

## BOOK REVIEW

*Thucydides*. By P.J. RHODES. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. Pp. xi + 92. Paper, \$25.95. ISBN 978-1-4725-2399-0.

Rhodes, one leading Thucydides scholar of our time, has produced a concise introduction in four parts: The World of Thucydides, The Historian, The Thinker, and After Thucydides. After a table of principal dates and one map, Chapter 1 provides a very elementary description of Thucydides' world. One thousand Hellenic poleis, sixty thousand Athenian citizens, and a divisive polarity between Spartan inclinations towards oligarchies outside their interior empire and Athenian sympathies for cooperative, satellite democracies overseas. Rhodes sketches the nature of those regimes. In the lead-up to the clash of these two dominating powers and their federated willing and unwilling allies, Rhodes suggests that the Athenians were readier to provoke the Peloponnesian alliance to war than Thucydides leads readers to expect from his Pericles' defensive speeches.

The longest chapter describes the historical methods of Thucydides, including his chronology, the composition of the *History*, analeptic references to the end of the war, discrepancies or puzzling silences sometimes explained as difficulties in discovering whether material had already been mentioned (Phormion's death, 23–24). Rhodes questions but does not reject current "unitarian" assumptions (14). He identifies sources of the Athenian's information, conflicting accounts (1.45; 2.5; and 4.122), use of superlatives, and alternative explanations (5.65; 8.87). Rhodes quaintly supplies sub-chapter numbers in "Roman," such as IV.27.iii–iv, while his own bilingual editions with commentary<sup>1</sup> and Hude's Oxford Classical Text use Arabic numerals (IV.27.3-4). His joint translation with Martin Hammond eschews this precise numeration (Oxford: Oxford University

<sup>1</sup> *Thucydides History Book I* (2014), *Book II* (1988, repr. 2015), *Book III* (1994, repr. 2014), *Book IV.I-V.24* (1998), Oxford and Havertown PA: Aris & Phillips. Rhodes states that he has no plans to continue his editions beyond the already published, so-called "Ten Years War." The notes in the Hammond/Rhodes translation and Simon Hornblower's Oxford *Commentary* both use Arabic numerals for books as well, thus 5.116.4.

Press 2009), but Jeremy Mynott's yet more recent translation provides it (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013).

Rhodes briefly discusses motivation and speech-response, but his references to scholarly controversy ("it has been pointed out that...") do not identify specific proponents—and he supplies no footnotes. Rhodes admits occasional carelessness in his "not infallible" subject's long-term, three-decade project. He discusses omissions and inclusions, for example, the extensive explanation of Athenian state funeral ritual and minimal information on Hellenic economics. In addition, Athenian bias may have prompted Thucydides' suppression of information about the pre-war status of Corcyra, Aegina, and Megara. Rhodes considers Thucydides' frequent discussions of the morality of Athenian power to arise from ambivalence—his "unresolved dilemma" about the "morality" of empire and its use of murderous force (29, 58: the Mytilenaeans "subject's-eye view" of the Empire). Rhodes, as the authority on the Athenian *Boule*, notes that Thucydides mentions this organ of government but once (a forgivable exaggeration), without explaining why—perhaps the General wished to darken readers' views of assembly decisions (thus Simon Hornblower's "airbrush", *Comm.* III. 23-31). Thucydides never mentions the Spartan *Gerousia*, despite their vaguely analogous executive functions in war and peace. Rhodes lists references to Spartan religious considerations (33), but thinks Thucydides "too uninterested in" religious explanations (49; cf. 59–65). Herodotus has encountered the opposite criticism. Rhodes discusses different narrative modes, a "low-key, matter-of-fact" reportage compared to detailed episodes such as the Plataean campaign and the Sicilian, or the bizarre herald exchanges at Ambracia and Delion (65). Rhodes notes a variety of focalization and hypotheticals—sophisticated literary techniques. He warns readers to be wary of over-interpretation, but no one has a metric for determining the proper level. The esteemed historian's very comprehensiveness sometimes makes this short book read like a list of topics prepared for a longer Introduction and a more advanced audience.

Chapter 3 explores the recently changed conception of Thucydides the Thinker. The coolly dispassionate truth-seeker has become a more engaged historian thanks to our closer observation of his selection, presentation, and arrangement of facts and speech content (would the Athenians have been so blunt at Melos?). Rhodes believes that speakers' arguments reflect views actually presented; he legitimately compares Claudius' "official" text of a speech delivered in 48 CE concerning Gallic senators (21: *ILS* 212, carved in bronze, found at Lyons) and Tacitus' version (*Ann.* 11.24). Rhodes discusses Herodotus' *Histories*, but

this earlier Ionian investigator's innovative platform everywhere underlying Thucydides' modification of historiography meets typically insufficient recognition from both the revisionist Athenian pupil and current commentators. Rhodes finds Thucydides own political views opaque but sensibly plumps for a born conservative aristocrat who admired Pericles' unique version of democracy and empire without resolving the contradictions. As a post-Periclean exile, Thucydides exaggerates the extent of Pericles' control and the difference between Pericles and his successors. He perceived incorrectly or distorted the degree to which Pericles' strategy was defensive (55). The true story of Thucydides' failure and loss of Amphipolis and environs remains obscured by the absence of other sources—as so often (e.g., Robert Luginbill's critical *Author of Illusions* [Newcastle 2011]). Rhodes questions whether Thucydides was proud of Athens' material and imperial achievements (57), but few recent readers have argued that he condemns them as a whole.

"After Thucydides" (Chapter 4) provides mostly a list of later references and influenced historians from the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* to Procopius in antiquity, selected quotations or indirect knowledge in Byzantium and editions in the Renaissance (e.g., Valla's) and Hobbes' translation. "More Recently" includes Leopold von Ranke's thesis, Thomas B. Macaulay' idol, F. M. Cornford's more subjective Thucydides, Anthony Woodman's rhetorician, and Ernst Badian's "dishonest journalist." Thucydides' reception "Beyond Classics" regrettably remains very thin, probably a result of his punctilious and apparently undramatic arrangement of materials, unlike Herodotus' wide appeal to artists, novelists, graphic novelists, and movie-makers. A conscientious "further reading" section and index conclude the book.

The sound information and cautious generalizations, always presented with citations, about a reclusive author's knotty prose and oblique expression of opinions, have produced a trustworthy guide. A problem, nevertheless, confronts candid reviewers. As "very short introductions" from various publishers proliferate, colleagues will observe that the same expert's considered views appear already in his introduction and notes (55 and 157 pages respectively) for the recent (2009) "Oxford World Classics" translation by Martin Hammond. Since that 720-page volume costs \$20 and this one \$25—roughly 25 cents/page—why should anyone but confirmed bibliomaniacs purchase this additional but digested statement? The chunky Oxford volume contains, of course, the text of

Thucydides' *History* "complete," the *sine qua non* for bothering to read any "concise introductory guide."

DONALD LATEINER

*Ohio Wesleyan University, dglatein@owu.edu*