
Thukydides, Eleutherios Venizelos, and Classical Scholarship*

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"THE WORD OF THE PAST IS ALWAYS A PROPHETIC WORD. ONE cannot understand it unless one is a builder of the future and a visionary of the present."¹

Thukydides obviously believed that. Venizelos also believed that, and this is why he spent eight years of his life translating and commenting on Thukydides' *History*.²

It may be difficult to draw lessons for future political actions from history. The composition of history is always biased, and there is nothing easier than "manufactured events." There is a definite message, however, that can be perceived throughout Venizelos' Commentary and Thukydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*: there is no measure of the manipulative power of propaganda on human emotions. Reason can have a secondary function or it can be placed completely aside, and it is then that "The ordinary acceptance of words in their relation to things is changed as men think fit."³

In dealing with Thukydides' *History*, Eleutherios Venizelos, although aware of the major scholarship pertaining to his subject, basically trusted its author's statements as to the manner of the composition of his *History* and the way the speeches were constructed. Also, being a man of action, a politician, he had the advantage of perceiving Thukydides' work as the product of another man highly active in politics. This is not the case, however, with the majority of the scholars

* All quotations and excerpts from modern Greek works have been translated by me, unless otherwise stated. All excerpts from Thukydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* are from the English translation by Charles Foster Smith in the Loeb Classical Library, unless otherwise stated.

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Athens, 1965) p. 340.

²See author's article, "Eleutherios Venizelos' Commentary on Thukydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*" in *Journal of Modern Hellenism* (Brookline, 1987) pp. 55-76.

³Thuk. 3.82.4

who have analyzed Thukydides' text. Being aware of the trap into which scholarship can sometimes be led when a literary work is considered merely as a text and independent from its author, I will attempt to draw attention to some of the problems which arise as a result of such a practice where Thukydides is concerned. And since the manner of the composition of Thukydides' *History* and of the construction of the speeches is instrumental in understanding the author's own point of view on the events and political debates he presents, as well as in explaining Venizelos' own point of view on the matter, I will concentrate on problems pertinent to the above two subjects.

The Problem of the So-called Second Introduction to the History of Thukydides.

Thukydides begins his *History* with the following statement: "Thukydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another. He began the task at the very outset of the war, in the belief that it would be great and noteworthy above all the wars that had gone before, inferring this from the fact that both powers were then at their best in preparedness for war in every way, and seeing the rest of the Hellenic race taking sides with one state or the other, some at once, others planning to do so."⁴ However, there is a repetition of this statement — a so-called second introduction — in Book 5.26, at the beginning of the narrative of the events that followed the close of the Ten Years' War: "The same Thukydides, an Athenian has also written the history of these events, in the chronological order by summers and winters, up to the time when the Lakedaimonians and their allies put an end to the dominion of the Athenians and took the long walls and Pireaus. Up to that event, the war lasted twenty-seven years in all; and if anyone shall not deem it proper to include the intervening truce in the war, he will not judge right."

Thukydides considered the whole twenty-seven years' war as one, as he himself says in the previous passage and also repeats a few lines later: "so that, including the first Ten-Years' war, the suspicious truce succeeding that, and the war that followed the truce, one will find that . . . there were just so many years as I have stated, and some few days over. He will also find, in the case of those who have made any assertion in reliance upon oracles, that this fact alone proved true: for always, as I remember from the beginning of the war until its close, it was said by many that it was fated to last three times nine years."⁵

⁴Thuk. 1.1.1

⁵Thuk. 5.26.2

Since Thukydides considered the whole twenty-seven year war as one, and since most of his work appears to have been revised by him after the war — his statement about the length of the war and its end, the information that he goes on giving about his banishment and how this affected the way he obtained this information, his way of presenting characters, situations and cities in an antithetical manner are a few examples leading to the conclusion that his work was revised — why the so-called second introduction in Book Five?

The so-called second introduction is closely connected with and probably suggested the problem of the composition of Thukydides' work, concerning which scholars have been divided into "separatists," who held the view that Thukydides wrote the first and second halves of his work at widely different times over a period of two decades or more, with perhaps occasional revision of early work in the later stages of writing, and into the "unitarians," who believed that the history was the product of only a few years, after the conclusion of the war.

The question then becomes one not only of textual but also of historical interest since Thukydides' judgment must appear to us in a different light according to whether it was formed and composed immediately after each event or at the end of the whole war when the author must have viewed the events of the first ten years in a different way. The problem of the composition of the work begins with Ullrich.⁶ His opinion on this matter is that Thukydides had made notes on the war from its beginning. He thought it finished in 421. He proceeded to write and got to the middle of Book Four when hostilities started again. He began to take notes again and did not resume regular composition until after 404. Hence the need of the second introduction.

Muller-Strubing held the opinion that the Ten Years' War was published separately. The second statement of chronological method, and the recurrence to the story of the murder of Hipparchos, were called forth by criticism of what he had already published.

Kirchoff's opinion on this matter⁷ was that the history of the Archidamian War is an independent and incomplete work composed considerably before the end of the war, in which certain additions have been somewhat planlessly inserted. The rest was written after 404, but for the most part left by Thukydides in a wholly incomplete state.

Meyer maintained that the peace of 421 was not, like that of 446-445, decisive. The conditions were not carried out. The Boeotians, Corinthians, Megarians, Eleans and Chalkidians did not conclude peace with

⁶*Beitrage zur Erklarung des Thucydides* (Hamburg, 1846).

⁷*Thukydides und sein Urkundenmaterial. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte seines Werkes* (Berlin, 1895), 179, pp. in-8.

Athens. How could the historian have brought his work to a conclusion at this point? There is no doubt that the first book, in the form in which we have it, was not written until after 404. "This war" is then the twenty-seven years' war, the "Peloponnesian War" grasped as a unity; and the causes of the war given in the first book are those of the twenty-seven years' war.

Recent scholarship although admitting at times the futility of the scholarly preoccupation with the problem of when Thukydides' *History* was composed, cannot avoid making assumptions on the subject, basing its own interpretations of Thukydides' statements on these assumptions, or formulating new theories as to the composition of the *History* based upon the various theses it aims to support.

Thus, Donald Kagan, although he professes that the decision as to the time any particular passage in the *History* was composed is in most cases completely subjective,⁸ maintains that a knowledge of the history of the composition of Thukydides' work and of the authenticity of the speeches in it is essential for anyone who works with Thukydides,⁹ and he declares that in this respect he is a "unitarian," which he defines as a supporter of the view that Thukydides' composition took place at one time, after the year 404.¹⁰

Hunter R. Rawlings assents that John Finley, Jacqueline de Romilly and Hermann Strasburger are three among the scholars who shifted scholarly attention from the problem of the composition of Thukydides' work to Thukydides' own perspective on important issues.¹¹ However, although Rawlings states that the whole scholarly contribution to the problem of the composition of Thukydides' *History* has been a futile exercise in scholarship and that it has not made us understand Thukydides' aims and interpretations of events,¹² and that his aim is to analyze the structure of Thukydides' *History* and present a new approach to the way this *History* is viewed.¹³ He is still concerned with the problem of the composition and he bases his thesis on the time the *History* was composed, and his interpretation of events and characters is based on this distinction. Consequently he attributes double vision in the way Thukydides examines the Peloponnesian War.¹⁴ Starting

⁸Donald Kagan, "The Speeches in Thucydides" in *Yale Classical Studies*, 24, (1974), p. 75.

⁹Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca and London, 1969), p. 75.

¹⁰*Ibid.* p. viii.

¹¹Hunter R. Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides' History* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 4-5.

¹²*Ibid.* p. 235.

¹³*Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁴*Ibid.* p. 6.

from his division of the *History* in two separate parts, he considers Books I and VI as introductory to each part. This assumption leads him to the conclusion that the digression in Book I about the end of Pausanias and Themistokles is due to Thukydides' aim of drawing parallels between Alkiviades and Themistokles on the one hand and Pausanias and Lysander on the other.¹⁵ Thus, Rawlings does not escape the problem of the composition of the *History*, nor can he reconcile his theory with Thukydides' own statement in 1.1.1. Moreover, he bases his conclusions about the interpretation of characters and events on his assumptions about the *History*'s composition and vice versa (i.e. in his attempt to trace a literary plan in Thukydides' *History* he concludes that there is a very carefully conceived plan, and that this is what shapes the composition of the entire work.¹⁶ A definite plan, however, in the *History* presupposes a late composition of the *History*, which leads to the conclusion that Thukydides composed his *History* after the year 404.).¹⁷

Virginia Hunter's thesis is that the basic unit in the structure of Thukydides' *History* is the λόγοι — ἔργα combination where in successful action the λόγοι anticipate the ἔργα which follow. This, according to her, explains the cyclic view that Thukydides had of history,¹⁸ and also presupposes a late composition. Hunter maintains that the characters presented in the *History* are type-characters, and in this respect Thukydides' method is similar to that of Herodotos. Starting from the assumption that Thukydides selects the facts in such a way that they would conform to certain patterns which according to him recur in history unless men learn from their mistakes and act in a different manner, she is attempting to establish parallels between various episodes presented by Thukydides. (She professes, for example, that she has discovered parallels between Thukydides' presentation of the Archidameian War and that of the Sicilian Expedition).¹⁹

Jacqueline de Romilly also states that the reconstruction of Thukydides' work makes no difference in the interpretation of the actual *History*.²⁰ However, her thesis that the historical, political and philosophical thought of Thukydides centers on the theme of Athenian imperialism,²¹ and that he interprets all the different facts in his *History*

¹⁵*Ibid.* p. 98.

¹⁶*Ibid.* p. 251.

¹⁷*Ibid.* p. 254.

¹⁸Virginia J. Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful Reporter* (Toronto, 1973), p. 78.

¹⁹*Ibid.* pp. 127-31, 145-48.

²⁰Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* (New York, 1963), p. 348.

²¹*Ibid.* p. 10.

in this light,²² also presupposes a late date for the *History*'s composition. Although her statement, that Thukydides had preconceived ideas about the war which no outcome could have changed,²³ may offer a certain amount of flexibility as to the time of composition, since the various developments throughout the war would not, according to the previous statement, alter Thukydides' interpretation of events, her grouping of the speeches in categories which she believes was an intentional effort on the part of Thukydides in order to prove his point of view, also points to a later composition of the *History*.

According to H. G. Westlake, Thukydides' *History* can be divided into two parts composed at different times. The first one is the Archidamian War (Thuk. 1.1.1 to 5.24), and the second one starts with the Peace of Nikias (Thuk. 5.25) and ends in Book 8.109. This explains the second introduction in Thuk. 5.26. Thukydides, he maintains, had completed the writing of the Archidameian War when he started to compose the second part of the *History*.²⁴ This division of the *History* in two separate entities leads Westlake to the conclusion that Thukydides' views on characters and events differ depending on the part of the composition to which they belong.²⁵

The above brief exposition of some examples of the way the composition of Thukydides' *History* is viewed by modern scholarship indicates that the opinions held regarding this subject influence to a great extent scholarly interpretations of Thukydides' judgment on the events and characters he is presenting. Another fact also becomes apparent from such an exposition: that in all the discussions about the composition of Thukydides' *History* there is little or no consideration about the composition of his history. And yet Thukydides clearly indicates at the beginning of his work that: "He began the task [of collecting evidence] at the very outset of the war, in the belief that it would be great and noteworthy above all the wars that had gone before . . ."²⁶

If one accepts Thukydides' sincerity in making the above statement, it would seem self-evident that one should discard altogether the notion that "the first book, in the form which we have it, was not written until after 404",²⁷ that "he did not resume the composition [of the rest of the war] until after 404",²⁸ or that the whole *Peloponnesian War*

²²Ibid. p. 54.

²³Ibid. p. 353.

²⁴H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 1-19.

²⁵Ibid. pp. 5-19.

²⁶Thuk. 1.1.1.

²⁷E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte* (Halle, 1899).

²⁸F. W. Ulrich, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Thucydides* (Hamburg, 1846).

is a composition that was written after the year 404.²⁹

According to his own statement, Thukydides started the composition of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* right at the time when the Athenians and the Lakedaimonians officially started to wage war against one another. The reason for the undertaking of such a task on the part of Thukydides is also explained by him. It was his belief that this war would be very important for the fate of the Greeks, and his intention was to leave for the future generations "an eternal possession." And the explanation of the nature of this "eternal possession" becomes evident when one reads his *History*. Thukydides' intention was to guard future generations from committing the same mistakes that the Greeks of his time had committed and which resulted in the deterioration of human behavior and the destruction of the Athens which he so ardently admires in Perikles' *Funeral Oration*.

Twenty-one paragraphs later, and after his description of the previous wars which the Greeks had undertaken before the outbreak of the one he intends to present in detail, Thukydides makes another statement which also argues for the composition of the *History* at the beginning of the outbreak of the hostilities and continuing throughout the duration of the Peloponnesian War:

Still, from the evidence that has been given, any one would not err who should hold the view that the state of affairs in antiquity was pretty nearly such as I have described it, not giving greater credence to the accounts, on the one hand, which the poets have put into song, adorning and amplifying their theme, and, on the other, which the chroniclers have composed with a view rather of pleasing the ear than of telling the truth, since their stories cannot be tested and most of them have from lapse of time won their way into the region of the fabulous so as to be incredible. . . . And so, even though men are always inclined, while they are engaged in a war, to judge the present one the greatest, but when it is over to regard ancient events with greater wonder, yet this war will prove, for men who judge from the actual facts, to have been more important than any that went before.³⁰

Since Thukydides states that he started right at the beginning of the war, and nowhere in his work does he indicate that he stopped or that he resumed his composition at different times during the Peloponnesian War or after the end of it, one has to draw the conclusion that

²⁹E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*.

³⁰Thuk. 1.22.1.2.

Thukydides started the composition of his history when the war started and continued to write throughout its duration. Also, besides the fact that both verbs which refer to the war in Thuk. 1.1.1 and 1.21.2 — *ἔσεσθαι* and *δηλώσει* — are in the future tense, which is an obvious indication of the writing of the history being in process right at the beginning of the war, even without Thukydides' testimony about the composition of his work, it would be hard to suggest that a person who discards and places very little value on the narratives about events of the non-recent past, because the validity of the narration is lost in the realm of the myth,³¹ such a person would wait through the duration of the Peloponnesian War, gathering information and never formulating his narrative, in order to start the composition of his *History* after the end of the war, after 404. Certainly there are many statements in his *History* which could not have been written until after the end of the war. It is obvious that the "second introduction" as well as his statements about the uneasy peace which followed the Ten Years War as well as his conception of the twenty-seven year war as a whole were all formulated after 404. Also judging from style and content there are many indications which point to or after the year 404. But all this is not proof of a later composition. It is only proof that Thukydides must have reworked parts of his *History*, and that he must have made additions at different times throughout his whole composition, and that some of the revisions and additions were done after the end of the war.

It is possible that Thukydides had finished the narration of the Ten Years War sometime during the peace of Nikias and published that part of his work. This would explain the "second introduction," when he resumed his narrative after the reopening of the hostilities.

The discrepancies, the absence of speeches in some parts of his work, especially in the last part of it, tend to indicate that some parts of his *History* had not been worked thoroughly in the way the author had intended because of his sudden death. This is probably the reason why his work stops abruptly right before the important incident of Kyzikos, where Xenophon, Kratippos and Theopompos picked up. Viewed under this light, the "second introduction" might not have existed if the author had had the time to work over his whole material thoroughly.

There is still one more possibility, however. It could be that Thukydides had intended this statement to be an introduction to the resuming of hostilities after the Peace of Nikias. His considering the twenty-seven year war as a single war would not prohibit him from seeing subdivisions in it. He calls the Ten Years War "the first war" in

³¹Thuk. 1.21.1.

5.20 and 5.24. In 5.25 he calls it "the ten year war" and in 5.26 "the first war, the ten year one." At the time of the Sicilian expedition he speaks about it as "the previous war."

The war of 418 is referred to as the "Lakedaimonians' War"³² by the Argives, and as the "Mantinean War" by Thukydides.³³ The Sicilian expedition is referred to as the "Sicilian War."³⁴ The whole period after the "years of peace" — the Peace of Nikias — is referred to as "the war following the truce,"³⁵ and the Dekelean War is divided as "the War of Dekeleia,"³⁶ taking place in Attika and the "Ionian War" taking place on the Ionian or Asiatic coast of the Aegean.

It is obvious, therefore, that Thukydides, although considering the twenty-seven year period as a single war, made distinctions within it. Besides, it seems that Thukydides' view as to the oneness of the war was not shared by his contemporaries. Up to the Macedonian times the Athenians appear to have regarded the Ten Years' War and the Dekelean War as separate. Plato, speaking about the Dekelean War refers to it as "the third war" after mentioning the Ten Years' War as a second and the first Peloponnesian War (459-446) as the first war. The same distinction between the Archidamian or Ten Years' War and the Dekelean War is found in the Attic orators.

It seems that the Archidamian or Ten Years' War, which happened during the times of the Athenian prosperity and did not change the picture of Athenian imperialism, was almost pushed aside and not given any special name in view of the fact that the Dekelean War brought the downfall of the Athenian power. It is probable that Thukydides, although conceiving the idea of the wholeness of the Peloponnesian War, was subconsciously making the same distinction as his contemporaries according to the different effect that the Archidamian and the Dekelean War had on the Athenian power. But he includes the incidents during the Peace of Nikias and the Sicilian expedition in his second part of his distinction, as leading to the Dekelean War and marking the beginning of the end.

The Speeches

The Study of the speeches in Thukydides has been closely connected from the middle of the nineteenth century until the period before the

³²Thuk. 5.28.

³³Thuk. 5.26.

³⁴Thuk. 7.85.

³⁵Thuk. 5.26.

³⁶Thuk. 7.27.

Second World War with the problem of composition of Thukydides' *History*, which was in the forefront of Thukydidean scholarship. During this period, the speeches had been explained either as historically faithful reproductions of those actually delivered or as free compositions. During this period there was a tendency to deal only with the direct speeches in Thukydides' work, to quest the degree of historical accuracy in the speeches as well as the degree to which the speeches reflected the actual rhetoric of the second half of the fifth century. Hence one encounters many studies of Thukydides and the sophists, and comparison of his diction with that of Antiphon and other orators.

Lately, when the question of composition of Thukydides' work has been less compelling, the speeches have been studied on a different basis, although the tendency of understanding them as free compositions had already started to be formulated in the previous period. However there would still be a tendency of indicating in them the reflection of the sophistic culture of Athens. One good example of this approach is Finley's work "Euripides and Thucydides,"³⁷ while Jacqueline de Romilly interprets the speeches in the context of Thukydides' thought as a historian and his understanding of the forces which shaped the events he described.³⁸

The new discoveries in the Athenian tribute lists and in other associated documents stimulated the study of the speeches for purposes of evaluating the degree of effectiveness of individuals on their contemporary events. Today the speeches are approached in terms of literature, history and rhetoric.

The origin of the custom of inserting speeches in the narrative can be found in epic poetry where the excellent man was regarded as the "doer of deeds" — ἔργα — and "speaker of words" — λόγοι. The Greeks emphasized the contrast and the interdependence of these elements in Attic tragedy. The same distinction we find in 1.22.1-2 expressed by Thukydides: καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον . . . τὰ τε ἔργα. . .

Thukydides writes political history. Hence the insertion of the speeches being an essential part of political life would be justifiable as an organic element of his political explanations. Herodotos inserts speeches, many times completely fictitious in order to dramatize events or to vary his narrative, but he does not seem conscious of their political function. He, together with Xenophon, usually introduces his speaker by: "ἔλεγε τάδε." Thukydides, however, introduces his speaker by:

³⁷J. H. Finley, "The Speeches in Thucydides" in *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford, 1937).

³⁸Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*.

"ἔλεγε τοιάδε," which brings us to his statement about the composition of the speeches. On this particular subject, as on the subject of the time the *History* was composed, the author himself is very clear: "As to the speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports. Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seems to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time, I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said . . ."³⁹

Although Thukydides has clearly stated the general principles on which he composed the speeches in his *History*, scholarly opinions have continued to vary on the subject. And, like the theories concerning the composition of the *History*, most of the theories about the way Thukydides constructed the speeches have the tendency to point to a particular plan on the part of Thukydides to which his selection and presentation of the various events and speeches have to conform. And, just as in the case of the composition, little or no consideration is given to Thukydides' own statement on the subject.

Thus, Jacqueline de Romilly has the tendency to interpret the speeches in the light of her thesis on Thukydides and Athenian imperialism. Since, according to her, the historical, political, and philosophical thought of Thukydides centers on the theme of Athenian imperialism,⁴⁰ and Thukydides is interpreting all the different facts in this light,⁴¹ it follows that the speeches are primarily a Thukydidean composition aiming to prove the author's point of view. Consequently, she groups the speeches in different categories according to the position they adopt regarding the theme of Athenian imperialism.⁴²

Virginia Hunter's thesis about a cyclic view in Thukydides' conception of *History*, where the various characters are presented as type-characters,⁴³ leads to the inescapable conclusion that the speeches are, for the most part, a Thukydidean construction in order to prove the author's point of view.

³⁹Thuk. 1.22.1-2.

⁴⁰Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, p. 10.

⁴¹Ibid. p. 54.

⁴²For example, she considers Archidamos' speech in Sparta, the first Corinthian speech in Sparta and the second speech delivered by Perikles complementary to each other and constructed by Thukydides in order to produce an idea which "takes place in the form of an actual dialogue" regarding the theme of Athenian imperialism. Ibid. p. 33.

The same is true for every theory which maintains that Thukydides had preconceived ideas or a definite and unchangeable plan in the composition of his *History*. Thus, Pouncey's thesis that Thukydides adopts a pessimistic view of human nature leads him to the conclusion that his choice of material is directed by this particular view.⁴⁴ Such a selection of material would obviously influence the content of the speeches.

Westlake's theory on the division of Thukydides' *History* in two parts leads him to the conclusion that the content of the speeches in the first half of the *History* differs significantly from that in the second half.⁴⁵

Rawlings' reading of a very carefully conceived literary plan in Thukydides' *History*⁴⁶ places him close to Virginia Hunter's conclusions in that respect, while his tendency of finding differences and contradictions in the two parts in which he divides the *History*⁴⁷ places him close to Westlake's conclusions. A. Andrews' conclusions are formulated in the same spirit, since his division of the *History* in two parts based on the artistic and dramatic mode of composition would indicate that Thukydides' method regarding the speeches would conform to the same rules.⁴⁸

Hans-Peter Stahl, in his article: "Course of Events in Books Six and Seven of Thucydides,"⁴⁹ argues that Thukydides aims at composing the intellectual history of the Peloponnesian War,⁵⁰ and he interprets his speeches in this light. Thus Stahl maintains that Thukydides writes a sort of intellectual (and emotional) history of the parties involved in the war,⁵¹ and he argues that "only the combination of speech and course of events can give us the full impact of Thukydides' judgment — or of his condemnation,"⁵² since the interplay of speeches and events is "a description of the successive moods and reflections of human beings who face the contingencies of war."⁵³

W. James McCoy, in his article: "The Non-Speeches of Pisander in Thucydides, Book Eight,"⁵⁴ after professing that "it would be frivolous to argue the question of whether or not Thukydides would

⁴⁴ Peter R. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War* (New York, 1980), p. 22.

⁴⁵ H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides*, pp. 317-18.

⁴⁶ Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides' History*, p. 251.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁴⁸ A. Andrews, "The Mytilene Debate: Thucydides 3.36-49" in *Phoenix*, 16 (1962) 66.

⁴⁹ *The Speeches in Thucydides*, ed. Philip A. Stadter, (Charlotte, 1973), pp. 60-77.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 66.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 63.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 78-89.

have included set speeches here or there had he finished his *History*,"⁵⁵ he goes on to establish passages in the *History* where speeches delivered by Pisander ought to have existed had Thukydides intended to do so or had he time to revise Book Eight.⁵⁶

William L. West, in his article: "The Speeches in Thukydides,"⁵⁷ maintains that Thukydides does not focus on the content of the speeches but upon their impact.⁵⁸ Starting from this thesis, he defines a speech as "a report in direct or indirect discourse of what was said (or its substance) in any particular instance."⁵⁹ He thus concludes that there are "fifty-two speeches in direct discourse, eighty-five in indirect discourse, and three in which there is a combination of direct and indirect speech."⁶⁰

Henry R. Immerwahr, in his study: "Pathology of Power and the Speeches in Thukydides,"⁶¹ seeks, like Jacqueline de Romilly, a conception of unity which actuates Thukydides' composition. And as Romilly finds this unity in the theme of Athenian imperialism, he argues that it is the theme of political power as it deteriorates throughout the war, the pathology of power (as corruption and as an account of suffering), which actuates the *History* and the speeches.⁶² Thus he argues that as "the pathetic element becomes stronger in the course of the *History*,"⁶³ "the subjective element is greater in the speeches during the end of the war than at the beginning."⁶⁴

N. G. L. Hammond, in his article: "The Particular and the Universal in the Speeches in Thukydides,"⁶⁵ starting from the thesis that Thukydides' aim is to draw universal deductions from the speeches in his *History*, seeks examples in the speeches where there is such a tendency.

These various theories aiming at interpreting Thukydides' own intentions and methods concerning the composition of the speeches have led to various conclusions ranging from judgments on the degree of objectivity or subjectivity in each speech to the question of whether a particular speech had actually been delivered or not. Thus, many

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 78.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 3-15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp. 16-31.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 16.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 30.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 31.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 49-59.

scholars, among them Gomme,⁶⁶ Jacqueline de Romilly,⁶⁷ and Donald Kagan,⁶⁸ have doubted that a speech had actually been delivered in Sparta by the Athenians in Book 1. The same is true — with very few exceptions⁶⁹ — about scholarly opinion concerning the Melian Dialogue. The debate about the fate of the Mytilenaians is also discussed in terms of the various theories of interpretation of Thukydides' work. Thus, Finley considers this debate as a demonstration of the deterioration of Athenian external policy toward her allies and of the decline of her morality as a result of the war.⁷⁰ Jacqueline de Romilly considers the two speeches as belonging to the group which had not been reworked at a later date by the author. Therefore, the debate is not concerned with imperialism itself but rather with its methods.⁷¹ According to Pouncey, Kleon's and Diodotos' speeches are constructed in accordance with the deterioration in human nature produced by the war,⁷² while Kagan argues that Kleon and Diodotos represent two divergent imperial powers in Athens: that of moderation instituted by Perikles and defended by Diodotos, and that of a policy of terror toward imperial rebels proposed by Kleon.⁷³

This brief exposition of scholarly opinions regarding the speeches in Thukydides' *History* seems to indicate a tendency of misreading or mistrusting Thukydides' own information on the subject since it points to a more or less general belief that the speeches reflect, for the most part, Thukydides' own beliefs. Some scholars even go so far as to argue that Thukydides had preconceived ideas about the events and the characters he is presenting, and that these ideas did not change during

⁶⁷Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, pp. 242-72.

⁶⁸Donald Kagan, "The Speeches in Thucydides and the Mytilene Debate," in *Yale Classical Studies*, 24 (1975) 74.

⁶⁹A. Amit, "The Melian Dialogue and History," *Athenaeum*, 46 (1968) 216-35, argues that the Melian Dialogue reflects an actual debate between Athenian and Melian speakers. According to Jacqueline de Romilly, in the book *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, the Melian Dialogue must have been written after the year 404, and it is characteristic of Thucydides' own ideas. By this dialogue, Thucydides demonstrates the difference in Athenian behavior, which has deteriorated from an imperialistic policy with a degree of idealism in Perikles' time and with which Thucydides sympathized, to a mere "desire for more by the alleged obligation of maintaining authority" (p. 296). A. Andrews, in "The Melian Dialogue and Perikles' Last Speech," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* in 1960, discusses the Melian incident in terms of the latest discoveries of the Athenian tribute lists, where Melos appears in B.C. 424 as a tributary. Viewed in this light, the Athenian military intervention in the island, argues Andrews, could have been a legitimate one. Thukydides, however, never mentions this fact, thus putting the blame entirely on Athens.

⁷⁰J.H. Finley, *Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1942), p. 177.

⁷¹Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, pp. 167-92.

⁷²Peter R. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War*, pp. 86-87.

⁷³Donald Kagan, "The Speeches in Thucydides and the Mytilene Debate."

the war. Such an assumption would weigh even more heavily against the author's credibility in presenting truthful accounts of the debates which influenced the events he is describing. It seems that a position taken in regards to the speeches should be primarily dependent on the credibility one attributes to Thukydides' statements and on the exact translation of these statements. Regarding Thukydides' credibility, some scholars agree that Thukydides does not, intentionally at least, deceive his reader.⁷⁴ As to the translation and interpretation of his statement in 1.22.1-2, however, theories vary.

The translation of this passage in the Loeb edition is as follows: "As to the speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports. Therefore, the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though, at the same time, I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said."

Thukydides clearly states that it was difficult to retain a memory of the precise words which he had heard spoken, and that this was so with those who brought him reports. He never maintains that he is presenting in the speeches the exact words of the speakers. It is obvious that such a thing would have been impossible, anyway. He does not say, however, that the speeches are entirely his own creation either. Besides the fact that if it were so, there would be no need of the statement in 1.22.1-2 at all, and, after all, one's entire attitude toward the speeches and the entire composition depends on whether one trusts Thukydides' statement or not, there is one passage in the *History* which clearly indicates Thukydides' own belief in the great importance of political debate for decision making. In Perikles' *Funeral Oration*, which most scholars agree expresses also Thukydides' beliefs as to the way an ideal Athenian democracy might have operated, one finds the praise of political debate: "And we Athenians decide public questions for ourselves or at least endeavor to arrive at a sound understanding of them, in the belief that it is not debate that is a hindrance to action, but rather not to be instructed by debate before the time comes for action. For, in truth, we have this point also of superiority over other men, to be most daring in action and yet, at the same time, most given to reflection upon the ventures we mean to

⁷⁴Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 374.

undertake."⁷⁵ Thukydides also mentions that as far as the deeds done in the war were concerned, he did not think himself at liberty to record them from the first informant, or on arbitrary conjecture, and that his account rests either on personal knowledge or on the closest possible scrutiny made by others.⁷⁶ It would be absurd to suggest that the same person who goes through all this trouble in order to verify the events of the war would make up the speeches which he considers so important in decision making. Unless, of course, one disregards Thukydides' own statement in 1.22 altogether. No one, however, would go so far as to admit that. Therefore, most scholarly debate centers around the meaning of the following statement made by Thukydides: ὥς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν μοι ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς συμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται . . . and especially around the meaning of τὰ δέοντα and its connection with the phrase that follows, namely: ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς συμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων. For the phrase "ἐδόκουν μοι" obviously presupposes some subjective treatment of the speeches on the part of Thukydides. Some scholars, therefore, have found it difficult to reconcile this phrase with the one that follows: ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς συμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων and have attempted to draw more importance to the first or to the second one, depending on their opinion as to the objectivity of Thukydides in relating speeches and events. Several meanings have also been given to the phrases: ἐδόκουν μοι ἕκαστοι and τὰ δέοντα.

As Kagan rightly observes, if one accepts that Thukydides is making every effort in order to report the speeches as accurately as possible, the phrase: ὥς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν μοι ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν would not present any problems.⁷⁷ And he quotes A. Andrews who maintains that this statement may be taken to refer to the form rather than the content of the speeches.

Also, in such a case, there should not be any problem in reconciling the first statement made by Thukydides with his second one.⁷⁸

The problem of the correct interpretation of τὰ δέοντα, however, still remains, since there is a tendency to attribute it to Thukydides' own judgment as to the situation on which the speakers had spoken. This would of course offer more freedom to Thukydides in expressing his own interpretations on each speech than if τὰ δέοντα were

⁷⁵Thuk. 2.40.2-3.

⁷⁶Thuk. 1.22.2.

⁷⁷"The Speeches in Thucydides," p. 74.

⁷⁸Ibid. p. 75.

interpreted as referring only to the speakers. And as an example of such an interpretation I present Hammond's statement that this phrase indicates Thukydides' attempt to "contrast, on the one hand, the actual words and general sense of the speaker on a particular occasion, and, on the other, the arguments, which, according to Thukydides' own judgment, would have expressed the essentials of the situation — *ta deonta*."⁷⁹ Hammond obviously attributes the meaning of τὰ δέοντα as referring to the essentials of the situation on which each particular speech was delivered.

Thukydides, as I mentioned, never pretends to present the exact words of what was said. That is why he introduces his speaker by: ἔλεγε τοιάδε and this is what the previous statement establishes right from the beginning. This already presupposes a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the author which Thukydides admits on his own. As to the phrase: τὰ δέοντα, I believe that it means "what is needed or required", and that it refers both to the relevant situation on which the speeches were delivered and to the character of the speaker with the weight, however, being on the speaker. Therefore, I would translate the phrase: "ὥς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν μοι ἕκαστοι τὰ δέοντα εἰπεῖν" as follows: "as I considered that each one would have said what was necessary", — with the assumption that ἐδόκουν, on the part of Thukydides, refers to what he considered the speaker likely to have said on a particular situation according to his judgment as to the speaker's character.

There is obviously a big difference between this interpretation and the one that includes Thukydides' own judgment as to what he considered appropriate to have been said on each particular occasion. My interpretation places more emphasis on Thukydides' evaluation of the speaker, while the other stresses Thukydides' evaluation of the situation. And yet, if Thukydides had placed more emphasis on his own evaluation of each situation than on the actual truthful presentation of what had actually happened, he would not have placed such an importance on the speeches delivered throughout the war. And he would not have added the phrase: ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς συμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων. Viewed in this light, the problem of the absence of speeches on particular occasions can, among other reasons, be attributed to the absence of the prerequisites that Thukydides needed in order to present such a speech, i.e. lack of essential information as to what the speaker had actually said, not enough personal knowledge of how the speaker was likely to speak, etc. In

⁷⁹"The Speeches in Thucydides and the Mytilene Debate," p. 49.

conclusion, if τὰ δέοντα were referring only to the occasion and not also to the character of each individual who delivered it, or if the same emphasis were being attributed on both the occasion and the character of the speaker, it would have seemed more appropriate for Thukydides to have said: ἄν ἐδόκει μοι ἐκάστους εἰπεῖν. As the actual text stands, however, the emphasis is obviously on the word ἐκάστοι, since Thukydides uses the verb in the plural ἐδόκουν, and is referring directly to the subject of εἰπεῖν: ἐκάστοι, which is in the nominative case.

There is no way that one can say how much one could remember at a period when people used to rely essentially on their memory, unlike our times when we rely on texts. But coming back to Thukydides' statement in 1.22.1-2, this is obviously a drawback, for, although Thukydides possessed real acuteness in psychological analysis, he could not have reproduced exactly his speaker's point of view.

Let us take Perikles for example. Reading the speeches of Perikles, one cannot but help wondering: How far do they preserve the form and the style of the statesman's oratory? How far do they express the ideas of his policy? How far do they represent what he said on several occasions?

There is no doubt that Thukydides must have repeatedly heard Perikles and that some of the traits of his eloquence must have verbally survived intact in his speeches, especially since we can double check with excerpts of Perikles' mannerisms that have survived in Aristotle and Plutarch.⁸⁰ However, the general style here, as in all the speeches, is Thukydides' own. This is only natural — and it does not deviate from Thukydides' initial statement as to the composition of the speeches — since Thukydides composed the speeches from memory and he did not copy them from the original notes of the speakers. He renders, for example, the majesty of Perikles in each of his speeches the same way he tries to imply the baseness of Kleon, Perikles' antithetical image, although the policy they both advocate is essentially the same.

In Thukydides' work, we can still find the influence of the epic poetry in the way he distinguishes, right from the beginning, the speeches "ὅσα λόγῳ εἶπον" from the deeds "ἔργα," the strong influence of the rhetoric of his times in a way that in his speeches the panegyric, forensic, deliberative of the contemporary rhetoric can be discerned, and of the Attic drama with which Euripides would eventually become the vehicle of dialectical subtleties and the dramatic mirror of public debate.

The second part of the fifth century B.C. was a period of profound

⁸⁰Plutarch, *Pericles*, 8.5.

social and political changes in Athens and of intense intellectual activity. During this time, many of the established patterns of life and beliefs were dissolving in favor of new ones. The sophists played a very important role in this turmoil and in many ways they gave expression to all this.

All the intellectual experiments of this period are reflected in the literary works of the time. Euripides and Thukydides are closely associated with and influenced by the sophistic movement, and all the new issues are found at work in their writings. In this respect, Finley's *Three Essays on Thucydides*,⁸¹ as well as Jacqueline de Romilly's *Histoire et Raison Chez Thucydide*,⁸² are most illuminating. In Thukydides, however, we can discern a historical approach to the understanding of human actions, where reason plays the most important role with probability and chance coming to supply the missing links. The importance placed on reason and the belief in the power of reasoned arguments come through all the time, especially in the speeches delivered in Thukydides' *History*.

Logos, in its infinite varieties, is studied and used in argumentation, where nothing seems to be impossible to handle either way. In orations, a favorite device is to point out inconsistencies and conflicts between one course of action and another, and a rational calculation of a probable course of events as seen, for example, in the speeches of Archidamos, the Corinthians, and the Athenians when they debate for and against victory in the coming war.

In defending a case, the presentation of different possibilities immediately followed by their refutation and the axiom of the possibility of disputing on either side of an argument and making the weak one strong and the strong one weak is very often found in the speeches in Thukydides' *History*, where opposing views are presented by parties belonging to the same side or opposite sides in the war, and argumentation is provided for every case.

Yet, in so doing, Thukydides' intention is to offer all the differing issues, as presented by the speakers, of opposing ideologies and interests in each situation, and to try to discern the politics involved and the process which led to the decision making. According to his own testimony, there are normally more than two speeches delivered on each occasion. It is probable that he selects the most characteristic and antagonistic ones in order to present the most controversial issues. And there is no reason not to assume that all the above discussed devices were

⁸¹J. H. Finley, *Three Essays in Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1967).

⁸²Jacqueline de Romilly, *Histoire et Raison chez Thucydide* (Paris, 1956).

not used to a greater or lesser extent by the speakers themselves, and this is what Thukydides is reproducing in his *History* as faithfully as such a thing is possible, given the restrictions which he himself admits in 1.22.1-2. It is because of these limitations that Thukydides' own views and interpretations cannot but be ever present throughout the narrative and the speeches. It is also because of the author's personal interest or bias as far as a particular situation or a speaker is concerned that this happens. But this is only natural.

Thus, the statement which Kleon is presented as making in 3.38.4, when addressing the Athenian assembly, "You have been used to become viewers of the words and listeners of the deeds," not disregarding the possibility that it might have been actually used by Kleon as a sophistic device in order to win his audience's attention by reprimanding them, is, I believe, also characteristic of Thukydides' disapproval of oratorical demagogy. Despite his contempt, however, for what he calls "ἡδονὴ τῶν λόγων," he cannot avoid participating in the widely spread sophistic experiment with the Greek language. There are many novel stylistic devices in his speeches and Prodikos' influence on the correct use of words and synonyms has been detected in his work.⁸³ And yet, here again, Thukydides' working with the language is not for experimentation per se. His observations are put to work for the description of the new and complex situations produced by the war. And it is more than possible that all these devices were actually used by the speakers themselves, who were also aware of these developments in the use of the Greek language.

The understanding of rational and irrational processes makes possible the reconstruction of human motives realistically and on the basis of experience. This especially applies to the contemporary political events. "Do not desire to be deluded," say the Athenians to the Melians in 5.130, "or to be like the common herd of men; when they still, humanly speaking, have a chance of survival but find themselves in their extremity, destitute of real grounds for confidence, they resort to illusions, to prophecies and oracles and the like, which ruin men by the hopes they inspire in them."

The affinity of Thukydides' diction with the sophistic movement of his time has occasionally led to the conclusion that many of his speeches may be exercises in the spirit of the sophistic developments which were at work in Athens then. The affinity of his work to tragedy, on the other hand, has led P. M. Cornford to formulate the theory that Thukydides read Aeschylean conceptions into the events of the war and

⁸³See W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 223-24, and J. H. Finley, *Thucydides*, chapter 2.

mounted it, like a tragedy, with the dark figures of Tyche, Hybris, Peitho, and Eros moving in the background and prompting the human actors.⁸⁴

There is no doubt that there is a strong dramatic force working through Thukydides' *History* with all the antithetical elements and polarities coming forward in a powerful way through the speeches. Viewed under this light, the Melian dialogue could be interpreted as the culminating point of Athenian arrogance — hybris — and as an expression of the ultimate antithesis between the Athenian raw show of power and the Delian plea for justice. And the unevenness of the speech distribution throughout the work could be explained as a device for a special dramatic effect.

In a work, however, as powerful as that of Thukydides', one could easily discern characteristic qualities of the literary genres of his time. Thukydides combined these qualities to create a historical work which, despite the limitations imposed by circumstances and by the times of its composition, is fundamental for the genesis of what we call history today.

One could argue that the concentration of most of the speeches in the first four books is an indication of that part of the work having been worked thoroughly by the author and being the only part that we possess in its complete form. If we accept this as true, it would lead us back to the debates about the composition of the work and the so-called second introduction. The absence of speeches in Book Eight could be explained as due to the unfinished character of the book, and that in Book Five to the fact that it mainly deals with the period of peace and so the insertion of speeches did not seem necessary: or perhaps the whole Book Five was a later insertion by the author as an introduction to the reopening of hostilities.

I would like to conclude my brief exposition of some of the problems encountered in Thukydides' work when it is viewed primarily as a literary text, with a quotation from Eliou's book, "The Message of Thucydides."⁸⁵ This book was composed throughout a period of fifteen years and its composition had begun when the author was in solitary confinement. Here is what Eliou has to say about his book on its completion:

It is obvious that my work contains a few repetitions as well as several different evaluations of the same events. I could, of course, without much effort, erase the repetitions and choose among the

⁸⁴F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1907).

⁸⁵Modern Greek political leader of the left.

evaluations those which represent my points of view today. However, this work started to be composed in the middle of 1968 and it is being continued until November 1979. Several interferences — either because of lack of sufficient bibliography, which, while I was in jail could hardly reach me, or because of long intermissions after my release in the summer of 1970 for political endeavors as well as for health reasons — did not permit me to work in a continuous manner on this book. Consequently, there matured inside me the evaluations of the various events and of my material in general. And now that I see all this in the process in which it has been formed I realize with affection that it started to grow differently and it matured differently. I was also moved to observe the entirety of my work in the history of its creation. And it is for this reason that I prefer to leave it with its repetitions and its different evaluations of the same events. And to leave to the reader or student himself the choice of the evaluations.⁸⁶

It is possible that similar traits may be discerned in Thukydides' work. And it is natural to expect this in a creative process that must have lasted at least thirty years, which was the duration of the Peloponnesian War. Thukydides may have felt the self-confidence and the elation of Perikles at the beginning of the war, he may have believed in the Athenian superiority at the beginning of the second half of the fifth century, and he may have suffered the disillusionment of its abuse of power which culminated in the Melian incident. But above all, the whole experience of the Peloponnesian War may have left Thukydides with the lesson of the futility of it, the futility and the horror of any war for any reason.

It would be hard for an intelligent politician who has experienced a war previously to advocate another. And this may also be Thukydides' attitude. This may be the reason for his insistence in indicating with whom the responsibility of the war lays. And this may be one of the reasons which have attracted politicians to his work. But above all, when one examines Thukydides' *History*, one has to account for the author's own bias regarding the events and the people he presents. In this respect, Hans-Peter Stahl makes a very important point. He indicates that most of the scholarly disagreement as to the speeches in Thukydides may be related to the tendency of considering history an objective discipline just like the other scientific disciplines. It may be, Stahl argues, that no one can achieve this kind of objectivity in a discipline

⁸⁶Helias Eliou, *Τό Μύνημα του Θουκυδίδη* [The Message of Thucydides] (Athens, 1980).

where the subjective element of material and interpretation are directly related to the author's personality and therefore liable to be subjective to a lesser or a greater degree.⁸⁷

Thukydides is partial to a certain degree since he cannot help but be essentially an Athenian in his presentation of events and, especially, of speeches. His partiality, however, cannot be intentional — since this would defy his main purpose of writing his *History*, as he himself defines it — except in rare instances, as, for example, in the case of Kleon. Kleon had many military successes, and his views toward the peace that Nikias struggled to achieve, as well as his policy toward Argos, prove that he had at least definitely good sense, an attribute which Nikias lacked. Thukydides, however, minimized Kleon's military successes and ascribed humble motives to his political actions, perhaps because Kleon had lacked moderation in his manners, the aristocratic element of Periklean Athens.

⁸⁷*The Speeches in Thucydides*, p. 61.