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THUCYDIDES "AS HISTORY" AND "AS LITERATURE"

KENNETH J. DOVER

It came about that in 1980 I was involved in a sequence of events likely to be of interest to future historians of the British "establishment." In 1981 I put together in strict chronological order all the relevant documents and letters in my possession; I added, also in strict order, summaries of all the relevant conversations in which I had participated; and I linked all these items by a chain of explanatory narrative which included an account of my own purposes, wishes, and feelings. I was doing something comparable in essentials to what Thucydides professed to have done: telling the future about interesting and important events through which I had lived. Pursuit of the comparison in detail reveals one plausible similarity, one presumed difference, and two differences of great importance.

As might be expected of someone who has chosen to spend his working life on enquiry into the past, I found the writing of my account an intensely self-rewarding activity. As might also be expected, I am motivated by feelings of affection and obligation towards those others, whether already alive or purely hypothetical, who enjoy history. My decision to write was thus "over-determined" even at conscious level. I feel no need to ask *why* Thucydides wrote; his choice of stated reasons is another matter, and of considerable historical interest.

Naturally I hoped that I would emerge from the account with credit in the eyes of a future reader, but I was never tempted to omit or falsify anything which seemed likely to frustrate that hope; then I hoped that I would be given all the greater credit for my candor; then, that no one would think that that was my motive for candor; and so on. It is hard to assess the extent of Thucydides' anxiety to please, because he has so little opportunity to refer to his own participation (iv 104–106, v 26.5) in events. On the other hand, I found I could not care whether the reader thought well or ill of any other person mentioned in my account; and that is something about which Thucydides, in certain obvious instances, seems to care. I passed no value-judgment without making it clear that I was describing what seemed to me at the time of writing to have been my feeling at a specified earlier point in time. Thucydides does not draw that distinction.

When I was absolutely confident that I recalled exactly what someone had said, I quoted what I recalled and used quotation marks; when less confident, I summarized and drew attention to the possibility of error. I did not ascribe any motive to anyone without giving my reasons for the ascription, so that the reader might judge their adequacy. These two procedures open quite wide the gulf between Thucydides' work and mine. One of the reasons for this is that, unlike him, I have behind me centuries of historiography and decades of arguments about its methodology. Another is that I have been brought up in an era suffocated by documentation, and he was not. The most important reason is that the sequence of events with which I dealt was of short duration and self-contained, so that the totality of the evidence available to me, plus all the comment I wanted to make, could be contained in two hundred pages. Judgment of relevance posed no problem; everything said or written to me or by me in 1980 was either

about the events in question or it was not. Selection posed no problem, because I stopped at the point at which the longest and hardest part of Thucydides' job began. If I ever went on to reduce my two hundred pages to twenty, or to two, I hope that any reader who asked himself, "What happened?" (counting plans, wishes, hopes, fears, love, and hate as happenings) or the more difficult question, "What mattered? What made the difference?" would derive by use of the abridgment answers which he would derive from the full version and none which he would not. If I tried to achieve that and failed, I would be incompetent. If I tried to achieve something incompatible with it, I would be a liar.

The use of so coarse a word, which we associate with the quarrels of children, politicians, and drunks, is unconventional; I am cheered by Momigliano's readiness to use it in connection with ancient historiography,[1] and I shall argue below that it is salutary, now and again, to discuss issues of Thucydidean scholarship in very simple terms. It is also unconventional to violate modern rhetorical rules of genre by inserting a page of autobiography into an article on a Greek author, and I regard this breach of convention too as salutary. Whereas we study poetry and fiction without being poets and novelists (we have no choice, since artistic endowment does not come for the asking), all classicists, whether they know it or not, are historians: of linguistic, graphic, and literary behavior ("pure scholars," "grammarians," "textual critics"), or of political, social, and economic behavior ("ancient historians"), or of art, religion, science, or philosophy. This fact creates a special relationship between classicist and ancient historiographer, which we ought to exploit. In trying to say about the past only what is best reconcilable with the evidence available up to the time of utterance, we are doing what ancient historiographers, much of the time, professed to be doing; and no one has gone so far as to deny that any of them at any time actually did it. If we are sufficiently interested, we can reinforce our special relationship by making the experiment (as I have done) of writing a few pages about a contemporary battle from oral sources alone, without any recourse to documentation, sketching out a speech of exposition and encouragement from the army commander on each side and asking ourselves, while doing that, exactly what we are trying to communicate to our readers. Or again, we can take a speech of Demosthenes on foreign policy and rewrite it until it looks like a Thucydidean speech. Experiments of this kind are useful and practicable, because they start from a basis which is *there*, outside ourselves.

The matter of a tragedy, a novel, or a poem is not there until the author's imagination has created it, and never outside him in the sense in which the matter of historiography is outside. If in discussing a tragedy we ask, "Did Creon do that?" the question is answerable through familiarity with the text. If we ask, "Did Cleon do that?" there are circumstances in which we expect an answer founded solely on familiarity with the text of Thucydides, but that is not as a rule the point of the question. "Would Creon have done that?" means, "Is the action consistent with the character of the kind of person the playwright, up to that point, has constructed?" "Would Cleon have done that?" however hard the question may be to answer, is rarely if ever reducible to such terms.

A recent reviewer[2] observed that Thucydides has been "*ausgeschlachtet wie ein Wrack*" by historians, and that this has distracted attention from the important task of "*Thukydides als ganzen aus dem ganzen Werk zu verstehen.*" The *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* begun by A. W. Gomme (Oxford, 1945, 1956) and completed after his death by Andrewes and Dover (Oxford, 1970, 1981) does not seem to me to sit very comfortably at either pole of that antithesis, but I have no hesitation in saying that in writing my portion of it I consistently regarded understanding Thucydides as

1. A. D. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), 127.
2. Hermann Volk, *Gnomon* 50 (1978), 282 (reviewing Schneider, see n. 14 below).

a means and understanding the Peloponnesian War as an end. Perhaps the title committed me to this ranking of ends and means. Certainly there can be a *Linguistic Commentary on Thucydides*, as on any author whose text was composed in a language now dead and transmitted by manual copying for eighteen hundred years, and the superb commentary of Classen, revised by Steup in the early years of this century, is just that, with a stiff seasoning of history and an occasional whiff of literary criticism. But can there be, and should there be, a *Literary Commentary on Thucydides*? Consciousness of the special character of historiography has waxed and waned, and in some respects much that is written now about Thucydides revives the spirit of what was written about him in the ancient world. Some of it, founded on acute observation of facts which seem obvious when pointed out but were not obvious to any of us before, is profoundly stimulating. Yet any attempt to deal with Thucydides solely as a powerful and interesting writer is repeatedly drawn into consideration of his relation to a subject-matter which was irrevocably *there* or, alternatively, ignores that relation and thereby cuts out half the answer to the question, "What kind of writer was he?"

When Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century B.C. composed his essays on Thucydides,[3] he criticized him for obscurity of style, unsatisfactory ordering of the content of the work, and lack of proportion in the treatment of different elements within that content. Dionysius shows no interest in the question, "Does Thucydides get things right?" The anonymous author of a commentary on Thucydides of which a portion (ii 1–45) survives in a papyrus of the second century A.D.[4] defends Thucydides in a long note (ii 1) against Dionysius's criticism of his chronological arrangement, but elsewhere virtually confines himself to elucidation of the author's language, with comment on matter of grammatical, lexical, and textual interest (frequently citing Homer) and sparse, meager items of antiquarian and geographical information.[5] Similarly, the scholia in our medieval manuscripts, the reflex of a commentary composed in late Antiquity, never bring any evidence from other historians, orators, or comic poets (nor, of course, from documents) to bear on the question, "Is what Thucydides says here true?" for that is a question which seems not to interest them. By contrast, ancient commentaries on the orators and Aristophanes, to judge (as in most cases we must) from the surviving scholia which originated in them, freely quote historiographers, more often chroniclers such as Androtion and Philochorus than Thucydides, in explanation, support, or refutation of what is said or implied by authors whose involvement in events made no pretense of detachment. In other words, for the purpose of studying an author who is not an historiographer, historiographers are treated as authorities and their statements as hard data; but when the critic or scholar turns to an historiographical work, he treats it as self-contained and self-explanatory. This phenomenon reflects a widespread skepticism about the practicability of getting details about the past right, a skepticism rooted in the practice of the early historiographers who wrote about the remoter past: sometimes recognizing the existence of alternative traditions, sometimes making confident assertions on flimsy or concealed grounds, in both cases without access to documentation of any kind, and seldom aware of the possibility of answering any historical question except through tradition, literature, and the exercise of one's

3. *On Thucydides* and *Second Letter to Ammaeus*. The former is translated, with introduction and commentary, by W. Kendrick Pritchett (Berkeley, 1975).

4. *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 853.

5. *Rainer Papyri*, 29247, fragments of a commentary on i 1–9 (edited by H. Gerstinger, *Denkschriften der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse* 67 [1926]), appears to be of similar character. What seem to be brief excerpts from a commentary of Aristarchus on Herodotus (*Amherst Papyri*, ii 12) contribute very little but the fact, which took scholars by surprise, that a Hellenistic commentary on Herodotus had existed.

own ideas of what was likely. Other forces also operated to inhibit the educated reader's interest in the relation between historiographers and their subject-matter: preoccupation with the moral effect of literature, an effect often enhanced by fiction; increasing preoccupation with formal rules of genre and readiness to treat historiography as a genre like any other; related thereto, a high valuation of oratory as an art form, including oratory on ceremonial occasions; and a tendency to give precedence to the claims of philosophy above those of history and science on the time and energy of the intellectual. When Dionysius comments (*On Thucydides*, 18) on the Funeral Speech of Pericles (Thuc. ii 35–46), "Why is it placed in this book rather than another?" it seems that he would have regarded the answer, "Because Pericles delivered it in the winter of 431, and not at any other time" as frivolous.

Now, the Christian centuries have been dominated by the belief that a certain body of texts was wholly inspired by God and that our eternal salvation or damnation turned upon our understanding of those texts. This notion, quite alien to the ancient pagan world (except possibly, from time to time, among the adherents of uncommon sects), patently affected European attitudes to Aristotle, and it played a part in generating a readiness among students of ancient history to treat Thucydides not as a "source" but as an "authority." Collingwood's caricature of what he calls the "common-sense theory" of the role of authority in historiography has only to be stated, as he says, to be repudiated.[6] Repudiated by historians, that is; it is alarmingly close to the view generally adopted by uneducated people and presupposed by the excursions into history sometimes found in popular books by scientists. We might reasonably expect to find that it is a common fall-back position for the historian who rejects it at once when it is explicitly formulated; and that, as Collingwood remarks, is what we do find. To this day one hears it said in conversation, when questions concerning the reliability of Thucydides come up, that he is "all we've got," the implication being that if we cannot trust him, the assurance with which we wish to talk about the events of the Peloponnesian War is diminished. In such circumstances I hear an echo of the agonized rhetorical question posed by Edmund Gosse's father in the letter which ends *Father and Son*: "If the written Word of God is not absolutely authoritative, what do we know of God? . . . What of the capital question—How can a God of perfect spotless rectitude deal with me, a corrupt sinner?"[7]

Thucydides is an extremely dramatic writer, and many of the things which he puts into the mouths of his *dramatis personae* are morally penetrating; the Funeral Speech depicts an ideal community to which many people think they would like to belong (as male citizens), and the somber chapters on civil conflict (iii 82f.) are written from a standpoint common to ancient and modern society. Consequently many of his readers come to admire and love him. When this sentiment is coupled with an inclination to treat his text as authoritative—and it is so coupled in many who read him when they were young but have not subsequently been engaged in history—it builds up an obstinate resistance to criticism, a readiness to explain away his apparent omissions and distortions by ingenious argument or even to defend his way of doing things as the right way, however alien to modern historical practice.

An observer from another world, studying the intellectual activities of ours, might conclude that when as historians we "ransack Thucydides like an abandoned ship," to use Volk's vivid expression, we treat every scrap we find as gold. Here are three examples:

(1) As for Potidaea and Mytilene, Forrest forgets that both these states had

6. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), 235.
7. Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (London, 1907), 333f.

received encouraging promises of help from Sparta (see Thuc. i 58.1 and 71.4; iii 15 and esp. 25.2, also 26, 29–33), and yet had *failed*, their revolts being *crushed*.[8]

(2) Pausanias, deprived of his naval command and back at Byzantium with a ship of his own, adopted Persian dress and manners and travelled with a barbarian bodyguard (Thuc. i 130).[9]

(3) [Thucydides'] view was that Athens was universally hated by her allies or subjects, who were held down by fear or force only, and were eager to revolt on every possible opportunity—this thesis he twice states in his own person apart from the speeches [II.8.4–5 = VIII.2.1–2]—and that Athens was wrong in "enslaving" them . . . His main thesis can be proved from his own narrative to be grossly oversimplified, and he himself gives the key to the truth in the statement which he attributes to Diodotus in the Mytilenaean debate. "At present the people in all the cities is friendly to you . . ." . . . At Torone and Mende also small cliques of conspirators admitted Brasidas, and at the latter town the people rallied to the Athenians as soon as a relieving force arrived, and were entrusted by Nicias with the punishment of their own traitors [IV.110–113, 123.1–2, 130.2–7] . . . There were some cities where hostility to Athens was more widespread, but in general the malcontents seem to have been limited to oligarchic groups. Thucydides' estimate of public opinion was no doubt based on his contacts with men of this type, . . . His own meticulously fair and accurate narrative, however, proves that his estimate was seriously at fault.[10]

Passage (1) is taken from an argument to the effect that Forrest greatly exaggerated the scale and effect of setbacks suffered by Athens in the war down to 425, and therefore misinterpreted Aristophanes' *Acharnians*. If it is not true that Sparta promised help to Potidaea and Mytilene, the criticism "Forrest forgets . . ." is invalidated. We have no grounds other than Thucydides' statements and later statements derived from them for asserting that Sparta promised help. Passage (2) is rather different. It comes from an argument that Aeschylus's portrayal of Agamemnon's walking on red fabrics, taken with some of the dialogue which leads up to that act, will have made the audience think of Pausanias. The argument is not necessarily invalidated if Thucydides' statements are false, nor does it depend on their being true, for what matters is that the picture of Pausanias presented by Thucydides should reflect the picture widely accepted at Athens by the time of the *Oresteia* (458). The argument would, however, be invalidated if what Thucydides said about Pausanias was not drawn from tradition but simply represented what he believed—under the influence of tragedy and a variety of presuppositions—Pausanias was likely to have done. Passage (3) is again different, and more complicated. The writer argues that one of Thucydides' most important generalizations is false, and the argument rests on acceptance of a series of his particular statements as true; it is precisely the contradiction which motivates the compliment "meticulously fair and accurate," since we understand and respect people who disclose data inimical to their predilections, but would not know what to make of someone who falsified data in such a way as to deprive his own generalizations of support.

The contradiction on which passage (3) comments was also observed by Gomme in his note on ii 8.4f., but if it was noticed by earlier commentators they evidently thought it was no business of theirs. Even Classen-Steup, alert and generous with cross-refer-

8. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London, 1972), 370, criticizing W. G. G. Forrest, "Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," *Phoenix* 17 (1963), 1–12.

9. Translated from my article, "I Tessuti rossi dell' *Agamennone*," *Dioniso* 48 (1977), 64.

10. A. H. M. Jones, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1957), 67f.

ences, is silent on Thucydides' assessment of the attitude of the subject-allies to Athens. A more singular contradiction in vii 42.3, which not only contains an internal inconsistency but is irreconcilable with the narrative which it summarizes, was first noticed by Steup in 1908, and he tried to mend matters by positing a lacuna in the text. A different approach, which saw in the paragraph a reckless exaggeration not uncharacteristic of Thucydides, a sign that he changed his mind about the strategy of the Sicilian Expedition, and a scar left on his mind by his own experience at Amphipolis, originated in a seminar at Harvard in 1960, and controversy continues.[11] The detection of inconsistencies and incoherences in Thucydides' text played a big part in the "composition problem" which has made heavy demands on the time of some classical scholars since the middle of the last century. The problem was not an imaginary one, but was imposed by data which readers have always had under their noses without seeing what the data implied. The ancients were not interested in that kind of problem, and in later ages perception, let alone curiosity, was inhibited by the comfort which respect for an authoritative text afforded; thus the same negative consequence had different origins at different times.

Now new conditions prevail. We are a rebellious age, which repudiates authority and sacred texts, while the advance of historical techniques has emancipated historians from dependence on historiography. In parallel, therefore, with the epigraphists' rise to power among historians of the Peloponnesian War, students of ancient literature focus attention on "understanding Thucydides as a whole" through the internal relationships—echoes, analogies, and symmetries, as well as contradictions—which can be uncovered in his work, rather than through its external relationship to events. Like the composition problem, this movement derives its impetus from facts which have been there all the time; unlike the composition problem, it cuts loose from dates and places.

The first and most important fact is that Thucydides introduces and narrates twenty-one years of war in about six hundred pages of modern print. What determined his distribution of emphasis?

Second, his work is full of speeches. In describing his own methods (i 22) he says that in presenting speeches he has supplemented evidence by invention. That much is plain, but the interpretation of the details which qualify the hard core of his statement is the subject of perpetual controversy.[12] How far did he take account of the purposes, abilities, habits, and limitations of the individual speaker at the time of speaking? He says he kept "as close as possible" to the *xumpāsa gnōmē* of the actual speech—the "expression of opinion" which the speech "added up to." Where did he draw the boundary between the essential opinion and the component arguments? For which speeches did he have good evidence, or some, or none at all? He never tells us. And, of all the occasions of debate, exhortation, or negotiation which he records, how did he decide which ones required him to compose speeches?

Third, he makes it plain (i 22.4) that he thinks there are constants in human history, for the understanding of which he hopes his work will be "useful," "helpful," "beneficial" (*ōphelimos*). His narrative contains a few generalizations about human behavior, and the speeches many. When he or his speakers have occasion to refer more than once to the same situation, or to situations of similar structure, the same phraseology tends

11. Most recently, my article, "Thucydides' Historical Judgment: Athens and Sicily," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* Series C 81 (1981), 231-238.

12. For example, G. Wille, "Zu Stil und Methode des Thukydides," *Wege der Forschung* 98 (Darmstadt, 1968), 683-716; F. Egermann, "Thukydides über die Art seiner Reden und über seine Darstellung der Kriegsgeschehnisse," *Historia* 21 (1972), 575-602; O. Luschnat in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Altertumswissenschaft, Supplementband* 14 (1974), 765-767; Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 5 (Oxford, 1981), 393-399.

to appear, so that the work is full of echoes, and description of events may echo the terms in which they have been forecast, analyzed, or deprecated by a speaker.[13]

A combination of all these facts has generated a number of books, notably those by Stahl, Hunter, Schneider, Edmunds, Cogan, and Rawlings, addressed to the problem of Thucydides' historical perspective.[14] The questions they tackle are these: what are, in his view, the constants of the human predicament, human nature, and political behavior? What are the roles of intelligence, expertise, and unforeseeable accident? What patterns or cycles does he discern in his story? Such questions, of course, could equally be asked about *Daphnis and Chloe* or the *Odyssey*. As soon as we ask a question containing the word "select," we may seem to be admitting the special character of historiography, but that is not necessarily so. The question "is his selection of events for narration and selection of ingredients within an event for extended treatment or dramatic heightening determined by his view of constants or patterns?" can be applied to a work of fiction if it refers to alternative inventions. So too, "does he ascribe motives on the principle of must-have-thought and compose speeches on that of ought-to-have-said?" is a perfectly possible question about realism and characterization in a novel. Only when we ask "does he actually distort and misrepresent events to make them fit?" are we recognizing the special dimension of historiography.

Having mentioned extraneous influences which have inhibited criticism of Thucydides, I hope I may be allowed to mention comparable influences which have the opposite tendency. I do not accuse any of the scholars named above of unscholarly vices; I am concerned with the climate of opinion in which questions about Thucydides are discussed, a climate reflected often in the facial expressions and tones of voice of participants in discussion and casual conversation.

First, the concept of genre is more widely and deeply understood, and with it the recognition of *topoi* in poetry has led us to discard as evidence for the lives of poets first-person utterances which occur in their works. The ancients, hungry for biographical evidence yet largely starved of it, set a bad example.[15] Avoidance of their bad example may promote hasty judgment on matters remote from poetry, especially when there is a temptation to formulate sweeping rules of genre.[16] Schwartz, following Wilamowitz, took as a starting point for his theory of the posthumous edition and interpolation of Thucydides' text the fact that the verbatim quotation of documents which we find in books iv, v, and viii is contrary to the practice of all other ancient historiographers, and he did not hesitate to speak in this connection of "rules" and "laws" of style and of what historiographers "always" or "never" did.[17] But however useful the notion

13. Acute observation of such verbal coincidences is fundamental to the argument of Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'impérialisme athénien* [1947] transl. P. Thody (Oxford, 1963) and *Histoire et raison chez Thucydide* (Paris, 1956).

14. H.-P. Stahl, *Thukydides: die Stellung des Mensches im geschichtlichen Prozess* (Munich, 1966); Virginia J. Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful Reporter* (Toronto, 1973); C. Schneider, *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides* (Göttingen, 1974); Lowell Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); Marc Cogan, *The Human Thing: The Speeches and Principles of Thucydides' History* (Chicago, 1981); Hunter R. Rawlings III, *The Structure of Thucydides' History* (Princeton, 1981). See also *The Speeches in Thucydides*, ed. P. A. Stadter (Chapel Hill, 1973).

15. On this matter see Mary R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London, 1981).

16. A parody by W. M. Calder III, "The Spurned Doxy: An Unnoticed Topos in English Academic Autobiography," *Classical World* 73 (1980), 305f., shows what could happen if interpretative procedures which are helpful when applied to narrative founded on little or no evidence were transferred incautiously to narrative of very different credentials.

17. Eduard Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides* (Bonn, 1919), 26–31; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Die Waffenstillstandsvertrag von 423 v. Chr.," *Sitzungsberichte der königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1915), 607–622, esp. 621.

of genre may be for the understanding of historiography from the fourth century B.C. onwards, its utility for the understanding of Thucydides is limited. The fifth-century historiographers, after all, were pioneers, creating a new kind of writing. Thucydides himself helped, without knowing it, to determine a number of patterns which later inhibited experimentation, but was he ever concerned to write what was expected of an historiographer? What *was* expected in his day? What was expected of Plato when he first wrote Socratic dialogues, and what contribution does the concept of genre and its rules make to the interpretation of the *Protagoras*?

Second, a contemporary development in literary criticism, which has affected even the study of the history of literature, detaches a text from its origin in a person who had a location in space and time and ascribes more importance to how it affects the reader than to what the author intended to communicate. This school of criticism indeed employs "intentionalist" as a derogatory term, although translation from an ancient language into a modern one, indispensable if a statement is to be made about anything beyond the graphic patterns of the text, presupposes recovery of the intentions of an ancient speech-community. It is perfectly possible to read Thucydides as if he had written a work of creative fiction, or the Hippocratic writers as if the human body were a science-fantasy constructed by a disembodied spirit, but only at the price of pretending we do not know that historiographers and scientists tried to do something different from what poets tried to do.

Third, people dread being thought naive, credulous, or old-fashioned. This is justifiable in historians insofar as skeptical reserve and receptivity to new concepts and methodology are indispensable to their work, but that work is not helped by the intrusion of fears which originate in social relationships, acceptance or rejection by subcultures, emotional insecurities, or concern with one's own image. I emphasize again that I refer to a climate of opinion in a reading public of which I am a member.

Both Rawlings's Thucydides and Hunter's are concerned with the patterns of history, but in quite different ways. Hunter's Thucydides is a liar. For example, he tried to cause his readers to believe that Demosthenes' seizure of Pylos, the operations which resulted in its successful defense, and the capture of the Spartiates on Sphacteria were the product of a succession of impromptu decisions and sheer accidents. Hunter's description of one stage of the narrative as "perfectly ridiculous" (66) is not unfair, and does not worry me; her conclusion does:

> To provide Demosthenes with a plan or strategy (*pronoia*) would have put him on a par with Phormion, who also had the advantage of good luck in addition to *pronoia*, but whose exploits were paradigmatic of Athenian excellence in action. In that incident Thucydides all but eliminated fortuity by allowing Phormion to predict the unpredictable. Here he does just the opposite and eliminates *gnōmē*, by representing Demosthenes' success as unplanned, unexpected and fortuitous. Did *this* serve historical truth? Yes, because the mere fact of Demosthenes' success was of no moment compared to its aftermath, Kleon's rise to undisputed leadership of the *demos* and the latter's *pleonexia* unleashed.[18]

An alleged pattern of history founded not on what happened but on false beliefs about what happened may be enchanting and provocative, but it will necessarily be a pattern of something other than history.[19] No events are altered by the importance of their con-

18. Hunter, 81f.

19. Edmunds (156) thinks that Thucydides seeks "The clarity which transcends factual exactness," and (163, n. 24) "I do not think that accuracy of computation or even factual accuracy was Thucydides' primary aim in writing the *History*." Well, the "clarity" of fiction can easily be made to surpass that of truth, but a generalization which "transcends" factual detail is unlikely to be true, except by mere accident, unless the details are dead accurate to start with.

sequences, and disproportionate consequences *are* a feature of reality, that is, of the "historical pattern."

One thing which has gone wrong with Hunter's approach is her insistence[20] that the speech of the Spartan envoys in iv 17–20 must represent "Thucydides' own considered judgment" on what was important in the Pylos sequence.[21] A simple, essential question poses itself: *if* there was a Spartan embassy to Athens, it must have said something; what, then, did it say, and on what grounds can we be confident that it said something different from what it said in Thucydides? To put it in a slightly different way: if you had been one of the Spartan envoys, wanting what they did want from Athens, what would you have said? Not, surely, that your soldiers had been defeated by Athenian forethought and skill, but that fortune is unpredictable and that your temporarily victorious adversaries will be unwise to trust in a run of good luck. It is constantly rewarding to put oneself in the place of personages who appear in Thucydides, especially when persuasion and self-defense are portrayed and when motives are under discussion. Excessive modesty is not always appropriate; there are such things as foresight and correct prediction. When scholars ask what, according to Thucydides, are the conspicuous recurrent patterns in human affairs, it is a matter for surprise that they do not at once ask the same question without the words "according to Thucydides."[22] We plan, we succeed or fail, continuously, in our ordinary life, and all historical judgment (including a judgment of the mysterious behavior of ancient historiographers) is ultimately based on criteria of probability which we learn by living and observing, however much more we have to learn about the presuppositions, values, and habits of the alien culture which we are studying.

The pattern discerned by Rawlings in Thucydides does not entail debate about truth and falsehood, but by focusing on the architecture of the work it offers a profoundly interesting explanation of the distribution of emphasis and the choice of occasions for speeches. Rawlings's hypothesis is that Thucydides, his imagination struck by certain analogies and no less striking contrasts between the period from 433 to 421 (ten years of open war between Athens and Sparta, 431–421) and the period from 416 to 404 (ten years of open war between Athens and Sparta, 414–404), accordingly designed the second half of his work, which was never completed, as a kind of "mirror-image" of the first.[23] So, for example, Nikias in book vii is contrasted with Pericles in ii, and Pericles in i with Alcibiades in vi. Speculation about the parallelism between books iv-v and what Thucydides planned to write about the last part of the war (a contrast between Brasidas and Lysander, foreshadowed in iv 81? Analogy between reactions to Pylos and reactions to Cyzicus?) raises the possibility that the counterpart of the Melian Dialogue was to be a debate between the Peloponnesian states on whether to destroy Athens or spare her (foreshadowed in v 89–91?).[24]

The details of Rawlings's analysis, which has considerable bearing on the "composition problem," merit careful reflection, and even if in the end not all of them command assent, they remind us of a dimension of Thucydidean studies seldom taken adequately into account. Greek civilization was characterized by a great gulf between art and (in the broad, un-English sense of the word) science: on the one hand, anxiety to conceive aesthetically attractive form, impose it on recalcitrant material, introduce the most subtle symmetries, polish the minutest details; on the other hand, methods of historical and

20. Hunter, 76–80.

21. Cf. de Romilly, *Athenian Imperialism*, 173.

22. This is emphasized by Raymond Aron, "Thucydide et le récit des événements," *History and Theory* 1 (1961), 103–128, notably 120–125.

23. Cf. Hunter (179) on "the aura of *déjà vu*" which invests books vi and vii.

24. Rawlings (247) draws attention to the adumbration of this idea by O. Regenbogen in 1933 (see his *Kleine Schriften* [Munich, 1961], 227, n. 13).

scientific enquiry which were casual, hit-or-miss, illuminated by stray sparks of insight but inclined to stop short of the point at which truly systematic enquiry begins. There is one very general question which we do not stop often enough to ask: why is it that when we have the opportunity to confront narrative statements in Thucydides with topographical and documentary evidence, the usual consequence is not comfortable reassurance but perplexity and endless controversy?[25] Even when there is no question of external controls, a narrative sequence which leaves attentive readers puzzled and arguing with one another about its obscurities and implausibilities, while it may be a great leap forward compared with previous generations, must be technically crude. I do not suggest substituting Thucydides the well-meaning fool for Thucydides the liar, but offer a reminder that historical enquiry and exposition are very difficult indeed. Herodotus and Thucydides were pioneers of genius in historiography, as Aristotle was in zoology. When pioneers get things wrong, it is sometimes because they have imported irrelevant preconceptions, at other times because they have not yet formed necessary conceptions. These remarks are not designed to brush aside anything in contemporary criticism of Thucydides, but as a plea that it should be more pluralistic; the reasons why one passage is unsatisfactory and perplexing may be different in kind from the reasons which hold for another, and two or more reasons of different kinds may account for the difficulties in the same passage.

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25. The Pylos campaign is a good example. J. B. Wilson, *Pylos 425 B.C.* (Warminster, 1979), offers a new solution to the desperate topographical problem posed by the relation between Thuc. iv 3–14 and what is before our eyes today at Pylos, a solution which convicts Thucydides of one mistake rather than several, but the mistake is a very big one indeed.