

III.—Thucydides As Reporter and Critic

LIONEL PEARSON

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Thucydides frequently expresses personal opinions. But he says himself that, although his *logoi* may represent only what he thinks the speakers could have said, his version of *erga* has not been given *ὡς ἐμολ ἔδοκει*. This might mean that he has avoided unwarranted and arbitrary expression of opinion. But sometimes, when the evidence is incomplete, he does offer arbitrary judgments. Thus his division of his material into *logoi* and *erga* seems excessively simple and does not conform to his practice; a further division of *erga* is needed into established recorded facts and problems to be solved only by exercising personal judgment.

The purpose of this article is to examine the manner in which Thucydides expresses his views and offers his interpretations and to compare his practice in this respect with his own theory of history-writing. An attempt will be made to classify the topics on which he expresses personal opinions, not with the object of analyzing his personality or his political attitude, but in the hope that such an examination may reveal his standards as a critical historian. This article, therefore, may be regarded as a Thucydidean sequel to my earlier discussion of "Credulity and Scepticism in Herodotus,"¹ but the terms used here must be different, because the issues are not exactly the same in dealing with the two historians. Credulity is hardly a proper word to use in a discussion of Thucydides, though there are occasions when one might charge him with prejudice; and since, unlike Herodotus, he records few "marvels," his occasions for display of scepticism are few and far between. His choice of material is such, however, that he has ample opportunities for critical expression of opinion. Sometimes his opinion is offered without argument, sometimes supported by evidence (*τεκμήρια*)² and appeals to probability or likelihood (*τὸ εἰκός*). Often he indicates

¹ *TAPhA* 72 (1941) 335-355.

² A. W. Gomme, *A historical commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford, 1945) note on 1.20.1, argues that *τεκμήριον* is not evidence, which in the law-courts is *μαρτυρία*, but the inference drawn from the evidence. But when the historian nowadays, though perhaps not always with the lawyer's approval, talks of evidence, he means almost exactly what Thuc. means by *τεκμήριον*. Thus a source provides evidence (*τεκμηριῶι* "Ὁμηρος, 1.3.3), the historian examines it (*σκοποῦντί μοι*, 1.1.3) and draws his inference or deduction from it (*τεκμαίρεται*, cf. Hdt. 2.33: *τοῖσι ἐμφανέσι τὰ μὴ γινγνωσκόμενα τεκμαιρόμενος*). Cf. also Thuc. 6.28.2; 4.123.2 and Aristot. *Resp. Ath.* 3.3.

that he is stating an opinion and not recording an established fact by the phrase "as it seems to me" (ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ) or some similar formula, but he does not always qualify his verdicts in this manner. Sometimes, though not very commonly, he adopts the manner of Herodotus, mentions what various people have to say on a particular issue, and then states his own preference; but more often he presents his argument or his point of view without reference to existing opinions on the matter.

Some critics of Thucydides, in praising his detachment and reserve, have gone so far as to say that he rarely expresses personal opinions.³ No space can be taken here to show how well he deserves their praise and no lengthy analysis of the text is necessary to show how frequently he does express opinions. The following pages will attempt to show how, when, and if possible, why he expresses opinions and how far his practice corresponds with the principles which he lays down.

It will be convenient to start with his introductory chapters on early Greek history, since his methods of historical reasoning are more clearly revealed here than in any other part of his work; and nowhere else are there so many appeals to τεκμήρια and references to authorities (especially Homer), coupled with verdicts which are offered as personal opinions (ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ). He gives the τεκμήρια which induced him to believe that the Peloponnesian War would be the greatest war in history and that earlier wars were on a much smaller scale (1.1-3). He says that Greece in earlier times "was evidently not a country of well-established settlers" (φαίνεται οὐ βεβαίως οἰκουμένη) and that migration was constantly in progress. Then he gives as reasons for this belief the presumed lack of economic intercourse and general economic insecurity of the times. These conditions, it should be noted, are not a set of recorded facts offered as an explanation of other recorded facts; the lack of development in early Greece is not presented as a proven fact and

³ Summarized or conventional criticism of Thuc. is particularly liable to make this mistake. For example, in a brief appreciation of Thuc. in a widely used Greek history textbook we read: "Only in rarest instances does his personal opinion intrude, as in his evident prejudice against Cleon" (A. Trever, *The ancient Near East and Greece* [New York, 1936] 359). Cf. E. Täubler, *Die Archäologie des Thukydides* (Leipzig, 1927) 1, who says that it is the rule of Thuc. not to speak about things but to let them speak for themselves—a point of view which leads him to seek special reasons for Thuc.'s expressions of opinion in his *Archaeologia*. Cf. also J. B. Bury, *The ancient Greek historians* (New York, 1909) 108.

he is still trying to establish it by argument in the following chapters; it is his belief that such conditions must have prevailed which persuades him that early Greece was weak both politically and economically. His method, indeed, is not unlike that of Aristotle in the *Poetics*, whose account of the early development of poetry is not based on recorded facts, but on theory and argument; excellent and convincing it may be, but it is theory none the less.⁴

The argument of Thucydides continues in chapter 3 with his remark that "Hellas evidently undertook no enterprise in common before the Trojan War; and, as it seems to me, it was not yet known by the common name of Hellas . . . and the best evidence of this fact is Homer (τεκμηριῶ δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος), who never has any name for the Greeks as a whole . . . nor does he speak of barbarians because, as it seems to me, Hellenes had not yet been marked off in opposition to them under one common name."⁵ The evidence of Homer, then, is not presented as proof positive, but as an argument which seems convincing to Thucydides personally. The same method may be seen in the discussion in chapter 4 about Minos and piracy in early times, with appeals to likelihood (τὸ εἰκός), parallels from contemporary customs in backward communities, and evidence from early poems.⁶ The method is similar for the remaining chapters of the *Archaeologia*. As he admits himself, it is a matter

⁴ Thuc. writes (1.2): φαίνεται γὰρ ἡ νῦν Ἑλλάς καλουμένη οὐ πάλα βεβαίως οἰκουμένη, ἀλλὰ μεταναστάσεις τε οὔσαι τὰ πρότερα καὶ ῥαδίως ἕκαστοι τὴν ἐαυτῶν ἀπολείποντες βιαζόμενοι ὑπὸ τινων αἰεὶ πλειόνων. τῆς γὰρ ἐμπορίας οὐκ οὔσης, οὐδ' ἐπιμυγνύντες ἀεὶς ἀλλήλοισι οὔτε κατὰ γῆν οὔτε διὰ θαλάσσης, νεμόμενοί τε τὰ αὐτῶν ἕκαστοι ὅσον ἀποζῆν καὶ περιουσίαν χρημάτων οὐκ ἔχοντες οὐδὲ γῆν φυτεύοντες, ἀδελῶν δὲν ὅποτε τις ἐπελθὼν καὶ ἀτειχίστων ἅμα ὄντων ἄλλος ἀφαιρήσεται, τῆς τε καθ' ἡμέραν ἀναγκαίου τροφῆς πανταχοῦ ἀν' ἡγοῦμενοι ἐπικρατεῖν, οὐ χαλεπῶς ἀπανίσταντο.

And his remark about changes of population being less frequent in Attica is followed by: καὶ παράδειγμα τὸδε τοῦ λόγου οὐκ ἐλάχιστόν ἐστιν (1.2.6). Cf. his manner of writing with that of Arist. *Poet.* 1448B.4: εἰκάσι δὲ γεννηῖσθαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτία δύο τινὲς καὶ αὗται φυσικαί: τό τε γὰρ μιμείσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστὶ καὶ τοῦτω διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου τὸ συμβαίνειν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων.

Taubler (*op. cit.* 10) points out that the φαίνεται sentence is a thesis which needs justification, and that this follows in the shape of two more unsupported statements.

⁵ 1.3.1-3: δηλοῖ δέ μοι καὶ τὸδε τῶν παλαιῶν ἀσθένειαν οὐχ ἥκιστα: πρὶ γὰρ τῶν Τρωικῶν οὐδὲν φαίνεται πρότερον κοινὸν ἐργασασμένη ἡ Ἑλλάς: δοκεῖ δέ μοι, οὐδὲ τοῦνομα τοῦτο ἔμπασά πω, εἶχεν . . . τεκμηριῶ δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος: πολλῶ γὰρ ὕστερον ἔτι καὶ τῶν Τρωικῶν γενόμενος οὐδαμοῦ τοὺς ἔμπαντας ὠνόμασεν . . . οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ βαρβάρους εἴρηκε διὰ τὸ μηδὲ Ἑλληνάς πω, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ἀντίπαλον ἐς ἐν ὄνομα ἀποκεκρίσθαι.

⁶ 1.4. Note the use of δηλοῦσι in 1.5.2 corresponding to the τεκμηριῶ of 1.3.3.

of building a chain of argument, with a danger of weakness at any link in the chain which may cause the argument to break down.⁷

Because of his insistence on argument and evidence he contrasts his method with that of poets and logographers;⁸ and he complains of the uncritical attitude of his contemporaries and their lack of thoroughness in seeking the truth.⁹ He says that his own discovery of the truth involved hard work (*ἐπιπόνως δὲ ἠύρίσκετο*, 1.22.3). This does not alter the fact, however, that his interpretation of early history is "an opinion which people may accept without fear of serious error" (*τοιαῦτα ἂν τις νομίζων μάλιστα ἃ διήλθον οὐχ ἁμαρτάνοι*, 1.21.1); it is only an opinion, because uncertainty and variation in his sources make conclusive certainty impossible. Nor is this uncertainty confined to early times, since he has found that even eye-witnesses cannot always be trusted to give an accurate account of what they have seen (1.22.3). It should follow, therefore, that as for earlier events, so for many events of the Peloponnesian War he can do no more than offer an opinion, based on a critical examination of the evidence.

Curiously enough, however, Thucydides neglects to draw this conclusion in stating his principles. In fact he says in 1.22 that he did *not* describe events *ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει* — a statement which has puzzled his critics, because he does in fact express numerous personal opinions and it would be strange if he did not do so.

The argument of 1.22 must be considered as a whole.¹⁰ Thucydides first explains his principle of recording speeches: he was not able, he says, to remember or discover the exact words which were spoken on every occasion, and so he has put in the mouths of the

⁷ 1.20.1: τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ἦν, χαλεπὰ δὲ παντὶ ἐξῆς τεκμηρίῳ πιστεῦσαι. οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγενημένων, καὶ ἣν ἐπιχώρια σφίσιν ἦ, ὁμοίως ἀβασανίστως παρ' ἀλλήλων δέχονται.

⁸ 1.21.1: ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων τεκμηρίων κτλ.

⁹ His view is summed up in 1.20.3: οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

¹⁰ 1.22: καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκριβείαν αὐτῇ τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεύσαι ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὡς αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ποθεῖν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένην δὲ ἐγγύτητα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται. τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἤξιωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δύνατον ἀκριβείᾳ περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελέσθην. ἐπιπόνως δὲ ἠύρίσκετο, διότι οἱ παρόντες τοῖς ἔργοις ἐκάστοις οὐ ταῦτα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔλεγον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἑκατέρων τις εὐνοίας ἢ μνήμης ἔχοι.

speakers more or less "what it seems to me they must have said (or: ought to have said)"¹¹ on the particular issues, keeping as close as possible to the general thought or tendency of their actual speeches." Then he goes on, contrasting *erga* with *logoi* in his usual manner: "But as for the actual events which took place in the war, I did not see fit to record them as they were told me by any chance informant, *nor in accordance with my personal opinions*, but rather I have written as a result of observation at first hand and, where I was dependent on others, investigating each report as carefully as possible. And the discovery of the truth involved hard work, because eye-witnesses of the various events did not always agree in their accounts, but their reports varied according to the prejudices and tricks of memory of each individual."

If one allows the full force of the contrast between words and deeds, the thought of the paragraph is simple enough: "In reconstructing speeches memory has failed me and I have been forced to use my imagination. For the *logoi*, therefore, *δόξα* or *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ* has been an important element in my work of composition. But for deeds I have tried to avoid using *δόξα*, which is appropriate only for the *logoi*, and to rely on my memory and the memory of others. Unfortunately the *δόξα* of other persons, as exemplified by their individual *ἐννοια*, has had to be reckoned with and so a record of facts based on first-hand evidence alone has not been possible." Thus Thucydides states his difficulty. But instead of going on to say how he resolved it, he merely says that it proved difficult to do so and passes on to a new topic: the lack of popular appeal in a history which contains no sensational stories. He explains how he resolved his difficulty in reporting speeches: he fell back on *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ*. He fails to explain how he resolved his difficulty in

¹¹ Τὰ δέοντα probably means "what they must have said," i.e. a *logical* reconstruction of their speeches, in view of the general point of view they are known to have presented and in view of their known character. The alternative is "what they should have said," i.e. an *ideal* reconstruction, which may be flattering and may have little resemblance to the real speeches. For discussion see Gomme's note *ad loc.* The second alternative, which some critics prefer, is equally acceptable for the purposes of the present argument. It is possible that Thuc. had in mind the famous saying of Sophocles that he represented characters *οἷους δεῖ* (Aristot. *Poet.* 1460B). This also is an ambiguous saying: did Sophocles mean "as they ought to be" (idealized), or "such characters as tragic art demands" or "as they must have been" (logically reconstructed, according to the demands of the myth and the heroic context, as opposed to the modern and more familiar characters of Euripides)?

reporting facts;¹² but here too what could he do in practice but fall back on *ὥς ἔμοι δοκεῖ*?

It appears then that the contrast between reporting speeches and events is ideal rather than practical. But he has explained the ideal contrast clearly. It is the same point that Pericles makes in the opening chapter of the Funeral Oration. Pericles says that he would have thought it sufficient (*ἐμοὶ ἀρκούν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι*, 2.35.1) to celebrate the deeds of the heroic dead by deeds of honour rather than words; custom, however, has decreed a funeral panegyric and he will not quarrel with the custom. But instead of attempting to recount deeds, where it is difficult even to give the impression of speaking truth, Pericles makes *logoi* the main burden of his speech: the democratic principles and traditions of Athens, the *logoi* which inspired the *erga* of the dead and of their ancestors.¹³ Pericles, therefore, resolves the difficulty of Thucydides by refusing to deal with *erga* at all and restricting himself to *logoi*.

If, then, personal interpretation is ideally legitimate only in *logoi* or as applied to *logoi*, one must consider the purpose of Thucydides in putting so many speeches into his history. Whatever one may think of the historical authenticity of the speeches, it cannot be denied that he uses them as a means of interpreting events, of illustrating issues, and of depicting characters; in short, as a graphic method of discussing the motives and the factors which influenced decisions. But Thucydides never makes this admission; he never says that his own interpretation of events can be gathered from a careful reading of the speeches, though many critics would agree that he could truthfully say so.¹⁴ But he does not say so, and for a

¹² Täubler (*op. cit.* [above, note 2] 93) points out that although Thuc. explains how he composed his speeches, he forbears to give a corresponding explanation of how he arrived at knowledge of the events. Grundy (*Thucydides and the history of his age* [London, 1911] 427-8) is also puzzled by the lack of such an explanation; his solution (hardly a satisfactory one) is to believe that Thuc. wrote this passage before he acquired the opportunities for investigation which his exile afforded him and which he mentions in 5.26.

¹³ 2.35.1-2; 36.4. Note here too the emphasis on *δόξα*. The speaker has to reckon with people's preconceived opinions about what took place, not only with their preferences.

¹⁴ Perhaps the best summary (within a single sentence) of the purpose of Thuc. in his speeches is by Glotz: "Thucydide entend tirer parti de la tradition pour faire connaître le résultat de ses réflexions sur les causes des événements, sur l'état des esprits, sur les idées des hommes d'état" (*Histoire grecque*, 2.512). Cf. also the excellent paragraph of J. H. Finley, *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942) 296-7, and the well known remarks of Eduard Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, 2.380-85.

very good reason: such a statement would imply that his speeches were the work of his own imagination and had no historical value at all.¹⁵

The fact remains, however, that his personal opinions are not restricted to the speeches. Since he has not indicated on what occasions expression of opinion is appropriate for an historian, the only course remaining is to examine the occasions on which he does express personal opinions, in the hope that the topics on which he commits himself can be classified as in some way distinct from *erga* — in case, for example, they are concerned with mind rather than with matter or with thought rather than with observable actions. Unfortunately the division into *logoi* and *erga* is the only division of the material of his history which Thucydides makes and without further clarification it seems excessively simple; at least, it is too simple if intended to mean the mere contrast between words and events and it requires further definition if he is thinking of the more philosophical distinction between *logoi* and *erga* such as Pericles and other speakers in his history try to draw.

Before embarking on this investigation another point must be considered. Thucydides qualifies many of his opinions with the phrase *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ*, but says distinctly that he has not written *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ*. In order to avoid thinking him guilty of an almost childish verbal inconsistency, one is entitled to ask whether there is a special meaning in the phrase as he uses it in 1.22 which justifies the almost indignant tone in which he scorns to describe events "as they seemed to him." Greek usage does supply an answer here, because in some contexts to act *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ* does not mean merely to do or say what I think best or to follow my own personal judgment; it means to behave in an arbitrary or even a high-handed manner, as when Demosthenes says Philip could always do *ἀ δόξειεν*

¹⁵ The preceding paragraph is not intended to demolish the arguments of critics who believe in the essential historical accuracy of the speeches. The controversy cannot be settled so simply. But it can be pointed out that an interpretation like that of Glotz (see note 14 above) does not contradict the principles of 1.22, where Thuc. claims the privilege of considerable freedom in composing the speeches. Critics will always differ in estimating how far he exercised that privilege. Pohlenz, curiously enough, takes an opposite point of view; he thinks that Thuc. in 1.22 is *limiting* his freedom (on the ground that Herodotus was too free in composing speeches) and that speeches with any considerable element of fiction in them must have been written at a time when he no longer held to the principles of 1.22 ("Thukydidesstudien," *NGG*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1919, 117-19). Cf. also W. Aly, "Form und Stoff bei Thukydides," *RhM* 77 (1928) 367-69.

αὐτῷ, and had a great advantage over a democratic city like Athens because he could do "exactly as he pleased" and had no need to consult any administrative or legislative body.¹⁶ Again, in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates makes an apparently orthodox and legitimate appeal to the jury when he reminds them that a juror swears not "to show favour to such persons as it pleases him" (χαριεῖσθαι οἷς ἂν δοκῇ αὐτῷ) but to give his verdict according to the laws; the implication being that he must not be guided by arbitrary preference.¹⁷ There are also some passages in Thucydides which show that he was sensitive to the arbitrary colouring of ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ. When Paches is suppressing the revolt at Mytilene, he is said to arrange matters ἢ αὐτῷ ἐδόκει ("exactly as he chose") and to send to Athens "any person who seemed to him to be responsible for the revolt" (3.35). Such language is particularly suitable since the whole episode of Mytilene is an illustration of the evils of arbitrary behaviour and arbitrary decision.¹⁸ In a similar atmosphere of unreasoned decision, when the preparations for the Sicilian expedition are being debated, Nicias, who is supposed to be against the whole scheme, invites the Athenians to provide "as many troopships as you like" (ὅσαι ἂν δοκῶσιν) and "anything else at all you like" (καὶ ἢν τι ἄλλο πρέπον δοκῇ εἶναι) (6.25); and the assembly replies by voting that the generals shall have carte blanche to act "just in whatever way they think fit" (ἢ ἂν αὐτοῖς δοκῇ ἄριστα εἶναι, 6.26.1).

When Thucydides says in 1.22 that he will not describe events ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, it is probable that he is thinking of the famous words of Hecataeus: τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων

¹⁶ *De Cor.* 235.

¹⁷ Plato, *Apol.* 35c. Cicero makes the same point in his discussion of the duties of a juror in the *Pro Cluentio*: Haec si T. Attius aut cognovisset aut cogitasset, profecto ne conatus quidem esset dicere, id quod multis verbis egit, iudicem quod ei videatur statuere et non devinctum legibus esse oportere (58.160). Cf. also the discussion in Plato's *Gorgias* on the arbitrary behaviour of tyrants and orators (τὸ ποιεῖν ἄνευ νοῦ ἃ δοκεῖ, 467A) which, Socrates convinces Polus, must be distinguished from real power and influence (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄρα τοῦτ' ἐστὶν τὸ μέγα δύνασθαι, τὸ ποιεῖν ἃ δοκεῖ αὐτῷ· ἢ δοκεῖ σοι; 469E).

¹⁸ The opinions and decisions of the Athenians are of course quite regularly indicated by δοκεῖν in these chapters as elsewhere. But the discussion is called an ἀγὼν τῆς δόξης (3.49), a curious phrase which seems to imply that it was entirely a matter of personal preference how each man decided; that he voted ὡς αὐτῷ ἐδόκει, not because he was convinced by argument; and that the repeal of the savage verdict was just as arbitrary as the original decision. Note also how the Thebans in their reply to the Plataeans in 3.61 contrast ἡ τοῦτων δόξα ("the absurd notions of the Plataeans") with τὸ ἀληθές.

λόγοι πολλοί τε καὶ γελοιοί, ὥς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν.¹⁹ In that case his objection must be that Hecataeus' method was an arbitrary one, that he did not explain his decisions and relied to an inordinate degree on personal judgment and intuition, instead of consulting the evidence; in short, that he used *δόξα* as his principal means of evaluating questions of fact, instead of merely falling back on it when other means of *historia* failed. His words are certainly not intended as criticism of Herodotus, whose method he has already contrasted with his own in the preceding phrase οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος, implying that Herodotus was too much inclined to accept uncritically what he was told. Of his methods in writing about Egypt Herodotus says himself: "So far my own knowledge and observation at first hand and inquiry have been the basis for what I have said; but from now on I shall give Egyptian accounts, as they were told to me, although personal observation on my part will have something to add."²⁰ This willingness to reproduce tales which are told him, some of which he cannot check either by observation or by further inquiry, is exactly the sort of procedure which Thucydides condemns.

The reasoning of Thucydides may therefore be summed up as follows: Ideally, in writing about *erga*, the historian should depend entirely on personal observation and on the word of informants and not allow his personal prejudice to affect him; but in reporting *logoi*, if they are to play any useful part beyond merely interrupting the narrative, he may be allowed greater freedom and greater use of his own imagination. In practice, however, personal observation of *erga* is always inadequate and informants cannot always be trusted, so that the element of personal criticism is bound to play a part; the historian, therefore, must not, like Herodotus, be too ready to accept what he is told, but on the other hand he must not, like Hecataeus, abruptly dismiss existing accounts as worthless and say "this is what I think."²¹

¹⁹ FG^rH 1.1, F 1a.

²⁰ 2.99. It is more usual to refer to Hdt. 7.152: ἐγὼ δὲ ὀφείλω λέγειν τὰ λεγόμενα, πείθεσθαι γέ μὲν οὐ παντάπασιν ὀφείλω. But 2.99 provides a better example of the practice of Hdt. as opposed to his theory. Cf. also 2.123: τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπ' ἐκάστων ἀκοῇ γράφω, where he says nothing about belief or disbelief. It is likely that Hdt. is himself criticizing Hecataeus. Cf. L. Pearson, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 335.

²¹ The interpretation given above is essentially that of Pohlenz, in Part II of his "Thukydidesstudien," NGG 1920, 74-75, when he speaks of Thuc. limiting his "subjektive Willkür" by his respect for "die methodisch erforschte Ueberlieferung." But Pohlenz presents his interpretation as though it were a paraphrase of Thuc.'s actual

It may be asked why Thucydides did not make this clear if this is in fact what was in his mind. To this objection there are two answers. First, that his interest in the ideal antithesis between *logos* and *ergon* has obscured the practical issue — not for the only time in Thucydides, as anyone familiar with the Funeral Oration knows. Secondly, that he is taking for granted a knowledge of current critical ideas about history writing, about which we know nothing. The only means, therefore, of testing the proposed interpretation is to see whether it is borne out by his practice throughout his history; to examine the occasions on which Thucydides expresses a personal opinion and his manner in doing so. It will be necessary to distinguish between opinions which are offered dogmatically, others which are qualified by *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ*, or *φαίνεται* or *ἡγοῦμαι* or some similar phrase, and conclusions which are supported by argument. It will also be convenient to group the opinions under different categories, with a broad distinction between opinions of a general nature, opinions which concern national questions, and opinions on the conduct and character of individuals.

On general political or military questions Thucydides is inclined to express himself dogmatically. After his description of the kingdom of the Odrysian Thracians, which includes remarks on its extent and resources and the importance of making gifts in dealing with them — remarks which are presumably due to his personal knowledge of the country — he says that the kingdom is the largest and generally the most prosperous national unity between the Ionian Gulf and the Euxine, but far surpassed in military strength and man-power by the Scythians, with whose power, if it were united, no single nation in Europe or even in Asia could contend (2.97). This verdict has no parallel elsewhere in Thucydides, though one might have expected a verdict on the potentialities of a united Sicily at the beginning of Book VI. It may be intended as a contradiction of Herodotus, who regards the Thracians as second only to the Indians;²² but it is certainly a judgment in the Herodotean manner, designed to remind the reader that there are nations

words — which it certainly is not! The same fault is to be found in Täubler, *op. cit.* 93. A. Grosskinsky, *Das Programm des Thukydides* (Berlin, 1936) 49–52, 74–80, maintains that Thuc. is claiming to exclude “subjectivity” entirely in dealing with *erga* and that the element of interpretation is supplied by the *logoi*; but he makes the serious mistake of trying to interpret the “Programm” of Thuc. without sufficient reference to his practice.

²² Cf. Hdt. 5.3.

outside the boundary of the Greek world who may make their power felt some day.

More common are verdicts on the relative importance of events and the relative size of armaments. The most famous of such verdicts is the remark at the beginning of his work that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest upheaval in which the Greeks had ever been involved — if not the greatest war in history. He tries to support this statement by historical arguments, but he is far from proving his case, except in so far as Greeks are concerned, since his examples of previous wars are all taken from Greek history. Parallel with this statement is his remark that the force sent to Sicily in 415 was the most lavish and most magnificent force ever sent out by a single Greek city up to that time (6.31). The same pattern is seen in his remarks that the disaster to Ambracia was the greatest calamity in the war that befell any single Greek city within such a short space of time (3.113), and that the massacre carried out by the band of Thracians at Mycalessus was a disaster which in its magnitude claims our pity as much as any disaster in the war (7.30). In similar style again he says that the army of the Peloponnesian allies assembled on the Argive plain in 418 was “the finest Greek army ever assembled up to that time” (5.60), and he describes the battle of Mantinea as “the greatest Greek battle that had taken place in a very long time, with the most important cities taking part” (5.74). Before the battle he says that the Spartans, when suddenly faced by the enemy forces, suffered a greater shock than they ever remembered to have experienced (5.66);²³ so also the

²³ Οἱ τε Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος πρὸς τὸ Ἡράκλειον πάλιν ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ στρατόπεδον ἰόντες δρῶσι δι' ὀλίγου τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐν τάξει τε ἤδη πάντας καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόφου προεληλυθότας. μάλιστα δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐς δ' ἐμέμνητο ἐν τούτῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐξεπλάγησαν. διὰ βραχείας γὰρ μελλήσεως ἢ παρασκευὴ αὐτοῖς ἐγίγνετο, καὶ εἰθὺς ἀπὸ σπουδῆς καθίσταντο ἐς κόσμον τὸν ἑαυτῶν, Ἀγῖδος τοῦ βασιλέως ἕκαστα ἐξηγουμένου κατὰ τὸν νόμον.

Stahl and Classen, among other critics, have questioned the text here, on the ground that the γάρ clause which follows does not properly explain the shock suffered by the Spartans (cf. A. W. Gomme, *Essays in Greek history and literature* [Oxford, 1937] 135–36). But the difficulty is not so great as to justify emendation. There are two reasons for their shock: First, their sudden sight of the enemy (as given in the preceding sentence). Second, their need to take up battle positions with little or no delay (this is presumed to be distasteful, since the Spartans are traditionally accustomed to μέλλης); and it was a shock to find themselves actually doing this (the imperfect surely describes the process). The difficulty arises because instead of saying “they had to move quickly” Thuc. says “they found themselves doing so,” and goes on to explain why this was possible thanks to their good discipline. Strangely enough Stahl, who suspects a lacuna after ἐξεπλάγησαν, proposes to supply a clause like ὅμως δὲ διὰ τάχους ὡς ἐς μάχην ἀντικατέστησαν — when, except for the ὅμως, this is exactly what the existing text says.

Athenians suffered "a greater shock than ever before" after the news arrived of the naval defeat off Euboea in 411 (8.96), and in 414 "they were come to a state of tension such as no one would have believed possible if he were told of it" (7.28). The famous description of the alarm at Athens after the announcement of the Sicilian disaster is in a different manner; this is a reasoned description, not a mere dogmatic statement. But one might add to the list of *optima* and *maxima* the remarks that the loss of Plemmyrium was one of the worst blows suffered by the Athenians at Syracuse (7.24) and that the occupation of Decelea was most damaging to the Athenians at home (7.27), although both of these remarks are supported by argument and illustration.

All these remarks are made categorically, not merely offered as opinions. When one looks for similar verdicts offered as mere opinions, only one instance can be found: the final verdict on the Sicilian expedition: "And so in the result this was the greatest event that took place in the war — and in my opinion it surpasses events of Greek history of which we know only by report — in that it brought greatest glory to the victors and greatest disaster to the vanquished" (7.87). This is the perfect counterpart to the claim made at the beginning of his history that the Peloponnesian War was in itself the greatest war of all time, qualified by *δοκέειν ἐμοί γε* just as the earlier statement is qualified by *ὡς εἰπείν*. The Sicilian expedition, therefore, deserved special detailed treatment, if the Athenian defeat was the greatest defeat suffered in the greatest war in history.²⁴

Thus in singling out the most noteworthy events of the war Thucydides makes few judgments and is as a rule quite definite about them, trusting to his narrative to justify them. In estimating the importance of different factors in the war and in the explanations that he offers of the course of events, particularly where cause or intention is concerned, his method is similar. The account of the revolution at Corcyra and the general remarks on *stasis* which follow it are offered without any parenthetical "as it seems to me." He does not consider here the claims of other factors besides *stasis* to be held responsible for the lowering of moral standards²⁵ and does not think it necessary to offer any further

²⁴ Cf. 1.110, where the Egyptian disaster, which is the greatest Athenian failure of the previous generation, is described in very similar language.

²⁵ But cf. what he says about the plague in 2.53.

explanation of the series of revolutions beyond the fact that in every city there were democrats and oligarchs, who stopped at nothing in their efforts to establish themselves in power (3.82).

In view of his personal knowledge of Thrace and his own failure to relieve Amphipolis, for which he was exiled, one is not surprised that he should be dogmatic and bitter in his treatment of the campaign of Brasidas in Thrace. He makes very clear his own view that the Spartans were foolish not to give Brasidas greater support and the Athenians equally to blame for not making a more intelligent effort to retain the good-will of their allies there (4.108). He does not believe that it was really in the interest of the allies to revolt and insists that the oratory of Brasidas, though it appeared convincing, was not founded on fact. But these are contentions which he does not substantiate. He avoids more detailed discussion of political intrigue within the individual cities, contenting himself with a general condemnation of their short-sighted behaviour. The story, indeed, is presented as a series of mistakes and misunderstandings on both sides. Thus when Scione comes over to Brasidas just about at the time when the truce was made (Thucydides says it was two days after the truce) Brasidas takes advantage of the ambiguity (4.122); and when Mende follows suit he justifies his acceptance of them by claiming some violations of the truce by the Athenians (4.123), which are not specifically described.

He is more reserved in passing judgment on his own part as a commander in Thrace (4.104-5). Of Brasidas he writes: "It is said that, if he had been willing to prevent his army from taking to plunder and had attacked Amphipolis immediately, he might have taken it"; but he offers no opinion of his own. He explains what his own intentions were: to save Amphipolis, if possible, or at least to occupy Eion (4.104.5); and when he is too late for Amphipolis, he remarks that if he had been less prompt Eion also would have been lost (4.106.4). In contrast to this severely limited effort at self-justification is his verdict on the abortive Spartan raid on the Piraeus in 429: "If they had chosen to act boldly they would have succeeded and no wind would have stopped them" (2.94.1); he passes a similar verdict when the Spartans fail to attack the almost undefended Piraeus after the Athenian defeat off Euboea (8.96). It is characteristic not only of Thucydides but of ancient historians in general that he says nothing about what would now be called

"the failure of intelligence" as a reason both for his own failure at Amphipolis and for the failure of the Athenians at Syracuse to take steps in time to prevent the approach of Gylippus (7.2-3).

In criticizing policy or strategy and in estimating motive or intention Thucydides is usually interpreting individual behaviour, but there are a few exceptions.²⁶ For example, he is very definite in blaming the Athenians for punishing Pythodorus, Sophocles, and Eurymedon on their return from Sicily in 424. These commanders were charged with accepting bribes to withdraw from Sicily and Thucydides attributes the severity of the Athenians to their exaggerated notion of their own power: "So completely confident were they that nothing could stand in their way; they expected possible and almost impossible aims to be achieved equally easily, no matter whether the expedition sent out was large or inadequate; and the reason for this was the unaccountable success of most of their schemes, which gave to hope the false appearance of reality" (4.65). He is equally quick to condemn the Athenian methods of investigating the affair of the Hermae: "They continued their investigation, not putting informers to the test, but maintaining an attitude of suspicion and accepting everything that they were told; they arrested and imprisoned completely innocent citizens on the word of worthless men, thinking it more profitable to investigate first and find the truth afterwards, instead of letting a man go without examination when he appeared to be innocent and when the complaint against him was due to the criminal design of an informer" (6.53). His condemnation is equally emphatic in 2.65 in his summary of the errors committed by Athenian political leaders after the death of Pericles.

In all these instances Thucydides is definite and blunt in his disapproval. On the other hand he offers only tentative praise of the constitution of the Five Thousand, after the fall of the Four Hundred: "During this initial period the Athenians seem to have enjoyed the best constitution they ever had, at least in my lifetime" (8.97.2). Such praise, it must be admitted, rests on a purely theoretical basis; he gives no illustrations of the wisdom of the Five Thousand and its activities are clouded in obscurity.²⁷ It is also necessary to point out that his narrative of the Sicilian expedition

²⁶ Cf. F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* [London, 1907] 64-66.

²⁷ Aristotle (*Resp. Ath.* 33.2) praises the 5000 in similar terms, but has no description of what they did.

is not written in such a way as to bear out his remark in 2.65 that the Athenians failed to support the expedition adequately after starting it on its course. When the Athenians recall Alcibiades they are not represented as withdrawing support from the expedition and the failure of Nicias to act decisively is not blamed on the political atmosphere in Athens.²⁸

Thucydides also expresses himself dogmatically in estimating the motives behind national decisions. The Athenian decision to accept the Corcyrean alliance is explained by their view that war is inevitable and that it will be in their interest to detach the Corcyrean navy from the Peloponnesian alliance; the convenient position of Corcyra on the sea route to the west is added as a secondary consideration (1.44.2). Equally decisive (and of more doubtful accuracy) is his remark that the Spartans voted to go to war "not so much because they were convinced by the arguments of their allies, as because they feared the increase of Athenian power, observing that the greater part of Hellas was already subject to them" (1.88). The same opinion is expressed in 1.23.6. Modern critics have not all been satisfied with this verdict. But they would feel on more certain ground if Thucydides had explained more clearly his reasons both for this judgment and for his statement that the quarrel at Ithome was due to Spartan fear of Athenian aggressiveness and revolutionary tendencies (1.102.3). The statements require supporting argument. On the other hand his remark that the real reason for the Athenian expedition to Sicily was their desire to gain control of all the island (6.6.1) is convincingly illustrated by the subsequent narrative.²⁹ He is also convincing in his argument that the agitation of the Athenians over the Hermae outrage is to be explained by their fear of tyranny (6.60.1).³⁰ And if he represents fear of tyranny as so strong, it is not surprising to find "love of liberty" given as the strongest influence which prevented the

²⁸ It is not proposed to consider in this article how far such apparent discrepancies are due to imperfect revision of the work or are indications of the order in which different parts of the history were written.

²⁹ This is perhaps the only instance which Gilbert Murray has overlooked in his wise remark: "It is very remarkable, indeed, how Thucydides never expresses a personal judgment which could be deduced from the facts he has given. He only speaks when he thinks the facts likely to be misinterpreted" (*Literature of Ancient Greece*, [London, 1897] 198). He might have added the converse that Thuc. often does not explain exactly what the facts are on which his personal judgments are founded.

³⁰ 6.53.3; 60.1. I hope to explain elsewhere the argument of Thuc. in illustrating the results of the Hermae affair by his digression on Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

success of the oligarchic movement outside Athens, "in Thasos and, as it seems to me, in many other subject cities." The cities are represented as seeing their chance of complete autonomy in going over to the Spartans, and this is a much more attractive prospect than the "doubtful good government" promised by the Athenian oligarchs (8.64).

It is of course understandable that his explanation of Spartan behaviour should be less convincing than his interpretation of Athenian intentions. Our knowledge of Greek history has suffered from the lack of writers with real sympathy and understanding of Sparta. If Thucydides were a Spartan we should be much more ready to believe him when he assigns old-fashioned religious or pietist motives for Spartan behaviour: as when he says that the Spartans in 414 attributed their lack of real success earlier in the war to the fact that they had been the aggressors instead of the aggrieved party and felt more confident about the new offensive which they were planning because this time the Athenians were clearly the guilty party responsible for renewing the conflict (7.18). It is perfectly possible that he had informants who assured him that this attitude prevailed in Sparta or he may have observed their mentality during his exile; but he does not tell us his source of information. He interprets their behaviour in the diplomatic exchanges before the first outbreak of war in the same manner. The Spartans take the initiative in trying to prove the impiety of their enemies, reminding the Athenians of the Alcmaeonid family curse in an attempt to discredit Pericles; and their motive is "in order that they might have the most valid excuse for going to war" (1.126.1). We are also told that the Spartans asked Delphi "whether it would be better for them if they went to war" and that the god ("as it is said") promised them victory and agreed to aid them (1.118). On the other hand, when piety or superstition plays a part on the Athenian side, it is represented as affecting individuals, not official policy.³¹

³¹ For other statements of Spartan or Athenian intention or motive see 6.93 (Spartan general intention of invading Attica even before Alcibiades urges it), 4.28 (motives of more sensible Athenians in accepting Cleon's offer), 4.108.7 (Spartan lack of support for Brasidas in Thrace attributed to ill-will of leading men at Sparta towards him and their desire for a truce so as to recover the prisoners taken at Sphacteria), and 5.69 (Spartan view that *erga* and training promote courage better than *logoi* given as their reason for not making speeches before Mantinea — a purely literary echo of the arguments of earlier speeches).

In his treatment of individuals he is usually ready to pass a definite judgment on their motives and intentions. Cleon, who is first introduced as "the most violent Athenian citizen" (3.36) and whose promise to capture Sphacteria is called "mad in its appearance" (*μανιώδης*, 4.39), is clearly so much disliked by Thucydides that one does not expect to find him fairly treated in any subsequent narrative. The reason for his opposition to peace — "because he thought he would then be more clearly revealed as a rogue and would secure less credence for his slanders of others" (5.16)—is nothing more than a further expression of ill-feeling. His conduct prior to the battle in which he is killed is described in such a way as to emphasize the historian's conception of his character; always thinking of popularity ("unwilling to let his men become discontented from remaining too long in one place," 5.7.2), over-confident and absurdly optimistic ("he never imagined anyone would offer him battle," 5.7.3), he is obliged not so much by events as by his own character to do what Brasidas expects,³² and he finally meets a dishonourable death, overtaken in his flight by a peltast from Myrcinus. Such interpretation of a man's actions and motives in accordance with a preconceived notion of his character is quite common in Herodotus,³³ but one usually finds Thucydides less violent in his prejudice.

His treatment of Alcibiades offers a good contrast to that of Cleon. He certainly disapproved of Alcibiades and thought that his personal behaviour was a considerable factor in the final defeat of Athens (6.15); it is therefore quite in keeping with such a point of view to represent his support of the Sicilian expedition as prompted mainly by desire of personal glory and gain. But most of his subsequent behaviour is left unexplained. Thucydides never implies that he was guilty of any impieties and describes his offer to stand trial before sailing to Sicily without comment on his motives; it is the motives both of his enemies and of the *dêmos* in preventing his immediate trial which he emphasizes (6.29). His escape and flight after his recall are attributed to fear of a trial in which prejudice would play so large a part (6.61). In all his subsequent activities his dominant motive is supposed to be an overwhelming

³² Cf. Cornford, *op. cit.* (above, note 26) 118–19.

³³ Cf. L. Pearson, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 349–54. Aristotle appears to think this is the proper or even the necessary procedure in tragedy: *ἔστιν δὲ ἥθος μὲν τὸ τοιοῦτον ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν* (*Poet.* 1450B.7; but cf. 1454A.16).

desire to recover a position of honour in Athens (6.92.4; 8.47.1; 48.4). When he fails to reach any satisfactory agreement with Tissaphernes, it is partly because he recognizes that Tissaphernes is not really to be trusted. Thucydides is well aware that the full story of these negotiations must remain a mystery, but offers his opinion that both of them were seeking excuses for breaking off negotiations; that Alcibiades was trying to give the impression not that Tissaphernes was implacable, but that his price was too high, while Tissaphernes wanted to continue playing a double game (8.56). This opinion is supported by the subsequent narrative. Finally he gives Alcibiades full credit for using his influence to prevent the Athenian forces at Samos from sailing to Athens against the oligarchs and thus leaving the enemy a clear field in Ionia and the Hellespont: "Alcibiades seems now for the first time to have rendered a service to his city which no one else could match . . . and at the moment there was no one else who could have restrained them" (8.86.4-5).

It is interesting to speculate how Thucydides intended to complete his picture of Alcibiades as a character and whether he meant to blame Alcibiades himself or the *dêmos* for the loss of his services to Athens. But the evidence is lacking. All that can be said is that he interprets the character of Alcibiades from his actions, just as he does for Tissaphernes (8.46.5), a procedure which he fails to follow in his treatment of Cleon. To use Thucydidean language, he gives the character and motives of Alcibiades *ἐκ τῶν τεκμηρίων*, but those of Cleon *ὥς αὐτῷ ἔδοκει*; and his treatment of Cleon is final, his verdict on Alcibiades is withheld.

There is no space here for a full discussion of his methods of characterization, but his attribution of motives and his criticisms can conveniently be summarized. To Themistocles and Pericles — the two individuals whose abilities and services to Athens he praises in the highest terms (1.138; 2.65) — he never assigns any particular motives, but he leaves their actions to speak for themselves with the minimum of explanation. We are never told why Pericles did not make greater efforts to avoid an outbreak of war and it is left to the reader to decide whether Pericles shared the common Athenian view that war was inevitable (1.44.2). The so-called Periclean strategy of the early war years is also far less fully justified and explained than one would like. A similar criticism can be made of the treatment of Perdicas. His actions, which are presumably

dictated by personal motives entirely, would be much easier to follow if more explanation of them were offered; if, for example, his shifting policy were described in the same manner as that of Tisaphernes in Book VIII.

Demosthenes, on the other hand, emerges more clearly as an individual personality largely because some of his motives are explained. When he first makes his appearance in the narrative, he is told by the Messenians of Naupactus that an attack on Aetolia would be "a fine thing for him" (3.94.3) and he is said to start out, without waiting for the Locrians, "trusting to his good fortune" (3.97.2); then after his failure he remains at Naupactus "in fear of the Athenians because of what he has done" (3.98.5); and after the battle of Olpae his private agreement with the Peloponnesian commanders is explained by his wish to discredit the Spartans in that part of the country (3.109.2). Demosthenes is thus established early as an independent personality with individual motives, though Thucydides never passes general judgment on him and indeed is subsequently less willing to point out his motives.³⁴

The treatment of Brasidas, for whose talents Thucydides has a healthy respect (4.81), forms an interesting counterpart to that of Demosthenes. His brief appearances in the earlier books, though they reveal him as a brave and determined officer (2.25.2; 93), call for no estimate of his motives, but in Books iv and v his actions are fully interpreted, partly through his speeches, partly through explanation. His particular haste to seize Amphipolis is supposed to be caused, in part, by his discovery that Thucydides, who is at Thasos, owns some mines in the area (4.105.1). His offering of thirty minae to the temple at Lecythus, after his capture of the city, is attributed to his belief "that he had not taken the city by mere human means" (4.116.2). His opposition to peace is attributed to a personal ambition to win further distinction by fighting (5.16.1). By no means all of these motivations are deductions from the events; there is a distinct element of *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ* here.³⁵

Finally something must be said about Nicias, whose motives are explained from his very first appearance (3.51.2). His wish for

³⁴ Cornford, *op. cit.* (above, note 26) 82-109, has made much out of Thuc.'s failure to give an adequate account of the motives on both sides in his story of Pylos and so has developed his theory of "The luck of Pylos." Is it possible that Thuc. was unwilling to overemphasize the personal character of Demosthenes, thinking that he had gone far enough in the explanations of his conduct that he offered in Book III?

³⁵ Cf. also 4.73; 4.107.1; 5.8.2.

peace (like the preferences of Cleon and Brasidas for war) is explained by a purely personal motive: the desire to preserve his reputation for success, to enjoy a rest from the rigours of war (as well as allowing others a rest), and to win fame for the future as a man never responsible for bringing any misfortune on the city (5.16.1). This is an exceedingly important judgment on Nicias, because his subsequent treatment as a character is based on it; he is established in the reader's mind as an individual who has everything to lose and nothing to gain by the Sicilian expedition; this impression is renewed by his speeches at the beginning of Book VI and their motivation (6.8; 19; 24), so that his hesitant conduct throughout the Sicilian campaign follows naturally. Thus we are given fair warning in advance that Nicias is a man with a tragic flaw, and criticism of his lack of initiative at the start of the attack on Syracuse can be postponed until after the arrival of Demosthenes and Eurymedon (7.42.3).³⁶

These instances should be enough to show how arbitrary Thucydides can be in his treatment of individuals and his estimate of their motives; this is a side of his work in which he allows himself most consistently to write *ὡς ἑμοὶ δοκεῖ*, not as a rule revealing whether his judgments are based on private acquaintance with the individuals or are deductions from the events.

Apart from motivation his general judgments on characters must be considered, because they follow almost exactly the same pattern as his judgments on the importance of events. They are rarely given at all unless they are given in superlatives. Just as the Peloponnesian War is the greatest war of all time and the Sicilian expedition the greatest event of the war, so Nicias is "the one man of all Greeks in my lifetime who was least worthy to be stricken with such a calamity, on account of his consistently virtuous life" (7.86). Pericles is recognized as standing in a class by himself (2.65.13), Themistocles is "worthy of admiration to an exceptional degree, beyond anyone else, for his natural abilities" (1.138), Cleon is "the most violent of the Athenians and at the same time by far the most influential man in speaking to the people" (3.36), and Brasidas proved himself "the most valuable person to the Spartans" and after his death his character was the strongest influence in

³⁶ For a good discussion of the characterization of Nicias see H. D. Westlake, "Nicias in Thucydides," *CQ* 35 (1941) 58-65, where it is shown that Thuc. cannot be considered as an apologist for Nicias.

making the Athenian allies desert to the Spartan side (4.81). Again, Antiphon is described as "inferior to no Athenian of his time in talent and most skilful both to plan and to put his thoughts into words" and Phrynichus is the man who showed himself "anxious more than anybody for the establishment of the oligarchy" (8.68).

On the other hand Theramenes, Peisander, and Aristarchus, though recognized as important members of the oligarchic faction, are not characterized in superlative terms, and even Phrynichus' own talents are not assessed in a dogmatic judgment; Thucydides says "he seemed to be a man of intelligence" (8.27.5). This modified form of verdict is peculiar to Book VIII, in which the motives of Alcibiades and Tissaphernes as well as those of the oligarchs are deduced from events and not dogmatically presented to the reader. Since the preceding discussion has been concerned for the most part with dogmatic verdicts, it will be best to conclude by noticing on what occasions Thucydides is less inclined to be definite and announces merely that he is expressing an opinion.

One group of such opinions can be dealt with briefly: those that concern omens, prophecies, or portents of any kind. On the Delphic response,

τὸ Πελαργικὸν ἄργον ἄμεινον,

he says "it seems to me that this prophecy was fulfilled in the opposite way to what people expected — that the disaster did not fall upon the city because of the impious occupation of the area, but that the need for occupation came from the war (which the oracle did not mention, though it foresaw the area would be occupied one day accompanied with evil results)" (2.17). Again, after his treatment of the plague he records the oracle which foretold a Dorian war with plague or famine, according as the reading *λοιμός* or *λιμός* was preferred, and he remarks: "I imagine that if there is a famine in a subsequent Dorian war, people will repeat the same prophecy with the reading *λιμός*" (2.54). And in discussing tidal waves he gives it as his view that they are connected with earthquakes, saying finally: "It seems to me this sort of thing could not happen without an earthquake" (3.89). These verdicts are in the Herodotean manner, necessarily guarded and tentative because superhuman agency is involved. The supposed rationalism of Thucydides — his apparent neglect of superhuman influence — is a com-

monplace of Thucydidean criticism.³⁷ It seems equally important to point out that his judgments on anything that concerns the gods are always expressed in such a way as not to offend the strictest orthodox believer.

Some of his opinions on early Greek history have already been mentioned. He is dogmatic in correcting errors (as in his treatment of Peisistratid times) but his *Archaeologia* and his other digressions on early history abound in personal opinions. It is his opinion that Agamemnon's personal influence played a great part in gathering together the expedition against Troy and "since he far surpassed the rest in naval power, it seems to me that he accomplished more by fear than by good-will" (1.9.3). His interpretations of Homer are likewise offered as his opinions (cf. 1.10.4). Likelihood (*τὸ εἰκός*) plays quite a large part in his historical arguments. He thinks it not likely that many of the ships of Agamemnon's fleet had covered decks (1.10.4); he suggests that the decay of the ancient magnificence of the Delian festival was "due to disasters, most likely" (*ὕπὸ ξυμφορῶν, ὥς εἰκός*, 3.104.6); and in discussing the early history of Sicily he gives the tradition that the Sicels crossed the strait from Italy on rafts "as is likely and as is recorded, though they may have made the voyage in some other way" (6.2.4). After pointing out the difference between Teres the Thracian and Tereus the husband of Procne, he adds that "it is not likely that Procne's father, Pandion, would have sought a husband for his daughter so far away as Thrace" (2.29.3); and after insisting that Hipparchus was not tyrant of Athens and that Harmodius and Aristogeiton did not kill the tyrant, he adds: "Nor does it seem to me that Hippias could have made himself tyrant easily, if Hipparchus had been reigning when he was killed" (6.55.3). In these two instances he uses a subsidiary argument from *τὸ εἰκός*, for the benefit perhaps of such persons as will not accept his dogmatic presentation of the facts. We also find him using the word *εἰκάζειν*, whether for estimating the nature of expeditions prior to the Trojan War (1.9.4) by comparison with the conditions of the Trojan War or for deducing the motives of Tissaphernes from his behaviour (8.46.5).

In addition to the personal opinions of the historian himself, it should be noticed that the characters to whom he attributes speeches use the same forms of expression in presenting their

³⁷ Cf., e.g., W. Nestle, "Thukydides und die Sophistik," *NJA* 27 (1914) 649-85, who argues that Thuc. has cast off religion because the gods play no part in his history.

opinions. Nicias, for example, in his first speech reopens the discussion of the Sicilian question by saying that "it seems necessary to me" (ἐμοὶ μέντοι δοκεῖ) to reconsider it (6.9). There is no need to cite instances in detail, but a careful reading of the speeches will show that the speakers state their opinions either dogmatically or modified by phrases like ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ just as frequently as they base their conclusions on reasoned argument. One of the great exceptions is the Funeral Oration of Pericles, where the γάρ clauses follow regularly after almost every statement, sometimes even in support of γινώμαι that are weakened rather than strengthened by explanation and comment. This speech, however, does not lead to any important decision on the part of the Athenians; the decisive speeches, like those of Diodotus, Nicias, Alcibiades, or those of the Corinthians in Book 1, abound in unsupported expressions of opinion.

Here perhaps lies the key to the only general conclusion which will be offered in this article. Just as political decisions in an assembly or council are reached, as a rule, not because of reasoned argument, but because of the prevalence of one opinion over another — as a result of an ἀγών τῆς δόξης like the controversy over the people of Mytilene³⁸ — so also the decisions that the historian must make cannot very often be logically deduced from the facts available to him and he too finds himself involved in an ἀγών τῆς δόξης. Where existing versions or interpretations differ, he can either give both versions, as Herodotus often does and as Thucydides does very rarely, or he can decide to adopt one source and follow it, as some of the later Greek historians did. If he scorns both of these courses, he must make his own decision like Thucydides whenever there is occasion for a choice.

The necessity of making such a choice will occur more often in dealing with events long past. That is why Thucydides' chapters on τὰ πάντα παλαιά are so full of opinions, many of them expressed dogmatically, which can never be properly substantiated by appeals to evidence, but only rendered convincing by appeals to τὸ εἰκός. A narrative of contemporary history does not require so many decisions of this kind, since there is less continual interruption of the narrative caused by dispute about observable facts. But the wisdom or folly of the principal actors, their motives and intentions, and the relative importance of different events and factors — these are the questions on which he will want to pass judgment. Thucy-

³⁸ 3.49. See note 18 above.

dides does pass judgment on these questions and his willingness to do so distinguishes him from inferior later historians, who substituted moralizing for the critical expression of opinion.

The short statement in 1.22 about his method and his principles of history-writing contains no suggestion that such will be his practice. His own division of his material into *logoi* and *erga* is quite inadequate as a classification without a further subdivision of *erga* into questions which can be settled by sources and τεκμήρια and questions which can be settled only by individual opinion ὡς αὐτῷ δοκεῖ; or, in less Thucydidean language, matters of fact and record as compared with problems for interpretation. Such a distinction, which is taken for granted by almost every writer of modern times, would have made it possible for him to state his principles more logically and to conform to them. Alternatively he might have compared the opinions which he forms himself and his manner of presenting them to the opinions which his speakers form and express. On most issues at least two possible speeches can be written. So also at least two possible interpretations can be offered of many events; and the historian, equally with the political orator, may claim the privilege of stating his personal opinion.