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THUCYDIDES

The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians

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king of Thrace, became an ally of the Athenians, as did Perdiccas, son of Alexander and king of the Macedonians.

Meanwhile, the Athenians in the hundred ships who were still off the 30
coast of the Peloponnese took Sollion, a Corinthian township, and handed the city and its land over to the Palaerans of Acarnania for their exclusive use. Astacus, where Euarchus was tyrant, they stormed by force, drove him out and incorporated the place into the alliance. They then sailed to [2]
the island of Cephallenia and brought that over to their side without a battle. (It lies across from Acarnania and Leucas and comprised the four cities of the Paleans, Cranians, Samians and Pronnians). Soon afterwards the ships returned to Athens.

Towards the autumn of this year the Athenians invaded the Megarid 31
with their full force, comprising both citizens and metics, under the command of Pericles son of Xanthippus. When the Athenians in the hundred ships round the Peloponnese (which happened to be already at Aegina on their way home) learned that the full force of men from the city was in Megara they sailed over there to join up with them. This was [2]
the greatest Athenian force ever assembled together, since the city was at peak strength and had not yet been struck by plague: the Athenians themselves numbered no fewer than 10,000 (not counting the 3,000 at Potidaea) and no fewer than 3,000 metics joined them as hoplites in the invasion, besides which there were a good number of other light-armed troops. After wasting most of the land they retreated. Later on in the war [3]
the Athenians made other invasions annually into the Megarid, either with cavalry or with all their forces, up until their capture of Nisaea.[1]

Towards the end of this summer Atalante, the island lying off Opuntian 32
Locris and hitherto deserted, was fortified as a military post to prevent pirates from sailing out of Opus and other places in Locris to inflict damage on Euboea.

These were the events that took place in the course of the summer after the Peloponnesian withdrawal from Attica.

Winter [II 33–47.1]

The following winter Euarchus the Acarnanian, who wanted to return 33
to Astacus, persuaded the Corinthians to sail with forty ships and 1,500 hoplites to restore him to power there, and he added some hired troops of

[1] In 424 (IV 66–69).

his own. The commanders of the force were Eumachus son of Aristonymus, Timoxenus son of Timocrates and Eumachus son of Chrysis. They [2]
duly sailed over and restored him. There were also some other places along the seaboard of Acarnania which they wanted to acquire as well and they made the attempt but failed and so set sail for home. Following the [3]
coast they put in at Cephallenia and made a landing on the territory of the Cranians. They were deceived by them, however, as a result of some supposed 'agreement' and lost a number of their men when the Cranians launched a surprise attack; then after forcing their way back on to the boats they managed to get away home.

In the same winter the Athenians held a public funeral for the first 34
men to die in the war. The ceremony is as follows.[1] They lay out the [2]
bones of the deceased for two full days beforehand in a tent they have constructed and people bring such offerings as they choose for their own dead. On the day of the procession carts bring coffins made of cedar, one for each tribe,[2] and the bones of each man are placed in the coffin of his tribe. One covered but empty bier is led out, prepared for the missing dead whose bodies could not be found for burial. Anyone who [4]
wishes – citizen or foreigner – joins in the procession and the women of the families are present at the grave making their lamentations.[3] They [5]
place the coffins in a public tomb, which is in the most beautiful suburb of the city where they always bury their war dead, except of course for those who died at Marathon, whose valour they judged so outstanding that they buried them just where they fell. After they cover the coffins with earth a [6]
man chosen by the city for his wise judgement and high public standing delivers over them a suitable eulogy.[4] And then they depart. These are [7]
their rites of burial, and they observed this practice throughout the whole war, whenever they had occasion.

[1] The whole description of the ceremony has a rather dignified quality, a suitably hushed and dramatic introduction to one of the most famous speeches in history.

[2] The *phule* (tribe) was both a military and political unit. After the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/7 BC Athens was divided into ten recognised tribes.

[3] For the associated rituals see M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1974), especially pp. 5 and 11–23.

[4] The *epitaphios* (funeral speech) was a standard feature of these ceremonies, and Pericles had himself given at least one of them before (in 440/39 BC: see Plutarch, *Pericles* 28). It was later to become a literary genre, with this speech of II 35–46 its most celebrated model. But its great literary qualities and its dramatic importance at this point in the narrative do themselves raise all the questions about the authenticity of the speeches in Thucydides referred to in the note to I 22 and the introduction, pp. xxviii–xxix. To what extent was this what Pericles actually said or what Thucydides needed him to say?

For these first victims of the war Pericles son of Xanthippus was the [8]
man chosen to speak. And when the moment arrived he stepped forward
from the tomb, mounted the platform that had been set up so that he
could be heard by as many as possible in the throng, and spoke as follows.

'Most of those who have spoken on this occasion in the past have praised 35
the man who added this speech to the traditional ceremony, regarding it
a fitting public tribute at the burial of our war dead. To me, however, it
would seem sufficient that when men have proved their worth in action[1]
we should also honour them with action – as indeed you see us do today
in the provision of this state funeral. Otherwise we risk the good name
of many on the persuasive powers of one man, who may speak well or
badly. It is difficult for a speaker to strike the right balance when there is [2]
not even any firm agreement between different perceptions of the truth.[2]
The listener who is close to these events and a friend of the dead may
perhaps think that the presentation falls short of what he wants to hear
and knows to be the case, while a stranger to the situation may suspect
some exaggeration, envious if he hears of feats beyond his own abilities.
After all, we can only bear to hear words of praise for others as long as we
can each imagine ourselves capable of doing something similar; anything
beyond this prompts resentment, and then actual disbelief. However, [3]
since our forebears deemed this the right and proper practice, I too must
follow the tradition and try to meet your different wishes and expectations
as best I can.

I will begin with our ancestors. It is right in itself and also proper to 36
the occasion that they should have the honour of first mention. This is
a land occupied continuously by the same people[3] through a succession
of generations up to the present day and handed on as a free country, a
bequest of their courage. They deserve our praise, and still more so do our [2]
fathers, for in addition to what they inherited they acquired – after many
a struggle – the whole of the empire we now have, which they then left as
a legacy to our own generation. And we here today, who are still alive and [3]

[1] The first of the many contrasts (often rather forced) between *logos* (word/speech) and *ergon* (deed/action) in the Funeral Speech. A. Parry, *Logos and Ergon in Thucydides* (Ayer Co. Publishers, 1981), counts thirty-two such pairings concentrated here and the speech closes with a final one at II 46.

[2] Literally, 'when even the appearance (*dokesis*) of truth is not firmly secured', an obscure statement that has been variously understood. See III 43.1 for a similar use of the term *dokesis*, which is rare in other prose writers.

[3] See I 2.5. This 'autochthony' was an important article of faith for the Athenians, used to justify various contentious domestic and foreign policies.

for the most part in the prime of life, we have further strengthened[1] it
and have provided the city with every resource to make it independent[2]
both in peace and in war.

Their deeds in war, through which each of these possessions was [4]
won, and the occasions when we or our fathers fought hard to repel
enemy attack, whether from Greeks or foreigners – these I pass over.
This audience knows them well and I do not wish to labour a familiar
theme. Instead, I shall portray the way of life that brought us to our
present position and the institutions and habits of mind[3] behind our rise
to greatness, and then I shall proceed to my commendation of the dead.
I trust that such a speech will be appropriate to the present occasion and
that the whole body of townspeople and foreign visitors[4] in the audience
may listen to it with advantage.

We enjoy a form of government that does not emulate the institutions 37
of our neighbours; indeed we ourselves are more often the model for
others than their imitators. Democracy is the name we give to it, since we
manage our affairs in the interests of the many not the few; but though
everyone is equal before the law in the matter of private disputes, in
terms of public distinction preferment for office is determined on merit,
not by rank[5] but by personal worth; moreover, poverty is no bar to
anyone who has it in them to benefit the city in some way, however lowly
their status. A spirit of freedom governs our conduct, not only in public [2]
affairs but also in managing the small tensions of everyday life, where
we show no animosity at our neighbours' choice of pleasures, nor cast
aspersions that may hurt even if they do not harm. Although we associate [3]
as individuals in this tolerant spirit, in public affairs fear[6] makes us the

[1] Presumably in the sense of 'consolidated' rather than 'expanded', since he has just congratulated the previous generation on effectively acquiring all the current empire.

[2] *Autarkes* is usually 'self-sufficient', but he makes a particular point later about the imports (38.2).

[3] The three key terms (*epitedeusis, politeia* and *tropoi*) have been variously distinguished and translated, but jointly at least they signify the 'culture' which encompasses the practices of education and training referred to in 39 and the social attitudes underlying the claims in 37–8.

[4] The 'foreign visitors' are the *xenoi* with no civic rights; presumably the 'townspeople' (*astoi*) include here the metics, the permanent foreign residents with limited rights.

[5] Most current commentators prefer the interpretation 'taking turns' or 'by rotation', a reference to the Athenian practice of choosing some officials in an annual lottery (Rusten, pp. 145–6; Hornblower I, pp. 300–1). But that seems both to undermine the logic of the section and to involve Thucydides in appearing to *deny* this common practice.

[6] Here *deos* (see glossary under *phobos*) perhaps more in the sense of 'reverence' or 'respect' (but see also Hornblower I, p. 302).

most severely law-abiding of people, obedient to whoever is in authority and to the laws, especially those established to help the victims of injustice and those laws which, though unwritten, carry the sanction of public disgrace.

Furthermore, we have provided many diversions from work to refresh 38
the spirit: there are regular public games and festivals of sacrifice throughout the year, while in private we have lovely things at home to delight us every day and drive away our cares. Because of the importance of our city [2]
the products of the whole world all flow in here, and it is our good fortune to enjoy with the same familiar pleasure both our home-produced goods and those of other peoples.

We also differ from our enemies in our approach to military training, 39
in the following ways. We keep our city open to the world and do not ever expel[1] people to prevent them from learning or observing the sort of thing whose disclosure might benefit an enemy. Our way is to place our trust not so much in secret preparations as in our own innate courage in action. In the matter of education too, whereas the Spartans right from their early youth follow an oppressive regime designed to make men of them, we are more relaxed in our style of life but are no less ready to face comparable dangers. Here is a proof. When the Spartans invade our land [2]
they come not on their own but with all their allies, whereas we act alone when we attack a neighbour's territory and generally have no difficulty in gaining the upper hand, although we are fighting on the soil of others and against people defending their own homes. No enemy has in fact ever [3]
encountered the full might of our combined forces, because we not only maintain a navy but at the same time deploy an army of our own citizens on many different missions by land. Whenever our enemies engage with a part of our forces, they flatter themselves that a success against some of us is the same as repelling all of us, and that in any defeat they were beaten by the whole of our forces.

So, if we choose to meet danger with an easy regime rather than an [4]
oppressive one, and with a courage that owes more to natural character than to force of law, then we are spared the need to suffer in advance for hardships still in the future; and when we do come to face them we show ourselves just as bold as those who are always labouring under stress. All this is reason enough to admire our city, and there is more.

[1] A reference to the Spartan system of *xenelasia* or 'expelling foreigners' (see I 144).

We love fine things but are not extravagant,[1] and we love learning but 40
are not effete. Wealth we treat as an opportunity for action not a reason for boastful talk, and for us the shame of poverty lies not in admitting it but in the failure actively to escape it. With us, moreover, people combine an [2]
interest in public and private matters, and those who are more involved in business are still well enough aware of political issues. In fact we alone regard the person who fails to participate in public affairs not just as harmless but as positively useless; and we are all personally involved either in actual political decisions or in deliberation about them,[2] in the belief that it is not words which thwart effective action but rather the failure to inform action with discussion in advance. Indeed, in this too we are [3]
distinguished from others. We bring to our ventures a very high degree of both daring and analysis, whereas for others their boldness comes from ignorance and analysis means paralysis. The bravest spirits are rightly judged to be those who see clearly just what perils and pleasures await them but do not on that account flinch from the danger.

Our idea of doing good is unusual, too. We make our friends not by [4]
receiving favours but by conferring them. The benefactor is the stronger partner, as the one who through his favours maintains the debt of gratitude in the recipient, while the one who incurs the obligation has a weaker motive, knowing that he will repay the service not to win a favour[3] but to return a debt. Finally, we alone have the courage to be benefac- [5]
tors not from a calculation of advantage but in the confidence of our freedom.

In summary, I say that the city as a whole is an education for Greece; 41
and I believe every individual among us has the self-sufficiency to respond to every situation with the greatest versatility and grace. This is no mere [2]
boast designed just for present effect but the actual truth, as the very power of the city demonstrates, a power acquired through just these qualities. Athens alone of cities today outdoes her reputation when put [3]

[1] *euteles* is the hardest to translate of all the key terms in this famous sentence, since it seems elsewhere to mean 'cheap' in a pejorative sense rather than 'thrifty' in a positive one, though that would spoil the rhetorical flourish. See also VIII 46.2.

[2] Most commentators translate as 'we at least *decide* issues even if we do not formulate them'. But that seems both to force an unusual sense on *enthumeomai*, which generally means 'reflect' or 'ponder' not 'formulate', and to run counter to the logic of the passage, which surely favours taking the two verbs together not contrasting them ('we Athenians all participate directly in the political process, one way or another').

[3] The word *charis* is reciprocal in Greek and is used to mean both giving a *favour* and owing *gratitude* for one, so here the service is repaid both *as* a favour and *for* a favour.

to the test. She alone neither gives an aggressor cause for resentment at the calibre of opponent by whom he is beaten, nor gives a subject cause for complaint that his rulers are unworthy. The proof of our power is [4] supported by the strongest evidence and by every possible witness. We shall be the wonder of this and of future generations. We need no Homer to sing our praises, nor any poet to gratify us for the moment with lines which may fail the test of history,[1] for we have forced every land and sea to yield to our daring and we have established everywhere lasting memorials of our power for good and ill.[2]

Such, then, is the city for which these men nobly fought and died, in [5] their righteous determination to prevent her being taken from us, and it is only fitting that we their survivors should each be willing to suffer hardships in her cause.

I have dwelt upon the subject of the city to demonstrate that we 42 Athenians have more at stake in this contest than do those who lack these advantages, and to illustrate with these shining examples my tribute to the men I now praise. My main points are already made: the qualities I [2] praised in the city were the ones these men and others like them enhanced by their virtues, and there are few other Greeks whose reputation would be found equalled by their deeds, as would theirs. The end they met is surely proof of their manly courage – whether in its first revelation or its final confirmation. Even those with other failings deserve to be first of all [3] remembered for their manly courage in war in the service of their country. They erased the bad with good and thus did more publicly to benefit the common cause than ever they harmed it in their private lives. Not one [4] of these men weakened because he valued more highly the continued enjoyment of his wealth; nor did any put off the evil day in the poor man's hope that he might yet escape his condition and become rich; the defeat of the enemy was their ruling passion, and judging this the most

[1] The Greek is somewhat ambiguous: literally, 'the truth of the deeds will harm the underlying meaning (*huponoia*)'. The usual interpretation implies that the poet's praises will later be discredited, but that runs counter to the repeated claim that Athens alone outdoes her reputation and (if the text is right) the sense must surely be the reverse, that the immediate celebration would fall short of the truth as revealed by the actual history.

[2] Another disputed passage: the Greek just says 'memorials of bad and good things', which some have interpreted as a reference to the culture of 'harming one's enemies and helping one's friends', while others take it to mean 'memorials of our success and failure' (which if true might support an ironic intent on Thucydides' part, and a late date for the composition of the speech). I have tried to retain the ambiguity of the original.

glorious of dangers to face they embraced it, choosing to be avenged on the enemy and to put aside all other thoughts. They entrusted to hope the uncertainty of future success, but resolved to seize with their own hands the challenge now before them. This, they knew, meant fighting and suffering rather than surviving through surrender; they fled only the stigma of dishonour, and stood their ground with life and limb in the field of action. And so, in the fortune of a single moment, at a climax of glory not of fear, they passed away.[1]

Such men they proved to be, worthy of their city; and you who survive 43 them must pray that your own defiance of the enemy has a safer outcome but is no less resolute. Look not just to arguments about advantage, since anyone could recite at length all the benefits of resisting the enemy – and you know these just as well as they do. Rather, feast your eyes every day upon the actual power of the city, become her lovers,[2] and when you realise her greatness reflect within you that men of courage won all this, men who knew their duty and kept their honour in its execution; and even when they failed in some venture, they were resolved not on that account to deprive the city of their valour but to present it to her freely as their finest offering. They gave their lives to the common cause and so gained [2] for themselves an enduring tribute and the finest tomb, not the one in which they lie but that in which their fame survives in eternal memory, to be celebrated forever in word and deed. The whole earth is the tomb [3] of famous men, and not only in their native land does the inscription on a monument commemorate their lives but in foreign lands too there lives on an unwritten memorial, engraved not in stone but in every mind.[3] These are the men you must now emulate: see that happiness depends [4] on freedom and freedom on courage, and do not stand aside from the dangers of war. It is not the world's unfortunate, with no hope of better [5] days, who have more reason to be lavish with their lives, but those who still risk a change in their prospects for the worse, to whom a reverse therefore matters the most. Indeed for a man of spirit the degradation [6]

[1] See Rusten, pp. 164–8 for the structure and interpretation of this very complex and highly rhetorical passage (42.4 is effectively one sentence in the Greek, with a single colon, as is 43.1 below).

[2] *Erastes*, a strong word, seriously intended (see Hornblower I, p. 311 for background references and discussion).

[3] *Ergon* and *gnome* again ('deed' and 'mind'), which have a wide range of uses and which I have translated rather freely here to make the contrast between the physical and the mental.

of a feeble act of cowardice is more painful than a death he never feels when struck down in the full flower of his strength, sharing the hopes of all.[1]

To those parents of the dead who are here now, I therefore offer not 44
commiseration but cheer. You know that you grew up in a world of chance and change; and this is good fortune – to win honour in death as they have done, and in grief as you have; good fortune too, when one's measure of happiness has lasted life's full span. It will be difficult, I know, [2]
to persuade you of this, when you will have so many reminders of them, seeing others with the good fortune you once enjoyed yourselves. The grief of bereavement comes not from being deprived of good things one has never experienced, but from the loss of what has become familiar. Those of you still of an age to have children must take strength in the [3]
hope of having others: to you as individual parents, the ones who come along later will help you forget those no longer with us, and the city will benefit twice over – in replenishment and in security. Indeed, one cannot expect fair and just counsel from citizens who do not have children at stake to give them an equal share in the dangers. Those of you who are [4]
past that age, however, must instead count as clear gain the greater part of your lives in which you have enjoyed your good fortune; remember that the remaining part will be short and let your spirits be lifted by these men's fame. The love of honour, alone, never grows old; and when one is in one's failing years it is not the reward of money, as some suggest, which is most satisfying but the reward of honour.

As for those of you who are sons and brothers of these men, I see 45
you face a formidable challenge: everyone tends to glorify the dead, and because of their exceptional merit you can scarcely be judged even a good second, let alone their equals. The living are rivals, who incur our envy, while those safely out of our way are honoured in a spirit of ungrudging goodwill.

If I am to make some mention also of a woman's special virtues, for [2]
those who will now be widows, I can reduce it all to one short message. You will be well honoured if you do not fall short of what is natural for

[1] More literally, 'death coming unperceived together with strength and public (*koine*) hope'. The latter phrase may have some sense of 'public-spirited hope' (i.e. patriotism) as well as 'shared hope' (i.e. of success).

your sex, as will she who is least invoked in male conversation, for praise or blame.[1]

I have now made my speech, as custom requires, and have tried to pay 46
a fitting tribute in words. As for the tribute of deeds, the dead have been honoured already in the act of burial, while for the future the city will maintain their children at public expense from now until they come of age. That is the reward and crown given to them and their survivors for the trials they have suffered. Those who offer the greatest prizes for civic virtue are also the ones to have the best men serving as citizens.

So now make your due laments, each for your own, and go your way.' [2]

Such were the funeral ceremonies held in this winter, at the close of 47
which the first year of the war came to an end.

[1] Earnest attempts have been made in various commentaries and translations to soften this brief and dismissive dictum, but it is a reminder of the very different status women had in the Athenian democracy of this period, which has just been so extravagantly celebrated. See II 4.2n.