

PLUTARCH AND THUCYDIDES OR THE FREE USE OF QUOTATIONS

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COMPARING WHAT PLUTARCH wrote in his biographies with what he read in Thucydides would require a long analysis, which I shall not attempt to give here. Nor would the research be new. What I intend to do is to consider a few precise examples where Plutarch obviously uses, or even quotes, Thucydides, but where the difference in date or literary aim introduces into the text some remarkable distortions. This is made possible by the practice of ancient writers in matters of imitation and quotation.

Plutarch knew his Thucydides quite well: no one doubts this any more today. He took much from him in the biographies of Pericles, Alcibiades, and Nicias. But, whenever he used him, he used him quite freely, as was the general custom with the ancient Greeks. They were much given to quotations; but they did not feel a quotation should be accurate to the very words, or should be accompanied by a reference.¹ They just tried to rewrite the passage they used in their own words. This applies to actual quotations, taken from a specific author; it applies even more to the use of historical knowledge, which was considered anonymous, and of admitted fact. Now the differences which appear in style between the two authors—the one who quotes and the one who is quoted, or the one who uses the material and the one who provides it—may be very slight and innocent, a simple matter of words. But these slight changes become illuminating, if the two authors belong to different periods or have different aims. For they show and reveal each one's tendencies. In the case of Plutarch and Thucydides, I should say

¹See my lecture: "Les citations infidèles dans la Grèce antique," *Public. de l'Institut de France* (1985) no. 12. Lists have been made of Plutarch's actual quotations of authors (see W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* [London 1959, American Philological Association, Philological Monographs 19]); and these actual quotations have often been studied, particularly in connection with Thucydides (so Tzannetatos, 'Ο Θουκυδίδης ὡς πηγὴ παρὰ τῷ Πλουτάρχῳ βιογραφοῦντι [Athens 1958]. I have seen only a summary of E. Meinhardt, *Pericles bei Plutarch* [diss., Frankfurt 1957]). But many passages are semi-quotations, and the limit is often impossible to trace. Plutarch often recounts the same story in different words: compare *Erotikos* 762c and *Alcibiades* 6, or *Erotikos* 760d and *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 180f. The text which follows was originally a lecture, which I gave at the Academy of Jerusalem in 1986. No attempt has been made to add all the footnotes and references that could be of use to the reader. Yet it is only fair to mention that, although dealing with different texts, and centered on Plutarch, not on Thucydides, some studies have shown the way and given useful views on the manner in which Plutarch used his material—the main one being B. R. Pelling, "Plutarch's adaptation of his source material," *JHS* 100 (1980) 127–140. See also the different studies by P. Stadter (e.g., for Pericles: "Plutarch's composition of Pericles and Fabius Maximus," *GRBS* 16 [1975] 77–85).

they are illuminating, not so much for Plutarch's own method, but for Thucydides' peculiarities as a historian: perhaps we should not have noticed them so well if they had not been omitted by the later author, and thus made more obvious. In many cases this highlights the differences in aim between history and biography; it also points to what was most original in our historian.

What an author leaves out in a quotation or an imitation is generally what was most intimately linked with the personal views of the writer he takes after. We could call that the method of differences or residues. But, whatever its name, I shall try and practise it with one or two examples taken from each of the three biographies I have mentioned.

I shall start with the *Life of Pericles*, where Thucydides is quoted several times by name, and where other passages are in fact borrowed from him. And leaving out what is sheer mention of fact, I shall concentrate on the general interpretation which Thucydides gives of Pericles and which is summed up in the well-known analysis comparing him to his successors in Book 2 chapter 65.

This famous text is quoted by Plutarch for the first time in his biography in a short sentence which can serve as a kind of introduction (9.1). It describes Pericles' authority as being "by name a democracy, but in fact the rule of the first citizen." This is an accurate quotation. But the short sentence, summing up Thucydides' view, is in Plutarch contrasted with other opinions. To put it succinctly, Thucydides insists on Pericles' personal authority, whereas other authors speak of his intrigues as a demagogue. Confronted with this discrepancy, what will Plutarch do? The usual answer to this question is that he just gives the two interpretations side by side. But things are a little worse than that. Plutarch develops the demagogue theme at some length, because it is rich in anecdotes and lively characters—and then he admits that, later, a change occurred; in chapter 15 he calmly writes: "After that, Pericles was no more the same man as before, nor alike submissive to the people and ready to yield and give in to the desires of the multitude." In other words, the contradiction between sources has become a psychological evolution—an easy way to deal with contradictions.² We therefore see that, when Plutarch returns to Thucydides' view, it will already have lost much of its weight and meaning, as a result of this combination of sources.

This occurs in chapter 15; there, following Thucydides, Plutarch firmly explains that Pericles could resist the people and master their temper or

²The evolution is in itself admissible and well presented: see A. B. Breebart, "Plutarch and the Political Development of Pericles," *Mnemosyne* 24 (1971) 260–272; and Plutarch may have found it somewhere. Still, it is obviously a means of doing away with contradictory judgments: See Gomme's commentary on Thucydides, *Introd.*, 69.

hostility. And this he could do, not only because of his quality as a speaker, but because, "as Thucydides puts it," it was acknowledged that he was utterly disinterested and superior to bribery. That is quite correct. Thucydides does say that Pericles used to frighten the people when they were overconfident, and stir them when they gave in to fright. He does say also that his authority was due to the general regard people had for him (ἄξιωματι) and to the fact that he was obviously superior to bribery. This is almost *verbatim* the same. But there are some differences; and that is what I am interested in.

First, two small differences in the formulation of these two ideas.

Plutarch says that Pericles could resist the people's hostility or discontent; and in order to make the idea quite clear, he adds two images: one borrowed from horsemanship (Pericles could "tighten the reins"), the other one from medicine (and this is probably taken from Plato). Thucydides has no such images. On the other hand, he is much more precise in his analysis. For he does not speak of the the people's discontent, which is a matter of personal relationship; he speaks of their irrational moods and of Pericles' reasonable action in restraining the opposite excesses of these moods. He says (I quote—more or less, in my turn—Hobbes' translation): "Whenever he saw them out of reason insolently bold, he would, by his speeches, breed fear in them; and again, when they were afraid without reason, he would likewise brace their spirits and embolden them." This means Thucydides gives his reader a profound interpretation of the psychology of the people and of the problems of democracy. It is analysis. And this is exactly what Plutarch, keeping only the personal relationship, leaves out of the picture.

Now the same difference also shows in the second idea, that is to say in the explanation of what this personal authority of Pericles rested upon. In Plutarch, we find that it rested on two qualities: he had a great reputation and was not accessible to bribery. These two qualities both come from Thucydides, who uses almost the same words. But Thucydides has a third one! Between the general regard for Pericles and his resistance to bribery, he has one more word, only one: judgment (γνώμη).³ When one realises that this γνώμη is, for Thucydides, the main quality of a statesman, and that the whole chapter on Pericles emphasizes Pericles' art of prevision (πρόνοια, προέγγω), or again that Pericles' γνώμη is emphasized all through the narration of Book 2,⁴ one cannot help feeling that Plutarch's omission is rather remarkable. It is made all the more remarkable by the fact that Plutarch, who has no room, apparently, for mentioning intelligence, has a long addition about the power of rhetoric, considered, in a most Platonic manner, as the art of "leading the soul" (ψυχαγωγία). He leaves out what was fundamental for Thucydides, and goes his own way, in other directions.

³See P. Huart, *Γνώμη chez Thucydide et ses contemporains* (Paris 1973).

⁴See my introduction to Book 2, xvi–xxv.

But these differences in the formulation of our two ideas are nothing compared with the difference in their order. In Plutarch, the whole emphasis is laid on Pericles' manners and behaviour, which are described first, and rather at length, with the two images already mentioned. The reasons that make this behaviour possible only come later, in 15.3 (with the transition "The reason why . . . : αἰτία δὲ . . ."). Now, if we turn back to Thucydides, we see that the order is the reverse. The central concern, for him, is the nature of Pericles' authority, contrasted with his successors' lack of authority. It is this that accounts for all the mistakes that were made when leaders had to court the people for power, to please the people, to obey the people. This covers the whole evolution of Athenian politics during the Peloponnesian war; and furthermore it is a far-reaching analysis of the manner in which a democracy works, for better or for worse. As for Pericles' practical attitude, it only comes in as an example of this general idea. It has to take second place. It is merely a symptom ("at least we can see that . . ."), illustrating the main idea and leading to the conclusion which had been quoted by Plutarch earlier: "it was by name a democracy, but in fact the rule of the first citizen." Coming at the end of Thucydides' analysis, this sentence acquires its full meaning, which of course it could not have, once isolated from its context.

With these slight differences in the formulation of the two ideas, and with the difference in their order, the whole meaning is changed. Plutarch, no doubt, keeps all that can help to describe Pericles' personal manners and habits. But the main point of Thucydides' chapter has been altogether left out; the main idea has been lost. And I think that, by contrast, Plutarch helps us to measure how original and profound Thucydides' view was. Pericles, indeed, had then just died; and there is not a single word in Thucydides' work about his personality. Instead we have ideas, deep and thorough analysis, abstraction, political philosophy Poor Plutarch used what he could, but none of those things was much help to him.

There are, of course, other small differences in detail between our two passages. They show that Plutarch had Thucydides in mind, for he uses the same words, with a different meaning and intention. It would be amusing to trace them,⁵ but it would lead us into too long a discussion. Also it might

⁵For instance, Thucydides had ended his mention of Pericles' reputation, intelligence, and honesty, with a sentence saying that, thanks to these advantages, Pericles could hold the people freely: κατείχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως. I shall not insist on this sentence because its exact meaning is not certain. I understand the adverb to mean that the people were free and yet obedient. Others understand that Pericles held the people "without hesitation," "as a free man should." If my meaning is correct, the thought is deeper and more political. But in any case, the sentence bears on the manner in which he practised democracy. It refers to political analysis, not to individual description. We cannot be surprised to see that it is absent in Plutarch. Similarly, Plutarch remembered what Thucydides had said about the difficulty for the people of managing such a great empire. Now Thucydides had meant, and said, that many mistakes were

be considered a little unfair to Plutarch, because, after all, this chapter of Thucydides is the only passage in the whole work where he goes so far out of his way for the sake of general theory. So one could not expect a biographer to retain all this theory in a work that was supposed to be centered on the life and habits of a single man.

Therefore I shall now consider another example, also taken from the *Life of Pericles*, but bearing, this time, on a detail of narration, not on a general reflection. In 33.6, Plutarch explains that, at the beginning of the war, the people in Athens were longing to come out of the city and fight the enemy. That was against Pericles' plan, which he had explained from the very start. So what was he to do? What he did was to refrain from calling the people together in an assembly. As Plutarch says, εἰς ἐκκλησίαν οὐ συνῆγε. Now, this is quite correct. Thucydides says, in chapter 22.1, that, seeing how eager they were to come out and fight, Pericles had refrained from calling the Athenians together, whether in an assembly or in any sort of meeting (ἐκκλησίαν τε οὐκ ἐποίει αὐτῶν οὔτε ξύλλογον οὐδένα). So far, so good. But Plutarch adds a motive; and this is not quite the same motive as in Thucydides. He says that Pericles acted in that way "fearing he might be driven by force against his better judgment" (παρὰ γνώμην). That is to say that once more he sees in Pericles' behaviour his relation to others and the very personal desire to act according to his own wishes.

Now, from what we have just seen, perhaps it is possible to guess what the motive was in Thucydides. It was almost the same. Plutarch would probably have thought that he was giving exactly the same explanation, only in different words. But let us beware of different words! We have just seen that the main idea in the chapter on Pericles was the notion that, thanks to his authority, the great statesman was the embodiment of reason, whereas the people were led by passions, anger, despondency, or overconfidence, in sum, by all sorts of irrational impulses. Could that be recalled here? Trust Thucydides: it is! According to his text Pericles did not call the people to any assembly or meeting "for fear lest, being together, they might obey passion rather than judgment, and thus be led to some mistake." It is not Pericles against others: it is, within the city and for the city, reason against passion. The whole theory about democracy is there again, with the people's irrational moods, and Pericles' clear-sightedness. The deep meaning of each particular step is thus briefly recalled, even in a simple narration of events.

Plutarch's omission or distortion calls our attention to these purposeful words. I must say it is sheer intellectual delight to notice these details,

committed, as was likely in such a case. And we know why: because it is hard to find the right policy when so many cities are hostile; it requires more lucidity than would be the case for a small and peaceful city. Plutarch, on the other hand, says that this empire stirs among the people all sorts of emotions (παντοδαπῶν . . . παθῶν). Again the general analysis has been lost, and the intellectual point of view dismissed. Only feelings and psychology interest him.

thanks to Plutarch! And each word seems to call for other similar observations.

For instance, we may find here that quality of judgment (or γνώμη), which we have already found in Thucydides and which Plutarch had already left aside. In fact it occurs twice in our passage. For Thucydides says that Pericles was confident that he judged things rightly (ὁρθῶς γινώσκειν) and that he did not want people to act for any reason other than judgment (γνώμη). A clear and emphatic system can thus be detected in the smallest details of his text. And then, in the very same sentence, a single word. It doesn't seem important at first. Pericles feared that the people, "being together," would act in a foolish way. One hardly notices it; and yet the word rests on another general analysis about the working of a democracy. For it means that, when people are brought together, each one is stimulated by the presence and pressure of the others. Thucydides shows it in the description of the assembly which sends Cleon to Pylos, because it gets excited, as mobs generally do (4.28.3). He also mentions the idea when the army, in Sicily, is eager to fight "as is the habit of the mob when it gains confidence" (6.63.2). In Book 6 he has even shown this happening precisely in an assembly; for he says that, when the Athenians decided to go and conquer Sicily, "even those who were not favourable feared, if they voted against the expedition, to seem to lack patriotism: therefore they didn't say anything" (6.24.3). One is reminded of what Plato wrote about the manner in which, because of the noise and the shouts of the assembly, the young man who could have become a philosopher loses his own judgment.

All that is contained in the one word "being together," which Plutarch omitted in our passage. Instead, Plutarch added another image, also taken from Plato: that is the image of the pilot who knows his job and does not listen to the passengers' prayers or protests. This, of course, is, in a way, a sound political theory; it is also lively. But it is not analysis. And, by contrast, we can understand better the unique manner in which Thucydides describes actual events with such a choice of words that the general meaning becomes clear to all, in the shortest, most discreet, and most illuminating way.

That is the reason why I am not so much interested in all the differences of facts, which are generally studied by scholars dealing with Plutarch and Thucydides or Plutarch and his sources. I am not interested in the small details, where he corrects the historian, or shortens his text, or makes it longer, when only facts, and battles, and names are in question. What I am interested in is the different orientation, the different approach.

Plutarch, using Thucydides, simply loses the whole point Thucydides was trying to make; with a few different words, he changes the meaning of the text and the originality of what the historian had written. Of course, he knew that he wasn't writing history: he spoke several times about the differ-

ences in aim between history and biography.⁶ So he is not at all to blame. But it is, I think, remarkable to see that the difference shows in every single word, and that it shows all the more clearly in passages where he probably thought he was following his model most closely. For in those cases what he leaves out, or what I called the residue, is exactly what was the originality of his source. His very omissions are like searchlights, suddenly turned on the most individual features of Thucydides' History.

We could of course imagine that Plutarch's other sources, in the case of Pericles, were entirely responsible for these losses. After all, many of them were deeply hostile to Pericles. We shall therefore seek a confirmation from the two other biographies I mentioned, both of which are concerned with men who were among those successors of Pericles whom Thucydides declared so different from their great predecessor.

Now, if we consider Alcibiades, it is obvious that the result is exactly the same as for Pericles; and this shows clearly if we compare the two texts: their difference is as remarkable as for Pericles.

As everybody knows, Alcibiades was a very gifted young man. He was brilliant in everything, and, on certain occasions, acted as a splendid general. Unfortunately, he was an individualist, obeying no rules, a prey to many passions, and delighting in provocation. This is made clear both by Thucydides and Plutarch. But here again, the difference is obvious. For Plutarch, these characteristics of Alcibiades provide a mass of anecdotes, all swift and lively. On the other hand, we have almost nothing about the political consequences of such an attitude: we only see that the reputable men in Athens (οἱ ἔνδοξοι) looked on this behaviour with loathing and indignation, whereas ordinary people did not mind so much.

Now, if we turn to Thucydides, we see that all these follies lead to another political reflection, which, like the one dealing with Pericles, is a sort of parenthesis that extends, in a single page, to the very end of the war. Our historian explains that Alcibiades' behaviour "proved later to be one of the causes, and not the least, which ruined Athens." Indeed, he writes, "as the majority of the people (οἱ πολλοί) feared the man, both for the great independence of his personal way of life and for the great spirit which showed in every particular action he undertook, they suspected him of wanting to be a tyrant and became his enemies. Therefore, though in his public activities he managed all that concerned the war for the best, yet, as they were irritated by his manners in private life, they gave the charge of the war to others, which brought disaster to the city" (6.15.3-4). In one sentence, conveying a whole evolution, the general relationship of Alcibiades to the people is described down to its furthest consequences for the city. The analysis bears

⁶See for instance *Alexander* 1.

on the same problem as the one we had for Pericles; and it is, once more, centered on the city: for it is the city that finally suffers from Alcibiades' private behaviour. We have therefore the same difference in level and orientation between our two authors: personal situation on one side, political reflection on the other. We have also some nice differences in detail, which I find illuminating. I shall mention but one. Alcibiades' enemies, in Plutarch, are the reputable men (for he thinks in terms of moral reprobation); indeed, he repeats in the comparison with Coriolanus that Alcibiades was not hated by his fellow-citizens. On the other hand, Thucydides says that Alcibiades was feared by "the majority." Why the majority? Obviously because this is what made their hatred politically important and explains its consequences. The different orientation of our two authors brings out discrepancies even in matters of fact.

But this mention of Alcibiades' enemies leads us to another episode which is very similar in our two authors. Both of them tell us about the intrigues that took place when Alcibiades was ready to depart with the expedition to Sicily: he was compromised in some scandals and wanted to be tried before leaving Athens. But his enemies thought the attacks would be more successful if he were away from Athens; and their action prevailed. The facts are exactly the same in Plutarch 19.5–7 and in Thucydides 6.29. The differences are only in formulation; but they are most characteristic.

First, of course, Plutarch is more lively: he makes Alcibiades' enemies speak, in direct discourse ("Nay," they said, "let him sail now, and Heaven be with him!"⁷). He also makes his narration more precise and personal by mentioning names of people who do not appear in Thucydides. He even remarks that it is a pity Thucydides should not have given more facts and details (particularly the names of the informers in the two scandals). But, while he notices this absence of names, he does not seem to notice at all the remarkable presence, in Thucydides' text, of some important ideas: he was looking for names, not for ideas; and therefore he just left them out, as he had done for Pericles.

Also, as was the case for Pericles, we have here a difference of order in our two texts. Thucydides has first of all the general attacks on Alcibiades, then Alcibiades' wish to get through his trial before leaving Athens, then the intervention of his enemies, leading to his leaving Athens: attacks against him—reaction—action against him—decision. Apparently Plutarch thought he could be more simple than that. He has one paragraph dealing with the general attacks and the particular action of Alcibiades' enemies, then an attempt on Alcibiades' part to oppose them, an attempt which does

⁷The fact that I put some words between inverted commas in my translation of Thucydides in the *C.U.F.* does not mean that Thucydides did the same, but, on the contrary, that his long explanations in indirect style are a little indigestible for our own tastes.

not succeed. So Thucydides gives more room to Alcibiades' enemies than to Alcibiades' own reaction. They come in twice. We could even say three times, for the general motives of these enemies have first been described at the end of chapter 28! There Thucydides explains that they were jealous of him because he stood in their way and prevented them from obtaining the leadership of the people; hence they hoped to use calumny against him while he was away. That is to say, the intrigues which take place at this time are brought into connection with the general idea we have already seen in relation to Pericles—that all the mistakes Athens made were due to the fact that the leaders who came after Pericles quarrelled with one another because of their ambition. Quarrels and private ambitions: this is what was announced in Book 2, and that is what we have again in Book 6, with practically the same words. Of course this makes the intellectual pattern appear quite clearly in the very narration of events.

We cannot blame Plutarch for having omitted this idea: he was interested in Alcibiades, not in the general evolution of Athenian politics. But the omission, once more, calls our attention to the way in which Thucydides managed to elicit a general meaning from actual narration, and to make it clear to his readers, without comment or digression. The "residue" is once more Thucydides' own originality.

With Nicias, we cannot hope to find, even in Thucydides, any general analysis of that sort, for Nicias' influence on Athenian politics was not as great as his predecessors'. But I think we can reach some interesting conclusion by looking at an early episode which is to be found in Thucydides (4.27) and in Plutarch (7). The two narrations, in the two authors, are so close to one another, that the editor of Plutarch in our Budé series, R. Flacelière, felt compelled to add a footnote saying: "This narration closely follows Thucydides 4.27–28." This is the passage where one sees Nicias abandoning his function as general for Pylos, and leaving it to the demagogue Cleon, under the pressure of the mob.

The two texts are quite alike. But, again, it is worth looking into the differences. First, as in the example just mentioned, Plutarch's narration is more lively because he uses direct speech: "Why don't you sail yourself?" ask the Athenians. This was not in Thucydides. Then comes the question of motives, where Plutarch omits quite a lot. Particularly, Thucydides has six lines about Cleon's motives, in which he says that he understood what his difficulty was and could see that the Athenians were in themselves inclined to send greater forces to Pylos. This, of course, did not interest our biographer; but it is important for Thucydides. Indeed, the motive he gives refers precisely to the usual attitude of demagogues, who urge the people to do what they wish to do, and who take into account, not the best solution for

the city, but the pleasure of the people. This is what the analysis of Book 2 had shown as being one of the problems of democracy. By adding these few words, Thucydides again brings a simple episode into relation with the general history of the war. One line only, and no reader can go astray!

However, we then have, in our two authors, a pretty dialogue between Nicias and Cleon. Nicias offers to give Cleon his post. Cleon first tries to draw back and then accepts the offer. Why does he do it? In Thucydides it is because he saw he was trapped and could not do otherwise; in Plutarch, because his ambition was stirred and on fire. An intellectual explanation on one side, a psychological and moral one on the other.

But of course, in both cases, the real decision comes from the pressure of the mob. People get excited, shout, insist. Plutarch, as I said, gives us one of these cries: "Why don't you sail yourself?" What do we have instead in Thucydides? No description, but once more a sentence of political analysis, and, once more, a sentence which connects this particular event with the general notion of the irrational tendencies of people brought together in an assembly: "As is the fashion of the multitude, the more Cleon declined the offer and went back from his word, the more they pressed Nicias to resign his function, and cried out to Cleon that he should go and do it." These few words echo the lines we have seen in Book 2; and the whole episode is thus treated as an example of the dangers of democracy, when lack of responsibility on one side combines with personal ambition on the other. No doubt, if Thucydides goes into the details of this lively meeting of the assembly, that is because it throws full light on this danger.

And finally another detail: the conclusion of the episode. In Thucydides, we see that the Athenians could not help laughing at Cleon's confidence; and wise people thought that the result would be good in any case: either Cleon would succeed, or they would be rid of him. As could be guessed, the reckoning of wise people is simply left out in Plutarch as being too intellectual, and too much centered on the city. But he keeps the laughter. He even increases it, for what was in Thucydides some sort of laughter (τι καὶ . . .) now becomes a big laughter (μέγα) and the text adds an impression of "agreeable game." Alas, the game cannot be quite so much fun in Thucydides: the episode is too clearly connected, for him, with the miseries that were to come as a result of such behaviour.

I could add other examples taken from the *Life of Nicias*. For instance, it would be easy to show that, when Nicias wishes to try and remain in Sicily, Plutarch turns into four lines what was two pages in Thucydides and two pages of thorough analysis at that, mentioning Nicias' information and his calculations about what he could hope or fear. All this is omitted in Plutarch.

But I think it will be fairer, as I did with Pericles, to take as my last

example a question of mere fact; and I shall choose the discussion between the three Athenian generals in Sicily, which occurs in Thucydides 6.47–49 and in Plutarch 14.3. Of course, such a discussion is more interesting for history than for biography: so we are not surprised that, again, it occupies two pages in Thucydides as against six lines in Plutarch.

And the content? On the whole, it is the same in our two authors. But not quite! Plutarch gives the opinions of the three generals: Lamachos, Alcibiades, and Nicias, ending with Nicias, the man he was interested in. But Thucydides has a different order: Nicias, Alcibiades, Lamachos. This could seem unimportant. But Thucydides, ending with Lamachos, says that Lamachos finally sided with Alcibiades' plan, which therefore prevailed. Now Plutarch does not say that at all: he ends with Nicias, as if Nicias' advice had prevailed. He even suggests it boldly, for he writes: "In this way he (Nicias) soon relaxed the resolution and depressed the spirits of the men." Of course, it is true that later, thanks to the departure of Alcibiades, Nicias became responsible. Still, the result of the meeting of the generals is here distorted, because Plutarch's interest in Nicias comes before historical accuracy. One must beware of biographers as such: even the most simple facts can be altered by the free arrangement of sources. That is required by their new interest.

I shall not go on with these examples, which could seem rather tedious: I hope that, though tedious, they have their point.

On the whole, we knew beforehand that Plutarch had read Thucydides and used him often, with an easy freedom in formulation. We knew beforehand that he would drop all political considerations and keep only what was of interest for individual psychology. We also knew beforehand that Thucydides was rich in general analysis, and was able to present events in such a manner that the reading of his History would be useful for people who wanted to understand later events that had something in common with those he was describing. We knew all that before we started. What I think we did not know quite clearly enough was how this general meaning was inserted in Thucydides' work, or how the material was transformed from history to biography, or how every single word, in the most similar passages, could bear the mark of this inner transformation.

The possibility of seeing it in full light comes from the Greek habit of practicing free quotation and free imitation: Greek literature consists at one and the same time of continuity and constant innovation. A philological approach can therefore be a test, and a most valid one, even of the history of ideas. For we have only to read and compare, and the evolution comes out clearly—as a person's psychology comes out from a simple *lapsus*. It is particularly exciting with historians. And I must say that a similar method

has been recently tried by others. I was happy to see that a recent book, by Jacques Gascou,⁸ devoted a whole chapter to the manner in which Suetonius quoted his sources and in effect altered them. Word-for-word comparison is the only safe way to observe and to test the exact originality of a text.

One last word should be added. I think the difference between our two texts comes out clearly from the free use Plutarch makes of Thucydides. And, on the whole, I have explained this difference by the fact that one of them was writing history and the other biography. I still believe it to be true. But when, on other occasions, I have studied the free use of quotations in Greek authors, I have met similar differences, which I have explained mainly by the fact that the time, the century, or intellectual fashion had undergone change and evolution. Now, has that not occurred with our two authors? After all, six centuries is a long time, and particularly so for Greek civilisation, where everything kept changing, by a sort of continuous process of discovery.

One could certainly trace such differences in the texts we have seen. But apart from that, the very difference in literary aim and interest can indeed be connected with the difference in time and circumstances.

That such a history as that of Thucydides, with the supreme ambition of letting the narration reveal a general system of ideas, should have appeared in Athens in the second half of the fifth century B.C., when the urge for understanding man and the world was at its highest, and when all authors were filling their works with general remarks about man's psychology and the laws of politics, is in no way surprising. Such an ambition was linked with the discovery of the powers of intelligence.

It is not surprising either that other interests should have brought out, in the time of Plutarch, a different kind of curiosity. The great progress made in individual psychology was one reason; the influence of the philosophers and moralists was another; and we have seen the intrusion of Platonism in the very pages where Plutarch was following Thucydides. There was also another reason: in the fifth century B.C. people lived for their city and by their city; it always came first. But, Plutarch, although he may have been quite devoted to the local activities of his own town or region, lived in the time of the Roman empire, when cities did not count as much as before—except of course for Rome. We have noticed that, in the passages we have considered, everything was centered for Thucydides on the behaviour and fate of Athens, but for Plutarch on the behaviour and fate of the individuals he was writing about.

We have thus a process of evolution which is much broader than just from

⁸J. Gascou, *Suétone historien* (Rome 1984, BEFAR 255).

one author to another or from one literary genre to another. And it is a good example of the manner in which the Greeks never stopped originating new ideas and new discoveries from one century to the next.

The general principle is exactly the same as in the specific cases we have considered; and the phenomenon is similar, only on a larger scale. A change of emphasis in a single sentence is a sign of a deep evolution which in the final analysis had a profound effect on Greek thought and literature.

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