

III. Post-Periclean Democracy in Action: The Mytilenean Debate (Thuc. III 37–48)

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With the exception of the controversy between Nicias and Alcibiades in Book VI, Thucydides only once presents the clash of opposite political positions and philosophies before the Athenian *ekklêsia*, in the pair of speeches delivered by Cleon and Diodotus on the measures to be taken against the Mytileneans. Consistent with his program concerning the *ξύμπασα γνώμη τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων*, these speeches present both the essentials and the atmosphere of the particular situation and its individual political actors, and the general issue and laws of *anthrôpeia physis* embodied in this case; the competition, in a democracy, of rational and emotional power politics. The same applies to the speakers, behind whose personal character appear the types and tempers of post-Periclean leadership; and in the background the Athenian people itself as we know it from many contemporary sources, easily influenced by the appeal to its inherent dynamism and emotionalism, but also, at times, ready to accept the call of reason and moderation. The interplay between this people and its political leaders, who embody, from Themistocles and Pericles down to their minor successors, its exceptional qualities as well as its dangerous potentialities, is one of Thucydides' major themes.¹ There are few speeches which equal the Mytilenean discourse in making the reader feel the thoughts and emotions of the audience. Indeed one of the reasons for the selection of the Mytilenean affair by the historian is a situation in which the audience

¹ J. H. Finley, Jr., *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass. 1942) 93, 164 f.; J. de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'Impérialisme Athénien* (Paris 1947) 277 f.; W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, Engl. ed. (New York 1939) vol. 1, 403 f. — On the speeches in general: E. Meyer, *Forschungen z. Allen Geschichte*, vol. 2 (Halle 1899) 379–400; R. C. Jebb, *Essays and Addresses* (Cambridge 1907) 359–445; O. Regenbogen, *Thukydides, Politische Reden* (Leipzig 1948) introd. 7–74; A. W. Gomme, *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford 1937) 156–89; W. Schmid, *Geschichte d. Griech. Literatur* (Handb. d. Altertumsw., Abt. 7), I 5 (München 1948) 161–81. — The most recent analysis of the Mytilenean debate: Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 2 (Oxford 1956) 297–324, with frequent references to his predecessors Poppe-Stahl and Classen-Steup. — Unless otherwise indicated, subsequent references to the authors listed above are to the works cited in this note.

appears about evenly divided into the followers of the rational and of the emotional approach to the issues facing *polis* and *archê* in a moment of crisis.

The ability to understand and to keep under control these competing and conflicting forces is the test of statesmanship as seen by Thucydides. But in one of the grandest passages of his work, the last speech of Pericles, even the statesman faces the danger of losing this hold when war, the βίαιος διδάσκαλος, puts the powers of endurance to the supreme test. After the death of the only man who was able to master his equally intelligent and undisciplined people within the framework of democracy, the Mytilenean case is the first stage on the road to the catastrophe of 404. For this reason its typical importance is underscored by the device which Thucydides uses whenever the general *idea* and the forces governing the political actions of men become apparent behind the realities of a particular event: the speeches.² They form a triad, marking the beginning and the end of the first major revolt of a member of the *archê*: the speech of the Mytilenean envoys at Olympia, which explains the situation of the *archê* from the point of view of the involuntary *xymmachoi* and offers a background to the action to be taken by the ruling city after the revolt has been crushed, and the two opposing speeches of Cleon and Diodotus dealing with these measures. The narrative, which gives a striking picture of direct democracy at work, illustrates the change of heart of the *ekklêsia* from initial anger (and the concomitant decision on the harshest retribution) to the acceptance, in a second assembly, of the suggestions of a more moderate action. However, Thucydides makes it clear that Diodotus wins only by a narrow margin (3.49, 1), and that it will not take much to turn moods and minds again to the emotionally more appealing violence of a Cleon.

In keeping with Thucydides' usual technique the Cleon-Diodotus debate, as we read it in the *History*, is a highly concentrated compound of the actual speeches (made in both assemblies by the representatives of either a moderate or a stern policy) and of his view of the static and dynamic forces behind the particular situation. Thus, in addition to his own recollections, both speeches

² W. Roscher, *Leben, Werk und Zeitalter des Thukydides* (Göttingen 1842) 151; Jaeger 398; Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* (Berkeley 1954) 143; G. M. Kirkwood, "Thucydides' Words for Cause," *AJP* 73 (1952) 61; H. Erbse, "Über eine Eigenheit d. thukyd. Geschichtsbetrachtung," *RhM* 96 (1953) 54 f.

include his later reflections about what the two politicians embodying the opposite and complementary possibilities of Athenian "colonial" policy might have said to express *ta deonta* in an issue touching the foundations of the Athenian *archê*. Cleon, as behooves his own temper, emphasizes the natural hostility between the *polis tyrannos* and her subjects. In this evaluation of the situation he is not entirely wrong; Thucydides makes Pericles himself, in what we may call a programmatic utterance, talk about the *archê* as a kind of *tyrannis* (2.63, 2), and the gist of what the Mytileneans have to say in justification of their revolt (3.9–14) also rests on the unbridgeable conflict of interests between Athens and her satellites. But in Cleon the emotional appeal of extreme suggestions replaces the cold analysis of the unavoidable consequences of domination. He exhibits the combination, not uncommon in a demagogic spell-binder, of violence and righteousness. As a sounding board of the subconscious urges of a mass assembly, he insists on collective responsibility and he presents moderation and reasonableness as weakness and lack of patriotic zeal (which, as Thucydides explains in his famous analysis of the Hellenic disintegration [3.82, 7], in an age of stirred-up political passions, is regarded as a greater deficiency than dishonesty and shortsightedness).³ Cleon's opponent, Diodotus, who suggests confining the application of the sternest measures to the aristocratic leaders of Mytilene and to spare the *dêmos* as a potential ally, appears not so much as an advocate of mildness as of *Realpolitik* unadulterated by either emotion or moralizing. One might even say that Cleon's vigorous anger and pseudo-righteousness has more of a human touch than the cold impersonality of Diodotus' *raison d'état*, which, though in this case on the side of restraint, looks like a preliminary stage to the unemotionally matter-of-fact philosophy of the Melian Dialogue.

In addition to the questions of power politics in the relations between the Athenians and their subject allies⁴ (in which both speakers

³ Finley, "The Unity of Thucydides' History," *HSCP* suppl. vol. 1 (1940) 285; F. Wassermann, "Thucydides and the Disintegration of the Polis," *TAPA* 85 (1954) 47.

⁴ Romilly 97, 200; Finley 89; Jaeger 395; D. Grene, *Man in His Pride* (Chicago 1950) 43–55; Schmid 78. E. Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides* (Bonn 1919) 140, sees — in accordance with his general hypothesis — in the emphasis on the negative aspects of the *archê* a proof for assigning the Mytilenean debate to the earlier (pre-404) stage of the *History*. The fairness of Thucydides' judgment on the *archê* and on Cleon is doubted by A. H. M. Jones, "Athenian Democracy and Its Critics," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1953) 18–25; cf. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "The Character of the Athenian Empire," *Historia* 3 (1954) 33–36.

may claim to be the heirs of one side of Periclean policy), Thucydides puts into the mouth of his two characters (as we may call them in this dramatic *agôn*) several issues of vital concern to his contemporaries, and, as is so much of his work, of striking modernity. This intertwining of the concrete and particular issue with general ideas (and their popularized reflections in catchwords), is one of the characteristics of an age in search for the facts as well as the truth and the laws behind the facts;⁵ and the presentation and arrangement of the arguments in both speeches closely follows the principles and prescriptions of the then "modern" art of rhetoric, as has been shown through the analysis of their various aspects of language and thought.⁶ Many of the political and of the related moral concepts of the age thus appear in these two complementary speeches, illustrating the *logos*, being spoken word and rational thought at once, as the key to the understanding of the permanent factor of human nature and history behind the particular and transitory event and condition.

Personal dislike of Cleon as an individual and as a type does not interfere with Thucydides' ability to present an objective picture of his liveliness and vigor as an essential phenomenon of post-Periclean Athens.⁷ Whatever the apparently popular politician of the middle class says or does is highly dramatized, in contrast to his more intellectual and unemotional opponent. It is significant that Cleon is

⁵ A. Grosskinsky, *Das Programm d. Thukydides* (Berlin 1936) 74 f.; C. Meister, *Die Gnomik im Geschichtswerk d. Thuk.* (Winterthur 1955); G. Grossmann, *Polit. Schlagwörter a. d. Zeit d. Pelop. Kriege* (diss. Basel 1945, publ. 1950). The general behind the particular in Greek historiography: K. von Fritz, "Der gemeinsame Ursprung d. Geschichtsschreibung u. d. exakten Wissenschaften b. d. Griechen," *Philosophia Naturalis* 2 (1952) 200–220, esp. 216 f. — The contemporary passion for generalization reflected in T.: Gomme, *Commentary*, vol. 2, 167; Finley 261–65.

⁶ L. Bodin, "Diodote contre Cléon," *Mélanges Radet*, *REA* 42 (1940) 36–52; P. Moraux, "Thucydide et la rhétorique. Étude sur la structure des deux discours III 37–48," *Les Études Classiques* 22 (1954) 3–23. — On language and style: Gomme, *Commentary*, referring to J. G. A. Ros, *Die METABOLH als Stilprinzip d. Thuk.* (Paderborn 1938); Jaeger 406; Finley, "The Origins of Thucydides' Style," *HSCP* 50 (1939) 35–84; Romilly, 138.

⁷ G. B. Grundy, *Thucydides and the History of His Age*, vol. 2 (Oxford 1948) 32; V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes* (Oxford 1951) 345 f.; L. E. Lord, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, Mass. 1945) 105; L. Pearson, "Thucydides as Reporter and Critic," *TAPA* 78 (1947) 53 f. (T.'s picture of Cleon as a contrast to that of Alcibiades); K. Reinhardt, "Thukydides und Machiavelli" in *Von Werken u. Formen* (Godesberg 1948) 249; Regenbogen 41 f.; Gomme (above, note 2) 176 f.; P. Cloché, *La Démocratie Athénienne* (Paris 1951) 150–52; Schwartz, *Gnomon* 2 (1926) 79. Degeneration of genuine Attic traits in Cleon: H. Gundert, "Athenen u. Spartaner i.d. Reden d. Thuk.," *Antike* 16 (1940) 110 f.

introduced as the mouthpiece of a growing anti-intellectualism; going beyond the actual political issue under consideration, his speech starts with a scathing attack against the new "wisdom" (embodied, of course, in his opponents), which undermines the *nomoi*, the traditional ways of life and conduct. Champion of the common man against the highbrow, of the *φαιλότεροι* against the *ξυνετώτεροι*, he extols *sôphrosynê*, the virtue of conservative stability, against *sophia*, the conceit of unfettered wisdom with its inherent urge to criticism, unrest, and what Jacob Burckhardt called "permanent revision." Great demagogue as he is, he voices the feelings and misgivings of his fellow citizens, their distrust (a concomitant of weakening self-assurance and nerve) of any kind of "modern" philosophy and science. This picture of a people at once attracted by, and suspicious of, the new approaches to human nature and society, has its parallels in contemporary tragedy and comedy, which naturally reflect the interests and concerns of the — approving or disapproving — audience; Plato also reveals these inner conflicts between the hold of tradition and the lure of the new so tempting to the restless liveliness of later fifth century Athens, the atmosphere of which had surrounded his own formative years.

The bitterness of the anti-intellectual reaction as shared and utilized by the clever politician, who is at the same time angry and proud to be an *ἀμαθής* in the eyes of the upper class, should be understood against the background of what happened to Protagoras and Anaxagoras; and the trial of Socrates is separated by only a few years from the time when Thucydides wrote his *History*. We may assume that these forces played a part in his own banishment. The *philokalia* and *philosophia* praised in the Periclean Funeral Oration, as an aristocratic element of Athenian democracy, are now considered rather a handicap to the responsibilities of efficient and honest political leadership.⁸ The demagogic manners used by the Thucydidean Cleon in presenting his point do not imply that he has no point at all. Indeed his speech provides a complement to the presentation of the Athenian character and institutions offered both by the leading statesman in the Funeral Oration and by the enemy in the keen observations of the Corinthians in Sparta (1.68–71).

⁸ Finley 172 f.; Grundy (above, note 7) 75. Cleon making use of the common man's suspicion of *deinoi*s: H. L. Hudson-Williams, "Political Speeches in Athens," *CQ* n. s. 1 (1951) 70. — The antidemocratic aspects of the new wisdom emphasized by demagogues: Schwartz (above, note 4) 235.

Cleon's discourse thus appears as an integral part of Thucydides' picture of the inseparably intertwined strong and weak sides of the Athenian people and of Athenian democracy; a picture which underlies the major theme of the *History*: the achievement and the failure of Athens when facing the supreme test of the war. The Pericles of the Funeral Oration stresses reason, intelligence, and openmindedness as the foundations of political power, and the balanced integration of thought and action, of the discipline of tradition and the free play of the individual mind, as the fountainheads of Athenian strength and pride. Cleon's biased appeal to the resentment of the intellectually backward but emotionally active part of the citizenry calls attention to the negative side of the restless dynamism and intellectual curiosity of his people: their irresponsible enjoyment of the clashes of the opponents in the *ekklêsia* as if it were nothing but a show of oratorical cleverness; their submission to the magic of the word — *logos* — of whose powers of expressing thoughts and of controlling minds and actions the contemporaries of the popularized philosophy of the "sophists" had just become aware; and the concomitant temptation, decried by him not without some reason, of accepting *logoi* for *erga* when judging about conditions and facts and even in a critical situation behaving like σοφιστῶν θεαταί — irresponsible aesthetes — instead of citizens *περὶ πόλεως βουλευόμενοι* (3.38, 7).

It is one of the many touches of subtle irony in Thucydides that his Cleon in this very speech in which he, emphatically righteous and down-to-earth, inveighs against the Athenian vogue for both displaying and enjoying the products of political oratory, offers an up-to-date paradigm of rhetoric, combining features of the ἀποτρεπτικόν and the κατηγορικόν γένος, as if a Gorgias (who, by coincidence, came to Athens in the very year of the Mytilenean debate) had been his adviser. After all, this Cleon is not part of any real tradition as it appears in aristocratic leaders such as Pericles or Archidamus; in spite of his conservative trappings and the adornment of his talk with passages which recall the political wisdom of either Pericles or Archidamus, he is, like others of his ilk, rather a radical.⁹ And he is too much of an Athenian not to fall under the

⁹ Finley 187; A. Thibaudet, *La Campagne avec Thucydide* (Paris 1922) 204. The irony of Cleon's conservatism: E. Braun, "Νόμοι ἀκίνητοι," *JOAI* 40 (1953) 145; W. Wössner, *Die synonymische Unterscheidung bei Thuk. u. d. polit. Rednern d. Griechen*, diss. Berlin 1937, 27; Gomme, *Commentary* (ad 3.37, 4). — About subtle irony in T., a topic deserving further investigation: L. C. MacKay, "Latent Irony in the Melian Dialogue," *Studies in Honor of D. M. Robinson*, vol. 2 (St. Louis 1953) 570–72.

spell of the new "sophistic" fashion of thinking and speaking. Ingenious play with words and meanings such as *θεαταὶ τῶν λόγων* and *ἀκροαταὶ τῶν ἔργων* (3.38, 4) shows him as a past master of the new style, whose dynamism naturally appeals to his own unruly temper and whose technique of striking paradox suits him as a means of impressing his audience. As a stock in trade of the popular speaker he makes use of his own brand of irony when addressing an audience proud of democracy and liberty as being *ἄριστοι* in being taken in by any newfangled fad, and *δοῦλοι* to any unfamiliar paradox (3.38, 5).

In some respects Thucydides introduces him acting as Pericles' successor (as the claim to be a great statesman's heir has been a device of second-rate politicians of all times), turning the words and manners of his model into his own mannerisms.¹⁰ Like a vulgarized replica of the Pericles who for the last time addresses his people in face of the crisis (2.60–64), he presents himself as a paragon of steadiness, self-assurance, honesty, and patriotic righteousness: *ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι*, he proudly asserts in the master's words while making the people feel, at the same time, their own lack of character and, in consequence, their need of leadership — his, of course. He exhibits the right blend — a mark of psychological insight — of flattering and cowing his audience. Being a representative of his type he derives his strength less from a definite political philosophy than from his personal vigor. But his emphasis on the values of a stable society, *nomos* and *sôphrosynê*, as well as his specious picture of a shortcut to overcome the antinomy of the *δίκαιον* and the *ξυμφέρον* appeals to the common man who is longing for settled conditions and peace of mind in these years of war, crisis, and social and mental insecurity. With the exception of Pericles and Alcibiades, no one of the Thucydidean speakers is so intensely dramatized and conveys so much the impression of personal and individual energy behind the general representation of the type. No matter how repugnant the extrovert exuberance of this *ami du peuple* may be to Thucydides' aristocratic reserve, he knows that, with all his shortcomings, "the people's watchdog" is the embodiment of a by no means negligible side of the Athenian character. And then Cleon appears as the

¹⁰ M. Pohlenz, "Thukydidesstudien I," *NGG* (1919) 129; Wassermann, "Das neue Thukydidesbild," *NJWJ* 7 (1931) 256; H. Herter, "Pylos und Melos," *RhM* 97 (1954) 341; Jebb 388 f.; Finley 255; Gomme, *Commentary*, vol. 2, 177. Thibaudet (above, note 9) 203: "Cléon s'oppose à Périclès comme le *thymos* au *nous*" (quoted by Romilly 277). Like Schwartz, Romilly (146) sees in the picture of Cleon an earlier stage when compared with the last Pericles speech and 2.65.

first and most representative example of a kind of popular leadership which was to play a decisive role in the drama of Athens' fall.¹¹

Thucydides is fair enough to concede to Cleon a grasp of one side of the real situation, which had been stressed even by Pericles: the precariousness of the relations toward the more or less involuntary members of the *archê*, hostile to the ruling city ἐξ ἀνάγκης (3.40, 3), as he says, using one of the significant catchwords of "modern" science. But if Cleon's character has been drawn with sarcastic bitterness, the Hellenic world outside Athens fares even worse. Thucydides wrote his Third Book as far as chapter 83 as one of the major units within his *History*; and the main subject of this section is the incipient moral disintegration as a concomitant to the increasing bitterness of a protracted war. The Plataean Debate (3.53–67), written by Thucydides as a counterpart to the Mytilenean affair, offers a kind of indirect justification even for Cleon's ruthlessness (directed, after all, against an ally which had betrayed Athens in her hour of weakness), if compared with the behavior of the "liberators," Sparta and her Theban friends, when dealing with the courageous defenders of the small city of Plataea.¹²

A complement to Cleon's discourse, Diodotus' reply is also arranged according to the rules of the early rhetorical treatises. Seen against the background of Cleon's aggressive talk, which though condensed conveys something of the atmosphere of the *ekklêsia*, Diodotus' συμβουλευτικός bears much less the imprint of an individual character. No one could have talked to an Athenian assembly in this rather impersonal and abstract manner and carried his point. When introducing Cleon, Thucydides is concerned both with the man and his political ideas; Diodotus counts only as the representative of a more moderate policy, one may say, as the mouthpiece of Thucydides' own position. As presented by Thucydides (who obviously inserted the two speeches in the already completed narrative), Diodotus wins through the weight of his arguments although the advocate of the sterner and emotionally more satisfactory course

¹¹ Meyer, 377; T. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers* (London 1901) vol. 1, 518; U. Kahrstedt, *RE*, s.v. "Kleon," 716. Gomme (above, note 2) 161: "One of Thucydides' passions was for self-control, another was for the truth." His horror of brutality and violence: Grene (above, note 4) 29.

¹² Gomme (above, note 2) 126 f.; Finley 178; Romilly 148: the "cité rebelle" a counterpart to the "cité fidèle." Pohlenz (above, note 10) 122, denying the close interrelation and assuming that the Plataean speeches belong to an earlier stage. — The relative moderation of the Athenians in the Mytilenean case brought into relief by contrast with the Plataean debate: C. del Grande, *Hybris* (Napoli 1947) 240 f.

comes out nearly even. This fits Thucydides' picture of the uniqueness of the Athenian character, the foundation of Athenian politics in war and peace, as a constant battlefield between the highest abilities of intellect and reason and the pressure of an equally strong emotional dynamism. The real statesman combines, like Pericles, this dynamism with the discipline of moderation and reason. Diodotus, although he speaks for the course approved by the historian, carries on only one side of Periclean policy, as does Cleon in his way. Thucydides wants his reader to judge both, and all the rest of Pericles' successors, against this great paragon of political wisdom. If politics were nothing but even-tempered and unimaginative reasonableness, Diodotus would be the right man; but this representative of *Realpolitik*, no matter how practical in dealing with the particular case, appears devoid of any grand design and of the sweep of political ideas which ennoble the words and deeds of a Pericles and, to a certain extent, even of his (in Thucydides' judgment) most able successor, Alcibiades.

When pleading for an unemotional handling of the rebellious ally, Diodotus does not refer to any of the noble qualities of pride and restraint which temper the unescapable realities of power politics when presented by Pericles. Instead he draws a sharp line between ethics and politics,¹³ as do, in a different yet comparable situation, the representatives of Athens in Sparta (1.73-78) and Camarina (6.82-87), and as the divorce of these two areas has been the theme of the *raison d'état* of modern political science since Machiavelli and Guicciardini. There is some irony in the fact that this separation of the two fields, discarding one of the foundations of the *nomos* in favor of the "modern" reverence of *physis*, is introduced to justify a policy of relative moderation, yet later will provide the basis for the most aggressive philosophy of power in the Melian Dialogue,

¹³ Romilly 138; Finley 177: "cynical arguments for a humane cause." — Δίκαιον and ἐνυφένον as a central theme in T.: H. Strasburger, "Die Entdeckung d. polit. Geschichtsschreibung d. Thuk.," *Saeculum* 5 (1954) 412, 416 f.; Schmid (above note 4) 172; E. Topitsch, "Anthropeia Physis und Ethik b. Thuk.," *WS* 61 (1943) 50-57; V. Paronzini, "Etica e politica nella concezione Tucididea della storia," *Aevum* 20 (1946) 217-31; Wassermann, "The Melian Dialogue," *TAPA* 78 (1947) 20; E. Bayer, "Thukydidēs u. Perikles," *WJA* 3 (1948) 22. T. both realist and moralist: Gomme 156 f.; Ehrenberg, "Polypragmosyne," *JHS* 67 (1947) 52 f.; Reinhardt, (above, note 7) 266: "Macht-politik" and "Staatsethik" combined. — T's concepts in Romanized form in Sallust: V. Pöschl, *Grundwerte röm. Staatsgesinnung i. d. Geschichtswerken d. Sallust* (Berlin 1940) 95 f. 104 f.; H. Patzer, "Sallust u. Thuk.," *NJAB* 4 (1941) 124-36; E. Cesareo, *Le Orazioni nelle Opere di Sall.* (Palermo 1938) 8 f.; P. Perrochat, "Salluste et Thuc.," *Revue Ét. Lat.* 25 (1947) 103 f.; V. Paladini, *Sallustio* (Milano-Messina 1948) 77 f.

which reflects ten more years of "hot" and "cold" war with the ensuing disintegration of the moral factor in international affairs. In Diodotus' case, however, the deemphasis of the moral imponderables is meant to be not so much a piece of political philosophy as a reply to Cleon's pseudo-righteous moralizing note of the *δίκαιον* — so dangerously welcome to any mass audience as a specious cloak for its latent urge to violent activism, and for this very reason suspect to Thucydides. Even though Diodotus' advice of restraint expresses some of Thucydides' own beliefs, it is still only a second best. It anticipates the ways of men such as Nicias or Theramenes, instead of an active neo-Periclean leadership to fit a people of such abundant energy (whose two extreme yet complementary potentialities the *History* presents in the Funeral Oration and the Melian Dialogue).

It is natural that Diodotus, as a reflective rather than active character, should engage in the defense of λόγοι as διδάσκαλοι τῶν πραγμάτων (3.42, 2). He adds some pertinent remarks, recalling Thucydides' personal experience, about the device, applied by Cleon, of slander and innuendo and the resulting discouragement of honest men from participation in politics; and about the plight of the responsible public servant acting under the control of a popular assembly which, wielding sovereign power without responsibility, is constantly swayed by its own instability and suspicions, and in case of any crisis looks for, and naturally finds, a scapegoat (3.43, 4). This leads to the condition which, in Thucydides' judgment, bears the main responsibility for the decline of Athenian democracy: public affairs falling from the hands of the statesman into those of the demagogue¹⁴ who has neither the ability nor the courage to risk his popularity by setting reason and restraint against the emotionalized combination of righteousness and short-range self-interest. The emphatic rejection of Cleon's insistence on the Mytilenean *ἀδικία* betrays Thucydides' awareness that in history the lost cause frequently has also to bear the brunt of moral reprobation. What matters, instead, in an unpleasant political situation such as the disloyalty of the alienated allies, is not *ἡ ἐκείνων ἀδικία*, but *ἡ*

¹⁴ W. R. Agard, *What Democracy Meant to the Greeks* (Chapel Hill 1942) 88 f.; Finley 309 f.; Gomme, *Commentary* (ad 2.65, 10); Schwartz (above, note 4) 241: "Mit Perikles' Tod hört der glückliche Zustand auf, dass Staatsform und Staatsmann zusammenfallen." About the people's lack of responsibility: Gomme, *Commentary* (ad 2.60, 4); see also Nicias' letter from Syracuse (7.14, 4).

ἡμετέρα εὐβουλία (3.44, 1). The concern of the statesman is not whether the actions of the others are morally good or bad, but whether his own decisions are politically correct or not. Politics, by necessity implying an act of power, belongs to a different world from the legal and moral sphere of a lawsuit (a timely, yet often disregarded warning): οὐ δικάζόμεθα πρὸς αὐτοὺς, ἀλλὰ βουλευόμεθα περὶ αὐτῶν (3.44, 4).

This policy of enlightened self-interest, advocated by Diodotus (and Thucydides) rests on the understanding — the great new discovery of Thucydides and his “sophistic” contemporaries — that politics, like everything that has to do with man, is a natural as well as a moral science. Political attitudes and actions, such as the Mytilenean case under consideration, obey the unchangeable laws of human psychology, of ἀνθρωπεία φύσις,¹⁵ to use the key concept of the new philosophy; and it is the same principle which is to govern the policy and the measures of the ruling power. Thus, the art of politics consists in observing the facts and conditions of human behavior and in both recognizing and applying the general law in the particular case (the integration of the general and the particular being one of Thucydides’ most vital concepts). On this account Cleon’s specious emphasis on collective responsibility is easily discarded by his opponent through reference to the conditions obtaining in contemporary Greece (as analysed in one of the most impressive chapters of the *History* (3.82–3)): the division of the *polis* into the two violently hostile parties of the *dêmos* and the oligarchs, with Athens enjoying the natural sympathies of the democrats including their potential use as a “fifth column” in places with an oligarchic regime. In addition, the indiscriminate punishment of the — either actually or potentially — pro-Athenian majority of the Mytileneans, would imply the most extreme form of *adikia* (against those to whom you rather owe a debt of gratitude (3.47, 2 f.)); and unwarranted commission of such an *adikia*, giving offense to

¹⁵ Jaeger (above, note 1) 386; *Humanist. Reden u. Vorträge* (Berlin 1933) 98–101; Regenbogen 55 f.; M. A. Levi, “In margine a Tuciddide,” *Parola del Passato* 7 (1952) 89 f.; W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (Stuttgart 1942) 521–24: relation to Democritus; H. Patzer, *D. Problem d. Geschichtsschreibung d. Thuk. u. d. thukydid. Frage* (Berlin 1937) 102; F. Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis* (Basel 1945); Pohlenz, “Nomos und Physis,” *Hermes* 81 (1953) 434 f.; Romilly 280–82; Grene (above, note 4) 56–59; Thibaudet (above, note 9) 127; T. “voit le jeu de la nature humaine avec le détachement lucide, la curiosité sèche et lente dont Démocrite considère le jeu des atomes”; P. Mugler, “Sur la méthode de T.,” *Lettres d’Humanité* (Ass. Budé) 10 (1951) 22 f., 41.

traditional Hellenic feeling, would be even more objectionable politically than morally.

Diodotus does not defend the past action of the revolting allies nor does he plead for any mitigating circumstances; but the concept of punishment (one may also say: war guilt), as analysed in his discourse, does not fall within the sphere of politics, but belongs to an entirely different category. Peacemakers of later periods might have remembered his advice that it is unwise to allow resentment about the past to interfere with the planning for the future: *περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἡμᾶς μᾶλλον βουλευέσθαι ἢ τοῦ παρόντος* (3.44, 3). A balanced view of man shows that he acts as he does under the necessity of a natural law whether as an individual or as a political group (Plato's later picture of the state as the individual writ large is already implied by Thucydides). This core concept of *ἀνθρωπεία φύσις*, the main theme of an age so intensely concerned with man as the measure of all things, reflects the new awareness of the parallels between human society and the phenomena of nature. In consequence, what the Mytileneans did is not *adikia*, to be counteracted by moral indignation and punishment, but *hamartia* (3.45, 3), to be anticipated as an unavoidable natural phenomenon.¹⁶

These unconquerable and unchangeable forces of human nature are presented as the core of Diodotus' speech in a chapter whose concentrated intensity has few parallels even in Thucydides (3.45, 4-7).¹⁷ There are three forces which in varying combinations more than anything else control the actions of men and states: *erôs*, *elpis*, and *tychê*. The first two are rooted in man's nature, the last in the external conditions and opportunities of his existence. The qualities to which Diodotus refers appear most strikingly in his own Athenian people, with its unabating drive of uncontrolled energies: *erôs*, the urge to action combined with the desire to get or increase the hold over men and things; and *elpis*, child of optimism and imagination (two aspects of the Athenian character much stressed in the

¹⁶ Bodin (above, note 6) 44; Moraux (above, note 6) 21; Romilly 275: — Rational handling of human nature the concern of statesmanship: Herter, "Freiheit u. Gebundenheit d. Staatsmanns b. Thuk.," *RhM* 93 (1949) 133-53; R. Zahn, *D. erste Periklesrede* (diss. Kiel 1934) 58; G. F. Bender, *D. Begriff d. Staatsmanns b. Thuk.* (diss. Erlangen 1938) 7-14; Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 94-96.

¹⁷ P. Shorey, "On the Implicit Ethics and Psychology in T.," *TAPA* 25 (1893) 68-72; W. Müri, "Beitrag z. Verständnis d. Thuk.," *MusHelv* 4 (1947) 251-75 (emphasis on 3.45); Romilly 244 f.; W. F. Otto, in *Grosse Geschichtsdenker* herausg. v. R. Stadelmann (Tubingen 1949) 25-30; C. B. Welles, "The Lesson of the Pelop. War," *Robinson Studies* vol. 2, 788.

History), which put the realization of every plan and wish within easy reach, encouraged by any ambivalent situation presented by *tychê* to take risks beyond the chances of success. In this world of struggle for domination, security, and prestige, inherent in the very existence of states (Thucydides' subject, the Peloponnesian War, is to him the greatest example in history), these dynamic forces — *ὄντα ἀφανῇ κρείσσω τῶν ὀρωμένων δεινῶν* (3.45, 5) — are intensified. This applies to action and behavior of the "haves" as well as of the "have-nots" (3.45, 4). The latter turn to reckless daring, *tolma*, under the pressure of *anankê* in a situation in which they have nothing to lose, the former, filled with the *hybris* engendered by self-assurance and success, to *pleonexia*, since man's restless nature keeps him for ever dissatisfied. These emotions, while already affecting the individual as part of human nature, play an even more vital part in the political sphere (Thucydides' foremost interest); here the controls and restraints of reason are even more endangered by the pressures of group psychology — a field which is one of the great discoveries of Thucydides — and of issues far beyond any private concern, such as the force we have been used to call "nationalism" for the last two centuries, implying both the will to rule over others and the freedom from foreign domination: *ἐλευθερία ἡ ἄλλων ἀρχή* (3.45, 6).

This analysis of *ἀνθρωπεία φύσις* as the foundation of political psychology could hardly be imagined as part of a speech in the *ekklêsia*; even an Athenian assembly would have preferred the popular slogans to the undiluted abstract concentrate. For this reason the Mytilenean debate belongs to those Thucydidean speeches whose remoteness from everyday speech called forth the criticism of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The professor of rhetoric, while a competent judge of Thucydides' style, fails to see that speeches of this kind were written, no matter how authentic they were with regard to the essentials of the actual situation, in accordance with the program (1, 22), not as a replica of an oral performance *ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν*, but for reading, and re-reading, and re-thinking.¹⁸ Only then the Mytilenean speeches (like most of the others) reveal the various stages of political experience and thought integrated in

¹⁸ Meyer 380: "Die Reden bilden den Gipfelpunkt aller historischen Kunst"; Patzer (above, note 15) 54: "die thukyd. Reden ganz Geist"; Finley 299. — Dionysius Hal. and the Mytilenean debate: *οὐχ ὅλην ἐπαινῶ* (*De Thuc. Iud.* 43, 1). About Dionysius' judgment: G. M. A. Grube, "Dionysius of H. on Thucydides," *Phoenix* 4 (1950) 95–110.

them. Starting with the particular case of the disloyal and reconquered ally, Thucydides deals with the underlying political issue of the Athenian *archê* and the position of its "satellite" members, the two opposite roads open to post-Periclean Athens being discussed by Cleon and Diodotus; behind that, on an even more general and higher level, where the historian turns into the political scientist and philosopher, politics presents itself as the supreme battleground between the forces of reason and of emotion in human nature.¹⁹

In this point, as in several others, Thucydides is in agreement with his great contemporaries in philosophy and drama,²⁰ and some passages of the debate would not be felt out of place in a Euripidean tragedy or one of the earlier Platonic dialogues. However, more than these other grand voices of Greek thinking, he approaches his one and only theme — Greece and her center and paradigm, Athens, under the stress of war — with a penetrating clarity of mind combined with a single-minded intensity in the search of the essential truth behind the confusing variety of facts. No matter how we draw the line — if it is possible at all — between the "Thucydidean" and the "authentic" components of the Mytilenean debate, its very insertion is part of his purpose to underscore through speeches the most significant situations and stages of both the *polis* and the *politeia* of the Athenians. Despite his insight into the failures of a democracy lacking a leadership both dynamic and self-restrained, Thucydides keeps his belief in the *polis* as the natural political form of the Greek world. Indeed he would not have called his work *κρῆμα ἐς ἀέλ*, had he not been convinced that there would be men in Hellas, and especially in Athens, able to provide leadership, or at least, intelligent participation in rebuilding the state and in guarding it, within the limits set by human nature, from the two fatal shortcomings illustrated by the Mytilenean debate: a citizenry in constant danger of being carried away by its own undisciplined dynamism, and political leaders unable to control, like Plato's charioteer, by superior intelligence, steadiness, and will power the most gifted but most unruly of all nations.

¹⁹ Ernst Meyer, *Erkennen u. Wollen b. Thuk.* (diss. Göttingen 1939) esp. 70 f. — Romilly 262–85, about the three stages in T.'s thought: (1) la nécessité politique; (2) l'entraînement psychologique; (3) la loi philosophique.

²⁰ Finley, "Euripides and Thucydides," *HSCP* 49 (1938) 47–50; Euripidean parallels to the Mytilenean debate; Schmid 74: Diodotus a similar type to the peasant in *Orestes* 917; Romilly 160 f.; F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London 1907) 110–28; "drama of Cleon"; del Grande (above, note 12) 252 f.; Bayer (above, note 13) 36–44.

If the greatest of his successors in Greek historiography, Polybius, in a mood of bitterness and resignation, speaks of the knowledge of history as a support for standing up against the blow of fortune, Thucydides, stern and disillusioned as he may be, yet believes at least in the possibility of learning from avoidable shortcomings and failures as he presents them, including their causes and implications, in his *History*. One of Thucydides' purposes when giving such a prominent place to the Mytilenean speeches is their ability to illustrate, in addition to the problems of the *archê* and of democracy in action, the dangerous potentialities of the Athenian character, and of *ἀνθρωπεία φύσις* in general, like a confirmation of Pericles' warning (1.114, 4): "I am more worried about our own faults than about the plans of our enemies." But Thucydides never fails to emphasize that these potentialities can be anticipated and brought under control if not removed.²¹ Among the readers, especially the Athenian readers, of his work, in which descriptive history and normative political science are not yet separated, he expects to find those who in spite of the unavoidable disappointments of the *βίος πολιτικός* will prefer participation in politics to *ἀπραγμοσύνη*, while learning from the standards as set forth in Pericles as statesman and speaker as well as from post-Periclean democracy and its problems and leaders — with the Mytilenean affair as one of the most representative paradigms. The statesman who is to save the *polis*, a counterpart to the Hippocratic ideal of the physician (an obvious parallel which has been noticed since Plato's *Gorgias*), will thus apply the experience of history turned into political wisdom: λέγειν τὰ προγενόμενα, γινώσκειν τὰ παρόντα, προλέγειν τὰ ἐσόμενα (Hippocr. *Epid.* 1.11).

²¹ Grene (above note 4) 65–69; Finley 309 f. — Against Finley's concept of the *History* as a "manual of statecraft": Gomme, *Commentary*, vol. 1 (1945) 149. Regenhogen 32: T. writes "für den politischen Menschen als handelnden Menschen." The *xynesis* of the statesman as the master of *orgê* and *tychê*: Müri (above, note 17) 259 f. — A recent discussion on the *pronoia* of the statesman as a counterpart to the physician as appearing in Hippocr. *Epid.* 1 and 3: K. Weidauer, *Thuk. u. d. Hippokratischen Schriften* (Heidelberg 1954) 58–75.