

THE SUBJECTIVITY OF THUCYDIDES : HIS TREATMENT OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AT ATHENS¹

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THE *History* of Thucydides appears at first sight to provide little more than a factual record of events, apart from the speeches and a few passages of discussion, and to leave readers free to form their own judgements. This concept receives some encouragement from Thucydides himself, since in a famous sentence he insists that his principal aim is produce an accurate report of what actually happened (*τῶν γενομένων τὸ σαφές*), which, he hopes, will prove instructive to future generations (1.22.4). If, however, his narrative is more closely examined, the impression which it initially creates is found to be largely illusory. Unlike Herodotus, he seldom states his own opinions explicitly by using the first person, but he often adopts an indirect method which he applies with great skill, namely to implant unobtrusively into the minds of his readers judgements which, unless they are very observant, they may imagine to be their own. The speeches make an important contribution to this system of communicating his personal views, but it pervades the narrative throughout his work. Even where he includes only summaries of events in his most concise manner, his decision neither to record these events in detail nor to omit all reference to them may be significant, though there are doubtless cases where his brevity is the outcome of inadequate or unreliable evidence. Although too little attention has been paid to this basic feature of his historical technique, it has not by any means escaped notice,² and I do not propose to embark on a general discussion of it. There is, however, a factor closely allied to it, in some degree an offshoot of

¹ The substance of a lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester on Wednesday, the 17th of January 1973.

² E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, ii (1899), 386; H. P. Stahl, *Thukydides* (1966), pp. 31–32; my *Essays on the Greek Historians and Greek History* (1969), p. 125 with the works cited there in n. 6.

it, which seems to me to have been insufficiently appreciated and therefore to merit investigation.

For all who are prepared to acknowledge that Thucydides made conscientious efforts both to discover the truth and to record it impartially there is an almost irresistible temptation to equate the history of the Peloponnesian war with the *History* of Thucydides. It is too easily assumed that the events of the war occurred precisely as he describes them; that their relative importance or unimportance should necessarily be assessed precisely as he assesses it; that the leading personalities were precisely as he presents them. Such assumptions are encouraged by the dearth of other evidence. Modern scholars may, for all manner of reasons, challenge the accuracy of his information or the validity of his judgements, whether expressed or implied; but it is very seldom that they can find even moderately reputable evidence which they can use against him. As soon as his *History* was published, it established itself as the standard authority on the Peloponnesian war, and its domination of the historical tradition was never lost. Works by contemporary authors who were not historians—comedy, tragedy, the political pamphlet by the anonymous writer known as the Old Oligarch, the speeches of the earliest Attic orators—throw some light on the history of the war, and documentary sources supply some valuable evidence, though its volume is limited. Some information which is independent of Thucydides may be derived from secondary authorities, especially the *Lives* of Plutarch, but in many cases its authenticity is not above suspicion. The only work by a contemporary historian which is known to have covered the period of the Peloponnesian war is the *Atthis* of Hellanicus. Thucydides criticizes it for its brevity in dealing with the Pentecontaetia (1.97.2), and there is no reason to believe that it treated the Peloponnesian war in much greater detail.¹ It is, however, most unfortunate that the *Atthis* has not survived, since, although it was a local history and not specifically a history of the war, comparisons with the work of Thucydides would have been most valuable. The digressions of

¹ The *Atthis* was almost certainly a work of only two books, the second book covering a period of some three hundred years, cf. F. Jacoby, *F Gr Hist*, iii b Suppl. i (1954), 12-14.

Thucydides on earlier history contain an unmistakable element of controversy, and some are certainly designed to challenge the views of Hellanicus. Thucydides adopts a system of chronology for the events of the war which is different from, and in his opinion superior to, the normal system as used by Hellanicus (5.20),¹ and there may well have been a number of other issues relating to the war on which the two historians disagreed.

It is not my purpose to suggest that, if the volume of ostensibly trustworthy evidence on the Peloponnesian war other than the *History* of Thucydides had been less meagre, posterity would have formed a basically different impression of the period. Nor do I intend to try to convict him of gross distortion or gross partisanship. He cannot, however, have been able to obtain complete and reliable information about every aspect of every episode despite his conscientiousness in collecting and testing evidence and despite the advantages afforded by his banishment including that of contact with the Peloponnesians (5.26.5). More important, his originality of mind predisposed him to question, and often to reject, current opinion. He was confident, perhaps overconfident, in his own judgement and evidently derived satisfaction from pronouncing unorthodox views on controversial topics. Accordingly, his picture of the war is a highly subjective picture; it bears his imprint to a remarkable degree and is conditioned by his individuality. If a picture had survived by another historian who was equally knowledgeable and equally eager to be impartial, the background would doubtless have been much the same, but the overall impression could well have been widely different. In endeavouring to establish this thesis, I shall devote my attention mainly to the only major episode in the *History* of which there exists a largely independent and moderately detailed report, written within a century after the end of the war, which may be compared with that of Thucydides. The episode is the short-lived oligarchy of the Four Hundred at Athens, and the report is that of Aristotle in the *Athenaion Politeia* (29–33). Unfortunately, for reasons which will be explained, comparison between the two reports is not so fruitful as might have been expected. It happens, however, that Thucydides held very positive views

¹ O. Lendle, *Wege der Forschung*, xcvi (1968), 661–82.

about the groups and individuals involved in this episode and conveys to his readers his approval or disapproval with exceptional forthrightness. While his judgement does not appear to have been warped by prejudice, the picture is subjective, and another equally fairminded writer might have apportioned approval and disapproval rather differently. After discussing this episode I shall refer very briefly to other cases in which his presentation or interpretation of events seems to be demonstrably subjective.

The report by Aristotle on the oligarchy of the Four Hundred shows that he or his source was familiar with the Thucydidean version. Such, however, are the differences between the two reports that it is not always easy to believe that they are dealing with the same series of events. These differences are in some degree attributable to differences in aim and method. Thucydides follows his normal practice in focusing attention upon what actually happened ; he is mainly concerned with the effect of the oligarchical revolution upon the course of the war ; he is interested in the motives and tactics of the groups or individuals who promoted or opposed it. To Aristotle, on the other hand, this oligarchy is important as a stage in the constitutional development of Athens ; thus he incorporates official records of proposals for constitutional reform, whether they were implemented or not. Although his report is in narrative form, he virtually ignores the series of complex intrigues conducted during the rise and fall of the Four Hundred. Hence, though attempts by modern scholars to reconcile the two reports have not won much acceptance,¹ they are in some degree complementary. Thucydides is concerned with the realities of the revolution, Aristotle with its formalities.

The divergences between the two reports are, however, largely attributable to another factor which is even more fundamental and also more relevant to the present investigation. The attitude of Aristotle towards the Four Hundred is essentially sympathetic,

¹ The most elaborate attempt is that of Mabel Lang, *A.J.P.*, lxi (1948), 272–89, whose conclusions are rejected by C. Hignett, *History of the Athenian Constitution* (1952), pp. 362–4, cf. G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *Historia*, v (1956), 10, n. 40. In the recently published Budé edition of Thucydides viii (1972), *Notice*, pp. xx–xxi, R. Weil lists the points of agreement and disagreement between the accounts of Thucydides and Aristotle.

that of Thucydides entirely unsympathetic, though he admires the ability of the leading oligarchs. Aristotle chooses to refer neither to what has been defined as "a classic mixture of terror and propaganda"¹ by which the Four Hundred seized and tried to retain control of the state nor to the hostile reaction by the armed forces at Samos. He thus creates the impression that the majority of Athenian citizens willingly consented to the measures for constitutional reform, fully recorded by him, whereby the democracy was abolished and an oligarchy established. Similarly he attributes the fall of the Four Hundred to reaction to the revolt of Euboea (33.1) without referring to the even more important contribution of internal dissensions. A note of censure is traceable only where he refers to the procrastination of the Four Hundred in bringing into effective operation the constitution of the Five Thousand (32.3 ; 33.2). Even if the eighth book of Thucydides had not survived, the report in the *Athenaion Politeia* would have been suspected of being an apologia designed to shield the oligarchical regime from criticism directed at it.²

Responsibility for this transparent bias should probably be attributed not to Aristotle himself, in spite of his well-attested preference for conservative forms of government, but to his source. In a passage of the *Politics* (5.1304b7-15) he expresses a totally different view, citing the Four Hundred as an example of an oligarchy established in the first instance by fraud and later maintained by violence. The source of his report in the *Athenaion Politeia* is believed by many scholars, and with good reason though there can be no proof, to be the *Atthis* of Androtion, whose father Andron was a member of the Four Hundred and an associate of Theramenes in challenging the extremists.³ It has also been suggested that the report is based upon the celebrated speech delivered by Antiphon in his own defence,⁴ which is so highly

¹ M. I. Finley, *The Ancestral Constitution* (1971), p. 4.

² The excellent discussion of this report by J. Day and M. Chambers, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (1962), pp. 150-4, shows how distorted it is. F. Jacoby, *F Gr Hist*, iii b Suppl. ii (1954), 138, sums up the basic differences in outlook between Aristotle and Thucydides on the Four Hundred.

³ G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde*, i (1920), 69 ; F. Jacoby, *Atthis* (1949), p. 384, n. 30.

⁴ H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (1958), p. 141 ; M. H. Jameson, *Historia*, xx (1971), 559.

praised by Thucydides (8.68.2). This suggestion is less convincing, though Androtion must have known the speech of Antiphon and may well have been influenced by it. At all events, the report in the *Athenaion Politeia* evidently has reputable origins, and it includes official documents. Thus it might have been expected, in spite of its bias, to have been valuable in supplementing and even correcting the account of Thucydides. On one or two points relating to procedure Aristotle is apparently right and Thucydides wrong,¹ and the former throws light on the attempts by political leaders to bolster their propaganda by reference to their own interpretations of the past.² There has been, however, since the recovery of the *Athenaion Politeia* a remarkable measure of agreement among historians in preferring the Thucydidean account of the Four Hundred and in continuing to rely almost wholly upon it. Nevertheless, the account in the *Athenaion Politeia* does show that there was some support for a tradition presenting the oligarchical revolution from a widely different point of view which was not by any means absurd.

The account of Thucydides is manifestly founded upon reports by eyewitnesses and for the most part authentic. With his usual flair for picturing public feeling in tense situations he recreates most vividly the atmosphere at Athens and at Samos at critical stages of the revolution. His account has, however, some defects which have been noted by modern scholars³: *inter alia* the sequence of events tends to be difficult to follow, especially at the outset, because causal links between them are lacking or insufficiently precise. Two factors have contributed to these defects, namely the unrevised condition of the eighth book⁴ and the

¹ K. von Fritz and E. Kapp, *Aristotle's Constitution of Athens* (1950), pp. 173-4 (n. 87), cf. pp. 178-9 (n. 103) for another point on which Thucydides may be mistaken.

² S. A. Cecchin, *Πάτριος Πολιτεία* (1969), pp. 26-63.

³ As K. von Fritz, *Griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, i a (1967), 772-3, points out, he fails to provide adequate guidance on the basic change of foreign policy by the oligarchs when, after the breakdown of their negotiations with Tissaphernes, they then proceeded to make overtures to Agis at Decelea. Nor does he make clear (8.47.1-48.1) whether the intrigues leading to the establishment of the oligarchy were initiated by leading Athenians at Samos or by Alcibiades.

⁴ Cf. my *Individuals in Thucydides* (1968), p. 258; Weil (above p. 196, n. 1), *Notice*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

difficulty evidently experienced by Thucydides in obtaining full and reliable information about complex moves and counter-moves at Athens while he was himself in exile. I do not intend to consider here the merits and defects of his narrative but to try to show how remarkably subjective it is, a feature which does not seem to have been fully appreciated. I shall confine my investigation to parts of the narrative in which this feature seems to me to be most conspicuous.

Thucydides makes abundantly clear that in his opinion personal ambition was the principal motive of those responsible for the first moves to overthrow the democracy. Prominent Athenians serving at Samos were attracted by the scheme proposed by Alcibiades largely because of the prospect that they would get control of the state into their own hands (48.1).¹ They were not deterred by the opposition of Phrynichus, who pointed out, correctly according to Thucydides, that the sole motive of Alcibiades in promoting the establishment of an oligarchy was to secure his own return to Athens (48.4). Later, when Peisander presented the scheme to the Athenian assembly and in the face of opposition urged its acceptance on the ground that only by constitutional reform could Persian aid be obtained and Athens thus saved from defeat, he conveyed the impression that the proposed constitution would not involve any fundamental change (53.1) and that any part of it found to be unsatisfactory could subsequently be altered (53.3). There is a clear implication that he was guilty of sharp practice. A note of admiration for the determination of the oligarchical conspirators at Samos, though not for their policy, is traceable when Thucydides mentions their decision to persevere with their plan for constitutional reform and to continue their resistance against the Peloponnesians despite the crushing disappointment of their failure to gain the support of Persia (63.4). On the other hand, his abhorrence of the methods adopted by their fellow conspirators at Athens is conveyed in unusually explicit terms. These men sought to hoodwink the populace by lying propaganda in order to build up their own power ; they crushed opponents, or potential opponents, by intimidation or assassination ; they

¹ All references are to the eighth book unless otherwise stated.

created an atmosphere of suspicion in which no one felt safe or could trust his neighbour (65.2–66). Thucydides presents a horrifying picture, which inevitably brings to mind his account of the civil strife at Corcyra and the general discussion on revolutions attached to it (3.82–3). In that instance, however, everyone seems to be equally corrupted; here his disapproval is confined to those responsible for planning and directing the oligarchical revolution.

After condemning the motives and methods of the leading oligarchs, Thucydides proceeds to pay a remarkable tribute to their ability. It is his practice to look for ability, or lack of ability, in his principal characters, especially qualities of intellect in planning military or political action. He finds such qualities in several leaders of the Four Hundred. The ability of Peisander emerges, in accordance with the normal Thucydidean technique, from the presentation of his diplomatic activities on behalf of the oligarchs at Athens and in Asia. Admiration for Antiphon, Phrynichus and Theramenes is expressed categorically in a celebrated passage which interrupts the narrative (68). Comment on the ability of Antiphon may be deemed to be almost essential for a special reason: though he was the principal architect of the oligarchical movement, he shunned public life because his reputation for cleverness caused him to be distrusted. Accordingly, the importance of his contribution is not deducible from the narrative.¹ Yet the reference to the excellence of his speech delivered at his trial strikes a personal note and might be considered irrelevant, since the Four Hundred had already fallen. The tributes paid to Phrynichus (68.3) and Theramenes (68.4) are shorter, but it is remarkable that any comment on their qualities is included, since both are prominent in the narrative. Phrynichus is praised for his devotion to the oligarchy and for his steadfastness in danger: his intellectual ability has been noted earlier (27.5). Theramenes is credited with two qualities essential to the Thucydidean ideal statesman, sagacity and eloquence. Thucydides seems to have felt that his unusually explicit tribute to the ability of the leading oligarchs required some explanation; for he points to the magnitude of their achievement in overthrow-

¹ *Individuals in Thucydides*, pp. 11–12.

ing the Athenian democracy when it had been in power for a very long period (68.4).

The successful methods of intimidation adopted by the oligarchs are seen in operation in a scene describing how they dismissed the democratic Council of Five Hundred. So efficient was their organization that there was no need to embark upon wholesale massacres comparable with those perpetrated by both sides in the civil strife at Corcyra. The arbitrary domination of the city by the oligarchs was unchallenged (69–70). It was, however, necessary for them at all costs to obtain the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the armed forces at Samos, whose members were likely to resent their own loss of political rights as citizens of a democracy. Accordingly, the Four Hundred sent an embassy to Samos to present a defence of their actions at Athens which is seen from the preceding accounts of these actions to have been thoroughly fraudulent (72).¹

The scene now changes to Samos, and with this change of scene there is a remarkable change of tone. Thucydides presents another graphic sketch of a revolutionary situation, but his attitude towards the majority of Athenian servicemen who reacted passionately against the establishment of the Four Hundred is warmly sympathetic. His treatment of the Athenian officers who led this reaction, and of the Samian democrats who were in league with them, is also consistently favourable. It is necessary to draw attention to some salient points made in the narrative. An attempted coup by Samian oligarchs was suppressed with Athenian support, but most of the conspirators were pardoned (73). Before the arrival of the embassy from the Four Hundred an exaggerated report was received charging them with all manner of outrages, and Athenian troops were disposed to attack everyone suspected of oligarchical sympathies; but they allowed themselves to be restrained by warnings that, because the Peloponnesian fleet was so near, overt dissensions might well ruin the Athenian cause (75.1). Athenian officers, among them Thrasybulus, then bound all their troops, including supporters of the oligarchy,² by

¹ Cf. 66.1 ; 70.1. C. Mossé, *Revue historique*, ccxxxi (1964), 4, points out the hypocrisy underlying their arguments reported in 72.1.

² It is not made clear whether they took the oath willingly.

oath " to preserve the democracy and maintain unity, to conduct the war earnestly against the Peloponnesians, to be enemies of the Four Hundred and not to negotiate with them ". The Samians of military age took the same oath, and there was close association between them and the Athenian troops (75.2-3). A military assembly was then held, of which Thucydides gives a long and wholly sympathetic account, summarizing the arguments whereby a number of unnamed speakers urged their comrades to take heart, believing that they, the armed forces at Samos, were in a stronger position than the oligarchs at Athens (76-77).

Thucydides credits these democrats at Samos with steadfastness and ardour in a perilous situation. It is true that much the same qualities were attributed at an earlier stage to the oligarchical conspirators at Samos, as has already been noted,¹ but here the implication of motive is much more emphatic. Through disinterested loyalty to a cause in which they believe the Athenian troops bind themselves to take united action, in common with the Samians, in defence of Athenian democracy. They make this decision even though they are conscious that it will weaken their own military position and may endanger the safety of their families at home. Nowhere does Thucydides suggest that they or their leaders are influenced by the selfish craving for power with which he has previously charged the Four Hundred. Nor does he appear to question the legitimacy of the claim by the armed forces at Samos that they were entitled to represent the Athenian state and that the oligarchs at Athens were in rebellion.² He indicates unmistakably where his sympathies lie.³

His attitude towards the conflicting factions becomes less clear-cut from the point at which he records the recall of Alcibiades by the troops at Samos at the instigation of Thrasybulus

¹ See above p. 199.

² Mossé, *op. cit.* (above p. 201, n. 1), pp. 5-6, does not seem to me to have established the legitimacy of this claim. The only contemporary parallel, namely 7.77.4-5, is both rhetorical and hypothetical.

³ The only democrat whose actions incur implied criticism is Chaereas. He, after being sent from Samos to Athens and escaping from detention by the oligarchs there, returned to Samos and spread false reports of outrages inflicted by the Four Hundred on their opponents and on the families of servicemen known to be hostile to them (74).

(81.1). Alcibiades is seen to have been tarred with the same brush as the leaders of the oligarchy: he was interested only in furthering his own ambitions, and he deceived his supporters by leading them to believe that he could easily induce Tissaphernes to change sides. On the other hand, he is credited with astuteness in framing policy and with persuasiveness in securing its acceptance.¹ Hereafter he dominates the narrative of Thucydides, and the other generals, even Thrasybulus who was mainly responsible for his recall, play minor roles. The Athenian troops apparently accepted with some misgivings the recommendation to recall Alcibiades,² but they later allowed themselves to be too easily convinced by his specious promises of Persian aid and became overconfident (81.2–82.2). When the envoys from Athens eventually arrived and, after being first threatened with violence, were granted a hearing, the assembly angrily rejected their plea that the Four Hundred were guilty neither of treason nor of oppression. Alcibiades is warmly commended by Thucydides for his services to Athens in dissuading the military assembly from voting to sail home to overthrow the oligarchy, an action that would have had disastrous consequences (86). A favourite thesis of Thucydides is traceable in his account of these debates at Samos, namely that mass meetings are easily misled by speakers wishing to please them and that under stress of emotion they tend to rush into unwise decisions unless they are kept firmly under control.³ Nevertheless, the Athenian troops are seen to have remained as determined as ever to uphold their ancestral democracy at whatever cost to themselves.

The narrative in which Thucydides records the developments at Athens culminating in the fall of the Four Hundred has a quality unmatched elsewhere in the eighth book (89–98). It contains fewer obscurities than his account of their rise to power and is almost more graphic. More important to the present investigation is that it reveals very clearly the judgements of Thucydides on

¹ Cf. 6.15.4 on his masterly direction of the war from the time of his recall. The presentation of Alcibiades by Thucydides is discussed in my *Individuals in Thucydides*, pp. 212–60.

² 81.1, τέλος ἀπ' ἐκκλησίας ἔπεισε (Thrasybulus) τὸ πλῆθος τῶν στρατιωτῶν.

³ Cf. 2.59.3; 2.65.4 and 11; 4.28.3; 6.63.; 2 7.48.3; 8.1.4.

the aims and actions of the groups involved in the complicated course of events. Three groups may be differentiated, the first being the extremist majority of the Four Hundred. These extremists clung to the absolute power which they had won for themselves, dishonestly postponing the fulfilment of their undertaking to bring the Five Thousand into being. Though becoming increasingly unpopular, they could still count on some popular support. Thucydides does not conceal his extreme disapproval of them. The second group consists of other prominent oligarchs, including some dissident members of the Four Hundred led by Theramenes, who challenged the extremists, objecting to the prolongation of arbitrary control by a narrow oligarchy. To Thucydides the aims of this second group are hardly less selfish and its methods hardly less reprehensible than those of the extremists. The third group was much larger than the first or second and doubtless less uniform. It included many Athenians serving as hoplites. Its members became increasingly dissatisfied with the leadership of the first group and were transferring their support to the second group, but they do not appear to have felt wholehearted enthusiasm for the policy of either. Thucydides is favourably disposed towards this third group, though not perhaps so favourably as he is towards the armed forces at Samos. His assessment of each group is determinable from specific references in his narrative, to which I must now draw attention.

The extreme oligarchs, when opposition to their authoritarian rule flared up, began to build a fortification at the Peiraeus whereby they could control the entrance to the harbour. Thucydides is inclined to credit the accusation of Theramenes that their object was to be in a position to admit enemy forces to the harbour whenever they wished (90.3 ; 92.1), but he expressly states that they intended to take this action only as a last resort to save their own lives (91.3). He is not prepared to commit himself on the controversial question whether it was through treasonable intrigues on the part of the extremists that an enemy fleet appeared off Epidaurus in uncomfortably close proximity to the Peiraeus (94.2). As their unpopularity increased, they threatened their critics with violence (92.6) ; they also endeavoured to bolster their authority by continuing their policy of spreading alarm and

confusion (92.11). When they were compelled to make concessions to popular feeling, their promises have an air of insincerity (93.2).

The motives of the second group, consisting of Theramenes and his associates, were, according to Thucydides, little more reputable than those of the extremists (89.2–3). While they were genuinely alarmed by the power of Alcibiades at Samos and also by the negotiations of the extremists with Sparta, their demand for a more liberal form of government, in which the Five Thousand would be the sovereign body, was bogus political propaganda (*σχῆμα πολιτικὸν τοῦ λόγου*, 89.3). Most of them were influenced only by personal ambition, each aspiring to win for himself the leadership of the people after the now confidently anticipated fall of the Four Hundred. To Thucydides they were opportunists, and his narrative nowhere lends support to the view of many modern scholars that they had from the first formed a wing of the Four Hundred dedicated to the principles of moderate oligarchy.¹ In their efforts to discredit the extremists they seem to have been guilty at least of deliberate exaggeration by representing the construction of the fortification at the Peiraeus as an act of treason premeditated from the outset (90.3 ; 91.1–2). Thucydides does not suggest that Theramenes and his associates were implicated in the murder of Phrynichus—he seems in fact to be somewhat ill-informed about this incident²—but he does state that it encouraged them to take much bolder action (92.2). When the Peloponnesian fleet was reported to have approached as close as Aegina, Theramenes asserted with much greater conviction that its destination was the Peiraeus (92.3). In the ensuing disturbances to which I shall refer, when a force of Athenian hoplites

¹ Hignett, *op. cit.* (above p. 196, n. 1), p. 362, and R. Sealey, *Essays in Greek Politics* (1966), pp. 127–30, rightly reject the orthodox view of Theramenes and his associates. According to Lysias (12.66), Theramenes turned against the Four Hundred because he was envious of fellow members who were eclipsing him. This evidence is suspect because of its palpable bias, but at least it is independent of Thucydides. Aristotle (*A.P.*, 28.5) makes a rather lame defence of Theramenes, cf. Diod., 13.38.2.

² If the persons named in an inscription (R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (1969), No. 85) were the actual assassins of Phrynichus (rather than organizers of the assassination), the account of Thucydides (92.2) is incorrect.

mutinied against the Four Hundred, he deceived his extremist colleagues by pretending to be loyal to the government while really conniving at, even encouraging, the mutiny (92.4–10). Thucydides does not, however, seem to imply disapproval of this duplicity, perhaps because it was directed against the extremists.

The third group was virtually leaderless, doubtless because of the effective intimidation practised by the oligarchs. Its members had consented, mostly with some misgivings, to the establishment of an oligarchy (53–54), but they were now disillusioned because it had not led to the improvement in the war situation confidently predicted by its sponsors. They were heartened by the message sent by Alcibiades from Samos which offered the prospect of reconciliation with the armed forces there if the Four Hundred were deposed and the Five Thousand given a real existence. Accordingly, they were disposed to lend their support to the second group, the dissident oligarchs under Theramenes, in seeking to oust the extremists (89.1–2). Their feelings, if somewhat confused and violent, evidently included a desire to restore to the Athenian state some measure of unity without which the war would inevitably be lost. The growing disaffection culminated in the mutiny, which I have already mentioned, by a detachment of hoplites at the Peiraeus. Sent by the Four Hundred to build the fortification at the harbour mouth, they became suspicious of its purpose and, after seizing one of their officers, began to demolish it. Apparently incited by one of their taxiarchs who was an associate of Theramenes, they were prepared to defy the authority of the Four Hundred, and most of the hoplites serving in other parts of Attica supported them (92.4–5).¹ The Four Hundred must, however, have still had troops at their disposal, for a clash between the city, which they controlled, and the Peiraeus was only narrowly averted (92.7–8). Thereafter the work of demolishing the fortification at the harbour mouth proceeded, and the hoplites were assisted by a large section of the

¹ τὸ στῖφος τῶν ὀπλιτῶν (92.5) refers to hoplites in general (cf. Mossé, *op. cit.* (above p. 201, n. 1), p. 7 and Weil, n. *ad loc.*) and not merely to those stationed at the Peiraeus, since the preceding sentence (92.4) already suggests that the latter were united in their action against the Four Hundred. At a later stage (93.3) τὸ πᾶν πλῆθος τῶν ὀπλιτῶν (i.e. those at the Peiraeus and those at Athens, cf. Classen, n. *ad loc.*) had a common outlook. In 94.1 ὀπλιτῶν seems to be a gloss.

local population (92.10). An appeal to the crowd called for help from "whoever wishes the Five Thousand to govern instead of the Four Hundred". This wording, Thucydides maintains, concealed the true purpose of the appeal, which was really intended for "whoever wishes the people to govern". The latter phrase had to be avoided because the Four Hundred were suspected of having compiled a secret list of the Five Thousand and some Athenians who were present might be members of this body (92.11). It is not clear how the appeal was issued or by whom, but throughout this incident the initiative rested with the hoplites. Thucydides seems to be suggesting that they, or at least many of them, had little enthusiasm for government by the Five Thousand, despite its potential advantages for themselves, and would have preferred the restoration of full democracy. Accordingly, they were not by any means wholly in agreement with the policy of Theramenes and his associates. Thucydides in fact makes a distinction between the two groups by treating the hoplites much more sympathetically than the dissident oligarchs: the willingness of the hoplites to curb their passionate feelings and to negotiate with the Four Hundred is attributed to a creditable motive, namely alarm for the safety of the state (93.3).

Before negotiations could begin, the naval defeat off Eretria and the damaging loss of Euboea caused a panic which finally swept the Four Hundred from power (94-97). The last reference to the extremist leaders is the report of their flight to the enemy at Decelea and of the treacherous ruse whereby one of them betrayed an Athenian fort to the Boeotians (98). The extraordinarily warm tribute paid by Thucydides to the constitution of the Five Thousand (97.2), which was now brought into operation, has given rise to a spate of learned discussion.¹ This tribute is all the more surprising in that, as has already been noted,² he has attributed discreditable motives to the promoters of the Five Thousand. At all events, whatever the precise significance of this famous sentence may be, it serves to underline his damning verdict on the Four Hundred.

¹ The problem has been discussed in detail by G. Donini, *La posizione di Tucidide verso il governo dei Cinquemila* (1969), cf. G. M. Kirkwood, *A.J.P.*, xciii (1972), 92-103, for a totally different interpretation. ² See above p. 205.

Thucydides tends to disclose his own opinions more freely in the second half of his *History* (5.25–8) than in the first (1–5.24), and explicit judgements are more numerous in the eighth book than anywhere else in his work. Even in the eighth book, however, he more commonly follows his normal practice of conveying his opinions indirectly. For example, his conviction that the Peloponnesians, and especially the Spartan admiral Astyochus, were guilty of dilatoriness and incompetence in conducting the naval war in Asia emerges from his narrative but is not expressly stated. His verdicts on the aims and actions of the political groups and prominent individuals involved in revolution of the Four Hundred are, as I have tried to show, conveyed with a bluntness that is indeed remarkable.

This demonstrably unfavourable attitude towards the oligarchs combined with his demonstrably favourable attitude towards the democrats is somewhat unexpected and may seem out of character for two reasons. First, as has already been noted,¹ in his account of the upheavals at Corcyra, his only other detailed picture of civil strife, he seems to regard oligarchs and democrats with equal distaste, holding both sides responsible for the widespread collapse of moral standards, which is for him the principal lesson to be learned from that episode. Traces of similar sentiments about civil strife are discernible in the account of the Four Hundred,² but the two episodes are very differently presented. Secondly, Thucydides is believed by some modern scholars to have favoured oligarchy rather than democracy and to have become a more confirmed oligarch when as an exile he observed the Athenian democracy moving further and further away from the Periclean ideals which he so much admired.³ The problem of his political beliefs is a highly controversial one which cannot be discussed here. I do not accept the view that he was ever a confirmed oligarch,⁴ but

¹ See above p. 200.

² Sealey, *op. cit.* (above p. 205, n. 1), p. 130.

³ G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *Historia*, iii (1954–5), 31–37; M. F. McGregor, *Phoenix*, x (1956), 93–102.

⁴ The case made by de Ste. Croix (see the preceding note) is weakened by his conclusion mentioned in an Addendum (pp. 40–41) and developed in *Historia*, v (1956), 1–23, which seems to me to have much to recommend it, that the constitution of the Five Thousand was not a moderate oligarchy but a moderate democracy.

he undoubtedly disapproved of post-Periclean democracy (cf. 2.65.7–12). It is therefore surprising to find that in presenting the revolution of 411 his attitude is so conspicuously more favourable to the democrats than to the oligarchs, even though he may have considered other oligarchies to have been less odious than that of the Four Hundred.

The foregoing investigation may be deemed to throw doubt upon his impartiality in his account of the Four Hundred. Did the oligarchs really deserve his categorical and comprehensive condemnation of their aims and methods? Is he not almost as prejudiced against them as Aristotle is in their favour?

There were undoubtedly many Athenians towards the end of the fifth century who subscribed to the principles of oligarchy, genuinely convinced that it was a better form of government than democracy. Among them was the Old Oligarch, whose political pamphlet, preserved so incongruously among the works of Xenophon, was doubtless published anonymously because the author could not have disclosed his identity without incurring the risk of prosecution.¹ There must have been dedicated oligarchs holding similar views who welcomed with enthusiasm the revolution of 411 as the fulfilment of a dream which had seemed virtually unattainable. Some of them must have been among those appointed to serve as members of the Four Hundred, though there is no means of determining how many they were or how great their influence. One of them is identifiable, namely Antiphon, who had for a long time been plotting the overthrow of the democracy while shunning the limelight of public life (68.1).² Unlike others who had been prominent politicians under the democracy and might well have been prompted solely by personal ambition

This conclusion has now been challenged by P. J. Rhodes, *J.H.S.*, xcii (1972), 115–27 (published when the present paper had been completed). F. E. Adcock, *Thucydides and his History* (1963), p. 54, expresses the justifiably cautious view that “it is not plain to see that Thucydides, throughout all his history, has any declared preference for this or that form of constitution”.

¹ The pamphlet seems to have been written during the Archidamian war, though there is no reliable evidence of date. W. G. Forrest, *Klio*, lii (1970), 107–16, suggests 425/4.

² A fragment of his defence at his trial (*On the Revolution* fr. 1 a, Thalheim) mentions that he held no office.

in deciding to turn to oligarchy, Antiphon was evidently no time-server but a devoted champion of oligarchical principles. There were certainly some, possibly many, minor Antiphons among the Four Hundred. Thucydides chooses to ignore them.

There were also undoubtedly some members and supporters of the Four Hundred who, though not dedicated oligarchs, favoured the establishment of an oligarchy for patriotic reasons, believing that only by a change of constitution could military defeat be averted. Thucydides indeed acknowledges that the officers at Samos who conspired with Alcibiades with a view to overthrowing the democracy hoped through their intrigues to get the better of the Peloponnesians (48.1).¹ He nowhere attributes this creditable motive to the oligarchs at Athens,² though it was the prospect of gaining Persian support and thus winning the war (53.1) that led the assembly to consent reluctantly to some modification of the constitution as advocated by Peisander (54.1). Feeling had been widespread since the disaster in Sicily that drastic reforms were required if Athens was to survive.³ As soon as the news was received, economies in public spending were agreed, and a board of ten elderly *Probouloi* was appointed with emergency powers (1.3). The first of these measures no less than the second foreshadowed a movement towards a narrower form of government: for when the revolution took place, the decision to abolish pay for public service except in the armed forces (65.3; 67.3) was certainly influenced by economic as well as political considerations.⁴ It is impossible even to guess how many prominent Athenians acquiesced in the overthrow of the democracy because it seemed likely to stiffen resistance to the enemy, but one of them can be identified with some confidence. This is Sophocles, one of the *Probouloi*, who is almost certainly the tragic poet, now a

¹ Another less honourable aim is also attributed to them (see above p. 199).

² They included some whom no one would have expected to favour oligarchy (66.5).

³ According to a rhetorically coloured passage of Isocrates, 16 (*On the team of horses*), 5–6, cf. 36–37, plans were being laid as early as 415 for the establishment of an oligarchy. Thucydides (6.60.1, cf. 27.3 and 28.2) refers only to fears of an oligarchical conspiracy at that time.

⁴ Sealey, *op. cit.* (above p. 205, n. 1), pp. 125–6.

very old man. According to a story in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle,¹ Sophocles admitted that in agreeing to the establishment of the Four Hundred he had knowingly committed a wrongful act but claimed that no better course was open to him. This anecdote reflects an attitude towards the oligarchy that was doubtless shared by others who, like Sophocles, occupied positions of authority. Another attitude, which diverges even more from that of Thucydides, is to be found in a speech attributed to Lysias but probably not composed by him. This speech was delivered, soon after the restoration of the democracy, in defence of an elderly Athenian named Polystratus, who had been a member of the Four Hundred. The speaker, who is the son of the defendant, claims in his opening statement that, whereas some of the Four Hundred had plotted against the democracy, others, including his father, had been completely loyal and had tried to prevent oppression, public and private, by their more violent colleagues (Lys. 20.1). Speeches delivered at Athenian trials tend to present distorted pictures of political situations, past or present, and this observation by the son of Polystratus is not above suspicion. He would, however, hardly have begun his speech with a general statement about the Four Hundred unless he had expected it to prove acceptable to a considerable proportion of the jury. He even seems to suggest that patriots, such as his father, constituted a majority of the Four Hundred. Patriotic feeling may also have had some influence at a later stage, shortly before the fall of the Four Hundred. According to Thucydides (89.3), as has already been noted,² the aim of Theramenes and his associates in turning against the extremists was to promote their own interests. It is, however, possible that some at least of these dissidents may have acted as they did with the intention of preventing the betrayal of the Peiraeus to the enemy, which they believed to be imminent.³

Yet another factor to which Thucydides makes no reference may be thought to have influenced the feelings of the Four Hundred and their supporters. After the death of Pericles a new element had been introduced into Athenian politics by the emergence of leaders to whom the label 'demagogue' is traditionally

¹ *Rhet.*, 3.18.6(1419a26-30), cf. Jameson, *op. cit.* (above p. 197, n. 4), pp. 542-3.

² See above p. 205. ³ Cf. Hignett, *op. cit.* (above p. 196, n. 1), pp. 278-9.

attached. Here it is necessary only to draw attention to two characteristics of these new leaders.¹ First, though neither poor nor uneducated, they were not members of the few families which had virtually monopolized Athenian political leadership in the past. Secondly, they used their influence in the assembly to encourage the abandonment of Periclean strategy and the adoption of a more enterprising war policy, culminating in the expedition to Sicily. After the disaster there, the Athenians were angry, according to Thucydides (1.1), with "those of the orators who had joined in instigating the expedition"; and, many years later, Isocrates goes so far as to maintain that the demos desired the establishment of the Four Hundred "because of the iniquity of the public speakers".² These passages refer to reaction by the assembly, but if the masses held the views attributed to them, there must have been many members of leading families, especially older men with experience of Athenian politics before the war, who regarded the new leaders as responsible for the present desperate situation. Athenians holding these views were doubtless prepared to go to almost any lengths to undermine the power of the new leaders whose influence they considered to be so pernicious, and the overthrow of the democracy would have this effect. The only named victim of assassination when the oligarchs were seizing power at Athens was Androcles, and one of the reasons for his death given by Thucydides is that he was a popular leader (65.2), while at Samos the well-known demagogue Hyperbolus, who lived there because he had been ostracized, was murdered by Samian and Athenian oligarchs (73.2-3). It may even be conjectured that Thucydides himself, if he had not been in exile in 411, would have been tempted to support the establishment of an oligarchy because it would render powerless politicians who had, in his opinion, caused so much damage to Athenian interests by encouraging the irresponsibility of the mob. Aristophanes, whose condemnation of the new politicians is more violent than that of Thucydides, may well have held much the same view.

¹ The subject is fully discussed by W. R. Connor, *New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*, (1971).

² 8 (*On the Peace*), 108. It must be acknowledged that Isocrates is not a very reliable authority on past history.

The *parabasis* of the *Frogs*, written some years after the restoration of the democracy, is mainly a plea for unity, but it betrays sympathy for Athenians who, "deceived by the tricks of Phrynichus", had supported the Four Hundred (686-705), and it appeals for the appointment of leaders endowed with the old-fashioned qualities associated with the aristocracy (718-37).

A final point may be mentioned on which the verdict of Thucydides could well have been disputed by many of his contemporaries. He pays tribute, as has been noted, to the ability of the oligarchical leaders because they successfully accomplished the formidable task of overthrowing the democracy (68.4).¹ The validity of this evidence in support of his claim that they were able men is beyond doubt, but it relates only to their initial success in seizing power. Subsequently the Four Hundred failed to achieve any of their objectives, and their control of the state collapsed after only four months. Their record has been justly described as "a catalogue of failures".² Errors of judgement on the part of their leaders may not have been wholly responsible, but could not these leaders have anticipated the reaction of the armed forces at Samos, which eventually proved fatal to their cause? Would they not have been wiser to have made genuine concessions to those wishing to bring the Five Thousand into being? However difficult the enterprise which they undertook, were they really so outstandingly able as Thucydides claims?

Accordingly, not all the conclusions conveyed by Thucydides to his readers in his account of the Four Hundred are beyond dispute, and on some of them there is a case for qualification or modification, especially his sweeping condemnation of the oligarchs. There must have been some leading supporters of the oligarchy at Athens whose motives were, as I have tried to show, wholly or largely honourable. In addition, there may have been leading democrats at Samos who were as self-seeking as Alcibiades, though their existence can only be guessed. Another

¹ See above pp. 200-1.

² W. S. Ferguson, *C.A.H.*, v (1927), 332. In addition to failures already mentioned, their efforts to win favour from the remaining subject-allies of Athens proved abortive (64.5).

historian writing on this period might well have included information about both groups, even though neither played a dominant role. Here Thucydides is following his normal practice : he is focusing attention upon the factors in the situation which he believed to have had the deepest influence upon the course of the war. The revolution of the Four Hundred, though initially successful, very soon collapsed and brought Athens close to military defeat. The democratic reaction at Samos achieved its aim in overthrowing the oligarchy and led to a remarkable recovery which gave the Athenians new confidence and raised hopes that defeat might be averted. Since causation was a major pre-occupation of Thucydides, he must have examined the information which he had collected on this episode with the intention of establishing why it developed as it did. The explanation which occurred to him is prominent in his narrative, as has already been shown, and may be summarized as follows. Most of the leading oligarchs, or at least the most influential of them, were interested only in their own advancement and adopted unscrupulous and oppressive methods in seeking to achieve their selfish aims. Accordingly, they ruined the oligarchical cause and nearly ruined Athens as well. On the other hand, the democrats at Samos were, he maintains, for the most part genuine patriots who were prepared to make sacrifices in order to preserve the security of Athens under democratic government. He was evidently convinced that in this verdict on the Four Hundred and their opponents, and in his use of it to explain the course of events, he had found the key to the whole episode, and he is at pains to ensure that his readers understand and accept his conclusion. Hence, although his narrative contains plenty of detail and includes some graphic descriptions of revolutionary scenes, it is concerned almost wholly with events which had important consequences,¹ especially those

¹ Mabel Lang, *op. cit.* (above p. 196, n. 1), p. 289. The reference by Thucydides to the charge brought against Antiphon after the fall of the Four Hundred illustrates his realistic approach. As pointed out by Jameson, *op. cit.* (above p. 197, n. 4), pp. 550-1, Thucydides states that Antiphon was accused of helping to establish the Four Hundred (68.2), whereas the official charge is known to have been treason (Craterus, *F Gr Hist.*, 342F5b). He is not being careless. He was doubtless aware of the official charge but preferred to give the real reason for the indictment, which had to be suppressed because the prosecutors included former members of the Four Hundred.

supporting his own interpretation of the episode. As in other parts of the *History*, he can have incorporated only a carefully selected portion of the material which he had collected. Here his omissions doubtless included more or less abortive proposals of the kind that Aristotle has recorded, as well as the opinions or reactions of groups which had little influence. This technique is open to criticism on the ground that it leads to oversimplification, and it may create the impression that he is prejudiced. In this case, as in many others, he is not being prejudiced ; he is being subjective.

Apart from the revolution of the Four Hundred, the only episode recorded by Thucydides of which a detailed account by a contemporary has survived is the investigation into the mutilation of the Hermae and the profanation of the Mysteries and the turmoil accompanying this investigation (6.27-9 ; 53 ; 60-1). Abundant, if somewhat suspect, evidence on this episode is contained in the speech *On the Mysteries* by Andocides, who was implicated in both scandals and defends himself against charges brought against him sixteen years later. To Thucydides the importance of the episode lay mainly in its influence upon the Athenian expedition to Sicily and especially upon the position of Alcibiades, one of the three generals in command, who was among the accused. The two accounts differ widely from one another both in aim and in the amount of information available to the author.¹ Andocides must have possessed an almost complete knowledge of the facts, but he was facing a capital charge, and there is good reason to suspect him of concealment and distortion with the object of securing his acquittal, which in fact he achieved. Thucydides certainly tried to discover the truth and to answer the questions relevant to his special interest in the episode. This task was, however, extraordinarily difficult for anyone not directly involved, and he was under the additional handicap of being in exile at the time and throughout the following decade. He has to report that the identity of those responsible for the impieties remained unknown despite the spate of denunciations (6.27.2 ;

¹ D. MacDowell, *Andokides, On the Mysteries* (1962), p. 175 ; K. J. Dover in A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and Dover, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, iv (1970), 273.

60.2 and 5), while on the important question whether the perpetrators had political motives he can only refer to the popular belief that they had (6.27.3 ; 60.1). On one issue which must have been controversial he expresses his opinion unequivocally : the enemies of Alcibiades who pressed the charges against him so insistently were prompted by jealousy, wishing to win for themselves the political ascendancy which Alcibiades now enjoyed (6.28.2 ; 61.1). Unfortunately Andocides has no occasion to consider this issue ; indeed the political repercussions of the two impieties, which were so important to Thucydides, were barely relevant to the endeavours of Andocides to establish his own innocence. On factual detail there is some discrepancy between the two accounts, and in at least one instance Thucydides seems to be mistaken.¹ Nor is the sequence of events arranged in precisely the same order.² While these differences are of no great significance, they do suggest that by no means all the contemporaries of Thucydides can have accepted his account in every detail.

More striking evidence of his subjectivity may be found by glancing at a basic element of his historical technique. Because he is writing a history of a war, he evidently feels himself to be under some obligation to mention every sizeable military operation about which he has information. He tends, however, to select for treatment in some detail a limited number of operations which he considers to be especially significant and in other cases to confine himself to a factual, annalistic summary.³ This practice is most marked in his narrative of the Archidamian war, a period in which few operations were on a large scale or brought any substantial advantage to either side. To some extent any historian writing about this period would naturally find himself adopting some method of selection, unless he was prepared to produce a work as voluminous as some fourth-century histories, but Thucydides has his own highly distinctive method. It makes a contribution towards the attainment of one fundamental aim of his *History*, which may be defined as the interpretation of historical events for the enlightenment of his readers. His selection of military operations for detailed treatment is not dependent merely

¹ MacDowell, *op. cit.* pp. 174-6.

² *Ibid.* pp. 181-5.

³ L. Pearson, *Local Historians of Attica* (1942), pp. 44-46.

upon the size of the forces engaged, the duration of the fighting or the decisiveness of the result, as may be illustrated by a comparison between his accounts of two Athenian seaborne expeditions.

In 430 Pericles carried out raids on several coastal areas of the Peloponnese. Thucydides gives only a brief report on this operation (2.56), though the numbers of ships and men engaged in it were very large; he later compares them with those of the expedition to Sicily in 415 (6.31.2). In 425 when Nicias with a fleet smaller than that of Pericles, and only half the number of Athenian hoplites, conducted an operation directed mainly against Corinthian territory, the account of it is more than four times as long as that of the expedition under Pericles (4.42–45). The duration of each expedition was probably about the same. Nicias won a minor victory over the Corinthians, whereas Pericles narrowly failed to capture Epidaurus, but the two operations do not seem to have differed in importance to the extent that the disparity in scale of treatment by Thucydides would suggest. This disparity is, I think, attributable to his desire to focus attention upon factors which he believes to have been most significant at each stage of the war and to have had most influence upon its development. He is at pains to indicate that Periclean strategy was essentially defensive, and for this reason he gives little prominence to Athenian offensives in the first years of the war.¹ On the other hand, the expedition of Nicias in 425 marks the beginning of an offensive programme designed to exploit the Athenian victory at Pylos. This programme reduced Spartan morale to a dangerously low ebb, as Thucydides points out (4.55), and peace might have been concluded on terms favourable to Athens. A few military episodes in the Archidamian war, notably those at Pylos and at Delium, clearly demanded treatment in detail, but contemporaries of Thucydides could well have doubted whether he was justified in dealing so fully as he does with the siege of Plataea or even with the mission of Brasidas. His reports on speeches by generals before battles, which are designed to provide his readers with guidance and instruction, involve the exercise of personal judgement to an almost greater degree than his narrative. *Inter alia*, they do not all occur at the most obvious points.

¹ Cf. my *Essays on the Greek Historians and Greek History* (1969), pp. 84–100.

On the political side he is even more drastically selective. It was manifestly impossible for him to mention every meeting of a public assembly of which he had information, whether at Athens or elsewhere, or even every moderately important meeting. Where he does refer to meetings, he often states only the decisions which were reached ; sometimes he includes a summary in *oratio obliqua* of what was said by a speaker or speakers ; sometimes he mentions factors which swayed sections of the assembly ; in a limited number of cases the debate is reported in considerable detail, and he includes a speech or speeches in *oratio recta*. The main criterion which he adopts in his treatment of public assemblies, and indeed in his treatment of conferences between generals or diplomatic representatives, is evidently relevance to the war. It is, however, relevance to his own conception of the war, which was not everyone's conception of it.

Finally, there are the broad basic questions which Thucydides raises. What was the real cause of the war? Was Pericles right in his conviction that, if the Athenians adopted his strategic plan and persevered in adhering to it, they would win? Were they perverted by his successors? Did they treat their allies tyrannically? Was Spartan leadership normally slow-moving and unimaginative? Was the Athenian expedition to Sicily a misguided venture inevitably doomed to failure, or could it have succeeded? Was the democratic way of life, as it was led at Athens at the beginning of the war, a good way of life? To Thucydides all these questions are of vital importance, and his views on them, some conveyed more explicitly than others, are original, even unorthodox, and not merely reflections of current opinion. From his own time to the present day these questions have been debated again and again, and often answers have been found which are sharply in conflict with his. Another historian of the Peloponnesian war using more or less the same method of writing history—it was by no means the only method—would doubtless have paid some attention to most of the same questions, but there are plenty of others to which he could have attached equal or greater importance. His history would certainly have been a very different history ; it might almost have seemed to be the history of a different war.