

THUCYDIDES' PORTRAIT OF KLEON

by

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ABSTRACT

It is Professor A. G. Woodhead who recalls that, since the time of the nineteenth-century historian George Grote, Thucydidean scholars have divided themselves into pro-Kleon and anti-Kleon camps, with the latter group more than holding its own. It is the purpose of this study to join forces with the pro-Kleon camp, and to rehabilitate Kleon.

Kleon has always held interest for students of the Peloponnesian War; the evidence about him both in Thucydides and in the other ancient sources is almost consistently derogatory, and yet on detailed examination of the sources the student can barely resist a murmur of dissent from the persistent condemnation the man receives. This study seeks to find justification for this dissent, and to restore Kleon to a place of respect and integrity.

It is not my aim to redeem Kleon from charges of coarseness and unorthodox manners. The comic poets did not fasten upon him so readily without reason. What this study seeks is to restore Kleon's status as a politician, statesman, and energetic war leader.

To do this, it has been necessary to examine with care all the evidence of the ancient sources, and, with equal care, to evaluate it. I have studied, first, Thucydides' portrait of the demagogue, noted the inconsistencies of that portrait,

and searched for their causes and their meaning. The result has been a conviction that Thucydides has treated Kleon unfairly, and has condemned him without just cause. I have turned, in the second place, to the other ancient evidence, that is, aside from Aristophanes. Here we see that all the evidence looks back to Thucydides and the anti-democratic tradition, except for shafts of light here and there that, if not flattering of Kleon, at least do not condemn him à vue d'oeil. Finally, I have consulted the comic poet Aristophanes, to find that his representation of the demagogue, while laudable as comedy, is untenable as history.

An examination and analysis of the evidence forces the conclusion that only Thucydides is reliable as a source for appraising the character of Kleon; even so, we may call into question the historian's judgements.

The conclusion of the study, therefore, is clearly stated: Kleon was a wiser and more intelligent statesman, with a better reputation and more just entitlement to fame and honour, than our principal authorities lead us to suppose.

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Introduction

It is the purpose of this study to rehabilitate Kleon; to seek to uncover, beneath the starkly etched portrait of Kleon, another figure, more commendable, more noble, than that presented by the historian; to call into question Thucydides' appraisal of the demagogue as unjust and biased to the point of distorting the true figure of the man. Whether that derogatory representation was deliberate, or the unconscious result of an embittered mind, may not finally be determined, but that Thucydides presented and set for posterity an unfair judgement will be argued. This study will not deny that Kleon was a man of violent temper and fierce political convictions, a bitter speaker, coarse in habits and in speech perhaps, and lacking in the fine graces of the traditional Athenian culture. What will be argued is that Thucydides has unfairly portrayed Kleon, in addition, as a war-monger, corrupt, lacking in both political insight and political honesty, indeed, the cause of the wholesale degeneration and collapse of Athens after the death of Perikles. These are charges that Thucydides makes in all seriousness, and that the poet Aristophanes, whose works will also be considered, expands and intensifies with all the ridicule and indecency that the comic drama could allow.

This study will seek, furthermore, to deliver Kleon from his long-standing traditional classification as a villain and a rogue, to correct the uncritical observations about him that are found in general works of all kinds. For instance, Rogers

writes in his introduction to the Knights: "Cleon, a leather-seller, son of Cleaenetus, was a most persuasive orator, full of resource, but corrupt and rapacious beyond others...." Again, in a comment on Pylos, Rogers writes: "But Cleon, who was no statesman, demanded such terms as were really out of the Spartans' power to grant...."¹ Philip Myers, in his History of Greece, writes: "Having arrived at Pylos, Cleon, not by good generalship, but through good fortune, actually did accomplish what astonished the whole Hellenic world, himself probably included."² Such disparaging legacies from Thucydides are legion in general historical works, and it is the intention of this study to dispel some of the myths that have hovered over Kleon's grave for more than two millenia.

The first part of the study will be an examination of the evidence of Thucydides; then it will be necessary to turn to an evaluation of the ostensibly corroborating material of Aristophanes, and to survey the comic tradition on Kleon, in order to relate its significance, if any, to the evidence of Thucydides. Finally, this study will seek to explain why Thucydides, an historian whose integrity and power are endorsed by all students, could treat Kleon as he has treated him.

1. Aristophanes, Comedies, translated by B.B. Rogers (Loeb Classical Library, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1940), I, pp.120-121.

2. P. Meyers, History of Greece (Boston, 1895), p. 314.

CHAPTER ONE

Thucydides' Portrait of Kleon

Thucydides' History leaves no doubt that the historian viewed Kleon as a contemptible and unworthy fellow. He is introduced to the reader as "the most violent man at Athens."¹ He is given a rather gratuitous second introduction at the time of the Pylos incident, with a reminder of his "having the greatest influence"² with the multitude. The repeated superlative πιθανώτατος, placed as it is the second time with emphasis, is a pregnant epithet; indeed, according to A. G. Woodhead, it "lends to the description δημαγωγός a sinister flavour...."³ He supports war, the historian says, for in peace "he would be more manifest in his villainies and less credited in his calumnies."⁴ He is, in a word, the type of man whom wise men are better rid of.⁵ The condemnation could not be more explicit. A. W. Gomme, certainly, is right when he says, "if Kleon was in fact a vulgar demagogue and most mischievous politician, it was the historian's duty to represent him as one."⁶ This

1. III, 36, 6.

2. IV, 21, 3.

3. A. G. Woodhead, Mnemosyne, XIII (1960), p. 311.

4. V, 16, 1 (trans. C. F. Smith).

5. IV, 28, 5.

6. A. W. Gomme, More Essays in Greek History and Literature (Oxford, 1962), p. 112.

study will not call into question Kleon's lack of decorum; it will dispute the label "mischievous politician." In order to do so, I shall examine the three episodes in which Kleon appears in the History: Mytilene, Pylos, and Amphipolis.

Significant in the study of Thucydides' treatment of the demagogue Kleon are the historian's oligarchic and anti-democratic political sympathies. M. F. McGregor, in arguing the oligarchic sentiments of Thucydides, speaks of the historian's "natural antipathy to democracy."⁷ In one of the few passages of the History in which Thucydides reveals his personal views, he says of the moderate oligarchy of the Five Thousand established in 411/0, "During the first period the Athenians appear to have enjoyed the best government they ever had, at least in my time; for there was a moderate blending of the few and the many."⁸ Thucydides was bitterly condemnatory of the democracy as it developed after Perikles,⁹ and the History, indeed, becomes in part a drama of selected

7. M. F. McGregor, Phoenix, X (1956), p.100.

8. VIII,97,2 (trans. C. F. Smith).

9. Woodhead has examined Thucydides' phraseology in II,65 to demonstrate this (pp.294-295).

incidents intended to demonstrate how the downfall of Athens was the direct result of the weaknesses of the democratic system.¹⁰ And, while Thucydides does not mention him by name, there was no doubt in the historian's mind that Kleon was one of the principal contributors to the system that he felt ultimately destroyed his beloved Athens. In examining the portrait of Kleon, therefore, we should bear in mind that he is described by a person of quite antithetical cultural and political sympathies.

The first episode relevant to the study is the debate concerning Mytilene. Mytilene had revolted in the third year of the war. The revolt was successfully crushed and the Athenian assembly under the leadership of Kleon carried the following motion: to put to death not only the prisoners at Athens, but the whole adult male population of Mytilene, and to make slaves of the women and children.¹¹ Kleon first appears in the History at the point when a second debate is called to reconsider the motion. Kleon

10. A. H. M. Jones (Athenian Democracy [New York, 1958]) argues that Thucydides reveals his condemnation of the democracy by his specific selection and treatment of certain incidents that took place in the course of the war (especially pp.64-65). J. H. Finley, on the other hand, (Thucydides [Cambridge, Mass., 1942]) more cautiously admits only that the History becomes a confirmation of the prophecy of Perikles that it would be Athens' errors that would destroy her (p.142). I follow the view of Jones.

11. III,36,2.

is supporting his motion of the previous day, and on introducing him Thucydides describes him as βιαίότατος τῶν πολιτῶν and τῷ δήμῳ πιθανώτατος . The introductions are striking, not only because it is Thucydides' normal method to leave the reader to make his own judgments,¹² but because of the decidedly disparaging tone of the words used. Woodhead unequivocally rates them "smear words,"¹³ and they are "violent in prejudice," according to L. Pearson.¹⁴ A. W. Gomme, who is more conservative in his remarks, admits that they anticipate the evidence. "There are less colourful phrases Thucydides might have used to express the fact that Kleon τέχνη καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ ἴσχυσε πρὸς τὸ πείθειν ."¹⁵ But, by careful selection of words, the historian conditions the reader's attitude to Kleon before there is an opportunity of independent assessment. Hence the insight of Woodhead's question, "Without them should we in fact regard the speech in the light Thucydides requires?"¹⁶ Would the reader be as likely to describe Kleon's address as a "volcanic tirade"?¹⁷

12. Thucydides has no introductory comment on Nikias in the Pylos debate, when Kleon is expressly condemned (IV,27).

13. Woodhead, p.298.

14. In a brief reference to Kleon, T.A.P.A., LXXVIII (1947), p.53.

15. Woodhead, p.298.

16. Woodhead, p.298.

17. Finley, p.171.

While there is no doubt Thucydides intends, to a great extent, both speeches to indicate that decadence that he believed followed the death of Perikles, one may see how the historian shows approval of Diodotos' position and condemnation of Kleon's. It quickly becomes apparent that, whereas the narrative states that a second debate was held because of a revulsion of feeling at the cruelty of the motion, the central theme of the debate has to do not with sentiments¹⁸ but with plain, expedient, imperial policy:¹⁹ what is to be the principal method of maintaining subject peoples in obedience? Diodotos wants to forestall revolt by more vigilant administration;²⁰ Kleon wants to forestall revolt through fear.²¹ Thucydides criticizes Kleon's arguments first by demonstrating that, the motion having been rejected, none of Kleon's prophecies come to pass.²² Later, when Skione revolted, the extreme penalty was voted and executed, yet Mende soon afterwards also deserted Athens.²³

18. III,48,1.

19. III,44,3.

20. III,46,4.

21. III,40,8.

22. III,39,7.

23. But see Kleon's promise in III,40,8.

Again in the composition of the debate it is Diodotos who recalls Perikles in his thesis of εὐβουλία and in his plea for the greatest liberty of debate.²⁴ It is Diodotos who, like Perikles, fights against imprudent anger of the people, Kleon who supports its use, for the making of decisions. Thucydides endorses the strengths of Diodotos' speech, while in Kleon's he shows "a veiled disapproval of the excesses of imperialism."²⁵

On the other hand Kleon seems to reecho Perikles in phraseology. Thus II,63,2 (Perikles), ὡς τυραννίδα γὰρ ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτήν, ἣν λαβεῖν μὲν ἄδικον δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἀφεῖναι δὲ ἐπικίνδυνον, may be compared with III,37,2 (Kleon), οὐκ ἐπικινδύνως ἠγεῖσθε ἐς ὑμᾶς καὶ οὐκ ἐς τὴν τῶν συμμαχῶν χάριν μαλακίζεσθαι, οὐ σκοποῦντες ὅτι τυραννίδα ἔχετε τὴν ἀρχὴν

Echoes occur again when Kleon declares himself faithful to

24. Compare II,40,2 with III,42,2.

25. Jacqueline de Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism, trans. Philip Thody (Oxford, 1963), p.192. Mme. de Romilly writes, "In the two episodes of Mytilene and Pylos, as we have seen, Thucydides expresses the same veiled disapproval on the excesses of imperialism. It must be added that this spirit of censure accounts for everything else that Thucydides says - or does not say - about Cleon."

one point of view (III,38,1), 'Εγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι
τῆ γνώμη . Perikles had said (II,61,2), ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ
αὐτός εἰμι Further, when Kleon ironically describes
the alternative to vigorous rule, he says (III,40,4), ἢ
παύεσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι .
Perikles had said (II,63,2), εἴ τις καὶ τόδε ἐν τῷ παρόντι
δεδιώς ἀπραγμοσύνη ἀνδραγαθίζεται . It is significant,
furthermore, that the verb ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι is not found else-
where, either in Thucydides or in any other literature of the
classical era (in fact, Aristotle uses it; see L.S.J., Lexicon, s.v.).

These verbal correlations have a distinct importance in
the analysis of Thucydides' treatment of Kleon.²⁶ A. Andrewes
writes, "In Thucydides' careful style such echoes cannot be
accidental, nor is their intention in doubt."²⁷ A. W. Gomme
reminds us of another source that depicts Kleon as the imitator
of Perikles, that is, Aristophanes.²⁸ In the Mytilenean de-
bate, then, Kleon becomes "the imitator, taking up for violent
and (in comparison) trivial purposes the phrases in which
Perikles had displayed his steady insight into the largest is-
sues."²⁹ Thucydides thus moves from criticism of policy to

26. Mme. de Romilly denies this. For her arguments see
pp.164-166.

27. A. Andrewes, "The Mytilene Debate," Phoenix, XVI
(1962), p.75.

28. A. W. Gomme, A Historical Commentary on Thucydides,
II (Oxford, 1956), p.311.

29. Andrewes, p.75.

ridicule of person, in order to portray Kleon as he sees him. Hence the intent of the introductory comment is clarified by an analysis of the treatment of the speeches. Thucydides disliked Kleon. He sought, first, to condition the reader to the same view. Then, by disparagement through ridicule, and illustration of the weakness of his argument, the historian sought to enforce the judgement.

Evidence is not lacking, however, to demonstrate the strengths of Kleon's policy. Athens was at war. She had already suffered great hurt and humiliation. She had been subjected to the systematic invasion and ravaging of Attica by the Peloponnesians;³⁰ she had been seriously weakened by an epidemic.³¹ A Spartan fleet under Alkidas had been roaming the Aegean. Now Mytilene, a city of significant power and position, had revolted. She was an island belonging naturally to the Athenian Empire, from which no one could detach her against her own will,³² possessing a fleet that was precious

30. II,19,2. II,23,1.

31. III,13,3.

32. As Kleon points out with force, III,39,2.

for Athens³³ and no less so for Sparta.³⁴ Her defection would mean serious loss of naval support.³⁵ Finally there was the lack of provocation. Mytilene had held a privileged position in the empire, and had in no way suffered oppression or extortion. Indeed, the speaker at Olympia admits that in the past the Mytileneans have been treated with marked honour.³⁶ Furthermore, had Athens intended aggression against Mytilene, she would surely have taken action earlier, at a time when Mytilene would have been less likely to find sympathetic support, and Athens herself more able to realize her intent.³⁷ The war had increased the security of Mytilene. Yet the arguments they bring for defection seem to rest on their sense of need for acquiring security for the future. After Grote has analyzed the speech of the Mytilenean envoys, he comments, "We see the plain confession that the Mytileneans had no reason whatever to complain of the conduct of Athens towards them. This important fact helps us to explain... the barbarous resolution taken by the Athenians after its [the rebellion's] suppression."³⁸

33. As the Mytileneans well know, III,11,4.

34. As the Mytileneans are quick to point out, III,13,7.

35. As the Mytileneans know, III,13,6; and Kleon's words (III,39,8) are: τῆς ἔπειτα προσόδου, δι' ἣν ἰσχύομεν, τὸ λοιπὸν στερησεσθε,...

36. III,9,2. And Kleon's reproach of their ingratitude (III,39,2): αὐτόνομοί τε οἰκοῦντες καὶ τιμώμενοι ἐς τὰ πρῶτα ὑπὸ ἡμῶν....

37. III,11,8: οὐ μέντοι ἐπὶ πολὺ γ' ἂν ἔδοκοῦμεν δυνηθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ὁ πόλεμος ὅδε κατέστη,...

38. George Grote, History of Greece (London, 1888), V, p.149.

The pressure of events, therefore, together with the lack of justifiable reasons for rebellion, naturally caused an intense reaction among the Athenians, and the policy of Kleon in the light of the context can be appreciated; and, indeed, in terms of war, it was justified. Any appreciation of Kleon's position, however, the reader may well miss altogether, for Thucydides gives no credit to the demagogue at all. Indeed, the historian seems to be intent upon having the reader regard Kleon as naturally bad in supporting such a cruel and monstrous motion, and Diodotos good in countering it. But it is just as unfair to regard Kleon's position as inhuman as it is false to regard Diodotos' as humane. The narrative states that the reason for the debate was the repentance of the crowd, yet Diodotos makes no mention of this in his speech. One is tempted to ask whether indeed the revulsion of feeling was as intense as Thucydides makes out, especially in view of the slim margin of victory. Did Thucydides exaggerate the emotional reaction of the people in order to intensify the implied moral judgment upon Kleon? The speech of Diodotos is termed "icy" by Finley,³⁹ and the words μήτε οἴκτω πλέον νεύμαντες μήτ' ἐπεικεία (III,48,1) strike its mood. Yet in every way it is against Kleon that the whole episode is presented, not only against his policy, but against his person. The evidence

39. Finley, p.177.

is clear: Thucydides sought, by careful selection of words and organization of narrative, to disparage Kleon, and to present him in the worst possible light.

Inasmuch as an assessment of Kleon in the Mytilenean episode depends upon an interpretation of the respective speeches, it may well be asked here whether the speeches bear relation to anything actually said by the real speakers, whether the speeches do reflect the true portrait of the speaker, and what role the Mytilenean debate plays in Thucydides' work. Thucydides speaks of the difficulty he had in recalling with strict accuracy the words actually spoken on the particular occasion. He sets down the speeches, then, "As I thought each speaker would most fittingly speak about the particular occasion, keeping as close as I could to the general sense of what was actually said."⁴⁰ While certain of the speeches of the History discourage too simple acceptance of this principle, I believe that the guarantee to present τὰ ἀληθῶς λεχθέντα is valid enough to ensure that the speeches do reflect the general line of the speaker's argument, while, at the same time, the liberty of τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης allows Thucydides to use the speeches to reflect and

40. I follow Andrewes' translation here, Phoenix, XVI(1962), p.66. The text reads: ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δεόντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων,..(I,22,1).

either approve or condemn ideas that he believed were involved in the tension of the event.⁴¹ We may believe, then, that Kleon and Diodotos actually did present these speeches, that they did argue along these lines, and we may look in the speeches for a reflection of ideas that Thucydides thought were involved at the time.⁴² And, from an analysis of these speeches, as we have seen, it is demonstrable that Thucydides intended to undermine whatever integrity lay in Kleon's position, and to discredit in every way possible both

41. This position I follow with A. Andrewes, pp.64-67. Other scholars are less convinced of any general authenticity to the speeches. Jones believes that the speeches are in effect "Thucydides' own opinion of empire" (p.67); F. E. Adcock (Thucydides and his History [Camb. England, 1963]) distrusts the speeches and claims that the historian wrote as freely as he wished (p.30).

42. As Mme. de Romilly states: "But if Thucydides made a point of bringing this unknown opponent [Diodotos] into the full glare of the light of history, it was because he wanted to use him in order to condemn certain ideas and show the validity of others" (p.160). Compare also Finley, p.168.

the demagogue and his policy.⁴³

The next episode in which Kleon appears is that of Sphacteria. This situation offers a different problem, for here Thucydides is dealing with actions not words. Once again an analysis of the affair reveals that Thucydides unfairly represents Kleon: he distorts the narrative to present Kleon in the worst possible light.

Demosthenes, while sailing around the Peloponnese with the Athenian fleet on its way to Kerkyra, proposed the fortification of Pylos as a fort for rebel Messenians to occupy. The generals objected, but a chance storm came on and bore the ships into the harbour of Pylos. Demosthenes then pressed them to fortify the place. The Athenians, in six days, completed a wall on the side toward the land, and at such other points as were necessary. The Peloponnesians eventually responded to the move, placing a Spartan hoplite force on the small island of Sphacteria as part of their offensive strategy. But the Spartans were defeated on both land and sea, and the Athenian fleet cut off and isolated from the mainland the Spartiates on Sphacteria, to the number of 420 hoplites, with attendant helots. Spartan consternation was great enough to call for an armistice

43. Compare the remark of Woodhead, "A good policy is damned in his [Thucydides'] eyes when it is in hands like those of Cleon...?" (p.296). Mme. de Romilly writes, "It must be added that this spirit of censure accounts for everything else that Thucydides says - or does not say - about Cleon" (p.192).

at Pylos and to sue for peace with Athens.

The Athenians, however, under the leadership of Kleon, were intent upon realizing the utmost of this fortune, and virtually rejected the peace offer by making claims for the return of Nisaia, Pegai, Troizen and Achaia, places that had not been lost in the war, but had been surrendered to Sparta by the terms of the peace treaty with Sparta in 446, concluded when Athens was in a difficult bargaining position. The Spartans asked for a committee to discuss the points, but Kleon "violently assailed them,"⁴⁴ upon which they retired to Sparta. The peace-offer collapsed, the armistice was withdrawn, and war continued.

There is no doubt that Thucydides again wishes to condemn Kleon. The historian deplored the rejection of the peace-offer, and he blamed Kleon as largely responsible for it.⁴⁵ The whole episode is coloured with hostility towards Kleon. There is a second introductory description of the demagogue.⁴⁶ The repeated epithet *πιθανώτατος* reminds the

44. IV,22,2: Κλέων δὲ ἐνταῦθα δὴ πολὺς ἐνέκειτο.

45. IV,21,3.

46. Noted by Woodhead, p.311, and Gomme, II, p.461.

reader of the violence of the affair of Mytilene, and the force of the word is intensified by its emphatic position.⁴⁷ Woodhead remarks that *πιθανώτατος* is used only of Kleon and of Athenagoras, "a man whom he [Thucydides] regards as of the same stamp."⁴⁸

It is, however, in an analysis of the single speech of the episode, by the Spartan embassy, that the reader may see Thucydides' judgment of the event.⁴⁹ The Spartans base their appeal for peace upon a warning of two dangers, good fortune (IV,18,3-5) and immoderate hopes (IV,17,5). By the emphasis of precisely these two ideas Thucydides himself organizes his account of the whole affair: the Athenians have been lucky and they have not been able to moderate their desires. Thucydides is careful to demonstrate how the success of Pylos was effected through chance occurrences: bad weather held up the fleet, creating the occasion for the soldiers to fortify the place (IV,3,1): *κατὰ τύχην χειμῶν ἐπιγενόμενος* ; at

47. IV,21,3: *ἀνὴρ δημαγωγὸς κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ὦν τῷ πλήθει πιθανώτατος* ;...

48. Woodhead, p.298.

49. Mme. de Romilly comments on the fact that Kleon is not represented by a speech. She writes, "Then, as now, the speaker to whom no one replies is the spokesman of wisdom" (p.173).

the time the Spartans were by chance celebrating a festival (IV,5,1): οἱ δὲ ἑορτήν τινα ἔτυχον ἄγοντες ; there was the chance arrival of two Messenian ships (IV,9,1): οἱ ἔτυχον παραγενόμενοι ; the Lakedaimonians had neglected to block up the harbours' mouths (IV,13,4): οὔτε, ἃ διανοήθησαν, φάρξαι τοῖς ἔσπλους ἔτυχον ποιήσαντες ; finally there was the chance initial success of the Athenians (IV,14,3): τῇ παρουσίᾳ τύχῃ ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐπεξελεθεῖν . This good fortune exalts Athens to the desire for more and more again. She rejects the Spartan proposals because she is inflamed with the desire to get more (IV,21,2): τοῦ δὲ πλέονος ὠρέγοντο ; she rejects them a second time because of the same fatal flaw (IV,41,4): οἱ δὲ μειζόνων τε ὠρέγοντο ; finally, when Thucydides recalls this persistent refusal of a peaceful settlement later, he cannot prevent himself from once again explaining the reasons that brought it about (V,14,1). Hence the close relationship between the arguments put forward by the Spartans and the ideas within the narration of events strongly suggests that the single speech ascribed to the Spartans embodies Thucydides' own ideas.

Again, a study of Thucydidean phraseology reveals the careful procession of 'good' words attributed to the Spartans: ξύμβασις, κατὰ ἡσυχίαν, ὅτι ἂν κείθωσιν ἀλλήλους , while the phraseology associated with Kleon and Athens under Kleon's sway carries the 'worst' connotations: τοῦ πλέονος ὠρέγοντο, πόλυσ ἐνέκειτο . The Spartans

finally withdraw because the Athenians refuse to act ἐπιμετρίοις ; however, Thucydides omits to state for whom, thus beguiling the reader into sympathy with Sparta, while, in fact, expressing a merely Spartan point of view.⁵⁰

Indeed, Thucydides neglects altogether to point out the strength of Kleon's position. But by calling into question the value of the Spartan offer, Kleon manifests shrewd insight that was later to be proved sound enough. The Spartan threat that they would παρὰ γνώμην διακινδυνεύειν⁵¹ and have eternal hatred for Athens if she refused the proffered friendship came to nothing.⁵² The promise that this friendship would be especially sincere and lasting is proved of little worth by the events following the peace of 421. Again, the events following 421 indicate of how little significance were the words ἡμῶν γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ταῦτὰ λεγόντων⁵³ Certainly it is hazardous to appropriate the consequences of the peace of 421 to a peace treaty of 425, but, when we recall

50. It is interesting to notice how J. B. Bury, History of Greece (London, 1906), p.311, is wooed by ἐπιμετρίοις , "But the reception of their reasonable proposals met...."

51. IV,19,4

52. Compare IV,41,3-4; IV,108,7; IV,117,1; V,15,22-23.

53. IV,20,4

the Athenian predicament that followed 421, when we recall the Athenian surrender of her best bargaining card⁵⁴ and the Spartan failure - whether or not her own fault - to reciprocate, when we bear in mind that even Thucydides himself confessed the failure of the peace-compact in 421, it is unfair to deny that in the similar context of 425 Kleon showed wisdom and competency in insisting upon a more rigid Athenian position. And yet, that Kleon's leadership at the assembly in 425 had any integrity or statesmanship whatsoever was entirely rejected or overlooked by the historian, and it is clear from the record that Thucydides had only one purpose: to condemn Kleon's whole position.

Ultimately, however, the Athenian advantage miscarried. The blockade soon became as full of hardship for the besiegers as for the besieged. The fleet began to grow sick in body⁵⁵ as well as impatient and dissatisfied in mind. The Spartans were being secretly provisioned and what had seemed a glorious victory was degenerating into a humiliating predicament. Winter could well reverse the whole situation. Messengers coming from the scene warned of the possible outcome, and there was a reversal of feeling at the lost opportunity for peace, public opinion turning against Kleon. Kleon charged that the reports were unfounded, whereupon the envoys advised that commissioners be sent to verify the fact, Kleon along with

54. The return of the Spartiates (V,24,2).

55. IV,29,2.

Theagenes being named. Kleon then, however, changed his line of approach and claimed that the necessary action was to sail at once and take the island, and if he were general he would do that.⁵⁶ Nicias, under pressure of attack, retaliated by offering him the command.⁵⁷ Kleon accepted the command, and claimed that he would within twenty days either bring the Spartans back to Athens alive or kill them on the spot. The scene is then concluded with the following words:

At this vain talk of his there was a burst of laughter on the part of the Athenians, but nevertheless the sensible men among them were glad, for they reflected that they were bound to obtain one of two good things - either they would be rid of Kleon, which they preferred, or if they were disappointed in this, he would subdue the Lacedaemonians for them.⁵⁸

The whole narrative is turgid with comment hostile to Kleon, with the historian intent upon setting Kleon in the worst possible light, as a wild and reckless boaster. But again evidence may be brought to question Thucydides' judgments, and to point to unfair treatment. In the first place, as Woodhead has noted,⁵⁹ Thucydides' initial attack on Kleon is based primarily on mind-reading.⁶⁰ The historian

56. IV,27,5.

57. IV,27-28.

58. IV,28,5 (trans. C. F. Smith).

59. Woodhead, p.313.

60. As also is the derogatory account of Kleon in V,7,1-3.

writes, "But Kleon, knowing that their suspicions were directed against him..."⁶¹ and "realizing now that he would... be obliged to bring the same report as the messengers...."⁶²

With the known evidence of Thucydides' hostility against Kleon, of what value are these mind-reading observations? Did ὑποψία really exist? Again, the evidence of later action indicates that Kleon would not have been "obliged" simply to report as the messengers did, but would have been ready to take action in the predicament. Yet, as the narrative continues in IV,27,4,⁶³ the historian succeeds in casting a grim reflection upon the person of Kleon.

The more serious anomaly in the narrative, however, is the historian's description (IV,28,5) of "the Athenian people who are supposed to have enjoyed the excellent joke of putting an incompetent man against his own will at the head of this enterprise, in order that they might amuse themselves with his blunders."⁶⁴ But the irresponsibility and levity of such action stands in direct contrast to the examples of the democracy at work, and is inconsonant with the proven integrity

61. IV,27,3 (trans. C. F. Smith).

62. IV,27,4 (trans. C. F. Smith).

63. ἢ ταῦτα λέγειν οἷς διέβαλλεν ἢ τάναντία εἰπὼν
ψευδῆς φανήσεσθαι,...

64. Grote, p.254. Grote is inaccurate here. The joke centred upon Kleon's promise and confidence of victory. Nevertheless in this caustic sentence Grote well brings to light the mood of mocking and virulent hostility that Thucydides felt convinced was both Kleon's desert and his lot on this occasion.

of the Athenian demos.⁶⁵ Woodhead comments, "The σώφρονες may well have been happy to play ducks and drakes with an Athenian fleet: not so the δῆμος whose lives were at stake.... They demanded and exacted responsible administration, and were themselves prepared to serve on the same terms."⁶⁶ If the people had been disposed to conduct their public business upon such whims and fancies as are here implied, they would have made a very different figure from that which their achievements present. The evidence strongly suggests that Thucydides has exaggerated the report in order to make Kleon contemptible, but in doing so has made the Athenian people look ridiculous.⁶⁷

Again the connotation of the words used by the historian succeeds in indicating where his sympathies lay. There are connotations of approval in the words σώφρονες, ἐλπίς, γνώμη, referring to men who apparently took vast pleasure in the prospect of a disaster that would certainly have involved many others besides Kleon. Kleon himself is ridiculed through such words as γέλως, κουφολογία. Throughout

65. The work of A. H. M. Jones, Athenian Democracy, is in large measure an attempt to show the general integrity and strength of the Athenian democracy.

66. Woodhead, p.315; he perhaps exaggerates.

67. See Grote, pp.255-256, for an imaginative portrayal of what might have happened in the assembly on that day.

IV,27-28 Thucydides draws with relish on vocabulary charged with disparagement and criticism of Kleon, making obvious his complete contempt of the orator.

However, in any comparison of Kleon with his political adversaries it is Kleon who is to be commended, for, whatever the justness of the rejection of the peace-offer, the die had been cast for a vigorous war-policy, and the necessity for the capture of the island. But in this context, Kleon's political adversaries emerge as timid and careless of public interest,⁶⁸ seeking only to turn the existing disappointment and dilemma into an opportunity of ruining a party opponent, whatever the cost. The taunt "that it was an easy matter, if the generals were men"⁶⁹ must have stung; nevertheless, Kleon was in the right to criticize the lack of response of Nikias and the other generals. And the latter must receive the severest censure in forcing a political enemy into the supreme command against his own protest, ready to risk the lives of many soldiers and the destinies of the state in order to satisfy themselves in bringing him

68. Plutarch states that on this occasion Nikias was overcome by sheer cowardice and fear of failure, Nikias, 8,1. The biographer also quotes Aristophanes' sneer in the Birds,

Heavens, this is no time for us to doze
Or dither about, like our friend Nicias!

(638-639, translation by Ian Scott-Kilvert [The Penguin Classics, 1960]).

69. IV,27,5.

into disgrace and ruin. Yet their sentiments are implicitly endorsed by the historian. Although Thucydides informs us that the Athenians were somewhat inclined to mount an expedition against Pylos (IV,27,4), and that Nikias was to lead it (IV,28,3), the readiness with which the latter was prepared to relinquish his command suggests that, had Kleon not accepted the challenge and gone forward with Demosthenes, Nikias and his friends could well have laid aside the enterprise and reopened negotiations for peace under circumstances most disadvantageous for Athens. But Kleon, through his vigour and courage, saved Athens from default and proceeded to the most important success of Athens throughout the whole war. For this Thucydides attributes to him not only no credit whatever, but in fact the most stinging abuse.

Kleon proceeded to Pylos, and the victory was consummated. Grote writes, "The events of Sphakteria... discredited the military prowess of Sparta in the eyes of all Greece."⁷⁰ But the judgement of Thucydides is studied to assure that the estimation of Kleon will not rise. Woodhead states it succinctly, "Thucydides cannot avoid reporting that the ὑπόσχεσις ἀπέβη but he can and does turn it sour by adding καίπερ μανιώδης ."⁷¹

70. Grote, p.263.

71. Woodhead, p.314.

The achievement, however, far from being the boast of a madman, was, at the least, the result of a reasonable calculation. The interval of twenty days was not extravagantly small, considering the proximity of Pylos, and the attack on so small an island could not occupy more than one or two days. Kleon brought with him fresh reinforcements, and selected Demosthenes, an enterprising and experienced leader, as his colleague. The promise indicated a reasonable and modest anticipation of the future. And while undoubtedly the military success against Sphacteria belongs to Demosthenes, yet, had Kleon not stood up in the assembly and defied the gloomy predictions of the envoys, Demosthenes might never have been reinforced nor put in a position to take the island.

The next episode in which Kleon is involved and therefore to which we must cast our attention is the Amphipolitan engagement.

A new turn in the events of the war took place when Brasidas along with a force consisting mainly of hoplites marched north to the Chalkidic peninsula. This venture came as a response to the invitation of Perdikkas and the Olynthians, who feared more Athenian successes in Thrace. Brasidas, through sheer brilliance of personality, tact, diplomacy, and enterprise, had managed to pass through Thessaly, and had occupied Akanthos in 424. Akanthos was an Andrian colony, and its action led to the adhesion of two other Andrian colonies, Stageiros (IV, 88, 2) and Argilos

(IV,103,4). Argilos, jealous of Amphipolis, aided Brasidas in taking Amphipolis, which he did before Thucydides, who was with the fleet at Thasos, could resist. Thucydides managed to save only Eion, at the mouth of the Strymon. Brasidas then roamed the Chalkidike, and took possession of the district of Akte and of Torone (424/3). Later Skione and Mende revolted and invited Brasidas to provide support. The war had thus moved into the Chalkidic area, and it was to this situation that Kleon turned his energies.

The successes of Brasidas encouraged the signing of the Armistice of 423. The peace-party at Athens was anxious to conclude a peace, and Sparta was particularly ready at this time when the favourable Chalkidic enterprise might give her more bargaining powers than she had had a year previously. But the revolt of Skione and Mende ruptured any possibility of peace, and at the end of the year public feeling in Athens had changed, and the influence of Kleon was strong enough to support a campaign directly to the Chalkidic peninsula. The result was the battle of Amphipolis in which both Kleon and Brasidas were killed. The death of Brasidas and the removal of opposition to Nicias led to the conclusion of peace in 421.

Again, within the context of this narrative, Thucydides directs bitter attack upon Kleon. The evidence, once more, indicates that the historian's criticism is unjust. Upon the death of the two leaders, Thucydides concludes the ac-

count thus:

But when the Athenians had met defeat at Amphipolis also and both Kleon and Brasidas had been killed - the men who on either side had been most opposed to peace, the one because of his success and the reputation he had derived from the war, the other because he thought if quiet were restored he would be more manifest in his villainies and less credited in his calumnies - then....⁷²

The first question Thucydides raises is whether, in fact, Kleon did have any real interest in fostering the war.⁷³ Kleon himself was not a military leader, and both Grote⁷⁴ and Gomme⁷⁵ recall Phokion's words⁷⁶ that remind us that

72. V,16,1 (transl. C. F. Smith).

73. Gomme (Comm., III, p.660) points out that the motives Thucydides attributes to Kleon for wanting the war to go on are, in the time of Aristophanes (Peace, 605-611), very like those attributed to Perikles for starting it.

74. Grote, p.368.

75. Gomme, Comm., III, p.660.

76. Plutarch, Phok., 16,2: ἔγωγε καὶ ταῦτα εἰδὼς ὅτι πολέμου μὲν ὄντος ἐγὼ σοῦ, εἰρήνης δὲ γενομένης σὺ ἐμοῦ ἄρξεις.

Compare also Thucydides, VI,33-36, where Athenagoras is portrayed as an ultra-pacific demagogue. He feared a war that would give power to Hermokrates and his like (VI,38,3).

war raised up leaders who would most likely overshadow the influence of the demagogue. It would be in time of peace, when his influence would be more powerful and prominent, that the demagogue would be less subject to criticism and less vulnerable to incrimination. Furthermore, evidence indicates that Kleon had not been always warlike. Plutarch reports that Kleon commenced his political career as an opponent of Perikles, when the latter was urging the necessity and wisdom of beginning the Peloponesian War.⁷⁷

At the same time, even if Kleon had vested interests in continuing the war, the facts indicate that an energetic warlike policy at this time, when Brasidas was moving unchecked through Chalkidike, was the soundest and best policy for Athens to pursue. Gomme notes that this was the policy common to all parties and persons at Athens.⁷⁸ In the summer of 423 Nikias and Nikostratos had campaigned with success at Mende and Skione,⁷⁹ and Nikias later pretended, at least, to have been in favour of action against Chalkidike.⁸⁰ Judged in terms of Perikles' exhortations,

77. Plutarch, Perikles, 33-35.

78. Gomme, More Essays, p.113.

79. IV, 129-130.

80. VI, 10, 5.

Kleon's policy was a logical plan of action.⁸¹ Perikles urged at the outset of the war that the Athenians were to stand in rigorous defence of the city, and to keep a firm hand upon their allies.⁸² If any blame should be laid, it should fall to Nicias for not interfering immediately after Brasidas first broke into Thrace.

Again the war-policy of Kleon, and his sound judgement in urging it, may be defended by an examination of the peace-policy of Nicias at this time. The peace-party in Athens carried the vote for an armistice with Sparta in the belief that negotiation with Sparta would arrest the progress of Brasidas in Thrace, also with the further expectation that this armistice would mature into peace.⁸³ But Kleon could well have realized that any faith in Spartan ability to control Brasidas when he was in the full flower of success unopposed was precarious. And the instinct proved true. The only way to stop Brasidas and expect a repossession of Chalkidike was by an energetic expedition to the scene. The war-policy was directly in accord with Periklean strategy and also founded on a juster estimate of the situation than the peace-policy of Nicias.

81. Gomme, More Essays, p.107 writes, "Kleon then followed the main lines of strategy laid down by Perikles." Finley's statement (Thucydides, p.35), "That he [Thucydides] owed his exile to the abandonment of the latter's [Perikles'] defensive strategy," is hard to understand.

82. II,13,2.

83. IV,117,1.

But again there is no hint in the History of any acclamation of Kleon. He is condemned as a warmonger, "because he thought if quiet were restored he would be more manifest in his villainies and less credited in his calumnies." The words are harsh and unfair to Kleon, and Grote pronounces them "careless in regard to truth and the instruction of his readers...."⁸⁴ They are one more contribution to a treatment of Kleon that Gomme says suggests "a strong bias, a hatred and contempt for Kleon which has not been justified by Thucydides' own narrative."⁸⁵

However, apart from the open criticism of Kleon's war policy, Thucydides fills the narrative of the episode with derogatory comment toward Kleon, comment that is inconsistent with the facts as Thucydides gives them, or, at the least, difficult to reconcile with them. Kleon is commissioned to Chalkidike and leaves in the late summer of 422. He succeeds in recapturing Torone, a considerable victory that Gomme equates in merit with that of Brasidas over Amphipolis.⁸⁶ In the Thucydidean account, however, the success is simply noted and left. Kleon then sailed around from Torone to Amphipolis, and established himself at Eion, to await the Thracian mercenaries. The narrative then says

84. Grote, V, p.371.

85. Gomme, More Essays, p.115.

86. Gomme, More Essays, p.114.

that Kleon was compelled to move because of the restlessness of his troops,⁸⁷ yet there has been no mention of any long delay. Woodhead argues that Kleon's move at that time, before the Thracian reinforcements were obtained, was defensible regardless of what the pressure was or was not from the troops.⁸⁸ The troops then began to discuss the quality of Kleon's leadership, becoming apprehensive of the weakness and incompetence of their commander as against the skill and valour opposed to them.⁸⁹ Yet there is no mention anywhere in the text to suggest either that the Athenians had a particular fear of Brasidas or that Kleon was hitherto guilty of lack of intelligence or cowardice. The Athenians had met Brasidas before and with success, and the narrative in fact suggests that the hoplites, rather than reluctant to move, were full of energy to act, and full of confidence.⁹⁰ Kleon, in the expedition thus far, had shown marked vigour and initiative.

Thucydides continues that "the temper of the general was what it had been at Pylos, his success on that occasion having given him confidence in his capacity."⁹¹

87. V,7,1.

88. Woodhead, p.307.

89. V,7,2.

90. V,7,2.

91. V,7,3: καὶ ἐχρήσατο τῷ τρόπῳ ὅπερ καὶ ἐς τὴν Πύλον εὐτυχήσας ἐπίστευσέ τι φρονεῖν.

But if Kleon had been so filled with arrogant confidence⁹² since Pylos, it is strange that he had commanded no significant expedition since then. More likely he was reluctant to accept the command to Amphipolis, as he had been to Sphacteria. Thucydides, however, pictures Kleon as full of confidence as soon as he moves, in spite of the earlier statement that he was cautious enough to send for reinforcements and to await them at Eion.⁹³ The impression of arrogance continues as the historian reports that "he had no expectation that anybody would come against him for battle."⁹⁴ Yet Woodhead reminds us⁹⁵ that here, as elsewhere,⁹⁶ Thucydides shows himself to be a remarkable mind-reader. What was Thucydides' source of information? "A few prisoners, eager to blame their misfortune on their dead general? Disgruntled hoplites, casting back in their memories nineteen or more years later?"⁹⁷

92. See Gomme (Comm., III, p.639) for an examination of the meaning of τῷ τρόπῳ. Gomme concludes, "I am doubtful whether Thucydides had made clear to himself what was wrong with Kleon's strategy."

93. V,6,3. Compare also V,10,3.

94. V,7,3.

95. Woodhead, p.308.

96. V,7,2.

97. Woodhead, p.308.

There are more inconsistencies in the narrative. Thucydides claims that Kleon regretted not having brought up siege-engines, yet the narrative reports it was not Kleon's idea at all to make the reconnaissance. The move was forced by the restlessness of the soldiers. Again, in V,8,2-3, Brasidas' position is described as a difficult one that demands a strategem, whereas in V,8,4 he is shown to have the advantage. Furthermore, whereas Brasidas states that the right wing that had exposed its flank⁹⁸ would not stand, it does in fact stand,⁹⁹ without comment from Thucydides. Hence in the light of these discrepancies Gomme asks, "Has Thucydides made clear to himself what was wrong in Kleon's strategy?"¹⁰⁰ And yet, in spite of the obscurities, Thucydides seems quite clear what was in the minds of the generals.

With respect to the battle itself, the narrative reveals the superior generalship of Brasidas, and Kleon outwitted. What was the nature of Kleon's behaviour in the thick of the battle? It is obvious that Thucydides again intends to condemn him, and have him marked as a coward. He writes, "Kleon, indeed, as he had not intended from the

98. V,10,5
99. V,10,8.

100. Gomme, More Essays, p.116.

first to stand his ground, fled at once and was overtaken and slain by a Myrkinian targeteer."¹⁰¹ But ὡς πρῶτον οὐ διενοεῖτο μένειν surely refers back to the policy of V,10,3, οὐ βουλόμενος μάχη διαγωνίσασθαι, his strategy as commander. However, εὐθύς φεύγων is clearly meant to condemn, in contrast to his troops, who were standing their ground. But Kleon, anxious though he was to get away, had not gone off with the left wing, but had stayed with the rear, for the Myrkinioi were all with the latter.¹⁰² How, then, did Kleon die? Did he simply desert and flee, or did he withdraw because he had ordered a withdrawal? He was killed by a Myrkinian targeteer, and, "for all that we know, he was struck in the chest."¹⁰³

Kleon is killed in the battle, and the expedition fails. Yet when it is told that the troops were the best and the best-armed hoplites in Athens,¹⁰⁴ that they began their scornful murmurs against Kleon before he had committed any error, despising him for his backwardness when he was not strong, and only showing reasonable prudence in awaiting reinforcements, it becomes apparent that the hoplites were not only unjust toward Kleon but were as

101. V,10,9 (transl. C. F. Smith).

102. V,8,4.

103. Gomme, More Essays, p.118.

104. V,8,2.

great a cause of the total failure of the expedition as any military incompetence of the commander. The whole expedition undoubtedly was enfeebled from the beginning because of the hostility of the hoplites. As to the accuracy of Thucydides' portrait of Kleon at Amphipolis, Gomme writes, "With the evidence of Thucydides' bias before us, and considering the uncertainty of any report of this kind from the middle of a confused battle which ended in a humiliating defeat, I would not be certain that he was, on this occasion, sufficiently awake to his own principles of work, I,22,3."¹⁰⁵

Scholars have noted the animosity and prejudice displayed in the Amphipolitan episode and accounted for them by the belief that the exile Thucydides suffered through his failure to relieve the city was probably moved by Kleon himself.¹⁰⁶ But the evidence, even as Thucydides himself gives it, indicates that the historian was at fault. For according to Thucydides his appointment in the Thracian region was to Amphipolis, and not especially to Thasos,¹⁰⁷ for he had been sent along as joint

105. Gomme, Comm., III, p.652.

106. Grote (p.266) derives the evidence from Markellinos, Vita, 26. Gomme, Comm., III, p.661, accepts the possibility without citing any evidence, as does A. Andrewes, Phoenix, p.80, again citing no evidence.

107. IV,104,4; V,26,5.

commander with Eukles of the whole Thracian district. Both Thucydides and Eukles must have known of Brasidas' successes at Akanthos and Stageiros; they would have known the sentiments of Andrian Argilos, a town whose territory bordered on the Strymon, whose people were disaffected toward Athens. Yet with such foreknowledge, the one leaves the bridge, the only access to the city, under a feeble guard,¹⁰⁸ and is caught unprepared, the other is half a day's travel off at Thasos, out of all possible area of danger. Grote writes, "We may be sure that the absence of Thucydides with his fleet at Thasos was one essential condition in the plot laid by Brasidas with the Argilians."¹⁰⁹ Grote continues, "When I consider the immense value of Amphipolis to Athens, combined with the conduct whereby it was lost, I cannot think that there was a single Athenian, or a single Greek, who would deem the penalty of banishment too severe."¹¹⁰

108. IV, 103, 5.

109. Grote, V, p. 332. See also the very words of Thucydides himself, IV, 105, 1-2: ὁ Βρασίδης δεδιὼς καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς Θάσου τῶν νεῶν βοήθειαν ... ἠπείγετο προκατασχεῖν, εἰ δύναίτο, τὴν πόλιν, μὴ ἀφικνουμένου αὐτοῦ.

110. Grote, V, pp. 333-334. The truth of this statement is well exemplified by the fact that after the death of Kleon in 422, and the removal of his influence, there was no move whatever to reverse the misfortune of the historian. One may wonder how Finley justifies the statement (Thucydides, p. 32), "When therefore he [Thucydides] lost Amphipolis and was promptly exiled, it seems almost certain that he was made a scapegoat for Cleon's own losses at Delium."

CHAPTER TWO

The Evidence of Other Sources

Before we analyse and compare with this portrait by Thucydides the only other contemporary source, Aristophanes, it will be informative to set forth the evidence from other ancient sources on Kleon, namely, Diodoros Sikelos, Aristotle and Plutarch. Diodoros is not rated highly as a critical historian, nevertheless his evidence is interesting in supplying a less condemnatory account of Kleon than that of Thucydides. Like the latter, Diodoros first names Kleon in relation to the Mytilenean incident (XII,55,8), and the judgement upon Kleon is presented in the same light. He is described as cruel of temper and violent. The narrative of Pylos is treated only in summary fashion (XII,63); the proposals of peace by Sparta are presented, but rejected by the Athenian people, without a mention of Kleon. Then it is announced (XII,63,3-4) simply that the Spartans surrendered and that they were led prisoners to Athens by the demagogue Kleon, now strategos.

Next it is recorded (XII,73,2) that in 422 the Athenians appointed Kleon again as strategos, and that they entrusted to him the leadership of the expedition to Thrace. The account is similar to that of Thucydides. The demagogue took Torone, laid siege to Eion, and made the approach to Amphipolis.

However, in the battle and death of Kleon, there is a notable divergence from Thucydides. Quite contrary to the evidence of the History, Diodoros states that the battle was fought bravely by both sides, that for some time the outcome remained uncertain and that the opposing leaders vied in every way to consummate victory by hurling themselves into battle with conspicuous energy (XII,74,1-2).

With respect to the death of the demagogue, Diodoros, after having reported that Brasidas fell heroically in combat, affirms that Kleon suffered likewise, and with equal valour. He has no mention whatever of the flight of Kleon, but states that, after the death of the two leaders, the two sides continued in battle until the Spartans prevailed. Hence, in spite of the anti-democratic tradition¹ that Diodoros has clearly used, there is a distinctly more honourable version of Kleon than that of Thucydides.

The witness of Aristotle is much less favourable. In the Ath. Pol. (28,1), Aristotle affirms that at Athens the public government deteriorated greatly after the death of Perikles, with a clear allusion to Kleon, of whom there is given, further on, a condemnatory description (28,3); after the death of Perikles he led to ruin the people through his wild leadership; from the beginning of his period of influence

1. I refer to Diodoros' uncritical appropriation of the main stream of tradition about Kleon that harks back to Thucydides.

he yelled and hurled insults from the Bema; he spoke in the Assembly with his cloak girt up about him, while others spoke with decorum.² There is no doubt that Aristotle harbours an aristocratic sympathy, and his deprecation of the demagogue is typical of criticism that is familiar from both Thucydides and Aristophanes.

Plutarch is just as realistic about Kleon's faults, but is distinctly more favourable to him. The allusions to the demagogue are concentrated almost entirely in the biography of Nicias. After noting the impudence and insolence of Kleon (2,2), the author informs us that he had achieved a position of power by "pampering the people and finding jobs for all."³ The biographer alludes to the power of the demagogue to sway the Athenian masses (3,2); he speaks of Kleon's intolerable arrogance and audacity (8,3), and states that it was he who "broke down all the conventions of decent behaviour in the Assembly."⁴

2. M. L. Paladini, "Considerazioni sulle Fonti della Storia di Cleone," *Historia*, VII (1958), p.53, notes, "Inoltre l'affermazione che Cleone 'per primo' gridò ed insultò dalla tribuna, si trova anche presso lo Scoliaista di Luciano (Schol. Lucian., Tim30, p.115 Rabe)."

3. See also Plutarch, *Mor.*, 807a.

4. Plutarch has the same report as that cited by Paladini from the Scholiast on Lucian (see note 2): it was he who first introduced shouting and abuse (8,3). Plutarch continues that Kleon had the habit of slapping his thigh,

The same criticism had been made by Aristotle. It is not possible to say definitely that Aristotle lies behind Plutarch's account, but there seems to have been a tradition already established that Plutarch accepts.

In chapters 7 and 8 Plutarch records the incidents of Pylos and Sphacteria. The Spartan peace-embassy is rejected, chiefly because of Kleon (7,1-2). But while Kleon's violence in rejecting the peace offers, in the Thucydidean account, is represented merely as a consistent part of the behaviour of the demagogue, in Plutarch Kleon's refusal is motivated at least partly by his hatred of and political opposition to Nicias. "He regarded Nicias as his natural enemy and it was because he saw him cooperating so eagerly with the Spartans that he persuaded the Athenians to refuse their offer" (7,2). Chapter 7, 2-6 follows Thucydides: the indignation of the people against Kleon for the difficulty that Pylos had become; the charges against Nicias, the predicament of Kleon and his spirited response. The biographer does not hesitate to report the embarrassment of Kleon, his temper, his vanity, his κούφολογία, but in the interpretation

throwing open his dress and striding up and down the platform as he spoke. He charges that Kleon's habits produced among the politicians an irresponsibility and a disregard for propriety that before long were to throw the affairs of Athens into chaos (8,3). There is an interesting parallel made by the biographer between Gaius Gracchus and Kleon in Tiberius Gracchus 2,2.

of the whole affair Kleon is far less maligned by Plutarch than by Thucydides; there are no amused reflections by "sensible men" λογίζομένοις δυοῖν ἀγαθοῖν τοῦ ἑτέρου τεύξεσθαι (IV,28,5), but the most censorious remark is, "The Athenians were more inclined to laugh than to believe."⁵

In the story of the actual campaign at Pylos (8,1), again Plutarch's version is the less discrediting. The account reads, "However, this time he had good fortune, served as general most successfully along with Demosthenes, and within the time which he had specified brought home as prisoners of war, their arms surrendered, all the Spartans on Sphacteria who had not fallen in battle."⁶ The fulfilment of the victory is reported without irony, indeed the emphasis lies on the shame of Nikias. Finally, in agreement with Thucydides (V,16,1), Plutarch remarks that Kleon and Brasidas were, respectively, the two most opposed to the peace, and that the war concealed the evil practices of Kleon and gave him the opportunity to perpetrate great injustices.⁷ As to his death, the biographer mentions simply that both persons were killed in the battle of Amphipolis (9,3), a report that

5. Nikias, 7,4: τοῖς δ' Ἀθηναίοις ἐπῆλθε γελάσαι μέγα μᾶλλον ἢ πιστεῦσαι.

6. Nikias, 8,1. Transl. by B. Perrin.

7. Nikias, 9,3.

seems to approach the noncommittal version of Diodoros, especially in the omission of Kleon's flight during the battle.

The tone of the relevant passage of Plutarch's Moralia is condemnatory. Plutarch reports an occasion when the Assembly was suspended by Kleon's insolence and fickleness.⁸ Kleon is mentioned as an example of the folly and vehemence by which a person may, by himself, subdue the city (Mor., 805c-d). Kleon is urged to put aside his longing for wealth, the mania for creating disturbances, his spirit of envy and wickedness, for he was hostile toward the honest, but ready to pander to the multitude for favour, and allied with the worst against the best (Mor., 806f-807a). Kleon is attacked because, in being avid for glory and power, he wishes to be general, yet he is not eligible either in nature or training (Mor., 812e). Kleon and his followers are like drone bees with stings (Mor., 818c).⁹

8. Mor., 799d. The same incident is reported in Nikias, 7,7, and Paladini notes that the Scholiast on Lucian (Tim., 30) attributes to Theopompos a similar anecdote, "esposto in maniera similissima a Plutarco" (p.55). Theopompos, averse to the Athenian democracy, may have supplied Plutarch with much of his material.

9. As in Plato, Republic, 552c-d.

Hence the portrait of Kleon suffers in emphasis according to the anti-democratic tradition. Nevertheless, it is clear that Plutarch has also looked to other sources for his compilations, and it may be seen that the tradition formed by Thucydides and darkened by Aristophanes and the comics has elements here and there, in which the condemnation of Kleon is considerably lessened. It is our task now to turn to the other major source, Aristophanes.

CHAPTER THREE

Aristophanes' Portrait of Kleon, and the Comic Tradition.

The fact that Aristophanes' portrait of Kleon is generally consonant with that of Thucydides is enough for Gomme, who writes, "When the pictures drawn, independently, by two men, both contemporaries, of such very different temper and interests as Thucydides and Aristophanes, agree or complement each other, there is every reason to suppose that they represent the truth."¹ On the other hand Grote calls into question the validity of the evidence of either when he writes, "It is through this representation [referring to the portrait of Kleon in the Knights of Aristophanes] that Kleon has been transmitted to posterity, crucified by a poet who admits himself to have a personal grudge against him, just as he has been commemorated in the prose of an historian whose banishment he had proposed."² The task of this chapter

1. A. W. Gomme, "Thucydides and Kleon: the Second Battle of Amphipolis," Hellenika, XIII (1954), p.1.

2. Grote, V, p.392. See p.36; note 106. Aside from the fact that scholars appear to believe that Kleon may have been responsible for the historian's exile, it is difficult to assess the validity of the evidence available.

will be to examine the Aristophanic portrait of Kleon, and to explore the questions why and with what validity Aristophanes portrayed Kleon as he did.

The first play the poet gave to the public was performed in the beginning of the year 427.³ It was called The Banqueters.⁴ The fragments remaining indicate that it was a satire on the intrigue and sloth of the youths of the day. This is the first presentation of a theme that runs right through Aristophanes, the censure of the degenerating character of the Athenian youth. It was the "bad young man" from whom the play drew its vigour and who was the centre of the action. His father had apprenticed him to learned masters with the intent of a disciplined and traditional education. "But," he said, "he learned none of those things that I wanted him to learn. Instead of doing so, he learned how to drink, to sing in topsy-turvy manner, to love nothing but Syracusan cookery, the pleasures of the Sybarites and bumpers of Chian wine from Laconian cups."⁵

3. B. B. Rogers, The Comedies of Aristophanes, Introduction to Acharnians, I(London, 1910), p.v.

4. The play is alluded to in the Clouds, 528-532.

Line 529, ὁ σώφρων τε χῶ καταπύγων ἄριστ' ἠκουσάτην

, refers to characters in the play.

5. Theodorus Kock, Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta (Lipzig, 1880), I, p.446, fr. 216. Translation quoted from M. Croiset, Aristophanes and the Political Parties at Athens, p.33.

His son had also become initiated in rhetoric and in sharp practice, and from there became a sycophant and public denunciator, who had grown rich on threats and calumny. He had acquired all the vices of that profession, and boasted of being gambler, drunkard, debauchee, treating his own father with cynical insolence.⁶ From these fragments may be seen the young poet's first attack against the professional politicians, that is, those persons who were beginning to transform politics into a lucrative trade in Athens, and who were, in the poet's eyes, hastening a moral degeneration through their perverseness. Aristophanes saw it as a real service to the democracy to chastise them.⁷

The Banqueters was followed, in 426,⁸ by the Babylonians, performed at the city festival of Dionysos. It was a political satire of a much bitterer, much bolder and far more personal kind than the first play. It was written under the shadow of the Mytilenean affair, after punishment had been debated before the popular assembly for the second time, and the severity of Kleon's proposal had been reversed by a

6. Kock, fr. 198-225.

7. Acharnians, 641-642.

8. Rogers, I, Acharnians, p.57. See Lines 378-382.

slender majority. There may well have been in Athens at the time feelings among some sections of the people that excessive burdens had been laid upon many of the allies. And there must have been some truth in the claim that it was the politicians of the day who made these burdens heavier through their severity. The politicians were charged with exacting monies and crushing those who refused to buy them off. Much of this kind of talk would be false, but some true, and such truth as there was in it sufficed to make people who were restless and discontented accept it without question. And so it came about that the entire responsibility for a state of affairs that was attributable to them in part, but in part only, was placed upon the leaders of the people, and especially, by the playwright, upon Kleon. Hence the poet Aristophanes selected Kleon to become the target and butt of attack in the play.

Unfortunately detailed knowledge about the Babylonians is meagre. The first piece of evidence is that given by the poet himself. In the parabasis of the Acharnians, Aristophanes boasts of the service he has rendered the people in his earlier comedy. He says that he taught them to distrust the hollow flattery of the orators,⁹ and he claims he has done great service to the city by forcing the

9. Acharnians, 634.

people to see the oppression to which they were subjecting the allies under the guise of democracy.¹⁰ Aristophanes boasts in his rôle of critic of Athenian tyranny over the allies. The Scholiast on Acharnians, 378, notes that in the Babylonians Aristophanes "made fun of the magistrates, of those chosen by lot as well as those who were elected, and of Cleon also."¹¹ The main victim in the attack was certainly Kleon. The influence of the demagogue at this time profoundly affected the youthful poet, who saw Kleon as the man who was responsible for all the evils from which Athenian democracy appeared to be suffering. To the poet, Kleon became the personification of these evils, and he was to feel convinced that, by overthrowing the one, he would get rid of the other.

Because of his open attack on the Athenian policy and the Athenian people, the poet was charged by Kleon with scoffing at his country and insulting the people.¹² It was no doubt at the door of Kleon that the poet had laid all the horrors of the policy he condemned; however, in principle, this policy had been approved by the people

10. Acharnians, 642.

11. Schol. Acharnians, line 378. Transl. from Croiset, Aristophanes, p.41.

12. Acharnians, 630-631.

themselves, and they must have been offended.¹³ The play did not win a prize, and reaction must have been strong enough for Kleon to be convinced he could get his aggressor punished.

The nature of the attack is in dispute. The only evidence is what Aristophanes gives in the Acharnians:

Aye and I know what I myself endured
At Cleon's hands for last year's Comedy,
How to the Council-house he haled me off,
And slanged, and lied, and slandered, and betongued me,
Roaring Cycloborus-wise; till I well nigh
Was done to death, ...¹⁴

Further on, Dikaiopolis adds:

Nor now can Cleon slander me because,
With strangers present, I defame the State.
'Tis the Lenaea, and we're all alone;¹⁵
No strangers yet have come;...

The evidence of the ancient commentators does not give any more information, except that the scholiast on Acharnians, 377, adds that Kleon brought a suit impugning the genuine-

13. The play was performed at the Great Dionysia, at the time when the allies brought their annual tribute to Athens. They would not fail to attend the celebrations of the season (Acharnians, 643-644). Hence here was a play, criticizing the oppression practised by Athens, enacted in the very presence of the people who, it was boldly claimed, were being oppressed.

14. Lines 377-382, trans. B.B. Rogers, Aristophanes (London and Camb. Mass., 1940).

15. 502-504, trans. B. B. Rogers.

ness of the poet's citizenship. This second suit, however, is not likely contemporaneous with the first, and probably occurred after the appearance of the Knights.¹⁶ Aristophanes was seriously alarmed at the accusation, but acquitted. Nevertheless it is interesting to notice that in the year following, 425, Aristophanes, aside from a few satirical allusions, attacked neither Kleon personally, nor the demagogues as a class.

At the Lenaeon festival of that year he brought out the Acharnians, an ardent declaration in favour of peace. There are only a few allusions to Kleon's misfortunes and vices. There is probably a reference to him in the warning not to trust those who betray by flattery, cajolery, adulation and lies.¹⁷ There is also no doubt an allusion to Kleon and his followers when it is said of the old that they are mocked by stripling orators, who prosecute them in the tribunal with their "pert forensic skill, grappling us with writs and warrants, holding up our age to scorn."¹⁸ Men like Kleon are evidently included among the ἄνδρες πονηροί,¹⁹ those who

16. See p.58 below.

17. Acharnians, 635.

18. Acharnians, 680-682, trans. B. B. Rogers.

19. Acharnians, 699.

prosecute the benefactors of the country.

At the beginning of the play, Dikaiopolis declares his joy of the preceding year when, thanks to the knights, Kleon was compelled to "vomit" up five talents.²⁰ The explanation of this reference is probably that in that year Kleon had proposed a reduction of contributions for some of the allies, a proposal rejected by the knights. The ill-wishers of Kleon claimed he had received money to make the proposal, and gloried in the fact that he had to return it.²¹ A further taunt at Kleon by Dikaiopolis (Acharnians, 659-664) suggests that, whatever the earlier charge had been, Aristophanes now felt sufficiently assured of his position to renew his attack on his adversary. In the Acharnians, however, it is not Kleon who is primarily under attack, but the instigator of the war, Perikles. According to the poet, Perikles had begun the war because "the Megarians...stole.... two of Aspasia's hussies."²² Aristophanes probably cared nought about the truth or falsity of the rumour. However, he was always ready to

20. Acharnians, 6-7.

21. This is the interpretation of Croiset, pp.52-53, whom I follow. According to the Scholiast on line 6, Theopompos reports an actual suit brought by the knights against Kleon. B. B. Rogers accepts the lines as true, The Comedies of Aristophanes (London, 1910), I, p.3.

22. Acharnians, 523-537. Transl. by B. B. Rogers.

capitalize on gossip and, by his attack, he expressed his convictions that the war had begun because of petty incidents that a competent statesman should have been above.

The poet renews his war upon the demagogical party and its leaders with fresh violence in the Knights, performed at the Lenaeon festival of the year 424. The attack was already forming in the mind of the poet as he has the chorus of the Acharnians say:

No debate! Thee we hate Worse than Cleon's self,
whose skin I'll ere long²³ Cut to shoes For the
worthy Knights to use.

It is in the parabasis of the Wasps, however, performed two years after the Knights, that Aristophanes records the battle that he set himself to wage against Kleon in the Knights. He was to be a second Herakles intent on ridding the land of the monsters and prodigies that were infesting it. The first labour of this Attic Herakles was to attack the all-powerful demagogue Kleon. "He came in the mood of a Heracles forth to grapple at once with the mightiest foes."²⁴

The Knights was written at the time when the demagogue's success at Sphakteria had lifted him into public acclaim and celebrity. It was exhibited at the first Dionysia since

23. Acharnians, 300-301, Rogers' translation.

24. See Wasps, 1029-1037.

Kleon's triumphant return with the Spartan captives. He was no doubt present at the performance.

Kleon is represented as a man whose power lies solely in anticipating and satisfying all the desires of the multitude.²⁵ As soon as another politician of the same stamp dares to apply the same system of government with still greater impudence and vulgarity, that politician is bound to oust Kleon. Political men of whom Kleon is the consummate type have nothing in common with the honest and the educated, but are recruited from the wretches off the street, the ignorant and licentious.²⁶ Agorakritos, who is little more than a savage caricature of Kleon, called upon to speak, solicits

Ye Gods of knavery, Skitals, and Phenaces,
And ye Beresceths, Cobals, Mothon, and
Thou Agora, whence my youthful training came,
Now give me boldness²⁷ and a ready tongue
And shameless voice!

The Sausage-Seller summons to his aid all the powers of Impudence and Trickery, the powers of Frivolity, Folly, Cheating, and Drunken Wantonness.

The demagogue is attacked, again, because of his raucous, brawling voice. He is given the name Paphlagon,²⁸

25. Thucydides has represented Kleon similarly, as one whose rôle it is to encourage the people to follow its own impulse (IV,21,3). Thucydides uses the same verb ἐνέηγε of Alkibiades (VI,15,2).

26. Knights, 180-181; 185-187; 191-193.

27. Knights, 634-638, Rogers.

28. παφλάζω : to splutter, fret, fume, chafe.

His voice is likened to the roar of the Kykloboros.²⁹
He is skilled in currying favour like a dog that fawns
on his master.³⁰ He is skilled in dulling the minds of
the people, before he plies his trade of bribery and ex-
tortion.³¹ He is skilled in oratory based on fraudulent
deception.³²

Aristophanes also attacks the violence and the cruelty
of the demagogue, always ready to bring false charges, to
extort, to blackmail, to bully, to indict an opponent as
a traitor.³³ Every base quality is attributed to him: in-
triguer (74-75); cheater (803, 809); thief (137, 205, 1082-
1083); racketeer (248-249); robber (296, 370, 444, 1127,
1147, 1252); perjurer (298); villain and abomination (304);
slanderer (6, 45, 64); disturber of all the public life
(303-308); contriver of plots and frauds (315-318); im-
pudent (324-325, 389-399); wicked and shameless charlatan
(331-332); coward (390); informer (437); obstinate war-
monger (792-6); boaster (903); deceiving hound-fox
"stealthily snapping, the crafty, the swift, the tricky
marauder" (1067-1068).

The poet constantly attacks the greed of Kleon. He has
brought the harvest of Pylos back to Athens (393-394), a

29. Knights, 137.

30. Knights, 48.

31. Knights, 61-63.

32. Knights, 210; 343; 351-2; 385; 395-396.

33. Knights, 67-68; 278-279; 284; 290; 294; 300.

harvest that he intends to use for his own profit. The demagogue is also charged with corruption in connection with both the surrender of Potidaea and the surrender of Mytilene. According to the poet Kleon received ten talents from Potidaea.³⁴ He allegedly received another bribe from Mytilene.³⁵

Aristophanes also charges that Kleon champions a policy of Athenian rule over all Hellas, a policy that would be especially repugnant to the poet's Panhellenism.³⁶ The Sausage-Seller retorts that Kleon's policy is geared not for Athenian benefit but that Kleon may snatch more money for himself, while the people, distracted by the war, will not be aware of his frauds.³⁷

34. Knights, 438: σὲ δ' ἐκ Ποτιδαίας ἔχοντ' εὖ οἶδα
δέκα τάλαντα . There is no evidence of this affair from any other source. Rogers, The Comedies of Aristophanes (note on Knights, 438), suggests that the poet is merely echoing a denunciation made by Kleon against the generals who had, according to the Athenians, come to terms too leniently with the inhabitants. There had been a charge of bribery.

35. Paladini demonstrates that there is confusion about the whole tradition (p.59). Apparently the Scholiast on Lucian (Tim., 30) accuses Kleon of receiving from Mytilene what Aristophanes charges he received from Potidaea.

36. Knights, 797-798: ἵνα γ' Ἑλλήνων ἄρξῃ πάντων.

37. Knights, 801-803. Compare Thucydides, V,16,1.

The poet indicates that Kleon was certainly not isolated politically. He has friends (850-854); he also has enemies: κολοιοί (1020), κώνωπες (1038), κορῶναι (1051). According to Aristophanes, Kleon made use of the uncertainty and heightened apprehension of the times by continually resorting to the use of oracles to support his statements, and more easily hold his influence:

And he chants oracles, till the dazed old man
Goes Sibyl-mad; then, when he sees him mooning,
He plies his trade.³⁸

Kleon is charged with bringing the city to ruin because of the "oracle-chants which you hatch" (817). Throughout the play there are also references to how much Kleon fawns upon and curries favour with the judges (50-51, 255, 800), as well as numerous hints regarding his mania for law suits (746, 750, 979, 1256).

From the beginning of the play to its end the poet sustains a bitter, ruthless attack upon the demagogue. Even the most hearty supporters of Aristophanes' condemnation of the demagogue agree that the portrait is only a caricature,³⁹ while Croiset states that the poet's Kleon

38. Thucydides reports that the war brought anxious suspense and abnormal excitement (II,8,1-2). He says, καὶ πολλὰ μὲν λόγια ἐλέγετο, πολλὰ δὲ χρησολόγοι ἦδον

39. Thus B. B. Rogers, The Comedies of Aristophanes, I, p. xxxvi. A. W. Gomme, More Essays, writes, "Actually there is less character-drawing altogether in the Knights than in any other play, and no character is sympathetically treated" (p. 85).

is "a monstrous composite of vice and impudence, a sort of mythological monster. He is emphatically not a human being, and for this very reason he cannot really be the personification of a class of real men."⁴⁰

What was Kleon's response to this derision? The Wasps, performed two years after the Knights, in 422, may give an indication. The chorus says:

Some there are who said that I was reconciled in amity,
When upon me Cleon pressed, and made me smart with injury,
Currying and tanning me: then as the stripes fell heavily
Th' outsiders laughed to see the sport, and hear me
squalling lustily,
Caring not a whit for me, but only looking merrily,
To know if squeezed and pressed I chanced to drop some
small buffoonery.
Seeing this, I played the ape a little bit undoubtedly.
So then, after all, the Vine-pole proved unfaithful to
the Vine.⁴¹

W. J. M. Starkie believes there is a reference here to the charge of ξενία that the Scholiast on Ach., 378, probably incorrectly, alleges was brought by Kleon against Aristophanes after the Babylonians.⁴² Starkie notes, "It is just possible that it [the charge of ξενία] was brought after the Equites, on the ground that Aristophanes was an Aeginetan."⁴³

40. Croiset, p. 83.

41. Wasps, 1284-1291, Rogers.

42. W. J. M. Starkie, The Wasps of Aristophanes (London and New York, 1897), p. 379. For Kleon's attack on the poet after the Babylonians see pp. 49-51 above.

43. Ibid.

Hence Kleon was far from crushed by the savage attack, and promptly brought the poet to his knees for his abuse.

However, Kleon's charge, if it was indeed laid, must have failed, for in 422 the poet's attacks on the demagogue are renewed in the Wasps. The theme of the play is the mania for law suits fostered by the demagogues. The attack focuses upon Kleon. The corrupted judicial system at Athens is incarnated in Philokleon, the eccentric old man. Bdelykleon is the wise son who wishes to reform him. The demagogue is attacked as the great promoter of lawsuits, of jurymen, and of pay for them. Philokleon appeals to him for help (197); the jurymen give to the demagogue their patronage, even though he is an irascible accuser (242-243); he is the great bawler and brawler who bites all but the judges, who state:

... at us, and us only, to nibble
forbears,
And sweeps off the flies that annoy us, and still with
a vigilant hand for our dignity cares.⁴⁴

He defends and protects the dikasts, and sweeps away any opponents.

Kleon, as Κύων Κυδαθηναίεύς, attends to the burlesque lawsuit against the dog Labes, the personification of the strategos Laches.⁴⁵ Kleon is demonstrated to be full of

44. Wasps, 596-597, Rogers.

45. Wasps, 895-1000. Kleon was of the deme Kydathenaion, and was called or called himself "watch-dog for the Demos,"

ἐγὼ μὲν εἶμ' ὁ κύων, πρὸ σοῦ γὰρ ἀπύω

(Knights, 1023).

greed (914), and a self-confessed thief (928). The poet recalls his encounter with Kleon (in the Knights):

In the very front of his bold career
with the jag-toothed Monster he closed in fight,
Though out of its fierce eyes flashed and flamed
the glare of Cynna's detestable light,
And a hundred horrible sycophants' tongues
were twining and flickering over its head.⁴⁶

Kleon surpasses all others as a racketeer and robber (1227); he crushes opponents by his vociferations, and is quick to threaten extermination, ruin and exile (1228-1230); he is greedy to have supreme power, and to throw the city into a turmoil (1234-1235); he is a foxy deceiver and hostile to the good (1240-1241). He holds forth in the assembly "In tone and accents like a scaled pig."⁴⁷ He is habitually corrupting the allies with thundering threats (669-671); he belongs to the category of "big talkers" (στομφάζοντας, 721).

In substance the attacks in the Wasps against Kleon simply repeat the procession of steady abuse and reviling already formulated in the Knights, while doubtless the poet avenges himself for the unknown maltreatment and threats that Kleon directed against him following the Knights.

Chronologically placed between the Knights and the Wasps is the Clouds, written at the close of the year 424,

46. Wasps, 1031-1033, Rogers.

47. Wasps, 36 : ἔχουσα φωνὴν ἔμπεπρημένης ὕδός.

and giving evidence of the poet's intention temporarily to hold aloof from politics; in the play there is little mention of the war or of the statesmen of the day. However, the poet cannot abstain from attacking Kleon upon his election as strategos,⁴⁸ and he appeals to the people to get rid of this "robber" as quickly as possible, by putting his neck in the pillory. When the tanner of leather, Paphlagon, the enemy of the gods, was elected, there occurred an eclipse of the moon and an eclipse of the sun, as the protest of nature.⁴⁸

The theme of the Clouds, however, is not political satire, but the deterioration in Athenian character wrought by the influence of the current philosophy and rhetoric. Through philosophy young people studied a thousand useless things, instead of taking part in active life. Through it they learned to doubt traditions and question morality. And the person who bore the brunt of attack, as the principal type of sophist, was Sokrates, an identification as unfair and as inaccurate as the poet's adoption of Kleon to bear the attack on the whole class of demagogues.⁴⁹

48. Clouds, 581-594, Rogers.

49. W. W. Merry, Aristophanes: The Clouds (Oxford, 1879), writes, "And in the 'Clouds' the relation of Sokrates to the Sophists is wilfully or ignorantly misunderstood; so that the picture of him as their 'fugleman' is, consequently, notoriously unfair" (p.vii).

In the very year in which Aristophanes had produced the Wasps, in the summer of 422, Kleon fell under the walls of Amphipolis in Thrace. His death assured the emergence of the peace-party of which Nicias was then the leader. In the following year peace was concluded. Aristophanes wrote and produced the Peace during the days just preceding the treaty. The inexpressible delight of the rural population of Attica resounds throughout the play. There is a retrospective judgement upon Kleon and upon the policy of the demagogues. Abuse centres upon Kleon immediately in the opening scenes. He is the "dung-eating" beetle (σκατοφάγος , 48). He is the disturber of Hellas, the pestle of the Athenians.⁵⁰ Now that he has gone (272), along with the Spartan pestle (281-282), there is nothing to hinder the coming of peace:

Now, men of Hellas, now the hour has come
To throw away our troubles and our wars,
And, ere another pestle rise to stop us,
To pull out Peace, the joy of all mankind.⁵¹

But Kleon is ready to block the way of Peace with his fusing and his fury.⁵² He is among the "public speakers" who have "pitchforked" out the Goddess with their yells and cries, who have vexed and harassed the allies, as well as accused them of being partisans of Brasidas(635-641).

50. Peace, 269-270, an echo of Knights,984, where Kleon is called δοῖδουξ and τρούνη .

51. Peace, 292-295, Rogers.

52. Peace, 313-315. Aristophanes recalls the title Paphlagon, see Knights, 919 and 1030.

And the fellow most to blame for the slanderings that were destroying the city and for the prevalence of bribery was "a tanner" (644-650). The poet's attack on the demagogue culminates with the following:

Knave and slave while yet amongst us,
Wrangler, jangler, false accuser,
Troubler, muddler, all-confuser.⁵³

The Peace forcefully reflects some of the lofty moral sentiments that had made Aristophanes hate the war. He had considered it as anti-Hellenic, as having been begun and prolonged for the selfish interests of a few men. To his mind Kleon was the pestle, "The tanner fellow that disturbed all Hellas."⁵⁴ And so the restoration of peace becomes a veritable festival of Hellenic brotherhood and deserves to be celebrated in hymns of joy (291). The war had altered the character of Athens; when it took the rural democracy from the farms, it gave them vicious and servile habits, and "the fellow most to blame was a tanner."⁵⁵ To the poet, Kleon was the representative figure of the corrupters of the Athenian spirit, and Kleon himself the arch-corrupter. The poet believed that, thanks to the peace and

53. Peace, 652-655, Rogers.

54. Peace, 269-270. Rogers' transl.

55. Peace, 647. See lines 631-647 for the poet's account of the degenerating influence on the rural folk caused by the orators, through whom "distracted Hellas came unobserved to wrack and ruin."

to Kleon's death, the Athenian spirit would be restored to its former vigour.

After Kleon's death, and the peace of Nikias, some years passed before the next extant play by the poet, the Birds, was produced. It was exhibited in 415. The play is a criticism of the moral condition of the city, and of its propensity to suspicions and to litigation. There is no direct mention of or allusion to Kleon in the play.

The next and final play in which there is any reference to Kleon is the Frogs, written under the shadow of the condemnation of the eight generals after Arginousai (406) and exhibited at the Lenaeon festival, January, 405. Its satire again aimed at the moral condition of the city, and the persons of the demagogues. There are two contemptuous allusions to Kleon. The scene is laid in Hades whither the god Dionysos goes, in the attire of Herakles, along with his slave Xanthias, for the purpose of bringing to earth the deceased poet Euripides. Xanthias is represented as acting with violence and insult towards two hostesses of eating-houses, consuming their substance, robbing them, refusing to pay when called upon, and even threatening their lives with a drawn sword. The women, having no other redress left, announce their resolution of calling, the one upon her protector Kleon, the other on Hyperbolos, for the purpose of bringing the offender to justice before the dikastery. Kleon is confidently expected to twist and

wring out (ἐκπηνιεύεται) the facts (577-578) and bring an accusation.

The above, then, is the portrait of Kleon according to the poet Aristophanes. As has been stated before, it is not the purpose of this study to contradict those charges that, in essence, lie at the base of Aristophanes' comic attack, namely, Kleon's bitter and unrefined and turbulent manners, his violent utterance and unorthodox behaviour. He was obviously one whose prominence and idiosyncrasies were ready material for comic wit.⁵⁶

What this study seeks is to restore Kleon's status as a political leader, as a statesman, a man of greater competence, energy, integrity, insight and wisdom than his contemporary sources admit. The examination of the portrait by Thucydides has sought to indicate that the evidence of the historian is unfairly condemnatory.

What now is the validity of the representation of Kleon by Aristophanes, a source that readily admits πολλά γ' ἡμᾶς λανθάνει⁵⁷ a source that relies on comic exaggeration and distortion for its effects, on unreal and impossible events, "typical" persons and topics.

Victor Ehrenberg is emphatic when he writes, "One essential

56. As Plutarch points out, Nikias, 7. Kleon had already become a comic figure before Aristophanes began to write.

57. Peace, 618.

point, frequently overlooked, is that the situation on the stage, which is naturally part of the plot, must not be used as evidence for historical facts."⁵⁸

Certainly Aristophanes was principally bent on entertainment. Did the poet have a further purpose besides this, a more serious purpose, as reformer and censor, and advocate for peace? The poet's counsels, if counsels they were, went unheeded. He attacked all the popular leaders of the day - Kleon, Hyperbolos, Peisander, Kleophon, but he drove no one from power. Kleon, when the poet's abuse became indecent, promptly brought the poet to his knees. If the poet's goal was to reform he failed.

At the same time it is wrong to regard Aristophanes simply as a jester. He wrote comedy, but his comedy was always meant to be regenerative. Croiset notes, "The instrument by which the poet probed the popular discontent was that most effective of all means when skilfully used - a laugh."⁵⁹ The poet used the laugh to stimulate criticism and arouse discontent at what he saw as evils. Nevertheless, while not simply a jester, Aristophanes was writing comedy, and not critical essays, and even the poet's most ardent

58. V. Ehrenberg, The People of Aristophanes (Oxford, 1951), p.39.

59. Croiset, p.xv. Ehrenberg writes, "A great artist has views of his own, and the picture he paints will be more than clownery." (p.9).

modern supporters and adherents of his judgements of Kleon admit the essential distortion inevitable in comic effects.⁶⁰

There were invention, distortion, and capricious exaggeration. There was also, in the background, reality

60. Cf. B. B. Rogers, The Comedies, I, p. xxxvi, "The description of Cleon in the Knights is avowedly a mere caricature." M. L. Paladini (p. 65) calls the poet's treatment of Kleon "a theatrical cartoon" ("la sua commedia è una caricatura teatrale"). Croiset warns of the deceptive quality of the poet's humour, and speaks of the mistaken idea of the function of Greek comedy as chiefly censorial and monitory. Hence "these plays have been regarded as a trustworthy source of information in establishing the facts of Greek history, biography, and institutions. So serious an interpretation of a form of literature of which the primary intention must always be entertainment and amusement inevitably obscured the poet's elusive humor" (p. xiv). And because of this mistaken disposition, Croiset continues, "A jest became a statement of fact, a caricature a portrait, a satire a document." A. W. Gomme, More Essays, who accepts the Aristophanic portrait of Kleon as basically valid, warns that Aristophanes was primarily a comic dramatist, and that his plays must be treated as drama, not history (especially p. 87).

to provide the contrast with the unreal fantasy of the play. Tragedy had a familiar starting point in its well-known themes. Comedy needed an analogous starting point. That starting point was the pulsating reality of the "political" life of the Athenian citizen. There was no other source that sprang so directly from reality as comedy. It is important to see the limits of this reality. The conditions of Athenian life were described in comedy in two ways, now with intentional distortion in deteriorem, now simply as a reflection of reality. Ehrenberg warns of the problem of determining in comedy where reality ends and caricature or fantasy begins.⁶¹ Furthermore, while there is reality in the action and plot of the comic drama there is also considerable loss of individuality to personalities.⁶² Indeed stage personalities, in the comic drama, merge into "types."⁶³ And in the wake of acceptance of these "types" as strict and accurate characterizations there have suffered Kleon, as the Paphlagonian in the Knights, Sokrates in the Clouds, and Euripides in the Thesmophoriazousai.

Apart from the poet's conventional stock-in-trade of distortion and fantasy, his mind was continually fed by

61. Especially p.39.

62. It is Ehrenberg who argues this position, and whose opinions I accept and follow, pp.39-41.

63. "They have much less individuality than the mythical men and women of tragedy..." (Ehrenberg, p.40).

gossip, the gossip of the streets, the gossip of the city's political clubs.⁶⁴ It was the personal slanders hurled back and forth that supplied ammunition for the poet. Aristophanes' views, again, were fashioned by contact with the oligarchs, not so much by the oligarchic theorists as by the youthful company of the aristocracy. They repeated the talk of the theorists with the vivaciousness and exaggerated fancies of youth. They delighted in all the scandal and ridicule that provided the raw material out of which was formed much of the insult and abuse hurled at Kleon.

There are, however, other factors that would have increased Aristophanes' desire and susceptibility to distort the picture of Kleon. He was hostile to the demagogue for personal, cultural and political reasons. He had quarrelled with Kleon after the exhibition of the Babylonians. Hostility was intensified after the Knights. From the evidence of the plays there must have been a persistent undercurrent of personal hostility and animosity.

In the second place there was the poet's natural predilection for the country and the rural life.⁶⁵ Although

64. See A. W. Gomme, More Essays, for a hint at Aristophanes' talent for converting the gossip of the streets into material for drama (p.87).

65. A. W. Gomme, More Essays, rejects the view that Aristophanes wrote for the rural population (pp.70-91); he would not, I think, deny the poet's genuine love for the country.

he belonged to the city deme of Kydathenaion, Aristophanes had lived in the country, and it is clear from his plays that he knew and loved the rural life. He is well informed about the ways of the farmer; he knows the names of trees, of plants, of the birds, and of tools. He knows the season when the grapes swell and turn golden. He speaks with a love and lively appreciation of nature. To Aristophanes, Kleon must have appeared tout au contraire. The demagogue was very probably brought up in the Peiraeus' throngs,⁶⁶ and certainly was a stranger to the light graces of Attic culture. His clamours, his violent gestures, the insults he heaped upon his opponents - all these traits combined to make him one upon whom Aristophanes could make persistent warfare as the very antithesis of the traditional culture of the rural democracy of Athens.

This democratic section of the people was vulnerable to ambitious men who knew how to gain the goodwill of the masses. And Athens, in the Peloponnesian War, had become a theatre of action exceptionally suited to politicians. It was one of these young men, Kleon, whom Aristophanes found as a target for incessant war. Kleon was seen by the poet as the root of the moral crisis which was gripping the Athenian character. The policy of the demagogues, according to the poet, had changed the Athenian spirit. Gone was the free and expansive nature, the gay, vivacious,

66. Knights, 1324.

merry-making spirit of Athens, gone were the "old days" of Aristeides and Miltiades, and the cause of this was "a tanner."⁶⁷

Aristophanes also saw Kleon as the embodiment of the thrust of the Peiraeus toward expansion and conquest, a zeal that was entirely foreign to the people of the soil and its traditions. The poet's pan-Hellenism would fight tooth and nail against the alleged Kleonian policy of Athenian rule over the rest of Hellas. "My aim," says the Paphlagonian to Demos in the Knights, "is to make you rule over all the Greeks."⁶⁸ To the poet it was unforgivable that the Greeks should engage in internecine war, or that the Athenian people should allow their kindly, amiable, and sprightly natures to be spoiled by selfish demagogues. These personal, cultural and political animosities could not help but drive the poet to a more bitter and more intensive hostility against the demagogue.

Further considerations give us pause in evaluating the Aristophanic portrait of Kleon. There is the poet's representation of Sokrates in the Clouds. W. W. Merry is at pains to demonstrate how signally inaccurate is Aristophanes in terms of the character of Sokrates known from other sources.⁶⁹ There is reality in the bare feet and

67. Peace, 647: ταῦτα δ' ἦν ὁ δρωῶν βυρσοπώλης.

68. Knights, 797: ἵνα γ' Ἑλλήνων ἄρξῃ πάντων.

69. Merry, p.vii. See p.61 above, note 49.

the argumentative subtlety, but the rest is fancy and distortion. With such an analogy, according to Grote, "We are not warranted in treating the portrait of Kleon as a likeness, except on points where there is corroborative evidence."⁷⁰

Grote has also pointed out that the different indictments accumulated by Aristophanes are not easy to reconcile one with another.⁷¹ Surely it is true to say that, for one who carries on speculation for his own profit, it would be an unwise policy to become conspicuous as a ruthless aggressor against such actions in others. If Kleon were inclined to brigandage himself, he would not be likely to make himself prominent as a slanderer of the innocent. It may also be claimed that the qualities of violent temper, fierce political antipathies, coarse invective, are nothing but the qualities that identify every type of energetic opposition. Just as the elder Cato was characterized by Plutarch as "the universal biter, whom Persephone was afraid even to admit into Hades after his death,"⁷² so Kleon has been represented for posterity as a man of native acrimony of temper, a powerful talent for invective. But what proportion of cases were just or calumnious, there is no means of deciding. "To lash the wicked is not only no blame,

70. Grote, V, p.393.

71. Ibid., p. 394.

72. Plutarch, Cato, 1.3, quoted from Grote, p. 395.

but is even a matter of honour to the good," observes Aristophanes,⁷³ but Kleon has seldom been allowed the benefit of the observation.

A further point to bear in mind in evaluating Aristophanes' portrait of Kleon is that, before the demagogue became prey to the former's wit, he had already become, because of his political prominence and idiosyncrasies, part of a comic tradition. Hermippos, elder contemporary of Aristophanes, and a bitter opponent of Perikles, had already selected Kleon for the comic theatre.⁷⁴ The Scholiast on Knights, 1304, reports a fragment of an unknown poet who refers to the corruption of Kleon and to the succession of Hyperbolos. In Wasps, 1034, the Scholiast cites Pherekrates, who refers to the voice of Kleon, clear as a raging torrent. In the Peace, 313, where Kleon is called Cerberus, the Scholiast records that the same name was given to him by the comic poet Plato.⁷⁵ In the Scholiast on Frogs, 320 there is a reference to a passage by Hermippos,⁷⁶ the first verse of which seems to allude to Kleon, who grows in importance day by day, because of the hatred he has stirred in Perikles.

73. Knights, 1271

74. Plutarch, Perikles, 33,8.

75. Plato, fragment 216 Kock: that the comic playwright Plato had attacked Kleon is confirmed by a further fragment (107 Kock).

76. Hermippos, fragment 42 Kock.

These traces, although slight, indicate that Kleon had already become a comic tradition that Aristophanes had appropriated, exploited and expanded.

This comic tradition, as M. Paladini points out in her study of the ancient sources on Kleon,⁷⁷ demonstrates that ancient comedy was basically opposed to the current democracy.⁷⁸ Its criticisms were similar to those of the De Republica Atheniensium, an oligarchic tract wrongly attributed to Xenophon.⁷⁹ In this work can be seen the kind of attack that Aristophanes and the entire comic tradition used against Kleon and his time.⁸⁰ It was the tradition of the comic

77. M. L. Paladini, "Considerazioni sulle Fonti della Storia di Cleone."

78. She writes, "Cio conferma naturalmente che tutta la commedia antica ebbe un neto atteggiamento di opposizione alla democrazia vigente" (p.68).

79. Its date is uncertain, but it was very likely available to Aristophanes. After an exhaustive study of the text, and after much debate, Gomme settles for a date between 420-415 (A. W. Gomme, "The Old Oligarch", Harv. Stud. Class. Phil., Suppl. Vol. I(1940), pp.211-245). Gomme argues that Meritt's date of circa 425-24 is unsound. For Meritt's case see B. D. Meritt Documents on Athenian Tribute (Camb. Mass., 1937), pp. 40-42.

80. The state controlled by the poor and the vulgar; freedom of speech granted in public to anyone; the love of the masses for the offices from which are derived profit and personal advantage (1,2,3); the vulgar and the poor given preference over the aristocrats (4); the ignorance, disorder,

poets to hurl abuse, in this hostile vein, at all opposition, as did Kratinos, who "flowed through the plains 'mid a tumult of plaudits and cheering; And sweeping on all that obstructed his course, with a swirl from their stations he tore them, Oaks, rivals, and planes; And away on his flood uprooted and prostrate he bore them."⁸¹ During the height of Kratinos' period (450-440), comedy was aggressively active, especially against Perikles.⁸² The attacks on

vileness, immorality, and lack of education of the masses (5); the equal opportunity for all to speak and to govern (6, ἔϊποι δ' ἄν τις ὡς ἐχρῆν αὐτοὺς μὴ ἔαν λέγειν πάντας ἐξ ἴσης μηδὲ βουλευεῖ . Compare Thucydides, II,65, and Woodhead's criticism, p.294. It seems that Thucydides is reflecting a typical aristocratic bias); the inevitable self-interest of the vulgar (6); the ignorance and vulgarity of the masses, and their lack of refinement (7); the participation by madmen in the council and assembly (9); the tendency of the people to enrich themselves, especially in the administration of justice, while the rich are impoverished (13).

81. Knights, 526-528, Rogers.

82. Compare Plutarch, Perikles, where the comics jest on the shape of his head (3), on his nickname Olympios (8,4), on his relationship with Aspasia (24,9-10). Plutarch claims that the comic poets have atrociously misrepresented him (16,1-2).

Perikles were so bitter that the attempt to outlaw the activity of the comic playwrights, hinted at in the De Republica Atheniensium,⁸³ does not appear unbelievable. This stinging abuse, already a tradition before Aristophanes, was adopted by him as he followed the spirit of political opposition set by his comic forbears. From the beginning of comedy, bitter railing against political leaders was part of a convention. This may not undermine the impetus and force of the poet's attack on Kleon, but it does help us to place it in perspective.

Finally, before we summarize the above considerations, it may be said that any prominent person was vulnerable to attack by the poets: Perikles, Aspasia, Sokrates, Euripides. Aristophanes in the Peace alleged that Perikles, in order to escape a charge of embezzlement, "blew up the Peloponnesian War" and involved his country in such confusion and peril as made his own aid and guidance indispensable to her; especially that he passed the decree against the Megarians by which the war "was set ablaze."⁸⁴ Yet we are sure this allegation against Perikles is not true. The comic writers attacked Perikles and exhausted their powers against him. But Perikles' stature was not blighted because of it.

83. κωμφοδεῖν δ' αὖ καὶ κακῶς λέγειν τὸν μὲν δῆμον
οὐκ ἔωσιν (2,18). Efforts to trace the law that embodied this μὴ κωμφοδεῖν have not been successful. See Paladini, p.72.

84. Peace, 587-603.

In turning, then, to the difficult task of evaluating Aristophanes as a source for the historical Kleon, we may say: Aristophanes was a comic dramatist, an artist. Gossip, exaggeration, distortion, were handmaids to his dramatic art. We know that it was the perilous fortune of any prominent person to fall victim to comic attacks. We know from independent evidence of Sokrates, and indeed of Perikles, that there was another truer portrait of these men than comedy allowed. We know that the poet was antipathetic to Kleon for personal, cultural and political reasons. We detect internal difficulties if Kleon was indeed as Aristophanes portrays him. We know that Aristophanes inherited a comic convention accustomed to the wildest and most vituperative language possible.

In the light of the above considerations, it may be properly urged that Aristophanes cannot be regarded as a valid historical source for evaluation of the portrait of Kleon, especially not for support of that evidence of Thucydides that it is the point of this paper to correct. We agree with Finley that it was the profoundest of Greek abilities both to convey the generic without falsifying the unique,⁸⁵ and also to portray characters with clear

85. Finley, p.67.

generic significance while at the same time not losing their reality as creatures of flesh and blood.⁸⁶ And we should say that in the case of Aristophanes it is the greatness of his genius that creates the illusions (a) that he has not falsified the unique Kleon, and (b) that the character represented as Kleon was in fact a creature of flesh and blood.

86. Finley, p.61.

CHAPTER FOUR

Evaluation and Conclusion: Why did Thucydides treat Kleon thus?

Earlier it was said that "this study will seek to explain why Thucydides, an historian whose integrity and power are endorsed by all students, could treat Kleon as he has." Why, indeed? There have already been set forth grounds for believing there was an embittered relationship between the two men. This hostility was probably based upon political antipathies, very likely upon cultural and social antipathies (like Aristophanes, Thucydides doubtless blamed Kleon for causing social and moral deterioration),¹ and, if we are to believe that Kleon was involved in the punishment of exile upon the historian, probably upon personal antipathy. But in spite of these factors, it is difficult to believe that Thucydides would deliberately vitiate the integrity of his History to satisfy his animosities. A. W. Gomme seems to suggest that at times Thucydides was not aware of the bias he felt against Kleon.² Andrewes believes that personal enmity may have played a part

1. The Corcyrean revolution was intended to exemplify the result of the "violence" of the Mytilene debate.

2. A. W. Gomme, More Essays, pp.118-119.

in Thucydides' treatment of Kleon, but he believes there is "more than that...."³

A contribution to understanding what that "more" is may be gained from F. M. Cornford's thesis that Thucydides treats Kleon not so much as a historical person as a tragi-comic figure in a tragic drama, wrought about the downfall of Athens.⁴ We have seen that Ehrenberg states that in comic drama the personalities are less persons than types.⁵ In Thucydides, according to Cornford, Kleon is less a person than an embodiment of tragic flaws that were to lead Athens inexorably to destruction.

Cornford argues that Thucydides never understood the origin of the war because his mind was filled with preconceptions that shaped the events he witnessed into a certain form.⁶ Thucydides sees history shaped by forces and passions that overtake people's characters, and this basic presupposition leads Thucydides to portray Kleon as he does. Cornford rejects the possibility that the historian disliked Kleon personally to the point that he

3. Andrewes, Phoenix, p.80.

4. F. M. Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus (London, 1907), especially pp. 79-173.

5. See p.68 above.

6. Cornford notes that Thucydides wrote in order that no one would need to ask the origin of the war (I,23,5), yet "We are still troubled by the question which he thought no one would ever have to ask" (p.3).

was prepared deliberately to distort evidence to condemn Kleon. Rather Kleon is treated as he is because of a certain principle of design that, in Thucydides' understanding, the war took. This principle of design becomes clear in the narrative of Pylos. The account of Pylos is set forth by Thucydides in such a way that it appears the historian really believed "Fortune" took a significant rôle in the whole affair.⁷ And Thucydides was predisposed to see Tyche at work in this incident because he believed it had overtaken Kleon and was leading Athens to destruction through Kleon's leadership. Why did Kleon appear in the History only three times, when he must have been the leader of the war-party? It is because he is the character of a drama to illustrate how Insolence (at Mytilene), Covetousness (at Pylos) and Pride (at Amphipolis) bring ruin. These three forces reflect the structure of characterization, crisis and catastrophe of the tragic drama. The plot of the war is tragic, but Kleon is not to be a tragic figure. Hence Kleon's little personal drama is deliberately spoilt: "Laughter seized the Athenians at his wild words."⁸

7. Mme. de Romilly (p.174) refers to Thucydides' emphasis and exaggeration of the element of chance in the Pylos incident. A. W. Gomme (Comm., III.p.488) condescendingly notes "Certainly the word τυχάειν occurs frequently." I cannot accept Gomme's statement that τυχάειν may mean merely contemporaneity; there is always implied chance coincidence.

8. Thucydides, IV,28,5, quoted from Cornford, p.125.

According to Cornford, Thucydides represents the Athenian assembly in such a way for dramatic cause and effect. It was essential to remove Kleon from tragic rank to tragedy.

Cornford argues that the story of Kleon is patterned upon dramatized legend. He is allowed no individuality, no past history, no atmosphere, no irrelevant relations. He enters the story abruptly from nowhere. A single phrase fixes his type, as though on a play-bill: Kleon the most violent of the citizens.⁹ Then Kleon vanishes - although he was the leader and main spokesman of the war party - to reappear before Sphakteria. Then he is wrecked at Amphipolis. Cornford, in fact, believes that both Perikles and Alkibiades are treated in precisely the same stark, dramatic fashion.

Although Cornford's hypothesis is rejected by many scholars, his study is prompted by a realization of discrepancies in the History, one of which it is the work of this paper to examine and correct, namely, the portrait of Kleon. Cornford's analysis aids the student to understand Thucydides' treatment of Kleon, and also relieves the historian of such inevitable judgements as "prejudiced" and "biassed." Cornford says, "It is evident that Thucydides saw him [Kleon] not purely, or even primarily as an

9. We have noted above, page 6, the comments of scholars on this unusual introduction of Kleon. Cornford (p.125) also answers Mme. de Romilly's query (p.173) about the omission of a response by Kleon to the Spartan peace

historic person, but as a type of character."¹⁰ This typical representation of character has been noted before, with respect to Aristophanes, where it is again the historical Kleon who suffers.¹¹ While Cornford's general thesis may have to be rejected, it is certain that dramatic factors did play a part in Thucydides' organization of the History, and it is not impossible that dramatic factors helped to shape his treatment of individuals within the History.¹²

To the question, therefore, why Kleon has received such treatment at the hands of the historian, first we recall what has already been said, "Whether that derogatory representation was deliberate, or the unconscious result of an embittered mind, may not finally be solved...."

Nevertheless, we feel that almost certainly political and social factors were involved, most probably personal factors, and very likely dramatic.

In this study, we have not sought to refute Kleon's lack of refinement or unorthodox ways; what we have intended is to rehabilitate Kleon's integrity as a statesman, as

embassy after Sphacteria.

10. Cornford, p.126.

11. Finley speaks of the absorption of the times with ideas and abstractions rather than with persons (pp.63-67). Thucydides inherited the sophistic intensification of "the long-standing Greek concern for the typical" (p.62).

12. This thesis need not jeopardize Thucydides' integrity as an historian, it simply brings to light another ingredient that helped shape his mental thought and experience.

a politician, as a man of competent insight, foresight, and action. We believe that our analysis of Thucydides has demonstrated Kleon's integrity, and that our subsequent study of other available evidence, as well as an evaluation of Aristophanes' portrait, has revealed the weaknesses of these sources as valid historical evidence. Where later sources condemn Kleon, they have been seen to follow an anti-democratic stream that uncritically follows Thucydides. Where the comic sources condemn Kleon, they have been seen to follow a conventional pattern of attack that renders their work, at the least, precarious for use as history. In the final analysis, therefore, we are thrown back upon Thucydides as the single reliable source for evaluation of the person of Kleon. And, if this is so, we are prepared to rest our case.

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