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THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR AND THE STATE OF NATURE IN THUCYDIDES: THE COINCIDENCE OF MOTION AND REST*

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Hermann Strasburger once observed that Thucydides' initial, programmatic characterisation of the Peloponnesian War as 'the greatest motion' (*κίνησις … μεγίστη*, 1.1.2) reveals his notion of the primary subject matter of historiography.[1] According to Strasburger, Thucydides turned his attention toward the kinetic and dynamic aspects of history, i.e., the struggle for power and, in particular, war.[2] With this choice, he bequeathed an overriding concern with the forces of motion to the entirety of subsequent ancient historiography. Strasburger observes that Thucydides' influential choice had its costs: his strong emphasis on the state of exception and the moments of crisis led to a relative disinterest in the stabilising forces of human culture, such as economic systems, religious beliefs, or cultural institutions. As a result, ancient historians conceptualised their subject matter in the wake of Thucydides as the quintessential unleashing of intense, wide-ranging commotions.[3] In a similar vein, Leo Strauss stressed the importance of the antithesis between motion and rest for Thucydides' view of the Peloponnesian War.[4] According to Strauss, Thucydides implicitly contrasts the period of climactic motion, i.e. the Peloponnesian War, with the preceding era of relative peace and stability, a phase of rest, marked by an accumulation of power and wealth. On the basis of this antithesis, war is motion and destructive, whereas peace means rest and is constructive.

My goal in this paper is to demonstrate that Thucydides' text shows the Peloponnesian War collapsing the opposition between motion and rest. This thesis will be substantiated through various case studies of specific episodes. Instead of being mutually exclusive, motion and rest are polar opposites that

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[1] Rusten (2015) 35 has argued that *κίνησις* means 'mobilisation' instead of 'commotion'. For a defence of the traditional understanding, cf. Munson (2015) 41–42.

[2] Strasburger (1966) 58, 61–2.

[3] Strasburger (1966) 58 (neglect of stabilising factors), 57 (influence on subsequent ancient historiography).

[4] Strauss (1964) 155–6.

both remain permanently in play. In periods of general flourishing, they enter into a relationship that enables mutual enhancement on the basis of a fine-tuned balance. By contrast, the Peloponnesian War is simultaneously climactic motion and climatic rest: each member of the antithesis, instead of achieving balanced proportionality with its counterpart, manifests itself in an extreme value. Rest in the sense of excess signifies entrapment in a situation and the impossibility of independent, free motion. The Peloponnesian War confronts people, time and again, with the experience of entanglement in circumstances while simultaneously exposing them to events that occur with an extreme degree of unforeseeable rapidity.

As I will argue, Thucydides identifies the experience of the Peloponnesian War with the state of nature. In advancing this view, he also takes a stance, albeit implicitly and beneath the surface of his factual account, on one of the central puzzles that occupied the Pre-Socratics: the significance of motion and rest for the makeup of the cosmos as a whole. Historiography, as conceived by Thucydides, thus touches on matters that go far beyond a purely factual reconstruction of the events of one particular war. In my conclusion, I will consider what light Thucydides' concern with motion and rest sheds on a foundational scholarly controversy about the ultimate aims of Thucydides' historiographic project.

Extremes of Motion and Rest in the State of Nature: The *Archaeology*

In the *Archaeology* Thucydides introduces the reader to the theme of the paradoxical coincidence of motion and rest. Throughout the *Archaeology* Thucydides portrays the development of Greece from a miserable early condition, in which the Greeks lacked fixed habitations and commerce and were constantly exposed to instability and external threats. An image of extreme disorganisation emerges. Thus, early Greece is stirred by an excessive degree of movement, manifesting itself in constant migrations and a nomadic lifestyle. These are due to the permanent compulsion to find new abodes in the wake of attacks by those who are stronger and drive people out of their current place of residence (1.2.2). On the other hand, Greece simultaneously suffers from extreme immobility, due to the absence of mercantile traffic and indeed the impossibility of any safe travel (1.2.2, 3.4, 6.1). Communication between different places is hardly possible, and most communities live in a state of utter isolation. Oscillating between extremes, the world of early Greece is disrupted by the equally dismal alternatives of incessant flux and paralysing inaction.

The amorphous state of Greece is reflected in the lack of any designation, at this early time, referring to the Greeks in their entirety as one people (1.3.2). This lack of a common proper name reflects two circumstances: first, that the Greek world, affected as it is by incessant motion, lacks the stability

requisite for a distinct identity presupposed by a proper designation; second, that the Greeks have not yet risen to a sufficient level of common self-awareness because they lack the resources that could enable them to regard themselves as a collective. Only after the Greeks have become able to explore what will be called the 'Greek' world through controlled motion—and especially navigation—will they be able to ascend to a more comprehensive outlook and recognise their shared identity.

The *Archaeology* traces the development of the strategies through which the Greeks, in an attempt to respond to the unbalanced world around them, impose order and stability on the ubiquitous chaos. As several scholars have stressed, the account systematically uncovers a definite set of material factors that enable the Greeks to establish order: ships, city walls, and wealth (1.7, 8.2–3, 9.3, 13.1, 13.5, 15.1).[5] Ships facilitate the motion necessary to conduct traffic and undertake grand military expeditions, and fortifications provide the stability that is indispensable for long-standing fixed habitations. While seafaring is the antidote to isolation and immobility, walls counteract the flux of uncontrolled motion. Monetary resources accrue from the mutually balanced employment of ships and walls, and they simultaneously provide a stimulus to refine both the instruments enabling extension and the factors furthering unity.[6] Thus, motion and rest are equally indispensable for the rise of a city, but they must be brought into a carefully calibrated balance. The interplay of both factors is nicely illustrated by the account that Thucydides gives of the state of Greece after the Trojan War. Even then, he writes, Greece was still 'subject to migration and settlement' (*ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἔτι μετανίστατό τε καὶ κατῳκίζετο*, 1.12.1). As a result, it 'did not come to rest nor undergo a process of growth' (*ὥστε μὴ ἡσυχάσασαν αὐξηθῆναι*, 1.12.1). Only after a further considerable lapse of time, 'Greece became securely tranquil and no longer subject to enforced migrations, and so it began to send out colonies' (*ἡσυχάσασα ἡ Ἑλλὰς βεβαίως καὶ οὐκέτι ἀνισταμένη ἀποικίας ἐξέπεμψε*, 1.12.4). This combination of 'rest' and 'growth' encapsulates the process of civilisation: while rest is required to overcome chaotic and violent migrations, growth, manifesting itself in the building of wealth and material resources, is the antidote against the state of immobility through isolation that prevailed before the art of seafaring had advanced to the appropriate level.

Thus, the extreme poles of motion and rest have finally entered a state of well-balanced equilibrium. By contrast, the pre-civilised condition is characterised by a simultaneous climax of these two opposites. Motion and rest in unmitigated form are hallmarks of a situation in which human beings are incapable of imposing order on the world around them. Under these

[5] de Romilly (2012) 157–60; Parry (1972) 53–4; Loraux (2006) 365; Hunter (1982) 20–2, Allison (1989) 14.

[6] For the crucial role assigned to, and the specific contribution made by, financial resources in the *Archaeology* see the summarising remarks by Kallet (1993) 35.

conditions, they are pushed around by hostile forces, whether by other people or elemental nature. As Werner Jaeger observed, in the *Archaeology* Thucydides lets his basic principles emerge from a minimum of facts, thus presenting them with singular incisiveness.[7] Given this paradigmatic status of the *Archaeology*, its systematic concern with the interaction of motion and rest is bound to have bearing on Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War proper.

The Warring Parties and the Antithesis of Motion and Rest

The antithesis between motion and rest is also central to Thucydides' portrayal of the contrasting character of the two warring parties: the Athenians are generally equated with motion, and the Spartans with rest.[8] As the Corinthians observe in their speech at Sparta in Book 1, the Athenians and Spartans occupy opposite poles on the spectrum ranging from extreme motion to extreme rest (1.70.2–8): while the Athenians distinguish themselves through unbounded versatility and incessant motion, the Spartans are slow to act, dislike leaving their country, always wish to hold on to what they have, and are generally risk-averse. Thucydides himself notably endorses the Corinthians' observation on the characters of the two cities when he comments on the Spartans' failure to blockade the Piraeus after the revolt of Euboea (8.96.5).

Thucydides' report of the first official acts of war also reflects this antithesis (2.10–23): Thucydides brings the differences in temperament between the two cities sharply into focus through stark juxtaposition, highlighting at the outset what specific challenges the two cities identified with the extremes of motion and of rest will face in the Peloponnesian War.

When the troops sent out from the different Peloponnesian states have gathered at the Isthmus, the Spartan king Archidamus gives a speech to the Peloponnesian commanders in which he expresses his view that the Athenians, confronted with the sight of their own territory ravaged before their eyes (2.11.7), will leave the city to fight the Peloponnesians.

Given the issues raised by Archidamus (viz., military strategy as well as fighting morale), his speech functions most naturally as a direct prelude to military action. However, the expected advance into Athenian territory does not follow. Instead, Archidamus sends a messenger named Melesippus to Athens 'on the chance that the Athenians might perhaps be somewhat more

[7] Jaeger (1934) 485.

[8] On the antithesis between the Spartan and the Athenian character, see Gundert (1968) 115–32, Strauss (1964) 146–49 and 210–17, Edmunds (1975) 89–93, Rood (1998) 43–6, Luginbill (1999) 87–94. Cartledge and Debnar (2006) 561–2 mention indications that on Thucydides' view the antithesis might not be as absolute as the Corinthians represent it. Price (2001) 147–51 does not believe that Thucydides endorses the criticism of the Spartan character implied in the portrait provided by the Corinthians.

given to yielding when seeing them [i.e., the Peloponnesians] already on the march' (*εἴ τι ἄρα μᾶλλον ἐνδοῖεν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ὁρῶντες σφᾶς ἤδη ἐν ὁδῷ ὄντας*, 2.12.1). And yet, Melesippus is not even allowed to enter the city. Archidamus has to accept 'that the Athenians will not yet yield' (*ὅτι οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι οὐδέν πω ἐνδώσουσιν*, 2.12.4). The repetition of the verb *ἐνδίδωμι* draws attention to Archidamus' concern with the vague possibility of Athenian compliance, an issue that will become prominent in due course.

As a result of the failed embassy, Archidamus 'advanced towards [or, alternatively, into] their [sc. the Athenians'] territory' (*προυχώρει ἐς τὴν γῆν αὐτῶν*, 2.12.4). Jacqueline de Romilly has rightly drawn attention to the deceptive phrasing of this passage: although in the present circumstances it most naturally suggests that Archidamus advanced 'into' Athenian territory, this is not what actually happens. For the next five chapters (2.13–17), Thucydides moves his focus to Athens to recount Pericles' concurrent countermeasures. In the meantime, the reader is left hanging with the phrase *προυχώρει ἐς τὴν γῆν αὐτῶν*. When Thucydides returns to the Peloponnesian army, one's natural assumption is that the Peloponnesian troops have in the meantime entered Athenian territory. However, the reader learns that the Peloponnesians have in fact advanced no further than the border separating Athens from Boeotia (2.18.1–2). The preposition *εἰς* has set the reader on the wrong track: the Athenians have not advanced 'into', but merely 'in the direction of' Athenian territory. Thucydides' account thus conveys the impression of failed forward motion.

Another disappointment of expectations follows in due course: Archidamus decides to halt and besiege the fortified border town of Oenoe. The delay causes considerable frustration among the Peloponnesians since it gives the Athenians more time to move their property inside the city. As Thucydides reports, Archidamus' long delay at the Isthmus (*ἐπιμονή*) and the 'leisureliness' (*σχολαιότης*) of the march had already earned him criticism before the halt at Oenoe (2.18.3). In this way, Thucydides retrospectively draws explicit attention to the Peloponnesians' excessive slowness, which the arrangement of his narrative had already signaled.

In order to account for the motives for Archidamus' halt at Oenoe, Thucydides reports the following widely held view: he halted 'because, as it is said, he expected that the Athenians would yield somewhat as long as their land was still unravaged and would shrink from allowing it to be laid waste' (*προσδεχόμενος, ὡς λέγεται, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τῆς γῆς ἔτι ἀκεραίου οὔσης ἐνδώσειν τι καὶ κατοκνήσειν περιιδεῖν αὐτὴν τμηθεῖσαν*, 2.18.5).[9] Through

[9] As de Romilly (1962) 288–9, 293 and Hunter (1973) 15–16 have pointed out, this forecast, and the strategy based on it (i.e., the *hesitation* to ravage Athenian territory in the hope that the Athenians will yield), contradicts the expectation that Archidamus expresses in his earlier speech at the Isthmus (2.11.6–8) and that Thucydides will pick up in due course (2.20.2) when supplying the motive for Archidamus' subsequent halt at Acharnae (i.e., the *resolve* to ravage Athenian territory in the hope that the Athenians will be provoked to offer

specific echoes, this passage recalls the ineffectual delegation of Melesippus: each time, an expectation of Archidamus' (*προσδεχόμενος*, 2.18.5 ~ *εἴ τι ἄρα*, 2.12.1) is directed towards the possibility that the Athenians might 'yield' (*ἐνδώσειν*, 2.18.15 ~ *ἐνδοῖεν*, 2.12.1, *ἐνδώσουσιν*, 2.12.4). Drawing attention to the repetition of the forms of *ἐνδίδωμι*, de Romilly rightly observes that Archidamus seems to experience the same episode twice.[10]

Once it becomes clear even to Archidamus that the Athenians are unwilling to comply, 'then at long last they set out from there … and invaded Attica' (*οὕτω δὴ ὁρμήσαντες ἀπ' αὐτῆς … ἐσέβαλον ἐς τὴν Ἀττικήν*, 2.19.1). As de Romilly has observed, the phrase *οὕτω δή* is another echo of the earlier delay at the Isthmus: Thucydides had used the same phrase to segue from the failed mission of Melesippus into the Peloponnesians' marching off from the Isthmus (*οὕτω δή*, 2.12.4).[11] The impression of Archidamus' newfound decisiveness is immediately undermined by the flashback to the previous episode, with its frustrated expectation that, now at last, determined action would follow.

The scepticism aroused in the reader immediately proves justified. The first phrase used by Thucydides to describe the Peloponnesians' advance into Attica is *καὶ καθεζόμενοι*—'and they halted' (2.19.2). Their motive is to ravage (*ἔτεμνον*, 2.19.2) Eleusis and the Thriasian plain. Next, they proceed to march against Acharnae, but another halt immediately follows: 'and halting at this place they pitched camp, and they stayed there for a long time and kept on ravaging the country' (*καὶ καθεζόμενοι ἐς αὐτὸ στρατόπεδόν τε ἐποιήσαντο χρόνον τε πολὺν ἐμμείναντες ἔτεμνον*, 2.19.2). The repetition of the phrase *καὶ καθεζόμενοι* as well as the verb *ἔτεμνον*, both of which have already appeared in connection with the stop at Eleusis and the Thriasian plain, suggests that, yet again, Archidamus replays an earlier episode.

Archidamus' curious procedure is meant to baffle the reader. Otherwise, Thucydides would not have felt the need to supply the following explanation: 'It is said that it was with the following idea in mind that Archidamus remained in the area of Acharnae, with his troops drawn up with a view to battle, and did not descend into the plain during this invasion …' (*γνώμῃ δὲ τοιᾷδε λέγεται τὸν Ἀρχίδαμον περί τε τὰς Ἀχαρνὰς ὡς ἐς μάχην ταξάμενον μεῖναι καὶ ἐς τὸ πεδίον ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἐσβολῇ οὐ καταβῆναι*, 2.20.1). The chief

battle). Unlike de Romilly and Hunter, I take the view that the ascription of contradictory motives contributes to Archidamus' characterisation: Thucydides' goal is to dramatise the wavering course of a man who is forced to conduct a war that he considers entirely mistaken (1.80.1–2, 81.6).

[10] de Romilly (1962) 291. De Romilly goes on to observe that, despite the resemblance, the two passages also mark a progression (292), but, as I show in what follows, Thucydides' goal is to bring home to the reader that Archidamus is entrapped in a circle.

[11] de Romilly (1962) 294. For *οὕτω δή* (meaning 'then at length' and introducing an apodosis), see LSJ s. v. *οὕτως* A.I.7, Classen–Steup (1963) IV.67 (*ad* 4.30.3, line 7); Fantasia (2003) *ad* 2.19.1 ('per enfatizzare la proposizione principale').

reason for the halt is Archidamus' expectation that the Athenians might meet the Peloponnesian army in battle at Acharnae (2.20.2). However, Archidamus' determination to meet an Athenian sally is not resolute. While halting at Acharnae, Archidamus also considers another possibility: 'And even if the Athenians should not come out during this invasion, it would be less intimidating, on a future occasion thereafter, to ravage the plain and to proceed up to the city itself' (*εἴ τε καὶ μὴ ἐπεξέλθοιεν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἐσβολῇ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀδεέστερον ἤδη ἐς τὸ ὕστερον τό τε πεδίον τεμεῖν καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν πόλιν χωρήσεσθαι*, 2.20.4). Raids on Athenian territory will be less intimidating in the future because, in Archidamus' view, the Acharnians will no longer be willing to fight, and the Athenian populace will be split over the issue of a sortie (2.20.4). Two conclusions follow: first, Archidamus knows that, if he were to push ahead as far as the city's walls, the Athenians would be even more likely to come out, but he fears this possibility; second, Archidamus welcomes a scenario in which the Athenians, with their divided opinions, will be less inclined to face the Spartans in open battle in the future. Given that these considerations are on Archidamus' mind, his willingness to provoke an open battle turns out to be highly dubious.

Given these ambiguities of Archidamus' intentions, the use of the particle *ὡς* in the phrase *ὡς ἐς μάχην* at 2.20.1 deserves attention. According to Classen–Steup, *ὡς* combined with prepositions such as *ἐπί* or *ἐς* usually signifies 'intention' or 'purpose' in Thucydides.[12] Yet at least when used with participles, *ὡς* can mean 'as if'.[13] It is not entirely clear whether in the present passage *ὡς ἐς μάχην* means 'having drawn up his troops *in order to do* battle' or 'having drawn up his troops *as if* for battle'. It is striking that, in the passage in question, the addition of *ὡς* is entirely optional. If Thucydides had omitted the word, the phrase would have been free from any ambiguity. By inserting the particle, Thucydides subtly accentuates the indecisiveness that afflicts Archidamus. By all appearances Archidamus himself is not entirely certain about his own motives: does he really intend to do battle, or does he merely want to act as if?

As de Romilly has pointed out, the phrase 'it is said' (*λέγεται*) that Thucydides uses in alleging the motive for Archidamus' halt recalls the same words from the episode of the delay at Oenoe, where it refers to Archidamus' motives for his failure to invade directly (*ὡς λέγεται*, 2.18.5).[14] What is more, both the report of the stop at Acharnae and the associated story of Oenoe

[12] Classen–Steup (1963) I.149 (*ad* 1.48.1, line 2): 'Absicht, Vorsatz'.

[13] LSJ s.v. *ὡς* C.I.1.

[14] de Romilly (1962) 294. In a study of Thucydides' source citations, Gray (2011) 79–82 has observed that Thucydides tends to use this formula in order to highlight Spartan indecision and torpidity as a cause of missed opportunities. Westlake (1977) 352 draws attention to the repeated use of *λέγεται* on 'occasions when Spartan leadership was or might have been subjected to criticism on the ground that it was insufficiently venturesome or determined'.

abound in terms that signify waiting and standstill.[15] In addition, both at Acharnae and at Oenoe, Archidamus' actions ensue from a distinct 'expectation' about Athenian behaviour (Acharnae: *ἤλπιζεν*, 20.2; *ἐδόκουν*, 20.4 ~ Oenoe: *προσδεχόμενος*, 18.5). Finally, on both occasions the expectation has to do with the Athenians' unwillingness to 'allow their land to be ravaged' (Acharnae: *τὴν γῆν οὐκ ἂν περιιδεῖν τμηθῆναι*, 20.2; *οὐ περιόψεσθαι … τὰ σφέτερα διαφθαρέντα*, 20.4 ~ Oenoe: *περιιδεῖν αὐτὴν* [sc. *τὴν γῆν*] *τμηθεῖσαν*, 18.5).[16]

In these various ways, specific echoes link the halt at Acharnae with each of Archidamus' preceding two stops: that at Oenoe and the other at Eleusis and in the Thriasian plain. Both of the preceding pauses did not have the intended effect. Further echoes have already connected the stop at Oenoe with the lingering at the Isthmus. The structure of repetition directs the reader ever further backwards. The echoes arouse the expectation that the strategy at Acharnae will likewise come to nothing.

The pillaging of Acharnae, sixty stadia (i.e. about 11 km) distant from Attica, brings the Athenians to the brink of a breakout. As several scholars have observed, Thucydides' report of the Athenian reaction to the devastation of Acharnae is connected via another wealth of verbal parallels with Archidamus' speech at the Isthmus and with Thucydides' own description of Archidamus' motives for the halt at Acharnae.[17] On the interpretation of both de Romilly and Hunter, the main function of the parallels is to show that Archidamus' anticipation of the Athenian reaction has been correct.[18] However, this facet must not obscure the fact that, at the end of the day, the Athenians again do not act as Archidamus expects: due to Pericles' intervention, they do not face the Peloponnesians in open battle. In this connection, it is important to realise that there is an ironic twist to Archidamus' narrow failure. The Athenians' agitation is not least due to the intense visual impact of the destruction of their territory (*ὁρῶσιν*, 2.11.6; *ἐν τοῖς ὄμμασι*, 11.7; *ἐν τῷ παραυτίκα ὁρᾶν*, 11.7; *ἐν τῷ ἐμφανεῖ*, 21.2; *ὃ οὔπω ἑοράκεσαν*, 21.2). How much more promising would it have been, then, to

[15] Oenoe (pointed out by de Romilly (1962) 292): *ἐνδιέτριψαν χρόνον*, 18.2; *ἐπιμονή*, 18.3; *σχολαιότης*, 18.3; *ἐπίσχεσις*, 18.3; *μέλλησιν*, 18.4; *ἐν τῇ καθέδρᾳ*, 18.5; Acharnae: *καθεζόμενοι*, 19.2; *χρόνον … πολὺν ἐμμείναντες*, 19.2; *μεῖναι*, 20.1; *καθήμενος*, 20.3.

[16] According to de Romilly (1962) 293, Thucydides wanted to impress the difference between the two episodes on the reader: whereas at Oenoe Archidamus hopes that the Athenians will 'yield' (*ἐνδώσειν*, 2.18.5), at Acharnae he expects that they will come out to fight (*ἐπεξελθεῖν*, 20.2; *ὁρμήσειν*, 20.4). However, *pace* de Romilly, the episodes are in fact connected by a deeper parallelism: on each occasion, Archidamus stops his advance due to the expectation that the Athenians will act in a specific way, and each time this forecast will be frustrated. What is more, as has been pointed out above, Archidamus' expectation of an Athenian sally is less straightforward than de Romilly thinks.

[17] de Romilly (1962) 296–7; Hunter (1973) 12–13 and 17; Rusten (1989) *ad* 2.11.7.

[18] de Romilly (1962) 298; Hunter (1973) 20.

lead the Spartan army directly before the walls of the city! This interpretation receives support from Pericles' slight deviation from his doctrine of military non-engagement with the invading Peloponnesian army: he sends out horsemen to prevent scattered Spartan contingents from ravaging 'the fields near the city' (*τοὺς ἀγροὺς τοὺς ἐγγὺς τῆς πόλεως*, 2.22.2). The most plausible explanation is that the Athenians would have felt an even greater temptation to offer battle if they saw the Peloponnesians devastate the immediate environs of the city itself.

On a later occasion in the *History*, Thucydides is unmistakably clear that it is imperative for an invading army to make the most of the factors of speed and surprise. During the critical stage of the Sicilian Expedition, Demosthenes arrives with his reinforcements at Syracuse. Considering swiftness to be essential (*νομίσας οὐχ οἷόν τε εἶναι διατρίβειν*, 7.42.3), he wants to avoid reiterating the mistake of his predecessor Nicias, who squandered his chances by failing to attack immediately (7.42.3). Upon arrival, speedy action (*ὅτι τάχος*, 7.42.3) is thus Demosthenes' highest priority. As Nicias' failure to strike fast shows, the attacked city has the chance to regain its composure when the initial moment of shock has subsided. Archidamus allows the Athenians to do just that.

The upshot of this account is that Thucydides does not just emphasise the slowness of the Peloponnesians' advance. The repetitive circle (suggested by the string of echoes) highlights their incapacity for genuine motion, i.e., for action that would effect a substantive change in the situation. Even when the Spartans are on the attack, their chief concern is with delay, misdirected anticipation, and repetition. The reader is left with the impression that the height of Spartan motion is still effective standstill.

When Thucydides turns to reporting the Athenians' reaction to the Spartan invasion, it becomes clear that the Athenians find it unbearably difficult to sit still and wait a situation out. The Periclean war strategy presupposes that the Athenians accept their immobility in their Attic home territory, while simultaneously retaining a maximum degree of mobility at sea (1.143.4–5; 2.13.2, 65.7). On Pericles' view, Athens will be victorious provided that she maintains this balance between motion and rest. But already at the sight of the first Spartan invasion of Attica, the Athenians, overtaken by an extreme impulse towards motion, become frantic to break out (2.21.2).

In marked contrast to the steadiness of repetition that marks the narrative of the Spartan advance, the Athenians' reaction is a bustle of different reactions that go off in all sorts of directions. References to 'gatherings' (*κατὰ ξυστάσεις*, 2.21.3) and 'disputation' (*ἐν πολλῇ ἔριδι*, 2.21.3) suggest a back-and-forth of different opinions among the Athenians. A crisp *μέν*–*δέ* antithesis, underscored by strict formal parallelism, highlights the clash between sharply opposite viewpoints: 'some urging to go out, some others not allowing it' (*οἱ μὲν κελεύοντες ἐπεξιέναι, οἱ δέ τινες οὐκ ἐῶντες*, 2.21.3).

As the verb forms *ὥρμητο* and *ἐνῆγον* (2.21.3) indicate, eagerness and mutual incitement are widespread. The verbs show that the prevailing mood is a foretaste of the still more excited atmosphere that will prevail at Athens on the eve of the Sicilian Expedition. On this subsequent occasion, Thucydides will draw on the same verbs to capture the seething atmosphere at Athens (*ἐνῆγε προθυμότατα*, 6.15.2; *ὥρμηντο*, 6.6.1, *ἐξώρμησαν*, 6.2, *ὥρμησθε*, 9.3, *ὥρμηντο*, 19.1, *ὡρμημένους*, 20.1, *ὥρμηντο*, 24.2). Thucydides also mentions that the young men in particular were eager for the sortie (*μάλιστα τῇ νεότητι*, 2.21.2) because they, unlike the elders who witnessed the Persian Wars, had never experienced this shocking sight (2.21.2). At Athens, the naturally more hot-headed and mercurial young men tend to take precedence over the elders in devising action. This also anticipates the heavy stress on the young men's agitation for the Sicilian Expedition (6.12.2 (two references), 17.1, 18.6 (three references), 24.3): on the latter occasion, Nicias even worries that the eagerness of the young men will cow the more sceptical elders into compliance (6.13.1). A vein of hysteria is added by the reference to 'oracle-mongers' who 'chanted oracles of all sorts' (*χρησμολόγοι τε ᾖδον χρησμοὺς παντοίους*, 2.21.3). This aspect also looks forward to the situation on the eve of the Sicilian Expedition: 'oracle-mongers' and 'prophets' took a leading role in inducing the hope in the Athenians that they would conquer Sicily (*τοῖς χρησμολόγοις τε καὶ μάντεσι καὶ ὁπόσοι τι τότε αὐτοὺς θειάσαντες ἐπήλπισαν ὡς λήψονται Σικελίαν*, 8.1.1). The impression of Athens as a buzzing hothouse of widely different opinions is summed up by the phrase 'in every regard the city was in a state of irritation' (*παντί τε τρόπῳ ἀνηρέθιστο ἡ πόλις*, 2.21.3). Whereas the extended account of the march of the Peloponnesian army induces the impression of immobility and repetition, the much shorter flashlight report of the situation at Athens depicts a city brimming with motion that strains in all sorts of different directions.

Through this juxtaposition, Thucydides' account of the first official operations of the Peloponnesian War highlights the vast dichotomy between Athens and Sparta. Both can be identified with an extreme value of either motion or rest. In the new era brought by the Peloponnesian War, these extremes will get each side into trouble: whereas the principle of rest makes the Spartans incapable of posing a challenge to the Athenians, the Athenians would almost certainly face defeat if at the sight of the Spartan army they gave in to their impulse for motion.

Coincidence of Motion and Standstill (I): The Spartan Nadir at Pylos

While the opponents in the War represent, between themselves, the antitheses of motion and rest, they both experience on the occasion of their most

devastating defeats, suffered by the Spartans at Pylos and by the Athenians in Sicily, the simultaneity of swirling agitation and numbing deadlock.

Thucydides' report on the Spartan reaction to the defeat at Pylos merits particular attention. Experiencing a total loss of confidence, the Spartans lose faith in the possibility of any effective action: 'they came to believe that they would fail in whatever they might set in motion' (*πᾶν ὅτι κινήσειαν ᾤοντο ἁμαρτήσεσθαι*, 4.55.4). While the War is identified by Thucydides as the prime mover, the *κίνησις μεγίστη* (1.1.2), the Spartans have lost faith in their ability to initiate any expedient motion at all.

The Spartans' loss of faith in the possibility of motion derives, in turn, from their experience of a world that swirls around them: 'The vagaries of fortune, which had happened to them in great numbers and within a short period and contrary to expectation, induced the greatest consternation in them' (*τὰ τῆς τύχης πολλὰ καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ξυμβάντα παρὰ λόγον αὐτοῖς ἔκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε*, 4.55.3). In being exposed to sudden and extreme shifts of fortune, the Spartans experience nothing less than the supreme *κίνησις*. Yet, as the following quotation shows, this extreme of motion has its flipside in the vanishing of purposeful human mobility (4.55.1):

> *γεγενημένου μὲν τοῦ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ πάθους ἀνελπίστου καὶ μεγάλου*, Πύλου δὲ *ἐχομένης καὶ* Κυθήρων *καὶ πανταχόθεν σφᾶς περιεστῶτος πολέμου ταχέος καὶ ἀπροφυλάκτου*.
>
> The misfortune that had happened to them on the island was unexpected and great, with Pylos and Cythera occupied and with a war, which was quick and took unforeseeable turns, encompassing them from every side.

Several features of this passage draw attention to the Spartans' passivity and their confinement through circumstances: the perfect forms of *γίγνομαι* and *περιίσταμαι*, verbs that taken by themselves would already suggest human passivity, underline the static, situational character of the Spartans' experience; the spatial adverb *πανταχόθεν* along with the prefix *περι-* in *περιεστῶτος* suggest the Spartans' encompassment from all sides; and the noun *πάθος* strongly underlines the passivity of the Spartans in all this. While emphasising the static and passive dimension, Thucydides simultaneously captures the Spartans' entanglement in a vortex of motion: due to its quickness and unpredictability (*πολέμου ταχέος καὶ ἀπροφυλάκτου*), the War resembles a formidable super-agent that encircles the Spartans (*περι-εστῶτος*). Through the dazzling turns of events, the Spartans undergo an experience marked by the simultaneity of motion and standstill: while the world around them moves with breath-taking speed, they themselves are trapped in a deadlock. In all this, the swiftly moving opponent is not identified, as one might expect, with the Athenians, but with the War itself.

The Abatement of Athenian Motion: Demosthenes' Trip to Sicily

It is remarkable that the Athenians, the paragon of motion in Thucydides, eventually succumb to the same state of immobility that befalls the Spartans in the wake of Pylos amidst a rapidly moving hostile environment. When approaching their nadir in Sicily, the Athenians are increasingly affected by uncharacteristic inertia. This theme becomes prominent from the moment when the Athenians respond to Nicias' lengthy letter in which he describes the critical situation faced by the expeditionary force in Sicily. Nicias writes that, regardless of what the Athenians decide to do, they should 'do it at the beginning of spring immediately and without any delay' (*ἅμα τῷ ἦρι εὐθὺς καὶ μὴ ἐς ἀναβολὰς πράσσετε*, 7.15.2). At first, it seems as if the Athenians comply with Nicias' appeal: after they have sent out Eurymedon with ten ships to Sicily immediately after the arrival of the report from Sicily (7.16.2), Demosthenes, who has gathered troops among the Athenian allies during the winter, departs with a large fleet for Sicily in early spring (7.20.1–2). The reference to the phrase 'immediately when spring began' (*τοῦ ἦρος εὐθὺς ἀρχομένου*, 7.20.1) picks up Nicias' request that the Athenians send reinforcements 'immediately at the beginning of spring' (*ἅμα τῷ ἦρι εὐθύς*, 7.15.2). The echo raises the expectation that the Athenians have heeded Nicias' urgent appeal that they should 'not make postponements' (*μὴ ἐς ἀναβολὰς πράσσετε*, 7.15.2).

However, contrary to this initial impression, Demosthenes does not make directly for Sicily, but has received instructions to support, before crossing the Ionian Sea for Sicily, another Athenian general, a man named Charicles, who has been entrusted with operations along the coast of Laconia (7.20.2). Even this step does not follow immediately, but for the time being Demosthenes stops at Aegina, where he 'kept on waiting in case any part of his armament had been left behind, and also for Charicles to receive the Argives [viz. hoplites to support Charicles' force]' (*τοῦ στρατεύματός τε εἴ τι ὑπελέλειπτο περιέμενε καὶ τὸν Χαρικλέα τοὺς Ἀργείους παραλαβεῖν*, 7.20.3).

With Demosthenes' voyage thus suspended, Thucydides turns his attention back to Sicily where Gylippus, the commander sent out by Sparta, arrives with the considerable reinforcements that he has gathered among the cities of Sicily over the winter (*ἄγων ἀπὸ τῶν πόλεων ὧν ἔπεισε στρατιὰν ὅσην ἑκασταχόθεν πλείστην ἐδύνατο*, 7.21.1). Given the different geographical scale, it is natural enough that Gylippus arrives faster than Demosthenes with his reinforcements. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that by the beginning of spring Gylippus' mission has been successfully accomplished while Demosthenes does not even have his forces gathered. Without much ado, the Syracusans, eager to make use of the advantage afforded by the fresh troops, attack and capture the forts at Plemmyrium, an event that

Thucydides calls the worst setback suffered by the Athenians in Sicily thus far (7.24.3).

After the conclusion of the account of this military episode, the narrative returns to Demosthenes, who is only now finally setting out from Aegina to meet Charicles (7.26.1). Thucydides then gives a detailed report of the places ravaged by Charicles and Demosthenes in Laconia and of the establishment of a fort that they build opposite Cythera (7.26.2). After these operations, the reader, aware of the speedy and successful accomplishment of Gylippus' mission, expects that Demosthenes will now finally set out to bring the urgently needed reinforcements. Instead, one is surprised to learn, again without the benefit of any previous indication, that Demosthenes now sails to Corcyra in order to receive yet further reinforcements (7.26.3). Thucydides then presents two events that are unconnected to the story of Demosthenes' voyage: first, the report of the damage done to Athens by the Spartan fort at Deceleia (7.27.3–28), and, second, the episode of Thracian mercenaries who arrive too late at Athens to join Demosthenes and inflict carnage at Mycalessus on their way back to Thrace (7.27.1–2, 29–30). Through the insertion of these reports, Thucydides stretches narrative time, just as he did with the account of the capture of Plemmyrium. When he turns his attention back to the voyage of the relief mission, Demosthenes has still not arrived at Corcyra, let alone Sicily, but stops at various other places to collect additional troops. Thucydides again makes a point of enumerating each place where Demosthenes stops,[19] thereby extending his report of Demosthenes' trip to maximum length.

While Demosthenes is occupied with these matters, he meets Eurymedon, who is on his way back from Sicily and informs him of the capture of Plemmyrium (7.31.3). This incident prods the reader to wonder whether Demosthenes will speed up at long last, but this expectation is instantaneously disappointed with the arrival of Conon, the Athenian commander at Naupactus, who asks for support against a superior force of Corinthian ships (7.31.4). Demosthenes and Eurymedon give him ten ships: and not just any, but the best sailors of their fleet (7.31.5). Thereafter, Eurymedon sails to Corcyra to levy troops and Demosthenes continues to gather men in Acarnania (7.31.5).

After the troops are finally gathered, the Athenians make the journey west across the Ionian Sea (7.33.3). Yet, even now, they do not head directly to Syracuse, but continue to pause at various places in the hope that they will gather further reinforcements: these are the Iapygian Islands known as Choerades (7.33.4), Metapontum (33.5), and Thuria (33.5–6). Then, they decide to hold a review of their armament 'in case anyone had been left behind' (*εἴ τις ὑπελέλειπτο*, 7.33.6). Thereupon, the fleet and the land forces are split, whereby, as H. D. Westlake remarks, further delay must have been

[19] 7.31.1: Pheia in Elis; 31.2: Zacynthus and Cephallenia; 31.2: contact with Messenians at Naupactus; 31.2: ports of Alyzeia and Anactorium in Acarnania.

caused.[20] Thucydides enumerates the various places which the land forces touch on during their march (7.35.1–2). This report gives the historian a chance to mention the refusal of the people of Croton to let the Athenians traverse their territory, necessitating a detour (7.35.2). Here as before, Thucydides' meticulous enumeration of the various places stretches narrative time, thus inducing the impression of an excessively slow forward motion.

Due to his enterprising spirit and resoluteness in action, Demosthenes stands out among the Athenian generals that appear in Thucydides. As Connor observes, it is easy to guess why the Athenians have selected Demosthenes for the reinforcement mission for Sicily: 'We have seen him in action often enough to predict his strategy. In particular his Ambraciot campaign (3.102.3–114.4) and his brilliant success at Pylos (4.29–40) have shown him to be a commander who believes in swift and decisive action often enough to predict his strategy'.[21] Thus, Demosthenes ought to be exactly the right man for the tasks at hand, bringing speedy relief to the Athenians at Syracuse and boosting their morale. Despite this initial expectation, however, Demosthenes' journey, with its constant interruptions, rather recalls Archidamus' indecisive invasion of Athenian territory.

The effect is still further heightened by the implicit juxtaposition of Demosthenes' trip with the journey of the original armada under the lead of Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lamachus. As Westlake points out, 'the voyage of Demosthenes to Sicily is described with a much greater wealth of detail than that of Nicias and his colleagues two years earlier'.[22] Westlake goes on to observe that Thucydides says nothing about the motives inducing Demosthenes to make the various stops. Westlake considers this simply to be due to Thucydides' lack of information,[23] but, while this may be so, Thucydides' silence inevitably has a specific narrative effect: while Nicias has stressed that speed is of the essence, Demosthenes' slowness, which lacks obvious justification, appears negligent and out of character, both for Athenians in general and for Demosthenes in particular. Due to the lack of explanation, the reader is left with the impression of a mysterious event, as if the Athenians have been smitten with unaccountable torpidity. As several scholars have pointed out, a central theme of the Sicilian narrative is the Athenians' puzzling loss of their characteristic speed and zest for action, qualities that progressively align themselves with the Syracusans, just as if

[20] Westlake (1968) 266–7.

[21] Connor (1984) 191. A similar assessment is also made by Westlake (1968) 97, 264. Strauss (1964) 197 memorably calls Demosthenes 'the most lovable of Thucydides' characters'.

[22] Westlake (1968) 264.

[23] Westlake (1968) 264.

they were independent forces with a will of their own.[24] By way of an ironic twist, that Athenian general who, unlike Nicias, has nothing in common with the Spartan character[25] succumbs to the ineffective type of motion, previously exemplified by Archidamus' raid of Athenian territory, that is constantly reduced to standstill.

Demosthenes' trip to Sicily conveys the impression of a man who tries to do everything at once: turn the scale at Syracuse, gather as many troops as possible, put pressure on the Spartans at Laconia, and reinforce the Athenians at Naupactus. The compulsive tendency to let no opportunity go unexploited may well be a sign of Athenian *πολυπραγμοσύνη*. According to Ehrenberg, *πολυπραγμοσύνη* refers to 'the characterisation of a dynamic policy which is in complete contrast to the static conservatism of Sparta'.[26] One might also say that the term captures the idea of fully unleashed motion. However, on the occasion of Demosthenes' mission, this bent for hyper-activity ironically leads to circuitousness and delay: seizing every opportunity, Demosthenes in fact loses sight of what is most vital. A frantic striving that goes in every direction results in an effective standstill. In this way, Demosthenes' journey encapsulates the paradoxical coincidence of extreme motion and extreme rest.

Coincidence of Motion and Standstill (II): The Athenian Nadir in Sicily

Once Demosthenes arrives with his reinforcements, the Athenians momentarily overcome their torpor and briefly regain their initiative thanks to the zeal of Demosthenes (7.42.4). Yet, when the first major enterprise launched by Demosthenes, the attempted reconquest of the heights of Epipolae, fails, the foregoing situation is restored. In fact, the generals realise 'that the soldiers were troubled by their abiding on the spot' (*τοὺς στρατιώτας ἀχθομένους τῇ μονῇ*, 7.47.1). The noun *ἡ μονή* suggests fixation to a specific place: the Athenian soldiers are vexed by the immobility that has befallen them.[27] Nevertheless, at this point the Athenians still have it in their power to undertake an orderly retreat. Demosthenes, who appears to have rediscovered his penchant for energetic action since his arrival, forcefully argues for this option (7.47.3–4). However, Nicias, with his usual indirectness and hesitancy, opposes Demosthenes' plan (7.48). Trying to overcome Nicias' opposition, Demosthenes highlights that the Athenians have taken up position in a 'narrow space' (*στενοχωρίᾳ*, 7.49.2), a disadvantage for the

[24] Strauss (1964) 206; Rawlings (1981) 149–50; Connor (1984) 191; Kallet (2001) 160; Taylor (2010) 168.

[25] Strauss (1964) 219 calls Demosthenes a 'thoroughly un-Spartan man'.

[26] Ehrenberg (1947) 47.

[27] Notice that Aristotle uses the plural of *μονή* as an antonym of *κινήσεις* at *de An.* 408b18.

Athenian fleet. The phrase highlights how close the Athenians have come to a state of total immobility. Trying to counter this threat of complete deadlock, Demosthenes urges Nicias to set the army in motion again: 'he said that he was not at all in favour of remaining any longer in the same place, but that they should depart now as quickly as possible and not hesitate any longer' (*οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ οἱ ἔφη ἀρέσκειν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἔτι μένειν, ἀλλ' ὅτι τάχιστα ἤδη ἐξανίστασθαι καὶ μὴ μέλλειν*, 7.49.3). Yet, due to Nicias' opposition, 'hesitation and delay occurred' (*ἀντιλέγοντος δὲ τοῦ Νικίου ὄκνος τις καὶ μέλλησις ἐνεγένετο*, 7.49.4). Thucydides' concluding remark on this episode underlines the immobility that has befallen the Athenians: 'The Athenians lingered on in the same way and continued to remain at the spot' (*καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἀθηναῖοι τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ διεμέλλησάν τε καὶ κατὰ χώραν ἔμενον*, 7.49.4).

When, soon after the report of the debate among the generals, further reinforcements arrive for the Syracusans (7.50.1), Nicias finally gives up his opposition, and the Athenians prepare for retreat. Yet, in this moment, an eclipse of the moon occurs, leading to a complete reversal of the situation. The soldiers are now urging the generals 'to sit tight' (*ἐπισχεῖν*, 7.50.4), and for Nicias the idea of a retreat is, for the time being, out of the question: 'he refused even to deliberate any longer how a move might be made before they had waited thrice nine days, as the soothsayers had ordered' (*οὐδ' ἂν διαβουλεύσασθαι ἔτι ἔφη πρίν, ὡς οἱ μάντεις ἐξηγοῦντο, τρὶς ἐννέα ἡμέρας μεῖναι, ὅπως ἂν πρότερον κινηθείη*, 7.50.4). It is striking that, just as the Spartans lose confidence in any kind of 'motion' in the wake of Pylos (4.55.4 *κινήσειαν*), so the Athenians undergo the same experience in Sicily (*κινηθείη*). When the War, 'the greatest *κίνησις*', shakes either of the two warring parties to the core, they simultaneously forsake the power of motion and numbing standstill befalls them. Thucydides sums up the episode: 'And so, because of this, there was more abiding for the Athenians, as they delayed' (*καὶ τοῖς μὲν Ἀθηναίοις μελλήσασι διὰ τοῦτο ἡ μονὴ ἐγεγένητο*, 7.50.4). Due to the perfective aspect of *ἐγεγένητο*, the sway of the situation over the Athenians becomes apparent. The quasi-passive construction, literally 'there was abiding' instead of 'they abided', likewise brings out the inability to initiate self-propelled motion. From this missed opportunity, the last moment at which an orderly, voluntary retreat would have been possible, the Athenians' fortunes in Sicily decline steadily until their fate is sealed and the whole army is wiped out. Thus, the Athenians' immobility, which represents a leitmotif of the Sicilian narrative, is largely responsible for the unparalleled disaster with which the expedition ends.

Several passages referring to the Athenians' experience in Sicily indicate that the Athenians, while undergoing the paralysis of immobility, are engulfed in rapidly moving circumstances. Before the decisive battle in the Great Harbour, Gylippus, the Spartan commander of the Syracusan forces, describes the situation of the Athenians as follows (7.67.4):

> *ὑπερβαλλόντων γὰρ αὐτοῖς τῶν κακῶν καὶ βιαζόμενοι ὑπὸ τῆς παρούσης ἀπορίας ἐς ἀπόνοιαν καθεστήκασιν … ἀποκινδυνεῦσαι οὕτως ὅπως δύνανται …, ὡς τῶν γε παρόντων οὐκ ἂν πράξαντες χεῖρον.*
>
> As the misfortunes confronting them exceed all bounds and they are under the compulsion of their present perplexity, they have resorted to the desperate resolve … of making a hazardous venture, in whatever way they can, … in the belief that they could not possibly fare worse than in their present circumstances.

With *καθεστήκασιν*, the passage features another perfect form of a compound of *ἵσταμαι*. The participial phrases with *ὑπερβάλλω* and *βιάζομαι*, each with an impersonal agent (*τῶν κακῶν* and *τῆς … ἀπορίας*) indicate that it is the situation confronting them, rather than any personal agents, that puts pressure on the Athenians. The nominalised forms of *πάρειμι* ('to be present') reflect the spatial dimension of circumstances that impose themselves on people, a burden also felt, as noted above, by the Spartans in their dejection after Pylos (4.55.1). The word *ἀπορία*, with its literal meaning of 'no way out', has the same effect. At the same time, the verb *ὑπερβάλλω*, which literally means 'to overshoot' and is usually rendered as 'to exceed all bounds' in translations of the present passage,[28] directs attention to the aspect of dynamic motion in the circumstances confronting the Athenians. Since the subject of *ὑπερβάλλω* is the substantivised neuter *τῶν κακῶν*, the dynamic opponent is not, just as in the case of the Spartans after Pylos, a human agent, but the terrors in which the War manifests itself.

The passage recalls in both style and content a similar phrase from Thucydides' account of the plague at Athens: 'For, as the evil overpowered them with exceeding severity, human beings, since they did not know what was to become of them, turned towards neglect of both sacred and profane alike' (*ὑπερβιαζομένου γὰρ τοῦ κακοῦ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, οὐκ ἔχοντες ὅτι γένωνται, ἐς ὀλιγωρίαν ἐτράποντο καὶ ἱερῶν καὶ ὁσίων ὁμοίως*, 2.52.3). In *ὑπερβιαζομένου γὰρ τοῦ κακοῦ* from the plague passage, the two participial phrases from Gylippus' speech (*ὑπερβαλλόντων … τῶν κακῶν καὶ βιαζόμενοι …*) have coalesced. In each passage, the evils (expressed through a substantivised form of *κακόν*) in which the War manifests itself appear at the head of the sentence as the subject of a genitive absolute. Adam Parry has cited the passage about the effects of the plague among various phrases that provide evidence for the tendency that '[t]he Plague itself is likely to appear in active verbs at the beginning of the sentence'.[29] As Parry also observes, '[t]he Plague … is essentially part of the war', and '[m]uch of the language of the Plague, in

[28] LSJ s. v. A.II.3.a.

[29] Parry (1969) 115.

fact, suggests that it comes as a military attack'.[30] Just as the plague puts on the shape of a formidable enemy which, as suggested by its position at the opening of the sentence, overpowers the population of Athens, so the Athenians are exposed to the same experience in Sicily: the force of disasters is best described as a superhuman attacker, who strikes with irresistible force.[31] The destructive motion of the War has been released in full force.

It is significant that, just before stressing the Athenians' experience of a deadlock, Gylippus describes them as frantically moving about: 'How will they not destroy their ships and all be in confusion among themselves because they move about in a way that does not suit them?' (*πῶς οὐ σφαλοῦσί τε τὰς ναῦς καὶ ἐν σφίσιν αὐτοῖς πάντες οὐκ ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῶν τρόπῳ κινούμενοι ταράξονται*, 7.67.2). This very experience of uncontrolled motion will reduce the Athenians to a state of blockage, and so the extremes of motion and rest come to coincide again.

The Ascendancy of Pure *Φύσις* in the Peloponnesian War

Once fully unleashed, the Peloponnesian War reintroduces the situation that Thucydides described in the Archaeology: the exposure of human beings to uncontrolled motion, which simultaneously reduces them to immobility. The slow and laborious process of civilisation appears to have been undone, and the Greeks suffer a relapse into the pre-civilised state described in the Archaeology. In his account of Corcyrean *stasis*, Thucydides observes that the evils descending upon the Greek world during *stasis* have their origin in 'the nature of human beings' (*ἡ … φύσις ἀνθρώπων*, 3.82.2) and are destined to recur, as long as this nature stays what it is. In several other central passages, Thucydidean speakers likewise single out *φύσις* as the power ultimately responsible for human behaviour (e.g., 1.76.3; 3.45.7; 5.105.2).

In the excursus on *stasis* at Corcyra, Thucydides provides a distilled account of what the relapse from civilisation into the raw state of nature looks like. The situation that prevails under *stasis* reflects the simultaneity of extreme motion and extreme rest. Thucydides remarks that, during *stasis*, 'Greekness in its entirety was, one might say, stirred' (*πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη*, 3.82.1). Scholars have pointed out that this comment recalls the earlier designation of the Peloponnesian War as 'the greatest commotion' (*κίνησις μεγίστη*, 1.1.2).[32] The echo encapsulates the relationship between *stasis* and the Peloponnesian War: as Colin Macleod and Nicole Loraux have observed, they are intimately related and mutually reflect each

[30] Parry (1969) 116.

[31] In addition to the parallel discussed here, Thucydides uses several other echoes to forge a link between the disaster in Sicily and the description of the plague: see Joho (2017) 38–43.

[32] Connor (1984) 103; Loraux (2009) 265; Hornblower (1991) 479.

other.[33] It turns out that if a city is in the grips of revolution, the forces of motion are fully unleashed. This, however, is only half the story.

As Loraux has pointed out, the Greek word usually translated as 'revolution', namely *στάσις*, is marked by a peculiar ambiguity: while, in the realm of politics, it suggests the idea of 'standing up, rising up, agitation', the word generally also signifies 'standing' in the sense of 'standing position, immobility'. Whereas in the former sense it is equivalent to *κίνησις*, in the latter it is used, for instance by Plato, as the opposite of *κίνησις*.[34] Loraux suggests that the Greeks, aware of the ambiguity of the noun, capitalised on its paradoxical implications and represented *stasis* (viz., civil strife) as 'a fixed explosive', i.e., as both standstill and motion:[35] under conditions of *stasis*, a city is both shaken by relentless conflict and hamstrung by agony.

In the section on revolution in Corcyra, Thucydides not only uses the noun *στάσις* (3.82.1, 82.2, 83.1) and the verb *στασιάζω* (3.82.3), but also a series of compounds of *ἵστημι* (*κατέστη*, 3.81.5; *ἐφιστῶνται*, 3.82.2; *καθισταμένων*, 3.82.8; *κατέστη*, 3.83.1). Commenting on the role of such words in Thucydides, Parry has observed that, when used in the middle or in the intransitive active, the verbs 'signify the putting into a position of something, or the taking up of a position'.[36] In this way, the compounds of *ἵστημι* tend to capture that human beings find themselves placed amidst settled circumstances conditioning their behaviour. The string of these words draws attention to the more subdued, but nonetheless relevant, semantic dimension of the word *στάσις*: revolution also signifies entrapment in a situation that severely reduces the possibility of prudent, self-determined agency. The phrasing of the following passage hints at the etymological link: 'In this way, every kind of depravity occurred to the civilisation of Greece in the wake of acts of civil war' (*οὕτω πᾶσα ἰδέα <u>κατέστη</u> κακοτροπίας διὰ τὰς <u>στάσεις</u> τῷ Ἑλληνικῷ*, 3.83.1). The form *κατέστη* suggests the onset of a settled state that imposes itself on the Greek world. The close proximity of this word and the noun *στάσεις* calls attention to the literal meaning of the noun (viz., 'standing, station'), thus highlighting the static connotations that the word can convey. Thus, agitation and paralysis of the city are two sides of the same coin: the regression of the city into the state of nature.

[33] Macleod (1983b) 123–4; Loraux (2009) 265.

[34] Loraux (2002) 104. In the *Sophist* (255e11–12) Plato expresses the antithesis between motion and rest through the terms *στάσις* and *κίνησις*. In the *Republic* (436c5–6) he captures the same idea through the corresponding verbal forms *ἑστάναι* and *κινεῖσθαι*.

[35] Loraux (2002) 106.

[36] Parry (1981) 99.

Coming Face to Face with Nature: Peloponnesian War and Ultimate Reality

Hadot has observed that the term *φύσις* at first was invariably used with a genitive indicating the specific entity whose 'nature' was at stake, but that this qualification was increasingly dropped over the course of the fifth century: 'Here, *physis* is no longer the form *of* something but designates the process of formation or its result, taken in general and in an abstract way'.[37] Φύσις thus became a term that referred to the nature of the world as a whole. In fact, one of the perennial problems occupying Pre-Socratic philosophy concerns the question whether the cosmos is, at its heart, being or becoming, unchangeable or in flux—in other words, rest or motion. The paradigmatic positions in this quarrel are those of Parmenides and Heraclitus: while Parmenides champions immobility as the ultimate cosmic principle, Heraclitus can be taken to reserve the same position for flux.[38] Another thinker who propounds the primacy of motion is Anaximander. According to Simplicius, the followers of both Anaximander and the Atomists 'used to call motion eternal' (*τὴν κίνησιν ἀίδιον ἔλεγον*, 12 A 17, 24 D–K): 'For without motion there is neither birth nor destruction' (*ἄνευ γὰρ κινήσεως οὐκ ἔστι γένεσις ἢ φθορά*, 12 A 17, 24–5 D–K). As we have seen, the opposition between motion and rest is likewise a concern that crystallises in the work of Thucydides. Through his account of the Peloponnesian War, he seems to take an implicit stance on the Pre-Socratic debate about the ultimate nature of the cosmos.

Parry has shown that Thucydides often employs the word *ἔργον*, used as an indication of what is factual and real, as a synonym for war.[39] From this peculiarity, Parry draws the following conclusion: 'Thucydides … is indicating, building the notion into the structure of his language, that power and war are simply aspects of reality. War is the final reality',[40] or, as he writes elsewhere, 'the *ergon par excellence*'.[41] Another way of stating Parry's point is that the Peloponnesian War is full-blown, undiminished *φύσις*, the

[37] Hadot (2006) 19.

[38] Cf. Schadewaldt (1978) 401 on Heraclitus: 'Der Hauptbegriff, der noch nicht in dieser ausgesprochenen Form bei ihm [sc. Heraclitus] auftaucht, ist der Begriff der Bewegung. Ich kenne das Wort *kinesis* bei ihm nicht, aber daß die Bewegung es ist, die als ein Unbezweifelbares für ihn das Sein bestimmt, im Gegensatz zu Parmenides, … ist wohl nach allem klargeworden'. Cf. 330 on Parmenides' characterisation of being in DK 28 B 8, 26–27 (*αὐτὰρ ἀκίνητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν | ἔστιν ἄναρχον ἄπαυστον*): 'Damit taucht der Grundbegriff der *kínesis* auf, der von jetzt ab das ganze griechische Naturdenken beherrschen wird bis zu Aristoteles … *kínesis* ist dabei aber nicht nur unsere Ortsbewegung, sondern Bewegung und Veränderung jeder Art … Die Unbewegtheit wird jetzt vom Sein selber ausgesagt'.

[39] Parry (1972) 52.

[40] Parry (1972) 58.

[41] Parry (1970) 19.

ultimate reality of things. The Athenian ambassadors at Melos do in fact use the term *φύσις* with manifest cosmic resonance: they identify it with a force that determines the behaviour not just of human beings but also of the gods (5.105.2). In the manner noted by Hadot, the Athenians do not, in making this claim, attach a genitive or an attribute to the noun *φύσις*, so as to name the specific domain of entities whose nature is at stake. Instead, they simply refer to *φύσις ἀναγκαία*: the compulsory force of nature, a comprehensive cosmic principle that governs even the behaviour of the gods.[42]

In equating the world as revealed in the Peloponnesian War with *φύσις*, Thucydides may well be responding to the aforementioned longstanding debate in Pre-Socratic philosophy. Based on the evidence of Thucydides' text, neither is Heraclitus right in claiming that the cosmos is constant flux nor Parmenides when he maintains that Being, ultimate reality, is at rest. Instead, when the cosmos reveals itself in its barest actuality, motion and standstill come to coincide. **Φ***ύσις*, as revealed by the Peloponnesian War, is simultaneously motion and rest: the rapidly moving events of the War have their flipside in the passivity of human beings who are confined by circumstances, which reflect the limitations imposed on their endeavours by nature.

Just after the chapter on method and before beginning his narrative proper, Thucydides refers to a list of 'sufferings' (*παθήματα*, 1.23.1) that reveal the unparalleled greatness of the War. As several scholars have observed, it is odd that, apart from man-made disasters, the list of sufferings features several natural occurrences, such as earthquakes, eclipses, droughts, and the plague that do not seem intrinsically related to a conflict among human beings (1.23.3).[43] Highlighting a certain reductionism in Thucydides' work, Jaeger and Strasburger have stressed that Thucydides usually seeks to exclude from his account all spheres of reality that do not contribute directly to his main theme, i.e., the struggle for power of the Greek cities.[44] Given this general approach, the encompassing list of disasters is all the more striking.

[42] On the cosmic resonances of the claim made by the Athenians at Melos, see Orwin (1994) 106: 'The gods are not the first beings on which all else depends; they depend, like the others, on nature'.

[43] Strauss (1964) 150–1; Lateiner (1977) 44; Marinatos (1981) 20; Parry (1981) 115–16; Munson (2015) 42–3.

[44] Jaeger (1934) 481; Strasburger (1966) 57, 60, and id. (1982) 784–92. The reductionism manifests itself most notably in the systematic exclusion of various significant aspecs of reality: the sphere of culture, the private realm, the anecdotal element, and the character traits of individuals (to which, as the examples of Nicias, Alcibiades, or Brasidas show, Thucydides only pays attention insofar as they have direct bearing on the course of the War). The systematic exclusion of these aspects of reality becomes especially evident when one compares Thucydides' representation of the world with the vast range of phenomena that attract Herodotus' attention.

The inclusion of natural catastrophes among the distinctive sufferings brought on by the War lends support to the thesis that Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War casts light not just on political events but on reality as a whole. The sufferings suggest that the Peloponnesian War marks a period in which the cosmos in its entirety, comprising the realms of both human beings and inanimate nature, comes under heavy stress. As scholars have pointed out, over the course of the narrative, Thucydides notes the occurrence of several such natural disasters, for instance the eruption of Mount Etna (3.116.1–2), solar eclipses (2.28.1; 4.52.1), inundations (3.89.2–5), and various earthquakes (2.8.3; 3.87.4 and 89.2–5; 4.52.1). Just like the list of sufferings, these events do not have any direct connection with the military affairs that Thucydides recounts.[45]

In connection with the first of these earthquakes, Thucydides uses the verb from which the noun *κίνησις* is derived: *Δῆλος ἐκινήθη* (2.8.3). As Thucydides points out, the earthquake at the island of Delos, which had never been shaken before, took place shortly before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (2.8.3). Rusten has observed that Thucydides uses *κινέω* only here for an earthquake (the usual designation being *σείω* and *σεισμός*).[46] Thucydides reports that people took the earthquake to be an ominous portent for the upcoming War. The War for which the phrase *Δῆλος ἐκινήθη* serves as a portent has been identified in the proem as *κίνησις μεγίστη*. Moreover, as the War escalates and *stasis* descends, Greekness itself will 'be shaken' (*τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη*, 3.82.1). These links suggest that Thucydides' reference to the portentous earthquake at Delos hints at the possibility of an engagement between the realm of nature and the sphere of human action. With his usual restraint, Thucydides states that the identification between the earthquake and the approaching War was what people 'said' and how it 'seemed' to them (*ἐλέγετο δὲ καὶ ἐδόκει*, 2.8.3). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that, in stating this belief, Thucydides evokes the proem through the word *κινέω*. He thus directs the reader's attention to a potential sympathetic relationship between the two commotions.

When, on the other hand, the eclipse of the moon occurs in the moment when the Athenians are about to retreat from Syracuse, the cosmic forces

[45] Lateiner (1977) 45; Marinatos (1981) 24; Munson (2015) 43–5. As Munson points out, Thucydides refers to five further earthquakes, all of which have some effect on military and political events, although not always a particularly consequential one. The passages in question refer to the great earthquake at Laconia (1.101.2, 128.1; 2.27.2; 3.54.5; 4.56.2) and to four other seismic convulsions in various areas (5.45.4, 50.5; 6.95.1; 8.6.5 and 41.2, the last two referring to the same event).

[46] Rusten (2013) 3. As Rusten also observes, the phrase alludes to Herodotus' identical reference to the same earthquake (*Δῆλος ἐκινήθη*, Hdt. 6.98.1). In alluding to Herodotus here, Thucydides corrects him: Herodotus, observing just like Thucydides that it was the only earthquake ever to shake Delos, dates it to the year 490, around the time when Darius' expeditionary force set out against Athens and Eretria. See Rusten (2013) 7; Munson (2015) 48–51.

seem to have entered a phase of enforced standstill. Among other sources, Plato's *Gorgias* provides evidence for the belief that lunar eclipses were caused by Thessalian witches who dragged down the moon from the sky (513a4–6).[47] As this belief shows, an eclipse was viewed as a situation in which the moon entered a state of confinement, passing from its regular wandering activity into a state of enforced rest. As mentioned above, when faced with the eclipse, Nicias and the superstitious majority of Athenians succumb to a state of total immobility, forcefully expressed by the accumulated vocabulary denoting standstill at 7.50.4 (ἐπισχεῖν; μεῖναι; μελλήσασι; ἡ μονὴ ἐγεγένητο). The paralysis of the Athenian army reflects and underlines the corresponding cosmic stagnation centred around the lunar eclipse.

The examples of the earthquake at Delos and the eclipse at Sicily show that the theme of natural disasters is not limited to the programmatic comments on the character of the War in 1.23. The repeated references to events from the sphere of inanimate nature provide a hint that the Peloponnesian War brings us face-to-face not only with the truth about human nature, but also with the forces governing the cosmos as a whole.

As the Archaeology shows, civilisation does not require a one-sided suspension of either motion or rest, but it presupposes the achievement of a successfully calibrated balance between both principles. If such an equilibrium is the hallmark of the self-elevation of human beings over their original uncivilised state, then Athens as represented by Pericles in the Funeral Oration is the epitome of civilisation. Konrad Gaiser has shown that according to Pericles the Athenians succeed at harmonising in their institutions and daily life antithetical predispositions of which other people usually possess only one half or the other.[48] Several of the antitheses enumerated by Pericles can be parsed in accordance with the polarity of extroverted activity and introverted circumspection—in other words, along the lines of the antithesis of motion and rest. For instance, the Athenians have adopted a liberal lifestyle while being obedient to their magistrates and the laws (2.37.2–3), they are simultaneously concerned with public and with private affairs (2.40.2), and they are both forceful in action and inclined towards reflection (2.40.2–3).

The Peloponnesian War unhinges the balance between opposite forces, of which the fleeting equilibrium achieved in Periclean Athens represents the highest realisation.[49] Instead of entering into a relationship of mutual balance and enhancement, motion and rest return to the extreme values which they

[47] See Boll (1909) 2333.

[48] Gaiser (1975) 31–2. On Pericles' ability to balance antithetical dispositions, see also Macleod (1983a) 86.

[49] Strauss (1964) 160 makes a slightly different, but highly pertinent point about the interrelation of motion and rest at Athens: '[T]he statesman who has acquired knowledge, like Pericles, as opposed to the fickle multitude, represents superhuman rest in the midst of human motion—rest confronting, understanding, and mastering motion'.

already had in the pre-civilised state.[50] When the harmonious unity is overthrown, the extreme manifestations of motion and rest paradoxically come to coincide. Instead of acquiring a distinct form that enables human achievement, they become indistinguishable. Motion and rest no longer maintain but erode civilisation.

Athens, representing motion, and Sparta, representing rest, make up between themselves the fundamental possibilities of the cosmos. As long as the two cities are balanced against each other, the cosmos is in a healthy state. However, due to the identification of each side with one of the polar principles, each city has an appetite for extremes: while the Spartans want to be at rest, the Athenians long for ever greater motion. From a cosmic perspective, the striving of each city after a climactic realisation of its leading principle undoes the state of balance and results in the coincidence of extreme motion and extreme rest. This situation marks a reversion into the state of nature. This return of uncontrolled natural forces manifests itself in the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, a condition in which, as the *stasis* chapters show, unrestrained φύσις rules supreme. The tragic aspect of this development is that, over the course of the War, the consequences of the unleashed state of nature fall back on the two protagonists: at Pylos and in Sicily, Sparta and Athens themselves come to be subjected to the coincidence of extreme motion and extreme rest. Thus, the degeneration into the chaotic state of nature finally catches up with the two protagonists themselves. Thucydides considers the resurgence of pure φύσις as the quintessential experience induced by war: it brings us face-to-face with ultimate reality.

The Antithesis of Motion vs. Rest and the Aims of Thucydidean Historiography

The argument presented in this paper has some bearing on a venerable dispute among scholars of Thucydides. Two distinguished protagonists of this controversy are R. G. Collingwood and A. W. Gomme. Comparing Thucydides with Herodotus, Collingwood makes the following observation about Thucydides' intellectual objectives: '[W]hat chiefly interests Herodotus is the events themselves; what chiefly interests Thucydides is the laws according to which they happen. But these laws are precisely such eternal and unchanging forms as, according to the main trend of Greek thought, are

[50] Strauss (1964) 160 also observes the co-presence of motion and of rest both in developed civilisation and in the chaotic early state: '[I]t is not so much motion as a certain kind of interplay of motion and rest which is responsible for the ancient poverty, weakness, and barbarism, and it is not rest but another kind of interplay of motion and rest which is responsible for present wealth, power, and Greekness'. My view differs from Strauss' observation insofar as I think that motion and rest do not really interact in the original state, but that they manifest themselves as amorphous extremes that paradoxically coincide.

the only knowable things'.[51] Thus, on Collingwood's view, Thucydides has more in common with Plato than with Herodotus, or than he has with the practice of modern history. Along similar lines, Jaeger equates Thucydides' notion that events can be subsumed under general laws, and that they follow a circular pattern, with the very opposite of a 'historical consciousness'. This is the case because the basic tenet of historicism is the conviction that all events are radically unique and unrepeatable, so that absolute difference separates each moment as well as each epoch from every other.[52]

By contrast, A. W. Gomme vigorously upholds the view that Thucydides is a scientific historian. In a critique of the picture presented by Collingwood, Gomme maintains that 'Thucydides is more recorder than philosopher'.[53] Elsewhere in the same work, Gomme calls Thucydides 'the first scientific historian',[54] a writer who 'tells us just what happened'.[55] In addition, Gomme emphasises that, when Thucydides sets up 'dramatic contrast' (for instance, by juxtaposing episodes that confront the fates of Mytilene and Plataea), he does so because that opposition 'is there, in the events'.[56]

Each side in this debate finds it easy to adduce evidence for its position. Those who hold that Thucydides' main objective was to penetrate the surface of historical contingency towards eternal governing principles usually point to the claim in the chapter on method, which is repeated in the excursus on *stasis* at Corcyra, that the events recorded by Thucydides will recur in the same or similar form due to the unchangeable constitution of human beings (1.22.4; 3.82.2).[57] By contrast, Gomme draws attention to the extended stretches of narrative in which Thucydides meticulously presents a factual account of events in strict causal sequence, with a rigorous focus on those details that are of immediate relevance for the military action at hand. He also emphasises Thucydides' general avoidance of authorial comments by which he might dispense praise or blame or draw moral lessons for the reader's edification.[58]

Thucydides' exploration of the principles of motion and rest, and of their constitutive role for the Peloponnesian War, is chiefly based on an implicit procedure: the arrangement of his narrative and certain stylistic choices. While Thucydides uses the proem to highlight the centrality of motion, and the *Archaeology* to signal that it is complemented by rest as its necessary

[51] Collingwood (1946) 30.

[52] Jaeger (1934) 487.

[53] Gomme (1954) 138.

[54] Ibid. 117.

[55] Ibid. 124.

[56] Ibid. 125.

[57] Jaeger (1934) 486–7; Patzer (1937) 93–4.

[58] Gomme (1954) 127–31 (on Thuc. 2.1–33), 134–37 (on Thuc. 4.66–109), 144–9 (on Thuc. 3.70–85).

counterpart, he nowhere makes explicit that, via his account of the Peloponnesian War, he will shed light on a perennial concern of Pre-Socratic thought.[59]

The argument presented in this essay shows that both sides in the dispute have important aspects of Thucydides' work in mind. Gomme is right when he emphasises that Thucydides does not expound general principles directly, but that he lets them emerge, as he does in the case of motion and rest, through his manner of representation. However, the image of the scientific historian easily conceals Thucydides' attempt, which is equally ambitious and discrete, to shed light on issues of the highest generality: when he opens the narrative of the War with a confrontation between Spartan rest and Athenian motion, or when he represents the traumatic defeats at Pylos and Syracuse as the coincidence of extreme motion and extreme rest, he chooses to highlight a specific theme that, in turn, reflects his conception of underlying forces manifesting themselves through the War. His means to arrive at these insights is a rigorous account of what happened—but his goals are not exhausted by his commitment to a faithful chronicle. Thucydides' concern with motion and rest reflects the permanent interaction between the mundane and the cosmic, between empirical detail and general law, and between scientific history and the quest for ultimate truths. The convergence of these contrary priorities amounts to an irreducible paradox, around which the primary aspirations of Thucydidean historiography crystallise.

[59] To some extent, this procedure may count as evidence in support of Gomme (1954) 138, who does not deny that Thucydides had general truths in view: '[W]e may feel certain that he was always thinking of general laws—but thinking about them rather than formulating them and giving them to the world'. However, the principles that Gomme thinks were on Thucydides' mind (e.g., awareness of the possibility that even the best insight may fail: cf. Gomme (1954) 155–6) are a long way from any ambition to illuminate, however implicitly, the basic principles governing the cosmos.

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