

Styles of Rhetoric and Political Leadership in Thucydides

Classics

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Introduction

At certain significant moments in the history, Thucydides uses speeches to reveal to the reader the political and moral issues that drive the events of the narrative. Thucydides sometimes chooses to include one speech from among several delivered at an assembly, and sometimes Thucydides chooses to include two or more speeches to show how greatly divided an assembly or πόλις is over an issue. After these speeches are delivered, the assembly invariably takes a momentous political or military decision. In this dissertation, I shall focus on certain speeches delivered before a number of different political assemblies. These speeches are the speeches delivered by Archidamus (Thucydides 1.80.5) and the ephor Sthenelaidas at Sparta in 432 BC (Thucydides 1.86), the two direct speeches Pericles delivers to the Athenian ἐκκλησία (Thucydides 1.140-144; 2.60-64), the speeches of Cleon (Thucydides 3.37-40) and Diodotus (3.42-48) during the Mytilenean debate, the two speeches delivered by Nicias (Thucydides 6.9-14; 6.20-23) and the one delivered by Alcibiades on the Sicilian expedition (Thucydides 6.16-18), and the speech of Hermocrates (Thucydides 6.33-34) on Syracuse's response to the Athenian expedition to Sicily. In none of the debates do two different politicians speak in the same rhetorical style. Before I set out the aims of this dissertation, I must first consider the issue of the speeches' composition, which Thucydides himself recognizes as problematic.

In explaining his methodology, Thucydides writes that it is difficult to record exactly what was said in the actual speeches and that consequently his method has been to make the speakers say what he believes was most appropriate to each situation, while still adhering as closely possible to the actual words he knew to have been used: ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται (Thucydides 1.22.1).

Thucydides' use of the term τὰ δέοντα appears to consist of three elements. The first is

Thucydides' opinion of the orator (ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἔμοι ἕκαστοι...εἶπεῖν); the second is what Thucydides believes was suitable in light of a speech's historical background and the assembly's decision (περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα'); the final element is what Thucydides believes was the sense and purpose of the speech (τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων). In light of Thucydides' admission regarding the composition of the speeches, we should try to establish Thucydides' opinion, when it is necessary to do so, not from the speeches but from other parts of the text.

According to Donald Kagan, the speeches in Thucydides "are often used to express points of view with which Thucydides agrees, to expose the weaknesses in positions with which he disagrees, and to set forth the character and ideas of major actors in the historical drama".¹ In this dissertation, I shall attempt to show that styles of rhetoric and political leadership form an important part of Thucydides' explanation of the events of the Peloponnesian War. In the first chapter, I shall examine how certain politicians approach the assembly and what Thucydides' opinion of these varying approaches is. In the second chapter, I shall consider how different styles of rhetoric can influence the outcome of a debate. In the third chapter, I shall examine whether an orator's personality influences their mode of speech and how this can affect the outcome of a debate. Finally, in the fourth chapter I shall examine those instances in which speakers fail to convince the assembly despite using an intelligent style of speech. It should become clear that Thucydides has strong views on the value and effect of different styles of rhetoric, and that the ability to speak well involves a matrix of different factors that only Pericles is able to combine.

¹ Kagan (1975), 7-8.

Chapter I: Relationship between orator and assembly

In this chapter, I shall analyze the attitude and approach of certain orators towards the assembly in order to show that Thucydides establishes a model of responsible political leadership in the text. I shall focus on the importance of reason (γνώμη) and certain other factors extrinsic to a speech's style that an orator must keep in mind if he is to speak successfully. It will be shown that a responsible orator is one who is able to manage the assembly and that in order to manage the assembly an orator must understand the nature of the group he is addressing. By examining those instances in which an orator successfully takes into account the assembly's mood and composition and those instances in which an orator neglects to do so, we shall understand how individual politicians can shape the course of events in Thucydides' history.

In the funeral oration, Pericles praises the Athenians for the importance they place on deliberating before deciding to undertake a course of action:

οὐ τοὺς λόγους τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἠγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδαχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ᾧ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν. διαφερόντως γὰρ δὴ καὶ τόδε ἔχομεν ὥστε τολμᾶν τε οἱ αὐτοὶ μάλιστα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἐπιχειρήσομεν ἐκλογίζεσθαι (Thucydides 2.40.2-3).

However, Pericles' praise is disproved by his own actions towards the δῆμος at other points in Book Two. At the end of Book One, the Athenians accept Pericles' argument that Attica is of no great strategic importance to Athens and that they should not leave the city to fight the Spartan army because they are angered that Attica is being ravaged (Thucydides 1.143.4-5). Later in the first year of the war, the Athenians, and especially

their youth, are outraged that the Spartans are ravaging Attica. Consequently, the Athenians want to leave the city and join battle with the Spartans:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ περὶ Ἀχαρνᾶς εἶδον τὸν στρατὸν ἐξήκοντα σταδίου τῆς πόλεως ἀπέχοντα, οὐκέτι ἀνασχετὸν ἐποιοῦντο, ἀλλ' αὐτοῖς, ὡς εἰκός, γῆς τεμνομένης ἐν τῷ ἐμφανεῖ, ὃ οὐπω ἐοράκεσαν οἱ γε νεώτεροι, οὐδ' οἱ πρεσβύτεροι πλὴν τὰ Μηδικά, δεινὸν ἐφαίνετο καὶ ἐδόκει τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ μάλιστα τῇ νεότητι ἐπεξιέναι καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν (Thucydides 2.21.2).

Pericles refuses to call an assembly. Thucydides explains Pericles' refusal to call an assembly in the following terms: τοῦ μὴ ὀργῆ τι μᾶλλον ἢ γνώμη ξυνελθόντας ἐξαμαρτεῖν (Thucydides 2.22.1). The use of ἐξαμαρτεῖν reveals how significant a role individual orators play in Thucydides' view. If Pericles had allowed an assembly to be held, the city might have decided to fight the Spartans in open combat, and the Athenians would almost certainly have lost. Emily Greenwood tells us that “according to ancient historians’ understanding of the remit of Athenian generals, it should not have been in Pericles’ (constitutional) power to override the statutory minimum requirement for meetings of the Athenian assembly”.² From this statement we must infer either that Thucydides was unaware of an assembly having been called or that Thucydides has purposefully misrepresented events. It is unlikely that Thucydides would not have known that an assembly had not been called at that time, and thus we must believe that Thucydides has deliberately presented events in such a way as to portray Pericles as a responsible leader. In his explanation of Pericles' decision not to hold an assembly, Thucydides introduces the two opposing forces of ὀργή and γνώμη which feature prominently in throughout the history. In the view of both Thucydides and Pericles, reason (γνώμη) is the means by

² Greenwood (2004), 186.

which good policy is formulated, as is expressed by Pericles when he relates his political foresight (πρόνοια) to γνώμη:

καὶ τὴν τόλμαν ἀπὸ τῆς ὁμοίας τύχης ἢ ζύνεσις ἐκ τοῦ ὑπέρφρονος ἐχυρωτέραν παρέχεται... γνώμη δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, ἥς βεβαιότερα ἢ πρόνοια. (Thucydides 2.62.5)

After Pericles' death, Thucydides indentifies Pericles' πρόνοια as key to Pericles' success as a leader, and Thucydides says that if Athens had continued with Pericles' prescribed strategy for the duration of the war then the city would have won (Thucydides 2.65.-7).

For Thucydides and Pericles, γνώμη is not simply that reasonable state of mind in which an assembly ought to deliberate; γνώμη is the means by which disaster is averted (as is evidenced by Thucydides' explanation of Pericles' motivation for not holding an assembly) and by which Athens' victory would ultimately have been assured.³ Despite accepting Pericles' rebuke, the Athenian δημοσ remains susceptible to ὀργή throughout the rest of the history.

According to Thucydides, the Athenian assembly continued to react unreasonably to the misfortunes of war. The Athenians who wanted under the influence of ὀργή to defend Attica against the Spartans in Book Two were as susceptible to their emotions as those who wanted to punish Mytilene by putting to death those Mytileneans in Athens, by executing the entire adult male population of the town, and by enslaving the women and children: καὶ ὑπὸ ὀργῆς ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς οὐ τοὺς παρόντας μόνον ἀποκτεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἅπαντας Μυτιληναίους ὅσοι ἠβῶσι, παῖδας δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἀνδραποδίσαι (Thucydides

³ Edmunds, (1975), 9.

3.36.2). It was just as important that later politicians could manage the assembly and remind the members of the assembly of their responsibility as deliberators.

Irresponsible political leadership

Of the Athenian politicians whose speeches Thucydides relates after the death of Pericles, Nicias is the orator whose inability to manage the *δημος*' impulsive nature has the most disastrous consequences.

Nicias addresses the assembly in Book Six when a second assembly has been called to consider the speediest means of equipping ships and to vote on whatever other provisions might be required by the generals for the expedition to Sicily (Thucydides 6.8.3). Nicias, who believes that the expedition is a mistake, does not address the matter of logistics in his first speech but instead tries to convince the Athenians not to launch the expedition at all. According to Harvey Yunis, reconsideration of the decision to launch the expedition would not have been unconstitutional if the matter had been placed on the agenda by the *βουλή*.⁴ As the agenda related by Thucydides makes no mention of reconsidering the matter, we must conclude that Nicias' speech is constitutionally inappropriate. Even though Nicias' belief that the expedition would be disastrous for Athens proves to be true, his intervention in the debate is irresponsible. The main consequence of Nicias' insistence on talking off topic is that Alcibiades is enabled to deliver a similarly off topic speech by which he fans the assembly's eagerness for the expedition: *πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον ὄρμηντο στρατεύειν* (Thucydides 6.19.1). In light of the assembly's enthusiasm, Nicias makes a

⁴ Yunis (1996), 89.

second irresponsible decision by delivering a speech designed to dampen the assembly's enthusiasm, in which he says that the expedition will succeed only if the city commits vast numbers of men and ships (Thucydides 6.24.1). The Athenians react in exactly the opposite manner to how Nicias had expected, and they become even more enthusiastic for the expedition because of Nicias' assurance of success: οἱ δὲ τὸ μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦν τοῦ πλοῦ οὐκ ἐξηρέθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀχλώδους τῆς παρασκευῆς, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον ὄρμηγντο, καὶ τούναντίον περιέστη αὐτῶ: εὖ τε γὰρ παραινέσαι ἔδοξε καὶ ἀσφάλεια νῦν δὴ καὶ πολλὴ ἔσεσθαι (Thucydides 6.24.2). Nicias lacks Pericles' ability to judge the assembly's mood; there was no need for Nicias to deliver his second speech, which proves disastrous by paving the way for the Athenian disaster at Sicily. If Nicias had not convinced the assembly to send such a large force by means of his second speech, then the Athenians might not have secured enough success early in the campaign to justify its continuation.⁵ In addition to speaking off topic at an injudicious time, Nicias also shows himself to be an irresponsible political leader when he divides his audience into two groups.

In his first address, Nicias notes with alarm that Alcibiades has summoned all of his supporters to vote for him in the assembly (Thucydides 6.13.1). Immediately before this remark, Nicias refers to Alcibiades in terms of his age (νεωτέρῳ) (Thucydides 6.13.1). Nicias then proceeds to call on the support of the older assembly members and warns them not to be intimidated by Alcibiades' supporters nor to allow themselves to be pressured into voting to go to war by being called a coward: καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἀντιπαρακελεύομαι μὴ καταισχυνθῆναι, εἴ τῷ τις παρακάθηται τῶνδε, ὅπως μὴ δόξει, ἐὰν μὴ ψηφίζεται πολεμεῖν, μαλακὸς εἶναι (Thucydides 6.13.1). Nicias' purpose in delivering this speech is to persuade the assembly to reverse the decision to send an expedition to Sicily. Yet Nicias alienates the younger members of the assembly, who he believes are in

⁵ Dover (1965), 129.

favour of the expedition and whom he needs to convince if his speech is to succeed, by characterizing them as aggressive brow-beaters. Unfortunately it is difficult for us to assess what effect Nicias' division of the young and old had on the outcome of the speech because Thucydides says nothing on this point. However, there is evidence in the text to suggest that Archidamus' dismissal of the younger members of the assembly may have influenced the outcome of the debate at Sparta in Book One.

Even though Archidamus is addressing a cross-section of Spartans in the assembly, he opens his speech with an appeal to his peers, those older members of the assembly whom he contrasts with the inexperienced: καὶ αὐτὸς πολλῶν ἤδη πολέμων ἔμπειρός εἰμι, ὃ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, καὶ ὑμῶν τοὺς ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἡλικίᾳ ὄρω, ὥστε μήτε ἀπειρία ἐπιθυμῆσαί τινα τοῦ ἔργου, ὅπερ ἂν οἱ πολλοὶ πάθοιεν, μήτε ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀσφαλὲς νομίσαντα (Thucydides 1.80.1). First, as Wasserman notes, Archidamus directs his argument to the wrong group; it is the younger generation which he needs to convince of the importance and appropriateness of his proposals.⁶ Secondly, Archidamus' speech appears to indicate that the older members constituted the minority of the assembly. Archidamus identifies himself with ὑμῶν τοὺς and contrasts that group with οἱ πολλοὶ (1.80.1).⁷ Thus Archidamus appears to be dismissing the majority of his audience at the very beginning of his speech. In contrast to this, Sthenelaidas uses various forms of ἡμεῖς four times in his very short address (ἡμᾶς at Thucydides 1.86.1 and 1.86.4; ἡμεῖς at 1.86.2; ἡμῖν at 1.86.3). Thus we can see that Sthenelaidas, unlike Archidamus, takes care to identify with his audience. Despite the clear rhetorical superiority of Archidamus' speech, it is Sthenelaidas and his fiery harangue that carries the day. Thucydides does not offer any authorial comment on the effect of the speeches of Archidamus and Sthenelaidas, which leaves it for the reader to

⁶ Wasserman (1953), 195.

⁷ Bloedow (1981), 140

deduce two things from the text. First, we can infer that the decision to go to war emerged out of an essentially irrational mood; secondly, that the decision was reached by the agitation of the νεώτεροι who in fact made up the majority of the audience. It is both unwise and irresponsible of Archidamus and of Nicias not only to divide the assembly but to rebuke that part of the assembly upon which the success of their policy and the welfare of the state depends.

From the evidence above we can see that the possession of judgement is the main difference between responsible and irresponsible political leadership. Pericles understands the mood of the assembly, whereas both Nicias and Archidamus lack the ability to judge whether it is proper to speak and how to speak to the assembly. It is not the case in these instances that Nicias and Archidamus are deficient in πρόνοια, for they both understand perfectly the consequences of the action which they oppose, nor can it be said of them that they do not appreciate the significance of γνώμη.

Chapter II: Styles of rhetoric

In this chapter, I shall first focus on the speeches of Pericles and on those of Cleon and Diodotus at the Mytilenean debate in order to examine the nature of instructive rhetoric and of demagogic rhetoric. By examining these speeches and later rhetorical treatises, we shall see that the difference between instructional rhetoric and demagogic rhetoric emerges largely as the result of orators having different attitudes to γνώμη and ὀργή. Besides this, we shall focus on Diodotus' speech in order to consider how rhetorical style can influence the outcome of the debates in the text.

Instructive rhetoric

Pericles does not regard γνώμη as important only to politicians. On the contrary, Pericles encourages the assembly to use their own γνώμη. When Pericles first proposes his strategy for the war, he does not encourage the Athenians simply to vote for his plan, but rather he encourages them to think through his plan (διανοήθητε) (Thucydides 1.141.1).

Immediately following this exhortation to reason, Pericles says that the assembly, by listening to a comparison of Athens' and Sparta's resources, will realize (γνώτε) that Athens is in a superior position: τὰ δὲ τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τῶν ἐκατέρους ὑπαρχόντων ὡς οὐκ ἀσθενέστερα ἕξομεν γνώτε καθ' ἕκαστον ἀκούοντες (Thucydides 1.141.2). Here Pericles highlights the purpose of instructive rhetoric: if an assembly is to make an informed decision in line with a politician's policy, then the politicians ought to provide the

assembly with the sort of detailed information that ordinary citizens could not reasonably be expected to have at their disposal. The best evidence for the sort of information that an orator would be expected to provide in the deliberative context of the assembly is to be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*.

Edward Harris notes that these treatises “drew on a long tradition of reflection on rhetorical practice reaching back to Corax and Tisias, contemporaries of Thucydides”.⁸

Although both Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* were produced in the fourth century BC, the classification of different rhetorical styles in the treatises corresponds with Thucydides' views on rhetorical style as they appear in the text.⁹

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle divides rhetoric into the categories of deliberative, forensic and epideictic (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358b). Aristotle also states that a deliberative speech ought to focus on the five topics of financial matters (περί τε πόρων), war and peace (πολέμου και ειρήνης), the defence of the realm (φυλακῆς τῆς χώρας), imports and exports (τῶν εισαγομένων και ἐξαγομένων), and legislation (νομοθεσίας) (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1359b). Furthermore, Aristotle says that an orator should be fully acquainted with all the details of each of these topics insofar as they pertain to the matter under deliberation; for example, Aristotle asks how an orator can advise the Athenians on whether they ought to go to war if the orator is ignorant of the particulars of Athens' military and financial position:

λέγω δ' οἷον πῶς ἂν δυναίμεθα συμβουλεύειν Ἀθηναίους εἰ πολεμητέον ἢ μὴ πολεμητέον, μὴ ἔχοντες τίς ἢ δύναμις αὐτῶν, πότερον ναυτική ἢ πεζική ἢ ἄμφω, και αὕτη πόσι, και πρόσοδοι τίνες ἢ φίλοι και ἐχθροί, εἶτα τίνας πολέμους πεπολεμήκασι και πῶς, και τᾶλλα τὰ τοιαῦτα (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1396a).

⁸ Harris (2013), 95.

⁹ Carey (2007), 236.

Pericles follows Aristotle's instructions to the letter in his speeches to the assembly. In his first speech to the assembly, Pericles tells the Athenians that they need not fear the Spartans because the Spartans will suffer from a lack of money: τῆ τῶν χρημάτων σπάνει κωλύσονται (Thucydides 1.142.1). Pericles continues by saying that any fortification the Spartans might establish in Attica will cause Athens no more than minor inconvenience (Thucydides 1.142.3-4) and that the Spartans are not nearly so experienced and proficient in naval warfare as the Athenians (Thucydides 1.142.4-6). Pericles also foreshadows Aristotle's codification in that Pericles focuses on the future: χρόνοι δὲ ἐκάστου τούτων εἰσὶ τῷ μὲν συμβουλεύοντι ὁ μέλλον (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358b). In addition to this, Aristotle says that a deliberative speech should be concerned with what is beneficial and what is harmful to the audience: τῷ μὲν συμβουλεύοντι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ βλαβερόν: ὁ μὲν γὰρ προτρέπων ὡς βέλτιον συμβουλεύει, ὁ δὲ ἀποτρέπων ὡς χείρονος ἀποτρέπει (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358b). Pericles duly tells the Athenians that not to go to war with Sparta would lead to the Athenians being harmed: αὐτόθεν δὴ διανοήθητε ἢ ὑπακούειν πρὶν τι βλαβῆναι (Thucydides 1.141.1).

Thucydides includes early in Book Two in indirect discourse a speech that Pericles gave to the Athenians before they turned against him, in which Pericles reiterated his views on the advantages of going to war (Thucydides 2.13.2-9). In this speech in Book Two, Pericles informs the assembly how much money the city has stored on the acropolis: ὑπαρχόντων δὲ ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλει ἔτι τότε ἀργυρίου ἐπισήμου ἑξακισχιλίων ταλάντων (Thucydides 2.13.3). Pericles continues by telling the assembly exactly how many soldiers are serving in the Athenian army and how many more are currently at home in Attica: ὀπίτας δὲ τρισχιλίους καὶ μυρίους εἶναι ἄνευ τῶν ἐν τοῖς φρουρίοις καὶ τῶν παρ' ἑπαλξιν ἑξακισχιλίων καὶ μυρίων (Thucydides 2.13.6). By means of his speeches, Pericles furnishes the Athenian assembly with the vital financial and military information it needs

to make an educated decision about Athens' strategy for the war. Pericles' purpose in delivering these heavily-factual speeches is not that the assembly should acquiesce to his policy, but that the members of the assembly as rational agents should first understand exactly why his policy is the best course of action to take and only then vote to undertake it.¹⁰ Therefore, to achieve his aim Pericles cannot focus on considerations that are inappropriate to the deliberative context of the assembly.

Demagogic rhetoric

According to Aristotle, considerations of justice and injustice (τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον) are more appropriate to forensic speeches and any reference to justice and injustice in a deliberative speech should be subordinate to matters of benefit and advantage (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358b). Pericles himself refers to the rightness (τὸ δίκαιον) of his strategy, but only after he has explained to the Athenians that going to war is in the city's benefit: ταῦτα γὰρ δίκαια καὶ πρέποντα ἅμα τῆδε τῇ πόλει ἀποκρίνασθαι (Thucydides 1.144.2). In his second deliberative speech, Pericles does not base a single argument on matters of justice and injustice. In contrast to this, Cleon departs from the example of instructive rhetoric as established by Pericles by concentrating on little else but considerations of τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον in his speech in the Mytilenean debate.

The primary difference between Pericles and Cleon is their attitude towards γνώμη and ὀργή. Pericles privileges the power of γνώμη in his speeches, while Cleon denigrates it and champions the rightness of ὀργή. Thucydides emphasizes the contrast between the two speakers when Cleon subverts Pericles' words. Cleon claims that he has not changed his opinion (ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι τῆ γνώμη) (Thucydides 3.38.1), a statement which echoes the words of Pericles, who earlier claims that he and his view have remained

¹⁰ Yunis (1991), 186.

constant (καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἐξίσταμαι) (Thucydides 2.61.2). First, that Cleon has kept his view overnight is quite different from the resolve shown by Pericles in not changing his position over a longer period of time and in the face of the Athenians' considerable anger. However, the real irony is that Cleon describes his οργή as γνώμη: he claims that his judgement (γνώμη) has remained constant, when in fact he is encouraging the assembly to take up their οργή again.¹¹ In contrast to Pericles, who, in the belief that anger prevented good deliberation, rebuked the people for their anger, Cleon thinks that the Athenians can reach the correct decision in this case only when concentrating on their anger and the injuries done to them by the Mytileneans: ὁ γὰρ παθὼν τῷ δράσαντι ἀμβλυτέρᾳ τῇ ὀργῇ ἐπεξέρχεται (Thucydides 3.38.1). This remark is evidence of Cleon's view that Athens is the victim of the Mytileneans' injustice, which is an example of Cleon's use in his speech of language characteristically found in forensic oratory.¹² Cleon continues to use legalistic language when he speaks of the ἀδικίας perpetrated by the Mytileneans against Athens (Thucydides 3.40.5) and stresses that the Mytileneans deserve to be punished: κολάσατε δὲ ἀξίως τούτους (Thucydides 3.40.7). Edward Harris emphasizes the peculiarity of this speech in Thucydides by pointing out that legal terms are largely absent from the other speeches in the history that are delivered to an assembly.¹³ The difference between Cleon's rhetorical style and that of Pericles is further emphasized when he sees how few of his arguments refer to those topics designated by Aristotle as appropriate to the deliberative context of the assembly.

At the end of his address, Cleon assures the assembly that if it follows his advice it will be doing what is both just and beneficial: πειθόμενοι μὲν ἐμοὶ τά τε δίκαια ἐς Μυτιληναίους καὶ τὰ ξύμφορα ἅμα ποιήσετε (Thucydides 3.40.4). Despite this claim, Cleon mentions

¹¹ Rood (1998), 147-8.

¹² Harris (2013), 97.

¹³ Harris (2013), 97.

only one of those topics suited to an instructive speech. Cleon presents the Athenians with an economic argument, warning them that if they do not make an example of the Mytileneans then other allies will surely revolt, and when those other allies are subdued, Athens will have lost a source of revenue upon which it relies (Thucydides 3.39.8). Cleon constantly refers to the past actions of the Mytileneans towards Athens, even though an instructive speech should be focussing on the future. Demagogic rhetoric is characterized not only by the absence of the information which an assembly requires for sound decision-making, but it is characterized also by the orator's desire to prevent the act of deliberation in the first place.

Cleon characterizes the assembly members as φαυλότεροι, who are well qualified to make decisions in the assembly by virtue of their common sense and comparative simplicity: ἀμαθία τε μετὰ σωφροσύνης (Thucydides 3.37.3). Cleon then contrasts the φαυλότεροι with those he calls the ξυνετωτέροι who might seek to dissuade the φαυλότεροι from voting for Cleon's policy.¹⁴ Cleon's ambition is to bring the assembly members around to his view by being seen to identify them with himself.¹⁵ When Cleon has finished lauding those simpler members of the audience, he says that the δεινότης of the speech of the ξυνετωτέροι should not motivate either the φαυλότεροι or himself (Thucydides 3.37.5). In contrast, Pericles never once tries to identify himself with the people. When he is trying to impress upon the Athenians the importance of supporting his policy, Pericles associates all the Athenians together in a single group: πῶς οὐ χρὴ πάντας ἀμύνειν αὐτῇ (Thucydides 2.60.4). Apart from this single instance, Pericles scrupulously keeps himself separate from the people because he understands it to be his role to provide the Athenians with impartial advice and not to persuade them by improper means such as flattery: καὶ οὐκ ἤγετο

¹⁴ Winnington-Ingram (1965), 78.

¹⁵ Rood (1998), 149.

μᾶλλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ἦγε, διὰ τὸ μὴ κτώμενος ἐξ οὐ προσηκόντων τὴν δύναμιν πρὸς ἠδονὴν τι λέγειν (Thucydides 2.65.8). In addition to this, Cleon reveals that he is a hypocrite and that demagogues are often inconsistent.

Early in his speech, Cleon harangues the assembly, calling them θεαταὶ μὲν τῶν λόγων, and he rebukes them for making decisions because of the fine rhetoric of those who speak (ἀπὸ τῶν εὖ εἰπόντων) rather than on the basis of the evidence (Thucydides 3.38.4).

Following such a remark, the assembly might reasonably expect Cleon to deliver a speech concerned only with the relevant facts and considerations. In contrast to this expectation, Cleon speaks in the manner which he has decried. For example, Cleon blurs the distinction between laws (νομοί) and decrees (ψηφίσματα). Cleon decries the move to reopen the debate, believing that such an action would undermine the power of the νομοί (Thucydides 3.37.3). First, this remark captures perfectly the motivation behind demagogic rhetoric.

Not entirely unlike Pericles in Book Two, Cleon believes that he cannot allow the assembly the opportunity to make what he regards as the wrong decision, but, unlike Pericles' actions in Book Two, Cleon is prepared to do anything in his power to discourage the assembly from deliberating rationally. Secondly, this remark exemplifies the illogicality of demagogic rhetoric; the assembly's decision to send a military force to Mytilene was a decree (ψηφισμα) which could be reversed, meaning that the assembly could reconsider what action to taken against Mytilene.¹⁶ Demagogic rhetoric's reliance on illogical arguments is exemplified again when Cleon claims that sudden good fortune tends to make people more insolent: εἴωθε δὲ τῶν πόλεων αἷς ἂν μάλιστα καὶ δι' ἐλαχίστου ἀπροσδόκητος εὐπραγία ἔλθῃ, ἐς ὕβριν τρέπειν (Thucydides 3.39.4). However, Cleon

¹⁶ Gomme, Andrewes, Dover (1956) on Thucydides 3.37.3.

immediately follows this by saying that Athens had erred by affording the Mytileneans special treatment for such a long time:

χρῆν δὲ Μυτιληναίους καὶ πάλαι μηδὲν διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ὑφ' ἡμῶν τετιμῆσθαι, καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐς τόδε ἐξύβρισαν: πέφυκε γὰρ καὶ ἄλλως ἄνθρωπος τὸ μὲν θεραπεῦον ὑπερφρονεῖν, τὸ δὲ μὴ ὑπεῖκον θαυμάζειν (Thucydides 3.39.5).

It is obvious to the reader that the demagogic style of rhetoric produces muddled and unintelligent speeches. In the next section we shall consider how the style of a speech can influence the assembly's decision.

The influence of rhetorical style on the assembly

As a result of Cleon's assault upon instructive oratory, Diodotus is forced to spend a large part of his speech reminding the assembly of its role as a deliberative body.¹⁷ Diodotus' opening words pave the way for him to deliver an instructive speech and for the assembly to listen to a reasoned argument:

οὔτε τοὺς προθέντας τὴν διαγνώμην αὐθις περὶ Μυτιληναίων αἰτιῶμαι, οὔτε τοὺς μεμφομένους μὴ πολλάκις περὶ τῶν μεγίστων βουλευέσθαι ἐπαινῶ, νομίζω δὲ δύο τὰ ἐναντιώτατα εὐβουλία εἶναι, τάχος τε καὶ ὀργήν, ὧν τὸ μὲν μετὰ ἀνοίας φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ μετὰ ἀπαιδευσίας καὶ βραχύτητος γνώμης (Thucydides 3.42.1).

First, Diodotus reminds the assembly that topics characteristically found in forensic and epideictic speeches are not appropriate to the debate on Mytilene when he tells the audience that he neither gives blame (αἰτιῶμαι) to those who have allowed for reconsideration nor does he give praise (ἐπαινῶ) those who object to reconsideration. Secondly, Diodotus makes the prospect of supporting Cleon appear far less attractive

¹⁷ Andrewes (1962), 72.

when he states that οργή tends to be accompanied by foolishness (μετα ανοΐας) and that τάχος tends to be accompanied by faulty judgement (βραχύτητος γνώμης). The members of the assembly would naturally not want their behaviour and decision to be regarded as stupid, and thus Diodotus is able to separate them from Cleon.¹⁸ Diodotus echoes Pericles in his reaffirmation of the potential that speeches have to instruct when he calls them teachers of deeds: τούς τε λόγους ὅστις διαμάχεται μὴ διδασκάλους τῶν πραγμάτων γίγνεσθαι (Thucydides 3.42.2). Diodotus continues his reorientation of the assembly's expectations by reminding the assembly members that they should be focusing on considerations for the future (περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἡμᾶς μᾶλλον βουλευέσθαι ἢ τοῦ παρόντος), that they have not been called together to sit in judgement as though the debate were a trial (οὐ δικάζόμεθα), and that the assembly's final decision must be one that ensures maximum benefit for Athens (χρησίμως ἔξουσιν) (Thucydides 3.44.3-4). However, despite the emphasis Diodotus places on deliberation and reason, his argument for leniency is predicated on a clear misunderstanding of the political situation in Mytilene.

Diodotus argues that if Mytilene were to be punished as had been decreed on the previous day, then the δῆμοι of the other allies would be more likely to revolt against Athens (Thucydides 3.47.2-3). Diodotus predicates this claim on the belief that the common people at Mytilene were in fact well-disposed (εὖνους) to Athens and that the common people did not participate in the revolt, and that as soon as they were supplied with weapons, they gave the city over to the Athenians (Thucydides 3.47.3).¹⁹ However, in Thucydides' narrative of the revolt, the common people, when they took possession of the weapons, demanded that the oligarchs provide them with food and threatened to surrender

¹⁸ Winnington-Ingram (1965), 78.

¹⁹ Connor (1984), 84.

Mytilene to the Athenian forces only if the oligarchs could not provide them with food (Thucydides 3.27.3). This version of the revolt is corroborated by the speech given by the Mytilenean embassy to the Spartans at Olympia in which the Mytileneans say that εὔνοια is absent from their relationship with Athens (Thucydides 3.9.2) and that it has been replaced by fear: ὁ τε τοῖς ἄλλοις μάλιστα εὔνοια πίστιν βεβαιοῖ, ἡμῖν τοῦτο ὁ φόβος ἐχυρὸν παρεῖχε (Thucydides 3.12.1). Evidently instructive rhetoric does not guarantee that information presented in and the logic of a speech will be correct. The implication of this error in Diodotus' speech is vital in determining the influence of rhetorical style on a debate. The Mytileneans appear to have enjoyed a degree of freedom not afforded to other Athenian allies but still they revolted. Consequently, Cleon's claim that force and not εὔνοια ought to be the basis of Athens' empire no longer seems unreasonable (Thucydides 3.37.2). Cleon's portrayal of Athens' relationship with its allies is closer to the truth than Diodotus' portrayal, but the assembly does not vote with Cleon. An examination of certain features of the style of Diodotus' speech shows that Diodotus maintains a level and unemotional tone throughout his address to the assembly.

The formality of the speech's structure contributes to the unemotional tone. Diodotus uses a number of antitheses throughout the speech:

ἦν τε γὰρ ἀποφῆνω πάνυ ἀδικοῦντας αὐτούς, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀποκτεῖναι κελεύσω, εἰ μὴ ξυμφέρον, ἦν τε καὶ ἔχοντάς τι ξυγγνώμης † εἶεν †, εἰ τῇ πόλει μὴ ἀγαθὸν φαίνοιτο (Thucydides 3.44.2).

The importance of this antithesis and of antitheses in general throughout the speech, is that it helps Diodotus to look deliberative and impartial unlike Cleon: Diodotus is prepared to weigh up both sides of the argument and then follow that one which is obviously better.

The effect of this approach is that the course of action which Diodotus supports will seem

to the assembly to be better because it has been evaluated by the speaker. In addition to this, one can identify an element of ring composition in the speech which is tied together by means of references to deliberation.

In the opening sections of the speech, Diodotus begins by reflecting on the value of instructive rhetoric and deliberation (βουλευέσθαι; ευβουλία; διδασκάλους) (Thucydides 3.42.1 – 2). The middle section of the speech discusses what course of action should be taken against Mytilene, before Diodotus ends the speech with references to deliberation: ἀλλὰ βουλευόμεθα περὶ αὐτῶν and βουλευσάσθαι (Thucydides 3.44.4; 3.46.1). The well-structured nature of the speech conveys the impression that the advice is logical and that the speaker is himself rational and logical, which thus makes it more likely that the assembly, which has been reminded of its deliberative duty, will support the speaker's policy. Further, Diodotus cleverly refrains from replying directly to Cleon's attacks on the ξυνετώτεροι. Diodotus deliberately refuses to take a position regarding those who protest against the reopening of the debate (Thucydides 3.42.1). Diodotus relies upon the use of γνώμαι by which he can speak in universal terms. For example, Diodotus says that anyone who maintains that speech should not inform action is senseless:

τούς τε λόγους ὅστις διαμάχεται μὴ διδασκάλους τῶν πραγμάτων γίνεσθαι, ἢ ἀξύνετός ἐστιν ἢ ἰδίᾳ τι αὐτῷ διαφέρει: ἀξύνετος μὲν, εἰ ἄλλω τινὶ ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος δυνατὸν εἶναι καὶ μὴ ἐμφανοῦς φράσαι, διαφέρει δ' αὐτῷ, εἰ βουλόμενός τι αἰσχρὸν πεῖσαι εὖ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἂν ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μὴ καλοῦ δύνασθαι, εὖ δὲ διαβαλῶν ἐκπληξῆσαι ἂν τούς τε ἀντεροῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀκουσομένους (Thucydides 3.42.2).

The value of these gnomic statements is that they enable Diodotus to criticize Cleon for his stupidity and rashness without actually confronting Cleon, and thus Diodotus portrays himself as impartial and unmoved by personal enmity. When Diodotus deals with Cleon's

remarks about bribery (Thucydides 3.38.2), he decides not to take these accusations head on, but instead he talks about how these accusations damage the city. Diodotus concludes his remarks on accusations of bribery by saying that a good citizen ought not to prevail by underhand means: *χρὴ δὲ τὸν μὲν ἀγαθὸν πολίτην μὴ ἐκφοβοῦντα τοὺς ἀντεροῦντας, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου φαίνεσθαι ἄμεινον λέγοντα* (Thucydides 3.42.5). Thus Diodotus turns Cleon's own argument against him. Diodotus, by delivering a speech that is concerned purely with those topics appropriate to deliberative oratory, is able largely to pass over the difficult problem presented by the common people's role in the revolt. We should consider briefly Thucydides' remarks on the Athenians' decision to reconsider.

At 3.36.4, Thucydides tells us that the Athenians changed their minds because they thought the decree was too violent. Thucydides also tells us that Diodotus had vigorously opposed the motion on the previous day (Thucydides 3.41), but Thucydides does not tell us if Diodotus delivered a similar speech that concentrated primarily on considerations of advantage and benefit at the earlier debate. It may be the case that Diodotus always considered the decision monstrously cruel (as the Athenians would come to believe), in which case Diodotus would be speaking in the second debate *παρα γνώμην*, a practice he criticizes in his speech (Thucydides 3.42.6). Diodotus may well have believed that the punishment decreed for the Mytileneans was not in Athens' interest, but, because the austere tone of his speech is ideally pitched to counter Cleon's speech, we must conclude that Diodotus has deliberately chosen to deliver a speech in the instructive style. Thus we can see the value of speaking in an appropriate style. Despite possessing a better understanding of events at Mytilene, Cleon loses because he does not put forward a clearly logical speech.

Chapter III: Speeches and characterization

Upon Pericles' death in Book Two, Thucydides writes that the Athenians, who were led by their own ambition and personal interests, prosecuted policies not in the city's interests and in contradiction of Pericles' warning regarding the expansion of the empire (Thucydides 2.65.7). Thucydides refers specifically to the Sicilian expedition as an example of this dangerous policy-making (Thucydides 2.65.11). In this chapter, we shall concentrate on the speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades in order to determine how an individual orator's character could affect the outcome of a debate. Such an approach demands that we analyze the syntax and grammar of an individual orator's speech to assess to what extent the way an orator expresses and presents himself can influence the outcome of a debate. In doing so, we shall also challenge the view of certain scholars that the speeches in Thucydides are essentially homogeneous in respect of style. First, we shall consider how Nicias' character influences his speech.

Nicias' self-presentation

According to Thucydides, Nicias was concerned above all else with honour:

Νικίας μὲν βουλόμενος, ἐν ᾧ ἀπαθῆς ἦν καὶ ἠξιοῦτο, διασώσασθαι τὴν εὐτυχίαν, καὶ ἔς τε τὸ αὐτίκα πόνων πεπαῦσθαι καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ τοὺς πολίτας παῦσαι καὶ τῷ μέλλοντι

χρόνω καταλιπεῖν ὄνομα ὡς οὐδὲν σφήλας τὴν πόλιν διεγένετο, νομίζων ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου τοῦτο ξυμβαίνειν καὶ ὅστις ἐλάχιστα τύχη αὐτὸν παραδίδωσι, τὸ δὲ ἀκίνδυνον τὴν εἰρήνην παρέχειν (Thucydides 5.16.1).

Even when Nicias is participating in important business on behalf of Athens his main concern appears to be his own reputation, as is evidenced by Thucydides' narrative on the Peace of Nicias. After the Spartans refuse to relinquish their alliance with Boeotia, it appears likely that Nicias will be forced to return to Athens without having accomplished his mission. Thucydides tells us that Nicias became panicked and asked the Spartans to renew their oaths to uphold peace with Athens because Nicias was afraid that his reputation would be damaged if he returned home empty-handed: ἐφοβεῖτο γὰρ μὴ πάντα ἀτελεῖ ἔχων ἀπέλθῃ καὶ διαβληθῆ (Thucydides 5.46.4). In light of his excessive concern for honour, it is no surprise that Nicias should focus so much on himself in his address to the assembly. However, Nicias begins the speech promisingly.

Nicias opens his speech by expressing his concern for Athens and his worries about sending an expedition: εἰ ἄμεινόν ἐστιν ἐκπέμπειν τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μὴ οὕτω βραχεῖα βουλῆ περὶ μεγάλων πραγμάτων ἀνδράσιν ἀλλοφύλοις πειθομένους πόλεμον οὐ προσήκοντα ἄρασθαι (Thucydides 6.9.1). Nicias advises the assembly against rash deliberation (βραχεῖα βουλῆ), which echoes the statement of Pericles in his second instructive oration that deliberation is an essential prerequisite to action (Thucydides 2.40.2). Nicias then follows this appropriately impartial and impersonal statement with an awkward justification of the speech he is delivering:

καίτοι ἔγωγε καὶ τιμῶμαι ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου καὶ ἦσσον ἑτέρων περὶ τῷ ἑμαυτοῦ σώματι ὀρρωδῶ, νομίζων ὁμοίως ἀγαθὸν πολίτην εἶναι ὅς ἂν καὶ τοῦ σώματός τι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας προνοῆται: μάλιστα γὰρ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως δι' ἑαυτὸν βούλοιο

ὀρθοῦσθαι. ὅμως δὲ οὔτε ἐν τῷ πρότερον χρόνῳ διὰ τὸ προτιμᾶσθαι εἶπον παρὰ γνώμην οὔτε νῦν, ἀλλὰ ἢ ἂν γινώσκω βέλτιστα, ἐρῶ (Thucydides 6.9.2).

Nicias is deceiving the assembly; Thucydides wrote that Nicias was unwilling to accept the command in the first instance: καὶ ὁ Νικίας ἀκούσιος μὲν ἡρημένος ἄρχειν (Thucydides 6.8.4). Nicias cannot claim that he would be honoured by taking part in an expedition that he thinks the city should not launch: νομίζων δὲ τὴν πόλιν οὐκ ὀρθῶς βεβουλεῦσθαι (Thucydides 6.8.4). More importantly Nicias' statement that he fears as little about his own person as other do about theirs (περὶ τῷ εμαυτοῦ σώματι ὀρρωδῶ) is at odds with the way in which Nicias speaks about and presents himself in this speech. As P.R. Pouncey notes, Nicias, whose ambition was to maintain his reputation as a politician and military leader, regarded the expedition as a threat to the maintenance of his reputation.²⁰ Later in the same speech, Nicias reveals just how very important he believes one's reputation to be: τὰ γὰρ διὰ πλείστου πάντες ἴσμεν θαυμαζόμενα καὶ τὰ πείραν ἤκιστα τῆς δόξης δόντα (Thucydides 6.11.4). In Nicias' mind, an individual's ability to safeguard their reputation from even the prospect of harm is an admirable quality. Finally, this statement highlights Nicias' inability in this speech not confuse public (τα δημοσία) and private concerns (τα ἰδία). If we compare Nicias' remarks here with those of Pericles we can see that Nicias fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the relationship between public and private:

ὅποτε οὖν πόλις μὲν τὰς ἰδίας ξυμφορὰς οἷα τε φέρειν, εἷς δ' ἕκαστος τὰς ἐκείνης ἀδύνατος, πῶς οὐ χρὴ πάντας ἀμύνειν αὐτῇ, καὶ μὴ ὁ νῦν ὑμεῖς δρᾶτε: ταῖς κατ' οἶκον κακοπραγίαις ἐκπεπληγμένοι τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀφίεσθε, καὶ ἐμέ τε τὸν παραινέσαντα πολεμεῖν καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς οἱ ξυνέγνωτε δι' αἰτίας ἔχετε (Thucydides 2.60.4).

²⁰ Pouncey (1980), 130.

When Pericles discusses public and private concerns, he says that private affairs are secondary to public matters, while for Nicias an individual's own self-interest is what guarantees the prosperity and well-being of the state.²¹ Nicias says that a person who is concerned with their own property is more likely than others to be concerned with the city's welfare because he is concerned for his own sake (δι' ἑαυτὸν), while Pericles recognizes that peoples' wellbeing can be facilitated and supported only by the state.²² Despite being as concerned about the Athenians expedition to Sicily as Pericles was regarding the Athenians' desire to surrender in Book Two, Nicias does not deliver as effective a speech as that delivered by Pericles. Nicias is incapable of convincing the assembly as Pericles had done because he focuses too much on himself and too little on those topics appropriate to the instruction of the assembly.

The opening section of Nicias' first speech begins with an odd change of subject. Nicias starts the speech by mentioning the preparation (παρασκευή) for the expedition, but then he suddenly changes the focus of the speech to his own view that the expedition is not in Athens' best interest, a change of subject which he achieves by means of the adversative μέντοι. Immediately Nicias changes subject again and uses the adversative καίτοι as though he feels driven to defend his position. Following this, Nicias defends the concept of the ἀγαθός πολίτης by means of a participial constructive with a concessive sense: νομίζων ὁμοίως ἀγαθὸν πολίτην εἶναι ὃς ἂν καὶ τοῦ σώματός τι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας προνοῆται (Thucydides 6.9.2). After changing direction and qualifying his meaning three times, Nicias uses the phrase ὅμως δὲ to return to the subject of the clause introduced by καίτοι.

According to John Denniston, the objective introduced by authors using καίτοι is not infrequently qualified or modified in some way by the succeeding clause that is introduced

²¹ Kallet (2001), 32.

²² Cogan (1981), 99.

by an adversative.²³ On this occasion Nicias returns to the subject of his own character and position, which suggests that Nicias' main interest in the speech is in justifying his own view and position. Throughout this section, Nicias focuses the assembly's attention on his own morality. The μέντοι directs us to ἐμοὶ... δοκεῖ; the adversative καίτοι facilitates Nicias' remarks that begin ἔγωγε καὶ τιμῶμαι; ὅμως δὲ returns the focus of the speech to Nicias' own position. Nicias' description of his ability as a speaker strikes the reader as unsuited to his intention: καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς τρόπους τοὺς ὑμετέρουσ ἀσθενῆσ ἄν μου ὁ λόγος εἴη (Thucydides 6.9.3). It is Nicias' ambition in this speech to save the assembly from making what he believes to be a catastrophic error. Nicias' choice to start his speech with such a pathetic and unassertive statement is completely inappropriate considering his aim; how can Nicias expect to instruct the Athenians on the correct decision to make if he does not believe that he is capable of speaking effectively. The inappropriateness of this confession is emphasized by the way in which other orators use words related to ἀσθένεια. Pericles uses it in his first instructive speech to say that the Athenians are superior to the Spartans in terms of resources (Thucydides 1.141.2), while in his second instructive speech Pericles criticizes the people for their weak resolve (ἐν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἀσθενεῖ τῆσ γνώμησ) (Thucydides 2.61.2). No other speaker in Thucydides uses the term ἀσθένεια of themselves. Nicias' weakness as a speaker is evidenced again by his use of potential optatives.

Nicias often weakens a prediction or statement by putting it into the optative mood. For example, in his first speech Nicias weakens a statement he makes by using the optative instead of the future indicative or the subjunctive mood (Thucydides 6.9.3; 6.10.4; 6.11.1 *bis*; 6.11.2; 6.11.4 *bis*; 6.14 *bis*). It strikes the reader as inappropriate that Nicias should be

²³ Denniston (1954), 557.

so tentative when he ought to be stressing to the assembly the danger of the expedition.²⁴ For example, Nicias advises the assembly there is a possibility that if the Athenians were to go to Sicily, their strength would be divided and that their enemies might use this opportunity to attack them: *τάχα δ' ἂν ἴσως, εἰ δίχα ἡμῶν τὴν δύναμιν λάβοιεν, ὅπερ νῦν σπεύδομεν, καὶ πάνυ ἂν ξυνεπιθοῖντο μετὰ Σικελιωτῶν* (Thucydides 6.10.4). In light of this remarks in 6.10.3 that Athens is at open war with certain states, it would seem advisable for Nicias to stress the imminent danger of embarking on the expedition instead of making this tentative suggestion that there might be a potential danger. Nicias' lack of judgement is highlighted by a comparison of his use of the potential optative in his second speech to the assembly.

After failing to convince the assembly with his first speech, Nicias tries to cow the Athenians into rethinking the matter of the expedition by exaggerating the scale of the resources that the expedition would require. In doing so, Nicias uses only two potential optatives in his second speech (Thucydides 6.20.2; 6.22) and seven instances of future indicative or present subjunctive (Thucydides 6.21.1 *bis*; 6.22 *bis*; 6.23.1; 6.23.2 *bis*), whereas in his first speech he used nine optatives and seven future indicatives or present subjunctives (Thucydides 6.9.2; 6.10.2; 6.11.1; 6.11.3; 6.11.6; 6.13.1; 6.14). Nicias was capable of speaking forcefully, but clearly he misjudged when to do so. Finally, Nicias' weakness as an orator is confirmed by his personal attack on Alcibiades.

Though Nicias is careful not to criticize the assembly directly for its foolish enthusiasm for the expedition, he has no qualms about attacking Alcibiades whom he sees as the main fomentor of this enthusiasm. Nicias begins by confronting the assembly; however, he does not rebuke them, but rather promises to instruct them: *ὥς δὲ οὔτε ἐν καιρῷ σπεύδετε οὔτε*

²⁴ Finley (1942), 216.

ῥόδια ἐστὶ κατασχεῖν ἐφ’ ἃ ὄρμησθε, ταῦτα διδάξω (Thucydides 6.9.3). Following this remark, we would expect Nicias to deliver a logical speech instructing the assembly as to why the expedition is not in Athens’ interest. On the contrary, Nicias attacks Alcibiades as an embodiment of the foolish desire to launch the expedition. Nicias does not refer to Alcibiades by name, but he disparages Alcibiades for his youth, and he claims that Alcibiades is not fit to command because he is so young. Then Nicias accuses Alcibiades of supporting the idea of an expedition so that Alcibiades, as a commander, could acquire money for his hobby of horse breeding (Thucydides 6.12.2).²⁵ Thucydides confirms that Alcibiades desired the command to further his own reputation, and the historian includes a particular mention of that hobby:

ἐνῆγε δὲ προθυμώτατα τὴν στρατείαν Ἀλκιβιάδης ὁ Κλεινίου, βουλόμενος τῷ τε Νικίᾳ ἐναντιοῦσθαι, ὦν καὶ ἐς τᾶλλα διάφορος τὰ πολιτικὰ καὶ ὅτι αὐτοῦ διαβόλως ἐμνήσθη, καὶ μάλιστα στρατηγήσαι τε ἐπιθυμῶν καὶ ἐλπίζων Σικελίαν τε δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ Καρχηδόνα λήψεσθαι καὶ τὰ ἴδια ἅμα εὐτυχήσας χρήμασί τε καὶ δόξῃ ὠφελήσειν. ὦν γὰρ ἐν ἀξιώματι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀστῶν, ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις μείζοσιν ἢ κατὰ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν ἐχρῆτο ἐς τε τὰς ἵπποτροφίας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δαπάνας: ὅπερ καὶ καθεῖλεν ὕστερον τὴν τῶν Ἀθηναίων πόλιν οὐχ ἥκιστα (Thucydides 6.15.2-3).

However, despite the truth of Nicias’ remarks as Thucydides sees them, Nicias is speaking inappropriately. Nicias should not be attacking someone personally in a speech whose purpose is to instruct the assembly, and he should be focusing on those issues appropriate to the matter that he himself insisted should form the subject of the debate (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358b). In fact, Nicias’ attack on Alcibiades provides the latter with one of his most powerful rhetorical tools. Alcibiades, by not responding directly to Nicias and by not

²⁵ Connor (1984), 163-4; de Romilly (1947), 204.

attacking him in turn, is able to present himself to the assembly as both reasonable and professional.

Alcibiades' self-presentation

Alcibiades takes up the accusations levelled at him by Nicias and subverts them into examples of his virtue. Alcibiades claims that those actions of which he stands accused brought honour not only upon himself and his ancestors but also upon the city (Thucydides 6.16.1). Alcibiades' display of seven chariots at the Olympic Games, the subsequent victory speech, and the numerous choruses he sponsored all helped to make Athens appear strong and impressive to the city's rivals, who had expected to see the city in a worse condition than their own cities (Thucydides 6.16.2-3). Alcibiades' response was controlled and rational, and Alcibiades thus made Nicias seem petty for having complained about something which was a benefit to Athens. Further, Alcibiades' reasonably long response to the accusations made by Nicias covers up for the fact that Alcibiades completely ignores the charge that he wanted a command in the expedition for the purpose of making financial gain. Thus Alcibiades appears to have dealt with Nicias' accusations, and it must be conceded that Alcibiades succeeds on this point because the accusation is not raised again. The most rhetorically significant point that Alcibiades makes is his argument regarding superiority.

Alcibiades claims at the beginning of his speech that he has a right to command and that he believes himself to be worthy of that right (Thucydides 6.16.1). According to Alcibiades, superiority often provokes jealousy among others; he says that his provision for choruses naturally evoked jealousy among his fellow citizens: *καὶ ὅσα αὖ ἐν τῇ πόλει χορηγίας ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ λαμπρύνομαι, τοῖς μὲν ἀστοῖς φθονεῖται φύσει, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ξένους καὶ αὕτη ἰσχὺς φαίνεται* (Thucydides 6.16.3). Alcibiades develops this idea by saying that people in

his position always upset their contemporaries because of their superiority: οἶδα δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν τινος λαμπρότητι προέσχον, ἐν μὲν τῷ καθ' αὐτοὺς βίῳ λυπηροὺς ὄντας, τοῖς ὁμοίοις μὲν μάλιστα (Thucydides 6.16.5). The assembly will undoubtedly think of Nicias as one of these jealous contemporaries; more importantly Alcibiades, by condemning Nicias' accusations as mere products of jealousy, manages to belittle what are, in the opinion of Thucydides, justified and important points of concern. Alcibiades' measured and unemotional response is a vital rhetorical tool because it makes Nicias look overly-emotional and indignant. In fact, Alcibiades refrains from referring to Nicias by name for most of the speech. Alcibiades refers to Nicias by name only three times in the whole speech. In the first section of the speech, Alcibiades remarks that he is obliged to reply to Nicias' accusations, which suggests to the assembly that Alcibiades' response is the result of nothing more than his respect for convention, and certainly not because Alcibiades felt that there was any truth in the accusations (Thucydides 6.16.1). Alcibiades refers by name to Nicias for the second time only when he is making a condescending reference to Nicias' reputation for luck (Thucydides 6.17.1). Finally, Alcibiades encourages the assembly not to follow Nicias' policy of inactivity or to be influenced by Nicias' separation of the young from the old (Thucydides 6.18.6). By not attacking Nicias, Alcibiades makes Nicias' arguments seem so insignificant as to be unworthy of comment. Alcibiades is in fact responding to the forensic element of Nicias' speech by employing the λύσις διαβολῆς, a feature found in defence speeches.²⁶ According to Aristotle, a defendant ought to rebut the attacks made on his reputation in the prologue, the rhetorical purpose of which is to suggest that one's accuser has spoken off topic (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1415a). Furthermore, it allows one the opportunity to praise oneself which might in another context seem invidious; this highlights the misguided nature of Nicias' speech, because he

²⁶ Macleod (1983), 70.

has given Alcibiades an opportunity to defend his dangerous personality. In a similar vein and with a similar effect, Alcibiades dismisses Nicias' long enumeration of the forces hostile to Athens (Thucydides 6.10.1-5) when he says that these things will not hinder the Athenians if they have been advised well: καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε οὐκ ἐπικωλύσει, ἢν ὑμεῖς ὀρθῶς βουλευήσθε (Thucydides 6.17.6). With the well-placed condition (ἢν ὑμεῖς ὀρθῶς βουλευήσθε) Alcibiades is able to undermine Nicias and portray his opponent as emotional and easily-worried. Moreover, Alcibiades achieves this without confrontation, which helps Alcibiades to present himself as measured and in control. Another example of Alcibiades latching upon a feature of Nicias' speech is his parody of Nicias' tentativeness.

In the peroration, Alcibiades appears to express himself just as tentatively as Nicias does:

παράπαν τε γινώσκω πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα τάχιστ' ἄν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ διαφθαρήναι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσφαλέστατα τούτους οἰκεῖν οἷ ἄν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἤθεσι καὶ νόμοις, ἢν καὶ χεῖρω ἦ, ἢκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν (Thucydides 6.18.7).

The element of potentiality in this statement is introduced by the infinitive δοκεῖν, which the verb γινώσκω introduces in indirect discourse. Instead of asserting that the city will be destroyed (ἄν... διαφθαρήναι) by ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ, Alcibiades uses the construction μοι δοκεῖν to avoid making a definite statement; what might be a strongly held point of view is rendered by μοι δοκεῖν as little more than an offering of his opinion. The tentativeness of this sentence might lead us to classify him as being as timorous a speaker as Nicias. On the contrary, Alcibiades is not being tentative, but rather he is responding to a point in Nicias' speech. Nicias' first speech ends with a similar statement regarding the laws, but one that reaches the opposite conclusion:

καὶ σύ, ὦ πρύτασι, ταῦτα, εἴπερ ἡγεῖ σοι προσήκειν κήδεσθαί τε τῆς πόλεως καὶ βούλει γενέσθαι πολίτης ἀγαθός, ἐπιπήφιζε καὶ γνώμας προτίθει αὐθις Ἀθηναίοις, νομίσας, εἰ ὀρρωδεῖς τὸ ἀναψηφίσει, τὸ μὲν λύειν τοὺς νόμους μὴ μετὰ τοσῶνδ' ἂν μαρτύρων αἰτίαν σχεῖν, τῆς δὲ πόλεως <κακῶς > βουλευσαμένης ἰατρὸς ἂν γενέσθαι, καὶ τὸ καλῶς ἄρξαι τοῦτ' εἶναι, ὅς ἂν τὴν πατρίδα ὠφελήσῃ ὡς πλεῖστα ἢ ἐκὼν εἶναι μηδὲν βλάβῃ (Thucydides 6.14).

As we can see both of these are statements regarding the laws and both employ infinitives used with ἂν. Alcibiades uses the same construction as Nicias because he wants to mock the feeble and unassertive way in which Nicias expresses himself on important matters. Alcibiades' mocking parody of Nicias' language is corroborated another instance when Alcibiades says that the Sicilian states will likely come to agreements with Athens separately: ταχὺ δ' ἂν ὡς ἕκαστοι, εἴ τι καθ' ἡδονὴν λέγοιτο, προσχωροῖεν (Thucydides 6.17.4). Alcibiades parodies Nicias' remark about a possible attack from the Sicilians: τάχα δ' ἂν ἴσως, εἰ δίχα ἡμῶν τὴν δύναμιν λάβοιεν, ὅπερ νῦν σπεύδομεν, καὶ πάνυ ἂν ξυνεπιθοῖντο μετὰ Σικελιωτῶν (Thucydides 6.10.4). Alcibiades is clearly using a similar construction to Nicias to emphasize that fact that he is contradicting and mocking Nicias' remarks. Here ταχὺ δ' ἂν changes the meaning of Nicias' τάχα δ' ἂν and replaces the tentativeness of Nicias' 'perhaps' with the dynamism and assertiveness of 'quickly'. These examples of parody in Alcibiades' speech disprove the notion that the speeches in Thucydides are homogeneous in style, as expressed by R.C. Jebb:

“Thucydides has given us distinct portraits of the chief actors in the Peloponnesian War, but these portraits are to be found in the clearly narrated actions of the men; the words ascribed to them rarely do more than mark the stronger lines of the character; they seldom reveal new traits of a subtler kind. The tendency of Thucydides was less to analyze individual character than to study human nature in its general or typical

phenomena...He may sometimes indicate such broad characteristics as the curt bluntness of the ephor Sthenelaidas or the insolent vehemence of Alcibiades. But, as a rule, there is little discrimination of style. In all that concerns expression, the speeches are essentially the oratorical essays of the historian himself".²⁷

Many subsequent scholars have echoed this view.²⁸ In light of our analysis of the speeches, we cannot support this view. To say that Nicias' style of speaking is indistinct from Alcibiades' is patently untrue, and even the view that Nicias' speeches indicate little more than the politician's "broad characteristics" is not supported by the evidence. For example, Nicias' syntax changes from the first to the second speech as a reflection of his changed purpose. The way in which the orators speak in Thucydides reveals not only their nature, ability, and desires, but also their motives at the exact time of a speech's delivery.

²⁷ Jebb (1907), 419-20.

²⁸ Cochrane (1929), 26; Finley (1967), 4-6; Grene (1950), 220-2; Ziolkowski (1981), 2-3.

Chapter IV: Correspondence between rhetorical style and policy

As has been established in the previous chapters, a politician cannot be considered effective if he is not able to present his policy in an effective way to the assembly, even though he might appreciate the importance of γνώμη. In this chapter, we shall examine those instances in which a speaker, though he is delivering an instructive speech, fails to convince the assembly to follow his policy. In particular we shall focus on the speech of Archidamus to the Spartan assembly in Book One and the speech of Hermocrates in Book Six. The failure of Archidamus to convince the assembly when is opposed by Sthenelaidas, whose harangue contains no real attempt at instruction, is especially valuable for what it reveals about the importance of understanding the terms of a debate. The speech of Hermocrates reveals how apparently instructive policy does not necessarily guarantee intelligent policy.

When Thucydides introduces Archidamus in the debate at Sparta, the historian draws the reader's attention to the king's intelligence (ξυνέσις) and soberness (σωφροσύνη):

παρελθὼν δὲ Ἀρχίδαμος ὁ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν, ἀνήρ καὶ ξυνετὸς δοκῶν εἶναι καὶ σώφρων, ἔλεξε τοιάδε (Thucydides 1.79.2). As Stahl points out, such an introduction by Thucydides

signals to the reader that the voice of reason is about to speak.²⁹ Westlake writes that it would be wrong to interpret this remark as a personal judgement of Thucydides, and that it refers to Archidamus' reputation among the Spartans.³⁰ However, the fact that Archidamus' analysis of the political and military situation corresponds exactly with that given by Pericles supports the opposite view to Westlake's.

Many of the arguments that Pericles uses to instruct the Athenian assembly that war with Sparta is in Athens' interests Archidamus now uses to instruct the Spartan assembly that war with the Athenians is not in Sparta's interests. For example, Archidamus tells the Spartans how they are disadvantaged in terms of resources compared to Athens; Archidamus tells the Spartans that they are far inferior to the Athenians in terms of their navy and their experience of war at sea: *πότερον ταῖς ναυσίν; ἀλλ' ἤσσοις ἐσμέν: εἰ δὲ μελετήσομεν καὶ ἀντιπαρασκευασόμεθα, χρόνος ἐνέσται* (Thucydides 1.80.4). With the opposite purpose in mind, Pericles tells the Athenians that they not need fear the Spartan navy (Thucydides 1.142.2), that the Spartans have not been honing their seamanship for nearly as long as the Athenians have, and that the Spartans have a much inferior fleet of ships compared to Athens (Thucydides 142.6-8). Naval considerations are just one of many correspondences that exist between these speeches of Pericles and Archidamus. Archidamus' speech corresponds with Pericles' speech in respect of its opening appeal to authority (Thucydides 80.1; 140.1), the view that the war will be of a long duration (Thucydides 80.1, 81.6; 140.1), the view that the war will be of a new sort (Thucydides 80.3; 141.1), the discussions on the financial resources of both states (Thucydides 80.4, 83.2-3; 141.5, 142.1) and of each side's manpower (Thucydides 80.3; 143.1), the view that the Spartans' superiority on land will be cancelled out by the Athenians' superiority at sea

²⁹ Stahl (2003), 53.

³⁰ Westlake (1968), 123

(Thucydides 80.1-2; 143.4, 142.4-5), Athens' nature as a virtual island (Thucydides 81.3; 143.5), and the discussion how fortune can influence the course of events (Thucydides 82.6; 140.1).³¹ From this analysis, we are inclined to conclude that Archidamus delivers an appropriately instructive speech, because he has focussed exclusively on the topics of financial and military resources that Thucydides and Aristotle deem necessary for good decision-making (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1396b). However, the speech fails to convince the Spartan assembly, which instead votes in favour of the proposition set forth in the stylistically unsophisticated speech given by the ephor Sthenelaidas. I wish to show that Archidamus failed to convince the assembly because his speech is in fact deficient and not because, as some scholars believe, the Spartan assembly failed to recognize the obvious superiority of Archidamus' speech.

According to Felix Wasserman, the victory of Sthenelaidas represents the triumph of illogical emotionality over reason in Thucydides' history:

“One of the major themes of his history is the disintegration of responsible leadership through the victory of emotion over reason. It is illustrative of the tragedy of a situation in which the forces of emotionalized activism prevail that not even in the Spartan assembly can Archidamus' picture of the conservative foundations of the state carry the day against Sthenelaidas' angry appeal to direct and immediate action”.³²

By looking at what had been said in the two speeches preceding those of Archidamus and Sthenelaidas, we can reject the notion that Archidamus' failure to convince the assembly represents “the victory of emotion over reason”. Archidamus speaks after the Corinthians and the Athenians. The Corinthians exhort the Spartans to go to war against Athens by

³¹ Bloedow (1981), 133.

³² Wasserman (1964), 290.

reminding the Spartans of their obligations to their allies and by warning the Spartans that their allies might be driven to join a different alliance if Sparta should continue to neglect them:

μέχρι μὲν οὖν τοῦδε ὀρίσθω ὑμῶν ἢ βραδυτή: νῦν δὲ τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ Ποτειδεάταις, ὥσπερ ὑπεδέξασθε, βοηθήσατε κατὰ τάχος ἐσβαλόντες ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν, ἵνα μὴ ἄνδρας τε φίλους καὶ ξυγγενεῖς τοῖς ἐχθίστοις προῆσθε καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἄλλους ἀθυμία πρὸς ἑτέραν τινὰ ξυμμαχίαν τρέψητε (Thucydides 1.71.4).

According Aristotle and the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, Archidamus would be expected to counter these accusations by showing that the war is not necessary (οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον) (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1359a; *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1421b). On the contrary, Archidamus adduces no argument to show that the war is οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον, and shows only that it is not desirable. Furthermore, Archidamus' argument that the war is not in Sparta's interests is irrelevant to the matter of the Corinthians' grievances. It was the Corinthians who insisted on speaking to the Spartans in order to seek redress for the wrongs perpetrated against them by the Athenians: παρεκάλουν τε εὐθὺς ἐς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα τοὺς ξυμμάχους καὶ κατεβῶν ἐλθόντες τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὅτι σπονδὰς τε λελυκότες εἶεν καὶ ἀδικοῖεν τὴν Πελοπόννησον (Thucydides 1.67.1). Archidamus speaks as though the Corinthians were not pressurizing the Spartan assembly, as though Sparta were not bound by duties to its allies and as though Sparta were in a position where it could focus solely on considerations of its own advantage. The Corinthians accuse the Spartans of having been concerned only with themselves and their own well-being in the past: τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ, ἣν ἀδικῶνται, δῆλοι ὧσι μὴ ἐπιτρέψοντες, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ λυπεῖν τε τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀμυνόμενοι μὴ βλάπτεσθαι τὸ ἴσον νέμετε (Thucydides 1.71.1). Archidamus is undoubtedly correct in his assessment that war with Athens is not in Sparta's best interests, but that does not mean that Archidamus can afford to ignore the very matter concerning

which the assembly has been called. In contrast to Archidamus, Sthenelaidas understands why the assembly is being held and answers the worries of the Corinthians directly:

ἡμεῖς δὲ ὁμοῖοι καὶ τότε καὶ νῦν ἐσμέν, καὶ τοὺς ξυμμάχους, ἣν σωφρονῶμεν, οὐ περιοψόμεθα ἀδικουμένους οὐδὲ μελλήσομεν τιμωρεῖν: οἱ δ' οὐκέτι μέλλουσι κακῶς πάσχειν. ἄλλοις μὲν γὰρ χρήματά ἐστι πολλὰ καὶ νῆες καὶ ἵπποι, ἡμῖν δὲ ζύμμαχοι ἀγαθοί, οὓς οὐ παραδοτέα τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐστίν (Thucydides 1.86.2-3).

The importance of speaking on topic is highlighted by the fact that Sthenelaidas wins despite the many shortcomings of his speech. As Edmund Bloedow notes, Sthenelaidas completely ignores Archidamus' speech, declining to engage with a single argument in the king's speech.³³ Furthermore, Sthenelaidas offers the assembly no argument based on financial or military reasoning that could be recognized as suitable to a deliberative context. Nevertheless, Sthenelaidas wins because, unlike Archidamus, he addresses the matter which forms the entire basis of the summit. Archidamus is right in his view that war does not benefit Sparta, but he does not answer the Corinthians' concerns. Though it seems very unlikely that the Corinthians would ever have acted on their threat and entered into an alliance with Athens, the threat does touch upon a point of obvious concern to the Spartans: the welfare and strength of the Peloponnesian League.

Thucydides tells us that the Spartans' decision to go to war was motivated by their fear of the rise of Athenian power and not by the arguments of their allies (Thucydides 1.88).

However, it must be the case that either Thucydides does not mean that the Spartans were unmoved by the Corinthians' speech or that Thucydides does not recognize the close relationship between the prospect of the Corinthians leaving their alliance with Sparta and the Spartans' concern with the reach of Athenian power. That Sparta should retain Corinth

³³ Bloedow (1981), 136.

and its other allies in the Peloponnesian League was vital for maintaining the balance of power between Athens and Sparta, as Sthenelaidas states in his conclusion: *καὶ μήτε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἔατε μείζους γίγνεσθαι μήτε τοὺς ξυμμάχους καταπροδιδῶμεν* (Thucydides 1.86.4). Sthenelaidas might ignore those important matters which Archidamus concentrates on, but Sthenelaidas does understand what lies at the heart of this debate.³⁴ Thus we can see that instructive rhetoric is by no means a guarantee of success in the assembly. Now we shall examine how instructive rhetoric does not necessarily guarantee intelligent policy.

Hermocrates delivers what appears *prima facie* to be an intelligent speech, and because of this appearance we might expect the policy promoted by the speech to be both intelligent and to Syracuse's advantage. Hermocrates speaks accurately and in some detail about the purpose and extent of the expeditionary force sailing from Athens (Thucydides 6.33.2), unlike his rival speaker Athenagoras who accuses Hermocrates of lying and who claims that the Athenians are not coming (Thucydides 6.36.1). Furthermore, Hermocrates is careful to corroborate all of his assertions with evidence and *ἔργα*.³⁵ For example, Hermocrates supports his claim that in the past no large expeditionary force travelling over a great distance has ever succeeded by reminding the assembly of the example of the Persian invasion of Greece (Thucydides 6.33.5-6). Thus we can see that Hermocrates is trying to encourage the Syracusans to think about each point he makes and to understand why his proposal is sound. However, if Hermocrates' speech proposing that the Sicilians should sail out to fight the Athenians at Tarentum had been successful, the Sicilian army would in all likelihood have been destroyed and the remainder of Sicily left largely undefended for the Athenians to conquer.

³⁴ Pelling (1991), 125.

³⁵ Hunter (1973), 155.

Hermocrates claims that the Sicilians would be able to use Tarentum as a base because Tarentum was prepared to receive them: ὑποδέχεται γὰρ ἡμᾶς Τάρας (Thucydides 6.34.4). There is no evidence in the text to support this claim made by Hermocrates, and Tarentum, when the war broke out, is not mentioned as having assisted Syracuse in any way.³⁶

Hermocrates also argues that the Athenian fleet would be disorganized during its crossing of the Mediterranean, and that a battle at Tarentum would likely catch the Athenians off guard. However, Thucydides tells us that the Athenians, when they reached Corcyra, sent forward three ships to find out if they would be received by any of the Sicilian or Italian states (Thucydides 6.42.1-2). It strikes the reader as odd that Hermocrates should have believed that the Athenians would be so naive as to sail straight to Sicily without scouting ahead. Furthermore, in their first confrontation, the Athenian forces easily defeat the Syracusans, even though the Syracusans have had plenty of time to prepare their forces (Thucydides 6.70-71). If Hermocrates' plan to fight at such short notice had been put into action, it is almost certain that the vastly superior Athenians would have won and Syracuse would have been left defenceless. This judgement is backed up not only by Thucydides' narrative in Book Six, but also by the historian's own estimation in Book Two, when he says that the Athenians' decision to embark on the Sicilian expedition was not misguided from a military point of view: ἡμαρτήθη καὶ ὁ ἐς Σικελίαν πλοῦς, ὃς οὐ τοσοῦτον γνώμης ἀμάρτημα ἦν πρὸς οὓς ἐπῆσαν (Thucydides 2.65.11).

In conclusion, it is clear that instructive rhetoric is not enough on its own to ensure good political leadership. Archidamus and Hermocrates, whose attitude to the instructive importance of speeches reminds us of Pericles, are shown to be deficient in the judgement

³⁶ Gomme (1937), 168-9.

and intelligence which ensures the correctness of Pericles' understanding of the political landscape and his strategy.

Conclusion

It has become clear through this study that Thucydides identifies two broad styles of rhetoric and political leadership: instructive rhetoric and demagogic rhetoric. It has also become clear that no politician other than Pericles is capable of speaking in an entirely instructive manner. Thucydides highlights the four qualities which, in his view, make Pericles unique in the history:

καίτοι ἐμοὶ τοιούτῳ ἀνδρὶ ὀργίζεσθε ὃς οὐδενὸς ἤσσω οἴομαι εἶναι γνῶναί τε τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἐρμηνεύσαι ταῦτα, φιλόπολις τε καὶ χρημάτων κρείσσω. ὃ τε γὰρ γνοὺς καὶ μὴ σαφῶς διδάξας ἐν ἴσῳ καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐνεθυμήθη: ὃ τε ἔχων ἀμφοτέρω, τῇ δὲ πόλει δύσνους, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως τι οἰκείως φράζοι: προσόντος δὲ καὶ τοῦδε, χρήμασι δὲ νικωμένου, τὰ ζύμπαντα τούτου ἐνὸς ἂν πωλοῖτο (Thucydides 2.60.5-6).

These four qualities are knowledge of the proper policy (εἶναι γινῶναι τε τὰ δέοντα), an ability to expound that policy (ἐρμηνεῦσαι ταῦτα), patriotism (φιλόπολις), and incorruptibility (χρημάτων κρείσσων). An orator must be endowed with all four of these qualities if he is to be a truly effective instructive orator. The other orators in Thucydides are inferior to Pericles because they lack at least one of these qualities. Archidamus delivers a speech that ignores the matter at hand, which means that he is both ignorant of the proper policy and incapable of speaking well; Cleon is not able to expound his view appropriately; Nicias is incapable of expounding a policy that both he and Pericles know to be central to Athens' well-being; Alcibiades is motivated by personal ambition; and Hermocrates proposes a course of action that would have endangered the whole of Sicily. However, separating speakers into the categories of instructive and demagogic rhetoric is not a scientific process for which we can use this scheme. Both Archidamus and Cleon lack the first two qualities, but they do not both belong in the same class. The two styles of rhetoric and political leadership are defined by their attitude to the importance of deliberation; those orators who treat the members of the assembly as rational agents capable of reaching the correct conclusion are instructive, whereas those who try to convince the assembly by any other means are demagogic. Consequently, Nicias' speech must be considered demagogic because it attacks Alcibiades as a means of persuasion. In addition, this study has also shown that rhetoric plays an active role in shaping the events of the history.

In the Mytilenean debate, Diodotus' rhetoric acts a bulwark against rashness. Even though Diodotus reveals a weaker understanding of the political situation at Mytilene, he prevails over Cleon because of the way he speaks. In contrast to this, it is the inferiority of Nicias' rhetoric that sets Athens on the track to disaster at Sicily. Pericles successfully counselled the Athenians against expansion in Book Two; if Nicias had been capable of delivering a

speech similar to that of Pericles then the expedition might not have been launched in the first instance. Finally, we have established that the speeches are an important element in characterization. How an orator approaches the assembly and expresses himself reveals his character to the reader and to assembly. Thucydides wants to understand and explain how individual human action influences the course of war, and this is why he devotes so much attention to styles of rhetoric and political leadership.

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