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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ATHENAN IMPERIALISM IN THUCYDIDES' *PELOPONNESIAN WAR*

a dissertation

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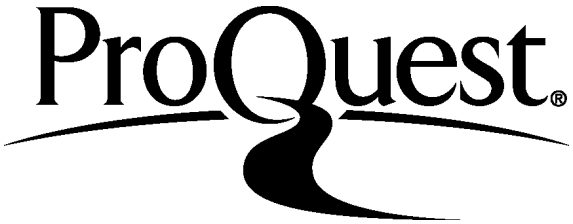

The Psychology of Athenian Imperialism in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*

Abstract

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In his depiction of Athens in his *Peloponnesian War,* Thucydides shows a city of extraordinary daring, energy, resourcefulness and hope. However, it is difficult adequately to articulate the character of that which is most central to Athens, namely, her imperial ambition. Although Athens is clearly distinguished from the fearful, ever-hesitating Sparta by her apparently boundless activity and hopefulness, it is nonetheless unclear what, precisely, Athens is hoping for. What is the attraction of the ceaseless toil and danger of great empire? In risking what they have because they are "always seeking more," what exactly do the Athenians think they are getting?

My study approaches these questions through a focus on one of the great puzzles of Athenian imperialism, namely, that the Athenians claim both that their empire is pursued under the compulsion of fear, honor, and/or interest, and that it is freely undertaken -- a contradiction that creates a difficulty especially for the Athenians' repeated suggestion that their empire is a noble, praiseworthy enterprise. Through consideration of the Athenians' experience of their imperial ambition and the ways in which the contradictory elements of that ambition fit together in their minds, as made clear especially through the rhetoric of their outstanding statesmen, we gain greater clarity about the character of the longings underpinning the extraordinary Athenian energy for empire. We also come better to understand the conditions in which the Athenians' hopes are made more or less tractable and reasonable, as well as the influence of the rhetoric of

leading Athenians on these hopes. This dissertation argues that the Athenians are less attached to one particular object as the deepest root of their imperialism, and more to the notion of a freedom from all limits, which can be both inflamed by, as well as helpfully anchored to, their opinions of their virtue; thus, the study suggests that the desire for empire is deeply rooted in human nature, and that empire will therefore appeal to us for as long as human nature remains unchanged.

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Introduction

Just prior to the start of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides describes a summit of the Peloponnesian allies, in which Spartan allies attempt to convince their plodding leader of the necessity of war against Athens. On this occasion we see envoys from Corinth, indignant at Athens' latest transgression, describing Athens as follows: her citizens are innovative; quick to act; "daring beyond their strength and venturesome beyond their judgment, and hopeful in the face of terrible things."[1] Moreover,

> …they use their bodies for the sake of their city as if they were not their own, but their mind as most properly their own, for doing anything for the city…and regarding what they go after and obtain, they consider that they have accomplished little in comparison with what the future will bring; but if it happens that they try a thing and fail, they conceive new hopes to fill the lack…And they toil in these ways, with all troubles and dangers, throughout their whole life; and they least enjoy what they have because they are always seeking more and they believe there to be no other holiday than doing the needful things, and they regard untroubled peace to be no less a misfortune than leisureless hardship. Therefore, if someone should sum up and say that they were born neither to have peace themselves nor to let other men have it, he would speak rightly (1.70).

Thus, we get a penetrating glimpse into the Athenian soul: extraordinarily daring, energetic, resourceful and hopeful, to such a degree as to command a kind of awe even from bitter foes. The truth of the Corinthians' characterization is borne out by the rest of the work, in which

[1] Numerals indicate book and chapter; unless otherwise indicated, all references are to Thucydides' *War of the Peloponnesians and Athenians.* Translations of the Greek are my own, but I am indebted to the translations of Charles Forster Smith (1923) and Thomas Pangle (unpublished).

Athens plays the leading role; such is the enduring appeal of Thucydides' dazzling and complicated protagonist that she has elicited the interest, if not the unalloyed admiration, of generations of students of politics.

Yet, for all the attention paid to Thucydides' Athens, it has proved difficult adequately to articulate the character of that which is most central to her, namely, her imperial ambition. Although Athens is clearly distinguished from the fearful, ever-hesitating Sparta by her apparently boundless activity and hopefulness, it is nonetheless unclear what, precisely, Athens is hoping for. What is the attraction of the ceaseless toil and danger of great empire? In risking what they have because they are "always seeking more," what exactly do the Athenians think they are getting?

These questions have received attention from many scholars. For example, students of the "realist" school of international relations often claim Thucydides as their founder, citing his clear-eyed freedom from moral delusion and his apparent acknowledgment of the primacy of self-interest – understood especially as security or power -- in international politics, as made clear chiefly by his portrayal of the Athenians.[2] This is seen, for example, in such prominent realists as Kenneth Waltz:

> In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides argues many of the policy considerations that lead to and follow from our construction…For our interests we go to war, and when our interests seem to require, we sue for peace. For we all know "that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where there is equal

[2] See, however, Richard Ned Lebow's interesting discussion of why Thucydides belongs more properly to the constructionist school of international relations thought (Lebow 2001, 547-560).

power to enforce it" (Waltz 2001, 210-211).

Thus Waltz, who seems to draw his understanding of Thucydides primarily from several speeches of the Athenians, indicates that the character of Athenian imperialism is rather straight-forward: Athens, and states generally, act according to their "interests," usually without regard to justice. However, while scholars like Waltz are right to remind us of the importance of facing up to the harsh necessities of political life, an endeavor for which Thucydides is of the utmost help, it is still the case that they overlook Thucydides' suggestion of the crucial importance of concerns for justice and nobility in international politics.[3] As several scholars have noted, this is true even of the Athenians, who seem to be the most "unabashedly realistic people who have ever lived" (Pangle and Ahrensdorf 1999, 24). Indeed, as this study shows, the importance to the Athenians of justice and nobility is apparent even in those speeches Waltz cites in support of his case.

Turning from international relations scholars to those whose work focuses more extensively on Thucydides, in the work of Jacqueline de Romilly we find greater attention to the complexity of the Athenian character. She is right to criticize scholars like G. B. Grundy, who argue that the aim of Athenian imperialism is fundamentally economic; de Romilly points out that Grundy's emphasis on the Athenian desire to gain access to grain supply roots as the true aim of its empire is not called for by Thucydides' account, most clearly because the desire for

[3] See also Keohane 1986, 163-165; Betts 2007; Morgenthau 1952, 972; and Gilpin 1988, 591-4.

grain is mentioned very little in the work (Grundy 1948, 187; de Romilly 1963, 71).[4] Rather, de Romilly maintains that we must look to the Athenians' own arguments to determine what is most fundamental to their imperialism. She locates the crucial motive in a general disposition to "want more," above and beyond material gain, and maintains that this constant desire for more "depends upon two basic emotions, the love of action and the need for power"; all of Thucydides' analysis, she claims, is centered upon these two "emotions." Very shortly afterward, Romilly goes on to claim that "what they want is, finally, the greatest possible power, and the domination over all other countries"; yet, she then quickly identifies "the desire for fame, renown, and honors," the "highest form" of which is "glory" as "what in fact inspires the Athenians." Finally, a few sentences later she concludes that what is most important in imperial ambition is the desire for freedom, as "the act of ruling was really considered as the perfect expression of both internal and external freedom, and, in fact, as a superior freedom" (de Romilly 1963, 77-80).

De Romilly's discussion highlights an interesting aspect of the question of how the aims of Athenian ambition are to be understood; for in a sense, the aims of empire seem obvious, and to belong together to such an extent that a thoughtful writer can suggest, over the course of very few pages, that each of a handful of different aims is the final or deepest root of Athenian

[4] G.E.M. de Ste-Croix also over-emphasizes the role of wheat in determining the most important causes of Athenian imperialism (de Ste-Croix 1972, 44-49). See also Francis Cornford, who argues that Thucydides was "diverted" from perceiving the true – that is, economic – causes of the war by a preoccupation, typical of the age in which he lived, with "mythical" forces. Yet, while Cornford is right to point out the influence of piety on many men depicted by Thucydides, he does not show that Thucydides was himself pious (Cornford 1969, 244-250).

imperialism. Yet, "love of action" and "need for power" are not obviously "basic" or even very clear (one might ask, for example, why action of this kind? For what purpose is "power" desired?); nor are these in any way clearly the same as the desire for honors, or for freedom, contrary to what de Romilly suggests both by making several claims over a short span of time that each is the final cause, as well as by her explicit identification, in one case, of one motive with another (i.e., love of rule is really love of freedom). Alternatively, if de Romilly does not simply identify these motives with one another, she appears to reduce one to the other without sufficient explanation. For instance, with respect to the claim that ruling is at bottom an expression of freedom, de Romilly explains as follows:

> The text of Thucydides which gives the clearest indication of this is probably the remark that he makes in 8.68.4. There, he notes the difficulty encountered, a hundred years after the fall of the tyrants, in abolishing the democratic system of government (internal liberty) in a country 'which not only obeyed no one (external liberty), but had even been accustomed, during more than half of this period, to governing others' (highest expression of this liberty) (de Romilly 1963, 80).

De Romilly then goes on to cite other places in Thucydides where freedom and empire are mentioned or grouped together, such as in Diodotus' claim that the "greatest things" are freedom and empire (de Romilly 1963, 80; 3.45.6). Yet, while Thucydides' remarks here do suggest that the Athenians are attached to freedom, and that freedom and empire are in some way linked, they do not establish that the desire to rule is simply reducible to the desire for freedom, nor do they explain why freedom is of such fundamental importance.

Other students of Thucydides treat the objects of Athenian imperialism in a more careful, focused way, and give greater attention to the tensions among them than does de Romilly. For example, Clifford Orwin helpfully brings out one of the great puzzles of Athenian imperialism, namely, that the Athenians claim both that their empire is pursued under the compulsion of fear, honor, and/or interest, and that it is freely undertaken. As Orwin observes, and as we will discuss at greater length in the following chapters, this presents a difficulty especially for the Athenians' repeated suggestion that their empire is a noble, praiseworthy enterprise. "How," Orwin asks, "combine the extensive sway they insist on according necessity with the primacy they wish to assign to virtue or the noble?" (Orwin 1994, 196).[5] His answer is that the Athenians fail to do so in a coherent way: despite their remarkable tough-mindedness and candor regarding the harsh realities of international politics, "spokesman for Athens continue to insist on a realm sheltered from necessity" (Orwin 1994, 194), despite lacking the rational support for doing so. Orwin goes on helpfully to elaborate several reasons that the Athenians cannot remain faithful to their argument about compulsion. First, he claims that a realm sheltered from necessity is in fact necessary for political life, as all political communities depend for their existence on opinions about justice and nobility which dignify them; indeed, to the extent that Athens' sophisticated outlook does undermine support for the attachment to justice and nobility, Orwin notes that it

[5] Contrast, for example, Martin Ostwald, who discusses at length the Athenian emphasis on necessity, but suggests that it does not present a difficulty for moral freedom (Ostwald 1988, 53-61). See also de Romilly and Peter Pouncey, who observe the presence of these two elements in Athenian speeches, but do not acknowledge the tension between them (de Romilly 1963, 127-130; Pouncey 1981, 101).

does considerable harm to the city. This is seen in the deteriorating domestic situation we observe in Athens over the course of the war, in which the desire for primacy within the city overtakes concern for the common good among the city's leading men: even or especially half-digested, the notion that human beings cannot help but pursue, not only their safety, but their honor and advantage, undermines the fragile peace within cities as well as without. A belief in a realm sheltered from necessity is also required to support the intransigent private hopefulness of most human beings, whose longing to escape necessity is bound up with opinions and extravagant hopes about virtue and the rewards they expect to attend it (Orwin 1994, 193-206).

My dissertation, which benefitted immensely from the work of Orwin and others who share his sensitivity and attentiveness to Thucydides' text,[6] begins from this problem of the contradictory elements of Athenian imperialism. My approach differs, however, in its focus primarily on the psychology of the Athenians, that is, their experience of their imperial ambition. For the analysis noted above brings out the crucial inconsistency in the Athenians' view and goes some distance in explaining why the Athenians cannot be consistent, but this raises the question of how the inconsistent elements of their ambition go together in the Athenians' minds: how does this contradictory mix of necessity and nobility encourage or influence the Athenians' remarkable imperial energy and hopefulness? Under what conditions are their hopes aroused and depressed, and made more or less tractable and reasonable, and how does the rhetoric of

[6] For other fine treatments of this contradictory aspect of Athenian imperialism, see also Christopher Bruell 1981, especially 28-9; David Bolotin 1987, 7-31; Thomas Pangle and Peter Ahrensdorf 1999, 13-32; Ronald C. Lee, Jr. 2002, 510-514.

their leaders influence these hopes? How do changes in Athenian rhetoric reflect or produce the changes we witness in her maintenance of the empire over the course of the war? By attending especially to the speeches of Athens' leading statesmen at key points in her pursuit and maintenance of empire, I aim to elucidate these questions, and thereby to achieve greater insight into how the Athenians understand themselves, particularly in times when they are most wildly, irrationally hopeful.[7]

I pause here to note that, while I also examine the deeds of the Athenians, I chose to emphasize especially their speeches because speech seems to be the best guide, in Thucydides and more broadly, to men's understanding. For political speech, however full of falsehoods or manipulations from the point of view of the speaker, always aims to persuade men to undertake a given course of action, and would therefore be useless if it did not draw on what genuinely moves them. Even if, in speaking to the Athenians, Pericles did not believe a word he said

[7] For a very different approach, see Donald Kagan's impressive studies of Thucydides (Kagan 1969, 1974, 1981, 2009). Kagan seems to take as his primary aim to "test" the truth of Thucydides' claims against other available resources on the Peloponnesian War. As Kagan explains, "When I began my study of Thucydides and his *History* so many years ago I came to realize that there could be no hope of understanding his thought and purposes merely by reading his work and pondering it carefully. That could be only the first step. The next required a painstaking comparison between what he said about the subject and what really happened…" (Kagan 2009,19-20). The aim to gain greater clarity about the events of the Peloponnesian War through the study of additional sources is a sound and admirable one, and Kagan's extensive study has yielded much interesting elaboration of events and circumstances relevant to Thucydides' work. One difficulty with Kagan's study, however, is that his statements of Thucydides' alleged positions often fail to take into account the richness and subtlety of Thucydides' work. To take one example, Kagan rather crankily asserts that Thucydides was excessively taken with Pericles, claiming that Thucydides' "description of the wisdom and character of Pericles and the unique admiration and power he enjoyed…is the most powerful and convincing endorsement of his policies that one can imagine…the reader is invited simply to accept the policy of Pericles as both correct and inevitable…" (Kagan 2009, 97). This reading is not borne out if one considers, for example, the specific praises Thucydides does and does not give Pericles; compare Thucydides' praise of Pericles at 2.65 with his praise of Themistocles at 1.137, as well as his judgment at 8.97 that the eventual Athenian mixed regime was superior to Pericles' Athens.

(which strikes me as unlikely), his success in moving his fellow citizens shows us what is of importance to them.

As to the historical accuracy of Thucydides' speeches, the matter is not simply clear, and Thucydides' own remarks on his manner of presenting them do not provide an obvious answer. For Thucydides claims that he does not merely reproduce the speeches as they actually occurred, but rather presents what would have been "most needful" on each occasion, while staying "as close as possible" to "the whole thought" of each speaker (1.22). In interpreting his comments on this matter, I have followed Orwin and Leo Strauss, who offer what seem to me the most plausible explanations. Orwin argues that Thucydides' method of presenting "the needful" things entails offering the strongest, most persuasive case a particular speaker could make in support of the given position and end that the speaker sought to support. Thucydides does not simply have his speakers say what is most true or wise or most necessary in an unqualified sense— indeed, we might add that he could not have done so, since the speakers contradict one another— but rather, Thucydides makes the best possible case for each speaker in light of his aims and political circumstances. In this way, Orwin argues, Thucydides offers us "an improvement on truth that serves truth" (Orwin 1994, 207-212). On the question of why Thucydides includes speeches in his work at all, as opposed to simple narrations of theses, supporting arguments, etc., Bruell notes the power of speeches, and suggests that we are more likely to comprehend Thucydides if we first feel the pull of that which moves his characters; by presenting his work in the moving manner that he does, Thucydides helps us better to understand

the depth of our own attachment to the opinions and desires that animate the men he depicts (Bruell 1974, 11).

To return to the questions animating my study, we note that other helpful scholars of Thucydides have taken up some of them, but it seems to me that there is still work to be done. This is seen if we look to Steven Forde's thoughtful analysis of Athenian daring and eros. Forde argues that the root of Athenian imperialism is her "eros" and "daring"; what is fundamental to both is liberation from the traditional restraints of piety, which in turn leads to liberation from justice. This liberation is the result especially of the Athenian experience in the Persian War, in which the city abandoned its land and with it, most importantly, its holy places. Forde explains that this abandonment – already somewhat impious in its extreme daring, as it "might go beyond what merely human courage is permitted" – led to a fundamental shift in the Athenian character, which was the emergence of the "daring" so on display in the Peloponnesian war. Forde explains that, given confidence by their spectacular success against the Persians in what "purely human power" could do, the Athenians in an important way threw off their traditional piety and came to rely on themselves alone. This also meant throwing off the limits on the pursuit of advantage that their former piety demanded, which, Forde suggests, is what allowed them to pursue empire with the kind of zeal Thucydides depicts (Forde 1986, 435-438).

However, Forde's analysis, too, leaves many questions unanswered. First, while his attention to the relative impiety of the Athenians is illuminating, isn't Athenian piety more complicated than he suggests? For Thucydides does not only depict the city abandoning its holy

places; he also shows us the city at prayer before the Sicilian expedition, and in a pious frenzy following the mutilation of the Hermae (6.32.1-2, 6.53.2). Secondly, even if we grant the impiety of the Athenians, why should greater impiety lead to the kind of immense hopefulness they possess, when piety is not only a source of restraint but also, as Forde acknowledges, a source of support? That is, even if the Athenians discovered in the Persian War that they were capable of much on their own, without the help of the gods, why should they become so much more confident of attaining what they want than others who believe they have the gods on their side? In addition, why does Athenian liberation from piety lead to empire? Forde's above argument suggests that empire is something of an obvious choice, one that, presumably, we would all pursue but for the fear of punishing gods; yet, Forde has not made the appeal sufficiently clear. He spells his understanding out a bit in his discussion of Athenian eros, which he also describes as an important driver of Athenian imperialism, but there further confusions arise. For instance, when Forde refers to Athenian eros, he seems to mean, at bottom, a very strong desire primarily for common sorts of goods that empire can potentially afford, such as money and safety. (Forde 1986, 444). Thus, Forde says that, ultimately, the Sicilian expedition is desired for "some kind of gain or personal gratification: the prospect of faraway sights for the young, the prospect of present and 'eternal pay' for the majority," and, in the case of the old, for "simple safety" (Forde 1986, 443, 447). Yet, this explanation does not seem to take into account Forde's own acknowledgment that erotic longing tends to be elicited by "the splendid" and "the grand" (Forde, 1986 440), nor his claim that eros is "the one thing capable of attaching even the

most individualistic human beings to something outside of themselves" and leads "to the most intense devotion and willingness to sacrifice" (Forde 1986, 439), nor his acknowledgement in another work on the same subject that the Sicilian expedition constitutes an "erotic peak" that offers the "lure of a politically, even a humanly impossible fulfillment, the hope almost of transcending the human condition" (Forde 1989, 49). These latter considerations of Athenian eros, which themselves would need more explanation, seem to conflict with the more prosaic ones Forde also mentions and ultimately gives greater weight to, though the reason for this priority is unclear.

In order to attain greater clarity on these questions, then, my dissertation begins by examining the speech anonymous Athenian envoys deliver in Sparta just prior to the start of the war. Here we find the first Athenian discussion of the city's imperialism, with its striking appeals to nobility, on the one hand, and necessity on the other; we consider several questions and difficulties that arise from this discussion before moving on to the speeches of Pericles, Athens' most outstanding statesman and the greatest champion of her empire. A comparison of the envoys' speech given outside of Athens and Pericles' speeches within reveals important similarities and indicates that, while most Athenians would surely not have given a speech like that of the envoys, some degree of acceptance of the principles animating the earlier speech, however partial or inchoate, is present in the Athenians generally. Moreover, we find that Athens' most admired statesman includes appeals to both necessity and nobility in all speeches Thucydides presents from him in direct discourse. This confirms their central importance to the

Athenian self-understanding, and suggests that the two appeals, while contradictory, belong somehow together. That is, for reasons we shall discuss in chapters one and two, effective guidance of the Athenians with respect to her empire in particular seems to require a combination of these appeals. Interestingly, we find striking differences of emphasis on these appeals across Pericles' speeches; the significance of this difference for clarifying the character of Athenian hopefulness becomes clearer when we note that it corresponds to the varying positions of strength in which Athens finds herself at different times, and to the greatness of the hopes Pericles stokes on different occasions. In light of these observations, we are able to reflect on several important connections between strength, hope, and nobility, which help to shed light on the Athenian attraction to empire more broadly.

In the second chapter, we focus on Pericles' successor, Cleon, the man most influential with the Athenian demos following Pericles' death. From a comparison of the two leaders we see, among other things, this difference: in addressing the Athenian people, Cleon speaks little of necessity, and even less of nobility. This change in speech helps us to make sense of the change in behavior we observe in Athens during this period with respect to her pursuit of empire. For while it is certainly true that there is a crucial connection between Pericles' leadership and Athens' progressive undoing after his death,[8] it is also the case that Pericles managed Athenian imperial ambition, in all its volatility, much more effectively and sensibly than did his

[8] See Strauss 1964, 193-196.

successors. By comparing Pericles with Cleon, we see an important aspect of what changed after Pericles' death, and thereby come to see more clearly the conditions under which Athenian ambition could flourish. We also see more clearly the character of the powerful longings driving that ambition, a task that is aided by consideration of Athens' response to several unexpected successes in her pursuit of empire during this period; through this examination, we see further the significance of Pericles' emphasis on necessity and nobility.

In the third and fourth chapters, we turn to an examination of the Sicilian expedition, Athens' greatest and most crippling imperial undertaking. In the third chapter, we look to the launch of the expedition and the reasoning, or lack thereof, which leads to it. Through consideration of the debate between Nicias and Alcibiades, as well as Thucydides' narration of the circumstances surrounding it, we see the enduring Athenian attachment to nobility and certain great dangers of that attachment, particularly in the unarticulated form in which we find it here. We also examine the reasons for the Athenians' failure openly to address their desire for the Sicilian expedition as a noble undertaking, and indeed their lack of clarity about the expedition generally. In this discussion a tension between nobility and justice comes to light: we see that, while the two are by no means strictly separable, they can draw human beings in different directions, and the concern for one can hamper the successful pursuit of the other. In the fourth and final chapter, we continue to examine the tensions among Athenian virtues by turning to a consideration of piety. By comparing the Athenians with some of the most strikingly pious characters in Thucydides' work, we grasp more fully Thucydides' suggestion of the divide

between nobility and piety, and the closer association of justice with the latter. From these observations, we are able to take up the question of the ways in which and the extent to which Athenian imperialism is fundamentally pious.

Thus, by examining in detail the ways in which leading Athenians persuade, embolden, and chasten their fellow citizens at crucial junctures in the pursuit and maintenance of the Athenian empire, we gain greater clarity about the character of the opinions and longings underpinning the city's extraordinary energy for imperialism. To anticipate, we will see that the Athenians seem less attached to one particular object as the deepest root of their imperial ambition than to a notion of a freedom from all limits; we will also see that this desire to be free from all limits, to which Thucydides suggests all human beings are prone, can be both inflamed by, as well as helpfully anchored to, our opinions about our own virtuousness.

Chapter 1: Athenian Imperialism Under Pericles: Necessity, Nobility, and Irrational Hope

Freedom versus Compulsion

As noted in our introduction, the problem from which we begin is that the Athenians seem to understand their empire in contradictory terms. We approach this problem by first elaborating the way this contradiction comes to light in a speech of Athenian envoys to Sparta, and the difficulties that arise from it. We then turn to the speeches of Pericles, Athens' great champion of empire, to get a fuller picture of the ways in which this contradiction presents itself. Our study will show that Pericles presents these two contradictory appeals together in each of his speeches, but with differing emphases. That the two appeals appear together in every speech of Athens' most influential statesman suggests that, while they are contradictory, they are also complementary, and that their combination, rhetorically and thus psychologically, serves the successful maintenance of Athenian empire – a suggestion that will become clearer in the second chapter when we compare Pericles' rule with Cleon's.

The Envoys' Speech at Sparta

In the first speech of the Athenians in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, anonymous envoys offer as surpassingly brazen a justification of empire as is likely to be found anywhere: their city, the envoys assert, has done nothing to be "wondered at" in subjugating others, but has merely acted in accordance with that which "has always been established," namely, that "the weaker be kept down by the stronger" (1.76.2-3). Indeed, they claim that no one in the Athenians' position has ever, yielding to considerations of justice, refrained from doing as they

have done, and even suggest that such is necessarily the case. For the Athenians, they declare, have been "compelled" to pursue rule – compelled, that is, by fear, honor, and advantage (1.75.3, 1.76.2). Rarely, if ever, has such a candidly amoral defense of imperialism been advanced in public discourse,[9] nor one with such far-reaching implications for justice. It is not so much the Athenians' statement regarding fear that is shocking; indeed, it may be that we would all grant to certain fears the status of compulsion, as the envoys do. For example, Aristotle observes that no one would freely throw away his property, but that a sane man whose life depended on it would (*Ethics* III, 1110 a.9). This suggests that acting on the basis of fear for our lives is somehow not something we freely choose to do or not to do. Rather, in the midst of great dangers, we understand ourselves to be compelled to provide for our safety. Thus it is that actions undertaken in self-defense are not usually considered criminal, for moral praise and blame require voluntary action; if we are compelled by fear for our lives, the actions we take in the grip of that fear can be considered neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. However, to extend the status of compulsion also to honor and advantage, as the Athenians do, is to deny the criminality of at least most acts we recognize as unjust.[10] This is because we commonly understand justice to set limits on our inclinations, to demand that we give up certain perceived advantages, and to dictate that we are blameworthy if we do not. This understanding of justice is based upon a judgment that human beings have the capacity freely to choose to do right or wrong. If, however, as the Athenians assert, it is instead the case that human beings and cities have no choice but to pursue such things as honor and advantage, it is unreasonable to blame them for

[9] Indeed, this defense is so radical that many scholars distrust the historical accuracy of this speech; cf., for example, de Romilly 1963, 242-272 and Werner Jaeger 1986, 396 (as cited in Orwin 1986, 74).

[10] It is at least possible that not all acts we would recognize as criminal are committed under the sway of the allegedly compulsory fear, honor, or advantage. For example, while it may be that an act of senseless cruelty (see 7.29.4-5) should ultimately be understood as the pursuit of some sort of advantage or honor, this is not clearly the case – at least, it is not clearly so in the same way that robbing a bank seems to be.

doing so. On such an argument, it is difficult to imagine what status justice could have in the world. The implications of the Athenians' claim for piety are also serious, since the argument that undermines justice also undermines the basis for belief that gods will intervene in human affairs on behalf of the just.

Thus, it is clear that the Athenians' claim regarding compulsion, if true, has consequences of the utmost gravity. However, it is also the case that their claim is somewhat difficult to understand. To take one perplexing aspect, how are these three alleged compulsions related? On one hand, they do fit together in a somewhat sensible way, since all three seem to involve a concern for our own good, be it negative (fear) or positive (honor and advantage). This is suggested both by common experience, and by what the Athenians say in this speech and elsewhere. For example, Pericles will later defend his war policy on the ground that it will bring honor or glory, which he presents as of such surpassing goodness as to make worthwhile the greatest sacrifices (2.64.5. 2.42.4). In this speech, the envoys demand that the Spartans "let us not be entirely deprived of the reputation [for our great deeds], if it will be advantageous" (1.73.2). That is, the envoys suggest that honor's desirability is contingent upon its being advantageous; the primary thing, then, would seem to be advantage, of which honor is a particular kind. On the other hand, if all three motives amount to advantage, why are they listed discretely, as if the Athenians had some significant difference among them in mind? The Athenians seem to suggest perplexing differences in how they understand the motives in other ways as well. For example, following the claim that they were compelled by "fear most of all, then by honor, and later by advantage," the Athenians continue thus:

> …and then it no longer seemed safe – being hated by the many and some of them having already revolted and been subdued, and you all no longer being friendly in the same way, but suspicious and at variance with us – to risk letting go [of the empire]. For those

> defecting went over to you. And for everyone there is no reproach for arranging one's interests well with respect to the greatest dangers (1.75.4-5).

Thus, having asserted the compulsory power not only of fear but also of honor and advantage, they immediately revert to an argument solely about fear. Indeed, they stress not fear of the Persians, which presumably is the initial spur to empire, but fear that comes later, that of embittered Greeks, which seems a bit strange given that their statement on compulsion presents a somewhat chronological order of motive in which fear presumably gives way, to some degree, to honor and then to advantage. They also explicitly describe the concern for safety alone – and that only in cases of the "greatest dangers" – as exculpatory. Does this suggest that the Athenians understand fear, and in fact fear only in the most extreme circumstances, as somehow more compulsory than the other compulsions? How is this possible?

More importantly, the Athenians also indicate a tension among the three motives, a problem which is made all the more significant because it undermines their claim to be acting under compulsion. The most striking difficulty lies with honor in its relation to fear and advantage, which becomes clear as the speech progresses. Following the discussion of fear and a few remarks on Sparta's own self-serving quasi-imperialism (1.76.1), the envoys go on to restate their claim about compulsion, and in doing so give honor a more prominent place: in their second formulation, they say that they have been "defeated by the greatest things," namely, "honor, fear, and advantage" (1.76.2). That is, whereas before fear had been listed first and emphasized most strongly ("we were compelled by fear most of all"), they now move honor to the front of the list. The reason for this shift at this point in the speech is not clear to me; however, we do note that, in contrast to the first statement, the envoys here call the apparent compulsions acting on them "the greatest things," a phrase they did not use when fear was at the forefront of their argument, which may suggest that honor is somehow of primary importance for

the Athenians. In any case, following the restatement in which honor is mentioned first, they go on to make what is apparently the most glaring contradiction of their argument: while maintaining that they are compelled to act as they do, and insisting that no one has ever been prevented by considerations of justice from "taking more" when he had the power to do so, they say that "they are worthy of praise" who, while not so superior to human nature as to refrain from ruling, still "rule more justly than their power allows" (1.76.2-3). The Athenians then assert that they themselves have done this very thing, to their own detriment. For instance, they have granted their subjects generous legal privileges, which has made them more uppity and obstreperous than they would have been under more heavy-handed rule (1.77). Thus, on the Athenians' own telling, it seems that honor or praise often requires a sacrifice of advantage or safety, [11] and common experience supports their suggestion. The latter also suggests an additional problem; for how can one be honored, any more than one can be blamed, for what one has not freely chosen to do? That is, does not the understanding of an action as honorable or praiseworthy also depend on the freedom we understand human beings to have to choose among different alternatives, some good and some bad, just and unjust, noble and base?

Indeed, if we look at the envoys' speech as a whole, we find that it is difficult to square many of their remarks with their argument regarding compulsion. For example, in their account of how they came to acquire their empire, they claim, twice, that they did not seek it until their allies freely offered them the hegemony (1.75.2, 1.76.3). The oddity of this insistence comes out clearly in their first formulation: "And we did not take it by force, but when you all were unwilling to stand against those of the barbarians who remained, and the allies came to us and

[11] The Athenians' restraint in fact brings them the irritation of their subjects; still, they think such restraint is worthy of honor, which shows something of their understanding of honor.

begged us to establish ourselves as hegemons. From this very deed we were compelled first to advance it to what it is…" (1.75.2-3). For, by thus insisting that it was only after the allies freely offered them the hegemony that the Athenians found themselves compelled to "advance it" to "what it is," that is, to an empire over unwilling subjects, they suggest that their pursuit of empire was dependent on or restrained by the willingness of the allies to submit to some form of Athenian leadership. Yet, if fear, honor, and advantage are compulsory, what bearing should the allies' consent have on what the Athenians do? Why did compulsion not act on the Athenians earlier? It may be that they did not feel themselves powerful enough to seek rule until a certain point, and perhaps that point chanced to be after they became leaders of the hegemony, but the wishes of the allies would seem irrelevant in any case.

Additionally, key aspects of their account of Athenian conduct during the Persian War cast doubt, if not on the truth of the compulsion argument itself, at least on the Athenians' full acceptance of it. It is true that they begin in a manner that seems consistent with the argument: "For when we did the deeds, the risk was run for the sake of an advantage, of which, from the deed, you had a share; therefore, let us not be entirely deprived of the reputation, if it will be advantageous" (1.73.2). Thus, while drawing attention to the fact that the Spartans have benefitted from what the Athenians accomplished, they also stress that their own advantage has been at the forefront of their minds, before and now. Yet, in the subsequent elaboration of the events of the Persian War, things come to look rather different. After recounting their contribution of ships and prudent leadership to the Greek war effort, the Athenians speak of their daring:

> Much of the most daring zeal we displayed, we who, when no one came to aid us by land, when the others by this time were already enslaved, deemed it worthy to abandon the city and to destroy our homes – not so as to abandon the common [cause] of the remaining allies, nor by scattering to become useless to them, but to take the risk of going on to the

> ships while not getting angry that you did not come to help us. So we declare that we gave you an advantage no less than what we happened upon ourselves…

Here, then, the Athenians do not suggest that they calculated a risk "for the sake of an advantage" (for themselves), a "share" of which the Spartans also enjoyed; rather, they "deemed it worthy" to risk – and not only to risk, but to abandon their city and destroy their homes – "so as not to abandon" or "become useless" to the remaining Greeks. In so doing, they seem to have intended to benefit the Spartans and others, and only "happened upon" an advantage for themselves. The thrust of these remarks is that the Athenians acted more out of a concern for others than for themselves in running the risks they did, an impression which is strengthened by the Athenians' subsequent emphasis on the fact that they acted thus despite having a "city that was no more," that is, much less of their own to fight for than did other Greeks whose cities were still intact (1.74.3). Therefore, on this presentation, the Athenians did not find themselves obviously compelled by fear, honor, or advantage during the Persian War, but rather, at least at times, they understood themselves freely to have risked their good primarily for the sake of others -- a possibility apparently precluded by their argument about compulsion but pointed to in other places as well. This is seen, for example, in their suggestion that the Spartans and others could have chosen, in various instances, to sacrifice their own safety or advantage, and their implicit criticism of these others for failing to do so (see 1.74.3, where the Athenians contrast themselves with the Spartans, who finally "came to help" only because they "still possessed inhabited cities" and wished "to enjoy them in the future," and therefore "feared more for yourselves than for us"; 1.74.4, where they distinguish themselves from those who "out of fear" went over to the Persians; 1.76.2, where they censure the Spartans for no longer acknowledging that the Athenians are "worthy" to rule, but rather "using the just discourse" out of a "calculation of your own interests"; etc.)

In this way, there comes to light a complication in how the Athenians understand themselves and in particular their imperial ambition, which the perplexing statements on compulsion were formulated to defend. In order better to understand the Athenians, then, it is necessary to shed light on this complication regarding freedom and necessity that appears from the very beginning of Thucydides' work. One promising place to turn for help on this question is to the speeches of Pericles. Thucydides calls Pericles "the first man of that time in Athens, ablest both in speech and in practice" (1.139.4), and, in speaking of his unparalleled influence in Athens, goes so far as to say that though the city was "in speech" a democracy, it was in fact ruled by the "first man" (2.65.9). Additionally, Thucydides notes that, during Pericles' tenure, Athenian greatness reached its peak (2.65.4). On the basis of Thucydides' judgments, then, Pericles' understanding of Athenian imperial ambition, and thus of the apparently contradictory elements constituting it, is likely to be a deep one. Therefore, reflection on the way that Pericles persuades, exhorts, and threatens the Athenians through his speeches will help us begin to grasp more precisely the Athenian understanding of freedom and necessity.

Pericles' Rhetoric

Indeed, one finds in all three of the Periclean speeches that Thucydides presents to us in direct discourse appeals to both freedom and necessity. It is true that there are differences between the understanding of necessity suggested by the Athenian envoys in Sparta and that to which Pericles often refers. While, as we have noted, the envoys speak of a much expanded realm of compulsion that has serious implications for justice, Pericles often relies on a more limited understanding of necessity. For example, Pericles' speeches tend to draw on the common experience of feeling ourselves compelled primarily in circumstances we would prefer to avoid. That is, the deeds we feel ourselves compelled to do are generally those we would not

wish to do; if a particular deed is attractive to us, we wish to undertake it and feel ourselves to do so freely. Pericles points to this experience when he suggests that the Athenians have been compelled to go to war with Sparta because failing to do so would have resulted in their enslavement. Here he claims that, unlike "those who have a choice" and are "doing well otherwise," for whom "war is a great folly," the Athenians must go to war because "the necessity was either, by yielding, immediately to submit to one's neighbors, or running a risk, to survive/prove superior" (2.61.1). Thus, he indicates that in certain circumstances, when we are "doing well," we are free to determine our course of action in a way that, when faced with the prospect of two unattractive alternatives, we seem not to be – an extremely common though somewhat perplexing suggestion, given that necessity seems in fact always to limit our choices, in conditions good or bad. In any case, while parts of the envoys' speech also rely on this ordinary experience (for example, their claim that they are "compelled" to undertake the "troublesome" task of mentioning their city's heroics during the Persian War (2.73.2), as well as their manner of speaking of being "defeated" by the greatest things, connects their sense of being compelled with the unattractive character of what they are allegedly compelled to do), the substance of their striking assertion regarding what things constitute compulsions denies it. Indeed, on the envoys' account, it is difficult to imagine what in human behavior is not compulsory. In this way, then, the understanding of necessity of which Pericles often makes use is more limited than that indicated by the envoys, which seems to leave greater room for freedom and thus not to imply the devastating consequences for justice that we have noted above. Still, as we will see, Pericles' speeches in certain ways also appeal to the more radical sense of necessity, and, in any event, both senses of necessity are opposed to the common experience of free choice, to which Pericles, like the envoys, also appeals – a fact made all the more perplexing given that

all of his speeches have very similar aims and make very similar demands of the Athenians. However, while Pericles' speeches all draw on both freedom and necessity, they differ greatly in the degree to which they emphasize one or the other.[12] In order, then, eventually to come to an understanding of the Athenian understanding of this matter, we will start by comparing the ways Pericles appeals to each one in his speeches. In so doing, and in considering the different circumstances surrounding those instances where Pericles encourages the Athenians to understand his preferred course of action primarily as either compulsory or as freely chosen, noble, and self-sacrificial, we can make some preliminary suggestions regarding how and why freedom and necessity seem always to go together for the Athenians, why they are differently emphasized on different occasions, and what this might suggest about the Athenian attraction to empire.

Necessity Tempered by Nobility: Pericles' First and Third Speeches

First, we will turn to Pericles' first and third speeches, in which he presents Athenian action as most constrained by necessity. His first speech (1.140-1.144) is given just prior to the official beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides informs us, in a brief narration preceding this speech, that the Athenians have formed an assembly for the purpose of settling on

[12] Much scholarship has, of course, been devoted to Pericles' speeches, and while it has often been noted that these speeches contain disparate elements, it is my impression that the particular puzzle presented by Pericles' apparently contradictory appeals to freedom and necessity has received little sustained attention (cf., however, Strauss 1964; Bruell 1981; and Orwin 1994, from whose thoughtful analysis of this puzzle I have greatly benefitted). Peter Pouncey, for instance, observes that the "freedom motif" so central to the funeral oration is abandoned, in Pericles' third speech, in favor of more "concrete" and "pragmatic" appeals, such as to safety and benefit (Pouncey 1981, 101). However, Pouncey does not speak directly of necessity and moreover does not address the tension between these different appeals and the questions that it raises. Similarly, de Romilly notes that Pericles' speeches contain both a "realism," which she ties to "*anankaion*" (necessity), and an "idealism," which she ties to "*kalon*" (nobility) (de Romilly 1963, 127-130). However, she, too, fails to attend to the difficulties that arise from it. Martin Ostwald's work, *Ananke in Thucydides*, does focus on Thucydides' understanding of necessity, but his treatment seems both to overstate the extent to which necessity is stressed in Pericles' speeches and elsewhere ("Throughout his work Thucydides never abandons the view that *anankai* determine the course of imperialism. In fact, if there is any determinism in his work, the dynamics of imperialism manifest it most clearly," and to neglect the difficulties that such a view presents for moral freedom, the possibility of which, Ostwald somewhat hazily asserts, Thucydides nonetheless maintains (Ostwald 1988, 38, 53-61).

a final answer to the Spartans, who have come to them with a series of demands; the Spartans allege that if these demands are met, the two cities and their allies can avoid war. Thucydides notes that many Athenians come forward in support of each side of the question, some arguing for the necessity of war, others for concession to at least certain key Spartan demands (1.139). However, Thucydides presents us with only one speech from this assembly, that of Pericles.[13] The purpose of Pericles' speech, which he indicates at its opening, is to convince the Athenians to go to war and to explain how that war should be carried out. Since war is coming in any case (1.140.1-2), Pericles claims, the Athenians should resolve on it without making any concessions to the Spartans that will place the city or its possessions in a precarious position (1.140.5-141.1). In addition, he suggests the various inferiorities of the Peloponnesian resources (1.141.2-1.142), and makes clear that the Athenians' strategy should be to retreat inside their city walls, and not risk a fight on land against the numerically superior Spartans. Rather, they should concern themselves only with their navy, which will furnish them with all that they need to survive and prosecute the war (1.143.3-1.144.1).

The case that Pericles makes for war is largely consistent with the radical understanding of necessity suggested by the bold claim of the Athenian envoys at Sparta. We see evidence of this consistency, in the first place, in its omissions. Perhaps most striking is that Pericles does not stress the justice and piety of the Athenian cause, a general feature of all of Pericles' speeches.[14] As to matters of justice, Pericles does not openly call the Spartans unjust or give anything resembling full-throated support of the righteousness of the Athenian cause, and there

[13] That Pericles' is the only speech we see emphasizes the characterization Thucydides here makes of Pericles as peerless in the city during his time (1.139).

[14] Pericles' neglect of these concerns has been noted by many students of Thucydides; see Lowell Edmunds 1975, 28, 39, 46, 76; Edith Foster 2010, 203; Orwin 1994, 19-22; Strauss 1964, 161; Ronald C. Lee, Jr. 2002, 509-514, among others.

are no references to piety or the divine. These omissions are striking on their own, as it is difficult to imagine this or any city being persuaded in a matter of such gravity without considerable appeal to its most fundamental concerns, among which justice and piety must surely be expected to number. They appear all the more striking when we note the contrast this speech provides with the pre-war speeches of Athens' enemies (see, for example, the speech given by the Corinthians to the gathered Peloponnesian allies, which refers several times of the injustice of Athens and the confidence that can be taken from the justice of the Peloponnesian cause, as well as from the support the gods will provide in the service of that just cause (1.123-1.124)). That Pericles fails to emphasize these things is consistent with the earlier Athenian claim that men are compelled, not only by fear, but also by honor and "advantage," for if, to repeat, men and cities have no choice but to pursue such things, the status of at least most apparent criminality is put in question. Thus, Pericles' failure to mention piety in this first speech or to focus on justice, or clearly to fan the flames of the righteous indignation that commonly attend confidence in one's justice – an indignation that is of course often made use of in exhortations to war, not least by the Peloponnesians (see the pre-war speech of the Spartan ephor Sthenelaidas on the need to punish the Athenians, 1.86) – at least fits with, if it does not explicitly appeal to, the radical teaching about necessity stated by the envoys at Sparta. Of course, this is not at all to say that the majority of Athenians have completely, or even largely, accepted this teaching and all its implications (indeed, as we have noted, the envoys themselves seem to contradict it several times, most clearly at 1.76.3). Their reliance on oracles (2.21.3), their fear of curses (2.54), and their hysteria following the mutilation of the Herms (6.60), are only a few signs of this. However, the stark differences on these points between Pericles' speeches and those of the Athenians' enemies are telling. That Pericles could have unparalleled influence in the city and

speak this way indicates some acceptance of the principles from which his speeches draw. Indeed, the moral fervor the Athenians sometimes display (most notably following the mutilation of the Herms), which seems in considerable measure a reaction to their own sense of wrong-doing (Strauss 1964, 209; Orwin1994, 197), suggests that the Athenians consider themselves to have gone quite a ways in disregarding justice – though they have not gone so far as to excuse themselves for it.

However, not only its omissions, but also the general tenor of the first speech accords with an understanding of the Athenians as being driven by necessity. This is suggested, first, by Pericles' explicit claim that war with Sparta is a necessity (*ananke*) (1.144.3). Pericles also indicates that the Athenians are forced into war by claiming that the Spartans clearly "have designs" against them and that they mean for their complaints to be settled by "war rather than speech" (1.140.2). The suggestion is that war is coming, irrespective of the Athenians' wishes or actions. That this is the case is shown, Pericles argues, by the fact that the Spartans have not acted in accordance with the treaty still in effect, which stipulates that disagreements be settled by arbitration. The Spartans, he points out, have neither offered arbitration themselves, nor accepted it from the Athenians when they offered it (1.140.2, 1.141.1). The claim, then, that those who intend to preserve the peace would not act as the Spartans do, has the effect of making peace seem impossible, since peaceful negotiation surely requires the participation of both sides. Pericles underscores the point by arguing that to concede to any Spartan demand in the hope that it will bring peace is misguided: satisfying one demand will only bring greater demands, rather than the peaceful settlement that those Athenians arguing for conciliatory measures likely envision (1.140.5). In this way, Pericles gives the impression that war is not really a choice for the Athenians. It is true that he does go on to suggest that there is an alternative to war – slavery

(1.141). However, this presentation of the Athenians' choices is in keeping with the common sense understanding of necessity mentioned above, in which we experience something as compulsory when it is not something we would simply have wished for, but is rather something undesirable that we submit to in order to avoid something worse.

The manner in which Pericles presents his war strategy similarly emphasizes the necessary limits on the Athenians' options. First, they must retreat into the city, giving up their homes and lands. In the event that the Spartans come to ravage the Athenian countryside, they must not be lured by indignation into venturing beyond the city walls to meet their numerically superior adversary in a land battle. Rather, they must attend only to vigilant guard of the city and the sea, since their strength is derived especially from their superiority with respect to the latter, and, in the event of a land battle, it will likely be depleted such that the Athenians will no longer be able to move against the "allies" under their control – in which case, Pericles makes clear, these will cease to remain allies. In addition, the Athenians must not lament the loss of their houses and lands, but only that of men, who are the source of the former (1.143). Pericles does not present this arduous path as a course to be freely accepted or rejected, but as one dictated to the Athenians by circumstances outside of their control. Likewise, in explaining the reasons the Athenians should have confidence that they will prevail in war, he indicates that the Peloponnesians will prove inferior because of certain necessities imposed on them. The chief point is that the Spartans are "put upon" (*epipherein*) by poverty, as they do not have money, which is, as Pericles asserts, what wins wars, and they will find it difficult to acquire. Similarly, the Peloponnesians' land, which is the source of their strength, they must work themselves, and they cannot free themselves of it to provide sufficiently for a long foreign war of the kind that is coming (1.141.3-5). Furthermore, the very composition of the Peloponnesian alliance, in which

influence is shared relatively equally among cities, will prevent the prompt and vigorous action which is required in such a war and which is, presumably, less a difficulty for an Athens with an empire, not merely an alliance, at its disposal (1.141.6-7). Thus, in explaining his strategy, Pericles stresses not considerations that seem to be more within human control, such as the superior virtue of the Athenians or their desire to avoid a shameful outcome, but the circumstances, primarily material, that confine both sides but that favor the Athenians.[15] We note in passing the distinctiveness of this approach, which is suggested by a brief comparison with that of Athens' adversaries. The Corinthians, for example, do emphasize considerations such as virtue and shame in their pre-war speech (1.121.1, 1.122.3, 1.122.4) and while they also attend to the sorts of concerns Pericles stresses here – indeed, many of Pericles' remarks directly respond to arguments made by the Corinthians, as de Romilly points out (de Romilly 1963, 113) – they give less time to them than does Pericles, whose reckoning of the resources of the two sides is roughly twice the length of the Corinthians' (1.121.2-1.122.2).

However, while this description captures the general thrust of Pericles' first speech with passable accuracy, it does not capture the whole. One important missing piece is the quiet but noticeable role played by Pericles' appeals to the Athenians' sense that they are free. First, while it is striking and significant that Pericles does not emphasize the justice of the Athenian cause, he does not leave out considerations of justice entirely. Most obviously, Pericles refers to the Spartans' breach of the treaty and the Athenians' compliance with it at both the beginning and the end of the speech. It is true that, as mentioned, he does not speak of the need to punish the Spartans nor even explicitly call them unjust. Rather, Pericles presents the claim that the

[15]Edith Foster also notes Pericles' strong reliance – she calls it an "overemphasis" – on material capabilities, to the neglect of such considerations as "leadership" and "morale" (Foster 2010, 140-144). (She also accuses Pericles of neglecting the role of chance, but this is more complicated given Pericles' ambiguous statement on chance at 1.140).

Spartans have not acted in accordance with the treaty more as evidence that war cannot be avoided than as a condemnation of a reprehensible act that must not be permitted to stand. In addition, speaking only of the strict letter of the treaty law, apparently without regard to broader considerations of justice, cannot, in any case, be said to constitute a very powerful appeal. Still, to speak of a breach of treaty at all, particularly while pointing out Athenian compliance, does suggest a quiet departure from the general emphasis on necessity – for what power could a treaty have to check the compulsions of human nature, as the envoy's argument would have it, and therefore what is the point of emphasizing a compliance that could only be apparent, a coincidental parallel between the treaty's demands and the forces driving the Athenians? Rather, this emphasis seems to appeal, indirectly, to something in the Athenians that resists an understanding of international politics that leaves no room for justice, if only, or at least most obviously, in the form of sworn treaties.

Upon further consideration, we see that the above remarks do not seem to be the only ones that appeal to justice, and that there are signs that Pericles means in various other ways quietly to draw on the Athenians' sense they are being wronged. This is seen, first, in how he presents the Spartan determination either to make war on or to enslave the Athenians. Strictly speaking, it is no contradiction of what the Athenians suggest at Sparta -- that all cities are compelled, by fear, honor, and advantage, to seek rule where they can -- if Sparta does wish to attain ever greater concessions from Athens with the ultimate goal either of war or enslavement. Perhaps Sparta may be mistaken as to her capacity to attain these objects from Athens -- indeed, that Pericles insists that Athens is Sparta's equal implies that she is too powerful for subjection to be prudently attempted and thus that Sparta fails to recognize her own limitations – but this would be the extent of what one could rightly criticize in Sparta, assuming the Athenians

consistently hold to the understanding of necessity earlier suggested. Yet, putting aside this potential objection, Pericles does not make the case to the Athenians, as Hermocrates later does to the Syracusans (4.61.5), that Athens' adversaries are merely pursuing what all men pursue, no less intently (though possibly less intelligently) than they themselves or anyone else would, thereby suggesting that the conflict is between two similarly motivated cities whose interests happen to be at odds. In addition, he opposes this intention of the Spartans with the Athenian wish to seek peace, which emphasizes a difference between them in which Sparta appears to be an unjust aggressor (1.140.2).

In addition to neglecting to exonerate the Spartans in this way, Pericles seems to appeal to the Athenians' sense that they are being done an injustice in more positive ways as well. For instance, Pericles argues that the Spartans present their complaints to the Athenians in the form of commands, a point he ostensibly makes to give proof of the Spartans' aggressive intentions, for he says that "be they great or small, claims put upon a neighbor as commands, before arbitration" can only signify "slavery" (1.141.1). Athens, of course, who has extended the offer of arbitration, has not treated Sparta in this manner. Yet, if the Athenians truly believe that all who think themselves capable of attaining it are compelled to seek rule over others, and the point in question is that Sparta gives evidence of such an intent by issuing commands to Athens, then what relevance does Athens' equality have to illuminating Sparta's aims? Is not the relevant point here the command-giving, rather than the command-giving to an equal? It is plausible, then, that the twice-referenced failure of Sparta to treat Athens in a way that her equality warrants (with the attending suggestion that Athens does not act this way toward Sparta), is meant to appeal to a common-sense notion of justice that dictates equal treatment for equals. In

other words, Pericles means here quietly to suggest that Sparta does not have the right to treat Athens as she does.

There are also other indications that Pericles departs from his general appeal to the Athenians' sense that they are bound by necessity. For instance, he distinguishes his plan for the Athenians to remain within the city walls and not to confront the Spartans on land from what he fears the Athenians will do, which is "to wish to gain rule at the same time you are at war or to take upon yourselves freely chosen *(authairetous*) dangers" (1.144.1). That Pericles would claim that there is such a thing as freely-sought danger seems already a departure from what he has stressed in the majority of his remarks. Moreover, it is striking that at other times in this speech, Pericles quietly casts in similar terms the Athenian war with Sparta – that is, the very course of action that he has spent much of the speech encouraging the Athenians to understand as necessary. This occurs at both the beginning and end of the speech, when Pericles presents war with Sparta not simply as an undesirable option that must be undertaken to avoid an even worse one, but as something more akin to the sort of daring venture the Athenians pride themselves on at various points throughout the work and especially in his funeral oration, as we will consider at greater length below. This is seen, for example, in Pericles' manner of describing the limited options available to the Athenians, namely, war or slavery. On its face, Pericles' claim that the only alternative to war is slavery seems simply to suggest that not going to war is more harmful than going. However, Pericles also gives a somewhat different impression when he says that the Athenians should decide at once either to go to war, or "to submit before you suffer some harm" (1.141.1). For in presenting as the alternative to war the possibility of submitting before suffering harm, Pericles opposes dangerous war not to something more obviously harmful, but to safe servitude, and thus suggests war to be the daring or noble alternative, and slavery to be

something not primarily disadvantageous, but contemptible. This is also suggested at the end of the speech. Having just urged the Athenians to recognize that "war is a necessity" (*ananke*), Pericles immediately goes on to say that "the more freely/willingly we accept it, the less devoted enemies we will have" and that "it is from the greatest dangers that the city and the individual acquire the greatest honors" (1.144.3). In this case, Pericles emphasizes the riskiness of the war together with an explicit mention of that aspect of it that is freely chosen (presumably, its zealous execution). That this speech's only mention of glory – which the Athenians seem to understand as the consequence of their noble daring, as is suggested in the funeral oration and throughout the work – tends to confirm the suggestion that these comments mark a departure from Pericles' appeal to necessity in the speech more broadly. This is not to say that, in the absence of such remarks, it would not have occurred to anyone that the war entailed risk; it is only to suggest that there is a difference between depicting war as the lesser of two evils forced upon the city, and portraying it as the daring course the Athenians should freely embrace from which glory will result.[16]

Turning now to Pericles' third and final speech, we find considerable similarity with his first,[17] both in its general appeal to necessity and the ways that it quietly departs from that appeal. Pericles gives this speech after the onset of the plague. Immediately before the speech, Thucydides informs us that the Athenians have suffered greatly from the disease, as well as from the military setbacks brought on by it, such as the Athenian failure in the siege of Potidaea because of the illness of the men on the expedition (2.58.2). In addition, the Spartans have at this

[16] The two remarks noted here occur in the midst of Pericles' two somewhat veiled appeals to justice, described above. The connection between the quiet references to justice and to freely chosen risk is not clear to me, except insofar as both constitute a departure from the appeal to necessity emphasized in the rest of the speech.

[17] De Romilly also notes the similarity between Pericles' first and third speeches, and notes the importance of necessity to both (de Romilly 1963, 120).

point twice ravaged the Athenians' land. All of this, Thucydides says, brings a change in the mind or spirit of the Athenians. They are entirely "at a loss," and angry with Pericles, whom they view as the cause of the war and thus of their hardships, and they have even sent envoys to Sparta with the aim of ending the war, though they have been unsuccessful in this. Pericles aims with this speech, then, to assuage their anger toward him and, as Thucydides tells us, to restore their willingness to fight the war (2.59.3)

As with the first speech, the absence of a direct spur to righteous indignation toward enemies, as well as the all-but complete omission of piety, is remarkable and consistent with the understanding of necessity outlined by the Athenians at Sparta. The sole mention of piety in the speech comes when Pericles says that "the daimonic things must be born of necessity" (2.64.2). As Strauss points out, there is no mention here of awe or reverence for the divine in this lone remark (Strauss 1964, 161). By referring to the plague as daimonic, he does not explicitly oppose the Athenians' piety, but does so subtly by not characterizing the plague as a punishment, which is how the Athenians had been inclined to understand it (2.54.1-4). Indeed, by tying the plague to necessity, he further undermines the idea of plague as punishment, as Orwin notes (Orwin 1994, 20). As to indignation, Pericles of course seeks to discourage the share that is directed at himself, but he also refrains from characterizing the Spartans as unjust or worthy of anger. Rather, in speaking of the damage the Spartans have done to the Athenians' homes and lands, he says merely that the Spartans have only done "what was likely (*eikos*) when you were not willing to yield" (2.64.1). In this way, far from presenting the Spartan actions as unjust, Pericles states them matter-of-factly, in a way that suggests they are a kind of necessary consequence that could not be otherwise.[18]

[18] Pericles probably has many reasons to quell the Athenians' anger in this case, not least that such anger tempts them to a foolish engagement with the Spartans on land. Given that indignation against the Spartans would likely

Pericles appeals to necessity more positively here as well. First, he opens this speech with the striking argument that the Athenians must defend the city because their individual safety depends upon it: failure to continue fighting the war will mean the ruin of all (2.60.2-4). Secondly, as in his first speech, Pericles here explicitly speaks of necessity (*anankaion*), claiming that if it is necessary that the Athenians either go to war or face slavery, war is to be preferred (2.61.1). In this way, Pericles presents the war as a compulsion, one which has brought considerable suffering on the Athenians but which must be born nonetheless to avoid worse consequences. In addition, to make clear to the Athenians the dangers that capitulation would bring, Pericles refers to the Athenian empire in a harsher and uglier manner than he does in any other place. He says that because their rule is "like a tyranny," which "it is deemed unjust to have taken," it is therefore dangerous to let go: the Athenians have brought hatred upon themselves as a consequence of their apparently unjust rule, and this means that the threat to a weak and capitulating Athens from enemies emboldened and indignant is considerable (2.63.1-2). Thus, those of the Athenians inclined "to play the honest part" by giving up the empire must be given to understand that this is not possible. Such men, Pericles says, would "destroy" a city (2.63.3). In this way, then, the general tenor of Pericles' speech again places a heavy emphasis on oppressive necessity. The suggestion is that Athenians do not have a choice in whether or not to fight the war, and there is no room for the misguided hope that cities can choose to behave

lead the Athenians to doubt that such treatment should be withstood, and might accordingly take measures in accordance with their anger rather than their abilities, it is sensible that Pericles would wish to present the Spartan action in the mild way that he does. In any event, it is worth noting that this approach belongs with the general tendency of Pericles' arguments, which discourages anger in a manner consistent with a radical understanding of necessity.

honestly. Such is not the nature of relations among cities, in which it seems that the compulsion to seek safety is primary and insurmountable.[19]

However, as in the first speech, certain details in Pericles' account put his demands to the Athenians in a very different light from that described above; a closer look will show that Pericles again quietly suggests that his recommended course of action is one of freely chosen danger. For example, as we have noted, after justifying the war on the grounds that it serves the safety of the individual, Pericles goes on to say that:

> For those who have a choice and who are otherwise doing well, war is much folly. But if the necessity (an*ankaion*) was either, by yielding, immediately to submit to one's neighbors, or running a risk, to survive/prove superior (*perigeneisthai*), the one fleeing the danger of the undertaking is more blameworthy (2.61.1).

The fact that Pericles opposes submission to the "danger" of resisting the Spartans is a departure from the speech's more prominent argument that such resistance is made necessary by the concern for individual safety. That he describes the safer option of submission as "blameworthy" also seems a departure, since, as we have noted, the possibility of blame and praise is dependent upon free choice, and the Athenians tend to praise themselves especially for their freely chosen daring.

There are similar suggestions in Pericles' discussion of the so-called Athenian tyranny. After disabusing those men who wish "to play the honest part" of the notion that it is possible to relinquish the empire -- noting, in passing, that these men are motivated by fear (2.63.2) – since "such men, persuading others, would quickly destroy a city," Pericles adds that this destruction would come to pass "even if [such unambitious men] lived somewhere under their own laws.

[19] That Pericles says only that the empire is "like" a tyranny, rather than, as is sometimes reported (Frances Cornford 1907, 209; F. Melian Stalwell 1908, 45), that it simply is a tyranny, may point toward the more radical understanding of necessity suggested by the Athenian thesis, which would not seem to leave room for a characterization of rule which necessarily implies its injustice.

For the inactive (*apragmon*) are not safe if not ordered by vigorous men. Nor are they advantageous to a city of rule, but only to a subject city, being safely in slavery" (2.63.3). Thus, Pericles again reminds the Athenians, briefly, that their imperial project is a dangerous one: contrary to his explicit statement that the apparent tyranny must be defended because this is the requirement of safety, he here distinguishes empire from the safety of slavery.[20] Similarly, at the conclusion of the speech, Pericles emphasizes the many risks and sacrifices the Athenians have undertaken in the past, noting the connection between these sacrifices and the city's very great glory, and presents the continuation of the war against Sparta as in keeping with these things:

> Know that your city has the greatest name among quite all of humankind through never yielding to misfortune and because of lavishing/expending the most bodies and effort in war and acquiring the greatest power ever…Foreseeing both what is noble in the future and what is not shameful at present, attain both by zealousness now: do not send heralds to the Lacedaemonians… (2.64.3, 2.64.6).

Thus, Pericles no longer speaks of the war against Sparta only as something forced on the Athenians that must be endured because neglecting to do so would be unsafe – indeed, he does not mention safety here at all -- but rather puts his prescription together with the idea of "lavishing/expending the most bodies" and the greatest glory known to man.

[20] The connection between tyranny and the concern for safety suggested here is also made elsewhere. In the Archaeology, Thucydides offers a description in his own name of the early Greek tyrants: "tyrants, as many as there were in the Hellenic cities, providing for the things of themselves only, with regard to the body and to the growth of their private households, managed the cities for the sake of security as much as possible, and accomplished no deed worthy of mention…"(1.17). Thomas F. Scanlon, following W.R. Connor, notes that Thucydides thus puts tyranny together with a concern for safety and a lack of impressive accomplishments – that is, with things "alien to Athens the tyrant-state" (Scanlon 1987, 290-291; Connor 1977, 104-106). Yet, as we noted above, considerations of safety are not simply "alien" to Athenian imperialism, as evidenced by Pericles' third speech. In fact, these considerations are most prominent precisely when Pericles likens Athens to a tyranny; they are dropped, and moreover spurned, when Pericles criticizes unambitious men, at which point he does not use the word tyranny (2.63.3). Thus, in both this speech and in the Archaeology, Thucydides seems to oppose tyranny and safety to great accomplishment and daring. This is not to argue that there is nothing tyrannical in Athens' bold and apparently boundless activity. It is only to raise the question of whether there is not some significant difference between Athens and what typically characterizes tyrannies, at least as Thucydides and Pericles understand them.

The above is not the only reference to renown found in the speech, but a brief consideration of the others tends to support the common sense suggestion that the Athenians understand glory to belong more to freely chosen danger than to compulsory provision for safety. First, while it is true that Pericles first refers to renown while advising the Athenians to attend to the safety of the city (he reminds them that they are citizens of a "great city" who should take care "not to destroy your reputation" and who should therefore protect the city [2.61.4]), there seems to be a considerable difference between merely not destroying one's reputation and the much grander aspiration Pericles speaks of at the conclusion of the speech, that is, gaining the greatest name among all human beings. Pericles himself suggests such a distinction at the end of the speech, when he speaks both of not doing what is shameful and of doing the beautiful things (2.64.6), for if he understood these to be simply the same thing he would not have mentioned them both. In addition, even this limited appeal to reputation comes with a slight shift away from the stark emphasis on individual self-preservation with which he opened the speech. While he began with the claim that the city should be defended in order to protect the individual (2.60.3-4), he does not here mention the individual's safety. Rather, he speaks only of preserving "the common," and does so while discouraging the Athenians from focusing on their private suffering ("feel no more pain at the private things, and turn to the preservation of the common" [2.61.4]). The only other time reputation is mentioned, it seems clearly to be separated from the concern for safety. In this instance, after asserting that it is "fitting" for the Athenians to aid the city, since if they expect to share in the honor that rule has brought them they should not decline its labors, Pericles goes on to introduce a different consideration: the Athenians should know that they are not contending "for this alone, slavery as opposed to freedom" but also "the loss of rule/empire and the danger from being hated which you have

incurred on account of rule/empire" (2.63.1). That is, when Pericles tells the Athenians that they must also concern themselves with their safety, he seems to indicate that he is bringing up a matter different from the one he was just emphasizing. That he here brings up the hatred they incur is also indicative of a break with his previous statement regarding honor. Thus, none of Pericles' other appeals to renown seem to challenge the suggestion that the Athenians understand it primarily to attend freely chosen risks and sacrifices.

From these observations, we see a great similarity between Pericles' first and third speeches, both in the ways that they emphasize necessity, and in the ways they depart from it. If we turn now to Pericles' central speech, we find in it a contrast with his first and third. For here, in Pericles' famous funeral oration, the city of Athens and her empire come to light as least constrained by, though not entirely free of, necessity. By attending to Pericles' overwhelming emphasis on freedom in the funeral oration and to its context – both the political circumstances in which the speech takes place, and other key features of Pericles' rhetoric – we will cast light on several differences between this speech and those previously considered, namely, in their connection with strength and transcendent hopefulness. In addition, by observing the ways that Pericles departs from this emphasis by pointing also to necessity, we will see one aspect of the continuity of Pericles' speeches.

Nobility Anchored by Necessity: the Funeral Oration

Thucydides tells us that the funeral oration is given in the second year of the war, and is part of a public funeral for the first fallen. In accordance with long-standing custom, the dead are laid in a public sepulcher, after which the citizen most distinguished in wisdom and reputation is to give a eulogy. In this case, the outstanding citizen is of course Pericles (2.34). In

his narration of the period from the time the Athenians settle inside the city walls to the occasion on which this speech is made, Thucydides does not indicate that the Athenians are involved in any major battles. Having been prevented by Pericles from venturing out to stop the Spartan advance upon their lands, the Athenians are occupied by only a few minor skirmishes and attaining a few small victories, and seem primarily to be engaged in the ravaging of various lands (2.22-2.33). They have, to this point, lost few men in the war. Indeed, in the section immediately preceding the speech, Thucydides notes that the city is at this time "in full bloom," that is, in its prime, having the largest army of Athenians ever assembled and not yet having suffered from the plague (2.31.1-2). As to Pericles' introduction, he begins by expressing a certain reluctance to give the address. In contrast to those who came before him, who deemed the custom of making a public eulogy noble, Pericles sees a considerable difficulty in the undertaking. For, as he says, the audience on such an occasion will be divided between those partial to the deceased who will find the praise too slight, and those who, from envy, will consider it too great. Having voiced his reservation, however, Pericles goes on to say that because their ancestors believed this custom to be noble, he must, in accordance with the law, attempt to speak to the satisfaction of his audience (2.35), i.e., attempt to do what he has just suggested to be impossible.

After a brief word of praise for the Athenians' distant ancestors, fathers, and, most of all, the present generation, he explains that he does not wish to dwell at length on the particular deeds of the Athenians now gathered or of those who came before. Instead, he will focus on what made those deeds possible, namely, the Athenian regime, manner, and general way of life. He then launches into an extended praise of the city Athens, from the beauty and extent of which we can easily see why the funeral oration's passages are the most famous in all of Thucydides

(2.36-2.41.4). This tribute begins with a praise of Athens' free domestic arrangements, both public and private, and culminates in the claim that the city thus described is worthy of the greatest sacrifices – those that the fallen have made on her behalf, and those that the living, who are called on to "become erotic lovers" of the city, must be similarly willing to make. From such devotion and sacrifice, Pericles claims, each individual will attain "ageless praise" (2.43). In the final section of the speech, Pericles addresses the families of the deceased, urging the parents of the dead to consider themselves fortunate for the glorious end their sons have attained. Those still of an age to bear children should hope for future children who may help them forget the others and whom they may also sacrifice to the city, while older parents should take comfort in the thought that the remainder of their lives will be short, and its burdens relieved by glory. To the widows, he advises that they aim to be spoken of as little as possible, for good or ill.

From this we see a very general outline of the speech; its bulk, and its pinnacle, is found in Pericles' stirring praise of Athens and exhortation to his audience, and it is in this section of the speech that its difference from the others comes most clearly to light. For, as Orwin points out, Pericles' portrayal of Athens and of the course of action he wishes his audience to take depicts a city almost entirely unbound by necessity (Orwin 1994, 15). From the concrete domestic arrangements with which Pericles begins his tribute (2.37.1-2), to the more abstract constraints that Athens alone seems to escape (2.40.3),[21] Pericles indicates that his is a city of

[21] For example, Athens is praised for being a city of men who are at the same time both superlatively calculating and superlatively daring (2.40.3). That these two qualities do not tend to reside together in the same people in the same moment is suggested both by common sense and by Pericles in what immediately follows this striking claim. As he continues, "…the boldness of others is from ignorance, and calculating brings hesitation." That is, in the usual course of things, as the experience of cities other than Athens suggests, it is not possible to be both most daring and most calculating. In addition, Pericles' other descriptions of Athenian sacrifice, such as, for example, his claim that "we alone fearlessly benefit someone, *not so much by calculation* of interest as by trust in freedom/liberality," (2.40.5, my italics) further suggest the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of what he maintains earlier. In other words, there seems to be, if not a strict necessity, at least strong constraints on the capacity of human beings to manifest both extreme daring and calculation at the same time, which Pericles indirectly acknowledges, both in his description of the usual condition of human beings (what "others" do) from which he claims Athenians depart, and

tremendous freedom. In particular, he emphasizes the various ways that the Athenians freely and nobly[22] court danger and sacrifice their advantage. For example, when Pericles speaks of the military preparations of the Athenians, he stresses that they, unlike others,[23] do not expel foreigners at certain times of year, and therefore do not prevent their enemies from seeing something that might serve their advantage (2.39.1). He thus implies, of course, that the Athenians hazard their own. As to going to war and conducting themselves in battle, Pericles insists that the Athenians not only confront dangers no less capably than the Spartans, who "pursue manliness through toilsome training straightaway from youth," but do so freely: the Athenians, despite living a "life of ease," "willingly run risks," and are manly "not more from laws than from ways/manner (*tropon*)," more from an "ease of spirit" than from "toilsome care" (2.39.1, 2.39.4). That is, the Athenians are not under, nor do they require, any compulsion -- including, it is suggested, that of the law -- to face the dangers of war. Similarly, "as to virtue" (by which Pericles means the virtue of Athens in its relations with other cities[24]) he argues that, contrary to the many, "we acquire friends not by being done good but by doing." The Athenians alone "fearlessly" benefit others, "not so much by calculation of interest as by trust in

in his other depictions of Athenian sacrifice. Though he implicitly admits the tension between daring and calculation, he indicates that Athenians are somehow free of this constraint which usually governs human behavior.

[22] Though it is true that Pericles does not use the word "noble" to describe the deeds described in this paragraph, his use of the word at other times to describe self-sacrificial and dangerous actions taken not out of a calculation of personal advantage (2.42.4, 2.43.1) suggests that it is fitting here as well.

[23] He seems to mean especially the Spartans, who, in his first speech, Pericles had criticized for this practice (1.144.2).

[24] Orwin convincingly shows that, while not explicitly saying so, Pericles here refers to the city of Athens as a whole in its relation with other cities, rather than, as Jeffrey S. Rusten suggests, the relationship of individual Athenians to one another (Orwin 1994, 17; Rusten 2009, 156)). The decisive point is that Pericles' comments paint an unflattering picture of those who are the beneficiaries of Athenian generosity. As Orwin notes, it would be very strange for Pericles to be describing a number of Athenians as ingrates.

freedom/liberality."[25] For, in addition to whatever particular sacrifice may be required of Athens in doing this or that good deed to others, to say nothing of the general risk of attending to the good of other cities without a primary "calculation" of the advantage of one's own, Pericles suggests that the Athenians' generous disposition brings additional risk. This is because "the doer" of good deeds to others is more reliably generous than he who receives the good: "he who owes a good turn is less keen, since he reciprocates virtue not as a favor, but as that which is owed/a debt" (2.40.4). That is, Pericles presents the Athenians as thinking of other cities before their own and in so doing taking on further risks by disposing the cities they benefit to be less mindful of Athens than Athens is of them. That Pericles here compares a virtuous deed performed out of "that which is owed/a debt" unfavorably to that undertaken as a "favor" underscores the importance of freedom to his account. He does not mean simply to suggest that the Athenians are virtuous, but that they are freely so to such a degree that they look slightingly even upon obligation as a kind of unattractive constraint. Accordingly, the overwhelming

[25] Simon Hornblower, following Carl Meyer, somewhat strangely neglects the more obvious interpretation I have offered of Pericles' claim here that the Athenians do not calculate their interest, suggesting instead that Pericles means to indicate an opposition "between guesswork (here 'calculation' of one's own interest, a calculation which would actually prove faulty if relied on) and the confidence of knowledge (the word *adews*, 'fearlessly,' recalls the 'Platonic' definition of courage in terms of knowledge, which Thucydides has given above [when he emphasizes that the Athenians are calculating and reflective but still fearless])"(Hornblower 2005, 307). However, I see nothing to suggest that, in speaking of calculation, Pericles means unreliable guesswork, rather than, presumably, sounder considerations of what is to Athens' advantage. Rather, Pericles' emphasis in this instance is on the good Athens does to other cities, which, he explicitly notes, requires the sacrifice of her own. Indeed, Pericles' emphasis on the benefits Athens confers on other cities, to her own detriment, is often passed over by students of Thucydides (cf., however, Lee 2002, 507; Orwin 1994, 17-18). For example, in her discussion of why Pericles speaks of the accomplishments of imperial Athens more in generalities ("we have made the city entirely self-sufficient in every way as regards war and peace" (2.36.3)) than in particulars, Foster argues that Pericles does not give many specific examples of Athens' allegedly great deeds in part because his "evasions disguise the piratical nature of Athens' imperial enterprise," which, she suggests, is "simply rapacious." Thus, Foster at once acknowledges that the Athenians do not think of their empire as simply serving their own city's good (hence the need for Pericles' "evasion" when speaking to them) and underestimates it (Foster 2010, 190-198). Scanlon's discussion of Pericles is similarly inattentive to this point. In presenting the relationship between the Athenian domestic arrangements Pericles praises and Athens' foreign policy, Scanlon suggests that, on Pericles' telling, Athenian liberality is confined within her borders and Athenian hopes for glory are somehow separate from considerations of empire ("the liberal conduct at home is what grants Athens its 'everlasting fame' and thereby justifies any harsh action necessary to maintain its rule") (Scanlon 1987, 289). He thus mischaracterizes the Athenians' understanding of their liberality, as well as the hopes attending it.

impression Pericles conveys with these remarks is that the dangers the Athenians confront and the efforts they undertake are not driven by some pressing external force. In this, we find a contrast with the general approach of his other speeches, in which Pericles emphasized, for example, that the aggression of Sparta made necessary that they go to war, and that of vengeful allies made necessary continued resolve in his policy. The difference in Pericles' approaches is made even more stark by his repeated insistence here on the apparently spontaneous character of Athenian virtue, which, as mentioned, seems hardly even to require the force of law. Indeed, to judge by Pericles' description of Athens in the funeral oration, the city seems frequently to be pursuing the "freely chosen dangers" Pericles had earlier spoken of in opposition to what his war strategy demands (1.144.1) – a difference of approach in his speeches to which we will return below.[26]

First, however, we will consider how Pericles' praise here of the various ways the Athenians freely and nobly sacrifice their advantage enables us better to understand his praise of other sorts of Athenian freedom, with which he began his tribute in the funeral oration. For instance, in his description of the city's domestic arrangements, he commends the city's freedom from internal domination by this or that faction. For while the city is "by name" a democracy, it is virtue most of all that determines public honors. Still, while the many do not dominate, neither are they dominated by others, for Pericles claims that anyone who is capable of doing good to his city may, and is not prevented by constraints such as poverty. Thus, he asserts, we Athenians "carry on our politics, with respect to the common things, freely/liberally" (*elutheros*) (2.37.1-2).

[26] Hornblower somewhat overlooks the impressive and noble character conveyed by Pericles' depiction of the Athenians here, remarking that he finds "puzzling" the "not very encouraging" message that "Athenian military arrangements are easy-going and unprofessional by comparison with Sparta" (Hornblower 2005, 303-304). However, the depiction is less puzzling when considered as of a piece with Pericles' general insistence on Athenian freedom throughout the funeral oration.

In addition, Pericles also speaks highly of the freedom Athenians enjoy in their private lives, claiming that "as regards the suspicion toward one another in daily affairs, we are not angry at our neighbor if he does something according to his pleasure, nor do we put on our faces those hostile looks that, being seen, are painful even if they don't punish" (2.37.1-2).

In this way, Pericles seems to tout the kind of individual freedom that a liberal democrat today might celebrate: Athens' citizens are free to participate in the business of governing, and are not prevented from doing what they like in their private capacities. As commentators like Steven Forde have pointed out, there is something notably akin to "individualism" in Pericles' suggestion of the absence of constraints that traditionally regulated men's everyday lives, an absence not without consequence for the city.[27] However, it is also important to note that these sorts of freedoms constitute part of the basis of the higher freedom to do noble deeds that we noted above, and that the Athenians consider them praiseworthy in part for this reason. For the freedom willingly to sacrifice as Pericles claims the Athenians do – for their city in war, as well as for other cities – requires that they be free, first of all, from domination domestic and foreign, and thus in a position so to choose. Pericles' praise of the Athenians vis a vis the Spartans is that they run risks for their city not because the city's harsh training and laws require it, but of their own accord when they could choose to do otherwise; for this to be possible, the citizens must first be left free within the city. Pericles' praise of how Athens treats other cities is similarly dependent on these basic domestic freedoms. For a citizen body whose foreign policy is dictated by a despot at home (or, we should add, by a ruling city abroad) cannot be praised as a whole, as Pericles does here, for its noble, self-sacrificial treatment of those in other cities. That Pericles

[27] Forde 1986, 438 and following for a helpful discussion of the internal division that such "individualism" eventually wrought on Athens and its critical role in the war's outcome.

has in mind such a link between this domestic freedom and the freedom to make noble sacrifices, and that the former is praiseworthy at least in part because of its connection with the latter, is suggested, for example, by his claim that "we alone consider one who partakes in none of these [political] things to be, not free of ambitious involvement, but rather useless" (2.40.2). As Arlene Saxonhouse also notes, this remark indicates that, while the Athenians are remarkably free to live as they like, they understand there to be a proper use of freedom that does not entail simply or primarily attending to individual, private concerns (Saxonhouse 1978, 469). In contrast to some champions of liberal democracy, then, whose attachment to the basic individual freedoms Pericles earlier spoke of does not contain the same insistence regarding how they should be used, Pericles and the Athenians he speaks to understand these freedoms to be, in large part, for the sake of virtue. [28] This suggestion also gains support from Pericles' later claim that the Athenians should judge "the happy to be what is free, and what is free to be stoutness of soul" (2.43.4). For by offering virtue as *the* definition of freedom, and by tying this definition to happiness, Pericles seems to imply that the most fundamental freedom is the freedom to do noble deeds.

The emphasis on sacrifice in his praise of Athens not only elucidates what came before, but also helps prepare what follows: the pinnacle of Pericles' speech, which is the exhortation to his audience to follow the example of the fallen. First, as Pericles says upon completing his lengthy praise of Athens,

[28] One important difficulty with the liberal view's greater emphasis on freedom for the sake of the individual is illustrated by a few contemporary examples. As a popular country song has it, "May freedom forever fly, let it ring. Salute the ones who died, the ones that gave their lives, so we don't have to sacrifice all the things we love – like our chicken fried, cold beer on a Friday night, a pair of jeans that fit just right, and the radio up…" (Zac Brown Band, 2008). Or, as the comedy television series *Parks and Recreation* presents it, less in earnest but still tellingly, "The whole point of this country is if you want to eat garbage, balloon up to 600 lbs., and die of a heart attack at 43, you can! You are free to do so. To me, that's beautiful" (*Parks and Recreation*, 2011).

> It is for such a city, then, that these here, in noble (*genaios*) fashion, holding it to be just that they not be deprived of her, came to an end fighting – and it is fitting that every one of those left be willing to suffer on her behalf. This is why I have dwelled at length upon the things concerning the city: to teach that the stakes in the contest are not equal for us and for those to whom nothing of such things similarly pertains…(2.41.5-2.42.1).

That is, Pericles' listeners should be prepared to die for Athens, because Athens – unlike other cities, it is suggested – is a city worthy of such sacrifice, as his praise of her has made clear. Since much of this praise has centered on the city's nobility, it seems that Athens is to be considered worthy at least in part because she is noble. Secondly, by referring to the various noble sacrifices that the Athenians as a whole undertake as a matter of course, he lessens the shock, and perhaps makes seem less daunting, what he now urges his audience to do, which is to emulate those who "offered [Athens] the noblest contribution" by fighting and dying for her. Thoose who are left must be similarly willing to sacrifice, "beholding every day the power of the city in action, and becoming erotic lovers of her…" (2.43.1).

The connection I have suggested between Pericles' praise of Athens and his exhortation to his listeners is not at all intended to diminish the truly strange and striking character of the latter.[29] I mean only to point to a certain continuity between, on the one hand, the call that Pericles makes here for the Athenians to offer the greatest sacrifices for the city and to become lovers of her, and, on the other, an important aspect of what he has praised in the Athenians prior to this point. A common thread running through all of these considerations – what Pericles has earlier praised about the Athenians, what he now calls on them to do, and the eros he means to inspire for what he calls on them to do – is freely chosen sacrifice without apparent concern for the good of the one sacrificing. When he describes the fallen men whom he wishes his audience to emulate, his account underscores their disregard of their own advantage:

[29] For a thoughtful discussion of political eros, see Ludwig 2002, especially 10-23 and 319-380.

> Among these men there was not anyone who postponed suffering what is terrible because he was softened by honoring more the future enjoyment of wealth, or the hope from poverty, that it might yet be escaped and wealth attained. Choosing as more to be longed for the inflicting of punishment on their opponents, and believing this to be the noblest of risks, they wished with that risk to inflict the punishment while relinquishing the other things…they deemed it fit to defend themselves and suffer, rather than to save themselves by giving in (2.42.3-4).

There is no clear suggestion in this part of the account that these Athenians were compelled by external forces to act as they did, or that they sacrificed part of their individual good for the sake of a greater individual good. They are here described as thinking only of their enemies and of doing the noble, and self-consciously wishing to sacrifice their own good ("they wished with that risk to inflict the punishment while relinquishing the other things"). The case is the same when Pericles exhorts the Athenians to erotic devotion to the city. Though it is difficult to say exactly why he appeals to eros,[30] and though I cannot offer a complete explanation of this, it is still useful to note that when Pericles speaks of erotic devotion, he opposes it to concern for one's own advantage: the Athenians should "determine their thoughts against the enemy, considering not in rational calculation alone the benefit…but rather beholding every day the power of the city in action, and becoming erotic lovers of it" (2.43.1). However strange it is to contemplate the idea of an eros for one's city, the fact that Pericles here implies that erotic devotion entails a disregard of one's own advantage in the service of a beloved fits with common experience of the ordinary sense of eros, that is, eros for a human being. That Pericles appeals to eros also fits with the funeral oration's general emphasis on freedom, since it belongs to the experience of

[30] Forde, for example, makes the plausible claim that Pericles encourages the Athenians to eros because erotic attachment leads men to consideration of and devotion to things outside and above themselves. However, while this is true of eros, it is also true of more traditional non-erotic attachment to community, of piety, etc. It is not clear why eros is preferred to these, what it distinctively adds that they would not, etc. (Forde 1986, 439).

ordinary eros that a beloved is something to be wished for, that is, something which one would not have to be, compelled to pursue.[31]

While the peak of the funeral oration maintains the considerable emphasis on freedom that we have observed more generally in the speech, it is still the case that, on closer consideration, we also find appeals to necessity. In contrast to what we saw in Pericles' other two speeches, the strongest Greek word for necessity, *ananke*,[32] is not used in the funeral oration to describe a compulsion moving the Athenians to act. In this speech, this word refers only to the compulsion the Athenians exert on the rest of the world ("we have compelled every sea and land to admit entry to our daring…")(2.41.4), which further supports the argument that Pericles emphasizes freedom and necessity differently in the funeral oration than in the other speeches. However, putting aside for the moment the very great difference of emphasis regarding freedom and necessity in the funeral oration as compared with Pericles' other speeches, we will first attend to the ways in which the funeral oration too draws on the understanding of necessity suggested in the first and third speeches, which, while less prominent, is still present and instructive here.

First, serious attention to the divine is, as in the other speeches, lacking in the funeral oration. Apart from one reference to prayer for safety, the sole mention of the divine is found in

[31] It is true that eros is sometimes thought of in a different manner than the one I have described, that is, it is thought to be a kind of unfortunate compulsion (as Xenophon's Cyrus puts it: "But I have even seen…people enslaved to those they loved, even though before they fell in love they believed that it was bad to be enslaved…and people praying that they get free from it, just as they would from a disease, and yet not being able to get free, but being bound by some necessity stronger than if they had been bound by iron…")(Xenophon 5.1.12). However, there is no sign from his beautiful encouragement of the Athenians to fall in love that Pericles has such an understanding of eros in mind, nor is it suggested by the fact that he describes erotic feeling as springing especially from contemplation of the power of Athens, which has been portrayed in an unambiguously attractive light throughout the speech.

[32] There are other words in Greek that imply necessity, such as *dei* and *chre*, as will be discussed below. However, these words are more ambiguous in the degree to which they suggest compulsion than is *ananke*.

Pericles' account of the various occasions for "relaxation" that Athens affords its citizens: "sacrificial festivals" are grouped together with "elegant private establishments" as examples of the "daily delights" that make life in Athens so pleasant (2.38.1). That piety is here praised only on grounds of its contribution to pleasure fits with Pericles' general neglect of piety, a neglect that is consistent with and may imply some acceptance of the argument regarding necessity made at Sparta. Second, in this speech Pericles again refrains almost entirely from stoking righteous indignation in his listeners,[33] and, in general, denigrates the importance of the law. The latter is seen, for example, when Pericles presents courage that is the product of, or that at least derives support from, obedience to law as less praiseworthy than courage that is the product of "ways" (2.39.4); when he criticizes the practice of giving a funeral oration, which of course also implies a criticism of the law that ordains the oration (2.35); and when he implies that the superiority of the present generation to their ancestors (2.36.1-3). This is not to suggest that the denigration of law here suggested is complete -- indeed, in this speech Pericles also praises the Athenians' law-abidingness (2.37.3). Yet even in that reference to law-abidingness, Pericles says only that the Athenians are "not lawless," and generally does not stress, and, as mentioned, he at times even clearly diminishes, the importance of law, which accords with an understanding of the primacy of necessity in human affairs.

In addition, both the context and the language of some of Pericles' remarks acknowledge and draw on the Athenians' understanding of themselves as subject to harsh necessity. This is

[33] There is one clear exception to this general characterization, which comes when Pericles describes the fallen as having chosen "the inflicting of injury/punishment on their opponents" over sparing themselves in battle (2.42.4). This remark is all the more striking for being, as far as I am aware, the only one of its kind in the funeral oration (or in Pericles' other speeches); at other points in Pericles' description of those who have sacrificed for Athens or exhorted his audience to sacrifice, he has dwelled upon the superiority and worthiness of Athens. This is not to say that a connection between the superiority of Athens and anger at enemies is unintelligible, but no connection is explicitly drawn, and in the rest of the speech the former rather than the latter is emphasized.

seen, for example, even or especially in Pericles' exhortation to the Athenians to sacrifice themselves for the city. At 2.43.1, immediately following his claim that the Athenians should behold the power of the city and become erotic lovers of her, and in apparent elaboration of this claim, Pericles encourages his listeners to reflect on the idea that men "who are daring and who know the needful things/what has to be done (*tolmontes kai gignontes ta deionta*) and possess a sense of shame in their actions have acquired [the power of the city]." First, to speak of certain things as "needful" or to say that a certain action "has to" be taken is, strictly speaking, to suggest a constraint on Athenian action. While this is a minor point regarding an obvious truth about the situation of all human beings, it is worth noting that even small acknowledgements of constraint like this one are rather rare in the funeral oration, and that constraint is frequently unacknowledged in cases where it surely exists for the Athenians (consider 2.40.4. noted above, where Pericles describes Athens in her relations with other cities, and speaks only of how she "fearlessly benefit[s] someone, not so much by calculation of interest as by trust in generosity").

Secondly, a consideration of the context of this remark and others similar to it will help support the argument that Pericles quietly appeals to necessity in this speech, as well as address a potential objection to this argument. The objection I have in mind is that what I have translated as the "needful things" (*ta deionta*) does not carry as unambiguous a sense of compulsion as *ananke* does. *Ta deonta* could also be translated, for example, the "proper things", and therefore does not obviously signal a departure from those aspects of the speech I have emphasized above. However, by addressing the context in which this word is used, we can see that my translation is fitting. Pericles has said that the men who acquired the power of Athens knew certain things, and it is helpful to recall what the things in question are: Pericles refers with this remark to the knowledge that one must risk death for the city (2.43.1). He acknowledges several times that

dying for the city is not a thing that one would simply choose or that is entirely to be wished for, despite what the beauty of much of his account tends to suggest. This is seen, for example, when he refers to the fallen men as not "having delayed what is terrible" (2.42.4), which points out both that what they suffered was undesirable and that the alternative to sacrificing themselves for the city would only have been to "delay" that which they had no possibility ultimately of avoiding. Pericles' other uses of *dei* in the speech are similarly indicative of compulsion.[34] For example, his claim that "we do not consider that it is speeches that are harmful to action, but rather the absence of prior instruction through speech concerning the things that we must (*dei*) do" (2.40.2) is followed immediately by the suggestion that the Athenians are superior because they "know most clearly the terrible and the pleasant things, and do not on account of this turn away from risks" (2.40.3), which again indicates that the Athenians consider "the things that we must do" to be "terrible." Pericles' only other use of *dei* comes when he addresses the women in his audience: "If I must (*dei*) say something in regard to women's virtue, as it pertains to as many as will be now in widowhood, I will indicate the whole with brief advice: great is the repute…of she among you who has least fame among males whether for virtue or blame" (2.45.2). Thus, Pericles indicates that it is desirable that widows not be spoken of. It is sensible to suggest, then, that he himself would prefer not to speak of them– a preference that is also indicated by his offering them only "brief advice" – but that he feels himself compelled to do so.

This quiet appeal to necessity appears in other parts of the funeral oration, which is also suggested by similarly ambiguous language and its context. For instance, he says "it must be

[34]While I treat "dei" together with the word "chre" (another ambiguous word for necessity) in the following section, I do not mean to deny that there are important differences between the words of the sort suggested by Seth Benardete's elaboration of their complicated relationship (Benardete 1965). Though I cannot claim entirely to have followed Benardete's argument, it seems to me that he does not rule out my understanding of their usage here (see. especially p. 294, 296), and in any event, I am in agreement with his suggestion that a consideration of context is essential for determining how the words should be taken, which I do below.

(*chre*) that those left behind pray that they may more safely, but no less boldly, determine their thoughts against the enemy..." (2.43.1). The word he uses here to refer to what the Athenians must do, *chre*, is again not as strong as *ananke*, and can connote moral obligation (one ought) rather than necessity. However, it would be strange to speak of a moral obligation to seek one's own safety, and not particularly surprising to refer to a compulsion to do so, as the Athenians did in their first speech at Sparta (1.75.3). If we look to the other uses of the word *chre* in the speech, we find that the context always makes the more moral meaning unlikely, and that the word tends to be used where Pericles is acknowledging the somewhat undesirable character of a particular task that someone is being pressed to undertake, both of which considerations lend support to the suggestion that Pericles intends to refer to necessity more than to moral concerns.[35] For example, *chre* appears at the beginning of the funeral oration, when Pericles explains why he does not wish to give the speech. It is only after outlining the reasons for his reluctance that he says "but, since the ancients thus judged these things to be noble, I too must try (*chre perasthai*), following the law, to hit as much as I can upon what will be in accordance with the wish and opinion of each of you" (2.35.3). It is true that Pericles refers to the law and to nobility in this statement (though as to the latter he says only that "the ancients believed" the law to be noble), but it is difficult to imagine that he speaks in earnest of a dutiful or noble inclination to give the speech when he has just explained why it is a bad idea, upon which he would rather not act. *Chre* appears again near the end of the speech, when Pericles addresses the parents of the fallen. After telling them to count their sons and themselves fortunate – the sons for their "most becoming" death, the parents for their similarly becoming grief – Pericles shifts course

[35] It is also plausible to suggest that, even if we were to understand *chre* to connote a moral obligation, on the basis of Pericles' somewhat slighting treatment of obligation in this speech – in which he opposes actions taken out of obligation to freely chosen actions, as we have seen (2.40.4) – this argument would still, to some degree, stand.

and acknowledges, to some degree, the parents' suffering. When he advises them of what they "must" do, he refers to something unwelcome that is thrust upon them that can only be endured:

> I know indeed that it is difficult to be persuaded, when you will often be reminded by the good fortune of others which you yourselves once enjoyed. And pain comes not from the goods one has not experienced of which one is deprived, but when the accustomed are taken away. But one must (*chre*) endure, in the hope of other children, in the case of those of you still of an age to make children. For in private the ones to come in the future will be a kind of forgetfulness of the ones who do not exist…" (2.44.3).

Thus, at several points in the funeral oration, Pericles quietly appeals to the common understanding of necessity that we earlier noted – according to which the compulsory things are those for which we would not wish – which is also the sense conveyed by Pericles' other speeches in which he speaks more clearly and strongly of necessity.[36] That this acknowledgment of necessity is present even in Pericles' account of what he portrays as freest and most praiseworthy in the Athenians – their daring, their courting of danger, their sacrifice – suggests that freedom and necessity, despite their opposition, must go together. Indeed, the inseparability of the two notions is suggested by the very formulation "free sacrifice." For the notion of sacrifice or risk of course contains the acknowledgment of something we would not wish for; the most beautiful acts are those undertaken in circumstances we would think it perverse to hope for. Additionally, that both freedom and necessity always come together in Pericles' speeches suggests the rhetorical, and thus the psychological, insufficiency of an appeal to only one or the other. Pericles must speak of necessity, for, if there are necessary limits on what we can do, no

[36] That this sense of suffering something undesirable belongs together with the Athenian understanding of necessity is made clearer by recalling Pericles' strongest statements of Athenian freedom in the funeral oration. In those places where Pericles is stressing the freely chosen risks the Athenians take, he also stresses the ease with which they do so: "we, living a life of ease, are no less capable of confronting equally-balanced dangers"; we, invading our neighbor's territory by ourselves, fight without difficulty on foreign soil and against those defending their own land, and usually win"; "we are willing to run risks out of ease of spirit rather than laborious exercise" (2.39.1-2, 2.39.4). There is no suggestion here that the Athenians suffer in these endeavors, that they find them "terrible," that they are praying for safety, etc., which suggests a different understanding than the one at work in 2.43.

community that simply neglects them could long survive, and because the most attractive freedom – the freedom to do noble deeds – presupposes harsh necessity. However, the fact that Pericles does not maintain a consistent appeal to necessity – not even for one whole speech, despite the fact that he is addressing the community that comes closer than any other in Thucydides to understanding itself in these terms -- suggests that doing so would be insufficient to move the Athenians. The reasons for this are not clear, but we can begin to shed light on the question of what rhetorical and psychological attractions lie in the appeal to freedom and noble by considering some of the political circumstances in which the funeral oration takes place, which we will do in the section below.

The Appeal to Freedom and Nobility: Strength, Sacrifice, and Hope

One circumstance that varies across Pericles' speeches is the Athenians' impression of their strength in each case. For example, immediately prior to the funeral oration, Thucydides emphasizes that the Athenians are at that time "in the flower of their strength," having the "largest force ever assembled" and not yet having engaged in any significant battles nor lost many men (2.22-2.25, 2.30-2.31). In contrast, prior to Pericles' final speech, he stresses that the Athenians have twice had their land ravaged by the Spartans, are suffering from the plague, and are "entirely at a loss," and thus clearly indicates that they are sensible of great weakness (2.59). The circumstances of Pericles' first speech are not made as clear, but it seems that the uncertainty and division within the city regarding whether to go to war is more suggestive of weakness, which always attends irresolution, than of the sort of great strength felt by the Athenians at the time of the funeral oration. It is plausible that this difference in how the Athenians experience their strength helps explain why Pericles encourages them to view their

actions as freely chosen sacrifices only at certain times. For the capacity for such sacrifice has as its prerequisite a sense of strength, a sense that we have something to give up. For example, the generosity towards other cities for which Pericles praises the Athenians in the funeral oration would not be possible without certain material advantages of money and manpower, as well as awareness of and confidence in those advantages. Thus, it is sensible that Pericles speaks to the Athenians more in terms of sacrifice when they are most conscious of their strength. Indeed, the very notion of sacrifice contains within it the suggestion of strength and freedom. This is shown by consideration of the fact that by "sacrifice" we do not simply mean losing good things, but actively giving them up rather than having them taken from us. To feel ourselves capable of giving up good things, it seems we must be conscious of being to some degree in a good condition. Therefore, it makes sense that Pericles can present what he asks the Athenians to do in terms of sacrifice much more in the funeral oration than in the other speeches. Some support for this suggestion of the importance in Pericles' speeches of the connection between strength and sacrifice is found in a contradiction between the rhetoric in his third speech and that in his funeral oration. As we earlier noted, in the latter, Pericles says that "for those who have a choice and are otherwise doing well, it is great folly to go war" (2.61.1), whereas in the funeral oration, he suggests the opposite: "for it is not those who are doing badly, who lack hope for the good, who would more justly be unsparing of their lives, but rather those for whom there is in life still the risk of a reversal…" (2.43.4). That is, when the Athenians feel themselves compelled, it is when they do not see themselves as "doing well" – when they are "overwhelmed" by their sufferings, as Pericles puts it (2.60.2); the capacity for sacrifice is said to belong more to those who are not "doing badly."

Additionally, the Athenians' varying sense of their strength helps explain additional differences between the funeral oration and Pericles' other speeches. For example, despite the similarity between the things Pericles asks of the Athenians in all his speeches – his aim in each one is to encourage them to accept the difficult measures the war requires -- he refers more to the "toils" of the war in the first and third speech, (2.61-2.62), while stressing the ease with which the Athenians make noble sacrifices in the former (2.39). This is in part because to do difficult things with a sense of ease requires considerable strength. That is, to accomplish something difficult is to do something inherently taxing of our strength, such that if the experience is not primarily one of suffering, it seems we must feel our strength to be great. It is at least in part for this reason, then, that in his first speech Pericles acknowledges the pain of losing houses and lands which may yet, he stresses, be recovered (1.143.5), while in the funeral oration, he says that even the loss of one's life is "unperceived" (2.43.4).

Furthermore, the degree to which Pericles stresses calculation on the part of the Athenians is also connected to their sense of strength, for we feel more that we must calculate – that is, carefully deliberate about what to do within the confining limits of the possible – when the pressing character of those limits is most felt, that is, when we feel weak. Thus, it is not surprising that when the Athenians feel themselves to be at the peak of their strength, Pericles speaks of how they "fearlessly benefit" other cities, "not so much by calculation of interests as by trust in generosity," and how they do not worry that their enemies might learn something from witnessing Athenian military exercises that might redound to their advantage, "since we trust not to practices and stratagems more than to our courage/stoutness of soul" (2.40.5, 2.39.1). In contrast, after the Athenians have suffered the plague and the ravages of war, Pericles spells out in some detail the concrete material resources that should give them confidence (2.62.1-5),

noting that they should trust in "a judgment grounded upon the things in existence" rather than "hope, which is the strength of those who are at a loss" (2.62.5).[37] That is, it is not surprising that in the funeral oration, when the Athenians have their great strength very much in mind, Pericles encourages them to eschew calculation, while at other times, when they are impressed with their weakness, he stresses careful consideration of evident material facts rather than some fanciful hopefulness whose basis is not clear.

If we look further at the way in which the Athenians seem to disregard calculation, we can shed more light on why Pericles emphasizes freedom in his speeches in the way that he does. For we notice that Pericles says of the Athenians not merely that they do not calculate, but that they "trust" instead to their "generosity" and "courage/stoutness of soul" – that is, to virtue. Thus, even as Pericles intends for the Athenians to prepare themselves to make the greatest sacrifices, he expects that their awareness or imagination of such sacrifice will bring with it a sense of hope. Further evidence of this connection between sacrifice and hopefulness is found frequently in the funeral oration. For example, Pericles speaks glowingly throughout the speech of the power the Athenians have acquired, which he expects "to be admired by those of this time and by those in time to come" (2.41.4), and which he maintains is the result of the Athenian ways of life he has described. After detailing and praising these Athenian characteristics, he asserts that his praise is not mere fine talk, the "proof" of which is "the evidence of the power of the city, which we have acquired as a consequence of these ways of life" (2.41.1). However, we recall that among the Athenian "ways" featured in Pericles' praise are their willingness to allow

[37] Similarly, that Pericles devotes the majority of his first speech to tallying the advantages and disadvantages of the Athenians relative to the Peloponnesians, to stating how, precisely, Athens must fight in order to make the war winnable, etc., also fits with this suggestion regarding calculation.

enemies to observe their military practices, despite the fact that the enemies might benefit from this, and their fearless benefit of other cities without regard to their own advantage. It is not at all clear why power would be the obvious result of such ways of life -- if anything, Athenian power would seem to be threatened by them. Yet, Pericles nonetheless ties the two together. Thus, the fact that Pericles can refer to virtuous practices as somehow productive of the great goods the city enjoys and anticipates enjoying in the future, in the absence of a clear connection between the virtues and these goods, suggests that virtue is, for whatever reason, attended by hopefulness – a suggestion that receives support from Pericles' beautiful description of the men who have given their lives for Athens as having died an "unperceived death," which he explicitly says occurs "in strength and together with common hope" (2.43.4).

Indeed, we note that the hopefulness Pericles describes in the funeral oration is of a degree unmatched in his other speeches, where he spends more time instilling confidence based on more pedestrian considerations like the poverty of the Peloponnesians. For here, Pericles indicates hopefulness for a condition of surpassing goodness that goes well beyond winning the war.[38] This condition seems especially to involve the enjoyment of everlasting glory, for, as Pericles argues, such glory is of a different and higher order than all other goods (2.64.5). Given that it is in the funeral oration that Pericles promises the greatest glory – telling the Athenians that they will be "remembered on every opportune occasion in speech and in deed," "for of famous men the whole earth is the tomb, and their epigraph is not only shown on a gravestone in their own home, but in lands not their own there lives an unwritten memory in the mind of each…" (2.43.2-3) – it seems fair to say that this speech, which contains the greatest demands

[38] See the reminder in the Corinthians' pre-war speech of the dangers of excessive hopefulness in success, to which, the speaker notes, the Peloponnesians should take care not to fall prey (1.120.3-5). See, too, Archidamus' comment on the Spartan virtue of not becoming "wanton" (*exhubrisomen*) in success (1.84.2). By contrast, Pericles never issues such a warning. Rather, as we have seen, he seems actively to encourage the opposite disposition.

for sacrifice, also stokes the greatest hopes. This consideration may shed light on why Pericles never leaves the appeal to free sacrifice entirely out of his speeches. Perhaps the hopefulness that attends awareness of sacrifice is necessary to supplement the harsh call to bend to necessity, which, even for the Athenians, would be too harsh to be moving on its own.

This last suggestion receives support from an additional speech of Pericles, the only one Thucydides presents in indirect discourse. This speech, which is made after war is declared but before the first Athenian fallen are honored in the funeral oration, largely recapitulates the advice Pericles offered in his first regarding war strategy and the confidence the Athenians should take from their superior resources (2.13.2-9). It is not immediately clear what this speech adds to our understanding of the war, given its similarity to the preceding speech, or why Thucydides merely summarizes it. However, a consideration of the speech's placement in the text offers guidance on these questions. As Robert Bartlett explains, following this speech, Thucydides twice states how difficult it was for the Athenians to do as Pericles advised, that is, to abandon their homes in the country to move within the city walls (2.14, 2.16.2). In between these two statements, Thucydides describes the rule of Theseus, a former king of Athens, which emphasizes his attention to and respect for the traditional ways of life and piety of the Athenians (2.15.2). As Bartlett also points out, this depiction of Theseus provides a stark contrast with what Thucydides has just reported of Pericles, which his remarks at 2.14 and 2.16.2 help reinforce: in addition to demanding that the Athenians abandon their homes, most striking of all is Pericles' counting among Athens' "resources" sacred offerings from her temples and even, if necessity demands it, the gold from the statue of the goddess Athena (Bartlett, *The Idea of Enlightenment*, p. 103-104) (2.13.5). Thus, the substance and placement of Pericles' speech and the remarks on Theseus invite a comparison of the two leaders, a comparison that is sharpened by that aspect of

Thucydides' presentation which seems puzzling: by using indirect discourse, Thucydides more clearly emphasizes the features of Pericles' leadership he here wishes to bring to our attention while leaving other things aside. This suggestion is supported in part by Thucydides' indication, at the end of his summary of Pericles' speech, that he is leaving some parts of the speech out: "and Pericles also said other things of the sort he was accustomed to, to show that they would prove superior in the war" (2.13.9). What Thucydides emphasizes, and what the comparison with Theseus helps us to see, is how radical Pericles' appeals to necessity are (most notably, to repeat, he suggests it may be necessary to desecrate the statue of Athena). However, while it may seem as though Thucydides thus portrays the "other things" Pericles typically speaks of – such as, for example, his appeals to freedom and noble self-sacrifice – as unimportant, since he does not choose to include them here, this does not seem to me the case. Rather, that Thucydides' most pointed presentation of Pericles' push to orient the Athenians by necessity does not take the form of a proper speech indicates the importance of these "other things" to political discourse, and supports our suggestion of the importance of the two taken together for the Athenian self-understanding.

These observations are, of course, far from suggesting a complete account of Pericles' speeches, or of the complication we earlier noted in the Athenians' understanding of freedom and necessity. However, by noting the correlations that Pericles' speeches suggest between strength and sacrifice, and between sacrifice and great hope, we both see more clearly why the Athenians' might desire empire, and help account for an apparent contradiction in that desire, which seems to seek both to attain strength and to sacrifice it. For it is the sense of great strength, derived in large part from their empire, which makes possible the Athenians' feeling free to sacrifice – which the inherent riskiness of empire calls on them to do. Thus, if strength

and sacrifice somehow bring with them the promise of the greatest goods – a theme we will develop in the following chapters – the allure of empire, which offers both, becomes somewhat clearer.

Chapter 2: Athenian Imperialism Under Cleon: Thoughtlessness, Baseness, and Even More Irrational Hope

Pericles versus Cleon

Thucydides indicates that, following the death of Pericles, the character of Athenian leadership changes dramatically. In his eulogy of Pericles, Thucydides offers a rare and forceful judgment in his own name regarding this change. Here he credits the singular Pericles with much, including leading Athens to the pinnacle of her greatness; pursuing a policy of moderation and maintaining the city's security in peacetime; correctly assessing, apparently, the city's capability once the war began; and restraining the many "freely"[39]: "he was not led by them but

[39] Thucydides' use of the word "freely" (*elutheros*) here is ambiguous; it could refer to the freedom of the many ("Pericles ruled the many while respecting their freedom"), or to the freedom of Pericles in his manner of ruling.

rather he himself led, through not acquiring power improperly by speaking for the sake of their pleasure, but on account of his reputation he could oppose them and even anger them" (2.65.5, 2.65.8). In contrast, Thucydides says that the successors of Pericles "acted contrary to all [of Pericles' war advice], but also in other things that seemed to be outside the war they were led by the love of private honor and private gain to do things that were bad for themselves and their allies" (2.65.7). Being "more equal to each other and each striving to be first," these successors "gave in to the pleasures of the demos," thereby exposing the city to the great blunders and civil discord that eventually destroyed her (2.65.10-11). Thus, Thucydides suggests grave differences between Pericles and the leaders who followed him, and a resulting decline in Athens' conduct with respect to the war and her empire. In order to understand this change and its implications for the character of Athenian imperial ambition, it is necessary to turn to some of the key speeches and deeds of Pericles' successors.

One of the most prominent of these is Cleon, whom Thucydides introduces through a speech given approximately two years after the death of Pericles. Cleon's is the first Athenian speech we see following Pericles' death, and it is the first given in Athens by any Athenian other than Pericles in the whole of the work (3.37-3.40). In his preface to that speech, Thucydides describes Cleon as "by far the most influential with the demos at that time" (3.36.6). Furthermore, he attributes to Cleon responsibility for crucial developments in the war, such as Athens' rejection of Sparta's peace offer following the events at Pylos (4.21.3). A comparison with Pericles, already invited by these suggestions of Cleon's importance, is further encouraged by certain striking resemblances between Cleon's speech and those of Pericles; though the rhetoric of the two men differs radically in crucial respects, several of Cleon's themes, depictions of Athens, and even turns of phrase nonetheless call Pericles' clearly to mind. Through a study

of the ways Cleon's rhetoric both follows and breaks with that of Pericles, as well as of the policies Athens pursues under Cleon's direction, we will shed greater light on the decline Thucydides identifies, and in particular the ways that Cleon's treatment of necessity, nobility, and hope contribute to that decline. We will suggest that Cleon, in failing to encourage the Athenians to understand themselves in terms of the noble and the reasonable, encourages or at least fails to prevent their turn to greater baseness and foolishness, and fails to temper, in the way Pericles might have, a particularly irrational and dangerous form of hope.

Cleon's Speeches

We turn first to a consideration of Cleon's rhetoric. Cleon's speech to the Athenian assembly, the sole address Thucydides presents from him in direct discourse, is occasioned by the failed revolt of one of Athens' allies and the Athenian reaction to this event. The circumstances of the revolt are these: the Mytilenians, who have enjoyed unusually lax treatment from the Athenians (1.19), orchestrate an uprising, not limited to their own city but extending to nearly all their neighbors in Lesbos. This revolt is to be accomplished with help from Sparta (3.2.3, 3.25). However, the Athenians learn of the plot and, following a period of denial born of "the wish it might not be true" (3.3), attempt to dissuade the Mytilenians from their plans. When these efforts fail, they move against the city (3.3-3.6, 3.18). Eventually, Mytilene finds herself blockaded on all sides by the Athenians, her food sources exhausted, and without the promised aid from Sparta, save for a Spartan general named Salaethus whom the Spartans had sent to announce the future arrival of ships and an invasion of Attica, neither of which came to pass (3.27, 3.25). Under these circumstances, Salaethus purposes to attack the Athenians surrounding the city, to which end he arms the demos of the oligarchic Mytilene. However, upon receiving

more substantial arms, the demos refuse to obey their leaders and threaten that if the city's remaining food is not distributed, they themselves will give the city over to the Athenians. At this point, their leaders realize the necessity of capitulation (3.27-3.28). The Athenian generals send Salaethus and the others whom they deem most responsible for the revolt to Athens, whereupon the Athenians immediately put Salaethus to death, and, "under the influence of anger" at being betrayed by those who, by their own admission (3.10.6, 3.11.2), have been well-treated, resolve to kill not only those Mytilenians present, but all the Mytilenian men, and to enslave their women and children. This verdict, Thucydides tells us, is brought about by Cleon (3.35-3.36). The speech we hear from Cleon is given on the following day, when the Athenians convene an assembly to reconsider their decision, which they have come to regret as cruelly indiscriminate. The matter to be decided at the second assembly, then, is whether to punish the entire city, or only those responsible for the revolt. A man named Diodotus argues for the latter position, and Cleon the former; while the Athenians ultimately follow Diodotus' counsel, Thucydides claims that Cleon very nearly prevails (3.49), thus suggesting the power of his appeal to the Athenians and its importance for understanding them.

Cleon begins with criticism of his audience, charging that the Athenians are currently demonstrating the unfitness of democracies to rule over others: being free of hostile relations among their own citizens, they assume that the same friendly conditions exist between themselves and those they rule. The Athenians neglect to consider how dangerous is their position with their allies, whom they rule over as tyrants and whose obedience is secured by the threat of force. In such circumstances, yielding to pity, as the Athenians are inclined to do in the present instance, would be a display of weakness that endangers, rather than ingratiates, them with those they rule (3.37.1-2). Cleon makes clear that he objects not only to the proposal of a

less severe sentence for Mytilene, but also to the practice of questioning what has been established by the city, pointing out that "a city living under worse laws that are inviolable is stronger than one having noble laws with no authority" (3.37.3). In addition, he argues that the motives of those who would seek to persuade the Athenians contrary to their previous judgment are suspect, as are those of the crowd who applauds them. The former, the "more clever," seek to show off their wit, if not to attain a more perfidious "gain" (3.37.4, 3.38.2); the latter are similarly guilty of vanity, wishing, if they are unable to attain the rank of clever speaker, at least to signal some measure of cleverness through their reflexive approval of others' (3.38.4). As to Mytilene, Cleon argues that the city's destruction is sanctioned by both justice and advantage. It is just because the Mytilenians, without provocation, having enjoyed safety, freedom, and honor, courtesy of Athens, willfully set out to aid the greatest enemies of their benefactor and bring about her demise (3.39.1-2). This is true, Cleon maintains, not only of the Mytilenian elite but also of the demos, who did, after all, join their leaders in their initial hostilities against Athens (3.39.6). (However, Cleon notes that the Athenians also deserve blame, for he argues that the Mytilenians grew hubristic in part because of the excessive and unexpected good treatment they received from the Athenians [3.39.4-5].) Cleon's course is advantageous because anything less would send a dangerous message to the rest of Athens' allies. For if Athens punishes a wanton revolt no more severely than one brought about "under compulsion from our enemies," she is thereby encouraging her allies to move against her, since "being successful [the would-be rebel] will acquire liberty, or failing he will not suffer an irreparable fate" (3.39.7). The consequence for the Athenians will be frequent battles with their allies, which will distract from the fight against the Spartans and which, in requiring them to besiege their own empire, will destroy the source of their strength (3.39.7-8). The proper course for the Athenians, then, is to resist the

impulse of pity, instead "recalling as nearly as possible how you felt when they made you suffer," and follow through on their original decree (3.40.7-8).

It is helpful, before turning to the ways Cleon departs from his predecessor, first to note the similarities between his speech and those of Pericles. Echoes of Pericles are heard from the beginning of Cleon's address. As Pericles opened his speech on the eve of war by touting his understanding of the tendency of his audience to waver and the natural root of that wavering, as well as his own steadfast judgment in the face of this difficulty, so too does Cleon: Pericles maintained that "I hold to the same judgment as always, Athenians, that we must not yield to the Peloponnesians, although I know…that men change their judgments in accordance with circumstance. And I see that now I must give you nearly the same advice [as in the past]…" (1.140.1-2); Cleon argues that "Many other times before this I have perceived that a democracy is incapable of ruling others, but more than ever now on account of your change of heart concerning the Mytilenians…As for me, I hold the same opinion" [3.37.1, 3.38.1]). Moreover, Cleon, like Pericles, speaks openly of Athenian "tyranny" (3.37.2; 2.63.2), while also asserting that Athens is in fact generous in her treatment of allies, and observing that this generosity does not, however, contribute to her popularity among them (3.37.2, 3.39.2; 2.40.4). Cleon seems also to agree with Pericles as to the character of Athenian domestic life, as he too emphasizes the free and amicable relations that Athenians enjoy among themselves (3.37.2; 2.37.2).

In addition to these similarities, to which we will return later, we note that Cleon also borrows from Pericles' appeals to freedom and necessity. First, Cleon indicates the importance of distinguishing between that which is freely done and that which is done by compulsion, as he acknowledges that the possibility of blaming the Mytilenians depends upon their having freely chosen their actions:

> I can pardon those who revolted because they were unable to bear your rule or because they were compelled by our enemies. But those possessing an island with walls and fearing our enemies only by sea…who, living in independence and being given the foremost honor by us…what else is it but plotting and insurrection rather than revolt, for revolt comes from those who suffer some violence…(3.39.2).

Cleon goes on to make explicit what he suggests above, by claiming that "they did not do harm unwillingly, but knowingly plotted, and it is that which is unwilling that is pardonable" (3.40.1). He then further emphasizes the point by insisting that the Athenians not "impose the same penalty on those who revolted under compulsion of your enemies as on those who did so freely" (3.39.7). Thus, Cleon repeatedly draws the Athenians' attention to the principle on which his case against Mytilene rests, which is the same principle to which Pericles' speeches frequently appealed. As to Athenian imperialism specifically, Cleon, like Pericles, alternatively suggests that it is bound by necessity and superior to it, and sometimes in the same words that Pericles used. As to necessity, through his account of the harsh nature of relations among cities, Cleon intends to remind the Athenians of the constraints under which they must act, as Pericles did, and seeks to deflate fanciful hopes that things could be otherwise by, for example, borrowing Pericles' suggestion of the impracticability of "playing the honest man" in international affairs (3.40.4; 2.63.2).[40] In addition, by bringing attention to the dispositions of human beings – to waver in their judgments according to their passions, as the Athenians have, to become hubristic in the face of unexpected success, as the Mytilenians have (3.39.4-5) – Cleon follows Pericles in suggesting other constraints of nature. This emphasis on the constraints allegedly governing relations among cities and human beings generally elucidates a further similarity between Cleon and Pericles, that is, the failure of both to make serious – or in Cleon's case, any – reference to the divine (see p. 13-14 of previous chapter).

[40] See also Gomme 1956, 302, 311.

Cleon also follows Pericles in departing in certain ways from his suggestions regarding necessity. Cleon scornfully puts "playing the honest man" together with "putting an end to ruling and living free from danger" (3.40.4), as did Pericles in his third speech (2.63.2). The general effect of these comments is to suggest an impracticable or ridiculous alternative to empire which indicates that the Athenians cannot really choose to cease pursuing it. However, the effect of the brief remark regarding safety is the opposite: by contemptuously opposing empire to safety, Cleon suggests that the Athenians are in fact not compelled to seek safety and instead daringly sacrifice it through their pursuit of empire. This appeal to the Athenians' sense of superiority to the concern for safety is again apparent in Cleon's criticism of the Mytilenian demos, as he observes that "they might now have been returned by us to their city, but they thought there was less danger and that it was more secure to join in the revolt" (3.39.6). Thus, Cleon attempts to undermine the sympathy and kinship democratic Athenians might be expected to feel towards Mytilene's democratic faction by criticizing the latter's avoidance of danger: they are not to be spared punishment in part because they, presumably unlike the daring Athenians, are men concerned to cover their own hides.

More striking than the resemblance Cleon's rhetoric bears to Pericles', however, is the contrast it offers. The most conspicuous departure is Cleon's effort to foment the Athenians' rage. While we suggested in the previous chapter that Pericles occasionally and quietly attempted to arouse some sense of righteous indignation against the Peloponnesians, such as by referring to their breach of the treaty and their attempt to enslave an equal (1.144.1, 1.141.1), for the most part he avoided this. Cleon, on the other hand, frequently urges the Athenians to "repay them" and "punish them as they are worthy," tries to carry his audience to the highest pitch of indignation ("bringing to mind as clearly as possible what you suffered and how you honored

above all the prospect of conquering them…" [3.40.7-8]), and explicitly maintains the connection between such a state of mind and sound policy:

> I wonder at those who introduce delay by proposing that we speak again about the Mytilenians…for thus the victim's wrath is duller when he proceeds against the offender, whereas the vengeance that follows immediately upon the outrage exacts a punishment that most nearly matches the offence (3.38.1).

In addition to righteous indignation and the concern for just punishment, Cleon also appeals to the Athenians' reverence for the law, which Pericles had neglected or even undermined. In objecting to the reconsideration of the Mytilenian affair, Cleon accuses his audience of "not wishing to follow approved advice, being slaves of all strange novelties and disdainers of what is customary," (3.38.5), praising instead "the more simple" who "deem it worthy to be more unlearned than the laws" (3.37.3-4). He also claims that "the most terrible thing of all is if nothing which is resolved upon will be established firmly for us, not knowing that a city living under worse laws that are inviolable is stronger than one having noble laws with no authority" (3.37.3). It is true that there is something ridiculous about this warning given the circumstances, as the "law" in question was passed only yesterday. However, the fact that one of Athens' most influential leaders can argue in these terms speaks to the Athenian attachment to law as well as, perhaps, to some latent anxiety about this "most terrible thing" coming to pass. In fact, Cleon's ability to draw on a fear of the subversion of law, particularly under circumstances in which such apprehension seems unwarranted, may be in part the consequence of Pericles' neglectful and even undermining treatment of law-abidingness (2.35, 2.39.4). That is, fears of the kind Cleon encourages here may plague especially those who understand themselves to be, to a considerable extent, tepid in their attachment to the law.[41]

[41] Further evidence that the Athenians harbor such fears is found in their hysterical reaction to the mutilation of the Herms, which, as Orwin points out, they seem to take as a sign of their own injustice (6.60; Orwin 1994, 197).

Cleon departs significantly from Pericles, not only in his emphasis on punitive justice and law-abidingness, but in his treatment of nobility, insofar as this is distinguishable from justice. While Pericles appealed frequently to nobility, particularly in his funeral oration but also to a lesser degree in his other speeches, Cleon, with the exception of his two references to Athenian daring noted above, does not.[42] First, he fails to use the word in any context that suggests his admiration of it, mentioning it only to point out the inferiority of noble laws with no authority to worse laws that are obeyed, and to criticize "noble speech" and those who make it (3.37.3, 3.37.4, 3.38.4). In addition, he attacks or undermines many of the Athenian attributes and practices that Pericles pointed to as constituting Athenian nobility. For example, as we have pointed out, Pericles, like Cleon, noted Athens' generosity to her allies – according to Pericles, the Athenians alone "fearlessly" and uncalculatingly benefit others (2.40.5). Pericles also shared Cleon's impression that this generosity tends to rankle rather than soothe. For while Pericles did not stress, as Cleon does, that Athenian generosity arouses contempt, he did say that it provokes a kind of resentment: according to Pericles, "the doer" of favors is firmer in his kindness to others than they are to him, for "he who owes a good turn is less keen, since he reciprocates virtue not as a favor, but as that which is owed [a debt]" (2.40.4). However, Pericles and Cleon have very different judgments as to whether the Athenians should be generous; while Pericles offered his observations in praise of Athens, to bolster the case that she alone among cities is worthy of the greatest sacrifices, in Cleon's mouth they are a censure that supports the charge of Athenian ineptitude:

> Many other times before this I have perceived that a democracy is incapable of ruling others, but more than ever now on account of your change of heart concerning the Mytilenians … for whenever you are led into error on account of being persuaded by them, or yield to them out of pity, you do not perceive the danger to yourselves and that your weakness does not bring the gratitude of your allies (3.37.1-2).

[42] See Strauss 1964, 213-216.

Cleon thus directs the Athenians to view as a "weakness" what Pericles had praised as admirably fearless; while the consequence of the disposition is agreed upon – danger for the Athenians – Pericles presents it as nobly self-sacrificial, while Cleon presents it as foolish.

Next, we recall Pericles' praise of the thoughtfulness of Athens' deliberative assemblies. In speaking of them, he claimed that "we do not consider that it is speeches that are harmful to action, but rather the absence of prior instruction through speech concerning the things that we must do" (2.40.2), and he drew a connection between the practice of giving speeches and Athenian virtue. For he argued that while "for others boldness is ignorance," the Athenians are "most daring" because they "reflect on the things we mean to attempt," "best" because they "know most clearly the terrible and the pleasant things, and do not on account of these turn away from risks" (2.40.3). That is, the clear-sightedness fostered by speech-making not only contributes to sensible policy, but also elevates the Athenians' virtue above that of all others, because it grounds that virtue in an apparent awareness of its true demands and consequences. In contrast to Pericles and despite his own flair for the art, Cleon disparages the effects of speeches and the motives of those who make and admire them. As we have seen, he connects the current debate about Mytilene with the undermining of law generally, and rails against "clever" speechmakers and their fawning audiences: in contrast to "simpler people," who are "impartial" judges of the city's affairs and who "manage cities better," the clever, in consequence of their frivolous desire for "the brief pleasure" of recognition, play at the city's affairs as "contestants" in some sort of game and thereby "many times cause the fall of their cities" (3.37.3-5, 3.40.3). Worse still, Cleon indicates that the clever are wont actively to seek to deceive the people, to the city's peril and for the sake of "gain" (3.38.2); because this claim follows closely upon the

charge that the clever on this occasion are acting "for the sake of [the Mytilenians], who have committed the injustice" (3.38.1), the deception and gain he refers to are suggestive of sedition. Thus, the public practice that most manifests Athenian thoughtfulness, which Pericles praised as most noble, is reduced by Cleon to a means of petty grasping, if not to the agent of the city's demise.

This strike against the Athenians' sense of their nobility is closely related to another. For, as we have seen, Cleon's condemnation of speeches is bound up with condemnation of those who make them and therewith of an able and influential segment of the Athenian population. Consequently, while Cleon's preliminary assertion of the absence of fear and "plotting" (3.37.1) among the Athenian citizenry suggests agreement with Pericles (2.37.1-2) as to the happy character of Athenian domestic life, his vilification of the clever encourages a very different impression. The divisiveness Cleon seeks to foment stands in stark contrast to the spirit fostered by Pericles, whose criticism of his political opponents was generally confined to the substance of their arguments,[43] whose criticism of the Athenians more broadly took the form of calls to live up to the high standards demanded by their own greatness, and whose praise of the Athenians was inclusive of the whole city – to such an extent that his funeral oration scarcely referred to the particular accomplishments of the fallen, emphasizing instead those praiseworthy deeds and qualities which, if they did not already belong to everyone in his audience, were at least in principle available to them (2.36.3, 2.37-2.43). By thus extending his praise to the entire city, Pericles strengthened his case for devotion to Athens, which was to be considered noble, after all, because of the noble character and achievements of her people. By assailing groups of

[43] One exception is the slight Pericles gives to his opponents who desire to end the war, as he accuses them of "seeking to play the honest man," which, he says, they do out of fear. He also says they are suited to "living safely in slavery" (2.63.2).

citizens -- particularly the talented and influential who are most responsible for leading the city -- as devious if not outright subversive, Cleon tends to undercut his audience's sense of the city's worthiness. Similarly, by reducing the city to a collection of competing factions, Cleon undermines the sense of strength which was augmented by the impression of unity Pericles conveyed and which seemed to be an essential support of the nobility he fostered, as we suggested in the previous chapter.

The other side of Cleon's attack of the few is his flattery of the many, which constitutes a further break with Pericles' emphasis on nobility. This is the case because essential to nobility, at least the highest nobility, is the self-sacrifice we understand it to demand; indeed, Pericles suggested that the Athenians prize their freedom above all because it makes possible such sacrifice (2.40.2, 2.42-2.43.2). While Pericles enjoined and extoled great sacrifice, as well as its less glamorous cousin, self-restraint, Cleon does not. While all of Pericles' speeches made great demands of the Athenians, and encouraged them to understand their actions in these terms, Cleon's asks that they recall the passion they felt yesterday and act to satisfy it. It is true that Cleon presents his directive to punish the whole of Mytilene as a tough one that requires resisting the sway of pity and guilt and avoiding, not merely imprudence, but "weakness" (3.37.2) – an account which contains some truth and which is instructive in its illustration, however dim, of Athenian attachment to strength and self-command. However, much more prominent is Cleon's effort to work the Athenians into a vengeful passion and induce them to act on it, that is, to give them back an itch and encourage them to scratch it. By focusing on the gratification of desires for vengeance which are, though rooted in the concern for justice and therefore perhaps defensible, still rather base, Cleon appeals to what is easy, impulsive, and low in his audience. This constitutes a kind of flattery that breaks with the Periclean emphasis on demanding

sacrifice. Indeed, even the apparent browbeating Cleon gives his audience is shot through with flattery of the many, whom he is most concerned to address (3.36.6), as he faults the simple for having too little esteem for simplicity, and for being generally too good to others.[44] In any event, Cleon does not exhort the Athenians to any substantial effort, instead assuring them that the appetite that so moved them yesterday accords well with both prudence and justice.

Given these features of the speech, it is unsurprising that it also lacks Pericles' emphasis on a shining goal or purpose for the sake of which the Athenians should act. As there is no call for sacrifice, so there is no call for devotion to an object, however mysterious or complicated, that warrants such sacrifice. It is true that Cleon does speak of justice and advantage, not inconsiderable objects of striving. However, putting aside for the moment the question of advantage, Cleon's just cause, as we have seen, is hardly an elevated one, and there is little other elevated purpose to be found in the speech; even his appeal to lawfulness is brief and rather ugly, focused as it is on attacking the clever and arousing fears of revolution. Cleon does not follow Pericles in urging the Athenians to dedicate themselves entirely, even erotically, to the greatest city that has ever been (2.43) – a failure that is predictable, given Cleon's denigration of various aspects of Athenian character and practice that supported Pericles' assertion of the splendor and worthiness of Athens. This difference is perhaps underscored by the fact that Cleon goes further in denouncing the Athenian empire than did Pericles, even at his harshest. It is true that both Pericles and Cleon speak openly, at times, of Athenian tyranny (2.63.2; 3.37.2), despite having at

[44] Cf. Mabel Lang, who argues that Cleon is, in fact, an enemy of the people and perhaps even a secret oligarch. However, much of her evidence for this claim, based as it is on an overly sanguine view of democracy, is unpersuasive: "…he played on the fears of the people, appealed to their baser side, sneered at reasoning…Surely this marks him out as no democrat" (Lang 1972, 162-169). A similarly optimistic view of democracy is suggested by H.D. Westlake, who, in discussing Cleon's jeremiad against clever speakers, refers to the following "incongruity" in Thucydides' presentation: "to modern readers this tirade against sophistic rhetoric strikes a slightly ludicrous note, because the language and style in which it is delivered are precisely those used by the practitioners of sophistic rhetoric" (Westlake 1968, 63). Both Lang and Westlake, then, suggest the strangeness of Thucydides' suggestions that a leader of the demos could act nastily or hypocritically, but this is not confirmed by experience.

other times depicted Athens as remarkably generous in her treatment of other cities (2.40.4; 3.39.1-2). However, Pericles brought up this consideration only during a time of very great distress in Athens – the Athenians' land had twice been laid waste by the Spartans, they were suffering from the plague, and they were described by Thucydides as "entirely at a loss" -- in order to keep the city from capitulating under dangerous conditions to Sparta, as, in her panic, she was inclined to do (2.59). Yet, even under these conditions, in which Pericles had to stress the danger that such a surrender would entail, he limited himself to the suggestion that Athens' empire would be dangerous to let go because it was "like a tyranny," and muddied the waters further by buffering his striking claim on either side with quiet suggestions of Athenian virtue, thus moderating its effect (2.63.1-3). In contrast, Cleon says, without any ambiguity, that the Athenian empire is a tyranny (3.37.2). He also follows this assertion with an exposition of the unattractive mechanism by which the empire is held together, stressing that Athens' subjects are held down, against their will, out of fear, and certainly not because of any gratitude (3.37.2-3). Thus, while Pericles made essentially the same point and for a similar purpose – to persuade the Athenians not to attempt conciliatory measures with their enemies because they will fail and bring great danger – he treaded more lightly, not dwelling on such considerations as the feelings of Athens' subjects, and taking care to allude to Athenian nobility.

Neither does Cleon encourage in the Athenians the great hopes that Pericles did: he does not arouse a longing for a condition of surpassing goodness of the kind we observed especially in the funeral oration. As we noted in the previous chapter, this condition seemed to involve, in particular, the attainment of eternal glory (2.43.2-3). Cleon does not speak of such glory; though he mentions honor a few times, he does so only in the context of blaming the Athenians for their excessive honor of the Mytilenians and the clever, (3.39.2 and 5, 3.38.5), and of recalling the

Athenians to their original state of vengeful wrath ("bringing to mind as clearly as possible how…you honored above all the prospect of subduing them" [3.40.7]). This omission of honor or glory as the great good to which the Athenians aspire is also intelligible, given the connection in Pericles' speeches between hopes for such goods and a sense of nobility – a connection to which we will return later in the chapter.

From all this we see that Cleon does not foster, and in various ways he undermines, the Athenians' sense of their nobility, to which Pericles paid substantial attention. Consideration of this difference points us in the direction of another. For in Pericles' speeches, appeals to noble sacrifice were always attended by appeals to necessity; while we observed earlier that Cleon does refer in certain ways to necessity, we see that here, too, he emphasizes it much less than Pericles did. The clearest example of this has already been mentioned, namely, Cleon's overwhelming emphasis on righteous indignation. For, as we have said, one can only be blamed for what one has freely chosen to do; therefore, the notion that human action is determined, at least in the most important cases, by necessity – a notion explicitly stated by the Athenian envoys to Sparta before the war and implicitly supported by much of Pericles' rhetoric -- precludes the possibility of moral indignation (1.75.3). In contrast to the Peloponnesians, then, who dwelled on Athenian injustice, Pericles generally portrayed the enemies of Athens as bound by necessity, stressing the Peloponnesians' material capabilities and generally neglecting to speak of their vice or base motives (1.141.3-5). Similarly, he tended to portray their actions as the predictable outcome of forces visible to all. For example, in speaking of their invasion of Attica, Pericles did not give any impression of Spartan reprehensibility, saying only that they did "what was likely (*eikos*) when you were not willing to yield" [2.64.1]). Though Cleon's portrayal of the Mytilenean revolt also tends occasionally toward the necessary and thus the exculpatory – "for those cities

are wont to come to hubris which come most unexpectedly and in a short time to success…it is the nature of human beings to have contempt for those who flatter them but to admire those who do not yield" (3.39.4-5) (3.39.4-5) – he far more strongly exhorts the Athenians to moral blame of those he blasts as willfully having sought to repay kindness with destruction. Therefore, while Cleon does evince an understanding of the principle that moral indignation depends upon freedom, and points occasionally to constraints of human nature that would seem, on the basis of this principle, to preclude such indignation, he does not give voice to these implications to the degree that Pericles does, but instead spends the majority of his speech denying them.

Cleon's explicit attack on speech-making and his elevation of ignorance (3.37.3-5, 3.38.3-7) also mark a departure from Pericles' emphasis on necessity. As mentioned, Pericles' praise of Athenian speeches serves in part to confirm the impressiveness of Athenian noble daring, which Pericles describes as thoughtfully pursued and thus undertaken in full awareness of virtue's costs; however, claims like "we do not consider that it is speeches that are harmful to action, but rather the absence of prior instruction through speech concerning the things that we must do" (2.40.2) surely also serve to demonstrate and encourage a general orientation by reason or necessity – an orientation with which Cleon breaks and which he even openly attacks.

Of a piece with Cleon's attack on thoughtfulness is his failure, in pushing the Athenians towards a given course of action, to clarify the dictates of necessity and thus the limits to which Athens is subject, or to take an inventory of the resources at her disposal. In other words, Cleon, in contrast to Pericles, does little in the way of moving the Athenians to consideration of what aims are possible and desirable, and of how, concretely, they might be accomplished. For while he briefly encourages the Athenians to reflect on the imprudence, as he sees it, of reducing Mytilene's punishment, and does offer an argument for this position, he devotes considerably

less attention to making his case than he does to inflaming indignation against Mytilene. This is seen, first, in the time he spends spelling out his argument. Cleon dedicates only a small portion of his speech to any consideration of Athenian advantage, and what case he makes is light on specifics. His argument that treating Mytilene with clemency will encourage other revolts -- his primary exposition of the concrete harm the Athenians will suffer if they do not heed him -- is contained in two (admittedly long) sentences (3.39.7-8). If we add to this his closing repetition of this argument (3.40.8), his other observations concerning the general danger of being generous to allies (3.37.2-3, 3.39.5, 3.40.4,6), and his earlier reflections on the domestic disadvantages of reconsidering any decided matter (3.37.3) and of being enamored of speeches (3.38.4, 7), we will have accounted for less than one quarter of the speech. Secondly, Cleon undermines what case he does make by pointing out the failure of Mytilene to have been deterred from revolting by the lesson provided by neighbors who revolted unsuccessfully and met with harsh consequences (3.39.3). The example of Mytilene is in no way damning for Cleon's argument; that some cities will not be deterred by the threat of harsh punishment does not mean that all will not, and surely many will.[45] However, Cleon does not make this point or other similar ones, and in the absence of further discussion or evidence, what stands out is that his principal argument is contradicted by the example most on everyone's minds -- a defect that his opponent, Diodotus, ably exploits (3.45-3.46).

Thus, it is clear that Cleon's emphasis on calculation is limited in both length and thoroughness, in what marks a considerable change from the practice of Pericles. For while we have noted that Pericles at times did not encourage the Athenians to careful calculation, and in fact seemed even to spurn it (2.40.5, 2.39.1), it is also the case that he frequently recalled the

[45] See A.G. Woodhead, who argues that Cleon's policy is "direct and sensible" (Woodhead 1960, 299-300).

Athenians' minds to necessity, and encouraged them to careful consideration of the possibilities available to them, taking thorough stock of their existing resources, and emphasizing that confidence should be based on such considerations. For example, Pericles emphasized several times that the Athenians should understand war with Sparta to be a necessity (1.144.3, 2.61.1, 2.60.4), devoted nearly twice the space in his pre-war speech to detailing the particulars of his city's strategic position vis-à-vis the enemy than did his Peloponnesian counterpart (1.141.2-1.143.1; 1.121.2-1.122.2), and, in later reminding the Athenians of their naval superiority to the Peloponnesians, encouraged them to take confidence in his advice as "a judgment grounded upon the things in existence" rather than "hope, which is the strength of those who are at a loss" (2.62.5). This strong emphasis in the exposition of his war strategy on "the things in existence," that is, evident powers the Athenians possess, stands in stark contrast to the disposition manifested by the Athenians after Pericles' death, in which their leading statesman speaks hardly at all of these things and the city as a whole harbors the belief that such considerations are entirely irrelevant to her, as we will consider at greater length below (4.65). Indeed, we now note that, in the funeral oration, Pericles' neglect and even discouragement of calculation was confined in important ways: for when he explicitly directed the Athenians to eschew calculation, he was speaking to individual Athenians about their devotion to the city, which does not imply a lack of calculation as to the city's needs; individual Athenians are to fight nobly and uncalculatingly for Athens, doing "the needful things" for the city as a whole (2.43.1). To the extent that Pericles encouraged the Athenians to understand Athens as a whole as strikingly uncalculating towards other cities, it is important to recall that these remarks did not occur in a speech whose purpose was to explicate foreign policy, as was the aim of Pericles' pre-war and post-plague speeches, but rather to honor Athens' fallen. This is not at all to deny the

importance of Pericles' remarks in the funeral oration, but only to point out that while they surely drew on and contributed to the Athenians' beautiful understanding of their city, they did so in a context that somewhat limited their direct effects on Athenian foreign policy.

Thus, while Cleon follows Pericles, to some degree, in encouraging the Athenians to understand themselves in terms of necessity and noble sacrifice, to a much greater extent he breaks with this orientation. If we turn now to Cleon's deeds and to those undertaken by the Athenians under his direction, we will find a connection between these deeds and Cleon's rhetoric, which will suggest the importance of his rhetorical break with Pericles. It will also begin to elucidate Thucydides' suggestion as to the deterioration of Athens under Cleon's leadership, as well as offer insight into what Thucydides indicates to be a volatile and perhaps inescapable propensity of human nature, namely, to desire a limitless good.

Cleon's Deeds

Thucydides indicates that, following his failed efforts with respect to Mytilene, Cleon plays a key role in several significant developments in Athens' prosecution of the war and maintenance of her empire. The first and arguably most important of these is Athens' confrontation with Sparta at Sphacteria and Pylos. The conflict arises when the Athenians establish a garrison in the Peloponnesian territory of Pylos. The initiative to fortify Pylos is conceived by Demosthenes and is initially met with resistance from the other Athenian generals who have made a brief stop there on their way to Sicily, as well as from the other Athenian men present (4.4.1-2). However, a weather delay and the restlessness it produces in the Athenians finally induce them to heed Demosthenes' advice and build the fortification, the eventual result of which is to strand the Spartans on the other side of it, on the island of Sphacteria just off Pylos' coast (4.4, 4.14-15, 4.21). The Spartans, terrified at the prospect of losing the men on the

island (4.15.1), offer to end the broader war on terms very favorable to the Athenians, asking only that the men on the island be released. Thucydides tells us that the Athenians reject this offer, however, because "on the one hand, they held that, having the men on the island, peace could be at hand whenever they wished to make it, and, on the other hand, they were grasping for more" (4.21.2). The Athenians are encouraged to this rejection by Cleon, who, Thucydides again reminds us, is "most persuasive with the many at that time" (4.21.3). Thucydides describes his intrigues thus: after the Spartans offer to end the war, Cleon persuades the Athenians to make additional demands of them. The Spartans make no immediate answer to these demands, but request to be allowed to send a few representatives to discuss the matter in private. Cleon responds to this request by asserting that he had known before that the Spartans "had no just purpose" but that their refusal to speak before the many has clearly exposed them, and by commanding them, "if they have some sound purpose," to make it plain to all (4.22.2). The Spartans, seeing that they could not make public certain proposals which, if the treaty did not come to pass, would cause them serious injury with the allies they would be attempting to abandon in return for peace, and moreover perceiving that the Athenians simply "would not grant what they proposed on tolerable terms" (4.22.3), give up and return home.

We will pause here, at the end of the first chapter of the Pylos and Sphacteria affair, to make a few observations. Though Thucydides does not present Cleon's speech to us in direct discourse, he is clear about what Cleon persuades the Athenians to do and the general terms in which he persuades them to do it, and through his brief narration, Thucydides reminds us of much that he made plain in Cleon's Mytilene speech. First, Cleon again accomplishes his aims in part by appealing to righteous indignation, as he prevents private negotiations by charging that the Spartans' motives for seeking them are unjust. We again find democratic flattery here as

well, for Cleon's evidence of Spartan injustice is nothing other than their unwillingness to speak before the many, which, he implies, is something any decent person would be willing to do under any circumstances. The mark of injustice, as well as unsound policy, is thus indicated to be any exclusion from negotiation, however temporary, of the demos – a suggestion whose obsequiousness and baselessness is particularly striking in light of Thucydides' clear indication as to the reasonableness of the Spartan request it is intended to attack.

Thus, we see that Cleon again demands nothing of the Athenians while indirectly suggesting that justice and "soundness" are on their side, pushes them to act out of indignation, and does not encourage them to serious consideration of their advantage – in fact, he apparently does not speak at all about the potential advantages of ending the war at no cost other than the release of a few Spartans, as he dismisses the Spartan peace offer on no grounds other than the motive (speciously asserted) of those making it. Perhaps Cleon does evince concern for Athenian advantage through the additional demands he makes of the Spartans: he commands them to return several cities to Athens which had not belonged to her during this war but which she had captured from Sparta some time ago and then returned as part of an earlier peace agreement (1.115.1), and he allows that, after these measures are taken, treaty negotiations may begin (4.11.3). Yet, Thucydides says nothing regarding why these cities are of such interest as to warrant risking continued unwanted war with Sparta; indeed, not only have the Athenians not held these cities since a previous war, but apparently they have not mentioned them since.[46] This suggests that Cleon's demands are not the consequence of much reflection on the Athenians' imperial or war aims or on the means required to achieve those aims. That is, Thucydides does

[46] At one point in the interim, the Athenians did stop by one of the cities, Troezen, to lay waste to the land (2.56.5), but this was only one territory among many to receive such treatment, and did not seem to be singled out in any way as a particular object of interest.

not indicate that Cleon and the Athenians he leads are here attentive to the dictates of reason or necessity, at least insofar as these demand the articulation of some kind of goal and the means required to achieve it. This is further suggested by Thucydides' acknowledgment that the Spartans "saw…that the Athenians would not grant what they proposed on tolerable terms" (4.22.3). This indicates a general disinclination on the part of the Athenians to consider seriously negotiating with the Spartans; following as it does Thucydides' suggestion that the Spartan request for private negotiations was a reasonable one, and with no contrary evidence to suggest some misunderstanding on the Spartans' part, it confirms the striking recklessness of the Athenians' actions. Finally, Thucydides' claim that the Athenians are disposed to reject the peace because they believe that "having the men on the island, peace could be ready at hand whenever they wished to make it, and on the other hand, they were grasping for more" (4.21.2) is perhaps the clearest indication of Athenian recklessness. Thucydides will go on to make clear how baseless is the Athenians' opinion that peace will always be readily available to them; as to the suggestion that they "were grasping for more," this unspecified desire proves to be a prominent and rather mysterious phenomenon to which Thucydides makes repeated reference and to which we will return later in the chapter. However, for now we note that this vague reference to a desire whose object is not terribly clear, whatever else it implies, surely also indicates a haziness of purpose that is fostered by or at least at home among Cleon's encouragements, direct and indirect, of mindlessness or inattention to reason or necessity.

Following the failed peace negotiations, hostilities recommence at Pylos, and Thucydides tells us that while the Spartan men continue to be stranded on the island, the burden of keeping them there begins to weigh heavily on the Athenian army, who lack food and water and who have "the greatest lack of spirit" on account of how long the siege is taking, given that they had

expected the Spartans to surrender quickly (4.23; 4.26). Back at home, the Athenians grow alarmed at the situation, especially because the Spartans have ceased extending offers of peace to them, and they regret having rejected the earlier proposal (4.27.1-2). Cleon, "knowing that their suspicion was directed against him for having prevented the treaty," announces that the messengers who had brought the report from Pylos are lying (4.27.3). To this, the messengers respond that Cleon should go to Pylos and see things for himself. Realizing that in such a scenario he will be compelled either to return from Pylos with the same report given by those he has slandered or to insist on what is manifestly a lie, and observing the Athenians to be somewhat more desirous than they had been previously of sending an expedition to Pylos, he begins chastising them not to let a good opportunity slip away through their dithering, but, if they believe the messengers' reports, to sail out and capture the men on the island – an "easy" thing, at least "if the generals were men," and just what he himself would have done, had he been general (4.27.3-5).

The Athenians retort that if it were such an easy thing, why did Cleon not do it himself, and Nicias, an enemy of Cleon and one of the generals he had just mocked, perceives this and offers to surrender his generalship to Cleon, encouraging him to take whatever forces he wishes and sail to Pylos. To this Cleon at first agrees, not believing the talk to be serious, but upon realizing that Nicias really means to do it he grows frightened and insists that Nicias is general, not he (4.28.1-3). However, as Thucydides reports, "the more he tried to evade [having to] sail, and retreat from what he said, the more they…shouted at him to sail," "as a crowd loves to do" (4.28.3). Thus cornered, Cleon resorts to greater bluster: he does not fear the Spartans, and not only will he lead the expedition, but he will either capture or destroy them, without the use of any forces apart from those Athenians already at Pylos and some foreign reinforcements -- and

this in twenty days or less (4.28.3-5). The Athenians laugh at this "light talk," but so it is decided, and "the moderate" or "sensible" human beings "were pleased nonetheless, reckoning that this would bring about one of two good things": the capture of the men or, better still, Cleon's death (4.28.5).

However, despite the inauspicious beginning of his Pylos adventure, Cleon goes on to disappoint his enemies after all. Enlisting the invaluable support of Demosthenes – who is aided by prudence acquired from a previous disaster (3.96-3.98; 4.29.2-4.30.1) as well as by fortune (4.30.2-3; 4.34.2-3; 4.36.2) -- he helps lead the Athenians to best the Spartans in battle and provoke their surrender. To everyone's surprise, then, Cleon makes good on his promise after all, "madness" though it was (4.39.3), as Thucydides notes.

Restricting ourselves for the moment to a consideration of how Cleon ends up in Pylos against his will, we observe several similarities between his earlier appeals to the Athenians and his rhetoric here, summarized by Thucydides. First, as he had previously assailed the character of the clever, the Mytilenians, and the Spartan envoys, so here Cleon tries to arouse indignation by condemning the messengers from Pylos as liars, before moving on to charge Nicias with effeminacy. Secondly, we note that Cleon again fails to indicate that he proposes anything of difficulty for the Athenians, or rather, in this case, he actively denies it. As the Athenians' laughter makes clear, this appeal is not especially successful this time, and what Cleon and Demosthenes accomplish is in fact difficult and impressive, and recognized as such (4.40.1). Still, Cleon nonetheless presents his proposal in these terms, repeatedly maintaining that what he calls for is "easy," and he does not seem to make any demands of his audience to contribute to it, as we recall that when Nicias apparently puts at his disposal the whole of Athens' forces, Cleon

does not take him up on the offer, preferring instead to restrict the effort to those already at Pylos and a few foreign allies.

Prior to Pylos, then, Cleon's failure to appeal to necessity or calculation is again manifest: there is no indication that Cleon's estimation of the possibility, let alone the "ease," of what he proposes is the result of any consideration of Athens' actual circumstances or resources – or, as Pericles might have put it, of "consideration of the things in existence" (2.62.5). That the Athenians react to him with laughter and that Thucydides explicitly judges Cleon's promise to be "madness" attest to this, if such attestation is needed. However, apart from their judgment, shared by Thucydides, as to the foolishness of Cleon's proposal, Cleon's audience manifests its own striking want of reflection. This is seen, for example, in the way the Athenians goad Cleon into the expedition: once it becomes clear that he has no desire to carry out what he has proposed, thus depriving the mission of its chief supporter and discrediting himself, the crowd responds by clamoring all the more for Cleon to attempt it. Thus it seems that the more certain they become that Cleon's powers are weaker than he represented them, the harder they push to expand his authority and put in his hands the fate of a conflict important enough that the Spartans recently tried to end the war over it.

In this way, the Athenians, or a significant portion of them, are shown to make an important foreign policy decision based largely on the desire to embarrass or punish, rather than out of considerations of prudence -- a tendency that Cleon himself has manifested and encouraged in his audience. It is true that, in his description of how the Athenians pressure Cleon to assume command, Thucydides notes that they act "as a crowd loves to do," perhaps thereby indicating that the many, at least, will always act in this way and thus casting doubt on the suggestion that such inattentiveness to reason is somehow the result of Cleon's influence. It

is still the case, however, that a leader can inflame or restrain such tendencies, and that Cleon, in contrast to Pericles, has surely done the former. Indeed, the esteemed and accomplished Nicias – hardly a member of the "crowd" – also manifests something of what we have observed in the many. For while it may be prudent to send Cleon into danger – we recall Thucydides' explicit judgment that getting rid of Cleon was something hoped for by "the sensible" or "moderate"– is there not something unsound about ceding to such a man the generalship and "urging him to take any forces whatsoever he wished," with which to attempt an expedition all of Athens found laughable? For this Nicias does; that such a move was not at all anticipated by Cleon is perhaps as suggestive of the former's lack of foresight as the latter's. Thus, even among parts of the Athenian elite, there appears in this instance a lack of seriousness as to considerations of safety and advantage, which accords with what we have observed of Cleon's rhetoric.

Finally, we note that Cleon's difficulty begins when he perceives that the Athenians' "suspicion was directed against him" (4.27.3), which suspicion arose because he had discouraged them from accepting the Spartan peace treaty. It is Cleon's awareness of this suspicion that prompts him to lie about the Pylos messengers, and it is from this lie that the rest of his trouble follows. That Cleon would have become an object of mistrust for preventing a peace that seems clearly desirable is reasonable. Perhaps it is the case that, however nonsensical his lie about Pylos, it is not as if he is in a position to make a truly compelling defense of his previous advice, rather than resorting to distracting the Athenians from it. Yet, one might wonder why Cleon did not at least attempt some defense of the earlier policy that Athens had come only recently to regret. For however limited the case available to him, would such an argument have been obviously less desirable than a lie that was immediately refutable? After all, the deed was done, and it would not have been unreasonable to give the Athenians some confidence in their previous

decision, given that they were stuck with it. Additionally, we have witnessed on earlier occasions the souring of Athenian opinion regarding the continuation of a war it had previously approved, and a subsequent return to confidence, for example, in Thucydides' account of how Pericles persuaded the Athenians to go to war, how they came to regret this decision, and how Pericles acknowledged this regret, overcame it, and persuaded them to continue fighting (1.140-144, 2.60-2.64). Why, then, does Cleon not attempt to defend the course of action, however stupid, that the Athenians had pursued at his direction, once they were no longer in a mood to approve it? That is, why he did not follow Pericles in reminding the Athenians that they had supported the decision no less than he (2.60.4), or in explaining that, while difficulties like the present one will invariably arise, Athens is certainly capable of pressing on with the war (2.62) (a claim that would have turned out to be true, as the subsequent 20-odd years of war effort attest)?

In considering this question, we are reminded of Thucydides' comparison between Pericles and his successors, in which he distinguishes Pericles especially by his ability to "oppose…and even anger" the Athenians (2.65.8). Thucydides attributes this capacity to Pericles' "manifest" virtue (2.65.8). That is, he stresses that Pericles was capable of opposing a given mood of the Athenians, not simply because he was virtuous, but because his virtue was clearly recognizable to them; the Athenians trusted Pericles, and they trusted him because he was "most incorruptible" and "did not seek power improperly by speaking for the sake of their pleasure" (2.65.8). This suggests that the Athenians take their confidence in a given course of action at least in part from their idea of the virtuousness of the person promoting it. Thus it is not enough, when addressing the Athenian (or most likely any) assembly, merely to argue the merits of a particular case; one must also show oneself to be virtuous. This suggestion is confirmed by Pericles' attempts to persuade the Athenians to continue the war. He did not simply

remind them that they previously supported it and explain why persistence was both possible and desirable; he did both these things, but he also stressed his own patriotism, superiority to the influence of money, and loyalty, and offered these as evidence that the Athenians should heed him (2.60.4-6). This suggests that the Athenians did not fully grasp Pericles' argument for continuing the war, or that his argument was somehow insufficient for them; in the absence of this understanding or acceptance, they were moved to confidence in the war effort in part by trust in Pericles' virtue, and thus perhaps by a kind of confidence in virtue simply, as we discussed in the previous chapter.

From these considerations we see more clearly Cleon's predicament and some of the consequence of his failures to appeal in speech to nobility, as Pericles frequently did. For while it is surely true that Pericles' virtue became manifest in no small part because of his actions, such as offering to make his home public property in the event that Sparta did not destroy it (2.13.1), it is likely also the case that his speech, which contained frequent appeals to nobility and avoided attacks on his political opponents, contributed further to the virtuous impression the Athenians had of him. As we saw above, Thucydides confirms the importance of such appeals in speech by noting the significance of the fact that Pericles abstained from flattery to the Athenians' trust in him (2.65.8). Thus, it seems that Cleon's flattery, calumny, and other base appeals, while obviously moving to the Athenians, may not go unnoticed by them and are not without their price, as Cleon himself seems at least somewhat aware. Though Cleon's formidable influence confirms that these appeals are powerful, they may also leave a certain unfavorable impression that hinders Cleon from attaining the influence that Pericles did. [47] It is likely for this reason, at

[47] See Cleon's own observation on this subject, from his speech at Mytilene: "it is the nature of human beings to have contempt for those who flatter them but to admire those who do not yield" (3.39.5).

least in part, that Cleon does not understand himself to be capable of opposing the Athenians in their newfound discouragement about continuing the war, and instead pursues a foolish distraction.

Several of the features emphasized in Thucydides' treatment of Cleon thus far are similarly prominent in his remaining accounts of Cleon's exploits, which are directed against the cities of Scione, Torone, Stagirus, and Galepsus, all of which formerly belonged to the Athenians but were brought over to the Spartans by Brasidas. These are the only examples of Athenian action that Thucydides explicitly identifies as having been directed by Cleon following his involvement with Mytilene and Pylos. As to Scione, Thucydides tells us that its citizens, being "stirred up" or "elated" by the words of Brasidas (4.120-4.121), are persuaded to revolt from Athens. When the Athenians discover this, they are "enraged" at the Scionians' audacity and instantly determine to move against them: "persuaded by the judgment of Cleon, the Athenians immediately voted to destroy Scione" (4.122.5-6).[48] Following this, Cleon persuades the Athenians to allow him to make an expedition to Thrace. When he arrives at the Thracian city of Torone, "upon learning that Brasidas was not in Torone and that the inhabitants were not a match for him in battle," he attacks them (5.2); Athens takes the city, at which point Cleon and the Athenians set up trophies and enslave the Toronean women and children (5.3.4). Cleon then sails to Athos in order to launch an attack on Amphipolis (4.102-4.105). On his way there, he attempts but fails to retake Stagirus, and successfully reacquires Galepsus (5.6.1-2). As to Amphipolis herself, Cleon intends to delay his attack until reinforcements arrive, but is deterred from his plan and "compelled" to act prior to when he thinks it best to do so. The circumstances

[48] When the city of Mende learns that Scione had revolted, her citizens grow bold and follow suit, in response to which the Athenians are "far more enraged, and immediately make preparations against both cities" (4.123.3). Cleon is not explicitly mentioned in connection with the Mende affair, though it is likely that his influence is felt there.

of the compulsion are that "[Cleon's] soldiers became annoyed by the inactivity and began to consider his leadership, what experience and daring [the enemy had] and what ineptitude and cowardice would go against it, and how unwillingly they had come with him from home" (5.7.2). When Cleon becomes aware of their complaints, "not wishing that they should be distressed by remaining inactive in the same place" (5.7.2), he proceeds to attack. The result is that Cleon's army is routed by Brasidas, who had anticipated his movements, and that Cleon is killed. In these accounts, then, as in earlier accounts of Cleon's exploits, Thucydides again shows the Athenians under Cleon acting out of rage, Cleon failing to oppose the Athenians when they become displeased with him, and all embarking on an unreasonable course of action in part as a result of Cleon's surrender to his men's displeasure.

Thus Thucydides suggests something of the importance of Cleon's departure from Pericles' emphasis on necessity and nobility in guiding the affairs of the Athenians. For following Pericles' death we observe a leader explicitly and implicitly less oriented by reason and a city correspondingly less reasonable in her actions. Indeed, that Thucydides presents only one speech of Cleon in direct discourse and no speeches of an Athenian in Athens in the whole of Book Four perhaps reflects the diminished status of reason in the city at this time. Athens' missteps in this period follow in large part from dispositions that Cleon's rhetoric encourages and Pericles' restrained, such as to blind indignation and carelessness in deliberation, and, more generally, to an understanding of sound policy as easy and undemanding. This last, which is certainly a temptation for all human beings, Pericles combated by stressing the great demands of necessity and calling forth the effort to rise to its challenges, not only by fostering the Athenians' attention to necessity but also by appealing to their sense of their own nobility. This sense of nobility was strengthened, it seems, by the very impression Pericles conveyed of the difficulty

and unpleasantness of his demands, that is, by the manifest difficulty of the nature of the tasks themselves and by Pericles' rhetorical insistence on their difficulty. It was also strengthened by the beautiful goals Pericles elaborated as the ends of the Athenians' great efforts -- of serving the greatest city that has ever existed and of attaining immortal glory – as well as by the Athenians' trust in the virtue of the spokesman of such efforts and ends. Through his account of these things, then, Thucydides suggests a connection between the contrasting rhetoric of Pericles and Cleon, and the contrasting actions we see from Athens under the leadership of each.

"Grasping for More"

However, the above account of how these leaders attend to or neglect nobility raises a perplexing question about the Athenians' imperial ambition. For it appeared from Pericles' rhetoric that central to Athenian imperialism is an attachment to noble sacrifice and a hopefulness that arises from it, as we discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, if the concern for nobility is as central to the Athenians' desire for empire as we have claimed, we might expect that, during a time when this concern is neglected or deemphasized by Athens' most influential leader, that the impetus to imperial adventures might be weaker. In fact, however, we seem to witness the opposite. In contrast to their practice in Pericles' time, in which the Athenians followed his directive not to pursue "freely chosen dangers" (1.144.1) while fighting a great war with Sparta, during the period we are currently considering, the Athenians now begin to pursue empire with less restraint. They launch their first (relatively limited) campaign against Sicily (3.88), and, following the events at Pylos, strike out against other targets with a frequency we have not observed since before the war (4.42-4.46, 4.49, 4.53, 4.57, 4.66, 4.76; cf. 1.07-1.117). Indeed, Brasidas' success in turning so many of Athens' allies against her during this time speaks

to this change, as it is in part Athens' return to energetic imperial expansion, heightening as it did the Greeks' fear of Athens, that makes possible Brasidas' achievements (4.79). How, then, are we to understand this spur to increased imperialism, which is apparently less connected, at least in speech, to the concern for nobility so prominent earlier in the work?

In order to shed light on this question, it is helpful to turn back to another we have briefly noted but not yet elaborated, that is, the question of how better to understand the role of the somewhat indistinct "grasping for more" Thucydides attributes to the Athenians, which he references several times. We first noted it in Thucydides' account of the events at Pylos: there, Thucydides claims that this impulse helps to drive the Athenians' initial rejection of Sparta's peace offer (4.21.2). We now observe that, immediately prior to this, Thucydides shows a Spartan envoy who is attempting to persuade the Athenians to accept the peace explicitly warning them against "grasping for more" (4.17.4). In addition, following the Spartans' later surrender at Pylos, when they repeatedly send envoys to Athens to try to recover their captured men, Thucydides reports that "the Athenians were grasping at greater things, and the envoys came to them many times, and were sent back unsuccessful" (4.41.4). Furthermore, Pagondas, a Theban attempting to persuade the Boeotians to attack the Athenians, characterizes the Athenian activity in Boeotia in these same terms (4.92.3), and indeed, particularly following their victory at Pylos, this does seem an apt characterization of the Athenians' general disposition. Thucydides also makes clear on several occasions that this disposition follows the attainment of great success, in particular, great unexpected success, from which success arises a sense of hope that drives the Athenians to reach for more. A connection between goods that are attained "contrary to expectation" (*para logon, para prosdokias, aprosdokitos*) and a sense of hope is suggested many times, explicitly and implicitly, by Thucydides in his own name and by several

of his speakers; this fact suggests its importance and invites us to study it more carefully. After this consideration, we will be better able to address the question we raised concerning the role of nobility in Athenian imperialism.

Thucydides' most striking statement on unexpected success and hope is found in his account of Athens' first failed adventure in Sicily. Athenian forces, having gone ostensibly to aid certain kinsmen in Sicily in a conflict against other Sicilians, are sent away when the conflict is (temporarily) resolved. The Athenians at home, disappointed because they had planned to use the opportunity to make a conquest of the whole of Sicily, exile or fine all the generals involved in the mission, because they could not believe the failure to subdue Sicily could possibly have resulted from anything other than the generals' corruption (namely, they had been bribed to retreat). As Thucydides explains it, "they used their present good fortune (*eutuchia*) to deem themselves worthy to be opposed in nothing, but even to achieve the more impracticable things (*ta aporotera*) as equivalent to the possible (*ta dunata*), whether with means great or deficient" (4.65.4). He continues, "the cause of this was the great success that came contrary to expectation (*para logon ton pleon eupragia*)," which "gave strength to their hope" (4.65.4). Others, too, make less striking but similar statements regarding this tendency of human beings to become hopeful in the face of unexpected success or good fortune. For example, Cleon says of the Mytilenians that, in developing "hopes beyond their powers," they did only what "is likely," since it is those who "come most to unexpected success (*aposdoketos eupragia*)" through "good fortune"(*eutuchonta*) who turn to "hubris" (3.39.3-4). Additionally, the Spartan envoy noted above, in urging the Athenians to accept the peace, elaborates on his admonition thus: "do not suffer as do those human beings who receive some good unexpectedly (*aethos ti agathon*

lambanontes)," for "these are always led on by hope to grasp at more because of their present unexpected good fortune (*adoketos eutuchesai*)" (4.17.4).

While the character of these hopes is rather mysterious, we observe, first, that however vague their object remains, he suggests that these hopes are very great, extending even to a capacity to fulfill all human desire. This is shown most clearly by his suggestion, noted above, that the Athenians hope to achieve the "more impracticable things as equivalent to the possible" and be "opposed in *nothing*" (2.65.4). Additionally, as these formulations also illustrate, Thucydides indicates that this hopefulness is unreasonable. If this was not sufficiently clear from his depiction of Athens' rejection of the Spartan peace treaty (which was based on a confidence in, among other things, the ready availability of peace at any time), it becomes so from the above description of the Athenians following their first expedition to Sicily. For while success that is the result of great skill or power obviously warrants some measure of confidence in one's capacities, there is certainly no human capacity great enough to merit the expectation that one will be "opposed in nothing" or that one can achieve "the more impracticable as equal to the possible," let alone with "means great or deficient" (4.65.4). Indeed, even in his less spectacular descriptions of this kind of hope, Thucydides still suggests it is unreasonable. For example, he says of the Athenians fighting at Pylos that, prior to the battle, they were frightened at the prospect of facing the Spartans, but that when they saw how few the Spartans were in comparison with themselves and with what they had expected (*tes prosdokias*), the Athenians "conceived the greatest confidence in themselves" and "contempt" for their enemy (4.34.1). But while a degree of confidence was surely warranted by the discovery that the Spartans were less numerous than anticipated, the loss of all fear of them appears excessive, especially in light of

how protracted the battle was (4.35.2-3) and how nearly a failure the effort was that decided it in Athens' favor (4.26.2).

From the battle at Pylos, we also learn that great and excessive hope is not the only possible consequence of unexpected occurrences, as Thucydides shows that unexpected ills foster a similarly great and excessive disappointment or discouragement. The clearest example of this is the Spartan reaction to this battle:

> …the things they suffered on the island had been unexpected/unhoped for (*anelpistou*) and great (4.55.1)…and the turns of fortune (*tes tucheis*), which were many and occurred in a short time and contrary to expectation (*para logon*), brought great consternation to them, and they feared lest at any time some misfortune (*sumphora*) might again come upon (*perituche*) them like that which had happened on the island. And they were more spiritless/less daring (*atolmoteroi*) on account of this in their fighting, and supposed that everything that they set in motion would fail (*amartesesthai*)…(4.55.3-4).

Thus, we see that the Spartans' response to this calamity is to believe that anything else they attempt will fail, an unreasonable reaction on par with the Athenians' belief that anything they attempt will succeed. Although in Thucydides' other examples of reactions to unexpected occurrences the effect is presented as less extreme, it still appears strangely and excessively powerful. For example, of all that troubles the Athenians in their siege of Sphacteria -- including a lack of food, water, and space for the army -- "what produced the greatest lack of spirit was that the time required by the siege was contrary to expectation (*para logon*)," because they had supposed the Spartans would surrender in only a few days (4.26.4). Additionally, during the siege, the Spartans do not surrender until the Athenians sneak up and launch another attack from behind, "suddenly appear[ing]," as Thucydides notes, and "striking them with panic by this unexpected (*to adoketo*) move" (4.36.2).

In this way, Thucydides indicates the curious importance of unexpected events, good or ill. This is not at all to imply that the unexpected nature of the goods and ills described above

accounts wholly for the hope or fear they produce, for it is certainly good and thus reasonably heartening to outnumber an enemy (as the Athenians do at Pylos), and bad and thus reasonably frightening to be attacked by an enemy on two sides (as the Spartans are at Pylos), irrespective of whether one sees these things coming. However, that Thucydides repeatedly points out that such events occur contrary to expectation, and that these claims tend to be closely preceded or followed by references to exaggerated hopes or fears, suggests that there is something peculiar and powerful added by the lack of expectation. Indeed, Pericles also made this point explicitly. In trying to restore the Athenians to confidence and quell their anger at himself after the onset of the plague and the second Spartan invasion of Attica, Pericles explained that the Athenians' minds were too "dejected" to maintain their former resolutions, because "the spirit is enslaved to the sudden or unforeseen (*aiphnidion*) and unexpected (*aposdoketon*), and to what happens most contrary to calculation (*to pleisto paralogo*). And this is what has befallen you, not least with respect to the plague" (2.61.2-3).

The confidence or fear that human beings, on Thucydides' telling, tend to draw from unanticipated events is especially strange given how often those events appear to be the result of, or are even explicitly attributed to, chance (4.65.4, 3.39.3, 4.17.4). For, as the Spartan envoy points out to the Athenians (4.16.5), chance occurrences are by definition unstable and thus an unreasonable basis for judgments or predictions, hopeful or gloomy, about the future. As to those unexpected events not explicitly ascribed to chance, such as those which may seem attributable to one's (hitherto misunderstood) capacities, these should also, perhaps, arouse uncertainty as to what the future will bring. For this sort of event reveals an element of unclarity and thus impotence on the part of those who brought them about. That is, any unexpected result that is not simply the product of chance discloses a lack of foresight, a lack that casts doubt on

the understanding that guided the endeavor and which therefore casts doubt on future endeavors informed by that understanding. As to forming expectations for the future, then, the reasonable reaction to unexpected success or failure would seem to be first to pause and reflect on how to improve one's understanding of one's situation so as to be in a better position to plan, or, in cases that are truly the result of chance, to realize the limits chance imposes on human planning.

Yet, Thucydides suggests that human beings tend not to react in these ways. Given that the reactions described above seem entirely unwarranted as responses to occurrences believed to be accidental, perhaps Thucydides means to indicate that human beings generally do not, in fact, really believe apparently chance occurrences to be the result of blind chance. But then what do they think, and to what do the hopeful or despairing attribute their expectations? Thucydides does not indicate that their outlook is based on a careful consideration of resources, strategic position, or the like; indeed, as we have seen, he suggests that the Athenians believe, at a certain point, they can accomplish anything, irrespective of their resources (4.65.4). One explanation is found by looking again at a few examples of despondency we have already noted. These examples suggest, upon further reflection, the importance of virtue -- or rather, human beings' sense of their virtue -- to the disposition we have identified. For we recall that, when Pericles spoke to the Athenians following the second Spartan invasion and the onset of the plague, he did so not only to buck them up, but to assuage their anger toward him – including anger about the plague. For while Pericles was not, of course, directly the agent of the plague, Thucydides claims that the Athenians were inclined to look on the plague as the fulfillment of an oracle, and to hold Pericles responsible for this and other "misfortunes," thereby indicating that they understood the plague to be a kind of punishment from the gods, presumably for some injustice carried out at Pericles' direction (2.54, 2.59-2.60); Pericles had to work to move them to the

opinion that this great unexpected event was the product of chance, an endeavor in which he perhaps only partially succeeded, as may be shown by the Athenians' refusal to restore his generalship until they had imposed a fine on him (2.65.3). Thucydides makes a similar suggestion regarding the Spartans' near-paralysis following the "unexpected and great" (4.55.1) disaster at Pylos. At a later stage of the war, Thucydides will say of the Spartans that they begin to fight with more spirit than they had before, because they had previously believed themselves guilty of breaking the treaty and thus of starting the war; therefore, they "thought that they had suffered misfortune fairly (*eikotos*)" and "took to heart their misfortune at Pylos and whatever else had befallen them" (7.18.2).

Thus, Thucydides illustrates a tendency of human beings to attribute great ills suffered to a lack of moral virtue, even when the connection between the ill and the virtue in question is not simply apparent. That is, imperialism does not directly produce plagues, and breaking a treaty does not directly produce defeat in battle, but Thucydides suggests that men believed these ills to have followed, somehow, from these vices. The specific character of the beliefs about virtue underlying this tendency is difficult to elaborate. Perhaps Thucydides is pointing to a more or less conscious belief that gods punish a lack of virtue, though it is surely important that he does not put in precisely these terms either of the examples mentioned above. In any event, we limit ourselves to the observation that, on Thucydides' telling, when unexpected ills arise, the experience of moral culpability and strong dejection tend to follow.

Therefore, it is plausible that our reaction to unexpected goods is similarly tied to opinions about our virtue, although Thucydides does not make this as clear. The suggestion that the great hopefulness apparently prompted by unexpected success or good fortune is likewise bound to men's belief in their own virtue also receives support from the resemblance that certain

features or circumstances of this hopefulness bear to what Thucydides earlier ascribed rather clearly to the Athenian's sense of their virtue. For as we noted in the previous chapter, the striking noble hopes Pericles stoked were most apparent when the Athenians had a heightened awareness of their own strength (they were "in the flower of their strength" and had "the largest force ever assembled" and had not yet suffered the reverses of war or the plague [2.22-2.25, 2.30-2.31]), and when the Athenians felt themselves not only to be uncalculating, but to disdain calculation (2.39.1, 2.40.5). The hopes apparently born of unexpected success and good fortune are similarly prominent when the Athenians feel themselves to be very strong (because several successes have fallen into their laps), and when they are being most neglectful of calculation or necessity, as our discussion of Cleon's influence suggested. Indeed, it seems, on reflection, that the Athenians are uncalculating during this time at least in part out of an apparently willful dismissal of or disdain for calculation that reminds of the disdain Pericles encouraged in his funeral oration (2.40.5). Thucydides' description of the Athenians at 4.65 -- they believe they can accomplish anything, the "impracticable" as well as the "possible," with "means great or deficient" -- is suggestive of such disdain, for it indicates that the Athenians are not simply forgetting to consider their material resources and the constraints of possibility, but that they believe, and are encouraged by believing, that these things do not bind them.

This resistance to or disdain for calculation may also be at work in the Athenians' rejection of the Spartans' first peace offer. We recall how strange it seemed that the Athenians declined the offer, especially in light of how paltry were the demands for the sake of which, apparently, they did so. Perhaps this action becomes more intelligible, however, if we consider further Thucydides' statement that the Athenians rejected the offer because "they believed peace could be at hand whenever they wished to make it" (4.21.2). This formulation suggests that they

believed peace with Sparta to be, in general, a good thing, for we do not tend to respond to offers of harm with reflections on how easily we can seek out the harm at a later time. It also suggests some chafing at the notion that they were somehow bound, by circumstance or the Spartans, in their access to this good; that they would reject it on the grounds that it could become theirs whenever they wished may point to the Athenians' rejection of the notion that they are not fully the arbiters of their fate or fully capable of attaining the good they desire. In other words, because the Athenians did not seem to have any substantial or clear object in mind for the sake of which they would forego a peace they regarded as generally good, and in light of Thucydides' particular formulation of their reasoning, it is plausible to suggest that they were repelled, at least in part, by the implication that there was some limit on their capacity to attain what they wanted and thus by any acknowledgement of that limit. Perhaps this disposition also accounts, in part, for the strange power Thucydides attributes to the unexpected. For the attainment of goods that we did not plan for in a way diminishes our sense of the power of human planning and thus of the limits implied by the need to plan or the necessity of calculation; if there is in the Athenians and human beings generally a kind of latent hope for goods beyond what their plans and calculations represent as possible, an unexpected boon could have the effect of validating and thereby strengthening the unarticulated hope to attain a more complete good.

In this way, Thucydides seems to characterize both the hopefulness born of a sense of noble sacrifice and that attributed to unexpected success or fortune as attended or fueled by a disinclination to calculate. Perhaps this similarity between the two kinds of hopefulness, as well as their shared prominence during times of great strength, is related to a third similarity: the strikingly great intensity or extent of both kinds of hope. For as we have observed, both point toward some condition of goodness, beyond what we can attain by any evident powers we

possess, be it the attainment of everlasting glory or freedom from all opposition. Yet, calculation necessarily involves acknowledgment of and reflection on the harsh limits to which we are all subject, which therefore casts doubt on the possibility of attaining a state of transcendent goodness. Thus, it is intelligible that hopes for the greatest goods would be attended by a resistance to such reflections. By the same token, a sense of great strength -- derived from a strong army or a good measure of success -- may suggest to us the possibility of, and thereby intensify the desire for, the more complete good that both kinds of hope seem to promise.

Thus, by indicating these similarities between the hopes he earlier tied to a sense of self-sacrificial virtue and those he later ties to the enjoyment of unexpected success and good fortune, Thucydides suggests a connection between the two; by pointing to the virtue component of the great discouragement human beings are prone to suffer in the face of unexpected ills, Thucydides makes plausible the suggestion that the great hope born of unexpected gains is similarly tied to opinions about virtue, and thereby indicates that the two sorts of hope are even more closely connected. In this way, we see the striking similarity between the hopes driving the Athenians after Pericles' death, at Pylos and in their imperial efforts, and those apparent under and encouraged by Pericles. Indeed, the connection between the two kinds of hope we have discussed is perhaps further reinforced by the fact that Thucydides does not suggest that the ignoble Cleon is directly involved in the activity that most manifests Athenian hopefulness: the expansion of their empire. Cleon is not named among the generals who go to Sicily (Eurymedon, Sophocles, Pythodorus, Laches, Charoeades, Phaeax [3.86, 4.2.2, 5.4-5]), nor is he mentioned in discussions about Sicily. Following the adventure he stumbled into at Pylos, Cleon is involved in the flurry of Athenian activity depicted during this time, but all of his efforts are directed at recovering, and getting vengeance on, those cities that had revolted from Athens

under Brasidas' influence. In other words, the unceasing drive to acquire ever greater rule and to court "freely chosen dangers," central to accounts of Athenian imperial ambition from its greatest spokesman (1.144.1) to its enemies (1.70.8-9), does not seem closely associated with the man who never speaks of great sacrifice, noble devotion to a city of superlative excellence, or the attainment of immortal glory.

This may suggest that Cleon is somehow uncharacteristic of Athens, at least insofar as her imperial striving is concerned. A distance between Cleon and the Athens generally portrayed in Thucydides' work is suggested by the parallel Thucydides draws between Cleon and Brasidas in Book 4, both of whose efforts he describes concurrently and who meet their respective ends in the same battle. Brasidas moves swiftly (4.79.1), manifests a questionable adherence to the truce then in effect by inciting Athens' allies against her (4.122-4.123), and converts these allies with rhetoric that bears a striking resemblance to that of Pericles. For example, his words to the Scionaeans, summarized by Thucydides, remind very much of Pericles in their appeals to necessity and free sacrifice, and in their effect on the audience: in praising the Scionaeans for revolting against Athens, Brasidas tells them that they "did not undaringly await compulsion," but rather "freely joined the side of freedom," a fact which serves to him as "proof that they would endure any other thing, however great, like men"; at these words, the Scionaeans are "elated," and "all alike took courage…and purposed to bear the war willingly"(4.120-4.121). Cleon, in addition to acquiring no new territories and restricting himself to recovering and punishing those who revolted, gives no speeches (in accordance, we recall, with his disdain for the practice), adheres to the letter of the treaty law (he only sails to Thrace after a temporary truce had expired, makes overtures to Perdiccas "in accordance with the alliance" [5.2, 5.6]), is more prone to do battle when he knows the dangerous Brasidas is not nearby (5.2), and prefers

not to attack until reinforcements have arrived, despite being numerically superior (5.10.3, 5.6.3). Indeed, "inactivity" or "remaining quiet" is attributed several times to Cleon during his expedition to Thrace (4.122.6, 5.6.3, 5.7.1-2) – inactivity which, as we have mentioned, is irritable to the other Athenians (5.7.1-2). In this way, Thucydides suggests that Brasidas resembles the Athenians, and Cleon the Spartans – to complete the picture, Thucydides even refers a few times to Cleon's land force (5.2-5.3).

Thus, we see not only that Cleon does not act as spokesman or general of the Athenians' new imperial conquests, but also that, in what efforts he does undertake after Pylos, he is somewhat hesitating, "inactive," laconic, vengeful, and more mindful than is the enterprising Brasidas of the particulars of the current treaty. That is, he shows himself to be a very different sort of man than that which Pericles had portrayed in his praise of imperial Athens. Therefore, it is plausible that the great hopefulness driving the Athenians in their imperialism may be similarly foreign to a character like Cleon. Perhaps, then, Cleon derives his great influence in the city from his appeal to other aspects of Athenian character, and, to the extent that the Athenians' great hopefulness and imperial striving are manifest during this time, this may not be directly the result of Cleon's influence – a possibility that suggests the study of Cleon may be useful for clarifying the character of Athenian imperial ambition especially by showing what it is not.

However, the suggestion that Cleon does not quite embody or appeal to what drives the Athenians to empire does not mean that he has no effect on their imperial ambition or the hopes underpinning it. For under Pericles' leadership, the Athenians remained moderate enough to follow his restrained imperial policy, and would almost surely have ended the war with Sparta if given the opportunity that arose at Pylos, whereas under Cleon, as we have seen, they are of a

more immoderate disposition. The reasons for this change are complicated, but one part of the explanation may be found in the great difference we have identified between the rhetoric of Pericles and that of Cleon. For while it is surely true that a change in circumstance influences the character and effects of Athenian hopes – under Pericles the Athenians were never in a position of such perceived strength relative to Sparta as they are after stranding the Spartan men at Pylos – as well as the rhetoric Athenian leaders would use to manage those hopes, it is nonetheless the case that Pericles' speeches indicate he would have guided the city differently in those changed circumstances; it is also the case that the different disposition Cleon encourages or allows in the Athenians is apparent prior to the significant change in circumstances brought about when the Spartans are thus stranded.

One important aspect of this disposition that is likely connected to Cleon's rhetoric is its less articulated and considered concern for virtue or nobility and for necessity. For, as we have noted, Cleon does not encourage the Athenians to understand and evaluate their actions in these terms, and in fact undermines the basis for their doing so. That is, while the Athenians seem to be moved, during Pericles' time and after it, by a hopefulness that is plausibly connected to their sense of their own virtue, it is nonetheless the case that under Pericles, this hope is more fully articulated, both in the good it seeks and in its connection to virtue. Under Cleon, in contrast, the Athenians' hope is vaguer, and its connection to virtue is more hidden; it thrives during a time when we do not hear Athenian leaders calling on their audiences to meet virtue's great demands. We recall that Pericles spoke extensively to the Athenians about their nobility and linked it clearly with the attainment of the greatest goods: as he argued, the best and most spectacular way of life is characterized by devotion to and noble sacrifice for the worthiest city in existence, worthy above all for her daring imperialism. By emphasizing especially the eternal glory of

Athens and those devoted to her, Pericles clearly brought out and thus focused the Athenians' desire for a condition of surpassing goodness. That is, glory appeals to the desire for a limitless good, insofar as it is to last forever and make the loss of all other goods seem acceptable; at the same time, in focusing that desire, the hope for glory acts as a kind of limit on the vague and sprawling hope for "more" toward which human beings seem very prone to drift. Moreover, it is a good that can be, and under Pericles' direction was, clearly tied to virtue, understood as devotion to the city's good: Pericles thus brought the connection between great hopefulness and the Athenians' opinion of their virtue to the surface, and tied the former to the political character of the latter. The needs of the city to which the devoted must attend were revealed through attentive calculation as to the dictates of necessity, to consideration of which Pericles frequently encouraged the Athenians, not only by leading them through careful analysis of the particular advantages and limitations of their position relative to the enemy, but also by explicitly stressing the idea of necessity, which stress may have encouraged a general mindfulness of the simple fact that there are limits on what human beings can accomplish. Pericles' apparently obvious or unremarkable approach is shown to be of significance in light of Thucydides' frequent suggestion of the tendency of human beings to deny or forget this fact – a tendency even illustrated by certain of Pericles' own remarks, as he claimed not only that the Athenians should take confidence from "judgment grounded upon the things in existence" rather than "hope, which is the strength of those who are at a loss" (2.62.5), but also, by judicious turns, that they need not rely on "calculation," "practices," or "stratagems" (2.39.1).

However, this is not at all to suggest that Pericles' efforts brought about political stability. To take one danger of his approach, an emphasis on glory may mitigate certain difficulties while exacerbating others, such as the fragility of civic unity and loyalty; for the concern for

distinction, which must necessarily come at the expense of other human beings, is prone to create divisive competition and envy among citizens. In addition, glory is only possibly, rather than necessarily, tied to serving the good of one's city – a difficulty that is likely exacerbated when that city is devoted to the morally questionable pursuit of empire, which, in its laxness towards justice in foreign affairs, runs the risk of undermining justice in domestic affairs (Strauss, p.194).[49] Indeed, there is considerable evidence, and even an explicit statement by Thucydides in his own name, that domestic difficulties to which the concern for glory clearly contributes eventually cripple Athens in her war effort (2.65). I mean only to suggest that, whatever the danger of his approach, Pericles' remarkable statesmanship seems to have managed a problematic propensity of human nature – the tendency to limitless longing -- in a way his successors' did not. In the absence of efforts such as those made by Pericles, who acknowledged and directed this longing in a somewhat controlled way, Thucydides seems to suggest that such longings will nonetheless arise, but in remaining unacknowledged they also remain unchecked, with foolish and dangerous results of the kind we have observed under Cleon's leadership.

[49] As Lee notes, this danger to domestic life is compounded by the Athenians' remarkable honesty, most of all with themselves, as to the unattractive aspects of their imperialism (Lee 2002, 514).

Chapter 3: Obscurity, Nobility, and Justice in the Sicilian Expedition

Thucydides' Perplexing Introduction

Thucydides reports that, in the sixteenth year of the war, the Athenians determined to sail to Sicily and conquer it (6.1.1). This determination produced an Athenian force that was "the costliest and most splendid" that a single Hellenic city had ever sent out: elevated by "the greatest hope," the Athenians embarked on the "greatest voyage from home yet taken," presenting to the Greek world a "spectacle" that was "beyond belief" (6.30.2-6.31.1,6). The result of this spectacular effort was spectacular failure, a staggering loss of Athenian blood and treasure, and the multiplication and emboldening of her enemies. While Thucydides notes that

the Athenians nonetheless went on to thwart for ten years the combined efforts of the Peloponnesians, the Sicilians, and eventually the Persian king, and claims that the Athenians did not ultimately "give in until they themselves fell upon one another in their private disputes" (2.65.12), the consequences of the attempt on Sicily were of the utmost gravity for Athens, as to both her present war and the ultimate survival of the democracy.

Thucydides offers an extensive elaboration of Athens' most extraordinary and terrible imperial effort, and thus provides us helpful insight into her understanding of and hopes for her imperialism. Through his account of the launch of the Sicilian expedition, Thucydides indicates that the Athenians are moved by a desire whose aims are not only complicated, but remarkably obscure – a fact that is all the more striking given how intensely this desire is felt. His presentation also indicates that, while the Athenians are deeply hopeful, they possess at the same time some quiet doubt as to both the justice of their Sicilian adventure in particular, and the superiority of their city in general. Through a consideration of the Athenians' speeches about Sicily, as well as of Thucydides' narration of the circumstances surrounding them, we will elaborate the ways in which the Athenians' obscurity of purpose presents itself, and then consider what bearing their misgivings as to virtue may have on it.

We begin, then, by turning to Thucydides' account of the conception and launch of the Sicilian expedition. After referring twice to the Athenians' wish to conquer Sicily (6.1, 6.6), and reminding us of their two previous excursions there (3.86.1, 4.2), Thucydides relays the circumstances that give rise to this most daring present venture: during a period of nominal peace between the Athenians and Peloponnesians, envoys from the Sicilian city of Egesta, with whom the Athenians had previously formed an alliance (3.86, 3.88), come to seek assistance from the Athenians, in the form of ships for use in their current war against neighboring Selinus and her

ally, Syracuse (6.6.2-3). The Athenians determine to send envoys to Egesta to confirm that the city in fact possesses the money she has promised as compensation for their aid, and generally to investigate the situation as to the war with Selinus (6.6.3). The following spring, the Athenian envoys return from Egesta, having received funds sufficient for a month's pay for sixty ships. Hearing from their own envoys and the Egestaeans that the latter have at their disposal, in addition to this money, a great deal more, and hearing also "other things that were alluring but not true," the Athenians vote to send the sixty ships "to assist the Egestaeans against the Selinuntians, and also to jointly restore the Leontines (see 5.4), if they should gain some advantage in the war, and to settle other things in Sicily as they might think best for the Athenians" (6.8.1-2).

Thus far, Thucydides has offered no speeches from the assemblies at which the above measures are adopted. However, he goes on to say that, several days after deciding to aid the Egestaeans, the Athenians convene another assembly, to determine how to equip the ships "most quickly," and to provide the generals leading the mission with whatever else they might require for it (6.8.3). On this occasion, Thucydides presents speeches from two of these three generals, Nicias and Alcibiades.[50] As Thucydides tells us, Nicias fears that, on a "slight and specious [*euprepes*] pretext" (6.8.4) the Athenians are in fact aiming at the conquest of the whole of Sicily, a great and dangerous enterprise which he aims to forestall. His attempt, a speech that emphasizes this great danger and impugns the character of the expedition's greatest proponent (6.9-6.14), Alcibiades, prompts the latter to respond in support of himself and, perhaps secondarily, of the expedition, the successful outcome of which he claims will be easily attained, as well as necessary for Athenian safety (6.16-6.18). Seeing that the Athenians' eagerness has

[50] The third general is Lamachus, from whom we do not hear.

only been increased by these efforts, Nicias then tries another tack: elaborating a much-expanded and more burdensome proposal, he attempts in a second speech to dampen his fellow citizens' enthusiasm for the expedition by casting it in what seems to him a most unflattering light; the result is a vastly larger and more expensive undertaking, and an Athens utterly intoxicated with longing for it (6.20-6.24). In Thucydides' most striking formulation,

> …*eros* fell upon all alike to sail away: upon the old men, because they believed they would either subdue those things they sailed against, or that such a great power could in no way falter; upon those in the prime of life, through a longing for the sight and beholding of what was not present, and being in good hope of being saved; and as for the great multitude, the soldiers, they supposed they would get money for the present and gain power which would be a source of eternal pay (6.24.3).

Thus begins Thucydides' account of the greatest calamity yet to befall Athens in the war. In attempting to understand how such an event came to pass, we begin with a perplexing feature of Thucydides' picture, which is the great complexity of motive he attributes to the Athenians as regards the Sicilian expedition. For example, after his initial claim at 6.1 that the Athenians wished to sail to Sicily "and subdue it, if they were able," at 6.6 he offers a pithy judgment of what leads the Athenians to Sicily, in which he gives multiple reasons:

> …according to the truest cause [*prophasis*], they were aiming to rule the whole of it, but they wished at the same time to help in a seemly way [*euprepos*] their kinsmen and the allies they had acquired in addition. But they were most of all excited to action by the envoys of the Egestaeans, who were present and who called on them for help more spiritedly…And the Egestaeans, reminding the Athenians of their alliance, begged them to send ships to aid them, saying many other things but chiefly that if the Syracusans should go unpunished…they might help to put down the power [of the Athenians] (6.6.1-3).

Thus Thucydides speaks not only of rule, but also of seemly help of allies and preemptive defense against the Syracusans. In this way, he raises the question of how the desire for rule, itself complicated, fits together with these other concerns. It is tempting to conclude that Thucydides means here to oppose the genuine aim, rule, to that which is intended to cloak and

further the genuine aim. De Romilly, for example, claims that Thucydides "gives no more details than in the case of Melos about what the Athenians want to obtain there: he just says that they wish to gain control over Sicily (VI.1) or are eager to exercise their authority in Sicily (VI.6.1)" (de Romilly 1963, 72). In considering "what the Athenians want to obtain" in Sicily, then, she does not speak of Thucydides' other claims at 6.6 and thereby indicates that they do not shed light on the Athenians' genuine motives. Later, de Romilly alludes briefly to the Athenians' purported aim to help the Leontines, at which point she concludes, from Thucydides' numerous references to the Athenians' desire for rule, that he "thus discards the pretext that can be provided by the Leontines." She does grant that the prospect that Syracuse might pose a threat to Athens is "not an absurd one," but swiftly dismisses this concern as well (de Romilly 1963, 200, 211).[51] Thucydides' reference at 6.6 to the wish to do something "seemly" (*euprepos*), that is, "to help in a seemly way their kinsmen and the allies," which might also be translated more strongly as "to have the pretext of helping their kinsmen and the allies," seems to give weight to the interpretation of conquest as *the* crucial motive. So too does our prior knowledge that the Athenians have long had designs on Sicily -- indeed, they have already made two expeditions there, as Thucydides has just reminded us (6.1; 3.86.1, 4.2), and their pre-war alliance with Corcyra was formed in part with such designs in mind (1.44.3). Moreover, Thucydides calls the desire for rule the "truest cause," thereby suggesting its primacy. Yet, to

[51] Others also take Romilly's view of the matter: Gottfried Mader, for example, calls the moral concerns spoken of in the Sicilian debate "empty," apparently assigning weight only to "the fact that Thucydides brings out, that the real aim of Athens' intervention in Sicily was conquest" (Mader 1993, 187). Cornford does not mention concerns other than conquest; citing Thucydides' remarks at 2.65.11, he describes the Sicilian expedition only as the product of the "selfish ambition or low covetousness" of Pericles' successors, which aimed at "glory or private gain" (Cornford 1969, 51). Kagan contests the view that the Athenians agree to help their kinsmen and allies "only as a pretext," and that they simply aim, from the start, at "the domination and exploitation of the entire island, an undertaking demanded by an Athenian mob hungry for power and greedy for gain…" (Kagan 1981, 164), but Kagan mistakenly attributes the view he disparages to Thucydides, neglecting the ambiguity of the latter's formulation at 6.6. In contrast, see Hornblower who, following C. Pelling, also notes the ambiguity of *euprepos* and suggests that "the kinship motive is not negligible by any means" (Hornblower 2008, 300).

speak of a "truest" implies that there are other true causes; in addition, Thucydides' use of *euprepos* is at least ambiguous, as it leaves open the question of whether the Athenians seek only to attain the good appearance of helping their allies, or both to attain a good appearance and to help their allies. Further complications are raised by Thucydides' claim that the Athenians are "most of all excited to action" by the Egestaeans: that the Athenians are "most of all" spurred to action by these men, who beg for help and who stress, "chiefly," the threat Syracuse poses to Athens, raises a question as to the clear primacy of the desire to rule; to speak of the Athenians as "excited to action" does not clearly suggest they view the Egestaeans as merely providing plausible pretext, a fair-seeming cover, for their true aim of conquest, rather than that they are somehow genuinely moved by what the Egestaeans have said.

Conquest, Justice, and Safety in the Speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades

The complications Thucydides raises here are also present in the Athenians' speeches about Sicily,[52] as both Nicias and Alcibiades speak of conquest, aid to allies, and the danger Sicily poses to Athens. As to conquest, Nicias warns that even if the Athenians should prove superior in Sicily, "we would find them difficult to rule, as they are numerous and far away" (6.11.1). He also cautions his fellow citizens not "to reach out [or long] for other rule before securing that which we have" (6.10.5), chastising them for the excessive confidence they now feel against the Spartans, as "disdaining [the Spartans] you now aim even at Sicily" (6.11.15).[53]

[52] Cf. H.D. Westlake, who dismisses the references to moral concerns in these speeches (Westlake 1973, 107-8).
[53] Cf. Kagan 1981, 178-191. Kagan offers a helpful critique of the view that the Athenians clearly intended at the outset to conquer Sicily, but he understates the extent to which such an intention is implied. For example, Kagan argues that "Nicias had nothing direct to say about the idea of conquering all Sicily, although one or two of his remarks may be ambiguous enough to suggest a reference to such a notion," citing 6.11.1 and 6.11.5. Kagan argues that Nicias' claim at 6.11.1 ("we would find them difficult to rule, as they are numerous and far away") might well refer merely to "the Syracusans and their Sicilian allies" (p. 178) whose aggression the Athenians might wish "to

Regarding their allies, Nicias admonishes the Athenians for "being persuaded by men of an alien race to undertake a war that does not concern us" (6.9.1) and for the view that "we must quickly bring aid to the Egestaeans as being, indeed, our allies who have been wronged, while those by whose revolt we have long been wronged we have yet to punish" (6.10.5). Instead, the Athenians ought not trouble themselves about "the things of the Egestaeans in Sicily, barbaric men" (6.11.7) but rather attend to their own safety, as "it is just to lavish here for ourselves, and not for these fugitive men who are begging our aid, for whom it is useful to lie nobly, and at their neighbors' risk, themselves furnishing nothing but words…" (6.12.1). Thus, Nicias tries to dissuade the Athenians both from conquering Sicily and from helping their allies, thereby indicating that he considers both aims to be somehow of importance to his fellow citizens. Nicias also indicates that the Athenians were moved by the Egestaeans' appeal to fear, as he argues against their assertion of the danger that an unchecked Syracuse would pose to Athens: according to Nicias, imperial Syracuse would in fact provide security for Athens, because in the present circumstances one or another Sicilian city might move against Athens "as a favor to the Lacedaemonians," but a Sicily united under Syracuse would be unlikely to do so, since "in whatever manner they with the Lacedaemonians might take away our [rule], it is likely that by these same means their own would be pulled down" (6.11.2-3).

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forestall" (Kagan 1981, 173), rather than to the whole of Sicily. However, given the strength and influence of the Syracusans, this does not seem a far cry from the rule of Sicily simply, and Nicias' explicit reference at 6.10.5 to the desire for "other rule," a reference Kagan does not mention, casts doubt on the defensive posture Kagan attributes to Athens with respect to Syracuse. In addition, that Nicias immediately goes on to argue that "the Sicilians" would pose less of a threat to Athens if they were conquered by the Syracusans also suggests that he has been arguing against plans pertaining to Sicily more broadly. As to Nicias' claim at 6.11.5, according to which, in contempt of the Spartans and unreasonably elated by success, the Athenians "now aim even at Sicily," this might also be translated "you now even send against Sicily," which, Kagan suggests, may be suggestive not of the conquest of all of Sicily, but of more limited action. However, sending a limited force for a limited purpose, which the Athenians have done before (3.115.4), is not the most compelling example of hubris run amok; one wonders whether moderate intervention in a limited Sicilian conflict would plausibly have inspired the fear of disaster Nicias means to stir up. Thus, while it is worth pointing out, as Kagan does, that Nicias does not speak perfectly openly of broad conquest, his remarks imply it more than Kagan suggests.

In arguing against Nicias and in favor of the expedition, Alcibiades, too, appeals to these same concerns. As to conquest, he argues that the Athenians should not shy away from sailing against Sicily on the grounds that they are "a formidable power. For it is with a mixed mob that the cities there are populous, and bringing changes of regime…among their citizens is easy" (6.17.2). He also prods the Athenians to live up to the example of their fathers, who he claims had more enemies and fewer resources than the current generation but still "acquired rule," (6.17.7), and, most strikingly, he maintains that a likely outcome of the Sicilian expedition will be to acquire rule over Sicily and thereby "rule over all of Hellas" (6.18.4). As to the question of helping the Egestaeans, he asks how the Athenians can "shrink" from helping their allies or "make an excuse" for not doing so, and asserts that the Athenians "must help them, as we have sworn to do so" (6.18.1). In addition, he emphasizes the danger of not going to Sicily: though he does not stress the particular threat the Egestaeans warned of – that of Syracusan aggression – he speaks in general terms of the necessity of continued imperial expansion, namely, the Athenians must continually conquer others, lest they be conquered by them (6.18.1-3).

Through his presentation of their speeches, then, Thucydides supports his earlier suggestion that multiple concerns influence the Athenians' desire to go to Sicily. Yet we are still faced with the question of how they understand these concerns to fit together, particularly in light of the apparent tension among certain of them -- such as, for example, between aiding their Sicilian allies and conquering Sicily. As mentioned, we could certainly imagine that the Athenians seek to help the Egestaeans fight their neighbors in order to position themselves eventually for conquest – that is, that the Athenians do have concerns other than conquest, as Thucydides clearly indicates, but that they are concerns only insofar as they further the aim of conquest and conceal it from outsiders. Yet, while there is likely truth to this suggestion, we do

not see evidence that it simply captures the Athenians' understanding of the Sicilian expedition. That the Athenians do not make a clear, consistent statement of the primary or even single-minded intention to conquer is not, perhaps, evidence of the seriousness of the other stated motives, particularly given that Egestaean envoys are present for the Athenians' deliberations (6.19.1) and may therefore influence what is said. However, while the Athenians' speeches do not express a clear and consistent statement of their intent to conquer, neither do they convey a mindful attempt to cover the Athenians' true aims with politic words, presumably intended to throw the Sicilians off the scent. For if the Athenians had been speaking with an eye to concealing from the Egestaeans their intention to conquer Sicily, it is unlikely that they would have made as many references to conquest as they do (6.10.5, 6.11.1, 6.11.5, 6.17.2-8, 6.18.2-4). That is, if the Athenians intended merely to lie to the Egestaeans or other outsiders regarding their intentions in Sicily, it is a question why they did not tell better, more consistent lies, and refrain from speaking multiple times of conquest. Additionally and notwithstanding such demands of strategy, if the Athenians had been openly aiming at the conquest of Sicily, it is unlikely that Thucydides would have introduced Nicias' speech with the claim that Nicias "thought" that "on a slight and specious pretext" it was, in fact, the conquest of all of Sicily at which they aimed, since in this case, Nicias would not have mere suspicions (6.8.4).

While it is also possible that the Egestaeans are aware of the Athenians' grander plans but believe that they themselves will be exempted from them to some degree, no such arrangement is mentioned,[54] and even if one did exist, it still would not account for many of the Nicias' and

[54] Alcibiades' claim that the most likely outcome in Sicily is that the Athenians will conquer all the Hellenes there does raise the possibility that they will spare their non-Hellenic Egestaean allies (6.18.4;6.2.3). However, this briefly and indirectly suggested possibility seems unlikely, especially considered in light of Nicias' and Alcibiades' multiple remarks naming the target of the expedition as simply "Sicily," of Alcibiades' argument that the Athenians must of necessity pursue limitless empire, and of the fate of many other Athenian "allies."

Alcibiades' remarks. For we recall that, in calling upon the Athenians to make good on the oath they have sworn to their allies, Alcibiades indicates that the Athenians should do what is just (6.18.1); Nicias, too, implies that justice should and does guide the Athenians, but indicates that helping the Egestaeans is not what justice requires in the present instance. While the Athenians mistakenly believe they must help the Egestaeans because they have been "wronged," according to Nicias it is just to attend instead to their own problems: plenty of the Athenians' own enemies need punishing, after all, and moreover "it is just to lavish [Athenian men and money] here for ourselves" (6.10.5, 6.12.1) – not to mention that the grasping Egestaeans put upon their benefactors while offering in return nothing but lies, ingratitude, and possible ruin. (6.12.1). Such attention to the claims of justice and kinship would be unnecessary if the Egestaeans understood the Athenians merely to be intervening in a narrow Sicilian conflict for the sake of their own broad strategic interest, since, in that case, the Athenians would seem free to speak only of their interest in conquering parts of Sicily, with which the Egestaeans' interest in crippling those same parts of Sicily (or at least Syracuse) would align. Therefore, it is likely that Nicias' and Alcibiades' appeals to these concerns are reflective less of calculated manipulation of the Sicilians than of the Athenians' true thoughts regarding Sicily. This suggestion receives additional support from Thucydides' description of the Athenian mood that prompts Nicias to speak a second time: by claiming that, upon "hearing [Alcibiades] and the Egestaeans and some Leontine exiles, who, coming forward and beseeching them for help, begged them for aid and reminded them of their oaths, the Athenians were much more eager for the expedition than before…" (6.19.1), Thucydides associates the Athenians' increased enthusiasm, not only with Alcibiades' speech, but with the earnest request of their allies for help and with their own awareness of their promise to give it.

Obscurity in the Sicilian Expedition

Thus, we are left with the observation that Nicias and Alcibiades make appeals to conquest and to just benefit of their allies, speaking of one motive and then the other, without giving any clear indication of their relative rank or of how they accord with one another, and without evincing awareness of the apparent conflict between them, in a way that is not accounted for by the demands of prudence with respect to the Sicilians. Thucydides' suggestion, then, is that there is some obscurity in the Athenians' minds as to their motives for the Sicilian expedition. Indeed, some murkiness on the part of the Athenians as to the imperial adventure they fervently desire is indicated in multiple places in Thucydides' account. This is seen, for instance, in the fact that the statesmen debating the expedition give different and even opposed reports of Sicily: on Alcibiades' telling, Sicily is not a "great power," but is populated only by "a mixed mob," among whom changes of regime are "easy"; the Sicilians do not have the hoplites that they "boast" of, and they live among many barbarian enemies who will be eager to aid the Athenians in their attack (6.17). Nicias, in contrast, reports that the cities in Sicily "are great, and neither subject to one another nor in need of changes of regime such as someone from forced slavery might be glad to come to, in order to change to an easier condition." They are also "prepared with everything very similarly to our own power," and they "can employ many hoplites, archers, and javelin-men, and many triremes and a multitude to fill them. They also have wealth…" (6.20). Thus, Sicily is portrayed as both a primitive backwater on the brink of civil war (if such a term is not too grand for this disordered bunch), and an advanced and formidable power, secure and prosperous, comparable even to the great Athens. Thucydides gives no indication that the Athenians are much affected by this discrepancy, as one might expect

if their desire to go to Sicily had been informed by a clear notion of its character -- nor do they find it jarring that at least one of the generals in charge of the expedition seems sorely lacking in the most basic knowledge of the place. Rather, they approve of and take encouragement from both accounts: after Alcibiades speaks, the Athenians are "much more eager for the expedition than before" (6.19.1), and after Nicias follows him, they are "much more eager" still (6.24.2).[55]

In this way, through his account of the Athenians' statements of their motives, and of their limited understanding of the nature of the place, Thucydides suggests the Athenians' unclarity about their motives for going to Sicily. This obscurity is suggested in other ways as well, such as in Thucydides' description of the development of the Athenian armament. Thucydides indicates ambiguity in the purpose of this armament from the time of its formation to after its arrival in Sicily. As to its formation, we recall that, initially, the Athenian armament consists only of the sixty ships requested by the Egestaeans: thus, it comes into being only in response to the Egestaeans' appeal for help and is formed to suit the Egestaeans' purposes, that is, the Athenians resolve to send only the forces the Egestaeans request and with the express aims of helping them fight the Selinuntians and restoring the Leontines. The possibilities available to this Athenian force would surely be limited by the task for which it was ostensibly formed, and, whatever their susceptibility to grand hopes, it is likely that the Athenians therefore

[55] While the fact that Nicias and Alcibiades differ in their judgment of the conditions in Sicily is clear, it seems that the extent of their disagreement, and the resulting strangeness of the Athenians' apparent failure to recognize or be disturbed by it, is not widely remarked upon. For example, de Romilly's summary of the disagreement is that "It is all very well for Alcibiades to say that [Sicily's] inhabitants lack unity and weapons, Nicias easily replies that they can be neither won over nor really defeated" (de Romilly 1963, 206). This statement glosses over Nicias' claims that many of the Sicilians are "prepared with everything very similarly to our own power"; that they "can employ many hoplites, archers, and javelin-men, and many triremes and a multitude to fill them. They also have wealth…" (6.20.3); that Alcibiades has insisted that the Sicilians not only lack unity but that they will be easily won over, etc. In addition, de Romilly does not mention the fact that the Athenians give no sign that they are persuaded by one version of events – Alcibiades' suggestion that the Sicilians are weak and barbaric, or Nicias' suggestion that they are strong and advanced -- over the other. Kagan does note the opposition between Nicias' and Alcibiades' depictions of Sicily, but does not comment on the Athenians' reaction to it (Kagan 1981, 187).

understand, to some extent, the purpose of this force to be limited. At the same time, Thucydides has already indicated that the Athenians have something in mind beyond helping their allies (6.1, 6.6), and he reminds us of this here, when they initially agree to the Egestaeans' request, by telling us that they also intend "to settle other things in Sicily as they might think best for the Athenians." However, what precisely they have in mind is not clear. It could be that the Athenians mean to conquer Sicily with these sixty ships – a tall order given that Thucydides describes the Sicilian expedition as an undertaking comparable to the war against the Peloponnesians. It is true that, as we have seen on other occasions, the Athenians' desires are not always commensurate with or apparently dependent on their resources. Still, the vague statement that they mean to do "other things" that seem "best for the Athenians," while clearly indicative of something more than aiding their allies, does not obviously evoke the enormity of the conquest of all Sicily or the delirious hope to do all things, regardless of resources, which Thucydides has attributed to them in other times and moods (4.65). It might also be that the Athenians intend with this relatively limited force only to acquire a useful foothold in Sicily and then to bring a greater force later, when conditions become more favorable to grander plans -- perhaps, as Hermocrates warned at Gela, after the Athenians have helped the Sicilians wear themselves out on one another (4.60.2). Yet, nowhere in Alcibiades' speech or in Nicias' first speech, both given on the understanding that the Athenian armament would consist of sixty ships, is this possibility mentioned in connection with the many references to conquest. Thus, Thucydides' description of the Athenians' initial decision to send this force, and their elaboration of their plans for it, leave vague what its purpose is. [56]

[56] See also Kagan, who argues that the size of this original armament is suggestive of limited aims (Kagan 1981, 172-3), though he overemphasizes this point.

As we know, the armament that makes it to Sicily takes a very different form than the one originally conceived, as the Athenians determine to send a greater force in place of the more limited one, in a change of plans that comes about rather by accident; at least, this change is not born primarily of reflection on the Athenian mission in Sicily, since the man who conceives the idea does so not chiefly from calculation of how best to accomplish the Athenians' aims but from (misguided) consideration of how to quash the whole affair. The circumstances of this accidental enhancement of the armament are similarly suggestive of ambiguous motive. In calling for greater means, Nicias points more clearly to a greater aim than that suggested by the original armament: whatever their earlier ideas for plans beyond aiding the Egestaeans, it seems there can be little doubt that the Athenians, bringing one hundred triremes, at least five thousand hoplites, archers and slingers, grain, barley, bakers, and more, are there to conquer the whole of Sicily, and indeed, Nicias makes several references to this fact (6.20.2-4, 6.21.1, 6.25.2). However, Nicias does not simply abandon the notion that they are going to help the Egestaeans, as he indicates when he refers in particular to Selinus and Syracuse as "those against whom we are sailing in particular" (lit. " sailing against more," *pleomen mallon*). In other words, Nicias paints a picture that is undeniably of great conquest, and he does make fewer references than are found in the earlier speeches to purposes other than conquest, but nonetheless does not entirely neglect to speak of these other purposes. This would seem somewhat strange on the basis of a clear-sighted intention to conquer Sicily. For if the Athenians simply aim to go to Sicily and subdue the whole thing now, why bother with the Egestaeans' piddly border conflict? Insofar as that conflict involves the Selinuntians' powerful allies, the Syracusans, who are key to broader conquest, it makes sense to plan with the latter in mind, but Selinus as a particular concern would surely become irrelevant to the Athenians' aims in such a case. In addition, if the Athenians

intend merely to keep up a useful pretense of concern for the Egestaean-Selinus conflict, this would surely be undermined by the fact that they will be arriving in Sicily with everything but the kitchen sink in tow, far more "help" than had been requested. That the Athenians still debate what they are going to do in Sicily even after arriving there – not simply the strategy for an agreed upon end, but the end itself -- confirms the ambiguity of purpose suggested here: according to Thucydides, after learning that the Egestaeans do not have the money they boasted of, Nicias wished that they would merely sail against Selinus, the purpose "for which they had most of all sailed out" (6.47.1), or, at most, also restore the Leontines and perhaps "bring over some of the other cities," while Alcibiades and Lamachus wished to do more, the former on the grounds that they ought not waste "such a power" as they had brought by "doing nothing" (6.48).[57]

The Athenians' reaction to Nicias' proposal of the expanded armament is similarly reflective of this obscure understanding of purpose. The fact that his proposal has such a powerful effect on them, that it attracts them much more strongly to the expedition, seems to indicate that previously they had not openly aimed at what Nicias' speech calls for. In other words, if the Athenians had from the beginning simply understood themselves to be going to conquer Sicily, why should Nicias' elaboration of a tremendous armament suited to that purpose

[57] Cf. Liebeschuetz, who argues that this late debate about the aims of the expedition reflects a hesitancy in the Athenian generals to carry out their previously established plans, which has arisen in response to the cool reception the Athenians have received in Sicily thus far and to their recent discovery of the Egestaeans' lack of money (Liebeschuetz 1968, 289-294). Liebeschuetz suggests that the Athenians' original plan had been to build a network of alliances in Sicily sufficiently strong to facilitate future "pressure" against Syracuse; in light of the lack of support they initially find, then, doubts as to the possibility of this course of action lead to consideration of alternatives such as Lamachus' idea to attack Syracuse immediately. However, this interpretation implies an initial precision of intention that is not supported by the Athenians' speeches about Sicily. In support of his view that the Athenians had formed rather clear and relatively limited intentions for Sicily that did not include an assault on Syracuse, Liebeschuetz cites the difficulty of such an assault, and the fact that neither Nicias nor Alcibiades lays out a clear plan for it (as he says, Alcibiades in particular is "very vague indeed); while these observations are correct, Liebeschuetz's conclusion is neither necessary nor in keeping with other aspects of the Athenians' speeches, such as their frequent references to conquest without any indication that it is to be accomplished at a later time.

have stirred them so? This reaction is not obviously intelligible on the basis of safety alone, as we will discuss below, and it is likely true, as we will also see, that they are attracted to the great risk and effort, that is, the nobility, of Nicias' account of their endeavor. However, this great risk and effort belong to the prospect of conquest, not to mere intervention in the Egestaeans' narrow conflict; if the Athenians are somehow newly attracted to the nobility of the Sicilian expedition, it is likely because they are somewhat newly attracted to the now more openly stated idea of conquering it. At the same time, the Athenians are not simply open on this point, and they do not explicitly say that they now understand the Sicilian expedition differently. According to Thucydides' narration, they act as if nothing has changed except that they will now be safer, presumably doing the same thing with a massive armament that they had originally planned to do with sixty ships. This aspect of their reaction, or lack of one, fits together with the somewhat meandering treatment of motive we have noted in Nicias' and Alcibiades' prior speeches, for if the Athenians' understanding of the purpose of the Sicilian expedition was somewhat indistinct, it is less surprising that the striking change in means elaborated by Nicias seems not to necessitate an explicit reconsideration of ends.

Further indications that the Athenians do not clearly understand what they are seeking from the Sicilian expedition are found in Thucydides' remarkable description of the "eros" that "fell upon all alike" following Nicias' second speech. Among the striking hopes Thucydides identifies as attending this eros are "a longing for the sight and beholding [*opsews kai theorias*] of what was not present" and, not only "money for the present" but also "power which would be a source of eternal source pay" (6.24.3). Yet, if we look again at the terms in which the expedition is defended, we find no such appeals. In making the case for Sicily, Alcibiades elaborates the various defects of the Sicilians and Peloponnesians and then argues that the

Athenians must sail against Sicily out of a concern for safety or to avoid enslavement: he claims that "[w]e must help them…and may not retort that they did not help us. For we have taken them as allies, not so that they would help in turn here, but so that, by being painful to our enemies there, they might hinder them from sending here against us" and that "it is not for us to control as much as we wish to rule, but it is necessary, since we are placed in this position, to plot against some and not let go of others, because there is a risk for us of being ruled by others, if we ourselves do not rule others (6.18.1, 6.18.3). "Sight and beholding" are not discussed in his or Nicias' speeches about Sicily. The expectation to acquire vast wealth is also not mentioned – despite the fact that Thucydides not only brings this consideration up at 6.24.3, but also implies its importance early in his account, when he notes that the Athenians decide to grant their allies' request for ships after Athenian envoys return from Egesta, having heard not only that the Egestaeans possess the fee they have promised for the ships, but a great deal more money (6.8.2). Nicias, for his part, does make brief mention of money, in order to assure the Athenians that the Sicilian expedition will not bring it: as to "[the money] of the Egestaeans, which is said to be ready at hand there, know that it is it most of all in speech that it will be ready" (6.22). This implies that the Athenians do have it in mind to make money in Sicily, but again, no explicit reference beyond Nicias' dismissal of this possibility is made. In this way, Thucydides indicates that the Athenians harbor extremely powerful desires, and opinions underlying those desires, which they do not acknowledge in speech, or which are even explicitly denied in speech, and which seem rather foreign to the terms in which the expedition is justified.

The Role of Nobility

Perhaps the most important unspoken concern pointed to by Thucydides is that for nobility, as he suggests that the Athenians' attraction to Sicily is strongly connected with their sense of nobility, despite the fact that neither Nicias nor Alcibiades speaks of the endeavor as noble, and, in fact, the word is hardly to be found in their speeches. Alcibiades uses it only once, and not in reference to the Sicilian expedition, but in describing himself and the superior men who resemble him; such men, he tells the Athenians, "leave…to their fatherland, whatever it is, boasting, as of men who are not foreigners or those who have done wrong, but their own and doers of noble things" (6.16.5). That he describes himself as a doer of noble deeds does make it likely that the Sicilian expedition, as one of his deeds, is to be understood as noble. Yet, it is nonetheless striking that he does not defend it to the Athenians in terms of its nobility. Perhaps he neglects to do so because, high as his sights are (6.15.3, 6.18.4), the conquest of mere Sicily appears to him small potatoes; perhaps he believes the conquest to be noble for himself, as the true leader of it, but less so for those men who will only be his followers. In any event, he encourages the Athenians to think of the Sicilian expedition primarily as a necessity, to avoid danger or enslavement (6.18). This argument is in some tension with his earlier depiction of the Sicilians and the Peloponnesians and the minimal effort required to overwhelm them all, but that depiction also fails to suggest that the Sicilian expedition is noble. For, as we recall, he earlier describes the Sicilians as "a mixed mob," among whom it would be "easy" to effect a change of regime, who lack arms, who are unlikely to put themselves to "works in common," and who are also menaced by hostile barbarians who will join the Athenians and make it "easier still" to defeat them. As to the Peloponnesians, they were "never more hopeless against us," and even if they were "altogether eager," they would only be able to invade the Athenians by land – which they could do even if there were no expedition to Sicily; additionally, they are no threat at sea, as

their fleet is far inferior to the Athenians' (6.17.2-8). These assertions of Sicilian and Peloponnesian inferiority, if true, cast doubt on Alcibiades' later claim that the enemies of the Athenians are so dangerous as to necessitate a preemptive attack against Sicily, but in any event, his repeated references to the "ease" of the endeavor are not suggestive of the great effort and sacrifice belonging to nobility.

Nicias, in turn, speaks of nobility only twice. His first reference echoes Cleon's censure of clever or noble speakers (3.37.4, 3.38.4), as he argues that the Athenians should not be taken in by the useless and deceitful Egestaeans, "for whom it is useful to lie nobly, and at their neighbors' risk, themselves furnishing words alone …" (6.12.1). The only other allusion is found at the end of his first speech, where Nicias sums up his argument and claims that, by overturning their original decree and staying home, the Athenians will "become a physician for the city when it has taken [bad] counsel," and asserts that "this is to be a noble ruler: he who benefits his city as much as possible, or willingly does it no harm" (6.14). Thus, Nicias' one approving use of the word casts as noble such feats as avoiding intentional harm to the city and reversing its stupid decisions – useful things, but somewhat lackluster examples of nobility, particularly taken together with the rest of his counsel to the Athenians, which calls for staying home, ignoring allies, "keeping watch" over the Peloponnesians (6.11.7), and spending money on themselves; one wonders if this lone encouragement to nobility marks a kind of half-hearted attempt to speak the language that Nicias believes will move the Athenians, but which betrays an inability to do so substantively or convincingly. In any event, while it is unsurprising that, in arguing against the Sicilian expedition, Nicias does not accuse it of being noble, the fact that he does not argue more strongly against its nobility, and that Alcibiades does not speak at all of its

nobility, would seem to suggest that the Athenians do not understand the case for it to turn on this point.

However, while the Sicilian expedition is not explicitly justified in terms of nobility, further consideration of the Athenians' debate reveals that this concern is of quiet but powerful influence. Signs of their attachment to nobility are seen, first, in Alcibiades' speech -- interestingly, when he appears to be speaking strictly of necessity. For example, in response to Nicias' argument that the Athenians should not defend those who will not come to the Athenians' defense in times of trouble, Alcibiades says the following:

> …and we may not retort that they did not [help] us. For we have taken them as allies, not so that they would help in turn here, but so that, by being painful to our enemies there, they might hinder them from sending here against us. Thus we acquired rule, both we and as many others who have ruled, by coming zealously to the aid of those, barbarians or Hellenes, who have at any time appealed to us; otherwise, if we all kept quiet or made distinctions of race as to whom we must help, we would add little to ourselves with respect to this, and would rather risk it. For against a superior one does not merely defend oneself when he is at hand, but also anticipates him so that he will not be at hand at all… (6.18.1-2).

Thus he argues that, while the Egestaeans may not come to the aid of Athens when she is attacked, they nonetheless contribute to her safety by busying her enemies so that they cannot attack her, and he goes on to suggest that such is also the case with Athens' other "allies": Athens faces many threats and should therefore acquire many helpers to stave off, indirectly, those threats. However, one striking aspect of this picture of Athens' international position is Alcibiades' description of her empire as having been acquired by "zealously" coming to help everyone, Greek or barbarian, who has "at any time" appealed to her. For, putting aside the difficulty Alcibiades himself raises – that energetic imperialism invites aggression, as "against a superior" like Athens other cities will move preemptively -- whatever utility there may be in acquiring allies or subjects as a defensive measure, necessity surely does not dictate doing so

indiscriminately. That is, allowing that Alcibiades is correct that there exist many threats to Athens and that acquiring allies is useful for combating them, this strategy still requires calculation as to what threats exist at a given time, where threats are likely to emerge, which potential allies are likely to be helpful, and so on. As far as safety is concerned, it is only on the basis of such a calculation that the Athenians would determine whom to "help" and when; certainly, there is no need, and it would be very dangerous, to aid everyone who "at any time" requested it, rather than merely those, however numerous, who are well positioned to address potential threats. In the absence of such a calculation, it seems that no city could long survive the drain on its resources or the inadvertent empowerment of adversarial powers. That Alcibiades speaks in terms that eschew this sort of reasoning indicates a quiet appeal to something other than safety, and is, rather, reminiscent of Pericles' descriptions of Athens in the funeral oration as a city that nobly aids others without regard to her own good (2.40.4-5).

Alcibiades' argument regarding the means of expanding the empire is thus suggestive of an attachment to nobility; his claims regarding the need for this expansion point in the same direction (6.18.6). It is true that certain of his statements do not obviously contradict Alcibiades' claim to be expounding the dictates of necessity, such as, for example, the statement that "it is not for us to control as much as we wish to rule, but it is necessary, since we are placed in this position, to plot against some and not let go of others, because there is a risk for us of being ruled by others, if we ourselves do not rule others" (6.18.3). This tough-minded claim is similar to that of Pericles in his final speech, in which he argued that, whatever the genesis of the empire, there is, at this dangerous point, no freedom to let it go (2.63.2); it differs from Pericles' argument in asserting the necessity, not merely of maintaining but of acquiring additional rule, the precise limit of which is not subject to the Athenians' wishes. Taken on its face, this is not an obviously

unreasonable claim. It turns out, however, that when Alcibiades says "it is not for us to control as much as we wish to rule," in fact he means that nothing should control how much Athens rules, that is, that there should be no limit to her imperial exertions: rather, she should be "always contending," lest her "knowledge of all things grow old" and she be "wear herself out against herself" (6.18.6). Such statements do not suggest sober calculation belonging to the contemplation of necessity: even if the Athenians' military preparedness and civic health would improve by frequent contests, there is no reason to believe that they are prudently pursued under all circumstances. Rather, these remarks seem reminiscent of the kind of disdain for limits we have sometimes observed during the Athenians' most noble moods. This claim is further supported by the fact that the exhortation to ceaseless conquest is followed immediately by the promise that such a course will allow the Athenians not to "grow old" in the "knowledge of all things," which seems more suggestive of the noble longing for a kind of immortality (2.43.2) than of the rather pedestrian concern Alcibiades is ostensibly referring to, namely, that the Athenians not get rusty in their military training.

A stronger implicit appeal to nobility is found in Nicias' second speech. As noted above, Nicias intends secretly to prevent the Sicilian expedition from taking place: while appearing to offer the terms he believes most favorable to success in Sicily, he means in fact to present terms sufficiently unattractive to sour the Athenians on the whole prospect.[58] To this end, almost the entirety of Nicias' second speech is taken up with an elaboration of an extensive armament, which he hopes the Athenians will find overly burdensome (6.19). However, as we have also noted, the speech only increases the Athenians' enthusiasm:

[58] Following Nicias' speech, Thucydides does say that he also intended that the speech, if it could not prevent the Athenians from going to Sicily, at least ensure that "he would thus sail out most safely" (6.24.1) Still, the concern to make the expedition safe is a secondary concern; his emphasis seems to be on preventing it entirely.

> But they were not turned away from their eagerness to sail by the troublesomeness of the preparation, but were much more eager for it; and it turned out the opposite for him: for it seemed that he had advised them well, and that now certainly there would be much security indeed (6.24.2).

Thus, the "troublesomeness of the preparation" does not dissuade the Athenians, but rather gives them very great confidence in the safety of the expedition. However, the reason for this confidence is not entirely clear. Thucydides' remarks at 6.24 give the impression that they had previously doubted the expedition's safety and that Nicias' speech assuages this doubt. Yet, we recall that Alcibiades, too, had spoken to the concern for safety, in part by expounding at some length the character and resources of the Sicilians and explaining that, given their general inferiority, prevailing over them would be "easy" (6.17.2, 6.17.6). That is, Alcibiades' argument implies that Athenian safety would be reasonably well assured by the weakness of her enemies. Thus, it seems that the Athenians are presented with two different accounts of what will make the expedition safe: on Alcibiades' telling, the expedition will be safe because Athens' enemies are feeble; on Nicias' telling, the expedition may be safe because Athens will have a massive force with which to fend off her capable enemies. As we have noted, Thucydides gives no indication that the Athenians understood Alcibiades to be mistaken about the character of the enemy and thus to favor Nicias' plan on such grounds; rather, he indicates that they approved both accounts, but that their zeal was encouraged most strongly by Nicias' portrayal of the requirements of the struggle in Sicily. But why should they think Nicias' proposal the safer one? Certainly, the notion that more men and arms affords greater safety than fewer men and arms has a good deal of sense on its side, but it is just as certain that terrific armaments carry the risk of terrific loss, particularly when they are far from home in hostile territory – which, as Nicias points out, Athens' will be. Thus, Nicias' proposal is not obviously the more convincing as regards safety, at least given the circumstances in which the Athenians are judging. Their

enthusiastic reaction to Nicias' speech is made more puzzling by the fact that Nicias himself does not present his troublesome plan as particularly safe. While he does say that he regards it to be, "as concerns planning, likely to be secure" and "surest for the city taken together and also for the deliverance of those of us taking the field" (6.23.4), these claims come after he has just stressed the limits of human planning and its weakness in the face of fortune (6.23.3). Moreover, he follows his list of recommendations, in characteristically stirring fashion, with the claim that "if we go from here with preparations of our own that are not only equal to theirs…but that even surpasses them entirely, thus with difficulty will we be able to prevail, or even to survive" (6.23.1).

From this presentation of events the Athenians conclude that there would be now be "much security, indeed" in Sicily, a reaction that is perplexing in light of Nicias' own explicit judgment of his proposition and of the likelihood that the Athenians are not in a position to judge it as abundantly safe or even safer than the earlier, more limited armament, with which no one but Nicias apparently had any complaints. Therefore, the very great confidence the Athenians feel that no harm would come to them seems to have been produced by something more complicated than a straightforward calculation of strategy. It is likely connected to a sense that, in undertaking an adventure fraught with such great difficulty and danger, they are doing something noble. That is, in portraying Sicily as an enterprise involving enormous risk and effort, Nicias has unwittingly ascribed to it crucial aspects of nobility, to which we have previously seen much evidence of the Athenians' attachment (1.74, 1.144, 2.41-2.43, 2.64, 5.107) and which contributes to their increased zeal for it. That Thucydides describes the Athenians after Nicias' remarks as having fallen under the spell of "eros" also supports this suggestion. Prior to Thucydides' account of Sicily and notwithstanding the speech of Diodotus

(3.45.5), to which we will return later, we have heard this word only once, in Pericles' funeral oration, where we recall that Pericles exhorted the Athenians to the greatest and most noble sacrifices for their city and in this context urged them to erotic devotion to Athens (2.43). That the Athenians should now, after Nicias' exposition of the supreme danger of and exertion required by the Sicilian expedition, fall in love with it, is in keeping with the link Thucydides has indicated between eros and nobility.[59] In addition, the hopes that attend the Athenians' eros for Sicily are reminiscent of those that Thucydides has previously associated with nobility, as articulated also in Pericles' funeral oration. There, Pericles stoked the hope for a condition free of necessity -- perhaps most importantly, the necessity of death -- by promising the Athenians the attainment of "ageless praise" and glory that survives "in everlasting remembrance," which would be the consequence of noble sacrifice for the sake of Athens (2.43.2). In his account of the Athenians' eros for Sicily, Thucydides again points to a hope for a condition free of death, as is seen in his description of the Athenians as longing, not merely for pay or a lot of pay, but "a source of eternal [*aidion*] pay" (6.24.3); it is also suggested by his claim that the Athenians believe a power as great as theirs could "in no way falter," which implies, not simply reasonable confidence that things would likely go well for themselves, but a hope for invincibility.

The Role of Justice and Athenian Deterioration

From the above discussion, then, we conclude that the Athenians' longing to go to Sicily is an obscure one: they do not articulate certain desires that are of crucial importance, and what they do articulate is not terribly clear or consistent; Thucydides thus suggests a failure of the Athenians inwardly to acknowledge what they are seeking in Sicily. Strikingly, then, in his

[59] For a similar discussion, see Ludwig 2002, 161-167.

account of their greatest imperial undertaking, Thucydides indicates at once that the Athenians are full of passionate desire, and that they are uncertain as to what they desire. It is difficult fully to account for this apparently paradoxical disposition, but other aspects of this account suggest that the Athenians' lack of clarity here is connected with a sense of their virtue, namely, with doubts about the justice of the expedition to Sicily in particular, and about Athens' nobility in general, which misgivings contribute to their inability or unwillingness clearly to acknowledge to themselves what they are seeking. Thucydides points to such doubts in several ways. That the Athenians are somehow uneasy about the Sicilian expedition is suggested early in his account, as he speaks at 6.6 of their concern that the expedition be "seemly," that is, that something seemly attend their conquest; he thus implies an awareness or fear that the intention to conquer Sicily is somehow ugly. The Athenians understand the seemly aspect of the expedition to be the benefit they will provide their allies in Sicily, an understanding that indicates some concern as to the unjust harm they believe the expedition more broadly to entail; the repeated references Thucydides goes on to make to the Athenians' concern to aid their allies, strained as such references are in light of their designs on Sicily as a whole, tend to confirm the significance of the apprehension suggested at 6.6. Apprehension of this kind is suggested more strongly by later parts of his account, such as his discussion of the Athenians' frenzied reaction to the mutilation of the Herms (6.60) and their guilty reaction to the terrible reverses they eventually suffer in Sicily (7.75.5) but we see that it is also pointed to here. Thucydides thus indicates misgivings from the very conception of the expedition.[60]

[60] Further acknowledgement of the importance of justice in international affairs has been offered by the Athenians as recently as their infamous encounter with the Melians. There, in the most harsh and apparently tough-minded speech in Thucydides' work, elite Athenian envoys sniff derisively at the Melians' suggestion of Spartan virtue (practiced with respect to people other than Spartans), claiming that they, more than all other men the Athenians know and clearly in contrast to themselves, equate the noble with the pleasant and the just with the expedient (5.105.3). That the Athenians immediately follow this claim with the assertion that justice and nobility are practiced

However, if Thucydides' suggestion is that the Athenians are somehow troubled by the injustice of their plans, it is a question why this would be particularly the case now, when the rest of their imperial endeavors have been similarly questionable. One reason may be that, despite the claims of Alcibiades and the Egestaean envoys to the contrary, the notion that the Sicilian expedition is being undertaken out of fear or compulsion – on which basis the expedition's great proponent, Alcibiades, largely rests his case -- is not very plausible and thus not convincingly exculpatory, at least as compared with the arguments put forth by the Athenians to defend their empire in Greece (1.75). For Alcibiades fails to convey convincingly a pressing threat from Sicily: though he speaks of the need continually to preempt enemies so that they cannot attack Athens, he gives no argument whatsoever that the Sicilians are among those whom it would be prudent at this time to preempt. As to the particular threat warned of by the Egestaeans, that of Syracusan aggression, Thucydides gives no indication, prior to the Athenians' invasion of Sicily, that the Syracusans have plans to help the Spartans bring them down; indeed, the Egestaeans themselves can say only that the Syracusans might "at some point" [*pote*] decide to help the Peloponnesians overthrow the Athenians (6.6.2) Thus, the Athenians' claim of compulsion in this instance is rather strained[61] and less convincing than their claims to have been compelled

"with danger"-- to which the Spartans whom they are scorning are notoriously averse and the Athenians notoriously attracted – further underlines the Athenian attachment to justice (5.107) (Orwin 1994, 115).

[61] Cf., however, G.B. Grundy's discussion of the Athenians' position with respect to Sicily (Grundy 1948, 180). Grundy suggests that Syracuse's aggression towards the rest of Hellenic Sicily during the preceding fifty years has been checked only by Athens' periodic intervention; in light of Syracuse's clear imperial ambitions, then, as well as the alliance established at the beginning of the war between the Peloponnesians and Dorian Sicily, including Syracuse (2.7.2), Athens might well have understood Syracuse to pose a threat (1948, p. 180). We might add that the Egestaeans' warning of Syracusan aggression is not the first the Athenians have heard of such a possibility, as we have seen, for example, in the Corcyraeans' remarks just prior to the start of the war: in arguing that the Athenians should ally with the Corcyraeans, the latter pointed out that Corcyra is situated so as to facilitate an Athenian expedition to Sicily, as well as to prevent a Sicilian fleet from moving against Athens in concert with the Peloponnesians (1.36.2). However, in speaking of the Athenians' decision to ally with Corcyra, Thucydides' only word on Sicily is that the Athenians were attracted to the prospect of making a voyage against her; there is no mention of a defensive concern. In addition, Thucydides tells us that, despite their alliance, the Syracusans and the other Dorian allies of the Peloponnesians have not joined in the war, at least as late as five years in (3.86.2), and there is no indication from his narrative that this changes until well after the Athenians' expedition to Sicily (8.26).

initially to acquire their empire over the Greeks (1.75) and to have maintained the empire they possess (2.63.2-3). For while the Athenians surely did not seek that empire simply out of fear, such a concern motivated them in part (1.98-1.100); thus, when they were called upon by their enemies' accusations of tyranny to justify their empire, to those enemies and to themselves, the Athenians likely felt that genuine (though partial) defense to be somewhat exculpatory. The attempt on Sicily, however, admits of no such justification. It may be, then, that the Athenians have a sense that the conquest of Sicily differs from their conquests in Greece in being apparently less necessary -- and that they are troubled by this notion.[62]

In light of these considerations, the Athenians' failure to speak of the Sicilian expedition as noble, despite harboring some belief that it is, becomes clearer. For it is difficult to consider noble something that, while daring and impressive, is thought to be unjust. It is plausible, then, that if the Athenians desired the Sicilian expedition as something noble, but had nagging doubts about that nobility because of the expedition's potential injustice, some dim awareness of this problem could have led them not to bring up the question of nobility, lest it be threatened by openly considering or defending it. This indicates that the Athenians' desire for empire cannot be for something that they squarely acknowledge to be unjust, at least during those times when that desire appears strongest and most intoxicating, because this intensity is tied to the Athenians' sense of their nobility. From this it seems that the obscurity of Nicias' and

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Furthermore, if the Athenians did understand themselves to be threatened by Sicily, because of, for example, Syracuse's aggression in Sicily, it is odd that this threat is not in any way clearly spelled out in their Sicilian debate.

[62] The above argument implies that one reason the Athenians may find persuasive questionable claims regarding the necessity of the Sicilian expedition is that they desire a way to acquit themselves of blame for it. However, another possibility is suggested by the same general concern about injustice, namely, that the Athenians here suffer a mild version of what after the mutilation of the Herms hits them full force. For in that instance, the Athenians see the threat of overthrow where it does not clearly exist, likely because they fear they deserve it; perhaps, then, the Athenians are genuinely moved by claims such as that the Egestaeans might "at some point" join the Spartans in "pulling them down" in part for the same reason.

Alcibiades' statements of motive in the Sicilian debate contributes to the erotic transports that Thucydides attributes to the Athenians at 6.24: if the Athenians had clear-sightedly faced the difficulty that taking over the whole of Sicily is at odds with their aim to help their allies there in accordance with justice, the noble picture of daring virtue that Nicias inadvertently painted in his second speech, and the eros that followed it, may have been threatened. At the same time, and as we saw in the previous chapter, the fact that the Athenians' hopes are not acknowledged and thereby subjected to some form of scrutiny encourages their dangerous irrationality. This is not to say that the Athenians' imperial desire was in former times sober; however, their hopes have become more unreasonable with time. To see one sign of this, we may compare some of the most extravagant statements of hope that Pericles' speeches expressed with Thucydides' statement of what the Athenians felt but did not spell out at the time of the Sicilian expedition. For while Pericles did promise the Athenians that their nobility would bring them deathless glory, he still maintained the possibility that they could suffer reverses, noting, at one point, that the city might "give way a little, at some point – for it is the nature of all things also to decline" (2.64.3); he never encouraged them to the dangerously complacent belief that on a given expedition they could "in no way fall" – particularly after making such muddled calculations as to the capacities of the enemy as they do about Sicily. Similarly, however unlikely it is that all the Athenians would be remembered for all time, such remembrance at least seems, in principle, more of a possibility than "eternal pay."

A second reason the Athenians might be more troubled by their plans for Sicily than by their previous conquests is that their general opinion of Athens has undergone a shift from the time of those conquests, which shift influences the way they now view the city's imperialism, in Sicily and more broadly. That the Athenians think less highly of their city than they did in

earlier times is suggested by certain contrasts that Nicias' and Alcibiades' speeches present with those of Pericles. For these later leaders speak with less veneration of the city than did their predecessor; while Pericles claimed, in no uncertain terms, the superiority of Athens to all other cities that have ever existed (2.64.3-4), both Alcibiades and Nicias give a less exalted picture of her. For example, when Alcibiades argues that Athens must continually expand her empire, part of the reason he gives is that a city that is "not inactive would very quickly be destroyed by a change to inactivity." Therefore, he concludes, "those men live most securely whose conduct of politics is least at variance with their present customs and laws, even if these are inferior" (6.18.7). He thereby raises the possibility, which Pericles never did, that Athens' customs and laws are defective; that he argues for their perpetuation only on grounds of stability does little to counteract this impression, as does his brief suggestion that Athens will destroy herself if she is not turned constantly upon others (6.18.6).

Additionally, both Nicias and Alcibiades suggest that Athens is somehow more impressive in appearance than she is in reality. For instance, in defending his private pursuits as beneficial to Athens, Alcibiades claims that he gives outsiders an impression of Athens' power that is "greater" than what exists in fact (6.16.2), thereby indicating that the opinion others have of Athens' greatness is not quite true. Nicias makes a similar suggestion in his discussion of how the Athenians can "amaze" the Hellenes in Sicily. Having argued that their adversaries would be most bowled over if the Athenians "did not come," or, secondarily, if the Athenians sailed by, let the Sicilians behold their mightiness, and then "after a brief time, departed," Nicias explains, "for it is, as we all know, things that are farthest off and least allow a test of their reputation which are looked at with amazement" (6.11.4). In this way he implies that, if the Athenians' reputation were tested by the Sicilians, as it would be if they embarked on a mission to Sicily, the result

might not be to inspire amazement; he thereby indicates, rather matter-of-factly, that the great reputation the Athenians seek is based, in part, on illusion, "as we all know." Such remarks are striking when contrasted with those of Pericles, who also spoke of testing Athens' reputation, claiming that "Athens alone…when put to the test, is superior to the report of her" (2.41.3). Indeed, on Pericles' telling, Athenian power, far from being falsely inflated for the sake of appearances, is the true sign of the city's worthiness: Pericles' praises of Athenian virtue in the funeral oration have not been a mere "boast," he claims, but "the truth, which is shown by the power of our city, which we have acquired through these ways" [*tropon*] (2.41.2).

The present leading Athenians also differ from Pericles in the prominence with which private concerns feature in their speeches, as both Nicias and Alcibiades point frequently to the pursuit of private interest by Athens' leaders, and imply a distance between those interests and the good of the city. In depicting Athens thus, her statesmen reflect and foster in their audience an impression of the city that is at odds with confidence in her nobility. For it is difficult to consider noble one's community, and the undertakings of that community, if one believes her most able and influential members to be less than wholeheartedly devoted, or even hostile, to the good of other citizens or the whole. The concern for private interest is most obvious in the speech of Alcibiades, whose first subject, chronologically and perhaps in importance, is himself, to which he devotes more than a third of his speech. He comes running out of the gate with the claim, made in response to Nicias' criticism of him, that "it is fitting for me more than others to rule," because "those things for which I am cried out against bring reputation to my ancestors and myself, and benefit to my fatherland" (6.16.1). He goes on to offer support for this statement, in which he elaborates his superiority to his fellow citizens: Alcibiades is responsible for conveying an impression of Athens' greatness to her enemies, through "the magnificence of

my display" at the Olympics – he does not shrink from reminding the Athenians of the particulars of his triumph, that he "entered seven chariots, a number that no private citizen had ever entered before, and I won the first prize and the second and the fourth, and provided other things in a way that was worthy of my victory" – and by financing choruses and the like, all of which "to strangers gives the appearance of strength" (6.16.2-3).

Furthermore, his direction of public affairs has been excellent, as it was he who "brought together the most powerful forces of the Peloponnesus without great danger to you or cost, and made the Lacedaemonians stake all on one day at Mantinea," as the result of which the Peloponnesians, though victorious in that battle, "have not even now firmly regained their confidence" (6.16.6). While Alcibiades recognizes that such men as he who have stood out "in splendor" will be "painful" to those who have to live with them, he argues that others ought to accept the fact of their inferiority and such treatment by the great as is commensurate with that inferiority: for it is "not unjust that one thinking highly of himself [should not wish] to be equal, since when one does badly he does not share equally in his misfortune with anyone. But just as in misfortune we are not spoken to, similarly one should bear up even though despised by those who are doing well…" (6.16.4-5).

Thus, far from Pericles' inclination to hide potentially divisive distinctions among the Athenians, to the point that he elects not to speak of the particular accomplishments of the dead he is eulogizing in his funeral speech (2.35-2.46), Alcibiades is as explicit as possible about his distinctness from and superiority to his fellow citizens, even musing that future Athenians will falsely claim him as their ancestor, rather than the relative mediocrities from whom they are in fact descended (6.16.5). This striking change in rhetoric is underscored by the fact that Alcibiades echoes Pericles even as he departs from him: as Pericles spoke of the illustrious

Athens as "painful" to other cities (2.64.5), so Alcibiades speaks of the illustrious Alcibiades as "painful" to other Athenians. In this way, this speech singles out the exceptional individual, Alcibiades, elevates him above the rest of the Athenians, and emphasizes the difference and opposition between his good and the good of other citizens, as least as far as such goods as honor are concerned. It is true, and crucial, that Alcibiades' argument for his superiority rests entirely on his claim to benefit the city in significant ways, and while it is a bold man who takes the orchestration of a great, failed battle as an example of such benefit, as Alcibiades does with Mantinea, his argument, while staggeringly rude and ill-advised, has real merit. For the talents and contributions to Athens enumerated in or suggested by this speech are considerable, and, as the rest of Thucydides' work will bear out, Alcibiades is a man of truly exceptional capacity, the blame for whose worst transgressions can be laid, in large part, at the feet of his fellow citizens (6.61). Nonetheless, there is no denying that, while Alcibiades claims to benefit Athens and does so in fact, thereby indicating a significant harmony between his good and the city's, he still brings to the fore a problem Pericles took careful pains to shade, which is that the individual's good and the city's are not simply the same. Indeed, even when Alcibiades is not stressing the divide between his good and the good of other, lesser Athenians – for example, when he speaks of the common good of safety, as opposed to divisive considerations of private honor -- his speech still emphasizes the difference between the individual and the city, and at times suggests the priority of the former. This is seen, for example, in his assertion that "the things for which I am cried out against bring reputation (*men*) to my ancestors and myself, and (*de*) benefit to my city" (6.16.1); and that it is "not useless, when someone by private expenditure benefits not himself alone, but also his city" (6.16.3); it is also suggested by his claim that the great, "whatever their fatherland," leave to it great pride in them (6.16.5). These remarks all give the

impression that, while Alcibiades is concerned for both himself and Athens, the former comes first. That is, he seeks his own glory first, from which Athens, too or secondarily, derives a benefit, and he aspires, not simply to contribute to Athens' eternal remembrance and admiration (in accordance with Pericles' exhortations), nor even to be remembered simply as a great Athenian, but to be among the ranks of great men who are venerated by later generations, "whatever their fatherland," for whom the particular place appears somewhat incidental.

As regards his treatment of private concerns, Nicias cuts a less spectacular figure than Alcibiades, as he does in most things, nowhere proclaiming the subordinate place of the rest of the Athenians relative to himself. However, he too departs from Pericles' rhetoric in this regard. This is seen, most clearly, in his attack of Alcibiades.[63] For Pericles, by and large, kept his attacks of enemies confined to the substance of their arguments, rather than disparaging their character and motives. Nicias, however, like Cleon before him, vigorously sows suspicion of his opponent: though he does not mention Alcibiades by name, he speaks of "someone," "being well-pleased at being chosen to rule," whom the Athenians should not heed because he is concerned "only for himself"; he seeks only "to be wondered at for his raising of horses" and then, because horses are very expensive, he seeks "some profit from his command" (6.12.2). Therefore, the Athenians ought not

> …put it into the power of this one to make a private display at the risk of the city, but rather consider that such men do an injustice to the public, and waste their private things, and that the matter is a great one, and not such as a youth may decide to take hastily in hand (6.12.2).

Nicias then addresses himself to the elderly in the crowd, exhorting them in old fogey-fashion to band together against Athens' fearsome young people, to oppose Alcibiades in particular and

[63] See Robert Faulkner's thoughtful discussion of Alcibiades' imperial ambition, in which he notes that Nicias fosters divisiveness and descends to personal attacks and slander during this debate in a way that Alcibiades does not (Faulkner 2007, 74).

such other impressionable youngsters as he has infected with a "sick love for what is not present," and rescind the decree to go to Sicily (6.13). Thus, Nicias accuses the man who has already been elected general of the Sicilian expedition -- on whom, therefore, the safety of the Athenian mission in large part depends – of being entirely selfish and without regard for the wellbeing of Athens. Putting aside the difficulty that his portrayal of Alcibiades is inaccurate,[64] and that, by depicting him as he does, Nicias prompts and thus bears some responsibility for Alcibiades' problematic rebuttal, he also stresses the notion that certain of the leading men in Athens have interests that are entirely opposed to those of the city, which they are pursuing without regard for the common.

Nicias implies a discrepancy between the good of the city and the good of the individual in other ways as well. For instance, he opens his speech by trying to preempt criticism of himself for opposing the expedition to Sicily; as he says, "and yet I get honor from this, and have less dread about my body than others, though I consider that he is an equally good citizen who takes some care for his body and property; for most of all would such a one wish, for his own sake, that the things of the city be guided rightly" (6.9.2). By thus emphasizing that his interest is not served by the course of action he is advocating, Nicias draws attention to the division between his good and the city's good – the former is allegedly served by the Sicilian expedition,

[64] If we do not find sufficient evidence of this inaccuracy in Alcibiades' speech on Sicily, Thucydides' remarks on Alcibiades prior to this speech, as well as before his involvement at Mantinea, also suggest it: in both cases, Thucydides indicates that Alcibiades' motives, like those of the Athenians generally, are mixed. In his account of the battle of Mantinea, Thucydides says not only that Alcibiades sought to overturn the treaty with the Spartans because they had negotiated it with Nicias and Laches, rather than with himself, so that he considered himself "in every way slighted," but also that "it seemed to him better to join battle with the Argives" (5.43.2-3), thereby suggesting concerns other than his private interest. Then, in his introduction to Alcibiades' Sicilian speech, Thucydides claims that Alcibiades speaks in order to oppose Nicias for private reasons, and "most of all he was desirous of becoming general and hoped from this to seize Sicily and Carthage, and, if he were fortunate, to benefit at the same time himself with regard to his private things, as to both wealth and reputation" (6.15.2). Thus, Thucydides does not make clear why Alcibiades wants to subdue Sicily and Carthage, but by saying that "at the same time" he sought his private wealth and glory, he suggests that the desire for conquest went beyond these things.

the latter is not – and implies that the Athenians are likely to assume that their leaders put their own good before that of the city. In addition, he makes the striking statement that a citizen who cares for the city for the sake of his own property is, as compared with one whose attachment springs from other sources, "equally good," and that the former would "most of all" be attached to the city. It is true that this sort of appeal is not simply novel in Thucydides' work, as Pericles earlier made a similar argument to the Athenians. However, a comparison of the two arguments provides a helpful illustration of the difference between the two men and the circumstances in which they led. Following the onset of the plague and several Athenian reverses, Pericles opened his third speech with the argument that the Athenians should not give up the fight against the Peloponnesians, because the individual's wellbeing depends on the survival of the city (2.60.2-3). Yet Pericles was addressing the Athenians at a time of great suffering and panic; in previous speeches, under better conditions, he made very different, more high-minded arguments as to Athenian attachment to Athens, and even this third speech becomes more public-spirited as it continues, with private concerns receding into the background (2.43; 2.61.4, 2.64.3). In addition, though Pericles' remarks at 2.60.2-3 do grant that the concern for individual safety should move his countrymen to continue defending the city, he does not assert that this motive is of equal standing with or perhaps even more important than other, more noble ones, as Nicias does here.

In these ways, Nicias and Alcibiades bring out the potential or actual conflict among Athenian citizens and between the individual and the city. That this rhetoric is reflective of a significant fact about Athenian life is shown by Thucydides' explicit remarks regarding the disastrous effect of private concerns on the management of the Sicilian expedition, the most obvious example being the recall of Alcibiades from his command, through the machinations of

his jealous enemies (6.27.2, 6.29.3, 6.61; 2.65.11). Nicias' private motives, too, are influential in determining the course of events in Sicily, as Thucydides makes clear that his concern for his own safety moves him, in part, to recommend the tremendous armament that, when lost, brings tremendous harm to the Athenians (6.24.1, 8.1.2). This is not, of course, to suggest that private concerns did not exist for or influence the Athenians prior to this time. It is surely no coincidence that private divisions eventually become more prominent and problematic in the city that, as Pericles himself stressed, takes pride in the freedom of individuals to pursue their own private interests (2.37.2), and which is, moreover, dedicated to the morally problematic project of empire, whose doubtful justice without surely threatens justice within (Strauss, p. 194). It is nonetheless the case that, during the period we are currently considering, the pursuit of private interest appears more primary and harmful for the Athenians than it previously did, a change to which they are not simply blind and which likely contributes to the diminished admiration they have for their city, noted above. That is, it is doubtful that the changes manifested and encouraged by the rhetoric of Nicias and Alcibiades are unfelt by the Athenians, particularly given that they were so elevated and energized by Pericles' beautiful description of Athens as free of the defects suggested by this later rhetoric. In turn, a weakened opinion of Athens' goodness further encourages in her citizens the less restrained pursuit of private interest, separate from or even opposed to the interest of Athens as a whole, as the city comes to appear less worthy of the sacrifice of such interests.

It is difficult to distinguish precisely the causes of the civil deterioration described above. Perhaps this change is, in part, the inevitable result of the Athenians' devotion to the pursuit of empire, as encouraged, most powerfully, by Pericles. For it may be that, however impressive the virtue to which Pericles' leadership moved the Athenians, imperialism's inherently questionable

justice and its emphasis on potentially divisive glory-seeking simply tends, eventually, to undermine confidence in the virtue of the imperial city. This is likely to be particularly the case, as we earlier noted, when that city is as remarkably honest about the tyrannical aspect of empire as Athens is (1.76, 2.63, 5.89). It is surely also the case that the Athenians' diminishing confidence in the goodness of Athens is a product of the poor leadership Thucydides describes after the death of Pericles, during which time we see the city succumbing to base, foolish, and cruel impulses in the execution of the war and the maintenance of her empire (4.21, 4.122.5-6, 5.116.3), impulses which Pericles had, to an impressive degree, moderated or restrained, and which surely affect the Athenians' opinion of themselves. However this may be, Thucydides clearly indicates the fact of such deterioration, and it would be strange if the Athenians, previously so buoyed by an opinion of their superiority, were not awake to and affected by it in various ways. In fact, the Athenians' desire for a stunning imperial expedition, a desire to which they are generally given, is likely intensified by their doubts about Athens, as the nobility they secretly believe such an undertaking to embody serves to bolster their flagging self-regard, even as the questionable justice of such a pursuit threatens it. Thus, by depicting in the Athenians a striking haziness of purpose as regards the Sicilian expedition, and by tying their obscurity to unease about the ugliness of their plans, Thucydides suggests that the Athenians' opinions about their virtue influence the hopes they have for the Sicilian expedition, as well as their execution of it. Through his account of the launch of this terrific undertaking, Thucydides indicates that the hopes and misgivings suggested there are connected to the Athenians' opinion of the expedition as both of dubious justice and of such nobility as to promise some confirmation of a virtue they hold in doubt.

Chapter 4: Piety and Nobility in Athenian Imperialism

Athenian Piety

Thucydides describes the Athenians' catastrophic defeat in Sicily as "the greatest event," not only in this war, but in the whole of Greek history (7.87.5): the Athenians were "defeated in all ways," having met with "utter destruction" by land and sea, and "from many few came back home" (7.87.5-6). Upon hearing the report of the calamity, the Athenians left in Athens could not believe it for some time, unfathomable as it was to them that a force as great as theirs could have been simply destroyed. However, when they did come to accept the truth of their situation, Thucydides tells us that the Athenians were "harsh" to the orators who had pushed for the expedition -- "as if they themselves had not voted for it" -- and that they grew angry at "those

who uttered oracles and soothsayers and whoever had, through the practice of divination, buoyed them with hope that they would seize Sicily" (8.1). The Athenians' anger at the proponents of the expedition is surely unsurprising; indeed, we recall Pericles' warning about this propensity of human nature on an earlier occasion (1.140.1), and his complaints when nature, predictably, asserted herself (2.60.1, 2.64.1). However, Thucydides' remark concerning soothsayers and diviners is more perplexing. For here Thucydides seems to suggest that such people were of decisive importance in fostering the Athenians' hopes for Sicily, while his account of the tremendously hopeful conception of the Sicilian expedition contains no reference to them or to any explicitly pious encouragement the Athenians presumably took from them. Similarly, in describing the Athenians' terrible retreat from Sicily, Thucydides summarizes the course of their failed venture thus: "so it came to pass that in place of having come to enslave others, they were now going away in fear lest they might rather themselves suffer this, and instead of prayers and paeans, with which they had sailed out, were now departing with words of ominous import that were the reverse of these…" (7.75.7). The reference to prayer and paeans in this brief but sweeping overview of the Sicilian expedition again seems to suggest the centrality of the expectation of divine assistance to the Athenians' hopes to conquer Sicily. However this suggestion, as we will see, marks a departure from Thucydides' earlier presentation of the genesis of the expedition. Thus, Thucydides' comments at 8.1 and 7.75 underline a perplexing question that is raised repeatedly in his account of the Athenians' attempt on Sicily to which we will now turn, namely, what role does piety play in Athenian imperialism? By considering Thucydides' statements on how piety moved the Athenians especially during the Sicilian expedition, and by comparing the Athenians' great imperial hopes with the hopes of several of

Thucydides' most deeply pious characters -- the Melians and Nicias -- we will shed light on this question.

That piety is present in the Athenians, and influential especially as regards their pursuits in Sicily, there can be no doubt. This is suggested in various places in Thucydides' account of the expedition, beginning with the Athenians' reaction to the mutilation of the Herms. While Athens is preparing to sail for Sicily, a number of religious statues in the city are defaced, which the Athenians interpret as a bad omen for the venture and a sign of a conspiracy against the democracy (6.27); in the hysteria that follows, the city arrests and puts to death a number of good citizens on the word of bad ones, and, falling prey to the manipulations of his personal enemies, she recalls the brilliant general Alcibiades from his command in Sicily for trial and execution on grounds of impiety. The Athenians' piety is also apparent on the day of the expedition's launch, when the whole of Athens ("so to speak") goes down to the Piraeus to see off the fleet and, at this "critical time," joins together in the "customary" prayers and singing of paeans (6.30.1, 6.32). Later, after the Athenians suffer terrible reverses in Sicily, pious concerns dictate their course of action at a critical juncture. Having lost significant battles with Syracuse by sea (7.41) and land (7.44), with an army utterly discouraged and in ill health (7.47), facing an emboldened and freshly reinforced enemy (7.50), the Athenians finally decide to go home. However, when an eclipse of the moon occurs, "the many," Thucydides tells us, "take [it] to heart," and urge their leaders to wait, while the general Nicias, in turn, determines that the question of leaving cannot even be considered for twenty seven days, per the recommendation of the soothsayers. Then, in his description of Athens' final sea battle with Syracuse, Thucydides says of those Athenians watching the chaotic scene from shore that, when it appeared to them that their side was prevailing, they "regained courage, and called on the gods not to rob them of their safe

return" (7.71.3). Finally, we see clear evidence of the Athenians' piety when this great battle is lost and the army is retreating by land: the wounded and ill, unable to follow their comrades, fall behind with "faint appeals to the gods and lamentations" (7.75.4); as to the utterly despondent men making the retreat, Nicias attempts to instill in them hope for some alleviation of their misery by encouraging them to reflect that they have been punished sufficiently for their transgressions and that they are now more worthy of the gods' pity than their jealousy (7.77.3).

While these are certainly not the first manifestations of Athenian piety we have seen in the work,[65] the frequency with which they appear and their obvious effect on foreign policy during the Sicilian expedition are remarkable given Thucydides' general portrayal of Athens to this point. After all, the spokesmen of Athens, in contrast to their enemies, hardly speak of gods or defend their city on pious grounds, in their speeches within Athens and without. As to the demos, Thucydides does indicate that they are more pious than at least some of their leaders: for example, and setting aside for now Nicias (whom we will discuss at greater length below), "the many" are singled out as those who "took to heart" the eclipse in Sicily and desired on that basis to delay their escape, and those who, at the start of the war, were pained by leaving their ancestral temples. In addition, Thucydides' claim that those Athenians in the grip of pious fervor after the mutilation of the Herms were manipulated by men vying for leadership of the demos indicates that those aspiring to leadership did not take terribly seriously that which so mattered to those they successfully stirred up (6.28.2). Nonetheless, the fact that the Athenian people follow and revere a man who calls publicly for stripping gold from the likeness of the goddess Athena to pad the war treasury (2.13.5), who never defends any course of action, however important, on

[65] We recall, for example, that they tended to interpret the plague as divine punishment and as the fulfillment of an ancient oracle (2.54.5, 2.59.1, 2.64.1), and that, at the beginning of the war, the many were grieved by the move, necessitated by Pericles' war strategy, within the city walls, away from their ancestral temples (2.14, 2.16.2).

the basis of its piety (cf. the practice of Athens' enemies at 1.123), and who praises religious sacrifice and festivals only on grounds of the "relaxation" they afford (2.38.1), indicates a remarkable neglect of piety on the part of the Athenian people. Thus, it is especially striking that a surge of pious feeling derails the Sicilian expedition. This fact surely indicates that the Athenians are much more attached to piety than they often appear; it also casts doubt on the wisdom of Periclean efforts to ignore or diminish such attachment, which efforts, as many students of Thucydides have suggested, may well have produced a particularly harmful manifestation of Athenian piety.[66]

Yet, while we see that piety is clearly of tremendous importance for the Athenians, questions about how precisely it moves them remain. In particular, it is not clear how piety affects their great imperial hopes. As we suggested above, one could reasonably take Thucydides' description of the Athenians' anger at the diviners and soothsayers for the outcome of the Sicilian expedition (8.1) to suggest that their great hopes for the undertaking were, fundamentally, hopes for the assistance of the gods, and thus that piety not only limits or cripples their imperialism, but also supports it. The fact that at the beginning of the expedition we see nearly the whole of Athens praying for its success seems to support this suggestion. But granting that hopes for the gods' assistance played some role in the great, delirious hopes for empire that we have observed throughout Thucydides' work, what, more precisely, is their priority in the Athenians' motivations? Do the examples of Athenian prayer reveal the deepest source of the energy fueling their imperial pursuits? To gain further clarity about these matters, we will now consider the character of the most striking hopes Thucydides attributes to the Athenians in comparison with those of some of the most obviously pious men described in the work, the

[66] See Ahrensdorf 1997, 256; Orwin 1994, 197; and Strauss 1964, 209.

Melians and the rather un-Athenian Nicias.[67] We will then be better able to ascertain the extent to which the Athenians' hopes for empire are indeed pious hopes.

Melian and Nicias Piety

We turn first to the example of the Melians. Just prior to his account of the Sicilian expedition, Thucydides describes the confrontation between Athens and the small island of Melos, a colony of Sparta that had until this point, the sixteenth year of the war, remained independent and neutral. The Athenians sail to Melos with a force that dwarfs their tiny adversary, and when the Melians refuse to submit to their rule, the Athenians encamp and send envoys to speak with their obstreperous would-be subjects, in order to persuade them to capitulate (5.84). The Athenians explain that they have not come to argue about suspicions regarding "the future things," and say they mean, instead, to converse about the safety of Melos, in light of "the present things and what you all see" (5.87). Informing the Melians that they will dispense with the "noble names" typically bandied about in such circumstances, the Athenians cut to the chase: neither do they claim to rule because they deserve to, nor are they interested in hearing that the Melians do not deserve to be conquered; rather, the Melians should consider "what is possible," knowing, of course, that "the superior do what they are capable of, and the weak yield" (5.89). Acknowledging their own weakness, the Melians remind the Athenians that the outcome of war does not depend simply on strength, but that the role of fortune, too, must be considered; as they see it, they should fight, for in fighting they are afforded some hope (5.102). However, as Thucydides' discussions of "fortune" elsewhere suggest (4.55.3-4, 4.65.4, 7.18.2),

[67] Nicias is reasonably treated separately on this question from the Athenians as a whole, not only because of his more manifest piety, but also because he gives no sign of harboring the consuming hopes for empire that distinguish the Athenians generally, with which hopes we are most concerned.

human beings tend to understand this force to be more than mere blind chance, which understanding the Athenians perceive in the Melians' comment. Thus, they respond by reminding the Melians of the havoc that profligate hope can wreak on the weak, recommending that they not

> make [themselves] like the many, who, when it is still possible to be saved by human means, when, being hard-pressed, manifest hopes abandon them, give themselves over to those that are immanifest -- to divination, oracles, and such things that bring ruin through hope (5.103).

Here the Melians confirm the Athenians' suspicions by making their hopes explicit, insisting that "we trust that in that fortune that is from the divine, we will not be at a disadvantage, being pious men who are standing against men who are not just" (5.104). The Athenians coolly rejoin that, when it comes to the gods, they themselves do not fear being at a disadvantage. As they explain, "of the gods we hold the opinion, and of men we [see] clearly, that all through everything by a necessity of nature, they rule what they have power over" (5.105). To this and other arguments the Melians make no answer; nonetheless, they are not persuaded by the Athenians and they will not submit, "trusting to fortune from the divine that has saved [us] to this point," and to help from the Spartans (5.112.2). The Athenians censure the Melians as the "only" men "who judge the future things as clearer than the visible things" and who "look on the immanifest, because you wish it, as already coming to be" (5.113). The conversation ends with the Athenians telling the Melians that they will come to ruin; the Athenians then besiege the city and, upon her eventual capitulation, kill all the men and make slaves of the women and children (5.114, 5.116).

Thus, in the example of the Melians, Thucydides offers a clear illustration of an experience of pious hope: the Melians, caught in a desperate situation beyond their evident capacity to survive, are buoyed by a feeling of their justice and piety, which virtues they believe will not go unrewarded by the gods; accordingly, they are confident that the gods will deliver

them from a terrible peril.[68] This confidence is likely bolstered by their sense of the Athenians' naked injustice, a sense that is surely inflamed, not only by the fact of the Athenians' attempt on them, but by the latter's insistence that they are unconcerned with justice. It is also surely inflamed by the impiety on brazen display in much of the Athenians' speech, such as their contemptuous dismissal of "divination, oracles, and such things that bring ruin," as well as the Athenians' likening of themselves to gods (5.105).

Next we turn to Nicias, in whom we find an example very similar to that of the Melians. Nicias' pious hope is seen most clearly in his reaction to the dire straits in which the Athenians find themselves in Sicily. Utterly dejected by the loss of their final sea-battle with Syracuse, the Athenians refuse to attempt a retreat by sea, finding the prospect of returning to what is left of their fleet, formerly the outstanding symbol of Athenian strength and superiority, too much to bear (7.72.4). They opt instead to attempt an escape by land, and in the miserable trek through the Syracusan countryside that follows, Nicias exhorts the Athenians not to abandon hope. He explains the ground of his confidence thus: noting that he himself, formerly renowned for "good fortune," is suffering no less (and, given the illness with which he is now afflicted, he suffers more) than "the lowest" among them, Nicias claims that he has "spent [his] life in many lawful actions to gods and many just actions to men" (7.77.1-2), on account of which his "hope for the future is still bold" (7.77.1-2). Here, then, we see the same hope expressed by the Melians: the reward of justice and piety by the gods in the form of escape from imminent destruction.

The situation here is less straightforward than that of the Melians in an important respect, for Nicias also believes the crisis facing the Athenians to be a punishment for their collective

[68] It is an interesting and somewhat common temptation to view the Melians as willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of their freedom; for example, as Michael Walzer claims, the Melian leaders "value freedom above safety" (Walzer 1977, 5-6). However, this suggestion neglects the Melians' explicit statements, noted above, as to their expectation of deliverance from the Athenians.

crime of invading Sicily. However here, too, we see Nicias' confidence that the gods' protection of the virtuous, or at least, those human beings whose vice is not serious enough to warrant their destruction, will assure the Athenians' safety. For Nicias also takes comfort in the very severity of the Athenians' suffering, as he goes on to say that their misfortunes will probably abate, "for fortune has sufficiently favored the enemy, and if by making this expedition we have roused the jealousy of one of the gods, we have now suffered enough retribution." He elaborates the ground of his belief that he and his fellow citizens have been punished sufficiently when he indicates that their transgressions have not been terribly great:

> For surely some others have before now gone against their neighbors, and after doing that which belongs to man, have suffered what can be endured. And it is now reasonable for us to hope that we will receive gentler treatment from the gods, for we are now more worthy of their pity than their jealousy…(7.77.4).

By describing the pursuit of empire as simply "that which belongs to man," Nicias flirts with the idea, which other Athenians have stated outright and discussed at length (1.75, 1.76, 5.105), that the Athenians and others who have sought rule have done so by a compulsion of human nature, which would suggest that they are not deserving of punishment at all. However, Nicias does not go nearly this far. According to his rather muddy formulation, the disaster visited upon the Athenians is in fact punishment from the gods for imperialism, which is a transgression, but one whose criminality seems to be mitigated by the influence of nature, which, while it does not simply overpower, gives a strong kick. Hence the mitigation of the punishment as well: the Athenians and others deserve punishment, but only "what can be endured," rather than, presumably, what would destroy them. Thus, Nicias shows the paramount importance in his understanding of the gods' concern for virtue, as he expresses the expectation that his own remarkable justice and piety will guarantee the Athenians' deliverance from their current plight,

as will the fact that the Athenians' crimes have not been serious enough to merit more than can be endured.

Unacknowledged Piety?

When we consider these examples of manifestly pious hope in comparison with Thucydides' most remarkable depictions of the Athenians' imperial hope -- seen in their reveries about Sicily and in the climax of Pericles' funeral oration -- one obvious difference we see is that, while the Melians and Nicias explicitly identify the gods as the agent of their great hopes, the Athenians, at their most hopeful, do not. Gods are not mentioned at the conception of the Sicilian expedition; the "eros" that Thucydides attributes to the Athenians at the moment they are most seduced by the prospect of such a conquest (6.24) follows an assembly in which neither of the speakers arguing as to the expedition's desirability refers to the gods (6.9-6.23). Nor do the gods feature in Pericles' beautiful picture of noble sacrifice and eternal glory. However, we might wonder whether the Athenians, though not explicitly calling on gods in the cases just mentioned, are implicitly or quietly hopeful for their help -- a suggestion that may receive support from consideration of certain important ways the Athenians' hopes resemble those of the Melians and Nicias. First, apparent or at least implicit in each of these cases is the hope to escape death. As Nicias and the Melians hope not to be destroyed, so too do the Athenians, a hope that is evident in Thucydides' description of the unspoken expectations the Athenians harbor for the Sicilian expedition at its conception. As we recall, "eros" is said to fall upon "all alike" -- on the older men, who believed that "such a great power could in no way fall"; on those "in the prime of life" who were "in good hope of being saved," and on the multitude, who sought a source of "eternal pay" (6.24). The attraction to launching a force great enough that it could

"in no way fall" suggests a hope for invincibility, and the pleasant contemplation of "being saved," coming as it does in a list of objects of fervent Athenian longing, suggests that this hope is not simply the precondition of attaining other goods in Sicily, but is itself a central object of desire (however complicated in the circumstances).[69] As to "eternal pay," attraction to an endless gravy train implies, of course, an expectation of being always able to ride it, and thus of always being. In other words, the Athenians don't hope merely to conquer Sicily, but with that as their obvious aim they hope for things far beyond what Sicily could offer, including immortality. Such hopes are also made apparent by the funeral oration, where Pericles promised that for those who devoted themselves to Athens death would be "unperceived" (2.43.6) and, moreover, that such men would attain "ageless praise" (2.43).

A second important similarity between the Melians and Nicias, on the one hand, and the Athenians as a whole, on the other, is the connection between their hopes and their understanding of themselves as virtuous. As we have discussed at length, one important aspect of the Athenians' understanding of their empire is that it is freely chosen, noble, and admirably dangerous and demanding, and the tremendous hopefulness we observe in the Athenians is most apparent when they have this opinion in mind (as opposed to when they have foremost in mind an opinion of their empire as compulsion or tyranny).[70] To repeat, on Pericles' telling, deathless

[69] That is, it would seem safer to stay home than to embark on a very dangerous military expedition, far away and in hostile territory.

[70] See Pericles' remarks on glory in the funeral oration in comparison with those in his other speeches. While he speaks of glory on multiple occasions, it is in the funeral oration that his promises of glory are greatest, as he here tells the Athenians not only that they will be remembered, but that they will be "remembered on every opportune occasion in speech and in deed," "for of famous men the whole earth is the tomb, and their epigraph is not only shown on a gravestone in their own home, but in lands not their own there lives an unwritten memory in the mind of each…" (2.43.2-3). Thus it is in this speech, which contains the greatest demands for sacrifice and the fewest references to the notion that the Athenian empire is a mere compulsion or even a tyranny, that Pericles stokes the greatest hopes.

glory is clearly suggested to follow from devotion to and sacrifice for the best city that has ever existed, a city that "fearlessly benefit[s]" other cities, "not so much by calculation of interest as by trust in freedom/liberality" (2.64, 2.40.5). Similarly, the considerable power of Athens is to be understood as the consequence of her virtue, including the virtue of allowing certain military advantages to her enemies "since we trust not to practices and stratagems more than to our courage/stoutness of soul" (2.41.2, 2.39.1). As to the Sicilian expedition, the strongest statement of the Athenians' hopes for it comes immediately after they hear Nicias' unwitting portrayal of the great risk and daring it will require; while the Athenians greatly desired the expedition before his speech, it is not until Nicias clumsily attempts to paint the venture as overly "burdensome" that they are said to be overcome with eros for it (6.19-6.24).

In this way, we see a second similarity between Thucydides' presentation of the Melians and Nicias and that of the Athenians generally: a sense of hope arising, in no small part, from an opinion of their virtue. For while Pericles' praise of the excellence of the city and his exhortation to the Athenians to sacrifice for her emphasized nobility more than the justice stressed by the Melians and Nicias, Thucydides suggests that both nobility and justice are productive of hope, and that this hope is tied to a sense of sacrifice. Just as Nicias is hopeful because of the good he has done others -- just deeds to men, pious deeds to gods -- so too are the Athenians hopeful because they understand themselves to sacrifice or disregard their advantage in various ways.

Consideration of this similarity between the Athenians and the manifestly pious Melians and Nicias brings us to a third, for in all of the cases we have discussed, that which is hoped for is beyond the evident powers of the hopeful to attain. For the strength of the Melians alone is not sufficient to stave off the Athenians in battle, nor can Nicias and the rest of his diminished army

have much reasonable hope of escaping, on their own, the Syracusans; likewise, the Athenians are not capable of ensuring that their city's glory will endure forever, nor that they will "in no way fall" on a risky military campaign or in any other circumstance. The connection in the minds of the Melians, Nicias, and the Athenians between the hope for salvation and virtues that have no manifest connection to that salvation underscores this point: for the fate of the virtuous to be reasonably assured, there must exist beings who recognize the possession of virtue and who are capable of assuring those goods that self-sacrificial virtues risk or fail to guarantee.

Thus, we see that the Athenians' hopes, no less than those of the Melians or Nicias, would, if thought through, require a power amounting to that of a god for their fulfillment. It is therefore plausible that, in their extravagant hopes for empire, the Athenians, too, are animated by an expectation of support from "immanifest" beings, and thus that they are guilty of what they criticize in the Melians: while justice and traditional piety are not emphasized when the Athenians are at their most hopeful, perhaps the Athenians are nonetheless moved by the belief that their nobility will be rewarded by gods.[71]

However, the observation that the Athenians would require gods of a certain character to make their hopes reasonable does not yet tell us whether the Athenians are reasonable in this respect, and indeed, many features of Thucydides' account suggest that they are not. We first note that Thucydides has elsewhere suggested the possibility of an attachment to nobility that does not depend on hopes for divine assistance. In his narration of the Corcyraean civil war, Thucydides claims that as civil order deteriorated, the meaning of the noble changed but men nonetheless remained attached to nobility and took great risks on behalf of that attachment (3.82.4-7). This suggests that the hopefulness born of nobility that we have observed in other

[71] For a thoughtful elaboration of this view, see Ahrensdorf 1997, 254-265.

circumstances also moves the Corcyraeans; at the same time, Thucydides tells us that they did not "have reverence for the gods" (3.82.8), thereby indicating that the terrible daring on display in the civil war is not underpinned by a hope for the gods' help. Turning now to the Athenians in particular, we have mentioned the possibility that, at the time of the Sicilian expedition's conception and Pericles' funeral oration, the Athenians are implicitly or secretly hopeful for divine support. However, if this is the case it is a question why, in expressing their greatest hopes, neither the Athenians nor Thucydides in his own name voice this crucial feature of them, as the Melians and Nicias do. Furthermore, if the Athenians are quietly relying on the divine in these instances, we would expect to find considerable similarity between Thucydides' descriptions of the Athenians on these occasions and on those when they explicitly call on the gods. In fact, however, his descriptions point to two rather different experiences.

This difference is suggested, first, by Pericles. While he does not lead the Athenians in prayer, his funeral oration does make one reference to prayer, and this lone remark implies a distinction between hopes for divine assistance and the hopes Pericles is most concerned to stoke. This reference to prayer comes immediately after his praise of those Athenians who sacrificed their lives for Athens, when Pericles tells his audience that they too must courageously face the city's foes. First acknowledging that they "must pray to be safer" than those he is eulogizing, he goes on to say that his fellow citizens ought not think of their own advantage, but rather should be inspired by Athens' power, and that when they are moved by the city's greatness, they must reflect that it was won by men who knew "the terrible things" and nonetheless freely offered Athens the "noblest contribution." Everlasting glory belongs to these men who have given their lives for Athens, whom Pericles holds up as examples for the living, the latter of whom should "not be mere onlookers to the dangers of the enemy" and should be

"unsparing of their lives" (2.43). Thus, in his sole mention of prayer, Pericles ties it to the desire for safety that he urges his audience to spurn, and thereby opposes the hope to be saved by gods with the free and noble sacrifice, and resulting eternal glory, that he extols.

As to the Sicilian expedition, we recall that Thucydides shows the Athenians in prayer when they are utterly beaten and fleeing, as well as at the launch of the mission, when they are said to join together in the customary prayers. As we have noted, these calls on the gods surely indicate that the Athenians' hopes, not merely to escape Sicily, but also to conquer it, are to some extent hopes for divine assistance. Nonetheless, the circumstances in which the Athenians pray in fact indicate important limits to the influence of piety on their imperial hopes, and suggest that their imperialism is supported by a prior and more fundamental hope, to which hope for the gods' assistance at times offers a supplement.

Thucydides' picture of the Athenians' state of mind on the day of the expedition's launch is complex: the hopes they feel at this point both recall the transcendent, erotic experience of their first contemplation of the conquest of Sicily, and depart from it. The most striking difference is that, on the present occasion, the Athenians become fearful. We recall the erotic transports Thucydides ascribes to the Athenians after they first openly imagine the expedition in the much-expanded form Nicias gives it (6.24). In contrast, on the day they pray, Thucydides describes them in the following manner:

> …they went at once with hope and with lamentations -- hope that they would acquire, lamentations as to when they would see [their friends again], laying to heart how long the voyage was from their own land on which they were being sent. And at this critical time, when in the midst of impending dangers they were now about to leave one another, the terrible things came into their minds more than when they were voting for the expedition (6.30.2).

Shortly before we see the Athenians praying, then, far from believing that they could "in no way fall," they are more aware of and disturbed by the danger confronting them than they were when

they first decided to attack Sicily. Thus, in describing the conception of the expedition and its launch, Thucydides describes two rather different experiences -- one purely hopeful, the other more mixed with fear -- and only explicitly ties piety to the latter. The connection Thucydides draws here between piety and fear does not necessarily indicate that the Athenians are moved by piety only in fearful circumstances, but it casts substantial doubt on the notion that they somehow had the gods in mind during the happy delirium depicted at 6.24, a doubt that is consistent with the fact that gods are not mentioned there.

After speaking of the Athenians' fear, Thucydides complicates the picture, telling us that "still they regained courage (*anetharsoun*) at the sight of their present strength because of the abundance that each saw before his eyes" (6.30.2). Thus, the Athenians are encouraged, but the encouragement that moves them is not simply new. For the claim that the Athenians "regained" courage indicates, of course, that they have experienced it before, namely, when they were voting for the expedition, which confident occasion Thucydides has just contrasted with the present one. To briefly sketch the broad trajectory of the Athenians' hopes in the account of the Sicilian expedition, there seem to be three somewhat separate stages before the Athenians pray. They first openly contemplate the expedition in the massive form it comes to take on the day they vote for it, at which time they grow tremendously, erotically hopeful for it (6.24, 6.26). Then, on the day the armament sets sail, the Athenians' confidence is shaken by a sense of the danger they are in.[72] Finally, the Athenians' original, erotic hopefulness is partially "regained" through consideration of their massive armament; then, they pray. It is reasonable to call this return to confidence merely partial because we do not now see a reiteration of the tremendous

[72] Some form of hope endures even at this point -- the Athenians are not simply full of lamentations, they also hope to "acquire" -- but it now exists alongside a new awareness of obstacles to its realization. Accordingly, the hope now appears more muted: it aims merely at "acquiring" rather than at invincibility, eternal pay, and the like.

expectations Thucydides so strikingly depicted when the Athenians first imagined the expedition, and because the recent awareness of danger that alarmed them seems unlikely to have been simply forgotten.

The importance of the order Thucydides describes here is underscored by the fact that we see it repeated in a later instance of Athenian prayer. During their final sea-battle with Syracuse, which Thucydides claims brought on "fear for the future like none [felt before]," the men watching the battle from shore whose vantage point suggested that the Athenians were prevailing "regained courage" (*anetharseesan*) and then fell to praying that the gods would not rob them of a safe return (7.71.2-3). Here again, then, we see the Athenians becoming frightened, then witnessing a measure of earthly success and thereby "regain[ing]," to some limited extent, an earlier courage, then praying to the gods. That Thucydides uses the same word, *anatharsew,* to describe their return to courage -- the only two times in the work he uses this word in reference to the Athenians -- further emphasizes the similarity between the two instances of prayer.

Thucydides thus suggests that the sequence he describes may be necessary to the emergence, illustrated through prayer, of the Athenians' pious hope; at the same time, this sequence suggests that the basis of their great erotic hopefulness is not primarily a pious one. For on Thucydides' telling, their erotic hope first arises from a sense of their nobility and strength (as we saw in his account of the expedition's conception), and it is not until this hope is shaken by fear and then recovered, to some extent, by a renewed sense of strength, that the pious hope clearly emerges. It is certainly true that Thucydides' presentation suggests important connections between the two kinds of hope: that the pious hope does not arise without the earlier erotic hope to which the Athenians are recalled prior to prayer indicates that their erotic hope may form a basis for their pious hope; that the pious hope arises when the erotic hope is shaken

indicates that the pious hope may form a support for the erotic hope when it has been threatened by an awareness of obstacles to its realization and thus suggested to be in need of such support. As these formulations suggest, these different kinds of hope may not be fully separable and may in fact bleed into one another. Nonetheless, Thucydides suggests the secondary character of the pious hope by indicating that it does not arise first or without the other, and that it plausibly forms a supplement to the other.[73]

Returning now to our comparison of the Athenians with the Melians and Nicias, we find further evidence that the Athenians' greatest imperial hopes are not primarily pious. This is seen if we reconsider a difference we earlier noted, namely, the Melians and Nicias stress that they believe themselves to be just in a way the Athenians do not, and they explicitly tie this opinion to their hope for divine assistance. To repeat, Thucydides does not indicate that the Athenians are unconcerned with justice and the traditional dictates of piety -- indeed, their concern is great and even of decisive importance for the outcome of the war. Still, their praises of their empire do not focus primarily on its justice. It is true that, as we have observed, nobility and justice share crucial attributes like self-sacrifice; it is also the case that the two are not easily or cleanly separated. This is seen in the fact that, when the Athenians speak of their nobility, they tend also to claim that they are "worthy" of rule, which of course implies a notion of desert (see, for example, the Athenian envoys to Sparta [1.76.2]). Similarly, it is difficult to consider noble that which is simultaneously thought to be unjust (cf., however, Pericles' claim at 2.41.4 in the midst of his praise of Athenian nobility, that the city has everywhere left eternal monuments "to bad [*kakon*] and good"). Nonetheless, it is surely possible to emphasize one type of virtue over

[73] For an extremely cryptic discussion of Athenian piety and the Sicilian expedition, see Strauss 1983, 96-101. The suggestions above are consistent with Strauss's remarks on the Athenians' final sea battle and on their anger at soothsayers and diviners after the expedition's failure, for having "confirmed them in their hope that they would conquer Sicily" (Strauss 1983, 100-101).

another, and the emphasis of Athens' spokesmen is decidedly on the city's daring, generosity, and superiority to petty concerns of safety. Moreover, in his funeral oration Pericles not only stresses the Athenians' nobility much more than their justice, but even disparages the latter by casting aspersions on the law that requires him to give the speech in the first place and by favorably contrasting the Athenians' liberality and daring with the law-bred virtue of the Spartans (2.39.4). Given the partial separability, then, and even potential opposition of nobility and justice, it is reasonable to suggest that the hopes and fears of men who are attached primarily to one are somewhat different from those of men attached primarily to the other.

One such difference is suggested when we consider the role that manifest or worldly strength plays in Thucydides' account of the hopes of the Athenians and those of the Melians and Nicias. We have noted that, in his descriptions of the Athenians at their most hopeful, Thucydides speaks frequently of their sense of their nobility and of their own strength: to repeat, at the genesis of the Sicilian expedition, the Athenians are attracted both to the tremendous risk Nicias claims it will entail and the tremendous armament he insists it will require. As we have seen, one simple connection Thucydides brings out between strength and nobility is that noble deeds require great strength to perform: the grandeur and scale that distinguish noble action, that is, feats that go beyond what human beings are ordinarily capable of, are only possible for those who are in possession of great means (not least ships and money) and who are aware of this possession. It is surely no coincidence, then, that Thucydides' accounts of the funeral oration and the conception of the Sicilian expedition, the occasions on which Athenian greatness is most clearly explicated or made manifest, include references to the position of unusual strength the Athenians are in at those times. For prior to the funeral oration, Thucydides notes that the Athenians are then "in the flower of their strength," having the "largest force ever assembled"

and not yet having engaged in any significant battles or lost many men (2.22-2.25, 2.30-2.31); similarly, in his account of the Sicilian expedition, Thucydides points out that the Athenians had recently recovered from the plague and that they therefore had many young men and much money to facilitate their preparations for Sicily (6.26.2). Thucydides also makes clear that a sense of strength is not only the ground, but also the consequence of the performance or imagination of noble deeds, for he suggests that the contemplation of noble acts further heightens the Athenians' sense of their strength. We see this clearly in the case of the Sicilian expedition: it is immediately after Nicias describes the undertaking as hugely expensive, demanding, and dangerous that the Athenians fall under the spell of eros and develop the opinion that they could "in no way fall." That is, the Athenians, already in a position of strength, imagine an expedition that will require great strength and noble risk, and immediately come to believe that they are invincibly strong. It is difficult to imagine how piety would fit in to such an experience, as the Athenians' feeling of their strength would seem to be threatened by an acknowledgement that they are in need of the help of gods. The hopeful experience of the Melians and Nicias clearly does not depend on this sense of strength, as they appeal to the gods in circumstances of manifest weakness, when they are frighteningly outmatched by superior armies. Thus, the particular connection Thucydides suggests between nobility and strength suggests that nobility is at odds with piety in a way that justice does not appear to be.

Our comparison of the Athenians with the Melians and Nicias brings out an additional tension between nobility and piety when we consider the sort of ends these men seek. For the Athenians hope for much more than do the manifestly pious: while the Melians and Nicias express hopes merely to escape from a particular terrible peril -- destruction by the Athenian army or destruction by the Syracusan army -- we recall that in various moments of enthusiasm

the Athenians express the hope for everlasting glory, for endless pay, for the "sight and beholding of what was not present" (6.24.3), to be "opposed in nothing," and to "achieve the more impracticable things as equivalent to the possible, whether with means great or deficient" (4.65.4). Even their desire for safety takes a grander form than does that of Nicias and the Melians, as the Athenians hope for invincibility rather than a more limited desire to be saved from a specific threat. Thus, the more obviously pious Melians and Nicias have hopes more limited in scope than do the Athenians -- a moderation that Nicias explicitly ties to his pious view of the world. For in trying to buck up the Athenians on their retreat through Sicily, he argues that "fortune has sufficiently favored the enemy, and if by making this expedition we have roused the jealousy of one of the gods we have now suffered enough retribution" (7.77.3). Nicias thus articulates the view, well-known from common experience, that piety places limits on the goods we can attain. Nobility, of course, also demands that we forego certain goods, but the basis on which we are to do so differs. For in contrast to the pious notion that there is simply a cap on the goods that gods permit human beings to attain, nobility dictates that we give up certain goods because they are beneath us or petty, that is, because they are not good enough. That the Athenians are moved by this view is apparent in some of Pericles' remarks, such as his claim that the Athenians should cease to care for the loss of their private homes and fields because these are mere "ornaments" of Athenian power: the Athenians' willingness to give up these goods should be rooted, on Pericles' telling, in their desire for better things (2.62.3). While these observations capture only one aspect of nobility, it is one that is crucial and of concern to the Athenians, and it helps to account for the fact that they strive for so much more than do people like the moderate Nicias, who has no desire to conquer Sicily (6.9), and the quiet Melians, who wish simply to be left alone to mind their own business (5.94). Thus, nobility allows for the

pursuit of certain goods that piety does not, which makes less likely that, in hoping for goods of this kind, the Athenians are hoping for the gods' help to attain them. This is not to say that there is no tension between nobility and pursuits like great conquest; for example, the difficulty of fully separating nobility and justice means that the noble self-understanding possessed by men who seek goods of this kind may well be threatened by nagging doubts about their justice. Nonetheless, when such doubts are not the focus of one's thoughts, a sense of nobility can attach to the pursuit of goods that piety cannot.

From all this we conclude that, while the Athenians' great erotic hopes resemble in important ways the manifestly pious hopes of the Melians and Nicias, Thucydides does not indicate that the former are fundamentally pious. We see this in his suggestion that when the Athenians are at their most strikingly hopeful they do not pray, that when they do clearly hope for the gods' help, they are first moved by hopes with a different basis, and that piety cuts against important features of nobility and the experience of it on which Athenian eros depends. This is not to say that pious hopes and erotic hopes are simply separate things: indeed, given the sequence Thucydides suggests in the development of the Athenians' pious hope, it seems that pious hope can act as a support for a weakened erotic hope, that erotic hope can come to be interpreted in a pious way, and that erotic hope can provide a basis for pious hope. Still, the two remain fundamentally distinct, and in the Athenians, pious hope is not primary.[74] Therefore, the curious remarks at 8.1 and 7.75 with which we opened our investigation -- Thucydides' indications at the end of the Sicilian expedition and immediately after it that piety played a great

[74] See Strauss's rather cryptic claim that "there is something reminding of religion in Athenian imperialism" (Strauss 1964, 229). That Strauss only says Athenian imperialism contains something that reminds of religion, rather than that it is religious, is consistent with the interpretation offered above.

role in motivating the Athenians to undertake it – likely serve some purpose other than providing an accurate statement of the Athenians' earlier understanding.[75]

Conclusion

In his discussion of the connection between the Melian dialogue and the Sicilian expedition, Bruell describes the first impression that Thucydides' account of the disaster is likely to leave on readers. He observes that, in contemplating the fate of the conflict's instigators, we

[75] One possible interpretation is that, when in some endeavor we come to a terrible end and we interpret that outcome as divine punishment, we are inclined to reinterpret the whole of the endeavor -- not only its outcome, but also, for example, its genesis -- in divine terms, including our opinions of our earlier motivations, even where piety had not in fact been fundamental to or even present in them.

are left not with satisfaction that hubris and unjust aggression have been punished, but rather with "sadness or melancholy" (Bruell 1974, 68). This impression is produced not simply by Thucydides' vivid descriptions of death and suffering as such, but by the fact that this death and suffering befall the citizens of Athens; we are likely to share in the dejection the Athenians feel especially at their fall from greatness.

This study was prompted by the desire better to understand that greatness, particularly the complicated longings and beliefs that are bound up with it. We took as our starting point a striking contradiction apparent in the Athenians' self-understanding, which first appears in a speech given by anonymous Athenian envoys at Sparta before the war begins. We then traced the appearance of the elements of that contradictory understanding – a belief in the compulsory character of Athenian imperialism, and a belief in its freely chosen, noble character – through the speeches of Athens' greatest statesman and the leading champion of her empire, Pericles. From this study we were impressed, first, by the prevalence of appeals to both elements in Pericles' rhetoric: in each speech presented in direct discourse, we find Pericles encouraging the Athenians to understand the prosecution of the Peloponnesian War and the maintenance of their empire as both necessary and noble. There are, to be sure, instructive differences between Pericles' rhetoric in Athens and the envoys' rhetoric outside of Athens – for Pericles does not make the radical claim that not only safety, but advantage and honor, too, are compulsory. That neither Pericles nor any other speaker in Athens makes such an argument to the city at large highlights important differences of understanding among the citizenry; nonetheless, crucial

aspects of Pericles' speeches, such as his almost complete neglect of piety, directly follow from or are at least consistent with the understanding of necessity articulated by sophisticated Athenians outside the city. We see, then, that some form of this contradictory understanding is shared by the Athenians generally. The frequency with which this understanding is expressed, among both the demos and the elite, indicates its central importance to the imperial experience of the Athenians generally, and underscores the need for a close investigation of it.

To return to Pericles' procedure, the fact that the Athenian leader who is most beloved and who advances the empire to its greatest point never leaves appeals to necessity or nobility out of his speeches suggests that the flourishing (however temporary) of Athenian empire requires this rhetorical pairing. The importance of the appeal to necessity is clear enough, as any city that truly neglects to consider the limits to which she is subject will not long survive. The fact that the same actions said to be necessary must also be understood by the Athenians as freely chosen is more complicated. We can say, however, that this fact indicates that the appeal of necessity is insufficient to move the Athenians to maintain her empire, and if Pericles believes he cannot persuade the city to maintain her empire for reasons of necessity, understood especially as safety, it seems that the empire was not sought simply for these reasons, either. That is, we cannot understand the empire as having been pursued simply for the sake of some concrete necessity, if the Athenians will not be moved to maintain the empire on those grounds alone. In order to get a sense of why appeals to freedom and nobility are important, we then considered the context of Pericles' remarks during those times he emphasizes freedom and nobility more than

necessity. Here we found that when Pericles emphasizes these appeals, he also stokes in the Athenians hopes for goods beyond those that rational calculation and the limits of necessity present as possible, such as a guarantee of being remembered forever, by everyone in every land. Thus, Thucydides shows that the contemplation of noble deeds is attended by extravagant hopes; hence the fact that Pericles disparages "calculation" of advantage during those times that he calls on the Athenians to make the most noble sacrifices and encourages in them the greatest hopes.

The cause of the Athenians' tendency to become hopeful when contemplating their virtue remains to be clarified further, but perhaps Thucydides takes it as his primary task to describe this psychological phenomenon, rather than to reveal its causes;[76] in any event, his treatment of Pericles' speeches shows clearly that Athenian hopefulness, particularly at its strongest, is much more connected with opinions about virtue than about necessity. His treatment also shows a dissatisfaction in the Athenians with the goods that the world seems, upon clear-sighted reflection, to offer. When we moved in our second chapter to a study of the period following Pericles' death, we again saw signs of this dissatisfaction, but at this point it appeared in a more dangerous form. For under the leadership of the demagogue Cleon, Thucydides depicts Athens enjoying a string of unexpected successes in the prosecution of the war and the pursuit of greater empire, and in describing the Athenians' state of mind during this time, Thucydides indicates that they are continually pricked by a hazy urge for "more." Indeed, it seems that they are

[76] See a similar suggestion is a very different context at 2.48.3.

repelled even by the notion of any check on their ability to attain it. What jumps out from Thucydides' account is that the Athenians are moved less by the pursuit of a well-defined, concretely advantageous object than by the pleasant denial of the very idea of limits.

When we considered the connection between this phenomenon and the character of Athenian leadership at this time, we saw more clearly the importance of Pericles' rhetorical emphasis on necessity and nobility to the health of Athenian imperialism. For under Cleon's leadership, we observed changes in the character of Athenian actions that are surely connected with the changes we observe in the speeches of her leading citizen. During this time, in which Cleon speaks little to the Athenians of necessity or nobility, we see that the Athenians act less reasonably and more basely than they did before; we also see that the unexpected successes that fall into their laps produce a hopefulness that looks very much like what we observed in the Athenians under Pericles, but less rational. To be sure, Pericles bears no small responsibility for encouraging dangerous, irrationally great hopes in the Athenians; nonetheless, he clearly did so in a way more conducive to stability than did his successors. For after his death, the Athenians' hopefulness leads them into to such foolishness as, for example, rejecting Sparta's panicked, no-strings-attached peace offer, which there is no reason to think they would have done under Pericles. From this study we concluded that Pericles' rhetoric, while it encouraged unreasonable hopes, did so in a relatively judicious manner that helped channel these hopes in a more helpful or at least less insane manner than does Cleon's rhetoric. It seems that Pericles managed this, at

least in part, by arousing and articulating a longing to which all human beings seem prone[77] and tethering it to necessity and to virtue, understood especially as uncalculating devotion on the part of the citizen to the needs, carefully-calculated, of the imperial city. Under Cleon, a similar longing endured, but it remained unchecked in part because unacknowledged and therefore untied to any sensible opinion or policy.

From these chapters, another suggestion that emerged was that this longing for a good greater than our capacities can procure seems aimed especially at escaping death – a suggestion that is also borne out by later expressions of Athenian hopefulness. The importance of death to Athenian hopefulness is suggested by Pericles' encouragement of the Athenians to consider eternal glory to be the greatest good to which human beings can aspire. That is, Pericles uses his noble rhetoric to attract the Athenians to an image of themselves that can escape death, and encourages them to regard this as the greatest good. However, it is noteworthy that the Athenians do not always have glory clearly in mind. We see this, for example, in the fact that Thucydides' description of the great Athenian hopes during Cleon's tenure does not contain references to glory. This suggests that glory is not the Athenians' deepest longing, but that it is something to which that longing can, helpfully but also problematically, be attached.

[77] Indeed, it seems that the tendency to hope for a transcendent good, present in the Athenians under Pericles and Cleon, is a general one among human beings. This is illustrated by, among other things, the character of the warnings that several non-Athenians offer to the Athenians during their flurry of successes. For we hear several times that it is man's wont to be "carried away" by success, that is, to believe that because we have gotten something we desire, we can have everything; in other words, and as Diodotus states explicitly, we are quite prone to being carried away by various forces that inspire unreasonable, often ruinous hope (4.17.3, 3.45).

After these considerations, we moved to a treatment of the greatest and most terrible chapter in Athenian imperial history, her attempt on Sicily. We first studied the conception of the expedition, and we saw that at this time the Athenians' hopes reach a fever pitch. Here again, we find no references to imperial glory; in addition, this episode brings the murkiness of Athenian imperial ambition, as well as the danger of unarticulated hopes, again to the fore. We were moved most of all by the striking thoughtlessness that accompanies the Sicilian expedition: not only their motives, but the whole character of the expedition – its proper size, its task – are surprisingly unclear to the Athenians, even after their forces arrive in Sicily. Our investigation of Nicias' and Alcibiades' speeches, as well as Thucydides' narration of the circumstances of the expedition's launch, led us to the conclusion that, while a desire for the Sicilian expedition as a noble undertaking is present in the Athenians, nagging doubts about the justice of the endeavor help to keep that desire unarticulated and thus unconsidered and dangerous. In this way, we became more aware of a difference, and even potential variance, between nobility and justice. For while the two are necessarily not separable – it may simply be impossible fully to consider noble that which one holds to be unqualifiedly unjust – they can pull in different directions; while the Athenians are clearly moved by both, and while their concern for justice is crucial in determining the outcome of the war, it is nobility that is much more central to their imperialism.

In the final chapter, we took up the question of nobility's relationship with another virtue, that of piety. This question was raised, not only by the explicit indications Thucydides gives us of the importance of Athenian piety, but by the fact that, in times of greatest noble hope, the

Athenians bear a striking resemblance to obviously pious types, like the Melians, whom the former criticize for their foolish reliance on the support of the "immanifest." Thus, we considered whether the greatest hopes of Athenian imperial ambition are, like the hopes of the Melians and Nicias, hopes for the gods' help. However, our consideration led us to conclude that, while piety is crucial for the Athenians generally and for the outcome of the war, and while their imperialism is, at times, supported by piety, an expectation of divine assistance does not seem to characterize their experience during those times of greatest imperial hopefulness. Indeed, Thucydides suggests that while both noble and pious hopes aim at goods beyond what we can attain through our human capacities, they differ in an important respect: noble hopes are more associated with a sense of one's own strength and with greater expectations than are pious hopes, as we saw when we contrasted the Athenian hope for such goods as eternal pay with the Melian hope for mere safety. These differences are sensible in light of the greater emphasis on limits that characterizes our commonsense understanding of piety as contrasted with nobility. It is understandable, then, that more pious Thucydidean characters seek to attain less than do more noble characters. While a belief in our piety leads, as does a belief in our nobility, to a hope to transcend that limits the world imposes on us, nobility seems to suggest to us the possibility of a more complete transcendence – a possibility that exists uneasily with the notion of obedience to ruling gods.

Thus, in returning to our original question of what Athenian hopefulness is for, we suggest that an essential part of the answer is a transcendence of all limits. As to why this hope

attaches to empire in particular, we raise as one suggestion, in light of our discussions of the importance of virtue and strength to Athenian hopefulness, the following. Because empire both demands and offers the opportunity to exercise great virtue, as well as demands great strength and provides it (in the possession of other political communities), empire seems a plausible object for human beings prone to hope for a condition beyond what reason presents as possible. These suggestions present a challenge to those who would hope for an end of imperialism for our analysis suggests that the desire for empire is deeply rooted in human nature, and will therefore appeal to us for as long as human nature remains unchanged (Thucydides 3.82). To those who would hope for an end to imperialism, we would therefore ask whether they believe the human inability to live within necessary limits has changed, or, if not, what they hope will take the place of empire.

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