69] Behaviours and attitudes that contradict this single ethic are regarded only as failures to live up to it, and appeals and resemblances to other virtues are treated as specious excuses and false appearances. The only virtue and vice are manliness and cowardice. The language of the passage incorporates a huge degree of variation, which comes to a statement that any refusal to engage whole-heartedly and self-destructively in *stasis* was regarded by most people as a lack of *andreia.* The *stasis*-episode presents us with the spectacle of *andreia* without the limit of reason:[70] so infectious and all-consuming,

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[67] Allison 1997, 163: "it is evident from reading Book 3.82-3 that [Thucydides] thought he was defining something about language that had not been previously articulated."

[68] See Hornblower's note and references (1.483): "The point (…) is not that the *meaning* of the words changed (…) but that the use which people made of the available descriptions changed as their evaluation of the relevant actions changed." For "semantic inversions" and "inversions of norms" – Edmunds 1975B, 81. Noriega-Olmos 2022 gives a thorough semantic analysis but is too extreme in claiming that an emphasis on moral change excludes the notion of semantic change.
An important question for understanding this sentence is that of how to translate the words *axiosis* and *dikaiosis* – on which see the discussion and citations in Allison (1997, 168-86).

[69] Edmunds 1975B, 75-6.

[70] Connor (1984, 100) compares the passage with the plague narrative (esp. 2.50.1) – "in each case *logos* is overpowered."

that in Corcyra it spurs the women of the *demos* to join the fight by throwing pottery from their houses "with great daring (…) holding their ground amid the tumult in a fashion contrary to their nature" (3.74.1: τολμηρῶς (…) παρὰ φύσιν ὑπομένουσαι τὸν θόρυβον); so destructive and uncompromising that "whoever caused conflict was always trusted, whoever opposed them suspected" and "whoever conspired against someone and succeeded was intelligent, if they regarded others with suspicion they were even smarter; whoever took precautions so that none of this would happen was seditious to his faction and terrified of his enemies" (3.82.5: καὶ ὁ μὲν χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεί, ὁ δ᾽ ἀντιλέγων αὐτῷ ὕποπτος. ἐπιβουλεύσας δέ τις τυχὼν ξυνετὸς καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος· προβουλεύσας δὲ ὅπως μηδὲν αὐτῶν δεήσει, τῆς τε ἑταιρίας διαλυτὴς καὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐκπεπληγμένος).[71] It seems that one lesson people take from war, a "violent teacher" (3.82.2: βίαιος διδάσκαλος), is a very brutal masculinity which at its worst entails harmful or destructive *andreia,* performed without an underpinning sense of the right thing to do. The echo of Archidamus in the above passage clarifies that the problem is symptomatic of the war in general, much as the phenomenon of *stasis* is conditioned by the war's conflict as "tensions within smaller states foster, and are fostered by, tensions between more powerful states."[72]

At the end of Chapter 4, I discussed how scholars erred when characterising nature in the *stasis* sequence because they treated it too much as something

[71] This sentence is very complex to parse, but its complexity is significant. See Macleod's (1983, 133) refutation of an effort to rewrite the sentence more clearly by the ancient critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus: "In laboriously distinguishing the plotter from the suspector [Dionysius] blunts the point that plotting and suspecting are two aspects of one form and behaviour (…) the use of nouns and adjectives here, though Thucydides is no longer using abstract terms, reminds us that the historian is analysing not only men's beliefs or feelings, but also their manipulation of concepts, which consists in substituting one characterising term (noun or adjective) for another."

[72] Rood 1998A, 64. See also 115-7 where he analyses the role of outside actors in the Corcyra narrative from 3.70-81. Edmunds' (1975B) claim that the implicit 'good' values in this description are associated with Sparta and the 'bad' ones with Athens is too sweeping since the narrative often blurs and subverts these associations.

exceptional without observing the continuity between *stasis* and normal times. A similar problem affects scholarly discussions of *andreia* in the *stasis* sequence. Bassi develops Loraux's argument that one consequence of *stasis* for Thucydides is a dearth of true *andreia,* a feminisation of citizens who plot against and kill each other instead of their enemies.[73] She argues that the above passage should be construed in a homophobic way where *philetairia* has negative connotations.[74] Bassi claims in each noun-adjective pair the first element is a good thing degraded by its bad, second element; so that rather than merely substituting a bad act with a good euphemism, the phrase *andreia philetairos* introduces something bad on its own terms.[75] But instead of one good thing and one bad thing, the expression *andreia philetairos* refers to two partly but not absolutely good things, that together make a destructive combination that brings out the worst in each.[76] *Andreia* has already been discussed. In general, *philetairos* is a very uncommon word, and this may be its earliest attested use. Other contemporary uses suggest it was broadly understood to be a way of directing one's ordinary human desire to good ends. It is likened to the love of wealth or military success but considered more praiseworthy than these (Pl. *Lysis* 211e; Arist. *Rh.* 1364b, 1389a; *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* 1251b; Xen. *Ages.* 21). Particularly in Plato's *Lysis* the term has clear pederastic and maybe sexual implications. The *Lysis* seems to launch a Platonist attack against *philetairia* that collapses the distinction between the love of friends/lovers and, for example, the love of money. Both, at best, are a means of attaining good; yet in both cases the means become a substitute that displaces the good as an end, which is to say both corrupt people. *Philetairia,*

[73] Bassi 2003, 31-7; cf. Loraux 2009..

[74] The first pair at 3.82.4 is echoed later at 6.59.1 to describe the act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton – this is very important for Bassi's interpretation, but I defer discussion until my chapter on the tyrannicides.

[75] Aside from citing Gomme (cf. 2.374), who cites the scholia's identification of the sound-parallel between the words and translates *philetairos* as "in the interests of the party," Bassi's main justification of this claim is that in general throughout 3.82 (2003, 31n18), "the phil- prefix connotes a negative because excessive form of the desire for victory."

[76] On the ambivalence of *tolma* see also Connor 1984, 179n55.

laudably the affectionate pursuit of one's friends and lovers and their interests, means privileging those interests ahead of the other things this are meant to serve. In Corcyra, the virtue of *philetairia* is evoked as a justification for the destruction of other members from the same city, and factional solidarity becomes more important even than kinship ties (3.82.6).

Thucydides writes: "of all these things the cause was the desire for power because of *pleonexia* and *philotimia*; and a drivenness from those who vied for victory" (3.82.8: πάντων δ᾽ αὐτῶν αἴτιον ἀρχὴ ἡ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν· ἐκ δ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐς τὸ φιλονικεῖν καθισταμένων τὸ πρόθυμον).[77] Connor writes that "In Corcyra the contest theme is prominent (…) but the contests are destructive."[78] The inversion/intensification of masculine values in *stasis* is a key moment in the context of a much larger and open-ended representation across the entire work, that seeks to explore their limits, causes, and consequences.

Conclusion

I have been arguing that the inadequacy of hoplite-warfare is represented by Thucydides as the failure of the war's best and most beautiful men in the prime of manhood to succeed, or even survive - to an extent that puts significant pressure on these moral categories, though they are nevertheless deeply felt. These eulogies of hoplite greatness and desirability are poignant as they make the dead seem unequal to their fates. But though to some extent we can describe this in sweeping terms of the human condition (of life palpable and loss

[77] See Connor's defence of retaining the pairing *aition/archē* (1984, 102n58). On the importance of *philotimia* in democratic Athens see the discussion and references at Mitchell 2008, 27: it was "deeply ambivalent in the context of the *polis*."
[78] Connor 1984, 98n45.

invariable) the text's unsparing portrayal of violence and ignoble deaths also marks a challenge to the ideals of warfare implicit in the hoplite virtues.[79]

In the last chapter, I argued that in general Thucydides represents political systems as inherently pathological because they incorporate impulses and conflicts that drive them to their own collapse. Here the same structural pathology is observable on a different level. The last chapter was concerned with the particular systems that distribute power within and between cities, but here the subject has brought into view the overarching common system of *polis*-society as such, which revolves around the male citizen-warrior collective. A number of scholars have argued claims that suggest the line from Nikias which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter captures something fundamental about the Greek city-state.[80] Allen has shown how the Classical Athenian cultural and political system was largely organised to facilitate competition for honour and glory among its citizen men.[81] Roubineau, taking a social history approach, has demonstrated political violence and exclusion were central facts of daily life in the *polis*.[82] A study by Billows has revived and defended the idea that a 'hoplite revolution' (i.e. the change in Greek warfare by which battles began to be fought by hoplite units) was the basis of the political forms that emerged in Greek *polis*-society; on that basis the classical city, he claims, should be understood primarily as a warrior collective of men centred around the hoplite class who formed its backbone.[83] "The state," writes Billows, "was always perceived by ancient Greeks

[79] Compare Herodotus' representation of Croesus: brought down by fate (Hdt. 1.91.1), but no less due to errors on his own account (discussed and listed at Garcés 2023, 18). Indeed, Croesus accepts responsibility for what transpired after his exchange with the Pythia (1.91.6).

[80] Contrast this approach with that of scholars who try to comprehend the ancient Greek political system in terms of power-relations between citizens, without emphasising the ways it shapes and limits the political and ethical category of citizen: de Ste. Croix (see bibliography), Ober (see bibliography).

[81] Allen 2000, esp. 50-72.

[82] Roubineau 2015.

[83] Billows 2023, 82-102. *Pace* Simonton 2017, 41-54. For a summary of the twentieth-century debate (which largely turns around the question how battles were fought in Homeric society) and a balanced judgement in favour of some sort of 'hoplite reform' see Snodgrass 1993.

themselves as a male collective – *hoi Athenaioi, hoi Korinthioi, hoi Milesioi:* the hoplites were in origin the State, and the developing city-state thus came to be closely identified with the hoplite class who formed its backbone."[84] This would suggest that Nikias was speaking literally when he said that the *men* were the city. Indeed, speakers throughout the text tend to refer to their audience as *andres* (e.g. 1.53.2: ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι).

Today, a scholar might be inclined to supplement Nikias' remark by saying that a city is also either an ideological structure or an imagined community. But this only highlights the significance of the male warriors by introducing the possibility of a base/superstructure distinction, or of a 'real' and 'fantastical' organisation of society and hierarchy within the community, on which the modern notion of ideology is constructed.[85] Billows several times quotes Aristotle's remarks in the *Politics* (6.7.1-3 = 1321a) about the direct connection between the structure of a city's army and of the political regime. "It is a readily observable phenomenon," writes Billows in agreement, "that the military system and arrangements of a society have a considerable effect on the political system and arrangements and vice versa."[86] From a certain point of view it would appear that the 'base' of Greek *polis* society is its collective of warriors that makes decisions on behalf of the entire community and whose internal disputes and struggles against the warriors from other cities constitute the official history of the *polis*.[87] Social reproduction, in a community like this, means the replacement of aged and dead soldiers with new ones – these are to the Greek *polis* what the labour force is to modern capitalism. The values of hoplite masculinity are of

[84] Billows 2023, 102.
[85] I develop this point during my analysis of the Funeral Oration in Chapter 7.
[86] Billows 2023, 81.
[87] See Crane's (1998, 164-171) extended comparison between Thucydides' representation of Athenian empire and Marx's analysis of capitalism. Both are systems of perpetual accumulation, and both money and state power play an important role in each, but Thucydides emphasises military dominance over financial exploitation.

central importance for producing people who are able and who wish to kill and die on behalf of their city. The actual city of men is thus dependent on the imaginary city and its power, which they regard as lovers (2.43.1), and therefore obey.

The *Peloponnesian War* clearly demonstrates an awareness that the male citizen collective is at the heart of the city, and that the values and group identity of this collective are essentially tied to a romanticised notion of warfare. It also demonstrates how these values and identity instil an urge to fight that all too often becomes the urge to destroy, and an urge to compete that often becomes the drive to pursue one's personal ambitions and glory at the expense of the collective. The cause of this malaise it identifies less with the individual failing of this or that hoplite or politician than the structure that brings them into being. An example will suffice to demonstrate this. The Funeral Oration imagines a city of virtuous competition between men where the prize is esteem. In his long eulogy of Pericles Thucydides tells us that while he lived (2.65.9):[88]

> ἐγίγνετό τε λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή (…) οἱ δὲ ὕστερον ἴσοι μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὄντες καὶ ὀρεγόμενοι τοῦ πρῶτος ἕκαστος γίγνεσθαι ἐτράποντο καθ᾽ ἡδονὰς τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐνδιδόναι.
>
> [Athens] was a democracy only in name, actually ruled by its foremost man (…) Those who came afterwards were more equal to each other: each one sought to be foremost, so they arranged things according to whatever pleased the *demos* and gave up control of things.

[88] Cf. Gribble 1999, 176: these interventions are "narrative climaxes, not authorial asides."

While Pericles was alive, it seems, there was no doubt as to who the greatest man was.[89] But when he died, the contest for esteem intensified and became destructive, leading to rash decisions from those who sought personal glory (Demosthenes, Cleon, Alcibiades).[90] The subsequent failures of Athens can thus be traced back to the Funeral Oration's own ideological depiction of masculinity, and (more generally) the institutions of social reproduction of which it forms part. The war, as both cause and effect, marks a crisis of Athenian masculinity, which throws into relief the machinery of social reproduction in the warrior collective known as the *polis*.

Elsewhere I have argued that Thucydides' representation of women is more sophisticated than has been recognised.[91] At several key moments he draws associations between the idea of femininity and those of peace, pleasure, collective enjoyment, and the moral right of the weak. One possibility therefore is that masculinity, or at least the form of it that turns out to be an essential aspect of the social structure of the Greek *polis,* is rejected altogether in the text. This seems not entirely to be the case. A crucial word that appears six times is ἀνδραγαθία – four times the noun, and twice the verb ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι – meaning either "manly goodness" or "being a good man," depending on where one wishes to place the English emphasis.[92] It is used by exclusively by speakers (not the narrator), and all uses are pejorative except one. The sole positive use is by Pericles in the Funeral Oration (2.42.3), where he praises even those among

[89] Mitchell 2008 argues that at 2.65 and elsewhere Thucydides is reflecting on the Athenian democracy's dependence upon foremost men who destabilise the political system (she particularly stresses the comparison between Pericles and Alcibiades).

[90] See Gribble 1999, 170 on the "deliberately suggestive" vagueness with which Thucydides gestures at subsequent events in his text. For a list of examples in the text of Athenian leaders strategising with selfish motives see Balot 2017, 326.

[91] O'Sullivan 2024A.

[92] Dover (1974, 165) demarcates *andragathia* as specifically non-military, but the examples given will show it fits more with his broader definition of *agathos* and *to agathon* (161-5), which may encompass both or either military or non-military virtues.

the dead who had been bad people during their lives: "Since even those who were bad in other ways showed themselves right in choosing to be a good man in wars on behalf of their country." (καὶ γὰρ τοῖς τἆλλα χείροσι δίκαιον τὴν ἐς τοὺς πολέμους ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ἀνδραγαθίαν προτίθεσθαι.). It would seem here that, as with the examples above, the emphasis is of the word is on manliness Indeed, Bourriot claims ἀνδραγαθία means this with a much more pointed and specific force than *kalokagathia*.[93] In fact, at least for Thucydides the emphasis is on goodness and the two component parts of ἀνδραγαθία, (1) willingness to fight (2) on behalf of another, are implicitly contrasted. In the Plataean debate it is used by the Plataeans (3.57.1) and Thebans (3.64.2-4) each to refer to the contribution of the Plataeans to the Persian Wars. Finally, during the Melian Dialogue when the Melians say it would be disgraceful for them to give up their own city's freedom without a struggle, the Athenians tell the Melians in a phrase with tightly nested oppositions that their concern should not be with either ἀνδραγαθία or disgrace, since they are dealing with a superior power, but with what measures are necessary to secure their safety (5.101). In all three of these military examples, ἀνδραγαθία conveys the sense of risking one's own life in battle for the benefit of another – the city in the Funeral Oration and the Melian Dialogue, and Greece in the Plataean debate. The other uses of the word are pejorative and by Athenian speakers. But they do not involve fighting battles, very much the opposite. In his final speech Pericles uses it to pejoratively with almost the exact opposite of its meaning in the Funeral Oration– that is, those who may not wish to continue fighting because they have moral scruples about the fact that the Athenians are effectively tyrants who rule unjustly (2.63.2-3).[94]

[93] Bourriot 1995, 2.562-3.

[94] Pericles associates the term with *apragmosunē,* or a refusal to get involved in Athenian democratic politics that may indicate on opposition to one or all of those three things: see Carter 1986; Demont 1990, 2009; Montiglio 2000, 281ff. But see also Allison 1979 which disputes the idea that *polypragmsunē* (the opposite of *apragmosunē*) was an important concept for the Athenians.

Cleon uses it with this same sense later during the Mytilene debate (3.40.4-5). What all these examples have in common is an association between ἀνδραγαθία and a desire and commitment to act against one's personal interest for the sake of freedom, not just one's own but also that of the group (the city, all Greeks).

The term therefore indicates: (1) A commitment to freedom in the sense of opposing tyrants, (2) A willingness to fight and struggle, (3) Goodness in the sense of putting another's interests before one's own, even one's own safety.[95] The word for Thucydides seems to stand between its sense in Herodotus, for whom it clearly means individual excellence (an aristocratic attribute to be distinguished from noble birth),[96] and Plato's *to agathon*, which is considerably more abstract. When asking what Thucydides thought was good, it is important to distinguish: (1) The best way for a person or people in a given set of circumstances, (2) The best way for a nation to organise itself (I discussed 8.97 at the end of the previous chapter), (3) What, beyond the constraints of a political system or the human condition, is actually good – all these are different, and the first two may naturally involve a goodness that is very limited and partial.

Instead of *kalos kai agathos* this chapter could have focussed on the word *arētē* ('excellence').[97] An especially aristocratic-sounding word, its semantic range runs from a very base notion of quality or worth – he uses it of soil (1.2.4)[98] – to ability or talent (2.36.1, 2.37.1), to something more imbued with a sense of justice, as with those who win freedom for others (1.69.1, 2.34.5) or conduct themselves fairly

[95] One reason Nikias' statement at 6.9.2 (that the *agathos politēs* is really someone who looks out for his own possessions and bodily safety) is so contorted and full of qualifications is that it is so counterintuitive at face value. Contrast his statement at 7.77.7 (cited above). Conversely Rees (1962) has argued that *kakōsis* in Thucydides refers primarily to physical, rather than moral, badness or degradation.

[96] Cf. Hdt. 1.99.2, 1.136.1, 4.65.2, 5.39.1, 5.42.1, 6.128.1, 6.128.2, 7.166.

[97] On *arētē* see the wide-ranging study of Classen 2010 (esp. 26-66). De Romilly (2005, 231-2) claims both originated as military virtues. On both, through this lens, see Loraux 1986, 98-113.

[98] The "excessive fecundity" of the soil leads to *stasis* – see Forde 1989, 245. Forde claims this is an example of how the word generally is ambiguous in Thucydides.

(5.105.4). As with *andragathia* the word's military sense is original and inescapable (e.g. 2.87.9 the Spartan commanders at Naupactus speak of goodness and *arētē* as synonyms). In the Funeral Oration Pericles uses it twelve times. Thucydides in his own voice uses the word *arētē* to praise people sometimes at highly emotive moments – (2.51.5, 4.81.2, 7.86.5, 8.68.2) – (in reverse order) Antiphon, Nikias, Brasidas, those who catch the plague after insisting on fulfilling their obligations to visit the suffering; all, to the extent that they possess this virtue, are tragic, as their character and destiny do not match.[99] The former two scholars have sometimes criticised these figures or read an undertone into Thucydides' remark: they had virtue but made mistake, perhaps they were even flawed.[100] The plague victims, although not normally discussed in these terms, are an especially poignant example because their *arētē* itself is their mistake: too ashamed to fear the disease, they put themselves in its way. Altogether, with *arētē* as with goodness, this treatment in the narrative suggests a world in which goodness is somehow not enough.[101] But perhaps even though the emotions do not necessarily run in this direction, a closer examination of the narrative leads to a reflection that the concept of goodness is essentially compromised, its currency debased.[102]

A meaningful difference between *agathos* and *arētēs* is that the former, and not the latter, appears in the *stasis* description, the latter part of which is a complex treatment of the virtues of intelligence and goodness both erased by *stasis*. The later sections of the description draw an opposition between intelligence and

[99] Sometimes he praises someone's *virtue and intelligence – arētē kai xunesis* – cf. 4.81.2, 6.54.5 (Classen 2010, 35-7).
[100] On Nikias see for example Thompson 1971; Kirby 1983, 191-5; Ferrario 2014, 124-35 (*pace* Rood 1998A, 184-5; Sebastiani 2018). In general, on Thucydidean character judgements and authorial comments see Gribble 1999, 159-213; de Bakker 2013, 2017,
[101] Cf. Crane 1998, 32: "dismay at the brutality of his fellows and the weakness of human virtue."
[102] See Forde's discussion of the word (1989, 144-6, note 144: "Thucydides' own references to *virtue* (…) are always ambiguous or paradoxical").

goodness (3.82.7-3.4). As we have seen here and in the last chapter, it is normal for Thucydides scholars to stress intelligence, and conversely to insist he is not very interested in moral thought.[103] In this case the narrative records how the less intelligent triumphed (3.83.3), because (Macleod summarises): "in an ironic twist (…) they were guided by fear of their own inadequacy and of their opponents' superior ingenuity."[104] But along the way we find inverted the general principle that for Thucydides "moral qualities" although "necessary" are "subordinated to intellectual qualities."[105] He makes this wrenching (cf. Macleod: "timeless") generalisation: "Most people are more easily called clever when they do wrong than good when they are stupid, and are ashamed by one but exult in the other." (3.82.7: ῥᾷον δ᾽ οἱ πολλοὶ κακοῦργοι ὄντες δεξιοὶ κέκληνται ἢ ἀμαθεῖς ἀγαθοί, καὶ τῷ μὲν αἰσχύνονται, ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ ἀγάλλονται).[106] Here Thucydides suggests bitterly that in life intelligence is worth much less than goodness though valued more. Returning to the *stasis* scene he describes later how "sincerity, which above all is what greatness consists of, was ridiculed and vanished." (3.83.1: τὸ εὔηθες, οὗ τὸ γενναῖον πλεῖστον μετέχει, καταγελασθὲν ἠφανίσθη).[107] The term

[103] See Williams 1998, 1-8.

[104] Macleod 1983, 130.

[105] De Romilly (1956, 174): "*Sans doute les qualités morales sont-elles nécessaires ; mais nous les trouvons, chez Thucydide, subordonnées aux qualités intellectuelles.*"

[106] Macleod 1983, 128. Price (2003, 55-7) claims the aphorism only applies to *stasis* situations. The shift to present tense clarifies that this is not the case. He argues that if the passage is taken as general it must mean Thucydides is saying most people *kakourgoi* or "malfeasants," but the circumstantial participle ὄντες is clearly meant to foreclose such interpretations (otherwise Thucydides could have left it out). Price himself acknowledges the participle is "concessive" (57n104) but arbitrarily limits its range to situations of *stasis.* Price's difficulty navigating the particular and the general is reflected in the awkwardness of his translation (55). Price and Gomme (2.378-9) believe the sentence is chiastic so that the participle governs ἀγαθοί and the verb ἀμαθεῖς – in that case it would be "those who do wrong prefer to be called clever than stupid while being honest." This imports a lot into the Greek and seems largely based on a sense of confusion that proves Thucydides' point (Gomme 2.378: "Why should the stupid be thought good?"). See Macleod 1983, 138n38.

[107] On the meaning of τὸ εὔηθες see Gomme (2.380-1). He cites Plato: "A mind organised with an attitude that is really good and beautiful." (*Rep.* 400e: τὴν ὡς ἀληθῶς εὖ τε καὶ καλῶς τὸ ἦθος κατεσκευασμένην διάνοιαν.). Williams' claim (1998, 17-46) that it means a unity of the virtues does not account for passage's the careful interplay of goodness and intelligence. It is not clear which of 'kindness' and 'a noble character' is meant to be a part of the other – Gomme thinks the latter has a part of the former, Nussbaum (1986, 507n24) that the former is part of the latter based on a comparison with 1.84.3. In any case Hornblower

εὔηθες, "an ancient term for simplicity and integrity – so ancient that it usually occurs in classical Greek in its ironic sense of simpleton," continues the opposition between intelligence and goodness.[108] Diodotus uses it as a synonym for 'stupid' (3.45.7). But here at 3.83 the line, as Macleod notes, is in contrast with the intelligence of those who are set up in faithless opposition to one another "by intelligence" (τῇ γνώμῃ), "with no trust" (ἀπίστως).[109] The lack of trust creates conflict as paranoid people try to get in the first move (cf. 3.82.5), especially those less intelligent and skilled with words since their fear of the more intelligent is most pronounced and justified (3.83.2-3). That is how the intelligent are destroyed by *stasis* along with the good, who are marginalised, along with those who refuse to take a side (3.82.8).

Intelligence is important for Thucydides, but its value has been overstated.[110] How much is intelligence worth if joined to a defective character (6.15.3-4), a selfish attachment to one's own position (8.68.3), or an incapacity to deal with events that by their nature defeat one's calculations (2.61.3, cf. 1.140.1)? In the *stasis* description the problem with intelligence is revealed to be much more than just the ordinary limit on human understanding. Intelligence requires goodness, not only to be of use, but also really to be useful in the last analysis. The power of the episode comes in part from how this ostensibly ultimate Thucydidean virtue of intelligence – whose limits elsewhere when they arise and come into view could be mistaken as casting into relief its tragic greatness – is treated with contempt as opposed to stupid goodness. Intelligence without goodness, what

(1987, 186n100) is probably right that the most important thing is to stress the relationship, which I have tried to do in translation.

[108] Orwin 1994, 181. For a survey of other vocabulary of kindness and gentleness in Thucydides (mostly framed as a political virtue of moderation of mercy), see de Romilly 1974, and de R. *ad loc.* ("*simplicité*").

[109] Orwin *ibid.*

[110] Cf. Syme 1960, 56: "Intelligence is the supreme virtue." See for example de Romilly 1956B; Edmunds 1975; Joho 2022, 270-308, and the sources detailed in Chapter 5 (p. 188) for the conventional interpretation of the tyrannicide excursus. For Golfin 2011 (esp. 235-9), *gnōmē* is the Thucydidean solution to avoid evil.

Macleod elusively names "a certain kind of intelligence," destroys even itself so that the bad *and* stupid prevail.[111] One way of interpreting this passage has been to regard Thucydides as espousing a very traditional set of morals and virtues – so traditional they have fallen out of date.[112] In this chapter I have tried to show how pejoratively Thucydides represents those virtues (cf. also 7.69.2, discussed in Chapter 8). It seems that traditional frameworks of goodness and morality, largely derived from the activities and culture of the hoplite, come under pressure in the *Peloponnesian War* and are shown to bear negative results. Perhaps therefore a better way of interpreting the reach for very old terms in the *stasis* description is that, just as with his invention of new concepts elsewhere, it is a way of trying to develop something new where existing concepts and frameworks are insufficient. What we have here is a sense of goodness that is not easily reducible to prior parallels and arguably cuts against the grain of the entire work. Certainly, it is not something powerful or sufficient in political life. It is not placed in any sort of cosmic hierarchy.

The issue of goodness brings us back from overarching structures to real and vital things; although, in a sense, to speak of one is always to bring in the other. The next two chapters will therefore invert the approach of the last two and examine how political structures and forces play on the ground of human psychology and morality. In the next chapter I delve deeper into the social process of value-creation here discussed, by turning from bravery to its dialectical opposite: terror.

[111] Macleod 1983, 130.

[112] Edmunds 1975B, Crane 1998 (324: "Thucydides set out (…) to reconstitute the ancient simplicity – the ideology of the elite into which he had been born and of which he was a product – and to reconcile what we might now call the real with the ideal"). Orwin (1994, 8-11) is very good on the limits of this view as a way of comprehending Thucydides' perspective.

7. The Politics of Meaning

Although the last chapter concentrated on notions of the good, it also argued that values and more generally appearances can have a distorting effect which exerts historical influence. Appearance was shown to be a kind of force. The present chapter continues the discussion from a different angle by analysing the implications of force for people's perception of reality. I first argue directly that appearance is a significant force in the text, manipulated by commanders and politicians for the sake of victory and power, most obviously as a way of concealing or suggesting manpower where it is in truth lacking. But, as a force, when appearance is used in this way it has reality-bending properties that come to develop their own power. I go on to discuss a motif of great significance in the text that cuts across the distinction between terror and desire: in each case, an overwhelming perception that seems to defy sense or limit. Particularly in the Sicilian Books, people try to gain power or an advantage by causing the other side to have this experience. I am referring particularly to what in Greek is called *ekplēxis.* I will argue that what underlies Thucydides' representation of *ekplēxis* is not only a psychological outlook. It amounts to a theory of the political constitution of reality, emphasising the link between carefully orchestrated, overwhelming impressions and our most basic social coordinates of sense. An important means by which Thucydides conveys this is the reader's own experience, so I will reintroduce and develop the analysis in Chapter 3 on the *ekplēctic* mode. This last claim is argued with reference to the Funeral Oration and the plague in Book 2.

The Force of Appearance

During the Athenian debate in Book 6 Nikias speaks to the Assembly (6.11.4):

> ἡμᾶς δ᾽ ἂν οἱ ἐκεῖ Ἕλληνες μάλιστα μὲν **ἐκπεπληγμένοι εἶεν** εἰ μὴ ἀφικοίμεθα, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ εἰ δείξαντες τὴν δύναμιν δι᾽ ὀλίγου ἀπέλθοιμεν· εἰ δὲ σφαλείημέν τι, τάχιστ᾽ ἂν ὑπεριδόντες μετὰ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἐπιθοῖντο· τὰ γὰρ διὰ πλείστου πάντες ἴσμεν θαυμαζόμενα καὶ τὰ πεῖραν ἥκιστα τῆς δόξης δόντα.[1]
>
> What would make the Greeks over there [in Sicily] **terrified** of us above all is if we did not go there, and next-best if we showed our power briefly and left. If we should somehow fail, they would very quickly look down on us and join up with those here. Since we know that things furthest away and those which have given least test of their reputation are wondered at.

When the Athenians vote for the expedition to Sicily and launch out in full force, with Nikias one of three commanders, the 'next-best' choice is what he will propose (6.47 – it is rejected: 6.48-50.1). In general the strategic importance of psychology and psychological advantage is a significant theme in the Sicilian books.[2] Kagan brands the above a "foolish" argument based in "dubious psychological assumptions."[3] Kallet takes it to be representative of the entire Athenian failure in Books 6 and 7: they cannot recognise that "the display of power is not the exercise of real power, but rather mere appearance and illusion."[4] For Kallet, Thucydides "attempts to dismantle an entire ideology" in rejecting the significance of display compared with "the concrete exercise of military power" and its ultimate source, "financial resources."[5] The Athenians by

[1] Textually there is some dispute about the order of these clauses (see Dover in Gomme 4.234-5). Alberti's text (3.13) differs from the OCT and adopts Dover's reading, which is also that of the MSS.
[2] Cf. Demosthenes' arrival (7.42.3), and Stahl (2003, 196-9) on the (only half-seriously proposed) plan of Hermocrates to sail out from Sicily and meet the Athenians in full force (6.34.4-6). He sees it as a psychologically astute stratagem "designed *not* to result in military action or even confrontation" (196).
[3] Kagan 1981, 178.
[4] Kallet 2001, 35. Cf. Jordan 2000; Wohl 2002, 188-203; Greenwood 2006, 39.
[5] Kallet 2001, 82-3. She does not emphasise the other constituent, manpower or human bodies. In the text bodies and money appear often as a pair (e.g. 1.85.1, 1.121.3, 1.141.5, 2.53.2, 6.9.2, 8.45.4).

invading Sicily fall for their own propaganda; the blame lies not in their stars but their selves.[6] Never mind that Nikias' advice here is not followed.[7] His idea has broader roots than Kallet's remarks would suggest. It may recall the Herodotean concept of *thōma*.[8] Xenophon offers similar advice to Nikias in his *Hipparchicus*, an instruction book for cavalry commanders (*Eq. Mag.* 5.5):

> ὅταν μέντοι βούλῃ τοὺς ἱππέας πολλοὺς φαίνεσθαι, ἓν μὲν πρῶτον ὑπαρχέτω, ἥνπερ ἐγχωρῇ, μὴ ἐγγὺς τῶν πολεμίων ἐγχειρεῖν ἐξαπατᾶν· καὶ γὰρ ἀσφαλέστερον τὸ πρόσω καὶ ἀπατητικώτερον.
>
> But if you want to appear as if you have a lot of horsemen, let your first resort be, as much as possible, not to be near the enemy when trying to deceive them: since indeed far-off is safer and more suitable for giving a false impression.

We may be thus dealing with an item of received wisdom among expert Greek military strategists. Among the Spartans, a counterpart to Nikias' plan may be their famous refusal to admit foreigners in order to protect their secrets (cf. Pericles: 2.39.1). The control that Sparta exerted over how and when it was perceived may have had something to do with its reputation in antiquity. In a contrasting but analogous fashion, Athenian power has very much to do with display and spectacle. This can seem to be embodied in the *Peloponnesian War* by the figure of Alcibiades, who spends extravagantly to impress others, and

[6] Stahl refers to the Athenians' "grotesque" ignorance about Sicily (1973, 71; cf. 6.1.1).
[7] Athenians may have regarded the military use of deception as unmasculine and un-Athenian (Hesk 2000, 20-84; 107-22 gives a more nuanced picture). In the previous chapter I argued that Thucydides positions himself against the ideology that underpinned this view.
[8] Kohl 1977, 43; Scanlon 1994, 165-71. On this concept in Thucydides in general see Lightfoot 2021, 158-73 (esp. 166-7: she sees Nikias' advice as largely sound). On Herodotean echoes in these books see Rood 1998B; Rogkotis 2006, 59-65.

increase his own personal influence and wealth (6.15.3-16.3).[9] Of his own expenditure Alcibiades says (6.16.2):

> οἱ γὰρ Ἕλληνες καὶ ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζω ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν ἐνόμισαν τῷ ἐμῷ διαπρεπεῖ τῆς Ὀλυμπίαζε θεωρίας, πρότερον ἐλπίζοντες αὐτὴν καταπεπολεμῆσθαι (…) νόμῳ μὲν γὰρ τιμὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ δρωμένου καὶ δύναμις ἅμα ὑπονοεῖται.
>
> Since the Greeks thought our city to be greater – even above its power – because of my magnificence during the Olympic festival, whereas previously they imagined we were exhausted by war (…) [he details his expenditures] by custom the result of these is honour, in practice also it is also suspected to be power.

The hard appearance/reality distinction developed by Kallet and other readers of the Sicilian Books is based on a rejection, explicit or implicit, of this argument.[10] Alcibiades begins by affirming that his displays are illusory and make others overestimate Athenian power (ὑπὲρ δύναμιν), which implies that 'real' power is something else. But then he affirms that the result itself is a kind of assumed or believed-in power (καὶ δύναμις ἅμα ὑπονοεῖται). This second kind of power is closely linked with Alcibiades himself, and Gribble notes that his "influence in Book 8 is achieved almost exclusively through advice to or persuasion of others, or through appearances and images."[11] In fact what the narrative in Book 8 shows, as we have seen in Chapter 4, is that appearances and persuasion operate less as power than as force.[12] These displays are precisely what make people

[9] Cf. Kallet (2001, 37): both Alcibiades "and the collective Athenians ultimately mirror each other in their aims, desires, and expenditures."

[10] Kallet's argument also seems to contradict Allison's (1989) study of *paraskeuē* which rejects any hard materialist interpretation of power in Thucydides as overly simplistic.

[11] Gribble 1999, 198.

[12] It is neither fully controllable nor its impact foreseeable. For example, in Book 8 the Athenian belief in Alcibiades' promise of Persian help leads to the collapse of the democracy (8.48.1, 8.53), giving power to a regime that ends up opposed to him (8.56.6).

suspicious of Alcibiades and cause his downfall in Athens (6.15.3-4). Alcibiades' strength, his power of appearance, is his weakness: he inspires terror in people he too much overawes and hatred in those too little. But the observation, in general, that his force of appearance harms him, that the good and ill it causes him are one, does not clearly distinguish it from other kinds of force in the text such as money and ships. In the long run, I have argued, these lead to the same end, "since indeed everything becomes less by nature" (2.64.3: πάντα γὰρ πέφυκε καὶ ἐλασσοῦσθαι). The point could be put more strongly, as by Joho: it is the force, (in this case) the appearance, that exerts control alongside and through the decision-makers, so that they are carried in its surge.[13]

The real complexity of appearances and their power is demonstrated by an episode in Book 7 (7.42-4). Demosthenes arrives at Syracuse with reinforcements and decides to immediately force a night battle at Epipolae. His reasoning echoes the remarks of Nikias above (7.42.3):

> γιγνώσκων ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ παρόντι τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ μάλιστα δεινότατός ἐστι τοῖς ἐναντίοις, ἐβούλετο ὅτι τάχος ἀποχρήσασθαι τῇ παρούσῃ τοῦ στρατεύματος **ἐκπλήξει.**
>
> Knowing that he himself would be most terrifying to the enemy right here on the first day, he wanted as quickly as possible to take advantage of the army's present ***ekplēxis.***

The situation backfires; ultimately it is the Athenians who are gripped by terror and disorder, unable to see at night, and many of them are killed (7.44).[14] Demosthenes was not wrong in his calculations, but the nature of the power on which he relied (a force of terror, enhanced by nighttime) proved unsteady

[13] See Joho (2022, 195-207) on the decision to invade Sicily.

[14] I briefly discuss the battle and scholarly responses in Chapter 3 (p. 116ff.). Connor (1984, 192) emphasises the symmetry of this reversal.

enough that his men were overwhelmed. The key psychological term in both speeches, *ekplēxis*, also appears several times in Hermocrates' speech to the Sycacusans in Book 6 (6.33.4, 6.34.4, 6.34.8). Throughout the Sicilian Books, on both sides, *ekplēxis* is not only something that they seek to cause in the other force, but also to contain and (with increasing difficulty for the Athenians) prevent from overwhelming their own side. Initially, the less experienced soldiers on the Athenian side are terrified of thunder and lightning on the battlefield; the more seasoned shrug it off (6.70.1).[15] Later a prediction by Hermocrates, that a naval defeat would shatter Athenian resolve (7.21.4), comes true: after losing a climactic battle in the Great Harbour, the Athenian sailors are so struck by *kataplēxis* that they will not get back into their ships and the army is forced into the disastrous retreat by land (7.72.4).

The fulcrum of the conflict between Athens and Syracuse (roughly 6.94-7.6), in which both sides attempt to build cross-walls to cut each other off, until the arrival to help the Syracusans from the Peloponnesian side of Gongylus and Gylippus, gives a chance to compare some important scholarly accounts of the relation between randomness, planning, and psychology.[16] In de Romilly's view what is remarkable is the way a multifarious and large-scale thing such as the Sicilian campaign should come down to this single question, "Will Athens succeed? Will its fortifications be able to isolate Syracuse in time?"[17] She therefore distinguishes between all those events and feelings which are at the margin of the account and the highly focussed central "struggle between two contrary intentions" materialised in the walls.[18] Stahl however emphasises the

[15] See Hornblower (*Commentary* 3.477ff) who argues convincingly that this passage refers exclusively to the Athenians, although the side is not specified explicitly.
[16] Cf. Stahl (2003, 206) on Thucydides' interest in the "hinges of history."
[17] De Romilly 1956B, 22-33 (23: "*Athènes réussira-t-elle ? Ses fortifications pourront-elles, à temps, isoler Syracuse ?* ").
[18] De Romilly 1956B, 26: "*La lutte entre deux intentions contraires.*"

contingency of events that keep threatening to go in different ways (for example, weather is an important factor: 6.103-4), leading him to the observation that "*Rational analysis may uncover the irrationality of history.*"[19] Both interpretations find support and qualification in a closer examination of the specific nature of the intentions opposed, on the Athenian and Syracusan side. Both armies seem so acutely aware of the stakes that success and failure each cause a strong and threatening emotional reaction.[20] First Syracusan terror makes them rush out to a disorganised and almost fatal attack (6.98.2: καὶ ἔκπληξιν τοῖς Συρακοσίοις παρέσχον τῷ τάχει τῆς οἰκοδομίας);[21] Athenian fear keeps them from preventing the Syracusan counter-wall (6.100.1: φοβούμενοι μὴ σφίσι δίχα γιγνομένοις ῥᾷον μάχωνται); Syracusan complacency and self-satisfaction (6.100.1: τοῖς Συρακοσίοις ἀρκούντως ἐδόκει ἔχειν) causes them to leave it inadequately protected. A mistake produced by success and Syracusan fear (cf. 6.101.5: δείσαντες) leads to the death of the able-bodied Athenian general, Lamachus (6.101.4-6);[22] buoyed by this (6.102.1: ἀναθαρσήσαντες) the Syracusans attack the Athenian encampment, are repulsed by a stratagem, and when Athenian ships become visible on the horizon they retreat back to their city in despair "believing that with their present force they were no longer enough to prevent the [Athenian] wall from reaching the sea" (6.102.4: νομίσαντες μὴ ἂν ἔτι ἀπὸ τῆς παρούσης σφίσι δυνάμεως ἱκανοὶ γενέσθαι κωλῦσαι τὸν ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν τειχισμόν).[23] Hopeless, they begin talks with Nikias and internal divisions grow within the city (6.103.3-4). Just as they are about to surrender and

[19] Stahl 2003, 217 (his italics). See 189-222. Rood (1998A, 171-6) examines how the narrative constructs a feeling of surprise and contingency. See also Allison 2005.

[20] Kirby (1983, 186-90) discusses the morale swing and refers to a "general snowball effect of depression which plays no small part in laying [the Athenians] low."

[21] They go out in such disarray that their commanders lead them back inside the walls. Hornblower (*Commentary* 3.528) notes that this is an inferior way of handling the problem: Gylippos, the Spartan commander who arrives to help the Syracusans in Book 7, faced with the same problem will simply lead the Syracusans into more open ground (7.3.3).

[22] Nikias by now is ill (6.102.2).

[23] Rood (1998A, 172n52) remarks on how the Athenian perspective is available to us in these sections.

come to terms, Gongylus arrives to inform the Syracusans of the approach of Gylippus, and the mood shifts (7.2).[24] Now it is the Athenians who are "disturbed" (7.3.1: ἐθορυβήθησαν), and Nikias loses faith in their ability to win a fight on land with their present numbers, leading them to retreat into a fortress where the army is worn down by bad conditions (7.4.4-7; 7.4.4: ὁρῶν (…) ἀνελπιστότερα ὄντα).

The above shows that the process of decision-making on both sides results jointly from a perception and an emotional reaction. The perception is not necessarily incorrect, nor the reaction foolish (although it may be). But no side views events with detachment. The reader's perspective is kept close to whichever side is experiencing the most tumultuous swings of feeling. The wiry thread of logic that de Romilly unearths is buried by the text in the confusion of both sides.[25] The force of appearance is therefore a crucial theme, not only for the two armies, but the reader. The emphasis on contingency that Stahl points to enhances the intensity by emphasising other possibilities.[26] But the point should not be left at Stahl's italicised irrationality any more than with de Romilly's walls of pure reason. The significance of events in large part comes down to the way they are perceived – which may also be analysed and manipulated in the moment. In general, the Sicilian Books provide a very careful and pragmatic reflection on the murkiness of the appearance/reality distinction, in situations where appearance exerts a reality, as these are merely elements in a broader conflict of forces not completely controlled by either side.[27]

[24] Letting Gylippus slip through his navy to arrive in Sicily is a mistake by Nikias (6.104.3), but it is unclear how much he deserves blame. See Rood 1998A, 173; Stahl 2003, 211. As he approaches Gylippus hears a false report that Syracuse has already surrendered (6.104.1).
[25] Pelling (7.304) writes that "the narrative is dense, the manoeuvres and constructions complex, and the modern student finds it difficult to follow them even with the aid of a map."
[26] These contingencies go a long way towards explaining Thucydides' judgement in Book 2 (cf. 2.65.11).
[27] Cf. Stahl 2003, 182: "Ignorance (combined with desire for conquest) is the keynote for understanding the following process of decision-making in Athens [6.8-24]."

At Syracuse these forces are wielded in a full and open conflict. However, just as violence does not disappear in peacetime but becomes absorbed and concealed within the coercive apparatus of the state, the force of appearance plays a very important role in Thucydides' broader representation of society. The investigation in this chapter, using the concepts of force and mediation, attempts to lay out the psychological and philosophical stakes of this representation. I begin by looking more closely at the programmatic word *ekplēxis*.

Ekplēxis

I treat *ekplēxis* and *kataplēxis* as synonyms.[28] *Ekplētto,* meaning to hit or strike, at face value indicates a superlative kind of terror.[29] Forms of the verb appear in the *Peloponnesian War* 20 times and of the noun *ekplēxis* 17 times, almost half of these in Books 6 and 7.[30] Of *kataplēxis* forms of the verb are used 13 times, the noun 4.[31] The English translation 'consternation' is inadequate to modern-day usage, although the Latin noun *consternatio* is a direct translation because it joins the implication of terror with that of having been struck by a blow.[32] The word became a very important term of ancient literary criticism but has been

[28] Of course, they are not precisely synonyms (cf. Allison 1997, 62-5; Scardino 2007, 437). Hornblower claims the latter is the stronger word (*Commentary* 3.583f.), but the difference has more to do with scope rather than intensity. *Kataplēxis* refers to "the summation of emotional stress following event" (Allison 1997, 64), with a sense of finality (and thus usually comes after a sudden reversal). *Ekplēxis* is more immediate. Still, for the purpose of my argument here they are sufficiently similar words that I ignore the distinction.

[29] Pericles uses the verb with the literal meaning (2.38.2).

[30] Verb: 2.38.2, 2.60.4, 2.87.4, 3.42.2, 3.82.5, 3.113.5, 4.36.2, 4.63.1, 4.125.1, 5.10.6, 5.66.2, 6.11.4, 6.33.4 (x2). 6.34.4, 6.49.2, 7.21.4, 7.43.6, 7.63.3, 7.69.2. Noun: 2.94.1, 4.14.3, 4.34.2, 4.55.3, 4.112.1, 4.126.1, 6.36.2, 6.46.4, 6.70.1, 6.98.2, 7.42.4, 7.69.2, 7.70., 7.71.7, 8.14.2, 8.15.1, 8.96.1.
Thucydides tends to use the participle form of the verb where he requires an adjective, although the noun ἐκπληκτικός appears once to describe the startling effect of the *thorubos* of Athenian hoplites revolting against the government of the 400 (8.92.7).

[31] Verb: 1.81.6, 2.62.2, 2.65.9, 4.10.3, 4.73.4, 5.65.5, 6.34.6, 6.34.8, 6.38.2, 6.40.2, 6.76.1, 7.72.4, 7.77.4. Noun: 7.24.3, 7.42.2, 8.1.2, 8.66.2.

[32] Bétant (1969, 1.313) defines it as *formido, consternatio.*

insufficiently studied.[33] It was associated with Thucydides and appears in Plutarch's comments about his vivid aesthetic which I quoted in the first chapter (*De. Glor. Ath.* 347a):[34]

> ὁ δ᾽ οὖν Θουκυδίδης ἀεὶ τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς ταύτην ἁμιλλᾶται τὴν ἐνάργειαν, οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα περὶ τοὺς ὁρῶντας **ἐκπληκτικὰ** καὶ ταρακτικὰ πάθη τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἐνεργάσασθαι λιχνευόμενος.
>
> Indeed, Thucydides always strives in what he writes for this vividness, such that he yearns to make the listener an observer to render as vivid as possible for readers those terrible events that were so *ekplēctika* and so disturbing for the people who witnessed them.

Among modern scholars, Huart labels it a description of fear that causes paralysis and stupor.[35] Cusumano stresses the link between *ekplēxis* and expectation: the dread of something yet to come, the shock of the unexpected.[36] This implies it is a part of, and not in contrast with, human procedures of rational cognition. As a word of fear, it is different from words like *phobos* and *deos* in degree, but also in kind, for several reasons.[37] One is its abstraction: it ends with the abstract form '-sis,' and with its evocation of a physical blow it reads like a metaphor.[38] Another is its relative rarity in texts before the *Peloponnesian War,* in contrast to its frequency and importance here.[39] A third is the way it is used in by other writers. Without seeking to be exhaustive, these uses demonstrate three nuances of the word I wish to highlight.

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[33] Grethlein (2023, 148-9): "While *energeia* has attracted much attention, *ekplēxis* still awaits a full investigation, not surprisingly as it is not easily identifiable as the predecessor of an important category."
[34] This was also considered a defining feature of Homeric verse: see Gazis 2018, 1-13.
[35] Huart 1968, 117.
[36] Cusumano 2011, 40.
[37] See de Romilly 2005, 227. See also Hunter 1986, 418: "[*ekplēxis*] implies a blow to the wits or a shock."
[38] See Allison 1997, 62f. On '-sis' nouns in general see also Browning 1958.
[39] See Huart 1968, 119; Cusumano 2011, 39 (incl. n12).

(1) The word in fact does not necessarily convey terror and may have to do with pleasure and desire. Its precise sense is of extreme agitation.

In the Platonic corpus a feeling of *ekplēxis* may be provoked by the sight and company of beautiful people (Pl. *Symp.* 216d), the memory of one's beloved (Pl. *Phdr.* 255b), the unfathomable nature of the Gods (Pl. *Euthph.* 6c). For Euripides it can describe someone overpowered by *erōs* (*Hipp.* 38; *Med.* 8, 639). A paradigmatic use is Plato's apparent description of a sexual orgasm in the *Philebus.* His point is that even the ostensibly greatest pleasures in fact are a mix of pleasure and pain, so that orgasm approximates experiencing torture (*Phlb.* 47a):

> τὸ δ' αὖ τῆς ἡδονῆς πολὺ πλέον ἐγκεχυμένον συντείνει τε καὶ ἐνίοτε πηδᾶν ποιεῖ, καὶ παντοῖα μὲν χρώματα, παντοῖα δὲ σχήματα, παντοῖα δὲ πνεύματα ἀπεργαζόμενον πᾶσαν **ἔκπληξιν** καὶ βοὰς μετὰ ἀφροσύνης ἐνεργάζεται
>
> An excess of inflowing pleasure excites him and sometimes makes him leap and turn every kind of colour, every form, every sort of breath causing all ***ekplēxis*** and mindless screaming.

Plato's argument about the interrelation of pain and pleasure draws partly on a common experience, partly on this word and concept that cuts across the line between attraction and repulsion. A similar example of this sense in the *Peloponnesian War* is the famous deception of the Athenian envoys at Egesta (6.46). By a number of tricks, the Egestans make it appear to the Athenians as if they have far more wealth than they do in fact: not only this, but that their city is enormously wealthy, and all the citizens have exceptionally lavish lifestyles and drink from cups of gold and silver (6.46.3). Thucydides writes that this "caused

a great *ekplēxis* among the Athenians from the [embassy] triremes, and when they returned to Athens, they told everyone they had seen a lot of money" (6.46.4: μεγάλην τὴν **ἔκπληξιν** τοῖς ἐκ τῶν τριήρων Ἀθηναίοις παρεῖχε, καὶ ἀφικόμενοι ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας διεθρόησαν ὡς χρήματα πολλὰ ἴδοιεν).[40] Clearly the Athenians are not afraid of the treasure: very much the opposite, they are so impressed and awestruck that they do not think to interrogate what they see. Later when the invading force arrives the Athenians discover that they were deceived by the Egestans and there is far less money available for the expedition than they had claimed. Nikias was expecting the bad news; Alcibiades and Lamachos find it "really incomprehensible" (6.46.2: ἀλογώτερα).[41] Thucydides writes that: "When word [*logos*] came through that the money in Egesta was not there, they [the emissaries] received a lot of blame from the soldiers" (6.46.5: ἐπειδὴ διῆλθεν ὁ λόγος ὅτι οὐκ εἴη ἐν τῇ Ἐγέστῃ τὰ χρήματα, πολλὴν τὴν αἰτίαν εἶχον ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν). An important part of the effect in this case is that the Egestans have not only enough money to pay for the Athenian force (a lie – cf. 6.6.2), but that they are exorbitantly wealthy. Paradoxically, the degree of unlikelihood of what the emissaries experience corresponds with the *ekplēxis* that causes them to lose their heads and believe it utterly. On closer inspection this turns out not to be a coincidence but a part of how *ekplēxis* works. One example of *kataplēxis,* striking the Argive army when the Spartans unexpectedly withdraw in Book 5, seems inappropriate to translate as 'terrified' (5.65.5). Hobbes gives "amazed," Mynott "staggered."[42]

[40] Kallet (2001, 69-79, esp. 75) argues that the passage is harsh on the Athenian emissaries.
[41] On the meaning of this word see Dover in Gomme, *Commentary* 4.312. The antithesis with "Nikias was expecting [it]" ("τῷ μὲν Νικίᾳ προσδεχομένῳ") rests on a characterisation of expectation as something which results from the use of *logos.*
[42] Hobbes 9.78; Mynott 2013, 366.

(2) What is common between the fear and desire is a notion of excess, extremity, or unexpectedness.

Plato uses the term to describe the impact of an excessive multitude of examples on people's ability to think clearly (*Phlb.* 26c), and elsewhere of a dizzyingly impressive speech (*Phdr.* 234d, *Symp.* 198b5-c5). In Herodotus it may have to do with the overwhelming situation of a battle (Hdt. 8.94.1), the mass of arrows in the air at Thermopylae (7.226.2), a shocking and cruel punishment (1.116.2), or the lavish fineries of a Persian meal (9.82.2). In Thucydides, superior numbers (4.10.3), invisible threats (6.38.2, 6.40.2) unexpected or sudden events (1.81.6, 2.62.2, 4.73.4, 6.34.6) are all cited as triggers of *kataplēxis.* Cusumano stresses the link between *ekplēxis* and the unexpected.[43] The Peloponnesian raid of Salamis, when the city's beacons had been lit and people believed the Piraeus had been captured. For their part, those in the Piraeus thought the Peloponnesians had captured Salamis and would soon attack them. In fact, neither of these were true: the Peloponnesian fleet raided Salamis, but as soon as the Athenian ships approached, they fled back to Megara (2.94.1).[44] First, Thucydides writes, since the port was largely undefended and there were no prohibitive winds, it would have been completely possible for the Peloponnesians to sail into the Piraeus, had they taken the chance. In this regard, the Athenians' panic was not an irrational or wanton flight of feeling but an experience of manifest danger. Second, the result of their *ekplēxis* was a rushed defence, which succeeded, not only in protecting the city, but in intimidating the Peloponnesian force away from Salamis (2.94.2-4). The incident foreshadows later disasters and is recalled by means of numerous parallels when Thucydides last uses the term, after the revolt

[43] Cusumano 2011, 40.

[44] For an explanation of how the beacons worked see the helpful scholiast's entry to this passage (in Hude 1973, 157-8).

of Euboea (8.96.1).[45] During the first incident in Book 2, he writes: "There was an *ekplēxis* which was not smaller than any of those that occurred throughout the war." (2.94.1: ἔκπληξις ἐγένετο οὐδεμιᾶς τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐλάσσων). After the revolt of Euboea, he writes: "An *ekplēxis* arose which was the greatest of all those that had come before" (8.96.1: ἔκπληξις μεγίστη δὴ τῶν πρὶν παρέστη).[46] By now the arrival of ships in the Piraeus has come to seem far more like an imminent danger, although still it does not occur because of Spartan incompetence (cf. 8.96.4-5), and Athenian fortunes recover before the text cuts off (8.106.5).

(3) *Ekplēxis* has a paralysing effect on people's capacity to reason (i.e. use *logos*), and consequently to act (i.e. use *ergon*), but this is not to say it is irrational. It may have objective or logical causes. *Ekplēxis* may come from *logos* in the sense that someone has deliberately engineered a situation or a speech to produce this effect in someone else. Equally it may be remedied by *logos*.

Ekplēxis in Thucydides may describe an objective situational fact (7.69.2, 8.15.1, 8.92.7), or be explained in terms of a process of rational thought (3.42.2, 3.113.5, 5.10.6). Sometimes it is the subject of the sentence alongside a verb like *gignomai* or *empiptō* (e.g. 2.94.1, 4.34.2).[47] It may be noted parenthetically that this, combined with the use of *phobos* as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 (respectively in relation to Sparta and Aristogieton), suggests a view of emotions in Thucydides that does not oppose them to reason, but associates them with how we

[45] Hornblower notes this (*Commentary* 3.1029).
[46] On the apparent contradiction here see Allison 1997, 62-3, who suggests several ways of resolving it. Her first seems to me the best – that "Thucydides is writing within the chronology of his events" – and therefore effectively this is another example of transformation.
[47] Cf. Allan 2013, 380-1. On *gignesthai* in Thucydides see Allison 1997, 115. On the use of compounds like *piptō* with impersonal forces or feelings as the grammatical subject, see Joho 2022.

understand concrete situations, and essentially a part of those situations, from a human perspective. This may be one reason why it does not *necessarily* need to be *caused* by the deliberate machinations of someone else. But it *can* be caused in this way, notably by speech or manipulation of appearances, the two forces correspondent with *logos* as I showed in Chapter. 4. Above I cited examples from Plato where *ekplēxis* may be the effect produced by an impressive speech. In *Iphigenia at Tauris,* Iphigenia tells Orestes "Do not cause me *ekplēxis* with words" (*IT* 773: μὴ λόγοις ἔκπλησσέ με). We have already seen how commanders strategised to deliberately engineer *ekplēxis* during the Sicilian campaign (see also Pericles manipulating the Athenians: 2.65.9). In that sense it is an instrument of power separate from military might (the cause of an engineered *ekplēxis* is sometimes an army or something an army does, but not necessarily). Equally commanders may try to remedy a perceived condition of *ekplēxis* in the army with a speech (4.126.1, 7.69.2, 7.77.4).[48] Nikias' last speech incorporates an opposition between *kataplēxis* and *logos* where he enjoins his men: "do not be too struck with *kataplēxis,* think rationally" (7.77.4: μὴ καταπέπληχθε ἄγαν, λογίζεσθε δὲ).

Nikias' statement points to the sensation's paralysing. stultifying effect that cuts across the seam of *logos* and *ergon,* people's capacity to reason and to act. Three times the word is used to describe the duress of Spartan fighting at Pylos and Sphakteria (4.14.3, 4.34.2, 4.36.2), as they respond to tactical manoeuvres and situations where they are inexperienced.[49] At 4.14.3, Thucydides writes, the Spartans in their panic behave as if fighting a sea-battle from the land, and the Athenians in their lust of victory as if fighting a land-battle from the sea. Earlier the Ambraciot herald is so overcome by *ekplēxis* when he realises the scale of the

[48] For an overview of the military speeches see Luschnat 1942; Leimbach 1985; Tsakmakis/Themistokleous 2013. These all tend to focus on identifying common linguistic and rhetorical features.

[49] The word makes an implicit analogy between the situation of the Spartans in Book 4 and that of the Athenians after the defeat in Sicily (made explicitly at 7.71.7). For a more developed discussion of how the two episodes relate to each other, see Rood 1998A, 7-8, with further citations at 7n14.

city's loss that he forgets his mission of collecting the corpses (3.113.5). The giant battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse overwhelms both sides and inhibits their ability to act together and give and receive orders: "there was a huge noise from so many ships crashing together and at the same time an *ekplēxis* and an impossibility of hearing what those who were giving orders were shouting" (7.70.6: τὸν κτύπον μέγαν ἀπὸ πολλῶν νεῶν ξυμπιπτουσῶν ἔκπληξίν τε ἅμα καὶ ἀποστέρησιν τῆς ἀκοῆς ὧν οἱ κελευσταὶ φθέγγοιντο παρέχειν).[50] Thucydides' specific emphasis on the soldiers' inability to hear their superiors' commands implicitly opposes *logos* to *ekplēxis*; but also, as in the examples from Book 6 above, *ekplēxis* is portrayed less as an emotional or psychological reaction among the soldiers than as an independent property of the battle itself. In the immediate aftermath of Athens' loss Thucydides writes: "And there was an *ekplēxis* smaller than none of the others up to that moment" (7.71.7: ἦν τε ἐν τῷ παραυτίκα οὐδεμιᾶς δὴ τῶν ξυμπασῶν ἐλάσσων ἔκπληξις).

Ekplēxis can be individual or collective, and can be short-term and immediate or else longer-lasting in response to a more fundamental blow, as with the changes to the Spartan character and outlook following the defeat at Pylos and Sphakteria (4.55.3-4):

> [3] καὶ ἅμα τὰ τῆς τύχης πολλὰ καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ξυμβάντα **παρὰ λόγον αὐτοῖς ἔκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε**, καὶ ἐδέδισαν μή ποτε αὖθις ξυμφορά τις αὐτοῖς περιτύχῃ οἵα καὶ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ. [4] ἀτολμότεροι δὲ δι᾽ αὐτὸ ἐς τὰς μάχας ἦσαν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι κινήσειαν ᾤοντο ἁμαρτήσεσθαι διὰ τὸ τὴν γνώμην ἀνεχέγγυον γεγενῆσθαι ἐκ τῆς πρὶν ἀηθείας τοῦ κακοπραγεῖν.

[50] Pelling 7.222 notes that this is the last time in the Sicilian narrative that *ekplēxis* afflicts both the Syracusans and the Athenians.

> [3] And also the numerous changes of fortune, in such a short time, and **contrary to their understanding, caused a very large *ekplēxis***, and they were afraid in case at some time some other disaster should happen to them like the one on the island. [4] They were less courageous because of this in battles, and in their every move they believed they would go wrong because their judgements were not confident due to their being previously unused to failure.

Here the contributing element of surprise to *ekplēxis*, stressed by Cusumano, is very significant.[51] But Thucydides goes further with both the term he uses to convey this and the implications he describes of this feeling. The term "contrary to their understanding" (παρὰ λόγον) conveys not only unexpectedness but a much broader opposition between what has occurred and what the Spartans previously believed about themselves and their own ability to fight and strategise. As Thucydides emphasises, the Spartans' specific beliefs and expectations in any circumstance were always underpinned by their own self-image as brave and successful fighters, their understanding of others as less brave and less effective, and their assumptions consequently about what would happen whenever they and others meet each other in war. All of these were joined together in the implicit rules the Spartans believed any military encounter would follow, like laws of physics, which had now been overturned. Similarly, in Nikias' last speech (discussed at 7.77.4) it is this self-image, as well as faith in the gods, which he tries to restore and use to resist the feeling. Psychologically *ekplēxis* involves a sensation of upheaval where the world appears completely different from what one thought, one's own position tiny and insecure. One's

[51] Cusumano 2011. Surprise is a common feature of *ekplēxis* but not a necessary one.

confidence in one's own powers of reasoning and action is destroyed. This feeling may be momentary or permanent.

The above examples show that *ekplēxis* conveys an experience of terror as a kind of force opposed to reason in a few possible senses, but no single necessary sense. It is opposed to expectation, calculation, language, self-image, values, and at times the basic order of someone's idea of the world. Indeed, it functions as a kind of inverted Herodotean *thōma*. As we saw in the last chapter, Thucydidean speeches normally attempt to convince their audience by giving an ordered, sensible portrayal of the world that makes a certain action seem necessary and convincing them of that portrayal's truth. But the kind of *logos* (strategy) that brings about an *ekplēxis* (usually by some action, *ergon*) works the opposite way: by breaking that foundation of self-certainty which enables someone to resist, assess, think strategically, act. As a deliberate military and political tactic, the function of causing *ekplēxis* is to deprive someone of their *logos* which paralyses their resistance, just as it might be advantageous to burn an enemy's fleet or destroy their walls. In that sense the use of deliberate tactics to cause *ekplēxis* in someone else is often, so to speak, the continuation of war by other means, and a deployment of *logos* as and by *ergon*.

But to point out that *ekplēxis* may be deliberately engineered and its use is bound up in other relations does not exhaust its sense, because it exerts a force that musts be reckoned with *qua* force. Perhaps more obviously than with physical force, this one works by breaking down people's representations of themselves and the world. To undergo *ekplēxis* is to experience a bend in one's reality.

Ekplēxis and the Construction of Meaning

We will begin to discuss the philosophical implications of this point by examining this use of the term in relation to Nikias (7.69.2):

> ὁ δὲ Νικίας **ὑπὸ τῶν παρόντων ἐκπεπληγμένος** καὶ ὁρῶν οἷος ὁ κίνδυνος καὶ ὡς ἐγγὺς ἤδη [ἦν], ἐπειδὴ καὶ ὅσον οὐκ ἔμελλον ἀνάγεσθαι, καὶ νομίσας, ὅπερ πάσχουσιν ἐν τοῖς μεγάλοις ἀγῶσι, πάντα τε ἔργῳ ἔτι σφίσιν ἐνδεᾶ εἶναι καὶ λόγῳ αὐτοῖς οὔπω ἱκανὰ εἰρῆσθαι, αὖθις τῶν τριηράρχων ἕνα ἕκαστον ἀνεκάλει, πατρόθεν τε ἐπονομάζων καὶ αὐτοὺς ὀνομαστὶ καὶ φυλήν, ἀξιῶν τό τε καθ᾽ ἑαυτόν, ᾧ ὑπῆρχε λαμπρότητός τι, μὴ προδιδόναι τινὰ καὶ τὰς πατρικὰς ἀρετάς, ὧν ἐπιφανεῖς ἦσαν οἱ πρόγονοι, μὴ ἀφανίζειν, πατρίδος τε τῆς ἐλευθερωτάτης ὑπομιμνήσκων καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ ἀνεπιτάκτου πᾶσιν ἐς τὴν δίαιταν ἐξουσίας, ἄλλα τε λέγων ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἤδη τοῦ καιροῦ ὄντες ἄνθρωποι οὐ πρὸς τὸ δοκεῖν τινὶ ἀρχαιολογεῖν φυλαξάμενοι εἴποιεν ἄν, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἁπάντων παραπλήσια ἔς τε γυναῖκας καὶ παῖδας καὶ θεοὺς πατρῴους προφερόμενα, ἀλλ᾽ **ἐπὶ τῇ παρούσῃ ἐκπλήξει ὠφέλιμα νομίζοντες** ἐπιβοῶνται.
>
> Nikias, **struck terrified by the present circumstances** and seeing what the danger was like and how near it by now was, since of course they would not be long in putting out, and thinking, as happens to people who undergo huge trials, that they still had everything left to do and that not enough had yet been said by them in speech, once again addressed the trierarchs one by one, calling them by each their own patronymic, name and tribe; calling upon each of them to whom there belonged something of distinction not to give these up; and not to hide their family virtues, in the case of those who had famous ancestors; and reminding them that their country was the freest and that there were no rules there governing how people must live their lives; and saying other things, as many as

> people in this kind of situation, not worried about seeming to speak a little archaically, might say, and which is always similar, about wives and children and household Gods, but which they, considering it helpful **against the present striking terrifying circumstances**, cry out.

The passage cultivates a sense of *pathos* with Nikias' situation. For the character who opposed this entire invasion in the first place this is well-deserved.[52] It comes also from its placement in a context of high emotional intensity after the speeches (7.61-68) and before the climactic battle of the Sicilian narrative (7.70-72).[53] In general the line between the perspective of the reader in these sections and that of the major characters is very thin, as for example with the description of the Athenian soldiers watching from the shore (7.71.1-3).[54] Bakker notes how Thucydides writes the entire sequence in the imperfect tense (including the main verb ἀνεκάλει above), creating a sense that the text's actions are being narrated as they are experienced.[55] Stylistic idiosyncrasies here lend further weight to this impression. Some scholars, for example, have commented on the "uncharacteristically" lengthy and paratactic form of the sentence, arguing it is meant to approximate the manner of Nikias himself.[56] But these features also lend the passage a sense of breathlessness and cause its form to align with its emotional content: once again, they induce some of the *ekplêxis* ascribed to Nikias

[52] On irony in Thucydides' representation of Nikias see Sebastiani 2018.
[53] Foster makes this point (2017, 311).
[54] Greenwood (2006, 39-40) argues that Thucydides' description of the watching soldiers places a distance between the observers of the battle and its readers (see also Huitink 2020, 203-5). I agree with scholars who have argued that more broadly the battle's narrative completeness is a composite one, achieved by plunging the reader vividly into several distinct perspectives (see Walker 1993, 372-3; Bakker 1997, 41-2).
[55] Bakker 1997, 40-45.
[56] See those cited in n6 above. Tompkins upbraids Hornblower and Rood writing that (2017, 114): "They dismiss, without extended analysis, efforts like Lateiner's to connect Nikias' speech with his previous utterances." But by the same stroke Tompkins, in choosing to read the passage as an expression of Nikias' character rather than a general human impulse, dismisses the generalising thrust of Thucydides' Greek. Rood does respond to Lateiner's brief characterisation of that portion of the Greek (1985, 203: Lateiner claims Thucydides criticises the generality of what Nikias says), by noting that "Nikias has dealt with the specific tactics already" (195n55). On *parataxis* as *pathos* see also Trédé 1975, 168-9.

in the reader.[57] Pelling writes that the sentence "reflects [Nikias'] agitation as the clauses tumble one after another."[58] Something similar occurs elsewhere in places of heightened emotion in Thucydides; such as in his description of the upheaval caused by *stasis* throughout Greece during the war (3.82), where antithetical μέν/δὲ clauses are paratactically strung together on a thread of conjunctions and participles, building a sense of climax. Finally, reading from the end we might recall how Nikias himself will end up killed, a man who was "least deserving" of this end (7.86.5: ἥκιστα δὴ ἄξιος ὢν).

Yet his encouragement to the Athenians is futile, especially given the circumstances, and the eventual outcome which is known to the reader in advance. Several scholars have noted that the sentence is a ring of which *ekplêxis* is the start and the end.[59] Lateiner takes its ring shape as proving how Nikias' words "failed to accomplish anything at all."[60] They are supposed to be "against" ("ἐπὶ") the *ekplêxis*, yet a sense of *ekplêxis* above is what the entire passage conveys to the reader. He argues that the word ἀρχαιολογεῖν ("speak a little archaically") is pejorative, and that in the formulation ὠφέλιμα νομίζοντες ("considering it helpful") the word 'considering' has an implied connotation of something like 'but not in fact.'[61]

But together, these two elements – *pathos* and futility – are transposed by a generalising trust which incorporates the passage into the *Peloponnesian War's* broader characterisation of the human condition. The line between the sense of futility and the outlook which informs this sense is traversed by this statement of Rood's: "the cries are a prelude to destruction, there is no answering signal from

[57] As Lateiner himself says (1985, 201n2) – although serving his argument instead of mine – they "suggest a conscious stylistic attempt to have manner imitate matter."
[58] Pelling 7.215.
[59] Rawlings 1981, 155; Lateiner 1985, 201n2; Tompkins 2017, 113-116.
[60] Lateiner 1985, 205.
[61] See also Grethlein 2008, 135f. and footnotes.

the gods."[62] Elsewhere Rood argues the language of the passage is crafted for generality of emphasis.[63] The sense of generality is heightened by the passage's echo of *Iliad* 10.68, where Agamemnon instructs Menelaos to address each man by their patronymic.[64] Carmona Centeno notes that the word πατρόθεν appears nowhere else in Thucydides than at 7.69.2.[65] Similarly these words echo Pericles' Funeral Oration in Book 2.[66] Rawlings argues the echo is ironic and intended to create a contrast between the "calm, logical, controlling" Pericles and the "compassionate and concerned general [Nikias] who speaks, indeed shouts to his solders."[67] But Wohl claims that this "faded and pathetic reiteration of Pericles' *Epitaphios*" draws our attention to how "in a sense these words were always hollow."[68] As Wohl points out, already readers have observed the challenge made to the civic ideals in Pericles' speech by the onset of the plague (2.47.3-54); and on several more occasions, such as when Periclean values are reframed in the figure of Cleon during Books 3 and 4.[69] Taking the first of these, there is a direct analogy between the experience of Nikias before the battle and that of the sufferer of the plague in Book 2. In both cases what undermines the power of the words to reassure and solidify is the presence of a life-threatening force: in the latter case, the rival military force of the Syracusans and their allies; in the former,

[62] Rood 1998A, 195.
[63] Rood 2022, 382-5.
[64] Scholiast *ad loc.* (= Hude 1973, 398-399). Discussed in Zadorojnyi 1998, 301 (his article claims there is a whole web of correspondences between Nikias and Agamemnon through the Sicilian episodes); Rood 1998B, 232-6 (he responds to Zadorojnyi).
[65] Carmona Centeno 2014, 104.
[66] For a list of specific phrases see Rawlings 1981, 154.
[67] Rawlings 1981, 158.
[68] Wohl 2002, 200.
[69] *Ibid.* On the juxtaposition of the funeral oration with the plague, and how the latter undermines the sentiments of the former, see Foster 2010, 204-210; Orwin 2016, 113-128. On Cleon as a revealing distortion of Pericles see Cairns 1982; Wohl 2002, 73-105. On Thucydides' carefully rendered portrait of Cleon as a Thersites-figure see Flower 1992 (who accuses him of distorting the historical facts to preserve this image). See also Mader 2017, whose discussion is based on a traditional and overly schematic reading of Thucydides' own sense of the link relation discourse, truth, and pleasure, and an identification between Thucydides and Pericles. See my contrasting analysis of 1.22.4 at O'Sullivan 2024B, 64-8.

the obscure and alien force of the disease.[70] The hollowness of Nikias`s speech not simply invokes a contrast between good and bad leaders, but rather contributes to the careful and critical examination which occurs throughout the *Peloponnesian War* of Pericles' stated ideals. Some scholars have emphasised only the futility of Nikias' words without generalising, claiming instead that the passage portrays Nikias with a feeling of contempt or ridicule; but the evidence adduced supports the notion of a portrayal from which the reader is not so easily distanced.[71] It is true that the passage characterises the Nikias' words as futile and even hackneyed; but this should not be conflated with a criticism of Nikias or a judgemental tone. Instead, it is a recognition of how Nikias' situation is both exceptional and representative: exceptional because it is a moment of extreme terror; representative because it exhibits something fundamental according to Thucydides.

Here I want to return to the concept of the *ekplēktic* mode which I developed in Chapter 3. An analogy may be possible with Scarry's claim about "The self-flagellation of the religious ascetic," which she has argued "is not (as is often asserted) an act of denying the body, eliminating its claims for attention, but a way of so emphasising the body that the contents of the world are cancelled, and the path is clear for the entry of an unworldly, contentless force."[72] What is at stake in this mode of writing, conceived as an analogy with the sailors' experience, is more than nice prose but a complex meditation on the link between, experience, sense, and force. In her important book *The Body in Pain:*

[70] The connection between suffering from disease and military violence is drawn at the very start of the *Iliad* (1.43-52), in which sufferers of the plague are struck by arrows from Apollo. Thucydides writes that when the plague first reached the Piraeus in Athens many believed the Peloponnesians had poisoned the wells (2.48.2).
[71] The best-known such discussion is Lateiner 1985, whom I address further below. See also Wohl 2002, 200; Grethlein 2008, 134-6; and Tompkins 2017, 113ff. For more sympathetic readings see the discussion in Rood 1998A, 193-195 (with bibliography at 193n54); and Hornblower, *Commentary* 3.689ff.
[72] Scarry 1985, 34.

The Making and Unmaking of the World, Scarry argues that pain is opposed to sense, it destroys our capacity to reason or even pay attention to other things, and at extremes even our self-certainty and stability of reference – it is 'the unmaking of the world.' She calls pain "the sensory equivalent of death."[73] But she argues that this property of pain makes it an essential instrument of power: whoever wields the power of life and death, or the power of pain, uses the threat of a complete breakdown of meaning to impose a particular construction, they 'make the world.' For Scarry this works via the subjugated party's experience of pain as a spectacle, a performance orchestrated by the powerful where they seem to lift the world's veil of sense.[74] The simplest, most intense and direct form of this is torture, on which she spends considerable time. The combined aspects of torture bring about "the process of perception in which all human reality is made, no matter how screamingly present, invisible, inaudible."[75]

Scarry's ideas may lead us to contemplate the *ekplēktic* aspect of Thucydides' work, not simply as a destructive force or feeling that makes the world seem to collapse, but as a generative one through which worlds are constructed. Equally, Plato's remarks about orgasm in the *Philebus*, quoted above, point to a strange affinity between sex and torture, and more generally between terror and desire. It is with this in mind that I want to return to the Periclean sequence in Book 2, which is alluded to especially during Nikias' speeches.[76] The Funeral Oration (2.35-46), and Pericles' last speech (2.60-4) are separated by the narrative of the plague in Athens (2.47.3-54), and all three should be read together as a set-piece.[77]

[73] *Ibid.* 61.
[74] In this regard her thought resonates with the pre-modern notion of justice described by Foucault (1995).
[75] Scarry 1985, 44.
[76] See the discussion of 7.69 above and of Nikias' last speech at the beginning of Chapter 6 (232ff.).
[77] This has long been recognised (see Steinbock 2024, 135-6). Pericles' earlier speech in Book 1 (1.140-4) is cited here where relevant, though it is largely intended to outline Athenian strategy and the city's power base, as opposed to these speeches in Book 2 which are more explicit articulations of a political and ideological outlook.

What follows is indebted in several ways to Nicole Loraux's pathbreaking study of the epitaphic genre.[78] A significant and controversial aspect of her work, more pronounced in the later abridged French edition, is the use of the term 'ideology,' with its implied base/superstructure model.[79] Marxist theories of ideology normally presuppose a capitalist system in which the structure of economic relations and needs determines the base. I alluded to this in Chapter 6, but the base/superstructure model becomes readily available to us if we treat hegemonic cultural genres and institutions like the Funeral Oration,[80] not in reference to an economic base, but a politico-military one.[81] These are not mutually exclusive and in fact may be two sides of a coin. The institutional need that causes a society's base to grow into its superstructure is social reproduction: that is, the creation of more people who are willing to do the work needed at all levels to maintain the existing order. Loraux details how the Athenian annual Funeral Oration not only turns the death of soldiers at war from a tragedy into a celebration; it consolidates the collective identity and individual values that make Athenians the sort of people who will start and fight such wars in the first place.[82] She also discusses the tensions that the institution invariably makes and tries to smooth over; these,

[78] Loraux 1986; cf. the essays in Pritchard (ed.) 2024. See also Ziolkowski 1981, whose comparative analysis is mostly directed towards the authenticity question.
[79] See Azoulay and Ismard 2024 on both the history of the concept and Loraux's use of it.
[80] Loraux 1986, 88 – "hegemonic speech" (cf. Wohl 2002, 38).
[81] Dover (1974, 161): "The continued existence of a Greek city-state depended ultimately on the military qualities of its adult male citizens." Marx says this himself (1974, 92-3), while making the important qualification that certain economic conditions were necessary so that the politico-military base (not his term) could harden as it did. He writes that "forms of social production that preceded the bourgeois form, are treated by the bourgeoisie in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions." The economic structures of ancient Athens are a massive and controversial topic. It strikes me that many recent efforts to overturn Finley's (1999) paradigmatic view may be vulnerable to the criticism Marx levelled at nineteenth-century economists.
[82] Cf. Lenfant 2024, 373-4.

with difference emphasis, the account and framing of Thucydides itself bring into focus too.[83]

What interests me above all here is the process of creating consent rather than what people strictly consent to, but it is necessary to discuss and delimit the latter as a way into the former. In late antiquity Plutarch writes that Pericles' son died during the Plague; Aelian records that his two legitimate sons died, and he bore their deaths with great nobility (Plut. *Vit. Per.* 36.3; Ael. *VH* 9.6).[84] They reflect a strand of Pericles' later reception where he seems exemplary, adhering to his principles (ethical and strategic), and not surrendering to his emotions or circumstances, even against terrible adversity from without.[85] For these readers, the plague serves not to diminish but to underscore the greatness of Pericles and his vision. The biographical details are missing from the *Peloponnesian War*, but they reflect the image of Pericles that he himself projects in his beleaguered last speech after the Plague, when the Athenians have begun to treat him angrily and hold him responsible for leading them into such a destructive conflict (2.59-64 cf. 1.127.1-3).[86] The sentiment both of this final speech and the admiring anecdotes of the later authors is essentially that it is a great and very respectable thing to bear significant misfortune lightly (see esp. 2.64.1-3, cf. 1.140.1).[87] Two important themes of the last speech are glory and excellence – the commitment to be a certain way and to do certain things as thoroughly as possible even up to the

[83] I do not agree that the question of the authenticity of this speech (was it actually said by Pericles or composed by Thucydides?) is the "essential difficulty" of this sequence (Hornblower 1.295), at least for me. Cf. Steinbock (2024, 135): "The key to coming to grips with the *epitaphios logos* of Pericles lies in acknowledging that the speech works at different levels."

[84] Cf. Dover 1974, 167-9. On the reception of Pericles through antiquity and beyond see Banfi 2003; Azoulay 2010. For a range of twentieth-century receptions see Dabdab Trabulsi 2011.

[85] See Banfi (2003, 215-45) on reception and more recently Joho's (2022, 270-309) analysis of the Book 2 sequence.

[86] Flashar (1969, 42) quite reasonably finds the tone of this speech dismissive of the extent of suffering during the plague.

[87] An important theme is the defence of Pericles himself (Will 2003, 212) but this should not be equated with a defence of Pericles by Thucydides (cf. 6.16).

point of death (which anyway is inevitable, we must all do *something* up to the point of death), in the hope of achieving everlasting renown. As Foster notes commenting on 2.64.3 in his last speech, Pericles is explicit that:

> More Athenians have died and labored in war than citizens of any other people. This greatest effort has acquired the greatest reward, since Athens possesses the greatest power among the Greeks. This power, in turn, will fade away, but (…) that this achievement will meet eternal remembrance is Pericles' great hope.[88]

It would be too simplistic to suggest that the plague simply refutes the Periclean stance articulated in Book 2.[89] The juxtaposition needs to be careful and both sides given their full weight. Foster is very precise in her formulation that "Thucydides displays both Pericles' talents and his limitations" from his introduction in the narrative to his death.[90] For Pericles and his admirers, the plague is an impetus to embody them more freely and sincerely. Parry makes the following eulogy:

> [Pericles] was able to lead them [the Athenians] so as to maintain the sovereignty of Athenian intelligence over all political circumstances, both predictable ones, such as Spartan hostility, and unpredictable ones, such as the almost supernatural visitation of the Plague. This sovereignty, for Thucydides, is the final meaning of *freedom*.[91]

[88] Foster 2010, 200.
[89] Flashar 1969 (esp. 41-2). See Steinbock (2024, 138-9) on polarised scholarly views of the Funeral Oration and a suggestion that Thucydides is ambivalent. Woodman (1988, 32-40) argues the narrative is structured specifically to exonerate Pericles.
[90] Foster 2010, 217. Syme (1960, 50) writes of Thucydides' "preoccupation with Pericles, indeed his affection for Pericles." From Book 1 through the early sections of Book 2 he should be read alongside his Spartan counterpart, the wise King Archidamus (see, e.g. Wasserman 1953; de Romilly 2005, 211-22; Bloedow 1983; Pelling 1991). Later he becomes "a paradigm against which (…) all others are to be judged" (adapted from Ferrario 2014, 110).
[91] Parry 1989, 146-7.

The Greek word with which Pericles expresses the ideal Parry approximates, in the Funeral Oration, is *autarkeia.*[92] Listing Athenian achievements at the beginning he says, "We have set up the city as fully *autarkēs* in all things related to both war and peace (2.36.3: τὴν πόλιν τοῖς πᾶσι παρεσκευάσαμεν καὶ ἐς πόλεμον καὶ ἐς εἰρήνην αὐταρκεστάτην.). In another part of the speech the same superlative describes the individual masculine body (2.41.1), adaptable to all situations and a key reason why Athens is "an education to Greece." This virtue of free control and adaptability, in some ways, seems entirely suited (arguably designed) to meet a circumstance such as the plague. In his description of the disease Thucydides repeats the word specifically to describe how people's health or lifestyles were no protection against the disease (2.51.3). Overall, the descriptive sequence of the plague inverts that of the Funeral Oration. Where the latter moves from describing the city – "from what sort of customs we achieved [our conquests] and with what sort of constitution and by what sort of ways they became great" (2.36.4: ἀπὸ δὲ οἵας τε **ἐπιτηδεύσεως** ἤλθομεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὰ καὶ μεθ᾽ οἵας **πολιτείας** καὶ **τρόπων** ἐξ οἵων μεγάλα ἐγένετο) – to reflections on individual virtue and exhortations to the crowd, the plague narrative progresses from a detailed description of its individual and physical effects to one of psychological, moral, and civic collapse.[93] The plague rewards selfishness and poor character; those who try to help others are most likely to catch it and be killed (2.51.4):

> δεινότατον (…) ὅτι ἕτερος ἀφ᾽ ἑτέρου θεραπείας ἀναπιμπλάμενοι ὥσπερ τὰ πρόβατα ἔθνησκον (…) καὶ μάλιστα οἱ ἀρετῆς τι

[92] This virtue forms the basis of Castoriadis' (2011) discussions of Thucydides and Periclean Athens generally. Nichols (2015, 24-50), ties her discussion of freedom in the Funeral Oration to *eleutheria,* but that is not the word Pericles uses most emphatically. Nichols does not confront the word`s full semantic range (see Raaflaub 2004, and the discussion and references at Wohl 2002, 37 and 181-8) – above all the connection between freedom, power, and self-sufficiency (implied by Parry above to his credit with the word 'sovereignty').

[93] On the terms in bold see Hornblower 1.298. Cf. Macleod 1983, 151: "the gloomier reality."

μεταποιούμενοι· αἰσχύνῃ γὰρ ἠφείδουν σφῶν αὐτῶν ἐσιόντες παρὰ τοὺς φίλους, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰς ὀλοφύρσεις τῶν ἀπογιγνομένων τελευτῶντες καὶ οἱ οἰκεῖοι ἐξέκαμνον ὑπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι.

The most terrible thing (…) was that people caught the disease by caring for others, and died, like cattle [or 'sheep' in Attic] (…) Most of all [this happened to] people who had laid some claim to good character: through shame they were unsparing of themselves, visiting their friends, since finally even their household members grew tried of laments of the dying, conquered by so much evil.

The Funeral Oration's idealised, almost metaphysical portrayal of the civic essence of Athens is linked with an ethical imperative: as with the later teachings of the, philosophical schools, according to Pierre Hadot, the grand speculative vision of the former is meant to underscore the latter.[94] The speech must be carefully scrutinised as an example of rhetoric, an attempt to convince its audience that a certain course of action is appropriate.[95] Pericles begins by drawing a rather ambivalent portrait of his audience (and consequently the city).[96] He suggests that some will begrudge and disbelieve the achievements of those commemorated, particularly "if they hear of [an action] beyond their own capability" (2.35.2: εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν αὑτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούοι).[97] The description of the city proper, its customs and institutions, takes up less than half the speech (2.37-41) and is presented as a "lesson" in the difference between the two cities at war

[94] See Hadot 1995, 2002.

[95] Some scholars have drawn out this point to good effect by emphasising the historical setting of the speech: see Hardwick 1993; Sicking 1995; Tyrell and Bennet 1999; Bosworth 2000.

[96] In support of what follows see also Wohl (2002, 44-7) on 2.40.1.

[97] Sticking (1995, 405): "An Athenian funerary orator who expects part of his audience to disbelieve him and to begrudge the dead the praise they deserve is an odd phenomenon indeed." Kakridis is even stronger (1961, 5): "Is there a speaker in the entire world who has ever spoken this way?" ("*Gibt es auf der ganzen Welt einen Redner, der je so gesprochen hat*?").

(2.42.1: διδασκαλίαν τε ποιούμενος). In his introduction he claims it will be "advantageous for the entire crowd, both citizens and foreigners, to hear it" (2.36.4: τὸν πάντα ὅμιλον καὶ ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων ξύμφορον εἶναι ἐπακοῦσαι αὐτῶν). This he contrasts with a more historical narrative which he says that he chose not to give because he does "not want to talk at length about things to people who already know them" (2.36.4: μακρηγορεῖν ἐν εἰδόσιν οὐ βουλόμενος).[98] The Athenians, it seems, know their own history (*contra* 1.20.1-2, 6.54.1), but still need to be reminded of their civic character. The latter portion of the speech, building on the characterisation of the city, is a series of instructions and exhortations (2.43-6).

Macleod: "Pericles' whole purpose [in the Funeral Oration] is to show that bravery is worth it because of the real glory of the city that all can see and experience and enjoy and love."[99] In the Funeral Oration proper this glory is something tangible, a huge variety of freedom and choice of individual expression and consumption (cf. 2.37.1-8.2, 2.40.1-1.2).[100] In Pericles' last speech he calls on the citizens not to glory themselves in their mode of life, but to demonstrate a capacity to withstand suffering that will win it "the greatest name (…) among all men" (2.64.3: ὄνομα μέγιστον (…) ἐν ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις), so that "a memory [of the city] will be left behind" (*ibid.* μνήμη καταλελείψεται).[101] In the Funeral Oration Pericles characterises the city's glory as an *ergon* – he even contrasts it with remembrance in verse (2.41.4) – but by his last speech the *ergon* has become a *logos.* Connor has written that the two speeches "evoke and contrast sharply with one another."[102] In this case the opposition points to a deeper unity.

[98] This is a rhetorical *topos* (cf. Kakridis 1961, 18).
[99] Macleod 1983, 152.
[100] On the theme of *timē* throughout the text see de Romilly 2005, 175-90.
[101] Orwin's (1994, 15-29) reads the Funeral Oration and last speech as if both are saying this.
[102] Connor 1984, 65.

In the Funeral Oration Pericles asks the Athenians to treat these aspects of their lives as signs of the city's power (2.41.1-2):

> ξυνελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι (…) [2] καὶ ὡς οὐ λόγων ἐν τῷ παρόντι κόμπος τάδε μᾶλλον ἢ ἔργων ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια, αὐτὴ ἡ δύναμις τῆς πόλεως, ἣν ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν τρόπων ἐκτησάμεθα, σημαίνει.
>
> In summing up let me say that the entire city is an education to Greece (…) and that this is no boast of words in the present contrary to the truth of facts, the power itself of the city, which we have acquired by these behaviours, shows.

On one level the distinction between *logos* and *ergon* is the organising thought of this passage. Yet the so-called *alētheia ergōn,* the truth of the facts, of which Pericles speaks is not something tangible but a concept or a vision of the city's power that becomes intelligible from reading, as signs, the various customs and affordances of the polity (cf. 2.37-40).[103] Earlier he says that "no enemy has yet faced our full power" (2.39.2: ἀθρόᾳ τε τῇ δυνάμει ἡμῶν οὐδείς πω πολέμιος ἐνέτυχε). This power seems to become synonymous with the city where he asks the Athenians to be amazed at it (2.43.1: καθ᾽ ἡμέραν **ἔργῳ θεωμένους**) and become its lovers (*ibid.* ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς). The phrase in bold seems to repeat the paradox of 2.41.1-2 above, in which the solidity of an *ergon,* which seems to exclude or surpass *logos,* serves in fact as an enjoinder to adopt a perspective and a sign of something which as such has no visible appearance. Parry claims that Pericles in the Funeral Oration deploys a version of the *logos*/*ergon* distinction 32 times.[104] Despite this they end up in some very close

[103] Cf. Loraux 1986, 85: "Indeed, for the orator, the empire is merely the *sign* of a deeper, more durably reality, namely, the greatness of Athens."
[104] Parry 1981, 159.

entanglements.[105] Something of this should be excepted in a speech that is also a memorial and part of a ceremony (2.34).[106] But more profoundly Pericles' concept of Athens and Athenian power as an *ergon* incorporates an implicit one of Athens as *logos.* When plague strikes, and the lived situation of the Athenians becomes intolerable – "they believed their bodies and wealth alike were ephemeral" (2.53.2: ἐφήμερα τά τε σώματα καὶ τὰ χρήματα ὁμοίως ἡγούμενοι) – Pericles retreats to describing this latent, *logos*-aspect of his vision of Athenian power. This transformation is not a complete shift but a rearrangement of the idea in response to the pressure of events. From the reader's point of view, aspects that were submerged in the original presentation become apparent. Although, in the Funeral Oration, Pericles claims to bypass the need for a poet like Homer to sing the Athenians' praise to give them glory (2.41.4), his idea of glory as a monumental recompense for excellence, especially if it is carried up to the point of death, is in step with what the poets say.[107] Thus Pindar, in his eighth Nemean celebrating Deilias of Aegina's athletic victory, says the following in reference to Deilias' deceased father, Megas, also an athletic victory (*Nem.* 8.44-8):

> ὦ Μέγα, τὸ δ᾽ αὖτις τεὰν ψυχὰν κομίξαι
> οὔ μοι δυνατόν· κενεᾶν δ᾽ ἐλπίδων χαῦνον τέλος·
> σεῦ δὲ πάτρᾳ Χαριάδαις τε λάβρον
> ὑπερεῖσαι λίθον Μοισαῖον ἕκατι ποδῶν εὐωνύμων
> δὶς δὴ δυοῖν.
>
> O! Megas, I cannot bring your soul back
> to life, that is the fruitless end of vain hopes:

[105] Cf. the earlier discussion on pp. 62-4. Joho conflates entanglement with synthesis and is relieved (2022, 289): "For once, the gulf between λόγος and ἔργον is overcome." But the point should be, rather than stopping at synthesis, to press further and draw out the different kinds of relation at work.
[106] Cf. Gagarin (2006, 178): "[the Funeral Oration] can and should be treated as both a λόγος and an ἔργον."
[107] See Hornblower 2004, 74f.

for your country, for the Chariadae [your family]
I will erect a shouting stone[108] of the Muses, for your famous feet
twice two.[109]

Pindar's comparison seeks to use the sense of solidity of a stone monument to buttress the idea that a commemoration in verse, a recompense for the loss of life, has some significance or permanence.[110] More fundamentally, critics have discussed how the last books of the *Odyssey* by a similar means stages a process whereby physical things become signs through which Odysseus recovers his own identity and the world he inhabits at Ithaca.[111] His leg's scar, the bedpost, the fruit trees – if these are like the codewords by which Odysseus' family recognise him, that is because they are all nodes where many links intersect and join Odysseus with his wife and blood relations, his slaves, his subjects, and his own past. The physical reality of these markers only enhances their symbolic force. The political community, from this point of view, is not just a way of organising production and consumption, nor relations of hierarchy and power. It is also a structure of meaning, a way of organising reality in the broad sense; (both) the identity of oneself and the intelligibility of the other.[112] On the threshold of these Greek concepts, *logos* and *ergon*, there is something of this process of meaning-making as notions of identity, memory, and civic unity are tied onto a physical metaphor. But the instability of the former corresponds with the ineffability of the latter: "since indeed everything becomes less by nature" (2.64.3: πάντα γὰρ πέφυκε καὶ ἐλασσοῦσθαι). With the passage of time *logos*

[108] The metaphor compares the poem to a commemorative (perhaps funerary) stele.
[109] These are the feet of Megas and his son Deilias, both victorious athletes.
[110] Cf. Loraux on Pindar (1986, 231-2): "Each ode tends to become an autocelebration of the all-powerful *logos*."
[111] Zeitlin 1996; Henderson 1997; Purves 2006; Dougherty 2015 (see also Stanford 1960, 50; and more generally Montiglio 2005, 2011).
[112] This distinction between self and other, of course, emerges out of such a system and the above should not be interpreted as meaning it is prior.

becomes a way of perpetuating the reality of things that no longer exist. This move, by both Pindar and Pericles, causes the *logos*-form of personal identity and collective meaning, which had previously concealed and submerged itself underneath symbolic *erga,* finally to reveal itself as a *logos* independent from physical reality, and thereby impervious to change. The promise of glory as an annulment of death is possible because, as *logos,* it can be void of any connection with the living circumstances or events of a moment.[113] The semantic emptiness of pure *logos,* the fact that it need not 'point to' anything in the world, is rehabilitated as its permanence. "Since love of glory alone is ageless," says Pericles "and in old age it is not money made, as indeed some say, that brings the most pleasure, but being honoured." (2.44.4: τὸ γὰρ φιλότιμον ἀγήρων μόνον, καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ ἀχρείῳ τῆς ἡλικίας τὸ κερδαίνειν, ὥσπερ τινές φασι, μᾶλλον τέρπει, ἀλλὰ τὸ τιμᾶσθαι – cf. Xen. *Hier.* 7.3-4).[114]

Meaning and Force

In the text it is repeatedly emphasised how Pericles was the most powerful and esteemed Athenian of his time (1.127.2-3, 2.34.6-8, 2.65.4-8). The sequence leading from the Funeral Oration to his last speech Pericles displays the considerable intelligence and strength of will that Thucydides highlights in the obituary (2.65.4-6). Indeed, his very first speech in the text begins with the Greek word for 'intelligence' (1.140: τῆς μὲν γνώμης). De Romilly argues that the narrative in Book 2 is based on an opposition between the rationality of Pericles and the passionate emotions of the crowd whom he leads and to whom he is placed in

[113] Cf. Orwin 1994, 19: "achieving apotheosis through glory."
[114] For some attestations of the contrary notion about money see Gomme 2.142.

opposition.[115] This apparent sovereignty of his sense of reason is compounded by his incorruptibility. Pericles avoided even the appearance of corruption (2.13.1, 2.60.5, 2.65.8).[116] In his last speech he tells the Athenians (2.60.5):

> 'ἐμοὶ τοιούτῳ ἀνδρὶ ὀργίζεσθε ὃς οὐδενὸς ἥσσων οἴομαι εἶναι γνῶναί τε τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἑρμηνεῦσαι ταῦτα, φιλόπολίς τε καὶ χρημάτων κρείσσων.'
>
> 'You are angry with me, the sort of person, I believe, who is worse than nobody at understanding and explaining what must be done – I love the city, I am incorruptible with money.'

Pericles' vice was not money, but glory, and his own personal glory in no small part.[117] On glory in general, it should be noted that when Thucydides describes how people turned away from trying to achieve it, in response to the plague, he says that "[each person] considered it unclear whether they would die before achieving it: what was already pleasant and what was in every case useful to this end, became regarded as fine and valuable" (2.53.3: ἄδηλον νομίζων εἰ πρὶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸ ἐλθεῖν διαφθαρήσεται· ὅτι δὲ ἤδη τε ἡδὺ πανταχόθεν τε ἐς αὐτὸ κερδαλέον, τοῦτο καὶ καλὸν καὶ χρήσιμον κατέστη). Thucydides describes a calculation between pleasures, where the real fulcrum is not between pleasure and something different but between two pleasures, one of the instant and the

[115] De Romilly 2005, 197-210. See also Connor 1984, 252. However, to insist too strongly on this would be no less simplistic than claiming, for example, that in the Melian Dialogue for example, the Athenians stand for brute force and the Melians for justice (see Chapters 4 and 8). Joho (2022, 299-303) is much better claiming that these are interwoven (cf. Visvardi 2015, 44-93, esp. 56-62), and Pericles' strength over (even his own: 2.60.5) passion is a defining characteristic.

[116] De Romilly (2005, 198-9) observes how, in contrast with other contemporary writers (especially Aristophanes), Thucydides never contemplates the possibility that Pericles is responsible for the war on account of some personal reason.

[117] *Pace* Pouncey 1980, 81. Joho (2022, 271-2) refutes this idea by citing the eulogy of Pericles at 2.65.5-7 - his plan could have won the war – but does not take on Foster's reading of 2.65 as a whole (2010, 212-8). Connor (1984, 62) notes how in the first book especially Pericles seems "to embody his city." Foster (2010, 9-10) highlights the link between glory and destructiveness in the Archaeology (1.5.1-2). On Thucydides' rejection of glorifying narratives at 1.22.4 see Flory 1990.

other of a larger expanse.[118] The above comparisons by Pericles, between the love of money and of glory (and cf. 2.42.4), are echoed here and reinforce the point. Although these are contrasts, on closer scrutiny of Pericles what gradually stands out is the affinity in which these contrasts are grounded. The love of glory is a pleasure – could that mean it is possibly a vice? If so, it is one he embodies in a number of respects. In contrast with the anonymised dead soldiers who are incorporated into the city, and the anonymised Plague victims who are killed by the disease, Pericles survives through the work in both name and voice. His insistence, particularly in his last speech, that the collective power and glory of the city must outweigh the needs of individuals, stands ironically in relief against Thucydides' own insistence that so much power and glory was his personally. But the point need not be reduced into a criticism of Pericles or his policy. Taking his exhortations to the Athenians in perfectly good faith, and presuming that his ambitions are purely collective, Pericles comes to appear like something of a Brasidas-figure for the Athenians.[119] Together, these two generals stand more abstractly for something like a passion for glory, or most charitably for the community's freedom and permanence (existing in the form of *logos*), an idea with roots deep enough in the poetic tradition to ground this more abstract and generalising approach.

It is understandable in this light to view the plague as Parry does: "an inhuman or even superhuman visitation, a demonic enemy against which no human weapon could avail."[120] Likewise Orwin reads it as an intrusion of the body into the political world, a limit no human reason or aspiration can surpass – in scare quotes he labels it "subpolitical."[121] By removing the "exigencies of daily life" the

[118] In this regard it parallels Thucydides' own self-presentation at 1.22.4: see O'Sullivan 2024B.
[119] Cf. Will (2003, 10) contrasts the idealised portrait of Pericles the statesman with Brasidas the military commander.
[120] Parry 1989, 164.
[121] Orwin 2016 ("Subpolitical" – 114).

plague destroys the edifice of civic meaning.[122] An important strand of scholarship on the plague debates, not only its cause (or what kind of a thing Thucydides imagined the cause to be), but how much Thucydides himself envisaged the possibility of a cause being identified someday in future (cf. 2.48.3).[123] The debate re-enacts the fundamental drama of the sequence through the plague from one speech by Pericles to another. "The form of the plague was stronger than *logos*" (2.50.1: κρεῖσσον λόγου τὸ εἶδος τῆς νόσου).[124] The word 'form' (or 'appearance') clarifies the phrase's sense.[125] To experience the plague (which means of course using faculties of *logos,* perceiving its *eidos*) was to find one's faculties overwhelmed. On a collective level this translates to a loss of power for the organising rules and ideals of Athenian society. People do things they would not have dared otherwise (2.53.1). Both the benefit of following these (cf. 2.53.3) and the threat of what might result from breaking them seemed to disappear (2.53.4):

> θεῶν δὲ φόβος ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος οὐδεὶς ἀπεῖργε, τὸ μὲν κρίνοντες ἐν ὁμοίῳ καὶ σέβειν καὶ μὴ ἐκ τοῦ πάντας ὁρᾶν ἐν ἴσῳ ἀπολλυμένους, τῶν δὲ ἁμαρτημάτων οὐδεὶς ἐλπίζων μέχρι τοῦ δίκην γενέσθαι βιοὺς ἂν τὴν τιμωρίαν ἀντιδοῦναι.
>
> No fear of gods nor law of men held them back: with the first they judged it was all the same, seeing that those who paid reverence and did not were killed alike; with the second no one expected that for their crimes they would live long enough to come to trial and be forced to give recompense.

[122] "Exigencies of daily life" – *ibid.* 124.
[123] See Page 1953; Parry 1989, 156-76; Radt 1978; Woodman 1988, 37-40; Marshall 1990; Jouanna 2005; Thomas 2006 (esp. 92-108); Demont 2013, Kallet 2013; Thomas 2017, 570-4.
[124] On the expression see Marshall 1990, 167-9. There is a parallel in Eur. *IT.* 837-40: (ὦ κρεῖσσον ἢ λόγοισιν εὐτυχοῦσά μου/ψυχά, τί φῶ; θαυμάτων/πέρα καὶ λόγου πρόσω τάδ' ἐπέβα).
[125] Hornblower (1.323) compares it to the standard Thucydidean expression *pasa idea* (cf. Flory 1988B).

What passages such as this show is the way that the disease is not, in fact, an assault upon *logos* in any simple sense. The Funeral Oration demonstrates how individual Athenians live within a pre-existing ethical and metaphysical order that structures what they perceive as their best interests (not without contradiction or difficulty). The plague causes this structure to collapse, undermines this order, so that they behave differently. It does this not simply by making a void of sense, a pure *ergon* that no *logos* can encompass, but by changing the terms of people's lives such that they perceive their interests and values differently. The collapse of *logos* happens from within *logos,* or by a change in a continuous field of *logos,* altering the calculations people make in response to the new reality that comes from the disease-event. *Logos* has gone nowhere. Neither could it precisely be said that individual calculations and desires replace those of the collective. Already in the Funeral Oration we keep sight of individuals: whether the begrudging listener (2.35.2), the soldier who chooses to risk their life (2.42.4), their bereaved parents (2.44.1), their siblings and children (2.45.1), their widows (2.45.2). And of these – and every citizen (2.43) – all are perceived to be making individual choices along the lines of what is beneficial and more broadly what is good.[126] Conversely, it is the entire city as a collective that is struck by the plague (cf. 2.4.3-4), and the alteration of people's desires and behaviours is across the board. It is not until Pericles' last speech that a stark polarity between the individual and the collective comes into frame (2.60.2), when he seeks to rescue the Athenian commitment to war and abate their fury against him (2.59.2-3), by changing his arguments and tone.

[126] Cf. Wohl (2002, 33): "[The speech] presents a mirror in which the Athenians are shown a perfect image of themselves in the unmatchable excellence of the dead, and urges them to assume this image as their own." Importantly the appeal to the audience's narcissism is accompanied by mystification and appeals to greatness and truth that lie far beyond the reach and conception of the listeners. The speech is both a mirror and a blinding light.

On the other hand, the spectacle of the Funeral Oration is designed so that the civic order it perpetuates (which is continuous with an ethics and an implicit metaphysics) comes into being, is conveyed for the reader by analogy with the audience member, through an experience of *ekplēxis.* The Funeral Oration is a pyrotechnic display of verbal brilliance and passion. It illustrates Thucydides' point about Pericles' powers of emotional manipulation: he "freely controlled the crowd," and more led them than was led by them (2.65.8: κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως).[127] At will, "when speaking he caused them a *kataplēxis* of terror; if they were irrationally afraid, he built them back up again into bravery" (2.65.9: λέγων κατέπλησσεν ἐπὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι, καὶ δεδιότας αὖ ἀλόγως ἀντικαθίστη πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ θαρσεῖν). Whereas others could only wield influence by pleasing the crowd, Pericles could make them angry (2.65.8: τὸ πλῆθος (…) πρὸς ἡδονήν τι (…) πρὸς ὀργήν τι cf. 2.65.10).[128] At the beginning of his last speech he reproaches the Athenians: "struck by ***ekplêxis*** due to things going badly at home, now you are giving up the collective's safety" (2.60.4: ταῖς κατ᾽ οἶκον κακοπραγίαις **ἐκπεπληγμένοι** τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀφίεσθε). After the events of the plague, the appropriateness of this word here cannot be doubted. But no less does it describe the effect of the Funeral Oration itself. The speech is spectacular – delivered at the end of an elaborate ceremony (2.34) – and verbally stunning, as I showed in Chapter 3. For Grethlein, this is because Thucydides intends for us to watch out, to avoid being seduced by adopting the paranoid

[127] See Parry 1989, 144-7; Raaflaub 2004, 338n88 (with references). There is a view among some scholars that 'freely' here means 'as a free city,' or 'in the spirit of a free man [as opposed to a slave]' rather than 'at will,' despite the force of the verb katechō and the surrounding emphasis on Pericles' control over the Athenians. It seems tendentious to me to exclude the sense of 'power' which is arguably inherent in that of 'freedom' (cf. other conflations of freedom and power in the text: 7.63.4, 8.68.4).

[128] Wohl's comparison between Pericles and Cleon (2002, 73-123) is particularly instructive in this regard. Obviously, Cleon does not simply try to please the crowd either (e.g. at 3.37.1-2 his words seem calculated to provoke anger).

stance he sees Thucydides as taking in his introduction (esp. 1.22).[129] But Thucydides makes no explicit negative remarks about Pericles nor imputations of bad motive, such as there are for Cleon (e.g. 3.36.6, 4.27.4) – almost the opposite (2.65). The point, I claim, is not strictly that the reader should learn to avoid being taken in, but that they should be taken in and disillusioned afterwards. Altogether it seems that the Funeral Oration, no less than the plague, is "stronger than *logos*" (κρεῖσσον λόγου). Far from an expression of sovereign reason, the speech of Pericles tries to force the hearer into stunned assent. Its erotic effect is very similar to the terrifying one of the plague, just as there is an analogy between the display of the fleet at Sicily and the disastrous spectacles at the climax of Book 7.[130]

Conclusion

Spectacles are perceptions that exceed reality. Their force is that they imply some greater or general truth behind the perception which cannot be accessed. Earlier I cited Elaine Scarry's argument, that the connection between pain and power has to do with how pain can be used to 'unmake' the world of the one who experiences it. The control of the one who wields the power of pain thus becomes an ontological control, and the power to 'make' the world becomes way to force others to live in a world of their making. Here I have tried to show that Thucydides conceives of a similar process in much broader terms. The power of pain is one acute means of the several by which politics becomes ontology – all of these involve the unmaking and remaking of the world. Rhetoric, particularly in the Funeral Oration, conceived in these terms is a way of enlisting certain erotic

[129] Grethlein 2005 (with numerous parallels between the speech and 1.20-2), 2013. My own reading of 1.22.4 qualifies this by diminishing the force of the contrast between pleasure and truth on which Grethlein depends (O'Sullivan 2024B, 64-8).
[130] In general on the ancient Greek erotic as the collapse of boundaries see Carson 1986.

energies in support of a political and global vision and an imperative to action. The very force of things like paradox, counterintuitive argument, sound overwhelming sense, and other effects like contrast, tricolon, and asyndeton, is that by confounding and overwhelming sense they usurp the listener's power of reason for the speaker. At its most fundamental, wrote Marshall Sahlins, "Sovereign power is a usurpation of divine power."[131] The divine power of creation and destruction is, in fact, even in much smaller ways, a basis of all kinds of power. The force of shattering other people's certainties, by someone who appears to hold a great and ulterior truth they cannot access, is an important link between intention and effect in the realm of politics. But these certainties can be shattered, and spectacles can occur, through events that are unplanned or of inhuman origin, as the world (in the sense of both invisible nature and an individually or collectively constructed ontology) continually makes and unmakes *itself*. In part this is because spectacles are more essentially to do with human cognition than political structures.

In the second chapter I showed that the Archaeology in Book 1 moves between three perspectives on events: taking them as individual experiences, outputs of a social system or process (these may be several and with varying degrees of scope and depth) and as a force of nature or of ontological reality. The above discussion has shown something of how these three levels relate to each other by a complex psychological analysis that is emphasised particularly in Books 6 and 7, and the dominating sequence of Book 2. We perceive by making sense of things, and political and social systems provide us with the tools to make sense, even as they are composed of forces that work by wielding against us nonsense, destruction, and sublime excess – indeed all forms of *ekplēxis.* Together we live in a world of stable meaning that is constructed by this process; many things are excluded

[131] Sahlins 2017, 119.

from this world, but they are not necessarily visible or perceived. However, they are a continual pressure on the world 'as is,' and sometimes this pressure builds up as dread, or explodes into a perception – also *ekplēxis.* This psychological and sociological analysis leads to a metaphysical point. If "nature loves to hide," as Heraclitus claims (DK B123), this is partly because human ontologies are naturally partial and so constructed that beyond them seems to lie only senseless perception – a 'beyond' that is also 'within.'[132] Perhaps this is no more obvious than with human beings. The bundle of their name, rank, speech, and figure has a solidity all too much confused with substance. But we exceed ourselves, and it is this strange excess, with its essentially constitutive role in moral relations, that I discuss in the final chapter on justification and recognition.

[132] Compare with the obscurity of Zeus in *Agamemnon* (Aesch. *Ag.* 32; cf. Meier 1990, 134-5).

8. The Anthropology of Morals

> *Truth does not do as much good as its appearances do evil.*
>
> La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*

The first word of the first speech in the *Peloponnesian War* (delivered by Corcyraean ambassadors requesting military aid from the Athenian assembly: 1.32-6) is Δίκαιον – 'right' or 'just' (1.32.1).[1] The first two speeches are an antilogy: the first word of the opposing speech by the Corinthians is Ἀναγκαῖον – 'necessary' (1.37.1).[2] It is right, the Corcyraean speakers say, seeing as they and the Athenians have no previous alliance, that the Corcyraeans should first need to explain what the Athenians stand to gain from assisting them. The sentence ironically shifts from the issue of justice to expediency: that is, questions of gain (necessity or advantage) detached from moral considerations. The Corinthian speakers begin *their* speech the opposite way – claiming that the dishonesty of the previous speech has so offended their sensibilities, they must begin by speaking about the rights and wrongs of their dispute against Corcyra. These first words are programmatic: all the speeches in the text will be concerned in some way or another with what is right and its relation to what is necessary or expedient.[3] Earlier scholars reading this opening antilogy have tended to treat these two things as relatively or completely opposed, here and throughout the

[1] The adjective δίκαιος (along with its substantivised noun-form) is very common and usually has the above sense of 'right' and 'just.' Δίκη is also a common word in Thucydides normally referring to some aspect of a dispute or process or arbitration (e.g. 1.39.1, 1.140.1-2, 3.57.1, 5.31.3). A third noun, δικαίωσις, used most famously in the *stasis* description (3.82.4), lies somewhat between these, signifying a claim or evaluation of right and wrong that may or may not be official (see Allison 1997, 172-86). See Crane (1998, 105-8) on the frequency of words from *dik-* in this pair of speeches, and Bétant (1.257-62) in general. For terms derived from ἀδικεῖν in Thucydides see Roman 2012, 227-44 (*passim* for discussion). For some brief remarks and references on the concept of justice in earlier poetry, philosophy, and Herodotus see Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 109-16.

[2] Strauss 1964, 174.

[3] Cf. Woodruff 2023, 215. Kakridis (1961, 21) similarly notes a dialectic between *diakion* and *xumpheron* in the framing of Pericles' Funeral Oration.

text.[4] More recent studies have emphasised how the themes are integrated in both speeches; in particular, the Corcyraeans and Corinthians develop competing concepts of right, whose differences are a source of their conflict with one another, and which underpin their respective claims about what is most expedient for Athens.[5]

During this debate the conflict between Corinth and Corcyra migrates from the territory of military engagement to that of speech. We have seen that, throughout the *Peloponnesian War*, *logos* is represented as a as a force in the struggle between people and between cities. It can thus be a means for an entity with less money, fewer ships, and few or no subordinate peoples, to coerce or influence those with more of each. This is precisely what happens in these opening debate: the Corcyraeans draw the Athenians into their conflict with Corinth, by convincing them they will need Corcyraean support in the war to come (1.32-36), even though, as Gomme points out, this support will never materialise.[6] Later, the Corinthians, following their inability to defeat the Corcyraeans due to Athenian support, will convince the Spartans to pursue war in a speech characterising the Athenians as an acquisitive imperial power that must be stopped, and which has violated the terms of the peace (1.68-71).[7] It has been observed that in this later

[4] *Ibid*. "The thought indicated by these two opening words taken together, the question of the relation of right and necessity, of the difference, the tension perhaps opposition between right and compulsion (…) is Thucydides' thought." See also the scholiast *ad loc.*; Macleod 1983, 55; Connor 1984, 34-6; Cohen 1986, 37-9. For further references see Orwin 1994, 38n22. Orwin (30-63) claims this tension is an overarching theme of the first book.

[5] Heath 1990, 390-1; Orwin 1994, 38-43; Crane 1998, 105-24; Morrison 1999, 109-21; Mara 2006, 40-4; Fragoulaki 2013, 85 (with further references); Jaffe 2017, 30-51.

[6] Gomme, *Commentary* 1.168. And see Foster's analysis of Corcyraean deceitfulness in this speech (2010, 56-60). For example (58): "Thucydides' presentation of Corcyra's defeat Sybota [1.47-54] will constitute the most vivid possible repudiation of the claims made here." Bloedow (1991B) argues the alliance with Corcyra is an Athenian strategic blunder.

[7] See also 1.90.1, the beginning of the Pentekontaetia, where Spartan behaviour towards Athens is influenced by the fears of other cities.

speech the Corinthians suppress a number of awkward points.[8] The Corcyraeans and Corinthians thus respectively give the Athenians and Spartans a deliberately constructed picture of what *is* leading to a sense of what *they* ought to do that aligns with the speaker's interests. Conversely, their emphasis on *what is right* comes out of the exigencies of their own position, *from their need* for a greater power to shift the balance of forces.

We have here, in modern philosophical terms, an entanglement of 'is' and 'ought' that will prove programmatic.[9] The dilemma cuts even to the heart of how the speeches were composed, as Thucydides writes (1.22.1):

> ὡς δ᾽ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ᾽ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.
>
> What it seemed to me were the essential things that every person in their immediate circumstances in each case more or less would have said, keeping as close as possible to the overall idea of what was actually said – that is what is in the speeches.

I strive with the above translation to resemble the Greek's hedging and ambiguity: it is perhaps the most commented upon phrase in the entire text. Particularly in the twentieth century, when there was a vehement ideological debate about the concept of historical accuracy and associated ideas, the passage

[8] On Corinthian colonisation and imperialist attitudes Foster 2010, 84. On transgressing the peace see Debnar 2001, 33-35. On both see Fragoulaki's treatment of the episode (2013, 64-81). On the omission of past tensions between the Corinthians and Athenians see Rood 2006B.

[9] For 'ought' Greek distinguishes between χρή and δεῖ, respectively necessity arising from personal factors and from the situation or external conditions (see Benardete 2012, 81-92). In this case we are speaking exclusively of the latter, as befits political argument. Neither of these is strictly moral in the familiar sense of the English 'ought.'

became something of a scholarly obsession.[10] More or less the whole dispute can be boiled down to this question: is Thucydides telling us he aimed to capture what his speakers *actually said,* or what he believes they *ought to have said* (translating τὰ δέοντα more strongly than I do to make "necessary things (…) should say")? To some extent this scholarly debate echoes one of the fundamental questions raised in the text itself by many speeches: what is the connection between the realities of a situation and the right thing to say in that situation?[11] If, like Plato according to some interpretations, you believe 'Justice' is a substantive concept woven through the fabric of the world, you may think you can answer this question. But the *Peloponnesian War* gives little emphasis to this notion. By contrast, it shows vividly the problems such thinking yields: if right and wrong exist independently of us, why do so many people have different concepts of right and wrong? And why are these so often self-serving?

It has been claimed that Thucydides is worth little as a moral theorist.[12] In this chapter I argue that, instead of a moral theory, the *Peloponnesian War* is best

[10] Two good statements of the problem, each giving several viewpoints, are Ste. Croix 1972, 7-16 and Pelling 6.22-9 (24: "nothing can be done to iron out those ambiguities: they are there in the Greek."). See West's (1973) long bibliography of work published on the speeches from 1873-1970, and a subsequent list of references by Wohl (2002, 31n1). For two more recent readings that come to very different interpretations (each also with copious citations) see Schütrumpf 2011, Tosi 2018.

[11] Cf. Macleod 1983, 68: "Rhetoric is a medium of thought about politics, embodying a rational approach to practical questions and designed to answer them in the best possible way; and τὰ δέοντα is the application of this in any particular situation." See also Winnington-Ingram 1965; Macleod 1983, 52-3; Pepe 2013, 29-35. In the work the speeches clearly serve multiple functions – see Immerwahr 1973, 23. On the vocabulary of assembly and decision-making in Thucydides see Frazier 1997. Macleod goes on (68-9) to say that persuasion, besides and as opposed to reason, is clearly at play in Thucydidean rhetoric, opening the door to analysis of the speeches *as rhetoric.* I take this to mean an analysis of *how people are convinced,* which I explain in this chapter in terms of the factual and moral representation of the world a given speech makes (so that therefore it is linked with more fundamental questions). This approach is not opposed to the analysis of rhetorical techniques, but I find the latter less valuable since it usually prioritises the immediate textual situation ahead of the overarching one, and to contextualise Thucydides in literary historical rather than intellectual terms. For examples of such rhetorical studies (often motivated by a desire to place Thucydides in context) see the works cited in West 1973, 140-2; Pires 1998; Plant 1999; Hagmaier 2008; Pelling 2012; Grethlein 2013B; Greenwood 2023. Debnar's (2011) analysis of the Corcyra/Corinth debate is an example of this methodology at its best.

[12] Orwin (1994, 8) claims that Thucydides' moral thinking is "neither searching nor original," as he merely records the moral assertions of cities and individuals (treating them as morally distinct entities) while

understood as providing an anthropology of morality and justice. The *Peloponnesian War* portrays a Greek world in which a shared and composite notion of right, based on various obligations of kinship and general reciprocity (with the Gods witnesses and enforcers), comes under strain as ideals clash and the ulterior play of force comes into view. In this regard the chapter echoes some of Wohl's recent work on the alternative constructions of justice explored in Euripides.[13] In Thucydides, these clashes threaten the entire notion of justification as reader is confronted with the idea that justice in any instance or dispute is a psychological mirage, something completely made up by human beings. Yet the work goes beyond that perspective and it is here that the anthropological dimension comes into focus. A nihilistic view of justice may lead us to ask – if justifications are so specious, why (in the *Peloponnesian War*) do people bother with them?[14] The Thucydidean answer is that justifications attempt to stabilise the relations of recognition that come prior to any order of justice.[15] By fulfilling my duty to you, I recognise you as one to whom the duty is owed: the practice of justice is a rendering of one's due and thus an order of recognition. Between distinct notions of justice, the contest is always one of force, "the struggle between two contrary intentions."[16] But this struggle is in turn limited by an equal and opposed reality: the existence of the other, whom I cannot fail to recognise, and recognising I legitimate their intentions. With particular reference

insisting they bear no relation to each other. Pelling (2000, 98) refers to a general Thucydidean "sidestepping of the moral issue."

[13] Wohl 2015.

[14] Cf. Woodhead (1970, 153-4): "Nevertheless there remains a need for spiritual or moral support, a need to say that an action is 'right,' that a decision is 'equitable,' that shares are 'fair,' that a war is 'just' or even 'holy'" – but Woodhead's explanation of this in terms of a (162) "need to convince people" suffices least where it is most necessary, i.e. in situations where justifications are the least convincing. Likewise Stahl 2011.

[15] Cf. Macleod (1982, 16): "the *Iliad* is great not least because it can speak authentically for pity or kindness or civilization without showing them victorious in life. Its humanity does not float on shallow optimism; it is firmly and deeply rooted in an awareness of human reality and suffering."

[16] de Romilly (1956, 26): "*La lutte entre deux intentions contraires.*" Here must be used the broad definition of force as I have developed particularly in Chapters 4 and 7.

to the practice of supplication, I show that Thucydides depicts recognition as the means by which one person perceives another's necessities and will alongside their own and might even place them above or act against their own interest, as if the other's intentions had become theirs. Recognition is mutuality of being, the process by which 'I' and 'mine' become 'we' and 'ours.' Obviously, this can be engineered like every force and the institution of supplication shows this. But like every force it exceeds its use and is in some sense totalising. Justification thus attempts to wield and stabilise, justice to universalise and fix, the inherently unsteady relations of recognition from which obligations are derived.

In the conclusion, I discuss the implications for Thucydides' view of the person, and the tragic aspect of his general outlook as explored most convincingly by scholars such as Lloyd-Jones and Macleod.[17] On the first, Saxonhouse has remarked that kings in Herodotus are represented in a way that suggests "there is nothing *by nature* that gives one man rule over another, that (in modern liberal terms) no one is so different from another to justify his or her rule over another."[18] In Thucydides it could be said that this democratic political outlook is transformed into a democratic anthropology – no one is so different as to be immune to political forces and human failings, so that in the last analysis the success of Pericles is joined with the failure of Nikias, and the ambitions of Brasidas and Cleon are the same (cf. 5.16.1).[19] Indeed, their mutuality of being is both the ground and limit of their struggles. In a sense for Thucydides the ultimate form of recognition is tragic, a spectator's disinterested and therefore uninhibited recognition of a subject's reality beyond the limits of their destiny.

[17] Lloyd-Jones 1971, 138-88; Macleod 1983, 157-8.
[18] Saxonhouse 1995, 48.
[19] Cf. also the Athenian speakers' remarks about human motivation in Book 1 (1.75.3).

Justifications

Above I distinguished between justice and justification. They are not completely different: both are concerned with ways people can or do or should treat each other, considered apart from their own personal self-interest, as well as conversely how they can or do or should demand that others treat them. But perhaps the simplest way of expressing the difference is to say that 'justice' is basically a normative concept, whereas 'justification' is a descriptive one. Justice is legislative whereas justification is litigative. 'Justice' has universal ambitions, 'justification' particular ones. And just like the universal/particular distinction in most cases, 'justice' and 'justification' both look a little different depending on if they are approached directly or via the other. Thus, the philosophical discussion of Plato's *Republic* begins with a question about the meaning of "justice" (*Rep.* 331c: δικαιοσύνη), and the subsequent chapters develop, in fairly granular detail, a concept of an ideal society whose justice may be easily perceived by the observer.[20] In the *Peloponnesian War,* by contrast, the opening speech of the Corcyraeans begins with a justification of their chosen emphasis on expediency (τό ξυμφέρον, cf. 1.32.1). The Corcyraeans begin, so to speak, by using justification to clear the ground for their speech's ultimate goal of appealing to Athens' self-interest as distinct from any questions of right or wrong.[21] They use justification as an instrument: as a means to achieve an end – which is basically the amoral one of securing military help for Corcyra against Corinth.

The Corcyraeans use justification, like military might, as a sort of power. The central claim of the Corcyraeans in their speech to the Athenians is that, by assisting them here and now against Corinth, they will gain a useful ally in the

[20] In Thucydides δικαιοσύνη appears only once, in the Thebans' speech at Plataea (3.63.4) where it means the same thing as here for Plato.
[21] On this distinction between Thucydides and Plato cf. de Romilly 1947, 303.

inevitable coming war, in which the Corinthians are guaranteed to be on the Peloponnesian side (1.33, 1.36). However, just as Plato in his discussion about justice deals at length with the fact that many people's justifications are simply excuses for doing what they would like, Thucydides in his description of *stasis* for example asserts the authentic existence of something called justice (3.82.8):

> παντὶ δὲ τρόπῳ ἀγωνιζόμενοι ἀλλήλων περιγίγνεσθαι ἐτόλμησάν τε τὰ δεινότατα ἐπεξῆσάν τε τὰς τιμωρίας ἔτι μείζους, οὐ μέχρι τοῦ δικαίου καὶ τῇ πόλει ξυμφόρου προτιθέντες, ἐς δὲ τὸ ἑκατέροις που αἰεὶ ἡδονὴν ἔχον ὁρίζοντες
>
> In every way they struggled to prevail against each other and dared to do the most awful things and went for greater and greater reprisals, beyond justice and what benefited the city, as far in each case as their pleasure took them.

The two opening speeches by the Corcyraeans and Corinthians, and the preceding narrative, raise more general questions about the meaning of justice in exactly this universal sense. Although the Corcyreaean claim, that helping Corcyra will be expedient for Athens, takes up most of the speech's argumentative energy, issues of right pervade it and frame the discussion of expediency. They are directly the focus of the beginning (1.32), as well as the middle part of the speech where the Corcyraeans argue: first, they are being wronged by the Corinthians (1.34); second, the Athenians would not be breaking their treaty obligations by intervening (1.35.1-3); and third, the Athenians would be doing wrong by not intervening (1.35.3-5). Moreover, the Corcyraean claims about expediency depend on the concept of right advanced by the speech's first section (1.32.1):

> **Δίκαιον**, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, τοὺς μήτε εὐεργεσίας μεγάλης μήτε ξυμμαχίας προυφειλομένης ἥκοντας παρὰ τοὺς πέλας ἐπικουρίας, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς νῦν, δεησομένους ἀναδιδάξαι πρῶτον, μάλιστα μὲν ὡς καὶ **ξύμφορα** δέονται, εἰ δὲ μή, ὅτι γε οὐκ ἐπιζήμια, ἔπειτα δὲ ὡς καὶ τὴν χάριν βέβαιον ἕξουσιν· εἰ δὲ τούτων μηδὲν σαφὲς καταστήσουσι, μὴ ὀργίζεσθαι ἢν ἀτυχῶσιν.
>
> It is **right,** Athenians, for people who come on the back of no previous large favour or alliance to ask for help from their neighbours, as we do now, to demonstrate first, above all that what they are asking for is **advantageous [/expedient]**, or at least that it is not damaging; then, that in return they will have their gratitude as a certainty; or else, if they do not establish any of this with complete certainty, not to become angry if they fail.

Grammatically this entire sentence is governed by its first word: the Corcyraeans propose mutual expediency *as a justification* of their request for help.[22] They represent expediency as the weakest of three possible justifications for this request, behind a large favour owed and an alliance made previously. Now these two justifications are also each, after a fashion, based on expediency. In the first justification – that help might be justified by a large favour owed because of some past action – the Corcyraean request would involve calling in a debt, so to speak. In the second – that help might be justified by an alliance – the Athenians would have a firm guarantee of some advantage in the future because of the past commitment to mutual aid by the Corcyraeans; in the absence of this, the Athenians may reasonably question if the Corcyraeans would remain committed

[22] In general, cf. Macleod (1983, 55): "Rhetoricians often fuse [right and expediency] together, so as to make the course the speaker praises, advises or defends appear satisfactory from as many points of view as possible."

to support them once their own situation was less dire. It is to reassure them about this that the Corcyraeans in the subsequent sentences justify their previous non-alignment and present inconsistency (1.32.2-5). Thus, if the first justification would be like the Corcyraeans calling in a debt, the second would be like taking out a loan. The first section of the speech finishes (1.32.5):

> ἀνάγκη καὶ ὑμῶν καὶ ἄλλου παντὸς ἐπικουρίας δεῖσθαι, καὶ ξυγγνώμη εἰ μὴ μετὰ κακίας, δόξης δὲ μᾶλλον ἁμαρτίᾳ τῇ πρότερον ἀπραγμοσύνῃ ἐναντία τολμῶμεν.
>
> So we must ask for help from you and everyone else we can, and be forgiven if – not because we are immoral,[23] but because previously we made an error of judgement – we are now daring to pursue a course opposed to our previous non-alignment.

The Corcyraeans reintroduce their initial framing in terms of right, by acknowledging the appearance of immorality in their actions and seeking to prove it is false: a previous lapse in their intellectual judgement, rather than a present lapse in their moral judgement, is the reason for their change of policy. The idea against which the Corcyraeans position themselves in this paragraph is that they are selfish, asking others for aid when they are in trouble, but helping nobody in turn and simply doing whatever is most expedient for themselves, even at the expense of others. Indeed, that is how the Corinthians will characterise them in their own speech (1.37.2-4). The Corcyraeans stress their commitment to a sense of right and wrong based on mutual reciprocity: it is right that those who receive a benefit should sooner or later give back in return, it is wrong if they neglect this responsibility. Thus, the thread of the Corcyraeans' justification leads to an implicit working theory of justice based on a (for fifth-

[23] For "κακία" – on the basis that the translation 'bad' is too weak, 'evil' too strong.

century Greeks) traditional idea of mutual reciprocity.[24] Indeed, one accusation the Corcyraeans level against the Corinthians is that they have refused to agree to independent arbitration to settle the Epidamnus dispute (1.34.2; cf. 1.28-29.1). The basis of this implicit, traditional idea is that the parties in any question of right are equal or empty categories – A:B as B:A – bestowing and accepting favours in the course of time.

The narrative depicting the dispute between Corinth and Corcyra, and the Corinthian response before the Athenian assembly, each raise issues that put pressure on the idea of justification as reciprocity. I will give considerable space below to sketch out the shape and limits of these. But first let me summarise the narrative where they are introduced. During the Archaeology, Thucydides mentions in passing that the most ancient naval battle on record (1.13.14: ναυμαχία τε παλαιτάτη ὧν ἴσμεν) was between the Corcyraeans and Corinthians – about 260 years (1.13.4: he gives the number), before the outbreak of the present conflict.[25] Readers of Herodotus will recall another dispute between the Corcyraeans and Corinthians when Periander was tyrant of Corinth (Hdt. 3.48-53), culminating in an effort by the latter to castrate three hundred of the sons of Corcyra's leading families.[26] In other words this is ultimately a dispute of distant and obscure origins.[27] But in this specific case the Corcyra/Corinth dispute centres on Epidamnus, a Corcyraean colony near the coast of the Adriatic Sea which experiences many internal conflicts and subsequently ends up at war

[24] Cf. Crane (1998, 116): "Both the manner and the rhetoric of the debate [i.e. both Corcyraean and Corinthian speeches] are largely traditional." In Thucydides the notion of reciprocity is often explicitly based in one of equality (Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 120-2). On the Greek ethics of reciprocity in general see Blundell 1989; Seaford 1994; the essays (some drawing on anthropological comparisons and methods) collected in Gill et al. eds 1998; van Berkel 2020. On reciprocity as a guiding principle of Greek interstate relations Low 2007, 36-54 (she also cites inscriptions).

[25] Gomme (*Comm.* 1.122): "nothing further is known of this battle." Hornblower (*Comm.* 45): "This is surely deliberate artistry."

[26] On their way Sardis, where the castration was due to be performed, the boys were saved by the Samian islnaders (3.48).

[27] Jaffe (2017, 22-9) compares the Corcyra/Corinth dispute to that between Athens and Sparta.

with the surrounding local population.[28] During a *stasis*-conflict on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, Epidamnus expels its wealthy members, who then join its enemies raiding the city and cause significant hardship (1.24.1-6).[29] The city sends ambassadors seeking help from the Corcyraeans asking that they not stand by while their own colony is destroyed (1.24.6). The ambassadors arrive and sit as suppliants in the temple of Hera – the Corcyraeans refuse them (1.24.7). At that point the Epidamnians, at a loss, consult the oracle at Delphi, on whose advice they seek help from Corinth, the original mother-city of Corcyra; the Corinthians agree to help them on the grounds of a colonial obligation as well as because of hatred for the Corcyraeans (1.25.1-3). The Corcyraeans are outraged when they realise Corinth has taken control of the colony and decide to join with the exiled Epidamnians against those in the city (speaking in Corcyra they point to the tombs of their shared ancestors: 1.26.3), which brings the Corcyraeans and Corinthians into conflict, which ultimately causes the Corcyraeans to appeal to Athens for help (1.26-31). The Corinthian speech to the Athenian assembly emphasises how Corcyra has done wrong by not fulfilling its obligations to Corinth as its mother-city: unique among the Corinthian colonies is Corcyra, the Corinthians say, in its neglect of this obligation, as well as its obligation to Epidamnus as the mother-city (1.38).[30] It is only when the Corcyraeans themselves feel their authority over Epidamnus is being threatened by Corinth that they "take on the guise of justice" (1.39.2: τὸ εὐπρεπὲς τῆς δίκης παρέσχοντο).[31]

[28] Morrison (1999, 106-9) stresses the general lack of information here.
[29] Thucydides says Epidamnus is "on the right as you sail into the Ionian bay" (1.24.1: ἐν δεξιᾷ ἐσπλέοντι ἐς τὸν Ἰόνιον κόλπον). For some discussion as to the position of Epidamnus on the modern map see Gomme 1.158.
[30] The Corcyraeans liken the Corinthian understanding of a colony's obligations to enslavement (1.34.1).
[31] The Corinthians in their speech also evoke treaties and precedents to argue Athens would be in the wrong by giving help to Corcyra (1.41-2). See especially Crane 1998, 113-24.

One alternative to a purely reciprocal view of justice worked out in the narrative is the notion of obligations based on kinship.[32] The Corinthians argue that, because Corcyra is a Corinthian colony, the city owes them obligations; likewise, they claim that because Epidamnus is a colony of Corcyra, the Corcyraeans as a mother city owe obligations to the Epidamnians. In both directions colonisation confers an obligation simply from the resulting tie. The obligations associated with colonisation carry a sacral element (1.25.4), to some extent placing them in a sphere beyond the immediate interests of either party. In their manifest disrespect of kinship obligations, it may seem as if the Corcyraeans are strictly behaving as if people were silos with no moral relation to each other except those governed by profit, lost, and trust.[33] But the individual Corcyraeans are not behaving this way towards their own city.[34] Individually for example the ambassadors from Corcyra in their speech to the Athenians, as they emphasise, are undertaking a great task with which they have been entrusted by the other citizens (1.32.2). There may some degree of self-interest in this, but depending on their individual circumstance there may not, and in either case to some degree clearly their embassy involves subordinating their individual needs and desires to those of their city. These ambassadors are not named – they are simply Corcyraeans.

Thucydides sometimes makes his cities act and talk like individuals, as if certain speeches were spoken somehow by 'the city' itself, or by a chorus.[35] The question of how, ideologically or referentially speaking, Athens, in particular, was able to both recognise the existence of discrete individual citizen lives, and yet conceive

[32] See Curty 1994; Hornblower 2.61-80; Fragoulaki 2013 (esp. 58-99).
[33] Disrespect according to the Corinthians, that is: the Corcyraeans deny this accusation blaming the Corinthians for the breakdown in their relationship (1.34). They do not listen to the Epidamnians asking for help, but later give it to the rebel Epidamnians on the basis of ancestral connection (1.26.3).
[34] On collective versus individuals in Thucydides see Morrison 1994, 2006A, 103-56; Sierra Martín 2021.
[35] In this many readers have followed him automatically – see Hanink 2021, for this and the choral comparison. See also the extended discussion on training choruses in Book 2 of Plato's *Laws.*

them all together as the *demos*, has been much discussed.[36] This follows Anderson's recent claim that, unlike modern bourgeois society, in fifth and fourth-century Athens the selfhood of the *polis* ideologically preceded that of individuals, who were defined mainly in terms of their connection to the larger entity.[37] This connection is finally affirmed, most beautifully according to Pericles for example, in the moment of someone's dying at war on behalf of the city (2.42.4-43).[38] Anderson's claim should not be exaggerated: the question of the individual's relative obligations to themselves and the community is certainly thematised by Thucydides, especially in the speeches.[39] But Anderson is right to the extent that Thucydides portrays the problem from the other way around. For example, in Athens he presents it as a shocking fact that after Pericles' death leaders placed their own personal ambitions and interests – their desire for individual wealth and glory – above those of the city (2.65.7). The great Athenian leaders depicted in the early books – Themistocles and Pericles – are precisely people who use their immense talents to help the common good of Athens rather than their own selfish interests (1.138, 2.13.1, 2.65).[40]

The obligations of individuals to their city, to deliberate and act in the interests of the collective, are the most strongly asserted of all those in the text that result from kinship.[41] By the Athenians sometimes they are asserted to the exclusion of all others. People automatically have obligations to their cities, but cities themselves have no such obligations to each other.[42] Implied in this attitude is a

[36] See for example Farenga 2006; Hanink 2021; Simonton 2021.
[37] Anderson 2018, 2021.
[38] This is also a very traditional idea: see Vernant 1989.
[39] Such as by Pericles (2.60-64), Nikias (6.9-14), and Alcibiades (6.16-18). See Farrar 1988, 153-8.
[40] "Common good of Athens" is a phrase whose meaning is very obvious to Pericles – it is not obvious Thucydides or many readers agree with him (cf. Mara 2006, 113-6). See below.
For Themistocles this is more qualified because of accusations of his complicity with Persia (1.135.2-3, 1.137.4).
[41] We may remember the extreme importance assigned to such obligations by Socrates in the *Crito.*
[42] Cf. Orwin 1994, 18 – for Pericles "[The Athenian Empire's] ends are noble, but they are those of the Athenians, no one else's."

moral indifference towards people who do not share one's citizenship. Sometimes this indifference is explicit: such as in Diodotus' speech to the Athenian Assembly after Mytilene's revolt against Athens is suppressed, opposing the decision to execute the entire male population of Mytilene and enslave the women and children (3.42-8).[43] He purports to be totally apathetic about the question of what should happen to Mytilene, except insofar as it helps the city of Athens (3.44.2). In this regard, the model of ancient citizenship resembles that of modern political institutions; in which, formally speaking, there are human rights, but to claim these rights in practice one must be a citizen of the place that grants them: citizens of nowhere, such as refugees, cannot claim human rights at all. The language and conceptual grammar of rights are thus not only inadequate as descriptions of people's relationship with the state, but even harmful as they enact and preserve abuses and inequalities of power.[44] There are laws of war, but these are regularly ignored or broken: those condemning 'human rights abuses' tend to be on the opposing side of the conflict.

In the modern world, apart from exceptional cases, opposition to this circumstance is exclusively vocal. In Chapter 4 I discussed Pericles' admonition to the Athenians who, fearing the consequences of their empire, "wish to withdraw from things and be a lover of mankind" (2.63.2: ἀπραγμοσύνῃ ἀνδραγαθίζεται).[45] Pericles' next line states that some people in Athens hold this idea – not merely that the war should end, and the city come to terms with the Spartans (cf. 2.59.2), but that Athens should give up trying to rule other cities.[46]

[43] At first the Athenians decide to do this: the next day they reconsider on reflecting they had made "a savage and big decision" (3.36.4: ὠμὸν τὸ βούλευμα καὶ μέγα).
[44] See the critique of rights articulated across several of Agamben's books (e.g. 1998, 2000, 2015).
[45] Tuplin's claim (1985, 354) that there actually were instances of Greek tyrants giving up their tyranny does not reduce the force of Pericles' point since the examples he adduces are marginal and complex.
[46] The story of how Athens gradually dominates them is told directly in the narrative as a mediative process, whereby the ships and money the allies contribute to the Delian League to fight the Persians makes Athens so powerful it can make the allies subordinate (1.96-7.1). See also the revolting Mytilenean ambassadors' narrative in their appeal for help from the Peloponnesians (3.10.2-11.1)

Pericles' response – that, under these circumstances, such a course of action would be suicide – is not necessarily unconvincing. Orwin argues there is a shared 'Athenian thesis' among all the speakers from Athens in the *Peloponnesian War,* positing roughly "neither that might makes right nor that there is no such thing as right, but rather that right, which is distinct from compulsion, prevails only within the limits established by it."[47] As we have seen, it gradually becomes clear that the Athenians are locked in a cycle of continuous acquisition that contributes to their downfall in the later books.[48] If to survive Athens must constantly make wars against new cities, eventually it will lose a war, and anyway even in victory numerous individual citizens will die. If Pericles is right, it is a case of either choosing simply to perish by the sword or else to both live and perish by it: there is no escape from the sword in this life. In Chapter 7 I stressed how repeatedly he encourages the Athenians to picture an afterlife of everlasting memory, a metempsychosis of the city as a glorious and unchanging image of great power in the minds of people in the future (cf. 1.144.3, 2.41, 2.64.5-6).[49] He asks people to become lovers – erotically charged admirers – of this resplendent image of the city and its power (2.43.1). The ordinary kinship obligation towards the *polis,* with which the Athenians apparently set out intellectually speaking, thus transforms when pressed by the *Peloponnesian War* into an obligation to serve and love an imaginary entity.

In general, if the Athenians tend towards moral indifference about people who are not Athenian, the Spartans frequently justify their stances based on a notion of Pan-Hellenic kinship: the Athenians are trying to enslave Greece, the Spartans to protect its freedom. On this basis they begin with widespread support among Greek cities (2.8.4). On this justification, ultimately, they set out to destroy

[47] Orwin 1994, 64.
[48] See especially Saxonhouse, 346-52 in Balot et al. (eds 2017).
[49] Mara 2006, 113-6.

Plataea, the Greek city famous for its role in defending against the invasion of Persia (2.72.1, 2.74.2). By casting himself as liberator of the Greeks, the Spartan commander Brasidas finds huge success among the cities of Thrace, convincing them to revolt against the Athenians even in cases where it seems very unlikely they will succeed, but highly likely they will face some terrible retribution (4.108.2-6). When a final embassy fails before the first Spartan invasion of Attika, the Spartan Ambassador Melesippos camply declares that day to be the beginning of great evils for the Greeks (2.12.3).[50] When Demosthenes negotiates secretly with the Spartans and other Peloponnesians trapped in Olpae, he succeeds in making them abandon their Amphilochian Argive allies so he can demonstrate publicly how they put their own interests above those of other Greek cities (3.106.2). In the Melian Dialogue the Athenians flatly reject the idea that the Spartans attempt to serve anything but their own interests, "most clearly of those we know" (5.105.4: ἐπιφανέστατα ὧν ἴσμεν). The Spartans do not defend the Melians from being destroyed by an imperialist Athens. Melos is a Spartan colony (5.84.2). Whether or not it is sincere, the Spartan insistence on a model of just relations between those united by their Greek kinship has obvious moral limits as soon as the existence of non-Greeks is seriously contemplated.

As I suggested at the very start of Chapter 1, the complexity of Thucydides' portrayals of non-Greek peoples has not been fully appreciated.[51] Thucydides does not seem to have travelled the world like Herodotus, yet still he shows a clear strain of cultural relativism. In the early pages of the *Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides explains that Greekness, even the word 'Greece,' did not exist before or during the Trojan War (1.3).[52] Recently Zirah has compared this to similar

[50] On Herodotean and Homeric echoes here see Woodman 1988, 31.
[51] Studies of fifth-century Athenian constructions of Greek and Barbarian identity have usually focussed on tragedy, Herodotus, and to a lesser extent Aristotle and Xenophon. See the discussion and notes at the beginning of Chapter 1 (pp. 35-6).
[52] Fragoulaki 2013, 61.

discussions in Herodotus' *Histories* arguing that for Thucydides, unlike Herodotus, Greekness has no positive definition: it is a historically produced circumstance.[53] Throughout the previous chapters I have been arguing that Thucydides portrays and theorises about a universal human condition shared by all. Generally scholars agree that (especially in the Archaeology, as I discussed in Chapter 2) Thucydides conceives a sort of material civilisational progressive historical arc by which communities get larger and better at protecting themselves and conquering others (to be understood separately from a moral arc by which life or people may become better), and the Greeks are further along this trajectory than other peoples.[54] Yet during his portrayal of some of the war's most violent events in Western Greece at the end of Book 3 Thucydides blurs altogether the line between Greeks and barbarians (3.94-116). Famously in Book 7 a group of Thracian archers hired and sent away by the Athenians massacres the small town of Mykalessos, including a school for children. Thucydides says: "since the Thracian race when it gets going is equal to the most bloodthirsty of the barbarians" (7.29.4: τὸ γὰρ γένος τὸ τῶν Θρᾳκῶν ὁμοῖα τοῖς μάλιστα τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἂν θαρσήῃ, φονικώτατόν ἐστιν).[55] Price demonstrates that on one level Thucydides portrays the Peloponnesian War as a kind of *stasis* between Greeks, informed by a strong sense of ethnic kinship.[56] At the start of Book 2 (2.1-2), the elaborate introduction at the war's beginning, just before the Theban attempt on Plataea, constitutes Greece as a fact of geography: of humanly constructed space, the theatre of the conflict. A constellation of individual communities, 'Greece' becomes unified as these communities are thrown into upheaval by the collective phenomenon of the war. Thucydides includes a long list of the war's participants at the outset (2.9), which conveys an effect of not

[53] Zirah 2019.
[54] De Romilly 2005, 41-78; Connor 1984, 103-7. See also Dodds 1973.
[55] See also Hdt. 5.6. On the translation of μάλιστα – see Classen/Steup *ad loc.*
[56] Price 2001.

only multitude or magnitude, but *Greek*-ness. One of Price's central claims is that Thucydides plays with the notion that the entire war is a *stasis,* a Greek civil war.[57] Andrewes argued that Thucydides suppressed Persian involvement in the war before Book 8.[58]

In the first chapter I argued that this perspective, which seems to have one foot in the camp of a Greek supremacist culture, and the other in a much broader and more distant perspective, with its mix of chauvinism and cosmopolitanism, might be explained best in terms of Thucydides' own likely connections with Thrace with the language and concepts of Homi Bhabha. The Greek notion of a common humanity transcending Greekness may have developed, for Thucydides no less than Herodotus, from encounters with the barbarian other.[59] Yet the intensity and variety of ways in which Greekness is asserted by Thucydides makes the approach to barbarians paradoxical: they are both admitted as human beings and excluded from the grand portrayal of human nature in the work.[60] The forces that relegate them to the status of invisible or peripheral figures become glaring. It may be useful to shift perspective for a moment and try to read the introduction of Epidamnus from the point of view of the Barbarians with whom they are at war (1.24.1-4):

> Ἐπίδαμνός ἐστι πόλις ἐν δεξιᾷ ἐσπλέοντι ἐς τὸν Ἰόνιον κόλπον· προσοικοῦσι δ᾽ αὐτὴν Ταυλάντιοι βάρβαροι, Ἰλλυρικὸν ἔθνος. [2] ταύτην ἀπῴκισαν μὲν Κερκυραῖοι, οἰκιστὴς δ᾽ ἐγένετο Φαλίος

[57] Price 2003. See also Joho 2022, 60-3.
[58] Andrewes 1961. See also Wiesehöfer 2006; Munson 2012 (a more even-handed view). On the importance of the (Herodotean) Persian Wars as a backdrop to the text see especially Rood 1999.
[59] On this notion and its precedents in poetry see Baldry 1965.
[60] On this cf. Sartre (2004, 123): "When, in the course of a migration, members of a tribal group come across a strange tribe, they suddenly discover man as an alien species, that is, as a fierce carnivorous beast who can lay ambushes and make tools. This terrified discovery of alterity necessarily implies *recognition:* human *praxis* confronts them as a hostile force. But this recognition is crushed by the quality of strangeness which it itself produces and supports."

Ἐρατοκλείδου Κορίνθιος γένος τῶν ἀφ᾽ Ἡρακλέους, κατὰ δὴ τὸν παλαιὸν νόμον ἐκ τῆς μητροπόλεως κατακληθείς. ξυνῴκισαν δὲ καὶ Κορινθίων τινὲς καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου Δωρικοῦ γένους. [3] προελθόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου ἐγένετο ἡ τῶν Ἐπιδαμνίων δύναμις μεγάλη καὶ πολυάνθρωπος· [4] στασιάσαντες δὲ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἔτη πολλά, ὡς λέγεται, ἀπὸ πολέμου τινὸς τῶν προσοίκων βαρβάρων ἐφθάρησαν καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως τῆς πολλῆς ἐστερήθησαν.

Epidamnus is a city on the right as you sail into the Ionian bay: around the area there live barbarians called the Taulantioi, an Illyrian people. [2] It was founded as a colony from Corcyra: the colonist was Phalios the son of Heratokleides, a Corinthian from the bloodline of Heracles, who was requested from Corcyra's mother city in accordance with the ancient law. Some of the Corinthians and of the rest of the Dorian people joined the colony as well. [3] As time went on Epidamnus became very powerful and highly populated: [4] but after many years of *stasis*, so it is said, they were destroyed by a war with the nearby barbarians and the city lost much of its power.

Thucydides keeps the Taulantioi enough in view that with some imagination and empathy the reader can construct a version of events through their eyes. Suddenly a new settlement of people from halfway across the Mediterranean grows more and more imposing; larger, wealthier, stronger. The war between Epidamnus and the Taulantioi resembles briefly and implicitly Thucydides' claim about the war between Athens and Sparta: that the rising power of Athens and the fear this caused among the Spartans forced the war (1.23.6). One reason ultimately the Taulantioi are successful at war – we do not learn of others – is that the Epidamnians are riven by internal conflicts (1.24.4-5). When the Epidamnians supplicate the Corcyraeans requesting help, they refer not only to

their internal conflicts but "the war with the barbarians" (1.24.6: τὸν τῶν βαρβάρων πόλεμον). In the ensuing conflict between Corcyra, Epidamnus, Corinth, and later Athens, non-Greek forces are listed fighting on both sides (1.28.4, 1.47.3, 1.50.3). Here the story becomes more difficult to imagine. Perhaps we are witnessing the internal conflicts of Epidamnus and the other Greek cities spreading into conflicts within and between the surrounding peoples. They are drafted in the service of either side on justifications completely different from those the Greek Ambassadors have given to each other. The Taulantioi and people like them are on the periphery of the Epidamnus episode. They do not matter as much as the cities, neither the speakers nor the narrator emphasises the reality of their existence. Why? Because they are not Greeks. To some extent kinship always delineates a special group of people to whom obligations are owed independently of one's individual interests. To people who are not kin these obligations may never arise. But kinship is no hard boundary, and perhaps anyone may be kin as their lives are analogous and reducible to each other. This is the source of Priam's claim in the *Iliad*: "He too has a father…" (*Il.* 22.420-1: καὶ δέ νυ τῷ γε πατὴρ τοιόσδε τέτυκται).

Recognition

Indeed, both sources of obligation discussed so far, kinship and reciprocity, depend on an ulterior procedure of recognition. Both are models of relationship between two entities that recognise each other to exist – and not only as existing, but as being owed obligations by virtue of the entity that they are. In his analysis of the Corcyraean speech, Crane invokes Marcel Mauss' famous *Essay on the Gift*, which observes how a principle of inherent reciprocity structures some very important acts and rituals of gift-exchange (usually reciprocal, but with a time-

delay and often not equivalent) among several non-Western peoples.[61] Briefly put," writes Crane, "Mauss argues that there is no such thing as a free gift, and that any gift from one individual to another establishes an expectation of something sometime in return."[62] This has been a common interpretation of the phenomenon.[63] But Crane's description misses something important. It treats the objects exchanged as commodities, in which the relationship that structures the exchange is economic (i.e. parties wish to maximise utility), and the gift functions like a loan which is in the giver's interest because it creates a debt.[64] In a capitalist society it takes some reframing to avoid automatically perceiving the gift-interaction as an exchange of commodities, and many interpreters in fact simply set out to explain why the gift-exchange is secretly like commodity exchange. Viewed as a commodity-exchange, the intellectual problem posed by gift-exchange seems to be that of establishing the rationality of the giver by demonstrating how giving contains a hidden mechanism for receiving.

By contrast, anthropologists (Sahlins, Gregory, Strathern) and philosophers (Bataille, Sartre, Derrida) have each separately produced a body of work on the gift seeking to go beyond interpretations that impose an idea of commodity exchange.[65] Bataille inverts the notion of self-interest in his analysis as part of his broader project to conceive economics (and political economy) of a need to consume more fundamental than the need to accumulate.[66] Anthropologists,

[61] Crane 1998, 109-13.
[62] *Ibid.* 109.
[63] In Classics see Burkert 1998, 129-55 (and the more rounded Van Wees 1998). Crane cites Mary Douglas' introductory essay (Mauss 1990, ix-xxiii), though she puts it more circumspectly than he does.
[64] See Gregory 2015. According to Strathern, this ethnocentric contrast is precisely what has given the phenomenon such importance in Western thought (1988, 19): "To talk about the gift constantly evokes the possibility that the description would look very different if one were talking instead about commodities."
[65] Anthropology: Sahlins 1972; Gregory 2015; Strathern 1988. Philosophy: Bataille 1988; Sartre 2004; Derrida 1995.
[66] Bataille 1988, 63-77. This point may be couched using more familiar notions like conspicuous consumption (a term Bataille uses citing Veblen directly) and debt/prestige. Cf. Strathern 1988, 161:

analysing the structure of gift exchange (noting how the exchange is often characterised, for example, by a time-delay and gifts of unequal value), have argued that the exchange is structured specifically to establish and maintain a relationship between the parties of the gift.[67] Marshall Sahlins goes so far as to claim that the gift functions as a kind of Hobbesian Leviathan without the State (thus refuting Hobbes), a means of avoiding conflict through the visible commitment of both parties to respect each other: "neither through the victory of one nor by the submission of all, but in a *mutual surrender*."[68] This suggests that fundamentally gift-exchange is not based in reciprocity, but sharing.[69] Strathern goes further in claiming that people are personified through social relations, of which gift-exchange is one example, so that personhood is an effect rather than a cause of taking part.[70] Relations (of which the economic is just one mode) according to Strathern, work making people identify themselves in relation to each other: by affirming this relational identity as real, as the way of the world.[71]

These ideas are anticipated and framed somewhat differently by Sartre in the first volume of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason:* in a social structure where exchanges are of gifts rather than commodities, "reciprocity becomes isolated as a human relation between individuals; it presents itself as the fundamental, concrete lived

"Dependency in turn is a condition for the accretion of prestige; in this sense, the wealth objectifies persons, that is, their relations with others."

[67] Cf. Gregory (2015, 40): "Gift exchange establishes a relation between the transactors, while commodity exchange establishes a relation between the objects transacted." In reframing the ethnographic evidence, Sahlins attempts to show that Maori norms around the treatment of gifts are not dictated by a principle of reciprocity (1972, 162). More generally on reciprocity see Strathern 1988, 144f.

[68] *Ibid.* 177 (his emphasis). More precisely he claims it is a means of avoiding what Hobbes calls *Warre*: a state of perpetual potential war, of legal war so to speak.

[69] *Ibid.* 183: "Every exchange, as it embodies some coefficient of sociability, cannot be understood in its material terms apart from its social terms."

[70] Strathern 1988 (cf. 191-2: "Exchange is essential to the process of personification through which persons are separated by the social relations between them."

[71] Thus they establish a mutual dependence, or what Marilyn Strathern calls 'Enchainment' (1988, 161): "Enchainment is a condition of all relations based on the gift. The inevitability of enchainment reveals a continuity between kin-based relationships and those of ceremonial exchange."

bond."[72] Sartre claims that the reciprocal or economic element persists in gift exchange (since it is ubiquitous in human relations), but what distinguishes the form is how this element is subordinated to a separate, also ubiquitous element of human relations, namely, recognition of the other. He broadens the point to argue that a process of recognition works even in relations of oppression.[73] Derrida, drawing on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* the Czech philosopher-theologian Jan Patoĉka, uses a concept of gift-giving as recognition to develop a philosophical characterisation of Christian faith and ethics. He emphasises (with close readings of passages from the gospels) the paradox that Christian faith by which the believer must surrender everything to God without hope of return, a kind of absolute recognition – only for this to be paid back with a reward. In this relation, writes Derrida, "There is an economy, but it is an economy that integrates the renunciation of a calculable remuneration, renunciation of merchandise or bargaining, of economy in the sense of a retribution that can be made symmetrical."[74] In Derrida's analysis, the complete rejection of a transactional element is the defining characteristic in the Christian understanding of the human/divine transaction.

The foregoing interpretations yield the possibility of treating the gift/commodity pair as a dialectical duality. That is, both contradictory elements are present in both forms of interaction, and arguably the customary rules of exchange in a society can be understood as a way of stabilising the tension between these two forces. Derrida has shown how even the deliberate effort of Christianity cannot completely exclude an economic component from the subject's relationship with God, but is forced to incorporate it. Conversely, an economic interaction is

[72] Sartre 2004, 108. For the full discussion see 95-121 (a chapter titled 'Human Relations as a Mediation of Materiality').
[73] Sartre 2004, 111: "This is the contradiction of racism, colonialism and all forms of tyranny: in order to *treat a man like a dog,* one must first recognise him as a man." His emphasis.
[74] Derrida 1995, 107.

frequently between (let us say) two people who wish to benefit from each other, but who, by virtue of participating in the interaction, each recognise the other's personhood. In such interactions the economic element may be concealed. At a certain bar where my friends and I are regularly patrons, the staff know us, and our economic exchange is folded into a conversation and a sharing of news. We and the staff are not friends, but we all are invested in making it look that way, and our personal interest in each other is sincere. More and more I buy groceries in supermarkets where the checkouts are automated. Every aspect of the interaction is human: the goods are produced and stocked, the machines developed and repaired, by human beings; and I buy them to sustain and enhance my life. But the mutuality of being between us parties to this interaction is obscured, and I conduct my business under the illusion that my interaction is purely an economic one with a machine. I am treated and learn to regard myself as a customer. Increasingly the internet allows even the buyer's role to be displaced by an intermediary. The complete automation of sale and purchase is a logical conclusion of the repression of the social and interpersonal element of commodity exchange in a capitalist society.[75] But this is only to say that capitalist commodity exchange is structured so as to stabilise and obscure converse tensions to gift exchange in the societies observed by Mauss. They are sides of a single logic. In gift exchange, an underlying transactional relationship is concealed and mystified by an interpersonal connection. In commodity exchange, an underlying interpersonal connection is concealed and mystified by the transaction process.

Arguably all social relationships are structured by a primordial drama of recognition: beneath my self-interest and my connection with the other there is

[75] Cf. Seaford 1998, 3: "Commercial exchange embodies a relationship between the items exchanged rather than between the parties to the exchange." On the disjuncture between personal and economic relationships in modern life see the discussion and references at van Berkel (2020, 6-7).

the strange equivalence of two incommensurables, myself and the other. The other and I are completely different, not just because we are both individuals, but because I experience myself internally (I am the centre of my own world) whereas I experience the other as an object, to me they are closed. Yet by entering a given social relation with the other, I acknowledge, however implicitly, that they are a subject like me, and that I am recognised by them. Moreover, as members of the same society (however broadly conceived) I recognise us both in a sense to be equivalent and interchangeable. The other thereby threatens the integrity of my sense of self, and what is required to stabilise our relations is a system of meaning that allows us to interact on the basis of clear roles and boundaries. Strathern claims the self is a product of the assemblage of interactions filtered through a society's system of meaning – I understand myself to be what others take me to be, and what I present myself as.[76] What is missing from this point of view is a theory of how the link between identity and relations does not quite come off, is not entirely closed and stable. Recognition is incorporated into the system, but it is also a force that can overwhelm it. There are several ways it can do this. Classic studies of recognition emphasise how it involves both affinity and strangeness.[77] Between two people it may cause a sense of fraternity or repugnance. Absolute recognition of the other (by absolute I mean one which occludes the self and presumes no access to the other, like the Christian sacrifice to God as theorised by Kierkegaard (cf. Derrida above)) is impossible for anyone who wishes to interact with people or maintain who they are. But absolute recognition

[76] Strathern 1988, *passim.*

[77] *Phenomenology of Spirit* par. 178-98 (tr. Miller 1977, 111-8); Cave 1988 (cf. 489: "Recognition (…) seems at first sight to be the paradigm of narrative satisfaction: it answers, questions, restores identity and symmetry, and makes a whole hidden structure of relations intelligible. Yet the satisfaction is also somehow excessive, the reassurance too easy; the structure is visibly prone to collapse. An ignorance which was never wholly innocent turns *for the moment* into an implausible and precarious knowledge; the apparently opposite pole of knowledge and ignorance meet in superstitious complicity."

nevertheless exists as a sort of impulse, a thrust that makes all forms of recognition in-itself hard to contain.

Returning to the *Peloponnesian War,* the entanglement of justifications in the dispute over Epidamnus incorporates a dialectical portrait of recognition as the constitutive element of justice in human relations. In my analysis of the Corcyraean/Corinthian debate I contrasted an implicit theory of justice based on mutual reciprocity with one based on obligations arising from kinship. At first glance these are opposed, inasmuch as the former imagines a relationship between self-interested parties whereas the second is more abstracted from concerns of self-interest. But the Corcyraeans set forth mutual self-interest as the ground on which a relationship of alliance between themselves and Athens may be possible. This presupposes a recognition of the two parties, the Corcyraeans and Athenians, as actors with interests and consequently some sort of right; it also provides a framework by which this recognition of the other is limited and balanced against one's own concerns. If self-interest motivates this theory of justice and constitutes a limit on one side, recognition and mutuality of being does the same from another. Justice in both the Corcyraean and the Corinthian understanding sets forth the terms for a way of interacting that is not set in conflict. It is a basis on which people can share the world. Thus, in each case the speakers are engaged in an attempt at mutual identification with the Athenian assembly, as they seek respectively to establish and affirm a relationship.

In what follows, I argue that the point is true of the text more broadly – it characterises relationships as mediated by an idea of justice that develops from the need to accommodate both self-interest and recognition, two overwhelming impulses. This is true not less where relations are on unequal footing. Earlier I asked why speakers in the text feel the need to make specious justifications at all. One simple answer might be that they do so in bad faith so as to appear to act

justly while in truth furthering their self-interest. But in most cases, this does not do anything to resolve (it merely displaces) the paradox that hypocritical or inconsistent justifications remain necessary. The above analysis suggests a different answer. For (let us say two) parties to live together without conflict, their relationship must be intelligible to both in terms of right – justification is the way of making it intelligible. Between seeking to relate to each other in terms not directly violent, justice is the third thing that stands above them both and makes possible a kind of mutual recognition. As expediency and obligation are analogous to the receiving and giving which are each held together in suspension by the act of gift-exchange, so justice is analogous to the gift exchange's atmosphere of sharing in which both parties can recognise and identify with each other's existence. Between two parties of roughly equal power, who are not constrained by some mutually recognised force or mediating principle, a disagreement about justice will cause a crisis that may result in conflict.[78] What is at stake in such a conflict is the meaning or nature of the relationship. But if one party is considerably stronger, then it is likely they will dictate the terms of justice for both themselves and the weaker party.[79] Understanding this to be a law of nature, the Athenians try to convince the Melians to obey (5.89):

> ἐπισταμένους πρὸς εἰδότας ὅτι δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν.

[78] Pericles makes this point (see Andrewes 1960, 7-8; Foster 2010, 140) – "Both the greatest and the least claim imposed by equals on their neighbours before judgment means the same enslavement." (1.141.1: τὴν γὰρ αὐτὴν δύναται δούλωσιν ἥ τε μεγίστη καὶ ἐλαχίστη δικαίωσις ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων πρὸ δίκης τοῖς πέλας ἐπιτασσομένη) – which arguably undercuts the contrast drawn by the Athenians at Melos in the quote that follows.

[79] Allen (2000, 3-38) does a very useful analysis that distinguishes punishment from revenge on the basis that punishment has authority. Authority is dialectical: it expresses the right order of things and applies force on this basis, yet force is what sanctions its authority as that which expresses the right order of things.

> Since we understand that we both know that if issues of right are at question in human discussion they are decided by equal constraint; whereas if power is at question those who have more use it and those who are weaker go along with them.[80]

Here and throughout the Dialogue, the Athenians suggest, first, that it is obvious both to themselves and the Melians that questions of human affairs are decided by whomever holds power, instead of who has right on their side; second, that human affairs would be more intelligently and humanely conducted if people acted with this knowledge. In a sense the Athenians make themselves smaller to allow the Melians to enter a relationship with them: they make themselves merely part of a world in which the Melians also exist.[81] They and the Melians, in a sense, are equal because they both share in the same process of justice which is controlled by neither side. Stones do not share in justice. In many cases barbarians do not share in justice. According to the Athenians, the relative position and obligations of the Athenians and Melians to each other proceeds from the law of nature (5.105.2):

> ἡγούμεθα γὰρ τό τε θεῖον δόξῃ τὸ ἀνθρώπειόν τε σαφῶς διὰ παντὸς ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαίας, οὗ ἂν κρατῇ, ἄρχειν· καὶ ἡμεῖς οὔτε θέντες τὸν νόμον οὔτε κειμένῳ πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι, ὄντα δὲ παραλαβόντες καὶ ἐσόμενον ἐς αἰεὶ καταλείψοντες χρώμεθα αὐτῷ, εἰδότες καὶ ὑμᾶς ἂν καὶ ἄλλους ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ δυνάμει ἡμῖν γενομένους δρῶντας ἂν ταὐτό.

[80] In Greek the passage is very difficult, above all because the sense of ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ (which I translate as "in human discussion") is not clear – common sense would seem to demand it mean "in human affairs" or something similar, but that stretches the Greek considerably. Moreover, does it apply only to the first clause or else to both the first and second clauses? My phrasing attempts to carry the vagueness over to English. Gomme (4.162-4) made two different translations in the course of preparing his commentary, which he had not chosen between when he died. The first was "in ordinary speech, δίκαια enter the picture when judgement is made between persons [etc.]" The second was "When we are talking about relations between human beings [δίκαια etc.]."

[81] Heath (1990) puts it too strongly in claiming that the Athenian speeches exclude arguments from justice.

> 'Since we consider the divine (it seems) and humanity (clearly) to be utterly bound by the same necessity of nature – where one has power, it rules. And we did not make this rule nor are we the first to follow it – it was handed down to us and when we are gone it will remain forever – but now we use it, knowing that you and anyone else in our position would do the same thing.'

The characterisations I have examined so far of a just relationship between two parties – that of the Corcyraeans, the Corinthians, and the Athenians – all are based on an understanding of justice as the rendering of one's due. Justice in the *Peloponnesian War* is not at heart to do with some kind of economic gain or balance of interests. It is about the act of affirming the reality of the other by rendering them what is owed. By rendering unto these or those people their due I affirm them to be what I regard them as: kin, a city of Greece, the stronger party, my enemies, the weaker party: in every case to be *what they are.* 'Is' and 'Ought' reinforce each other in a circular fashion. By acknowledging what you 'Are,' I admit the 'Ought' that governs our relationship – by treating you as I 'Ought,' I demonstrate my awareness of what you 'Are.'

Supplication

This point is vividly rendered by a scene in Book 1 closing a brief narrative of the fortunes of Themistocles after the Persian Wars. Exiled, forced to seek help from King Admetos of Molossos, whom he once spoke against in the Athenian Assembly, Themistocles supplicates the King's wife, who instructs him to sit waiting at the hearth with Admetos' young son in his arms. Admetos enters and straightaway raises up Themistocles, receives his son, and accepts his supplication agreeing to help him escape to Persia (1.136.2-4). The passage is

notable for its subversion of the *Peloponnesian War's* usually realist dynamic, as well as the important place of Admetos' wife. Themistocles arrives at the royal household:

> [3] καὶ ὁ μὲν οὐκ ἔτυχεν ἐπιδημῶν, ὁ δὲ τῆς γυναικὸς ἱκέτης γενόμενος διδάσκεται ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς τὸν παῖδα σφῶν λαβὼν καθέζεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἑστίαν. [4] καὶ ἐλθόντος οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον τοῦ Ἀδμήτου δηλοῖ τε ὅς ἐστι καὶ οὐκ ἀξιοῖ, εἴ τι ἄρα αὐτὸς ἀντεῖπεν αὐτῷ Ἀθηναίων δεομένῳ, φεύγοντα τιμωρεῖσθαι· καὶ γὰρ ἂν ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου πολλῷ ἀσθενεστέρον ἐν τῷ παρόντι κακῶς πάσχειν, γενναῖον δὲ εἶναι τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου τιμωρεῖσθαι. καὶ ἅμα αὐτὸς μὲν ἐκείνῳ χρείας τινὸς καὶ οὐκ ἐς τὸ σῶμα σώζεσθαι ἐναντιωθῆναι, ἐκεῖνον δ᾽ ἄν, εἰ ἐκδοίη αὐτόν (εἰπὼν ὑφ᾽ ὧν καὶ ἐφ᾽ ᾧ διώκεται), σωτηρίας ἂν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀποστερῆσαι. [137.1] ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας ἀνίστησί τε αὐτὸν μετὰ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ υἱέος, ὥσπερ καὶ ἔχων αὐτὸν ἐκαθέζετο, **καὶ μέγιστον ἦν ἱκέτευμα τοῦτο**, καὶ ὕστερον οὐ πολλῷ τοῖς τε Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ Ἀθηναίοις ἐλθοῦσι καὶ πολλὰ εἰποῦσιν οὐκ ἐκδίδωσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἀποστέλλει βουλόμενον ὡς βασιλέα πορευθῆναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἑτέραν θάλασσαν πεζῇ ἐς Πύδναν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου.
>
> [3] [Admetos] was not actually home: Themistocles supplicated his wife and was instructed by her to take their child and sit himself down at the hearth. [4] And when Admetos returned not long later Themistocles revealed himself and said it was not right, just because he had once spoken against him when he was making a request from the Athenians, to take revenge against him now in exile; nor that he, Themistocles, who was now so much weaker, should have to suffer more in the present: since what is right is for equals to take revenge on each other from an equal standing. And anyway, he had opposed Admetos in a financial matter and not

> something to do with his bodily safety, whereas if Admetos gave him up now (he explained why and by whom he was being pursued), he would lose his life. [137.1] When he had finished Admetos made him stand up with his son (because Themistocles was seated holding him: **indeed, this supplication was of the very greatest kind**), and not long later when the Spartans and Athenians came and made all sorts of threats he refused to give him up. Instead, because Themistocles wanted to go to the King of Persia, Admetos sent him towards the other sea[82] by land via Pydna, which was ruled by Alexander I of Macedon.

Themistocles' speech to Admetos' wife subverts the kind of statements about power that are ubiquitous among Athenian speakers. His language closely parallels that of the Athenians in the Melian dialogue (5.89 – see above). But Themistocles emphasises his own weakness as a source of entitlement: it would be wrong, he says, for Admetos to take revenge on him precisely because he is weak, and right to help him since he is in such a vulnerable position. Altogether – I have put this in bold – Thucydides describes this as the very greatest kind of supplication.[83] And it affords Themistocles, who has been abandoned by the Corcyraeans (precisely because they are being threatened by more powerful entities), the protection of a man who was previously an effective enemy. It saves his life.

In an essay on Euripides' *Hecuba,* Victoria Wohl distinguishes between understanding justice as a process and as a spectacle.[84] 'Process' defines a relationship-pattern, a procedure of right- and wrong-doing, as well as perhaps a procedure of punishment. 'Spectacle,' as we have seen, is a show of

[82] Gomme identifies this as the Thermaic gulf (Gomme 1.439).
[83] Naiden (2006, 39) refers to the "ensemble of elements: the hearth, the king, and access to the king's family."
[84] Wohl 2014.

overwhelming force: in this case used to assert someone's claim to a right or the sovereignty of one person or entity over another. Invariably these moments are stage-managed. Most studies concentrate on the spectacle of punishment.[85] You could say that supplication was an institutionalised performance of spectacular justice. It should be emphasised that supplication, here and almost always, is accompanied by an entreaty, and thereby utilises justification like an ordinary assembly speech. But the justification is enhanced by the act which exerts a force.

Scholarship on the practice of supplication has tended to stress its structure: a game with rules and accepted behaviours (either more or less mutually understood and strictly observed in different scholars' opinions), for both parties.[86] In the *Peloponnesian War* supplication is mentioned several times in the context of people seeking help. The first embassy of Epidamnians in Corcyra attempts to gain some kind of moral force for their call for help by sitting as suppliants in the temple of Hera (1.25.7). Later the rebel oligarch Epidamnians do something similar in Corcyra pointing to the graves of their ancestors (1.26.3). Obviously from Achilles to Alexander the institution did not stay the same, and among scholars there is disagreement as to what exactly was standard practice in each era, or to what extent. It is unclear when and if suppliants were expected to kiss or touch the body of the *supplicandus* (supplicated person);[87] if they were meant to speak, cry, or lament, or else all or none of these; if they were expected physically to lower themselves towards the ground, so that the *supplicandus* who accepted them took their hands to raise them up; and finally whether the *supplicandus* was generally obliged to accept.[88] Supplication can be a means of

[85] Most famously Foucault 1995; see also Allen 2000, Wohl 2015.
[86] The paradigmatic essay is Gould 1973; for adjustments and alternative schematisations of his view see the surveys Grethlein 2006, 9-15; Naiden 2006, 3-18.
[87] I borrow the term from Naiden 2006.
[88] Cf. Pedrick on the complexity of supplication in Homer (1982, 140): "because supplication scenes are so freely manipulated in both poems, care should be taken even in describing a fundamental outline of the Homeric ceremony.

ostentatiously reminding the *supplicandus* of an existing duty, as with the Epidamnians above, or indeed famously in the *Iliad* with the supplication of Zeus by Thetis (1.439-516). In other cases, as with Themistocles and Admetos above, no such prior obligation exists, and the supplication is an effort to create one. For both supplicant and *supplicandus,* supplication is a means of projecting some kind of power. Tzanetou has argued that in tragedy the frequent representation of Athens as a humanitarian recipient of supplication requests was a way of articulating its power as one who granted such requests – theirs is the power of the *supplicandus*.[89]

But my interest here is in the power of the suppliant. Scholars have emphasised how the suppliant's act may be at least partly disingenuous: by abasing myself, I assert my own right to whatever I am requesting.[90] But the point need not rely on adopting a cynical stance towards supplication or its impact. In general scholars tend not to develop a rigorous enough sense of where the suppliant's power comes from: that is, its force of spectacle.[91] In Gould's highly paradigmatic essay on supplication he perceives this fact, even if he does not develop or emphasise it: "The element of inversion," he writes, "carries with it (…) a certain constraint and emotional charge for all those participating under any conditions."[92] Supplication is not just a process, it is a way of causing and manipulating this charge, as Crotty emphasises: "the individual suppliant's particular sense of the

[89] Tzanetou 2011.

[90] Gould (1973, 75) emphasises this by distinguishing supplication from *proskunēsis,* a Greek concept partly based on misinterpretation of the Persian practice of prostrating before one's superiors. *Proskunēsis* is a formal demonstration of absolute inferiority, whereas supplication is not so because it "seeks a *reciprocal* act on the part of him to whom it is addressed, above and beyond the concepts of reciprocity which are built into the structure of Greek social relationships."

[91] An exception is Crotty (1994, xi): "[Supplication] consists of a traditional form that bundles together many of the constituent values of the warrior society, but also affords the individual within that society a means of articulating his or her particular distress." Later (19): "Supplication is a public enactment of an emotion." See especially 89-104l.

[92] Gould 1973, 95-6.

life-or-death importance of what he requests."[93] In supplicating you, I attempt to stun you with this charge to force you into recognising me. Weil, commenting on the famous supplication of Achilles by Priam in the *Iliad*, writes:

> The human beings around us by their simple presence wield a power that is uniquely theirs to stop, repress, or alter any of the movements our body sketches out; we do not step aside on the road for a passer-by in the same way we do to avoid a road-sign (…) But this indefinable influence of human presence is not exercised by those whom one impatient gesture could deprive of life (…) people behave as if they were not there; and for their part, in the danger in which they find themselves of being destroyed in an instant, they imitate nothingness.[94]

To be powerless is to be ignored, to have no purchase on someone's recognition. A slave cannot supplicate.[95] Perhaps few might respond like Talleyrand did apocryphally to the beggar – who shouted, 'I must live!' and to whom he said 'I do not see why that is necessary' – but the effect of saying nothing is equivalent. To ignore something is to place it beyond the bounds of recognition and therefore of obligation.[96] Beggars, slaves, those reduced to nothing or almost nothing by the socially sanctioned justice of human relations, do not exercise the same moral force by behaving lowly as Themistocles or Priam. A simple contrast with violence may serve to illustrate the point. Violence – I make you assent to my authority over the meaning of our relationship by threatening the destruction of

[93] Crotty 1994, 20.
[94] Weil 2003, 74 My translation.
[95] Patterson 1982 conceives slavery as 'social death' (on slavery in Greek religion and religious practices see 66-8). But see also Roubineau (2015, 24-38) who argues that slaves in the Greek city-state were treated with a more paradoxical mix of recognition and exploitation.
[96] As my analysis of roles above suggested, recognising/ignoring is not a dichotomy and there are ways to avoid recognising people while interacting with them. Cf. Sara Ahmed's study of institutional complaints in higher education (harassment, bullying, unequal conditions) which begins by claiming that (2021, 1) "To be heard as complaining is not to be heard."

all meaning and relationships in death or moments of extreme pain. Supplication – I do the same thing by forcing you to witness my own complete abjection and my dignity together as an image of the abjection and dignity of others including you. That is why, like physical force, supplication is most effectively used by those who wield the greatest authority.

A view of supplication as an effort to force a recognition also emerges clearly from the text of the supplication scene in *Iliad* Book 24.[97] Before entering Achilles' tent Priam is instructed by Hermes to take his knees and remind him of his parents, "so that you rouse his *thumos*" (*Il.* 24.476: ἵνα οἱ σὺν θυμὸν ὀρίνῃς).[98] When Priam enters the tent he immediately takes Achilles' knees and hands, and starts to kiss them – this shocking action, to kiss the hands of his son's killer, was not mentioned by Hermes and the reader is unprepared for it.[99] Peaceful as they are, these gestures are clearly a way for Priam to assert himself upon Achilles.[100] The narrator introduces a famous simile involving someone who has been exiled for accidental killing, and comes seeking refuge in a wealthy man's home (24.480-4). Strictly speaking the point of comparison is the *thambos* felt by those receiving the supplication in each case. But Heiden has argued the simile does much more than this, that it holds a "mysterious, even uncanny interpretive density."[101] The image has a centripetal force that draws in and subsumes every figure who surrounds it. Tenor and vehicle are identified only at the end, lending greater emphasis to the obvious implicit one between Priam and the murderer. Thus (to take just one example out of many comparisons embedded in the simile) tradition

[97] Crotty (1994, 3-24) cites and discusses earlier interpretations of the passage. Scholars tend to focus on Achilles and his arc rather than Priam (e.g. Zanker 1994, 115-25; Kim 2000; Lesser 2022, 228-41). On the importance of Priam's gift of treasure, in the context of the entire poem, see Wilson (2002, 109-33).
[98] The expression conveys a sense of exciting turbulence or passion in Achilles without specifying what sort of passion – see the discussion of *orinō* in Clarke 1999, 81-2.
[99] Priam later emphasises its uniqueness (*Il.* 24.504-6). On this gesture see Purves 2019, 164-75.
[100] Cf. Purves 2019, 175: "It is important to note that Priam is not just gesturing himself, but impressing a gesture *on* Achilles, by making the latter's hands move a certain way."
[101] Heiden 1998, 2.

states that both Patroclus and Peleus killed someone by accident and sought refuge in exactly this way; so it seems they are being compared to Priam.[102] *Thambos* – amazement – strikes Achilles and his companions, then Priam speaks. He calls for Achilles to remember his father Pelias, to whom he compares himself (24.486-92); then speaks of his own catastrophic situation (24.493-500); then Priam makes his request, for Hector's body in exchange for payment (24.501-2); finally, he returns to himself (24.503-6). Priam thus attempts to use Achilles' memory of his father as a bridge to create some feeling for Priam himself. This is exactly what occurs: Achilles pushes Priam away (24.507-8);[103] as Priam weeps for Hector, Achilles weeps for his father (24.511), then Patroclus (24.512); after this, Achilles stands up and take's Priam's hand, feeling pity for him (24.515-6). That Priam wields a force effectively in this scene should not be confused with a claim that he is anything close to dominant: in fact, he has placed himself entirely at Achilles' mercy.[104] But the point stands, that, with the help of a God, Priam sets out to provoke a recognition in Achilles which will be sufficient to make him to have pity on Priam and give up the body of Hector.

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[102] Heiden (1998, 4-7).

[103] How to interpret this moment? It reads: "A desire to weep for his father surged in [Achilles]/so he took the old man's hand and pushed him away gently" (τῷ δ᾽ ἄρα πατρὸς ὑφ᾽ ἵμερον ὦρσε γόοιο:/ἀψάμενος δ᾽ ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα). Weil (2003, 21-2) sees this as an involuntary movement: Achilles' sorrow causes him briefly to forget the old man Priam and push him away. For her the moment demonstrates the difference between the situations of Achilles and Priam in this scene: Achilles has the freedom to make involuntary movements, whereas Priam's life is at stake in his every gesture. Macleod (ed. 1982, 130) is clear that "Achilles' first gesture [in these lines] is not to accept the supplication (…) only ἦκα ('gently') makes it clear that Achilles is ridding himself of Priam just for the present, to let go the feelings the old man's speech aroused." Likewise, Purves (176n82) notes that the verb *apōtheō* is "a rough word." Schein (2016, 167) and, with more ambivalence, Gold (2016, 363-4) claim that Weil mistranslated ἦκα into French as *un peu,* and refers wrongly in her discussion to Achilles pushing Priam 'to the ground,' and she therefore misunderstood the entire scene – Schein: "Despite the tenderness of this shared lamentation, Weil insists that Achilles treats Priam as a corpse (…) Weil seems to be so carried away by her sense of the 'thingness' of a suppliant that she utterly ignores the rest of the scene." These criticisms of Weil on points of detail are well made, but not substantial enough to invalidate her reading of the episode, since it works just as well taking Macleod's gloss of the Greek (by contrast Schein appears to suggest the scene is characterised by a uniform pity and tenderness). Weil's attempt here is to try and understand precisely what can be learned about the overarching dynamic from this instant where an involuntary movement of Achilles disrupts the scene.

[104] See n above.

Conclusion

As I noted in the sixth chapter, many scholars have noticed something fundamentally tragic in Thucydides' outlook, emphasising how people's destinies are unequal to their character (see esp. 7.86.5), the former shaped by external powers.[105] The force that many scenes exercise upon the reader is not unlike that of supplication: the reader is made to recognise the existence of characters in the text. These may be the victims of a massacre those such as the Ambraciots in Book 3, whom I discussed in Chapter 3, or the Athenians killed in Aetolia, whom I discussed in Chapter 6. Or they might be those of some superlative quality, such as the Spartan army in Book 5 or the exceptionally good-natured Nikias. In earlier chapters we have seen how the tension at the heart of force between experience and an autonomous progression governs the tragic dimension of the *Peloponnesian War*. This tragic outlook depends on a strong sense of the textual world as real, its inhabitants as persons. Recognition thus constitutes an important link between the work's tragic orientation and its moral one.

It is important, however, that an excessive emphasis on the tragic element of the work should not be made to obscure its broader ontology nor confused with a simple morality of bearing witness. Already in Chapter 6, I sought to nuance the idea of a tragic Thucydides by arguing that he directs the reader away from raw sympathetic indulgence: first, by showing that often people's downfalls are related to their choices; second, by incorporating human error and defeat into an implicit anthropology of human limitedness and an ontology of forces. In Chapter 3 I argued that the text's serial form, and the narrative strategy of

[105] The idea has been around in some form or another since Cornford 1907. See for example Mittelstadt 1985; Parry 1989, 286-300; Stahl 2003; Ponchon 2017 (cf. 11-15 for more references).

reducing events to a few key paradigmatic elements and episodes, develop a portrait of a world unsympathetic to people's cries for justice. Those from whom the narrative moves on unimpeded, or else simply passes over, such as for example the Skionians (4.122.6) or the Aeginetans (2.27), do not have their individual characters and sufferings recorded – we are encouraged (I have argued) to recognise these for ourselves along with the forces against which these become as nothing.[106] But even if we are encouraged to do so, the work nevertheless inevitably a hierarchy of recognition on the war's subjects.[107] It cannot do otherwise for the same reason that the idea of bearing witness as an ethical principle is incoherent, namely, that one cannot bear witness without also in a different respect looking away; both from what one simply does not see, and from what one sees but decides is unworthy or irrelevant from the solemn perspective of 'bearing witness.' For Corcyraean or Corinthian citizens to bear witness to the plight of Epidamnian aristocrats or kin is a political act at least as much as a moral one, and if taken in the context of its results, it is unclear that it has anything much to do with morality. In other words, there is always a politics of tragedy. The *Peloponnesian War* is self-conscious about this and distributes attention according to the demands of its ontological exegesis.

Equally, the tragic perspective can make it seem as if we are all powerless. This is the plea of the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue, "we did not make this rule nor are we the first to follow it" (5.105.2: ἡμεῖς οὔτε θέντες τὸν νόμον οὔτε

[106] On Melos as a paradigm that can be read across to other cities see Connor 1984, 147; Foufas 2019, 182-92.

[107] For example, Irwin (2007A, 2007B, 2009, 2018) has argued that in various respects Thucydides leaves things out and constructs his narrative to favour a hegemonic, positive and heroic depiction of Athens' imperial enterprise. The essays cited are thoroughly argued, but obviously I am not in agreement with Irwin's construction of Thucydides as a narrow Athenian apologist which she develops largely as a background to her portrait of Herodotus. In this regard, her tendency to rely on Thucydides' exclusions as evidence, without necessarily as deeply analysing what has been included in the text and engaging with the full breadth of scholarly responses, can have a distorting impact. For another example, see Hornblower's (3.12-21) interesting note on the absence of the theatre from Thucydides.

κειμένῳ πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι); we are victims, we have no choice. It is true that the assertion of human powerlessness is an important aspect of the *Peloponnesian War's* representation of power, particularly in the last analysis and at the outer frame. But in a sense, as I argued in Chapter 4, to frame the issue as the Athenians do is to put the point entirely the wrong way. It is not that, personally and collectively, we have no choice. Very much the opposite: our choices make and then consume us. Force and struggle are ubiquitous, not as some empty, impersonal layer of truth more real than our life and freedom, but as their vital substance. What we find in Thucydides is therefore no implicit philosophy of morality or practical reason, but a complex meditation on the uneasy link between moral claims and human relations in practice. There is no false equivalence between forgiveness and understanding.

As I have shown, one element of this depiction is a portrayal of moral rhetoric and appeals as an amoral force in human relations. The reader is conditioned to be sceptical about justifications offered by people and cities as explanations for their actions – pretty much all of these are self-serving.[108] In the Melian Dialogue the incredulous Melian speakers ask the Athenians if their subjugated cities would really find it reasonable (5.96: σκοποῦσι (…) τὸ εἰκός) for them to behave so aggressively towards people who had nothing to do with them (i.e. the Melians). In response, the Athenian speakers state with some irony that their subjugated cities "are of the opinion neither side is short of justification" (5.97: δικαιώματι γὰρ οὐδετέρους ἐλλείπειν ἡγοῦνται). Near the beginning of the Melian dialogue, it seems that justification is precisely what the Athenian speakers claim to distinguish themselves by eschewing (5.89):

[108] See also on this Low 2007, 222-33 (231: "The problem with moral arguments (…) is not that they are irrelevant to the conduct of foreign affairs, but that they can be made relevant to anything, and, more crucially, be made part of an argument justifying just about any course of action.").

> ἡμεῖς τοίνυν οὔτε αὐτοὶ **μετ᾽ ὀνομάτων καλῶν, ὡς ἢ δικαίως** τὸν Μῆδον καταλύσαντες ἄρχομεν **ἢ ἀδικούμενοι** νῦν ἐπεξερχόμεθα, **λόγων μῆκος ἄπιστον** παρέξομεν
>
> So for our part we will not use **nice-sounding phrases – such as that rightly** after defeating the Persians we have power, or that we are attacking you **because of some wrong done to us** – to make **a long list of arguments in bad faith**

These lines encapsulate an important, ubiquitous theme of the work.[109] As I have said, the Athenian claims wind up amounting to self-justification: 'None of this is our fault: it is the way of the world.' James argues that "the central argument the Athenians make (…) [that] 'might excludes right' (…) is itself an ethical position and is not amoral."[110] In justifying themselves to the Melians, in acknowledging however implicitly that there is a need for such as justification, the Athenians acknowledge them as persons to whom a sort of justice is owed (whatever this might be).[111] If relations between human beings are conditioned by force, the dialogue suggests, equally they are conditioned by the need to be recognised as legitimate. By using force, I may seek to establish my dominance over you; inherently, I also seek to establish the justice of my dominance, whether by appealing to some greater principle or the lack of one. Human relations and interactions, the *Peloponnesian War* claims, are steeped in the will to be recognised and in justice no less than force.

[109] Cf. Morrison 2000, 126-7: "The idea that justice is irrelevant to foreign policy recurs prominently in the *History*."
[110] James 2024, 3.
[111] Macleod (1983, 57) notes that, by participating in dialogue at all, the Athenians ostensibly place the Melians on the same level as them – as if the two were engaged in a conversation about justice. Whereas in fact "the Athenians are the real agents whereas the Melians must simply endure." See Bosworth (1993) who argues that on the Athenian side (31) "the purpose of the Dialogue is to force [the Melians] to a decision which minimises suffering on all sides" (cf. Scardino 2007, 477-80).

In Chapter Four I argued that to properly interpret the Melian Dialogue we must add to the opposed perspectives of the Athenians and Melians a third, combined one of the reader and author. Obviously, an aspect of this is the awareness of how Melos was destroyed, its men killed, its women and children sold into slavery (5.116.2-4). The narrative elicits sympathy, not with the Melian speakers' statements about justice, but their condition as human beings destroyed by a conflict in which they have had almost no part.[112] Later the Athenian soldiers – did some of them carry out the massacre? – will receive the same sympathetic narrative treatment with the collapse of the force in Sicily (see esp. 7.84-7).[113] Devastating as these episodes may be, they are not innocently rendered and the work's direction of our gaze towards them is political. Even still, like violence, the force that makes us recognise these things, shaped by individual powers (of the author, of the rhetorician) and larger structures (e.g. social conditions of ancient Greece and now), is vitally tinctured. In a politico-historical sense, recognition's meaning is its use. But this use depends on a different kind of meaning so repugnant to concerns of power and interest it is destabilising. In this way, recognition is a boundary of politics: an internal boundary, as the political rests upon something it struggles to incorporate, and a frontier beyond which the political cannot pass.

[112] The preceding narrative in Book 5 further compounds this emphasis. The Melian Dialogue follows what has been a parade of empty treaties, broken oaths, and false alliances between Athens, Sparta, and others during the period after the ten-year war and before the invasion of Sicily that historians call the Peace of Nikias. See Rood's close reading and discussion (1998, 83-108).

[113] The link between Athenian ideology at Melos and outcomes in Sicily has been often made (see e.g. de Romilly 1951, 256-9; Andrewes 1960, 2-3; Macleod 1983, 58-60; Connor 1984, 154-5; Kallet 2001, 9-20).

Conclusion

I have argued that the historical events in the *Peloponnesian War* and its vision of human politics are framed by an ontology of force. If power is something we possess, force is what possesses us. The concept of force allows us to centre the medium through which power is gained and exercised: violence, strategy, speech, laws. It is never simply 'I' who have power: I use power, I wield an instrument of power against someone else, so that properly speaking they are not controlled by me, and we make no contact directly but via the means of control. That even the intimate force of violence works this way has been shown by Simone Weil and discussed in Chapter 4. In each case, therefore, the one who wields force cannot avoid also becoming somehow subject to its demands. From time to time the instability of a force may invert the relation between ruler and subject or cause its bearer to be carried along inadvertently: this may take in a moment or a much broader sweep of time to occur. It may involve one person or a whole city or a constellation of cities. For Thucydides, all who have power take and keep it by force, but this ultimately constrains them and is something by which they are kept and limited. What ultimately has the upper hand, for Thucydides, is not the person but their instrument. In this sense Thucydides' theory of power differs greatly from that of many moderns who are concerned almost exclusively with the distribution and exchange or transfer of power. Thucydides is interested in the substance of power: in other words, force. Viewed as force, what is finally most salient about power is that human beings do not possess it, not in fact.

The world of forces is the one of nature, "deepest Orkus" as the poet Hölderlin has written. But the darkness of nature is a mask. Even Orkus is limited and subject to a law: "a straight line, a rule." The antinomy of nature and the law,

between *physis* and *nomos,* is here in a very different light. The state of nature does not cede to the law in human societies, it never has. Instead the law conceals and solidifies relations and dynamics of power; in civic struggles, by the same token by which it limits conflict, the law is a weapon. Equally, and conversely, destruction or domination is not the only principle in the world. Law *is* limit: the impossibility for each thing of going anywhere without its opposite, and the tendency of forces by no external compulsion to exhaust themselves and change. There is no one rule or principle to describe this, no single force; its content is innate and different in everything, but its form is law. For Thucydides, perhaps the greatest instance of this is the natural pair of movement and rest, which in Greek is coterminous with the ideas of change and continuity. Human experience makes palpable the mysterious unity of change and the fixed present, as every moment seems to stand outside of the very thing it pushes forward. The same paradox can be observed in the quality and specificity of individual human lives. The dead disappear such that even the past does not contain them, they are void. Sometimes a feeling of absence or deficiency in the present (one that Thucydides works hard to reconstruct) leaves an opening through which they pass without making contact. But their traces survive without our knowing: just as our means of life transform us, so our habits and constructions are what survive us, even long after our link with them has been severed.

People are thus born amid the scattered ruins of their ancestors. When they enter these forms, they are shaped by them and shape them in their turn. An important strand of this investigation has been the insertion of a sociological element in Thucydides between the psychological and the natural (previous scholars tended to jump straight between those two): desires, values, and interests are all in some degree collective, and in that way subject to much broader situational and socio-historical influence. The gambles of the past incurred debts that come due in the

present. Today's investments are tomorrow's dividends and squandered fortunes. This sociological aspect not only shapes for the strategic orientation of a city and the character of its people, but also their basic sense of obligation and meaning. The collapse of Athenian values during the plague (2.53) clarifies what they depended on before: the collective sense of continuity and possibility that the city could instil, expressed most powerfully by Pericles in the Funeral Oration. In this sense, the city was much more than just its men, as the imaginary Athens was a real one. The analysis in Chapter 7 of the Funeral Oration/Plague sequence showed that the power of such an imaginary system over individuals mentally is its power to make things mean for us what it describes them as. Importantly this power is sustained by how the systems' defenders wield the unravelling of meaning, a kind of supple and writhing indeterminacy, which shatters common sense with the force of a sound breaking glass. The collective imaginary imposes itself on the individual by playing a game of limits with the absurd. This source of its strength is also its weakness. In the Funeral Oration Pericles declares (2.41.1):

> ξυνελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι καὶ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον δοκεῖν ἄν μοι τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστ᾽ ἂν εἴδη καὶ μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστ᾽ ἂν εὐτραπέλως τὸ σῶμα αὔταρκες παρέχεσθαι.
>
> In summing up let me say that the entire city is an education to Greece, and that each man among us it would seem to me is capable in themselves of adapting deftly and with grace to the greatest number of forms their own self-sufficient body.[114]

[114] See Rusten's (1989) 158—9 and Hornblower's (vol. 1) 308 notes: the passage is echoed in other writers, earlier by Pericles himself in the funeral oration when speaking about the entire city (Thuc. 2.36.3), and later by Thucydides himself during the plague (2.51.3). On the analogy between city and individual in

This is of course a eulogy of power masked as beauty, but it is notably based on an idea of power as the possession of the possible. The body of the Athenian man, representative of the city, is a kaleidoscope of different actions and ways of being, the ultimate instrument of the city. In a speech designed to encourage the Athenians to put their bodies at the disposal of the city, it is appropriate to highlight the body's strangeness, the unaccountable possibilities it contains. When the notion of the body as mystery returns in the plague sequence, its malleability is a source of terror: open, vulnerable to attack, no form of strength or discipline could foreclose the possibility of plague. Thucydides repeats a phrase of Pericles: "The body showed it was completely unable to sustain itself against it [the disease] whether strong or weak: it destroyed all, even those cared for by every sort of regimen" (2.51.3: σῶμά τε αὐταρκες ὂν οὐδὲν διεφάνη πρὸς αὐτὸ ἰσχύος πέρι ἢ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ πάντα ξυνήρει καὶ τὰ πάση διαίτη θεραπευόμενα). The body's capacity to be moulded makes it vulnerable to external forces, erasing the power of its owner's will. Instead of possessing their body, people turn out to be possessed by it. Yet the idea of force as absolute devastation is no more correct than that of power as absolute control. Visions of horror and collapse are not rare in the *Peloponnesian War*, but no less strange are the moments when the world itself picks back up again, when the disaster turns out to have been survivable at least by some. The calamity of yesterday recedes before today's crisis and tomorrow's hopes. Time and again difficult circumstances cause people to underestimate the power of the Athenians (e.g. 3.13.3, 4.104.8, 8.24.5), as what seems like a total defeat is in truth as circumscribed and limited as victory.

Thucydides see Morrison 1994 (this is also a fundamental and debated aspect of Plato's *Republic*: see for example Williams 1997; Evrigenis 2002; Blair (2012) 69—93).

The *Peloponnesian War* thus seeks to traverse the boundary of politics and metaphysics, or between the possible and the true. In this work I have kept far from any idea of the text as a kind of political ethics or instruction manual for action, because I believe its ambition is much broader and such readings often follow to their detriment Polybius' reduction of politics to the art of being a ruler and organising a state. But I have also tried to avoid a tragic interpretation that would make it seem as if political action does not matter, or else cannot be for better or worse, since in the long run we are all victims. So let me briefly outline the dialectic that I believe, from a Thucydidean point of view, must motivate any self-conscious and informed political act. "A political career," writes Karl Barth, "becomes possible only when it is seen to be essentially a game; that is to say, when we are unable to speak of absolute political right, when the note of 'absoluteness' has vanished from both thesis and antithesis (…) But in saying this we must remember that 'moderation' is not a compensation for the good."[115] Barth is sensitive to the way that as soon as one grabs hold of a truth it seems to change; the right thing very quickly becomes the wrong thing. Thus, good political action requires a sense of lightness, enough to be impersonal and regard as a game the struggle between contrary intentions.[116] Schlosser has described how the Melian Dialogue is used in parts of the United States to train activists to think in terms of political pragmatism.[117] On the other hand, the French author, Édouard Louis, in a book addressed to his father, tells of how changes to social welfare laws under the Chirac and Sarkozy governments forced his father into work despite a disability, ruining his health:

> Those in power can complain about a left-wing government, they can complain about a right-wing government, but a government never causes

[115] Barth 1968, 489.
[116] De Romilly 1956B, 26: "*La lutte entre deux intentions contraires*" (cf. p. 219 above).
[117] Schlosser 2023.

them digestion problems, a government never puts out their back (…) For the powerful, most often, politics is an *aesthetic question*: a way of considering oneself, a way of seeing the world, of constituting their person. For us, it was life or death.[118]

Louis identifies what Luciano Canfora has called "[the] living phenomenon of the struggle for power and the intertwining of this struggle with the political order."[119] To forget this, as we all do in some degree, is to make life grotesque and unbearable. Perhaps what is worth the most in the *Peloponnesian War* is its instinct of reality: not in the sense of a hard-nosed realism that busts illusion or myth, but the reality of 'us:' what is most alive in us, what is real. There is nothing cheap about who we are and how we treat and are treated by those with whom we share the world. As I write these words it is day for myself and everyone I know. We are illumined. It does not matter how much difference any of it makes. Socrates says in Plato's *Philebus* (58b-c)*:*

'οὐκ, ὦ φίλε Πρώταρχε, τοῦτο ἔγωγε ἐζήτουν πω, [58c] τίς τέχνη ἢ τίς ἐπιστήμη πασῶν διαφέρει τῷ μεγίστη καὶ ἀρίστη καὶ πλεῖστα ὠφελοῦσα ἡμᾶς, ἀλλὰ τίς ποτε τὸ σαφὲς καὶ τἀκριβὲς καὶ τὸ ἀληθέστατον ἐπισκοπεῖ, κἂν εἰ σμικρὰ καὶ σμικρὰ ὀνινᾶσα, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ὃ νῦν δὴ ζητοῦμεν.'

'Myself, Protarchus, I have not been looking for [58c] whichever skill or knowledge differs from all others in being the greatest and best and most

[118] Louis 2018, 73: *"les dominants peuvent se plaindre d'un gouvernement de gauche, ils peuvent se plaindre d'un gouvernement de droite, mais un gouvernement ne leur cause jamais de problèmes de digestion, un gouvernement ne leur broie jamais le dos (…) Pour les dominants, le plus souvent, la politique est une* question esthétique : *une manière de se penser, une manière de voir le monde, de construire sa personne. Pour nous, c'était vivre ou mourir."*

[119] Canfora 2016, 3 ("[*il*] *fenomeno vivente del conflitto di potenza e dell'intreccio di tale conflitto con gli ordinamenti politici"*).

useful to us, but the one concerned with what is real and precise and most true. Even if it is small, and helps little, that is what we are searching for.'

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