CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History

This book addresses the questions of how and why history begins with the work of Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War* is distinctive in that it is a prose narrative, meant to be read rather than performed. It focuses on the unfolding of contemporary great power politics to the exclusion of almost all other elements of human life, including the divine. Western history has been largely an extension of Thucydides's narrative in that it repeats the unique methodological assumptions and concerns that first appear in his text. The power of Thucydides's text has never been attributed to either the charm of its language or the entertainment value of its narrative, or to some personal attribute of the author. In this study, Darien Shanske analyzes the difficult language and structure of Thucydides's *History* and argues that the text has drawn so many readers into its distinctive worldview because of its kinship to the contemporary language and structure of classical tragedy. This kinship is not merely a matter of shared vocabulary or even aesthetic sensibility. Rather, it is grounded on a shared philosophical position, in particular on the polemical metaphysics of Heraclitus.

Darien Shanske is a scholar of classical literature and works on topics at the intersection of philosophy, classics, and law.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History

DARIEN SHANSKE

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521864114

© Darien Shanske 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Shanske, Darien, 1974–
Thucydides and the philosophical origins of history / Darien Shanske.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-10: 0-521-86411-9 (hardback)
ISBN-13: 978-0-521-86411-4 (hardback)
1. Thucydides. History of the Peloponnesian War. 2. Greece – History – Peloponnesian War, 431–404 B.C. – Historiography. 3. History – Philosophy. I. Title.
DF229.T6S47 2006
938′.05′–dc22 2005037371

ISBN-13 978-0-521-86411-4 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-86411-9 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for
the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or
third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such
Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

For My Parents,

Without whom not,

Thanks to whom,

Everything

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

Acknowledgments *page* xi

Introduction 1
Restoring the Wonder of Thucydides 1
Theoretical Preliminaries 8
Short Outline 13

1 Thucydides's Vision 15
Introduction – Six Features of Thucydides's Text 15
The First Sentence 18
The Archaeology 22
The Empire of Logos 27
What the Athenians Did Not Know 31
Thucydides on His Method – Disclosure about Disclosure 33
The Causes of the War 37
Conclusion 40

2 The Case of Pericles 41
Introduction 41
War – Pericles's First Speech 42
Who We Are – Pericles's Funeral Oration 45
Rhetoric and Adversity – Pericles's Third Speech 46
Transition – The Dissemination of Pericles 49
Plague 51
Cleon and Diodotus 52
Brasidas and Hermocrates 55
Nicias and Alcibiades 57
Thucydides 60
Themistocles 62

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Identity and Disclosure 64
Conclusion 64

3 *Deinon*, Logos, and the Tragic Question Concerning the Human 69
Introduction 69
Tragedy 70
Introducing the Deinon 71
Tragic Elements in Thucydides 74
Deinon *in Pretragic Literature – A Summary* 80
Aeschylus 81
Sophocles 85
Euripides 99
Thucydides Revisited (The Deinon *and* Epieikeia*)* 105
Plato 116
Conclusion 117

4 Thucydidean Temporality 119
Introduction 119
The Metaphysics of Praise – Pericles and Socrates on Athens 120
Plato's Menexenus 125
Thucydides and Plato in the Philosophical Tradition 129
Heraclitus 134
Thucydides as a Cure for Platonism 138
Thucydidean Realism 142
Book Eight 145
Philosophical Implications 148
Conclusion 152

Appendix I: Restoring Key Terms 1.1–1.23 155
*Unconcealedness (*Aletheia*)* 155
*What Is Appropriate (*Ta Deonta*)* 157
*Pretext (*Prophasis*)* 158
*Compulsion (*Ananke*)* 163
*Kind (*Toioutos*)* 167

Appendix II: Pretragic History of *Deinon* 169
Introduction 169
Etymology and History of Interpretation 169
Homer and Hesiod 171
Conclusion 174

Appendix III: Wittgenstein on Fly-Bottles, Aspect Seeing, and History 177
Introduction 177
Aspect Seeing 178
Aspect Seeing and History 179

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Conclusion: Forms of Life and Logos 184
Appendix IV: Heidegger on World and Originary Temporality 185
Introduction 185
World 186
Ontological Difference 188
Originary Temporality 188
Phenomenological Bestiary 191
An Internal Defense 194

Notes 199
Bibliography 249
Index 261

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

Acknowledgments

It is easy to know where to begin my thanks, though impossible to know where to end. Without the love, support, and models provided by my parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, and aunts, neither this book nor any of the other endeavors I have been so happy and fortunate to be a part of would have been possible. I want especially to give thanks for the extraordinary relationships that I have enjoyed with my siblings, Alisa and Uri, and my uncles Abe and David and Aunt Shirley.

This book began as a dissertation in the Rhetoric Department at the University of California at Berkeley. Every member of my committee – Fred Dolan, Mark Griffith, Hans Sluga, and especially my chair, David Cohen – in many ways went beyond the call of duty to help me develop as a scholar and as a person. At Berkeley, I was also very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from Anne Carson, Alan Code, and Hubert Dreyfus. Most remarkable of all was the time I spent learning from Philippe Nonet, who week after week opened his home to his students for a truly singular reading group.

I was introduced to Thucydides during the first semester of my first year as an undergraduate at Columbia College by Richard Billows. Clearly, it made quite an impression. Michael Tanner introduced me to Nietzsche, and Philip Buckley and Charles Taylor supervised my MA thesis at McGill University on Nietzsche and the self.

Academic work is often a fairly solitary endeavor, but I never felt alone. Two friends in particular showed great patience in reading the many earlier incarnations of this project: Mark Feldman and Stuart Murray. No friend has shown greater patience with me than Michael Wara. Of the many other people who enriched my life and helped and inspired me on

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86411-4 - Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History
Darien Shanske
Frontmatter
More information

this project, the following stand out for special thanks: Michelle Allersma, Kari Rosenthal Annand, Joanna Brooks, Kyra Caspary, Julia Cho, Steve Frenkel, Juliette Gimon, Natasha Guinan, Kusia Hreshchyshyn, David Kamper, Sara Kendall, Katherine Kim, Minna King, Jens Kjeldsen, Heidi Maibom, Eve Meltzer, Chris Palamountain, Loren Passmore, Deven Patel, Jeya Paul, Ellen Rigsby, Shalini Satkunanandan, and Rebecca Wara. No doubt, in my good fortune, I have overlooked many people to whom I owe a great deal, and I ask their indulgence.

It is hard, in the end, to say when this project began, with a passion for learning instilled by my family, my first introductions to Thucydides and Nietzsche, or the beginning of graduate school. The publication of this project does represent a more definite ending, and I am very grateful for the thought and care of the editors at Cambridge University Press – Terence Moore, Beatrice Rehl, Louise Calabro, and Helen Greenberg – as well as the anonymous readers who made so many astute comments and suggestions. The questions of this book, those of history, of tragedy, and of language and the self have, of course, not been answered, and I very much hope this book becomes a vehicle for ongoing dialogue.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org