

Thucydides

Thucydides (ca. 460 – ca. 395 BCE) is best known as an historian of the Peloponnesian War and is often credited by modern (and most post-Renaissance) political theorists and historians as the father of scientific or rationalistic history due to his investigation into cause and effect and his focus on the *Realpolitik*. While many argue that these trends place Thucydides in stark opposition to his predecessor Herodotus, there is much common ground shared between these two historians. Both primarily wrote—or at least conceived of—their works while in exile, both investigate with an aim to discover the causes of various events, and both choose a prose format for the composition of their histories (and in so doing fully establish history as a prose genre). In fact, Thucydides seems to connect his *History of the Peloponnesian War* to the *Histories* of Herodotus. While Thucydides covers in detail the first twenty years of the war between Athens and Sparta, he also describes in a passage called the *Pentecontaetia* the progression of Athens in the time between the Persian Wars (the focus of Herodotus' work) and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Stylistically, however, the two could not be farther apart. While Herodotus' fluid running style makes occasional appearances in Thucydides' narrative sections, the best known passages of the latter's work, especially the rightfully famous speeches, are composed in a style that is best described as thoughtfully dense. In the passages provided here, keep an eye out for ellipsis, anacoluthon, archaism, careful avoidance of parallelism, frequent shifts of construction, antithesis in sense (instead of direct verbal antithesis), the use of abstract nouns and concepts, and a general density of expression.

Passage α: Proem (1.1.1)

Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων, ὥς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθύς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι ἀκμάζοντές τε ἦσαν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμφοτέρω παρὰσκευῇ τῇ πάσῃ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ὄρων ξυνιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους, τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον.

Vocabulary:

ἀκμάζω – *to be at one's height, in one's prime*

ἀξιολογώτατον = ἀξιο/λογό/

διανοέω – *to intend, have in mind*

ξυν- = συν-

τεκμαιρόμαι – *to take as proof, judge, estimate*

Passage β: Methodology (1.21-22)

[21] ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων τεκμηρίων ὅμως τοιαῦτα ἂν τις νομίζων μάλιστα ἃ διήλθον οὐχ ἁμαρτάνοι, καὶ οὔτε ὥς ποιηταὶ ὑμνήκασι περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον πιστεύων, οὔτε ὥς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσαν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῇ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέστερον, ὄντα ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστως ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνενικηκότα, ἠύρῃσθαι δὲ ἡγησάμενος ἐκ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων σημείων ὥς παλαιὰ εἶναι ἀποχρώντως. καὶ ὁ πόλεμος οὗτος, καίπερ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν ᾧ μὲν ἂν πολεμῶσι τὸν παρόντα αἰεὶ μέγιστον κρινόντων, παυσαμένων δὲ τὰ ἀρχαῖα μᾶλλον θαυμαζόντων, ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων σκοποῦσι δηλώσει ὅμως μείζων γεγενημένος αὐτῶν.

Vocabulary:

ἀκροάσις, -έως, ἡ (= ἀκρόασι/) - *hearing*

ἀνεξέλεγκτος, -ον = ἀ(ν)/ἐξ/ἐλεγκ/τ/-

ἀποχρώντως – *sufficiently*

ἐκνικάω, etc. – *to win its way*

μυθώδης, -ες – *legendary, fabulous*

προσαγωγός, -όν (= προσαγωγό/) – *attractive, persuasive*

τεκμήριον, -ου, τό (= τεκμήριο/) – *proof*

ὑμνέω, ὑμνήσω, etc. (= ὑμνε/) – *to sing*

ὑπὸ χρόνου = *by lapse of time*

[22] Καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθεν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὥς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς συμπίσεως γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται. τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὥς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελθών. ἐπιπόνως δὲ ἠρύσκειτο, διότι οἱ παρόντες τοῖς ἔργοις ἐκάστοις οὐ ταῦτ' αὖτε περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔλεγον, ἀλλ' ὥς ἐκατέρων τις εὐνοίας ἢ μνήμης ἔχοι. καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται.

Vocabulary:

ἀγώνισμα, -ματος, τό - *contest*

ἀκρίβεια, -ας, ἡ - *exactness, accuracy, precision*

ἀρκούντως - *enough*

ἀνθρώπινος, -η, -ον - *human, belonging to mankind*

ἀτερπής, -ές - *unpleasant, less attractive*

διαμνημονεύω, -εύσω, etc. - *to remember exactly, call to mind*

διότι - *because of the fact that*

ἐγγύς - *adv. - near (+ gen.)*

ἐπέξηλθον - *to discuss thoroughly or accurately*

ἐπίπονός, -ον - *toilsome, laborious*

εὐνοία, -ας, ἡ - *goodwill, partiality*

κτῆμα, ατος, τό - *possession*

μνήμη, -ης, ἡ - *memory, recollection*

ξύγκειμαι, etc. - *to be composed*

ὅτι + *superl. adj./adv.* = ὥς + *superl. adj./adv.*

παραπλήσιος, α, ον - *near, nearly equal, just about*

παραχρῆμα, *adv.* - *on the spot, at the moment, immediate*

ὠφέλιμος, -ον - *useful, beneficial*