

MORAL VALUES IN THE AGE OF THUCYDIDES¹

THUCYDIDES describes Antipho (8. 68. 1) as 'inferior to no one of his time in ἀρετή and more capable than any of initiating ideas and giving expression to them'. What does he mean here by ἀρετή? Does it refer to ability?² or does it refer to courage and consistency of principle?³ and in either case how are we to relate this description of Antipho to Thucydides' description of Nicias (7. 86. 5) as less worthy than any other Greek of the historian's day to meet with the misfortunes that he did "διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν"?

It has long been recognized that the framework of moral ideas within which the Greeks argued differed in important respects from ours,⁴ and in his book *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960),⁵ Professor A. W. H. Adkins made a notable attempt to clarify the character of Greek ethical thinking, using the evidence of Greek literature from Homeric to Aristotelian times to show that the ways in which the Greeks valued qualities and judged actions do much to explain apparent anomalies in the thought of Plato and Aristotle. It is the object of this paper to examine and test some of Adkins's conclusions with reference in particular to Thucydides and also in a more general way to the literature of the fifth century.

As the title of his book implies, Adkins is particularly concerned with the Greek attitude to the concept of moral responsibility, and he is anxious to see why this concept 'is so unimportant to the Greek' (*MR* 3). The main part of Adkins's answer to this question lies in his thesis that the Greeks from Homer onwards consistently attached overriding value to those virtues of which success rather than intention is the criterion. They would, on this view, be more concerned that a man should be *able* to fight than that he should be *willing* to respect the property of others, and in general competition would count for more than co-operation. Adkins rests the thesis on two contentions. The first is that 'the noun *arete*, with the adjective *agathos*,' and the latter's various synonyms and variants, 'are . . . the most powerful words of commendation used of a man both in Homer and in later Greek', and that 'the noun *kakotes*, with the adjective *kakos*' and its various synonyms and variants, 'are the corresponding words

¹ This is a much-revised version of a paper given to a Northern Universities' Seminar on Thucydides at Liverpool in February 1969, and I am grateful to many members of the seminar for their comments; I also wish to acknowledge valuable advice from my colleagues Professor M. M. Willcock, Mr. M. J. Osborne, and Dr. G. J. P. O'Daly, and from Professor John Gould.

² Thus Rex Warner in the Penguin translation (p. 526). Cf. the comments of D. Grene, *Greek Political Theory* (originally issued as *Man in his Pride*) (Chicago, 1950), 80-4.

³ Thus E. Lange, 'Die Bedeutung von ἀρετή bei Thukydides', *Jahrbuch für Klassische*

Philologie cxlv (1892), 827 ff. (I am indebted to Professor K. J. Dover for drawing my attention to this invaluable article.)

⁴ See, for instance, E. Schwartz, *Die Ethik der Griechen*, 18 ff., M. Wundt, *Geschichte der griechischen Ethik*, 1-4, B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, 153-90, N. Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, 75-83.

⁵ Henceforth referred to as *MR*. For further development of Adkins's views see especially 'Aristotle and the Best Kind of Tragedy', *C.Q.* xvi (1966), 78-102, 'Basic Greek Values in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Hercules Furens*, *C.Q.* xvi (1966), 193-219. Cf. also below, p. 220 n. 4.

of denigration'; furthermore, that 'the neuter adjective *aischron* . . . is the most powerful word used to denigrate a man's actions', and that *kalon* is in the fifth century, though not in Homer, the corresponding word for commending men's actions (*MR* 30-1, cf. 44-5, 158).¹ The second and more controversial contention is that these most powerful words of commendation are pretty exclusively in Homer and preponderantly in later Greek used to commend what Adkins describes as the 'competitive' excellences which he opposes to what he calls the 'co-operative' or 'quiet' virtues. *Ἀρετή*, according to this theory, is typically used to denote 'courage' or 'skill'; it is a cause for surprise and comment if it is used to refer to *δικαιοσύνη* or *σωφροσύνη*.² I shall deal with the first of these contentions mainly by discussing the passages from tragedy which Adkins adduces in support of it, and with the second by a more detailed discussion of the usage of Thucydides; the view for which I shall argue is that while the first of these contentions contains some truth we must be cautious about the conclusions that we draw from it, and that the second contention is by no means fully applicable to the language of the fifth century.³

First, however, I have some comments on the distinction which Adkins draws between 'competitive' and 'quiet' or 'co-operative' excellences (*MR* 6-7). The variation in Adkins's use of adjectives to describe the non-competitive excellences is in itself significant. The distinction between 'competitive' and 'quiet' virtues suggests above all a distinction between the courage and aggressiveness of the fighter and the virtues—whether of prudence or of justice—of the man at peace; but the distinction between 'competitive' and 'co-operative' virtues suggests the rather different distinction between those who pursue their own interests and those who subordinate their interests to those of the community.⁴

But in fact qualities which are far from 'quiet' may be eminently co-operative, and other qualities which appear quiet may still be highly competitive. Adkins rightly sees military prowess as the essential feature of the Homeric warrior's *ἀρετή*, and bravery as one of its most important ingredients; and he clearly, and in this instance not unreasonably, regards both as pre-eminently competitive virtues (*MR* 31-4). Yet military prowess and, even more, courage may depend as much on a willingness to co-operate as on a capacity to fight, and we would be unwise to assume that the prowess of the fifth-century hoplite

¹ Adkins's arguments (*MR* 44-5) for denying that *καλόν* is a powerful word of commendation in Homer are at least in part circular, depending on the fact that *καλόν* is not used to commend actions which he thinks Homeric usage commends most powerfully.

² The point has in fact been put in various forms before. The eighth (though not the ninth) edition of Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* speaks of the sense of *ἀρετή* in Attic as remaining 'more of active excellence than of the strictly moral virtues', and W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers*, p. 9, talks of it (in my view somewhat misleadingly) as meaning 'skill or efficiency at a particular job'. This is certainly an element in but scarcely the whole of the meaning of

the word as it is used in Plato's dialogues.

³ Much of the force of Adkins's arguments for the fifth century derives of course from his claim that his theses apply to the Homeric poems, and that Homeric uses are traditional for the fifth century. For a criticism of Adkins's conclusions on Homer see the admirable article of A. A. Long, 'Moral Values in Homer', *J.H.S.* xc (1970), 121 f., to which Adkins has replied in his 'Homeric Values and Homeric Society', *J.H.S.* xci (1971), 1 f.

⁴ Adkins admits (*MR* 7) that the distinction is very much simplified but scarcely seems fully to perceive the distorting effect of the simplification. For a criticism of the distinction see A. A. Long, *op. cit.* 122 ff. and cf. Adkins's reply, *op. cit.* 3-4.

was viewed in the same way as the ἀρετή of the Homeric warrior (see below, p. 219). Conversely, σωφροσύνη which might seem to be, and is treated by Adkins as, a 'quiet' virtue cannot always be regarded as 'co-operative'. Despite the importance of the notion of restraint in many of the contexts in which it is used,¹ in other contexts (and this is particularly true in Thucydides) the dominant notion is one of 'prudence' or 'good sense'—a prudence or good sense which is often directed to the pursuit of one's own interest with very little regard to anything that could be called co-operation.² Justice, on the other hand, is pre-eminently a co-operative virtue, involving as it does the foregoing of advantages which might otherwise be enjoyed;³ yet if it involves, as Polemarchus suggests in Plato's *Republic*, helping one's friends and harming one's enemies,⁴ or, as with Orestes, killing one's mother because she killed one's father, it is very far from being a 'quiet' excellence. While it is no doubt the conflict between the 'co-operative' and the 'competitive' virtues which is at the heart of the distinction Adkins is drawing—and thus it is the relation between justice on the one hand and the other excellences on the other that is the most crucial to examine—we must beware of assuming, as Adkins is sometimes in danger of doing, that courage is always a competitive virtue or σωφροσύνη always a co-operative one. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, with for example the performance of λητουργίαι, there may be competition to perform a co-operative function.

To turn to the first of Adkins's main contentions, he maintains (*MR* 156) that the most powerful terms of value continued in the fifth century to be what in his view they had been in Homeric times—ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, and κακός used of men, and αἰσχρόν used of actions, with καλόν now behaving as the contrary of αἰσχρόν in a manner that it did not in the Homeric poems. This assertion is justified with extreme brevity (*MR* 156, cf. 185) by reference to three passages from Greek tragedy. In the first of these (Sophocles, *Electra* 558–60), Electra asks what could be more αἰσχρόν than for Clytemnestra to murder her husband, whether she acted δικαίως or not; in the second (Euripides, *Electra* 1051), Clytemnestra is told by the chorus that she has spoken justly in defending her murder of Agamemnon, “ἡ δίκη δ' αἰσχρῶς ἔχει”; in the third (Euripides, *Orestes* 194), the chorus tell Electra that Apollo acted justly (δικᾶ) in telling Orestes to kill his mother, but Electra replies “καλῶς δ' οὐ”. As far as I have been able to discover, these are the only passages used by Adkins to justify his view of the fifth-century supremacy among value-words of ἀγαθός and the terms that he relates to it.

¹ As exemplified *par excellence* in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, see for instance 413, 431, 995, 1100, 1365. Cf. Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 140, Euripides, *Andromache* 594, 596, 601, 741, *Troades* 1027, *Electra* 261, *Helen* 47.

² Adkins admits (*MR* 80 n. 2) that σωφρων means basically 'prudent in one's own interests', but again the implications of this for his dichotomy are inadequately brought out. For the 'prudential' aspect of σωφροσύνη and cognate terms see for instance Sophocles, *Ajax* 1264, *Philoctetes* 304, Euripides, *Medea* 311, 549, 884, Herodotus 3. 71. 3, Thucydides 1. 32. 4, 42. 2, 80. 2, 3. 43. 5, 4. 18. 4, 6. 6. 2 (end). On σωφροσύνη

in Thucydides see A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (henceforth referred to as *Commentary*) i. 166–7, Helen North, *Sophrosyne* (Cornell, 1966), 100–15 and cf. below, p. 228 n. 5.

³ See especially Plato, *Republic* 2. 357–67 and cf. 1. 343 c where justice is declared by Thrasymachus to be ἀλλότριον ἀγαθόν.

⁴ *Republic* 1. 332d. Adkins (*MR* 229–30) lays some stress on this being part of Meno's first definition of ἀρετή (*Meno* 71 e); yet it is also surely of interest that conventional definitions of ἀρετή and δικαιοσύνη should coincide.

A case that rests on these three passages is extraordinarily weak. Adkins is obviously right in supposing it to be the implication of each of them that the *καλόν*—*αἰσχρόν* standard is there regarded as overriding the standard of justice. But, as Adkins himself admits (*MR* 186), the purport of these passages is to suggest that 'there is a higher standard which may be set against the claims of strict justice'—and the respect in which it is higher is that it gives more weight than does 'strict justice' to the co-operative element in human relationships. It is surely somewhat perverse to regard passages which are asserting the moral claims of an attitude *more* co-operative than strict justice as evidence that the terms *καλόν* and *αἰσχρόν* carry the same overriding quality when used, as Adkins believes that they generally are, to assert values of a competitive kind. Even more significant is the content of the justice involved in these passages. In each of them the action described as just but shameful is one which involves the *exaction* of justice,¹ and to say of an action that it is carried out *δικαίως* in this sense is to assert not so much that it is commendable, as that it is justifiable. It is no doubt worthy of note, though scarcely surprising, that *αἰσχρόν* overrides this weaker sense of *δίκαιον*; but this is in no way evidence that an action described as *δίκαιον* in a more positive sense would be irrevocably damned in Greek eyes if it were termed *αἰσχρόν*. Indeed the most probable conclusion in the absence of examples to the contrary is that such an action never would be termed *αἰσχρόν* save possibly by a writer advancing a consciously immoralist thesis.²

But quite apart from the interpretation of these passages, it is very doubtful whether we are justified in drawing general conclusions from them as to the pattern of Greek moral discourse. All three passages relate to a single series of incidents, which though notorious in Greek legend were by any standards highly unusual, and one would feel more confidence in a theory about the relationship to each other of Greek moral terms if it drew on a rather wider range of instances. Furthermore, the general moral term involved in each case is *καλόν* or *αἰσχρόν*, and there is no reason to suppose, in the absence of supporting arguments, that even if *καλόν* and *αἰσχρόν* have this overriding moral force, the same is true in every instance of *ἀγαθός* and *κακός* or of *ἀρετή*.

It is indeed a general weakness of Adkins's treatment that while he shows some sensitivity to the shifts in meaning of certain Greek moral terms he assumes a rigidity of structure in their behaviour which is implausible in the extreme. This manifests itself in at least two ways: he seems to assume—as in the case under discussion—that because one or two terms of general commendation have overriding commendatory force so do all the other terms which in his view had this force in Homeric times;³ he also assumes that if any given term possesses this overriding force on some particular occasion it must always do so. In fact, most people familiar with classical Greek, if asked what was the most powerful word of commendation used to describe a man in the fifth century, would probably reply "*ἀγαθός*", even if only because this is the most general term, and would agree that *ἀρετή* generally denoted the most admired

¹ The comment is slightly less applicable to the passage from the *Orestes* in that it is Apollo's command which is characterized in this way, not the killing itself.

² Aristotle after all seems to assume that the identification of *τὸ καλόν* with *τὸ δίκαιον*

was regularly and conventionally accepted; see the Delian epigram quoted at the end of the article.

³ He does in fact allow that there is some flexibility over the use of *καλόν*, as noticed above, p. 214 and n. 1.

quality. But they would not necessarily commit themselves to the view that, for instance, if a man has committed an unjust act, the application of the word *ἀγαθός* to him for other reasons overrides, even if it to some extent mitigates, the unjust act. I shall be arguing later in this paper that Adkins has exaggerated the extent to which the normal applicability of *ἀγαθός* in the fifth century was to qualities of courage and capacity. But I am far from denying that there is a strong tendency to use the word in this way in certain contexts. What I question is whether in these cases it retains the automatically overriding force with which Adkins invests it.¹ The point is well illustrated by the well-known line in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (610) describing Amphiaraus:

σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθός εὐσεβὴς ἀνὴρ.

It is hard not to feel that *ἀγαθός* here refers to some quality more specific than goodness as a whole,² and plausible to suppose that it denotes military valour. But there is nothing in the line itself to suggest that *ἀγαθός* is thought of as a more important or powerful adjective than any of the others in the line; and the passage as a whole (597–614) would lead one to suppose that much more significance attached to Amphiaraus' being *δίκαιος* and *εὐσεβής*. And this is surely what one would expect in Aeschylus. It would no doubt be wrong to lay too much stress on the fact that the word *ἀρετή* never occurs in his extant plays,³ although one would scarcely guess it from Adkins's pages. But we can see in Aeschylus' plays far more concern with the consequences of men's breaches of the co-operative virtues than with the exaltation of competitive achievements.⁴ Even with a poet so overtly dedicated to the exaltation of competitive excellences as Pindar, who frequently applies the word *ἀρετή* to athletic and military exploits, there are invocations of *Δίκη*, *Θέμυς*, *Εὐνομία*, and even *Ἥσυχία* as well as several references to the value of 'quiet' virtues;⁵ and there is no more evidence here than in Aeschylus or Sophocles that the man commended for his *ἀρεταί* is in any way exempt from the requirement that he observe the ordinances of *δίκη*.

¹ Cf. the judicious comments of Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Univ. of California, 1971, henceforth referred to as *JZ*), 158, especially his remark that 'Much of the work done in our language by the term "good" was done in Greek by words other than *agathos*, particularly by the word *dikaios*, "just" or "righteous" . . . '.

² Although there are cases where *ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός* are linked with other moral terms without this implying that they refer to what we should regard as a specific part of goodness as a whole. See below, p. 221 and n. 1. In the cases there cited, however, *ἀρετή* or *ἀγαθός* is linked with only one other moral term. Adkins discusses the *Septem* passage briefly (*MR* 192 n. 13).

³ See G. Italie, *Lexicon Aeschyleum* s.v. It occurs once in a fragment—Nauck 340, which may only be a paraphrase by Libanius, although it seems to me likely that the word *ἀρετάς* did appear in the original version. *Ἀρετή* occurs six times in the extant plays of

Sophocles, and once in a fragment, see Dindorf, *Lexicon Sophocleum* s.v.

⁴ See especially *Agamemnon* 699 ff., 761–2, 773–5; *Septem* 407 ff. (where *Δίκη* is depicted as a force driving a man to fulfil what Adkins would call traditional *ἀρεταί*), 597 f. The same concern is evident in Sophocles' *Antigone* 332–75, esp. 370 where τὸ μὴ καλόν must denote the negation of the just and lawful behaviour described in the previous two lines. It is no doubt true that a motive for the avoidance of injustice was often the fear of divine retribution, but to infer from this that it was the only reason why justice was valued begs the question. Rather an appreciation of the value of justice might lead to the view that the gods reward it.

⁵ See particularly *Ol.* 13. 6 f., *Py.* 8. 1 f., and note the striking phrase τὰν θεμίζενον *ἀρετάν* at *Paean* 6. 130–1. Cf. *Ol.* 7. 18, *Py.* 5. 14, 6. 48, 8. 21–4, *Nem.* 8. 40 f., 11. 8, *Isth.* 7. 47–8, and Bacchylides 4. 3, 5. 6, 14. 53–5.

So, while the terms ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, and καλόν may have a powerful and general commendatory force (and while their opposites κακία, κακός, and αἰσχροτόν may have a similar effect in decrying men and actions), I see no warrant for supposing that in any particular case they have an overriding power in relation to the other main value-terms, unless this can be inferred from the context.

Adkins devotes much more space to elaboration of the second premiss of his thesis, that ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, and καλόν are still in the fifth century used primarily to commend competitive values. It should be noted at the outset that he does not deny that this set of terms is sometimes used to commend the co-operative virtues and decry their opposites; but he regards such uses as part of the process of 'the infiltration of morality' (*MR* ch. 9); he takes it to be evident that instances of the 'quiet' use of ἀγαθός are 'directly related to sophistic thought' (*MR* 179), and he later connects it with the supremacy of the democracy at Athens (*MR* 195 ff.).¹ He further observes (*MR* 172-9) that κακός is used earlier and more frequently to decry breaches of the co-operative virtues than ἀγαθός is used to commend their presence.

I shall particularly consider this thesis in relation to Thucydides, in whose work we find presented clear conflicts of moral attitude which may help us to discern which are the traditional and which the novel points of view. But I have first some general observations on it.

Firstly there are obvious dangers in too confidently constructing a scheme of the development of moral values in the fifth century on the basis of the scanty evidence which we possess, and in supposing that we can infer very much from the relative frequency of certain terms used in certain ways. This applies particularly to Adkins's claim that κακός is used in relation to 'quiet' values more frequently than ἀγαθός in such authors as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Herodotus. This is after all what one would expect. In the case of what Adkins calls the competitive virtues it is in most societies their presence rather than their absence which is remarked; but it is with *breaches* of co-operative standards that people are normally more concerned than with their observance; the law-breaker attracts more attention than the law-abiding citizen, and legal and moral systems—like the Ten Commandments—are frequently prohibitive and negative. It is therefore no matter for surprise that writers as concerned as are Aeschylus and Sophocles with exploring the consequences of breaches of co-operative standards should more frequently use κακός of a man who is unjust than ἀγαθός of a man who is just.²

A more serious fault in Adkins's treatment is a certain arbitrariness in determining which uses of value-terms are traditional and which innovatory. There is frequently an assumption of the point which Adkins should be trying to prove,³ that any use of terms like ἀρετή to refer to courage or noble birth or success is traditional and that any application of these terms to restraint or justice is innovatory. As far as the application of the term ἀγαθός to persons of noble birth is concerned, few would question its traditional character. It is a

¹ It is never entirely clear whether Adkins regards the 'infiltration' of 'quiet' uses as something that is gradually becoming acceptable in normal discourse in the fifth century, or whether he thinks that such uses would have always startled the listener or reader.

² See the admirable remarks of Bruno Snell at the beginning of his essay 'The Call to Virtue' in *The Discovery of the Mind*, 153.

³ This is particularly true of *MR* chapters 8 and 9.

well-attested fact of both Greek and Roman literature and thought that aristocratic valuations of people persist alongside other more sophisticated criteria which have ostensibly replaced them;¹ and in the fifth century this is borne out by Pindar's adherence to a belief that ἀρετή is inborn and by Euripides' almost obsessive preoccupation with redefining the true nature of nobility.² We cannot, however, infer from this that co-operative values are unimportant in the aristocratic scheme of things—at the very least loyalty among members of the aristocratic group to each other must be highly prized.³ It is further important not to confuse the question whether justice and other co-operative qualities are valued with the question of the extent of the group within which their display is required.⁴

In Thucydides' history,⁵ there are indeed a number of passages in which ἀρετή and ἀγαθός and their opposites have a clear reference to military valour.⁶ There is, however, no implication in any of them that either ἀρετή or ἀγαθός is necessarily or even mainly used of warlike qualities unless the context makes it clear; a very high proportion of the cases of ἀρετή used in this sense (five out of eight) come from the Funeral Oration of Pericles, and in three of the passages in which ἀγαθός is used (2. 35. 1, 5. 9. 9, 7. 87. 7) it forms part of the standard phrase ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίγνεσθαι. These uses are of course in some sense traditional, as the somewhat ritual character of funeral speeches and the cliché-like quality of the phrase ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίγνεσθαι indicate. But while this ἀρετή can legitimately be regarded as the lineal descendant of the ἀρετή displayed by the Homeric warrior there is already a co-operative element even in the Homeric warrior's display of it;⁷ and by the fifth century its flavour has subtly changed. In Homer ἀρετή is above all displayed by the successful warrior; but in funeral speeches it can be displayed alike by victor and vanquished and can be supremely manifested at the moment of death.⁸ While the glory won by those who display this ἀρετή may make it in one sense competitive, it is in fact displayed in service to the community and is in some of its most significant manifestations supremely sacrificial.

An idea that underlies many of the uses of ἀρετή in Thucydides is that of the

¹ I need only cite the literary tradition of hostility to the so-called Athenian demagogues, and the suspicion at Rome of a *novus homo*.

² See Pindar *Ol.* 9. 100 f., 10. 20 f., 11. 10, *Pyth.* 1. 41 f., *Nem.* 3. 40–3, Euripides *H.F.* 663 f., *Ion* 237–40, *Electra* 38, 253 f. (a passage on which Adkins lays justified if distorted emphasis, *MR* 176–8), 369 f., *Helen* 728 f., 1641, Nauck frs. 22, 53, 232, 336, 413, 495. ll. 40 f., 527.

³ Cf. Lloyd-Jones, *JZ* 26 and 47. Adkins seems partially to concede this point in his reply to Long, *J.H.S.* xci (1971), 4–5.

⁴ Cf. below, p. 230 and *ibid.* n. 4.

⁵ The use and significance of ἀρετή in Thucydides were exhaustively considered by E. Lange, *op. cit.* (above, p. 213 n. 3.)

⁶ See for ἀρετή 2. 35. 1, 36. 1, 42. 2, 43. 1, 46. 1, 87. 9, 92. 7, 126. 2, 6. 11. 6, and probably 4. 63. 2; for ἀγαθός (including ἀριστος and βέλτιον) 2. 11. 1, 35. 1, 46. 1,

87. 9 (cf. use of κακός at 87. 3), 3. 98. 4, 4. 40. 2, 80. 3, 95. 1, 5. 9. 9, 60. 5, 69. 1, 2, 7. 77. 7. Ἀρετή seems in these cases to include the notion of capacity as well as that of courage, since, when Thucydides wishes to isolate courage from skill in analysing military success, the words used for courage are ἀνδρεία, εὐψυχία, or τόλμη. See 1. 121. 4; 2. 87. 1–5 and 89. 1–7 (the fullest treatment of this theme); 5. 72. 2; 6. 68. 2; 7. 64. 2.

⁷ See Lloyd-Jones, *JZ* 15: 'Even in a heroic society . . . the so-called quieter virtues are essential, above all loyalty, without which not even a gang of thieves, let alone an army, can hope to operate successfully.' Cf. the argument of Plato, *Republic* 1. 351.

⁸ Thucydides 2. 43, and for the notion that times of danger and war call for co-operative activity cf. Pericles' last speech, 2. 60. 2–4.

rendering of services to, or the conferring of benefits upon, some other person or body—whether this be a friend, one's city, or Greece as a whole. Indeed, this idea is present in many of the cases where ἀρετή refers to valour in war, particularly in the reiterated claims of the Plataeans to the quality for their part in the defeat of the Persian invasions.¹ But the concept is applied to wider fields than war, especially where relations between φίλοι are concerned. At one point in the Funeral Oration (2. 40. 4), Pericles seems to think of it as being essentially displayed in such relationships; 'as far as ἀρετή is concerned,' he says, 'we are the opposite of most people; we gain friends not by receiving but by conferring benefits.'² The idea that ἀρετή may involve self-denial as well as the conferment of benefits is suggested when the Spartan ambassadors try to persuade the Athenians to make peace after the seizure of Pylos. Enmities, the Spartans say (4. 19. 2), are most firmly removed when the stronger party foregoes the exaction of all that he can secure from his opponent, and unexpectedly agrees to moderate terms πρὸς τὸ ἐπιεικὲς καὶ ἀρετῇ αὐτὸν νικήσας. The weaker party, they continue, will then feel bound to repay the ἀρετή, and so through a sense of shame will stick to his agreement. As MacDowell has pointed out in an admirable discussion of this passage,³ ἀρετή here involves not just helping friends but being generous to enemies. Pearson none the less has some justification (op. cit. [above, n. 2] 234–5) for regarding the view here put forward as a 'variation of the theory of friendship which Pericles had elaborated in the Funeral Oration', since although the ἀρετή here invoked is not displayed towards friends, it could plausibly be regarded as part of the process of making them friends in the way Pericles there describes.

In all these cases, as with the display of ἀρετή in war, there is an overlap between the competitive and the co-operative. What brings benefit to others also brings glory to the doer; and, in the case of friendship, we find a disconcerting and almost calculating expectation of reciprocal benefits which will ensue.⁴ Yet the very formality of this serves to underline both the notion of obligation which is present, and the essentially co-operative nature of the act which secures the reputation. Nor is it the case that the ἀρετή is judged solely in terms of success in conferring the benefit—the mere intention and attempt can be sufficient. In his account of the plague at Athens Thucydides observes (2. 51. 5) that it was above all οἱ ἀρετῆς τι μεταποιούμενοι who tried to help those suffering from the plague and so died themselves. 'Virtue in general, perhaps,' writes Gomme on this passage,⁵ 'but primarily courage and a sense of duty, not kindness.' Certainly courage is involved here, but courage that is manifestly self-sacrificing and in no way related to notions of success, yet thought of as carrying with it a claim to admiration from society.

Quite apart from these passages there are several in which ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, and their opposites are related to co-operative notions in a quite unequivocal way. In two passages ἀγαθός and κακός are treated within one and the same sentence

¹ See 2. 71. 3, 3. 56. 7, 58. 1, and cf. the Theban remarks at 67. 2.

² See L. Pearson, 'Popular Ethics in the World of Thucydides', *C.P.* lii (1957), 228–44, esp. 229–30 and 242 n. 7. Gomme in his note on this passage (*Commentary* ii. 123) introduces an unnecessary and misleading contrast between 'courage' and 'goodness'.

³ D. MacDowell, 'Ἀρετή and Generosity', *Mnem.* 4th ser. xvi (1963), 127–9.

⁴ This whole issue has been illuminated by Adkins's admirable article 'Friendship and Self-sufficiency in Homer and Aristotle', *C.Q.* n.s. xiii (1963), 30–45.

⁵ *Commentary* ii. 157.

as applicable to standards both of active courage and of justice. Sthenelaidas the ephor (1. 86. 1) repudiates any claim by the Athenians to consideration for their services in the Persian war by insisting that, if they were *ἀγαθοί* against the Persians then, the fact that they are now *κακοί* towards the Spartans makes them doubly deserving of punishment. The Plataean prisoners claim (3. 54. 3) that they have been *ἀγαθοί* both in peace and against the Persians, in peace since they were not the first to break it, against the Persians because they joined in the attack which secured the freedom of the Greeks. In the first of these passages, the Athenians are thought of as *κακοί* because of their unjust aggressiveness, in the second the Plataeans claim to be *ἀγαθοί* for refraining from injustice. *Ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός* are related more exclusively to co-operative values in the speeches of the Corcyraeans and Corinthians at Athens. Rejecting (1. 37. 2) the Corcyraean claim that they pursued a neutral policy *διὰ τὸ σῶφρον*, the Corinthians insist that this policy was pursued *ἐπὶ κακουργίᾳ καὶ οὐκ ἀρετῇ*; and a little further on (37. 5) they say that, if the Corcyraeans had been as they claim *ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί*, their very security should have made it possible for them to make their *ἀρετή* more evident by observing justice in their relations with others (*διδόσθαι καὶ δεχομένους τὰ δίκαια*). Justice is again associated with and included in *ἀρετή* early in the speech of the Mytilenaeans at Olympia pleading for Spartan assistance (3. 10. 1). Concerned that their defection from Athens may make the Spartans despise them as traitors and so regard them as *χείρους*, they propose to talk *περὶ . . . τοῦ δικαίου καὶ ἀρετῆς*, declaring that no lasting friendship or partnership can exist between states *εἰ μὴ μετ' ἀρετῆς δοκούσης ἐς ἀλλήλους γίνονται καὶ τὰλλα ὁμοίωσιν*.¹ Finally, *ἀρετή* is clearly divorced from the simple pursuit of advantage in the Melian Dialogue when the Athenians contrast (5. 105. 4) the Spartans' pursuit of it at home with their policy abroad; towards others, say the Athenians, more clearly than any we know *τὰ μὲν ἡδέα καλὰ νομίζουσι τὰ δὲ ξυμφέροντα δίκαια*. It is the clear implication of this passage that *ἀρετή* involves the pursuit of what is *καλόν* and *δίκαιον* irrespective of pleasure or advantage.²

There are in addition four passages³ in which *ἀρετή* is ascribed to particular individuals. Of these the most difficult to interpret is the passage describing

¹ It might be argued that there is here a disjunction between *δίκαιον* and *ἀρετή* and that this supports Adkins's view of the normal meaning of *ἀρετή*. In fact, however, some notion like *δικαιοσύνη* is clearly present in the second use of *ἀρετή* (in the phrase *μετ' ἀρετῆς δοκούσης*), and the use of *δίκαιον* earlier in the sentence merely seems to signpost the particular aspect of *ἀρετή* which is here under discussion. It is difficult, and perhaps wrong, to try to establish a rule as to whether the combination of *ἀρετή* or *ἀγαθός* with another moral term implies conjunction or disjunction. It seems wisest to be guided by the context. See p. 222 below where I assume along with other scholars that there is a disjunction between *ἀρετή* and *ξύνεσις* at 4. 81. 2 and 6. 54. 5. For a usage rather like the present one see Herodotus 8. 79. 1 where Aristides is said *ἄριστον ἄνδρα γενέσθαι καὶ δικαιοτάτον*, and the

δικαιοτάτον surely amplifies and explains the *ἄριστον* (is there any evidence that Aristides was *ἀμείνων* in military valour, or more successful, than Themistocles?—it must be remembered that the words here have the meaning 'best and justest', not 'very good and very just'), and cf. 8. 95 where the notion is more briefly expressed by describing Aristides as *ἀνδρὸς ἁρίστου*.

² Dover has commented on this passage that it makes clear that a 'good' man is one who 'sacrifices his own pleasure and advantage', in his edition of Book 6 (OUP), p. 63 on 54. 5. To the passages cited in the text can be added two (6. 80. 2, 86. 3) in which the Athenians are described as *κακοί* in so far as they are aggressive, and two in the general account of *στάσις* in Book 3 which will be dealt with below, pp. 229–30.

³ Cf. the discussion of these by Lange, *op. cit.* (above, p. 213 n. 3) 829–33.

Antipho (8. 68. 1-2) referred to at the beginning of this paper. Antipho was, says Thucydides, τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀρετῇ τε οὐδενὸς ὕστερος καὶ κράτιστος ἐνθυμηθῆναι γενόμενος καὶ ἃ γνοίη εἰπεῖν. This is the only passage in Thucydides in which a case can be plausibly made out for supposing that ἀρετή means 'ability'.¹ The whole weight of the sentence which follows is on Antipho's ability—despite the suspicion that he incurred with the populace, says Thucydides, because of the impression that he gave of δεινότης, he had the greatest capacity of any single individual to help those who were engaged in political or forensic contests. It has, furthermore, been argued² that the description Thucydides gives of the intimidatory procedures of the Four Hundred (8. 70. 2) is scarcely consistent with the view that Antipho was a pattern of moral rectitude. The conclusion, however, need not follow. There may be a disjunctive force here in τε . . . καί, and Lange has argued (op. cit. [above, p. 213 n. 3] 831-3) that Thucydides is commending by the word ἀρετή the consistency and courage with which Antipho maintained his political principles. If this is so, it is strange that Thucydides did not make the point more explicit. On the other hand, if we grant that ἀρετή here refers to capacity, we should also note the uniqueness of the use in Thucydides, and further that Thucydides does not use this word of the two statesmen for whose capacity he had the most admiration—Themistocles and Pericles.³ When, however, Thucydides refers to the effects of Brasidas' campaigns (4. 81. 2) and says that many allies of Athens were encouraged to defect to Sparta by ἡ τότε Βρασίδου ἀρετὴ καὶ ξύνεσις and goes on to remark that δόξας εἶναι κατὰ πάντα ἀγαθὸς he encouraged the hope that others would be like him (81. 3), there can be no doubt that the content of the ἀρετῇ is described earlier in the section when Brasidas is declared to have won his successes ἑαυτὸν παρασχὼν δίκαιον καὶ μέτριον ἐς τὰς πόλεις. Thucydides ascribes the same combination of qualities to the Pisistratids during the greater part of their rule: καὶ ἐπετήδευσαν ἐπὶ πλείστον δὴ τύραννοι οὗτοι ἀρετὴν καὶ ξύνεσιν (6. 54. 5). The tyrants are being commended not just for their intelligence but also for their restraint and generosity; they showed restraint over taxation and in adhering within certain limits to the legal constitution.⁴ Finally and most unambiguously⁵ Thucydides describes Nicias (7. 86. 5) as deserving less than any Greek of his time to meet the misfortunes that he did διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν. The content of the ἀρετῇ in question is clearly indicated in Nicias' own earlier speech describing his way of life—πολλὰ μὲν ἐς θεοὺς νόμιμα δεδιήτημαι, πολλὰ δὲ ἐς ἀνθρώπους δίκαια καὶ ἀνεπίφθονα (7. 77. 2). With the exception of the first, which is ambiguous, these four passages support the view that ἀρετῇ is readily applied by Thucydides to the quiet values.

¹ See above, p. 213 n. 2.

² By Grene, op. cit. (above, p. 213 n. 2) 81.

³ See for Themistocles 1. 138. 3 and for Pericles 2. 65. 5-9.

⁴ See Dover's comments ad loc. (*Commentary* iv. 329) and Lange, loc. cit.

⁵ This may seem a surprising description of a passage whose text is disputed (some manuscripts omit πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν) and whose translation has caused difficulty (with what does νενομισμένην agree?). It would seem that Dover is right (*Commentary* iv. 461) to make it agree with ἐπιτήδευσιν, as against

Grene (op. cit. [above, p. 213 n. 2] 81) who makes it agree with ἀρετὴν. But if ἀρετὴν is retained in the text, and however the sentence is construed, the content of the ἀρετῇ is surely as I have described it. The passage, although unaccountably ignored by Adkins, has been extensively discussed; in addition to Dover and Grene see Murray, *B.I.C.S.* viii (1961), 33 f., Westlake, *C.Q.* xxxv (1941), 59 f., and for the contrast between this judgement and that on Antipho see Grene, loc. cit. and R. C. Jebb, 'The Speeches of Thucydides' in *Essays and Addresses* (Cambridge, 1907), 403 n. 3.

There is thus a very wide range of behaviour commended by *ἀρετή*, *ἀγαθός*, and associated words in the pages of Thucydides.¹ While military valour may indeed be so commended, this is generally made abundantly clear by the context, and in no way indicates that this is the general, let alone the exclusive meaning of the terms in question: relations with and services to friends and others are often involved; and on occasions the terms are clearly related to refraining from doing harm to others and showing respect for standards of justice. Adkins certainly agrees that there is a very wide range of connotation for these terms in Thucydides, and he cites some of the uses which are by his definition 'quiet',² although he only discusses one. The question at issue is how the different uses are to be interpreted. In general, as we have noted (above, p. 218) Adkins regards quiet uses of *ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός* as novel, and relates them to sophistic thought; he accordingly regards such uses in Thucydides as a sign that the 'thoughtful and intellectual' historian (*MR* 178–9) was, as he puts it elsewhere, 'a devotee of the New Thought' (*MR* 209). He regards it as a 'startling thing' even for Thucydides to say that *ἀρετή* can be displayed in observing freely the claims of *δικαιοσύνη* (*MR* 178–9, discussing 1. 37. 5), and observes twice (193 n. 16, 218 n. 18), that the quiet use of *ἀρετή* only appears in Thucydides in conditions of stress—a fairly unhelpful criterion, since the description could apply to almost every page of the History. Since Adkins also remarks (*MR* 218 n. 18) that 'Thucydides was clearly very sensitive to *all* the arguments about values current in his day, and could employ them, and the linguistic usages which accompanied them, with great dramatic and rhetorical effect', it would seem that in his view the 'quiet' use of *ἀρετή* and such terms by Thucydides is deliberate and consciously at variance with tradition, and that the historian is not just under the influence of 'the New Thought' but is consciously using value-terms in accordance with its precepts. In fact, however, there is little if any evidence that Thucydides is consciously using these terms in a novel way, and a good deal to suggest the contrary.

The only 'quiet' use of these terms which Adkins discusses is the passage from the Corinthian speech at Athens mentioned above (1. 37. 5, see above, p. 221 and *MR* 178–9), and even here he does little more than assert its 'startling' character, and note the evident implication that *ἀρετή* can at least involve justice. The passage is admittedly somewhat rhetorical,³ but the argument does not receive the kind of emphasis which would lead one to suppose that a novel idea is being deployed. Other passages suggest the contrary. We observed above (p. 222) that when Thucydides referred to Brasidas' *ἀρετή* (4. 81. 2) there was every reason to suppose that the *ἀρετή* consisted in the display of justice and moderation. This would not only be a strange place for Thucydides to introduce a 'novel' use of the term, but the sense of the passage as a whole makes it almost impossible that he should be so doing. For Thucydides is concerned to show that the justice and moderation which constituted Brasidas' *ἀρετή* made a great impression on states contemplating defection to Sparta, and while it is just conceivable that Thucydides could have used the word *ἀρετή* to describe the kind of behaviour that made this impression even if it were a novel

¹ For *ἀνδραγαθία* and cognate terms see below, pp. 227–8 and p. 228 n. 2.

² See *MR* 178, 193 nn. 16 and 17, 218 n. 18. Adkins does not claim that his list of 'quiet' uses is exhaustive, but the only

instances he cites are 1. 37. 5, 38. 5 (*αἰσχρόν*), 86, 3. 58. 1 (*αἰσχρᾶς*), and 3. 82. 7.

³ Rhetorical, that is, in the slightly forced neatness and logic of its rebuttal of the Corcyraeans' claims.

and eccentric use, it is surely inconceivable that in that case he would have gone on to say, as he does in the next section, that Brasidas seemed *to everyone* to be *κατὰ πάντα ἀγαθός*. Again we observed that Thucydides' commendation of Nicias as deserving least of all the Greeks of his time to meet with the dire fate that he did was to be related to his own earlier profession that he had behaved lawfully towards the gods and justly and unexceptionably towards men. Thucydides just *could* be applying a novel and eccentric standard here in implying that such behaviour constituted *ἀρετή*, but it is surely the sense of this judgement of Thucydides that Nicias could be seen by all to have manifested this *ἀρετή*.¹ Finally, the passage discussed above (p. 221) in which the Mytilenaeans envoys defend themselves against the charge of treachery (3. 9–10) implies not only that they regard loyalty to be an essential ingredient of *ἀρετή*, but that such a view is in accordance with *τὸ . . . καθεστὸς τοῖς Ἑλλήσι νόμιμον*.

There is another reason of a more general kind for supposing it to be unlikely that Thucydides is consciously using *ἀρετή* in a novel way when he applies it to the 'quiet' virtues. One of the most prominent and arresting features of Thucydides' history is the conflict of argumentative attitude, presented, particularly in the speeches, about the proper conduct of relations between states.² Most speakers who are not Athenian and some who are show a certain sensitivity to moral issues and supposed obligations which they expect to be reflected in their hearers. This is not of course to say that such speeches are solely or even mainly concerned with moral issues; as in most political speeches, policies are straightforwardly discussed in terms of the advantages that may accrue to those who pursue them; but it is from time to time suggested that what is expedient coincides with what is right.³ It is rarely urged that a course of action that is immoral should be pursued on grounds of expediency⁴ unless some special extenuating circumstances can be adduced,⁵ and the relevance of moral considerations to political decisions is in general assumed. Three main moral requirements, which overlap, seem to be generally accepted. Firstly, there is the obligation on a state to be loyal to its group—whether that group be defined as a particular alliance or association of states or as Greece as a whole. It is, as we have seen, about the charge that they have not been loyal to their alliance that the Mytilenaeans are so defensive in their speech at Olympia (3. 9–10), and conflicts of views as to what is the group to which loyalty should be displayed are prominent in the debate on the Plataean prisoners (3. 52–68, esp. 54, 59, 61. 2).⁶ Secondly there is recognition of the need to observe the terms of

¹ I am not meaning here to imply that *νενομισμένην* means 'conventional' and agrees with *ἀρετήν*. See above, p. 222 n. 5.

² On this see now the illuminating account by G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 11–25. I fully agree with de Ste Croix's view (16 ff.) that Thucydides in practice drew a fundamental distinction between the relations between states and those between individuals within the state; but whatever his intentions I feel that Thucydides must have *expected* his readers to be shocked by the view of inter-state relations expounded by the Athenians in the Melian dialogue.

³ See particularly the Corinthian speech at Athens, 1. 37–43 (esp. 43. 4), and the

debate on the Plataean prisoners (3. 53–67).

⁴ At. 1. 36. 1 the Corcyraeans seem prepared to let arguments of expediency override those of morality, but have already devoted some time to justifying themselves. On 4. 61. 5 see below.

⁵ As at 1. 82. 1, 32. 5, 4. 114. 5. Cf. (where the speakers are Athenian) 1. 75. 5, 6. 83. 2, 8. 50. 2.

⁶ Here the Thebans clearly regard the Plataeans as owing a loyalty to Boeotia as a whole—just as the Corinthians claim (1. 37–8) that colonies have a duty to their *μητροπόλεις*. Such claims, however, are not regarded as absolute—the Corcyraeans can plausibly claim that they need no longer be obedient to a *μητρόπολις* which wrongs them

treaties—this is particularly apparent in parts of the debate at Athens on the Corcyraean request for an alliance.¹ Most important, however, is the general obligation to refrain from aggression, especially when that aggression threatens the *αὐτονομία* of a particular state. It is scarcely surprising that Thucydides, obsessed as he seems to have been with the question whether the Athenian Empire was immoral,² should have stressed this issue; it is alluded to in many of the debates and decisions affecting Athens's relations with her allies, it is again prominent in the debate on the Plataean prisoners, and the belief that each state has a right to autonomy is presented as a major theme of Peloponnesian propaganda in the war.³

A different attitude to inter-state morality emerges in other speeches. It emerges only in discussions of Athenian imperialism, and consists essentially in asserting the theory that it is natural for the stronger to rule the weaker, and that in all situations in which equal is not facing equal issues of justice are irrelevant; the strong therefore will pursue their own advantage without concern for morality. The view is at its most articulate and complete in the Melian Dialogue (esp. 5. 89 and 105), but various aspects of it emerge in other utterances, all except one by Athenians.⁴ In the Melian dialogue the Athenians insist that the practical question of Melos' future be discussed in the knowledge that 'justice is only a basis for decision in human calculations where there is equal force on both sides, but elsewhere the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak agree' (5. 89). It is thus an implication of their view, as the Melians recognize (5. 90), that policies should be weighed solely in the light of *τὸ ξυμφέρον*. The same belief that the stronger always exert their power over the weaker is expressed by the Athenians in their speech at Sparta before war breaks out (1. 76. 2), although here it has been prefaced by an attempt to 'justify' the empire, and is followed by the claim that if a strong power behaves with more justice towards a weaker one than this theory demands, it deserves praise. In the same way, Athenian imperialism is excused by its opponent Hermocrates (4. 61. 5) in terms of a general tendency for human nature to

(1. 34), and the Mytilenaeans feel justified in deserting an alliance which is infringing their autonomy. The claim that loyalty should be shown to Greece as a whole is much nearer to being absolute, although it is a serious over-simplification to say, as Grene does (op. cit. [above, p. 213 n. 2] 50), that 'the practical question of justice or injustice in international procedure in his [viz. Thucydides'] day always falls back to claims as to what this country or that did against the Persians in the wars of 490 and 480'. It is admittedly a plea that the Athenians are fond of using (see esp. 1. 73-4, 6. 82-3), and is prominent in the Plataean speeches. But in neither case is the argument decisive, and in other debates, like that between the Corinthian and Corcyraean ambassadors, it is irrelevant, although issues of international justice are prominent.

¹ Closely linked to the respect for treaties is the belief that it is wrong to have recourse

to violence except as a last resort. See the Corinthian and Corcyraean accusations of each other over arbitration (1. 34. 2, 39. 1-2), and the Plataean and Theban arguments over truce-violation (3. 56. 1-2, 66. 2).

² See A. Andrewes, 'The Melian Dialogue and Pericles' last speech', *P.C.P.S.* clxxxvi (1960) 1-10.

³ The principle of non-aggression is expounded most succinctly by Pagondas the Boeotarch in his speech before Delium (4. 92) when he refers to those for whom it is *γενναῖον τὴν τε αὐτῶν αἰεὶ ἐλευθεροῦν μάχῃ καὶ τὴν ἄλλων μὴ δουλοῦσθαι ἄδίκως*. Cf. the various attacks on Athenian imperialism, 1. 68. 2-3, 69. 1-2, 71. 1-2, 121. 1, 124. 3, 2. 8. 4, 3. 13-14, 4. 85. 2.

⁴ On this theory see Andrewes op. cit. (above, n. 2) and *Commentary* iv. 159 ff., also G. E. M. de Ste Croix, 'The Character of the Athenian Empire', *Historia* iii (1954-5), 36-7, and *Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, loc. cit.

exercise mastery over what gives way to it. These are the only three fully explicit expressions of the theory; but other passages give it indirect support. In the last speech put into his mouth by Thucydides, Pericles admits that the acquisition of the empire seemed *ἀδικον* (2. 63. 2), and that its possession is a tyranny, but insists that it would be dangerous to abandon it. Contempt is expressed for those whose virtuous pretensions would encourage them to give it up,¹ and it is maintained that immediate brilliance and lasting glory will more than compensate for any transient unpopularity that the possession of empire may involve (2. 64. 5). Cleon, too, in the Mytilenaeen debate reminds his hearers—in this at least consciously echoing Pericles—that the empire is a tyranny,² and his opponent Diodotus urges that the issue before them be settled in the light of what is expedient, not of whether the Mytilenaeans have behaved unjustly—a procedure which contrasts strikingly, as Thucydides surely meant it to, with the *δικαιώματα* adduced by both sides in the trial of the Plataean prisoners which is narrated immediately after it.³

Whether or not Thucydides wishes us to suppose that the Athenians themselves in contradistinction to the Peloponnesians held this view of what should be the basis for political decisions,⁴ the contrast between this attitude and other attitudes is surely meant to be marked. It is a theory which its propounders claim to be true of *all* human political behaviour; in each of their major enunciations of the theory, the Athenians maintain that the Spartans too despite their protestations of virtue behave as if the theory were true (1. 76. 1–2, 5. 105. 4). Furthermore, despite the truth of the point made by de Sainte Croix (op. cit. [p. 225 n. 4] 36) that the theory merely claims to be ‘recognizing a natural tendency, a “law of human nature”’, there are of course pre-scriptive—or at least permissive—implications to it. The theory derives its impact first from a claim to be tearing away the mask of conventional moralization and revealing the truth about human behaviour, and secondly from the practical inference that is expected to be drawn that moral issues can be legitimately ignored.⁵ Whether Thucydides himself held this theory or

¹ For further discussion of this passage see below, pp. 227–9.

² This and other echoes of Pericles’ last speech serve powerfully to heighten the contrast with Pericles on the question whether rational argument or sustained emotion shall be the mainspring of policy—a point well brought out by F. M. Wassermann, ‘Post-Periclean democracy in Action: the Mytilenaeen Debate’, *T.A.P.A.* lxxxvii (1956), 27–41, esp. 33–4. See also Andrewes, ‘The Mytilene Debate: Thucydides 3. 36–49’, *Phoenix* xvi (1962), 64–85.

³ The contrast is both in the intellectual character of the arguments and in the final judgement. Thucydides is not saying, however, that the Athenians were unaffected by moral considerations, rather that the arguments put forward by Diodotus ignored them. He makes it clear that the debate was reopened because of a feeling that the sentence was savage (36. 4), and even Diodotus allows himself to remark that the Athenians would do wrong to kill their

benefactors (47. 3). See de Sainte Croix, op. cit. (above, p. 225 n. 4), Andrewes, op. cit. (above, p. 225 n. 2.)

⁴ A decision on this point depends on one’s view of the speeches. I incline to believe that Thucydides does wish us to think that the theory was propounded by *some* Athenians. I can, however, see no grounds for accepting the view of H. Strasburger, ‘Thukydides und die politische Selbstdarstellung der Athener’, *Hermes* lxxxvi (1958), p. 36 that the Spartans are being presented as in practice more humane than the Athenians. Strasburger underestimates the significance of the execution of the Plataeans, and in his text ignores the massacre of the Ionian prisoners in 427 (3. 32. 1), although he cites the passage in a note. Cf. de Ste Croix, op. cit. (above, p. 225 n. 4) 21.

⁵ This may both appear and be a contradiction in terms. It seems to me none the less implicit in the presentation of the theory that the immoral is being made out to be permissible.

not¹ he surely expected it to be in some sense shocking to his readers—and if there is anywhere in his History where the 'New Thought' is being presented, it is surely here.²

Given, then, that we have this argumentative conflict presented to us in the pages of Thucydides' History between those who believe that justice is irrelevant and those who believe that it is relevant to political and human affairs, is it likely that at one and the same time Thucydides is presenting to us as a symptom of the 'New Thought' the use of *ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός* to describe 'quiet' values? And if Thucydides *were* doing this, would he not make the dramatic significance of such uses very much more evident than he does? Would the word *ἀρετή* have been used almost casually to refer to the altruistic character of the domestic behaviour of the Spartans in contrast to the selfishness of their foreign policy (5. 105. 4, see above, p. 221)? Discussing the 'immoralist' challenge of the late fifth century (*MR* 232–5), however, Adkins maintains that the immoralist theses derived their plausibility precisely from the fact that they coincided with the 'traditional' uses of *ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός*. 'Any Greek of this period', he writes (*MR* 233–4), 'was bound to find it very difficult to confute the immoralists. Exhortation was useless; for the "immoralists" and the power politicians had plausibly pre-empted the most valued terms; and . . . ordinary man and immoralist would often agree on the exact interpretation of these terms, not merely on their general flavour.' In so far as this is not just a re-statement of the by now familiar Adkins position, it fails to take account of the fact that there must at the very least have been an intermediate stage at which the 'quiet' virtues were valued, if the immoralist theses were to create the subversive impact that they did. Adkins goes on, however, to clinch his argument with reference to a passage from Pericles' last speech (2. 63. 2). Pericles there reminded his hearers that they could not abandon their ruling position *εἴ τις καὶ τὸδε ἐν τῷ παρόντι δεδιὼς ἀπραγμοσύνη ἀνδραγαθίζεται*. According to Adkins, the ordinary Athenian would not have been dismayed by the thought that the empire that he possessed was a tyranny,³ and would certainly not have adopted the opposing view of peace and justice. The phrase *ἀπραγμοσύνη ἀνδραγαθίζεται* Adkins describes as 'one of the most outrageous oxymora possible in Greek. *Dikaiosune*', he goes on, 'is a quiet, co-operative virtue; accordingly, Pericles terms it *apragmosune*, inactivity. *Andragathia*, on the other hand, . . . in its traditional usage entails courage, daring, and initiative, and may stand as a synonym for *arete*. To characterize the new standard of *arete* in such a manner as to indicate that it violates the old standard in every detail is to pour scorn on it with a demagoguery so brilliant that the position could not for a moment stand against it.'

Adkins's treatment of this passage merits some attention, since it illustrates well both the strengths and the weaknesses of his position. To start with, Adkins is surely right in supposing that *ἀπραγμοσύνη* is here being used in a

¹ Thucydides may have regarded the theory as embodying a correct view of *actual* motivations; it does not seem to me likely that he would have regarded it as sanctioning the practical conclusions drawn from it by the Athenians.

² This is obviously not to deny that more unsophisticated assertions of the role of force in politics were made earlier. See

Themistocles' threats to the Andrians, Herodotus 8. 111.

³ Adkins appropriately compares *ἀδικίαν εὐδαίμονα*, Euripides, *Phoenissae* 549 (*MR* 234 and 242 n. 19), but his view that the disparagement which the phrase implies is 'ineffective' depends precisely on the thesis which he should be trying to prove.

derogatory manner to cast doubts on the credentials of the supposed *ἀνδραγαθία* which it accompanies.¹ Secondly, it is surely also true, as Adkins says, that Pericles is being made to suggest that *ἀνδραγαθία* is most appropriately applied to courage and daring.² Pericles is therefore, as Adkins maintains, pouring scorn on the possibly juster policies which involve *ἀπραγμοσύνη* because they do not conform to *ἀνδραγαθία* as he wishes his audience to understand it. Where Adkins' interpretation is more questionable is in his assumption that Pericles' opponents are innovators, and that the values which they represent would be rejected out of hand by those who were steeped in tradition. In fact these opponents are surely persons of more or less oligarchical sympathies,³ professing (perhaps hypocritically) to support traditional standards of justice at least where the autonomy of states is concerned, and opposed to the innovations of every kind for which Periclean democracy seemed to stand.⁴ Furthermore, there is considerable evidence to suggest that this traditional oligarchic approach set much store by *Ἡσυχία*, and even within the pages of Thucydides himself there is ample evidence that *σωφροσύνη* was regarded as above all an oligarchic virtue.⁵ Nor should we suppose that *ἀπραγμοσύνη* would naturally and automatically be regarded as a term of abuse. I believe that Adkins is right so to interpret it here; but it is surely the necessary conclusion of Ehrenberg's careful study of this question⁶ that the term was differently regarded and used by those of different sympathies. To democratic encomiasts in the pages of Euripides and Thucydides the *ἀπράγμων* was worthy of condemnation; but to the more conservative Aristophanes his qualities were highly commendable.⁷ Adkins is right in seeing that Pericles is here exploiting tensions present in Greek notions of excellence, but he is going too far when he supposes that only one of the two conflicting notions here present can claim traditional support and backing; and as far as the immoralist theses go, Adkins is making a valid and valuable point if he is asserting that they derive additional plausibility from certain traditional elements in the value system (the same could be said of many revolutionary doctrines), but wrong if he supposes that these elements

¹ Gomme, however, *Commentary* ii. 175 disagrees. He insists that *ἀπραγμοσύνη* is a complimentary term (always) and in his rendering the bite of the phrase derives from the contrast between *δεδιώς* and *ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι*. Cf. de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'impérialisme athénien*, 72 n. 1 and V. Ehrenberg, 'Polypragmosyne, a study in Greek politics', *J.H.S.* lxxvii (1947), 48 n. 9.

² And the word would certainly be associated with the phrase *ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίγνεσθαι*. Uses of *ἀνδραγαθία* in Thucydides bear out the association with courage—see 2. 42. 3, 3. 64. 4, 5. 101, although at 3. 57. 1 a reputation for justice as well as military valour seems to be in mind.

³ Gomme ('Four Passages in Thucydides', *J.H.S.* lxxi [1951], 78–9) sees Nicias and his associates as being Pericles' targets here rather than strictly oligarchical opponents, but from the point of view of political propaganda the difference is not very important. I see no ground for accepting

the suggestion of Nestle (*“Ἀπραγμοσύνη”*, *Philologus* lxxx [1925], 129–40), that οἱ ἀπράγμονες are philosophers, even Socrates. If Thucydides had meant to refer to philosophers he would have made it much clearer.

⁴ On the nature of this traditional attitude see H. Wade-Gery, 'Thucydides, son of Melesias', Appendix D, *J.H.S.* lxi (1932), 234–5, Ehrenberg, *op. cit.* (n. 1) 62, and Lloyd-Jones, *JZ* 205–6. For the opposite characteristics of the Athenians see Thuc. 1. 68–71.

⁵ Note particularly 3. 82. 8, 8. 53. 3, 64. 5, and the overtones of 4. 28. 5. Cf. Helen North, *op. cit.* (above, p. 215 n. 2) 111 ff. It is surely no accident either that in Plato's *Charmides* Socrates discusses *σωφροσύνη* with two well-known oligarchs, Charmides himself and Critias.

⁶ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 1) esp. 53–6.

⁷ See the passages cited by Ehrenberg, esp. *Plutus* 913 ff.

comprise the whole of what was traditionally valued by the Greeks, or necessarily the principal part of it.

Much more telling evidence that the 'quiet' values were, and had for some time been, admired in Thucydides' own day comes from the passage in which he describes the general effects on the Greek cities of *στάσεις* (3. 82–5). There are two main processes which Thucydides observes and deplores in the main part of this passage—firstly, the replacement of intelligent forethought and caution by an impetuous and thoughtless violence in action, and secondly, the disappearance of generosity and justice in the wake of slick cleverness and a proneness to suspicion. These tendencies, especially the second, amount to nothing less than the abandonment of what Adkins calls the quiet values. But the language which Thucydides uses here also deserves attention. When Thucydides remarks (82. 7) that it was easier for the many who were *κακοῦργοι*¹ to be called clever than for the stupid to be called *ἀγαθοί*, this is not only a 'quiet' use of the term, but implies that it had been normal for *ἀγαθός* to be applied to quiet excellences. It is surely clear that in more normal times Thucydides would expect stupid people on occasions to be called *ἀγαθοί*, and this would presumably be because of a certain quality of outlook and intention. This impression is confirmed by the sentence in which Thucydides sums up the whole character of the change in moral climate as he sees it—'Simplicity,' he says, 'which is the most important ingredient in nobility, was laughed out of court and disappeared', *τὸ εὖηθες, οὗ τὸ γενναῖον πλείστον μετέχει, καταγελασθὲν ἡφανίσθη* (83. 1). *Τὸ εὖηθες* is here being used in its original and by now perhaps slightly old-fashioned sense of 'goodness of character'; at the same time there is a full awareness of the contemptuous notion of naïveté generally present in the use of the word, combined with an intention of showing that the contempt is misplaced.² *Τὸ εὖηθες* is linked by Thucydides with the notion of *τὸ γενναῖον*, a concept whose significance he has illuminated for us in the previous chapter (82. 7) by contrasting it with the unduly cautious reception of proposals from an opponent. The association of *γενναϊότης* with simplicity and generosity as opposed to cleverness and calculation is attested elsewhere. In Euripides' *Phoenissae* (1680) Antigone's declared intention of accompanying her father into exile is characterized as noble but foolish (*γενναϊότης σοι, μωρία δ' ἔνεστί τις*); and the refusal of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* to go along with the machinations of Odysseus is a sign too of *γενναϊότης*.³ Adkins again

¹ Indeed the word *κακοῦργος* itself indicates that some active qualities were regularly decried, and generally implies a contrast with the peaceful and law-abiding citizen. Cf. the use of *ἀμείνους* at 82. 2, where, however, the connotation may be intellectual rather than moral.

² The contemptuous use is already present in Herodotus, see 1. 60. 3, 2. 45. 1, and cf. the only other use of a word from this root in Thucydides, 3. 45. 7; it is perhaps this that has tempted at least one scholar to translate *τὸ εὖηθες* here as 'silliness' (P. Shorey, 'The Implicit Ethics and Psychology of Thucydides', *T.A.P.A.* xxiv (1893), 75 f.). Shorey's translation is well criticized by Grene op. cit. [above, p. 213 n. 2] 27.) For

a use which like the one here shows an awareness of both meanings of the word see Plato, *Republic* 1. 348 c–d, where the term is again coupled with *γενναῖος*. See also *Republic* 3. 400 e (cited by Gomme ad. loc.) and 409 a.

³ See *Philoctetes* 475, 799, 801, 1068, 1402. That the term could also plausibly commend a person's resource is implied at 50–3. Adkins's discussion of this play (*MR* 183, 189) once again shows him greeting 'quiet' uses of value-terms as novelties when in fact they are surely traditional, and being challenged by the wily Odysseus. Adkins's own somewhat ambiguous attitude over values at this period is well illustrated by his remark (*MR* 183): 'The new usage (sc.

chooses to regard the standard of *γενναιότης* in these two plays as evidence of a new scale of values and the two plays are admittedly late.¹ It is indeed very clear that Euripides in particular was anxious to redefine terms which had above all signified aristocratic birth in more unambiguously moral terms; but the attempt would scarcely be plausible if the qualities which were now being regarded as constituting 'nobility' had never been associated at all with the aristocratic set of values. Anyway the connexion of *τὸ γενναῖον* with self-denying and generous behaviour certainly goes farther back than this. In the surely conventional characterization of the early *Alcestis*, the heroine is again and again described as *γενναία*;² and in what is probably the earliest of Sophocles' extant plays the kindred term *εὐγενής* is used of a man who shows proper gratitude.³ Furthermore it is the clear implication of Thucydides' account here that the standard of *γενναιότης* was generally recognized as at once traditional and involving magnanimity and straightforwardness of character.

The impression, then, created in the pages of Thucydides is that the values which Adkins terms 'quiet' are very much part of an established tradition, that the application of the terms of the *ἀρετή-ἀγαθός* group to them is in no way novel or unusual, and that even where these terms are not used, other terms like *τὸ δίκαιον* or *γενναιότης* may carry quite as much weight. This impression is strengthened by the fact that Thucydides shows us a challenge being presented to these values which tries to assimilate *τὸ καλὸν* to *τὸ συμφέρον*. This is not to deny that there are substantial elements of truth lurking behind Adkins's contentions, rather to assert that he has exaggerated and over-systematized their significance. It is certainly true, as Adkins implies, that the issue of whether birth, wealth, individual merit, or some other criterion is the proper basis for assessing human value was a matter of debate in the late fifth century, and that this in its turn raised the question of the extent of the group within which laws were valid and moral virtues should be practised. This second question indeed is clearly one of the major themes of the moral and political thought of antiquity,⁴ although it is important not to confuse it with the question whether justice should be valued at all (see above, p. 219). It is clearly true too that the 'immoralists' of the late fifth century could plausibly draw on a strand in Greek thinking which supposed that *ἀρετή* and *ἀγαθός* are appropriately—but not exclusively or even primarily, as Adkins seems to think—applied to those who display ability or achieve success. The whole moral debate that echoes through the pages of Euripides, Thucydides, and Plato testifies to the tension between the different implications of different approaches to the main Greek moral terms, and we have reason to be grateful to Adkins for redirecting our attention to it. But it does not support the view that only one element in the conflict is traditional, and the tension is one which is surely present in almost any society's attempt to define human excellence; the problem is certainly crucial to understanding the nature of the Roman *virtus*; and what more central difficulty has confronted Western Christian civilization than that of reconciling the ad-

of *αἰσχροπρία* to describe an unjust action) is sufficiently understood without explanation, but only a minor assault might be needed to upset it'.

² *Alcestis* 624, 742, 993.

³ *Ajax* 524.

⁴ Leading instances are obviously the widening of Greek horizons to take account of non-Greeks (Alexander, the Stoics), and the progressive extensions of the Roman citizenship up to the time of Caracalla.

¹ *Philoctetes*, 409 B.C.; *Phoenissae* between 411 and 409.

miration for drive, initiative, and enterprise with that for probity, self-sacrifice, and Christian love?¹

No-one who has studied the more systematic of the Greek ethical thinkers from Socrates onwards can fail to be impressed by the egoistical and utilitarian framework within which their ethical theories seem to be worked out. Alike in Plato's *Republic* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle it is assumed that what we ultimately need to find is the nature of *εὐδαιμονία*, rather than any account of man's duties or possible achievements.² Such an approach may well seem to place a higher value on those qualities which depend on capacity and success rather than goodness of intention. It is therefore tempting to follow Adkins in supposing that the peculiarities of Greek ethical thought can be explained in terms of a predilection for competitive rather than co-operative ideals. As I have suggested, Adkins seems right in drawing attention to this element, but wrong in supposing that it is this which mainly determines the character of Greek ethical thinking. What seems above all characteristic of the approach of Plato and Aristotle is their attempt to relate values which are already morally admired to the pursuit of man's advantage. They are writing in a situation in which values which have been admired will no longer be so unless they can be shown to be conducive to the individual's advantage. This is true no doubt of justice *par excellence*, but a similarly utilitarian justification has to be furnished for qualities like courage and *σοφία*. At the heart of the problem for Plato, at least on occasions, is the need to relate *τὸ καλὸν* to *τὸ ἀγαθόν*: and while the Spartans may be described in the pages of Thucydides as assimilating *τὸ καλόν* to what is purely expedient, Plato sees it as his task to turn this argument on its head and show that the expedient can only be understood in terms of *τὸ καλόν*, in which *τὸ δίκαιον* is an essential ingredient. It is not for nothing, either, that Aristotle opens his *Eudemian Ethics* with the Delian epigram³ which asserts a separation between the two concepts—a separation which Aristotle conceives it to be his function to refute, but which he believes to be widely held:

*Κάλλιστον τὸ δίκαιότατον, λῶστον δ' ὑγιαίνειν,
πάντων ἥδιστον δ' οὐ τις ἐρᾷ τὸ τυχεῖν.*

I would suggest that it is by studying the implications of this epigram rather than by just distinguishing the competitive from the co-operative that we shall gain insight into the ethical background of the thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

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¹ See D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust*, ch. 2, and Lloyd-Jones, *JZ* 32 and 136-7.

² See especially Plato, *Republic* 2. init. and Aristotle, *E.N.* init.

³ Cf. *E.N.* 1. 1099^a27-8.