Abstract

Thucydides on the Outbreak of War
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This project illuminates Thucydides’ political thought through a novel interpretation of the first book of the History of the Peloponnesian War. It explores how Thucydides reveals the human causes of war through the outbreak of a particular war, the Peloponnesian war.

The primary claim is that Thucydides intends the breakdown of the Thirty Years’ Peace between Athens and the Peloponnesians, which inaugurates the great Peloponnesian war, to be understood by grasping how the characters of the Athenian and Spartan regimes contribute to the outbreak of the war and, crucially, how Athens and Sparta differently express human nature.

In broad outline, the History’s first book reveals how the regime characters of Athens and Sparta inform their respective foreign policies, but also how the interaction between the two cities—inhaled by the distinctive necessities pressing upon them—causes the Hellenic status quo to tremble and fall. Throughout the first book, while never obscuring the specific events triggering war, Thucydides progressively develops and expands his original statement that it was Spartan fear of Athenian power that compelled the fighting. The study argues that necessity (or compulsion) is the bright thread that Thucydides uses to guide his reader through the episodes of the first book, from the immediate causes of the Peloponnesian war to the human causes of war, from the particular events to the History’s universal themes.
This project is dedicated to my parents, Allan and Wendy, and to my sister, Devorah.
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Facts, with him are subordinated to ideas, and rather than contrast two particular states he
goes back to the basic differences between the two orders and two sets of principles.

—Jacqueline de Romilly
The following study explores the political thought of Thucydides through a novel interpretation of the first book of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It traces new paths through the thicket of the work’s opening 146 chapters, revealing how the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war sheds light on the causes of war in general and how these in turn explain the great conflagration. The importance of Thucydides’ first book has long been recognized. It introduces the *History* and sets the stage for the war. Why then is there the need for another study on the origins of the war? Doesn’t Thucydides himself tell us that the growth of Athenian power inspired Spartan fear, which made war necessary (1.23.6)? What could be clearer?

1 The only certain information we know of Thucydides’ life comes from the *History* itself. He began writing from the beginning of the war (1.1.1); he was old enough to understand it when it first broke out (5.26.5) and lived to its conclusion (2.65.12 with 5.26); he suffered from the plague in Athens (2.48.3); he was an Athenian general in the Thraceward regions in 425/4 BC (4.104.4) and linked by blood to the Thracian royal family, having some hereditary right to the gold mines there (4.105.1); and finally, he was exiled from Athens for twenty years after his failure to relieve Amphipolis (5.26.5). He was presumably allowed to return to Athens in the general amnesty of 404 BC. Since the minimum age to become an Athenian general was thirty, scholars conjecture that Thucydides was born between 455-460 BC. He is believed to have lived until at least 396 BC. His *History* ends abruptly in the year 411 BC.

2 Stahl, for example, notes that book one “has always been of central importance to Thucydidean scholarship” … “provid[ing], so to speak, the exposition for the entire work …” Hans-Peter Stahl, *Thucydides: Man’s Place in History* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2002), 37.


Because of this apparently simple sentence, scholars of international relations have claimed Thucydides as their own, the archetypal realist, the first proponent of power politics, and a man preeminently interested in scientific causation in war. While Thucydides assuredly has much to say about the balance of power and the outbreak of war, his famous statement cannot be interpreted in isolation, nor, indeed, is it scientific in any contemporary sense. To start, it requires the History’s involved first book as supplement, which would mire these seekers after causal generalizations in the historical weeds, or, worse, in literary interpretation. Second, as we will see, Thucydides’ account is largely psychological, in no way bound up with efficient causation. The devil is in the textual details, in the manner Thucydides develops his argument about power, fear, and necessity through the unfolding episodes of the first book. His statement about the “causes” of war is a road-sign, not a destination.

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6 “If the ἀλήθεστάτη πρόφασις of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war is that, in view of the situation prevailing in the Greek world at the time, it was necessary for it to break out, we may assume that [Thucydides] selected his facts with a view to demonstrating this necessity.” Ostwald, *Ananke in Thucydides*, 23.
Regarding the devilish details, Classical historians, more versed in Thucydides’ text and 5th Century politics than any IR scholar, have judged the History’s presentation of the great war’s origins sufficient or deficient in almost equal measure, spilling countless ink over the subject. But to neglect Thucydides’ avowed interest in the universal—in human nature—for the sake of the particular, as many of them do, is to confuse their preoccupations with his own, and to render his account of the war only halfway intelligible. Thucydides’ view of the universal must be grasped through the particular events, but, paradoxically, the particulars themselves can only be fully understood in light of the universal. There is, then, the need for another book on the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, one that achieves a delicate interpretative balance, neglecting neither forest nor trees. The aim of this study to contribute to an understanding of Thucydides’ political thought through a careful and thorough examination of his account of the origins of the Peloponnesian war.

The primary claim of the dissertation is that Thucydides’ account of the breakdown of the peace must be understood by grasping how the characters of Athens and Sparta contribute to the outbreak of the war and, crucially, how Athens and Sparta differently express human nature. This is the case because the particular character of the regimes

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7 Francis Cornford has written, “Having occasion to look into the question, how the Peloponnesian war arose, I felt, vaguely but strongly, that Thucydides’ account of its origin was remarkably inadequate; and I came to form a very different theory of the real causes of war.” Donald Kagan, although no Cornfordian, agrees that Thucydides’ account is deficient: “Thucydides’ view that the war was the inevitable consequence of the growth of that Empire [i.e., the Athenian], its insatiable demand for expansion, and the fear it must inspire in the Spartans has won widespread acceptance. Our investigation has led us to conclude that his judgment is mistaken.” G.E.M de Ste. Croix adopts precisely the opposite view: “I believe that we can trust Thucydides to a very high degree for the events of his own day, and that if we study his narrative carefully and attend to what he says rather than what modern scholars assume he said (often two very different things), we shall find his account consistent, penetrating, and very satisfying.” See Francis Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus (London: Edward Arnold, 1907), ix. Kagan, The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, 345; and de Ste. Croix, The Origins of the Peloponnesian War, 3.
links human nature in general to each city’s distinctive foreign policy. A city’s behavior cannot be too distantly separated from the character of the men comprising it. For it is the character of a regime that educates and forms the character of its citizens, while a city’s historical development, in turn, shapes its character. In great part, book one reveals how the characters (τρόποι) of Athens and Sparta color their respective foreign policies, but also how the dynamic interaction between the two cities—informed by the distinctive necessities that press upon them—leads to the collapse of the Hellenic status quo. While never obscuring the specific events triggering the war, Thucydides progressively develops and expands his original statement about power, fear, and necessity through the course of the first book. Necessity, as we will see, is that bright thread leading from the immediate causes of the Peloponnesian war to the causes of war in general, from the particular events to the History’s universal themes.

This study is informed by five main arguments, which can be summarily stated and then summarily outlined. First, reflective of his interest in the human condition, Thucydides intends certain episodes to disclose universal themes. Second, Thucydides’ account of

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8 In line with our theme, Clifford Orwin has written, “To grasp that human nature expresses itself politically is to grasp that its manifestations are shaped above all by the regime.” *The Humanity of Thucydides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 10. One of the very few works devoted to the issue of regime character, psychology, and human nature in Thucydides’ *History*, but which has a broader and different focus than this study, is Robert Dean Luginbill, *Thucydides On War And National Character* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

9 “Above all, Thucydides surely lets us see the universal in the individual event which he narrates and through it: it is for this reason that his work is meant to be a possession for all time.” Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 143. Collingwood makes something of a similar point, but with disapproving tone and talk of a “substantialism” alien to Thucydides: “But already in Thucydides the historical point of view is being dimmed by substantialism. For Thucydides the events are important chiefly for the light they thrown on eternal and substantial entities of which they were mere accidents.” R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: With Lectures 1926-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 43.
human nature is a political psychology. Third, this political psychology is inextricably bound up with his speech-deed antithesis. Fourth, book one is primarily a psychological portrait of Athens and Sparta. Fifth, Thucydides’ own claims at the end of the Archaeology—about power, fear, and necessity, but also about blame for the war—combined with narrative clues and the logic of the recreated speeches themselves suggest the interpretative line of this study. These points can now be briefly outlined.

First is the indisputable claim that Thucydides is interested in human nature. In his own words, he composed (ξυνέγραψε) the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians (431 - 404 BC), intending his work to be a κτήμα τε ἐς αἰεὶ, or an “everlasting

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10 Cornford, in the summary of his fifth chapter, observes: “The only natural causes of human events, considered by ancient historians, are psychological—the characters and immediate motives of men or of personified states; whereas moderns look to social and economic conditions, and formulate abstract laws.” In chapter five itself, he writes: “It appears to us to be characteristic of ancient historians in general, that in so far as they look for causes of human events, they look, apart from supernatural agencies, solely to psychological causes—the motives and characters of individuals and of cities.” Cornford is right. As we will see, however, Thucydides does not neglect the structural even if he privileges the psychological. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, xiv, 64. In an important article to which this study is indebted, William T. Bluhm asks and answers the following question. “What are the organizing concepts and causal hypotheses about empire which Thucydides interlines, explicitly and implicitly, this case study of imperial symptoms? The basic theory is motivational, a political psychology.” Like the interpretation offered here, Bluhm too explores the role of fear, honor, and profit in different arrangement as constituting a kind of psychological matrix for grasping the behavior of cities and men in the *History*. William T. Bluhm, “Causal Theory in Thucydides' Peloponnesian War,” *Political Studies* 10 (1962): 18.


12 Throughout the *History*, Thucydides progressively opens up the black box of the Athenian and Spartan regimes. Nonetheless, he intends individuals to be viewed against the background of the character of their respective regimes. And regimes do evince characteristic behavior. To say that something is uncharacteristic of the United States, for example, is to suggest a range of normal behavior against which deviation can be readily identified. Lowell Edmunds makes a similar point: “The speech of the Corinthians in Sparta (1.68-71), with its detailed exposition of the differences between Athens and Sparta, cities nearly the opposite of one another (1.70.1), is programmatic. It provides the terms and the concepts by which both Thucydides in his own voice (the Corinthians’ main points are corroborated by Thucydides, 4.55.2. 8.96.4) and also the actors of the *History* understand events. The Corinthians establish the Spartan norm and the Athenian norm, by which one can measure the degree to which an individual manifests the character of a complete Athenian or a complete Spartan.” Lowell Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 89–90. On these same themes, see also Luginbill, *Thucydides On War And National Character*, 14–20.
possession” (1.1.1 and 1.22.4). He wrote it for “whosoever wishes to contemplate both the truth of the things that have happened and of the like things that will happen again according to “the nature of human-beings” (κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, 1.22.4). As Nietzsche observes in Daybreak:

… through seeing nothing but types [Thucydides] introduces something great into all things and persons he treats of; for what interest would posterity, to whom he dedicates his work, have in that which was not typical! Thus in him, the portrayer of man, that culture of the most impartial knowledge of the world finds its last glorious flower...

The History can be an “everlasting possession” only if it truly portrays man, only if it reveals that which is typical of him. Thucydides asserts the timelessness of his work on the ground that the future will resemble the past, because the men of the future will resemble those of the past. History as a singular chain of events will not repeat itself, but the way Thucydides depicts singular events is nonetheless intended to bring out what is universal or representative about them. In other words, key episodes in the History are intended to disclose characteristic phenomena: the terrifying spectacle of civil war at Corcyra, for example, stands as Thucydides’ paradigm of stasis or faction. If certain

13 This is Hobbes’ elegant turn of phrase. Unless otherwise noted, translations of Thucydides’ History are my own.
14 The expression may also mean ‘the human condition’, which is broader than human nature; it translates as ‘the human thing’. The following is my literal translation of 1.22.4: “And, on the one hand, in the hearing perhaps it (my work) will seem rather unpleasing because of the non-fabulous/mythical nature of these things, but, on the other hand, for whosoever wishes to examine both the truth of the things that have happened and of the like things that will happen again according to ‘the nature of human-beings’ (κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον) if these things are judged useful/beneficial/advantageous (by them), it will be enough (for me). It (my work) was composed as a possession for all time, rather than as a contest piece for immediate hearing.” See also 2.50.1, 3.82.2, and 4.108.4 for authorial claims about human nature or the essential characteristics of men. Other such claims are sprinkled through the speeches, for example, at 1.76.3, in the speech of the Athenian envoys at Sparta. De Ste. Croix furnishes a helpful list as well as the range of Greek words that frequently attend such claims. See The Origins of the Peloponnesian War, 29.
events are indeed paradigmatic, then Thucydides must intend his presentation of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, to which he devotes more chapters than to any other event—with the sole exception of the Sicilian Expedition—to illuminate the human causes of war. The present study is based on this idea.

Second is the claim that Thucydides’ account of human nature is psychological. Although events are singular and so indefinite, the range of human attitudes toward events is finite. In the *History*, nature is bound up with *representative* dispositions, attitudes, and beliefs as these confront the range of human circumstances. Thucydides’ study of human nature is therefore largely psychological, bound up with how psychology meets the challenges of a given moment, or the proverbial road. But ‘psychology’ must be understood here and throughout this dissertation not in its scientific sense but rather in its etymological one, as a λόγος about the soul, as a study of its characteristic motions as these encounter a moving world.\(^{17}\) While showing events in both speech and deed, Thucydides sensitively uses narrative indications and signs—as well as echoed terms and recurring arguments in his speeches—to signal the characteristic attitudes, representative passions, and enduring preoccupations of cities and men. His text often speaks in a double voice, directing a signal to his readers through the mouths of his speakers, whose speeches naturally serve their own ends but also, more subtly, his own.

The third claim is that Thucydides’ political psychological account is revealed above all through his speech-deed antithesis, which, given the range of meanings of the word λόγος, might be more aptly labeled the attitude-reality antithesis, if, indeed, it is an

\(^{17}\) This need not (and does not) imply a metaphysical account of soul.
antithesis at all. The History is a virtual catalogue of political success and failure, one disclosing not only those ends that men and cities forever seek, but also the manifold ways that they succeed or fail to achieve them, and, importantly, the varied consequences of success or failure. It is above all in the interplay between the recreated speeches and deeds of the Peloponnesian war that Thucydides reveals what is universal about those episodes he chooses to garb with color and life. To grasp Thucydides’ own view—the authorial voice is the voice of human nature in the work—is to identify how Thucydides brings out the formal or general through the chain of particulars. This constitutes the unique artfulness of the History, and it is to articulating this interplay in the first book that this interpretative study is devoted.

Fourth is the argument that the characters of Athens and Sparta are essential to understanding the war’s outbreak. Thucydides paints Athens and Sparta as opposites, but, as already noted, he subscribes to a conception of human nature. Consequently, Athens and Sparta must be sewn together of the same cloth, equally woven of “the human”. The obvious differences between the cities have sometimes misled inattentive readers. An anthropologist, Marshall Sahlins, has written the following:

To believe Thucydides' descriptions of the Spartans' habitual character, either they were deficient in human avarice and the will to power, or else we would have to

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18 Again, see Parry, Logos and Ergon in Thucydides.
19 See Macleod’s observation in his “Thucydides and Tragedy”: “The speeches which fail or are plainly mistaken are, in the work as we have it, no less instructive than those which succeed or seem to be right; for error too is part of ‘human affairs.’” Colin Macleod, Collected Essays (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 146.
20 The opposing characters of the cities are famously introduced in the Speech of the Corinthians at Sparta (1.68-1.71). John Finley hints at something of this view when he writes, “Hence it is that in Thucydides’ description of the council at Sparta, the inciting causes [of the war] merge into the essential cause, and the first great theme of the History, the contrast between Athens and Sparta, becomes dominant.” John H Finley, Thucydides (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 121. See also Peter R. Pouncey, The Necessities of War: A Study of Thucydides’ Pessimism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 78.
suppose that what is of interest and value to a people is culturally rather than naturally constructed—and whatever is (supposedly) inherent in human nature may be variously and meaningfully sublimated. Given the differences between the austere and conservative Spartans and the enterprising Athenians, the interest of Thucydides' History may be its demonstration of the cultural relativity of practical reason rather than its universal validity.\(^{21}\)

Whatever one thinks of cultural relativity versus universal validity, Sahlins has misread his Thucydides. So far from being oblivious to the differences between Athens and Sparta, and so far from this refuting the work’s claims about human nature, the issue itself constitutes a central Thucydidean theme, particularly in the first book. Indeed, no account of human nature need deny difference. It simply must account for it on the basis of a more fundamental similarity. The argument will demonstrate that this Thucydides does and does systematically.

The fifth and final claim is that attending to Thucydides’ own narrative statements opens up this distinctive interpretative path through the thicket of the first book. Book one reveals not only the strategic logic of the war’s triggering events, but, more importantly, how each city’s perception of these events generates a different but no less compelling necessity for war—a necessity rooted in that point of contact between a city’s psychology and strategic circumstance. In terms of psychology, Thucydides discloses how Athens and Sparta are differently preoccupied with advantage, the Thucydidean surrogate for the Aristotelian good. In a narrative section in the middle of the first book, commonly termed the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides outlines Athenian and Spartan relations from the end of the Persian wars to the beginning of the Peloponnesian. He furnishes retrospective

context for the immediate events sparking the war, while confirming thematic claims made at the Spartan Congress of 432 BC. This narrative section, the study will maintain, points backwards to the longer historical arc of the prefatory Archaeology, which discloses how the characters of Athens and Sparta developed in response to differing circumstances, which arose from distinctive original (historical) positions. As we will see, it is the enigmatic Archaeology that contains the key to unlocking the first book.

Before outlining the dissertation’s interpretative approach, a further word is necessary about Thucydides’ conception of human nature. The extremity and magnitude of the Peloponnesian war are clearly of thematic importance for him (1.23.1-3). Thucydides claims to have written about the war because it was greater than any previous war, in large part because of the terrible suffering that attended it (1.1-2, 1.23.1). War is a destroyer that tears political orders apart—treaties, alliances, cities themselves. War atomizes. In political breakdown, the worst of human tendencies slip the leash of restraint.

Many scholars therefore interpret nature in the History as that dangerous subterranean current that forever threatens to overwhelm law and restraint, eclipsing the fragile peace of political life. They primarily base this interpretation on a pregnant line drawn from the famous excursus on the civil war at Corcyra, where Thucydides says that so much death and destruction will recur so long as human nature remains the same (3.82.2). Nature

22 Thucydides’ description of the plague at Athens is also often adduced to support this view. See, for instance, 2.53.4, where Thucydides writes that neither fear of human law or of the gods could constrain men in the face of the terrors of the disease. There are other statements sprinkled throughout the History
lurks beneath law or convention, with the latter exerting a necessary and salutary restraint upon the savagery of the former.

According to this common view, Thucydides agrees with only half of Aristotle’s famous assertion in the *Politics*, “For just as man is the best of the animals when completed, when separated from law and adjudication he is the worst” (*Politics*, 1253a31-33). Unlike Aristotle, Thucydides is not thought to believe man is the best of the animals when completed, only the worst when separated from law and adjudication, so focused is he on the dangers of uncontrolled (at times uncontrollable) human nature. To use Hobbesian language, the Leviathan that is the ancient city violently but precariously binds asocial human-beings together into peaceable association.

Although there is assuredly something true in this interpretation, there is no reason to think that nature in the Thucydides’ *History* is only that which requires restraint by law. Indeed, through the spectacle of political collapse, the *History* throws light on the material and psychological elements of peace. Are these less ‘natural’ than war? Perhaps the city at peace manifests human nature as much as the city at war, even if war uniquely reveals this nature. This study argues that Athens and Sparta differently manifest human

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24 For Aristotle, the common good of a society is held together in part by friendship, which prevents oligarchic and democratic elements from ruinous friction. For Thucydides, it would appear to be bound together by trust as well as by fear of law, divine and human. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 1155a20-30, 119-120.
25 It appears to be Thucydides’ view that war tortures political communities in an almost Baconian sense. Amidst the storm of war, the ship of state is buffeted by uncommon necessities. In this way, the transgression of law, the breakdown of the political, the outbreak of war, or the eruption of stasis cast the political into frozen relief, like the illumination of a lightning flash. Connor makes a parallel point: “The
nature. In other words, they do not simply or merely repress or overlay it with distinctive conventions. Stated still another way, “convention” too expresses nature, or, alternatively and perhaps more precisely, representative natural possibility: Spartan conservatism or Athenian daring. Above all, this study seeks to identify human nature in Thucydides’ presentation of Athens and Sparta in the History’s first book. It is the story of the outbreak of the war that leads the reader to this account of human nature, and, as we will see, it is this account itself that fully explains the origins of the great war. With these preliminaries in place, we turn to a discussion of the interpretative approach of this study.

Interpretative Approach

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the political philosophy of Thucydides through a reading of the History’s first book. It is not to compare Thucydides’ account with other literary sources or the material evidence. The project is thus literary or historiographical or political-philosophical but not historical in the contemporary sense. As Nietzsche writes of the History in Twilight of the Idols, “One has to turn Thucydides over line by line and read his background thoughts as clearly as his words: there are few thinkers so
rich in background thoughts.”²⁷ The following therefore represents an act of active interpretation, but one that attempts to discover Thucydides’ background thoughts through scrutiny of Thucydides’ text. The author is dead, of course, but this study does not subscribe to the death of the author. The author intends to speak to us through his work—a work he claims will be a possession for all time.

Thucydides asserts his History to be the greatest speech (λόγος) about the greatest deed (ἔργον), i.e., the war—a writing unmarred by the errors of the poets and logographers. The Peloponnesian war is worthier of account than all wars preceding it, and Thucydides asserts his account worthier than any preceding it. Thus does he throw down the gauntlet to Homer.²⁸ Poets distort and magnify, pleasing their audiences by recourse to myth. Thucydides, by contrast, will reveal the truth of the human to those who strive to know it. Because of the absence of the fabulous, his book may be less pleasurable to some (1.22.4). Here, in Thucydides’ proem, the Archaeology, we perhaps find a precursor to the Platonic Socrates’ assertion of a quarrel between the poets and philosophers.²⁹ Yet the greatest speech, the History, about the greatest deed, the Peloponnesian war, recreates through a kind of artful speech the living relationships between speeches and deeds. As Hobbes states, quoting Plutarch, Thucydides “maketh his auditor a spectator.”³⁰

History is thus almost ministerial poetry in the Platonic sense. But if this is true, how, precisely, is the reader to gain access to the Thucydidean teaching?

The prefatory Archaeology culminates in chapters 1.22-3, where Thucydides offers a statement about his manner of treating speeches and deeds of the war. The majority of the History’s assertions about human nature are contained in the work’s speeches, which abound in a complex interplay assuredly absent from the originals. Thucydides penned all the speeches himself: “As it appeared to me that each speaker would have said those especially necessary things (τὰ δέοντα μᾶλιστα), concerning the matter at hand, thus I wrote it down, all the while holding as closely as possible to the overall purpose (or general intention, τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης) of the speech as it was actually delivered” (1.22.1). The translation and interpretation of this sentence are hotly disputed. What is unambiguous is that each speech in the History is partly Thucydidean and partially its original speaker’s.

The vexed question is the character of Thucydides’ portion. Thucydides writes that neither he nor those who reported to him could remember precisely the exact thing spoken on a given occasion (τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτῆν τῶν λεχθέντων), but he also indicates that he hewed as closely as possible to the overall purpose of the speech as it was actually delivered (τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων). The parallelism in the Greek—the repetition of τῶν λεχθέντων in these lines—suggests that the “overall intention” is significantly less than “the exact thing spoken”, and that while
the latter was obscure, the former was tolerably clear. Thucydides’ own creation, then, exists in the space between the two.

Thucydides, in other words, claims to have added those especially needful things that it seemed to him that the speaker should have said, while holding as closely as possible to what the speaker actually did say (τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων). The use of ἀληθῶς here—i.e., the general outline of the things truly or actually spoken—suggests a firm limit to free invention but not the absence of it. Thucydides then furnishes those necessary things to the speeches which perfect them within the frame of the speaker’s own purposes. He makes the best case that he can for each speaker and each speech, given who the speaker is and what he is trying to accomplish. Taking the ξύμπασα γνώμη as given, he provides τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα (the rhetorically needful things). Regarding the deeds themselves, Thucydides writes that he did not add to them what appeared necessary but instead acted to ensure as much precision as possible (ἀκριβείᾳ), implying some primacy to the deeds (1.22.2, cf. 1.21.2).

To state the matter clearly, speeches require interpretation and correction in light of the deeds of the war. The deeds are touchstones for the speeches. And it is the point of contact between psychology and world that primarily interests us. Just as actions speak louder than words, so too must Thucydides’ narrative be used to corroborate, refute, or qualify claims made in speech. Indeed, what is most true may be least manifest in speech (1.23.6). Despite the relative primacy of deeds, words do not merely obscure. They are a kind of deed. In Aristotelian terms, human beings are political animals precisely because
they are moved by speech, by rational deliberation or by less than rational exhortation.\textsuperscript{31} Attitudes, motives, plans, and intentions all manifest themselves in speech and are susceptible to persuasive speech. What is more, to err is human, and so error, too, reveals human nature, as much as or perhaps more than success.\textsuperscript{32} Finally, conceptions of $\tau\alpha\delta\varepsilon\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$ in whatever circumstance—about the necessity, justice, or advantage of a particular course of action—imply beliefs about the world, beliefs which may be either true or false. Two broader perspectives that Thucydides trades upon throughout the History are those of justice and necessity. As we will see, these are intimately bound up with Athens (necessity) and Sparta (justice).

Overall, the History is about how conceptions fit or jar with reality. Thucydides’ teaching lies not exactly in the interstices of his recreated $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron$ and $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha$ but in the characteristic relationships between and among them (3.82.4). Taken as a whole, the History locates the manifold judgments, the multiplicity of claims and counter-claims, and the variety of successful or unsuccessful outcomes within some more encompassing account of political life. This complete account, this comprehensive $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega\varsigma$, constitutes Thucydides’ political philosophy itself.\textsuperscript{33} It is to discovering aspects of this master $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega\varsigma$ that this study is devoted. The entering wedge for our inquiry is the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, to which Thucydides devotes 146 chapters. We now turn to a treatment of chapter 1.23,

\textsuperscript{31} See the famous lines of Aristotle: “It is thus clear that man is a political animal, in a higher degree than bees or other gregarious animals. Nature, according to our theory, makes nothing in vain; and man alone of the animals is furnished with the faculty of language. The mere making of sounds serves to indicate pleasure and pain, and is thus a faculty that belongs to animals in general: their nature enables them to attain the point at which they have perceptions of pleasure and pain, and can signify those perceptions to one another. But language serves to declare what is advantageous and what is the reverse…” Aristotle, The Politics, 1253a10-11, 37.

\textsuperscript{32} See fn 19 above.

\textsuperscript{33} The first articulation of a natural right view of Thucydides is Strauss, The City and Man.
which thematically structures the episodes of the first book and furnishes something like a key for unlocking them.

**The Outbreak of War**

The outbreak of the war corresponds with a violation of the Peace (1.23.4). At the end of the Archaeology, in chapter 1.23, Thucydides distinguishes between the grounds of accusation and difference (τὰς αἰτίας καὶ τὰς διαφοράς) publicly put forward by the belligerents prior to war—those advanced as justifications for dissolving the Thirty Years’ Peace—and his own view of the war’s truest reason or cause (πρόφασις), which was least manifest in speech. Importantly, in these passages Thucydides remains studiously indeterminate as to which party first broke the Treaty and thereby bears αἰτία, or responsibility, for the Peloponnesian war. In his own view, however, the truest reason for war was the following: “the growth of Athenian power (τῶν Ἀθηναίων

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34 For the debates surrounding the meaning of πρόφασις and αἰτία see, Gordon M. Kirkwood, “Thucydides’ Words for "Cause”, *American Journal of Philology* 73 (1952): 37-61; Lionel Pearson, “Prophasis and Aitia,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 83 (1952): 205–223; and Hunter R Rawlings, *A Semantic Study of Prophasis to 400 B.C* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975). For the original portrait of Thucydides as a scientific historian, who borrowed his conception of “cause” from the Hippocratics, see, C.N. Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1929). For a discussion of these issues and a critique of interpreting πρόφασις as cause in any scientific sense (as opposed to a forensic one), see Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 32–37, 213–214. Throughout this study, I follow Orwin: πρόφασις and αἰτία are bound up with political speech, with charge and counter-charge. The terms are intended to straddle the perspectives of justice and necessity, which have their common root in political λόγος. Nonetheless, it will be maintained that Thucydides programmatically moves from blame to ascription of responsibility without imputation of blame. Human nature ultimately bears αἰτία for the Peloponnesian war.

35 Just as a constitution (πολιτεία) is an institutional arrangement in fact, so too is peace a unity of speech and deed. The Greek verb λύω, used for the collapse of a treaty, means an untying causing a falling apart—a falling away of promise from action. Adherence to covenants guarantees stability among cities, reducing the sway of fortune in human affairs. Such adherence requires mutual trust in solemn promises as well as respect for the gods who witness oaths. In antiquity, the violation of an oath was an act of hubris, an offense against the Gods as well as a crime against men. On good faith, oaths, and divine retribution, see David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 52–53. See also, George A. Sheets, “Conceptualizing International Law in Thucydides,” *American Journal of Philology* 115 (1994): 51-73.
made the Spartans fearful (φόβον), which compelled (ἀναγκάσαι) the parties to fight” (1.23.5 and 1.23.6).\(^{36}\) Here, Thucydides introduces his famous claim about the compelling nature of the fear produced by rising Athenian power.\(^{37}\) Importantly, he uses the language of necessity, which, as we will see, is echoed by the doctrine of necessity advanced by the Athenians at Sparta. With the final sentence of the first book, Thucydides completes his treatment of the war’s origins by repeating the line with which he began it: “These were the accusations and quarrels of the parties before the war (σκίτια δὲ ἀυτῶν καὶ διάφορα), which arose straightaway from the events of Epidamnus and Corcyra” (1.146). These two lines, 1.23.5-6 and 1.146, bookend the episodes falling in between them, and suggest that the entirety of the first book revolves around the several grounds for the Peloponnesian war. These naturally include the claims made loudly in speech—the justifications for dissolving the Peace—but also the quieter but somehow no less actuating motivation, the truest πρόφασις. The key to interpreting the first book lies in untangling the connection between the two, in grasping how the former illuminates the latter and vice versa. As we will soon see, it is the character of Thucydidean necessity that binds them together.

A central theme of book one is the relationship between justice and necessity as this pertains to the dissolution of the Thirty Years’ Peace. Thucydides begins his treatment of the war with a question of justice, the question of σκίτα or blame for war, the juridical

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\(^{36}\) The relevant part of the sentence is τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦσαν μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβου παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἔστω πολεμεῖν (1.23.6). The Greek is, I think, intentionally indeterminate as to whether Spartan fear or Athenian power compelled the war—in fact, both did—just as Thucydides intentionally leaves it open who first violated the Peace.

\(^{37}\) As shorthand, this statement will often be termed the ‘truest πρόφασις’ throughout this study.
question of the first violator of the Peace. In raising this question of justice or blame, he
first introduces his claim about necessity: war became necessary because of Sparta’s fear
of Athenian power. As Clifford Orwin has written, “we may now grasp why Thucydides
does not commit himself on the question of αἰτία. The question of who bears blame is
inseparable from the question of what constitutes it and therefore from what extenuates
it.”

The necessity theme arises within a debate about justice, from within political life
and the world of political justification, while, as we will see, sanctioning deviations from
justice strictly understood.

Justice and necessity share a common root in lived political experience, in charges and
counter-charges advanced in speech. It is not accidental, then, that in the narrative
Archaeology and Pentecontaetia, which contain no speeches, there is little mention of
justice and necessity. As the interpretation will prove, for Thucydides, the question of
who bears αἰτία or responsibility for the Peloponnesian war ultimately points to
inescapable necessities of perception and action, or to the cause of political growth as
well as to the fear such growth naturally inspires. In the final analysis, human nature is
Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war.

Although this claim is true, as the interpretation will establish, it is also hollow, formal,
empty. What is the substance of ‘the human thing’?

[38] Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 37.
[39] As we will have opportunity to discuss, the terms are not entirely absent.
[40] Ostwald makes a similar point but is insufficiently programmatic in drawing out the implications.
“Ultimately, in Thucydides’ eyes, it is the way the human animal is constituted that made the outbreak of
the Peloponnesian War an inevitable necessity.” Ananke in Thucydides, 32, 64.
[41] The term is Marc Cogan’s literal translation of τὸ ἀνθρώπινον and the title of his book: The Human
disclosure of human nature involves some movement through the self-understanding of Athens and Sparta. As in Plato’s writings, politics projects outward and upward into the sky, into some conception of the whole. The differences between Athens and Sparta are therefore not merely structural and circumstantial, although they are that too. The cities—and their characteristic spokesmen—have opposing views of the cosmos or chaos and the human place within it.  

Athens and Sparta express human nature in part by evincing characteristically human attitudes to the world of deeds, or, perhaps, more precisely, by evincing the poles of possible attitudes to the realm of deeds. In the pages of the History, these representative perspectives are those of necessity and justice. Thucydides delicately brings out these web-works of belief by shifting between Athenian and the Spartan perspectives throughout the first book as well as the History as a whole. In this way, he realigns the world from a variety of vantage points, from the Spartan and Athenian, but also from the perspectives of middle-rate powers and even from those of key individuals. Again, claims about justice and necessity in the History are bound up with psychology, individual and collective.

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42 For the origin of key portions of this reading, see Strauss, The City and Man, 218. “For Thucydides the course of the war is the self-revelation of Athens and Sparta rather than the outcome of a strategy.” See also Orwin, who follows him. “Thucydides shows us the self-revelation of the cities of Athens and Sparta, the poles and peaks of “Greekness” or of evolved political life; the significance of the war lies above all in this process of self-revelation.” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 193.

43 For the sharpest statement of these rival ‘theologies’, compare the Athenian and Melian positions advanced in the Melian dialogue, 5.104 (Melians), 5.105 (Athenians).

44 On the fundamental nature of this opposition, see Strauss: “These two opening words [of the Corcyraean and Corinthian speeches] indicate the point of view from which Thucydides looks at the Peloponnesian war.” The City and Man, 174. Crucially, these are also the points of view from which the characters themselves look at the war.
The structure of the first book follows Thucydides’ statement about manifest and hidden (i.e., quieter) causes offered in 1.23. After the Archaeology, following the order of 1.23.5-6, Thucydides first presents the dispute over Corcyra followed by the quarrel surrounding Potidaea (1.24-1.55 and 1.56-66). Each ends with a “rounding off” statement of the belligerents’ respective grounds of accusation and difference, confirming them as the manifest quarrels (1.55.2 and 1.66). Both involve Corinth, a powerful member of the Spartan confederacy, whose interests are doubly jeopardized by Athenian action. In her anger over Athenian support for her rival, Corcyra, Corinth materially aids a revolting Athenian subject in the Thraceward region, Potidaea. These initial quarrels culminate in Thucydides’ recreation of four speeches delivered at a Congress at Sparta in 432 BC, which issues in a Spartan decision for war, and which, this study will claim, represent the beginning of a Thucydidean expansion on the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war. This treatment extends beyond the Congress through to the Pentecontaetia, the narrative section following it, which sketches the development of Athenian power from the end of the Persian wars to the beginning of the Peloponnesian, throwing retrospective light on the earlier quarrels. Finally, it will be maintained that the prefatory Archaeology

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45 For an important article on the structure of book one, to which this study is indebted, see N. G. L. Hammond, “The Arrangement of the Thought in the Proem and in Other Parts of Thucydides I,” The Classical Quarterly NS2 (1952): 127-141.
46 The useful expression is Connor’s, See Thucydides, 87, 92, fn 30.
47 Gomme argues that the Congress at Sparta continues Thucydides’ treatment of the immediate causes, which begin with the events surrounding Corcyra and Potidaea, while the subsequent Pentecontaetia (on Athenian power) represents Thucydides’ exploration of the truest πρόφασις. In contrast, this study will maintain that the Spartan Congress links the early quarrels to the truest πρόφασις, or, more precisely, that the Congress itself represents the first element of Thucydides’ three part treatment of the truest πρόφασις, which is bound up with Spartan fear just as much as with Athenian power: the other two parts being the later Pentecontaetia and the earlier Archaeology. See A. W. Gomme, An Historical Commentary on Thucydides Volume 1. Introduction, and Commentary on Book I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), 152–154. See also Hammond, who agrees with Gomme. “The Arrangement of the Thought in the Proem and in Other Parts of Thucydides I,” 134–135. De Romilly argues that the truest πρόφασις refers primarily to Athenian Imperialism. Jacqueline de Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, trans. Thody (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 18. On this point, I am in agreement with Ostwald, “Growth and fear combine to create the necessity of war.” Ananke in Thucydides, 3, emphasis added.
requires interpretation after the Pentecontaetia as the final element of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the war.

Although the study will present and defend these interpretative claims at some length, the logic of the progression can be preliminarily stated. Spartan fear is produced by Athenian power. The growth of Athenian power, an instance of a more general phenomenon, points to the human causes of the growth of power: to the more general phenomenon itself. This latter account is contained in the prefatory Archaeology. In combination with several claims drawn from the Spartan Congress, it is the enigmatic Archaeology that discloses how common human nature and disparate human circumstances condition the development of Athens and Sparta. Just as the logic of the first book—the logic of Thucydidean necessity—points backwards to the rise of Athenian power depicted in the Pentecontaetia, so too does it point still further backwards to the first times, to the Archaeology, which reveals the origins of the power and character of the two great Hellenic contestants.

In the chapters following the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides once more returns to manifest quarrels but now to other charges leveled by the parties in speech. He reproduces a final Corinthian speech, which concludes with a successful vote of the Peloponnesian League for war, and which reveals the psychology of Sparta’s allies. While the Peloponnesians prepare for the invasion of Attica—and the status quo trembles—a series of Spartan embassies go to Athens to drum up the greatest πρόφασις, or pretext, for war, including,

48 As Ostwald notes, “All ἀνάγκαι, whether expressed by verb, noun, or adjective, in speeches or in narrative, are intelligible and rationally explicable. None is predetermined either by a divinity or by some transcendental force.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 8.
now, an accusation of impiety (1.126.1). This is the Spartan demand that Athens drive out
the curse of the goddess (1.126-7). The Athenians counter-demand that Sparta cleanse
herself of two such impurities. Commentators are frequently perplexed by this exchange
of pollutions as pretexts for war, but they reveal something important about the
psychology of the war’s outbreak, especially Spartan views about justice and piety. These
new charges and counter-charges fall within the ambit of the manifest quarrels and reveal
new facets of Athens and Sparta, particularly the character of their outstanding citizens
and their troubled relationship to their respective regimes.

Thucydides’ use of the term the “greatest πρόφασις” suggests the need to compare the
logic of these Spartan charges with the logic of the truest πρόφασις. Broadly speaking,
the truest πρόφασις involves necessity and is somehow Athenian, while the greatest
involves justice and piety and is somehow Spartan. The causes of the war look quite
different from Athenian and Spartan perspectives. Overall, the Athenians emphasize the
necessity of pursuing an advantage apparently free of justice, while the Spartans
emphasize the necessity (and advantages) of justice. Nonetheless, as we will see,
Thucydides reveals that it is the Athenians who stay within the letter of the Treaty, while
it is Sparta which in fact violates it, all the while loudly claiming to defend it. As we will
see, the greatest πρόφασις is also linked to the characteristic errors of the poets and
logographers discussed in the Archaeology.

At the end of the first book, Thucydides returns once more to the truest πρόφασις.
Through Pericles’ first speech, he recreates the decisive ‘Athenian’ perspective on the
manifest quarrels. In rejecting Sparta’s ultimatums, Pericles discloses how Athenian power generates a distinctly Athenian necessity for war. Honor, rooted in a sober assessment of power, compels Athens to resist Spartan demands. This resistance is consistent with the letter of the Treaty, because Athens offers arbitration on equal terms. She will not, however, accept orders from Sparta as if from a superior in power. Sparta initiates the Peloponnesian war out of her fear of the growth of Athenian power. Athens refuses to yield to Spartan ultimatums because of that honor due her relative power.

Throughout book one, Thucydides repeatedly emphasizes that fear and advantage compel Sparta to fight, while honor and advantage compel Athens to resist. Each city is ensnared by different psychological necessity. As we will see, fear, honor, and profit, first introduced by the Athenians at Sparta, are revealed to be at play in every city’s conception of the advantageous things, but in different arrangement. And throughout Thucydides’ History, all cities are compelled to seek the good as they understand it, compelled to say in speech and to do in deed whatever they believe necessary to achieve it. We are at last ready to turn our attention to those events that produced the breakdown of the Hellenic status quo of 446 BC and to those rival necessities anchored in the distinctive ways of Athens and Sparta that collide to begin the unprecedented motion of the Peloponnesian war.

49 “… one of the characteristics of ἀνάγκη in Thucydides is that it must be perceived as such by those it contrains … ἀνάγκαι depend for their existence on the perception of an agent …” Ibid., 24.
The Manifest Quarrels

The preliminary quarrels run over forty chapters, spanning the years 435-432 BC. They begin after the Archaeology and end with the Congress at Sparta of 432 BC (1.24-67). Thucydides begins his account of the outbreak of the war by throwing his readers into moving events, offering a clean view of the strategic issues that overturn the Hellenic status quo without clutter of preconception. Although Athens and Sparta appear in these chapters, they are mostly in shadow, darkly visible through the distorting angle of vision of middle-rate powers. This allows Thucydides to reveal how alterations in the regional balance of power progressively escalate to jeopardize the systemic balance. Later episodes in the first book will furnish additional context, retrospectively deepening and transforming the reader’s understanding.

The following examines Thucydides’ presentation of the conflict between Corcyra and Corinth and the subsequent clash between Corinth and Athens with an eye to political psychology, especially to the charges and countercharges made in speech about justice, necessity, and advantage. We will pay particular attention to authorial statements about motivation as well as to the key decision points, those moments in the narrative where Thucydides depicts a city facing a choice. In line with this emphasis, we will focus

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extensively on the first two speeches in the *History*, those of the Corcyraeans and Corinthians at Athens.Overall, these early chapters reveal the strategic issues that lead to the outbreak of the war—the chain of events triggering war—while introducing the reader to themes that find fuller expression in the Spartan Congress, and which prove bound up with the logic of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις.

**The First Quarrel—Epidamnus, Corcyra, Corinth, Athens**

Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian war begins with Epidamnus on the Ionian gulf. Epidamnus was originally founded by Corcyra, but its founder, according to an ancient law, was from Corinth, Corcyra’s mother-city (1.24.2). Over time, Epidamnus grew powerful and populous, but faction, arising from a war with neighboring barbarians, destroyed much of its power (1.24.3-4). According to Thucydides, the apparently innocuous first sparks of the Peloponnesian war began when the Epidamnian demos expelled the city’s powerful men, who joined neighboring barbarians in piratical raiding against the city by land and sea. Thucydides offers no indication as to the rights or wrongs of this factional struggle. Epidamnian *stasis* appears as that brute fact from which subsequent events spring—a political tremor foreshadowing the Hellenic earthquake to come.

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51 On the programmatic nature of these early events, see Crane, who writes, “The conflict between Corinth and Corcyra, and particularly the debate at Athens between these two powers, occupies a formally strategic position within the design of the *History* and sets the stage for what follows.” *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity*, 94. See also Morrison, who makes a similar point. “Thucydides’ account of the Corcyraean conflict (1.24-55) serves in many ways as a programmatic introduction to the complexities of rhetoric and action found in the *History*.” “Preface to Thucydides,” 94.

52 “*Stasis* launches the Peloponnesian War: it is not only the first incident in the war narrative, and it is not only the first in a long series of ever-worsening *staseis*, but it also establishes the main framework for the *History*, the guidelines by which the war is understood.” Jonathan J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*
In his treatment of Epidamnus, Thucydides reveals how a local conflict escalates to produce a regional one. Desperate in the face of external attack, the Epidamnian *demos* appeal successively to Corcyra and Corinth for help, having ancestral ties to each. They first implore Corcyra to reconcile them with their rivals and to end the war with the barbarians. Their ambassadors solemnly seat themselves as supplicants at the Temple of Hera at Corcyra and request aid. Without providing a motive, Thucydides briskly relays that the Corcyraeans refused to receive the supplicants and sent them home empty handed. Unsure of what to do next, the Epidamnians send to Delphi to ask Apollo if they should hand over their colony to Corinth and obtain assistance from that quarter (1.25.1). Upon receiving the god’s sanction, the *demos* approach Corinth and offer up their city. Corinth’s all too ready acceptance touches off a war with Corcyra.

The motives of the participants are of particular importance. Although Thucydides offers little in the way of commentary, the reader is struck by the reasonableness of the Epidamnian requests—as well as their ostensible piety—but also by the fact that ancestral ties beget competing claims of justice or right. The Epidamnian *demos* acts with seeming propriety, appealing to the commonality of ancestry stretching from Epidamnus, the colony, to Corcyra, her mother-city, to Corinth, her grandmother city. Corcyra’s rejection of the Epidamnian supplicants appears at first blush impious. For unknown reasons, she ignores a desperate plea by her own colonials at the altar of a god. She neglects her

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 277. I agree with Price that it is no accident Thucydides begins the Peloponnesian war with faction. I disagree that it constitutes the organizing theme of the work as a whole. *Stasis*, it should be noted, is recurrent, bound up with the permanent ways of human beings (3.82.2).
apparent duties to her colony, while Corinth will soon charge that she neglects her duties to her mother-city as well. The Corcyraeans appear strangely insensitive to kinship and ancestral ties. Thucydides styles the Corinthians their opposite in this respect, preoccupied with colonial relationships and ancestral ties. Corcyra is also politically unaligned, while Corinth is a key member of Sparta’s confederacy. Corcyra’s refusal to aid her colony affords Corinth a long sought opportunity to meddle in her affairs.

Unlike his presentation of Corcyra’s rejection of the Epidamnians, Thucydides chooses to furnish a motive when describing Corinth’s acceptance of the request for aid. Corinth, Thucydides says, agrees to help because it is just to do so, which is to say, in accordance with legality (κατά τὸ δίκαιον). This is the first use of a justice cognate in the History, and it offers an instructive example of one relationship between motive and pretext. According to Thucydides, Corinth considers Epidamnus no less hers than Corcyra’s, but at the same time she welcomes the request out of hatred of Corcyra, due to neglect of the honors due her, Corcyra’s mother-city (1.25.3). Here, several motives and pretexts combine. First, Corinth considers Epidamnus no less hers than Corcyra’s. As we will see, she considers even Corcyra her wayward dependency. In Corinth’s apparent view, the chain of colonial relationships implies if not outright ownership then certainly hegemony by right of founding.

Corinth has several ‘just’ (or legal) motives for involving herself in Epidamnus: the formal Epidamnian request for aid, the fact that the city’s founder was from Corinth, and finally the response of the Delphic oracle. Yet these would be insufficient to move
Corinth to act were it not for her hatred. Motives, then, require pretexts—pretexts, of course, can also be motives—but just as a pretext without a motive will not issue forth in action, neither will a motive without a pretext.\(^{53}\) It is characteristic of political life that cities and men not only have their reasons for acting, but that they feel compelled to offer up reasons for their actions. Self-justification can be more rhetorical than real, of course, but reasons, whether true or false, can always be expressed in speech. It is in this light that we must begin to try to grasp Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war.

Let us take a step back. Corinth had had a long-standing grudge against Corcyra, but it was the plight of Epidamnus that furnished the propitious opportunity to settle the score. Did Corinth’s grudge cause the Corcyraean-Corinthian conflict or was it caused by the Epidamnian faction? Alternatively, could Apollo be the culprit, who through his oracle counseled the Epidamnians to turn to Corinth? Putting aside this last possibility, perhaps it is best to say that motives seek opportunities (or pretexts), while opportunities themselves influence motives. Actions have their original reasons, their first causes, but these are quickly transformed by moving events.

Perhaps this is what Thucydides intends by his distinction between charges leveled in speech and a truer but quieter ground for war. If correct, then the truest πρόφασις for Corinth’s interference in Epidamnus is her hatred of Corcyra. But if compelled to justify her intervention, Corinth would doubtless refer to the justice of her cause. Perhaps her

\(^{53}\) “Thus, right at the beginning of the conflict, there appears the split we encountered in the Archaeology: outward expression (justifiable aid to the endangered colony) and true motive (opportunity for revenge on the daughter city).” Stahl, *Thucydides*, 38.
anger and sense of entitlement are inseparable. The narrative certainly suggests as much. Indeed, at the later debate at Athens, Corinth will angrily defend herself in the language of justice and injustice. But what is the source of Corinthian hatred?

The Archaeology has prepared the reader to understand that the quarrel between Corinth and Corecyra is of long duration. In 1.13.4, Thucydides relays that the first known naval battle occurred between the cities some two hundred and sixty years earlier, dated to end of the Peloponnesian war. Their hostility is therefore recurrent, and the imbroglio over Epidamnus fits into some larger pattern of conflict. According to Thucydides, Corinth is especially angered by Corecyra’s neglect of the religious honors traditionally offered by colonies to their mother-cities (1.25.3). Corecyra, for her part, refuses to accept Corinthian hegemony simply because she was founded by Corinth.

According to Thucydides, Corecyra is equal to the wealthiest of Hellenes, militarily powerful, and occasionally inflated by the power of her fleet (1.25.4). Ships and money—themes treated programmatically in the Archaeology and mainstays of naval power—inspire in Corecyra the desire for a relationship with Corinth commensurate to the balance of power between them. Signs of honor, in other words, ought to follow facts of power. Corinth’s demand for tokens of respect offends the Corecyraean, and so they decline to offer them. The neglect of these honors, in turn, infuriates the Corinthians, who, angered by constantly receiving less than their due, hunt about for opportunities for revenge. The plight of Epidamnus is the pretext Corinth has been waiting for. This issue

See 1.13.5.

In this way, but also in others, the Corecyraean disposition prefigures the characteristically Athenian one. For the Athenians at Sparta will propound a view of honor and justice as bound up with power.
of Corinthian hatred affords a first glimpse into what we might loosely term Corinthian and Corecraean world-views, which themselves prove bound up with the characters of the cities. As we will see, these views find fuller expression at the debate at Athens, where they deeply color the arguments of the embassies. We will examine them more exhaustively in that context.

Having these accusations (ἐγκλήματα) against Corecra, Thucydides says that Corinth is pleased to help Epidamnus. She is happy to provoke Corecra by meddling in her sphere. The Corinthians dispatch colonists and a force to Epidamnus. They send them by land to avoid Corecraean naval interference (1.26.1-2). This expedient reveals that Corinth anticipates a hostile response. So far, then, in these preliminary events, there have been four decision points. First, the Epidamnian demos expelled the oligarchs for unstated reasons; second, Corecra rejected the Epidamnian supplicants, also for unclear reasons; third, the Epidamnians chose to hand over their city to Corinth, having nowhere else to turn; and fourth and finally, Corinth agreed to intervene in Epidamnus, partly out of hatred and partly out of considerations of right. We arrive at the fifth such moment.

Catching wind of Corinth’s provocation, Corecra angrily dispatches a force to besiege Epidamnus, taking with her the Epidamnian oligarchs, who had in the interim successfully enlisted her aid (1.126.3). With this move, the situation becomes more complex and more severe. Both cities now have just but incompatible pretexts for involving themselves in Epidamnus. Corinth has been invited in by the people, Corecra
by the oligarchs.\textsuperscript{56} Each also has an ancestral claim upon Epidamnus, and each now an Epidamnian party as ally. The city itself is quickly becoming a war-zone for the escalating conflict between Corinth and Corcyra.\textsuperscript{57} The original civil war, in other words, has radiated outwards. As the reader already knows from the Archaeology, faction or \textit{stasis} forever lures in external powers. These avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by inner strife to enhance their own power or to defend their own prerogatives (1.2.4). The minor conflict that sparks the great Peloponnesian war is itself a representative phenomenon—part of the recurrent pattern of political life.

When the Corcyraean fleet arrives at Epidamnus, Corcyra insultingly commands the \textit{demos} to receive the oligarchs and to send away the Corinthians. Late to the game, she attempts to achieve the same outcome originally asked of her. But now the Epidamnians are having none of it. They ignore her commands, and so Corcyra proceeds to besiege the city (1.26.3-4).\textsuperscript{58} Upon discovering her citizens besieged, Corinth furiously assembles an expeditionary force and makes provision for a colony to Epidamnus; she gathers ships from the Peloponnesian League so as not to be hindered on her voyage (1.27.1-2).

Corinth’s counter-escalation represents our sixth decision point. It is taken for the same reason as the original intervention in Epidamnus: hatred, but now hatred inflamed by

\textsuperscript{56} In the excursus on civil war in book three, Thucydides reveals that the popular party within a city was often inclined to invite in the Athenians, while the oligarchic one would invariably ally with the Spartans (3.82.1). A similar dynamic is at play here, and it represents a microcosm of the process that ultimately produces the collapse of the Hellenic status quo. Each party, facing a security dilemma, exacerbates the situation by appealing up the power chain for assistance.

\textsuperscript{57} It is unclear if Corcyra is somehow more natively inclined to the plea of the Epidamnian oligarchs than to that of the Epidamnian demos, or, if, as seems more likely, she takes up the banner of the oligarchs as a pretext for responding to Corinthian encroachment.

\textsuperscript{58} The Epidamnian many are presumably emboldened by Corinthian support.
provocation. Moreover, Corinth’s drawing of support from her Peloponnesian allies—a material enhancement of her power—tilts the balance of power in her favor. Grasping this and frightened by the Corinthian preparations, unaligned Corcyra changes course and quickly tries to bring about a diplomatic resolution. Here, we arrive at our seventh and eighth decision moments: Corcyra’s offer of arbitration and Corinth’s rejection of it.

Aware of the changing balance of power, Corcyra seeks to negotiate. She dispatches a delegation to Corinth along with Spartan and Sicyonian embassies to bid Corinth remove her force and colonists (1.28.1). This is Sparta’s first appearance in the preliminary quarrels, and it is significant that she attempts to defuse the conflict. If Corinth refuses to withdraw, Corcyra proposes arbitration by whichever Peloponnesian city can be mutually agreed upon. Alternatively, Corcyra is willing to turn the matter over to Delphi (1.28.2). She makes clear that she wishes to avoid war, but if pressed that she will feel herself compelled to make new friends out of self-interest (1.28.3). Offering arbitration with one hand, Corcyra threatens an alliance with Athens with the other. She threatens to counterbalance Corinth’s power in the only way she can, with Athenian might. This ultimatum about seeking new friends is the first use of a necessity cognate after Thucydides’ claim about the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war.

Once again, we are interested in the motives at play. It is clear that Corcyra’s diplomatic flexibility reflects her fear. She also obviously mistrusts Corinth and so prefers the maintenance of the status quo, where she temporarily has the upper hand, at least until a

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59 Excepting the Archaeology, this is Sparta’s first appearance in the History.
60 This would seem to be a concession, since Delphi had earlier sanctioned the handing over of Epidamnus to Corinth.
more permanent solution can be reached. Corcyra appeals to justice, to a negotiated solution, but Thucydides makes clear that she feels *forced* to make the overture, compelled by the precariously of her strategic circumstance. Unsure she can win in deed, Corcyra seeks accommodation in speech. Importantly, justice is not here tied to anger or entitlement, as it is for the Corinthians. Instead, it reflects Corcyra’s prudence. Fearing she cannot win outright, she appeals to justice.

Unfortunately, Corinth’s thirst for vengeance, stemming from a different conception of justice, prevents her from accepting the olive branch. What is more, so does Corcyra’s own position. With Corinthian power increasing—and with it Corinthian odds of achieving their objectives by force—why should Corinth negotiate? The Corcyraeans have a natural interest in negotiating—they feel weak—but the Corinthians do not. Their strength is growing, and with it their odds of success. As they have been from the beginning, they are also emboldened by the righteousness of their cause.

Just as the first use of a justice cognate involved Corinth’s motivation for helping Epidamnus, the first use of a necessity one is bound up with Corcyraean psychology. Even before the debate at Athens, Thucydides takes pains to link justice to Corinth and necessity to Corcyra, despite the fact that each city will appeal to both justice and necessity before the Athenian assembly. Corcyra does not want war, but if arbitration is rejected and she is forced, she claims that she will be *compelled* (ἀναγκασθῆσθαι) to make new friends for the sake of benefit (ὠφελίας ἑνεκα, 1.28.3). The Corcyraeans link necessity to interest, which is to say, to a kind of advantage. Stated another way, if
Corecyra faces a war with Corinth alone, the necessities of the Corcyraean advantage will force her to the Athenian doorstep. While Corecyra does not claim to be compelled to seek a peaceful solution, the same motives that eventually push her to Athens are those that cause her to try her hand at diplomacy first. Corecyra is apparently motivated by the necessity of saving herself in whatever way she can. Corinth, by contrast, is moved by anger and retributive justice.

In our eighth decision moment, Corinth dismisses Corecyra’s overtures. Once again, anger is the motive. She outfits her ships, brings her allies to side, and declares war (1.29.1). Given the preceding events, the reader is surprised to learn that it is Corecyra which decisively wins the ensuing naval battle. Moreover, on the same day, Epidamnus surrenders to the besieging Corcyraean force, the foreigners are sold, and the Corinthians imprisoned (1.29.5). In the aftermath of these victories, Corecyra engages in reprisal raiding against Corinth’s allies. Now, almost entirely consumed by rage, Corinth draws still greater material support from the Peloponnesian League. She spends a year assembling a massive expeditionary force (1.31.1). The escalation following her defeat is our ninth decision moment. Once again, it is less a decision and more a continuation of Corinthian policy and Corinthian anger.

Not being in treaty with either great power, the Corcyraeans are frightened (ἐφοβοῦντο), and it seems best to go to Athens for help (ὠφελίαν τινὰ, 1.31.2). Again, Thucydides emphasizes that benefit (or profit) is the primary motive for turning to the Athenians (ὠφελίαν, also cf. 1.28.3). Now he also stresses Corecyra’s fear. She is unaligned with
either of the two great Hellenic powers. Corecyra dispatches an embassy to Athens to propose alliance. Corinth too sends ambassadors, but these to prevent the Athenian fleet from joining the Corcyraean one, which would thwart her prosecution of the war (1.31.3).

Fear and benefit—terms which recur frequently throughout the History—combine to push Corecyra into the arms of Athens. At 1.28.3, Thucydides had said that the Corcyraeans told the Corinthians that if their offer of arbitration were to be rejected, they would be compelled to seek new friends (ἀναγκασθῆσαι). At 1.31.2, however, he says only that in light of the recent battle and Corinth’s preparations, it seemed best to the Corcyraeans to send to the Athenians to propose an alliance (ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς). In this way, Thucydides raises the question of the relationship between compulsion and interest. Corecyra, for her part, would seem to feel compelled by fear and profit to seek alliance with Athens, compelled by her conception of advantage—what we today might term the Corcyraean national interest. On this reading, the motives that ‘compel’ are psychological, reflective of Corecyra’s assessment of her strategic situation and the options available to her.

To introduce a claim in preliminary fashion that will be developed more fully throughout this study, Thucydides often uses ‘necessity’ to refer to a decision arrived at on the basis of the point of contact between a city’s inner (psychological) disposition and its external (strategic) circumstances. Corecyra, in other words, conceives she has no other real choice—or no better choice, given her interests and situation—than to send to Athens. Corinth’s unremitting rage has painted her into a corner. The Corcyraean decision to go
to Athens is the tenth decision point of these preliminary events, and it is an especially pregnant one. For this Corcyraean decision affords the Athenians a choice. Despite “forcing” Corcyra to apply to Athens, Corinth recognizes that Corcyraean alliance with Athens will frustrate her wishes, and so she acts aggressively to prevent it.

**Debate at Athens**

The debate at Athens is the moment where the shifting regional balance of power more decisively touches the broader Hellenic balance. It also draws together a number of the thematic threads lightly anticipated in the earlier narrative and briefly discussed above. The first recreated pair of speeches in Thucydides’ *History* is the debate between Corecyra and Corinth over whether Athens should ally with Corecyra. The strategic consequences of the move can be briefly outlined. Because Corinth and Corecyra are at war, if Athens allies herself with Corecyra, she puts herself on a collision course with Corinth, a member of the Spartan confederacy, and a city with whom she is in treaty. An Athenian alliance with Corecyra risks a confrontation with the Peloponnesians.

Athens therefore faces a security dilemma. While Thucydides chooses not to recreate an Athenian speech, he does summarize the logic of the Athenian decision. This is the first appearance of Athens in the early chapters, and we, the *History*’s readers, sit as Athenian surrogates, silent members of the Athenian assembly. On the basis of the earlier narrative as well as the opposing speeches, Thucydides encourages us to decide whether to accept an alliance with Corcyra or not.
Importantly, the speeches also reveal the characters of Corcyra and Corinth. We glimpse not only how Corcyra and Corinth perceive their conflict but also how they shape their arguments and characterize their behavior for the Athenian audience. Through the narrative, Thucydides has conveyed something of the characters of the cities, but these characters manifest themselves most fully in the speeches at Athens.

Thucydides has also furnished his readers with each embassy’s motive in coming to Athens. Corcyra is alone and needs foreign assistance to survive, while Corinth wishes a free hand in prosecuting her war of revenge. These ends decisively inform those rhetorically necessary things that the speakers propound in order to achieve them. The rhetorically necessary things (τὰ δέοντα), in other words, are firmly in the service how each city perceives its actual necessities (also, τὰ δέοντα). Stated sharply, the speeches serve the underlying motives. In this way, Thucydides encourages his readers to use the truer motives for interpreting the pretexts, for disentangling the real from the rhetorical. He also uses the speeches to disclose Athens’ strategic position, through the claims about the inevitability of a wider war.

The speech of the Corcyraeans at Athens begins with the word δίκαιον, “it is just”, while the opposing Corinthian speech opens with ἀναγκαῖον, “it is necessary” (1.32.1, 1.37.1). This is programmatic, and, as we have seen, Thucydides has introduced justice and necessity prior to the debate.61 He first used “justice” or “right” (δίκαιον and cognates) in

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61 Connor remarks, the early quarrels introduce “what is to be a major theme in the Histories—the conflict between right and advantage ...” Connor, Thucydides, 34. On the programmatic nature of justice and
presenting Corinth’s motive to aid Epidamnus, while cognates recur in Corcyra’s diplomatic overture.\(^6^2\) After the claim about the truest πρόφασις, “necessity” (ἀνάγκη and cognates) first appears in the History when Corcyra tells Corinth that she may be compelled to seek new allies (1.28.3). In that context, necessity reflected Corcyra’s assessment of the constraints of her circumstance, which was itself colored by Corcyra’s prudential disposition.

At Athens, however, it is the Corcyraeans who open with “justice” and the Corinthians with “necessity”.\(^6^3\) Despite this, consistent with the earlier presentation, it is the calmer Corcyraean speech that stresses necessity, advantage, and considerations of power, while it is the angry Corinthian which is full of the hot language of justice and injustice. In outline, according to the Corcyraeans, it is advantageous for Athens to ally with Corcyra, while justice does not debar the arrangement, and a great war is coming. According to the Corinthians, it is unjust and therefore disadvantageous for Athens to accept Corcyra’s request, especially since it will bring about an avoidable war.

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62 To offer arbitration is in the Greek literally to offer and receive what is just. The first use of δίκαιον at 1.25.3 may refer to what is simply permitted on the basis of legality as distinct from obligation, although these may perhaps be the same; for what one is obligated to do, one is permitted to do.

63 The Corinthians open by claiming that it is necessary to respond to Corcyra’s allegations of their injustice. In other words, there is a rhetorical necessity in meeting Corcyra’s charges. Ostwald makes a similar point: “For example, in light of the points made by the Corcyraeans in their request for an alliance with Athens, the Corinthians feel compelled not only to express their opinion on the possible consequences of acceptance but also to defend themselves against the charge of having launched an unjustified attack on their colony 1.37.1). Obviously, by no objective standard would the world have come to an end if the Corinthians had failed to justify their actions, yet they could not have done so without seriously jeopardizing the desired effect of their speech; hence it was unavoidable for them to address the issue.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 10, emphasis added. See also Orwin, “The openings statements of both embassies refer to their respective situations as speakers.” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 39.
We are especially interested in the question of the character of advantage—how the cities conceive of the advantageous—but also in their differing presentations of the wider Hellenic status quo. Each speech also raises important questions about the legality or justice of an Athenian alliance with Corcyra, especially as it pertains to the Thirty Years’ Peace, which anchors the wider Hellenic status quo. Above all, however, it is through the question of the likelihood of war that Thucydides reveals the stakes that are at play in Corcyra’s decision to come to Athens for help. We turn to the Corcyraean speech.

**The Corcyraeans at Athens (1.32-36)**

The Corcyraean embassy begins by asserting that it is just (δίκαιον) for those seeking aid, who are not in formal alliance and have no claims of prior gratitude, to demonstrate that their request is advantageous for the granting party (μάλιστα μὲν ὡς καὶ ξύμφορα δέονται). If not immediately so, the petitioner must at least demonstrate that their plea is benign, and that they will be grateful. In other words, the Corcyraeans claim that if there is no present advantage in their request, there must be future advantage and no present harm (1.31.2). The benefits of a proposed alliance must outweigh its likely disadvantages. The stronger require cause to aid the weaker: that cause is advantage.

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64 Connor helpfully notes that “Under traditional Greek values the Corcyraeans were in a weak position. They had no claim on Athenians either by kinship or by past services. They were Dorians, much more closely tied to the Corinthians and the Spartans than to the Athenians. Their conduct, moreover, had been outrageous. They had refused to help their own colony, Epidamnus. The occasion was not minor or routine, but a desperate appeal to help stop civil strife in which one party was aided by the barbarians.” Connor, *Thucydides*, 34–35, fn 33. By this light, Corcyra’s arguments about the primacy of advantage stand out in even sharper relief.

65 Or the future advantages must outweigh whatever present harm.
The Corcyraeans open their speech by implying that mutual benefit is at the heart of every alliance—some calculus of past, present, and future advantage. They make clear that if they had an alliance or claims of prior gratitude—if they had just claims on the Athenians, in other words—they would naturally appeal to these for present help. Since this is denied them, they must persuade the Athenians of the present and future advantages of alliance. First, however, the Corcyraeans must account for their city’s policy of isolation, and explain why they are only now seeking an alliance. In this account, they must speak of themselves, of their character and policies.

The Corcyraean embassy claims that their city had earlier forsaken alliances because they did not wish to run risks for the sake of others. Now Corcyra is running risks alone, and so the benefits of association have become more readily apparent to her. Her strategy of isolation failed to take into account for the need of future help. She was perhaps too preoccupied with immediate advantage, too inclined to see only risks and never benefits in association. Now, however, as the embassy forthrightly admits, Corcyra cannot survive by her own power alone, while her danger is great if she is conquered by Corinth (μέγας ὁ κίνδυνος εἰ ἔσωμεθα ὑπ’ αὐτοῖς, 1.32.5).

Because of this danger, it is necessary (ἀνάγκη), she says, for her to request help from the Athenians (1.32.5). The Corcyraeans twice emphasize the magnitude of their danger: at 1.32.5, quoted above, but also at 1.33.1, where they stress that Athens will be welcoming a power running risks concerning the greatest matters (ἔπειτα περὶ τῶν

They thereby hint that the just claims of allies are the result of earlier arrangements made for the sake of advantage.
It is the clear and present danger that begets the necessity of seeking aid.

Later in book one, at 1.75.5, the Athenian envoys at Sparta will assert that no one can be blamed for seeking the advantageous things for themselves amidst the greatest dangers (πᾶσι δὲ ἀνεπίφθονον τὰ εὐμφέροντα τῶν μεγίστων πέρι κινδύνων εὖ τίθεσθαι, 1.75.5). The verbal repetition of these passages—two Corcyraean and one Athenian—suggests a link between them, but more some connection between necessity (ἀνάγκη) and advantage (τὰ εὐμφέροντα), the latter the theme of the Corcyraean speech as well the later Athenian one. It is to meeting the exigencies of a coming Peloponnesian war that Coreyra attempts to impress upon Athens the advantages of alliance, while it is the pressing exigencies of the Corcyraean interest that have forced her to Athens.

At Athens, the Coreyraeans repeat their city’s earlier statement about the necessity (ἀνάγκη) of seeking new friends relayed by Thucydides in indirect discourse at 1.28.3. There, the Coreyraeans had threatened Corinth with an Athenian alliance if their offer of arbitration were to be ignored. Now they are making good on that threat. Earlier, Thucydides had presented fear and benefit as conspiring to push Coreyra to Athens. For the Coreyraeans, fear for safety and hope of benefit joined to form a national imperative.

Coreyra’s assessment of her circumstance was as follows: once Corinth draws sufficient support from the Peloponnesians, she will sail against us, and we will be powerless to

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67 In book three, Diodotus terms freedom and empire the greatest matters (περὶ τῶν μεγίστων, 3.45.6). The Coreyraeans are fighting for their freedom.
prevail (1.32.5). It is this insight that informs those rhetorically necessary things (τὰ δέοντα) that Corcyra propounds at Athens. She needs help to survive. She must therefore magnify those benefits accruing to Athens from alliance, minimize disadvantages, and prospectively defuse arguments about justice debarring an alliance. Thucydides has furnished his attentive readers with that illuminating motive by which to scrutinize the several claims of the Corcyraean embassy.

After outlining their city’s plight and their own mission, the ambassadors explain the great good fortune that Corcyra’s desperation affords the Athenians. First, Athens will be assisting those suffering injustice and not harming others. Second, because Corcyra is facing unusual danger, the Athenians will obtain her endless gratitude. Third and most importantly, the Corcyraeans offer the second largest navy in all of Hellas (1.33.1).68 These rare benefits accruing to Athens will be proportionately painful to her enemies. The Corcyraeans offer Athens an increase in power (δύναμιν), which they note the Athenians value (ἐτιήσασθε) over much money or gratitude (1.33.2). Moreover, they freely offer the alliance, without risk of danger or financial cost to the Athenians. In granting alliance, the Athenians will acquire a reputation for virtue (ἀρετήν) because they will help those suffering injustice. They will gain the gratitude (χάριν) of those they help—which is to say tokens of gratitude and future benefit—and they will acquire greater power (ἰσχύν) for themselves (1.33.2).

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68 The first is the Athenian navy.
As the ambassadors next stress, the relative benefits of the proposed alliance hinge upon the prospect of a wider war between Athens and the Peloponnesians. In this first reference to the Hellenic status quo in Thucydides’ pages, the Corcyraeans proclaim the inevitability of a great war against Athens.\textsuperscript{69} Since a Corcyraean alliance will put Athens on a potential collision course with Corinth and the Peloponnesian League, Corcyra is rhetorically \textit{compelled} to claim that war is coming independent of whether Athens accepts the alliance or not.\textsuperscript{70}

Coreyra is forced to make this argument because the benefits of alliance are decisively magnified if war is coming. According to Coreyra, if any Athenian cannot see the thunderheads of war shrouding the horizon, he errs in his judgment (\textit{γνώμης ἁµαρτάνει}). He fails to grasp that Sparta will go to war because she fears Athens, and that Corinth is hostile to Athens and powerful with Sparta (\textit{τοὺς Λακεδαιµονίους φόβῳ τῷ ὑµετέρῳ πολεµησίοντας, 1.33.3}). As the Corcyraeans frame it, Coreyra and Athens face a common enemy in Corinth. They even go so far as to claim that Corinth is moving against Coreyra as a prelude to attacking Athens. This, they say, is her true motive in trying to forestall an Athenian-Corecyraean alliance: a covert strategy of divide and conquer.

In the face of a coming war, the common threat posed by the Peloponnesians generates the common good of the proposed alliance, which involves the warding off of the common enemy. Rejecting alliance is untenable for the Athenians, because a Corinthian

\textsuperscript{69} Excepting, of course, the prefatory Archaeology.

\textsuperscript{70} This is not decisive proof that the claim is wrong, but only that the reader has some grounds to be suspicious of it.
victory would lead to the capture of the Corcyraean navy, and thus to a significant enhancement of Peloponnesian naval power, which the Athenians simply cannot allow. As the Corcyraean embassy presents it, Athens has two choices. She can gain Corcyra’s navy for herself or lose it to the Peloponnesians. The second is no choice at all. Athens can have more naval power during the coming war or less. Corcyra then does not merely come offering benefit. She comes prophesying that if Athens rejects alliance great harm will befall her. It is in the Athenian interest to maintain the comparative advantages of her fleet, particularly if war is on the horizon (1.35.5). The game is zero sum. Athens can gain ships or she can lose them to her enemies.

Coreya’s ambassadors echo Thucydides’ own statement about the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war, making manifest a motivation Thucydides claimed was least manifest in speech: Spartan fear of Athenian power (1.23.6). Besides Thucydides himself, it is only these Corecyraeans who reference Spartan fear. But what evidence, if any, has the earlier narrative provided about the possibility of a wider war, or even of Spartan apprehension about Athenian power? None whatsoever. We know only that Sparta tried to facilitate Corinthian-Corcyraean diplomacy, which cannot signal Spartan hostility toward Athens, although it need not signal pacific intention (1.28.1). Besides this solitary reference, Sparta has been absent from the manifest quarrels.

Just prior to the debate at Athens, Thucydides wrote that the Corinthians had come to Athens to prevent alliance, which would, by joining the Athenian navy to the Corecyraean one, thwart their prosecution of the war as they pleased (1.31.3). In this sentence at least,
Thucydides presents the Corinthians as squarely focused on punishing Corcyra. There is no hint of any desire to fight against Athens, which would give the apparent lie to Corcyra’s claim that Corinth was moving against Corcyra as a prelude to attacking Athens. Nonetheless, the fact that the embassy makes the claim about the imminence of war suggests its (relative) plausibility, for even rhetorically specious claims must have some basis in reality, no matter how slender. As we will see, the Corinthian speech furnishes additional evidence of a more general suspicion against the Athenians, although the Corinthians will deny that a war is inevitable.

In Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις, however, it wasn’t simply Spartan fear that sparked the Peloponnesian war but Spartan fear of Athenian power. And these Corcyraeans are offering the Athenians an increase in power, while Corcyra’s ambassadors note offhand that Athens honors power over money or gratitude (ἐτιµήσασθε δύναµιν, 1.33.2).71 It is therefore clear to the reader that if Athens accepts the alliance, she makes war more likely, not only because of the fact of the alliance itself but also because Corcyra’s navy increases her power. It is to drive this point home that Thucydides has his Corecyraeans echo his own claim about Spartan fear. This, then, is an example of double communication, where Thucydides offers a signal to his readers through the mouths his characters. But even if there is doubt about the inevitability of war, can Athens risk losing the Corecyraean fleet to the Peloponnesians?

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71 As the speech of the Athenian envoys at Sparta will reveal, there is a characteristically Athenian understanding of the relationship between honor and power. Like the Corecyraeans, the Athenians would seem to suggest that honor should follow power, although they will also claim, perhaps contradictorily, that they deserve honor for their superior justice.
If war is coming independent of any alliance, and if Athens refrains from welcoming Corecyra, she will be comparatively weaker when she can little afford to be. For Athens, the question of war’s inevitability is at the heart of her security dilemma. We will return to these issues in the interpretation of Corinth’s speech, since several Corinthian claims shed greater light on the several issues at play. Overall, however, Corecyra appears to exaggerate the inevitability of a broader war in the necessity of her own need for security. She is desperate and so must make alliance as desirable as she can.

Having emphasized the advantages of alliance, the embassy next turns to the claim that justice or legality might debar it. If the Corinthians claim that it is unjust for Athens to ally with a Corinthian colony, Athens should know that well-treated colonies honor their mother-cities, while those experiencing injustice do otherwise (1.34.1). Colonists, the Corecyraeans say, are intended to be equal to citizens of the mother-city and not their slaves. Here, Corecyra articulates the logic behind her long-standing refusal to offer traditional tokens of colonial respect to Corinth—what Thucydides had earlier revealed to be the source of Corinthian hatred—while at the same time styling Corinth grasping and oppressive.

Again, we return to the differences between Corecyraean and Corinthian world-views. Corecyra demands nothing less than equality. The Corecyraeans claim to be suffering injustice at the hands of the Corinthians, and they emphasize Corinth’s rejection of arbitration: the Corinthians chose to prosecute their charges by war more than by equal
judgment (1.34.2, emphasis added).\textsuperscript{72} Equality surfaces as a constituent of Corcyra’s conception of justice, but Corcyra’s motive for seeking arbitration clearly involved some assessment of power. Although the Corcyraeans disparage the Corinthians for pursuing the issue by force of arms, they are, perhaps unsurprisingly, silent regarding their own questionable actions prior to their offer of arbitration, particularly their besieging of Epidamnus (i.e., their attempt to solve the problem by force).

It was only when Corcyra recognized she would be unable to carry the day that she resorted to arbitration. Corcyra’s use of force in the anticipation of success implicitly justifies Corinth’s rejection of arbitration. To state the apparent Corcyraean view—a “realist” view—those who don’t think they can achieve their objectives by force are forced to negotiate. Having disparaged the Corinthians in this somewhat inconsistent way, the Corcyraeans turn to address the question of the legality of an alliance, given the Thirty Years’ Peace, although they quickly return to the issue of advantage. In order for a Corcyraean alliance not to be a legal \textit{casus belli} against Athens, the Corcyraeans must prove that it will not violate the Treaty between Athens and the Peloponnesians.

Coreyra’s embassy therefore claims that Athens will not transgress the Peace by allying with Corcyra, for the agreement allows neutrals to join either side, and Corcyra is a neutral (1.35.1-2). The Corcyraeans emphasize the gross injustice (\(\omicron\upsilon\ \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\)) of Corinth being allowed to draw support from Hellas, including even Athenian dependencies, while Corcyra is isolated and prevented from appealing to the other Hellenes for help.

\textsuperscript{72} Corcyra’s situation bears some resemblance to that of the Athenians who later offer equal arbitration only to have it ignored.
Overall, however, Corcyra’s argument resolves into the following: it is foolish for Athens to facilitate the strengthening of her enemies and the weakening of her natural friends (1.35.3-4). Throughout the Corcyraean speech, justice is fundamentally colored by advantage. Nonetheless, the embassy argues that the formal peace allows for the alliance, which is no small matter. The Corcyraeans are emphatically not asking Athens to start a war by overtly violating the Treaty. Despite the arguments about justice and legality, the central Corcyraean point, to which the embassy consistently returns, is that Athens will benefit greatly by allying with Corcyra (πολλὰ τὰ ξυμφέροντα, 1.35.5). The greatest surety of the stability of the alliance—the glue of its common good—is the common Corinthian enemy. And war is coming.

Having argued that advantage and justice recommend alliance, the Corcyraeans suggest a tension between the two. More precisely, they allow that some Athenian *might* perceive there to be such a tension—perhaps the reader of the History amidst the Athenian crowd. These lines are echoed in the Corinthian speech, albeit with differing emphasis, suggesting a special importance to the theme. In flagging the lines in this way, Thucydides brings them to his readers’ attention.

In the passage in question, the Corcyraeans suggests the ultimate primacy of considerations of power. According to the embassy, if the things they have said appear advantageous to one of the Athenians (τάδε ξυμφέροντα), but he fears lest the treaty be violated (φοβεῖται), he must realize that the one fearing such a thing (τὸ μὲν δεδιὸς
αὐτοῦ) but holding power (ἰσχύν) will be more fearsome (μᾶλλον φοβήσον) to his enemies than the confidence of the one refusing alliance (τὸ δὲ θαρσοῦν μὴ δεξιαμένου), whose (material) weakness (ἀσθενὲς) will be less fearsome (ἀδεέστερον ἐσόμενον) to strong enemies (ἰσχύοντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, 1.36.1).

It is better to be materially strong and scared, in other words, than materially weak and (ethically) confident. The involved repetition of the words for power (or strength) and fear once again recalls Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war, and, again, this is no accident. Athens will grow more powerful by accepting a Corcyraean alliance. According to Corcyra, she cannot afford to do otherwise. The increase in strength, however, will increase the fears of her enemies, but so much the better if war is coming.

If Sparta fights out of her fear of Athenian power, as the reader knows she will, then the Athenian acceptance of an alliance with Corcyra will bring war closer. Power is clearly beneficial in wartime. But how much increased power is worth how much increased risk of war? This is a central question raised by the Corcyraean speech. But if war is coming regardless of any alliance, then Athens must strengthen herself however she can.

The Corcyraeans conclude by noting that there are three Hellenic navies of note: the Athenian, the Corinthian, and the Corcyraean. Athens will be best served by joining the Corcyraean one to her own. The alternative, abandoning it to the Corinthians, is strategically untenable. The advantages of the proposed alliance make it necessary for
Athens accept it, which is to say security and advantage recommend it. Sounding this key-note of advantage, the Corcyraean ambassadors end their speech. Some concluding remarks are necessary. Above all, the Corcyraeans stress the necessity of Athens gaining the Corcyraean fleet for herself, which is to say, the necessity of pursuing a specific advantage. Importantly, they also suggest that anger is an inappropriate response to the frustration of desire, should they fail to entice the Athenians to rescue them (μη ὑγιζεθαι, 1.32.1). Corcyra knows she must offer Athens sufficient incentive in the coin of advantage. If she can’t, she must accept the result with equanimity. Anger would be irrational. Corinth’s opposing view, as we will soon see, is bound up with an angry conception of justice.

Overall, the Corcyraean embassy implied that all parties seek the advantageous, and so none should be blamed for doing so. It had also claimed Corcyra deserved pardon for her earlier neutrality, since it had resulted from error and not wickedness (ἀμαρτία, 1.32.5). In other words, those who err in the pursuit of their own advantage are worthy of forgiveness. Cities then should not be blamed for pursuing advantage or for failing to achieve it.

Cities can’t help seeking the ends they do, and they attempt to fit their means to their ends. Failure is unintentional and so blameless. The Corinthians, as we will see, articulate an opposing view. Necessity and justice are beginning to emerge more clearly as views. Although later speeches in the History emphasize these themes, scholars have frequently failed to notice that they are present, if somewhat muted, in the debate at Athens.
A final word is necessary about error and blame, since error will play an important role in the interpretation of the Corinthian speech. In regard to their policy of isolation, the Corecyraeans say they were mistaken as to their true advantage, their long-term advantage. Consequently, they are blameless. This is one of only two uses of ἁμαρτία or error (and cognates) in Coreyra’s speech, although, as we will see, the word appears frequently throughout the Corinthian one. It is not insignificant that the Corinthians will only use the term for the advantageous once (τό ξυμφέρον)—the Corecyraean word of choice—and this in conjunction with erring, ἁμαρτάνειν (1.42.2).

Unlike Corecyra’s usage, however, Corinth’s embassy will use ‘erring’ (ἁμαρτάνειν) to mean punishable sin or unjust transgression. The Greek word, ἁμαρτάνειν, straddles these connotations, and Thucydides shifts between the senses: inadvertent and so blameless error or blamable transgression. The difference resides in the scope of freedom the erring party is thought to possess as well as in the type of error. The interpretation of ἁμαρτάνειν, as with several other key terms in the History, particularly fortune (τύχη), depends upon whether one views erring or fortune from the perspective of justice or of necessity.

Above all, the Corecyraeans emphasized necessity and advantage. Advantage, they would seem to suggest, compels all cities—perhaps, however, it is best to say that Thucydides uses their speech to imply this position, just as he will use the Corinthian speech to

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73 The other usage involves the ‘error’ of any Athenian who does not believe war is coming (1.33.3).
suggest an opposing view. In other words, while cities or individuals may misconstrue their interests and others will fail to achieve them, this is always the result of error and not wickedness. Although they begin by stressing justice (δίκαιον), the dominant Corecyraean theme is advantage, specifically the importance of their fleet for the Athenian war effort. In strong contrast, the Corinthians will stress the advantages of just behavior, and they will also claim that injustice cries out for retributive punishment.

As the Corecyraean embassy steps down, the Corinthian one steps forward. Its purpose is negative, to prevent alliance, to refute Corecyra’s claims, and to show why justice and advantage recommend that the Athenians send the Corecyraeans away empty-handed. As with Corecyra’s speech, the following will focus on regime psychology—on justice, advantage, and necessity—but also on the arguments the Corinthians make about the Thirty Years’ Peace and the inevitability of a war against Athens.

**The Corinthians at Athens (1.37-43)**

Instead of justice (δίκαιον), the Corinthian embassy begins with necessity (ἀναγκαῖον), but the overwhelming emphasis of the angry speech is injustice: general Corecyraean malfeasance and the specific injustice of an Athenian-Corecyraean alliance. Despite this reference to necessity, the Corinthians long to punish Corecyra. Just as Corecyra was

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74 Commentators have not found Corinth’s speech compelling. Salmon, to give a representative example, writes, “Corinth was excessively belligerent over Epidamus; her self defense is specious, and consists of little more than repeated assertions that Corecyra should show more respect and let Corinth have her own way. On the more general issues, too, Corecyra has much the better argument.” Salmon, Wealthy Corinth, 285.

75 Justice and injustice (and cognates) appear at extremely high frequency in the Corinthian speech.
moved by necessity and advantage but Thucydides had her refer to the justice of appealing to advantage, the Corinthians begin by emphasizing the necessity of responding to Corcyra’s allegations of their injustice, which was a subordinate theme of the Corcyraean speech. Each embassy, in other words, begins by outlining its rhetorical circumstance. The respective appeals to justice or necessity reflect those rhetorically necessary things (τὰ δὲοντα) the speakers feel compelled to say to achieve their deeper objectives. Although the claims about justice and necessity are partly situational, Thucydides suggests that they are also bound up with the characters of the cities.

It is necessary (ἀναγκαῖον), the Corinthian embassy begins, because Corcyra did not simply request alliance but charged Corinth with injustice (ἀδικοῦµεν) and warring unreasonably (οὐκ εἰκότως πολεµοῦνται), to treat these claims first and then address the remaining issues. These, then, are the rhetorical requirements of the Corinthian speech. Corinth must prove that her war against Corcyra is just and then take up the matter of alliance, the demands of Thirty Years’ Peace, and the specter of a Peloponnesian war. It should be recalled that Corcyra’s motivation in coming to Athens was the desperation of her strategic circumstance. Corinth’s motivation is her desire to have a free hand in punishing Corcyra. Her embassy’s arguments serve this end.

Whereas Corcyra’s rhetorical appeal depended upon the advantages of alliance in the shadow of an impending war, Corinth relies upon justice and the claim that war remains uncertain, but only if Athens rejects the proposed alliance. If she accepts it, the embassy argues, she will unjustly bring about a great war. Corinth offers the Athenians no material
advantages, merely the opportunity to avoid the harm of war. She claims that justice demands the Athenians refrain from the alliance. Justice and advantage, in other words, recommend the Athenians mind their own business. If they don’t, it is Athenian injustice that will make war necessary.

The first half of the Corinthian speech is an exercise in national character assassination. Corinth styles Corcyraean neutrality a strategy of maximum injustice. So far from being actuated by moderation (τὸ σῶφρον), Corcyra’s unaligned status has allowed her to commit injustices without witnesses or shame (ἀδικήµατα, 1.37.2). The autarkic character of her location allows her to act as judges over those she harms instead of settling disputes by agreement. So far from remaining neutral to avoid committing injustices at the behest of others (ξυναδικῶσιν), Corcyra wished to commit injustices alone (κατὰ µόνας ἀδικῶσι).

For its part, the Corcyraean embassy had only referred to Corcyra’s fear of binding herself to other cities such that she would be forced to run risks alongside them (1.32.4). But Corinth claims that the Corcyraeans remained unaligned so that wherever they would conquer, they might use violence; whenever they might escape the notice of others, they could enjoy more than their rightful share; and if ever they should take something, that they might shamelessly enjoy it (1.37.4). By Corinthian lights, Corcyra is violent, insatiate, and shameless. Now, Thucydides’ narrative has revealed Corcyra to be a calculating power—one perhaps indifferent to the fate of her own colonists—but there has been scant evidence of violence, insatiability, or shamelessness, excepting whatever
shamelessness attends the prudential calculation of advantage. Having attacked her opponent in this way, Corinth proceeds to enumerate more specific grievances.

In this part of the speech, the embassy echoes Thucydides’ statements from the earlier narrative. According to Corinth, Corcyra is a colony in full revolt (1.38.1). The Corinthians here refer to the underlying source of Corinthian hatred, and because of the overlap with the narrative, we can infer that these statement accurately reflect Corinth’s view—that they are not simply rhetorical. Corinth says she did not found Corcyra to be treated hubristically, but to rule as hegemon and to receive the customary honors (1.38.2). In anticipating this argument, the Corcyraeans had stated that colonies are not sent out to be slaves but rather equals to the mother-city (1.34.1). What by Corinth’s lights is a rightful hegemony is experienced by Corcyra as a thirst for rule. According to the Corinthian delegation, the Corcyraeans have repeatedly sinned against Corinth out of hubris and financial excess (ἡµαρτήκασι, 1.38.5). Thucydides and the Corinthians, then, agree as to the source of Corcyra’s desire for equality, if not in their characterization of this desire. Whereas Corinth refers to hubris and wealth as the source of Corcyra’s ‘transgressions’, Thucydides simply notes that Corcyra was equal to the wealthiest Hellenes and at times inflated by the power of her fleet (1.25.4). Here, then, is the place to discuss Corinth’s presentation of Corcyraean ‘transgression’, which discloses something of the Corinthian character and the character of her underlying views.

76 See the earlier reference to Corinthian hatred at 1.25.3.
77 Thucydides perhaps provides subtle support for the Corcyraean view by noting that when Corinth announced her colony to Epidamnus she proclaimed in traditional fashion that anyone wishing to go would be legally equal and alike, one amongst another, but also presumably to the citizens of the mother-city as well (καὶ ἀµα ἀποικίαν ἐς τὴν Ἔπιδαµνον ἐκήρυσσον ἐπὶ τῆς ἤη καὶ ὀµοία τῶν βουλόµενον ἰέναι, 1.27.1, emphasis added).
The Corinthian embassy says that if Corinth herself is somehow erring (ἡμαρτάνομεν)—here and only here is ἁμαρτάνειν used in the apparent sense of blameless mistake—it would be noble for Corcyra to yield to her anger (εἴξαι τῇ ἁμετέρᾳ ὀργῇ, 1.38.5). It is not accidental that Corinth uses erring once in the sense of forgivable mistake, only in reference to her own behavior. The same word is always used as blamable error or punishable transgression in reference to Corcyra. This is the hypocrisy of the Corinthians, or perhaps simply the attitude of the just. Because her cause is (ostensibly) just, Corinth is blameless, her errors forgivable. By contrast, the unjust deserve no forgiveness, only chastisement. The embassy asserts that justice demands that unjust Corcyra bow to just Corinth’s wishes. The Corinthians rightfully merit those things they desire, and they desire above all that Corcyra be punished as she so rightfully deserves.

Coreyra’s own ambassadors had used ἁμαρτία (error) in the sense of blameless error in the pursuit of advantage, while also suggesting that anger was the improper response to failing to get one’s way (μὴ ὀργίζεσθαι, 1.32.1). Corinth, by contrast, suggests that the unjust should bow to the anger and advantage of the just. Once again, Corcyraean and Corinthian views are opposed—what I have been calling the characters of the cities. These are not simply irrational dispositions but bound up with λόγοι. Justice, anger, and the desire to punish go together, just as necessity, cool calculation (of advantage), and forgiveness do. These themes resurface in the later Spartan Congress, where the Athenian position mirrors the Corcyraean one, and the Spartan view, particularly that of Sthenelaidas, resembles the Corinthian.
To return to the speech, according to the embassy, they have established that Corinth has fitting charges and that the Corcyraeans are violent and insatiate. Next, they must demonstrate that Athens cannot justly ally with Corecyra (1.40.1). These arguments are the linchpin of the Corinthian speech. In the first half, the embassy tried to prove that it was Corinth who had truly suffered injustice and was consequently warring justly, warring reasonably. Corinth now vigorously disputes Corecyra’s claim that the Thirty Years’ Peace allows for the proposed alliance. Neutrals, they say, may not join one side so as to harm the other. The Treaty allows only truly unaligned cities to join, those whose need of security does not arise from their defection from others, those neutrals who will make war instead of peace (1.40.2). In short, if Athens is not persuaded by Corinth and forms an alliance with Corecyra, she will bring down a great war upon her head (1.40.2).

The Corinthians turn to the question of the inevitability of a broader war, which was central to Corecyra’s appeal. So far from being inevitable, they say, it will be the Athenians who will bear responsibility for it. Corinth here threatens war by appealing to the logic of peace. The purpose of the Thirty Years’ Treaty is peace. Even if a technicality allows Corecyra to join Athens, the action would corrode the very peace that the Treaty was sworn to protect. Corinth is at war with Corecyra. If Athens allies with Corecyra, she will put herself in conflict with Corinth. The Treaty cannot intend this. For the Athenians cannot become auxiliaries of Corecyra without becoming enemies of Corinth (1.40.3).

78 Literally πλεονέκται, i.e., they are pleonectic.
79 Corinth’s qualification, “if that power is of sober mind”, hints that the Treaty may (technically) allow for the alliance. See 1.40.2.
If Athens marches with Corcyra, it will be necessary (ἀνάγκη), the embassy now says, for the Corinthians to defend themselves against Athens as well as Corcyra (1.40.3). This ‘if’ clause is of no small importance. If Athens accepts the alliance, the Corinthians will compelled to fight the Athenians. But what will rob the Corinthians of their power of choice? It is the injustice of the Athenians accepting an alliance with their enemy, Corcyra, which will compel them to fight both cities. We have already discussed the character of Corcyraean necessity, which was tied to fear and benefit, to advantage: to the point of contact between Corcyr’a’s prudential character and her dangerous strategic circumstance. It remains to discuss the character of Corinthian necessity.

Give the thematic importance of necessity in the History—and particularly for understanding Thucydides’ statement about the truest πρόφασις for the War—we must scrutinize Corinth’s claim carefully. If Athens allies with Corcyra, the Corinthians argue, a confrontation between Athens and Corinth becomes necessary. But this is only true if the Corinthians won’t back down. Of course, as the reader anticipates, Corinth will not back down—not after her initial defeat, the capture of her men, and Corcyra’s reprisal raiding—especially with her war preparations on-going. As with the Corcyraeans, the appeal to necessity appears to be made when a city cannot (or will not) entertain another course of action, which is to say the necessity referred to is the necessity of acting within the constraints of a city’s interests as that city understands its interests.
Stated plainly, Coreyræan necessity is different from Corinthian necessity, despite the fact that they are formally the same. They are formally the same because they are compulsions arising from the point of contact between psychology and circumstance. What is different is the psychology and the circumstance. Putting aside the question of which appeal to necessity is truer—i.e., which is more a genuine necessity—each city is unable to countenance another course of action, such that it views one course as necessary. Corcyra, for example, could have bowed to Corinth’s claim over Epidamnus. She could have removed her besieging force unilaterally. Since she refused to do this, she was compelled to seek help from the Athenians. Perhaps after her naval victory, however, she really had no choice. Corinth was manifestly unwilling to let the matter drop.\(^80\)

To refocus slightly, the appeal to necessity in the History cannot refer to efficient causation since other choices are at least nominally open to the actors. Necessity is then something closer to inertia bound up with perception of advantage, with a city’s conception of the advantageous coloring its character. In other words, Corinth is compelled by her anger and sense of justice to prosecute a war of revenge against Corcrya. These inclinations flower from her regime’s character and not simply the facts of the case. On the other hand, Coreyra is no less compelled by her more prudential disposition. Again, character is not unconscious habit but cognitive response, bound up with an underlying view. This is not to deny that the situations of the cities are also different.

\(^{80}\) Although Corcyra did engage in provocative reprisal raiding.
For present purposes, then, we can say the following, Corinthian necessity depends upon the Corinthian character, Corcyraean necessity upon the Corcyraean one. This means that necessity partly depends upon character, or, perhaps more precisely, upon the underlying and antecedent views of the actor in question, be it a city or an individual. The question of whether Corcyraean necessity is objectively truer than Corinthian necessity becomes the question of the relative truth of these underlying views, the question of the relative truth of the attitudes that the cities bring to each and every circumstance. As we will see, regime character is a major theme of the Spartan Congress and indeed of Thucydides’ political philosophy itself, which, it must be recalled, is a political psychology—bound up with how human attitudes and dispositions meet the realm of deeds.

If these arguments about necessity make good sense of the text, then Corinth’s claim can be restated as follows. If Athens allies with Corcyra, then the Corinthians, experiencing yet another (perceived) injustice, will be compelled by this injustice to fight against Athens and Corcyra. And the Corinthians are telling Apollo’s own truth. They won’t back off. They will hold the Athenians responsible. Their faith in the original justice of their involvement in Epidamnus is unshakeable. Every obstacle to punishing Corcyra has only further compounded the original injustice. Corinth’s anger has grown alongside her sense of injury. In allying with Corcyra, the Athenians will become unjust obstacles to the satisfaction of Corinth’s just desire to punish Corcyra. And so Corinth will not back down. Indeed, her righteous anger will soon push her to provoke the Athenians in significant ways.
After this claim about necessity, the Corinthian embassy asserts that Athens owes Corinth gratitude, which is to say present recompense for past benefits. They also argue that Athenians should not establish the precedent that revolting cities are to be received into alliance, a principle which would ultimately harm Athens more than Corinth (1.40.4). This argument revolves around the dubious claim that neutral Corcyra is a wayward Corinthian dependency. In fact, it is not.

Nonetheless, the Corinthians claim they did Athens a service on precisely this score. During the Samian revolt of 440 BC, when the Peloponnesian League was voting to aid Samos, which was at that time revolting from Athens, with the League divided, Corinth did not vote against Athens but instead proclaimed that each power should be given a free-hand to punish its own allies (1.40.5). If by welcoming those doing evil, Athens now aids defectors, the embassy says, her own dependencies will no less attach themselves to the Peloponnesians. She will foolishly establish a law that will press upon her more than others (1.40.6). This Corinthian claim may reflect foreknowledge of Potidaea’s desire to revolt from the Athenian Empire, which constitutes the second of the preliminary quarrels. Corinth may perhaps be making a veiled threat about supporting the revolt of Athenian allies into the future.

The reference to the Samian revolt also confirms something of the Corcyraean—and Thucydidean—claim about Spartan fear of Athenian power, since the revolt occurred in 440 BC, only six years after the swearing of the Peace. If Corinth is telling the truth, then

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81 Corinth’s reference to her vote against Peloponnesian interference during the period of the Thirty Years’ Treaty implies a prior Spartan vote for involvement, potentially in contravention of the Peace. More precisely, if the vote itself were not a violation of the Treaty, the invasion itself surely would have been.
within recent memory Corinth acted as a brake on Spartan aggression against the Athenians. In the current circumstance, however, Corinth suggests that she will act differently. Despite the threat, Corinth ostensibly appeals to the past favors she did Athens, including her support over Samos (1.41.1).

Recognizing that she did not exist in any legal relationship with Athens or have claims of prior gratitude, the Corcyraean embassy was compelled to promise future advantage. Corinth, by contrast, does exist in a legal relationship with Athens and asserts she has claims of prior gratitude. According to the Corinthians, the time has come for Corinth to receive present consideration for past favors. Furthermore, justice is firmly on their side, and it forbids the proposed alliance. Corinth’s war against Corcyra is just, the Corcyraeans are unjust, and it is unjust for Athens to ally with Corcyra, since Corcyra is a colony in full revolt. She must be punished and brought back into line.

As to advantage, that omnipresent Corcyraean theme, the Corinthians raise the specter of future harm. Again, Athens will bring about war if she foolishly welcomes Corcyra. As the speech winds down, like the Corcyraean speech before it, the speakers suggest a tension between justice and advantage. Like the Corcyraeans, they do not admit an actual tension between the two. But if any among the listeners should foolishly believe there to be one—again, perhaps the History’s readers amidst the Athenian throng—the Corinthians address the matter squarely. And here, as in the Corcyraean speech, Thucydides engages in a double communication. On the one hand, he is recreating
Corcyraean and Corinthian arguments, if sharpening them. On the other, he is flagging thematic issues through the use of parallel passages.

According to the Corinthians, no Athenian must consider the things the Corinthians have said to be just (μὴ νομίσῃ δίκαια), but that it will nevertheless be advantageous to war (Ξύμφορα, 1.42.1). For advantage (τὸ ξυμφέρον) especially attends the one transgressing the least (ἀμαρτάνῃ, 1.42.2). Although apparent advantage may tempt Athens to act unjustly, hewing closely to the truly just—i.e., not transgressing—secures that which is truly advantageous. These are the only uses of the word for advantage in the Corinthian speech, just as the word for erring (or transgression) appeared only twice in the Corelyraean one. If one reads ἁμαρτάνειν in this passage as blameless error, against the grain of the Corinthian intention but consistent with earlier usages, the claim becomes a counsel of prudence: the one erring the least especially (or mostly) comes out ahead.

But on either interpretation of ἁμαρτάνειν, the key question is the character of the truly advantageous.

The question of the character of the advantageous is the deepest theme of the two speeches taken together, a question which is only posed but not answered. On either interpretation of ἁμαρτάνειν, Athens should avoid erring. Of course, what constitutes erring is the question. While the Corinthians claim it would be a punishable transgression to begin an avoidable war, the Corelyraeans argue that it would be sheer folly to allow

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82 The full line is: “τὸ τε γὰρ ξυμφέρον ἐν ὧν τὶς ἐλάχιστα ἁμαρτάνῃ μᾶλιστα ἔπεται …” (1.42.2). Morrison notes in reference to this line that “Corinth’s best response concerning Athenian self interest appears to be a redefinition of advantage that recommends caution …” “Preface to Thucydides,” 114.

83 Presumably an assertion that the Corelyraeans could also agree with.
Corinth to acquire their navy, given war’s inevitability and that any Athenian who fails to grasp this errs in his judgment (γνώμης ἀμαρτάνει, 1.33.3). The question of war’s inevitability is bound up with the question of the truly advantageous for the Athenians.

According to Corinth, war, by which Corcyra frightens Athens and bids her commit injustice (ἀδικεῖν), lies in the unknown future. The prospect of war, however, will recede if Athens rejects the alliance. Rather than gaining the enmity of Corinth, Athens should instead remove the suspicion surrounding her actions toward Megara (1.42.2). This is the first reference to Athenian behavior towards Megara and the second mention of a more general suspicion of Athens. Like the earlier reference to the Samian revolt, it corroborates, at least to some extent, the claims of the Corcyraean ambassadors about Peloponnesian hostility. It gives the reader the sense that, even if exaggerated, Corcyra’s claims about a coming war are not entirely outlandish.

According to Corinth, Athens should not be swayed by the prospect of a great naval alliance with Corcyra. For not committing injustice to equals is a more secure power (ἐχυρωτέρα) than being inflated by immediate advantage (1.42.4). Moreover, Athens should not chance danger in order to take more than her rightful share (τὸ πλέον ἔχειν, 1.42.4). Now, Corinth’s statement may be broadly true, but it is inapplicable to the present circumstance. Her pretensions notwithstanding, Corinth is no equal of Athens. Thucydides’ explicit statements in the Archaeology about the relative power and

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84 This likely refers to the so-called Megarian decree/s. For the most exhaustive historical discussion on this contentious subject, see de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 225–289.
85 See the later line of the Athenian envoys at Sparta at 1.76.2, which would appear to respond directly to this Corinthian assertion.
preeminence of Athens and Sparta make this clear (1.18.2). Perhaps, however, the ‘justice’ of their cause encourages the Corinthians to believe in a false equality of power.

The Corinthian principle of not sacrificing long-term benefit at the altar of short-term gain is also assuredly sound. But again, the Corinthian fit to case is questionable. What is the short-term Athenian gain, what the long-term benefit? And what risk does the former pose the latter? All of these questions depend upon an accurate forecast of opportunity and threat, or upon some assessment of how events will unfold. Corinth, for her part, appears to have an overly optimistic sense of her own power, fueled by the righteousness of her cause. It is this anger that blinds her to the actual disparities in power—or, perhaps, alternatively, she simply expects the Spartans to save her if she gets into trouble with Athens.

Whereas the Corcyraeans had emphasized the carrot of future advantage in the context of an inevitable war, the Corinthians appeal to past benefit while brandishing the stick of war. The Corcyraeans promise gain, the Corinthians threaten harm. Both maintain that justice and advantage recommend their respective proposals, and that no daylight exists between the demands of justice and those of advantage. But if there is an apparent tension, the Corcyraeans encourage the Athenians to choose concrete advantage, while the Corinthians exhort them to avoid injustice to equals. Strictly speaking, Athens takes the advice of both. She chooses concrete advantage, and she refrains from offending

86 On this Corinthian argument, Stahl writes, “The only ‘advantage’ to which [the Corinthians] can allude is the possibility that, in the event of a pro-Corinthian decision, the current tension between the cities [Corinth and Athens] might give way to a ‘friendly’ relationship (41.3; 42.2-3; 43.2). The argument based on τὸ δίκαιον is itself then used entirely in the service of advantage: Corinth wants a free hand in dealing with Corcyra.” Stahl, Thucydides, 39.
another great power. Despite her pretensions, Corinth is no great power. And as we will see, Athens does consistently offer Sparta arbitration, which, as we will see, by light of her own views about honor and justice, betrays Athenian respect for Spartan power.

The Athenian Decision (1.44)

Following the debate, Thucydides summarizes the decision of the Athenian assembly. There were two assemblies. In the first, the Athenians were inclined no less to the arguments of the Corinthians, which suggests initial receptivity to claims of justice and gratitude. In the second, they welcome a defensive alliance with Corcyra, which suggests they are decided by considerations of advantage. Nonetheless, the Athenians do not accept a full alliance so as not to violate the Peace by being compelled to sail against Corinth at Corcyra’s behest (1.44.1). Through this half measure, the Athenians take pains to stay within the letter of the Treaty. Thucydides’ explanation of this Athenian expedient makes clear that a confrontation between Athens and Corinth risks violating the Peace. In the Athenian view, a qualified alliance might perhaps deter Corinth, while at the same time enhancing the relative power of the Athenian navy by denying Corcyra’s fleet to the Peloponnesians. The Athenians, Thucydides writes, believed a war with the Peloponnesians was coming, and, as a result, they wished to deny Corinth the Corcyraean fleet. They hoped the navies would weaken themselves against one another, making it easier for Athens to move against Corinth and others by sea, should the need arise (1.44.2).

87 It may also suggest that some in Athens were afraid of the possibility of a Peloponnesian war.
With the establishment of a defensive alliance and the accession of Corcyra’s powerful fleet, the broader systemic balance of power has tilted in the direction of Athens. Athens is also now on a collision course with Corinth. While alliance may be provocative to the Corinthians, however, it can hardly be styled outright aggression against Sparta or the other Peloponnesians. Nonetheless, the attentive reader of the *History* cannot but be aware that Athenian power has just increased, and with it doubtless Spartan fear, despite Sparta’s conspicuous absence from Thucydides’ narrative.

In sending a small, ten-ship contingent in support of the Corcyraeans, the Athenians appoint Lakedaimonios, son of Kimon, to be one of the commanders. Kimon, of course, was the great Philo-Spartan among the Athenians. His son’s name communicates as much. This expedient suggests that the Athenians were concerned to tone down the appearance of provocation and to reassure the Spartans of their intention to maintain the formal status quo.

**The Battle of Sybota**

In spite of this Athenian effort to deter Corinth, Corinth sails against Corecyra, and the defensive alliance leads to a naval clash between Athens and Corinth (1.48-49). With Corecyraean ships hard pressed, the ten Athenian ships enter the fray to help the embattled Corecyraean vessels. Thucydides says that at this point necessity (ἀνάγκη) compelled the Corinthians and Athenians to lay hands upon one another (1.49). Yet even these ten ships—more a symbolic deterrent than a true contingent—would not have been enough to
save Corcyra, had it not been for twenty additional Athenian ships that suddenly appeared on the horizon in the aftermath of the initial clash. The events confirm that Corcyra would not have survived without Athenian help. By remaining neutral, Athens would have lost the Corcyraean navy to the Peloponnesians. The Corinthians have also kept their promise, after a fashion. They refused to back off, compelled by their unquenchable anger.

Let us untangle the *necessity* of this Athenian-Corinthian naval clash, itself the product of three distinct necessities. First, the Corcyraeans had claimed necessity (ἀνάγκη)—i.e., fear and benefit—pushed them into the Athenian orbit (1.32.5). Second, the Corinthians had asserted that if Athens established a Corcyraean alliance, it would be necessary (ἀνάγκη) for them to defend themselves against Athens as well as Corcyra (1.40.3). Third and finally, the Athenians became convinced of the imperative of allying with Corcyra. Fear compelled the Corcyraeans; honor and justice compelled the Corinthians; and benefit compelled the Athenians. As already mentioned above, Corcyraean and Corinthian necessity are different. The Athenian necessity is different still from these, but is itself dependent upon the Athenian character and the Athenian circumstance. In what precise sense then are Athens and Corcyra compelled to fight against Corinth (ἀνάγκη, 1.49)?

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88 τιµῆ and cognates—there are many—straddle the senses of honor and justice. The words are bound up with what a party is owed—what it deserves—be it punishment or acclaim. The interpretation offered here agrees with Ostwald about the character of necessity: “If we can isolate any factors in which ἀνάγκαι are anchored, we would have to identify them as fear, prestige, and self-interest with which the Athenians explain the genesis of their empire and which they generalize into a universal principles. (1.75-6).” Ostwald, *Ananke in Thucydides*, 33.
The parties are compelled to fight because three necessities, three driving motivations, have brought them into conflict. The battle itself is not strictly necessary, of course—events could have turned out otherwise—but each city had a pressing motivation for acting as it did, and these together made a confrontation almost inevitable. Through the narrative and the speeches, Thucydides has revealed the motivation of each city.\(^8^9\) Corinth’s prosecution of her ‘just war’ is in conflict with Corcyraean security and now the Athenian advantage as well. But Corinth cannot back down. And so the game is zero-sum. Rival necessities—rival motivations—have brought Corcyra and Corinth into a war, while a third imperative has brought Athens into the fray. As we will soon see, a fourth imperative will draw Sparta and her allies into the game. Powerful inertias are combining to render the Hellenic status quo precarious.\(^9^0\)

After the battle, the damaged Corinthian force is unsure how to return home in the face of the combined Athenian and Corcyraean navies. There follows a short exchange between the Corinthians and Athenians, where the Corinthians accuse the Athenians of having committed injustice, violated the Treaty, and begun a war. The Athenians deny they have done so, emphasize the strictly defensive character of their alliance, and allow the Corinthians to depart. The manner of Corinth’s departure implies tacit acceptance of the Athenian claim about the continued integrity of the Treaty (1.53). Once again, in this

\(^8^9\) Morrison writes, “Thucydides employs multiple perspectives in both speech and narrative. In the Corcyraean conflict, both Corcyra and Corinth present arguments; as the internal audience, the Athenians offer a third perspective. The reader is implicitly asked to view that conflict from these three points of view … “Preface to Thucydides,” 100. And, I would add, to grasp why each city felt itself compelled to act as it did. In this context, Morrison’s discussion of focalization is especially helpful.

\(^9^0\) As Ostwald notes in regard to the Corinthian-Corcyraean conflict, “In short, although in each case, the necessity to act in a certain way is inevitable only for the party involved, the fact that both of the opposing parties feel pressure to act as they propose excludes all alternative courses of action, and makes the resulting clash assume an aura of objective inescapability.” Ostwald, \textit{Ananke in Thucydides}, 27, emphasis added.
exchange, the Athenians make clear in speech and deed their desire to stay within the letter of the Treaty. The balance of power is nevertheless progressively slipping out from under the formal Peace.

Although the Treaty remains in force, the Hellenic status quo is clearly unstable. According to Thucydides, it was in this way that Corcyra survived her war with Corinth (σοῦτω περιγίγνεται τῷ πολέμῳ, 1.55.2). Her survival depended upon the Athenian alliance. Thucydides next relays that this constituted the first ground for war (αἰτία) that Corinth had against Athens: that being in Treaty with Corinth, Athens fought a naval battle with Corcyra against Corinth (1.55.2).\(^{91}\) It is unclear whether Thucydides is summarizing the Corinthian grievance or sanctioning it as a legitimate ground of complaint. In support of the latter, Thucydides had earlier relayed that the Athenians accepted the defensive alliance, so as not to be forced to sail against Corinth at Corecyra’s behest and thereby violate the Treaty (1.45.3). Whether Athens was defending Corcyra or not, she did fight against Corinth, with whom she was legally at peace, which is legally problematic.

Thucydides’ statement about αἰτία at 1.55 confirms that these events between Corcyra, Corinth, and Athens constitute what we have been calling the manifest quarrels. The naval clash between Athens and Corinth soon leads to another ground for war between Athens and the Peloponnesians (διάφορα ἐς τὸ πολέμεῖν, 1.56.1). This second dispute also involves Corinth, who, now bent upon vengeance against Athens, materially

\(^{91}\) The full lines are as follows: αἰτία δὲ αὕτη πρώτη ἐγένετο τοῦ πολέμου τοῖς Κορινθίοις ἐς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, ὃτι αφίσαν ἐν σπουδαῖς μετὰ Κερκυραίων ἐναυμάχουν (1.55.2).
supports the revolt of a true Athenian dependency, Potidaea. In styling the Athenian acceptance of alliance with Corcyra as establishing a precedent that would harm Athens more than Corinth, Corinth may have been alluding to Potidaea. The Athenians, for their part, cannot tolerate the revolt. The conflict between Athens and Corinth is escalating. Just as Corcyra felt compelled to balance Corinthian might with Athenian power, the Corinthians will soon feel compelled to counterbalance Athenian power with Spartan might.

The Second Quarrel—Corinth, Potidaea, Athens

The second quarrel is less important as regards the psychology of the participants and more important as disclosing the strategic situation before the Spartan Congress of 432 BC. Corinthian rage is the great constant running through these early events. It is not nearly as impressive or as interesting as that of Achilles, but perhaps this is Thucydides’ point. The angriest characters and cities in the History are invariably presented in unflattering light. Enraged by Athenian interference over Corcyra—the well-springs of Corinthian hatred run deep—Corinth thirsts for vengeance against Athens. She takes it upon herself to foment the revolt of Potidaea, a Corinthian colony but tribute-paying ally of Athens, which had been meditating revolt for some time.

At Athens, Corinth had speciously styled Corcyra a wayward colony. By her own lights, then, she engages in tit for tat by furnishing material support to an Athenian ally. But whereas Corcyra was in a fact a neutral power, Potidaea is not. Corinth’s interference is
not a reprisal but a provocation. The Athenians anticipate the move, however, and therefore take active precautions against it. They fear a domino effect among their allies in the region (1.56.2). Moreover, the regional power, Macedonia, led by Perdiccas, had turned against Athens and was trying to foment a Peloponnesian war for its own purposes. The Athenians quickly move to forestall Macedonian and Corinthian collusion, particularly as regards Potidaea and its neighbors.

Ambassadors from Potidaea travel to Sparta along with a Corinthian embassy and obtain from the authorities there a promise to invade Attica if Athens moves against Potidaea. Emboldened, the Potidaeans revolt (1.58.1). It is important to note that Sparta’s promise is made independent of any Athenian violation of the Peace, which implies that the invasion itself would constitute a violation of the Treaty. Whereas the Treaty does allow neutral Corcyra to join the Athenians, it cannot allow Sparta to aid a rebelling subject of the Athenian Empire. As we will see, during the discussion of the Pentecontaetia below, the Spartans demonstrate a similar disregard for legality during the Samian revolt of 440 BC. Strategically, the Athenians cannot allow their subjects to revolt. The necessity of defending their empire is an even more pressing imperative than the advantages of naval alliance with Corcyra.

An Athenian force arrives to discover the Thraceward region in revolt, Potidaea chief among them. Unable to move against Macedonia and Potidaea simultaneously, the Athenian force first turns toward Perdiccas and Macedonia. Fearing for Potidaea, Corinth dispatches Corinthian volunteers and Peloponnesian irregulars to defend the city (1.60.1).
The Athenians catch wind of the expedition and so deploy a larger contingent. Athens and Corinth meet a second time in battle, this time by land, and, again, the Peloponnesians are routed (1.62-63). The second quarrel ends with Corinthian and Peloponnesian irregulars trapped inside Potidaea, besieged by land and sea by the Athenian force.\(^92\)

In summarizing the thinking of the Corinthian commander Aristeus, Thucydides makes it clear that there is no hope of salvation for Potidaea without Peloponnesian support (1.65.1). The situation of Potidaea resembles the earlier siege of Epidamnus. Corinthian forces are again trapped, and, again, Corinth is furious but also fearful for her men. She has now been frustrated by Athens on two fronts, and she is powerless to save Potidaea without Spartan assistance. She must therefore counter-balance Athenian power with Spartan power, just as the Corcyraeans felt compelled to counter-balance Corinthian power with Athenian might. This, then, is the driving motivation, the pressing necessity, that informs Corinthian rhetoric at the congress at Sparta.

As he did with the first quarrel, Thucydides concludes the second by relaying the grounds for war on each side (αἰτίαι). For the Corinthians against the Athenians, that their colony along with their men were besieged. This is clearly a specious charge, given Corinth’s use of private volunteers as well as her material support for the revolt of an Athenian ally. For the Athenians against the Peloponnesians, Thucydides continues, that the Peloponnesians had caused the revolt of an Athenian tribute-paying ally and had openly fought on the side of Potidaea. In his summary of the first quarrel, it was only Corinth

\(^{92}\) Corinth sends volunteers to avoid an overt breach of the Treaty.
who had a grievance: that Athens fought a naval battle against her while in treaty. In the second, both sides have grounds of complaint. The fact that Corinth’s involves the besieging of her colony suggests that the αἰτίαι do not fully harmonize with legality. In other words, the αἰτίαι are somehow broader than the requirements of the Peace. Athens is assuredly allowed to besiege her recalcitrant ally, whether a Corinthian colony or no, but one element of Corinth’s complaint is clearly the fact that it is her colony that is besieged. Nonetheless, her men are besieged as well. And, once again, Athens has again fought against Corinthian forces, which is more legally problematic than the siege of Potidaea itself.

The Athenian grievance, by contrast, clearly accords with the demands of the Treaty. The Corinthians fomented the revolt of an Athenian ally and fought openly on its side. According to Thucydides, war had not yet broken out at this point. The treaty was still in effect because the Corinthian force was technically comprised of private men (1.66).93 The serious legal issue here involves military conflict between two signatories of the Treaty. But after the first naval battle, Corinth had tacitly accepted that the Treaty remained in effect, while the use of private men to defend Potidaea suggests that the legal line had yet to be crossed. It also weakens Corinth’s assertion that her citizens were attacked unjustly—for if they are volunteers, what is the juridical ground of her complaint against the Athenians?

93 The full text of Thucydides’ distillation of the second quarrel is as follows: τοῖς δ’ Ἀθηναίοις καὶ Πελοποννησίοις αἰτίαι μὲν αὐτὶ προσγεγένητο ἐς ἀλλήλους, τοῖς μὲν Κορινθίοις ὅτι τὴν Ποτιδαίαν ἔστεν ὡσών ἄποικαν καὶ ἄνδρας Κορινθίων τε καὶ Πελοποννησίων ἐν αὐτῇ ὑπάρχουσας ἐπολιόρκουν, τοῖς δὲ Αθηναίοις ἐς τοὺς Πελοποννησίους ὅτι ἔστεν τοὺς τοῦ Ποτιδαίαν ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαναχθέντα καὶ φόρου ὑποτελὴ ἀπεστήσαν, καὶ ἔλθο

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In response to the desperate situation of Potidaea, Corinth summons the other allies to Sparta and loudly accuses Athens of having violated the Treaty and committed signal injustice against the Peloponnesians (1.67.1). Her only chance to save Potidaea is to bring about a war between Athens and the Peloponnesian League. Thucydides recreates four speeches from this congress, which concludes with a Spartan vote for war. Before turning to an interpretation of these important and complicated speeches, which, this study will maintain, revolve around the quieter but truer πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war, a concluding word is necessary about the manifest quarrels.

Following the debate between the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians at Athens, Thucydides had implied that considerations of advantage decided the Athenians. As we will see, in the parallel context in Sparta, in a gathering devoted to airing accusations of Athenian injustice, considerations of justice apparently decide the Peloponnesians (1.67.3 and 1.79.2 with 1.87.3). Advantage throughout Thucydides’ pages consorts more openly with necessity than with more decorously garbed justice, although, as we will see, naked advantage may perhaps lie beneath the robes of Sparta’s preoccupation with justice.

In the lengthy interpretation of the Spartan Congress that follows, we will be especially attentive to the manner in which the speakers at Sparta develop and expand upon the themes introduced in the manifest quarrels. Again, we will have opportunity to focus on the point of contact between regime character, which includes conceptions of the advantageous, and strategic circumstance. Having now explored the manifest quarrels at
length, we turn to an interpretation of the Spartan Congress as beginning a Thucydidean examination of the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war. Again, our guiding interpretative thread will be the character of Thucydidean necessity, which, as we will see, points us to the characters of Athens and Sparta, the two great Hellenic contestants.
Congress at Sparta as Truest πρόφασις for War

The next three sections, which together comprise the longest part of this study, attempt to establish that the four speeches at Sparta (1) in conjunction with the later Pentecontaetia (2) and the earlier Archaeology (3) constitute a comprehensive expansion on the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war originally articulated at 1.23.6. Thucydides’ statement about Athenian power, Spartan fear, and necessity or compulsion is a guiding thread that allows the reader to identify the human causes of war through the origins of the Peloponnesian war.

The manifest quarrels culminate in four speeches delivered at a gathering at Sparta in 432 BC, which itself culminates in a Spartan vote for war. Corinth delivers the first speech, agitating for war by alleging that Athens has violated the Treaty. An Athenian embassy delivers the second speech and attempts to deter Sparta by communicating Athenian power, while strongly denying that their city has in fact broken the Peace (1.72.1). The Spartans next separate to deliberate alone, and Thucydides recreates two Spartan speeches. The first, by King Archidamus, recommends delay, while the second, by the Ephor Sthenelaidas, advocates war. The Congress ends with the Spartiates voting that Athens has committed injustice and violated the Peace and that therefore Sparta must fight. The following will maintain that the speeches, taken together, disclose a Thucydidean preoccupation with nature and convention as these inform the characters of Athens and Sparta.
The following relies on the notion of double voice outlined in the introduction and the manifest quarrels chapter. At 1.22.1, Thucydides says that he hews as closely as possible to the ξύµπασα γνώµη of every speech as it was actually delivered. The recreated speeches are therefore occasional and serve their speaker’s purposes. The question is whether this exhausts their thematic significance in the History. With regard to the Spartan Congress, I will argue that it does not. Thucydides communicates to his readers through the mouths of his speakers—through the succession of themes—in ways beyond what his speakers intend to impart to their audiences.

There are two claims here. First, that the succession of speeches discloses something of political-philosophic importance, and second, that the speeches contribute to this thematic progression in ways at times distinct from the purposes of their speakers. Neither should be construed as suggesting that the reader of the History is not to interpret the rhetorical purposes of speeches. It is simply to add another layer to the Thucydidean intention and another place to look for that intention. In the following, every attempt will be made to distinguish how the speeches at Sparta serve their specific, rhetorical purposes from the manner in which they unfold a running argument about the truest πρόφασις for the War. In fact, this distinction itself corresponds to the one between the immediate events triggering the Peloponnesian war and its more general, human causes.

94 To recount the instances of double communication from the last chapter, the use of “justice” and “necessity” to open the speeches at Athens represented a signal to reader, as did the parallel passages in the Corcyraean and Corinthian speeches about an (apparent) tension between justice and advantage. Finally, the echoes of the truest πρόφασις in the Corcyraean speech were intended to draw the reader’s attention to the Athenian security dilemma posed by the Corcyraean offer of alliance. In none of these cases did this second layer of meaning compromise Corcyraean or Corinthian rhetorical purposes.
It is fitting that the Congress at Sparta stands as a bridge between the manifest quarrels, which constitute something like triggering events for the War, and Thucydides’ exploration of its truest reason or cause. The Congress reveals not only the characters of Athens and Sparta but also each city’s view of its strategic and legal circumstance in 432 BC, the moment the status quo of 446 BC falters. As discussed in the manifest quarrels chapter, claims about necessity involve the contact between a regime’s psychology and its strategic circumstance. When a city—or a critical majority within it—believes that it cannot countenance another course of action, the action in question appears necessary. The discussion of the Congress that follows will untangle the elements of the distinctive necessities weighing upon Athens and Sparta.

In the first book, the Athens-Sparta theme is preeminently important because Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις involves the growth of Athenian power and the fear that this power inspires in Sparta, which compels war (ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεµεῖν, 1.23.6). The Athenian propensity to expand and the Spartan propensity to fear are therefore the two sides of the single coin of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις, along with the character of Thucydidean necessity, which binds obverse and reverse together. If human nature lies beneath the differences between Athens and Sparta, as indeed it must, if what is unique about each city arises from its education or ways, then Spartan fear and Athenian growth emanate from some disparate education and arrangement of the human—from the differing characters and structures of the two cities. As we will see, Thucydides makes

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95 If the purpose of the History is to reveal human nature through the presentation of political psychology amidst the pressures of war, then the Athens-Sparta comparison is assuredly a window into this inquiry.
clear that the necessities of the cities are not wholly circumstantial, not merely the product of their different strategic positions. Character matters.

Before turning to the Congress, it will be useful to outline briefly the interpretative claims about its purpose. They are as follows. The Corinthian speech is an introduction to Athens and Sparta, to the opposing psychologies of the two principal combatants. The Athenian speech introduces claims about power, necessity, and human nature that recur throughout the History. The Athenians advance a “way of human beings”, which is more fundamental than the ways of either Athenians or Spartans (1.76.2). The two Spartan speeches reveal the Spartan character as well as the character of Sparta’s fear of Athenian power. Like the Athenian speech but unlike the Corinthian one, the Spartan King Archidamus emphasizes the similarity of human beings. Rather than stressing natural distinctions, however, he focuses on conventional ones, specifically the rigorous Spartan education. Education then is the manner by which the ways of Athens and Sparta outlined by the Corinthians can be reconciled with the more fundamental way of human beings introduced by the Athenians.

The explicit theme of the Spartan Congress is Athenian injustice. Athenian injustice is why the cities have gathered at Sparta (1.67.3). As we will see, however, Athenian power is closely bound up with Athenian injustice. When Athens infringes upon the interests of the Peloponnesian League, League cities cry foul. At Sparta, Athens is roundly condemned by the assembled representatives, not simply for Potidaea—for besieging a

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Corinthian colony with Corinthian and Peloponnesian irregulars inside—but also for denying Aegina autonomy and for refusing Megara access to the markets of Athens and the Empire (1.66, 1.67.2, 1.67.4). The Corinthians, whose prerogatives are most seriously endangered, lead the public charge, while also covertly agitating for war. They arrange to speak last among the allies, allowing the others to stir the Spartans up first (1.67.4). Of the Peloponnesians, Thucydides reproduces only this Corinthian speech, suggesting that it stands as a representative brief of Peloponnesian grievance. We now turn to the speech itself.

Character and Advantage—The Corinthians at Sparta (1.68-1.71)

The Corinthian embassy treats a central theme of the entire History: the running comparison between Athens and Sparta. Thucydides has kept the cities mostly in shadow during his account of the manifest quarrels. Indeed, it is only after the Corinthian speech that he first allows his readers to hear Athenian and Spartan voices. The speech therefore represents a vivid introduction to the characters of Athens and Sparta. In the prefatory Archaeology, Thucydides had examined their differing kinds of power—sea

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97 “The address of the Corinthian delegation is fresh and surprising in its strategy and introduces a theme of recurring importance in the Histories, the contrast between Athenian and Spartan character.” Connor, Thucydides, 39. Important for our purposes, the comparison is also a crucial element of the structure of the first book, as the final lines of the Themistocles-Pausanias episode corroborate (1.138.6). Also see fn 12 above.

98 As Edmunds notes, “… Thucydides has various means of elaborating the [Athens-Sparta] comparison. There are the parallel lives of Pausanias and Themistocles (1.128-138). Certain details seems to make tacit comparisons … But the speeches, above all, are Thucydides’ way of comparing the rival cities.” Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides, 89.

99 As to the purpose of the Congress, Pouncey succinctly states, “It is important to realize what Thucydides is doing in this debate. Having established the principle that he will follow the collective movements of the two sides, and individual actions only insofar as they affect the movements of the whole, he now sets out to provide a study of national character-types, so the reader can see the kind of temperament and climate of opinion from which subsequent actions and decisions will proceed.” Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 58.
and land power, respectively—as well as their distinctive modes of controlling their allies, but he had only hinted at their characters.

On the first page of his work, Thucydides terms the Peloponnesian war the greatest motion (κίνησις). Throughout the History, motion (κίνησις) is opposed to rest (ἡσυχία), just as war (πόλεμος) is opposed to peace (also ἡσυχία). The terms are clearly programmatic and significant, and they appear throughout the narrative as well as in many of the speeches, including, importantly, in the second Corinthian one. The Corinthians tie motion (κίνησις) and rest (ἡσυχία) to Athens (motion) and Sparta (rest). Throughout their speech, political motion and rest appear indistinguishable from regime psychology. While Corinth’s comparison is exaggerated in the service of Corinthian rhetorical ends—Corinth praises Athens and disparages Sparta, and all so as to bring Sparta into war—Thucydides nevertheless reveals something of the true characters of the cities through the speech.

100 κίνησις γὰρ αὐτῇ μεγίστῃ (1.2).
101 Thucydides even uses them to suggest a kinship between the political and the divine or natural. Throughout the History, the sea (and sea power) appears to correspond to motion, land (and land power) to rest. Again, war is motion, and civil war is also motion—human motion—while earthquakes, it would seem, are non-human motion (cf. 3.82.1 and 2.8.3). Moreover, motion appears to dissolve rest. The terrible motion of war causes cities to dissolve into islands of faction, into domestic commotion. At one point, Thucydides describes land being swallowed up by the sea (3.89.2). Motion, however, can also coalesce into rest. At still another point, Thucydides narrates a story about a river silting up the channels between islands, joining them to the land: sea becoming land (2.102.3). In the prefatory Archaeology, where Thucydides outlines the growth of Hellas, long rest is necessary for the growth that makes possible the unprecedented motion of Peloponnesian war.
102 In book eight, Thucydides explicitly affirms something of Corinth’s presentation—many sections do so implicitly—corroborating the importance of these earlier and more expansive passages:

“And not just in this moment alone but in many others the Lacedaimonians were the most advantageous (ξυμφορωτατοι) of all peoples for the Athenians to fight. For there being a great difference in their manner (διάφοροι γὰρ πλείστον ὄντες τὸν τρόπον), the one quick (οἱ μὲν ὄξεις), the other slow (οἱ δὲ βραδεῖς), the one enterprising (οἱ μὲν ἐπιχειρηταί) the other unadventurous (οἱ δὲ ἄτολοι), this especially proved of the greatest benefit to a naval empire like Athens. The Syracusans showed this, for being especially alike the Athenians in manner (ἔμοιότροποι), they fought them the best (8.96.5).”
Corinth depicts Athens and Sparta as the poles of a psychological continuum, which together define dispositions toward the uncertain future. Athens is hopeful of future gain, and so daring. Sparta is apprehensive of present loss, and thus cautious. The character of each regime is tied to its view of the responsiveness of events to human action, be it the sufficiency of human judgment, power, virtue, or skill, on the one hand, or the effect of just or pious behavior, on the other. As we will see, Corinth also presents both cities as erring but in opposing ways. This Corinthian presentation of error—a theme also of the manifest quarrels—will imply that political success is best achieved by aligning power and judgment: the mean between the characteristic erring of Athens and Sparta. In other words, long-term success is achieved by some mixing of political motion and rest—a blending of the dispositions of Athens and Sparta. In line with these themes, the sections that follow scrutinize Corinth’s presentation of Athens and Sparta with an eye to psychology.

The reason for Athenian success against Sparta is treated in fn 121 below. On the theme of a correspondence between Thucydides’ view and that of the Corinthians, see Finley, who writes, “But the great Corinthian speech contrasting Athens to Sparta is of a piece with his [Thucydides’] whole judgment of the adversaries …” John H. Finley, *Three Essays on Thucydides* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), xiii.

103 The Corinthians assert that the Spartans ἐς τύχας πρὸς πολλῷ δυνατωτέρους ἀγωνιζόμενοι καταστῆαι, which is to say they cede more power to chance than necessary (1.69.5). According to Edmunds, the Spartans “grant tyche a wider scope than does Pericles, and they mean by gnome a tenacious adherence to their traditional ways.” Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*, 91.

104 The treatment of error will go (somewhat) against the grain of Corinthian rhetoric but will nevertheless be shown to be consistent with a demonstrable logic.
According to the Corinthian embassy, it is Sparta’s trust (τὸ πιστὸν) in her constitution and way of life (πολιτείας καὶ ὁµιλίας) that causes her to mistrust all others, even her allies, when they step forward to speak. For a long time, the Corinthians have plainly announced they were about to be harmed by the Athenians but the Spartans refused to heed their lesson (1.68.2). From this trust amongst Spartans and corresponding distrust of outsiders, the Corinthians says that Sparta is moderate (σωφροσύνην) but also ignorant of the outside world. Her foreign policy is, in a word, naive. She is overly suspicious of her allies, and therefore too inclined to view their sufferings as merely private quarrels. Of course, the earlier narrative has revealed Corinth’s quarrel to be essentially a private one.

Corinth, for her part, is naturally concerned to dispel this impression. She must therefore convince Sparta that the danger posed by Athens is common. So far from being actuated by private disputes, she says, the Peloponnesians are doubly wronged, treated wantonly (ὑβριζόµενοι) by Athens and neglected by Sparta. The Athenians are to be blamed for their hubris, the Spartans for failing to defend their beleaguered allies. The assembly at Sparta has come together too late and for less than clear purposes (1.69.2). Sparta must move against Athens, and quickly.
Hellenic Enslavement (1.68.3-1.69.6)

The Corinthians assert that the Athenians are enslaving the Hellenes in broad daylight, committing injustice against Hellas (ἠδίκουν τὴν Ἑλλάδα, 1.68.3). Some states have already been brought under the yoke, while Athens now plots against even Sparta’s allies (1.68.3). The Corinthians go so far as to claim that Sparta is responsible for this sorry state of affairs. After the Persian wars, it was she who allowed Athens to build the walls that made possible the growth of her power. It is Sparta who is to blame for the enslavement of Hellas, for it is not the enslaving power, the Corinthians say, but rather the one able to stop it who fails to do so that truly enslaves, especially if that power bears the reputation of liberator of Hellas (1.69.1). As the Corinthians present it, it would be uniquely shameful for the Spartans, those purported defenders of Hellenic freedom, to fail to stop the Athenian advance.

Sparta, according to Corinth, has erred in failing to stop Athens, which is to say that she has missed the mark of the Spartan and Peloponnesian advantage. Implicitly, Corinth denies the sufficiency of Athenian power. Although Athens is dangerous and increasingly so, she remains a manageable threat if only barely. Stated sharply, Athenian power is

105 The Corinthians agree with Thucydides in the Archaeology and Pentecontaetia that Athenian walls are a cornerstone of Athenian power.

106 De Romilly nicely captures the rhetorical tactic: “The Corinthians, in the assembly at Sparta in Book I, denounce the very existence of Athenian imperialism, which, they say, has enslaved some and threatens all others, which leaves no one at rest and which, with infallible logic, develops its principle of annexation.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 242. See also Raaffaub on Corinth’s rhetorical circumstance: “The only way to legitimize intervention on behalf of the allies’ autonomy—and later their complete freedom—was to invoke the higher norms of Hellenic nomoi and to hark back to Sparta’s traditional prostasia.” Kurt Raaffaub, The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 196.

107 See 7.28.3.
insufficient to run the table without the acquiescence implied by Spartan quiescence. Contrary to what the Athenians will argue, the Athenian Empire is proof neither of Athenian power nor virtue. It is proof instead of Spartan diffidence. Thus does Corinth walk a fine rhetorical line, flattering Sparta, while trying to shame her into war.

Corinth knows all too well how Athens advances against her neighbors (1.69.3). Although she condemns the caginess of Athenian plotting, Corinth’s picture also aptly fits the more organic growth of power, which is to say that a city’s control expands as its power naturally increases. Up until the present, the embassy says, Athens has quietly expanded so as to avoid alerting Sparta to her designs. The Athenians will only become emboldened if they know Sparta is aware of their advance but unwilling to stop it (1.69.3). In framing the matter thus, Corinth raises the stakes by making Sparta publicly aware of Athenian plotting, styling further delay cowardice. She points to the recent alliance with Corcyra and to the besieging of Potidæa (1.68.4). Only Sparta of all of the Hellenes remains stubbornly at rest (ἡσυχάζει), believing she can defend herself and others by appearing to be on the verge of acting instead of through any use of her actual power (1.69.4).

In Corinth’s presentation, Sparta has stupidly allowed Athens to double her strength instead of crushing that strength in its infancy (1.69.4). Provocatively, the embassy even suggests that Sparta’s reputation itself is not based on any solid achievement (1.69.5). So far from bold Spartan action liberating Hellas in the fight against the Mede in the previous generation, the barbarian had the grace to shipwreck himself (1.69.5). Those
placing their hopes in Sparta do the same.\textsuperscript{108} The Corinthians assert that Sparta’s allies have survived more by virtue of Athenian error than Spartan assistance (τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασιν αὐτῶν, 1.69.5). Through her indifference to Athenian growth, Sparta has made the coming contest, the inevitable war, a greater affair of chances than necessary (καὶ ἐς τύχας πρὸς πολλῷ δυνατωτέρους ἀγωνιζόμενοι καταστῆναι 1.69.5).\textsuperscript{109}

The issue of erring was prominent at the earlier debate at Athens. There, the Corcyraeans used ἁμαρτάνειν in the sense of inadvertent mistake in the pursuit of advantage, while Corinth consistently used it as blamable transgression.\textsuperscript{110} Error, in whatever sense, was bound up with the (truly) advantageous. It is noteworthy that Corinth’s second speech also emphasizes erring or missing the mark (ἁμαρτάνειν). In fact, it deepens several of the issues raised by the earlier debate at Athens. Corinth presents Persia, Athens, and Sparta as all erring. Nonetheless, Corinth stresses Spartan mistakes above all; at 1.69.6, Sparta is explicitly said to err (φίλων ἀνδρῶν ἐστὶν ἁμαρτανόντων). Importantly, this error is bound up with the character of the Spartan regime.

According to Corinth, Sparta errs in neglecting Athens, more so than when she failed to challenge Persia until the Mede arrived on her very doorstep. Persia herself erred in her failed attempt to enslave Hellas, ruining her armada. The Corinthians even claim that Persian errors were more responsible for Hellenic victory than any Hellenic action,

\textsuperscript{108} The theme of the danger of relying upon Sparta recurs in the History. See especially the Athenian chastisement of the Melians for hoping Sparta will rescue them (5.105.3–4).
\textsuperscript{109} As we will see, all of the speeches at Sparta emphasize fortune or chance, but all differ as to the weight they assign it.
\textsuperscript{110} See Orwin’s important discussion of transgression (or erring) from the perspectives of piety and wisdom, to which this study is indebted. Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 202–203. The theme of error (or transgression) is present in the History from the first book to the last.
Athenian or Spartan—a claim the Athenian embassy will vigorously contest. Lastly, the Peloponnesians, the Corinthians says, have survived by virtue of Athenian error (1.69.5).

As will soon become clear, when we combine this emphasis on error with Corinth’s formal regime comparison, we will be left with the implication that intelligent action—hitting the mark of the advantageous instead of missing it—is a mean between the dispositions of Athens and Sparta. Political virtue, which obviously plays a critical role in political success, is bound up with the ability to do whatever a circumstance calls for. Error is what results when a characteristic disposition shipwrecks itself against a circumstance demanding an opposite response. A daring power, for example, risks tripping up when its circumstances demand caution, while a cautious power may stumble when success requires decisive action.

When Corinth roundly blames Sparta for erring, she implies that Sparta had the freedom to act other than she did. A blamable error follows a poor choice, while choice itself presumes the freedom to choose. Sparta could have prevented Athenian growth, but she failed to do so. Thus does she bear responsibility for Hellenic slavery, or, what is the same, for the Athenian Empire. In the Corinthian view, then, Sparta has not acted advantageously for herself or her allies. If Sparta is indeed blameworthy for allowing Athens to grow powerful, then she could have acted other than she did. Praising and blaming imply freedom. Chance may be ineradicable—the best-laid plans can go awry—
but there are nonetheless better and worse laid plans. Consequently, cities can be held accountable for their actions.\textsuperscript{111}

Cities and individuals act wisely or foolishly, and more often than not they reap the consequences of their wisdom or foolishness. According to Corinth, Sparta’s fundamental ‘error’ was and remains her sluggishness in defending the peace (or rest) that she so craves. Sparta’s habitual character then is her problem, because it is the source of her characteristic erring. But can Corinth blame Sparta for her character? Only, it would seem, if Sparta freely chose her character. If she did not, then she cannot be blamed for being what she has always been. These issues implicitly raise still others about freedom and fortune.

Fortune and freedom may co-exist or be opposed. Fortune can crowd out freedom or freedom fortune. If fortune rules, human beings are either the playthings of the divine—and subject to its fickle intentionalities—or bound up in the whirl of impersonal necessities.\textsuperscript{112} The Corinthians come close to suggesting the latter when they assert that Athens appears incapable of taking any rest (ἡσυχίαν) herself or allowing it to others (1.70.9). They thereby imply that character can be fatal and so characteristic error inescapable, i.e., beyond a regime’s control. If this is true, then errors of character are inadvertent and thus not freely chosen. If character is given and characteristic error inadvertent, then characteristic actions are neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. If Spartan sluggishness is as fatal, as determinative of Spartan “choices” as Athenian

\textsuperscript{111} See, for example, 8.24.5, on the reasonableness of the (failed) Chian revolt.

\textsuperscript{112} Thucydides’ use of τύχη throughout the History (intentionally) straddles the connotations of divine intentionality and impersonal chance.
restlessness, then Corinth cannot blame her for erring. Sparta is what she is, and so she acts as she acts. Perhaps Sparta can be educated. The first part of the Corinthian speech, which is so full of the language of error, is also full of the language of education. And indeed it is ironic that the bumbling Corinthians style themselves the educators of the naïve Spartans. Archidamus will soon defend Sparta’s ways, which flower from the Spartan education, against this Corinthian attack.

To return to freedom and fortune, we move to the other horn of the dilemma. Allowing freedom to eclipse chance, we are left with the position that the entirely free are entirely praiseworthy or blameworthy. Might or virtue or skill, including intelligence, can conquer chance. Human beings can grow large. Success proves virtue, just as power patent not latent testifies to it. Virtue manifests itself as worldly strength and success. Its absence manifests itself as worldly weakness and failure. As we will see, this position strikingly mirrors the one advanced by the Athenian envoys at Sparta, who speak after the Corinthians, and who appear to deny a role to chance. For now, however, we turn to the formal Athens-Sparta comparison of the second Corinthian speech.

**Athens and Sparta (1.70.1-9)**

After blaming Sparta for sanctioning Athenian injustice by remaining, characteristically, at rest, the Corinthians vividly compare the cities through a series of sharp antitheses. The

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113 In line with this, Debnar notes that “… this address to the Spartan assembly masterfully represents the Corinthians in their role of “instructors” (διδάσκαλοι), which might be translated “instigators” or more loosely, “stage managers” of the war.” Paula Debnar, *Speaking the Same Language: Speech and Audience in Thucydides’ Spartan Debates* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 46.
comparison is rhetorically necessary because Sparta appears unaware of the adversary that she will contest against, how Athens differs from her in every respect (1.70.1). And it is here that the notion of the war as a great contest first appears. According to Corinth, the contest is a mismatch: Athens is geared for success, Sparta for failure. The logic of her claims, however, will suggest a more balanced picture.

The Corinthians present the cities as opposites. The Athenians are innovators, revolutionaries (νεωτεροποιοί), quick to conceive of enterprises (ἐπινοῆσαι ὀξεῖς) and equally quick in deed (ἐργώ) to effect their resolutions (ἐπιτελέσαι αὕτην γνωσιν 1.70.2). Instantly formulating plans, they unhesitatingly execute them. Sparta, by contrast, is quick only to secure what she already has (τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σῴζειν). She is slow to judge anything (ἐπιγνῶναι μηδέν), and in deed (ἐργώ) she fails to accomplish even the necessary things (οὐδὲ τάναγκα ἐξικέσθαι, 1.70.2).

The Corinthians emphasize the manner in which each city’s judgment (γνώμη) relates to deeds or actions (ἐργα)—a relationship that appears to be a species of the λόγος-ἐργον (speech-deed) contrast that so dominates the History’s early books. The Athenians evince a faith in their judgment, grounded in a confidence in their capacity, that the

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114 Debnar makes the apt point that “According to the Corinthians there is a direct connection between differences in the sense of “quarrels,” and differences in the characters and ways of life of Athenians and Spartans: the greater the difference in mores, the more intense and difficult the conflict.” Ibid., 44.
115 The Athenian envoys pick up this same theme at 1.73.3.
116 On the apparent praise of Athens, Hornblower notes, “What follows is, in its way, as glowing a tribute as anything which Th. puts into the mouth of an Athenian speaker and is more effective coming from an enemy.” Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume I, 114.
117 For the most substantive treatment of γνώμη in the History, particularly as regards τύχη and τέχνη, see Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides. On the relationship between λόγος and ἐργον (speech and deed), see fn 11 above.
Spartans lack. They trust in their γνώμη, and, what is more, they lead headfirst with it. Spartan hesitation, by contrast, is the result of Sparta’s repression of individual judgment in deference to law. Athenian daring results from the liberation of private judgment, and perhaps a corresponding derogation of the authority of law.

According to Corinth, in her next antithesis, the Athenians dare beyond their power (δύναμιν), run risks beyond their judgment (γνώμη), and in danger are full of good hope (ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες, 1.70.3). The Athenians, it would seem, dare more than any sober assessment of their power would recommend, and hope more than any sober assessment of their circumstances should warrant. Sparta is her opposite. She forever does less than her power (τῆς τε δυνάμεως ἐνδεᾶ πρᾶξαι), failing to accomplish even those things judgment sanctions (ἐνδεᾶ πρᾶξαι τῆς τε γνώμης). Sparta mistrusts sure things (μὴ δὲ τοῖς βεβαίοις πιστεύσαι), in contrast to the apparent Athenian faith in insecure ones. When in danger, unlike the hopeful Athenians, the Spartans believe there is no escape (1.70.3). Sparta dares less than her capacity, failing to run acceptable risks, to say nothing of unacceptable ones.

While the first antithesis emphasized the relationship between γνώμη-ἔργον—Athenian swiftness in the execution of plans as compared to Spartan slowness—the second stresses how the cities differently fail to align power (δύναμις) with judgment (γνώμη). The

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118 As will be discussed in the treatment of Pericles’ first speech, the word γνώμη attends Pericles with surprising frequency.
119 In reading Thucydides’ History, it must be grasped that the Greek word for “power”, δύναμις, straddles general capacity and capacity for doing something in particular, i.e., being able to do X, Y, or Z. We lose something of the Greek when we fail to grasp the latency in δύναμις but also the fact that it can refer to the latent ability to do something quite particular.
stress on *misalignment* makes clear the yardstick by which error is identifiable: a proper fit between judgment and power. This is the standard for hitting the mark instead of missing it. Without denying a role to chance, this fit between capacity and intention would seem to represent a formal framework for success.\(^{120}\) Despite presenting Athens as forever achieving the necessary things (τὰ δὲοντα)—with Sparta always failing to do so—a more literal reading of the Corinthian speech suggests that both cities err in pursuing the necessary things.

Early in the speech, as has already been mentioned, the Corinthians state almost offhand that Athens too errs: that the Peloponnesians have survived more by virtue of Athenian error than Spartan assistance (1.69.5). Joining this line with the second antithesis, the source of Athenian error becomes apparent. It arises from a typically Athenian misalignment of power and judgment. The Athenians, in other words, risk overconfidence in their power, virtue, and capacity. They are prone to running foolish risks. They lean forward into the future, emboldened by immanifdest hopes, whereas Sparta shrinks back from the present, enervated by immanifdest fears.

On this interpretation, both cities sometimes miss the mark but in opposing ways.\(^{121}\) Where Athens may err high, Sparta can err low. Just as confidence can distort Athenian

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\(^{120}\) The framework is abstract, but it nonetheless allows the reader to grasp how substantive success is (generally) achieved.

\(^{121}\) As Thucydides writes in book eight (see fn 102 above), Athenian boldness is uniquely effective against the cautious Spartans. Despite the dangers that attend daring, zeal matters. When men collide in battle, a driving confidence can break the will of more fearful opponents, producing a rout. Always stealing marches, hope and speed combine to supercharge Athenian δύναμις. Daring, in other words, can shoot the gap between disparities in material power, just as superior skill can. Athenian boldness, then, often renders Athenian capacity commensurate with that of stronger but more diffident adversaries. The extent her enemies shrink back is the extent she gains an advantage over them. Daring works well against cautious
judgment (γνώµη), apprehension may distort Sparta’s. Again, attention to the logic of Corinth’s claims furnishes a more balanced assessment of Athens and Sparta than the impression left by Corinthian rhetoric, which is that Athens is always successful, while Sparta forever stumbles.

On this more literal reading, doing τὰ δέοντα, the necessary things, would seem to require a mean between Athens and Sparta, one achieved by harmonizing judgment (γνώµη) with capacity (δύναµις). All of this would lead to the running of reasonable risks, where the reasonableness of a risk is guaranteed by the accurate assessment of power: a proper marriage between means and ends. This notion of an alignment of γνώµη with δύναµις recurs throughout the History.\textsuperscript{122}

In the final antithesis, the Corinthians emphasize that Athens and Sparta are preoccupied with profit or benefit, but, as we might expect, in differing ways. The Athenians hope to acquire new things by leaving home, while the Spartans, by going forth, fear that they will endanger what they already have (1.70.4). Athens is forever in motion because of her thirst for profit, while Sparta is always at rest because of her fear of loss. Sparta

powers but less so against equally daring ones. This is why the Syracusans fought the Athenians best, because their ways were so similar (8.96.5). The two motion powers, the two democracies, leaned forward into one another, denying the Athenians the comparative advantages of their daring, which was met by the equal boldness on the part of the Syracusans.\textsuperscript{123} Indeed, Pericles emphasizes precisely such an alignment, although one wonders if he fully appreciates the immaterial components of Athenian power, which is to say the power of the Athenian character. He certainly grasps the material ones as well as the dangers of that selfsame character. In his verdict on Pericles in the second book (2.65), Thucydides reiterates the elements of Periclean strategy outlined in Pericles’ first speech (1.144.1). Pericles exhorts the Athenians to stay at rest (ἡ συχάζοντας), to not acquire or add to their empire during the war, and to avoid running gratuitous risks (2.65.7). As any attentive reader of Corinth’s second speech will surmise, the Athenians prove incapable of this. They cannot remain at rest or stop acquiring, both of which conspire to encourage the running of unreasonable risks. In ways identified by the Corinthians in their second speech, the Athenians err (2.65.11-12). The connection between 2.65 and the second speech of the Corinthians is insufficiently recognized by scholars.
maintains, safeguarding those things upon which her way of life depends, while Athens acquires, spurred onward by the confidence of obtaining new things. Each regime is motivated by profit or benefit: future benefit for Athens, present advantage for Sparta. Whereas the Athenian pursuit is informed by confidence, Sparta’s maintenance is colored with apprehension.

In this context, it will be recalled that one theme of the earlier debate at Athens was the character of the advantageous. Here, the Corinthian discussion turns to those distinctive ways that Athens and Sparta cherish the advantageous. The differences appear to arise from some rival nurture of a natural desire for gain. Athens is compelled by her character and circumstances—by the necessities of the Athenian advantage—to grow powerful after the Persian wars, while Sparta is compelled by the necessities of the Spartan advantage to allow her to do so until Athenian power manifestly threatens Sparta’s ability to maintain those things that she already possesses. It is at this moment, when the two contestants’ modes of cherishing the advantageous come into increasingly sharp conflict, that war becomes necessary in the minds of critical majorities within the two cities. War becomes inevitable not objectively but subjectively—given the interplay between character and circumstance—and Thucydides will show clearly how the necessities of the major parties align to produce a great war.

Following these lines about Athenian acquiring and Spartan maintaining, the Corinthians begin to speak only of Athens. Corinth claims that when successful the Athenians advance the farthest, and when defeated fall back the least (1.70.5). Again, hope is the
culprit. In success and failure alike, confidence drives the Athenians onward. Corinth next proceeds to outline the characteristically Athenian relationship between body, mind, and civic virtue (cf. 2.41.1). The embassy says, quite beautifully, that an Athenian uses his own body on behalf of Athens as if it were another’s, while dedicating his most private judgment to acting on her behalf (τῇ δὲ γνώµῃ οἰκειοτάτῃ, 1.70.6). The Athenian then is characterized by a rare full-throated dedication to his city. He is unsparing of his body and selfless with his mind.

But perhaps he is unsparing of his body because of his confidence in success, and perhaps he is selfless with his intelligence because he fully associates his own good with that of his city. The Athenians collectively believe in themselves—they honor themselves greatly—and they long for profit. Consequently, each privately serves the common good, which he understands to be the same as his private one. By light of the Corinthian presentation, the Athenian common good orbits the twin stars of honor and profit. The earlier portions of the Corinthian speech suggest that the Spartan common good orbits the stars of fear and profit. As we will soon see, fear, honor, and profit—honor understood as reflecting an assessment of power or capacity and not moral virtue—will all play a role in the great speech of the Athenians at Sparta, which follows this Corinthian one.

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124 Palmer notes, “The key element of Athenian confidence is a kind of hopefulness, which is explicitly discussed by the Corinthians (1.70.3 and 1.70.7).” Michael Palmer, Love of Glory and the Common Good (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), 47. The relation between honoring oneself, confidence, and an assessment of power will be discussed during the interpretation of the Athenian speech below.
125 The Funeral Oration offers a window into public-spirited Athenian courage though the Periclean effort to achieve a uniquely Athenian harmony of public and private goods.
The Corinthians consistently present the Athenians as wedded to the future. If they fail to achieve something that they have resolved upon, they feel themselves deprived. Moreover, whatever they do acquire they consider of little worth compared to what they will soon obtain (1.70.7). To an Athenian, the glittering future forever beckons. If the Athenians trip up—again the Corinthians stress that they are not infallible—the lack is quickly filled by fresh hopes. For it is only the Athenians, they say, who have and hope alike because of the speed with which they attempt those things that they have resolved upon (1.70.7).

The Corinthians conclude this part of their speech by stating that the Athenians toil away at all of these things with troubles and dangers throughout the whole of their lives. They least enjoy the things they have, because they are forever acquiring; and they believe in no other relaxation (or festival, ἑορτήν) than doing the necessary things (τὰ δέοντα), considering rest no less a misfortune than labor without rest (1.70.8). If someone, the embassy says, were to sum up the Athenians by asserting that by nature (πεφυκέναι) they take no rest (ἡσυχίαν) themselves and give none to others, he would speak correctly (1.70.9).

Here, the Corinthians would seem to naturalize a conventional distinction. They suggest that one might say of the Athenians that they naturally take no rest themselves—the programmatic term ἡσυχία is used—and thus allow none to others. Earlier in the speech, Corinth had presented Sparta as alone at rest among the Hellenes (1.69.4). Political motion and rest appear wholly bound up with political psychology. The Athenians are
future oriented and so court present danger for future gain. The Spartans only court present danger to safeguard what they already have, or when inaction risks it. It is this last motivation, as we will see, that will cause Sparta to begin the Peloponnesian war out of her fear of Athenian power.

The Spartan Manner (1.71.1-7)

Sounding this note of almost wonder at the Athenian character—shocking Athenian restlessness—the Corinthians first outline and then attack those beliefs grounding Spartan slowness. It is necessary to quote the embassy at some length:

This, however, being the sort of the city arrayed against you, Spartans, you delay, failing to realize that peace (ἡσυχίαν) is most lasting for those among human beings, who, on the one hand, in regard to their preparation, behave justly (δίκαια πράσσωσι), but in regard to their resolution (τῇ δὲ γνώµῃ), if ever they are done injustice (ἢν ἀδικῶνται), make it manifestly clear that they will not yield (δῆλοι ὦσι ἐπιτρέψοντες); instead, you, in order not to harm others and to protect yourself from being harmed, engage in fair dealings (τὸ ἴσον νέμετε), believing you will gain peace this way (1.71.1).126

Above all, Sparta longs for peace and rest (ἡσυχίαν). But, according to Corinth, peace is best maintained by those who stalwartly refuse to submit to injustice. Sparta foolishly believes that by acting justly she wards off future harm and injustice. Corinth claims that such a policy will never bring her the peace (ἡσυχίαν) that she desires. It would barely work against a neighbor of the same mentality; it will assuredly fail against the Athenians (1.71.2). Sparta’s ways are ancient compared to those of Athens (ἀρχαιότροπα, 1.71.2),

126 The translation of this passage is especially difficult. The Greek is as follows: 'ταύτης μὲν τοιαύτης ἀντικαθηστήκεις πόλεως, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιοι, διαμέλλετε καὶ οἴεσθε τὴν ἡσυχίαν οὗ τούτοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀρκεῖν οἱ ἂν τῇ μὲν παρασκευῆ δίκαια πράσσωσι, τῇ δὲ γνώµῃ, ἢγαν ἀδικῶνται, δῆλοι ὦσι μὴ ἐπιτρέψοντες, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ λυπεῖν τὲ τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀμωμόμενοι μὴ βλάπτεσθαι τὸ ἴσον νέμετε.
which was earlier styled a relentlessly innovative power (νεωτεροποιοὶ, 1.70.2). The Athenians embrace the cloudless future, while Sparta dangerously clings to her ancestral ways.

The Corinthians say that it is by a necessity (ἀνάγκη) that new things conquer the old (αἱ ἄνεφα ἐπιγιγνόμενα κρατεῖν, 1.71.3). This necessity, it must immediately be noted, is not psychological—as so many of the others have been—but instead an assertion about the fabric of things: the new inevitably triumphs over the old. For a city at peace (ἡσυχαζούσῃ), the Corinthians allow, unmoved laws would be best (τὰ ἄκιννητα νόμιμα ἀριστα). But for those cities pressed by many necessities (ἀναγκαζομένοις), various contrivances are necessary. Again, a necessity cognate is used, and again the pressures are described as objective. Sparta must adapt in the face of Athenian aggressiveness and innovation—she must change her ways—or she will be swept away by the Athenian tide.

Sparta, according to Corinth, can only achieve rest by means other than her traditional ones, only by embracing motion. The deep source of Spartan rest appears to be her unmoved laws (τὰ ἄκιννητα νόμιμα). Corinth is, in essence, exhorting Sparta to change the character of her regime. The Athenians have advanced down the road of innovation because of the range of their experience (1.71.3). In addition to their daring and redoubtable character, they have acquired skill and experience through innovation,

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127 This line is perhaps how Thucydides might be understood to respond to the Socratics regarding the question of the possibility of the best regime: foreign policy pressures will forever affect the internal arrangement of regimes. On this theme, see Strauss, *The City and Man*, 238–240.

128 In the Archaeology, Thucydides relays that the Spartans have used the same constitution for four hundred years, dated to the end of the war (1.18.1). In other words, Sparta did not need to change her constitution to win the war.
through their faith in their γνώψις, which has nourished their τέχνη. Corinth is referring to Athenian nautical skill, which flourished magnificently after the Persian wars.\(^{129}\)

Having diagnosed the sources of Spartan erring—those beliefs grounding Sparta’s character—the Corinthians conclude with a final exhortation to fight, but also with a threat to defect from the Spartan alliance if Sparta refuses to act.

**Exhortation to Fight (1.71.4-7)**

The delegation begs Sparta to end her unconscionable delay, while threatening to abandon the confederacy if she refuses to do so. Sparta must aid Potidaea by invading Attica as she initially promised (1.71.4).\(^{130}\) Only this will forestall the piecemeal handing over of her allies to the Athenians as well as Corinthian defection. In abandoning the League, the Corinthians say, they would do nothing unjust, neither in the eyes of the gods who witness oaths nor in those of the men who observed them. Those violating treaties are not those who approach others when abandoned, they claim, but instead those who fail to aid the allies that they have sworn to defend (1.71.5).\(^{131}\)

According to Corinth, the purpose of an alliance is mutual advantage, in this case, protection from the common enemy. If members demonstrate an unwillingness to protect, or if the advantages of defection outweigh the benefits of membership, defection is justified. Corinth wishes to remain with Sparta, but only if Sparta will fight (1.71.6). The

\(^{129}\) Pericles will also emphasize the unrivaled τέχνη and experience of the Athenian navy (1.142.9).

\(^{130}\) The authorities in Sparta had promised to invade Attica if Athens moved against Potidæa (1.58.1).

\(^{131}\) The Corinthians echo something of their earlier claim that those who truly enslave are those who are able to stop tyranny but fail to do so.
Corinthian speech ends with a plea for the Spartans to lead the Peloponnese no less well than their fathers, who handed the hegemony down to present generation (1.71.7). It ends, appropriately enough, with an appeal to the ancestors—a last attempt at shaming the Spartans with the glory of their fathers.

In response to the Corinthian speech—and also to the general Peloponnesian outcry against their city—an Athenian embassy comes forward to address the assembled cities. In trying to slow the Peloponnesian drive to war, these unnamed Athenians introduce a series of claims about power, necessity, and human nature. They assert fear, honor, and profit compel the behavior of all cities—not justice, which is the appeal of the weak—and, moreover, that all cities naturally seek the advantageous. The interpretation that follows will harmonize the Corinthian portrait of differences between Athens and Sparta with the universal motivations advanced by the Athenian delegation.
Necessity as Advantage—The Athenians at Sparta (1.72-78)\textsuperscript{132}

The denial of chance—No victor believes in chance.\textsuperscript{133}

—Nietzsche

The overall theme of the Spartan Congress is Athenian power. The Corinthian embassy had emphasized Athenian injustice, which appeared indistinguishable from Athenian motion. Overhearing the Peloponnesian accusations, an Athenian embassy in Sparta on other business steps forward to speak. The theme of its speech, the first Athenian one of the work, is Athenian power, which, according to the Athenians, is the product of necessity, but also virtue.\textsuperscript{134} At Sparta, there are then two primary accounts of Athenian power, the first bound up with justice, or rather injustice (the speech of the Corinthians), and the second with necessity and virtue (the Athenian speech). Most important for our purposes, the Athenian speech deepens the reader’s understanding of the thematic issues

\textsuperscript{132} “The most thorough exploration in Book One of the tension between necessity and justice is the speech of the Athenians at Sparta (1.72-78).” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 44. See also de Romilly. In the Athenian speech, “realism becomes a moral attitude, and, as the facts stand out in their eternal essence, we begin to see, beyond the individuals whose acts are described, the naked principles of justice and force, of might and right.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 272. Kagan adopts an opposite view. “Thus, the account the Athenians have given of their acquisition of empire and the nature of their rule is not a general discussion of imperialism thrust into the debate by Thucydides, nor is it an attempt to defend or palliate Athenian actions. It is instead part of a very intelligent and practical argument, the point of which is to make Sparta think twice before plunging into a war that will not only be dangerous but will be likely to bring results very different from what the Spartans anticipate.” Kagan, The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, 298. The interpretation offered here is closer to that of Orwin and de Romilly—that the speech explores issues of thematic importance to Thucydides—without denying Kagan’s point that the speech has a practical purpose: to deter Sparta. Nonetheless, as we will see, the most rhetorically effective parts of the speech are the appeal to the incalculable and the offer of arbitration, not the conveyance of Athenian power.


\textsuperscript{134} Except for the short exchange that Thucydides relays between the Corinthians and the Athenians after the battle of Sybota. There, the Athenians speak briefly and deny that the Thirty Years’ Peace has been broken.
raised by the Corinthian speech, while further developing the logic of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις.

At Sparta, the Athenians advance the original articulation of what some have called “the Athenian thesis”, a series of arguments about human nature and necessity that recur in the mouths of Athenian spokesmen throughout the History. Although every speech is occasional, universal claims rise above every circumstance to encompass all circumstances, past, present, and future. Given Thucydides’ avowed interest in human nature and necessity, there are good reasons for exploring similarities and differences between the “Athenian” view and the Thucydidean one.

In their attempt to communicate Athenian power, the envoys advance a doctrine of necessity. Fear, honor, and profit, they claim, compel the behavior of all cities. We would appear to be in the midst of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις, which involves Athenian power, Spartan fear, and necessity or compulsion. Power, fear, and necessity all make important appearances in the Athenian speech.

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135 The term is first used by Leo Strauss in The City and Man and thereafter adopted by those influenced by him, notably Clifford Orwin. See Strauss, The City and Man, 183. And Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 64. Of the Athenian speech, Gomme aptly remarks, “The first frank expression of selfish imperialism, the natural right of the stronger to act as he would, in the History; though here spoken in self-defence. There are many others, culminating in the Melian dialogue.” Gomme, An Historical Commentary on Thucydidess Volume I, 236.

136 According to de Romilly, “There is a lack of relationship between the debate as a whole and the Athenians’ reply, for this rises above the immediate subject matter and stands out from it, precisely because it treats the problem of imperialism in the abstract; it takes account neither of the speakers who have criticized Athens nor of the aim of which Athenians speakers in such an assembly might be expected to pursue; it neglects the politicians present in Sparta in order to speak directly to the future reader of Thucydides’ History.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 243. I agree with de Romilly that the Athenian speech speaks to Thucydides’ readers—deepening the reader’s understanding of the truest πρόφασις—but disagree that it fails to respond to the exigencies of the Athenian rhetorical circumstance, or that every aspect of the envoys’ position can be so readily identified with Thucydides’ own. See fn 132 above.
Because the Athenian speech follows the Corinthian one—and the Corinthians so vividly depict the Athenian character—the reader is encouraged to compare the speeches, to read the Athenian one in light of the Corinthian presentation. The fact that the envoys are unnamed also perhaps suggests that their speech is somehow quintessentially Athenian: a window into the Athenian self-conception of their empire. In their very decision to speak, the embassy corroborates Corinth’s portrait in at least one respect. These Athenians spontaneously place their private intelligence in the service of their city’s advantage (1.70.6).

The Athenian speech is prefaced by a Thucydidean summary of the speakers’ intention, one of the rare speeches in the History so prefaced (1.72.1). Curiously, the summary varies slightly from what the envoys actually say, hinting at a thematic import to the discrepancy. According to Thucydides’ summary, the envoys do not intend a defense (πέρι μηδὲν ἀπολογησόμενος), but instead, concerning the entire matter, to demonstrate that the Spartans should not resolve the matter quickly but instead examine it more slowly. At the same time, they wish to make a display of their city’s power (καὶ ἅμα τὴν σφετέραν πόλιν ἐβούλοντο σημηναί ὡς εἴη δύναμιν), to remind the older among their audience of things they once knew and to acquaint the younger with matters

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137 Perhaps the most revealing portrait of the Athenian domestic self-conception is found in the Funeral Oration of Pericles as well as in his Final Speech (2.35-46 and 2.60-64). By keeping the Athenians anonymous, “Thucydides is showing that what he intends to express is the very logos of the city. We are not hearing the views of this or that Athenian: it is the voice of Athens herself which is speaking. And this fact immediately gives the debate a much wider significance.” Ibid., 242.

138 Palmer makes the same point. Palmer, Love of Glory and the Common Good, 49.
of which they are inexperienced. By this, they hope to incline the Spartans more toward peace (i.e., rest) than war (πρὸ τὸ ἡσυχάζειν τραπέζθαι ἢ πρὸ τὸ πολεμεῖν, 1.72.1).

The envoys hope to deter Sparta, to slow Sparta, to encourage what Corinth had presented as her fundamental disposition. According to Thucydides, their means is a conveyance of power. But the means do not conduce to the end. This is corroborated by Thucydides’ summary of the Spartan mood after the Athenian speech and confirmed by the war vote that concludes the Congress (1.79.2 and 1.87.3). Following that vote, Thucydides takes pains to reiterate that the Spartans voted for war precisely because they feared the growth of Athenian power (cf. 1.88 with 1.23.6).

The speech of the Athenian envoys then fails, and what is more, the discerning reader knows beforehand that it will. At the end of the Archaeology, Thucydides writes that Athenian power, literally, the Athenians becoming great (τοὺς Ἀθηναίους μεγάλους γιγνομένους 1.23.6), inspired Spartan fear and so compelled the fighting. If Sparta wars because of Athenian power—as the attentive reader knows she will—then a conveyance of this power for the purpose of keeping Sparta at rest will fail. The Corinthians had stressed the shocking restlessness of the Athenians so as to spur Sparta into motion.

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139 Archidamus also invokes a distinction between young and old. The pairing of his speech with that of Sthenelaides may imply some division within Sparta between the attitudes of younger and older Spartiates.

140 Stahl asks, “Is not the speech of the Athenian emissaries best suited to render Sparta’s fear, the real cause of the war, understandable?” Stahl, Thucydides, 43. I disagree with Stahl that Spartan fear is the “real cause” of the war. Athenian power is just as “real.” Nonetheless, the speech clarifies the character of Spartan fear, partly by clarifying the character of Athenian power.
These Athenians have miscalculated. The greater the threat, the greater Athenian power, the greater the likelihood Sparta will fight.

But why have they miscalculated? The cause of their error would appear to be honor, more precisely, the longing for their virtue to be recognized by others—a virtue which they will claim manifests itself as Athenian power. According to Thucydides, the Athenians wish to slow the Spartans, but, at the same time, they also wish to signal the power of their own city (1.72.1).\(^{141}\) It is clear that the Athenians believe that by communicating Athenian power they may deter Sparta. But is deterring Sparta their only objective, or does their pride also spur them to communicate Athenian power? Pride, as we will soon discuss, sits somewhat uncomfortably with the envoys’ doctrine of necessity. Yet the envoys are obviously proud of their city, in part because of its superior justice. They have also received some provocation from the Corinthians, who omitted Athens’ contribution to the defense of Hellenic freedom during the Persian wars.

The envoys open by denying that the Spartans are the correct judges to adjudicate charges made against Athens by Sparta’s allies. Athens will not bow to Sparta’s presumptive right to decide the merits of the charges leveled (1.73).\(^{142}\) The situation is not forensic but deliberative, and the soul of deliberation is advantage and not justice. And so the envoys offer advice. The Athenian speech revolves around this issue of advantage, although the envoys do conclude their speech with a point of justice. They offer to arbitrate the dispute in accordance with the terms of the Thirty Years’ Peace. The central issue, however, as

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\(^{141}\) The ἅµα at 1.72.1 suggests that the Athenians may be actuated by two motivations.

\(^{142}\) The Thirty Years’ Treaty contains an arbitration clause, establishing the proper procedure for resolving disputes.
with the earlier debate at Athens, is the character of advantage. The Corinthians had claimed that justice and advantage recommend war, these Athenians will argue that the Spartan advantage as well as justice recommend the maintenance of the status quo.

Concerning the outcry against their city, they say that they wish to demonstrate that their city holds her empire fairly, or not unreasonably (οὔτε ἀπεικότως ἔχομεν ἀ κεκτήμεθα), and that Athens is worthy of renown (ἵπ τε πόλις ἡμῶν ἀξία λόγου ἐστίν, 1.73.1). According to Thucydides’ summary of their intention, the envoys wish to communicate Athenian power. What is the relationship between the longing to communicate Athenian power, on the one hand, and holding empire fairly and being worthy of renown, on the other? In interpreting the speech, we will pay particular attention to the relationship between power, necessity, and honor. As we will see, in the second part of the speech, the Athenians advance an almost Hobbesian conception of the relationship between honor, worth, and power, where “the honourable is whatsoever possession, actions, or quality is an argument and sign of power.”

Prooemion and conclusion aside, the Athenian speech can be divided into three major parts. First, the envoys discuss the Athenian defense of freedom during the Persian Wars (Part I—Defending Freedom, 1.73.2-1.74). Second, they justify their empire through a series of claims about necessity and advantage—(Part II—Founding Empire, 1.75-76).

Third, they describe their measured manner of ruling others, make several claims about the status of justice and law, and, at the same time, they diagnose the source of their subjects’ bitterness (Part III—Ruling Others, 1.77). In the conclusion, the Athenians make clear that Athens is willing to submit any and all disputes to arbitration consistent with the Thirty Years’ Treaty (1.78). Again, the Athenian speech, which emphasizes necessity and advantage above all, ends by sounding this key-note of justice. Athens has not violated the Treaty. If Sparta declines arbitration, she will transgress her oaths, violate the Peace, and thus bear ἀἰτία, or responsibility, for the resulting war. We turn to the first part of the Athenian speech.

**Defending Freedom (1.73.2-1.74)**

The Corinthians had selectively omitted Athenian actions against the Mede, claiming instead that Persia had shipwrecked herself. Not so, counter these Athenians. The Persian armada foundered on the rock of the Athenian navy. The envoys wish to demonstrate that Athens is worthy of renown, literally “worthy of speech” (ἵ τε πόλις … ἀξία λόγου ἐστίν). A truthful recounting of Athens’ brilliant successes during the Persian Wars will testify to Athenian virtue. Although it is not often recognized as such, honor in the *History* is bound up with Thucydides’ speech-deed antithesis. The Athenian speech is throughout charged with the envoys’ desire for a proper...

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144 The Corinthians had claimed that Persia had tripped herself up. “Without answering the Corinthians directly, the Athenians have implicitly refuted the charge that the Persians defeated themselves (cf. 1.69.5).” Debnar, *Speaking the Same Language*, 50.

145 See 1.69.5 of the speech of the Corinthians at Athens: καίτοι ἐλέγεσθε ἀσφαλεῖς εἶναι, ὡν ἄρα ὁ λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἑκάτερος, where the Corinthians use a speech-deed antithesis in relation to honor. The Spartans, they say, fail to live up (in deed) to their reputation (in speech). See also 1.73.2 of the Athenian speech.
correspondence between speech (λόγος) and deed (ἔργον). To sound a Herodotean note, the glorious deeds of Athens have failed of their report, and so the envoys must burnish the unjustly tarnished reputation of their city.

The Athenians correct Corinth’s disingenuous sketch of the past in order to communicate the power of their city’s virtue, particularly Athenian daring, which comprised one element of Athenian power during the Persian wars. This retelling represents a conveyance of power because past actions testify to present capacity. The Athenian ability to benefit Hellas in the past is not wholly distinct from her present ability to harm her enemies.

The envoys begin by asking why they should speak of ancient times (τὰ μὲν πάνυ παλαιὰ), where reports would be witnesses more than the eyes of the hearers. Wearying though it is, they will once again advance their city’s contribution to Hellenic freedom. The subject is no doubt a familiar one, they say, especially to the older Spartans.

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146 On the thematic importance of including this particular discussion in the middle of the first book, Rood writes, “It is essential for the design of the narrative that the account of the Persian Wars that Thucydides does give is placed where it is. It prepares for Thucydides’ account of Athens’ rise to power straight after the Persian Wars (the Pentekontaetia); an account that justifies Thucydides’ claim that the Peloponnesian War resulted from Spartan fear of growing Athenian power. And that this account starts immediately after the Persian Wars itself suggests that the Persian Wars are central to the origin of the Peloponnesian War.” Tim Rood, “Thucydides’ Persian Wars” in Jeffrey S. Rusten ed., Thucydides (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 153.

147 In the Archaeology, Thucydides provides grounds for mistrusting both eyes and reports (1.10.3 with 1.20.1). This reference to ancient times may link the Athenian speech—which focuses on Athenian power—to Thucydides’ account of the development of Hellenic power in the Archaeology. See, for example, 1.20.1, τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ήρον, and 1.21.1, ηὑρῆσθαι δὲ ἡγησάμενος ἐκ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων σημείων ὡς παλαιὰ εἶναι ἄποχρόντως. Moreover, Pericles, in the Funeral Oration, makes the point that there is no need to discuss the Persian wars, which would be familiar to his hearers. The Archaeology then treats ancient times, the speech of the Athenian envoys the Persian wars, and Pericles the present generation. My suggestion is that Thucydides is communicating to the reader—linking speeches and episodes—by having his speakers explicitly reference the fact that they are neglecting a topic with which the reader is already familiar.
among the audience. In brief, during the Persian wars, Athens ran extraordinary risks for
the sake of profit or benefit (ἐπ᾽ ὑφελίξ ἐκινδυνεύετο). Sparta, they admit, took some
part in the glorious deed. Now, the envoys ask, would Sparta rob Athens of all reputation
for the defense of Hellenic freedom, if, indeed, the reputation is profitable in some way
(εἰ τι ωφελεῖ, 1.73.2)?

The Peloponnesians wrongly deny Athens a reputation rightfully won by her shining
deeds. By having his envoys inquire—in almost an aside—if repute is profitable or
beneficial, Thucydides gently raises a thematic question. One of the themes of the speech
is clearly advantage. But what is the advantage of praise, of a fit between λόγοι and
ἐργα? As we will see, the doctrine of necessity advanced by the envoys in the second
part of their speech sits somewhat uncomfortably not only with their own desire for honor
but also with their later presentation of their city’s justice.

In recounting the Persian wars, the Athenian envoys emphasize that they are not speaking
in any spirit of entreaty but instead furnishing testimony about the opponent Sparta will
contest against if she deliberates poorly (1.73.3). This sentence—a threat—echoes a line
from the Corinthian speech, where Corinth had also styled the coming war a contest
(1.70.1). She had sketched the character of the contestants so as to push Sparta to war.

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148 The full line is as follows: ἥς τοῦ μὲν ἔργου μέρος μετέσχετε, τοῦ δὲ λόγου μὴ παυτός, εἰ τι ωφελεῖ, στερισκώμεθα (1.73.2). Again, a speech-deed antithesis is used. See fn 145 above.
149 Athens, in the apparent view of the envoys, deserves an honor commensurate with the great benefits that her actions conferred upon Hellas. In the first part of the speech, service to the common good appears to be the yardstick for the awarding of an honor in speech proportionate to the benefits conferred by deed.
These Athenians also wish to convey something of their city’s character, but, again, for the purpose of slowing the Peloponnesian march to war.  

At Marathon, the envoys say, the Athenians stood alone, single-handedly beating back the barbarian. When the Mede returned ten years on, not having sufficient forces to resist him by land, the Athenian people boarded their ships to join the Hellenic forces at Salamis (πανδηµεὶ, 1.73.4). Had they not done so, the barbarian would have ravaged the Peloponnesian city by city, there being too little ship-power to resist him (1.73.5). The Athenians therefore saved Hellas, and indeed, the barbarian himself furnished the greatest proof of the decisiveness of Salamis. After his defeat, believing his power fatally impaired, he at once repaired home (1.73.5).

According to the envoys, it was among the ships that Hellenic victory was won, and it was the Athenian fleet that won it. At Salamis, Athens furnished the three most beneficial things (ὠφελιµῶτατα): the greatest contingent of ships (almost two thirds of the force), the ablest commander, Themistocles, who masterminded the battle in the narrows, and the most unhesitating zeal (προθυµίαν ἀοκνοτάτην). Athens furnished the necessary leadership, the requisite ships, and an indomitable fighting spirit (1.74.1).

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150 According to the Corinthians, the Spartans οὐδ᾽ ἐκλογίσασθαι πώποτε πρὸς οἶους ψάχνων Ἀθηναίους ὄντας καὶ ὅσον ψάχνων καὶ ὃς πᾶν διαφέροντας ὃ ἀγῶν ἔσται (1.70.1). The Athenian Envoys echo the Corinthians: ῥηθήσεται δὲ οὐ παρατήσωσις μᾶλλον ἕνεκα ἢ μεταγένοις πρὸς οἶους ὑμῖν πόλιν μὴ ἐὰν βούλευσαν ὃ ἀγών καταστήσεται (1.73.3). Note the repetition of contest (ὁ ἀγών) as well as the parallelism between the Corinthian πρὸς οἶους ψάχνων Ἀθηναίους ὄντας, and the Athenian πρὸς οἶους ψάχνων πόλιν.

151 As commentators have noted, the Athenians omit the contribution of the Plataeans. Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume I, 118.


153 The Athenians conveniently neglect to mention the battle of Plataea, where Spartan led land forces delivered the decisive blow.
According to the envoys, in the face of great danger, the Athenians demonstrated rare zeal and remarkable daring (προθυμίαν δὲ καὶ πολὺ τολμηροτάτην, 1.74.2). This self-presentation corroborates the Corinthian portrait of Athenian energy and boldness. Seeing no hoplite reinforcements coming, and the lands around them already enslaved, the Athenians abandoned their city and ruined their possessions, and all so as not to abandon the common cause (τὸ κοινὸν) or by scattering to become useless to it (1.74.2). Instead, city-less, they took to their ships to risk themselves in the defense of Hellenic freedom (κινδυνεῖσαι, 1.74.2). To use Thucydides’ own expression, it was at this moment that the Athenians became nautical (ναυτικὸι ἐγένοντο, 1.18.2). Athens became a city at sea, setting her on a path leading toward empire.

The Athenian envoys say that during the Persian wars they benefitted the Spartans no less, if not indeed far more, than the Spartans ever benefited the Athenians (ὠφελῆσαι, 1.74.3). And here, the envoys take special pains to emphasize the self-regarding character of Spartan behavior. Only when fearing for themselves and their own interests, they say, did Sparta finally aid the common cause. The Spartans, moreover, fought for an existing city and for the sake of its continued enjoyment. They, by contrast, with their city existing only in the slenderest of hopes (ὑπὲρ τῆς [πόλεως] ἐν βραχείᾳ ἐλπίδι οὕσης), stood full-footed upon that hope, and running all risks not only saved themselves but the

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155 See also 7.21.3.
156 The city as fleet trope appears throughout the History, for example, the “democratic” city/fleet at Samos in the eighth book.
157 See Archidamus, 1.84.1.
Spartans too (1.74.3). Now, the Corinthian delegation had earlier claimed that the Athenians were never at home (ἀποδημηταῖ) and in dangers were full of good hopes (ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες, 1.70.3-4). Once again, the Athenian account fully accords with the Corinthian one. Even homeless and in the face of terrible danger, the Athenians remained somehow confident in themselves and hopeful of success.

Had they been decided by their fears and gone over to the Mede, as others did, or had they not dared to board their ships on the grounds that they would have been enslaved, the Mede would have advanced through Hellas howsoever he wished (1.74.4). The redoubtable Athenians, however, were unafraid, and so they did not go over. They refused to allow any concern for their immediate safety to prevent their taking to their ships to continue the fight against the barbarian. Daring, as only a moment’s reflection will reveal, is incompatible with the strong desire for safety.

On the basis of deeds such as these, are we then worthy (ἄρ᾽ ἄξιοί ἐσμεν), the envoys inquire rhetorically, for the sake of our zeal then (προθυμίας ἐνεκα τῆς τότε) and for the intelligent judgment of our empire now, to be so jealously disliked by the Hellenes (1.75.1)? With this flourish, they end their retelling of the Persian wars and begin the second major part of their speech, an account of the establishment and consolidation of their empire, in which they advance their remarkable—and remarkably daring—doctrine of necessity. Before turning to a discussion of the empire, a concluding word is necessary about the envoys’ presentation of their city’s defense of Hellenic freedom.
Overall, the first third or so of the Athenian speech corroborates Corinth’s picture of Athens as a city in constant motion, courageously daring all things and running every risk. In the first third of the speech alone, the following words or cognates recur: running risks (κινδυνεύειν), four times (1.73.2, 1.73.4, 1.74.2, 1.74.3), zeal (προθυμίαν), three times (1.74.1, 1.74.2, 1.75.1), and daring (τολμᾶν), twice (1.74.2, 1.74.4). The word for profit or benefit (ὠφέλια or cognates) also appears four times (2X 1.73.2, 1.74.1, 1.74.3). The Athenians ran every risk for the sake of profit (1.73.2). They contributed the three most profitable (or beneficial) things at Salamis. And during the Persia invasions, they profited Sparta more than Sparta benefitted Athens. Profit (ὠφέλια), as we will soon see, is one of the three compulsory motivations that the Athenian envoys introduce to justify their empire in the second part of their speech.

To take up briefly the issue of Athenian confidence, during the Persian wars, what was the basis of Athenian courage, the source of Athenian daring? Although it seems almost tautological, the Athenians were hopeful of success because of their confidence in themselves. Perception of worth then—of oneself or others—is bound up with an assessment of power (or capacity). To honor oneself properly, to assess one’s strength accurately, requires a correspondence between judgment (γνώμη) and power (δύναμις), which was a theme of the interpretation of the Corinthian speech. We are now in a position to turn to the second part of the Athenian speech.

158 Again, the only apparent difference is that Corinth omitted Athenian actions against the Mede.
159 Pericles furnishes the most sophisticated presentation of the psychology of Athenian courage in his three speeches. In the Pentecontaetia, at 1.90.1, Thucydides notes that the allies were afraid of Athenian τόλμα. At 1.92, he writes that Sparta, for her part, was grateful for Athenian προθυμία during the Persian wars and initially friendly on precisely this account.
In discussing the defense of Hellenic freedom, the Athenians stood upon their difference from all other cities. They won glory during the Persian wars for their rare courage, their exceptional service to Hellas, and their rare capacities. In the second part of the speech, they justify their empire by arguing they act no differently than any other city. They are only more successful than others, and, quite naturally, the object of Hellenic envy. The Athenians are at once alike and unlike all others, exceptional and common in almost equal measure.

The envoys had claimed that they wish to show that Athens holds her empire reasonably, literally “the things she has acquired” (1.73.1). The second part of their speech justifies this claim through a doctrine of necessity, which meets the broad charge of injustice levied by the Peloponnesians by denying the freedom presupposed by justice. The Corinthians had alleged that the Athenians were harming Hellas (1.68.2). Nowhere do these Athenians deny it. Instead, they simply assert that they have been compelled to act as they have. If they are harming others by ruling them, they suggest that they are at least not doing so unjustly.

In this second part of the speech, the envoys outline the growth of their city’s power. Given the thematic importance of Spartan fear and Athenian power, this Athenian treatment of the causes of the growth of Athenian power is especially important for present purposes. According to the envoys, fear (δέος), honor (τιμή), and profit (ὠφέλιμον) 160 Sthenelaidas will make the same point (1.86.1).
are inescapable compulsions that compelled the Athenians to advance their power to its imperial peak. The envoys go on to assert a permanent relationship between the strong and the weak, where the weak are naturally hemmed in by the strong, and they also claim that all cities seek advantage, even if some are manifestly better at achieving it than others.

After raising the question of whether they deserve to be so disliked by the Hellenes for their courage or for the intelligent management of their empire, the Athenians recount the origins of their empire. Somewhat, the city uniquely responsible for Hellenic freedom became a threat to that freedom. How did this situation come to pass? The envoys begin by stressing that they did not assume the mantle of their empire by force (αὐτὴν τὴν ἐλάβομεν οὐ βιασάμενοι, 1.75.2). After the Persian retreat, Sparta was unwilling to join in mopping operations up against the Mede and went home instead. As a result, the allies approached the Athenians and asked them to lead the Hellenic League in her stead (1.75.2). The Athenians readily accepted.

Athens then reasonably took what was freely abandoned and freely offered. The beginnings of Athenian hegemony, the first steps on the road to empire, were pure. From

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161 In their transition into the development of the Athenian Empire, the envoys blur the sources of anti-Athenian sentiment. Athens might be praiseworthy for her actions against the Mede but blameworthy for her empire. The Athenians simply lump them together. Athens, they say, is viewed with envy for her earlier courage as well her empire. The envoys do not claim that Athens merits praise, only that she does not merit so much dislike. The envoys intimate that the superior intelligence of their leaders and their collective zeal—i.e., the sources of Hellenic resentment—“are the core of Athens’ power.” Strauss, *The City and Man*, 171. See fn 184 below.

162 “What kind of liberation is this, that compels the liberators to subjugate the liberated?” Palmer, *Love of Glory and the Common Good*, 54. “To later observers it may have occurred that turning over the defense of freedom against the Persians to Athens, was, so to speak, like driving off the devil with Beelzebub.” Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, 126.
this singular moment of freedom, however, the Athenians say they were thereafter compelled to bring their power to its current imperial peak. They were *forced* to grow powerful (κατηναγκάσθημεν τὸ πρῶτον προαγαγεῖν [τὴν ἀρχήν] ἐς τόδε), principally by fear, next by honor, and lastly by profit (μάλιστα μὲν υπὸ δέους, ἔπειτα καὶ τιμῆς, ὑστερον καὶ ὁφελίας, 1.75.3).

The envoys assert that necessity (or compulsion) is tripartite, and that it was necessity that made their city into an imperial power.163 If Athens was freely offered the hegemony, and if she was indeed compelled to grow powerful, then she has not acted unjustly. Chained by overriding necessities, she holds her empire reasonably, according to the sweet reasonableness of necessity. In 1.23.6, Thucydides writes that the growth of Athenian power made the Spartans fearful, which *compelled* (ἀναγκάσαι) the Peloponnesian war. Fear is one of the three compulsory motivations advanced by the envoys, and like Thucydides himself, the Athenians use a necessity (ἀνάγκη) cognate (i.e., καταναγκάζειν, 1.75.3), suggesting some correspondence between his own view of the war’s origins and the envoys’ doctrine of necessity.164

To step back, at the end of the Archaeology, Thucydides writes that the Spartans were compelled to fight out of their fear of the growth of Athenian power, while these

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163 Ostwald notes that “It has long been recognized that we have here an explicit statement of some essential features of the dynamic which Thucydides himself saw inherent in the historical process, especially in view of the role this unholy trinity [i.e., fear, honor, and profit] plays throughout the work, in speeches as well as in his narrative.” Ostwald, *Ananke in Thucydides*, 29.

164 In his statement about the truest πρόφασις, Thucydides says that Athenian power inspired φόβος in the Spartans, whereas the envoys use the term δέος. Are φόβος and δέος interchangeable in this context? I believe they are, and in this, I follow Bluhm. “Thucydides often employs the term ‘fear’ (phobos, deos) interchangeably with the expressions ‘security’ and ‘safety’ (asphaleia) since the desire for security manifests itself as fear of the loss of this value.” Bluhm, “Causal Theory in Thucydides’ Peloponnesian War,” 18.
Athenians now argue that Athens was compelled to grow powerful. If Thucydides subscribes to the envoys’ position in this matter—as I believe he does—then the origins of the Peloponnesian war are inextricably bound up with the causes of the growth of Athenian power, which are fear, honor, and profit—psychological drives. The Athenian claim about necessity then significantly deepens the issue of the war’s origins.

Joining Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις to the envoys’ statement about Athenian power, we are led to the position that the αἰτία (or blame) for the Peloponnesian war is to be found in those motivations that always and forever compel the behavior of cities and men.165 Human nature, in other words—i.e., political psychology—becomes Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the War.166 In addition, the claim that psychology compels is corroborated by our earlier study of Corcyraean necessity and Corinthian necessity.167 In the case of both Corcyra and Corinth, necessity reflected the belief that in whatever circumstance there were no reasonable alternatives to a particular course of action.

In this first statement about necessity—there will be a second—the envoys say that their motivation in establishing their empire was initially fear, followed by honor, and lastly by profit. It did not seem to the Athenians safe (οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς), they say, having become hated by the Hellenes, some of their allies revolting and having been brought back under

165 “The growth of the Athenian empire which, in his statement about the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις, Thucydides had declared to have created the conditions that made war necessary, is now shown to have itself been the result of a necessity embedded in motivations common to all men.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 30.
166 Human nature, of course, is also the basis of Thucydides’ claim that the present will resemble the past and future, itself the ground of the assertion that his History will be a possession for all time.
167 De Romilly makes a similar point: “[Athenian] conduct [the envoys] suggest, was determined by circumstances which made them obey (ὑπὸ) certain feelings; these feelings are, as it were, the means through which the actual circumstances become compulsory for Athens.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 251, emphasis added.
the Athenian yoke, with the Spartans no longer friendly but suspicious and quarrelsome (ὑπόπτων καὶ διαφόρων ὄντων), to let go their rule and to run risks (ἀνέντας κινδυνεύειν). For the revolting cities would simply go over to the hostile Spartans.

The envoys round out the original claim about fear, honor, and profit with the statement that it is beyond reproach (literally “beyond envious resentment”, ἀνεπίφθονον) for a city to arrange matters as advantageously as possible for itself amidst the greatest dangers (τὰ ξυμφέροντα τῶν μεγίστων πέρι κινδύνων εὖ τίθεσθαι, 1.75.5). Danger then justifies setting down the advantageous things for oneself, while the advantageous things (τὰ ξυμφέροντα) would seem to encompass fear, honor, and profit.

In speaking of the advantageous things (τὰ ξυμφέροντα), the envoys echo their earlier rhetorical query about whether Athens merits so much jealous dislike (1.75.1). The two “envy” cognates (i.e., φθόνος)—translated as “jealous dislike” (ἐπιφθόνως διακεῖσθαι) and “beyond reproach” (ἀνεπίφθονον) above—book-end the lines falling between them, with the second statement furnishing the ground for the first. The Athenians do not merit resentment either for their earlier courage or for the intelligent administration of empire because it is beyond reproach to act as they have done, which is to say, advantageously in the face of great danger.

The Athenians pursued advantageous ends, in other words, and they pursued them well. Again, the advantageous things (τὰ ξυμφέροντα) would seem to embrace fear, honor, and profit. Here, fear stands for basic safety or security, which is supported by the
sentence just following the one about necessity, where the Athenians argue that it would not have been safe (οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς) to relinquish their empire and to run risks. In other words, fear, honor, and profit together spoke—and speak—against Athens relinquishing her empire, and so she refuses to do so. But if necessity is tripartite, if several motivations are at play amidst danger, what is the relationship among them? Is it plausible that the daring and redoubtable Athenians were primarily compelled by their fear, by security considerations, to found their empire?¹⁶⁸

To answer this question, we must return briefly to the first part of the speech. To state something of the conclusion at the outset, the envoys’ claim about the priority of fear, honor, and profit contradicts their own earlier account of the Persian wars. During the barbarian invasions, great danger clearly loomed over Hellas—a point Thucydides makes in his Archaeology (μεγάλου κινδύνου ἐπικρέμασθέντος, 1.18.2). And yet in setting down the advantageous things for themselves, the older Athenian generation was anything but fearful. According to the envoys themselves, another motive was primary: profit or benefit.

In discussing the Persian wars, the envoys spoke above all of their city’s risk-taking, daring, and zeal, but also the extraordinary manner that Athens profited Hellas

¹⁶⁸ Hornblower identifies the problem. “But what of the first motive for starting the empire, namely, ‘fear’? At 95 and 96 below, Th. Speaks of appeals to Athens by the allies, to respond to which would be a matter of honour and advantage, not fear; and of desire for revenge on Persia,—honor and advantage again, one would have thought.” Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume 1, 120. Johnson also recognizes it: “It is safe to say, though, that regardless of the famous claims of the Athenian envoys, the empire was taken chiefly for Athenian interests and, starting with Pericles, was held for the sake of their interest and glory.” Johnson, Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism, 34. This is not to deny that the Persians remained dangerous in this period—or that security alone recommended firm control—but instead to suggest that the Athenians do not appear primarily motivated by fear.
Athens, they said, ran every risk for the sake of profit (ἐπ᾽ ὤφελίᾳ ἐκινδυνεύετο, 1.73.2). But in the second part of the speech, profit initially appears as the third and ostensibly weakest compulsion, last in point of priority. And yet the envoys present it as the primary engine of Athenian action in the fight against the Barbarian.

During the Persian wars, the Athenians were motivated by the desire for profit. Whose? The envoys had stressed the benefit to Hellas. The Athenians boarded their ships so as to avoid abandoning the common or by becoming scattered to become useless (1.74.2). But this claim is deceptive, because the “common” good encompassed the Athenian one, for the Athenians were in the vanguard of the common danger. The Athenians therefore acted for their own good, which chanced to encompass the Hellenic one. The Athenian generation who fought the Persians, then, also set down matters for its own advantage amidst great danger. But how did these Athenians conceive of the advantageous things (τὰ ξυμφέροντα)?

It was in strong contrast with more slavish and fearful cities that the Athenian envoys had emphasized the rare courage of the previous generation. Indeed, the singularity of Athenian daring itself, the radical decision to abandon Athens and Attica, suggests the vast gulf in power between Persia and Athens, the extent of the danger, and the superiority of the Athenians to their fears. Crushing a weak invader is not daring. Being

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\[169\] According to Thucydides in the Archaeology, the Athenians and Spartans in common (κοινῇ) repelled the barbarians (1.18.2).
far weaker in material preparation and running unimaginable risk to beat back a powerful invader is daring indeed.

The Athenians, however, had a robust sense of their own capacity—they honored themselves highly—which gave them a daring confidence, which itself, paradoxically, magnified their effectual strength. Spectacular success at Salamis was memorialized as a vivid testimony to Athenian strength, a glorious benchmark for future ambition, and a linchpin of later Athenian confidence. If any of the compulsory motivations put forward by the Athenians “compelled” Athens during the Persian wars, it would appear to be a kind of honor (τιμῆ)—an honor stripped of justice—that encouraged the Athenians to run risks for the sake of profit (ωφελία). But in the initial justification of the Empire, Thucydides has his Athenians twice remark that they were compelled not to run risks—these, the very same Athenians who proudly announced that they ran every risk against the King (κινδυνεύειν, 1.75.4, 1.76.1)! All of this invites the question of what it is that actually makes a risk worth running, because, as we have seen, the Athenians are not averse to running certain risks. To answer in a word, it is advantage that determines whether a risk is worth running or not. More precisely, it is a city’s conception of advantage—combined with an assessment of its prospects for achieving it—which determines whether a risk is worth running or not.

170 Courage itself, for example, might even well be irrational, while nonetheless magnifying capacity. “Daring undeniably represents the discovery of an “effectual truth” about the character of international politics.” Forde, “Thucydides on the Causes of Athenian Imperialism,” 443. See fn 124 above and fn 184 below.

171 The bold decision to become a fighting city at sea during the Persian war finds its imperial parallel in the great fleet of invasion sent out to conqueror Sicily. Triumph at Salamis and disaster in the great harbor of Syracuse book-end the period of Athenian naval predominance.
In the Corinthian speech, the Athenians were characterized by an optimistic or hopeful judgment about their own capacity. Honor and profit then—and not primarily fear—would seem to have characterized Athenian behavior during the Persian wars. Honor and profit then—and not primarily fear—would seem to comprise the distinctly “Athenian” conception of advantage. During the Persian invasion, then, the Athenian advantage recommended risk-taking in the defense of freedom. After defeating Persia, advantage recommended founding, maintaining, and expanding empire.\textsuperscript{172}

This does not mean that security played no role in Athenian policy. In the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides suggests that security did in fact recommend empire. Instead, it is only to say that the Athenians are more than capable of subordinating fear-based concerns to their longing for honor and profit. To bring several threads together, necessity in the \textit{History} can refer to the compulsory pursuit of advantage, where a city’s conception of advantage is defined by its relative prioritization of fear, honor, and profit. Cities conceive of advantage in different ways, but all are compelled to pursue \textit{their} conceptions of advantage within the constraints of their circumstances.

To return to the Athenian speech, after the initial claim about necessity, the envoys turn toward Sparta. The Spartans, they say, are no different than themselves. They lead the cities of the Peloponnese by arranging matters for their own benefit (τὸ ὁφέλιμον, 1.76.1).\textsuperscript{173} The envoys thus attack Sparta for hypocrisy in masking her selfishness behind the disinterested mask of justice. All cities, they argue, rule for the sake of their own

\textsuperscript{172} This is not to deny that security also recommended establishing and maintaining the empire.

\textsuperscript{173} Thucydides corroborates this claim in the Archaeology, where he discusses the Spartan practice of establishing friendly oligarchies among their allies (1.19).
benefit. Had Sparta maintained her leadership over the Hellenic League, she too would have become painful to the allies, no less than the Athenians now. Like the Athenians, Sparta would have been compelled to rule firmly or to run unacceptable risks (ἀναγκασθέντας ἄν ἢ ἄρχειν ἐγκρατῶς ἢ σύστης κινδυνεύειν, 1.76.1). Again, the envoys use a necessity cognate. Necessity produces an apparent choice, which is really no choice at all. The compulsory nature of advantage compels ruling cities to “choose” to rule firmly, so as not to err foolishly by running foolish risks. Nonetheless, the Spartan example itself raises a problem.

Sparta did not maintain her hegemony over the Hellenic allies. She went home instead. Does this refute the Athenian claim? It may, but if cities are compelled by their conception of advantage, then it may not. Given Sparta’s conservatism, the Spartan advantage—bound up with beliefs about justice—recommended that Sparta return home to the Peloponnese. Such a claim is empty, since it explains every decision by reference to advantage, but the argument that every city’s conception of advantage binds together fear, honor, and profit is more substantive and perhaps more controversial.

The Athenian envoys next make a second statement about necessity that would seem to support these interpretative claims more than their first one. The envoys say that the Athenians have done nothing wondrous nor at variance with the way of human beings (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄνθρωπείου τρόπου), if they welcomed rule (ἀρχήν) when it was offered, and if they refused to relinquish it, having been defeated by the greatest things: honor, fear, and profit (ὑπὸ τῶν μεγίστων νικηθέντες, τιμῆς καὶ δέους καὶ ωφελίας, 1.76.2).
This second statement varies from the first in several respects. First, the compulsions are no longer presented in an order of either substantive or chronological priority. Second, fear has now switched places with honor. Third, great danger is no longer necessary to sanction the pursuit of advantage. It is consistent with the “way of human beings” to welcome rule and to be unwilling to relinquish it, whatever the circumstances.

Although the Athenians had earlier presented honor and profit as compulsory, fear was given pride of place. At first, the Athenians introduced a reasonable exemption from considerations of blame, from the broad allegation of injustice levied by the Peloponnesians. In great danger, fear-(or security-)based actions may perhaps justify the violation of the canons of right behavior required in more ordinary times. The envoys’ second statement expands the realm of necessity in significant ways.

No longer does necessity govern only desperate moments but all moments. If honor and profit are as compulsory as fear, then all are equally exculpatory, and necessity fully eclipses the freedom requisite for justice. Human ends are set by necessity, while justice presupposes freedom in the choice of ends. This claim is not merely descriptive but prescriptive as well. A wise city would respond to its true threats and opportunities on the basis of its actual capacities. It would align its plans and capacities so as to do τὰ δέοντα and thereby secure τὰ ξυμφέροντα. Excessive fearing and hoping, of course, can

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174 “At first sight, this justification seems to contradict the first one which the Athenians put forward: while they began by excusing the authority which they exercised by the circumstances which had led them to assume it, they now suddenly assert that imperial rule is a normal condition whatever be the particular circumstances. In so far as this second explanation is considered as self-sufficient, it seems to destroy much of the value of the first one.” De Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 254–55. Or to use Bartlett’s vivid expression, the Athenians “explode the ordinary moral horizon.” Robert C. Bartlett, *The Idea of Enlightenment: A Postmortem Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 85.
affect one’s sense of one’s capacity, producing error in the pursuit of advantage by interfering with a proper fit between power and judgment—a fit requisite for doing τὰ δέοντα and achieving τὰ ξυμφέροντα at any moment.\(^{175}\)

In broad terms, the doctrine of necessity advanced by the Athenians becomes a doctrine of the advantageous, which sanctions the harming of others in the pursuit of one’s own advantage. The Athenians maintain that they are not the first to establish these things, for it has forever been the case that the strong overcome the weak (1.76.2). The weak are compelled by the strong, while all are compelled by some differing cocktail of fear, honor, and profit.\(^{176}\)

The Athenians, the envoys say, consider themselves worthy to rule others (ἄξιοί τε ἀμα νομίζοντες εἶναι), and so did the Spartans, they claim, until reckoning up the advantageous things (τὰ ξυμφέροντα) for themselves, they now speciously appeal to justice (τῷ δικαίῳ λόγῳ)—a language no one ever uses when able to acquire something by force. Nor indeed has justice ever prevented anyone from taking more than their fair

\(^{175}\) In the Mytilinean Debate, the Athenian Diodotus offers a sophisticated variant of this Athenian position on necessity. His version involves an account of error (ἁμαρτάνειν), which appears at 3.45. Diodotus argues that cities and men err by nature (3.45.3). In the face of whatever circumstance, every party believes that its chosen action is best and that it has some chance at success. This is because erring is unintentional. But, of course, to err is human. Stated in Aristotelian terms, no city seeks the bad. Cities are compelled to strive for those ends they believe to be good. They are equally compelled to use means believed good for attaining ends believed good. These are all formal claims, which is to say they are unhelpful unless applied to actual events. It is Thucydides’ narrative of the War that puts the flesh on the bone of these more abstract claims. The deeds harshly correct the errors of perception and judgment of the war’s protagonists, and vicariously of the History’s readers.

\(^{176}\) Bluhm makes a parallel point, “Thus political activity of all kinds, the pursuit of power, resistance to power, submission to power—is derived from the three primary impulses.” Bluhm, “Causal Theory in Thucydides’ Peloponnesian War,” 20–21. As does Ostwald, “If we can isolate any factors in which ἀνάγκαι are anchored, we would have to identify them as fear, prestige, and self-interest with which the Athenians explain the genesis of their empire and which they generalize into a universal principle (1.75-76).” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 33.
share when their raw strength allows it (οὐδεὶς … τοῦ μὴ πλέον ἔχειν ἀπετράπετο, 1.76.2). According to the envoys, when a city cannot obtain the advantageous things by its own steam, then it appeals to justice. No one is ever entirely constrained by justice, the Athenians assert, which is forever weaker than the strength of desire or aversion.

In the envoys’ presentation, in the absence of obstacles to the realization of desire, power (or capacity) will extend itself to its outer limit in the pursuit of objects set by desire. It will also extend itself to its limit to avoid perceived evils. Such actions are shaped by a city’s conception of advantage but also by the particulars of the case—what we have been calling the necessity arising from that point of contact between character and circumstance.

The envoys next rehabilitate an attenuated conception of justice, which appears to be in tension with their doctrine of necessity. According to the Athenians, truly worthy of praise (ἐπαινεῖσθαί τε ἄξιοι) are those who rule human beings more justly (δικαίοτέροι) than their power allows (1.76.3). As opposed to an honor entirely stripped of justice, the Athenians refuse to wholly subordinate justice and honor to necessity. Relative gentleness, they say, the restraint of the full application of one’s power, is a praiseworthy grace in the strong. When ruling others, both the honorable and the just recommend relative mildness toward the weak. Again, it is unclear whether these rehabilitated conceptions of the just and the honorable are consistent with the envoys’ earlier claims.

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177 The Athenians may be responding to a line from the Corinthian speech at Athens (1.42.4).
about necessity, or, indeed, why the Athenians should be gentle, if their interests demand that they treat their allies harshly.178

The envoys say that if others were to assume the power of Athens, the measured character of Athenian rule would readily become apparent; and it would be reasonably shown that the Athenians are unreasonably disliked (1.76.4). With this line, the Athenians move into the third part of their speech: a defense of their mild rule by light of the doctrine of necessity. In this context, the envoys offer a perceptive account of their subjects’ resentment—a series of claims about the psychology of justice. In this presentation, justice, like honor, would appear to relate to an assessment of power.

The envoys say that it has always been the case that the strong compel the weak. The Athenians naturally place themselves in the camp of the strong. On what grounds? One strand of the Athenian argument suggests that the Athenians deserve to rule because they do in fact rule. The claim that Athens is worthy of rule becomes the claim that the fact of Athenian power is identical with Athens’ worthiness for it. This position also implies that quantity of power ought to correspond with “quantity” of repute.179 Sparta would do well

178 “And with regard to their arguments as to their worthiness to rule and their acting with measure or with greater justice, given their power, than they have to (I, 176), might one not reply that moderation in crime is no great claim to merit among the noncriminal.” Christopher Bruell, “Thucydides’ View of Athenian Imperialism,” American Political Science Review 68 (1974): 13. And, of course, advantage itself may recommend (relative) gentleness, as Diodotus argues in the Mytilinean debate.
179 Pericles too emphasizes this relationship between honor and power, most notably in the Funeral Oration. The present Athenian generation, he says, is worthy of the highest praise because Athens is at the peak of her power. Moreover, power testifies to itself by what it concretely achieves. To use a line from Tennyson’s Ulysses, with which we can only imagine the Athenians would have enthusiastically assented: “How dull it is to pause, to make an end, To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!” Power, especially Athenian power, longs to shine in use.
to accurately gauge Athenian power before beginning a war. She would act prudently by honoring Athens properly.\textsuperscript{180}

According to the envoys, the strong rule. If a city does not rule, then it is weak, or weaker than ruling cities if stronger than enslaved ones. By the strict logic of the Athenian doctrine, there would appear to be no difference between that which is held and that which is reasonably held. While no power is strong enough to resist rule—strong cities are weak in the face of still stronger compulsions—strong cities, the envoys claim, are praiseworthy to the extent that they rule more mildly than their power allows. This is styled magnanimity. It is precisely this relative gentleness, the Athenians say, which inspires so much resentment against Athens. Despite their flirtation with necessity, the envoys are not prepared to abandon justice or virtue.

In his preface to the speech, Thucydides had stressed that the Athenian wished to communicate Athenian power, while the envoys themselves had said that they would show that Athens holds her empire reasonably and is worthy of renown. According to the strict logic of the Athenian doctrine of necessity itself, power, holding empire reasonably, and being worthy of renown are the same.\textsuperscript{181} It would appear to be the envoys’ doctrine itself that resolves the discrepancy between Thucydides’ summary of their intention and their own claims. We turn to the third major part of the Athenian speech.

\textsuperscript{180} In his first speech, which we will discuss below, Pericles articulates the same view.
\textsuperscript{181} “Likewise, it follows from the initial refusal of self-justification and from the subsequent rejection of the argument from justice, on which we have already commented, that the ‘reasonableness’ of Athenian rule will consist precisely in the fact that Athens is a powerful city, such as will inevitably acquire and seek to extend control of others; it is in this sense that they consider themselves worthy (ἀξιοί) of their empire …” Malcolm Heath, “Justice in Thucydides’ Athenian Speeches,” \textit{Historia} 39 (1990): 386.
Ruling Others (1.77)

According to the envoys, Athens allows her subject-cities to be tried by Athenian law. Rather than receiving gratitude, she gains a reputation for litigiousness (1.77.1). Others who rule more harshly are not equally reproached. To explain this phenomenon, the Athenians offer a psychology of might and right where justice too implies some assessment of power. According to the envoys, for whosoever can compel by force, there is no need of justice besides (βιάζεσθαι γὰρ οἶς ἂν ἐξῇ, δικάζεσθαι οὐδὲν προσδέονται, 1.77.2). Because Athens is stronger than her subjects, she can gratify her desires without recourse to law. Yet out of magnanimity she chooses not to do this. The implication is that law is a means for securing benefit, especially for the weak, if a mostly ineffective one. Law is also a mechanism for adjudicating the disputes of parties equal in power.

Athens graciously masks her own power by allowing the use of law to arbitrate disputes. This magnanimity, however, falsely communicates a false equality in power, causing her subjects to believe that they rightfully associate with her on equal terms. If contrary to this presumption, her subjects are defeated in a judgment or overcome by the Empire, so far from being grateful not to lose still more, they are angrier at the loss than they would be if from the very beginning Athens had set aside law and manifestly took more than her share (ἀποθέμενοι τὸν νόμων φανέρώς ἐπιλεονεκτουμένει, 1.77.3).
In the latter case, the Athenians say, her subjects would never claim that the weak ought not yield to the strong (1.77.3). The difference in the strength of the parties would have been proved by deed, and the manifest necessity of bowing to superior force would attenuate the sense of being wronged by disproving that equality presumed by every offended sense of justice. Genuine recourse to law—as opposed to the grace of the strong, or the last-ditch appeal of the weak—occurs when equal powers, unable by strength alone to achieve their objectives, find themselves stalemated. On the basis of these claims about justice, the conclusion of the Athenian speech is not without respect for Spartan power. To it we now turn.

**Arbitration and Spartan Power (1.77.6-1.78)**

According to the Athenians, although the allies suffered worse under the Mede, Athenian rule is painful to them, and reasonably so. For the present always heavily weighs upon the ruled (1.77.5). The envoys once more turn toward the Spartans, claiming that if they were to bring down the Athenian Empire and rule in its place, they would quickly lose the good will of the allies, which is the natural result of their fear of Athens. This would be especially true if the Spartans ruled in the same fashion as they did after the Median war. For the lawful things (τὰ νόμῳα) of Sparta, the Athenians say, do not mix with those of others. And whenever a Spartan leaves Sparta, he observes neither Spartan

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laws nor any other Hellenic ones (1.77.6). The behavior of the Spartan regent Pausanias—outlined later in the first book—corroborates this Athenian jab.\footnote{And they are probably referring to Pausanias. De Romilly notes that “Lysander repeated the mistakes of Pausanias; he rapidly abandoned Spartan customs, causing concern to Sparta as well as annoyance to the allies, and was, like Pausanias, recalled by the ephors in order to be judged.” De Romilly, \textit{Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism}, 263. It may perhaps be the case—on the basis of the assumption that the \textit{History} is incomplete—that the Athenian Alcibiades and the Spartan Lysander are intended to pick up the Themistocles-Pausanias pairing of the first book.}

The Athenians conclude their speech by repeating that Sparta should deliberate slowly and not be persuaded by her allies to make a hasty declaration of war. Here, for the first time in the speech, the Athenians stress the role of chance and the incalculable. War, they say, operates contrary to reason, and Sparta would do well to keep this firmly in mind (1.78.1). It quickly becomes a game of chances (ἐς τύχας), to which all men are equally vulnerable (1.78.2). The blows of fortune rain down upon strong and weak alike, while risks are forever run in the dark. With these lines, the Athenians may perhaps hope to slow Sparta by appealing to her known propensity to fear the unknown future.

This appeal to fortune sounds a false note, but the discordance discloses something question-begging about the Athenian speech itself. Throughout, the Athenians have derogated the role of chance. One strand of their argument clearly suggests that strength efficiently manifests itself as rule over others. If a successful outcome is purely the product of power or capacity or virtue, then chance is conquerable, or at least bendable by the strong.\footnote{“For one might say that what the Athenian discovered as a body on their ships [during the Persian wars] is the enormous potential of purely human power—that is, human power standing on its own and bereft of its traditional supports, terrestrial or otherwise.” Forde, “Thucydides on the Causes of Athenian Imperialism,” 437.} The Nietzsche quotation with which this chapter begins, “no victor believes in chance”, captures this view. Daring risks hubris, which is to say hubris in the
face of the incalculable future. Boldness may magnify Athenian power, but the Athenians nonetheless risk erring in the pursuit of advantage. They risk flying too close to the sun.

Human beings enter into wars, the envoys say, clutching tight to those deeds that it is necessary to do, but upon suffering, they attach themselves to speeches instead (1.78.3). The Athenians are not making an error of this sort (ἐν οὐδεμιᾷ πω τοιαύτῃ ἁμαρτίᾳ), nor do they see the Spartans doing the same. The envoys hereby encourage the Spartans to deliberate at greater length before embarking upon a war. While it still remains possible for each side to engage in good counsel (ἡ εὐβουλία), the Athenians strongly exhort the Spartans not to break the Thirty Years’ Treaty or to violate their oaths, but instead to allow any quarrels to be settled by arbitration as it is set down in the Treaty.

If Sparta will not do this, the Athenians call upon the gods of the oaths to witness that they will defend themselves against those who begin a war (1.78.4). The Athenians conclude their bold speech by sounding this note of justice, by offering to resolve any quarrel by arbitration, but also by asserting that if Sparta refuses do so, she will bear responsibility, i.e., αἰτία, for the Peloponnesian war. If justice is applicable to situations where the balance of power is equal, then this Athenian offer of arbitration represents an acknowledgement of Spartan power. Positive justice is also applicable to situations where there is a treaty in place with a mechanism for resolving disputes, as is the case with the Thirty Years’ Peace. Although the speech of the Athenian envoys is bold, it is not without its respect for Spartan power, nor a perceptive grasp of Sparta’s powerful attachment to the lawful.
A final word is necessary about the tension in the envoys’ speech between the pride the Athenians so clearly take in their city and the doctrine of necessity they expound. The logic of the Athenian argument about necessity leaves little room for pride. Although Athens is a strong city, it is not entirely clear that she deserves praise on this account, or, for that matter, for ruling mildly.\(^\text{185}\) It may be the case that the enemies of Athens would do well to recognize the extent and range of her actual power, but it is only truth (or perhaps prudence) that demands this. The envoys, however, appear to feel that they are owed recognition by others, that their city is worthy of a reputation in speech (i.e., honor) in an almost moral sense, and that they are unjustly denied a rightful reputation. Yet what is the benefit of praise itself, as Thucydides has his envoys ask at the beginning of the speech? The Athenian speech sharply poses but does not resolve this tension between necessity and honor and justice.

It is in the Athenian advantage to delay Sparta, and the envoys attempt to deter her through a conveyance of Athenian power, but their effort fails. And, again, Thucydides has taken pains to draw the reader’s attention to its failure. Perhaps it would have been advantageous for the Athenians to dissemble, to communicate Athenian weakness instead of Athenian power, which might perhaps have slowed the Spartans.\(^\text{186}\) It is not entirely clear that Athenian pride always serves the Athenian advantage. Athenian pride, it must


\(^{186}\) Price makes a similar point: “The Athenian argument would be natural at Athens or at a conference of Athenian allies deciding on war, but not at Sparta as an attempt to bring peace or at least delay war. Appeasing the Spartans would, one imagines, have been more readily accomplished by the opposite argument, the stress on common identity and interests of Athens and Sparta.” Price, Thucydides and Internal War, 194.
be noted, is also tied to Athenian truth-telling, to the desire for a correspondence between speech and deed. But sometimes lying may be advantageous. These Athenians, however, appear incapable of underplaying their city’s greatness. And regarding this greatness itself, if the Athenians were truly compelled to attempt to grow powerful, and if they are not themselves responsible for their capacities, then the manifest pride they take in their own power would be unjustifiable. We now turn to the third speech of the Spartan Congress, to the speech of the Spartan King Archidamus.

**The Spartan Debate**

After the speeches delivered by foreign embassies, Thucydides invites his readers to become the hearers of a Spartan debate. These are the first Spartan speeches of the *History*, and just as the speech of the Athenian envoys revealed the character of Athenian power, these Spartan ones disclose the nature of Spartan fear. Not only do they reveal two aspects of Spartan psychology but also Sparta’s view of her strategic and legal situation in 432 BC. Finally, like the Athenian speech before them, the Spartan ones are also touchstones for Corinth’s regime comparison.

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187 Honor and truth demand a correspondence between speech and deed. Honor is won by deed and should be anchored by true deed. Consequently, those who truly love honor must also honor the truth. It is shameful to be proud of unearned praise precisely because it is false praise. This harmony between honor-loving and truth-telling goes some way toward explaining the remarkable candor of Athenian speakers throughout the *History*. Indeed, the *History* itself may perhaps represent the highest example of a correspondence between speech (the *History*) and deed (the Peloponnesian war). In the final analysis, honor-loving may point to truth-seeking. “Thucydidean wisdom reveals the character of human life by presenting deeds and speeches which are not magnified and adorned.” Strauss, *The City and Man*, 158, emphasis added.

188 “The envoys have mistaken the direction in which the fear of Athens would incline Sparta. They would have acted as consistently with their insight into the primacy of fear for Sparta had they sought to *allay* her fear of Athens.” Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 49.
The first speaker, the old King Archidamus, is unsure of the wisdom of war, and he defends the Spartan character against the Corinthian attack. He is apprehensive of the prudence and justice of beginning a war and so he counsels delay. His counterpart, the laconic Sthenelaidas, is angry. In a speech over-flowing with the language of justice, Thucydides has his Spartan Ephor echo his own statement about the growth of Athenian power. According to Sthenelaidas, Sparta must not allow the Athenians to grow more powerful (μὴ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐὰτε μείζους γίγνεσθαι, 1.86.5). Instead, she must fight with full vigor. To the reader, Sthenelaidas cuts a less attractive figure than Archidamus. The question is whether his view of the strategic situation is sounder. He is certainly more persuasive with the Spartans. In the following, we must pay special attention to the Spartan conception of advantage but also to her strategic circumstances.

In the interlude between the foreign speeches and the Spartan ones, Thucydides offers a snapshot of the Spartan mood. The majority believed that the Athenians were committing injustice, and that it was necessary to go to war quickly (ἀδικεῖν τε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἤδη καὶ πολεμητέα εἶναι ἐν τάχει, 1.79.2, emphasis added). These lines suggest the failure of the Athenian speech, which was intended to slow the Spartan drive to war. Like the Athenians before him, Archidamus also wishes to slow the Spartans. There is a strange harmony between his rhetorical intention and theirs.

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189 τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἠγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους … (1.23.6)
190 In large part, this depends on the seriousness of Corinth’s threat to abandon the Peloponnesian League if the Spartans refuse to act (1.71.4).
191 “The king’s speech thus acquires the weight of the last chance for peace.” Stahl, Thucydides, 53.
While the first and last speeches of the Spartan Congress advocate war, the middle two recommend delay. Whereas the Athenians had communicated the power of their city without emphasizing its material resources—stressing the power of their national character instead—Archidamus calls attention to Sparta’s lack of war resources. The Athenian speech revolved around the immaterial elements of power. Archidamus’ focuses on the material ones. The Athenian envoys had communicated the power of the Athenian character to keep Sparta at rest. For the same purpose, Archidamus outlines Sparta’s material weaknesses. He too will be unsuccessful.

**Education, the Spartan Way—The Speech of Archidamus (1.80-1.85.2)**

According to Thucydides, Archidamus is reputed to be intelligent (ξυνετὸς) and moderate (σώφρων). According to the Corinthian embassy, it was trust (τὸ πιστὸν) in her constitution and way of life that made Sparta moderate (καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχετε, 1.68.1). It is therefore appropriate for the “moderate” Archidamus, who so trusts the Spartan constitution and way of life, to defend them against Corinth’s attack. Archidamus is an apostle of Spartan rest, just as the Athenian envoys were spokesman for Athenian motion.

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192 The total power of a city involves both.
193 Is he perhaps only reputed to be intelligent and moderate because the Spartans have no natural standard for judging political excellence? According to Edmunds, “Archidamus is the complete Spartan: he possesses the virtues which he says are the characteristic Spartan virtues (1.79.2, 1.84.2).” Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides, 90. Of course, Sthenelaidas is no less a Spartan than Archidamus, which raises the question of the “completeness” of Archidamus’ presentation.
Archidamus corroborates Corinth’s portrait of the Spartan character. He is slow and cautious. But so far from being harmful, he claims that Sparta’s ways always redound to her benefit. In terms of war, he finds Spartan preparation lacking and consequently her strategic outlook unfavorable. He therefore advocates that the Spartans remonstrate with the Athenians through a series of embassies, all the while properly equipping themselves to fight within two or three years. The following primarily focuses on what Archidamus’ speech reveals about the Spartan advantage. Those parts of the speech detailing Sparta’s material preparation and war strategy will be treated more cursorily, except insofar as they shed light on the character of her regime.  

What will be Sparta’s War? (1.80-1.82)  

Archidamus’ speech is full of the language of preparation and experience. He begins by stressing his own long experience of war. Inexperienced men, he says, especially the young, desire war because of their lack of familiarity with it. He implies that the inexperienced young should defer in this matter to their more experienced elders. Older men know full well that war is neither good nor safe (μήτε ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀσφαλὲς,  

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194 Book one not only treats the causes of the War but also outlines the resources and strategies of the sides. The first speech of Archidamus (1.80-1.85.2), the third Corinthian speech (1.120-1.124), Pericles’ first speech (1.140-1.144), and the Periclean speech in indirect discourse early in book two (2.13.2-9) all focus on preparation and strategy. In places, they even appear to respond to one another. For the best presentation of Spartan war strategy, see P. A. Brunt, “Spartan Policy and Strategy in the Archidamian War,” Phoenix 19 (1965): 255-280. For parallels between these several speeches, see de Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 31, fn 3. For correspondences between the speeches of Archidamus and Pericles in particular, see Edmund F. Bloedow, “The Speeches of Archidamus and Sthenelaidas at Sparta,” Historia 30 (1981): 131–135.  

195 The word for preparation (παρασκευή and cognates) appears eight times in Archidamus’ speech, including its last lines, an exhortation for Sparta to prepare herself: 1.80.3, 1.80.4, 1.82.3, 1.82.5, 1.84.1, 1.84.3, 1.84.4, 1.85.2. The word for experience or inexperience (ἔμπειρός and cognates) appears at 1.80.1 x 2, 1.80.3, 1.81.6. There are many other related words and themes.  

196 Thucydides agrees. At 2.8.1, he emphasizes that the young especially desired war because of their lack of experience with it.
As we will see, the good and the safe are virtually synonymous for the Spartans. Nor will this war be small, Archidamus continues, not on a sober assessment of the situation (σωφρόνως τις αὐτὸν ἐκλογίζοιτο, 1.80.2). Needless to say, a great war is assuredly less good and less safe than a small one.

In his attempt to slow the Spartans, to inspire the proper caution, Archidamus turns to the question of Spartan strategy. Above all he trusts in concrete things—money, men, resources—not immaterial ones. How will Sparta fight? What will be her strategy? Sparta is a match for any of the Peloponnesians, he says. But against the Athenians, men living far away, who have experience of the sea and are fitted out excellently in every way, who have public and private wealth and ships and horses and hoplites and manpower, and tribute-paying allies besides, how is it easy to fight such men? On what basis will the Spartans begin such a war unprepared (ἀπαρασκεύους, 1.80.3)? One of the central themes of the speech is the proper object of Spartan confidence. Overall, Archidamus raises the pertinent question of the winning Spartan strategy against such a well-equipped opponent, all the while stressing the comparative advantages of the Athenians. In this way, he hopes to temper the hot mood, to slow his Spartiates.

He warns that they must not be inflated by the hope that if they ravage Attica it will bring a speedy end to the war (1.81.6). Given that Sparta’s war strategy necessarily involves

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197 Edmunds translates ἀσφαλὲς as predictable, which is possible. “Even with his use of the word ἀσφαλὲς he has signaled the characteristic Spartan respect for tyche.” Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides, 94.
199 Late in the History, Thucydides reveals that it had been commonly thought at the outset of the war that Spartan invasions of Attica would bring Athens to her knees within one to three years (7.28.3).
an invasion of Attica, Archidamus suggests that Sparta has no reason for confidence of victory. The Athenians, he knows, will not be slaves to their land nor frightened by any lack of experience (1.81.6). So far from any quick resolution, Sparta will hand down war to the next generation. In this, he proves prescient. Given Athenian preparation and Spartan want of the same, Archidamus advocates that Sparta should more carefully prepare for war before foolishly initiating one. He recommends that Sparta move to acquire resources from the other Hellenes and perhaps from the barbarians as well (1.82.1).

All of Archidamus’ points are deflationary. He argues that the Spartans must not be inflated by hope or by the speeches of their allies (ἐπαίρεσθαι, 1.81.6, 1.83.3). He will later assert that a Spartiate is never inflated by the pleasures (ἡδονῇ) of praise to run risks contrary to what he deems good (again ἐπαίρεσθαι, 1.84.2). In his view, a Spartan ought to be immune from the pleasure of praise, the pain of insult, and the enticements of hope.

The Spartans should not yet mobilize their army (1.82.1). They should instead send to the Athenians to remonstrate—literally, to impute αἰτία or blame (πέμπειν δὲ καὶ αἰτίασθαι)—revealing neither the desire to fight nor that Sparta will yield (μὴ τε πόλεμον ἀγαν δηλοῦντας μήθ᾽ ὡς ἐπιτρέψομεν, 1.82.1). Here, Archidamus directly responds to a Corinthian injunction. The Corinthian embassy had announced that Sparta must show that she will not yield to Athenian injustice (ἡν ἀδικῶνται, δῆλοι ὡσι μή

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200 Here, Archidamus echoes the Athenians, who had asserted it irreproachable for a city to set down the advantageous things for itself amidst great dangers (ἀνεπίφθονον, 1.75.5). In normal circumstances, collusion with the barbarians would be (morally) unacceptable.
ἐπιτρέψοντες, 1.71.1). Archidamus agrees but disagrees that Sparta should so quickly tip her hand in the direction of war.

If the Athenians hearken to the proposed embassies, if they are swayed by Spartan speech, then this will be best (ταῦτα ἄριστα, 1.82.2). If not, in two or three years’ time, if it seems good to Sparta then, the well-fortified Spartans can advance against Athens as they see fit. Perhaps the Athenians, observing Spartan preparation and listening to her embassies, will yield, holding onto land not yet ravaged and deliberating about good things not yet destroyed (1.82.3). In this way, Archidamus betrays his belief that the Athenians are like the Spartans, committed to maintaining the present things. As Pericles’ first speech will make clear, this is wishful thinking. The reader is left with the impression that Archidamus hopes to avoid war; and that if it proves unavoidable, he wishes to limit its scope and duration.201

The Corinthians had asserted that Sparta invariably regards the suffering of her allies as the product of private quarrels (1.68.2). This would seem to be Archidamus’ view. He claims that he is not bidding the Spartans be insensitive to their allies, if, he adds, they are being harmed (ἐὰν βλάπτειν), if they are being plotted against by Athens (1.82.1). Moreover, in his conclusion, he advocates that Sparta send embassies to Athens regarding those things the allies claim to have suffered unjustly (οἱ ξύμμαχοι φασὶν ἀδικεῖσθαι, 1.85.2, emphasis added). These are the only times that Archidamus refers to Athenian injustice or harm done by Athens, which contrasts with Sthenelaidas’ speech, so full of

201 “Archidamos is the typical pacific statesman, sensibly anxious to postpone a war and hoping by postponement to avoid it altogether, but not (as far as we know) having made earlier any serious attempt to avoid its causes.” Gomme, An Historical Commentary on Thucydides Volume 1, 248.
the language of harm and injustice.\textsuperscript{202} It is not clear to Archidamus that Corinth’s troubles should be Sparta’s as well (1.82.6).

After proposing his strategy of delay and prepare, Archidamus defends the Spartan manner against the Corinthian critique, justifying that slowness which informs his own strategy of hesitation. In this context, he moves into an important discussion of the Spartan character and the character of Spartan power. Archidamus claims Spartan slowness is advantageous for Sparta. For our purposes, this Archidamian defense of Spartan rest is especially important.

**Sparta’s Constitution and Ways (1.83-1.84)**

Archidamus knows full well that delay invites the charge of cowardice—the Corinthians have insinuated as much—and so he meets the matter squarely. He defends the traditional slowness of the Spartan manner before Spartans. Sparta should not be ashamed of it. It is because of this slowness that she has enjoyed a free and famous city for all time (ἐλευθέραν καὶ εὐδοξοτάτην). Her desire to remain at rest reflects her sensible moderation (σωφροσύνη ἔμφρων, 1.84.1).

Because of moderation, Sparta alone does not become hubristic in prosperity, and she yields less than others in misfortune (1.84.2). When others try to stimulate her with praise

\textsuperscript{202} Archidamus refers to justice one additional time in his speech, but this in reference to Spartan behavior in ignoring the Athenian offer of arbitration. He argues it that it is not lawful to move against those offering arbitration as if proceeding against those committing injustice (1.85.2). In Sthenelaidas’ very short speech, the word justice or injustice (or cognates) appears six times.
to confront risks contrary to what she deems best, she does not become puffed up with pleasure. And if goaded by insults, she does not by becoming angry become persuaded (1.84.2). According to Archidamus, it is moderation that makes the Spartans so immune from the praise and blame of outsiders, while Spartan moderation, as we will see, is bound up with obedience to the laws of Sparta.\footnote{Gomme nicely summarizes Archidamus’ position: “In what follows we have an analysis of this σωφροσύνη in public affairs: it is a refusal to allow the emotions to dominate the judgment, whether those natural to success or to failure, whether pleasure at flattery or annoyance at blame—action determined by any kind of excitement is dangerous and wrong.” Gomme, \textit{An Historical Commentary on Thucydides Volume 1}, 248.}

According to the King, the Spartans are warlike (πολεμικοί) but at the same time wise deliberators (εὐθυμολοι), and both because of their good order (διὰ τὸ εὐκοσμον). They are warlike because their sense of shame (αἰδώς) comprises (μετέχει) the greatest part of their moderation (σωφροσύνης), and because their self-control (εὐψυχία) comprises the greatest part of their sense of shame (αἰσχύνης). And, he continues, they deliberate wisely because they are educated (παιδευόμενοι) to be too ignorant (ἀμαθέστερον) to be suspicious of the laws, and they are also educated (παιδευόμενοι) with the utmost severity to be more moderate (σωφρονέστερον) than to disobey them (1.84.3).\footnote{Education is a major theme of Archidamus’ speech, but these lines may also be a response to Corinth’s earlier (condescending) use of the language of education.} The Spartans do not question or disobey their laws. Their wisdom is the wisdom of their constitution and not that liberation of private judgment that so characterizes the Athenian.\footnote{Finley argues that “the most striking trait of his argument, and that which stands in strongest contrast to the liberalism set forth by Pericles, is its scorn of reason.” Finley is correct that the Spartans are not encouraged to think for themselves. Their decision to go to war, however, is not unreasonable. Finley, \textit{Thucydides}, 132.}
Let us examine these lines about war-likeness and wise deliberation more carefully. Self-control (εὐψυχία), Archidamus says, informs Spartan shame (αἰδώς/αἰσχύνη), which is the larger share of Spartan moderation (σωφροσύνη), while moderation is tied to obedience to law. Thus, Spartan self-control and Spartan moderation are linked via the intermediary of shame, while self-control is a constituent of moderation. Spartan honor then—which is to say shame, αἰδώς/αἰσχύνη, an honor tinged with fear—involves respect for the laws, the ancestors, and the gods, as opposed to Athenian honor, which involves faith in Athenian judgment and power. An Athenian honors himself and his capacities, and he seeks preeminence. The Spartans collectively put their faith in Sparta and seek to avoid the shame of failing her.

The Athenians are bold because they believe in themselves, whereas the Spartans are moderate because of their deference to law. When the law provides little guidance, the Spartans become unsure and apprehensive. This is one cause of Spartan hesitation. The Spartans are clearly more at home in judicial circumstances than deliberative ones, and there are several examples of this throughout the History (cf. the “trial” of the Plataeans, 3.52-68). If we accept as true Corinth’s earlier assertion that the Spartan trust in their constitution and way of life is the source of Spartan moderation (σωφροσύνη), then Spartan courage, like Spartan moderation, would itself be the fruit of Sparta’s trust in her constitution and way of life (1.68.1).206 As Archidamus makes clear, this trust is itself the product of the rigorous Spartan education.

206 In the Funeral Oration, Pericles makes a series of verbal substitutions—in the context of advancing his “Athenian” conception of τὸ εὐψυχίον—that on the level of the language cries out for comparison with Archidamus’s first speech. Pericles argues, in effect, that happiness is freedom and freedom self-control: τὸ εὖδαιμόν = τὸ ἔλευθερον = τὸ εὐψυχίον (2.43.4). Archidamus, for his part, offers a characteristically
According to Archidamus, in speaking of Spartan wisdom or good counsel, the Spartans are educated (παιδευόμενοι) with the utmost severity to be more moderate (σωφρονέστερον) than to disobey the laws (1.84.3, emphasis added). Spartan moderation, then—along with literally everything Spartan—flows from the Spartan education. Every Spartan virtue comes from the Spartan constitution and the way of life that supports it, from what Corinth had termed Sparta’s unmoved laws, written as well as unwritten (τὰ ἀκίνητα νόμιμα, 1.71.3). Every road then leads back to Sparta’s distinctive good order (τὸ εὐκοσμοῦ, 1.84.3), to her unique εὐνομία (1.18.1). Spartan law is the source of Spartan rest. According to Archidamus, Sparta is warlike and wise because of her laws. Her courage and wisdom are of a piece with her trust in her constitution; while the Spartiates trust in their constitution because they are roughly educated to obey it unthinkingly and without hesitation.

It is here—on the theme of education—that Thucydides has his Spartan King make a claim that thematically links the Corinthian speech to the Athenian one. Archidamus says that it is not necessary to believe that there is any great difference between men. The strongest (κράτιστον), he claims, is the one who has been educated (παιδεύεται) in the severest necessities (ἐν τοῖς ἀναγκαιοτάτοις, 1.84.4).

As we have already observed, a “Spartan” definition of εὐψυχία. I agree with Debnar (and others) that Archidamus’ speech “stands as a Spartan counterpart to Pericles’ Funeral Oration.” Debnar, Speaking the Same Language, 68. See also, Finley, Thucydides, 131.

207 This is a response to the Corinthian claim that the Spartans are unaware how Athens differs from them in every respect (1.70.1).

208 Edmunds argues that the expression (ἐν τοῖς ἀναγκαιοτάτοις) refers to the bare minimum of life’s necessities. The interpretation offered here is closer to that of Ostwald, who translates the passages in question as follows: “It is wrong to believe that there is a great difference between one man and another,
Spartiate is not responsible for his virtues. His virtues are not even entirely his. All are Sparta’s. Men are everywhere the same. It is the Spartan education that fashions men into Spartiates. It is presumably some different education that makes men into Athenians. Perhaps the Athenians are even differently educated as regards these selfsame necessities. The statement of Archidamus is fully in character, fully Spartan, but it also represents an important instance of double communication.

Both the Athenian envoys and Archidamus stress the similarity of men. Whereas the Athenians envoys had talked of universal natural drives—fear, honor, and profit—Archidamus stresses convention and education, or the way that a particular convention, specifically the Spartan education, perfects human beings. The educations of Athens and Sparta are the source of the characters of the two regimes. It is the differing educations of some common nature—rival nurtures of natural drives—that account for the differences between Athenians and Spartans. And these educations, as we will see, are not themselves entirely distinct from the historical trajectories of the regimes. To state the overall matter clearly, Archidamus’ claim about education reconciles the regime difference articulated by Thucydides’ Corinthians with the more universal doctrine advanced by his Athenian envoys. Education is the bridge between nature and convention.

but it is right to believe that a superior person is he who is brought up to face the most essential constraints to which all men are subject.” By way of clarification, Ostwald adds: “My translation of this rather difficult passage is perhaps so free as to constitute an interpretation rather than a translation. But there can be no doubt that—presumably to counter the Corinthian contrast of Spartan and Athenian characteristics (1.70)—he denies any natural difference between one man and another, and affirms that an education aimed at recognizing basic ἀνάγκαι that apply to all men makes a person superior to others.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 17. Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides, 96. We will return to this particular issue during the interpretation of the Archaeology below.
Conclusion (1.85)

After his defense of the Spartan manner, Archidamus appeals to the ancestors. The fathers have handed down Spartan practices to the present generation. These practices have benefitted Sparta for all time (ὠφελούµενοι, 1.85.1). They promise to continue to do so, but only if she adheres to them loyally. Sparta must not decide hurriedly in the space of a single day concerning so much men, money, cities, and reputation. Instead, she should deliberate at leisure, slowly, at rest (ἡσυχίαν, 1.85.1). This is uniquely possible for her because of her strength (διὰ ἰσχύν, 1.85.1). The maintenance of the Spartan constitution is the key to securing the Spartan advantage. If the Spartans honor their regime, it will protect them.

Sparta has been free and famous for all time because of her constitution, because of her adherence to her ancestral practices, and because that regime and those practices have conferred the greatest of benefits upon the Spartans. The potency of her regime has been repeatedly proved in deed, by the long duration of Spartan power. As Thucydides states in the Archaeology, Sparta is powerful because of her regime (1.18.1). Archidamus and Thucydides are in agreement as to the source of Spartan power.

In the final lines of their speech, the Athenians had concluded by exhorting Sparta to deliberate slowly because of the vicissitudes of fortune. Using arguments in some tension with the overall thrust of their speech, they had stressed the way in which war is contrary to reason (τοῦ δὲ πολέµου τὸν παράλογον, 1.78.1), that it all too easily becomes an
affair of chances, where risks are run in the dark (1.78.2). These rhetorical gestures were targeted to appeal to Sparta’s fears of fortune and the divine. In this way, the Athenians had suggested that the gods would favor the just Athenians in a war unjustly begun by Sparta.

Archidamus, it would seem, has been persuaded by the Athenians. In his conclusion, he repeats his call to send embassies to the Athenians concerning Potidæa as well as those other injustices that the allies claim they have suffered, especially since the Athenians are offering arbitration. For it is not lawful (οὐ νόμιμον), he adds, to proceed against one offering arbitration as if proceeding against one committing injustice (ὡς ἐπ᾽ ἀδικοῦντα, 1.85.2). While these embassies are remonstrating with the Athenians, Sparta should diligently prepare herself for war. By doing these things, he concludes, Sparta will resolve matters most excellently for herself and in a manner most fearsome to her enemies (1.85.2). Archidamus is concerned about a Spartan violation of the Thirty Years’ Peace, worried lest Sparta bear responsibility (i.e., αἰτία) for the Peloponnesian war.

Let us step back. Spartan conservatism is bound up with anxiety about fortune and the unknowable future. Although careful preparation can mitigate chance, Archidamus knows that the blows of fortune are not ultimately soluble to reason or calculation (1.84.3). The Corinthians had earlier suggested that Spartan inaction increased the power of chance in ways harmful to the Spartan interest, that Sparta was overly deferential to chance (1.69.5). The Spartans, for their part, believe that by avoiding injustice they arm

themselves against the blows of fortune. In distinguishing the Spartan view from the Athenian view, one major issue is the power and character of chance.\textsuperscript{210}

From an Athenian (and Corinthian) perspective, Archidamus is too deferential to fortune. But if he is correct, then the Athenians are dangerously hubristic, and the Spartans properly moderate. The Athenians risk divine envy or, naturalistically, the limits of human action. Late in the \textit{History}, Thucydides reveals that Sparta believed the capture of her men on Sphacteria to represent punishment for her transgression of the Peace, for her failure to accept the Athenian offer of arbitration (7.18).\textsuperscript{211} By acting justly, the Spartans believe that they ward off evil by inclining fortune in their favor, but by behaving unjustly—violating their oaths, for instance—they risk divine chastisement. Contrary to the Athenian doctrine of the advantageous, the Spartans believe that securing the advantageous things \textit{requires} justice, because efficacy in the attainment of ends depends upon the justice of the end in question. Avoiding unjust harm to others is critical for safeguarding the advantageous things for oneself, because the gods play in that space between intention and outcome, in the unknowable future, where γνώμη or λόγος only imperfectly reach.\textsuperscript{212} No amount of virtue or preparation can smoothly determine an outcome, since fortune can always upset the best laid plans, causing even the warlike and wise to stumble. Archidamus is concerned about the justice of beginning a great war

\textsuperscript{210} “In the same way that Athenian restlessness is related to technical innovation, so, according to Archidamus’ analysis, Spartan sluggishness is related to a sense of a general limitation imposed on human intelligence by the power of chance.” Edmunds, \textit{Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides}, 96.

\textsuperscript{211} The Spartans “thus imply that justice enjoys cosmic support and that it weighs heavily upon human beings not as a necessity in the strictest sense (in which case they would be unable to flout it and could not claim merit for observing it) but as a supreme law.” Orwin, \textit{The Humanity of Thucydides}, 62.

\textsuperscript{212} In relation to our theme, Edmunds notes that “the Spartans, too, think, in terms of the tyche-gnome antithesis. They, however, grant \textit{tyche} a wider scope than does Pericles, and they mean by gnome a tenacious adherence to their traditional ways.” Edmunds, \textit{Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides}, 91. Again Spartan wisdom is the wisdom of the Spartan constitution.
against Athens. This particular worry is the product of his vision of the cosmos: that there are gods concerned with upholding justice.

It is possible to hazard a naturalistic account of this typically Spartan attitude toward fortune. The Spartans are roughly educated to obey the law in all matters. From childhood, they are punished whenever they violate it. This respect for the law, conjoined with the fear of punishment that forever attends it, causes a cloud to hang over the Spartans. If ever they violate the law, if ever they commit injustice, they live in the anticipation of punishment. Apprehensive, they await the sanction of some inscrutable judge. Violating the law is no trifling matter for a Spartan.

And yet the Spartan Congress culminates with a Spartan vote for war. Like the speech of the Athenian envoys, the speech of Archidamus fails. It fails to temper the Spartan impulse to fight. Somehow, Sthenelaidas’ speech proves more persuasive than the longer one of Archidamus.213 We must attempt to solve this puzzle, while at the same time examining how the Ephor’s speech qualifies and completes Archidamus’ presentation of the Spartan character.214

213 Bloedow concisely articulates the puzzle. Archidamus’ “masterful speech, then, prepares the reader, psychologically for one thing, and one thing only: a Spartan decision against going to war (unless, of course, his arguments were to be refuted). And yet the Spartans promptly proceed to do the very opposite.” Bloedow, “The Speeches of Archidamus and Sthenelaidas at Sparta,” 135.

The Speech of Sthenelaidas (1.86)

Sthenelaidas’ speech is suffused with the single point that encroachment upon the Spartan confederacy is a sufficient justification for war. In his final lines, Sthenelaidas echoes Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις about the growth of Athenian power. Athenian power manifests itself as Athenian entanglement with the interests of Corinth, Megara, Aegina, and others. Sparta cannot countenance this. Athens is interfering with the Peloponnesian League, a mechanism for safeguarding the Spartan advantage. She must be brought to her knees.

Sthenelaidas opens by remarking that he does not understand the Athenian speech, which smacked of sophistry to Spartan ears. The Athenians, he says, praised themselves a good deal but never denied they were committing injustice against Sparta’s allies (1.86.1). Sthenelaidas is right. The Athenians did not deny committing injustice, but their argument about the sway of necessity did furnish a broader defense of their city. Nor, indeed, did the Athenians deny that they were harming Sparta’s allies. The only issue for Sthenelaidas whether the alliance is endangered by Athens or not.

If the Athenians were once good (ἀγαθοὶ) against the Persians, Sthenelaidas says, but are now bad—some fifty years later—vis-à-vis Sparta (κακοὶ), they merit a two-fold penalty. For instead of remaining good, they have become bad instead (1.86.1). The Spartans, he continues, are the same then and now (1.86.2). Interestingly, Sthenelaidas’ blame of Athens is linked to the Persian wars. He castigates Athens for failing to benefit Sparta
consistently in spectacular fashion, as she did during the Persian wars, plus current harm to the Spartan interest. Athens therefore merits a penalty proportionate to this change from past benefit to present harm. Overall, throughout Sthenelaidas’ speech, “justice” and “injustice” and “good” and “bad” appear pegged to the Spartan advantage. Sthenelaidas’ guiding star is apparently the Spartan interest, the collective selfishness of the Spartans. He infuses this position with an angry sense of merit or desert.

Sthenelaidas’ use of the language of punishment also reveals a characteristically legalistic and retributive Spartan disposition. A Spartan should be judged by Spartan law. Foreigners should be judged by their contribution to the Spartan interest and punished if they harm it. If this is true, then Spartan judgment is, finally, based on advantage rather than justice. The conflict between Archidamus and Sthenelaidas reveals a tension between the Spartan domestic imperative—adherence to covenants without exception—and the demands of her foreign policy. The conflict revolves around the question of whether the requirements of justice or legality, which are essential to the maintenance of Sparta’s domestic ways—to a kind of advantage—always correspond with the demands of her foreign policy. Should Sparta defend her confederacy at the risk of violating the Peace?

In a jab at Archidamus, Sthenelaidas argues that true moderation demands the vigorous defense of the alliance. It does not counsel delay, for the allies are not on the verge of suffering evil but suffering it in fact (1.86.2). Others have a great deal of money and ships and horses. Sparta has good allies (ξύμισχοι ἄγαθοι, 1.86.3). The allies are a
component of Spartan strength, and they must be defended. Once again, “good”—here used in reference to the allies—is a label bespeaking contribution to the Spartan advantage.

In Sthenelaidas’ view, Sparta must not hand her allies over to the Athenians or decide the disputes by arbitration or speeches. Her allies are not being harmed in word but in deed (1.86.3). This is the only mention of harm in his speech, and it is linked to injustice, although the terms appear almost synonymous throughout.\(^{215}\) So far from delaying, Sparta must aid her allies quickly and with all of her might (ἀλλὰ τιμωρητέα ἐν τάχει καὶ παντὶ σθένει, 1.86.3).\(^{216}\)

Finally, let no one, proclaims Sthenelaidas, in another jab at Archidamus, teach that it is fitting for Sparta to deliberate while suffering injustice. It is more fitting for those preparing to do injustice to deliberate at length (1.86.4). Sparta is being harmed now, her interests are being harmed now, and so she must act now. Sthenelaidas ends by urging his Spartans to vote worthily of Sparta for war, neither allowing the Athenians to grow greater still nor to hand over the allies to them, but instead with the gods to advance against those committing injustice (1.86.5).

For Archidamus, justice and advantage recommend delay. In terms of justice, he is concerned about the legality of rejecting the Athenian offer of arbitration. In terms of advantage, he believes that Sparta is unprepared for war, and she requires time to prepare

\(^{215}\) See fn 202 above.
\(^{216}\) Allison argues that the term, παντὶ σθένει, is an intentional pun used by Sthenelaidas, given its common use in treaties. Allison, “Sthenelaidas’ Speech,” 15–16.
herself adequately. By Sthenelaidas’ lights, justice and advantage recommend war. With regard to advantage, it is imperative for Sparta to defend her alliance. With regard to justice, Sthenelaidas argues that it is just to respond to Athenian injustice—harm to the Sparta’s interest—by launching a war to break Athenian power. But he also claims that Sparta will proceed against the unjust Athenians with the help of the gods. Sthenelaidas claims that the gods favor the just. Archidamus agrees but fears that the legal issue favors the Athenians. He is afraid that the gods will be against Sparta.

**The War Vote**

After his speech, Sthenelaidas leads a war vote of the Spartan Assembly. Following an initial vote, where he claims that he cannot determine which shout was louder, but in fact wishing to make the Spartans publicly display their decision for war so as to stir them up still more, he announces, “to whomever of you, Spartans, it appears that the treaty has been violated and the Athenians have done injustice, stand on that spot”, pointing to a place (δοκοῦσι λελύσθαι αἱ σπονδαί καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ἀδικεῖν, 1.87.2). “And to whomever these things do not appear to be so, stand over there.” The Spartans stand and separate, and, according to Thucydides, there were many more to whom it seemed that the treaty had been broken (1.87.3).

Sthenelaidas’ framing of the vote suggests that an Athenian violation of the treaty is a necessary and sufficient condition of Sparta beginning a war (1.87.2, 1.87.3, 1.87.6 and 217)

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217 It should be recalled that Corinth ended her speech with a threat to abandon the Spartan confederacy, which would significantly weaken the alliance.
1.88). But in fact and not opinion, it is Sparta who first clearly violates the Treaty by ignoring the Athenian offer of arbitration.\(^{218}\) Hypocrisy, then, would appear to be that manner by which Sparta marries the position of Archidamus with that of Sthenelaidas. Hypocrisy would appear to be the way that Sparta harmonizes justice and advantage, while denying the existence of a tension between them.

When the Spartan interest comes into conflict with the demands of justice, when Sparta’s fear for her interests overcomes her fear of injustice, the Spartans bend the claims of justice. But they so do uncomfortably. In the present circumstance, Sparta’s fear of Athenian power—the risk Athens poses to Sparta’s confederacy—overcomes her fear of violating the Thirty Years’ Peace. Her apprehension regarding the latter—or perhaps her anger at the threat to her interests—manifests itself in the specious claim that it was Athens who first violated it.\(^{219}\) The disagreement between Archidamus and Sthenelaidas would seem to expose a tension within Sparta between the just and the advantageous, between the requirements of Sparta’s domestic policy, where justice must rule, and foreign policy, where interest holds far greater sway.

After the vote, the Spartans announce to their allies that it appears to them that the Athenians have committed injustice. They wish the Peloponnesian League to assemble

\(^{218}\) The double use of δοκεῖν may have an ironic undertone: i.e., to those of the Spartans to whom it seems the Athenians have violated the treaty and committed injustice. δοκεῖν, however, it should immediately be conceded, is perhaps technical here. The verb often figures in the formal resolutions of cities. Nonetheless, there remains a difference between opinion and fact. And in fact, it is Sparta who will violate the Treaty by ignoring Athens’ offer of arbitration.

\(^{219}\) I can perhaps agree with Bloedow that the decision “emerged out of an essentially irrational mood”—i.e., that the Spartans were angry when they voted—but I cannot agree that this makes the decision itself irrational. The question is whether delay favors Athens or Sparta. The Athenians clearly believe delay favors them, since it was precisely their embassy’s intention to slow Sparta. Bloedow, “The Speeches of Archidamus and Sthenelaidas at Sparta,” 142.
for a vote, so that they might resolve upon war in common (1.87.4). Immediately following the Congress, Thucydides digresses to offer an account of the growth of Athenian power from the end of the Persian wars to the beginning of the Peloponnesian. Before interpreting the Pentecontaetia in light of the Congress, a few framing remarks are first necessary about the “Athenian” logic of the truest πρόφασις.

The Athenian Logic of the Truest πρόφασις

The Spartan Congress ends with a Thucydidean restatement of the priority of Spartan fear, while the Pentecontaetia is book-ended by assertions about Spartan fear and Athenian power. Thucydides uses the framing sentences at 1.88 and 1.118, which echo 1.23.6, to draw out the thematic significance of the Congress and Pentecontaetia in relation to the truest πρόφασις. In 1.88, he reiterates in his own voice that the Spartans voted that the Athenians had violated the treaty and that it was necessary to make war quickly, not so much because they were persuaded by their allies’ speeches, but more because they feared lest the Athenians become still more powerful, seeing most of Hellas already subordinate to them (1.88). Chapter 1.89 introduces the Pentecontaetia and picks up this theme of Athenian growth.

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220 It was presumably at this stage, the formal vote of the League, that Corinth had blocked the Peloponnesian effort to aid Samos several years before (1.40.5). This suggests that Sparta herself voted to take action in 440 BC, as she did eight years later in 432. The vote of the Peloponnesian League, which will be discussed below, does not appear to be pro forma.

221 Although the rise of Athens is noted in the Archaeology, it is only glossed there (1.18.3). Thucydides details the growth of Athenian power, the development of the Athenian empire, in the Pentecontaetia. The two sections form a natural pair: narrative chapters outlining the growth of power.
The Spartan Congress ends with a Spartan vote that Athens has transgressed the Peace. On the basis of Athenian injustice, Sparta claims she must fight. Although Sparta poses as the defender of the Treaty, Thucydides leaves little doubt it is Sparta who first clearly violates it by ignoring the offer of arbitration. The juridical issue then favors Athens. In this way, Sparta would seem to bear ἀἰτία for the Peloponnesian war. On legal grounds—and by light of her own preoccupation with justice—she is blameworthy for the war.

Yet Thucydides himself presents Sparta as compelled by her fears (1.23.6), while his Athenian envoys had argued that fear, honor, and profit compel the behavior of all cities. There seems to be overlap between the views of Thucydides and those of his Athenian envoys regarding necessity or compulsion. If a city is compelled to act in some way or another, then its actions can be neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. A city must choose its ends if it is to be held accountable. If truly compelled, Sparta cannot bear ἀἰτία for the Peloponnesian war.

But Spartan fear is insufficient to explain the outbreak of the war. According to Thucydides, it is fear of Athenian power that compelled Sparta to violate the Peace. In 432 BC, the growth of Athenian power threatened the Hellenic status quo, negatively excusing or positively justifying Sparta’s preventive war. But if Sparta is compelled to fight, is Athens to be blamed for the war? Yes, unless Athens was herself under the constraints of necessity in growing powerful. This, of course, is the argument of the Athenian envoys at Sparta. The subject of the Pentecontaetia, which immediately follows
the Congress, is the growth of Athenian power—\textsuperscript{222}a story that begins with the rebuilding of a destroyed Athens after the Persian wars. The Pentecontaetia ends in 435 BC, just before the quarrels surrounding Corcyra and Potidaea (1.118.1).

The tangled question of the blame for the Peloponnesian war is the manner by which Thucydides opens a dialectic between the claims of justice and necessity. Like Plato’s Socrates, Thucydides begins within the horizon of political life, with the charges and counter-charges advanced by the belligerents. The question of αἰτία, or responsibility, implies blame and therefore justice. It is in this context that Thucydides has his Athenian envoys introduce their claims about necessity.

As quick reflection will prove, the question of blame implies the matter of cause. Over the course of the first book of the History, the question of who is to blame for the war, a question of justice, becomes the question of who (or what) is responsible for it, which may or may not admit of justice or blame. If war is necessary because of Spartan fear, Spartan fear is responsible for war, although Sparta herself may be blameless, if compelled by her fear. In this way, Thucydidean necessity—first introduced in response to allegations of injustice—points to human nature, to the psychology of Athenian growth and Spartan fear, which are themselves rooted in the differing characters and structures of the two principal cities. Necessity ultimately bears αἰτία for the Peloponnesian war. In the final analysis, necessity proves indistinguishable from Thucydides’ account of human nature.

\textsuperscript{222} The role of Themistocles is of supreme importance in the development of Athenian power. It will be discussed more fully below.
If Sparta is compelled to make war in the face of rising Athenian power, and if Athens is compelled to grow powerful, then compulsion points the reader in the direction of the growth of Athenian power, to the Pentecontateia. These chapters, in turn, point him further backward to the Archaeology, where Thucydides reveals how human nature developed differently in response to the varying historical circumstances of Athens and Sparta. Having already revealed a Thucydidean story about the characters of Athens and Sparta, we now turn to an examination of the Pentecontaetia, to those circumstances that contributed to the remarkable growth of Athenian power in the period following the Persian wars.
The Truest πρόφασις, the Pentecontaetia (1.89-1.118)²²³

The Pentecontaetia furnishes a wide angled lens on the events triggering the Peloponnesian war, while at the same time further expanding upon Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for it.²²⁴ Having presented the manifest quarrels, Thucydides now offers a broader view of Athenian-Spartan relations across a fifty-year interval, from the end of the Persian wars to the beginning of the Peloponnesian. The Pentecontaetia deepens and transforms the reader’s understanding of the preliminary quarrels as well as the Congress at Sparta. It is also a missing piece of the prefatory Archaeology, of the longer arc of the growth of Hellenic power.²²⁵


²²⁴ The Pentecontaetia is sometimes called a commentary on the speech of the Athenian envoys at Sparta, but it is in fact a commentary and expansion on the whole Congress, which itself is an expansion on the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war. “The Pentekontaetia attempts to present a cogent argument to support the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις, the “truest explanation” of the war.” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 37. “The accounts of the First and Second Lacedaemonian Congress are interrupted by the pentekontaetia, which provides the factual basis for the growth of Athenian power and Spartan fear between the end of the Persian and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and thus supplies the underpinning for what had been only a general statement at I.23.6.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 30–31. On the speech of the Athenian envoys and the Pentecontaetia, de Romilly notes that the “two passages reveal a similar tendency: without in any way modifying the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις, they form a commentary on Athenian imperialism [i.e., the growth of Athenian power] and throw it into greater relief.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 35.

²²⁵ “The Archaeology argues not merely that the Peloponnesian War was the most important until that time, but shows how, over the passage of time, power became concentrated enough to set up a conflict on that scale. This development stops with the Persian War, leaving the Pentecontaetia to bridge the gap.” Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 48. “In the Pentekontaetia, therefore, Thucydides has applied the same method and criteria used in the Archaeology to illuminate and to judge the development of Athenian power.” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 68.
As we have discussed at length, Thucydides frequently uses necessity to refer to the interplay between psychology and circumstance. The speeches at Sparta furnish the psychology (the λόγοι), the Pentecontaetia those historical circumstances (or ἔργα) that make clear why war broke out in 432 BC. After scrutinizing the Spartan Congress, the reader is positioned to grasp the character of Athenian growth and Spartan response across time. The Pentecontaetia is also written in Thucydides’ own voice and so represents a kind of touchstone for the claims of the Congress.

The thirty odd chapters can be divided into two major parts. The first, which runs from 1.89 to 1.96, outlines the key circumstances that made possible the growth of Athenian power. The second, longer section spans the remaining chapters, 1.97 to 1.118, and sketches how the Athenians turned their initial hegemony into an empire (1.97.1-2). It

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226 “In so far that, for Thucydides, the true reason for the Spartan decision [for war] was Spartan fear of Athenian growing power, and that the Spartan decision was decisive in the development of war from the representation of grievances, the passage 89-118, as an account of the Athenian growth which alarmed Sparta, is at the same time an account of ἡ ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις: it is, from its introduction and conclusion, no more and no less than an account of the growth of Athenian power written to explain Spartan alarm and a particular Spartan decision.” Walker, “The Purpose and Method of ‘The Pentecontaetia’ in Thucydides, Book I,” 31. This “decision” is the Spartan vote for war of 432 BC.

227 De Romilly notes that the Athenian speech “is the only time in the whole of Thucydides’ work, that the feelings of Athens receive an explanation, and the Pentecontaetia provides no means for checking its validity; for it describes the practical system which enables Athens’ power to grow, but never gives the initial reason why this should happen.” De Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 253. The following interpretation maintains that these “feelings” reference by De Romilly inform not only Athenian behavior but Spartan as well, and that the Pentecontaetia furnishes the circumstances in which the motivations introduced at the Congress play out from the end of the Persian wars to the beginning of the Peloponnesian. In a similar vein, Connor writes that the Pentecontaetia “further illustrates the energy of the Athenians and helps corroborate the Corinthian characterization of the contrast between the Spartans and the Athenians.” Connor, Thucydides, 51. Rawlings maintains that the narrative reveals how the Athenians exhibited the ways (τρόποι) of their city discussed by the Corinthians at Sparta and later by Pericles—what we have been calling the character of the city. I would only add that the Pentecontaetia also reveals something of the τρόποι of the Spartans, in their response to the growth of Athenian power. Hunter R Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides’ History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 86.

228 “In addition to its other functions, the Pentecontaetia provides an opportunity to test the ideas and generalizations that were adduced in the first debate at Sparta.” Connor, Thucydides, 43. Orwin maintains that the Pentecontaetia supports the claim of the Athenian envoys at Sparta that the growth of the power of Athens was largely justified by security considerations (i.e., by fear), even if security was not the sole motive. Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 50–53. See also fn 240 below.
concludes with the Samian revolt of 440 BC, which occurs several years before the conflict over Epidamnus.

The Elements of Empire (1.89-1.97)

The Pentecontaetia opens with the claim that it will show the manner in which the Athenians came into those circumstances from which their city grew (ἐν οἷς ἡξήθησαν, 1.89.1). Its first part outlines these key circumstances. Thucydides begins by offering a paired treatment of the post-Persian war activities of Themistocles, the Athenian, and Pausanias, the Spartan, the most brilliant men of their era (1.138.6). After the Persian retreat, it was the patriotic foresight of the Athenian that led to the growth of Athenian power, while it was the private ambition and unrestrained violence of the Spartan that alienated the Hellenic allies, driving them into the arms of the Athenians.

The Pentecontaetia begins with the Spartan King Leotychides returning to Sparta from Mykale along with the other Peloponnesians. With the defeat of the Persians, as we might expect, the Spartans promptly return home. When the Persians abandon Athens, which

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229 Like the Archaeology, this growth is described in organic terms. Compare the similar uses of αὐξάνω at 1.2.6, 1.12.1, and 1.16.
230 Thucydides uses the first and last sentences of these chapters to emphasize their significance for the development of Athenian power. At 1.93, he indicates that such was the way (τοῦτω τῷ τρόπῳ) the Athenian walled their city in a short time (1.93), and at 1.96, after recounting the actions of Pausanias, such was the way (τοῦτω τῷ τρόπῳ) the Athenians received the hegemony over willing Hellenic allies due to their hatred of Pausanias (1.96.1, etc). Kallet states the issue nicely. “In fact, the need to fix each decision and action as it unfolded arises from Thucydides’ very purpose in writing this section: to isolate each significant step in the evolution of Athenian power.” Money, Expense, and Naval Power in Thucydides’ History 1-5.24, 40.
231 After the Pentecontaetia and the vote of the Peloponnesian League, Thucydides offers a second discussion of Pausanias and Themistocles, which picks up the threads of these chapters.
the Athenians themselves had abandoned to become a fighting city at sea, the Athenians begin to rebuild their city, especially its ruined walls (1.89.3).

The Spartans dispatch an embassy to discourage the Athenians from rebuilding their walls, because, according to Thucydides, they thought it more pleasant (ᾲδιον) for there to be no walls in Hellas. They were also urged on by their allies, who feared the Athenian navy and the daring of the Athenians (τὴν ἐς τὸν Μῆδικὸν πόλεμον τόλμαν γενομένην, 1.90.1). Here, Thucydides presents the Peloponnesians as afraid of two of the three most beneficial things the Athenian envoys had asserted that their city contributed to the Hellenic common good during the Persian war: the largest contingent of ships and an unhesitating zeal (προθυμίαν ἄκνοστάτην, 1.74.1).

It is in the context of the rebuilding of Athens that Thucydides introduces Themistocles, the man the Athenians had presented as responsible for victory at Salamis. Themistocles advises the Athenians to send home the Spartan delegation and to dispatch him forthwith to Sparta to negotiate. He tells his Athenians that they must spare no effort to build their walls with utmost haste. Heeding his injunction, the whole people (πανδῆμεί) work diligently, sparing neither private nor public building in the effort to ensure the common defense (1.90.3). Just as the Athenians had collectively abandoned Athens to take to their

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232 Sparta herself has none.
233 Despite Archidamus’ claim that the Spartans are immune from being stirred up (ἐξοτρυνόντων) by the pleasures of praise and unmoved, if someone tries to goad them with blame (ἡν τις ἀρα ξύν κατηγορίᾳ παροξύνῃ, 1.84.2), Thucydides here indicates that the Spartans were (successfully) urged on by their allies (ἐξοτρυνόντων, 1.90.1); he had also emphasized that at Sparta the Corinthians had arranged to speak last among the Spartan allies so as to excite Sparta to war (παροξύναι, 1.67.5). These narrative indications—the repetition of the very words used by Archidamus—appear to refute (or at least qualify) the King’s claim.
234 Later, Thucydides states that the Spartans were well disposed to the Athenians because of this same courage (τὴν ἐς τὸν Μῆδον προθυμίαν, 1.92).
ships (πανδημεί, 1.73.4), so too is the rebuilding of Athens a collective enterprise, involving the unsparing subordination of private goods to the common one.

Arriving at Sparta, Themistocles uses a series of expedients to delay meeting with the authorities until the walls of Athens reach a defensible height. Despite their mistrust of Athens, the Spartans trust Themistocles. This is an error. Thucydides consistently presents Themistocles as an unabashed Athenian partisan, willing to advance his city’s interests by any means whatsoever. Upon the completion of the walls, Thucydides reproduces a Themistoclean pronouncement to the Spartans, which echoes something of the position articulated by the Athenian envoys.

The central elements of Themistocles’ short speech are as follows. The walls of Athens are of a sufficient height to protect those living within the city as well as in Attica. If the Spartans or allies wish to negotiate, they should know that the Athenians are capable of judging their own advantage and the common one (διαγιγνώσκοντας ... τά τε σφίσιν αὐτοῖς ξύµφορα καὶ τὰ κοινά, 1.91.4). When it appeared best to abandon Athens and to embark upon their ships, the Athenians did so without Spartan consultation. In the Athenian view, it is now best for Athens to have walls. This state of affairs will be beneficial for Athens as well as for the allies (ὠφελίµωτερον, 1.91.6). For it is not possible from unequal power to deliberate equally regarding the common good (ἐς τὸ κοινόν, 1.91.7).
According to Themistocles, the common good is ensured by the balance of power, where parties equal in strength play equal roles in deliberating about it. The Hellenic common good, in other words, is some aggregate of private goods. If those deliberating are of equal strength, no city’s interests can be sacrificed to any another’s, since each will take care of its own and thereby safeguard the common. Here, Themistocles implies that power in deed always frames deliberation in speech. In response to the fact of Athens’ walls and the pronouncement of Themistocles, the Spartans, Thucydides says, hide their anger. Thucydides next discusses Themistocles’ overall contribution to the growth of Athenian power.

**Themistocles and the Vision of Empire (1.93)**

The key elements of Athenian power—walls, a defended port, a powerful navy, and hegemony over the Hellenic allies—were all necessary for the development of the Athenian Empire, but it was Themistocles who put the pieces into place. Immediately after the Persian wars, perhaps earlier, he foresaw the possibility of empire. When the war ended, he was instrumental in rebuilding not only the walls of Athens but also those of the Piraeus, which he had earlier counseled the Athenians to construct, likely during his year as eponymous archon (1.93.3). Moreover, he also foresaw that the Athenians, if they became nautical, might advance greatly in the acquisition of power (μεγάλα).}

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235 “Besides establishing Athens as Sparta’s equal, Themistocles’ speech dissected the effect of physical defensibility on the psychological and political constitution of a people. Through freeing the defended from immediate fear, the wall enables the existence of an independent foreign policy.” Edith Foster, *Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 101.

236 The dating of Themistocles’ biography and political actions are uncertain. For the various problems associated with the chronology arising from our extant literary sources, see the article of J. Arthur R. Munro, “The Chronology of Themistocles’ Career,” *The Classical Review* 6 (1892): 333-334.
In the Archaeology, Thucydides mentions yet another Themistoclean contribution. With the barbarian threat looming, in the context of a war against Aegina, it was Themistocles who advised the Athenians to build the ships with which they later fought at Salamis (1.14.3). Not only was Themistocles responsible for the Athenian Empire, then, he was also responsible for the Athenian defense of Hellenic freedom. The Athenians envoys had asserted that Athens furnished the three most beneficial things at Salamis: the largest contingent of ships, the most brilliant commander, Themistocles, and an unhesitating zeal (1.74.1). Since Themistocles was the father of the Athenian navy, and it was he who masterminded the battle of Salamis, the Athenians are left only with their zeal. Indeed, Themistocles even first articulated that broad strategy that Pericles, fifty years on, with only slight modification, would set into motion in the early years of the Peloponnesian war (1.93.7).238

Thucydides presents Themistocles as the master architect of the Athenian Empire.239 He is responsible for the Athenian navy (1.14.3), for the choice of the Piraeus as the port of

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237 αὐτοὺς ναυτικοὺς γεγενημένους μέγα προφέρειν ἐς τὸ κτήσασθαι δύναμιν, 1.93.3, emphasis added. Thucydides uses the same language in the Archaeology, where he writes that the Athenian became nautical at that moment when they abandoned Athens and Attic to take to their ships (ἐς τὰς ναῦς ἐσβάντες ναυτικοὶ ἐγένοντο, 1.18.2). “Themistocles appears to have concluded that the success of the city-fleet implied the conversion of the city itself into something resembling a fleet.” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 51.

238 Compare 1.93.7 with 1.143.4-5, 2.13.2, and 2.65.7.

239 In regard to Themistocles’s relationship to Athens, Palmer raises a pertinent question: “But to what extent were the Athenians themselves even aware of Themistocles’ daring ambitions for Athenian power?
Athens (1.93.3), for victory at Salamis (1.74.1), for walling the city and the Piraeus, and, finally, for encouraging the Athenians to embrace their imperial future by cleaving to the sea (1.90-1.93). Moreover, all of his behavior appears completely public-spirited. In contrast, Thucydides will present Pausanias, Themistocles’ Spartan analogue, as consumed by personal ambition. Although Themistocles laid the cornerstones of Athenian power, Athens required the opportunity to expand her control into the Aegean. It was the Spartan Pausanias who gave it to her.

**Pausanias and the Ambition for Tyranny (1.94-1.95)**

In 1.94, Thucydides introduces Pausanias, the Hellenic commander at the battle of Plataea and the treacherous Spartan counterpart to Themistocles. At Sparta, the Athenians had ended their speech with the caustic remark that individual Spartans outside of Sparta do not abide by their own or any other Hellenic laws (1.77.6). The envoys were likely referring to Pausanias, whose Medizing Thucydides documents in greater detail after the Pentecontaetia (1.128.2-1.134).

After the Persian retreat, Pausanias is dispatched with twenty Peloponnesian ships accompanied by thirty Athenian vessels and a number of allied boats. They sail first to Cyprus and then to Byzantium. According to Thucydides, during these missions, Pausanias frightens the other Hellenes by becoming violent (ἡδὲ δὲ βιαίου ὁντος αὐτοῦ, 1.95.1). The Ionians are especially afraid, having only been recently liberated from the

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Did he not exploit the Athenians’ fears to motivate them to execute his own plans, without himself sharing their motivation.” Palmer, *Love of Glory and the Common Good*, 58.
Persian yoke. Fearing Pausanias, the allies implore Athens to take over the alliance and to protect them (1.95.1). The Athenians welcome this request, immediately sensing its advantages (1.95.2).

At Sparta, the envoys had said that it was irreproachable for a city to set down the advantageous things for itself in the face of great danger (1.75.5). They had claimed that Athens was compelled first by fear, next by honor, and lastly by profit to establish her empire (1.75.3), although they later qualified this statement (1.76.2). Despite the danger posed by Persia, which continues in this period, danger is not the sole motivation for the Athenian acceptance of hegemony over the allies.²⁴⁰

Receiving reports of his behavior, the Spartans recall Pausanias. According to Thucydides, he had become more the image of a tyrant than a commander (1.95.3). With his departure, the allies go over to the Athenians. Pausanias escapes the charges brought against him, but despite the acquittal the Spartans no longer send him out. They dispatch new commanders, who quickly discover the defection of the allies.

Upon receiving this news, the Spartans no longer send their citizens out, fearing, Thucydides says, lest those become worse too, which they had seen in the case of Pausanias (1.95.7).²⁴¹ Thucydides also claims that the Spartans considered the Athenians

²⁴⁰ “That one would justify the Athenian empire in terms of a legitimate concern with security would not of course imply that this was her only or even her primary reason for maintaining and expanding it. The envoys themselves have invoked two other alleged compulsions, and the deportment of the Athenians in the Pentekontaeta is not that of a careful empire.” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 53. See fn 228 above.
²⁴¹ On this theme, see the anecdote of Herodotus at 5.51 about Cleomenes. Herodotus, The History, 376.
their friends at this time and capable of leading the allies in their stead (1.95.7). He concludes his treatment of Pausanias by saying that it was in this way that the Athenians took over the hegemony of the allies because of the general hatred of Pausanias (1.96.1). Here, the Pentecostaetia corroborates the claim of the Athenians at Sparta that the command of the Delian League was freely offered to Athens (1.75.2).

The treason of Pausanias, the corruption of a member of one of the royal families, threatens that respect for law and wholehearted dedication to Sparta required for maintaining the regime. The actions of Pausanias suggest a problem with the Spartan education. The danger is repression, or the precariousness of the lid kept on the gratification of desire. The Spartan education is thoroughly negative. As the later Funeral Oration of Pericles mostly clearly reveals, Athens liberates the desires of her citizens. At Athens, the common good is a vehicle for the satisfaction of the desires of individual Athenians, although Pericles will also assert that the Athenians deeply respect their laws. If Sparta is compelled by her fears, then her Spartans are also negatively oriented. All of which leaves little room for the satisfaction of her citizens’ positive desires for honor or profit. Pausanias, the hero of Plataea, symbolizes the dangers of Spartan repression. His longing for tyranny appears as a limitless drive for honor and profit—a reaction against the shackles of his Spartan upbringing. In his own view, his private good has become distinct from that of Sparta, which, quite simply, is the definition of Spartan corruption.
Hegemony to Empire (1.96-1.118)

To return to the Pentecontaetia, its second part outlines the transformation of the Athenian hegemony over the Delian League into the Athenian Empire (1.97.2). Upon assuming the hegemony, the Athenians first proclaim which cities are to contribute money and which ships for the avowed purpose of reprisal raiding against the Persians (πρόσχημα, 1.96.1). The word πρόσχημα, cloak or outward show, suggests that the Athenians had other motives.242 League treasurers were established, and the tribute was kept in the Temple of Apollo on Delos, where common league meetings were also convened (1.96.2). In its early years, the Delian League appears to have operated much like the Peloponnesian League, or the Hellenic League before it, with the hegemon leading as a first among equals. This was soon to change.

The Subjection of the Hellenic Allies (1.98-99)

During joint expeditions against the Persians, Thucydides makes it clear that Athens did not countenance shirking or defection, and that the failure to participate became a justification for the tightening of her control. Naxos, according to Thucydides, became the first member-state to revolt from the alliance. She was quickly attacked, besieged, and brought back into line. Thucydides does not mince words: Naxos became the first allied

242 Against the common view, Kallet takes πρόσχημα to refer to the rationale for the assessment of money and ships and not to the general purpose of the Delian League. For a review of the evidence and a useful if long statement of the implications of her interpretation, see Kallet, *Money, Expense, and Naval Power*, 43–49.
city subjected contrary to what had been established by the cities (πρώτη τε αὐτή πόλις ξυμμαχίς παρὰ τὸ καθεστηκὸς ἐδουλώθη, 1.98.4). She would not be the last.

The primary reason for revolt, Thucydides says, was the allies’ own failure to furnish money or ships for joint campaigns; sometimes, they refused to serve in them at all (αἴτιαι ... μέγισται, 1.99.1). The Athenians were precise in such matters, applying force to those unaccustomed to it, who wished to avoid hardship and pain. They brought to bear harsh necessities against their recalcitrant allies, using the stick of their power to make compliance ‘advantageous’, as it were (προσάγοντες τὰς ἀνάγκας, 1.99.1).

Thucydides does not blame Athens for attempting to rule the Hellenes but instead her allies for being too willing to submit to rule (αἴτιοι οἱ ξύμμαχοι, 1.99.3). The majority, in order not to leave home, sent monetary tribute instead of ships. They thereby nourished the Athenian navy at personal expense, strengthening Athens, weakening themselves, and bankrolling their own subjection. Whenever a city did revolt, it found itself unprepared for war and inexperienced in its practice (1.99.3). The Athenians were neither unprepared nor inexperienced.

The psychology of the allies would seem to resemble that of Sparta. At Sparta, the Athenian envoys had introduced two classes of cities—and perhaps of individuals as

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243 At Sparta, Corinth, in her attempt to incite Sparta, had styled Athens an enslaving power. In her later speech before the Peloponnesian League, she will call the Athenian Empire a tyranny (1.68.3, 1.69.1, 1.122.3, 1.124.3). The Persian Empire had also intended the subjection of Hellas. Regardless of whether Athens is as despotic as Persia or not, the argument of the Athenian envoys, which establishes that Athens holds her empire reasonably, justifies the Persian Empire as much the Athenian one.

244 See 1.18.3.
well—the strong and the weak. They had claimed that it has always been the case that the strong rule, while the weak are ruled. The majority of the allies fall into the class of weak cities, not just in terms of their military resources but also because of their psychology. As we will discuss during the interpretation of the Archaeology below, Sparta is a strong city in fact, but one, strangely, that evinces something like the psychology of the weak. After outlining Athens’ relationship to her allies, Thucydides next turns to Sparta’s enslaved subjects, the Helots.

**Eurymedon, Thasos, and the Helots (1.100-1.103)**

Perhaps around 466 BC, the Athenians defeated the Persians by land and sea at the battle of Eurymedon River, capturing and destroying the Phoenician fleet of two hundred ships (1.100.1). Soon thereafter, Thasos revolted from the Athenian alliance, and the Athenians besieged it. The Thasians implored Sparta to assist them by invading Attica. The Spartans promised to do so, and Thucydides asserts that Sparta would in fact have done so, had it not been for an earthquake that precipitated the revolt of the Helots as well as the Thuriats and Aethaeans of the Perioeci to Mt. Ithome (1.101.1-2).245 The majority of the Helots, Thucydides says, were the descendants of the ancient Messenians, who had been enslaved long ago (οἱ τῶν παλαιῶν Μεσσηνίων τότε δουλωθέντων ἀπόγονοι, 1.101.1-2, emphasis added). Sparta has a major domestic disturbance on her hands.

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245 Ithome was the acropolis of ancient Messenia. It is perhaps worth noting that the Old Oligarch refers to this event in the context of discussing responses to civil wars (στασιαζούσαις, 3.10-11). J.L. Marr and P.J. Rhodes trans., *The “Old Oligarch”: The Constitution of the Athenians Attributed to Xenophon*— (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2008), 56, 164.
There are several important points to be made. First, Sparta promised to invade Attica at Thasian request. Despite this, the Spartans will soon summon the Athenians to assist them in besieging the Helots, only to send them away again out of fear that they might foment a revolution. The promise to invade Attica also reminds the reader of the one made to Potidaea (1.58.1). Second, in presenting this episode, Thucydides reveals that Sparta too has a long-standing empire. Long ago, she enslaved the Messenians. The Pentecontaetia confirms another claim of the Athenian envoys: the strong rule.

Third, as later books corroborate, Athens and Sparta are both bedeviled by the omnipresent danger of restive subjects. Following the earthquake, the Spartans have a war on their hands against the Helots on Ithome, while the isolated Thasians, after several years of fruitless resistance, eventually surrender to the Athenians (1.101.3). Unable to dislodge the Helots, Sparta summons her allies, including the Athenians, to Sparta. Thucydides states that it was from this expedition that the first open quarrel arose between Athens and Sparta (διαφορὰ ... φανερὰ ἐγένετο. 1.102.3).

This sentence echoes those summarizing the manifest quarrels, the statements of alleged responsibility or blame, which bookend the narrative of the quarrels themselves (cf., 1.23.5-6, 1.55.2, 1.56.1, 1.66, also 1.146). Unable to capture Ithome, the Spartans, become afraid of the daring and revolutionary character of the Athenians (τὸ τολμηρὸν καὶ τὴν νεωτεροποίαν); they fear lest the Athenians become persuaded by the Helots to

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246 Thucydides intends a contrast. While in alliance with Athens, the Spartans promise to aid a revolting subject city of the Athenians. When the Spartans bid the Athenians aid them against their own revolting subjects, the Athenians loyally dispatch a force under Cimon. The Athenians keep their promises, just as they maintain the letter of the Thirty Years’ Peace. Sparta is less than fastidious in this regard.
foment a revolution (ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Ἰθώμῃ πεισθέντες νεωτερίσωσι, 1.102.3). Consequently, the Spartans send the Athenians home out of fear. Once again, they mask their true motive, saying merely that they have no more need of them (1.102.3). The Athenians are furious at the dishonor done them and so terminate their alliance with Sparta and establish one with Argos, Sparta’s rival in the Peloponnesus (1.102.4).

The Messenians on Ithome eventually come to terms with the Spartans and leave the Peloponnesus under truce. Out of newfound hostility, the Athenians strategically resettle them in Naupactus (κατ᾽ ἔχθος, 1.103.3). Shortly afterwards, Megara revolts from the Spartan alliance, going over to the Athenians as the result of a border war with Corinth, which, Thucydides says, was the beginning of Corinth’s hatred of Athens (τὸ σφοδρὸν μίσος, 1.103.4).

**The Battle of Tanagra (1.107-1.108)**

After discussing an Athenian campaign in Egypt and another against Aegina, Thucydides describes the first of two major Spartan campaigns depicted in the Pentecontaetia, which ends with the only major battle between Athens and Sparta in this period. The situation arises in the following way. First, the Phocians attack Doris, Sparta’s mother-city (Φωκέων στρατευσάντων ἐς Δωρίας τὴν Λακεδαιμονίων ἐμπόλιν, 1.107.2). The Spartans promptly aid Doris with overwhelming force: fifteen hundred Spartan hoplites and ten thousand allied troops. They handily bring the Phocians into line, but are then at a loss about the safest way to return home.
With an army of invasion in the Athenian backyard, the primary Spartan concern is, strangely, the security of their retreat. Unsure of which way to march, the Spartans tarry in Boeotia. The Spartans, Thucydides says, were also in contact with a party in Athens intent on overthrowing the democracy and stopping the construction of the long walls (1.107.2-4). The Athenians march out with their entire levy along with their allies, some fourteen thousand men strong (1.107.5-6). A huge battle occurs between the armies at Tanagra in Boeotia. After heavy losses on both sides, the Spartans and their allies are victorious. So far from pressing its advantage, however, the Peloponnesian force beats a hasty retreat home (1.108.1-2). The battle of Tanagra confirms Corinth’s presentation of the Spartans as risk-averse and hesitant, men who accomplish less than their power, while at the same time making clear Sparta’s superiority to the Athenians in hoplite warfare.

The Expedition to Egypt (1.109-110)

After Tanagra, Thucydides’ narrative returns to the Egyptian front. The large Athenian force in Egypt briefly wrests the country from the Persians (1.109.1-2). The King

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247 Given the overthrow of the Athenian democracy in 411 BC, this reference to an anti-democratic faction in Athens is noteworthy. Perhaps the aid to Doris was merely a cover for establishing control in Central Greece or even for moving against Athens, but Thucydides’ narrative doesn’t support the conjecture, although it doesn’t refute it either. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Thucydides take pains to emphasize that the party in Athens promised to stop the construction of the long walls, and the attentive reader knows that Sparta had disguised her earlier anger at the walling of Athens (1.92). In line with the above suggestion and in reference to the aid to Doris, Hornblower notes that “Recognition of all of this [i.e., the importance of kinship ties] need not prevent us from asking whether Sparta, who minded less than did Corinth about control of the Saronic gulf, nevertheless had central Greek ambitions which such an appeal to kinship might allow her to satisfy.” Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume 1, 168.

248 In reference to the Pentecontaetia, Connor writes, “But the contrast between the Athenian conduct and the Spartan illustrates the Corinthian claim that the Spartans do less than their power allows while when the Athenians ‘defeat an enemy, they push the advantage as far as they can; if defeated, they retreat as little as possible (ch. 70).’” Connor, Thucydides, 45.
fruitlessly tries to bribe Sparta to invade Attica. When this expedient fails, he dispatches his own force, which ultimately succeeds in destroying the Athenian fleet, conquering it by an innovative stratagem, whereby the Athenians ships are stranded on dry land. Not knowing the fate of the earlier force, the Athenian relief fleet is also destroyed (1.110.4). The failure of this Egyptian expedition foreshadows the later, ill-starred Sicilian one, and Thucydides uses similar language to describe their outcomes.²⁴⁹ Athenian ambition, however is little dented by even this loss of so many men and so many ships.

**Euboea, Megara, and the Thirty Years’ Peace (1.114-1.115)**

In the next chapters, Thucydides outlines the events that bring about the establishment of the Thirty Years’ Peace, which collapses fourteen years later with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war. In response to the revolt of Euboea, Pericles conveys an Athenian army over to the island to suppress the insurrection.²⁵⁰ While there, he receives urgent word that Megara has revolted and that a Peloponnesian army of invasion is on the march, headed toward the isthmus and Attica. He hurriedly brings the army back from Euboea, but not before the Peloponnesian force commanded by the Spartan Pleistonax has invaded Attica, laying waste to the land as far as Eleusis and Thria.

²⁴⁹ Compare 1.110.1 with 7.87.5.
²⁵⁰ As a passage in book eight most clearly reveals, Euboea is of enormous strategic importance for the Athenians (8.96.1-2). Many events in the Pentecontaetia find their parallels in the eighth book of the History, for example, the later revolt of Euboea. One almost wonders if the progressive rise of Athens described in the Pentecontaetia is matched with her progressive undoing, which Thucydides describes in the eighth book.
Inexplicably, the Spartan-led force returns home (1.114.1-2). Although Thucydides does not confirm it, it seems probable that the retreat was made possible by a Periclean diplomatic overture that ultimately led to the formal Thirty Years’ Peace (c.f., 1.114-1.115.1 with 2.21.1). Moreover, Pleistonax’s retreat again confirms Sparta’s propensity to fail to press her advantages. She failed to follow up her victory at Tanagra, and now she fails to exploit the revolts of Euboea and Megara to maximum advantage. Had Pleistonax not retreated, the reader has the distinct impression that the Peloponnesian army would have been a match for the Periclean-led force. Whatever the reason for the retreat, it allows Pericles to pacify Euboea (1.114.3).

Following the conquest of Euboea, the Athenians and the Spartans agree to a Thirty Years’ Peace (1.115.1). In short order, Athens has lost Boeotia as well as the Megarid, the land route for Peloponnesian invasions into Attica, but she has peace. In the final episode of the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides recounts the Samian revolt of 440 BC, which was mentioned by the Corinthians at Athens. He does not mention any divided Peloponnesian vote to aid Samos, preceded, presumably, by a Spartan vote to do precisely this (1.40.5, 1.41.2).

The Samian Revolt (1.115-1.117)

In the sixth year of the peace between Athens and Sparta, a war between Samos and Miletus over Priene breaks out. The Athenians sail to Samos with forty ships and

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251 In book two, Thucydides mentions the Spartan rumor that Pleistonax was bribed by Pericles to retreat (2.21.1). “In fact we can conjecture that he [i.e., Pleistonax] withdrew because some preliminary understanding had been reached.” Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume 1*, 186.
establish a democracy there (1.115.3). In response, Samian oligarchs treat with the Persian Governor of Sardis, Pissuthnes and attack the Samian democrats. Declaring Samos independent, they hand over the Athenian garrison and officials to Pissuthnes. As late as 440 BC, Persia is involved in fomenting the revolt of a subject city of the Athenian Empire.

The Athenians swiftly sail for Samos with sixty ships, a contingent of which is sent to watch for the Phoenician. After a victorious naval battle against the Samians, forty additional Athenian ships arrive, along with twenty-five from Chios and Lesbos. When combined with the earlier sixty, this Athenian-led force now stands at one hundred and twenty-five ships—a major deployment. Landing on Samos, the Athenians blockade the city by both land and sea (1.116.2). The Samians briefly break the blockade but the Athenians quickly reestablish it, reinforced with another Athenian contingent of sixty ships as well as thirty more Chian and Lesbian vessels—a massive combined expeditionary force of two hundred and fifteen Athenian and allied ships (1.117.2).

Corinth had earlier claimed that during the Samian revolt she had publicly maintained that Athens ought to be allowed to punish her own rebelling allies. Whether true or not, the Peloponnesians do not invade Attica at Samian behest nor does Thucydides refer to any Spartan promise to do so. After nine-months’ siege, the Samians surrender, take down their walls, give over hostages, hand over their fleet, and agree to pay installments

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252 A Spartan vote precedes a vote of the Peloponnesian League, with the League acting as an apparent stop to Spartan unilateralism. At any rate, this is the procedure followed in 432 BC (compare 1.87.4 and 1.119). For an extensive discussion of the historical evidence on the operation of the League, see de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 101–123.
to the Athenians (1.117.3). The Corcyraean-Corinthian war over Epidamnus, escalating Athenian-Corinthian tensions, and the Spartan vote for war follow only several years later.253

The Conclusion of the Pentecontaetia (1.118)

The final chapter of the Pentecontaetia, 1.118, recounts Sparta’s motivation for beginning a war with Athens. Thucydides intentionally echoes 1.23.6, 1.86.5 and now 1.88, the passage with which the Pentecontaetia began. It will be helpful to quote from 1.118 at some length:

These actions of the Hellenes against one another and the barbarian occurred in the fifty years between the retreat of Xerxes and the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, in which the Athenians firmly established their rule and advanced greatly in power. The Spartans, although they perceived this, did little to hinder them, but for much of the time remained at rest (ἡσύχαζόν), being, on the one hand, from early times slow to come out against enemies, unless they were compelled (ἢν μὴ ἀναγκάζωνται), but also, on the other, being hindered by enemies at home, until, indeed, the power (ἡ δύναμις) of the Athenians manifestly rose up and the Athenians encroached upon the Spartans’ alliance. Then, it was no longer bearable, but it seemed to them that they must attempt with full vigor to destroy that power, if they were able, by taking up a war (1.118.2, emphasis added).254

253 “The fact that [Thucydides] ends his consecutive account of Athenian growth with an event of 439 BC carries the very natural inference that the surrender of Byzantium, with the reduction of Samos with which is stands, was the last event of Athenian aggrandizement before 435 BC, which he considered worth statement as an item in the growth of Athenian power which alarmed Sparta.” Walker, “The Purpose and Method of ‘The Pentekontaetia’ in Thucydides, Book I,” 32.

254 The Greek passage is as follows: ταῦτα δὲ ξύπαντα δῶσα ἔπραξαν οἱ Ἔλληνες πρὸς τε ἀλλήλους καὶ τὸν βαρβάρον ἐγένετο ἐν ἔτει πεντήκοντα μᾶλλον μεταξὺ τῆς τε Ξέρξου ἀναχωρήσεως καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ πολέμου: ἐν οἷς οἱ Αθηναῖοι τὴν τε ἀρχὴν ἐγκρατεστέραν κατέστησαν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐπὶ μέγα ἐγκόμισαν δυνάμεως, οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι αἰσθόμενοι οὔτε ἐκὼλυον εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ βραχύ, ἡσύχαζον τε τὸ πλέον τοῦ χρόνου, ὡστε μὲν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μὴ ταχείᾳ λέναι ἐς τοὺς πολέμους, ἢ μὴ ἀναγκάζωνται, τὸ δὲ τι καὶ πολέμιος οἰκεῖος ἐξειργόμενοι, πρὶν δὴ ἡ δύναμις τῶν Αθηναίων σαφῶς ἢρετο καὶ τῆς ξυμμαχίας αὐτῶν ἢπτοντο, τότε δὲ οὐκέτι ἀνασχετόν ἐποιοῦντο, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπιχειρητέα ἐδόκει εἶναι πάση προθυμία καὶ καθαρετέα ἢ ἰσχύς, ἢν δύναονται, ἡρεμοῦντες τόνδε τοῦ πολέμου (1.118.2)
In the fifty years following the Persian wars, the Athenians, as we have seen, were in perpetual motion, fighting on multiple fronts, while Sparta remained, characteristically, at rest. She acted quickly only to discharge her ancestral duties to Doris, the Spartan metropolis and to wrest Delphi from the Phocians during the so-called Sacred War. In this same period, the Athenians transformed their hegemony over the Delian League into the Athenian Empire, consolidated their rule, and advanced greatly in power (μέγα ἐξώρησαν δυνάμεις, 1.118.2). Indeed, Themistocles foresaw precisely this possibility (μέγα προφέρειν ἐς τὸ κτίσσασθαι δύναμιν, 1.93.3). But Athenian power eventually provoked Spartan fear because it manifested itself as encroachment upon Hellas, first upon the islands, but later, and more importantly, upon the Spartan confederacy, compelling Sparta to defend the prerogatives of her endangered allies.

At Sparta, the Athenian envoys had claimed that Athens was compelled (κατηναγκάσθη µεν) to establish her empire and compelled (ἀναγκασθέντας) to rule it firmly (ἀρχεῖν ἐγκρατῶς, 1.75.3, 1.76.1), compelled by fear, honor and profit—by the necessity of pursuing her conception of advantage within the constraints of her circumstances (1.75.3, 1.76.2). Taken together, it was the daring and acquisitive character of the Athenians, combined with walls, a powerful fleet, and hegemony over the Delian League, which produced the Athenian Empire, while the requirements of maintaining the Empire soon bound Athens to the necessity of certain policies, swiftly crushing revolts,

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255 In reference to this particular passage (and in line with the general interpretative approach offered here), Connor notes that “this restatement, as so often in Thucydides, brings out the themes that have been implicit in the preceding narrative. It can be seen that the growth of Athenian power, the truest cause of the war, is the underlying topic of the Pentecontaetia and that this growth of power is explained in part by the characteristics and dispositions of the two great powers. The Athenians continue the growth of power that was evident in the Archaeology; the Spartans illustrate the slowness and hesitation of which the Corinthians have accused them” Connor, *Thucydides*, 43.

256 The verbal echo of these passages is intentional.
for example. Now, while security alone may have recommended firm rule, the Athenian thirst for honor and profit recommended expansion wherever possible, consolidation and maintenance wherever necessary.

According to Thucydides, the Spartans perceived this growth of Athenian power but hindered it only a little, staying at peace most of the time (ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλέον τοῦ χρόνου, 1.118.2). The Pentecontaetia bears this out. The only direct clash between the cities occurs at Tanagra in Boeotia, and the Spartans fail to stir to aid Thasos or Samos, to invade Attica at Persian request, or to press their advantage after Tanagra or during the simultaneous revolts of Euboea and Megara. In failing to act against Athens, Thucydides says that the Spartans were hindered by wars close to home (τι καὶ πολέμωις οἰκείοις ἔξειργόμενοι, 1.118.2). Had it not been for the revolt of the Helots, Sparta would have, apparently, invaded Attica at Thasian bequest (1.101.2). In his view, however, the Spartans were slow from old to enter into wars unless compelled to do so (ἠν μὴ ἀναγκάζωται, 1.118.2). What compelled Sparta to fight when she did?

In the fifty years following the Persian wars, Sparta wished to check the growth of Athenian power—her empty promises to invade Attica testify to it—but countervailing pressures invariably kept her at rest, at least until 432 BC. As the narrative makes clear, Sparta’s conservative conception of advantage is firmly bound to the demands of her own situation. Over the course of book one, we have learned that Sparta fears many things: Athenian power, the daring and revolutionary character of the Athenians, transgressing her laws, written and unwritten, the corruption of her citizens, a Helot uprising, and,
finally, threats to her confederacy. Sparta fears those things that threaten her regime and the way of life that nourishes and supports it.

Thucydides says that it was only when the power of Athens *manifestly* rose up that the situation became intolerable for Sparta. Then it seemed to the Spartans that they must attempt to destroy the power of Athens by taking up the flag of a Peloponnesian war (1.118.2). The Spartan confederacy is a mechanism for safeguarding the Spartan advantage, and the alliance itself comprises one element of effectual Spartan power.\(^{257}\) Escalating Athenian clashes with Sparta’s allies, particularly Corinth, combined with Corinth’s threat to defect from the confederacy, represent a threshold that once crossed spurs Sparta into motion.\(^{258}\) She is compelled to defend her interests. The Athenian threat is obvious enough to rally a majority of the Spartans to vote for war. And, as we will see, the Athenian threat to League members—unlike the more distant one to Samos—also aligns a critical Peloponnesian majority behind a war.

Sparta is slow to enter into wars unless compelled to do so (\(\hat{\eta}ν \ \muη \ \alpha\nu\gammaκ\alphaζ\omega\nu\tauαι\), 1.118.2). In 432 BC, Sparta fears the growth of Athenian power more than she fears transgressing the Peace. This is one meaning of the victory of Sthenelaidas over Archidamus. The growth of Athenian power, powered by Athenian acquisitiveness, runs aground upon the rock of Sparta’s need to maintain what she possesses. The result is the

\(^{257}\) In the *Archaeology*, Thucydides emphasizes that it was Spartan practice to support friendly oligarchies in the Peloponnesus (1.18.1).

\(^{258}\) Although some scholars have doubted whether Corinth’s ultimatum to abandon the Peloponnesian League is credible, the Corinthians would not have made the threat had they not intended it seriously. Some scholars think Corinth is referring to allying with Argos, others to Athens. Salmon argues for the latter. Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth*, 300.
Peloponnesian war. But Thucydides’ account of the war’s origins does not end with the Pentecontaetia, which itself points backwards to the prefatory Archaeology, and so, following the logic of the truest πρόφασις, it is to the Archaeology that we must now turn.\textsuperscript{259}

\textsuperscript{259} “The Pentecontaetia is, in effect, a continuation of the Archaeology, applying to the recent past the ideas there applied to the remote past” Finley, \textit{Thucydides}, 137. “The Pentecontaetia thus forges a link between the quantitative analysis of power in the Archaeology and the emphasis on national characteristics in the Corinthian speech at Sparta.” Connor, \textit{Thucydides}, 46.
The Truest πρόφασις, the Archaeology (1.1-1.23)

Attending to the logic of Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις leads backwards from the Pentecosmia to the Archaeology, which is a λόγος of ἀρχαια or account of ancient times.260 Throughout the first book, Thucydides progressively pushes the question of the blame or cause for the Peloponnesian war backwards in time. The Pentecosmia points to the Archaeology’s account of the interplay between human psychology and historical circumstance, which conditioned the development of Athens and Sparta. Just as the Congress at Sparta and the Pentecosmia illuminate one another, so too do they shed light on the prefatory Archaeology. And, we will see, Thucydides intends it to illuminate them.

The Archaeology is a sketch of Hellenic growth from ancient times to the eve of the Peloponnesian war.261 In it, Thucydides announces, augments, and defends the War as his chosen theme. The chapters are compressed, the transitions enigmatic, and the tone polemical.262 As W.R. Connor has written, the first page of the History “… is as puzzling and difficult a beginning—an idiosyncratic introduction to as complex an argument as is to be found anywhere in the eight books of the work or indeed in all the pages of ancient

260 “In an important respect, these chapters are the key to the work as a whole; for, as has long been recognized, the Archaeology introduces many of the ‘formative ideas of the History’.” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 21. Kallet is quoting Finley, Thucydides, 87.
261 The period of the Pentecosmia is glossed.
262 The Archaeology may be characterized by a complex ring structure, which involves a series of successive proofs that conclude with a restatement of the original claim—a way of nesting arguments. On this, see especially Hammond, “The Arrangement of the Thought in the Proem and in Other Parts of Thucydides I.” The most complicated (and comprehensive) presentation of ring structure in the Archaeology is J. R. Ellis, “The Structure and Argument of Thucydides’ Archaeology,” Classical Antiquity 10 (1991): 344-376. See also Connor’s appendix. Connor, Thucydides, 251.
historical writing. In the Archaeology, recurring themes of the *History* are rapidly introduced and quickly dropped: the opposition between motion and rest, the origin and character of land and sea power, the role of surplus money in the growth of walls, ships and other preparations of war, the relationship between naval strength, revenue, and empire, the kinship between external and internal war, the psychology of piracy and political growth, the relationship between the strong and the weak, and, most important for this study, the development of the Athenian and Spartan regimes.

Throughout the Archaeology, Thucydides emphasizes the weakness and poverty of the past. In great part, his progressive portrait is achieved—and achieves its rhetorical force—through a debunking of Homer’s Iliad, the greatest of wars enshrined in Hellenic memory. Thucydides’ Iliad, however, is prosaic, not epic. No gods intervened on the ringing plains of windy Troy. The battle lasted so long due to insufficient supplies. The ineffective Achaeans were compelled to divide their expedition between plundering, farming, and fighting Trojans (1.11.1-2). This denial of the greatness of the past, in contradistinction to the pleasing fables of the poets, represents an implicit attack on the traditional belief in divine intervention in human affairs. Invoking the daughters of Mnemosyne (memory) and Zeus, Homer had sung of the titanic struggles of god-like men

265 “Thucydides’ own analysis of the early history of Greece, the so-called ‘Archaeology’ (1.2-19), itself serves this function of isolating relevant principles of analysis in a particular context which are then applied to the interpretation of events in the remainder of the *History.*” Cynthia Farrar, *The Origins of Democratic Thinking: The Invention of Politics in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 138.
266 According to Thucydides, there is human tendency to wonder (θαυμάζειν) at ancient wars (1.21.2). Pouncey rightly notes that “the deflation of the heroic is fairly systematic throughout Thucydides’ account.” Pouncey, *The Necessities of War*, 47.
on whose behalf men-like Gods actively fought. Invoking reason, inference, and autopsy, Thucydides offers a naturalistic account of political growth and war, one based on a vision of the human condition rooted in a conception of human nature (cf. 3.82.2).²⁶⁷

The Archaeology can be divided into several parts. In the first, Thucydides narrates the growth of Hellas before the Trojan War, outlining the conditions which made possible that storied expedition. He interrupts the narrative with a digression on Athens and Sparta and the ways of life of Hellenes and barbarians. In its second part, he offers a sketch of the Trojan War itself, interrupted by another digression on Athens and Sparta. Next, Thucydides sketches the punctuated growth of Hellas after the Trojan War until the eve of the Peloponnesian. Before the famous chapters on method and the causes of the War, he offers a final comparison of Athens and Sparta in 432 BC, on the eve of the great war.

Most important for our purposes, the Archaeology reveals how Athens and Sparta were conditioned by the circumstances of their historical growth, while at the same time revealing how their distinctive τρόποι arose from a more general, barbarian one. Crucially, the Archaeology offers important statements about psychology in Thucydides’ authorial voice. The following draws out the role that fear, honor, and profit play in the motivation of cities and men in Thucydides’ Archaeology, focusing on the growth of power, the relationship between the strong and weak, and, crucially, the development of Athens and Sparta. Fear, honor, and profit, of course, are the three compulsory

²⁶⁷ The ‘causes’ of the Peloponnesian war cannot be explained in human or naturalistic terms if the Gods actively intervene in the affairs of human beings. “Thucydides describes a cyclical process of rises and falls, prompted by need, greed or the will to power, with changing and expanding goals and possibilities.” Ibid., 48. Thucydides’ implicit attack on the divine is related to his explicit one against the poets and logographers.
motivations advanced by the Athenian envoys at Sparta to justify the founding and growth of the Empire. They all make appearances in the Archaeology.

**Ancient Times (1.1-1.8)**

According to the Thucydides, in the beginning, Hellas was not firmly inhabited or even called Hellas. There was constant migration (1.2.1). ‘Hellas’ was everywhere in high-frequency, low-intensity motion. Conflicts were local and short-lived, producing shifts in population but little destruction. There was, in fact, nothing to destroy. Each group readily abandoned its home in the face of superior numbers of invaders or raiders who compelled relocation (1.2.1).\(^{268}\) The first title to power in the *History* is brachial superiority. Thucydides makes clear that there was no trade or communication by sea or land without fear.\(^{269}\) Groups, presumably tribes, cultivated land only for survival. They did not accumulate monetary surplus or engage in the intensive planting of trees or vines (1.2.2).

Fear is the first motivation that appears in Thucydides’ *History*. It moves the fearful to flee, while at the same time making the accumulation of surplus impossible. Trade, it

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\(^{268}\) The verb translated above as ‘compel’ is βιάζω, not ἀναγκάζω.

\(^{269}\) See the famous lines of Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, which are influenced by the early chapters of the Archaeology: “In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76. “Without suggesting that Thucydides followed anything like Hobbes’s resolutive-composive method, we may say that he foreshadows the political masterpiece of that method, Hobbes’s presentation of the state of nature.” Clifford Orwin, “Stasis and Plague: Thucydides on the Dissolution of Society,” *Journal of Politics* 50 (1988): 831–832.
would seem, requires financial and agricultural surplus as well as stable association by
land or sea. Profit, in other words, requires a foundational security that assuages fear. As
Thucydides presents it, freedom from fear is a condition of growth, and so growth
necessarily requires a reduction of the threat posed by the invader or raider. In migratory
motion, just as in basic agriculture, the human good is survival, and it is in this context
that Thucydides first introduces his important thematic term ἀνάγκη, in regard to the
“necessary” daily nourishment, which sits at the foundation of every society (τῆς τε καθ’
ήμεραν ἀναγκαίου τροφῆς, 1.2.2).²⁷⁰ Taking care of the body is part of the fabric of
human sociability, a genuinely common good, and a plank in every political floor.²⁷¹

In the Archaeology’s early chapters, another fear operates alongside that for one’s skin.
This is the fear of loss. For the majority of ancient men, danger suppressed the profit
motive. Thucydides makes this point clear by articulating the perspective of the ancient
farmer. These men did not engage in intensive agriculture or accumulate financial
surpluses, because, at any moment, someone might attack their unwalled communities
and take everything away (1.2.2). The emphasis on the lack of walls implies that walls
are a solution to the problem of fear. They insulate those within from threats posed by

²⁷⁰ According to Ostwald, this represents a second group of ἀνάγκαι— as opposed to the psychological
ones already discussed— which “consists of minimum requirements of one sort or another, in which the
compulsions are dictated by the need to survive or to preserve something essential to those involved.”
Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 10. We might say that psychological ἀνάγκαι depend upon these more
fundamental ones.
²⁷¹ “Accordingly, what stands between most cities and their disintegration is not a sound regime or civic
education: these Thucydides knows are not the real glue of many real societies. Rather he stresses the
rhythm of daily life—the whir and hum of the insistent, recurrent needs of the body. For as long as these
are smoothly greased, most men will put up with the status quo, or at any rate not seek to overturn it at the
risk of their lives and fortunes.” Ibid., 834, emphasis added. Orwin’s “most men” anticipates the claim that
will be made about the relationship between strong and weak within cities. The Archaeology reveals
the origins of human sociability. It is therefore critical for understanding Thucydides’ account of political
breakdown at all levels of analysis.
those without. Without them, there is nothing to be gained by acquisition and nothing to be lost by flight. Cultivating land to live, in facing a threat to life, ancient men painlessly fled to pastures as green (1.2.2). Because of these dynamics, cities did not grow strong in size or in any other resource (1.2.2).

But Hellas did grow, and Thucydides links the kind of growth to the quality of the soil, specifically to the presence or absence of jostling over coveted ground (1.2.3). If the majority did not gather surplus because it courted invasion—because it was afraid—the existence of the invader or raider suggests a class of men who run risks for the sake of profit, or whose thirst for gain outstrips their fears. Let us anticipate slightly by calling such men, ‘the strong’, and the others, ‘the weak.’

Throughout the Archaeology, these profit-seeking men go by the name of pirates. They operate on sea (1.4), land (1.5.3), and the islands (1.8.1). When he explicitly discusses their motives at 1.5.1, Thucydides says that they desire gain. In the passage in question, he takes pains to note that they especially preyed upon unwalled communities. In this way, he links 1.2.2 to 1.5.1, tying the rationale of the early farmer to the later passage about pirates, and corroborating the interpretation offered here.

Let us take a closer look at the dynamics of conflict on land as they pertain to fear and profit. In 1.2.3, Thucydides writes that jostling over the best or most productive soils led to migration. Good land, which held out the promise of surplus, especially courted

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272 In the second book, in a line that is intended to recall this one, Thucydides says that the Athenians felt great pain in abandoning their homes and ancestral temples to gather behind the walls of Athens in accordance with Pericles’ war strategy (2.16.2).
invasion. Alternatively, perhaps those unable to acquire sustenance in a region of poor soil desperately attacked those in possession of better. Thessaly, Boeotia, and the majority of the Peloponnese, excepting Arcadia, Thucydides says, were in constant motion, whereas Attica, by contrast, due to the poverty of its soil, became a bastion of relative rest, an area free of both migration and conflict. Consequently, it was inhabited continuously by the same people (1.2.5).273

According to Thucydides, the possession of good soil enhanced the power of the possessor, which first introduced strife into communities (στάσεις), from which they were ruined, but which also attracted outside invasion (1.2.4). From the very beginning of the History, internal war and external war are closely joined. They make their original appearance at 1.2.4, and the motives for them appear similar, if not identical. A jealous faction or outside tribe covets land held by another. The only difference is whether the coveter is a fellow or an outsider. The land, the source of the quarrel and the victor’s prize, is presumably desirable because it holds out the promise of surplus (i.e., profit).

From the narrative, we can conclude that one relationship between fear and profit led to motion in the fertile Peloponnese, and still another to rest in stony Attica. In the Peloponnesus, the strong battled the strong and preyed upon the weak, while the weak ran for the hills. Attica, again, was essentially free of these dynamics (1.2.6). Consequently, powerful men, expelled in the course of war and faction from elsewhere, retreated to Athens and Attica. Quickly becoming naturalized, they increased the population beyond

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273 This is Thucydides’ naturalistic account of Athenian autochthony.
the point sustainable by the weak soil. This, Thucydides says, produced the eventual colonization of Ionia (1.2.6).

In the context of his treatment of faction, Thucydides introduces the first individual of his Archaeology, Hellen son of Deucalion, a figure of the remote past, who furnished his name to Hellas and the Hellenes (1.3). According to Thucydides, Hellen and his sons grew strong in Thessaly, which the reader has already been informed is an area of excellent soil (1.2.3, 1.3.2). As a result, we can presume that it suffered from constant migration, continuous civil strife, and frequent invasion (1.2.4). Hellen and his sons, Thucydides goes on to say, were invited into divided communities for the sake of ὧφελία, or profit (1.75.3, 1.76.2). City-by-city, he adds, this led to the slow victory of his name (1.3.2). Although Thucydides does not say it explicitly, Hellen and his sons would appear to be a uniquely powerful and predatory Thessalian tribe.

The activities of Hellen and his sons show the reader the mechanism of the growth of power by land, which is tribal unity, the source of later Spartan power. Hellen and his sons command a powerful tribe, which thrives in a tough neighborhood. Somehow free from faction, they exploit the inner weakness of their neighbors to conquer them. It will be recalled that, according to the Athenians at Sparta, ὧφελία is one of three compulsory motivations, and a key constituent of the advantageous. In this particular

274 The furnishing of one’s name to a place is tied to power. See the reference to Pelops at 1.9.2, who gave his name to the Peloponnesus and the Peloponnesians. See also the reference to Italus at 6.2.4.  
275 The verb used here, ἐπάγειν, ‘invite in’, is the word of choice throughout the History for the inviting in of an external power into a civil conflict. See, for example, 3.82.1.  
276 The reference to Achilles and his men as the first Hellenes at 1.3.4 is perhaps itself an affirmation of the strength of Hellen’s tribe. Achilles was of course the mightiest of the heroes.
context, the range of its meaning encompasses the profit anticipated by the party requesting aid as well as that of the opportunist on the doorstep. Both anticipate ὠφελία, else the former would not deign to ask for help, and the latter would not grant it.

After introducing Hellen and his sons, precursors to Spartan power, Thucydides turns to Minos, whose domain is the sea. Minos is the forerunner of the distinctive Athenian type of power and manner of control. According to the poets, Minos was the son of Zeus, the tyrant of Crete, and a mythic lawgiver. Thucydides introduces him without fanfare as the earliest man known by report to have acquired naval power (1.4).277 With ironic touch, an ancient enemy of Athens becomes a prototype for the Athenian Empire.278

Thucydides’ Minos conquered most of the Hellenic sea and ruled the Cycladic islands, becoming the founder of many of them (1.4). He drove out the Carians and, like Hellen, established the hegemony of his progeny (1.4). Importantly, he also cleared the seas of (lesser) pirates, ensuring that their revenues came to him instead (τὰς προσόδους, 1.4).279 Once again, although Thucydides doesn’t say so explicitly, Minos, like Hellen, appears to be a uniquely powerful brigand, one who turfs out his rivals to maximize his own gain.280 In the case of both, the successful consolidation of power by one ruler or house made possible wider political growth. To speak anachronistically, Hellen and

277 This is perhaps a response to Herodotus 3.122. Herodotus, The History, 263.
278 “… Thucydides implies a causal relationship among regular revenue, naval power, and control over others (arche).” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 25.
279 On the importance of this term and the theme of financial growth in the Archaeology, the indispensable work is Kallet. Ibid., 21–36.
280 “As Thucydides presents him, Minos is not the divine legislator but the toughest pirate, ruling by altogether human means.” Bartlett, The Idea of Enlightenment, 70.
Minos are Leviathans in the distinctly Hobbesian sense, one by land and the other by sea.281

After introducing Minos, Thucydides makes a crucial thematic statement about the motivation of the pirates. He writes that when the Hellenes of old and the barbarians, those living near the sea as well as those controlling islands, first used ships, they quickly turned to piracy, led by the most powerful among them. These powerful men became pirates, Thucydides says, for the sake of personal gain but also to obtain sustenance for the weak (κέρδους τοῦ σφετέρου αὐτῶν ἐνεκα καὶ τοῖς ἀσθενέσι τροφῆς, 1.5.1). Plundering unwalled communities, they made their livelihood by robbery (1.5.1).

In these lines, Thucydides has shifted perspectives. In 1.2, he wrote from the perspective of the weak, who feared for their safety and farmed to live. In 1.3-1.5 and thereafter, he writes from the perspective of the strong, who attack the unprotected weak as well as other members of the strong to obtain daily nourishment as well as ὀψελία (1.7). At this time, Thucydides continues, no shame attached to piracy; it even brought with it some repute (φέροντος δὲ τι καὶ δόξης μᾶλλον, 1.5.1). Indeed, among the barbarians of his own day, he concludes, to raid finely is still a mark of honor (οἶς κόσμος καλῶς τοῦτο δρᾶν, 1.5.2). Thucydides has introduced two new elements. First is his statement about

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281 According to Hobbes, “Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company where these is no power able to over-awe them all … hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war …” Hobbes, Leviathan, 75–76. For useful comparisons between Thucydides and Hobbes on human nature, see Johnson, Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism, 3–71. And Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 139–157.
the strong and the weak, and second is the introduction of a species of honor, the third compulsory motivation of the Athenian envoys at Sparta.\textsuperscript{282}

The strong, for their part, supply their own rudimentary needs as well as those of the weak—presumably of their own tribe—and slake their thirst for profit at the expense of outsiders. The strong and weak of one group, in other words, form a community, with a common good between them. One imagines that the strong furnish nourishment as necessary and defense as required, while the weak fork over their surplus. The majority, it should be noted, does not necessarily eschew profit but is risk-averse. It prioritizes security over surplus and so embraces the dominion of the strong (1.8.3).

Thucydides would appear to make a distinction similar to the one that Machiavelli makes in \textit{The Prince} between the humors of the people and the great. According to Machiavelli, the people wish not to be oppressed by the great—they desire the secure enjoyment of what they already have—while the great wish to oppress the people, presumably out of some longing for profit. For Machiavelli, the domestic problem is solved by allowing the great to satisfy their desires at the expense of foreigners.\textsuperscript{283} Whether or not Thucydides’ vision is identical, he too would seem to suggest that every community must achieve some (domestic) accommodation between the humors of the strong and weak.

\textsuperscript{282} It should be noted that the word τιµή, used by the Athenian envoys, is \textit{not} used here or anywhere else in the Archaeology. Thucydides instead uses φέροντος δέ τι καὶ δόξης μᾶλλον (1.5.1) and οἷς κόσμος καλῶς τοῦτο δρᾶν (1.5.2). Nonetheless, it appears thematically significant that honor attends the acquisition of profit.

\textsuperscript{283} “For in \textit{every} city these two diverse humors are found, which arises from this: that the people desire neither to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people.” Machiavelli, \textit{The Prince}, 2nd ed., Harvey Mansfield trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 39, emphasis added.
On the basis of these lines, then, we can say something significant about the fabric of political order as Thucydides presents it. First, all communities must satisfy the body’s needs. These are recurring necessities for strong and weak alike.\textsuperscript{284} Second, a community must achieve some balance between those who want more and are willing to risk everything for it (i.e., the strong) and those who will settle for less in exchange for safety and security (i.e., the weak). Whereas the Athenians at Sparta had discussed strong and weak cities, the Archaeology reveals that similar dynamics are at play within them. To use language introduced in earlier parts of this study, the strong and weak have different conceptions of advantage.\textsuperscript{285}

As to honor—that third compulsory motivation introduced by the Athenians at Sparta—Thucydides says repute in speech attended successful raiding in deed. Honor, in other words, followed the acquisition of profit. In the Athenian speech, honor involved some assessment of capacity, which was not distinct from virtue. In ancient times, in regard to piracy, the capacity to plunder (i.e., to acquire) generated a reputation commensurate with this ability. If they were prudent, the weak feared the strong proportionate to the strong’s capacity to rob or harm them, while pirates themselves respected those still stronger than themselves. Perhaps they even admired the talents of their rivals and enemies. There was no justice in this honor, only respect for the strong, who were respectable merely because of their ability to benefit or harm others.\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{284} C.f., 3.82.2.
\textsuperscript{285} In line with our theme, Farrar notes that “The desire for advantage, which powers the [historical] process, must—because the process is conceived as concentration and consolidation of power within Hellas—have two aspects. For some, advantage must reside in an assertion of power, for others in acquiescence to it.” Farrar, \textit{The Origins of Democratic Thinking}, 141–142.
\textsuperscript{286} “Honourable is whatsoever possession, action, or quality is an argument and sign of power.” Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan}, 53. See fn 143 above.
Thucydides next turns to the ancient practice of carrying weapons, which leads to a brief but important digression on the Athenian and Spartan contributions to the distinctly Hellenic way of life (τὴν διαίταν), both of which developed from a more common barbarian one (1.5.3). In these passages, Thucydides sharply contrasts the soft, ostentatious Athenian manner (ἀβροδίατον)—a relaxing of the older, harder way (ἀνειμένη τῇ διαίτῃ)—with the egalitarian, if still harsh Spartan one (ἰσοδίατοι).

Carrying weapons at all times was originally necessitated by the omnipresent threat of brigands. Due to this universal insecurity, the Hellenes individually bore arms because their homes were unguarded and their roads insecure (1.6.1). It was the Athenians, according to Thucydides, who first set down their iron weapons, exchanging hard metal for soft linen and becoming luxurious and effeminate in the process. Indeed, it was only recently that the older among them stopped wearing flowing garments of linen and tying up the topknots of their hair with golden grasshoppers, from which their kinsmen, the Ionians, borrowed the practice (1.6.3). Thucydides takes pains to emphasize that Athens was also built away from the sea in the old fashion as a measure to protect it from pirates (1.7.1). Because of their insulation from the necessity of warding off jealous...

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287 Bartlett concisely makes the key thematic point about Greekness and barbarism: “To put this another way, the ‘Greeks’ of old were in fact ‘barbarians’: the ‘Greek’ way had not yet arisen, and Thucydides’ account of the early time is devoted in part to tracing its growth and to describing its features.” Bartlett, The Idea of Enlightenment, 71. “In chapter 6, characteristic objects and behavior from the daily life of Athens and Sparta represent the extraordinary achievement of stable peace and characteristic civic culture.” Foster, Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism, 26.

288 The golden grasshoppers (or cicadas) are likely symbols of autochthony. See Ibid., 24. And Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume I, 26.

289 The use of τρυφερός and ἀβροδίατον suggest the corruption of a warrior ethos (1.6.3). These passages would also appear to be somehow linked to Thucydides’ later discussion of the Athenian purification of Delos (3.104).
factions and conniving neighbors, the Athenians were the first to engage in a weaponless display of wealth. As the earlier chapters of the Archaeology made clear, Athens was stable because of the poverty of her soil as well as the city’s distance from the sea. Together, these contributed to a reduction in fear and a corresponding increase in trust—just as walls can—all of which facilitated a display of surplus or profit. This general stability also presumably liberated the profit motive of the weak by assuaging their fear.

From the earliest pages of the History, Thucydides has taken some pains to present Athens as the home of the liberation of private desire. In contrast to Athenian ostentation, Thucydides says that the Spartans were the first to adopt the measured style of dress contemporary in Thucydides’ own day, which ultimately replaced even the luxurious garb of the older Athenians (ἁβροδίαιτον, 1.6.3). This moderate dress was one way that those Spartans who had acquired more established an equal way of life with the many (ἰσοδίαιτοι, 1.6.4).²⁹⁰

Whereas the individual Athenian flaunted his difference from others through his clothing, the individual Spartan attempted to obscure any difference between himself and others. More than any other Hellenic city, Sparta is defined by a common way of life, which involves the suppression of difference. Thucydides consistently presents Sparta as the home of the repression of desire. Pausanias, as discussed above, symbolized the dangers of that repression.

²⁹⁰ "At this point enter Sparta, to which Thucydides accords the extraordinary credit of having discovered the common." Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 31.
In Thucydides’ original presentation of civil strife, it was inequality that generated faction (1.2.4). From other sources, we know that the Spartiates referred to themselves as ὅµοιοι, peers, literally those who are alike or the same. Equality would appear to safeguard Spartan unity. According to Thucydides, the Spartans were also the first to strip naked and to oil themselves for their gymnastic exercises. It was only recently, he adds, that Olympic athletes stopped competing with loincloths covering their genitals, which is still common among the Barbarians (1.6.5).

In the space of only a few lines, Thucydides has moved from conventional (Athenian) adornment to natural (Spartan) nudity. The ostentatious display of the Athenians was made possible by freedom from fear, while display itself, at least at Athens, no longer communicated the capacity to acquire by force, as it presumably had for the ancient pirate. At Athens, then, appearance threatened to replace virtue, because adornment no longer corresponded to it. Certain Athenians affected a false natural superiority through their showy, conventional display. Despite this, Athens allowed for a greater range of natural differences precisely because she tolerated conventional display. Sparta did not. Her citizens’ lack of adornment communicated equality, masking difference, while the Spartan education went some way toward ironing out the (natural) differences between Spartans.

The barbaric practice of every man carrying a weapon is virtually the opposite of civic training and nude, weaponless competition, while contest itself would appear to represent
a characteristically Hellenic disclosure of nature.\textsuperscript{291} The man who proves his superiority in contest—in deed—is crowned with an adornment of words, with glory. His laurel crown testifies to his virtue. Thucydides links the Spartans to gymnastic exercises and physical contests. He will later reference the Athenian establishment of music and poetry contests (3.104). To use Platonic language, the Spartans are more gymnastic than music, the Athenians perhaps more music (cf. 2.40.1). Nonetheless, both cities contribute to those contests, those weaponless fights, which uniquely distinguish the Hellenes from the barbarians. It is no accident, then, that Thucydides has his Corinthians and Athenians at Sparta refer to the war as a contest (1.70.1, 1.73.3). The Peloponnesian war itself is a great contest between the two principal cities of Hellas.

After this digression on Athens and Sparta, Thucydides makes another claim about the relationship between the strong and the weak. The passage in question occurs just before the presentation of the Trojan War and helps explains the character of that expedition. It also anticipates the claims of the Athenians at Sparta (1.76.2, 1.77.3).\textsuperscript{292} Thucydides writes that because of their desire for profit (ἐφιέµενοι γὰρ τῶν κερδῶν), weaker men accepted enslavement at the hands of the stronger (τὴν δουλείαν), while more powerful men, acquiring surplus, subjugated the lesser cities (1.8.3).\textsuperscript{293} The passage confirms that strong and weak alike desire gain, and also that the weak prize safety over profit, while the strong prize profit over safety. Finally, it also confirms that the dynamics at play

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  \item \textsuperscript{291} “Each discloses fully his nature the better to compete to establish his natural superiority; they [the Hellenes] have overcome their shame at nakedness in the service of their love of victory.” Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{292} See also the infamous lines of the Melian Dialogue about the relationship between strong and weak (5.89).
  \item \textsuperscript{293} The full line is as follows: ἐφιέµενοι γὰρ τῶν κερδῶν οἱ τῆς ἣσσος ὑπέµενον τὴν τῶν κρείσσονων δουλείαν, οἱ τε δυνατῶτεροι περιουσίας ἔχοντες προσεποιοῦντο ὑπηκόους τὰς ἐλάσσους πόλεις.
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within cities are operative among them. Just as strong men rule weaker ones, strong cities subordinate less powerful ones.\textsuperscript{294} According to Thucydides, it was the interplay of these dynamics that made possible the Trojan War.

**The Trojan War (1.9-1.11)**

In the early Archaeology, migration was ordered motion for the purpose of survival and not conquest. The great mission to Troy is also a form of coordinated motion, but for the sake of plunder and conquest. In Thucydides’ account, Agamemnon, the expedition’s commander, excelled all others in power, and it was fear of him more than any oath that allowed him to assemble the great expeditionary force (1.9.1, 1.9.3). Thucydides does not deny a weight to oaths. He instead asserts the primacy of power and the fear it naturally inspires. Fear, like profit, appears as an ordering principle, binding Agamemnon’s allies to Agamemnon’s purposes. Fear of Agamemnon’s power, and also presumably some desire for profit, compelled the weaker cities to join the great piratical expedition to Troy.

In discussing Agamemnon’s power, Thucydides makes an important point about the might of Mycenae, which soon becomes a second digression on Athens and Sparta, picking up the theme of adornment from the first. He writes that the fact that Mycenae now appears small or insignificant would not justify doubting the reports of her once

\textsuperscript{294} “The formation of Hellas, as well as every subsequent notable achievement by Hellenes in the Archaeology, follows a kind of historical law or pattern by which a stronger power organizes weaker ones around itself.” Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 340. Price is broadly correct, and he too treats the relationship between strong and weak within political communities. Nonetheless, he does not try to explain why strong and weak interact as they do on the basis of Thucydides’ political psychology. See Ibid., 340–344.
great power (1.11.1). To prove his point, he uses the example of a future observer gazing upon the ruins of Athens and Sparta.\textsuperscript{295}

If Sparta were abandoned, he says, and all that remained were the foundations of her temples and public buildings, there would be a great tendency to mistrust the report of her great power (1.11.2). Yet Sparta controls two fifths of the Peloponnese, leads all of it, and has many outside allies besides (1.11.2). But she is not centralized and compactly arranged like Athens (οὔτε ξυνοικισθείσης πόλεως), nor does she have lavish temples or public buildings. She is plainly adorned, arranged κατὰ κώμας in the older style of Hellas, and without walls.\textsuperscript{296}

According to Thucydides, if this very same thing were to happen to Athens, if she were abandoned and all that remained were the ruins of her temples and public buildings, people would think her power to be twice what it actually was, incorrectly judging her might from the city’s adornment (1.11.2). He ends this second Athens-Sparta comparison by remarking that one cannot adequately evaluate the power of a city by its looks (1.11.3).\textsuperscript{297} Sparta’s looks, in other words, suggest that her power is less than it is, Athens’ that it is more. This second discussion of Athens and Sparta is clearly related to

\textsuperscript{295} In regard to this passage in particular, Allison claims that “the central position in the Archaeology of this comparison [is] an indication of its importance. In addition to this, the underlying subject of the comparison is power, which means that this passage functions as the thematic as well as the structural hub of the Archaeology.” Allison, Power and Preparedness in Thucydides, 18. In discussing ring structure in the Archaeology, Ellis points out that Thucydides’ account of Trojan War (as well as this passage which interrupts it) occupies a central position within the ring structure. Ellis, “The Structure and Argument of Thucydides’ Archaeology,” 372. In ring structure, the central position suggests thematic importance.

\textsuperscript{296} κατὰ κώμας means loosely composed of villages, typically spread over a larger area. On this, see Gomme, An Historical Commentary on Thucydides Volume 1, 100. And Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume 1, 34–35.

\textsuperscript{297} In the Funeral Oration, Pericles tells the Athenians to gaze upon the city and fall in love with its power (2.43.1). Thucydides here distances himself from his Pericles.
the first. The luxurious garments of the older Athenians parallel the adornment of Athens, while Sparta’s lack of adornment is reflected in the unpretentious dress of her Spartiates. The appearance of a city, just like that of an individual, suggests power, virtue, or capacity, but appearances can be deceiving. Indeed, appearances can even be self-deceiving, as the interpretation of the speech of the Corinthians at Sparta made clear. All too often, cities and individuals misjudge the extent and range of their actual power.

After discussing Mycenae and Athens and Sparta, Thucydides again returns to the Trojan War. The overall size of the expeditionary force, he says, had more to do with the lack of fiscal resources than of men (1.11.1). A smaller army than desired was dispatched. It was this that led to the great length of the conflict. Due to the lack of food, the Achaeans were forced to divide their force between farming, piracy, and fighting (1.11.1). Had there been sufficient supplies, they would have been able to prosecute the war continuously and thus to conquer Troy quickly (1.11.2). Collective action requires supplies, and it is financial surplus that secures them. Daily nourishment is not simply a plank in every political floor but a tent-post in every army of invasion. After the Trojan War—that great plundering expedition to Troy—Hellas experienced a regressive phase, succeeded, eventually, by another progressive one.

**Motion after Troy (1.12)**

According to Thucydides, the coordinated motion of the Trojan War was followed by a period of disordered motion and upheaval. In this time, Hellas did not enjoy the rest
requisite for growth (ὡστε μὴ ἡσυχάσσασαι αὐξηθῆναι, 1.12.1). After Troy, the return of powerful men to their homes generated civil strife for a long period, while those expelled from their cities established communities elsewhere (1.12.2). Around this same time, Thucydides says, the Spartans first arrived in Hellas—the so-called return of the Heraclidae—and took control of the Peloponnese. 298 Years passed before things again calmed, and Hellas once more enjoyed a secure rest (ἡσυχάσσα σῇ Ελλάς, 1.12.4). 1.12.4 closes the ring opened at 1.12.1 by repeating the link between rest and growth. A period of long rest allowed the Hellenes once more to engage in coordinated motion. The Athenians colonized Ionia and the islands, the Peloponnesians Italy and Sicily (1.12.4).

Rest and Growth (1.13-1.14)

With rest, revenues soon grew, and Hellas became increasingly powerful. This, Thucydides says, led to tyranny within cities. The Hellenes also began to equip navies and to attach themselves ever more firmly to the sea (1.13.1). As they had for Minos, navies brought with them great power, both revenue and rule over others (καὶ ἄλλων ἄρχειν, 1.15.1). From the first pages of the History, sea power is linked to empire. The verb ἄρχειν, to rule, used of Athens throughout the History—it is never used of Sparta 299—first occurs in the discussion of Minos, the first naval power, who ruled over the Cycladic islands (καὶ τῶν Κυκλάδων νῆσων ἡρξέ, 1.4., emphasis added).

298 More precisely, Thucydides says that the Dorians along with the Heraclidae took control of the Peloponnese (1.12.3).

299 In line with this theme in general but with regard to the Pentecontaetia in particular, de-Romilly writes that “the imperceptible transformation of a confederation into an empire is accompanied by a distinction among the groups of words ἡγεῖσθαι, σύμμαχος, συμμαχία, and ἄρχειν, ἄρχωμενος, ἄρχή.” In the
In Thucydides’ claim about the strong and the weak, the weak accepted the dominion of the strong out of fear but also from a desire for profit. This is an imperial dynamic, and one that especially characterizes naval empire. The Pentecontaetia’s description of Athenian control over the Ionians corroborates these claims. In the period of the tyrants, Thucydides emphasizes that there were no wars by land from which power was won, merely conflicts over borderland (1.15.2). Subject cities, he says, did not rally around the great powers nor were there large, confederate expeditions with participants contributing equally (1.15.2).

Here, Thucydides sketches two distinct models of collective action, which have parallels in the later History, and which are important for present purposes. The first would seem to fit Agamemnon’s expedition, where fearful subjects followed a great power for the sake of plunder. Persia’s attempt to enslave Hellas is presumably of this same character, as is the later Athenian effort to subjugate Sicily. The Hellenic League, formed for the defense of Hellenic freedom, would appear to be an example of the second model, where confederates equally contributed to a common expedition. Persia threatened all of Hellas, and so every city had an equal stake in contributing to the common defense. Due to her great power, Sparta was chosen to lead the Hellenic forces. She did not rule over them (1.18.2). The Delian League, originally decided by common counsels, would appear to be another example of this second model (κοίνων ξυνόδων βουλεύοντων, 1.97.1), that is,

footnote to this passage she adds, “The two series of expressions are never confused with each other.” De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, 87, emphasis added.
until the Athenians transformed it into the Athenian Empire, using their naval power to bring the Ionians firmly under their control (1.97.1-2).

The first model, where subject cities follow a greater one, characterizes the uniquely Athenian form of dominance and control. Sparta’s confederative Peloponnesian League, decided by majority voting and requiring common force contributions, represents the second. The first model of collective action appears to correspond to offense, to plundering, conquest, and profit-seeking, the second to defense and security-seeking.

The first model unifies strong and weak. The strong desire profit and compel the participation of the weak. The weak too long for profit and fear their imperial masters more than they do the enemy. The price of defection, in other words, is higher in the coin of safety and profit than loyal service. The second model also unifies strong and weak. The strong’s privileging of profit over safety and the weak’s prioritization of security over gain align in the face of a palpable threat to both. As a result, strong and weak together meet the common danger. In Thucydides’ pages, defense appears to be a more stable collective enterprise than offense, precisely because of the solid equality of the stakes.

In the progression of the Archaeology, Thucydides has arrived at that moment just before the Persian wars, which he sketches in compressed fashion. Before the barbarian invasion, there were hindrances to Hellenic growth (κωλύματα μὴ αὐξηθῆναι, 1.16). The key external hindrance was the Persian Empire, the key internal one the Hellenic
tyrants. When both are removed, Hellenic power, specifically Athenian power, grows rapidly. Before the Persian wars, Ionian power was on rise, but the Persian Cyrus conquered the land down to the sea, enslaving the cities of the mainland (ἐδοὺλωσε). Shortly thereafter, Darius with the Phoenician fleet conquered the islands (1.16). The Persians were expanding into the Aegean. Presumably, they would have continued to expand had they not been beaten back by the Hellenes.

The successful defense of Hellenic freedom, however, required the earlier deposition of the tyrants. According to Thucydides, the tyrants principally looked to their own safety and acted for the sake of personal gain. Their aim was security. As a result, they accomplished no deed worthy of mention (ἐπράξθη δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἔργον ἀξιόλογον, 1.17). Moreover, because of them, for a long time, Hellas was prevented from engaging in collective action, while the cities of Hellas individually lacked daring (κατὰ πόλεις τε ἀτολμοτέρα εἶναι, 1.17).

Although wealthy and strong, Thucydides’ tyrants seem to evince what we have been calling the psychology of the weak. They grow their wealth cautiously, likely because they fear not only outsiders but also domestic rivals. It will be recalled that Athenian daring is of recent origin, dating from the time the Persia wars. Thucydides’ emphasis on the lack of daring in Hellas during the reign of the tyrants suggests the importance of

300 Earlier, he had called the Peloponnesian war most worthy of report (ἀξιολογώτατον). The repetition of ἀξιόλογος here suggests the importance of the deposition of the tyrants for Hellenic, especially Athenian, growth.

301 According to Kallet, in specific reference to the era of the tyrants, “Yet, as he [Thucydides] brings out in 1.17, a third element of dunamis was absent, namely unity, for the tyrants were concerned primarily with maintaining the security of their own position in a polis.” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 30. The establishment of the democracy more fully unifies the Athenians. See fn 305 below.
their removal for the later transformation of the Athenian character. The final chapters of the Archaeology sketch the Persian wars and their aftermath and conclude with a final comparison of Athens and Sparta. After interpreting 1.18-1.19, we will examine the overall logic of the Archaeology’s presentation of the growth of the Athenian and Spartan regimes.

**Athens and Sparta (1.18-19)**

Having introduced the tyrants and Persia, Thucydides explains how these obstacles to Athenian growth were overcome. It was Sparta who deposed the tyrants, including those at Athens (1.18.1). Ten years after the Athenian victory at Marathon—one presumes the tyrants would have given earth and water to the King—the Barbarian returned to enslave Hellas (ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα δοῦλωσόμενος ἤλθεν, 1.18.2). Just as Agamemnon’s superiority had made possible the expedition to Troy (τῶν τότε δυνάμει προύχων, 1.9.1), it was Spartan preeminence that caused her to be chosen to spearhead the defensive effort (δυνάμει προύχοντες, 1.18.2). With the Barbarian advancing, the Athenians daringly abandoned their city, broke up their property, and took to their ships. At this moment, according to Thucydides, they became nautical, wedding themselves to motion and the sea (ναυτικοὶ ἐγένοντο, 1.18.2). Together, Athens and Sparta successfully beat back the barbarian invader.

A few years later, Thucydides says, in the Archaeology’s summary of the Pentecontaetia, those cities that had revolted from the King and the Hellenic allies separated. Some went
over to the Athenians, others to the Spartans. At this time, these were the greatest Hellenic powers, one strong by land, the other by ships (δυνάμει γὰρ ταύτα μέγιστα διεφάνη: ἵσχυον γὰρ οἱ μὲν κατὰ γῆν, οἱ δὲ ναυσίν, 1.18.2). The Hellenic alliance was active for several years, until the Athenians and the Spartans quarreled, warring alongside their allies against one another.

From the Median war to the present, the two blocs, sometimes at peace, sometimes at war with one another or their own allies in revolt, became well prepared in matters of war and experienced in the practice of dangers (κινδύνων τὰς μελέτας ποιούμενοι, 1.18.3). According to Thucydides, in 432 BC, Athens and Sparta were at the peak of their growth and preparation in every capacity for war, one by land and the other by ships (1.18.3 and 1.19). Most of the Hellenes were aligned with one of the two great powers (1.1.1, 2.9).

We are now in a position to assemble the Archaeology’s several claims about Athens and Sparta By combining them with Thucydides’ key statements about the motivation, a fuller picture of the two regimes comes to light. Overall, the Archaeology reveals that the cities’ differences are the product of different cultivations of a common human nature. Partly in response to their geographic circumstances, specifically the quality of soil, Athens and Sparta developed differently, while this, in turn, contributed to the development of their distinctive τρόποι.

Given the fertility of its soil, the Peloponnese originally suffered from faction for a long period (1.18.1). Like Hellen and his sons, Sparta, in order to grow and remain strong
amidst conflict, had to avoid civil strife, the source of communal destruction. Thucydides says that she acquired good laws early and consequently never experienced tyranny (ἡ ὑνομήθη, 1.18.1). Good laws represent Sparta’s solution to the problem of faction, a problem that bedeviled Sparta longer than any other city (1.18.1). Good laws also prevented tyranny, and likely for the same reason: because they rooted out inequality. In the original presentation of civil strife, inequality in power was the source of conflict (1.2.4). This inequality can lead to either tyranny or faction, to the preeminence of one man or to a conflict between rival groups vying for dominance. The Spartan constitution solves the problems of faction and tyranny by establishing an uncompromising equality, while the Spartan education harshly educates away—or perhaps only obscures—that inequality which nourishes civil strife.302

At Sparta, the Corinthian embassy had termed Sparta’s laws unmoved (τὰ ἄκινητα νόμιµα), suitable only for a city at rest (1.71.2-3). Pressed by many necessities, the Corinthians had begged Sparta to innovate and adapt, lest she be swept away by the Athenian tide. The Archaeology reveals Sparta’s unmoved constitution to be itself a contrivance, a technical solution to the problem of faction and tyranny. Although Sparta may respond slowly to threats, so far from representing a failed adaptation to foreign policy challenges, her constitution appears to represent a supreme adaptation to weathering them successfully.

302 Gomme notes that “in this connexion ἑὐνοµία has a very precise meaning: it implies two things, a constitutional government (the rule of law, as opposed to tyrannies, however benevolent) and internal peace, absence of στάσεις.” Gomme, An Historical Commentary on Thucydides Volume 1, 128.
In the Archaeology, Thucydides also takes pains to emphasize that Sparta is organized in the old style, i.e., loosely composed of villages, and that she has no walls. Whereas most cities organized in this way are weak, Sparta is strong. Her strength is the result of her unity, which facilitates collective action, and which itself depends upon her distinctive way of life. The Spartan regime imposes harsh necessities upon the Spartans (cf. 1.84.4), which allow them squarely to face the exigencies of the Spartan strategic circumstance. Spartan power is also old. Just as her constitution has been in place for years, so too has the Spartan manner remained unchanged.\(^3\)

To turn to Athens, the poverty of Attic soil insulated Athens from the strife experienced in the Peloponnesus (1.2-5-6). The fact that the city was built away from the sea also provided a geographic buffer from the threat posed by pirates (1.7.1). These circumstances afforded the Athenians a certain freedom from threats to their security and profit, which made possible the development of a more leisurely way of life (1.6.3). The later establishment of Athens’ walls and fleet enhanced her insulation from these same threats, while her unmatched navy made possible the control that Minos had once exerted over the islands. Finally, first democracy and then the Persian wars liberated the acquisitive desires of the Athenian many. Unlike the old Spartan manner, the daring Athenian one is new. How did it develop?

\(^{303}\) In his life of Lycurgus, Plutarch quotes Lycurgus to the effect that "A city cannot be unfortified if it is ringed with brave men and not bricks." Plutarch, *On Sparta*, trans. Talbert (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 32. According to Raaflaub, “The ideal of *eunomia* thus stands not only for a good social order, but for the political resolution of crisis and *stasis* and for the integration of the polis; it represents the aim of the Archaic lawgivers and encapsulates the main concern of early Greek political thinking.” Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, 46. See fn 302 above.
Thucydides emphasizes that the Athenians achieved their democracy only after Sparta’s deposition of the tyranny at Athens. Until the end of the reign of the tyrants, no cities were daring (1.17). In addition to her navy and financial resources, the great power of Athens—like the power of Sparta—depends upon her character. Overall, then, it was the combination of insulation from conflict—the manner in which the Athenian geographic circumstance and later the city’s walls solved the security problem—with the transformation of the Athenian character wrought by the Persian wars that made possible the later growth of the Athenian Empire.

By solving the problem of fear—but also as a result of that confidence borne of Salamis—the individual Athenian’s thirst for honor and profit was fully liberated. With the majority’s fear assuaged, strong and weak alike began to see their city as a source of pride and a vehicle for the realization of gain. It was first the establishment of the democracy and then the brilliant defense of Hellenic freedom that contributed to the full development of the Athenian manner—a culmination of that character originally made possible by the city’s accidental geographic circumstance.

A word can now be said about how the cities characteristically exert control over their allies or subjects, followed by a few concluding remarks. According to Thucydides, because Sparta has had the same constitution for almost four hundred years, she is able to establish reliable oligarchies within neighboring cities (1.19). Again, this manner of control resembles that of Hellen and his sons, whose involvement in the affairs of their neighbors led to the gradual dominance of his name (1.3.2). On this basis, Sparta leads
her allies as a first among equals. Athens, by contrast, rules over subjects. Between the Persian wars and the Peloponnesian, Athens progressively took the navies from her allies, excepting Chios and Lesbos, and assessed all a quantity of tribute (1.19). Unlike Sparta, whose control is primarily internal, on the level of the regime, Athenian control is external.304

In dealing with her allies, Sparta poses as a first among equals, while her domestic order is itself based upon the fundamental equality of her Spartiates. Her internal or domestic arrangement, in other words, harmonizes with her external or foreign policy. Domestically, Athens is also organized around the equality of her citizens. In the Periclean presentation at least, every Athenian is an equal desirer of that honor and profit that empire alone can confer, which is itself made possible by an Athenian manner shared equally by each and every Athenian. But unlike hegemony, the logic of empire—a logic of preeminence—is in some disharmony with the domestic equality of the Athenians.

Let us step back. For countless generations, the powerful Spartans have maintained a cautious, defensive posture, their line steady, their spears bristling outward. For less than fifty years, the powerful Athenians have been unified in a daring, aggressive posture. In the previous generation, Sparta was easily the more powerful city, chosen to lead the Hellenic League for this reason (1.18.2). Athens, for her part, achieved comparable power only when she became nautical as a result of Themistoclean innovation in the

304 Kallet makes a parallel point on the cities’ respective manner of controlling others. “The external measure of dunamis is the ability to compel; this demonstrates in practical terms the importance of both Athens’ naval arche and Sparta’s authority by virtue of its unsurpassed military superiority on land maintained by a stable politeia and the ability to impose similar politeiai on its allies.” Kallet, Money, Expense, and Naval Power, 33. See fn 299 above.
impending shadow of the Persian invasion (1.14.3). She fully equaled Sparta in the fifty years following the Persian wars, the period covered by the Pentecontaetia.

Collectively, Athens evinces the psychology of the strong, privileging profit over safety. She is compelled by her hopes. Although strong, Sparta evinces the psychology of the weak, privileging safety and maintenance over expansion. She is compelled by her fears. The Archaeology discloses those original historical conditions that influenced the distinctive Athenian and Spartan mode of cherishing the advantageous, especially profit.

Again, the power of Athens resides not simply in her unmatchable Athenian fleet, which sustains her empire by nourishing it upon the tribute of her subjects, but also in the character of her regime. Character, which is to say disposition and efficacy in the use of power in the pursuit of advantage, is a critical component of power itself. Athenian daring comprises one element of effectual Athenian power, just as Spartan conservatism does of Spartan power. As Simon Hornblower has written, “There is, in Thucydides, no systematic treatment of Spartan and Athenian weakness other than those of character.” This is the case because Thucydides’ Peloponnesian war is largely or essentially a contest between the characters of the two great Hellenic cities.

305 The Athenian character inextricably bound up with the fact that Athens is a democracy. Finley rightly observes that “the greatness of Athens was, to him [Thucydides], dependent on her being a democracy, not only or chiefly because the poorer classes were the backbone of the fleet but because freedom alone could supply men individually with the self-confidence and vigor which were necessary for the maintenance of Athens’ far flung interests.” Finley, *Thucydides*, 92. Finley neglects the very great extent to which the individual Athenian considered these “far flung interests” his own. See also Farrar, *The Origins of Democratic Thinking*, 140.

It is Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war that ultimately leads to reader back to the story of the Archaeology, to the manner that historical circumstances differently influenced the development of human nature in Hellas, particularly in Athens and Sparta. The causes of the Peloponnesian war point to the characters of the belligerents, which prove bound up with their domestic arrangements, with how they organize their strong and weak individuals, with how they organize and shape the fundamental human drives of their citizens. The causes of the Peloponnesian war can represent a window into the human causes of war—into how and why human beings come together into peaceful association and how and why they break apart again into the brutal motion of war—because the question of the causes of war points to the question of human sociability—that fundamental question that so exercised Thucydides’ great heir and student, Thomas Hobbes.\(^\text{307}\)

\[^{307}\]"The fact is that Thucydides has seen beyond all accidental identities or differences to the common roots of human nature, and he clearly considers that the two blocs which Athens and Sparta assembled are as large as humanity can contrive, before it sets about destroying them. In the last analysis, the common human nature that we share is what can be relied on to keep us apart.” Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 177, note 9. Of course, it is human nature that also brings us together. Human nature is social and anti-social. The central question is the conditions and possibilities of sociability.
The Corinthian Speech to the Spartan Alliance (1.120-1.124)

The preceding chapters explored the logic of the truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war by following the thread of Thucydidean necessity, which led us from political charge and counter-charge to the Archaeology’s account of the development of Athens and Sparta from an original human nature. Following the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides returns to the openly avowed quarrels. After the war vote, Sparta inquires of Delphi whether it is best to fight. Apollo responds through his oracle that if the Spartans fight with all of their might, they will win, and that he will take part called and uncalled (1.118.3). Receiving this apparent divine sanction for war, Sparta summons her allies so as to resolve upon war in common, to see if it is necessary to fight (εἰ χρὴ πολεῖν, 1.119, cf. 1.87.4). Thucydides reproduces the Corinthian speech before the Spartan confederacy, the third Corinthian speech of the first book, which reveals the Peloponnesian necessity for launching a war against Athens.

At the debate at Athens, the Corinthians had claimed that they had spoken out against a proposed Spartan invasion of Attica during the Samian revolt, likely at a similar gathering of the allies, which suggests that the vote of the Spartan confederacy is more than pro forma. From what we know of the Spartan alliance—much of it drawn from the

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308 There is perhaps irony here. In book seven, Thucydides indicates that the Spartans began to fight with all of their might only when they believed that justice was on their side (7.18.2). Sparta, in other words, may only be able to fight with all of her might when she believes that the gods are (already) on her side, which is to say when she has acted justly.

309 The μὲν - δὲ adversative of the line distinguishes the Spartan decision that the treaty has been violated (and that Athens has committed injustice) from the question of whether it is best for Sparta to fight. The permissibility of war is apparently distinct from its desirability, although Corinth will claim that the god’s pronouncement regarding the latter confirms the former. From the Pentecontaetia, the discerning reader is aware that Delphi itself is not immune from outside interference (1.112.5).
History—a majority vote is necessary to begin a common war. According to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, once Sparta has herself voted, she brings the campaign up for a common vote. A simple majority can block it, as presumably happened with the proposal to aid Samos, while a favorable vote commits all alike, even the dissenters, to the common enterprise.\textsuperscript{310}

Just as with the Congress at Sparta, Thucydides emphasizes that the majority of the allies condemned the Athenians and were eager for war (1.67.1-4, cf. 1.119). Once again, Corinth is the loudest agitator. She even canvasses the Peloponnesian cities in advance of the gathering to secure the requisite votes (1.119). Again, she has arranged to speak last among Sparta’s allies, and again Thucydides recreates only Corinth’s speech, an anthem to Hellenic liberation. As with the speech of Archidamus, the interpretation that follows is selective, not comprehensive. It focuses less on preparation and strategy and more on the psychology of Sparta’s allies.

In the previous chapter, two models of collective action were introduced, one offensive and the other defensive. Corinth’s speech before the allies reveals the psychology of the defensive model, where cities gather on an equal basis to fight a common enemy (1.15.2).\textsuperscript{311} Although Thucydides makes it clear that Corinth is motivated by her private fears for Potidæa, she publicly maintains that the Athenians menace every Peloponnesian

\textsuperscript{310} This may mean that during the Samian revolt Sparta voted to go to war against Athens, which would have been in violation of the Thirty Years’ Peace, but that the lack of adequate Peloponnesian support stopped her. On the mechanism of the Peloponnesian League, see de Ste. Croix, \textit{The Origins of the Peloponnesian War}, 101–123. See also fn 252 above.

\textsuperscript{311} This aspect of Corinth’s third speech demands comparison with the later speech by Hermocrates at Gela (4.59-64). Hermocrates also argues for unity so as to meet the common danger posed by the Athenians.
city equally (1.120.2). The burden is on her to prove it. Corinth will claim that security and profit recommend war, and that victory is probable, but only if the Peloponnesians are united. Corinth walks a fine rhetorical line. She must simultaneously overstate and understate the Athenian threat. To bring about a war, she must convince the Peloponnesians of the very great danger posed by Athens. At the same time, she must persuade them that they will be victorious against so powerful an adversary.

The Corinthians begin by saying that they can no longer blame Sparta for inaction, for she has now at long last accepted her rightful role as leader of the Peloponnesus (1.120.1, cf. 1.69.6). She has finally voted to move against Athens and gathered her allies for the same purpose. According to Corinth, leaders must distribute private things equally (τὰ ἰδια ἡξ ἱσου νέμοντας), while safeguarding the common ones (τὰ κοινὰ προσκοπεῖν, 1.120.1). For this, they are honored (1.120.1). Sparta has done her part. The allies must now do theirs.

The Corinthians claim that Athens poses an equal danger to the safety and profit of all. Given the interconnection of trade, inland cities have just as much to fear as coastal ones (1.120.2). The Peloponnesians, they say, must not hesitate to exchange peace for war, for moderate men (ἂνδρῶν γὰρ σωφρόνων), when they are not suffering injustice, naturally remain at rest (ἡσυχάζειν), while good men (ἀγαθῶν), when they suffer injustice, fight (1.120.3). Such men do not become inflated by good fortune in war or by

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312 i.e., a hegemon. See fn 299 above.
the pleasures of peace (1.120.3). These are errors to be avoided at all cost. If a man hesitates to fight because of his enjoyment of the pleasures of peace, the Corinthians warn, he will all too quickly lose that delight of ease for which he hesitates. On the other hand, the man presuming upon good fortune in war is inflated by a dangerous and untrustworthy confidence (θράσει ἀπίστω ἐπαιρόμενος, 1.120.4).

The Corinthians claim that the Peloponnesians are suffering injustice at the hands of the Athenians and so would take up this war with real justification (ἰκανὰ ἔχοντες ἐγκλήματα, 1.121.1). After offering a preliminary war strategy and several reasons for confidence in victory, the Corinthians attempt to frighten the Peloponnesians with the dangers of inaction. To do this, they sharpen their earlier characterization of Athens as tyrannical and dangerously expansionistic. Just as the Peloponnesians, led by the Spartans, once deposed the Hellenic tyrants, so too must they now bring low tyrannical Athens. Not to act would reflect stupidity, cowardice, or indifference (ἀμελείας, 1.122.4). Worse still would be to hold Athens in contempt (1.122.4). Slavery is the only alternative to war. This was the reason to fight Persia. It is now the reason to fight Athens. Shame if nothing else demands it (1.123.1). Honor, like fear and profit, also recommends a Peloponnesian war.

313 The danger of becoming puffed up by pleasure or praise was also a theme of Archidamus’ speech (1.81.6, 1.83.3, 1.84.2). The virtues that the Corinthians appeal to be may be characteristically Dorian ones. See Debnar, Speaking the Same Language, 80.
314 In 1.121.2–5, the Corinthians outline the material strengths and weaknesses of the two sides and offer a Peloponnesian war strategy. Although unimportant for present purposes, these passages should be compared with the strategic assessments of Archidamus’ speech (1.80.3-1.81) and those portions of the first Periclean speech that treat war resources and strategy (1.141.3-1.143).
315 Pericles claims that the general indifference of the individual Peloponnesian cities is a significant obstacle to collective action (ἀμελείαν, 1.141.7).
316 Debnar makes the interesting suggestion that “the catalogue of Spartan virtues praised by Archidamus is systematically inverted by the Corinthians as they describe the dangers that Athens’ dominance poses to the Peloponnesians’ reputations.” Debnar, Speaking the Same Language, 85.
Although they had earlier stressed the untrustworthiness of confidence in war (θράσει ἀπίστῳ, 1.120.4), the Corinthians now say that the Peloponnesians can in fact be confident because of the gods (θαρσούντας, 1.123). Apollo has promised his support, while the rest of the Hellenes will quickly rally to the Peloponnesian banner from fear of Athens or hope of advantage (τὰ μὲν φόβῳ, τὰ δὲ ὠφελίᾳ, 1.123.1, cf. 2.8.4).  

Importantly, the Corinthians also claim that the god has confirmed that the Treaty has been broken by Athens, meaning that the Peloponnesian will be fighting a just war (1.123.2). They hint that Athenian injustice—specifically, the Athenian transgression of the Peace—will incur divine punishment. This is one reason why the Peloponnesians can be confident of victory. The gods will be on their side.

According to Corinth, while justice recommends war (1.121.1), so too does the Peloponnesian advantage (ταῦτα ξυμφέροντα, 1.124.1). Delay is untenable. Athens will only continue to weaken the Peloponnesians one by one. If she is allowed to do so, it will soon be too late to stop her. Consequently, the allies must aid Potidaea immediately, and then swiftly liberate the other Hellenes (1.124.1). The Peloponnesians, the Corinthians say, have arrived at a necessity (ἐς ἀνάγκην ἀφίχθαι)—and here the thematic term necessity (ἀνάγκη) is used. Justice as well as the Peloponnesian advantage combine to demand war. The allies must not be frightened by immediate dangers—as is the wont of the weak—but instead focus on the durable peace that will follow the war (μὴ

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317 According to Debnar’s reading of this oracle, the god prophesied victory “‘if [they] fought with [all] their might,’ and he promised to take sides (1.118.3). He did not say that the Spartans would fight with all their might or that he would take their side.” Ibid., 87. See fn 308 above.
φοβηθέντες τὸ αὐτίκα δεινόν, 1.124.2). In appealing to the risk-averse, the Corinthians argue that the direction of least risk is, paradoxically, war.

As the speech winds down, Corinth repeats her claim that Athens is a tyrant city, threatening slavery for all alike and plotting against those that she does not yet rule (1.124.3). To sum up the Corinthian position, war has become necessary because Athens endangers the Peloponnesian interest. Throughout the speech, Corinth articulates a logic of collective action that is rooted in the psychology of the weak. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the psychology of Sparta’s confederacy mirrors Spartan psychology. The allied cities are compelled to fight out of fear of rising Athenian power (1.23.6).

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The Vote of the Peloponnesian League (1.125)

After Corinth’s speech, the Spartans conduct a vote of their allies, great and small cities alike (καὶ μείζονι καὶ ἐλάσσονι πόλει, 1.125.1). The majority vote for war (1.125.1). Thucydides takes pains to emphasize the equal vote of the small and the great, confirming that equality resides at the heart of Sparta’s confederacy. Given the general unpreparedness, however, each city returns home to begin its individual preparations for war. The time that elapses before the first invasion of Attica is almost a year (1.125.2).

318 “The Second Lacedaemonian Congress … has the Corinthians appeal to their fellow members of the Peloponnesian League that the point has been reached at which a vote for war is a necessity (ἐς ἀνάγκην ἀφῆκατι, 1.124.2). With the vote to go to war on this basis, Thucydides’ own statement of the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις has been endorsed by one of the contending parties.” Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 31.
The delay corroborates Archidamus’ assertion that the Peloponnesians are unprepared for war.\textsuperscript{319}

In this time before the invasion, Thucydides says that the Spartans send embassies to Athens to make charges (ἐγκλήματα ποιούμενοι) so as to establish the greatest possible πρόφασις for war if the Athenians refuse to listen to them (1.126.1). Despite Corinth’s claim that the Peloponnesians already have sufficient grounds for war (ικανὰ ἐγκλήματα, 1.121.1), and that the god himself has confirmed an Athenian violation of the Peace (1.123.2), Sparta brings forward still more charges. Although her proverbial ducks are in a row—there has been a Spartan vote for war, an encouraging oracular response from Delphi, and now an allied vote—some in Sparta clearly remain uncomfortable with war. Archidamus may perhaps be among them.

\textsuperscript{319} Stahl rightly notes the irony of the passage about the lack of Peloponnesian preparation, which only serves to confirm Archidamus’ judgment. Stahl, \textit{Thucydides}, 56.
The Greatest πρόφασις for War

Thucydides says that Sparta dispatches embassies to drum up the greatest πρόφασις for a Peloponnesian war—a magnified caseus belli—if Athens fails to heed her ultimatums (1.126.1, cf. 1.139.1-3). As we will soon see, Pericles’ first speech, which concludes the first book, represents the definitive Athenian response to these quintessentially Spartan demands. On the first page of the History, Thucydides states that the Peloponnesian war is the greatest motion (κίνησις γὰρ αὐτῆς μεγίστη, 1.1.2). As we have seen, in his own view, the truest πρόφασις for this unprecedented motion—the truest reason for the violation of the Peace between Athens and Sparta (διότι δὲ ἔλυσαν, 1.23.5)—is human nature.

Although Thucydides himself suggests that the Peloponnesian war is necessary (1.23.6), Sparta’s demands imply that it remains avoidable, but only if Athens will back down. The embassies also seem to radiate apprehension about violating the Peace. Although Archidamus lost the Spartan debate to Sthenelaidas, Spartan policy closely follows his proposal that Sparta should remonstrate with Athens—literally affix αἰτία or blame (αἰτιάσθαι)—while preparing for war (1.82.1-3, 1.85.2). Archidamus had hoped war would prove avoidable. He had been troubled by a possible Spartan violation of the Peace, and also by the fact that Sparta and the Peloponnesians were unprepared to fight.

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320 The full line is ὅπως σφίσιν δτι μεγίστη πρόφασις εἰτ τοῦ πολεμεῖν, ἥν μή τι ἐσακύωσιν. For a justification for translating πρόφασις as caseus belli instead of pretext, see Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 59.
321 This argument mirrors the claims of the Corinthians at Athens, who had said that it was only by accepting an unjust alliance with Corcyra that Athens would make war necessary (cf. 1.40.3, 1.42.2).
The greatest πρόφασις for a Peloponnesian war (1.126.1) echoes Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις for it (1.23.6). Whereas Thucydides’ truest πρόφασις involved necessity and was somehow Athenian, this greatest one is Spartan and is bound up with justice and the gods. As the Melian and Athenian “theologies” of the later Melian dialogue make clear, claims about justice and necessity imply conceptions of the cosmos or chaos and the human place within it (5.104 and 5.105, respectively). On the basis of these views of the whole, Athens and Sparta have radically different accounts of the origins of the war.

In the early chapters of the first book, the preliminary clashes produced what Thucydides called the grounds of complaint and quarrels leveled by the sides in speech (τὰς αἰτίας καὶ τὰς διαφορὰς, 1.23.5). Throughout this study, these have been termed the manifest quarrels. Sparta’s greatest πρόφασις falls within the ambit of these charges and counter-charges, as opposed to the quieter but truer cause of war, which has already been examined in detail. From Thucydides’ own perspective then, the greatest πρόφασις is tinged with Spartan fear. But necessity is ostensibly absent from it. Instead, justice and

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322 It is important to note that the necessity position that Thucydides ties to Athens throughout the History is emphatically not that of every Athenian, although the characteristic daring of the Athenians may in fact point to it.

323 “Going together with Thucydides’ analysis of justice, however, is his sometimes unobtrusive but nonetheless persistent concern with the belief in the divine as that belief manifests itself in and through the Peloponnesian war.” Bartlett, The Idea of Enlightenment, 67.

324 “When Thucydides speaks in the first book of the causes or justifications for the Peloponnesian war, he stresses three of them: the Spartans’ fear of Athens’ increasing power, the breach of the treaty, and the pollution contracted at the time of Cylon.” Strauss, The City and Man, 238.

325 These new Spartan arguments are intended to “strengthen the openly avowed causes.” Ibid., 180.
advantage are wedded together by a capricious divine. Sparta fears the gods, from whence springs her famous moderation, at least in part.\textsuperscript{326}

In her first embassy, Sparta puts forward a divine \textit{casus belli}, one used by Cleomenes in the previous generation (1.126.12).\textsuperscript{327} Although Thucydides allows his readers to see the hypocritical character of Sparta’s ultimatums, the Spartan logic of the greatest πρόφασις requires comparison with the Athenian logic of the truest one. Sparta’s words and deeds disclose her psychology, just as the decisive Athenian response, the Periclean response, will reveal that of Athens. These final episodes of book one bring the question of the war’s outbreak into even sharper relief.

The Spartans demand that Athens expel the curse of the goddess, which arose during the conspiracy of Cylon, who made the first attempt at a tyranny at Athens. The Athenians quickly rejoins that Sparta should purify herself of two such pollutions, the first involving her Helots and the second involving the death of the traitor Pausanias. The curses relate to the distinctive political dangers that the cities face, but they also involve offenses against the divine. Thucydides uses the discussion of the curse surrounding Pausanias’ death to introduce a second comparison between him and Themistocles, which picks up the thread of the Pentecontaetia’s earlier pairing of the men. We turn to the demands of the first Spartan embassy.

\textsuperscript{326} Sparta’s deference to chance is reflected in the speech of the Spartans at Athens (4.17-20), which is intended to be compared with the speech of the Athenians at Sparta (1.73-78).

\textsuperscript{327} See Herodotus 5.70. Herodotus, \textit{The History}, 385.
The Cylonian Conspiracy and the Curse of the Goddess (1.126.3-1.127)\textsuperscript{328}

After noting that it was purpose of the embassies to establish the greatest πρόφασις for a war, Thucydides says that the Spartans bid the Athenians to cleanse themselves of the curse of the goddess. The greatest πρόφασις somehow relates to the gods. Thucydides next relays the story of Cylon’s unsuccessful bid to establish a tyranny at Athens, which happened in roughly 630 BC. Whereas the Pentecontaetia moved backward in time from 432 to 479 BC and the Archaeology from 431 BC to the first times—this, the progression of the truest πρόφασις—Thucydides’ treatment of the greatest one moves from 432 back to 630 BC. The curse of the goddess arose in response to the wrongful Athenian murder of some of Cylon’s co-conspirators upon the altar of a god. Sparta’s casus belli arises from an Athenian violation of a sacred prohibition—an event occurring some two hundred years earlier. Instead of tracing the reason for war to the growth of Athenian power, the Spartans search the past to discover a transgression of sacred law.

Cylon, Thucydides says, was an Olympic victor, well-born, powerful, and linked by marriage to Theagenes, tyrant of Megara. He wished to become tyrant of Athens (1.126.3). Cylon’s wealth, birth, and natural aptitude—the last proved by Olympic victory—caused him to believe that he deserved to rule others. When he made inquiry at Delphi, the god told him to seize the Athenian Acropolis during the great festival of Zeus (1.126.4).

\textsuperscript{328} For the Herodotean account of the Cylonian conspiracy, which varies somewhat from the Thucydidean one, see Herodotus 5.71. Ibid., 386.
Upon receiving the oracle’s pronouncement, Cylon took a force from Theagenes along with some of his own friends. At the time of the Olympic festival in the Peloponnesus, he seized the Acropolis in order to establish his tyranny (ὡς ἐπὶ τυραννίδι), believing that this was the festival mentioned by the oracle (1.126.5). Thucydides interjects to say that Cylon did not reflect upon whether this great festival of Zeus was in Attica or elsewhere, nor was the oracle itself clear (1.126.6). The oracle’s actions are noteworthy. First, Apollo has no apparent problem counseling tyranny. Second, the recommended occasion itself, the festival of the preeminent Zeus, suggests something like divine sanction for tyranny. Then again, Cylon’s bid failed, which might suggest that the gods are just and frown upon tyranny. Thucydides makes it clear, however, that the failure had more to do with Cylon than with the gods.

Thucydides stresses the difficulty in interpreting oracles, while at the same time implying that Cylon’s bid could have been successful if Cylon had been more discerning. The gods, it would seem, help those who help themselves. As opposed to the Olympic festival, which is dedicated to Zeus, Thucydides suggests that the Athenians also have the Diasia, the festival of Zeus the Kindly, in which the whole people (πανδῆμε) gather outside of the city to sacrifice traditional offerings (1.126.6). This, he suggests, might have been the propitious moment for Cylon’s attempt. When Cylon seized the Acropolis during the Olympic festival in the Peloponnesus, however, the Athenian people (πανδῆμε) poured in from the fields to besiege him and his co-conspirators (1.126.7).

Footnotes:
329 “The most striking thing that emerges from the story of Cylon is this: It appears that the gods, in this case, Zeus, do want us to do as they do; that piety may, indeed, consist in doing as men say the gods do, not as men say the gods say.” Palmer, Love of Glory and the Common Good, 86.
The repetition of πανδηµεί suggests that Cylon has not adequately considered the importance of either the people or their piety. The Peisistratids will not make this mistake.331

For their part, the Athenians grew weary of besieging Cylon and returned home, turning over the guard to the Nine Archons, to whom they gave complete authority (1.126.8). Cylon and his brother managed to escape, but when the others began to starve, they sat themselves as supplicants before the altar on the Acropolis (1.126.10). The guards, seeing the conspirators dying in the sanctuary—a sacred offense—quickly raised them up by telling them that they would not be harmed. While leading them away, they killed them (1.126.11).

Strangely, the curse does not arise from this broken promise—nor even, apparently, from the murder of these men—but from the fact that on the way down the Athenians killed several other conspirators, who had thrown themselves upon the altars of the dread goddesses, the furies (1.126.11). It was from this action, Thucydides says, that those responsible were thereafter called accursed and offenders against the goddess, and so too their children after them (1.126.11).

The miasma, or blood impurity, arose from the murder of men at the altar of a god. The killers became men marked by the god’s anger, a taint they handed down to their

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331 In the Archaeology, Atreus’ rule is facilitated by his propitiation of the people (9.2). Thucydides typically presents the tyrants as engaged in acts of piety. Polycrates, for example, consecrated Rhenae to Delian Apollo (1.13.6); Hippias’ brother was killed while preparing the Panathenaic procession (1.20.2). On the link between tyranny and piety, see Palmer, Love of Glory and the Common Good, 83–84.
children—an offense borne across time. At first, the Athenians drove the accursed from Athens, but the men returned, and the Spartan Cleomenes later expelled them again. Once more, however, they returned, and, Thucydides takes pains to add, still live within the city (1.126.12).

There are several important points here. First, it was not the pious Athenian many that committed the original act of impiety, but their leaders. Second, the Athenian demos took seriously the goddess’s injunction to expel the accursed. Third, in the previous generation the Spartans proved willing to use Athenian piety for their own ends and to their own advantage, just as they attempt to do in 432 BC. While the logic of the truest πρόφασις has been described as Athenian, and the logic of transgression and punishment as Spartan, the Athenian demos may have subscribed, long ago, before the democracy had been installed, to something resembling the Spartan view, which is to say that for every transgression there is either atonement or punishment. But now the demos allows the “accursed” to live in the city.

Thucydides says that the Spartans bid the Athenians to drive out this curse so as to vindicate the honor of the gods (τιμῶροῦντες), but also because they knew Pericles was linked to the curse on his mother’s side (1.127.1). They thought that if he were expelled, it would be easier for them to advance matters with the Athenians (1.127.1). They did not actually expect that this would happen, Thucydides says, but they thought that it might
Pericles, Thucydides adds, was the most powerful man of his time (δυνατώτατος, 1.127.3). In leading Athens, he opposed the Spartans in all things, never allowing his fellow citizens to yield but forever stirring them onward to war (ἀλλ᾽ ἐς τὸν πόλειμον ὀρμα τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, 1.127.3). Although commentators frequently accept this as Thucydides’ view, the context suggests that it is likely a description of Pericles from the Spartan perspective. Indeed, it is precisely Pericles’ refusal to yield that represents his incitement for war, since Sparta can only escape war if Athens backs down.

According to Pericles, as we will soon see, honor demands that Athens resist Sparta’s demands. For the Spartans, a different kind of honor compels war, not personal honor, but divine honor, the vigorous defense of which generates divine support—a divine support that may perhaps counteract or mitigate the divine disfavor incurred by Sparta’s failure to arbitrate the dispute as mandated by the Treaty.

332 “That Sparta’s piety is genuine, moreover, appears from her very expectation that Pericles’ prestige will suffer from his connection with an ancient curse.” Orwin, The Humanity of Thucydides, 60. And perhaps his prestige did suffer. In the History’s second book, Thucydides relays that the Athenians held Pericles responsible for their misfortunes (2.59.2). He was even temporarily removed from office and fined (2.65.3). The fact that the Athenians were inclined to ascribe the Plague to divine disfavor suggests that they may have held Pericles responsible for their misfortunes because of his connection to this curse (2.5.4-2-4).

333 The interpretative problem is that in his appearances in the History, Pericles doesn’t seem belligerent. It is true that he is resolute in his refusal to yield to Peloponnesian demands, but his war strategy is essentially defensive. Nonetheless, as noted above, his refusal to yield apparently constitutes his incitement to war, at least to the Spartans.
The Curse of Taenarum (1.128.1)

The Spartan attempt to generate a divine *casus belli* prompts two Athenian countercharges intended to negate it. In response to the Spartan demand that Athens expel the curse of the goddess, the Athenians enjoin Sparta to purify herself of two such curses, that of Taenarum and of the Bronze House (1.128.1, 1.128.2). Thucydides treats the curse of Taenarum in only a few lines, whereas he uses the curse of the Brazen House to discuss the treachery of Pausanias at length, and then uses the treachery of Pausanias to move into a second discussion of Themistocles.

The first Athenian allegation referred to the time when some Helots took refuge as supplicants in the Temple to Poisedon at Taenarum, and the Spartans raised them from the altar, led them off, and killed them (1.128.1). Like the curse of the goddess, this Spartan one arises from the murder of men taking refuge at an altar. But there is a difference. According to Thucydides, the Athenian curse arose from the killing of supplicants *on* an altar and not from the killing of those they raised up under false pretenses, while the Spartan one involved the killing of those who had been led away from the altar. Thucydides also notes that the Spartans believed that the great earthquake at Sparta was a divine punishment for the killings (1.128.1). Despite expelling the accursed families, Thucydides does not indicate that the Athenians believed

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334 The Spartans are not above dishonesty in such matters. In the fourth book, Thucydides describes a ruse by which the Spartans executed a large number of Helots. In that context, he emphasizes the very great extent to which all Spartan policy is influence by the Helot problem (4.80).

335 Or perhaps they were forcefully removed. The Greek (ἀπαγαγόντες) is unclear. The verb can mean either “lead away” or “carry off forcibly.”
themselves to have been punished by the goddess for the murder of the Cylonian conspirators. The Spartans then evince a greater awareness of the power of the divine.

This great earthquake is the same as the one in the Pentecontaetia, which prompted a Helot revolt and thereby prevented the Spartans from invading Attica at Thasian bequest (1.101.1-2). It is unclear when the murder of the Helots at Taenarum occurred, if it contributed directly to the revolt or not, as distinct from the earthquake, which clearly did. The Spartans nonetheless believed that the earthquake was punishment from Poisedon, earth-shaker, at whose altar the Helots had been seated. Perhaps this succession of events is why Sparta ultimately decided to let the Helots on Ithome go on the basis of an oracle (1.103.2). At Taenarum, Sparta’s anxiety about her Helot problem overcame her fear of the gods, just as her apprehension about the growth of Athenian power will overcome her fear of transgressing the Peace.

Broadly speaking, the curses reveal that which the regimes fear enough to violate their own sacred prohibitions. Each regime fears something manifest in other words, which overcomes its fear of the (immanifest) gods. As later passages of the History make clear, the Helots are the Achilles heel of the Spartan regime and a major source of Spartan apprehension, while the specter of a tyranny at Athens would seem to be the Athenian equivalent. After bidding the Spartans to purify themselves of the curse of Taenarum, for which the Spartans already believed themselves to have been punished, the Athenians levy a second charge, which reveals another Spartan fear: the corruption of the Spartan education. The Athenians command the Spartans expel the curse of the Bronze House,

\textbf{Spartan Trust and the Treachery of Pausanias (1.128.2-1.135.1)}

Thucydides begins his account of the curse of the Bronze House by returning to the post-Persian war activities of Pausanias.\footnote{Thucydides had set down the earlier Pausanias narrative at 1.96.1.} The following focuses on what the Pausanias episode reveals about Sparta’s domestic politics and the trust that uniquely characterizes the Spartan way of life. The interpretation is more schematic than exhaustive.

After Pausanias is recalled to Sparta but acquitted of charges, he returns to the Hellespont to negotiate with the Persian King (1.128.3). Thucydides plainly says that he longed to become ruler of Hellas (ἐφιέμενος τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ἀρχῆς, 1.128.3).\footnote{Despite his acquittal on the charge of Medism, Thucydides expresses certainty about the crime (1.95.5).} He sends Xerxes a letter, where he proposes to bring Hellas under Persian control (1.128.7). Receiving a positive response, he becomes even more infatuated with himself, such that he can no longer live in the customary fashion (ἐν τῷ καθεστώτι τρόπῳ, 1.130.1). He dresses in Median clothes and is often accompanied by bodyguards, and he becomes hard of access and difficult of temper (1.130.1-2).\footnote{In the Pentecontaetia, Thucydides says that the allies defected to Athens out of their fear and hatred of Pausanias (1.95.1, 1.96.1).}
After describing his intrigues, Thucydides depicts the almost comic attempt by Sparta to rein him in. The problem is as follows. To move against him decisively, Sparta requires a proof more trustworthy than the extraordinary trust she reposes in her citizens. First, the Spartans tell Pausanias that if he refuses to return to Sparta, they will declare war upon him (πόλεμον αὐτῷ Σπαρτιάτας προαγορεύειν, 1.131.1). Wishing to remove the suspicion against him, Pausanias returns home (1.131.2). The Spartans then review his way of life, to see if he had ever strayed from their established laws (εἰ τί ποι ἐξεδιήτητο τῶν καθεστώτων νομίμων, 1.132.2).

In this context, they remember his private dedication to Apollo on the tripod set up after the Median War, where he styled himself ruler of the Hellenes (Ἑλλήνων ἀρχηγός, 1.132.2). In the Spartan view, through his transgression of the law (τῇ τε παρανομίᾳ) and by his imitation of the Barbarians, Pausanias furnishes disturbing evidence that he is unwilling to live equally with the others (μὴ ἵσος βουλεσθαί εἴναι, 1.132.2). Honor-seeking, or the desire for preeminence, poses a danger to Spartan equality. The Spartans are afraid lest their citizens become corrupted, which they see in the case of Pausanias (1.95.7).341

To compound the problem further, the Spartans receive word that Pausanias is conspiring with the Helots (1.132.4). But even after Helot informers alert the Ephors to his designs,
the Ephors refuse to believe them, considering them untrustworthy (οὐδὲ τῶν Εἰλώτων μηνυταῖς τις πιστεύσαντες, 1.132.5). At long last, a servant of Pausanias turns informer and shows an incriminating letter to the Ephors (1.132.5). Finally, the Ephors trust the evidence against Pausanias (μᾶλλον μὲν ἐπισίτευσαν), but they nevertheless wish to hear what he himself might say (1.133.1). In a ruse designed to entrap him, Pausanias’ servant goes to the temple of Poisedon at Taenarum as a supplicant. When Pausanias arrives and his servant confronts him—the Ephors are hiding in order to overhear the conversation—Pausanias reveals his plan, and the Ephors finally see everything clearly (1.133.1).

Despite all of this, when Pausanias is about to be arrested, Thucydides says that an Ephor warns him with a nod (1.134.1). Pausanias runs to the temple of the goddess of the Bronze House (1.134.1). When the Ephors discover him there, they remove the roof, wall up the doors, and starve him to death (1.134.2). Seeing him dying in the temple, they quickly bring him outside where he immediately expires (1.134.3).

After he is buried, the Oracle at Delphi tells the Spartans to move his bones to outside of the temple, but also that they are accursed and owe two bodies in exchange for the one to the goddess of the Bronze House (1.134.3). To avenge the god’s honor, the Spartans fashion two bronze men and dedicate them for Pausanias. Despite the fact that the Spartans have atoned for this transgression, the Athenians demand that they drive this curse out too (1.135). Thucydides next turns to a discussion of Themistocles, who, like Pausanias, also fell afoul of his city and negotiated with the Persians. Overall, the
Pausanias-Themistocles digression represents commentary on Athens and Sparta, specifically the cities’ troubled relationships with their exceptional citizens.

**Athenian Mistrust and the Loyalty of Themistocles (1.135.2-1.138.6)**

In the course of the inquiry concerning the medizing of Pausanias, the Spartans claim to have discovered evidence implicating Themistocles. They dispatch an embassy to Athens to demand his punishment (1.135.2). In one sentence, Thucydides says that the Athenians were persuaded by the Spartan embassy and quickly sent out men to track Themistocles down in Argos, where had been living, having been ostracized from Athens (1.135.3).

While Sparta is concerned lest her powerful men leave home and become worse, the Athenians are concerned lest their most powerful men remain home, and so they ostracize them. Moreover, whereas the bulk of the Pausanias chapters revolve around Sparta’s need for extraordinary proof of Pausanias’ malfeasance, the bulk of the chapters on Themistocles focus on the activities of the man himself. Sparta is uniquely characterized by her common way of life, Athens by her individuals.

Athens, it would seem, has a domestic trust problem. In contrast to the overwhelming proof required by Sparta to move against Pausanias, the Athenians instantly mistrust the

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342 As if in passing, Thucydides notes that Themistocles was living in Argos and travelling about the Peloponnesus (1.135.3). If he was engaged in anti-Spartan activities, this would certainly furnish Sparta a motive for implicating him. From the curse of the goddess, the reader knows that Sparta is not above attempting to undermine Athenian citizens, especially those who oppose them. In line with this interpretation, de Ste. Croix asserts that “It can surely be taken for granted that immediately after his ostracism Themistocles was conducting anti-Spartan activities in the Peloponnes, and with some success, until the exasperated Spartans turned upon him.” De Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 173–4. De Ste. Croix also makes the interesting suggestion “that Themistocles foresaw that sooner or later Sparta would attack Athens, even if Athens did not directly threaten Sparta herself or the Peloponnesian League.” Ibid., 176.
man who Thucydides presents as their greatest benefactor on the basis of mere Spartan innuendo. One might almost say that the Spartan burden of proof for moving against Pausanias mirrors Thucydides’ own rigor in ascertaining the deeds of the Peloponnesian war (1.22.2-3), while the ready Athenian acceptance of hearsay evidence resembles the credulity of the logographers, who Thucydides roundly criticizes in his Archaeology (1.20).

Unlike Pausanias, who should never have returned to Sparta, Themistocles, although apparently innocent, smartly goes nowhere near Athens. He flees to Corcyra instead, where he is considered a benefactor. From there, he travels to the mainland but is forced to seek lodging at the house of an enemy, Admetus, King of the Molossians (1.136.2). Admetus is away when he arrives, and so Themistocles becomes a supplicant of his wife. She instructs him to take their child and to sit down at the hearth (1.136.3). All of the curses involved the violation of an act of supplication. Themistocles is the only

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343 “Athens moves with disgraceful haste against her greatest benefactor, condemning him in absentia at the mere imputation of his Spartan enemies. The Spartans accord Pausanias, of whose treason they possess manifest evidence, a degree of due process so scrupulous as to be comical.” Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 76, fn 14. Rawlings makes a related but broader point: “Athens produces, it is true, a superior type of leader, indeed citizen, to that produced in Sparta; but the Athenian democracy treats its leaders shabbily, even disastrously, compared to the way Spartan oligarchy handles its leaders.” Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides’ History*, 95.

344 Regarding Pausanias, the Spartans had second hand evidence from the Hellenic allies, past and present circumstantial evidence, Helot informers, the report of Pausanias’ loyal servant, a letter to the Persian King, and an actual confession. Indeed, it was only this last proof—the reports of their own eyes and ears—that finally sprang the Ephors into motion.

345 According to de Romilly, “when we come to consider Themistocles, we that everything is chosen, developed, and presented [by Thucydides] in order to glorify him. Independently of the narrative itself, an excursus is inserted with the purpose of freeing him from any suspicion of pro-Persian sentiments.” De Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 231.
Thucydidean character who engages in “secular” supplication. He is also the only supplicant in these chapters who survives.

When the Athenians and Spartans arrive for Themistocles, Admetus refuses to relinquish him, conveying him to Pydna instead, from where he can catch a ship to Persia. From there, he embarks upon a merchant ship, which is blown toward the Athenian force blockading Naxos. Afraid, Themistocles reveals himself to the captain and threatens to implicate him if he is handed over, while promising to reward him if he is conveyed across safely (1.137.2). The captain agrees and Themistocles successfully reaches Ephesus. Thucydides makes sure to add that he kept his promise to the captain (1.137.2-3).

Like Pausanias, Themistocles too writes a letter to the Persian King. In it, he emphasizes the great harm he once did Persia (κακὰ μὲν πλεῖστα), hinting at his present ability to benefit the King (1.137.4). And just as Alcibiades will later do, Themistocles speaks to a foreign power as a city unto himself. He says that he defended himself against Xerxes only when compelled to do so (τὸν σὸν πατέρα ἐπιόντα ἐμοὶ ἀνάγκη ἡμινώμην, 1.137.4, emphasis added). Now, however, he can do the King a great service (καὶ νῦν ἐξων σὲ μεγάλα ἀγαθὰ δρᾶσαι, 1.137.4).

After spending a year learning the Persian tongue and the customs of the land (1.138.1), Themistocles arrives at the Persian court and becomes a man of importance such as no

346 Thucydides notes that his is the greatest form of supplication (καί μέγιστον ἢν ἱκέτευμα τοῦτο, 1.137.1). He may mean among the Molossians.
Hellene before him (1.138.2). Thucydides adds that this was because of his reputation as well as the hope that he held out of enslaving Hellas, but especially because of the constant proof that he gave of his intelligence (1.138.2). In exchange for his services, the King rewarded him with Magnesia, Lampsacus, and Myus (1.138.5).

Thucydides next offers an encomium of Themistocles, which is the highest praise showered upon any individual in the History. For our purposes, it is only important to note that Themistocles is described as a man of wondrously exceptional natural ability (1.138.3). He is presented as a man who unerringly does τὰ δεόντα, the necessary things, on every occasion (1.138.3). By contrast, Thucydides did not praise Pausanias, nor did he appear to merit it. At the end of this treatment of Themistocles, Thucydides concludes by stating, in Herodotean fashion, “such was the manner in which Pausanias, the Spartan, and Themistocles, the Athenian, the most celebrated Hellenes of their day, made their end” (λαµπρότατοις γενοµένους τῶν καθ᾽ ἑαυτούς Ἑλλήνων, 1.138.6).

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347 In the context of discussing Themistocles’ death from illness, Thucydides says that some say that he committed suicide because he couldn’t fulfill his promises to the King (1.138.4). The enslavement of Hellas is presumably the promise in question. And yet if Themistocles was uniquely able to achieve his objectives, the suicide claim rings hollow, especially since Thucydides presents him as doing nothing at all to fulfill this promise. When we combine this with the fact that Themistocles laid the foundation of the Athenian Empire and apparently desired that his bones be smuggled back into Attica after his death (1.138.6), the overall picture suggests he had no intention of helping Persia enslave Hellas.


349 “One of the most striking facts which emerge out of the present observations is that in these two episodes nothing good about Pausanias is told, and nothing bad about Themistocles is written.” Konishi, “Thucydides’ Method in the Episodes of Pausanias and Themistocles,” 66.
The Spartan Logic of the Greatest πρόφασις

We are now in a position to discuss more fully the Spartan logic of the greatest πρόφασις. Hellenic treaties, including the Thirty Years’ Peace, were sworn with the most solemn of oaths, while the violation of an oath represented an offense against men as well as the gods. At Sparta, the Athenian envoys offered arbitration consistent with the Treaty, and they called upon the gods of the oaths to witness that they would defend themselves against those unjustly beginning a war (1.78.4). Whereas Sthenelaidas claimed that the gods would be with the Spartans (1.86.5), Archidamus made no mention of the gods, likely because of his fear that they would not favor Sparta. In Corinth’s final speech, the Corinthians claim that Delphi’s pronouncement confirms that it is the Athenians who have violated the Peace.

Late in the History, Thucydides reveals that Sparta was aware of her transgression of the Thirty Years’ Treaty, and that she consequently viewed her misfortunes in the Archidamian war, particularly the capture of her men on Sphacteria, as punishment for her crime (7.18.2). Alternatively, she may perhaps have come to believe retrospectively that she had transgressed as a means of explaining her unexpected failures. Regardless, Sparta came to believe that she bore αἰτία for the Archidamian war, and that the gods were punishing her for it.

350 “Of course, as soon as ancient people invented good faith, they were faced with the problem of what to do when faith was broken. Penalties were inevitable. Historians have been nearly unanimous in their pronouncement that this sanction was solely religious.” Bederman, International Law in Antiquity, 53.
Anxiety about the justice of a Peloponnesian war must account, at least in part, for Sparta’s attempt to establish greatest possible πρόφασις for it. Sparta—or some within Sparta—feel the need to gain the favor of the gods, to fight under their banner, and they consequently win approval to send to Athens to demand that the Athenians drive out the curse of the goddess. In 432 BC, some within Sparta remain unconvinced of the justice of war and perhaps later convert others to their view. To put the point on the matter, just as Sparta is compelled to fight from her fear of rising Athenian power—a fear which overcomes her fear of violating the Peace—so too is she compelled by her fear of committing injustice to advance a divine casus belli.  

Thucydides begins his first book with the question of the transgressor of the Thirty Years’ Peace, with a question of justice. He begins within the horizon of political life. The question of who (or what) bears αἰτία for the Peloponnesian war points to first principles, or, more precisely, to two differing accounts of first principles. According to the logic of the truest πρόφασις, the question of the responsibility for the war points to the psychological and structural causes of war and peace, to political motion and political rest,  

or to those human passions and human circumstances that cause human beings to joint together in peaceful association and those that break them apart again. The logic of Sparta’s greatest πρόφασις leads from the question of who or what bears αἰτία for the

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351 “The treaties were solemnly sworn; their breach was a violation of divine law. Thus the question of who started the war is linked to the question concerning the divine law.” Strauss, The City and Man, 177.

352 In reference to the Athenian “theology” of the Melian dialogue, Strauss writes that “One could say that according to the Athenians this law is the true divine law, the law of the interplay of motion and rest, of compulsion and right, compulsion obtaining among unequals and right obtaining among cities of more or less equal power.” Ibid., 187. Political motion and rest appear to belong to some larger species of motion and rest. At 2.8.3, Thucydides uses a motion cognate to describe the earthquake at Delos (ἐκινήθη). War, it would seem, is human motion (1.1.2, 3.82.1), an earthquake natural or divine motion.
war to the existence of just gods who intervene in human affairs in response to impiety and injustice.353

Part of the Archaeology’s purpose is to establish the superiority not only of the Peloponnesian war to the Trojan and Persian wars but also of Thucydides’ method to those of Homer and Herodotus. It is no accident that Thucydides’ presentation of the Cylonian conspiracy and the medizing of Pausanias and Themistocles has appeared Herodotean to commentators. It is intentionally so.354 To state the matter clearly, the Spartan logic of the greatest πρόφασις is Herodotean, and Thucydides has intentionally situated this more poetic account within his own truer story of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war. He, Thucydides, can do what Herodotus and Homer can do, and he can do much more besides.355 Several lines from the Archaeology confirm this point.

When Thucydides discusses the difficulty of discovering the truth, he says that poets adorn events by making them greater than they are (ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες). The vast majority, he says, do not take pains to ascertain the truth (οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ή ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, 1.20.3). The logographers, including Herodotus, he says, write more seductively than truthfully (ἀληθέστερον, 1.21.1). Their writing is more

353 Ostwald notes the absence of ἀνάγκη words in the Cylon and Pausanias episodes. There are two in the Themistocles episode (1.136.2, 1.137.5). Ostwald, Ananke in Thucydides, 34.
354 “The two excursuses on Pausanias and Themistokles (and the Kylon episode which precedes them) are in a different style from the rest of Book I, and indeed from the rest of Thucydides. They are in easy narrative Greek (the scholiast remarked of the Kylon chapter, ‘here the lion laughed’); and the general handling recalls even when it corrects Herodotus.” Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume I, 211. On the shades of Herodotus, see also Rhodes, “Thucydides on Pausanias and Themistocles,” 399.
355 Pouncey has it right when he observes that “the neat dovetailing of these two stories with the end of Herodotus’ History and the relaxed, almost anecdotal tone of the narrative suggests a deliberate, if gentle parody, as though to show those critics who found his own work less ‘entertaining’ that he was capable of a more readable vein.” Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 70.
seductive than true because of its reliance on the mythical (τὸ μυθῶδες), whereas Thucydides’ own work may be less pleasurable to some precisely because of the absence of it (τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες, 1.22.4, cf. 1.21.1). His History, however, should satisfy those who like him seek the truth of the human (1.22.4).

Thucydides truest πρόφασις for the Peloponnesian war corresponds to Thucydides’ avowed interest in the truth (ἀλήθεια), while the poets and logographers’ magnification of events, their reliance on τὸ μυθῶδες, is captured in the Spartan logic of the greatest πρόφασις. By situating this poetic account within his truer one, Thucydides explains it without deforming it. He gives it its fair say, revealing how it unfolds into a view of the cosmos populated by the gods. Thucydides’ adoption of a Herodotean style draws the reader’s attention to the connection between the Spartan view and the mythic tales of the poets and logographers, which he has already attacked in the Archaeology.

Having outlined the Athenian logic of the truest πρόφασις and the Spartan logic of the greatest one, which corresponds to the difference between Thucydides and the poets and logographers, we are ready to turn to the final episode of Thucydides’ first book, the first Periclean speech, which completes his account of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war by adding the final piece of the puzzle. Pericles articulates the Athenian necessity for resisting Sparta’s ultimatums, for refusing to back down. At this point, by the end of the

first book, the compelling demands of the Spartan, Peloponnesian, and Athenian advantage have made war inevitable. Moreover, each party’s necessity has been clearly revealed to the reader.
Pericles on Necessity and War (1.140-1.144)

After praising Themistocles (1.138.6), Thucydides introduces Pericles, the most outstanding latter-day Athenian, who persuades his Athenians to reject Sparta’s demands. While the first Spartan embassy commanded Athens to drive out the cure of the goddess, which was intended to weaken Pericles politically, the second and third make more overtly political demands. According to the second, Athens can prevent war by abandoning Potidaea, by granting Aegina autonomy, and by repealing the Megarian decree. In other words, she can avoid war by ending her interference with the prerogatives of Sparta’s allies. The Athenians refuse, charging Megara with unlawfully cultivated sacred land as well as border-land and with harboring runaway slaves. The final Spartan embassy simply tells the Athenians that they can avoid war by granting the Hellenes their autonomy (1.139.3). It makes the untenable demand that they abandon their empire and let go that power which inspires fear in the Spartans. The Athenians convocate an assembly to respond to Sparta’s demands once and for all.

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357 Aegina had advocated for war at the Spartan Congress (1.67.2). So did the Megarians (1.67.4).
358 The decree apparently denies Megara access to the harbors of the Athenian Empire as well as the marketplace of Athens (1.139.1). At Athens, the Corinthians had referenced the general suspicion surrounding Athenians actions toward Megara but had not furnished any details (1.42). Despite the claims of ancient sources and certain modern scholars that the decree was central to the war’s outbreak, Thucydides clearly presents it as more a Spartan pretext than a true cause. Cornford, to give one example, argues the decree played a pivotal role in bringing about a war. See Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, 25–38. For a thorough historical discussion on the Megarian decree/s, see de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 225–289. On Thucydides’ presentation of it, see Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 215–216.
Thucydides has reserved the introduction of Pericles to a moment of high drama. From the Athenian debate, Thucydides recreates only the Periclean speech, although he makes clear others advocated appeasing Sparta by repealing the Megarian decree (1.139.4). Pericles’ speech furnishes the decisive “Athenian” response to Sparta’s trumped-up προφάσεις for a Peloponnesian war. The aim of the following is to examine the logic of Athenian resistance as Pericles articulates it.

Just before the speech, Thucydides writes that Pericles was the most powerful Athenian of his day, preeminent in speech and deed; and the speech (λόγος)—deed (ἔργον) antithesis—so important in the History—stalks Pericles throughout Thucydides’ pages, along with the word γνώµη, or judgment, which also attends him. In the so-called encomium to Pericles in the second book, Thucydides makes clear that Pericles maintained a measured (µετρίως) and safe (ἀσφαλῶς) policy during the Peace, and that the city achieved its greatest height during this period (2.65.5). He consistently presents the statesman as a cautious steward of Athenian power. As we will see, Pericles’ war strategy is hardly bold, but it is prudent. His speech itself raises a question about the prudence of daring—about whether the boldness that so characterizes the Athenians is fully rational.

359 He could have introduced him at the earlier debate at Athens over the Corcyraean alliance. Plutarch tells us Pericles pressed for alliance with Coreya: “A few years later, when the clouds were already gathering for the Peloponnesian war, Pericles persuaded the Athenians to send help to Coreya in her war with Corinth and so bring over to their side an island with a powerful navy at a time when the Peloponnesians had all but declared war on them.” Plutarch, The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives, trans. Scott-Kilvert (New York: Penguin Books, 1960), 195.

360 In the Pentecontaetia, Pericles appears in one failed offensive campaign (1.111.2-3) and two successful and important acts of imperial maintenance (1.114 and 1.116-117). There, he hardly appears a war-monger, or as daring. Pericles “is more prominently displayed as a general trying to save critical situations, than as an empire-building politician or conquistador.” Pouncey, The Necessities of War, 73. With the exception of Themistocles, empire-building Athenians are absent from the first book, including the Pentecontaetia, where we might have expected to find them.
Throughout his speech, Pericles attempts to stiffen the spines of his Athenians. While he will claim that security, profit, and honor demand stalwart resistance to Spartan ultimatums, he is clearly concerned lest his inconstant Athenians wilt under the pressures of war. He opens by asserting that he maintains the same judgment that he always has (τῆς μὲν γνώμης αἰεὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἔχομαι, 1.140.1). The Athenians must not yield to the Peloponnesians (1.140.1, also 1.127.3). Pericles knows, however, that in the face of shifting circumstances, human resolutions all too easily shift and change (1.140.1).

As Lowell Edmunds has written, Pericles counterpoises the firmness of his (rational) judgment (γνώμη) to the inconstant and irrational passion of the Athenian many (ὀργή). Edmunds argues that Pericles is claiming that γνώμη in the sense of a particular judgment or intention or policy may itself be based on either passion (ὀργή) or rational judgment free of passion (also γνώμη). Pericles’ specific judgment (γνώμη) then—that Athens must not yield to the Peloponnesians—is itself based upon his own rational judgment and not fickle passion, whereas the γνώμαι of the Athenians are typically the product of their irrational ὀργαί—such that when their mood changes, their plans change along with it. Pericles, by contrast, is constant. He leads with his mind.

361 After experiencing the ravaging of the land outside of Athens and the ravages of the plague within it, a party in Athens sends an embassy to Sparta, most likely with a peace overture, which was assuredly dispatched over the objection of Pericles (2.59.2).
362 “Thus in the prooemium to the first speech, Pericles is apprehensive of a change in the Athenians’ gnomai, which might result from a change in their feelings. This distinction between gnome in the sense of “policy based on intelligence or insight” and gnome in the sense of “(potentially fickle) state of mind” points to the second main connotation of gnome as Pericles uses the term of himself in the first sentence, the connotation of “will.”” Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydidês, 10.
Because the Athenians are tossed about by their ὀργαί, he, Pericles, must again offer them the same advice. Every Athenian, he says, must shoulder full responsibility for common resolutions, specifically the decision to resist Sparta’s demands, or they must not expect any credit for the common successes (1.140.1). In this way, he hints at the fractiousness of Athenian politics, while rallying his Athenians to resist Sparta’s provocations.

Events, he continues, often advance no less foolishly than the plans of human beings (τὰς διανοίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 1.140.1). It is for this reason that men blame fortune (τὴν τύχην), when things turn out contrary to reason or calculation, literally contrary to λόγον (1.140.1). Pericles suggests that men wrongly blame fortune when they should blame the deficiency of their own judgment instead. He evinces a powerful sense of the efficacy of human judgment over and against the power of fortune, without wholly denying its sway.

This is emphatically not a Spartan view. At the Spartan Congress, Archidamus had remarked that the Spartans consider the plans of their enemies (τὰς διανοίας) to be equal to their own, and that they believe the blows of fortune to be incalculable (τὰς προσπιπτούσας τύχας οὐ λόγῳ διαιρετάς, 1.84.3). The parallelism of these passages—the repetition of διανοία, τύχη, and λόγος in close succession—suggests that

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363 The full line is: δι᾽ ὅπερ καὶ τὴν τύχην, ὡσα ἀν παρὰ λόγον ξυμβῇ, εἰώθαμεν αἰτιᾶσθαι (1.140.1). See fn 366 below.
364 “Pericles is speaking ironically … you cannot teach events. They are stubborn, but reason is all we have.” Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume 1, 227. And from the Periclean perspective, I would only add, reason is usually enough.
365 Archidamus’ full line is as follows: νομίζειν δὲ τὰς τε διανοίας τῶν πέλας παραπληγίους εἶναι καὶ τὰς προσπιπτούσας τύχας οὐ λόγῳ διαιρετάς (1.84.3).
Thucydides intends his readers to compare them. Whereas Pericles, the Athenian, would seem to privilege rational judgment (and planning) over fortune—reason can conquer chance, at least to some extent—\textsuperscript{366}—the Spartan, Archidamus, evinces greater respect for fortune and the unknown.

According to Pericles, human beings are accustomed to blame fortune (τὴν τύχην), to ascribe αἰτία or responsibility to it (εἰώθαμεν αἰτιᾶσθαι, 1.140.1). But human beings rarely blame an impersonal fortune for what befalls them. They instead ascribe blame or responsibility (αἰτιᾶσθαι) to a capricious divine, or perhaps to that individual who first angered the gods, bringing divine disfavor down upon the community. Indeed, this was the Spartan rationale for demanding that the Athenians drive out the curse of the goddess: they had hoped to undermine Pericles by making him appear responsible for Athenian misfortunes due to his familial connection to a sacred offense.\textsuperscript{367}

Regarding fortune or chance (τύχη), the view that Pericles criticizes would appear to be the one captured by the Spartan logic of the greatest πρόφασις: the view that the cosmos is responsive to human behavior, particularly human transgression. From the Periclean perspective, then, the Spartans personify impersonal chance. He would seem to present this tendency, the ascription of responsibility (αἰτία) to fortune (τὴν τύχην), as a

\textsuperscript{366} Edmunds notes that “the self confidence of Pericles is in marked contrast with the humbler view of Hermocrates (4.64.1), who considers it foolishness to believe τῆς τῆς ὑπόθεσις γνώμης ἀναγκάζων αὐτὸκράτωρ εἶναι καὶ ἴς ὡκ ἄρχον τύχης (that I am complete master equally of my own mind and of chance, which I do not rule). Edmunds, Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides, 17.

\textsuperscript{367} And perhaps the Spartans were successful. See fn 332 above.
distinctly human one. So far from bowing to fortune, Pericles trusts in his judgment, particularly the soundness of his war policy.\textsuperscript{368}

The Peloponnesians have consistently presented Athens as tyrannical. Pericles puts the shoe on the other foot by standing on positive law. It is Sparta who has long been plotting against Athens (1.140.2). The Treaty explicitly requires quarrels to be settled by arbitration (1.140.2). Sparta has not offered arbitration nor has she accepted the standing Athenian offer. She wishes to resolve the dispute by war instead of through discussion. What is more, her embassies have come to command and not to remonstrate (1.140.2). If Sparta unlawfully begins a war, it will be the Athenians who will suffer injustice. It will be they who are fighting a just war against unjust aggressors.

After summarizing Sparta’s demands, Pericles rejects a proposal that must have been made by other Athenian speakers. He argues that the Athenians must realize that if war comes because they refuse to revoke the Megarian decree—which Sparta especially advances as a means of avoiding a war—they will not be fighting over a small matter (1.140.4). For this decree, he says, represents a crucial test of Athenian resolve (1.140.5). If the Athenians bow to this demand, if they appease, the Spartans will instantly demand something greater, believing Athens obeyed out of fear (ὡς φόβῳ, 1.140.5). But by

\textsuperscript{368} In regard to these passages, Edmunds argues that “The prooemium to the first speech is a concise and subtle adumbration of the political philosophy of Pericles. This prooemium introduces not only the first speech but also the other speeches, which are fundamentally consistent in theme with the first. Furthermore, the main terms of the prooemium appear again in important places in which Thucydides explains the actions of Pericles. The conceptual framework of the prooemium, and thus, by implication, of the thought of Pericles in general, is a gnome-tyche antithesis.” Edmunds, \textit{Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides}, 22. Presumably, Archidamus has a quite different view of the relationship between γνώμη and τύχη. One wonders if the distinction between the Periclean view and the Archidamian one in this regard might not correspond to the difference between the truest πρόφασις and the greatest one.
remaining firm, they will make clear that they are to be treated as equals (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰσου, 1.140.5). Resistance then is a matter of honor. The fact that Pericles feels compelled to make this argument—that his Athenians must show themselves superior to fear—suggests that some in Athens are afraid. From the narrative, we know that certain Athenians advocated repealing the decree in the hopes of staving off war (1.139.4).

Pericles exhorts his Athenians to submit before being harmed, or if they fight, as it seems best to him, to refuse to yield to big and small pretexts alike (καὶ ἐπὶ μεγάλη καὶ ἐπὶ βραχείᾳ ὀμοίως προφάσει μὴ ἔξοντες, 1.141.1). Again, he stresses the importance of constancy, but the repeated emphasis on refusing to yield suggests that he fears Athenian inconstancy. According to Pericles, the Athenians cannot, must not, hold their empire fearfully (μηδὲ ἔννοι ὀφθαλμὸν ἔξοντες ἀκεκτήμεθα, 1.141.1). To use the phraseology of the Athenians at Sparta, they reasonably hold what they have reasonably acquired (ὡς οὔτε ἀπεικότως ἔχομεν ἀκεκτήμεθα, 1.73.1). Now, they must defend it. The reader is left with the impression that many in Athens are unsure of the wisdom of war. To convince them—or perhaps to shame them into silence—Pericles paints the alternative to war as subjugation.

Both Pericles and the Peloponnesians style the danger posed by the other as slavery. For the Peloponnesians, rising Athenian power threatens key members of the Spartan alliance, if not outright tyranny over all of Hellas. For Pericles, Spartan ultimatums bespeak cavalier disdain not only for the Treaty but also for Athenian power. If Athens yields to the threat of force, she will only be asked to yield again, which, Pericles claims,
is slavery, pure and simple (τὴν δούλωσίν, 1.141.1). Justice and necessity then require Athens to resist Sparta’s demands. Moreover, the Athenians are also militarily strong enough to successfully resist Spartan aggression.

Pericles supports his claim that Athens is an equal match for the Peloponnesians by outlining the material preparations of the sides (1.141.2-5). These chapters should be compared with the parallel passages in Archidamus’ speech and Corinth’s speech before the allies. For present purposes, the only important point is the criticism that Pericles levels against the Spartan confederacy itself. He paints it as inefficient and fractured—a dysfunctional form of collective association. Each city has an equal vote, but because there is no single council chamber for deciding immediate business, each acts for its own interest, and, as a result, nothing is accomplished (1.141.6). Some wish to avenge themselves upon others, while others hope to minimize damage to their own interests (1.141.7).369

According to Pericles, when the Peloponnesians do assemble, they all too briefly examine their common affairs (τι τῶν κοινῶν), spending their time on private ones instead (τὰ οἰκεῖα πράσσουσι, 1.141.7). Each somehow believes that he will not be harmed by his indifference, because it falls to someone else to look to the future (1.141.7). Because all alike evince this same short-sighted view, it escapes everyone’s notice when the common good is ruined (τὸ κοινὸν ἅθρόου φθείρομενον, 1.141.7). The problem with Sparta’s

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369 This last distinction might perhaps correspond to the one between the strong and weak treated in earlier chapters.
alliance, in a word, is its *democratic* character.\textsuperscript{370} Oddly enough, this constitutes the democrat Pericles’ critique of Peloponnesian decision-making.

It also raises the question of whether something similar might be said of Athens. As Thucydides makes plain in the second book, the same tension between private and public goods, which Pericles claims plagues the Peloponnesian cities in their equal relations with one another, bedevils common deliberation among the Athenians.\textsuperscript{371} As later books make clear, Athens too suffers from problems of collective action, especially in the absence of a strong leader (2.65.10-11). Pericles’ allusions to Athenian fickleness suggest the same.

After diagnosing the problems of the League, Pericles offers a lengthy discussion of strategy, the main line of which will be sufficient for our purposes (1.142-1.143). Pericles’ war strategy is inspired by Themistocles. It demands the abandonment of Attica to Peloponnesian invasion; the concentration of the rural population behind the city’s walls—a more radical *synoikicism* than that of Theseus—a refusal to fight the Peloponnesians by land; a freeze on imperial expansion during the war; a vigorous defense of the city and navy; and, lastly, reprisal raiding by the navy (1.143.4-1.144.1, cf. 193.7). If the strategy is followed, Pericles claims that his Athenians will survive the war.

\textsuperscript{370} In the *History’s* second book, Thucydides describes the gathering of the Attic population behind the walls of Athens—a key component of Periclean strategy. In this context, Thucydides offers a digression on Theseus and the original *synoikicism* of Attica. There, Thucydides takes pains to emphasize that Theseus created a single council chamber, the very thing Pericles claims the Peloponnesians lack (2.15.1-2). The looser confederative mode of the League might perhaps represent some earlier stage of political development, although given the size of the Peloponnesus, its synoikismos would be improbable if not impossible.

\textsuperscript{371} According to Thucydides at 2.65.12, the progressive separation of private interests from the public (or common) good is the ultimate cause of the defeat of Athens.
He does not say that Athens will win it outright, but only that the Peloponnesians will be unable to defeat her.

But, again, this is only if the Athenians refrain from expanding the Empire and setting down gratuitous dangers for themselves (κινδύνους αὐθαίρετος μὴ προστίθεσθαι, 1.144.1). These, the same Athenians who have been consistently presented as courting every danger! Overall, Pericles’ strategy is sober, cautious, and predicated upon Athens outlasting the Peloponnesians, who will fruitlessly bang their heads against the city’s long walls, unable to bring their superior land power to bear. Above all, it demands constancy and restraint.

While Thucydides presents Pericles as constant, he presents the Athenian multitude as anything but. Pericles himself admits that he fears Athenian errors more than the plans of the enemy (τὰς οἰκείας … ἀμαρτίας, 1.144.1). In his verdict on Pericles in the second book, Thucydides says that Pericles was uniquely able to oppose the popular impulse (2.65.9). Deftly using argument and rhetoric, he was able to pull the Athenians back from the brink, from those errors toward which they precipitously inclined.

From Corinth’s second speech, we know that the errors—and successes—of the Athenians are bound up with their character. In correcting for certain characteristic errors, does Pericles perhaps undermine a source of Athenian strength? His war policy is

(περιέσεσθαι, 1.144.1).\textsuperscript{372} Indeed, if Thucydides can be relied upon to the letter (and he is the only witness we have), Pericles did not unambiguously encourage the Athenians to hope for victory in the full sense: what he said was that Athens had the power to ‘win through’—to use Brunt’s excellent translation of the terms \textit{perigignesthai, pereinai} (1.144.1; 2.13.9; 2.62.1; 2.65.7).” De Ste. Croix, \textit{The Origins of the Peloponnesian War}, 208. We might use the expression, “to win out.”
prudence incarnate, but it is not daring—or it is daring only insofar as its demands that his Athenians abandon their character for the duration of the war. Character is a double-edged sword. Pericles is aware of the dangers of the Athenian character. Is he sufficiently alive to its advantages? Regardless of the answer, Thucydides makes it abundantly clear that the problems of Athenian domestic politics only multiply after the death of Pericles (cf. 2.65).

In the conclusion of his speech, Pericles stands on legality. He advises the Athenians to respond to Sparta that Athens will allow Megara access to the markets and ports of the Empire, if Sparta ends her practice of expelling foreigners, since neither is prohibited by the Treaty (1.144.2). Second, he says, the Athenians will grant the Hellenes their autonomy, if they were autonomous when the Treaty was sworn, and when Sparta herself allows her allies true autonomy, as opposed to that sham autonomy that so conduces to the Spartan interest (1.144.2). 373

Athens continues to offer arbitration consistent with the Thirty Years’ Peace. The Athenians, Pericles says, will not start a war, but they will defend themselves against those unjustly beginning one (1.144.2). It is the Peloponnesians who are threatening to invade, and so it is the Athenians who must defend themselves. According to Pericles, the Athenians must grasp that it is a necessity that they fight (ἀνάγκη πολεμεῖν, 1.144.3). The more willingly they accept it, the less aggressive their enemies will be (1.144.3). And here—for the last time in the first book—the programmatic term ἀνάγκη is used.

373 Here, Pericles is referring to the Spartan practice of supporting oligarchies, which Thucydides mentions in the Archaeology, and which the Athenians envoys mention at Sparta (1.19, 1.76.1).
Pericles argues that the Athenians have no real choice. Athens must remain firm. Just as the Athenians at Sparta had claimed that fear, honor, and profit required Athens not only to maintain but also to grow her empire, Pericles argues that justice as well as the Athenian advantage compel the Athenians to maintain their empire by resisting Sparta’s demands. It is an irony of Thucydides’ first book that Sparta, the cautious, defensive power, is compelled by her fear to launch an offensive war, while it is the daring, aggressive Athenians who are compelled to defend themselves against aggression.

In a final appeal, aimed at those in Athens who long for honor, Pericles says that it is from the greatest dangers (ἐκ τε τῶν μεγίστων κινδύνων) that cities and individuals win the greatest glories (πόλει καὶ ἰδιώτῃ μέγισται τιμαὶ περιγίγνονται, 1.144.3). And yet Pericles’ own strategy is one that minimizes danger, and so also glory. Just as Archidamus and the Corinthians had invoked the ancestors, Pericles now appeals to them. He claims that the previous Athenian generation courageously fought the Barbarian with fewer resources than Athens now has, even abandoning the city to continue the fight (1.144.4).

These Athenians repulsed the Mede and brought Athenian power to its great height, he says, by judgment more than by fortune (γνώμῃ τε πλέονι ἦ τύχῃ) and by daring more than by power (τόλµῃ μείζονι ἦ δυνάµει, 1.144.4). Present-day Athenians must not fall short of their fathers, but instead hand down their city and its power undiminished to their

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374 Palmer makes the point that “when speaking of principles to show that the war is just, Pericles does not so much as allude to the empire; when speaking of necessity of resisting the Spartans, and especially the strategy of resistance, he emphasizes the empire.” Palmer, *Love of Glory and the Common Good*, 18.
children (1.144.4). With this exhortation—which seems to suggest that the Persian wars brought with them greater glory than any Peloponnesian war ever could—Pericles ends his speech.

In lines mirroring those of Pericles, the Corinthians at Sparta had said that the Athenians dare beyond their power and run risks beyond their judgment (1.70.3). According to Pericles, it was the extraordinary nature of the Persian danger and the remarkable character of Athenian daring that brought Athens so much renown. But Periclean policy, Periclean γνώμη, would appear to be based on a rational assessment of Athenian δυνάμις, of Athens’ financial resources and comparative advantages.

If successful daring in the face of great danger brings with it great honor, the question arises if daring is always so prudent, especially in the face of great danger. This itself raises the thornier question of the rationality of honor-seeking, and also the question of how honor as a motive relates to the impulses for security and profit. Can Pericles assent to the proposition that the Athenians should runs risks beyond their judgment? His first speech doesn’t answer but merely poses this question, the question of a tension between honor and prudence or wisdom—a tension which also characterized the speech of the Athenian envoys at Sparta.

On the eve of war, Sparta poses as fighting to liberate Hellas from Athens, a latter-day Mede, while Thucydides depicts her and her allies as fighting from fear of Athenian

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375 The Corinthians say of the Athenians, οἱ μὲν καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν τολμηταί καὶ παρὰ γνώμην κινδυνευταί … (1.70.3).
power. Hearkening to Pericles, Athens refuses to yield to Sparta’s demands due to the honor due her relative power.\textsuperscript{376} Sparta’s ultimatums evince disdain for Athenian power. Pericles’ own assessment of this power suggests Athens will not lose a war, even if she cannot win one outright, and so she must fight. Her resistance will cause Sparta to grasp the brute fact of Athenian power; it will cause her to honor Athens properly.

After Pericles’ speech, Thucydides says that the Athenians considered the things he advised best and voted as he counseled (1.145). They told the Spartans that they refused to respond to ultimatums but were prepared to adjudicate the charges on an equal basis as set down by Treaty. Upon receiving this response, the Spartans returned home and no longer sent out embassies (1.145).\textsuperscript{377} Thucydides concludes the first book by echoing the sentences from chapter 1.23, with which he began it: “these were the grounds of complaint and the quarrels for war on both sides, which occurred straight away from those events surrounding Epidamnus and Corcyra” (αἰτίαι δὲ αὖται καὶ διαφοραὶ ἐγένοντο ἀμφοτέροις πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου, 1.146, cf. 1.23.5-6).

Over the course of the first book, Thucydides has progressively disclosed the Spartan necessity for war, the Peloponnesian, and the Athenian. He reveals that combination of character and strategic circumstance that set each party on the road to war. What is now known as the second book begins with the actual outbreak of the war: the Theban attack

\textsuperscript{376} “In the situation immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities, neither side could have emphasized its own self-interest, but it is significant that the Corinthians predicate the ἀνάγκη for war on fear and Pericles on prestige.” Ostwald, \textit{Ananke in Thucydides}, 32.

\textsuperscript{377} With the Peloponnesian army of invasion on the march, the Spartans do send a final messenger to see if Athens might perhaps capitulate. Due to an expedient of Pericles’, the messenger is not granted a hearing and immediately sent back (2.12-1-2).
on Plataea and the first Peloponnesian invasion of Attica—manifest violations of the Thirty Years’ Peace (2.7.1, cf. 7.18.2). With the interpretation of the History’s first book now complete, we can make some very brief closing remarks about Thucydides’ account of the origins of the great Peloponnesian war.
Conclusion—Thucydides on the Outbreak of War

In examining the causes of the Peloponnesian war, this study of Thucydides has treated the episodes of the first book as they relate to one another. But they are part of the larger whole of Thucydides’ History, and their meaning is not exhausted by the contribution they make to explaining the war’s outbreak. Themes of the first book clearly project forward into the later ones, and fear, honor, and profit do not exhaust Thucydides’ understanding of human nature. Book one offers a largely psychological account of the causes of war, but no political psychology drawn from the History would be complete without ἐρως, which is introduced only in the second book, and which is assuredly part of the fabric of the human soul as Thucydides understands it.

This study has made the case that Thucydides has deftly arranged the unfolding episodes of his first book so as to reveal the human causes of war through the origins of the Peloponnesian war. When Thucydidean speakers speak, they reveal their preoccupations, but when they make claims about necessity, they reveal their deepest preoccupations. When a city or an individual believes itself to face a genuine necessity—or when it justifies itself in the language of necessity—the articulation of that necessity illuminates the contours of the speaker’s world. Thucydides’ political philosophy arises from the delicate mapping of his speakers’ worlds, which are thrown into vivid relief by the pressures of war.
Throughout the first book, Thucydides progressively reveals how political concerns point in the direction of either nature or the divine. These possibilities are captured by the Athenian logic of the truest πρόφασις and the Spartan logic of the greatest one, which have a shared root in lived political experience. While the Athenian logic of the truest πρόφασις overlaps with Thucydides’ own view—he is an Athenian, after all (1.1.1)—the Spartan logic of the greatest one captures something of the tales of the poets and logographers, whom Thucydides so roundly criticizes in his Archaeology.

What is more, the characters of Athens and Sparta themselves—as well as those beliefs that nourish the rival τρόποι of the cities—point in the direction of these opposing visions of the cosmos or chaos and the human place with it. Thucydides, for his part, does not understand himself to be imposing his own vision upon political life, but instead drawing out those several visions contained within political life itself. For him, psychology is a path to the fundamental problems. The first book makes clear that the question of the war’s origins—the question of who or what is to blame for the war—inevitably leads back to first principles: to motion, rest, and necessity or to the world of the gods, which is sung of by the poets.\(^{378}\)

In the quotation with which this study begins, the late Jacqueline de Romilly wrote, “Facts, with [Thucydides] are subordinated to ideas, and rather than contrast two states he goes back to the basic differences between the two orders and two sets of principles.” De

\(^{378}\) This is perhaps what Leo Strauss intends when he ends his complicated essay on Thucydides with “the question *quid sit deus.*”—what is god, or what would god be? To explore political life from within, to dare to articulate nature as an alternative to the divine requires a comprehensive examination of those opposing first principles to which political life points. See Strauss, *The City and Man,* 241.
Romilly is correct. But Thucydides doesn’t simply reveal the characters of the great Hellenic contestants—he doesn’t merely go back to “two orders and two sets of principles”—he also shows how the arc of each city’s development conditioned the development of its order and principles. Circumstances matter, but so too does human nature. Thucydides neglects neither element of the human condition.

Although the Peloponnesian war is a generation-long struggle between a land power and sea power, it is more a contest between the characters of the Athenian and Spartan regimes. For Thucydides, Athens and Sparta represent the poles of a psychological continuum, the poles of justice and necessity, and the deeds of the Peloponnesian war a laboratory for exploring the ways in which human beings successfully or unsuccessfully meet the demands of their political circumstances. For this reason, the work is a political education. As we have seen, however, it also points in the direction of philosophy, in the direction of first principles.

Although he is an Athenian, especially in the boldness of his thought, there would also appear to be something Spartan, something unadorned in Thucydides’ own manner. According to the Archaeology, the Spartans were the first publicly to strip naked and to compete nude (1.6.5). Thucydides too strips his protagonists bare, revealing the natural health of the Athenian and Spartan body politics, their regimes’ fitness for war, and thereby the character of their long contest (1.6.5).
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