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A Mind at War: Erga Paraloga in Thucydides' History

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A Mind at War:

Erga Paraloga in Thucydides' *History*

Senior project submitted to

The Division of Languages and Literature

of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Introduction: Teaching and Learning

In antiquity, the poet was considered a teacher (Smertenko, 233). Even in the historical prose of Herodotus, a teaching figure appears early on in Book 1, Solon, whose lessons inform the outcome of the *History*'s events to a significant extent (Dewald, 9-26). Thucydides is different: no such articulate entity endorses a system of political action that befits circumstance, a system that the narrative confirms with concordant results. Instead of a wise man, it is the war itself that is the *didaskalos*, a *biaios didaskalos* (3.82.2), and it is from this war narrative, rather than a characterization of it by someone in the text, that the reader of Thucydides will learn.

It is difficult to remember that behind the austere, impersonal narrative of the *History*, there was an Athenian citizen, a general no less, who wrote it. Thucydides reveals something of his authorial convictions in section 1.22, when he details the historical methodology involved in the composition of his work. Such deliberate emphasis of authorial presence and process is unparalleled elsewhere in ancient literature, with Arrian's *Anabasis* being an "honorable exception" (Hornblower, 59 n. 22). As such, we have a brief glimpse of a corporeal Thucydides, *kalamos* in hand.

Thucydides presents himself boldly. He believes that his work is superior to other histories because its subject matter is the greatest to date, and because his study of the subject matter is a *zêtêsis alêtheias*, a remarkable literary enterprise (1.20.3). Thucydides is confident and proud that his work will have everlasting importance because the hard facts and truths that it offers are *useful*, a claim of Thucydides' that we will return to (1.22.4). Truth for Thucydides requires an understanding of war that is not heroic, as in the *Iliad*, but highly realistic: the *biaios*

didaskalos of the Peloponnesian War produced no glorious heroes, but leveled the spirit of humankind to baseness and necessity.

In Chapter 21, Thucydides contextualizes these realist objectives within the history of Greek literature, going head-to-head with what he calls “the mythic” quality that pervades much of it. While the value of the truth may seem self-evident to a modern reader, it is worthwhile to pause and consider the nature of the truth that mattered to Thucydides. Thucydides introduces the concept of the truth in his discussion of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, whose glorification into civic heroes he believes was largely undeserved. Thucydides reveals that they killed Hipparchus in cold blood because they wanted “to perform some daring exploit.”¹ The prevalence of this myth exemplifies the fact that “People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way—even when these stories concern their own native countries” (1.20*). As we will learn in reading Thucydides, people accept tales of the past indiscriminately *especially* if they are flattering and native to their own land.

The quest for truth is arduous. Using his own historical efforts to illustrate this claim, Thucydides demonstrates this fact to his reader several times.² He sets these painstaking probings against the trusting nature of the majority, whose quest for truth (if it could even be called such) is “not painstaking”:

οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται. ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων τεκμηρίων ὅμως τοιαῦτα ἂν τις νομίζων μάλιστα ἂ διῆλθον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνοι...

¹ All translations of Thucydides are my own with the exception of those marked with an asterisk (*), which are from Rex Warner’s translation.

² ...ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί (1.1); τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ἤϊρον, **χαλεπὰ ὄντα** παντὶ ἐξῆς τεκμηρίῳ πιστεῦσαι (1.20); **χαλεπὸν** τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί (1.22); **ἐπιπόνως** δὲ ἠύρισκετο (1.22.3).

² Ἀπὸ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί (1.1), τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ἤϊρον, **χαλεπὰ ὄντα** παντὶ ἐξῆς τεκμηρίῳ πιστεῦσαι (1.20); **χαλεπὸν** τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί (1.22); **ἐπιπόνως** δὲ ἠύρισκετο (1.22.3).

For many, the quest for the truth is not painstaking; they are more inclined to turn toward what is readily available. But nevertheless, someone judging such things which I was going through by the aforementioned evidence would not err...
(1.21.4-5)

In this passage, Thucydides distinguishes his intellectual rigor from that of the majority, who do not want make the effort to find the truth, and who accept the information that is at hand.

Thucydides also asserts here that a reader heeding how he has presented historical information would share in the certitudes of his intellectual rigor. Thucydides transforms himself from investigator to author: once laboring to perceive the truth of matters, he now presents what he has found as the truth, and once having criticized how information is shared and processed, he must now validate why he should be trusted as a source of information about the Peloponnesian War. To do so, he elucidates important differences between his narrative and the narratives of poets and chroniclers by contrasting his composition style with theirs, explaining how each of these styles of composition and presentation impacts the reader (or listener) in different ways.

Thucydides' reader will be "judging" (νομίζων) from evidence (ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων τεκμηρίων, 1.21.5) that he "wrote-up" (ξυνέγραψε, 1.1). By contrast, those who are reading the poets are not "judging," but "trusting," "trusting how the poets have sung about [the events of the past], arranging them toward something greater" (ὡς ποιηται ὑμνήκασι περι αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον πιστεύων), and trusting "how the chroniclers were putting them together in a form more appealing to the ear than as something truer" (ὡς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσαν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῆ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέστερον), both types of narrative "being safe from being disproven and [much of their contents] being untrustworthy given their length of time, having

won for themselves mythic status”³ (ὄντα ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστως ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνευικηκότα, 1.21). In summation, those who incline toward poetry and chronicles are “trusting” because their judgment has been overwhelmed by the artistry of these narratives that appeal more to the ideals of the human spirit than the empirical facts of life. Because Thucydides assures his reader that the *History* is an unadorned factual compilation of the war, rather than a poetic “ordering” (1.21) of it, he cautions that it is accordingly less pleasurable, “The non-mythic [quality of my work] will perhaps appear less pleasurable to hear [than the works of the poets and chroniclers]” (καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται, 1.22.4).

Since Thucydides is confident that a reader can “judge” information from τῶν εἰρημίων τεκμηρίων (1.21.5), a methodology tailored to seek *alêtheia* (1.21.4), he believes that reading the *History* is a journey to knowledge through extreme narrative constraint. Thucydides’ doctrine not only governs the writing of the work, but attempts to govern its reading as well. Questionable as this logic may be, it is clear that Thucydides ultimately seeks to promote a new kind of intellectual freedom with his *History*. As a *ktêma es aiei*, a “possession for forever,” it will be useful for “those who are willing to perceive the truth of what has been, and what will be again” (1.22.4). The *ktêma* that is the *History* is democratic in its objectives, written with the individual in mind, given to us, his readers, as a tool to understand the past and the future alike. By contrast, Thucydides depicts the mythic works of other authors as self-interested, appealing to the public to bolster their stature, each acting as an *agonisma es to parakhrêma* (1.22.4). Of course, to characterize these other works as sell-outs only bolsters Thucydides’ literary appeal and his claim to intellectual rigor and profundity. Nevertheless, the distinction that Thucydides draws

³ Although Thucydides seems to have successfully tested Homer’s claims in the Archaeology (1.1-20).

between *ktêma*, “possession” and *chrêma*, “use” or “want,” is both sincere and important. Rhetoric, as has been and always will be noted by readers of Thucydides, holds incredible sway over the vulnerable mind. The volatile Athenian democracy, in particular, was at the mercy of words and ideas that would influence them by speaking to their ambitious and exalted view of their state. Thucydides’ exposé of the myth of Harmodius and Aristogeiton points to this phenomenon: the story is loved because it validates and heroizes democracy and its ideals, not because it is true.

Thucydides began recording the war “immediately at its onset,” expecting that “it would be great and more noteworthy than preceding wars” (ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, 1.1). Truly, the *History*, a steady stream of events and factual reporting with limited didactic analyses from the author himself, is often designed to read like a transcript of these events.⁴ This narrative is both objective, reflecting Thucydides’ philosophy of historical reporting, and experiential, reflecting his participatory status in the war. As Hornblower puts it, Thucydides “sat down to record a set of events which were still in the future” (Hornblower, 5), an altogether new phenomenon. In this way, the *History* features a “homology between the reader’s experience and that of participants in the war,”⁵ one initially shared by Thucydides himself as an Athenian general. Thucydides would later be exiled from Athens for 20 years because of a military failure at Amphipolis, during which time he was at leisure to research and continue to write the *History*, a fact that he states at 5.26.

To consider Thucydides’ experience as an exiled Athenian general is of the utmost importance in understanding the composition of the *History*. In its opening chapter, Thucydides

⁴ There are notable digressions, such as the myth of the *Pentekontaetia* (1.89-117), the stories of Pausanias and Themistocles (1.128-138), and of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (6.54-9).

⁵ Tim Rood, “Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation,” 22, citing Connor (1991), 58.

refers to himself as an “examiner,” a “viewer,” a *skopôn*.⁶ In doing so, Thucydides is subtly asserting the sense of sight that he employed in the composition of his *History*, having lived through this time as an Athenian citizen, and a general on the front lines. The historian expounds upon his role as *skopôn* here:

τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος
 πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ
 παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελεθῶν. ἐπιπόνως δὲ
 ἠύρισκετο, διότι οἱ παρόντες τοῖς ἔργοις ἐκάστοις οὐ ταῦτα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν
 ἔλεγον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκατέρων τις εὐνοίας ἢ μνήμης ἔχοι.

And as for the deeds of events in the war—I did not deem them worthy to write down as I learned them from anybody who happened to be standing around, nor as it seemed to me, but at events in which I myself was present or from other eyewitnesses, cross-examining information about each deed with as much precision as possible. And the deeds of the war have been discovered with great difficulty, because those who were present at each event were not saying the same thing about it, but as one would speak from bias or recollection.

(1.22.3)

Here, Thucydides tells us that he did not write the *History* based on information that he heard from ordinary folk whom he happened to bump into on his travels. He only it deemed worthy to write accounts of deeds that he had witnessed with his own eyes, or from accounts of other eyewitnesses whom he interviewed. Even when Thucydides has to conduct an interview to obtain information for his *History*, we can tell that he is observing his subjects carefully to determine when they are speaking from *eunoia* or *mnêmê*: facial expressions, body language, verbal cadence, and the words of the speakers themselves are all being considered. Thus, even in interviews, Thucydides is fully “present” (αὐτὸς παρῆν) as a watcher, a *skopôn*.

⁶ ... ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακρότατον **σκοποῦντί μοι** πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει... (1.1.3).

Thucydides refers to readers of the *History* as *skopountes*;⁷ this makes his imagined audience distinct from the audiences of other literary genres who are, in Thucydides' estimation, "trustees," *pisteuontes*.⁸ What does it mean, then, for Thucydides, a *skopôn*, to class us, his readers, as kindred *skopountes*?

I would like to begin to answer this question with a quote from Lowell Edmunds' book *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*: "In the *History*," he writes "the actors and speakers experience only some one arc of the cycle, whereas experience reflected in the *History* is a whole cycle" (203).⁹ Thus, while Thucydides' historical actors are confined to their individual perspectives of the war, Edmunds argues that Thucydides' *History* gives us a complete perspective, a full spectrum, of the war.

I would like to direct Edmunds' comments toward the thematic and structural dichotomy of *logoi* and *erga* in the *History*, one that has been noted by many scholars of Thucydides, and by the historian himself when he tells us about the two different methods he employed to compose speeches and deeds in the *History* (1.22). It is, I would argue, Thucydides' very presentation of

⁷ καὶ ὁ πόλεμος οὗτος, καίπερ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν ᾧ μὲν ἂν πολεμῶσι τὸν παρόντα αἰεὶ μέγιστον κρινόντων, παυσσαμένων δὲ τὰ ἀρχαῖα μᾶλλον θαυμαζόντων, ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων **σκοποῦσι** δηλώσει ὁμῶς μείζων γεγενημένος αὐτῶν (1.21.2); ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφές **σκοπεῖν** καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὐθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι... (1.22).

⁸ Audiences of other genres: ὡς ποιηταὶ ὑμνήκασι περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον **πιστεύων** (1.21). It could be argued that Thucydides simply refers his audience as *skopoi* because he imagines that they will be reading or "looking" at a physical copy of the *History*, rather than having it read to them. I believe, however, that we will find this interpretation needlessly limiting as we proceed through our study, especially when we discuss the Archaeology, which begins with *phainô* as well. When Thucydides writes, for example that "My work will appear less pleasurable to hear" (καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ... ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται, 1.22.4), we are confounded because we are presented with a conflation of senses: sight (*phainô*) and hearing (*akroasis*). The experience of encountering the *History* is, in a sense, synesthetic. As we proceed through our analysis, the meaning of Thucydides' "synesthetic" approach to history will be unfolded.

⁹ Edmunds is making this assertion from a study of Aristotle's *Problemata*, from which he argues that "Human ignorance is... an objective condition."

erga alongside *logoi* in the *History* that completes the “cycle” of knowledge that historical actors of the *History* do not have. Take, for example, Thucydides’ analysis of the cause of the Peloponnesian War: “What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta” (1.23*). Thucydides describes the Peloponnesian War as something “brought to necessity” (ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν) because the incomplete knowledge that each nation had of the other led to deep political mistrust and diplomatic irreconcilability; each side was compelled to trust their own calculations (*logismoi*) about the other’s intent.

To Sparta, the ultimate imperial intents and machinations of the Athenians are unknown; it is this fear of the unknown that pushes them toward war. So too, the Athenian uncertainty of the Peloponnesians’ ultimate intents and machinations causes them to take measures to consolidate their empire, measures that only make the Peloponnesians more frightened.¹⁰ Thucydides shows us how the respective half-cycles of knowledge on the Athenian and Spartan side brought about the war that they feared and, in this way, completes the cycle of our knowledge regarding the cause of the Peloponnesian War.

In Book 1, the Athenian envoys at Sparta warn the assembled Peloponnesians that a significant portion of war is *paralogos*. This word, in its nominal form, means, “that which is beyond all calculation,” and in its adjectival form, “beyond calculation,” “unexpected,” or “unaccountable” (LSJ, 524). It is ironic that the Athenians should, in this particular speech, characterize war in this way. These Athenians, Thucydides tells us, had intended to placate the

¹⁰ The fear between Sparta and Athens goes back to the Athenian construction of their Long Walls, which Thucydides details in the Pentekontaetia (1.89-93). The Spartans fear that the construction of the walls will grant Athens too much power and ask that the Athenians reconsider their plans. Themistocles, believing that the Spartan will secure by force what they cannot secure by policy, goes to Sparta to stall them until the Athenians have constructed the walls. Once the walls are built, Themistocles tells the Spartans what has transpired, and justifies it with nationalistic praise of Athenian heroism during the Persian War. “After listening to this, the Spartans showed no open signs of displeasure towards Athens” (1.92*).

Peloponnesians with their speech, “In this way they hoped to divert their audience from the idea of war and make them incline toward letting matters rest” (1.72*). Yet their speech, as my second chapter examines in greater detail, achieves the opposite of its intended result: having heard it, the Spartans grow even more agitated with the Athenians, decree that the Athenians have, in fact, broken the peace treaties, and take further steps toward declaring war against Athens (1.86-8).

How, then, could these Athenian envoys have so utterly misjudged the effect that their speech would have on the Peloponnesians? They knew full well that the Peloponnesians were weary of hearing their nationalistic speeches, yet they deliver a nationalistic speech nonetheless, “...we must (ἀνάγκη λέγειν) refer to the Persian War, to events known to you all, even though you may be tired of constantly hearing the story” (1.73*). The word ἀνάγκη is important here because suggests that the Athenians are bound to deliver this nationalistic speech knowing that it would annoy their audience. But the Athenians refuse to establish a causal relationship between their repeated deliverance of nationalistic speeches and the growing resentment of the Greeks toward Athens: this is because they live imaginatively in their imperial ideal, an ideal that exists independently of their current political reality. As such, the Athenians, for all their ingenuity, fail to adapt their rhetoric to placate an increasingly anti-Athenian Greece.

I believe that the Athenian envoys’ behavior at the Spartan assembly is a product of what Thucydides will later call an *autokratôr logismos* in a bold sociological proclamation about the nature of humankind:

εἰωθότες οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὗ μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἐλπίδι ἀπερισκέπτῳ διδόναι, ὃ δὲ μὴ προσίενται λογισμῶ ἀτοκράτορι διωθεῖσθαι.

Men are accustomed to give what they want to untested/blind hope, but that which they do not want they cast aside with biased calculation to be rejected.

(4.108)

That which man wants he puts in the hands of hope, blindly (*aperiskeptos*) and without calculation. But that which man does not want, he dismisses by creating a system of logic (*logismos*) unchecked by reality (*erga*). Metaphorically speaking, this logic is autocratic (*autokratôr*).

The *autokratôr logismos*¹¹ of the Athenians proved to be a bitter reality for Thucydides and his fellow generals to cope with. In the *History*, we often see Athenian generals saddled with difficult orders from the Athenians, and fearing the consequences of failure. Our first example of this will be in Chapter 2, when we study the fear that the Athenian generals experience at Sybota, having been placed in the catch-22 position of following Athenian orders and most certainly failing in their mission, or disobeying orders and having a better chance at success (1.45-55). Should a general fail to meet the Athenians' expectations, their wrath was harsh. At the end of the Peloponnesian War in 406, past the time when Thucydides was still writing the *History*, "the eight *stratêgoi* who commanded the fleet at Arginusae were all removed from office and condemned to death" (OCD, 1406, "*Stratêgoi*"). Although the generals had led the Athenians to victory, this was "marred by the failure to pick up survivors from their crippled ships, when a storm arose" (OCD, 148, "Arginusae").

This project examines Thucydides' presentation of autocratic reasoning in the Peloponnesian War. We will primarily study the autocratic reasoning of the Athenians with regard to their empire, and the autocratic reasoning of Hellenic *staseis* with regard to the meaning of *nomoi*. In the case of the Athenians, we will see how autocratic reasoning proves detrimental to their imperial ambitions in a *paralogos polemos*. In the case of the Hellenic

¹¹ When I do translate this term, I will translate it as "autocratic reasoning," autocratic in the sense that such a reasoning is formed and exists independently of objective facts.

staseis, we will see an extremely violent manifestation of autocratic reasoning that justifies what are, in actuality, vices and, accordingly, vilifies virtues. I call this phenomenon linguistic *kinêsis*. Finally, we will consider how the *History*, in presenting *logoi* and *erga* side by side, controverts the process by which the self-justificatory narratives produced by autocratic reasoning become unchallengeable; such narratives about the Peloponnesian War could have been codified into history had the *History* not been written.

This project is largely conducted in the chronological order in which Thucydides presents his history of the Peloponnesian War. Chapter 1 begins with a study of the Archaeology (1.2-19) and demonstrates how Thucydides challenges the historicity of “unchallengeable”¹² Homeric *logoi* by writing-up, from a realist perspective, the *erga* that correspond to (and undermine the veracity of) what had come to be accepted as the heroic past. Thucydides’ challenging of the Homeric *logoi* provides a model for how proper historical inquiry should be conducted. It also provides a sociopolitical framework through which to view the events of the Peloponnesian War, an essential sociopolitical truth that “...material relations—who is more powerful and controls resources—shape social relations” (Crane, 174).

Proceeding from the Archaeology to the Epidamnian narrative (1.24-30), I examine how Thucydides subtly shows that the sociology of 5th-century Greece remains fundamentally the same as that of the prehistoric times that he had analyzed in the Archaeology—only now, however, ethical principles are used to legitimize and further political agendas. The chapter concludes with a look at the speeches delivered at the Athenian *ecclêsia* (1.31-45), where I examine how the Corcyraeans and the Athenians rhetorically manipulate the principle of justice to suit their own national interests. From the Archaeology to the Athenian *ecclêsia*, Thucydides

¹² ὄντα ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστωσ ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνευκικότητα (1.21).

demonstrates that material relations shape social relations, and it is this fundamental sociological precept that is to be weighed against the ideals that autocratic reasoning projects.

Chapter 2 transitions from Thucydides' geopolitical analysis of self-interest in the Epidamnian narrative to the national perspectives of the Athenians, Peloponnesians, and Thracians as the crisis of war looms over Greece. The Athenians fail to understand the connection between their material ambition and their social relations with other Greek states. This fact will be demonstrated by comparing the intents of their diplomatic strategies employed at Sybota (1.44-55), Sparta (1.72-8), and Potidaea (1.56-65) to the negative reactions that such strategies receive from the Peloponnesians and the Thracians. For these parties, it is Athens' material relations to the Greek world, rather than their magnanimous democratic ideals, that shape their social relations to Athens: what the Athenians believe is the just defense of their empire, others perceive as an aggressive and overreaching tyranny.¹³ By viewing the state of political affairs through their own nationalist narrative, and making decisions based on this flawed understanding, the Athenians unwittingly further degrade their public image and make disadvantageous decisions believing them to be advantageous.

Chapter 3 begins with a broad examination of the effect that war, a *biaios didaskalos*, has on the political ideals of Athens and Sparta. The first half of the chapter demonstrates that the necessities of war inhibit them from implementing on the battlefield the national ideals that they had proclaimed in Book 1 (3.1-3.69). The second half of this chapter demonstrates a correlation between the increasing devastation that war brings to Greece and the rise in violent idealism within cities that results in the eruption of Hellenic *staseis* (3.82-5). Within the civic space of Greek cities, the rhetorical finesse of politicians corrupts traditional Hellenic *nomoi*, and

¹³ Cleon himself warns the Athenians: "What you do not realize is that your empire is a tyranny exercised over subjects who do not like it and who are always plotting against" (3.37*).

internecine warfare becomes justified. It is in Book 3 that Thucydides shows most clearly how *logoi* prevail over *erga*—the *biaios didaskalos* has not only taught the Greeks to commit acts of violence, but also how to justify violence and live happily in a world where atrocity is the norm.

Chapter 1: Thucydidean Worldbuilding

Introduction:

This chapter begins with a study of the principles of sociopolitical development presented in the *Archaeology* (1.2-19): self-interest and the rule of the strong. It proceeds to examine how these sociopolitical principles exist and operate in first diplomatic altercation in the *History*: the dispute over Epidamnus between Corinth and Corcyra (1.24-30). It concludes with a look at how these sociopolitical principles can be masked with rhetoric in the first set of speeches in the *History* (1.31-45).

The *Archaeology*: Establishing Patterns, Debunking Myths (1.2-19)

The *Archaeology* is, on the one hand, a selling point for Thucydides' *History*. In the *Archaeology*, Thucydides argues that wars fought before the Peloponnesian War did not match its "greatness" (1.1): the Trojan War did not match its greatness because the parties involved lacked material resources (1.11-12), and the Persian War because it was decided relatively quickly (1.23). Later handbooks of rhetoric would call this comparative technique, which Thucydides employs here, an *auxêsis* (Hornblower, 3). But the *Archaeology*'s rhetorical quality—its quantitative deflation of past wars—is really a foil for its qualitative deflation of Greek mythohistory: while the traditions of ritual and religion seen in the poems of Homer and Hesiod would characterize any Greek's conception of the past, Thucydides sees a past that is not governed by epic *nomoi*, but by principles of *dunamis*, *dunamis* that is not acquired by words, oaths, religion, and ritual, but by asserting power over others and subduing them.

I say that Thucydides "sees" a past because *phainô* is the verb that Thucydides uses to introduce the *Archaeology* (1.2). By using this verb of illumination, the historian is expressing a visual rather than an aural connection to the past. Thucydides believed that human events

resemble one another (1.22.4), and that human nature remains the same (3.82). Recognizing in his lifetime that principles of *dunamis* governed the world, rather than ethical concerns, Thucydides saw no reason why the Homeric past should have been any different, despite what songs of the ancient poets portrayed. In this way, Thucydides had not just heard the *logoi* of the epic past, but, in a sense, had actually “seen” the past itself.

The most important function of the Archaeology is to provide a sociopolitical framework of *dunamis* through which to view the events of the Peloponnesian War. So too, by beginning the *History* with an interrogation of the most widespread and compelling Hellenic *logoi*, Thucydides encourages his reader to interrogate the *logoi* presented within the *History* as well.

The Archaeology begins with a vision of prehistoric Greek society: there were cycles of population migrations caused by raids of nomadic hunter-gatherers, a constant flux of people “being under the constant pressure of invaders who were stronger than they were” (1.2*). Thucydides’ description of prehistoric nomadism introduces to the *History* the concept that the weak are subject to the strong, a rhetorical refrain of speeches delivered in the *History*.¹⁴ This rhetorical claim is validated by the Archaeology, which presents the rule of the strong as a timeless truth underlying society.

The process of migrations was constant and unrelenting; the inevitability that stronger raiders would overcome weaker settlers created a destructive vortex in which a growing society established in a fertile land would be all the more subject to attack and destruction (1.2). Attica is the exception to this *paradeigma* on account of its poor soil, and Athens in particular rises to

¹⁴ Two examples of this are the Athenian envoys at Sparta: “It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong” (1.76*), and the Athenians in Melos: “This is the safe rule — to stand up to one’s equals, to behave with deference toward one’s superiors, and to treat inferiors with moderation” (5.111*).

power by accepting the powerful exiles from newly-destroyed wealthy cities, without suffering from raids themselves (1.2-6).

Thucydides' analysis of Athens' rise to power is his most myth-like interpretation in the Archaeology: that welcoming refugees and safety from attacks due to poor soil should result in power and colonization is rather too schematic—magical, even—to be fully compelling. Furthermore, this Athenian vignette is mythical in that it evokes the literary tradition that Athens had always been a sanctuary for the oppressed. Nevertheless, Thucydides establishes Athens as the first bastion of strength and stability in the prehistoric Hellenic world, the *archê* of power.

Thucydides proceeds from this global perspective to Minos specifically. This king was, “according to tradition, the first person to organize a navy,” and is, therefore, Thucydides' first person of interest (1.4). Naval power, the dominant refrain of the Archaeology, “played so large a part in the rise of Athens as an imperial power, and in the actual course of the Peloponnesian War” (Hornblower, 3). Focal figures of the Archaeology, like Minos, all wield naval power; these figures do not simply thematically prefigure the importance of sea power in the Peloponnesian War, but also show how they wielded it and for what reasons.

Minos instated his sons as governors of the Cyclades, “having driven out the Carians.” He also drove out the pirates of the region and, Thucydides writes, “it is reasonable to suppose that he did his best [to do so] in order to secure his own revenues” (1.4*). As if to answer the question —“why else would Minos put down piracy except to secure his own revenues?”— Thucydides examines the societal position of the pirate in the prehistoric world.

The profession of piracy arose from the advent of shipbuilding, and was practiced by Hellenes and barbarians alike. These pirates

were powerful men, acting both out of self-interest and in order to support the weak among their own people... they would descend upon cities which were

unprotected by walls... and by plundering such places they would gain the most of their livelihood.

ἡγουμένων ἀνδρῶν οὐ τῶν ἀδυνατωτάτων κέρδους τοῦ σφετέρου αὐτῶν ἕνεκα καὶ τοῖς ἀσθενέσι τροφῆς προσπίπτοντες πόλεσιν ἀτειχίστοις... ἤρπαζον καὶ τὸν πλεῖστον τοῦ βίου ἐντεῦθεν ἐποιοῦντο.

(1.5*)

These men were the nautical equivalents of the land raiders whom we saw earlier at 1.2: both make a living by plundering the weaker. “At this time,” Thucydides tells us, “such a profession, so far from being regarded as disgraceful, was considered quite honorable” (οὐκ ἔχοντός πο αἰσχύνην τούτου τοῦ ἔργου, φέροντος δέ τι καὶ δόξης μᾶλλον, 1.5*). This sentence is quite important; it shows that in this time of bare essentials, to fight for survival to the fullest extent by overpowering the weaker was “not yet” (οὐκ πο) called “shameful,” but was a legitimate, and even honorable profession. When the pirates were asked by ancient poets, and even certain coastal dwellers in Thucydides’ own times, what they did for a living, they “would not shrink from admitting the fact [of their profession]” because the rule of the strong was a social norm, and there was no need for dissimulation (οὔτε ... ἀπαξιούντων τὸ ἔργον, 1.5*). As such, it becomes clear that Minos did not put down piracy out of any principle of morality.¹⁵

Thucydides’ analytic focus on the rule of the strong culminates in his retelling of the Trojan expedition, a poetic universe central to Greek life:

Agamemnon, it seems to me, must have been the most powerful of rulers of his day (δυνάμει προύχων); and it was for this reason that he raised the force against Troy, not because the suitors of Helen were bound to him by the oaths which they had sworn to Tyndareus.

(1.9*)

¹⁵ The unapologetic societal position of the pirate serves as a countermodel to frequent attempts to cloak “unflattering” *erga* with noble *logos* throughout the Peloponnesian War. Corcyra’s attempt to frame their self-interested actions as though they were in accordance with *dikē* will be our first real-time example of this (1.32).

Thucydides not only states that Agamemnon mustered his army by power, but also emphatically denies that the army voluntarily coalesced because of the oaths that they had sworn. “In my opinion,” he continues, “fear played a greater part than loyalty in the raising of the expedition against Troy” (μοι δοκεῖ Ἀγαμέμνων ... τὴν στρατείαν οὐ χάριτι τὸ πλεόν ἢ φόβῳ ξυναγαγὼν, 1.9*). The weaker suitors are serving the stronger Agamemnon because they fear his power, not out of any moral principle. Indeed the Archaeology asserts that voluntary servitude was never ethical in prehistoric times, but always done for the sake of profit: “the weaker, desiring profit, were submitting themselves to the slavery of the stronger, whereas the stronger, having an abundance of wealth, were making weaker cities their subjects” (ἐφιέμενοι γὰρ τῶν κερδῶν οἱ τε ἥσσους ὑπέμενον τὴν τῶν κρεισσόνων δουλείαν, οἱ τε δυνατώτεροι περιουσίας ἔχοντες προσεποιοῦντο ὑπηκόους τὰς ἐλάσσους πόλεις, 1.8.3). That the Trojan expedition was a product of coercion rather than a voluntary effort reflects subtlety, but ironically, on the Hellenic world and, more specifically, the self-flattering rhetoric of imperial powers.

In addition to challenging literary representations of the past in the Archaeology, Thucydides also conceives of a time when the architectural remains of Athens and Sparta would inaccurately reflect each civilization’s actual power to a future observer (1.10). Like the oaths sworn to Agamemnon in the poetic tradition, the aesthetic of cities reflect cultural values and practices that are at a remove from sociopolitical principles of material strength that allow for survival.

The Archaeology shows us that appearances deceive. That the powers of Athens and Sparta could not be accurately gleaned from each city’s architectural aesthetic is one such example of this. Another is Thucydides’ emphasis on sea power. The Archaeology chronicles “the greatest navies of the past,” all of which are implicated as dominant forces in the dynamic of

the weak and strong (1.14): Minos (1.4), Agamemnon (1.9), the Corinthians, the Ionians, Polycrates, the Phocaeans (1.13), a model in which the Athenians are placed, “[Sparta was] supreme on land, [Athens] on sea” (1.18*). The Archaeology creates an expectation, therefore, that because the Athenians follow in this tradition of naval supremacy, they too will be victorious in the Peloponnesian War. Yet, as an ancient reader would know, feeling the barb of irony, or a future reader, for whom the *History* is really intended, would learn, Gylippus the Spartan general and the innovative Syracuseans would stunningly defeat the Athenian navy in the battle in the Great Harbor of Sicily (7.70), a defeat that precipitated the end of the Athenian empire. Thus, even the Archaeology, a section of the *History* devoted to deconstructing appearances, deceives us by situating Athens in the tradition of Hellenic naval power.

The truths that the Archaeology professes to reveal¹⁶ about the origins of Hellenic life may be summarized briskly as follows: the prehistoric world was unabashedly governed by the rule of the stronger—oaths, *charis*, and ethics were irrelevant. We will see to what extent these sociological principles apply to the events of the Peloponnesian War as recorded by Thucydides.

Epidamnus: Values Old and New (1.24-30)

Epidamnus’ vivid, present-tense introduction, “Epidamnus is a city...” (Ἐπίδαμνός ἐστι πόλις, 1.24), marks the transition from the Archaeology’s method of abstract historical analysis to a narrative of real-time current events; the *History* now commences its ongoing plot.

The prehistoric world that Thucydides had presented in the Archaeology seems to have advanced: contemporary society has managed to disavow the simple and accepted harshness of ancient times—now, the *ideas* of right and wrong seem to matter. Beginning with Epidamnus, Thucydides begins to show how the dominant themes of the Archaeology—self-interest, the

¹⁶ Thucydides asserts: “I do not think that one will be far wrong in accepting the conclusions I have reached from the evidence which I have put forward. It is better evidence than that of the poets...” (1.21*).

pursuit of power, and the rule of the strong—exist and operate within the more complex material and ideological framework of 5th-century Greece.

A few years before the onset of the Peloponnesian War, the Epidamnian *dêmos* exile their city's oligarchs, unhappy with the way that they had been ruling their impoverished city. These oligarchic exiles subsequently besiege Epidamnus with the aid of neighbouring Taulantian barbarians, and the *dêmos* find themselves hard-pressed for survival. Fearing for their lives, they send an embassy to Corcyra, "seeing as it was their mother-city" (ὡς μητρόπολιν οὔσαν, 1.24.6). This ὡς clause illustrates the logic and motive of these democrats: seeking aid from their *metropolis* is the proper measure to take, given the circumstances. Corcyra rejects their appeal, however, a decision that Thucydides does not comment on in his authorial voice. That the *metropolis* would show no investment in its own colony's well-being is left puzzling and unexplained to the reader.

Despite Thucydides' analytic reticence, the historian emphasizes the pathos of the democratic appeal by depicting it in greater detail than many of the surrounding events recorded in the Epidamnian narrative; accordingly, it becomes a focal point of this first section of the *History*. The Epidamnians, Thucydides writes, came to Corcyra "begging that the Corcyraeans not oversee their destruction... [begging] them to reconcile the exiles to themselves, and put down the war with the barbarians" (δεόμενοι μὴ σφᾶς περιορᾶν φθειρομένους... τούς τε φεύγοντας ξυναλλάξαι σφίσι καὶ τὸν τῶν βαρβάρων πόλεμον καταλῦσαι). He closes his account of the supplication with a careful depiction of the suppliants seated in the temple of Hera; *deomai*, the verb of supplication that introduced the scene as a participle, emphatically closes the sentence in the indicative: "These things they begged, sitting as suppliants in the temple of Hera" (ταῦτα δὲ ἰκέται καθεζόμενοι ἐς τὸ Ἥραιον ἐδέοντο, 1.24.7). Even without the addition of

Thucydides' authorial voice, the extended image is quite charged and speaks for itself: the democrats are a pious people in a state of fear, and willing to come to an agreement.

Furthermore, their request—that the Corcyraeans reconcile and mitigate this conflict as Epidamnus' *metropolis*—is not unreasonable: no favoritism is requested, only authoritative arbitration.

Corcyra's dismissal imposes on the democrats a feeling of *aporia*:

γνόντες δὲ οἱ Ἐπιδάμνιοι οὐδεμίαν σφίσιν ἀπὸ Κερκύρας τιμωρίαν οὔσαν ἐν ἀπόρῳ εἶχοντο θέσθαι τὸ παρόν, καὶ πέμψαντες ἐς Δελφοὺς τὸν θεὸν ἐπήροντο εἰ παραδοῖεν Κορινθίοις τὴν πόλιν...

Recognizing that there would be no help to them from Corcyra, the Epidamnians were at a loss to resolve their present circumstance, and having sent an envoy to Delphi, were asking the god if they should hand over their city to the Corinthians...

(1.25)

Aporia is the term that Thucydides uses to express the democrats' feeling of confoundment after their *metropolis* forsakes them. Supplication was "the most sacred of Greek appeals" (Connor, 34-5 n.33), yet the Epidamnian democrats have received only a curt dismissal from the Corcyraeans.¹⁷ Connor's important observation that there is a "homology between the reader's experience and that of participants in the war" is one that is first felt here (Rood, 22 citing Connor, 58): the readers share in the democrats' *aporia* because a shared ethical assumption of proper colonial conduct suggested by the *ὥς* clause (1.24.6) proves invalid (1.25). Like the participants in the war, readers of Thucydides will have to adjust to this new and shocking sociopolitical climate.

¹⁷ For this reason among others, Connor is convinced that Corcyra's "conduct... had been outrageous" (Connor, 34-5 n.33).

Now the democrats, in a state of desperation, turn to the Delphic oracle, who advises them to seek help from Corinth (1.25). It is important to pause here and note that the historian has begun his history of the Peloponnesian War through the lens of tradition and religion, a lens notably absent in the Archaeology. Thucydides is presenting the ability of traditional¹⁸ and religious practices to effect change in the world of 5th-century politics, and *aporia* marks the recognition of their first failure to do so.

When the Epidamnian envoy arrives at Corinth from Delphi to plead their case (1.25.2), Thucydides begins to explore the different value system and political outlooks of Corinth and Corcyra. His description of Corinth's motivations to assist the democrats begins this process:

Κορίνθιοι δὲ κατὰ τε τὸ δίκαιον ὑπεδέξαντο τὴν τιμωρίαν, νομίζοντες οὐχ ἥσσον ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τὴν ἀποικίαν ἢ Κερκυραίων, ἅμα δὲ καὶ μίσει τῶν Κερκυραίων, ὅτι αὐτῶν παρημέλουν ὄντες ἄποικοι.

The Corinthians both accepted their appeal in accordance with justice, judging that the colony was no less their own than the Corcyraeans, and at the same time, because they hated the Corcyraeans for disregarding them, while being their own colony.

(25.3)

The Corinthians agree to assist the Epidamnians for two reasons: they believe that they are acting in accordance with *to dikaion* by helping the besieged Epidamnians, and they have a prior civic grudge against Corcyra. Κατὰ τε τὸ δίκαιον is the first mention of *dikê* in the war narrative and, since it is an important political and ethical term, it ought to be interrogated: why do the Corinthians believe that it is just for them to help the democrats, and what does this say about the Corcyraeans' refusal to help them?

The writings of Connor and de Ste. Croix on this portion of the narrative provide a useful framework through which to view the question of justice in Epidamnus' sociopolitical dilemma.

¹⁸ Certainly, the Archaeology calls into question whether “tradition,” as the Greeks knew it from Homer, ever existed at all.

Connor believes that when Delphi sanctioned the Epidamnian democrats' appeal to Corinth, she "thereby implicitly criticized Corcyra's conduct" (Connor, 34-5 n.33). de St. Croix, however, takes a skeptical view to the Delphic oracle's credibility: "In accordance with the common practice, [the Epidamnians] gave a strong hint of the advice they would like to receive, and they duly received it: they were to 'hand themselves over to Corinth and accept her leadership'" (de Ste. Croix, 68). Even if de St. Croix's view is correct, the oracle's potential lack of principle cannot cast definitive doubt upon the credibility of how the Corinthians viewed the oracle's religious authority. Putting this matter aside for now, let us examine further Thucydides' presentation of the Corinthians' motivations to help Epidamnian democrats:

οὔτε γὰρ ἐν πανηγύρεσι ταῖς κοιναῖς διδόντες γέρα τὰ νομιζόμενα οὔτε Κορινθίῳ ἀνδρὶ προκαταρχόμενοι τῶν ἱερῶν ὥσπερ αἱ ἄλλαι ἀποικίαι, περιφρονοῦντες δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ χρημάτων δυνάμει ὄντες κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ὁμοῖα τοῖς Ἑλλήνων πλουσιωτάτοις καὶ τῇ ἐς πόλεμον παρασκευῇ δυνατώτεροι, ναυτικῶ δὲ καὶ πολὺ προύχειν ἔστιν ὅτε ἐπαιρόμενοι καὶ κατὰ τὴν Φαιάκων προενοίκησιν τῆς Κερκύρας κλέος ἐχόντων τὰ περὶ τὰς ναῦς.

Unlike their other colonies, the Corcyraeans did not give to Corinthians the usual right and honours at public festivals or allow them the correct facilities for making sacrifices. Instead they looked down upon their mother city, claiming that their financial power at this time made them equal with the richest states in Hellas and that their military resources were greater than those of Corinth. In particular they boasted of their naval superiority, sometimes even basing this claim on the ground that those famous sailors the Phaeacians had inhabited Corcyra before them.

(1.25.4*)

Here, the verb *nomizô* describes the customary nature of the gifts that Corinthians would receive from their *apoikiai* as a *metropolis* in panhellenic festivals. *Nomizô* was also the verb that Thucydides had used to express the Corinthians' belief that they had no less a right to Epidamnus as a colony than did Corcyra (...νομίζοντες οὐχ ἦσσαν ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τὴν ἀποικίαν ἢ Κερκυραίων..., 1.25). June Allison, analyzing the use of *nomizô* in the speech of Diodotus and throughout the Corcyraean *stasis*, states that the verb "carries greater authority, since it is, at least

in the speaker's mind, by definition backed by society and convention or something that he claims should be accepted as *nomos*" (Allison, 76). The prominence of *nomizô* in Thucydides' prose emphasizes Corinth's respect for traditional practices, and supplication, "the most sacred of Greek appeals," would be among them (Connor, 34-5 n.33). Because Corcyra has disregarded colonial *nomoi* for quite some time, most recently by refusing to put down the *stasis* in their own *apoikia*, the Corinthians view the Corcyraeans as violators of justice.¹⁹ It is for this reason that they hate the Corcyraeans.

Indeed, "Corcyra threatens the basic ideology by which Corinthians defined themselves ... [challenging their] moral hegemony" with their naval and economic growth (Crane, 103-4). Because the Corcyraeans have achieved material power equal to Corinth's (so they believe), they resent having to play a symbolically subservient as an *apoikia* to their *metropolis* in festivals (1.25.4). The Corcyraeans will say, in a later speech delivered at the Athenian *ecclêsia* "colonists are not sent abroad to be the slaves of those left behind, but to be their equals" (1.34*). Looking back to the pattern of the rule strong established in the Archaeology, we can see that the Corcyraeans, having amassed considerable material capital, are now challenging the Corinthians, who were originally their material betters. Because the Corcyraeans believe that they are equal, if not superior, to Corinth in power, they no longer have a reason remain symbolically subservient to them. As a result, they celebrate Phaeacian naval *kleos*, to glorify their material and naval

¹⁹ Judging from the paradigms established within the Archaeology, Gomme notes that "one naturally suspects an economic motive ... Not that a series of pinpricks, a constant provoking of touchy sensibilities, may not be the cause of greater quarrels" (Gomme, 159). Although Corinth's economic interests in the West were significant (Gomme, 159 citing Head, 399). Thucydides has chosen only to elucidate the social and nationalistic considerations that went into Corinth's acceptance of Epidamnus' appeal.

might. The Corcyraeans' celebration of these legendary seafarers of the *Odyssey* (*Od.*6.1-13.96) symbolizes and justifies their rebellion against their *metropolis*.²⁰

However, the Corcyraeans have strayed far from the noble nature of their Homeric predecessors. Thucydides tells us, without reservation, that the Corcyraeans have been made arrogant (*ἐπαρόμενοι*, 1.25.4) by their material power. The Corcyraean arrogance that Thucydides has elucidated will be the lens through which we evaluate Corcyra's diplomacy during the historian's otherwise austere account of the Epidamnian affair.

Thucydides suggests that Corcyra would not have taken any interest in the Epidamnian *stasis* had it not been for Corinth's interference: "When the Corcyraeans discovered that the [Corinthian] settlers and the troops had arrived at Epidamnus and that the colony had been handed over to Corinth, they reacted violently. As soon as the news arrived they put to sea with twenty-five ships..." (*Κερκυραῖοι δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἦσθοντο τοὺς τε οἰκίτορας καὶ φρουροὺς ἦκοντας ἐς τὴν Ἐπίδαμνον τὴν τε ἀποικίαν Κορινθίοις δεδομένην, ἐχαλέπαινον: καὶ πλεύσαντες εὐθὺς πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι ναυσὶ...*, 1.26.3*). The *epeidê* clause and adverbial *euthus* show us that it is not a concern for Epidamnus' well-being that motivates Corcyra's intervention, but Corcyra's realization that the Corinthians are trying to increase their colonial influence by encroaching upon Epidamnus.

Later, with another fleet, the Corcyraeans were also demanding in abusive language that the Epidamnians take back the oligarchs (for the oligarchic exiles of Epidamnus came to Corcyra, and begged for their help in being reinstated in Epidamnus, pointing to the tombs of their Corcyraean ancestors).

ὕστερον ἐτέρῳ στόλῳ τοὺς τε φεύγοντας ἐκέλευον κατ' ἐπήρειαν δέχεσθαι αὐτούς (ἦλθον γὰρ ἐς τὴν Κέρκυραν οἱ τῶν Ἐπιδαμνίων φυγάδες, τάφους τε ἀποδεικνύντες καὶ ξυγγένειαν, ἦν προῖσχύμενοι ἐδέοντο σφᾶς κατάγειν).

²⁰ Indeed, Corcyra and Corinth had a troubled history. Thucydides records that the first ever sea fight existing in Greek cultural memory was between these two cities in 664 B.C. (1.13.4).

(1.26**)

Here, Thucydides describes the demands issued by the subsequent Corcyraean fleet, noting in particular the abusive language that they use to address the Epidamnian democrats (κατ' ἐπήρειαν). In this passage, he also tells us that, at some point, an envoy from the exiled oligarchs had gone to Corcyra and made a formal appeal to the Corcyraeans. It is not, however, genuine concern for the oligarchic suppliants that causes the Corcyraeans to intervene at Epidamnus. If that had been the case, then Corcyra would have intervened on behalf of the oligarchs when the Epidamnian democrats had first supplicated them. The Corcyraeans are merely taking the side of the oligarchs because the Corinthians have taken the side of the democrats.

In the Epidamnian narrative, Thucydides makes a point of describing the details of the practice of supplication—the huddling in temples, the gesturing toward tombs of ancestors—in the democratic (1.24) and oligarchic appeals to their *metropolis* (1.26). Such detail gives his reader a sense of the cultural gravity of these acts. While these ethical practices may be important to the weaker Epidamnians, the narrative demonstrates that they are but secondary considerations to the more powerful nations of Corcyra and Corinth. Indeed, the Corcyraeans only begin to advocate on behalf of the oligarchs when they realize that the Corinthians are trying to take control of Epidamnus. Corinth does not help the democrats from pure compassion, but from the ulterior motive of harming Corcyra.

Before battle is instigated between the Corinthians and Corcyraeans, the Corcyraeans send an envoy to the Corinthians, to try and make a settlement by arbitration or by “referring the matter to the oracle at Delphi” (1.28*). Thucydides tells us:

The Corinthian reply to this was that if Corcyra withdrew the fleet and the foreign army from Epidamnus, then discussion might be profitable; but it was quite absurd to talk of arbitration while the city was still being besieged.

(1.28*)

Corinth's agreement to arbitrate is conditional upon the Corcyraeans' full withdrawal of their troops and barbarians from Epidamnus, a concession that would leave Corcyra strategically at Corinth's mercy. It should also be noted that Corinth neglects to rebut Corcyra with the fact that Delphi *had*, in fact, decreed that Epidamnus should be Corinth's. Even if the Corcyraeans would not have believed the Corinthians' word, the same response would presumably have been given had they collectively visited the oracle.²¹ Furthermore, throughout Thucydides' condensed record of the negotiation, Corcyra offers a total of four possible concessions that could be made to facilitate arbitration,²² all of which the Corinthians reject, holding fast to their initial demand that the Corcyraeans withdraw fully from Epidamnus before they would consider arbitration. By the time that the Corcyraeans have made two counter-offers to the demand (how long this exchange took is unspecified), Thucydides tells us that "None of these proposals was acceptable to the Corinthians. By this time their ships were manned and their allies were ready. They sent a herald in front of them to declare war..." (Κορίνθιοι δὲ οὐδὲν τούτων ὑπήκουον, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ πλήρεις αὐτοῖς ἦσαν αἱ νῆες καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι παρῆσαν, προπέμψαντες κήρυκα πρότερον πόλεμον προεροῦντα Κερκυραίοις..., 1.29*). Because the Corinthians reject settlement by the Delphic oracle that would have likely worked in their favor, and because Thucydides shows the Corinthians declaring war as soon as their fleet was ready, it clear to me that the Corinthians prefer war to settlement: they see Epidamnus as a good excuse to launch an offensive campaign upon their wayward colony, Corcyra.

²¹ Unless we are to imagine that the oracle had been rigged by Corcyra, as per de Ste. Croix, 68.

²² First, the Corcyraeans offer to arbitrate via a congregation of the *poleis* or the via the Delphic oracle. Then, as a counterclaim to Corinth's initial rebuttal, Corcyra agrees to withdraw its troops and barbarians from Epidamnus should Corinth do the same with its own troops, or, as an alternative, they suggest that they "let both sides stay in their present positions and to arrange an armistice to remain in operation until the result of the arbitration [is] declared" (1.28*).

The Epidamnian narrative affirms the prime sociological thesis of the Archaeology: that material rather than moral considerations form the bedrock of sociopolitical action. Thucydides illustrates that it is not ethical concerns for the Epidamnian oligarchs that motivate Corcyra's intervention at Epidamnus, but the fact that their rival superpower, Corinth, is attempting to gain control of their colony. While the Corinthians are shown to value ethics more than the prehistoric peoples of the Archaeology, they reject interstate communal deliberation, *dikê*. Instead, they take the Epidamnian crisis as an opportunity to justly harm their enemy, Corcyra. Ultimately, both Corcyra and Corinth value power more than ethics.

The Speeches at Athens: Interpretations of Justice (1.31-1.45)

Two years after Corcyra defeats Corinth in the first naval battle following the Epidamnian dispute (1.29-30), Corcyra and Corinth send delegates to the Athenian *ecclêsia*: the Corcyraeans need to win Athenian military support against an impending Corinthian retaliation against them, the Corinthians are seeking to prevent this alliance between Corcyra and Athens from occurring, so that they may carry on with their vengeance unimpeded (1.32-43). Regarding this debate that took place in Athens sometime between 432 and 431, Gregory Crane notes: "Many scholars, particularly modern students of ancient history, have analyzed the debate in moral terms, seeking to determine precisely who was right and who was wrong" (Crane, 94). Since the Epidamnian narrative is primarily focalized through the plight of the Epidamnian democrats, and since the Corinthians fight on the behalf of these democrats, I believe that moral sympathy toward Corinth is the more logical choice. On the other hand, Corcyra had made offers of arbitration and, to further complicate our moral judgment, there is the largely untold history of the long-standing enmity between these two nations, which Thucydides mentions only in passing at 1.13. Nevertheless, Corinth's argument that Athens, bound by peace treaties to Corinth, should

either help them fight Corcyra or stay out of the conflict altogether (1.40-1) is, to my mind, a fair and straightforward argument, allowing for some of their rhetorical hyperbole.²³

Justice is the subject of these first speeches in the *History*. It is fitting that justice be the subject of discussion, given the moral ambiguities left open by the Epidamnian narrative. Of the two speeches, Corcyra's is my primary focus because it is here that Thucydides begins to demonstrate how principles like justice can be verbally manipulated to conceal self-interest. Furthermore, it is important that we get a sense of how Thucydides presents the Corcyraeans in Book 1 because the Corcyraean *stasis* will be the subject of this project's concluding chapter.

The Corcyraean Speech (1.32-36)

While the Corcyraeans initially attempt to clothe their realist propositions in the rhetoric of justice, they eventually do away with this facade, advocating for an alliance on the basis of their naval strength alone: "If Corinth gets control of us first and you allow our navy to be united with hers, you will have to fight against the combined fleets of Athens and the Peloponnese" (1.36*). The Corcyraean envoy's rhetorical progression from ideological argumentation to realpolitik resembles the trajectory that Athenian political policy will follow throughout the Peloponnesian War, starting from the soft power that they employ at Sybota (1.46-55) and Potidaea (1.56-65), to the blatant realpolitik that they employ at Melos (5.84-114). So too, the Corcyraean speech attempts to synthesize the meanings of justice and advantage, an act that foreshadows the linguistic *kinêsis* that will rack their homeland in Book 3 (3.82). In these ways, the Corcyraean speech seems too abstract to be a transcript of a historical speech. Instead, it

²³ When Corinth proclaims: "The ships of other states are forced to put into [Corcyra's] harbours much more often than Corcyraean ships visit the harbours of other states" (1.37*) are we to think of 1.13 where Thucydides writes: "Corinth, planted on the isthmus, had been from time immemorial an important mercantile centre. . . those who lived inside and those who lived outside the Peloponnese had to pass through Corinthian territory"? Corinth's complaint could be perceived as hypocritical here.

seems programmatic: as the Archaeology had established sociopolitical principles that would dictate the outcome of deeds in the *History* to a significant extent, so this first speech of the *History* establishes, in an exaggerated manner, the ways in which words can manipulate reality.

The Corcyraean speech begins with a maxim about justice stated in the third person. This third person rhetorical device enables the Corcyraeans to distance themselves from their present circumstance of dire need. It also enables them to state their argument as if it were already a pre-existing universal principle. The Corcyraeans are trying to (re)define the concept of justice in interstate relations:

Δίκαιον, ὃ Ἀθηναῖοι, τοὺς μήτε εὐεργεσίας μεγάλης μήτε ξυμμαχίας
 προφειλομένης ἤκοντας 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 ἔξουσιν: εἰ δὲ τούτων
 μηδὲν σαφὲς καταστήσουσι, μὴ ὀργίζεσθαι ἦν ἀτυχεῶσιν. Κερκυραῖοι δὲ μετὰ τῆς
 ξυμμαχίας τῆς αἰτήσεως καὶ ταῦτα πιστεύοντες ἐχυρὰ ὑμῖν παρέξεσθαι
 ἀπέστειλαν ἡμᾶς.

It is just, Athenians, that men coming to neighbors, seeking assistance without having done them a great service, without allegiance owed—as we are doing now—instruct, first and foremost that what they need is advantageous [for both parties], but if not, that it is not punishable at least, and secondly that they shall hold the favor securely. If they fail to establish these principles clearly, they should not be angry if they have not hit their target. The Corcyraeans sent us with a request for an alliance, trusting that what we have would be compelling for you.

(1.32)

The Corcyraeans begin by talking about a hypothetical envoy approaching a neighboring city to ask for assistance, but without having established the usual prerequisites for making such a request (μήτε εὐεργεσίας μεγάλης μήτε ξυμμαχίας προφειλομένης). This hypothetical envoy's request would be atypical, then, since it would not fulfill the established norms of interstate reciprocity implied by the genitive absolutes. The Corcyraeans assert that it would, nevertheless, be just for the envoy seeking assistance *to make an appeal* offering political advantages to the

appealed-to party. By Corcyra's reasoning, the principle of justice becomes conflated with a speech act, since ἀναδιδάξαι is the subject infinitive of δίκαιον. *Anadidaskō* suggests that what this embassy offers would transgress the established traditions of justice with regard to interstate reciprocity.²⁴ In this way, *anadidaskō* can be thought of as a kind of proto-*biaios didaskalos* because it symbolizes the first attempt to transgress Hellenic *nomoi* by means of language in the *History*.

Throughout this preamble situated in hypothetical circumstance, the Corcyraeans are, of course, indirectly referring to themselves. They are trying to frame *ta sumphora* within the semantic sphere of *to dikaion* to achieve two closely-related goals: first, to give their own argument an appealing aura of justice, and second, to flatter the Athenians by speaking to their history as a savior nation. As such, they argue that the advantages that their alliance offers would not only be material, but also moral:

γενήσεται δὲ ὑμῖν πειθομένοις καλὴ ἢ ζυντυχία κατὰ πολλὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας χρείας, πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἀδικουμένοις καὶ οὐχ ἑτέροις βλάπτουσι τὴν ἐπικουρίαν ποιήσεσθε, ἔπειτα περὶ τῶν μεγίστων κινδυνεύοντας δεξάμενοι ὡς ἂν μάλιστα μετ' αἰεμνήστου μαρτυρίου τὴν χάριν καταθήσεσθε: ναυτικόν τε κεκτήμεθα πλὴν τοῦ παρ' ὑμῖν πλεῖστον.

A noble outcome will be yours in many respects if you heed our request, firstly because you will aiding those being wronged and not those harming others, and, most of all, because you will establish favor in forever-memorialized proof

²⁴ Although Liddell and Scott use this passage to exemplify *anadidaskō*'s more general meaning, “*instruct, inform,*” it seems to me that the emphatic meaning “*teach otherwise, or better*” (LSJ, 102) is fitting, as the Corcyraean ambassadors are trying to modify political norms. The verb is used in Herodotus to a somewhat similar effect: Salamoxis, once a slave in Samos, has returned to his native Thrace with considerable fortune and an Ionian education, having associated with figures like Pythagoras. He gains influence among the Getae, teaching them (*anadidaskō*) during meals that they are actually immortal, while having an underground chamber built. Eventually, he secretly goes into the chamber and remains there for three years. The Getae mourn. He then reemerges, and is later deified (Hdt.4.94-6). For those who change the logic of the world through language, great rewards are reaped.

when you receive us being in the utmost peril: and we have the strongest navy with the exception of your own.

(1.33)

Referring to the all-pervading dictum of Greek socio-political ethics—to “help friends and harm enemies” (Mitchell, 11)²⁵—the Corcyraeans appeal to Athens’ mythic role as a sanctuary state for the abused by framing themselves as the victims (*adikoumenoi*) of Corinthian aggression. In this way, they “perform” their understanding of Hellenic ethical models, while alluding at the same time to a particular point of Athenian pride, one to which Thucydides also alludes in the *Archaeology* (1.1). Most importantly, the Corcyraeans promise the Athenians a *charis* of *aiemnēstos marturios*. Pericles will later praise the eternal memories of the Athenian dead held in the minds of all Hellenes: it is from this oration that we get a sense of how important it was for each Athenian citizen to leave behind a glorious and undying memory after death.²⁶ In these ways, Thucydides has the Corcyraeans appeal to Athenian idealism.

But immediately after this noble rhetoric, Thucydides has the Corcyraeans offer a purely material incentive for their alliance, linked to their prior statements with a curt connective *te*: “and we have the strongest navy, other than your own” (ναυτικόν τε κεκτήμεθα πλὴν τοῦ παρ’ ὑμῖν πλεῖστον, 1.33). Much of Corcyra’s subsequent argumentation through 1.33 continues to alternate between the moral and material advantages of the *summachia* they offer. I have found that this phrase from their speech best captures the spirit of their argument: “there is scarcely a case in history where all these advantages have been available at the same time” (1.33*). By

²⁵ The Corcyraeans could not legitimately say that the Corinthians were “enemies” to the Athenians because of the 30 Years Peace, so Thucydides has the Corcyraeans evoke this traditional dictum by calling the Corinthians *blaptousi*, “those harming others.”

²⁶ κοινῇ γὰρ τὰ σώματα διδόντες ἰδίᾳ τὸν ἀγήρων ἔπαινον ἐλάμβανον καὶ τὸν τάφον ἐπισημότερον, οὐκ ἐν ᾧ κείνται μᾶλλον, ἀλλ’ ἐν ᾧ ἡ δόξα αὐτῶν παρὰ τῷ ἐντυχόντι αἰεὶ καὶ λόγου καὶ ἔργου καιρῷ **αἰείμνηστος** καταλείπεται. ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος, καὶ οὐ στηλῶν μόνον ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ σημαίνει ἐπιγραφή, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ μὴ προσηκούσῃ **ἀγραφος μνήμη** παρ’ ἐκάστῳ τῆς γνώμης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ ἔργου ἐνδιδαιτᾶται (2.43).

arguing that their alliance would offer not only material advantages, but also moral advantages to the Athenians, the Corcyraeans build their argument to appeal to the Athenians' idea of their role in history as a powerful and noble empire.

The Corinthian Speech (1.37-43) and the Athenian Verdict (1.44-5)

The Corcyraean speech is a tough act to follow. The Corinthians are not offering any material or moral advantages to the Athenians, but are advocating that they act on principle alone, by honoring the established peace treaties between Athenians and Peloponnesians: "The right course surely," they say, "is either for you to preserve a strict neutrality or join us against them. At least you have treaty obligations towards Corinth..." (1.40*).

While the Corcyraeans had claimed in their speech that a war with the Peloponnesians was inevitable (1.36), the Corinthians state that this is *not* the case:

Do not think: "the Corinthians are quite right in what they say, but in the event of war all this is not in our interest." ... you must remember that, though Corcyra is trying to frighten you into doing wrong, there is no certainty that a war will come... The power that deals fairly with its equals finds truer security than the one which is hurried into snatching some apparent but dangerous advantage.
(1.42*)

The Corinthians argue that the Athenians would find a greater security in honoring the peace treaties, than by allying with the Corcyraeans for the sake of greater naval defense. The Athenians would "be making the wisest decision in their own interests" (1.43*) by fulfilling their end of the *charis* that the Corinthians had bestowed upon the Athenians some years ago, when they gave the Athenians warships for their fight against Aegina, and also prevented the other Peloponnesian states from aiding the revolt of Samos (1.41).

The Athenians hold two assemblies to discuss the matter: at the first, "opinion seemed to incline in favor of the Corinthian arguments, but at the second there was a change, and they decided on entering into some kind of alliance with Corcyra" (1.44*). They do so because "It

seemed to the Athenians that they would have a war on their hands against the Peloponnesians” (ἐδόκει γὰρ ὁ πρὸς Πελοποννησίου πόλεμος καὶ ὥς ἔσεσθαι αὐτοῖς, 1.44.2). Not wanting to break the treaties, however, they decide to form a type of alliance called an *epimachia*, one that would be defensive rather than the standard offensive *summachia*. This word *epimachia* is unattested in Greek before Thucydides,²⁷ and is likely to be an Athenian invention, especially considering the care that Thucydides takes to describe how it would function: “this was not to be a total alliance involving the two parties in any war which either of them might have on hand; for Athens realized that if Corcyra required them to join in an attack on Corinth, that would constitute a breach of their treaty with the Peloponnese” (1.44*). Here, we see Athenian legal ingenuity at work, formulating a legal term that allows them to accept the Corcyraean alliance without bearing the shame of breaking the treaties.

At this point, The Thirty Years Peace—what we know of it— ought to be examined, so that we may understand the situation that Athens, Corinth, and Corcyra are in. Here, I use de St. Croix’ account of the terms of the treaty,²⁸ of which terms one, three and six are important for our purposes:

1. It was to last for thirty years.
3. Neither side was to make an armed attack on the other, if the latter wished to go to arbitration.
6. Any state not [enlisted in a treaty with Athens or Sparta] (an *agraphos polis*) could ally itself with either side.

²⁷ By de St. Croix’s reckoning, *epimachia* appears only in Aristotle and Demosthenes, thereby making Thucydides the first to use this word (Appendix XIII).

²⁸ de Ste. Croix, “The Origins of the Peloponnesian War,” Appendix I.

The treaty does not account for a situation in which a nation forms an alliance with an *agraphos polis* already at war with a member of one of the leagues. Who, then, would be making an armed attack on the other side? Thus, the Athenian *epimachia* has confounded the terms of the treaty.

Chapter 2: Seeing Double

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how the advantages (*ta sumphora*) that Athens pursues in the political disputes at Epidamnus and Potidaea turn out to be *asumphora*, thereby illustrating the principle that much of war is *paralogos*. Because the Athenians habitually choose to pursue *ta sumphora* without circumspection, it argues that they understand the concept of *paralogos* in word, but not in deed. It suggests that the reason that the Athenians are unable to be politically circumspect is because they live imaginatively in their imperial ideal, an ideal facilitated by Periclean *erôs* for Athens.

Doublesight in Deed and Word: Sybota (1.45-55) & the Athenian Speech at Sparta (1.72-8)

Shortly after the Athenians form an *epimachia* with the Corcyraeans, they send a fleet of ten ships to Corcyra sometime between 433-432 as a safeguard against the impending Corinthian assault. This fleet is under the commands of Lacedaemonius, Diotimus, and Proteas—three commanders for ten ships, as many commanders as would be in charge of the monumental Sicilian Expedition (6.42). While Plutarch suggests that the small size of the fleet is contrived by Pericles to make trouble for Lacedaemonius, the son of his political rival, Cimon (Gomme, 177-8, n. 45.2),²⁹ there is, I believe, another plausible rationale for its small size: that a small, highly-monitored fleet would ensure that orders were followed with the utmost precision, orders that could not be hazarded on the fortunes of war. Thucydides has the Athenian generals report these orders to their fleet:

²⁹ Hornblower does not believe that there is any reason to doubt Lacedaemonius' patriotism, or to believe that Pericles attempted this sabotage (Hornblower, 88 n. 45.2).

προεῖπον δὲ αὐτοῖς μὴ ναυμαχεῖν Κορινθίοις, ἢν μὴ ἐπὶ Κέρκυραν πλέωσι καὶ μέλλωσιν ἀποβαίνειν ἢ ἐς τῶν ἐκείνων τι χωρίων: οὕτω δὲ κωλύειν κατὰ δύναμιν. προεῖπον δὲ ταῦτα τοῦ μὴ λύειν ἔνεκα τὰς σπονδάς.

[The generals] briefed their fleet to not battle the Corinthians at sea, unless they were either sailing toward Corcyra and intending to disembark, or toward any part of the Corcyraean districts. If this were the case, then they were to prevent the Corinthians from doing so insofar as they were able. These briefings were made so that the treaties would not be broken.

(1.45)

These orders state that it is unacceptable for the Athenians to battle the Corinthians in the open sea. Instead, they must wait to fight the Corinthians until they see that they are about to land upon Corcyraean soil. In the minds of the Athenian strategists, these orders must be followed with the utmost precision—to do otherwise would be to break the peace treaties by attacking Corinth, a member of the Peloponnesian League, rather than defend Corcyra, their newfound ally with whom they have made an *epimachia*.

The Athenians, in other words, formulate this strategy on an assumed legal technicality that “defending” Corcyra can only occur when enemy vessels are in close proximity to land and are “about to disembark.” At this moment and this moment only—when the Athenians perceive that the enemy is about to move from sea to land—can the Athenians prevent a Corinthian landing with their ships and still have it constitute “defense” without breaking the treaties. Would the Corinthians (or any non-Athenian party for that matter) respect this highly technical approach to international law?

Looking at the first Athenian speech of the *History*, that of the Athenian envoys at Sparta, and the reaction that it provokes from the Spartan ephor Sthenelaidas (1.86), we will see how Thucydides presents Athens’ perception of itself in relation to the Peloponnesians’ perceptions of

Athens. This will inform our understanding of what the Athenians had hoped to achieve by their diplomatic naval strategy at Sybota, and will help us judge how realistic their hopes were.

Shortly after the events at Sybota and Potidaea, Athenian envoys, who were already in Sparta on business unspecified by Thucydides, happen to witness the Corinthians urging the Spartans to declare war on Athens (1.68-71). As a result, the envoys feel compelled to speak on behalf of their homeland:

This delegation of ours did not come here to enter into a controversy with your allies, but to deal with the business on which our city sent us. We observe, however, that extraordinary attacks have been made on us, and so we have come forward to speak. We shall make no reply to the charges which these cities have made against us. Your assembly is not a court of law, competent to listen to pleas either from them or from us.

(1.73*)

The Athenian envoys begin their speech by announcing that it is not appropriate for them to defend Athens against the damning charges that the Corinthians have made, since the Peloponnesian assembly is not, by Athenian *nomoi*, a court of law. After showing no respect for Spartan *nomoi*, the Athenians hypocritically proceed to complain about how little respect their own *nomoi* receive from other Greeks:

... unreasonably enough, our very consideration for others has brought us more blame than praise. For example, in law-suits with our allies arising out of contracts we have put ourselves at a disadvantage, when we arrange to have such cases tried by impartial courts in Athens, people merely say that we are overfond of going to law. No one bothers to inquire why this reproach is not made against other imperial Powers, who treat their subjects much more harshly than we do: the fact being, of course, that where force can be used there is no need to bring in the law. Our subjects, on the other hand, are used to being treated as equals; consequently, when they are disappointed in what they think right and suffer even the smallest disadvantage because of a judgment in our courts or because of the power that our empire gives us, they cease to feel grateful to us for all the advantages which we have left to them... People, in fact, seem to feel more strongly about their legal wrongs than about their wrongs inflicted on them by

violence. In the first case they think they are being outdone by an equal, in the second case that they are being compelled by a superior.

(1.77*)

The Athenians claim that the democratic legal practices which they employ in the adjudication of their empire are done purely out of principle because they prove rather troublesome to manage. The Athenians also mention “other imperial Powers”—Corinth and Sparta implied—as counterexamples to their own method of democratic imperial adjudication. These powers, they claim, adjudicate their empires with violent treatment that is met with neither resistance nor reproach from Peloponnesian subjects. We know that this assertion would be particularly insulting to the Corinthians at this assembly; earlier, at the Athenian *ecclesia*, the Corinthians had said: “our... colonies do respect us, and indeed they treat us with great affection... the majority are pleased with us” (1.38*).

The Athenians’ comparison of their principled system of imperial adjudication to that of the Peloponnesians’ implies that the Athenian empire is morally superior to the Peloponnesians’. Thus, it is not only the pretentious attitude that the Athenian envoy takes to the institution of the Spartan assembly, but also the self-aggrandizing and implicitly condemnatory content of their speech that insults the assembled Peloponnesians. The Spartan ephor Sthenelaidas openly voices his distaste for the zealous Athenian speech:

I do not understand these long speeches which the Athenians make. Though they said a great deal in praise of themselves, they made no attempt to contradict the fact that they are acting aggressively against our allies and the Peloponnese.

(1.86*)

Here, Sthenelaidas expresses his distaste at both the tone and the content of the Athenian speech, a speech that began by dictating to the assembled Peloponnesians that their assembly was, in fact, illegitimate to make decisions regarding pleas, “Your assembly is not a court of law,

competent to listen to pleas either from them or from us” (1.73*). The Athenians speak as though Sparta were already a subject of their empire and Sthenelaidas’ anger highlights the fact that the Athenian envoys’ strict adherence to Athenian *nomoi* at a Spartan assembly is neither appreciated nor respected.

The Athenians intended for their speech to “divert their [Peloponnesian] audience from the idea of war and make them incline towards letting matters rest” (1.72*). Given the arrogant tone and nationalistic content of the Athenian speech, however, one might initially think that the Athenians are ignorant of the fact that their *nomoi* are not globally appreciated. However, their speech itself reveals an awareness of how resentful the Hellenic world has grown toward them for their self-aggrandizement and accumulation of power.³⁰ In this way, the Athenian envoy is possessed by a kind of doublesight in which they see what is, in fact, a single reality as two wholly disconnected realities: they see that the Peloponnesians and Athenian subject states alike resent the Athenians for their self-aggrandizement, but fail to fully comprehend the causal relation between anti-Athenian resentment and Athenian self-aggrandizement.³¹ In other words, the Athenians prove incapable of thinking outside of their imperial ideal.

As the Athenian envoys do not account for the nature of their Peloponnesian audience in the crafting of their speech, so the Athenian war council did not account for the *paralogos* nature of war with their overly-subtle and rigidly-formulated battle plan for Sybota. Thucydides tells us

³⁰ “... we must refer to the Persian War, to events well known to you all, even though you may be tired of constantly hearing the story” (1.73*).

³¹ In fact, this doublesight resembles Thucydides’ way of writing about the Athenian empire under Pericles—chronicling its failures and logical fallacies during his command, yet praising the man as a bastion of Athens nevertheless (2.65).

that the Athenian generals are anxious, or even in a state of fear³² about their orders from the Athenians: “they did not begin battle, anxious about [or fearing] the orders of the Athenians” (μάχης δὲ οὐκ ἤρχον δεδιότες οἱ στρατηγοὶ τὴν πρόρρησιν τῶν Ἀθηναίων, 1.49.4). These generals are anxious because the actual state of the battle at Sybota does not conform to the abstract picture that the Athenians had anticipated.

The battle at Sybota is, we learn, noisy and confusing: “Everywhere in the battle confusion reigned, and there was shouting on all sides.” “It was a battle where courage and sheer strength played a greater part than scientific methods” (ἦν τε ἡ ναυμαχία καρτερὰ, τῆ μὲν τέχνη οὐχ ὁμοίως, 1.49.2*). We quickly realize that the Athenian naval *technê* designed to uphold the terms of the *epimachia* is not suited to the nature of the battle at Sybota, a battle of sheer strength; this is not the sort of battle Phormio will win at Rhium by *technê* (1.87-1.92) because “no one attempted the manoeuvre of encirclement” and “both sides relied more for victory on their hoplites, who were on the decks and who fought a regular pitched battle there while the ships remained motionless” (1.50*).

Eventually, it becomes apparent that the Corcyraeans, being outnumbered 110 to 150 by the Corinthians, will lose the battle. When the Athenian fleet recognizes this, they cease from support tactics and fight the Corinthians openly at sea contrary to their orders.³³ Thucydides describes this outcome as “inevitable” because the Athenian generals are in a catch-22 position (ξυνέπεσεν ἐς τοῦτο ἀνάγκης, 1.49.7*): if they wait until the Corcyraean forces are routed, then they are in the lunatic position of fighting the Corinthian armada closing in to shore with their

³² Athenian generals were held fully accountable for military failures. *Deidô* suggests the generals’ fearing the consequences of failure, like banishment (5.26). This will be discussed in more detail later.

³³ “... their assistance at the end of ch. 49 will be unjustified...” (Hornblower, 90 n. 46.3).

ten ships alone. Thus, it is out of necessity that they disobey their orders, by fighting in the open sea: this gives the Athenians the best chance of saving the Corcyraeans and themselves.

Given the situation that the Athenian fleet had to face at Sybota, it is ironic that the Athenian envoys in Sparta should describe war as *paralogos*:

think... of the great part of the unpredictable in war... the longer a war lasts, the more things tend to depend on accidents. Neither you nor we can see into them: we have to abide their outcome in the dark.

τοῦ δὲ πολέμου τὸν παράλογον, ὅσος ἐστί, πρὶν ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι προδιάγνωτε: μηκυνόμενος γὰρ φιλεῖ ἐς τύχας τὰ πολλὰ περιίστασθαι, ὧν ἴσον τε ἀπέχομεν καὶ ὀποτέρως ἔσται ἐν ἀδήλῳ κινδυνεύεται.

(1.78*)

A great portion of war is *paralogos*—unpredictable and contrary to reason. By the time that the Athenian envoys have uttered this principle, Thucydides has already shown this to be true at Sybota, where the highly-technical battle plan devised by the Athenians had proved entirely useless in a battle of pure might. Here too, the rhetorical *technê* of these Athenian envoys proves useless to placate the Spartans and the other assembled Peloponnesians: Sthenelaidas views their words as incomprehensible *pollous logous*, and proceeds to incite his fellow Spartans to declare war upon Athens (1.86). At both Sybota and the Spartan assembly, Thucydides is showing us that Athenians understand *paralogos* in theory, but not, most importantly, in practice.

Potidaea: An Exposition on Political Friendship and Enmity (1.56-65)

The next stage of the cold war between Athens and Corinth manifests at Potidaea “almost immediately after” the battle at Sybota (1.56*). Potidaea, like Epidamnus, is a smaller city that has socio-political ties to two imperial powers: Corinth, as a colony, and Athens, as a tribute-paying ally. Thucydides introduces his record of the events at Potidaea by giving us insight into the post-Sybotan strategizing of the Corinthians and the Athenians:

τῶν γὰρ Κορινθίων πρᾶσσόντων ὅπως τιμωρήσονται αὐτούς, ὑποτοπήσαντες τὴν ἔχθραν αὐτῶν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι Ποτειδεάτας, οἱ οἰκοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῷ ἰσθμῷ τῆς Παλλήνης, Κορινθίων ἀποίκους, ἑαυτῶν δὲ ξυμμάχους φόρου ὑποτελεῖς, ἐκέλευον τὸ ἐς Παλλήνην τεῖχος καθελεῖν καὶ ὀμήρους δοῦναι, τοὺς τε ἐπιδημιουργοὺς ἐκπέμπειν καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν μὴ δέχεσθαι οὕς κατὰ ἔτος ἕκαστον Κορίνθιοι ἔπεμπον, δείσαντες μὴ ἀποστῶσιν ὑπὸ τε Περδίκκου πειθόμενοι καὶ Κορινθίων...

While the Corinthians were preparing how they might retaliate against the Athenians, the Athenians, having perceived Corinth's enmity, were commanding the Potidaeans, who dwell on the isthmus of Pallene as colonists of Corinth (but tribute-paying allies of Athens) to take down their wall facing Pallene, to give them hostages, to banish their Corinthian magistrates, and to no longer receive the magistrates sent on a yearly basis from Corinth, fearing that they would revolt under persuasion from Perdiccas and the Corinthians...

(1.56.2)

Thucydides does not make it known where the Corinthians planned to strike, presumably because he, like the other Athenians, did not know himself; the Athenians anticipate that the Corinthians will take retaliatory action, and choose Potidaea as the city in which to preempt them.

Why Potidaea? First, we are told that Athens fears that Perdiccas and the Corinthians will incite a revolt there, a revolt that could “draw in other allied cities to revolt in the Thracian area” (1.56*). Then, we are told that Perdiccas had originally been an “ally and friend” to the Athenians, but was now an enemy because the Athenians had formed an alliance with *his* enemies, Philipp and Derdas (Περδίκκας... ξύμμαχος πρότερον καὶ φίλος ὦν. ἐπολεμώθη δὲ ὅτι Φιλίππῳ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ ἀδελφῷ καὶ Δέρδα κοινῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐναντιούμενοις οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ξυμμαχίαν ἐποιήσαντο, 1.56.2-3). Thucydides' condensed history of Athenian relations with Perdiccas evokes their recent diplomatic relations with Corinth regarding Corcyra: the Athenians had

angered both of these parties by making alliances with their bitter enemies.³⁴ Thus, the Athenians choose to anticipate the Corinthians' retaliation in Potidaea because they are wary of the hatred of Corinth and Perdiccas. The disadvantages that come with the Athenians' neglect *charis* and *philia* are meant to contrast with the advantages that we see *philia* bringing to the Peloponnesians for their campaigns at Sybota and Potidaea, for which they easily gain voluntary military support from their friends.³⁵

Perdiccas proves himself to be a particularly dangerous enemy to the Athenians.

Thucydides presents him as the centrifugal force pulling Corinth, Potidaea, Sparta, and other Thracians into an anti-Athenian resistance movement in Thrace: “Perdiccas was alarmed by these moves [i.e. the Athenians breaking their alliance with him, to ally with his enemies, Philipp and Dardas] and not only sent his agents to Sparta in order to try to involve Athens in a war with the Peloponnese, but was also approaching Corinth in order to get support for a revolt in Potidaea” (δεδιώς τε ἔπρασσεν ἕξ τε τὴν Λακεδαίμονα πέμπων ὅπως πόλεμος γένηται αὐτοῖς πρὸς Πελοποννησίους, καὶ τοὺς Κορινθίους προσεποιεῖτο τῆς Ποτειδαίας ἕνεκα ἀποστάσεως, 1.57*). In this passage, Thucydides presents the “idea” of the Peloponnesian War germinating in Perdiccas' mind, “he... sent his agents to Sparta in order to try to involve Athens in a war with

³⁴ Although Thucydides does not specify why the Athenians had chosen to ally themselves with Philipp and Dardas, it would be safe to assume that they did so because of some perceived political advantage, as had been the case at Epidamnus.

³⁵ Thucydides notes in his record of Sybota that “There were many of the [Sybotan] barbarians reinforcing the Corinthians on the mainland: for these Sybotans were always *philoî* to them” (ἦσαν δὲ καὶ τοῖς Κορινθίοις ἐν τῇ ἡπείρῳ πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων παραβεβοηθηκότες: οἱ γὰρ ταύτη ἡπειρῶται αἰεὶ ποτε αὐτοῖς φίλοι εἰσίν, 1.47); at Potidaea, Thucydides notes that Aristeus, the general sent by Corinth to support the Plataean revolt, “had always been a staunch friend to the people of Potidaea. And it was largely because of his personal popularity that most of the Corinthian volunteers joined the expedition” (ἑστρατήγει δὲ αὐτῶν Ἀριστεὺς ὁ Ἀδειμάντου, κατὰ φιλίαν τε αὐτοῦ οὐχ ἦκιστα οἱ πλεῖστοι ἐκ Κορίνθου στρατιῶται ἐθελονταὶ ζυνέσποντο: ἦν γὰρ τοῖς Ποτειδαῖταις αἰεὶ ποτε ἐπιτήδειος, 1.60-1*).

the Peloponnese.”³⁶ Perdiccas, whom Thucydides emphatically states had been both an ally (*summachos*) and a friend (*philos*) to Athens, has been backed into a corner by Athens’ flagrant power grabs. Needing to protect his kingdom against Athens, his lost ally and newfound enemy, Perdiccas begins to foment revolts among the Chalcidians and Bottiaians (1.57).

Thucydides says that fear caused the Peloponnesian War: “what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta” (1.23*). At Epidamnus, Sybota, and Potidaea, Thucydides shows how the Athenians’ non-traditional, overreaching, even treacherous (in the case of Perdiccas) diplomacy produces fear in other political parties expecting more traditional, reciprocal treatment from the Athenians.

When the Potidaeans hear the demands that the Athenians are making of them—that they send hostages to Athens, exile their Corinthian magistrates, tear down their defensive walls, be treated as prisoners more than allies, in other words—they send representatives

to Athens in the hope of persuading the Athenians not to make any alterations in the existing state of affairs (*νεωτερίζειν μηδέν*). They also sent representatives with the Corinthians to Sparta in order to win support there in case it should be necessary (*ἤν δέη*). After long negotiations at Athens nothing valuable was achieved; in spite of all their efforts, the fleet for Macedonia was ordered to sail against them too. The Spartan authorities, however, promised to invade Attica if the Athenians attacked Potidaea. This, then, seemed to the Potidaeans to be the moment: they made common cause with the Chalcidians and the Bottiaians and revolted from Athens.

(1.58*)

These initial Athenian demands are very intrusive, and must have left the Potidaeans fearing what the Athenians would do next, should they comply. As an alternate resort (*ἤν δέη*), the Potidaeans send an envoy to Sparta, to see if the Spartans would help them, should the Athenians refuse their requests. Although Thucydides’ use of *ἤν δέη* here suggests that the Potidaeans are

³⁶ Although the Corinthians had been trying to get Sparta involved in a war with the Athenians for some time as well, we learn (1.68).

more trustworthy than the Athenians give them credit for, the Potidaeans fail to gain Athens' trust. In fact, after hearing the Potidaean representatives, the Athenians decide to *add* to their security measures at Potidaea, by sending an additional fleet to Potidaea from Macedonia. The Potidaeans then revolt, having been promised assistance by the Spartans. Their revolt is shown to be as much a product of Athenian pressure as it is of Sparta's offer to assist in their revolution.

When the Athenians arrive in Thrace to implement security measures in Potidaea, they are surprised to find not only Potidaea already in revolt, but also the Chalcidians and the Bottiaeans. As a result, they end up going back to Macedonia because "with the forces at their disposal it was impossible to make war both against Perdiccas and against the league of revolted cities" (1.59*). The Athenians were certain that they would *prevent* a revolution in Potidaea by carrying through with their political intervention; to the contrary, Potidaea's certainty that Athens will intervene in their affairs *necessitates* their rebellion (ἦν δέη, 1.58), which, in turn, further exacerbates tensions already building in Thrace, and results in more rebellions against Athens.

Disadvantageous Advantages: *Ta Sumphora Paraloga*

At the Athenian *ecclêsia*, the Corinthians had encouraged the Athenians to not become fixated on seizing the "apparent" advantages before them, but to act with reciprocity and fairness: *this*, they claimed, would be the most advantageous thing for the Athenians to do as well.³⁷ The Athenians do not heed the Corinthians' words, however, and from Epidamnus to Potidaea, Thucydides shows us the inflammatory results of the Athenians' seizure of apparent

³⁷ Corinthians: "We should like...for you to decide that you ought to behave towards us as we have behaved towards you. Do not think: "the Corinthians are quite right in what they say, but in the event of war all this is not in our interest." ... you will find that an act of kindness done at the right moment has a power to dispel old grievances quite out of proportion to the act itself... Do not be influenced by the fact that [the Corcyraeans] are offering you a great naval alliance. The power that deals fairly with its equals finds a truer security than the one which is hurried into snatching some apparent but dangerous advantage" (1.42-3*).

advantages. Once the Potidaeans revolt under Athenian pressure, they join up with Perdiccas and the Corinthians, to fuel a tripartite rebellion in the Thracian region, one so big that Thucydides will call it a *parousê dunamis* (1.59.2). It is with these revolutionary fires burning in Thrace that the Corinthians approach the Spartans and urge them to destroy what they now call the *turannos polis* of Athens: “Let us now liberate the Hellenes, who have been enslaved!” they cry, effectively giving their war an ideological brand and a good public image (τοὺς νῦν δεδουλωμένους Ἑλληνας ἐλευθερώσωμεν, 1.124.2).

Indeed, their message carries: Thucydides tells us that when war was first declared between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, “people’s feelings were generally very much on the side of the Spartans, especially as they proclaimed that their aim was the liberation of Hellas” (2.8*). Ironically, the Athenian democrats are seen ruling their empire by force, while the Peloponnesian oligarchs are seen leading voluntary rebellions against Athens with their *philoï*—all this despite the Athenian envoys’ claim that the Peloponnesians were widely-resented in Greece (1.77).

In these ways, the Potidaean narrative validates the Corinthians’ words as prophetic: the Athenians’ relentless prioritization of advantage over reciprocity not only foments the onset of the Peloponnesian War, but also gives the Athenians a bad public image that will haunt them throughout the war’s course, an image that the Peloponnesians capitalize upon. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Spartan general Brasidas’ Thracian campaign, in which he successfully gets a number of cities under Athenian control to revolt. Of his campaign, Thucydides wryly remarks:

The Athenians also feared that their allies would revolt, since Brasidas was behaving with great moderation and was constantly declaring wherever he went that his mission was the liberation of Hellas. The cities subject to Athens, when they heard of the capture of Amphipolis, of the terms being offered, and of the

considerate behaviour of Brasidas himself, eagerly embraced the idea of change, made overtures to him, begging him to march on into their territory, and vied with each other in being the first to revolt.

(4.108*)

Given Athens' bad image in Thrace, it is no coincidence that Brasidas campaigns so effectively there, even working in tandem with Perdikkas after he captures Amphipolis (4.107).³⁸ Brasidas would be crowned with gold or decked with garlands throughout his future "liberating" exploits (4.121), all the while making promises of freedom to the Greeks which the Spartans "cheerfully ignored," after they won the war, establishing "tightly-controlled pro-Spartan governments" instead (Ober, 228). In Book 1, the unpopularity of the Athenians' "tyrannical" decisions regarding Corcyra and Potidaea make it that much easier for the Spartans to gain a strong foothold in Thrace in Book 4 because Brasidas employs the positive rhetoric of freedom.

And as for the apparent *sumphora* that the Corcyraeans offered? These islanders eventually prove themselves to be troublesome and treacherous allies, come the Corcyraean *stasis* (3.70). Furthermore, Corcyra is an isolationist city—unpopular and widely-resented, by Corinth's reckoning.³⁹ Therefore, the Corcyraeans bring no friends along with them into the Athenian alliance, quite unlike what we see happening in the Thracian resistance movements. Finally, "that Corcyra lay very conveniently on the coastal route to Italy and Sicily" only further enables and legitimizes the disastrous Sicilian Expedition. In these ways, what the Athenians

³⁸ For further study of this fascinating campaign, Mary P. Nichols devotes the 3rd chapter of her book *Thucydides and the Pursuit of Freedom* to Brasidas, of which there is a subchapter on this commander's Thracian campaign. I have not had time to read it, but have included it in my bibliography for further reference.

³⁹ Corinth: "The ships of other states are forced to put in to [the Corcyraean] harbours much more often than the Corcyraeans visit the harbours of other states... in cases where a Corcyraean has been guilty of injuring some other national, the Corcyraeans are themselves their own judges, and there is no question of having the case tried by independent judges appointed by treaty. So this neutrality of theirs, which sounds so innocent, was in fact a disguise opted not to preserve them from having to share in the wrong doings others, but in order to do wrong themselves, making away with other people's property by force..." (1.37*).

thought would be advantages turn out to be disadvantageous, as a result of the unpredictability of war (*paralogos polemou*).

Athens, The Hypnotic City

Could the Peloponnesian War have been avoided if the Athenians had been less opportunistic in its early stages? Thucydides does not deal in hypotheticals, and I myself can provide no definite answer. Later in the war, Cleon will argue that the public image of Athens is irrelevant to its success as an empire, and that there should be no effort made to improve the city's public relations: "a democracy is incapable of governing others... feelings of compassion [for subject states] will not make them love you [i.e. the Athenians] any more" (3.37*). But Cleon urges this in 427, five years after the events at Potidaea and Thrace, events that Thucydides narrates in such a way as to suggest that the Athenians, by maintaining their alliance with Perdiccas, by honoring *charis* with Corinth, and by trusting the Potidaeans, might possibly have prevented the initial outbreak of rebellions in Thrace, rebellions that gave fuel to the fire of the so-called Hellenic liberation. Although war might not have been avoidable altogether, the outcome might have been significantly different for Athens.

Thucydides portrays the Athenians as being blind to the consequences of their habitually mistrustful and aggressive politics. This blindness becomes readily apparent when Pericles addresses the subject of friendship in his Funeral Oration:

... in questions of general good feeling there is a great contrast between us and most other people. We make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them. This makes our friendship all the more reliable, since we want to keep alive the gratitude of those who are in our debt by showing a continued good-will toward them...

(2.40*)

Pericles' claim that Athenian friendship is steadfast and widely renowned has already been proven untrue by the political realities that the Epidamnian and Potidaean narratives illustrate.

Cleon will tell the Athenians in the Mytilenaeon debate: “you cannot even think straight about the facts of life that are before you. You are simply victims of your own pleasure of listening, and are more like an audience sitting at the feet of a professional lecturer than a parliament discussing matters of state” (3.38*). Cleon would have the Athenians accept their city as the *turannos polis* that it has become in the eyes of Hellas. If he had delivered this speech earlier, perhaps reality would have broken through the self-delusion of the Athenians; forced to confront the fact that the Greeks perceived them as a *turannos polis*, the Athenians could have made an effort to change their bad public image before it was too late. During these first years of the war, however, Pericles is encouraging the Athenians to see their city as “an education to Greece” (1.40*), and to “fall in love” with Athens for the *nomoi* of freedom that it bestows: “What I would prefer is that you should fix your eyes every day on the power of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her” (ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ’ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς, 2.43**). Pericles’ reference to the force of *erôs* is moving, yet curious—worthy of inquiry given the discords between what his words claim about Athens and what the narrative has shown about Athens. The way in which the chorus of Euripides’ *Hippolytus* characterizes *erôs* will provide a useful lens through which to view the word’s more sinister connotations:

Love (*erôs*) distills desire upon the eyes,
 love brings bewitching grace into the heart
 of those he would destroy.
 I pray that love may never come to me
 with murderous intent
 in rhythms measureless and wild.

(*Hippolytus*, 525-30)

The *erôs* of the *Hippolytus* facilitates a divide between beautiful dream and dangerous reality, as does Funeral Oration between the Athenians’ vision of their city and the current political reality.

It is blind *erôs* for Athens that prevents the Athenians from accepting the tyrannical image that their city now carries outside the confines of its walls. Later, it will be the *erôs* they feel for the Sicilian Expedition⁴⁰ that turns their attention away from the war at hand, and the festering social problems within their city's walls.⁴¹ In both scenarios, *erôs*, blinding the eyes of the Athenians, makes them believe things that are not there by “bringing bewitching grace” into their hearts, hearts “[it] would destroy.” Indeed, the words and appearance of the charming Alcibiades—a veritable poster boy for Athenian expansion—will cause the Athenians to stare spellbound into a beautiful vision that spells their destruction: Sicily (6.16-18).

⁴⁰ “There was a passion for the enterprise which affected everyone alike” (καὶ ἔρωσ ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁμοίως ἐκπλεῦσαι, 6.24).

⁴¹ The desecration of the stone Hermae at 6.27 foreshadows the societal collapse that occurs within Athens in the *stasis* of Book 8.

Chapter 3: Normalizing Atrocity

Introduction

In Book 3, Thucydides finally returns his gaze to Corcyra, recording the monumental *stasis* that ravages the island in the summer of 427. This event occurs four years after war had officially been declared between Athens and Sparta in 431 (2.7), six years after the battle at Sybota between Corcyra and Corinth in August of 433 (1.46-55), and approximately eight years after the first naval battle between Corcyra and Corinth off the coast of Epidamnus (1.29-30), a product of the Epidamnian revolution that had occurred in the months before August of 435 (1.24).⁴² During this long historical (and narrative) interim between Sybota and the *stasis*, Thucydides mentions the Corcyraeans on only two occasions: they are included among the list that Thucydides has compiled of Athenian allies at the outbreak of the war (2.9), and the historian mentions that 50 Corcyraean ships join the 100 Athenian ships sailing around the Peloponnese during the first year of the war, “doing damage at various places” and “land[ing] in the Spartan territory of Methone ... [making] an attack on the fortifications there” (2.25*). This information is important because it tells us that the original Athenian-Corcyraean *epimachia* has, unsurprisingly, become a full-on offensive alliance, after war had officially been declared between Athens and Sparta.

The first objective of this chapter is to illustrate how the events recorded in Book 3 that precede the *stasis*—the revolt of Mytilene (3.1-35), and the subsequent debate regarding the fate of the Mytilenaeans (3.36-50); the fall of Plataea, and the tragic execution of these most steadfast of Athenian allies (3.51-68)—display the necessities of war eroding the ethical value

⁴² There is a consensus of dates between Warner, Gomme, and Hornblower assigned to the Corcyraean *stasis*, the declaration of war between Athens and Sparta, and the battle of Sybota. For dating the Epidamnian revolution that occurred *pro toudē polemou* according to Thucydides, I use Hornblower’s estimation of 435 (Hornblower, 66-7 n. 24-55).

systems proclaimed by the Athenians and the Spartans in Books 1 and 2. The second objective of this chapter is to investigate the collapse of ethical values within cities as a result of the pressures of the Peloponnesian War. We begin our study of civic collapse by examining Thucydides' historical record of the political *kinêsis* on Corcyra in the summer of 427 (3.70-81). From there, we examine how these ethical violations become justified and codified into new *nomoi* by means of linguistic *kinêsis* (3.82-4).

An Analysis of Book 3's Pre-*Stasis* Narrative Structure: (3.1-3.69)

The 400 Plataean men, 110 Plataean women, and 80 Athenian hoplites within Plataea are being starved out under siege by the Peloponnesians and Boeotians, "seeing no hope of help coming to them from Athens" (3.20*). Just three chapters earlier, Thucydides had stated how glorious the Athenian fleet was at this time, "At the time when this fleet was at sea, Athens seems to have had almost the largest number of ships in action at the same time that she ever had, and beautifully equipped too." He then notes that the maintenance of this fleet and the siege of Potidaea are the chief drains on the Athenian revenue (3.17*).

Between the scenes of the glorious Athenian fleet at sail and the starving Plataeans near capitulation, Thucydides tells us that the Athenians are aiming to put down a recent and shocking revolt in Mytilene, for which a citizen contribution of 200 talents had been raised to fund it, a first in Athenian history. Even this citizen contribution had proved insufficient, however, so the Athenians send out ships to collect an additional tax from their allies (3.19).

Thucydides' interspersing of these three fields of operations displays the inability of the Athenians to cover all their bases—moral and material—under rapidly growing economic strain. Indeed, their glorious fleet can do little to relieve Plataea, a city situated inland, because the Athenians will not hazard a land war against the Peloponnesian siege army, in adherence to the

Periclean policy.⁴³ So too, the Athenians are constrained by lack of funds because of the ongoing siege at Plataea and the grandeur of their fleet.

The Plataeans, on the other hand, had demonstrated their loyalty to Athens in Book 2 by remaining in their city, although they were about to endure a Spartan siege: “The Plataeans ... decided not to desert the Athenians, but to endure, if it had to be so, seeing their land laid waste and all the other sufferings that might befall them” (2.74*). The Plataeans remained in their city both out of long-standing loyalty to Athens and because the Athenians had promised to help the Plataeans with a solemn and formal oath.⁴⁴ For this reason, the Athenians’ decision to prioritize reconquering Mytilene over saving the Plataeans and the 80 Athenians inside Plataea for the sake of *philia* and the fulfillment of *charis* is all the more disconcerting given Pericles’ assertion about the steadfastness of Athenian friendship in the Funeral Oration (2.34).

As the besieged Plataeans are forsaken by the Athenians, so the Mytilenaeans, now under Athenian siege, are forsaken by the Spartans, who had promised them their assistance. Alcidas, the Spartan general sent to relieve Mytilene, arrives after the Athenians have begun setting up siege operations. Not wanting to risk battle with their fleet, he sails away (3.29-32). The Mytilenaeans eventually capitulate under siege because of a lack of food (3.27) and the leading conspirators in the revolt are then taken to Athens, among them Salaethus, their Spartan representative and ringleader. Salaethus is put to death immediately, although “there were things which he was offering, especially to withdraw the Peloponnesians from Plataea, which was still

⁴³ See Pericles’ speeches at 1.142-3 and 2.13. And so we ask: just how did Pericles intend to defend inland allies vulnerable to attacks from the Peloponnesian land army?

⁴⁴ Athenians: “Men of Plataea, the Athenians say that in all the time that we have been their allies they have never once abandoned you to an aggressor, nor will they desert you now. Instead they will give you all the help they can, and they solemnly appeal to you in the name of the oaths which your fathers swore not to make any changes in the existing alliance” (2.73*).

being besieged” (ἔστιν ἂν παρεχόμενον τά τ’ ἄλλα καὶ ἀπὸ Πλαταιῶν (ἔτι γὰρ ἐπολιορκοῦντο) ἀπάξειν Πελοποννησίου, 3.36).

Thucydides’ interweaving of fields of battle in his narrative from 3.17 to 3.20—the glory of the Athenian fleet sailing around the Peloponnese, the Athenian plan to attack Mytilene, the suffering of those trapped in Plataea, to whom Athens is supposed to be bound by oath to aid—has implicitly demonstrated that the Athenians are prioritizing advantage over ethics, raising money to regain control of Mytilene at the expense of the lives of their desperate allies in Plataea (not to mention their own Athenian soldiers). Even worse is their decision to execute Salaethus, a potential bargaining chip for the rescue of the Plataeans: the Athenians’ decision to execute Salaethus shows their thoughtless prioritization of emotional catharsis over loyalty to friends.⁴⁵

The final disturbance that Thucydides highlights in the historical sequence of events that precede the Corcyraean *stasis* is the Spartan mass execution of the surrendered Plataeans. Just two chapters before the *stasis* narrative begins at 3.70, Thucydides informs us that Sparta’s decision to kill the Plataeans “was largely, or entirely, because of Thebes... they considered that at this stage of the war the Thebans were useful to them” (3.68*). By saying this, Thucydides offers “his own gloss on the situation” (Hornblower, 464 n.4): the Thebans have behaved atrociously; not only had they illegally invaded Plataea while the 30 Years Peace was in place (2.2), but in doing so, had also betrayed the League's plan to delay the war with Athens so that they could be better prepared for it (1.125). Nevertheless, it is the Thebans who are catered to, and at a bloody cost. In this way, the Spartan tradition of independence and self-assurance alleged by Archidamus in Book 1 proves to have little practical value when it comes to winning

⁴⁵ Hornblower thinks that it is unlikely that Salaethus could fulfill this promise. Thucydides, however, has included this information for a reason (Hornblower, 417 n. 36.1).

this new PanHellenic war;⁴⁶ the Spartans do what the Thebans want to keep them fighting on their side. Thus, the national characteristics proclaimed by the Athenians and the Spartans in Books 1 and 2 disintegrate almost immediately under the strain of war. Rather than ethical principles, the powerful emotions of pride and anger along with the more rational but equally brutal realist considerations of military advantage hold sway over their policies.

All major powers of the *History* execute a harsh, realist military policy as though human life were not valued at all. As readers of the *History*, we become numb to it, and it is only in rare instances like the Mytilenaeans' debate⁴⁷ or the Samians' complaints made to Alcidas about his execution policy⁴⁸ that we are reminded that the total destruction of the enemy—warriors and innocents alike—may be the norm in the *History*, but it is not *supposed* to be this way, at least for Greeks. Indeed, when Thucydides records, with his usual restraint, how the Mycallessian schoolboys were slaughtered at the hands of bloodthirsty Thracian mercenaries, we must infer that this is “unexpected” (*adokêtos*) from the perspective of the Mycallessians themselves, “disaster fell upon the entire city, a disaster more complete than any, more sudden and more

⁴⁶ “...we are no more likely to give in shamefacedly to other people’s views when they try and spur us on by their accusations” (1.84*).

⁴⁷ The Athenians had originally voted “to put to death not only those [Mytilenaeans] now in their hands but also the entire adult male population of Mytilene, and to make slaves of the women and children” (3.36*). The next day, however, “there was a sudden change of feeling and people began to think how cruel and unprecedented such a decision was...” (καὶ τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ μετάνοιά τις εὐθὺς ἦν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀναλογισμὸς ὧμὸν τὸ βούλευμα καὶ μέγα ἐγνώσθαι, 1.36.4*).

Thus, the Athenians realize that their earlier resolution had been savage, *ômon*, a behavior antithetical to the Periclean ideals of Athenian society, and a product of rage, *orgê*, rather than reason. The Athenians, manage to shake off this blind rage, and restrain themselves from the brink of an *ômon kai mega paradeigma* that will become the norm in the *ômê stasis* of Corcyra (3.82).

⁴⁸ “... a deputation of Samians from Anaia came to [Alcidas] and told him that it was not the right way to set about the liberation of Hellas by massacring people who had never raised a hand against him... Alcidas saw the force of this argument and released all the prisoners from Chios whom he still had...” (3.22*).

horrible” (καὶ ξυμφορὰ τῇ πόλει πάση οὐδεμιᾶς ἥσσω μᾶλλον ἑτέρας ἀδόκητός τε ἐπέπεσεν αὕτη καὶ δεινὴ, 7.30*). By this time, it is respite from such atrocities that has become abnormal.

The *Stasis* on Corcyra: (3.70-3.82)

The *stasis* on Corcyra marks the official beginning of sociopolitical atrocity’s normalization throughout the Hellenic world. Thucydides’ record of the Corcyraean *stasis* comes in two parts: from 3.70-81 the narrative is historical, factual, and chronological; from 3.82-4 the narrative is an abstract analysis of *stasis*’ societal impact. The images of men being butchered on the altars of temples, and of suppliants starving to death in the temple of Dionysus serve as the climactic conclusion to the historical account of the Corcyraean *stasis* and are symbolic of the degree to which civilization on Corcyra has devolved.

Thucydides’ historical account of the *stasis* (3.70-81) is punctuated by the arrivals and departures of ships from the major powers of the Peloponnesian War: Corinth, Athens, and Sparta. Accordingly, my argument is structured around these arrivals and departures, to show that there is a correlation between the behavior of the Corcyraeans and which power(s) are docked in their harbors. In examining the actions of the Corcyraeans actions in accordance with which outside powers are present, I hope to demonstrate that there is, in fact, a degree of validity to how Corinth had characterized the Corcyraean *ethos*: “she wanted no allies because her actions were wrong, and she was ashamed of calling in others to witness her own misdoings”—a statement that had seemed hyperbolic then (1.37*). Given the conflict of interests among the Corcyraeans themselves and among the other nations interested in Corcyra, it makes sense that the behavior of the Corcyraeans should be, to some extent, contingent upon who is watching. All Corcyraeans, as we shall see, are self-interested to the core, democrats and oligarchs alike, “Leaders of parties in the cities had programmes which appeared admirable—on the one side

political equality for the masses, on the other the safe and sound government of the aristocracy—but in professing to serve the public interest they were seeking to win prizes for themselves” (3.82*).

Thucydides tells us that the Corcyraean *stasis* began with the return of Corcyraean prisoners from Corinth. These prisoners had been captured by the Corinthians during the sea battles between Corcyra and Corinth in 435 and 433. Thucydides’ phraseology “The Corcyraeans began to be in a state of *stasis*, ever since⁴⁹ the Corcyraean prisoners captured from the sea battles off of Epidamnus came home, having been released by the Corinthians” does not tell us when these prisoners were released to return home, and has thus given rise to conflicting views as to when they might have been released (οἱ γὰρ Κερκυραῖοι ἐστασίαζον, ἐπειδὴ οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι ἦλθον αὐτοῖς οἱ ἐκ τῶν περὶ Ἐπίδαμνον ναυμαχιῶν ὑπὸ Κορινθίων ἀφεθέντες, 3.70).⁵⁰

We last saw these prisoners in Book 1 being taken to Corinth after the battle at Sybota:

[The Corinthians, having sailed away after the battle,] sold 800 of the captured Corcyraean prisoners who were slaves, and they kept in captivity 250 whom they treated with great consideration (ἐν θεραπείᾳ εἶχον πολλῇ), hoping that a time would come when they would return and win over the island to Corinth. Most of them were in fact people of great power and influence in Corcyra.

(1.55*)

The Corinthian *therapeia* was successful: these powerful Corcyraeans are now seen “approaching citizens individually with the aim of detaching the city from Athens” (3.70*). With some amount of pampering, the Corcyraean elites let go of their ancient feud with Corinth, forsaking the very isolationism that Thucydides had portrayed as a cornerstone of Corcyraean

⁴⁹ Or “because,” in John Wilson’s rendering, to avoid temporal ambiguity. See Hornblower, 467 n. 70.1.

⁵⁰ Gomme advocates for sometime before the spring of 427, close to when the *stasis* broke out, whereas Wilson believes that the Corcyraean prisoners were returned in 430 or earlier, therefore working the minds of their fellow citizens for several years (Hornblower, 467 n.70.1).

identity in Book 1. Even the “strongest” convictions can be reversed with a little *therapeia* (1.55), it would seem. So too, the growing influence of democracy in Corcyra as a result of its *epimachia* with Athens would have further incentivized the Corcyraean elites to work with the oligarchic Corinthians. The prisoners return home to find an Athenian *etheloproxenos*,⁵¹ Peithias, who wields a good deal of power in the Corcyraean council. This does not bode well for the Corcyraean elites, so an alliance with Corinth gives them the opportunity to gain back their traditional sphere of influence in Corcyra.

a. 1 Corinthian Ship, 1 Athenian Ship

After the returned prisoners had been approaching Corcyraean citizens individually for some unspecified amount of time, a ship from Corinth and a ship from Athens arrive at Corcyra with the “accredited representatives” from each state, to put matter of political allegiance to vote (3.70*). The “people of Corcyra voted in favour of remaining allies of Athens in accordance with the original agreement, at the same time preserving their friendly relations with the Peloponnese” (3.70*). Gomme calls this second clause of the vote—“to remain friends with the Peloponnesians, just as before”—“make-believe and self-deluding diplomacy” (Gomme, 360 n. 2 “*Peloponnésiois de philoi*”).⁵² This is well said: the “make-believe” quality of Corcyraean

⁵¹ A word found only in Thucydides. “Presumably a voluntary *proxenos* was so called to distinguish him from a hereditary one... what looks like a technical term for an Athenian institution” (Hornblower, 468 n.3). Indeed, that *proxenos* would be a voluntary position speaks to the excitement about Athenian lifestyle on Corcyra.

⁵² Gomme will go on to say: “the pro-Peloponnesian [i.e. the returned Corcyraean prisoners] party had won something [in putting the matter to vote]—the reassertion of old friendship and of the terms of the alliance with Athens, with which the action in 431 might strictly be said to have conflicted. They had won a moral victory, and they go on to attack Peithias for wanting to go farther than the resolution allowed in the alliance with Athens...” Gomme’s argument here is an ingenious solution to resolve the ambiguous status of the Corcyraean-Athenian alliance. But to make this assertion, Gomme assumes that the offensive role that we saw the Corcyraeans playing in the Athenian alliance (2.25) was a result of Athenian coercion going beyond the terms of their original *epimachia* with Athens. As such, he seems to believe that the pro-Peloponnesian Corcyraeans are following some sort of moral prerogative to restore the original terms of their

diplomacy, seems to reside somewhere between absurdity, naiveté, and cold calculation: absurd because the Corcyraeans had been Corinth's bitterest enemies for years (1.25); naive because the notion that the Athenians or the Corinthians would be satisfied with Corcyra's noncommittal vote is absurd; coldly calculating, nevertheless, because the Corcyraeans seem prioritize what they perceive to be their own interests by pandering to Athens and Corinth simultaneously. The duplicity of the Corcyraeans results in their own destruction, however, as both Athens and Corinth eventually abandon them to *stasis*.

b. 1 Athenian Ship

The Corinthian ship departs Corcyra carrying the news of the vote, while the Athenian ship remains in the harbor. The outcome of the vote—to be allies (in some unspecified capacity) with Athens, while remaining friends with the Peloponnesians—is, in truth, entirely inconclusive. Now, the pro-Peloponnesian party brings a legal charge against Peithias, the Athenian *etheloproxenos*. In doing so, they seek to eliminate the leading pro-Athenian advocate among their fellow Corcyraeans, who seem to have not yet decided whether to ally with the Athenians or Peloponnesians: “The charge [that they made] against him was that he was

epimachia with Athens. I am not convinced; let us not forget that the Corcyraeans had originally wanted a *summachia* with Athens, and promised their *charis* to Athenians (1.32-6). When the war began, Thucydides tells us that “The Athenians were examining their current alliances and were sending envoys to the lands around the Peloponnese, Corcyra, Cephallenia, Acarnania, and Zacynthus, realizing that they could make war all around the Peloponnesus if they could secure friendships with these places” (Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ τὴν τε ὑπάρχουσαν ξυμμαχίαν ἐξήταζον καὶ ἐς τὰ περὶ Πελοπόννησον μᾶλλον χωρία ἐπρεσβεύοντο, Κέρκυραν καὶ Κεφαλληνίαν καὶ Ἀκαρνανᾶς καὶ Ζάκυνθον, ὀρῶντες, εἰ σφίσι φίλια ταῦτ' εἶη βεβαίως, περίξ τὴν Πελοπόννησον καταπολεμήσοντες, 2.7). Accordingly, at 2.8, we see Corcyra listed as an official Athenian ally. As such, it should be recognized that Corcyra was most certainly in a *summachia* with Athens at this point. The pro-Peloponnesian party is not trying to save their country from Athenian “enslavement,” so much as it is trying to gain power for itself, as I will go on to demonstrate in the body of my argument. Contrary to what Gomme thinks, it is fairly clear to me that Peithias is, in fact, the one who is trying to restore original relations between Athens and Corcyra.

enslaving Corcyra to Athens” (ὑπάγουσιν αὐτὸν οὗτοι οἱ ἄνδρες ἐς δίκην, λέγοντες Ἀθηναίοις τὴν Κέρκυραν καταδουλοῦν, 3.70.3*). Peithias, however, is acquitted. This is unsurprising since just five years before, the Athenians had saved the Corcyraeans from probable death and enslavement at the hands of the Corinthians. Among the Corcyraeans, then, there must have been some residual gratitude for Athens’ support at this time.

Peithias’ legal retaliation is far more compelling. He “bring[s] to trial five of the richest of his opponents on the charge of having procured vine-props by cutting them on the ground sacred to Zeus and Alcinous” (ὁ δὲ ἀποφυγὼν ἀνθυπάγει αὐτῶν τοὺς πλουσιωτάτους πέντε ἄνδρας, φάσκων τέμνειν χάρακας ἐκ τοῦ τε Διὸς τοῦ τεμένους καὶ τοῦ Ἀλκίνου, 3.70*). By taking the five wealthiest of his opponents to trial, Peithias deliberately transforms what was initially a diplomatic dispute over which power the Corcyraeans should ally with, into a conflict between the classes on Corcyra. The charge of *asebeia* that he brings against these men is merely a *prophasis* for his true aims to pit the *dēmos* against the *oligoi*; he may as well have accused these five men of being greedy and rich.

The five rich men, “having been convicted [of Peithias’ charge] were sitting as suppliants in the temple on account of the amount of the fine, in order that they might pay it in increments” (ὀφλόντων δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἱερὰ ἰκετῶν καθεζομένων διὰ πλῆθος τῆς ζημίας, ὅπως ταξάμενοι ἀποδῶσιν, 3.70.5). By offering to pay their fine in installments, the wealthy convicts agree to work within the bounds of the law (in word, at least); an opportunity for political compromise and social healing is suggested by the moderate behavior of the convicts. Nevertheless, Peithias carries the charge through.

Now backed into a corner, the pro-Peloponnesians retaliate through open violence: “Being now exposed to the full rigour of the law and at the same time learning that Peithias

intended, while he was still a member of the council, to persuade the people to make an offensive and defensive alliance with Athens, the five accused joined up with the rest of their party and, armed with daggers suddenly broke in on the Council and killed Peithias and some sixty others...” (3.70*). The murder of Peithias marks the end of civic discourse on Corcyra. From here on out, violence will reign supreme.

c. No Ships in the Harbor

The members of the Corcyraean council who had survived the attack of the pro-Peloponnesian party now take refuge on the Athenian trireme still in the Corcyraean harbor. After they are shuttled back to Athens (3.70), the pro-Peloponnesian party

... also sent at once to Athens envoys to explain recent events at Corcyra, showing how these were for the interests of Athens, and to persuade those who had taken refuge there to do nothing prejudicial to them, in order that there might not be a reaction against Corcyra.

πέμπουσι δὲ καὶ ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας εὐθὺς πρέσβεις περὶ τε τῶν πεπραγμένων διδάζοντας ὡς ξυνέφερε καὶ τοὺς ἐκεῖ καταπεφευγότας πείσοντας μηδὲν ἀνεπιτήδειον πράσσειν, ὅπως μὴ τις ἐπιστροφή γένηται.

(3.71⁵³)

It comes as no surprise that the Athenians arrest these Corcyraean envoys on the spot, since the escaped council members who witnessed the murder of Peithias first-hand had already arrived in Athens (3.72). Here, Thucydides’ use of the verbs *didaskō* and *sumpherō* to describe the content of the speech that the Corcyraean envoy had planned to deliver evokes Corcyra’s first appeal to Athens during the Epidamnian dispute in Book 1.⁵⁴ These rhetorical similarities between the speeches illustrate a Corcyraean pattern of duplicity.

d. 1 Corinthian Ship

⁵³ C.F. Smith, 129.

⁵⁴ Namely, *anadidaskō* and *ta sumphora* (1.32).

After this brief arrest scene in Athens, Thucydides subsequently returns his gaze to the happenings on Corcyra:

ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τῶν Κερκυραίων οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πράγματα ἐλθούσης τριήρους Κορινθίας καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων πρέσβων ἐπιτίθενται τῷ δήμῳ, καὶ μαχόμενοι ἐνίκησαν.

Meanwhile, on the arrival of a Corinthian trireme with delegates from Sparta aboard, the party who held power in Corcyra attacked the democrats and defeated them in the fighting.

(3.72.2*)

As in 3.70,⁵⁵ the entrance of the Corinthian trireme into the Corcyraean harbor is demarcated by a temporal genitive absolute. Presumably, the Corcyraean *dēmos* did not submit to the demands of the party now in power (οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πράγματα), tensions rose, and one party attacked the other. In the subsequent chapters, the island of Corcyra becomes a veritable battlefield, with the *dēmos* occupying the acropolis and harbor, and the other party, whom Thucydides now officially begins to call *hoi oligoi* (3.74), occupying part of the *agora* and the section of the harbor opposite to the *dēmos*. Political dissent has evolved into full-on class warfare on Corcyra. We can imagine the Corinthians and Spartans watching from their trireme as their investment in these Corcyraean nobles falls to shambles; Corcyra would not be easily won, and “When the *dēmos* had prevailed, the Corinthian ship began to sail away in secret” (καὶ ἡ Κορινθία ναῦς τοῦ δήμου κεκρατηκότος ὑπεξάνηγετο, 3.74).

In this urban warzone, the oligarchs “set fire to the houses and the blocks of apartments round the town square, so that there should be no means of approach. They spared neither their own property nor that of others...” (3.74*). Thucydides tells us that this blaze almost consumes and destroys the city of Corcyra in its entirety. The final image of the Corcyraean *stasis*—the oligarchs “burn[ing] their boats [on the shore of Corcyra], so that there should be no hope left to

⁵⁵ καὶ ἀφικομένης Ἀττικῆς τε νεῶς καὶ Κορινθίας... (3.70.2).

them except in a final conquest of their country” (3.85*)—exemplifies the extent to which the oligarchs are hazarding their own well-being to gain back political power. Indeed the *stasis*, by this point, has departed somewhat from the self-interested aims with which it began; “revenge,” Thucydides will write, “was more important than self-preservation” (ἀντιτιμωρήσασθαι τέ τινα περὶ πλείονος ἢν ἢ αὐτὸν μὴ προπαθεῖν, 3.82.7*). Like animals in the food chain, the Corcyraeans now value the killing of others over their own preservation.

Linguistic *Kinêsis* (3.82-5)

Even more horrible than the lives destroyed in the political *kinêsis* that ravaged Corcyra is the fact that its atrocities were justified by a *kinêsis* of language itself. In this next and most famous section of Thucydides’ discussion of *stasis* (no longer the Corcyraean *stasis*, but a meditation *stasis* generally), the historian details how the customary understandings of the meanings of words changed. These changes result in a powerful and pervasive illusion that Greek *nomoi* are still being maintained in *stasis*, while in actuality they are all being horribly violated. Although Thucydides is no moral relativist,⁵⁶ by using the verb *nomizô* to illustrate these changes, the historian shows us that men in the throes of *stasis* believe (or make themselves believe) that their depraved actions are still in accordance with *nomos*.⁵⁷ Socio-

⁵⁶ “Indeed, it is true that in these acts of revenge on others men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing the general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress, instead of leaving those laws in existence, remembering that there may come a time when they, too, will be in danger and will need their protection” (3.84*). This may be an interpolation, however. See Hornblower, 489 n.84.

⁵⁷ τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ζυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν (3.82.4).

political evil, to be sustained, must remain blind to itself; the linguistic *kinêsis* facilitates this blindness.⁵⁸

Before turning to the phenomenon of linguistic *kinêsis*, it is important that we first understand Thucydides' abstract sociological analysis of the cause of *stasis*. Thucydides outlines the circumstances that produce *stasis* in what I have found to be a rather complex A-B-A structure. On an initial reading, his presentation of the cause of *stasis* might not seem so disjointed because of the confidence with which he presents his ideas. I have found, however, that Thucydides proposes three groups of consecutive theses in 3.82, which, although thematically related, are not plainly established as causal relations in the historian's prose. Below, I have isolated what I consider to be each "thesis" with a subheading and a brief summary of its content. After outlining this A-B-A structure, I will offer my interpretation of what Thucydides is trying to express, and why he might have chosen to express it in this tripartite structure.

A.1 Political Leaders in Peace and War

And while in a time of peace [the leaders of democratic factions and oligarchical factions] would have had no pretext for asking their intervention [i.e. Athens and Sparta], nor any inclination to do so, yet now that these two states were at war, either faction in the various cities, if it desired a revolution, found it easy to bring in allies also, for the discomforture at one stroke of its opponents and the strengthening of its own cause.

καὶ ἐν μὲν εἰρήνῃ οὐκ ἂν ἐχόντων πρόφασιν οὐδ' ἐτοίμων παρακαλεῖν αὐτούς, πολεμουμένων δὲ καὶ ξυμμαχίας ἅμα ἑκατέροις τῇ τῶν ἐναντίων κακώσει καὶ σφίσι αὐτοῖς ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ προσποιήσει ῥαδίως αἱ ἐπαγωγὰι τοῖς νεωτερίζειν τι βουλομένοις ἐπορίζοντο.

⁵⁸ Lebow, on the other hand, suggests that "the Greeks became increasingly irrational and inarticulate (alogistos), and, like animals, no longer capable of employing the logos (rational facilities and language) necessary for communal deliberation (149)."

In peace, the leaders of political parties within cities are unable to formulate pretexts (*prophaseis*) to bring harm (*kakōsis*) to their enemies and power to themselves. In war, however, they may formulate such *prophaseis* with ease.

B. Human Nature & *Stasis*

And so there fell upon the cities on account of revolutions many grievous calamities, such as happen and always will happen while human nature is the same, but which are severer or milder, and different in their manifestations, according as the variations in circumstances present themselves in each case.

καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιότερα καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἰ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται.

The calamities of *stasis* will fall upon cities as long as human nature remains the same, although the exact circumstances and level of severity of any given *stasis* may vary.

A.2 Cities and Private Individuals in Peace and War

For in peace and prosperity both states and individuals have gentler feelings, because men are not then forced to face conditions of dire necessity; but war, which robs men of the easy supply of their daily wants, is a rough schoolmaster and creates in most people a temper that matches their condition.

ἐν μὲν γὰρ εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀγαθοῖς πράγμασιν αἱ 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.

(3.82.2⁵⁹)

In peace, private citizens (*idiōtai*) and cities (*poleis*) have better inclinations because they do not have to face unwilled necessities. The *biaios didaskalos* of war, however, reorients their emotions (*orgai*) to accord with their dire circumstances because it deprives them of their provisions (*euporia*). This change in human temperament caused by wartime devastation and the

⁵⁹ C.F. Smith, 143.

deprivation of goods suggests that the pre-war *akousioi anagkai* are no longer *akousioi*. Because the war has leveled people's emotions to accord with their violent surroundings, they now pursue violent revolution as their new and alternate livelihood, "knowledge of what had happened previously in other places [in *stasis*] caused still new extravagances of revolutionary zeal" (3.82.3*).

Conclusions

Thucydides' analysis of party leaders in *stasis* (A.1) is partitioned off from his analysis of cities as a whole (*poleis*) and their private citizens (*idiôtai*) (A.3) by his assertion that *stasis* will repeat itself so long as human nature remains the same (A.2). Such a division between party leaders, private citizens, and cities themselves is the principle oddity in Thucydides' presentation of the cause of *stasis* with which I am concerned.

Party leaders, while not sanctioned outright, are not presented flatteringly either. Unlike cities and independent citizens, whom Thucydides says have "gentler feelings" in peacetime (Section A.2), the most he can say about political leaders in peacetime is that they do not have a *prophasis* to harm their enemies and gain power for themselves (Section A.1). It is the advent of war, Thucydides says, that encourages and enables political leaders to aggressively pursue self-interested aims because they can wield it as a *prophasis*. As the war has enabled political leaders to vie openly for power, so their words seduce the ordinary citizens to join them in internecine atrocities:

Leaders of parties in the cities had programmes which appeared admirable—on one side political equality for the masses, on the other the safe and sound government of the aristocracy—but in professing to serve the public interest they were seeking to win the prizes for themselves.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ My reading conflicts with the sentiment expressed in 3.84, which asserts that the atrocities of *stasis* are acts of retaliation of the lower classes against their abusive ruling class. This chapter, however, has been rejected by the scholiast as an interpolation, and Dionysius fails to mention it.

The individual in the *polis*, now deprived of *euporia* and desperate for change, heeds these noble-sounding words and joins wholeheartedly in the civil war, while his familial role is washed away by the fervor of rebellion, “Family relations were a weaker tie than party membership...” (3.82.5*). It is, then, a two-pronged force that brings cities into *stasis*: war deprives citizens of *euporia*, and self-interested politicians promise solutions to these deprivations. *Stasis* is an eternally recurring phenomenon because it part of human nature to heed the noble-sounding promises of politicians in times of great distress (γινόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, 3.82).

At war in Thucydides are not only the great nations of Athens and Sparta, but also two schools of thought: that of the Ionian intellectual tradition, for which Pericles is the fifth-century figurehead, and the *biaios didaskalos* of war, of which the Corcyraean *stasis* and other Hellenic *staseis* are both products and pupils.⁶¹ We can imagine these two schools of thought marching side-by-side through the *History* like armies themselves, for Connor has noted that the verb *prokhôreô*, used to describe the progression of the “savage *stasis*” through Greece (οὕτως ὠμῆ <ῆ> στάσις προχώρησε, 3.82), is the same verb that Thucydides uses to describe the progress of Ionian civilization toward greatness in the *Archaeology* (καὶ Ἴωσι προχωρησάντων ἐπὶ μέγα τῶν πραγμάτων, 1.16). In this passage, Thucydides describes how *stasis* progresses from city to city:

ἐστασίαζέ τε οὖν τὰ τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τὰ ἐφυστερίζοντά που πύσσει τῶν
προγενομένων πολὺ ἐπέφερε τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας τῶν τ’

“The chapter should be excised” (Hornblower, 489 n.84). Indeed, 3.84’s presentation of *stasis* as being instigated by the lower classes rising up against their aristocratic abusers seems quite different from the more complex manipulations of the citizen body by party leaders that Thucydides outlines in the chapters preceding 3.84. On the other hand, Thucydides is not immune to self-contradiction.

⁶¹ Certainly, there is also the Spartan didactic system, but this does not receive as much focus in the *History* as that of the Athenians.

ἐπιχειρήσεων περιτεχνήσει καὶ τῶν τιμωριῶν ἀτοπία. καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιοῦσει.

And so the cities began to be disturbed by revolutions, and those that fell to this state later, on hearing of what had been done before, carried to still more extravagant lengths the invention of new devices, both by the extreme ingenuity of their attacks and the monstrousness of their revenges. The ordinary acceptance of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit.

(3.82⁶²)

Stasis progresses geographically because it produces a widespread fervor for revolution throughout cities in Greece. It also progresses intellectually in that the knowledge (*pustis*) of previous *staseis* produces a flourishing of *diagnoia* for new ways to maim and murder others (*peritechnêsis*), as if the new *stasis* were vying with the old, in order to reach a new height of atrocity. The widespread appeal of *stasis* can be attributed to linguistic *kinêsis*, the radical change in how citizens in *stasis* evaluate the customary meanings of words.⁶³

What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action.

Violations of civic custom⁶⁴ are justified and enabled by the violation of linguistic custom (τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν, 3.82.4): "...neither [party] had any regard for true piety, yet those who could carry through an odious deed under the cloak of a specious phrase received the higher praise" (εὐσεβεία μὲν οὐδέτεροι ἐνόμιζον, εὐπρεπεῖα δὲ

⁶² C.F. Smith, 144-5.

⁶³ "The point... is not that the *meanings* of words actually changed, as in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but that the use which people made of the available descriptions changed as their evaluation of the relevant actions changed" (Hornblower, 483 n.4).

⁶⁴ "These parties were not formed to enjoy the benefits of the established laws, but to acquire power by overthrowing the existing regime" (καὶ τὰς ἐς σφᾶς αὐτοὺς πίστεις οὐ τῷ θεῷ νόμῳ μᾶλλον ἐκρατύνοντο ἢ τῷ κοινῇ τι παρανομήσαι, 3.82.6*).

λόγου οἷς ξυμβαίη ἐπιφθόνως τι διαπράξασθαι, ἄμεινον ἤκουον, 3.82.8⁶⁵). Thus, *logoi* are fundamental to the sustenance of *stasis*; the “specious phrase,” for example, is so highly valued because it perpetuates the illusion that *nomoi* are being upheld by the revolutionaries.

While speeches that glorify *stasis* with words of praise are valued, voices of dissent are regarded with suspicion: “Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, but anyone who objected to them became suspect” (καὶ ὁ μὲν χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεὶ, ὁ δ’ ἀντιλέγων αὐτῷ ὕποπτος, 3.82**). These dissenters, *antilegontes*, are heretical because they threaten to shatter the illusion of justice that linguistic *kinēsis* has facilitated. When Thucydides tells us that “it was...praiseworthy...to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all,” we can imagine that the *antilegontes* were among these innocents (3.82*). Since neutral parties, moderate parties, and voices of opposition are denounced or killed-off, societies in *stasis* become ideologically homologized to violent opinions. *Stasis* becomes a closed intellectual system in which even the father-son bond fails to wrench minds from the teachings of the *biaios didaskalos*. Indeed, the image of fathers killing sons described at 3.81.5 was most likely a true occurrence in the Hellenic *staseis*, but it is also an archetypal image that marks the end of Hellenic customs being passed down from father to son.

Thucydides concludes his record of the Corcyraean *stasis* with an image of Eurymedon, the Athenian general, and his fleet sailing away from the carnage-in-process on Corcyra, where they had stood by for seven days without intervening. Eurymedon’s inactivity has cast the general in considerable disrepute. Gomme writes: “the implication is that Eurymedon was, to this extent, responsible for the massacre, that with sixty ships he could have done what Nikostratos [the previous general stationed at Corcyra, whom Eurymedon presumably relieved] did with twelve, but took no trouble to interfere” (Gomme, 369 n.4). Hornblower adds: “The facts speak

⁶⁵ C.F. Smith, 149.

for themselves, and Th. does not need to comment on Eurymedon's behaviour in standing by during the massacre" (Hornblower, 476 n.4). While I agree that "the facts speak for themselves," I cannot agree that they condemn Eurymedon. Thucydides has already shown us Nicostratus' failed attempt to arrange a settlement between the parties on Corcyra. But after the parties had reached a settlement and signed treaties, the Corcyraean democrats immediately began to sabotage the oligarchs (3.75). On Corcyra, unbridled acts of violence and breaches of trust are already in the process of being codified into *nomos*: healthy deliberative functions of the mind are decried as cowardice, while blind aggression and mental calculation insofar as it is used to harm another are now considered good behavior.⁶⁶ Thus, with the Corcyraean *stasis* further underway, Eurymedon would have had even less of a chance than did Nicostratus to persuade the Corcyraeans to adopt a better way of life. As Athenian medical *technê* had met *aporia* in attempting to combat the plague,⁶⁷ so Periclean *paideusis* meets *aporia* in attempting to recivilize the Corcyraean revolutionaries. Both of these events prove to be beyond the ability of the Athenians to control; the teachings of the *biaios didaskalos* have fully occupied the minds of men.

⁶⁶ "What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action" (3.82*).

⁶⁷ "At the beginning the doctors were quite incapable of treating the disease because of their ignorance of the right methods...Nor was any other human art or science of any help at all" (οὔτε γὰρ ἰατροὶ ἤρκουν τὸ πρῶτον θεραπεύοντες ἀγνοία... οὔτε ἄλλη ἀνθρωπεῖα τέχνη οὐδεμία, 2.47*).

Conclusion: Intellectual Freedom

In Chapter 1, we began by looking at how Thucydides challenges the heroic narratives of the past, by showing that power (*dunamis*), rather than ethics, shaped the prehistoric world (1.2). We then turned to the Epidamnian narrative, Thucydides' first real-time study of 5th-century Greek history, and saw that ethics were only of concern to political parties insofar as they could be manipulated to gain a political advantage. In Chapter 2, we transitioned from this geopolitical study of *dunamis* as the ultimate truth of politics, to the tensions created by the fact that the Athenians have an empire that they desperately wish to be perceived as just, yet are unwilling to yield, in any respect, the stranglehold that they have on their empire. To sustain both their ideology and their *dunamis* simultaneously, the mentality of the Athenians slides into denial: *logoi* and *erga* drift apart, as though the Athenians believe that their ideals dictate their public image, not their power. Such idealism results in the Athenians producing several ill-conceived political maneuvers that backfire by furthering their tyrannical public image. In Chapter 3, we see the divide between *logoi* and *erga* widen to a blatant and irreconcilable degree on the battlefields of 428-427: Thucydides shows us that neither the Athenians nor the Spartans are, in practice, able to live up to the national virtues that they had proclaimed for themselves in Books 1 and 2. The ultimate irreconcilability between *logoi* and *erga* occurs in the Hellenic *staseis*, the first of which occurred in Corcyra in 427, the very same year in which national virtues collapsed openly on the battlefield. *Stasis* is militant idealism gone rogue; revolutionaries all too readily adapt to the violent *erga* of their world brought about by the *biaios didaskalos*. Once acclimated, however, they cease to name atrocities as such, but glorify them with new *logoi*. In this way, *stasis* synthesizes, or closes, the widening divide between *logoi* and *erga* that Thucydides has

shown progressively increasing from Books 1-3 by codifying the harsh and horrible *erga* of war into becoming new civic *nomoi* (3.82.4).

This project has aimed to demonstrate how ideologies at a remove from reality are harmful for the Athenians and, more broadly, for the character of the Greek world itself, because of the proliferation of *stasis*. Now, I would like to consider what this means for intellectual freedom and for history as a means of bestowing intellectual freedom:

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

For in peace and prosperity both states and individuals have gentler feelings, because men are not then forced to face conditions of dire necessity; but war, which robs men of the easy supply of their daily wants, is a rough schoolmaster and creates in most people a temper that matches their condition.

(3.82⁶⁸)

War drags the human mind into violence. In the *History*, Thucydides illuminates the descent of the mind to violence under the teachings of the *biaios didaskalos*. When we read Thucydides' brief description of how he conducted his interviews, however, we realize that his contemporaries did not usually speak about the war with such brutal honesty: "Not that even the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories" (1.22*).

Thucydides tells us that his sources spoke from *eunomia* or a very partial *mnêmê*. By implication, few of Thucydides' sources seem to have conveyed the whole truth of events as they actually occurred. Do we, for example, believe that once the Corcyraean democrats had prevailed over the oligarchs by slaughtering them out of pure malice (4.47-8), they would have

⁶⁸ C.F. Smith, 143.

told of the Coreyraean *stasis* the way that Thucydides tells it? Certainly not—revolutionaries would be the least likely to tell the truth, since their atrocities had been codified into *nomos*.

Thucydides viewed internal revolution as a great threat to historical truth. The myth of the revolutionaries Harmodius and Aristogeiton exemplifies Thucydides' claim that most people's search for the truth is without pain.⁶⁹ Indeed, at the beginning of the *History*, Thucydides uses a similar terminology to express his *History*'s eternal use that closely resembles his description of the eternal recurrence of *stasis*:⁷⁰

... however many people will wish to see the clear image of both the things having happened and that are likely at some point again in accordance with the human condition to be resembling such things [as I have described], it will be abundantly useful to judge it.

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 ἔξει.

(1.22.4)

Amidst the horror of war, linguistic *kinêsis* facilitates the ultimate denial of reality by reforming reality through language. In this way, *stasis* enables people to escape from the horror of war by rephrasing it in a way that makes war's horrors seem noble or at least respectable.

It requires considerable willpower, a moral steeliness, to *wish* to see things as they actually are (*hosoi boulêsontai skopein to saphes*). The Athenian reaction to the news of their defeat in Sicily

⁶⁹ οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἢ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας (1.20.3).

⁷⁰ Thucydides on the recurrence of *stasis*: “And so there fell upon the cities on account of revolutions many grievous calamities, such as happen and always will happen while human nature is the same, but which are severer or milder, and different in their manifestations, according as the variations in circumstances present themselves in each case” (καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἰ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται, 3.82.2 Trans. C.F. Smith).

exemplifies this difficulty (8.1). Rather than face the truth, the Athenians blame the seers and politicians who had advocated for the Sicilian Expedition.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche praises Thucydides for his “Courage in the face of reality,” and criticizes Plato for his flight into the realm of idealism.⁷¹ While Thucydides is certainly worthy of our admiration, it is important that we not adopt the Nietzschean view too heartily, that the realism of the *History* is a product of Thucydides’ heroic temperament. It must be remembered that Thucydides was a disgraced Athenian general, banished from his homeland by the very Athenians whom he was supposed to defend. He was forced to watch, from afar, as the Athenian democracy destroyed itself—democracy, the intellectual milieu in which the historian himself was raised. Perhaps not a truth crusader by nature but merely a realist, we ought to view Thucydides as a truth crusader by necessity, a bitter and disillusioned man trying to reconcile ideals of civic virtue with the harsh realities of war and its effect upon civilization.

Nevertheless, Thucydides had courage. Not only did he face the investigative difficulties in the writing-up of the war, but also the emotional difficulty, we can imagine, in recording its atrocities without gods and without much redemption. Thucydides tells us at the beginning of the *History* that he was expecting that the Peloponnesian War would be a “great” and “noteworthy” war.⁷² These words become almost parodic, a flirtation with *eunoia*, a taste of how the war *could*

⁷¹ “Courage in the face of reality ultimately distinguishes such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in the face of reality—consequently he flees into the ideal; Thucydides has *himself* under control—consequently he has control over things...” (*Twilight of the Idols*, 118).

⁷² Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων, ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθύς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι ἀκμάζοντές τε ἦσαν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμφοτέρω παρασκευῇ τῇ πάσῃ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ὄρων ξυνιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους, τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον (1.1).

have been written-up by those who “order [their narratives] toward the greater” (ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες, 1.21).

It seems to me that the *History*'s endless paradoxes and perpetual contradictions are also a product of the courage that Nietzsche perceived in Thucydides: Thucydides does not allow his reader to wholeheartedly adopt any singular viewpoint presented within the *History*—not even his own. Although Thucydides vocally stands behind Pericles and Nicias, his narrative presents facts contrary to their words, and his own. Is Thucydides praising Pericles from *eunoia*? And why is Thucydides so critical of Cleon, when it is Cleon who perceives the *erga* of life most readily? These are the questions that come to mind from a reading of the *History*.

“Someone taking into consideration the information which I have gone through would not err” (τις νομίζων μάλιστα ἃ διήλθον οὐχ ἁμαρτάνοι, 1.21). The effect of Thucydides' intellectual rigor in compiling the *History* is to not allow his reader to slide into intellectual complacency in reading it. His or her quest for the truth will be hard-won as Thucydides' own.

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