Thucydides' text attempts to expose this construct as a fragile political myth by demonstrating the existence and function of much narrower interests that were concealed by the language of Athenian politics. His text suggests that under the stress of war the myth of Demos often broke down and that, in light of the majoritarian decision-making mechanisms of the democratic state, this had serious consequences: Athenian political life after the death of Perikles is depicted as tending toward the selfish extreme typified by poleis beset by tyrants or plague. Alternately, the myth of unity was from time to time revived during the war, and Thucydides suggests that the consequences of this revival were, if anything, even more destructive to the polis.

For an ordinary Athenian, the term *demokratia* meant something like "the monopoly over legitimate public authority is held by the whole of the citizenry." For Thucydides, the same term denoted something like "the lower classes possess the raw power that gives them the means to constrain the rest of us." Thucydides does sometimes use the term *demos* to refer to the abstraction *citizenry,* but his primary use of the term is to denote a large, sociologically defined, and self-interested political faction within the state. *Demos* in this narrower sense means "the mass of the poor" and is equated with *to plethos* and *hoi polloi.*[26] If *demos* means "the masses as an interest group or faction," then demokratia is reenvisioned as an unstable system likely to promote the spread of destructive, narrowly defined self-interest, and this instability will unleash the great destructive potential innate in the *dunameis* of both Athens and Sparta. The only way around this reenvisioning is for two conditions to be met. First, the demos of Athens must be not only "the many" imagining themselves as Demos but also "the many and the few united in fact." Second, that unified demos must have an accurate understanding of the effect of its present decisions and actions on the future. This second condition requires that public decisions be grounded in objective facts. Thucydides depicts the Athenian process of linking (or failing to link) facts with speech in a number of passages of the *History,* notably in the Funeral Oration scene, and the three debate scenes (debates over Corcyraean alliance, the fate of Mytilene, and the Sicilian expedition) in which sets of speeches are delivered in the Athenian Assembly. These passages lead the reader to form certain judgments about the failure of the Athenians to fulfill either of the conditions noted above. Here I will touch on only the final scene, the Sicilian Debate.[27]

Book 6 begins: "In that . . . winter the Athenians decided . . . to sail against Sicily and, if possible, conquer it," although "hoi polloi were ignorant (*apeiroi*) of the great size of the island, of the numerousness of its Greek and barbarian population, and that they were undertaking a

war not much smaller than that against the Peloponnesians" (6.1.1). Thucydides then describes the island's size, population, and early history (6.1.2–6.5) in order to demonstrate that "it was against such an island that the Athenians were eager (*hormento*) to make war." They intended, we are told, to rule the entire island, although they wanted to make it appear that they were offering aid to allies and kinsmen (6.6.1). Thucydides' sober and detailed description of Sicily contrasts sharply with the transparent duplicity and pathetic ignorance he attributes to the Athenian masses. In the three speeches by Nikias and Alkibiades that follow, as in other Assembly speech scenes, Thucydides establishes a contest between his historical way of knowing and democratic knowledge, between his text and public speeches, between his readers and Athenian assemblymen.

The scene is set: Sicilian Segesta has asked for Athenian military aid; the Athenians dispatched a fact-finding mission (6.6.1–2) that returned with accounts of Sicilian resources "both encouraging and untrue" (*ouk alethe,* 6.8.2). On the basis of this misinformation, which they evidently believed, the Assembly voted to send a force of sixty ships to Sicily (6.8.2–3). Five days later, a second Assembly was held, to vote on any additional material the generals felt would be necessary (6.8.2–3). As the debate opens Nikias, who had been designated a leader of the expedition, has come to feel that the slight and specious pretext of the alliance is inadequate to the monumental reality (*megalou ergou*) of attempting to conquer the entire island of Sicily (6.8.3–4). He hopes to persuade the Athenians to rescind the decree authorizing the expedition, in effect to "undo" the speech act performed at the previous meeting of the Assembly (6.9.1). This is a tall order. Nikias admits that his logos is unlikely to prevail against the Athenian character (*tropoi*) and that it will be difficult to dissuade his audience from taking risks in regard to "the still-obscure future." But he nonetheless tries to teach (*didaxo*) his audience that it will not be easy to accomplish that which they are eager to do (*hormesthe,* 6.9.3). Nikias' language recalls Perikles' comments on speech and action in the Funeral Oration, but Nikias hopes that, "instructed by speech," the Athenians will be willing *not* to act.[28]

Nikias establishes his political credentials with a claim never to have spoken in public "against his own opinion" (*para gnomen,* 6.9.2). He points out that he has no *personal* interest in blocking the expedition (6.9.2), thus setting up a contrast to Alkibiades' great personal interest in having the expedition sail. But ever-moderate Nikias qualifies his statement: I do, however, believe that a good citizen takes forethought for his own body and goods because this man will sincerely wish that the affairs of the polis should prosper so that his own will (6.9.2). Like other Athe-

nian public speakers, Nikias hopes to show that there is no *necessary* gap between personal and public interests. But his comment undercuts the contrast between himself and Alkibiades and leaves his opponent with a deadly rhetorical counter.[29]

Nikias attempts to show the Athenians that the expedition is dangerous in light of the continued antagonism of the Spartans. The plots of certain Athenians and our enemies have made the peace treaty into "merely a name" (*onoma*). He correctly predicts that the treaty will not stop the Peloponnesians from attacking should Athens suffer a defeat abroad. But, like other Assembly speakers in Thucydides' history, Nikias also resorts to dubious arguments from probability and vague maxims.[30] He also appeals to Athenian fear of antidemocratic conspiracies.[31] Thucydides' forthcoming description of Athenian hysteria over the affair of the Herm-smashers will show his readers how very dangerous this last line of argument could be.

Like other public speakers, Nikias emphasizes the need to concentrate on national interests.[32] He points out the Segestans' national interests lie in telling plausible untruths; they have nothing to contribute but *logoi* (6.12.1). This leads to his attack on Alkibiades' narrowly *personal* and *selfish* motivation (*to heautou monon skopon*): Alkibiades hopes to profit from the command, but the Athenians must not endanger the polis in order that Alkibiades may appear brilliant in his private life (*idiai*). Nikias claims to fear Alkibiades' supporters; he calls upon older citizens to counter their claim that voting against the expedition is a sign of cowardice (6.13.1). Nikias appeals again and again to polis and *patris* (6.13.1–6.14), and in a key passage he argues that forethought (*pronoia*) is the best thing for the state, intense desire (*epithumia*) the worst (6.13.1).

Alkibiades is epithumia personified.[33] Grabbing the thread of Nikias' linking of private and public interest, he unravels his opponent's argument by evoking an Athens in which the successful risk-taker is freed from the constraints of egalitarian mores. Alkibiades trumpets the propaganda effect of his recent triple chariot-racing victory at Olympia: as a result of my victory the other Greeks have come to believe our dunamis is great. The reference to Olympia underlines the agonistic nature of the current speech competition in the Assembly, and Alkibiades confronts Nikias' charge of self-interest head on: "It is a useful sort of folly if, by expending private means, someone profits not only himself, but also the polis" (6.16.3).

Alkibiades admits that because of his desire for great personal fame he has been criticized in regard to his private affairs (*ta idia*), but he asks the Athenians to look around and see if there is anyone better than himself at public administration (*ta demosia*).[34] The proof? I brought about a

useful anti-Spartan alliance in the Peloponnesos which "entailed no significant danger or expense for you" (*aneu . . . kindunou kai dapanes,* 6.16.6). This sounds good, but is it true? Alkibiades' "alliance" is the "plot" that Nikias claims rendered the peace treaty a mere name and too insubstantial to restrain Spartan aggression. Readers may remember the Corcyraeans' confident and erroneous prediction that their alliance would make Athens stronger "without dangers or expense" (*aneu kindunon kai dapanes,* 1.33.2). Thucydides' readers should by now have extracted from his historical examples (e.g., Epidamnos and Corcyra) the rule that every alliance is a potential source of danger and expense, for every alliance redirects the flow of power.

Readers will be even more dubious when they come to Alkibiades' follow-up: it was by means of appropriate logoi that I found a way of dealing with the dunamis of the Peloponnesians, and by stirring up passion (*orge*) I won their trust (6.17.1). Alkibiades' naïve confidence that logoi could tame dunamis is unlikely to persuade the reader who has got this far in Thucydides' narrative, and who has learned Thucydides' core lesson: the all-important difference between mere words and brute fact. The blithe expectation that orge could be the basis for a sound policy smacks of Kleon's demagogic appeals to righteous anger in the Mytilenian Debate (3.40.7).

Alkibiades then argues, "on the basis of what I hear from my informants" (*ex hon akoei aisthanomai,* 6.17.6), that the Sicilians are lightweights who will not put up much resistance.[35] This is patently false, but Alkibiades' ignorant listeners accept the speaker's words as an adequate representation of the men they will soon be fighting. Alkibiades concludes his portrayal of Sicilians by suggesting that it is hardly likely (*ouk eikos*) that such a mob (*homilos*), unable to listen to a *logos* as if with a single mind (*mia gnome*), will be able to engage in communal *erga* (6.17.4). By implication, if the Athenians *do* listen to him with "a single mind," if they ignore or forbid opposition, they will be able to initiate a great project in common. The danger of this line of argument will soon become apparent.

Alkibiades brushes aside the charge that the expedition will be risky, offering a specious historical analogy with the Persian Wars (6.17.7), and then he fires off a string of highly questionable maxims, predictions, and arguments from history and probability.[36] He concludes with appeals to national unity and to Athens' innate nature: a polis active by nature will ruin itself if it becomes passive, so it is better to stick to our active ways, even if they are imperfect (6.18.7). The sentiment, the context, and the vocabulary all recall Kleon.[37] Thucydides' readers have by now learned that one must be skeptical of this sort of oration. Not so the Athenian

assemblymen. Having heard Alkibiades' speech, they were much more eager (*homento*) than before for the expedition (6.19.1). Nikias now made a momentous decision: because his previous argument had failed to deter the assemblymen, he would attempt to alter their resolution by grossly overestimating the size of the force that would be needed (6.19.2, cf. 6.24.1).

Nikias begins his second speech by acknowledging that it is the will of the Assembly to sail, and he claims that he will now inform them of what is needed (6.20.1). Thucydides' readers know that this acknowledgment is insincere and that Nikias is drifting perilously close to saying one thing in public while believing another—a form of political dishonesty that he proudly renounced in his previous speech. He contradicts Alkibiades' overconfident assessment of the Sicilian situation: "According to what *I* hear from *my* informants" (*hos ego akoei aisthanomai*), we will be going against poleis, many of them Greek, which are large, not at odds with one another, not likely to want a new government, or willing to give up their freedom in order to be ruled by us" (6.20.2). By mimicking his opponent's words, Nikias initiates a contest of facts: Alkibiades' information about Sicily versus his own. Nikias supposes that he can win this contest and thereby deflate Athenian enthusiasm. Much of the speech (6.20.2–23.3) details the tactical difficulties the Athenian expeditionary force will encounter, an assessment that Thucydides' subsequent narrative confirms as factually correct.[38] So far, this fact-oriented presentation of realia seems a model speech by Thucydidean standards. But then, at the end of the speech comes the rhetorical kicker that Thucydides' prior discussion of Nikias' intentions had prepared us for: the invading forces will have to be immense, but if [only if!] we do all this, I believe that there will be maximum security (*bebaiotata*) for the polis, and safety (*soteria*) for our soldiers (6.23.3).

Nikias' seemingly clever rhetorical plan, to deter enthusiasm by means of hyperbole, backfired badly: the assemblymen's desire (*to epithumoun*) for sailing was in no way dampened by the greatness of the necessary preparations; the Athenians, now convinced that the expedition would be completely safe if they voted for all that Nikias demanded, became even more eager (*polu de mallon hormento:* 6.24.2). And so "a passionate lust (*eros*) to sail burst upon everyone equally" (6.24.3).[39] In the feverish atmosphere opposition was impossible: because of the intense desire (*epithumia*) of the great majority, those few who still harbored doubts dared not speak out against the expedition lest they appear traitors to the polis, and so they kept quiet (6.24.4). Born of selfish and factional interests, midwifed by clever public rhetoric and ignorance, the myth of perfect unity possessed the Athenians.

The results of this erotic possession are, by turns, magnificent and horrific. The huge expedition was duly voted (6.25). The preparations completed, the entire population of Athens went down to Peiraieus to witness the launching (6.30.2). There was a moment of fear, when the true riskiness of what they were doing impressed itself upon the throng, but unease gave way to confidence as the Athenians feasted their eyes upon the sight of the huge fleet (6.31.1).[40] Thucydides lavishes superlatives on the expeditionary force (6.31.1–32.2). Yet he also points out that to the other Hellenes it seemed more a display (*epideixis*) of dunamis than a military expedition (6.31.4) and that on it rested all the hopes of the polis (6.31.6). The eventual outcome, the utter destruction of the Athenian naval and land forces in Sicily in 413 B.C., was equally great: "This accomplishment [*ergon* = the Syracusan defeat of Athens] was the greatest of the war, indeed, in my opinion the greatest in the known history of the Greeks" (7.87.5).[41]

If the destruction of the expedition is the greatest ergon of the war, then the decree that launched it, enacted by a collectivity possessed and artificially unified by desire, was commensurately wrong-headed.[42] Who was to blame? Not just naughty, sexy Alkibiades. Thucydides makes it clear that Nikias *himself* was responsible for much of the general lust. The verb that traces the upward spiral of Athenian enthusiasm is *hormao*, "to be eager to initiate an affair."[43] The Athenians do not seem especially mad for the expedition before the speech-contest of the second Assembly, a meeting that was called simply to iron out the administrative details of sending out a moderate-sized sixty-ship mission. It is Nikias who rekindled the general debate (6.14). In his first speech, Nikias describes the Athenians as "eager to initiate" (6.9.3) the expedition; after his second speech they are "even more eager" (6.24.2). By his violent personal attack on Alkibiades, Nikias ensured (6.15.2) that his opponent would make the reply that made the assemblymen "much more eager than before" (6.19.1). Rather than cutting his losses after the success of his opponent's speech, Nikias decided to act against both the general will and his own character, by challenging his enemy directly in a rhetorical contest. In his second speech Nikias abandons "his own genuine opinion" in favor of an overclever rhetorical strategy that feeds the flames of popular enthusiasm.

The construction of the scene suggests that Nikias, an excellent and moral man (as Thucydides is at pains to tell us, 7.86), was tricked by the agonistic context of the democratic decision-making process into the self-betrayal that will destroy both himself and Athens' power. Nikias' strategy in his second speech was based on the assumption that the assemblymen recognized a distinction between words and facts. His rhetorical bluff required that his own words invoke an external reality of expensive

material necessities. He imagined that the Athenians would be sobered by a confrontation with the facts (huge expense, tactical difficulties) to which his words referred. But he forgot that in the context of the Assembly language was less referential than performative: the Assembly was a battleground of speech in which words were, through felicitous speech performances (i.e., the enactment of decrees), transmuted into social and political realities.[44] The Funeral Oration ideal, which elides the difficulty of moving from political speech in a democracy to effective action, here reaches its telos: speech becomes more than a spur to action; with the enactment of the decree authorizing the great expedition, speech is isomorphic with action. The distinction between words and facts melts away with predictably (in Thucydides' realm) bad results.

Thucydides' explanation of why Nikias' hyperbole fanned the fires of public desire is implicit in his depiction of how the Assembly "processed" the knowledge presented in verbal arguments. In the debates over Corcyra and Mytilene, the assemblymen were forced to choose between two positions. Thucydides' text suggests that in neither case was the final choice completely rational, because the assemblymen had no independent means of judging or testing the accuracy of each speaker's factual statements. But Thucydides also showed that even self-interested speeches might contain some truth, and so the decisions made by the Assembly did not *necessarily* result in bad outcomes.[45] The Sicilian Debate might have followed the same scenario. Nikias tries to refute Alkibiades' facts with his own better facts, but the Athenians refuse to choose between the two competing descriptions of external reality. They solve the political/epistemological dilemma posed by Thucydides—democratic decision-making as typically based on misinformation because of the agonistic nature of Assembly debate—by rejecting contradiction and combining Alkibiades' argument that there must be an expedition with Nikias' argument that it must be almost impossibly huge. As Thucydides told us at the beginning of the scene, they are still ignorant of the realities of Sicily, but, through their speech act, they have created an imaginary Sicily as an opponent for the imagined Demos. This imaginary Sicily cannot be strong enough to hurt the great dunamis that the assemblymen have called into being by the authorizing decree. And thus, in Alkibiades' dangerously optimistic and exclusionary formulation, the only outcomes they can foresee are the conquest of Hellas, or helping their friends and hurting their enemies.

The result of this "solution" is that the Athenians become (in Alkibiades' words) a being with a single mind (*mia gnome*) and a single purpose, a being that embodies the ideological dream of an end to all the complex contradictions, distinctions, and uncertainties that led to political friction. The idealizing discourse of Perikles' Funeral Oration is actualized: the *agon* of politics becomes a love feast where "everybody wins."[46] Individual self-interest and desire to excel unites with the public good. Social unequals and political equals, the many and the few, old and young, dissolve into an ideological "all." The future is no longer unknown because the huge dunamis called into existence by the Assembly's decree has transmuted uncertainty into a sure thing. Justice and expediency go hand in hand because Athens will help its Sicilian allies through the self-serving act of conquering Sicily. The demos, freed from the braking tendency of sociopolitical friction, driven by desire, impatient with delay, is angered by any hint that contradictions or impediments remain. This unity is of course false. But it is highly dangerous to oppose the consensus in public, and so all critics of unanimity are gagged. Political criticism of the political myth becomes impossible in the face of the hegemonic will of the mass.

The tragic outcome is practically foreordained. The expedition, a product of false words and personal interests, crashes into the complex and harsh realities of war in the real world, and sinks; fragile unity devolves into stasis.[47] Books 6 and 7, with their detailed and vivid descriptions of the initial successes, subsequent crumbling, and final collapse of the Athenian expeditionary force in Sicily, present Thucydides' strongest case for the priority of erga over logoi and for the instability of democracy when it is reenvisioned as government by competing speeches.

Thucydides' summation of why Athens lost the Peloponnesian War (2.65) begins with the statement that under Perikles' leadership Athens was a democracy only in logos (2.65.9). The implied inverse is that, after Perikles' death, demokratia existed as an ergon and that this led to disaster. Real demokratia meant that democratic knowledge was the epistemic authority undergirding decisions about actions the state would undertake. As a result, decisions were predicated on speech-contests rather than on fact and foresight. Speech-contests were the result of, and in turn exacerbated, selfishness and factionalism. As the contests became fiercer, there was a growing tendency for speaker and audience to confuse political enactment with reality. In Thucydides' text, the public performance of a speech act in the democratic polity does not felicitously call into being sociopolitical realities, it evokes a false and fragile vision of reality that is shattered by its inevitable collision with brute fact. Perikles' inferior successors competed through public speech for the "leadership" of the demos—a leadership that the text now reveals as the spurious privilege of using lies in order to persuade the demos to enact fictions. These fictions were dangerous first because the contests reflected and inflamed the selfish ambitions of individuals and sociopolitical factions, and second be-

cause they involved a mighty dunamis and the communal kratos wielded by a numerous and increasingly willful demos, a demos that tended to confuse ideology with truth and political speech with reality. When this kratos was unleashed by unrestrained speech-contests, Athens' dunamis was misdirected and lost in Sicily, and Athens fell into the stasis of 411/10.

Here, with the apparent demise of demokratia, Thucydides' text abruptly ends. His critical argument, if not his historical narrative of the twenty-seven-year (5.26,1) war, is complete. The text as we have it empirically demonstrates the validity of his historical counterepistemology, by showing how and why the linkage between democratic knowledge and democratic political power led to the destruction of both democratic Athenian political life and Athenian dunamis. It is, however, worth noting that Thucydides' critical project, compelling (if chilling) as a logos, was not fully sustained by the erga. Demokratia bounced back after 410, Athens rebuilt its military power, and the conflict with Sparta lasted a good deal longer than twenty-seven years.[48]

Because of its vulnerability to falsification on the empirical basis of observable "realities," a political theory that claimed to explain the probable future on the basis of accurate knowledge about the recent past was perhaps, in the long run at least, a flawed vehicle for literary resistance to Athenian civic ideology. We certainly need not accept Thucydides' pessimistic conclusions about public speech and collective action. But the fact that Thucydides could conceive, execute, and find an audience for such a profound and sustained criticism of Athenian democracy should help us to define the limits of the hegemonic tendencies of democratic discourse.

Notes

This essay is adapted from parts of two chapters of a book-in-progress, tentatively entitled "Athenian Critics of Popular Rule." I wrote drafts of the chapters while I was a Junior Fellow of the Center for Hellenic Studies. I thank the Director and Fellows (both Senior and Junior) of the center for the year 1989–90. Along with the administration of Montana State University (who helped support my stay at the center), they made it possible for this study to be undertaken in the pleasantest of circumstances.

1. Civic ideology, democratic discourse, and hegemony: Ober 1989a.

2. Power-as-discourse: Foucault 1980, 78–133. Although Foucault refers briefly to the possibility of resistance (e.g., 1980, 82–83, 108, 134–45), several of Foucault's critics have pointed out that his theory fails to give an adequate account of the phenomenon of resistance (including the resistance to power-as-discourse implicit in his own writings); see essays by Taylor and Said in Hoy 1986, 69–102, 149–55.

3. See, for example, Bloom 1987, who argues that the supposed hegemony of democratic egalitarianism is among the evils of modern American society.

4. Importance of context: Skinner in Skinner et al. 1988, 56–63. The notion that these two analytic modes are compatible is important to my argument. Although Skinner and Foucault may seem far apart on (esp.) the issue of intention, the sharpness of the contrast can be overdrawn. Cf. Skinner 231–88 (esp. 271–73), where the hermeneutic scope he allots to authorial intentionality is considerably scaled back.

5. This is among the central arguments of Ober 1989a; see esp. 293–339.

6. Austin 1975. Austin's argument is usefully extended and reworked to better explain political speech, esp. in revolutionary situations, by Petrey 1988. Conventional effect quote: Petrey 1988, 77, slightly rephrasing Austin's "rule A.1."

7. Foucault's theory of power: n. 2 above. Democratic hegemony: Ober 1989a, 332–39. I adapt the concept of ideological hegemony from A. Gramsci; for a useful discussion, see Femia 1981, 1–129. The issue of textual resistance to ideological authority is also important to Skinner: Skinner et al. 1988, 276, 286–88.

8. On historical knowledge and discourse-as-resistance, cf. Petrey 1988, 193: "A verbal form alien to dominant discourse takes legitimacy from its appeal to a different historical moment producing different rules for what words can do."

Thucydides' political viewpoint is far from transparent. The *loci classici* are 2.65 (praise of Perikles, see below) and 8.97: praise of the broad-based oligarchy of the Five Thousand. Modern readings have had Thucydides all over the political map, e.g., Finley 1942, 237: Thucydides was by nature a democrat incapable of conceiving a great progressive city except as a democracy. Woodhead 1970, 34–35: Thucydides did not approve of democracy. De Romilly 1976, 93–105: Thucydides was an advocate of a "mixed constitution." Connor 1984, 237–42 (with review of literature): Thucydides was neither a simple antidemocrat nor a proponent of oligarchy. Pope 1988, 276–96: Thucydides was not esp. antidemocratic but regarded both democrats and oligarchs as contributing to the breakdown of community during the Peloponnesian War.

My argument looks at the text as a whole and offers no contribution to the "Thucydidean question" of composition. For this long, largely sterile, debate, see Rawlings 1981, 250–54.

9. The Athenian ignorance of the facts regarding the tyrants has tragic political consequences during the affair of the Herms (6.60.1); see Rawlings 1981, 256–59; cf. Euben 1986, 361: the tyrannicide story "reveals human beings as creators of meaning in the context of political struggle."

10. *Plethos* as a term for the mass of ordinary citizens: Ruzé 1984, 259–63. Note that *plethos* could, in the mid-fifth century, be used in official documents as a synonym for *demos:* ML 40 (= *IG* I^3 14: Erythrai decree).

11. The suppositions that each Spartan king had two votes in council and that there was a Spartan battalion called the Pitanes.

12. This criticism has (at least) two targets: Herodotus, whose *Histories*

contain these two errors, and the Athenian masses, who are implied by the term *hoi polloi*. Herodotus and the errors on Spartan kings and Pitanes: Gomme in *HCT* 1, ad loc. *Hoi polloi* as term for citizen masses: Ober 1989a, 11. Hornblower 1987, 155–90, points out Thucydides' authorial self-certainty and the rarity of this stance in ancient historiography.

13. In translating *ergon* as "fact," I am following the lead of Parry 1981, 13, 76–89, and esp. 92–93: *ergon* can mean anything wrought or done, or deeds of war, or the whole business of war. "But then there is a slightly different direction in the meaning of *ergon*, whereby it stands for *fact*, or *reality*, the thing that was *actually* done. It is this side of the word that makes it appropriate for the *logos/ergon* antithesis." As Parry points out, the two meanings of *ergon* as fact and as deed are quite close and are often conjoined in Thucydides. Thus, *ergon* in the antithesis "means *external reality*, but then it also means the *deeds of war*, and so *war;* and by insisting on this, Thucydides presents war as *the* reality, *the* complex of external forces within which the human intellect strives and operates."

14. The ranks of the *logographoi* must include the political orators of Athens. *Logographos* is not used again in Thucydides' text; for the translation here, cf. Connor 1984, 28. *Logographos* as a term for speech-writer in later Greek rhetoric: Lavency 1964. As Aristotle points out (*Rhet.* 1418a 21–29), speeches presented in Assembly deal with the affairs of the future, and speeches were the basis of decision-making in the democracy.

15. True historical objectivity, if defined as the absence of perspective, the "view from nowhere," is, of course, simply impossible; see Novick 1988. Yet it is important to keep in mind that Thucydides' motive for claiming to be "objective" was not the same as that of the "scientific" historians of late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries who attempted (and attempt) to follow von Ranke's dictum that it was the historian's duty to relate history "wie es eigentlich gewesen war." Thucydides was not writing within the confines of an established discipline, or for a disciplinary audience. Thus it seems relatively meaningless to criticize him for not being "truly" objective by Rankean standards (cf. n. 18 below). Objectivity is a rhetorical stance for Thucydides, one that offered him a needed *point d'appui* for his critical project.

16. Rhetorical appeals to the validity of public opinion and to historical examples: Ober 1989a, 156–70, 177–82.

17. Cf. Parry 1981, 48, 83–88.

18. For this much-discussed claim that history should be useful, see, e.g., Rawlings 1981, 254–63; and Connor 1984, 243–48. Gomme in *HCT* 1.149–50, argues "the future things" are future still to Thucydides, but assumed to be past to the reader. Thus, Thucydides does not suggest that his work will be of any help to one who hopes to understand what is still in his own future; and therefore Thucydides is not to be taken as giving practical advice for political agents. Gomme's argument strains the sense of the passage and is predicated on seeing Thucydides as a historian, with a modern historian's interests. The other side of the "modernist Thucydides" coin is the view of him as a dishonest

historian, who knew that historians should be objective, but willfully decided not to be: e.g., Wallace 1964; and Hunter 1973, esp. 177–84. Cf. Rawlings 1981, 263–72: no meaningful line can be drawn between the historian as reporter of events and historian as artist; Connor 1984, esp. 235–36: the text is complex and forces the reader to challenge positions the text itself seems to establish.

19. On the text's didactic tendencies, cf. Hunter 1973, 179–83; Cogan 1981, xvii; Rawlings 1981, 261–62; and Connor 1984.

20. See esp. 1.2.4, 1.7.1, 1.8.2–3. Population, capital, and navy as the main elements of Thucydides' definition of power: 1.4, 1.7.1, 1.8.2–3, 1.9.2, 1.9.3, 1.11.1–5, 1.13.1–1.14.3, 1.15.1. Cf. Connor 1984, 20–32, 246–48. For Thucydides on power, see also Woodhead 1970; Immerwahr 1973; Allison 1989; and the essays collected in Lebow and Strauss 1991.

21. *Kratos* as domination: 1.143.4, 4.98.2, 8.46, 8.76.4; the strength to carry out a war: 3.13.7; violent means used to take a city: 1.64.3, 1.118.3. For other examples, see Bétant 1843, s.v.

22. See, e.g., Pouncey 1980, xi: Thucydides' "assumption is that human nature remains relatively constant." But contrast Farrar 1988, 135–37, 139, who claims that Thucydides' view of human nature is not static; Flory 1988, 43–56: Thucydides' view of human nature is neither rigid nor strict.

23. Plague and individual selfishness: 2.53. Contrast 2.51: examples of selfless care of others. Late-fifth-century Athenian political writers were very interested in the issue of what is "natural" (*phusis*) and what is a product of human society (*nomos*); see Ostwald 1986, 260–73. Because I do not accept the postulates of methodological individualism as universally valid, I cannot agree with Pouncey 1980, xii, that Thucydides' view is that in times of crisis (e.g., *stasis*) human nature is "tracked to its proper ground in the human individual." On Thucydides' emphasis on groups rather than individuals, see Pope 1988.

24. Athenian ideal of consensus (*homonoia*): Ober 1989a, 295–99.

25. Imagined Demos: Ober 1989b, 329–32. The citizens in the Assembly were not, of course, in any formal sense "representatives" of their fellow citizens, for every Athenian citizen had the right to attend any Assembly. For a review of Athenian governmental procedure, see Ober 1989a, 53–155.

26. Ober 1989a, 4 with n. 2 for bibliography on this distinction. Sealey 1973, 283–90, unsuccessfully attempts to show that *demos* in Thucydides has no class meaning.

27. The three sets of speeches: 1.31–44 (Corcyraean Debate), 3.36–49.1 (Mytilenean Debate), and 6.8–26 (Sicilian Debate). I exclude Assembly scenes in which speeches are given in indirect discourse, and those in which only one speech is presented. Bibliography on speeches in Thucydides (to 1970): West III in Stadter 1973, 124–61. Useful discussions of the Sicilian Debate include Tompkins 1972; Stahl 1973; and Connor 1984, 162–68, 237.

28. By referring to the revoking of a decree as "undoing a performed speech act," I am consciously casting the political process of the Assembly in terms of Austin's theory; see above. The relationship between persuasive public speech

and collective action is of key importance in Perikles' Funeral Oration (2.40.2–3) and in the Mytilene Debate (3.38.1–4, 3.42.2).

29. For comments of other Athenian speakers on the issue of personal and public interests, cf. 2.37.1–3 (Funeral Oration) and 3.38.2–3, 3.40.3, 3.42.3–6 (Mytilenean Debate).

30. We should not fear the creation of a Syracusan empire, for it is hardly likely (*ouk eikos*) that an empire would attack another empire (6.11.3); it will impress our enemies more if we do not sail because "we all know" that people are most impressed by that which is most distant and least testable (6.11.4). Examples of other Assembly speakers' maxims: Corcyraeans (1.33.4, 1.34.3, 1.35.5), Corinthians (1.41.2–3, 1.42.2, 1.42.4), Kleon (3.37.2, 3.39.2, 3.39.5, 3.40.1), and Diodotos (3.45.3–6).

31. If we are soberly realistic (*sophronoumen*), we will realize that the contest (*agon*) is not against the barbarous Sicilians, but against Spartan plots to impose an oligarchy upon Athens (6.11.7).

32. Other Assembly speakers on the priority of Athenian interests: Corcyraeans (1.32.1), Kleon (3.40.4), and Diodotos (3.44).

33. In Thucydides' one-paragraph introduction (6.15), Alkibiades is first called "most-ardent" (*prothumotata*) for the expedition, and desirous (*epithumon,* 15.2) of the generalship. His desires were greater (*epithumiais meizosin,* 15.3) than his means, and eventually the demos came to believe that he lusted after (*epithumounti,* 15.4) tyranny. Cf. Hunter 1973, 180 on Alkibiades; she seems to go too far (8–9) in arguing that "Thucydides' characters . . . are not real people at all but *mere* [my emphasis] personifications of one quality or another."

34. This claim is supported by Thucydides' narrative comments on Alkibiades: 6.15.4.

35. The Athenians will not be facing a big dunamis in Sicily (6.17.1); like all Greeks, the Sicilians falsify their numerical strength (6.17.5). Each Sicilian is just out to get what he can for himself by making clever speeches, or by stirring up a stasis so that he can take from the common store; if unsuccessful, he will simply move to some other land (6.17.3). This last does *not* accurately describe the real Sicilians whom the Athenians will encounter in the invasion, but it could be taken as a succinct (if hostile) posteventum description of Alkibiades' own career: he is just now making a clever speech, he will soon defect to Sparta, and he will benefit by the Athenian stasis of 411/0. Thucydides' readers will learn all this in due course.

36. All empires were gained by helping those in need; inactivity is more risky than action; if we do not expand we risk being conquered ourselves (6.18.2–3). Don't worry about the Peloponnesians, our sailing to Sicily will befuddle them. Anyway, the expedition can have only two possible outcomes: either we conquer Hellas, or we'll hurt Syracuse and help our allies (6.18.4). Don't be fooled by Nikias' attempt to create social unrest (*diastasis*) by appealing to the elders; let's do as our fathers did and stand united, young and old. Keep in mind that, like all things, a polis can wear out if it is inactive, but if it

engages in contests (*agonizomenen*) it will gain experience and will be able to defend itself, not just in speech (*logoi*) but in fact (*ergoi,* 6.18.6).

37. Vocabulary: Alkibiades: *gignosko . . . nomois . . . kheiro.* . . Kleon (3.37.3): *gnosometha . . . kheirosi nomois.*

38. Sicilian cavalry will be a big factor; the Athenians cannot expect to recruit cavalry in Sicily; they might need to send home for more supplies; the money promised by the Segestans exists only in logos; if we don't conquer the whole island quickly, we'll be surrounded by enemies.

39. The old men thought such a great dunamis was likely to succeed or at least to be invulnerable; the young hoped to see wonders and felt they could do so safely; the mob (*homilos*) looked forward to military pay.

40. *Dia to plethos hekaston hon heoron, tei opsei anetharsoun.* This example of the masses' false confidence resulting from *seeing* demonstrates that visual perception can be just as misleading as verbal persuasion. Cf. Stahl 1973, 73–74; Brittan, "History, Testimony, and Two Kinds of Scepticism," in Chakrabarti, ed., *Testimony* (n.d.). The inability of visual perception alone to overcome the illusions of speech within the context of the democratic regime is an important issue for the Athenian antidemocratic "critical enterprise"; it recurs in Aristophanes (*Ecclesiazusae*) and, of course, in Plato's epistemology.

41. The location of this *edokei moi*–type construction in the sentence fits the methodological scheme Thucydides laid out in the proemium. According to Thucydides' categories, it was a demonstrable *fact* that the defeat was the greatest *ergon* of the war. But because ancient history is knowable only by inference, it can only be his (informed) *opinion* that this was the greatest *ergon* of all Greek history.

42. However, cf. 6.47–50 (victory in Sicily seems possible); 2.65.11: Thucydides here claims that the error was not so much ignorance about what to expect in Sicily (*ou tosouton gnomes harmatema en pros hous epeisan*), as a failure by those at home in Athens to support the expedition. This claim is contradicted by Thucydides' narrative; see Gomme in *HCT* 2. ad loc.

43. See above: 6.6.1, 6.9.3, 6.19.1, 6.24.2. The chronological context of 6.6.1 (*hoi Athenaioi strateuein hormento*) seems to be after the second Assembly, but before the launching of the expedition.

44. Felicity (successfulness) of speech performances (as judged by the subsequent behavior of the relevant parties): Austin 1975, 14–24, 116–17; and Petrey 1988, 32–48.

45. Truth, that is, as judged by conformity to the erga, or to Thucydides' own interpretation: e.g., the Corcyraeans predict the coming war and identify Spartan fear (*phobos*) of Athenian power as the prime cause (1.33.3); Corinthians predict that Athens' allies will revolt (1.40.6).

46. Athenian ideal of consensus: above n. 24. *Mia gnome,* vel sim. in (later) Athenian rhetoric: Dem. 19.298; Din. 1.99; And. 2.1; Lys. 2.12, 17, 24; and Aeschines 3.208. Idealizing discourse of the Funeral Oration (Perikles' and others): Loraux 1986.

47. Cf. Eco 1976, 66: death, once it has occurred, is the one thing that cannot be semioticized.

48. The last years of the twenty-seven-year war, and the ongoing conflict between Sparta and Athens in the 390s and 380s, are recounted by Xenophon, *Hellenica;* cf. Strauss 1986. On the question of whether Thucydides survived into the 390s, see the contrasting views of Pouilloux and Salviat 1985; and Cartledge 1984.

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Private Lives and Public Enemies: Freedom of Thought in Classical Athens

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Personal freedom—"to live as you wish" (*zen hos bouletai tis*), "to say what you wish" (*parrhesiazesthai*)—is cited by many ancient sources as an outstanding quality of the Athenian democracy. At a moment of crisis outside Syracuse in 413, Thucydides' Nikias sought to encourage his soldiers by reminding them that their country was "the most free of all states" (*eleutherotate*) and that "all who lived there had the liberty to live their own lives in their own way" (7.69.2, trans. Warner). Both Plato and the Old Oligarch complain that in Athens even animals or slaves do just as they please.[1] Most famously of all, in the Funeral Oration Thucydides' Perikles remarks that "just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next-door neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt people's feelings. We are free and tolerant in our private lives, but in public affairs we keep to the law" (2.37.3, trans. Warner). Thus, perhaps as a consequence of the history of fifth-century Athens, personal freedom has come to be associated with the democratic form of government.[2]

As traditionally conceived, however, there are at least two outstanding categories of exceptions to this principle of personal freedom: first for those citizens who took part in city government, and second in the area of the freedom of thought, especially in connection with prominent intellectuals and in religious matters. Among many examples in the first of these categories were the official state examinations into the personal conduct of Athenians who were selected to hold public office. These examinations concerned issues such as whether they treated their parents badly. Candi-