Thucydides' Plataean Debate

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To Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Thucydides* 42) no speech of Thucydides was finer than the Plataeans' in Book III. But that debate has commanded little attention in writing from modern scholars apart from the detailed observations of commentators. This paper tries to show how the speakers' rhetorical arguments and their tragic pathos or passion contribute to the historian's profound enquiry into the behaviour of men at war. In conclusion, it recapitulates by means of a comparison with the speeches concerning the Mytilenean revolt.

I

The opening of the Plataeans' speech, like the whole debate, uses the tools of forensic oratory. It is an appeal for sympathy, a normal topic for a defence speech to begin with.[1] But it also contrasts significantly with what is usual in such contexts:

(1) "Our lives are at stake" (53.2; *cf.* 59.3). *Cf. e.g.* Antiph. 5.96; Lys. 1.50, 4.18; and the subtly modified version of this commonplace in Gorg. *Pal.* 1. But here the danger lies not in a prosecution but in the lack of one. That this topic is presented not as an assertion but as an inference (*εἰκότως ὑποπτεύομεν . . . τεκμαιρόμενοι . . .*) stresses the point: the speakers cannot even say they know for sure how badly off they are. It is further stressed by 53.3. Not making a speech in a predicament like theirs would give rise to blame or accusation; but in that case the only accusers would be themselves, the sufferers. At the same time the whole chapter shows that the speech they do make is found to be futile too.

(2) "To tell the truth will harm us, to lie will expose us" (53.2). The claim to speak the truth is a stock-in-trade of defendants: *cf. e.g.* 6.89.3; Antiph. 3β2, 5.2; Gorg. *Pal.* 33; Lys. 1.5. But the Plataeans see that to tell the truth will not help them any more than lying. This statement subtly combines, as Gorgias does in the *Palamedes* (4), the claim of veracity with the appeal for pity; but it is also bitterly

[1] Or any speech: *cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1415a35; *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1436a38.

accurate. Indeed, the Spartans' 'brief question' undercuts any speech they could make.

(3) "We are in dire straits, so we must speak in our defence" (53.3). *Cf. e.g.* Antiph. 2β4, 3β2; Gorg. *Pal.* 28; Eur. *Hipp.* 990; Lys. 3.3, 7.1–2; [Arist.] *Rhet.Alex.* 1442b6–9. But again, the Plataeans are not compelled by a previous accusation; they themselves admit that they have asked to speak (53.2). Thus there is all too truly a necessity, but no one they can blame for it.

(4) "Our case is a hard one to make" (53.4). It is a normal procedure for a speaker to say how difficult a task the speech is; that is designed to win sympathy for him and give his subject importance. *Cf. e.g.* 2.35.2; Ar. *Vesp.* 650; Antiph. 5.19; Isoc. 4.13; Arist. *Rhet.* 1415a2. Strikingly similar to our passage is Eur. *Hec.* 812–19, which also thrusts an almost personified 'persuasion' to the fore.[2] But the difficulty is of a peculiarly ironical kind: the Plataeans cannot produce witnesses of their friendship towards Sparta because the Spartans already know about it. Now this might seem an advantage when it is a question of recalling their good deeds (54.1), for then their audience cannot question them: *cf.* Gorg. *Pal.* 28; Lys. 7.30–3, 24.5; Dem. 18.10, 40.53; and for the reverse in a prosecution, Lys. 22.22; Dem. 21.1, 149. But the Spartans are prejudiced against them; so because they already know what the Plataeans have to say, they have already discounted it. And we have already seen them hear and reject such a speech in 2.71–72.

(5) "You will not make your superior virtues a reason for prejudice against us" (53.4). Flattery of the juror's qualities is a natural and common device: *cf. e.g.* 57.1 below. Gorg. *Pal.* 33,37; Andoc. 1.140; Lys. 3.2; *Rhet.Alex.* 1442a14–16. This is a particularly choice example because it praises both directly the Spartans' virtue and indirectly their humanity. But no sooner has it been said that the Spartans will not prejudge the case than it has to be said that they will because of their favour towards the Thebans. So this is also a request, though a desperate one, to the audience to be impartial. It thus corresponds to Attic orators' invocation of the jurors' oath, which required the swearer not to take bribes and to listen to both sides equally (Dem. 24.150f): *cf. e.g.* Lys. 10.32; Dem. 27.68, 45.87; Aeschin. 3.8. The pathetic irony is heightened by the wording. (a) The Plataeans try to

[2] On the Plataean Debate and *Hecuba* see further J. C. Hogan, "Thucydides 3.52–68 and Euripides' *Hecuba*," *Phoenix* 26 (1972) 241–57.

say that the Spartans have not prejudged the case by introducing a motive for prejudice that they do not have. The harsher terms, προκαταγνόντες, which includes the notions both of prejudice (προ-) and of condemnation (κατα-), and ἔγκλημα, which would suggest the Spartans were behaving like prosecutors rather than judges, are thus put in the negative part of the sentence; the milder ones, διεγνωσμένην ('decided') and κρίσιν, which implies they really are judges, are put in the positive part. (b) ἄλλοις χάριν φέροντες, which governs a verb in the first person, avoids saying that the Spartans are the ones doing favours (*cf.* Poppo-Stahl *ad loc.*). This tactful manoeuvre[3] only impresses the truth on the reader the more and shows up how useless are the speakers' attempts to gain the good will of their audience.

So this exordium, rhetorically hopeless, is rich in history. The Spartans, concerned only with their immediate interests (68.4), still make a show of their reputed virtue by allowing a kind of trial, whose apparent purpose is to establish guilt or innocence, merit or demerit (52.2, 53.4). But this trial is a travesty of legal forms; and indeed the motive for holding it at all is purely prudential (52.2). Thus we are given also a verbal enactment of what the weaker city, the 'accused', must perforce endure; for the destiny of Plataea is one of those sufferings which for Thucydides make the war worth recording and give history the status of epic.[4]

In 54.2 the Plataeans answer the 'brief question'. Again there is a vain attempt at tact: where Spartan wrongdoing is concerned they shift from a second (ὑμᾶς) to a third person (αὐτοὺς . . . τοὺς ἡμῖν ἐπιστρατεύσαντας) to soften their complaint. But this is in fact all that the Plataeans can say to the 'charge' against them; so at once they have to move on to irrelevant topics, just as Hippolytus in Euripides, because of his oath of silence, can defend himself only by reference to his character as manifested up till now (991–1006, 1016–20; *cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1418a38–1418b1). The appeal to past good deeds was a regular part of an ancient legal defence: *cf. e.g.* Lys. 30.1; [Dem.] 25.76, with L. Radermacher, *Artium Scriptores* (*SitzWien* 227.3 [1951]) 224f §55.[5] But here it has been explicitly ruled out of court. The more pathetic

[3] *Cf.* Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.264–70.

[4] Compare 1.23.2 with *Il.* 1.1f (μύρια . . . ἄλγεα) and *Od.* 1.4 (πολλὰ . . . ἄλγεα). *Cf.* H. Strasburger, "Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung," *SitzHeidelberg* 1972.1 pp.33f. Also H. D. F. Kitto, *Poiesis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1966) 270–79.

[5] See further K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1974) 292–95.

then that the speakers should try to enhance their merits by stock methods of *amplificatio*:

(a) μόνοι Βοιωτῶν (54.3): *cf. e.g.* 1.73.4, 6.83.2; Hdt. 9.27.2,5; Lys. 2.20; Arist. *Rhet.* 1368a10f. (As commentators observe, they forget the Thespians in order to make the point; *cf.* Isoc. 14.57.)

(b) παρὰ δύναμιν (54.4, 57.4): *cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1365a21f.

(c) τότε ὅτε ἐν μείζονι κινδύνῳ ἦτε (56.4) . . . ἐν καιροῖς οἷς σπάνιον ἦν (56.5): *cf.* 1.41.2; Arist. *Rhet.* 1365a19–21.

(d) μέγιστος φόβος (54.4) . . . τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ καὶ μέγιστα (55.1) . . . μείζω πρὸς ἐλάσσω (56.5). The use of the word μέγας is the most obvious way of lending μέγεθος to a subject; *cf.* 1.1.1–3, 23.1; 2.61.4, 62.1, 64.3 (four times). But in 1.21.2 Thucydides observes that men naturally consider greatest whatever danger threatens them in the present, and that corresponds exactly to the Spartans' exclusive concern with their interests in the present war.

Ch.55 now broaches an awkward question: if the Plataeans have been such good friends to Sparta in the past, why are they her enemies now? There is a simple answer: 'it is your fault' (55.1). But this again nullifies their attempts at tact or flattery. It also reveals how Plataea is, and always has been, at the mercy of greater powers. The Mytileneans likewise justify their alliance with Athens before the Spartans by criticizing them for withholding help (10.2). In both cases the Spartans are uninterested in justifications and in the past (*cf.* 9.2); the Plataeans' case is neither better nor worse than Mytilene's, but the one persuades, the other is ignored. The futility of their speech is emphasized even further by the opening words of ch.55. As Gomme observes (*ad* 55.1), "though this is to be by contrast with τὰ μὲν παλαιά, Thucydides" (or rather, the Plataeans' speech) "begins by going back to an even earlier event." Every argument they discover to defend themselves is a reminder that such defence is irrelevant.

55.3–4 intensify the pathos: the Plataeans are now not merely rebuffed by an impervious audience but are entangled in their own justifications. 55.3 (*cf.* 56.6) claims that they were right to remain loyal to Athens; 55.4 (*cf.* 58.2) that they are not to blame for what they do as Athens' allies. The two arguments sit uneasily together: they first expect moral credit for their standing by Athens, but they then say that they cannot help what they do as Athens' allies. The contradiction is brought out by the echo of προδοῦναι αὐτοὺς οὐκέτι ἦν καλόν

in εἴ τι μὴ καλῶς ἐδράτο. This rhetorical weakness again reveals their sufferings and the historical truth which underlies them: that as a minor power they have no choice; and indeed they first contracted their alliance with Athens for fear of Thebes (55.3). Moreover, to have accepted Sparta's terms at the beginning of the siege would have done them little good, as their reply to Archidamus at 2.72.2 brings out: that would endanger their compatriots at Athens without protecting the city from the painful pressure of the Athenians or Thebans, and Archidamus' offer in 2.72.3 still leaves them understandably anxious about what Athens would do if they accepted it (2.73.3, and see also Gomme *ad loc.*).

The Plataeans' lack of freedom and inability to make a case for themselves to Sparta emerges again, with a sharp irony, in 2.71–72. They protest against the Spartan invasion that Pausanius in 479 B.C. gave them back their land and city to hold 'in freedom', and remind their audience of the oaths (*cf.* 3.59.2) sworn at that time. Archidamus retorts that as allies of Athens, the enslaver of Greece, they have given up their freedom and thus betrayed the very oaths they invoked (*cf.* 3.63.3). So the Plataeans' defence merely points to what, in Spartan eyes, is their crime. Neither will their loyalty to Athens help them. Now this section illustrates the restless activity (πολυπραγμοσύνη)—in sharp contrast to the Spartans' indolent egoism—which has also gained Athens her empire, but the event is to reveal the limits of that quality, which is sometimes idealized by Athenian speakers or reluctantly admired by others (2.40.4, 6.18.2, 1.70.2–9). Athens begins by acting energetically on the Plataeans' behalf (2.6.4), but when the pressure grows, she does no more than offer promises (2.73.3), which remain unfulfilled; and when there is a chance of getting the Peloponnesian army away from Plataea by sparing the life of a Spartan captured at Mytilene, she ignores it (3.36.1). And like Sparta, despite the exclusive concern with her own interests, she is prepared to appeal to old oaths to justify herself or browbeat the Plataeans (2.73.3). The Plataeans know they have been deserted by her (57.4); and Thucydides' account of the whole episode concludes with the dry and devastating comment (68.5): "The events at Plataea ended in the ninety-third year after it became Athens' ally." So in the war one big power displays its reputed virtue no more than the other—whatever they say about themselves and others may believe of them.[6]

[6] For the unmasking of Spartan and Athenian pretensions, see H. Gundert, "Athen und

In ch.56 the speakers turn to an attack on Thebes. In a normal defence-speech this would be the topic of counter-accusation: *cf.* Gorg. *Pal.* 27; Lys. 6.42; Aeschin. 1.178. Here, where there has been no prosecution, that impresses on us yet again that the whole speech is a waste of time and the speakers' case hopeless. But the arguments again create complications illuminating for the reader.

56.1–2 are, from a forensic point of view, a weak argument. They justify their execution of the Theban prisoners by appeal to the 'universal law', which their enemies also recognize (66.2), that aggression may be repulsed with violence; but this is scarcely more than a law of nature (*cf.* 4.61.5). Further, in 58.3 they appeal to one of a very different kind, the 'law of the Greeks' which requires that prisoners of war who surrender should be spared.[7] And if the former 'law', which is of the very essence of war, is valid, how valid is the latter likely to be—especially since this court, as the speakers themselves recognize, is not a 'lawful' one (53.1)? The shifting sense of νόμος also exemplifies what Thucydides describes in general terms in 3.82.4: how war, a state of continual need and danger, deforms language and values alike, which are interdependent conventions (νόμοι). The very word νόμος is revealed as ambiguous.[8] This theme is also represented in the facts of the Plataean affair.

(1) The Plataeans said they would return the Theban prisoners if the Thebans withdrew. The Thebans did so, and the Plataeans killed the prisoners nonetheless. The Thebans claimed the Plataeans swore to return the prisoners; the Plataeans said that they agreed to return them only after negotiations and denied that they swore any oath (2.5.5–7). Clearly the Thebans, as they say in 66.3, took their enemies to have promised to return the prisoners without further ado if they themselves withdrew; but what the Plataeans said presumably did

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Sparta in den Reden des Thukydides," *Die Antike* 16 (1940) 98–114 = *Wege der Forschung* 98 (1968) 114–34 (hereafter, *WF*); H. Strasburger, "Thukydides und die politische Selbstdarstellung der Athener," *Hermes* 86 (1958) 17–40 = *WF* 498–530; H. Diller, "Freiheit bei Thukydides als Schlagwort und als Wirklichkeit," *Gymnasium* 69 (1962) 189–204 = *WF* 639–60; H. Flashar, "Der Epitaphios des Perikles," *SitzHeidelberg* 1969.1.

[7] On this and similar νόμοι (and their precariousness), see P. Ducrey in *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, ed. J. P. Vernant (Paris 1968) 231–43; and his *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique* (Paris 1968) 289–311.

[8] For a similar clash between natural and moral law in war *cf.* 4.97–98 and Arist. *Pol.* 1255a3–11; for arguments resting on an equivocation between the two, 6.16.4–5, with "Rhetoric and History: Thucydides 6.16–18," *Quaderni di Storia* 2 (1975) 46–48; and 6.92.4, which is a travesty of Pericles in 2.43.1 and 2.60.5. Note also Pl. *Grg.* 483A.

not either affirm or entail that. There seems also to have been room for confusion between a promise and an oath. The Plataeans, then, in effect tricked the Thebans by sticking to the spoken letter but not the assumed spirit of their promise. Paches plays the same kind of trick in 3.34; and both episodes are versions of what is described in general terms in 3.82.7: "whenever an agreement was made on oath, it only held good for the moment of need in which it was given, for as long as the combatants had nothing else to fortify them."[9]

(2) The Plataeans invoke the 'law' that those who surrender in battle should be spared. But the Thebans can justly retort that the Plataeans themselves flouted it (66.2–3,[10] 67.6). This reveals the shakiness of such a 'law'. Indeed, when the Thebans surrender, it is thought necessary that a promise or oath be given to spare them; and when the Plataeans surrender, a special agreement is made, which provides that a trial be held before the Spartans and the 'guilty' be punished (52.2). Clearly in neither case is there any reliance on the law of the Greeks: it is overridden by a verbal pact. And just as the Plataeans were able to excuse themselves by reference to the terms of their promise, so the Thebans are able to remind their enemies that they agreed to offer themselves for trial, which both makes their punishment legal and nullifies their recourse to the law of the Greeks (67.5). To the Plataeans, this meant putting themselves in the hands of friends, the Spartans,[11] not of their archenemies, the Thebans (59.3). But in fact the trial is a formality which merely palliates and accommodates Spartan unscrupulousness and Theban hatred. It is a travesty of legality, as the Melian Dialogue is of dialectic:[12] it represents that εὐπρέπεια λόγου which replaces and undermines εὐσέβεια or τὸ εἴθισμένον (3.82.8–83.1).

[9] Such gamesmanship is typical of war but not confined to it; *cf.* e.g. 1.134.

[10] Note how they emphasize the Plataeans' crimes by listing them as three; for this kind of *amplificatio*, *cf.* 1.74.1, 76.2, 3.40.2; Antiph. 2γ11; more generally, Arist. *Rhet.* 1365a10–15. This trumps the Plataeans' δύο ἀγῶνας τοὺς μεγίστους (57.3).

[11] They carefully distinguish between πολέμιοι (which is what they are) and ἐχθροί (which is what they are not): see 54.2, 55.1, 58.2.

[12] *Cf.* "Form and Meaning in the Melian Dialogue," *Historia* 23 (1974) 389–91. I should have noted further there: (1) that the Athenian proposal in 5.85 corresponds to Pl. *Grg.* 467C, 469C, 504C, 506A; *Phd.* 91C; *Prt.* 329A–B; (2) that the requirement of plain-speaking without moral pretensions in 5.89 corresponds to *Grg.* 487A–E (shame and candour are an important theme in the whole dialogue); *Resp.* 346A, 349A, 350E; (3) that the language of combat in 5.86 corresponds to Plato's condemnation of eristic, or corrupt dialectic, as mere 'fighting', *cf.* *Euthyd.* 271C–272A, *Soph.* 225A–C, and his use of φιλονικεῖν: *Phd.* 91A; *Grg.* 457D–E; and for the Athenians' domineering, *cf.* further *Meno* 76B, 86D.

In 56.3–7 the Plataeans appeal to their audience's sense of justice. This line of argument is closely connected with their accusation of the Thebans, because what interferes with considerations of justice is the Spartan's self-interest or prejudice in favour of Thebes. These two things are in effect one and the same, as is brought out by *τῷ αὐτίκα χρησίμῳ ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐκείνων πολεμίῳ*.[13] The article embraces the whole phrase, and *τε* is positioned in such a way that they are bound up inextricably; and the rest of the sentence restates the dominant irony of the whole speech: the Spartans, who have set themselves up as legal judges, are really concerned with expediency—or in rhetorical terms, this is a forensic speech to a body of deliberators.[14] In what follows the Plataeans try, by a repeated antithesis between 'then' and 'now', to give weight to the fact that they too once served Sparta's interests. 56.7 draws the threads of their thought together.[15] They require that the Spartans be consistent, using a commonplace identified by Aristotle[16] (*Rhet.* 1399b15–19; *cf.* Thuc. 2.61–62; 6.86.1[17]); and they argue that what is expedient for the Spartans at the moment is to show lasting gratitude to their old allies. This attempt to identify morality with prudence (*cf.* 58.1 *σώφρονα χάριν*: 59.1 *οἴκτῳ σώφρονι*) is like the Corinthians' in 1.42.4;[18] it fails as that one fails because the past, and the values a living memory guarantees, mean nothing in war. This is part of what is implied by 3.82.2: "War . . . is a violent schoolmaster who assimilates men's temperaments to their present

[13] Gomme objects: "no one thing can be both Spartan advantage and the Thebans' hostile attitude." But Thucydides' point is that the two considerations converge, as Classen-Steup saw, adducing parallels for the use of the article (note esp. 2.64.5). J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*[2] (1954) 516, gives examples of the same idiom from Plato.

[14] *Cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1358b13–26: *χρόνοι δὲ ἑκάστου τούτων εἰσὶ τῷ μὲν συμβουλεύοντι ὁ μέλλων* [or the present: Thuc. 5.87; Dem. 18.192] . . . *τῷ δὲ δικαζομένῳ ὁ γενόμενος . . . τέλος δὲ τούτων ἕτερόν ἐστι . . . τῷ μὲν συμβουλεύοντι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ βλαβερόν . . . τοῖς δὲ δικαζομένοις τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον.*

[15] I read *ἔχουσι* (Heilmann) for the MSS *ἔχωσι* here: *cf.* Gomme *ad loc.*

[16] *Cf.* Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 219.

[17] It is revealing that Euphemus has just rejected an almost identical type of argument in 84.3–85.1. 85.1 states the logic or ethic which really underlies the behaviour of states (he cannot expect of the Sicilians more consistency than Athens has shown); needless to say, it applies to Sparta too.

[18] The same reason for which they commend their past services to Athens (1.41.2–3, 42.3) will make their present attempt at conciliating her useless. The ones who have timely aid to offer in a crisis are now the Corcyreans; so 1.43.2 refers, ironically, to Athens as much as to Corinth. For arguments like the Corinthians' designed to identify prudence and morality, see E. Lévy, *Athènes devant la défaite de 404* (Paris 1976) 167–68, 189–91.

circumstances" (*cf.* 82.8 *τὸ ἀεὶ ἡδονὴν ἔχον . . . τὴν αὐτίκα φιλονικίαν*). Again this reflects, no less than on Sparta, on the Athenians, to whom Plataea, as emerges pointedly in 56.6, has been consistently loyal. And again the speakers' self-justification is doomed to fail. For the Spartans, as they have already made clear (2.72.1, 74.2), it is the Plataeans who have betrayed the old alliance; and they cannot even claim moral credit for their loyalty to Athens (*cf.* above on 55.3–4).

In 57 (*cf.* 59.1) the speakers appeal to the audience's reputation as good men, warning them not to let it be tarnished[19] (*cf.* 5 above, on ch.53). This comes a little ironically after a passage in which they have had to represent morality as the best policy. In any case, the whole chapter serves to unmask the Spartans of their good name, like, for example, the exchange between the Melians and the Athenians on the same subject (5.104–10). The point is reinforced by the bitter and moving antithesis in 57.2: *τοὺς μὲν πατέρας—ὑμᾶς δέ*: *ἀναγράψαι—ἐξαλεῖψαι*: *ἐς τὸν τριπόδα τὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς—καὶ ἐκ παντὸς τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ*: *δι' ἀρετήν—διὰ Θηβαίους*. By contrast, but just as powerfully, *ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πρὶν φιλτάτοις* breaks into the antithesis in the next sentence,[20] a contrast between the Spartans' (and in 57.4 the Athenians') treatment of Plataea in the past and in the present strikingly combined with a comparison between the sufferings threatening her then and now. Not only are we reminded how useless appeals to the past are; we also see that appeals to the future, *i.e.* to loss of reputation (*cf.* 59.4 *fin.*), are equally so: partly because the Spartans will not be materially damaged by such a comedown, partly because even if their interests in the long term were at stake, it is their immediate ones they care about. A similar appeal to the future falls flat in 5.90–91: the emphatic *πάρεσμεν . . . νῦν* in 5.91.2 are like *παραυτίκα* in 56.7.

Chs. 58–59 restate the main arguments so far produced in a long peroration. They are also enriched by a new consideration, that if the Spartans destroy Plataea they will leave untended the tombs of their grandfathers who died in the battle of 479 B.C. This gives a climactic intensity to this section. The richest resources of Thucydides' style are employed as the Plataeans try in vain to make a bridge between the past and the present.[21] This is done partly through unobtrusive

[19] On such arguments, see Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 227f.

[20] On the style, note also Dion.Hal. *Comp.* 7.44–45 on the word-order of 57.4 *fin.*

[21] It is instructive to contrast the anaemic version of the same thoughts in Isoc. 14.57–62.

details like διὰ παντός in 58.3, or εὐεργέτης in 59.1 (with no determination of time) or φίλτατοι ὄντες in 59.2 (*i.e.* strictly only to the Spartan dead, but again the time is not delimited). That contrasts with 57.3 τοῖς πρὶν φιλτάτοις; throughout the speech the Plataeans waver pathetically between the painful consciousness that past and present are quite separate, that the Spartans are hostile, and an attempt to identify them, to persuade themselves that Sparta may still be friendly.

Here that attempt is also represented by bolder devices. Thus in 59.2 not only do they supplicate the living audience, as is normal in a forensic speech,[22] but in the same breath they invoke its dead ancestors. Even more vivid and striking is what follows (ἢ τὰ λαμπρότατα . . . παθεῖν). The "uncommonly harsh"[23] syntax here serves to identify the present-day Plataeans with their forebears, while μετ' αὐτῶν claims that the fate of the Spartan dead is coupled with that of Plataea as it once was in their lifetime. Or again, in 58.5 the Thebans are called 'killers' (αὐθένταις) of the Spartans' forefathers, because they fought against them at the battle of Plataea; and then this is taken—though we and the speakers know now that it is Thebes which Sparta favours—to be a reason for not letting the Spartan tombs or Plataea fall into Theban hands. At the same time the blunt "if you kill us" (balanced with αὐθένταις) and "you will enslave the land where the Greeks found freedom" tend to identify the action they fear from Sparta now with Thebes' then. The event exposes not only the Spartans' indifference to the past but the falsity of their claim to be liberators of Greece (*cf.* 59.4). But at the same time the Plataeans expose themselves to their adversaries: their claim to have fostered freedom is indeed, as the Thebans object, at odds with their more recent conduct.

59.1 explicitly invokes pity, and the whole speech aims to create it. That feeling, what arouses or scotches it, was particularly studied in

[22] *Cf.* below 59.4; Lys. 4.20, 6.55, 18.27; Dem. 46.28. The best construction of this phrase is, I think: "we beg you (ἱκέται γιγνόμεθα ὑμῶν) not to forget your ancestors' tombs." Editors take it that ὑμῶν depends on τῶν πατρῴων τάφων and that it is the tombs that the Plataeans supplicate; but that makes it hard to accommodate μὴ ἀμνημονεῖν (Classen-Steup delete it). Note also 67.2–3, the retort to this passage, where the supplication is directed to the living Spartans and the invocation to the tombs of their dead: that suggests the same should be the case here. I assume a connective has fallen out before or after προφερόμενοι: see Gomme *ad loc.*

[23] So Gomme. But Classen-Steup saw the point.

rhetorical theory as essential to forensic oratory, and many of the commonplaces regarding it can be found here. The speech may be considered in the light of Isoc. 16.48, which implicitly lists some of them: *εἴπερ χρὴ τούτους ἐλεεῖν* (1) *τοὺς ἀδίκως μὲν κινδυνεύοντας*, (2) *περὶ δὲ τῶν μεγίστων ἀγωνιζομένους*, (3) *ἀναξίως δ' αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν προγόνων πράττοντας* . . . (4) *καὶ μεγίστῃ μεταβολῇ τοῦ βίου κεχρημένους* . . . For (1), *cf.* 54–59 as a whole; for (2), *cf.* 53.2, 59.3 and 57–59 as a whole; for (3), *cf.* 59.1 and 56–59 as a whole;[24] for (4) *cf.* 56.6, 57.2. Further, Aristotle in his discussion of pity in the *Rhetoric* emphasizes that it concerns sufferings caused by mischance (1386a6f)—*cf.* 59.1 "how unstable events are"; also that it is evoked by repeated misfortune (1386b12f)—*cf.* 57.3. The historian, like the tragedians, here and often uses rhetorical skills in order that they should be seen to fail; that not only heightens the pathos but also draws our attention to the reasons why they fail.

II

The very brevity of the Thebans' exordium (61.1) by comparison with the Plataeans' reveals their advantage, and they can profit from the simple commonplaces denied to their adversaries. Attic orators are prone to complain that their opponents have spoken off the point: *cf. e.g.* Lys. 9.1, 12.38, 30.1; Dem. 18.9, 15. Talk of character and past behaviour, whether praise of one's own or vilification of the other man's, are often what they have in mind; and that is what the Plataeans have done (*ἐπὶ ἡμᾶς τραπόμενοι . . . ὧν οὐδεὶς ἐμέμψατο*), an offence made worse by there being no accusation, only the 'brief question', to answer. Thus the Thebans can indeed claim that they would never have spoken if it were not for their opponents (*cf.* 3 above on ch.53; also 1.37.1; 6.16.1; Hdt. 9.27.1); and since they can condemn all the Plataeans said as obfuscation, that lends plausibility to the claim to speak the truth (*cf.* 2 above on ch.53). They can also appeal to a natural dislike of people who praise themselves: *cf.* Gorg. *Pal.* 28; Dem. 18.3–4.

The Thebans' speech is also simpler in its argument. It is focussed on one major theme of the Plataeans, where there has been free will in their own or their adversaries' past deeds and where compulsion.

[24] *Cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1385b14, 1386b6; *Poet.* 1453a4. In general on the evocation or banishment of pity in rhetoric, E. B. Stevens, "Some Attic Commonplaces of Pity," *AJP* 65 (1944) 1–25.

They pursue this topic chronologically, beginning with Plataea's original alliance with Athens. 61.2 replies to 55.1; in particular ἐπειδὴ προσηναγκάζοντο sarcastically echoes ὅτε Θηβαῖοι ἐβίασαντο: the 'compulsion' causing the Plataeans to ally themselves with Athens was of their own making. But can the Plataeans be blamed for the enmity with Thebes any more than for the pressure which results from it? The rhetorical conflict indicates the difficulty of making any moral judgements where there is a necessity, of circumstances or human nature. Further questions about free will now arise in chs. 62–63.

In 62.1 they move on to the period of the Persian Wars, taking up the charge of medism against them implicit in 54.3 and 58.5. The Thebans justify themselves by claiming that because the city was then governed by "something as near as can be to tyranny, a small controlling clique," it was not 'self-determining' (62.2–4). Such self-determination is guaranteed by νόμοι (62.3,4); and the constitution they then had was neither a democracy, where νόμοι are supreme,[25] nor an oligarchy which was like a democracy in being ἰσόνομος. What is implied here is that political rights—above all the right to vote on questions of national policy—were denied to the citizens at large.[26] To establish this point the Thebans make their present constitution look as much like democracy (ὀλιγαρχία ἰσόνομος is approaching an oxymoron) and their past one as much like tyranny as possible. But their constitution in 427 B.C. was still some kind of oligarchy, and the state of things in 480–79 B.C. may well not have been much different (see Gomme on 62.3, 1.108.2–3). The readers' doubts about this passage are intensified when he comes to 65.3. There the Thebans claim that the collaborators who let them into Plataea were the wealthiest and noblest citizens, that their aim was to stop the 'lower' classes sinking still lower, and give the 'better' class their due. Though they admit that this was not the people's will, they play down the fact with a shameless meiosis (66.2 εἰ ἄρα καὶ ἐδοκοῦμέν τι ἀνεπιεικέστερον πρᾶξαι); and they claim disingenuously that in first inviting any Plataeans who wished to join their side they were acting in a friendly manner: their real reason was the belief that this, the easiest way of taking control of the city, would also succeed (2.2.4). So 65.3, as Gomme says, is "frankly oli-

[25] *Cf.* Arist. *Pol.* 1292a1–4; A. H. M. Jones, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford 1960) 53.

[26] *Cf.* G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton 1973) 178–88 =*Isonomia: Studien zur Gleichheitsvorstellung im griechischen Denken*, ed. J. Mau and E. G. Schmidt (Berlin 1964), 12–21.

garchic," for it assumes that the true interests of the city coincide with those of the 'best' men in it and so contradicts the apparently democratic tendency of their remarks in 62.2–4. They use the specious catchwords of both political parties (*cf.* 3.82.8) and their language in both places is calculated to appeal to their Spartan audience, who have a reputation for *cωφροcύνη*[27] and whose constitution is a blend of democracy with oligarchy.[28] The Thebans' equivocation is presented as a problem of political philosophy by Aristotle in the *Politics* (1247b34–36): *νῦν γὰρ ἀμφιcβητοῦcι, οἱ μὲν φάcκοντεc τὴν πόλιν πεπραχέναι, οἱ δὲ οὐ τὴν πόλιν ἀλλὰ τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν ἢ τὸν τύραννον.*[29] The Thebans reveal not only their own unscrupulousness, but also how easily responsibility can be evaded in politics, and so how hard it is for any moral claim or condemnation to stick.

Chs. 63–64 introduce yet another problem about free will. The Plataeans in 479 B.C., say the speakers, chose to ally themselves with the Athenians and join with them in enslaving the Greeks (63.2, 64.3). This is contrasted with their own 'involuntary medism' (64.5; *cf.* 64.3). But where Plataea's good deeds, her conduct in the Persian Wars, are concerned, she was merely following the Athenian lead and so can take no credit. This contradiction is the mirror-image of the Plataeans': they wanted what they did in the Persian Wars to be reckoned to their credit but what they did as Athens' allies to be excused as involuntary (55.4). The Thebans in 65.2, when discussing their entry into Plataea, then turn the argument and wording of 55.4 against their adversaries; and this connects for the reader the questions concerning a city's free will when there is faction within it and those when there is pressure from outside. Now it would be possible to answer back on Plataea's behalf. If the Thebans claim that she could have allied herself with Sparta in 479 B.C. (63.2), why should Sparta be any better an ally then than before (*cf.* 55.1)? And even if the Thebans were not threatening Plataea then, why should that hold good forever? Or again, in answer to 64.1, would Athens have been able to stop Plataea medizing in 480 B.C.? And would Plataea have been in any position to oppose or abandon Athens when she was acquiring her empire (64.3)? But what matters is not that the reader

[27] *Cf.* 1.84.2–4. For the oligarchic overtones of *cωφρονιcταί* (65.3), *cf.* 3.82.3; 6.89.6; 8.53.3, 64.5.

[28] *Cf.* Isoc. 12.153; Arist. *Pol.* 1265b35–1266a1.

[29] *Cf.* 1276a8–12. Aristotle himself takes a view like the Thebans' (1276b1–11).

condemn or acquit either side, but that he see the historical meaning of the rhetorical contradictions. External necessity or internal strife not only remove moral scruples (*cf.* 3.82.2); they also remove the conditions for action to be judged morally. But that does not stop men using such judgements for their own purposes (*cf.* 3.82.8), as constantly happens in Thucydides' speeches.

Chs. 62–64 also ingeniously confute the Plataeans' invocation of their past services. The speakers' principal stratagem is to make Athens equivalent, as the enslaver of Greece, to Persia in 480 B.C.: thus they arrive at the neologisms ἀττικίζειν (62.2) and ἀττικισμός (63.5) on the model of μηδίζειν and μηδισμός, which emphatically begin and conclude this section of their argument. Thus in standing by Athens Plataea becomes a traitor to "all the Greeks"—meaning those who are hostile to Athens;[30] conversely, the Thebans are among the liberators. They then implicitly project this image back onto the past, so that already at the time of the Persian Wars Athens was acting against the interests of the other Greeks and Plataea abetting her (64.1).[31] A similar procedure culminates the section (64.4). The Plataeans claimed that their former services should be accredited to them; the Thebans argue that their present 'misdeeds' have merely revealed their true nature, just as for Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* his son's integrity is exposed as a mere pretence by Phaedra's letter (925–31, 948–57).[32] These rhetorical procedures vividly illustrate again how only present interests count in war: so much so that the image of the past is shamelessly distorted to further them. At the same time, they show up the bitter resentment of Athens' empire among the Greeks; it is that passion too which causes the speakers to rewrite history.

Ch.67 is a long peroration corresponding to 59 and aiming to banish pity as the Plataeans aimed to inspire it. This allows them, as it did their opponents, to draw on the resources of forensic rhetoric, and also to reverse again a number of the Plataeans' points.

(1) "If they did any good in the past, they deserve a double punish-

[30] 64.3 (ξυγκατεδουλοῦσθε μᾶλλον. . . ἢ διεκωλύετε) is studiously vague; no doubt the Thebans, and perhaps Thucydides too, did not know if Plataean troops had actually aided Athens in their campaigns.

[31] *Cf.* 6.76.4. For similar projections of present aims onto past history, see 6.17.7, 38.3 with Dover *ad locc.*

[32] On the rhetorical background of this, see A. Hands, "Postremo suo tantum ingenio utebatur," *CQ* 24 (1974) 312–17.

ment for their misdeeds now" (67.2). *Cf.* 1.86.1; Dem. 24.127;[33] and ἐπικλαcθῆτε echoes ἐπικλαcθῆναι in 59.1. A notably unscrupulous manoeuvre: they play along with the Plataeans' argument that they did Sparta good in the past, but only to reinforce the case against them. This contradicts their attempt to discredit the Plataeans' past behaviour, and so again illustrates the inevitable fraudulence of moral argument in war and politics.

(2) "Pay no attention to their weeping and wailing; consider rather those whom they have caused to suffer, ourselves" (67.2–3). *Cf.* Antiph. 1.25; Dem. 19.310, 21.100, 187, 24.198. They also make a countersupplication to 59.2. They call on the Spartans to avenge (τιμωρήcαcθαι) the Thebans who died at Plataea and whose fathers either died at Coronea or are now left 'deserted' (ἐρῆμοι) in their houses:[34] this answers the Plataeans' 'deserted and defenceless' (57.4 ἐρῆμοι καὶ ἀτιμώρητοι), said of themselves. Now it is the Thebans who are trying to arouse pity by an appeal to the past: again a contrast which reveals the hollowness of such argument. The fate of their 'fathers' might seem less close to this audience's hearts than that of the Spartans' (58.4–5, 59.2); but their advantage is that the past that they invoke is one in all relevant respects like the present, in which there is an imperial Athens (*cf.* 62.5 ἠλευθερώcαμεν τὴν Βοιωτίαν καὶ νῦν τοὺc ἄλλουc ξυνελευθεροῦμεν). So the appeal for pity to the past thinly masks considerations of present expediency, and their resentment against a Boeotian city which refused and refuses to accept their hegemony (61.2, 62.5, 66.1, 67.3) coincides with Sparta's interests now.

(3) "Uphold the laws by giving them their legal deserts" (67.5–6). *Cf.* Antiph. 3γ12; Lys. 10.32; Dem. 26.27, 43.84, 45.87, 46.28. The Thebans try to present this 'trial' as a court governed by the 'laws of the Greeks'. In fact (see above) it positively undercuts those laws.

(4) "Do not be taken in by mere words, by fine speeches" (67.6). *Cf.* Gorg. *Pal.* 35; Antiph. 3γ3; Dem. 22.4; Aeschin. 1.170. This echoes the beginning of the speech: now of course the Thebans have made a speech no less specious than the Plataeans'. But the Plataeans stand to

[33] *Cf.* J. de Romilly, *Histoire et raison chez Thucydide*[2] (Paris 1967) 209; Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 317. Compare also 3.61.1 and 67.6–7 with 1.86.1 and 86.3. Both the Thebans and Sthenelaidas are, moreover, retorting to a similar speech: both Athens and Plataea try at the same time to claim credit for their deeds in the Persian Wars while excusing what they did afterwards as the result of a compulsion.

[34] Stahl read κατ' οἰκίαc here, which gives an attractive balance to ἐν Κορωνείᾳ and is probably right.

lose everything in fact and have only words to save them (53.3): the Thebans only risk being "pushed around by their words" (67.6, an echo of 57.4).[35]

(5) "Punish them, and it will be an example to others not to do likewise" (67.6–7). *Cf.* Alcid. *Odyss.* 29; Lys. 14.45; Dem. 21.227, 22.68. But here the 'example' is to represent Sparta's notion of justice, that is, to make any spoken or reasoned defence useless, which makes the appeal to the 'laws of the Greeks' ring hollowly. The 'crime' to be prevented is, in fact, as much the speech as anything done; and the punishment is presented as a foregone conclusion: note the confident futures καταγνωσόμενοι (67.1) and πείσονται (67.5), and even a perfect (67.1 τετιμωρημένοι) and an aorist (67.5 ἀνταποδόντες).[36] The Thebans' cocksure anticipation of the future is in striking contrast to the Plataeans' hopeless attempt to revive the past in chs. 58–59. The Thebans' peroration, then, has an effect similar to the Plataeans' exordium. It is not merely disingenuous, as forensic oratory often is; it is rather that contradiction or hollowness in their arguments here, as in the Plataeans' there, correspond to the parody of legality which this whole 'trial' is. And parody is carried by Thucydides to the height of tragic and historical art.

III

Both Athens with the Mytileneans and Sparta with the Plataeans are supposed to be deciding who are the 'guilty' parties (36.4, 52.2). In Athens the matter is entrusted to an assembly, at Plataea to a court. Now in Athens the forensic arguments of Cleon are refuted by Diodotus, who stresses that the city should be deliberating about her future interests, not judging the immediate case (44). Thus vindictiveness is separated from expediency and a total massacre avoided. At Plataea the Plataeans' defence is all irrelevant as indeed is the Thebans' prosecution; the 'brief question'—concerned only with Sparta's immediate interests, which coincide with Theban vindictiveness—makes both superfluous. The Spartans have not taken the Plataeans'

[35] The use of περιωθεῖν probably echoes a turn of phrase familiar in Attic law-courts; *cf.* Dem. 42.32: δέομαι . . . βοηθῆσαί μοι καὶ μή με περιελαθέντα περιϊδεῖν ὑπὸ τούτων.

[36] For the aorist or perfect, *cf.* Hom. *Il.* 13.772; Ar. *Thesm.* 77. Steup does not believe that the particle ἀνταποδόντες can even belong in one sentence with the others. But οὐκ ἀνταποδόντες seems clearly designed to balance οὐ προπαθόντες. It is also, in fact, the most logical tense, more so than a future (Stahl) or an aorist with ἄν (Dobree): when they committed their crime, "they *had* not received their punishment (as they surely will) now."

case as a subject for deliberation, merely for summary judgement. The result is that self-interest dominates again, but it is not enlightened, so far as that is possible, by open and rational discussion, and it limits its view to the 'present war' (52.4, 56.3, 68.4). And since the legal form is a sham, still less can any moral considerations weigh.

Now all this might seem aimed at contrasting Sparta with Athens. The Spartans, with their reputation for virtue (53.4, 57.1), make a show of judging good or bad deeds (52.4, 53.4, 67.6); but their brief question makes any legal debate a waste of time, and they act quite callously. The Athenians, by virtue of their character and constitution, value free speech and reasoned argument, things which Diodotus, echoing Pericles, recommends (42.2; *cf.* 2.37.1, 40.2); and pity, which, moves the Athenians to reconsider their decision about Mytilene (36.4, 40.3), is often thought to be a characteristic of theirs.[37] But the Mytilenean Debate, partly through both speakers' refusal of pity, partly through their criticisms of the Athenian assembly and democracy, shows how tenuous those qualities are; and Diodotus' view prevails only by a narrow margin (49.1). More to the point, then, is to consider how the two nations respond to the dictates of self-interest. Athens is an empire, which means she lives in fear of her subjects.[38] Such fear can be a moderating influence on her treatment of them—though it can also lead to savagery or aggression which endanger the very survival that fear was concerned with. But the Spartans, who in this case have to fear at worst only loss of their reputation and to gain the favour of Thebes, behave with unchecked ruthlessness. So do the Athenians where Plataea is concerned, for there their empire is not at risk;[39] and anger with Mytilene counts more than concern for Plataea (3.36.1).

Thus the two debates examine how the law of self-interest operates in war; and they distinguish the conditions which cause it to restrain, from those which cause it to become, mere brutality. At the same time they reveal how conventional morality is undermined in war and so also what its foundations are.

[37] *Cf.* Pl. *Menex.* 244E; Dem. 24.170–71.

[38] The Athenians ascribe the acquisition of empire in part to fear (1.75.3); Cleon thinks that Athens, as a tyrannical empire, should be more responsive to fear (3.37.2); fear is also behind the attacks on Melos and Sicily (5.99, 6.18.2–3, 83–85).

[39] So Athenian *πολυπραγμοσύνη* (see above on 55.3–4) not only yields to self-interest but is based on fear: *cf.* 6.18.2–3, 83.4, 87.3.

Past deeds count for nothing because they serve only to frame moral arguments, which both tend to entangle themselves and can easily be reversed. And in any case, immediate self-interest prevails. The Mytileneans have become faithless allies to Athens and moreover, as her allies, threatened Sparta; but this does not stop Sparta taking up their cause. And they themselves indicate that for Sparta to look down on them for their past record would be a merely hypocritical regard for convention (9.1). So what they announce as a self-justification (10.2) really serves to show how they fear and hate Athens; and that, combined with the advantages they can hold out to Sparta (13.3–7) determines the issue in their favour. The Plataeans have been faithful allies to Athens, and moreover friends to Sparta in the Persian Wars; and they too make a self-justification. But here the *apologia* is not only a mere rhetorical framework: it is altogether useless to the speakers. As they themselves indicate (53.4; *cf.* 9.1), the danger is not that Sparta will look down on them for what they have been in the past but that she will follow expediency, which means a prejudice in favour of their enemies, and their own destruction. And here it is the Thebans who correspond to the Mytileneans in expressing the resentment of the Athenian empire which Sparta shares.

If moral credit and blame are to be assigned, there must be free will.[40] But the speeches concerning both Mytilene and Plataea show how difficult it is to establish free will in political action, just as in broader terms they show the futility of moral conventions in war.[41] There are two historical factors which affect freedom, (1) pressure from outside a city and (2) faction within it.

(1) The Mytileneans claim that they are compelled to revolt by the unremitting expansion of Athens' empire. Cleon insists that their action was gratuitous, yet he too has to admit that they are "necessarily enemies" (40.3; *cf.* 37.2) of the empire which oppresses them. Diodotus in his turn ascribes their action to the compulsion of human nature (45) and of the empire (45.6, 46.5). Behind all these speeches is a further necessity of nature, that which causes the Athenians to acquire, maintain and extend their empire (*cf.* 1.75–76; 5.105.2; 6.18.2–3). The Plataeans claim that they had no choice, because of the Theban threat, but to ally themselves with Athens (55.1) and that they cannot be

[40] This major theme in the two debates makes them a political equivalent to Gorgias' *Helen* and Antiphon's second or third *Tetralogy* in the legal sphere.

[41] *Cf.* above *passim*, and "Reason and Necessity: Thucydides 3.9–14, 37–48," *JHS* 98 (1978).

blamed for what they do under her leadership (55.4, 58.2): the Thebans smartly reverse their arguments (61.2, 63.2, 65.2). Behind this too lies an oppressive Athenian empire and also an unavoidable hatred between the two cities, which brought Athens into the situation as the Plataeans' ally and fosters Theban hostility to them. And for the Thebans, who now have Spartan power to support them, it is as inconceivable that Plataea remain outside the Boeotian League as it was for Athens, in the Mytileneans' view, that Mytilene should remain autonomous (11.1).

(2) Diodotus excuses the Mytilenean *demos* on the grounds that the oligarchic party forced them into revolt (47.2–3); for Cleon the whole city is responsible for the whole city's defection. The Thebans, in dealing with their conduct in the Persian Wars, claim that their freedom of action was lost to a ruling clique (62.3–4, 64.3); but in dealing with their entry into Plataea they take an oligarchic group of citizens as representatives of the whole city's will (65.2–3). In both these arguments in both debates the rhetorical to-and-fro, as so often in Thucydides, show how hard it is to assign responsibility in international politics and how easy to avoid accepting it. That means that moral judgements are quite devalued in practice. And yet all the speakers, even Diodotus (for he distinguishes the guilty *oligoi* from the innocent *demos*), continue to use such judgements for their own purposes.

Naturally, inside and outside pressure go closely together. This emerges on a large scale in Thucydides' account of the Corcyrean stasis and in the conclusions he draws from it (3.82.1–2); it is also clear in the Plataean and Mytilenean narrative and speeches. The Thebans entered Plataea because they foresaw the war which fear of Athens' power was about to bring (2.2.3; *cf.* 1.23.6 etc.); and they were aided by Plataean oligarchs (2.2.2, 3.65.2–3). So too in 480 B.C. the Theban oligarchs hoped to use the Persian invasion to secure their own power (3.62.4). And in Mytilene the Athenian siege drives the *demos* to force the hand of the *oligoi* (3.27.2; *cf.* 47.2).

Finally, pity. The whole Plataean speech appeals for it; the Thebans, like Cleon and Diodotus, try to banish it (though they also claim it for themselves). Pity, as the Greeks knew, is closely bound up with morality. We give pity to unmerited misfortune (*cf.* 39.6, 40.7, 59.1, 67.4): that means we must distinguish between sufferers who have deserved what they got and those who do not (it therefore also implies that the past matters), and between voluntary and involuntary action.

In both these respects the conditions for pity are often uncertain where nations are concerned, and that makes it easy to do what Cleon and the Thebans do, to disguise hatred or self-interest as a concern for inflexible justice.[42] We also pity those whom we can feel to be like ourselves;[43] but under the pressure of war, which confines men's view to the immediate present, and with the disparity of power that victory brings, such a sense of shared human vulnerability is lost. Now pity is also the emotion tragedy inspires; and the pity is doubled for the reader when in Thucydides—as in Greek tragedy or in Homer, their common source—he sees how no pity can be raised for a sufferer. And that emotional response is also to recognize what it is that reduces human morality and fellow-feeling to nothing. For behind it all stands the historian, again like the tragedians or Homer, pointing to the necessities that drive ruler and ruled, conqueror and conquered alike.[44]

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[42] For minor analogies between Cleon's and the Thebans' speeches, compare 37.4–5, 38.4, with 67.6–7 (attack on ἀγῶνες λόγων or specious words, preference for ἔργα); 40.7 with 67.6 ('make an example'); 40.2 with 66.3 (triplication).

[43] *Cf.* Arist. *Rhet.* 1385b13ff. Also Thuc. 5.90; Hdt. 1.86.6; Soph. *Aj.* 121–26, *OC* 560–68.

[44] I owe very valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article to Dr D. C. Innes and Dr C. B. R. Pelling.