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THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR.

It might reasonably be argued that this question is one of those historical problems which form excellent subjects for the writing of essays, but which are far too complex to admit of a decisive answer, and consequently are much better left alone. No one man is responsible for a war between great powers, and the motives which influence the vast number of people, whose consent is necessary, can rarely, if ever, be identical. It is therefore comparatively easy to argue against any given motive which is asserted to be the one and only reason. Certainly the writer would make no effort to rake up the ashes of this controversy, were it not that in Dr. Grundy's recent work on Thucydides a new and ingenious theory is put forward concerning the *vera causa* of the Peloponnesian War.

The whole of Dr. Grundy's valuable publication is coloured by his theory that the acquisition of the means of subsistence was the root-principle of the policy of Greek States, a theory which there is no room here to examine in detail. In so far as it applies to the Peloponnesian War, it may be stated thus: Athens was compelled to interfere in the north-west, owing to the necessity of opening out new sources of corn-supply and of providing for her unemployed. The Peloponnese was bound to resist any such project, firstly, because Corinth did not want to see her trade ruined; secondly, because the inland communities were afraid of a blockade and the loss of their imported corn; and, thirdly, because the allies were able to bring pressure upon Sparta.

In Dr. Grundy, then, another critic is raised up in judgment upon Thucydides. The prevalent English opinion on this point is well illustrated in the favourable reception of Mr. Cornford's book, in the general tendency of most Oxford lecturers on the subject, and in the new articles on the Peloponnesian War and on Greek History in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Thucydides' judgment of a purely imperial cause is generally rejected, and the secret of the outbreak is found in the relations of Athens and Corinth rather than of Athens and Sparta. Professor Bury's defence of Thucydides in his Harvard Lectures is almost the only recent presentation of the other point of view.

It is, then, perhaps excusable for some champion, however unworthy, to make another stand on behalf of the deliberate judgment of Thucydides.¹

¹ I. 23.

Διότι δ' ἔλυσαν (τὰς σπονδὰς) τὰς αἰτίας προύγραφα πρῶτον καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, τοῦ μή τινα ζητῆσαί ποτε ἐξ ὅτου τοσοῦτος πόλεμος τοῖς Ἑλλησι κατέστη. τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν· αἱ δ' ἐς τὸ φανερόν λεγομέναι αἰτίαι αἷδ' ἦσαν ἐκατέρων, ἀφ' ὧν λύσαντες τὰς σπονδὰς ἐς τὸν πόλεμον κατέστησαν. . . . and so to a discussion of the 'incidents' of Epidamnus and Potidaea.

Fortunately his meaning is perfectly plain. The αἰτίαι, or rather the λεγομέναι αἰτίαι ἀφ' ὧν the truce was broken, were αἷδε, i.e., Epidamnus and Potidaea, but the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις ἀφανεστάτη δὲ λόγῳ was the fear inspired in the Spartans by the growth of the Athenian power.

The rejection of his deliberate judgment on the cause of the war would probably not have pained Thucydides so much as the salves applied by the critics to his injured reputation. 'Thucydides is quite wrong,' implies Mr. Cornford, 'but you must not blame him because he is writing drama rather than history.' 'Thucydides is wrong,' says Dr. Grundy,¹ 'but excusably so, since he is writing after the end of the war, when the original causes have been obscured by the new developments which arose very soon after the war began.' And here we might very well raise the point, 'What is the value of your commercial or economic *vera causa*, if it had effect only for the first three or four years of the war, while you admit that the question of political supremacy was paramount for the rest of a twenty-seven year struggle? Surely that question of supremacy must have lain hid (ἀφανεστάτη δὲ λόγῳ) all the time.'

But, if the war arose for commercial or economic reasons, all this defence of Thucydides' reasoning is very thin whitewash. It is not once only that he gives his opinion, but at least six times² in the first book. Certainly Thucydides, as Dr. Grundy's book illustrates, is now beginning to meet the fate of Homer. The χωρίζοντες have got him firmly in their grip, and doubtless it is easy to prove that all these passages belong to later redactions. But, for all that, Thucydides must stand or fall by his own judgments, and if, writing soon after the end of the war, he stated over and over again as his convinced opinion that the cause of the war was the imperial jealousy of Athens and Sparta and nothing else, then if we refuse to believe him, we must admit that he has made about as grave a blunder as he could make. He wrote his history from contemporary notes,³ and he must have written down some motive as the cause in 431. He can find no excuse in forgetting the events of 431, for he had his diary. His judgment is a considered judgment, written perhaps after 404, but written after full deliberation and with complete knowledge of all the facts, and his credit as a historian must rest upon it.

Here we meet with a more insidious objection.⁴ Thucydides may have been writing not to combat any view of commercial or economic rivalry

¹ Grundy, *Thucydides*, pp. 412, 413.

² I. 23, 33, 44, 86, 88, 118.

³ I. 1.

⁴ Cornford, *Thuc. Mythistoricus*, p. 30.

between Corinth and Athens, but simply to answer the accusation of Aristophanes and contemporary gossip, that Pericles brought on the war for his own advantage and for personal reasons. Commercial causes, it is agreed, were not separated from political in ancient times, and the imperial struggle between Sparta and Athens would be held to cover the commercial jealousy of Athens and Corinth. But whether the Piraeus traders drove Pericles to war, or whether his motive was the necessity of feeding and employing the unemployed, in neither case can we give Thucydides much credit for discernment in attributing the outbreak to Spartan fear of Athenian expansion. And again, if it was Athenian aggression in the north-west arising out of Attico-Corinthian rivalry that caused the war, it is a bad blunder on Thucydides' part to speak of Spartan fear of Athens as the real cause, and thereby to imply that the true aggression came from the Peloponnese.

It is impossible really to confuse the issue or to effect a compromise. Either Thucydides is wrong or his modern English critics are mistaken, and perhaps a brief re-examination of the problem will be permitted in the hope of throwing a little new light on the question.

The main arguments brought against Thucydides are the following :

1. Why should Sparta be driven to war from fear of Attic expansion in 431, when Athens was really much weaker than she had been a quarter of a century before ?¹

2. The rivalry between Athens and Corinth was far greater than that between Athens and Sparta.²

3. Corinth had most to gain from the declaration of war, and Sparta practically nothing.³

4. Sparta showed great reluctance to fight at all, and in the early years of the war little energy or initiative.⁴

5. Heavy pressure was brought to bear upon Sparta by the inland Peloponnesian states in fear for their food-supply.⁵

6. Corinth forced Sparta to fight by threats of secession.⁶

The attack is formidable, and can be countered only by a careful examination of party politics in Sparta.

Not enough attention has been paid to the fact that at any rate after 550 we have clear evidence of two main parties in Sparta. About that year Sparta came to a very grave turning-point in her policy. Hitherto an absorbing and conquering state, which had amalgamated all Laconia, Messenia, Cynuria, and Southern Arcadia, she was induced by the resistance of Tegea to exchange her policy of conquest for one of alliance and hegemony. Tegea was the first member of the Peloponnesian League. The change is contempo-

¹ Grundy, pp. 323, 408, 409.

² Cornford, chs. 3 and 4 ; *Encycl. Brit.*, vol. xxi., p. 72.

³ Cornford, p. 10 ; Grundy, pp. 323 sqq. ; *Encycl. Brit.*, vol. xxi., p. 72.

⁴ Cornford, pp. 7 and 8 ; Grundy, pp. 326 sqq.

⁵ Grundy, pp. 324 sqq.

⁶ *Encycl. Brit.*, vol. xxi., p. 72 ; Grundy, p. 410.

aneous with two other important developments. Spartan art, hitherto a luxurious and flourishing plant, stops abruptly as the Lycurgan *ἀγωγή* is reintroduced with great severity, and the power of the ephors is established on a firmer and more predominant basis. It is impossible to avoid connecting these three contemporaneous events with a single line of policy—that of the great ephor Cheilon.¹ The reintroduction of the *ἀγωγή*, with the consequently greater exclusiveness of Sparta, and greater emphasis on the democratic character of the régime; the probable initiation of the Thalamæ cult² in the interest of the ephors, as opposed to the royal monopoly of Delphi; the abandonment of conquest, partly no doubt already owing to questions of population, but mainly because conquest tended to aggrandize the kings; and, finally, the known increase of the ephors' power at this time—all show clearly that 550 marks the rising of the ephorate to power as an equipoise to the kings, and the beginning of that division of interests between ephors and kings, that was to become a commonplace of Spartan politics.

The reign of Cleomenes shows the two parties in full opposition, and also throws a light on the unscrupulousness of the ephors. When Cleomenes desires to attack Athens in 506, they combine with Demaratus³ and the Corinthians to restrain him; when he spares Argos, they attack him for his want of energy; when he consults for pan-Hellenic unity by taking hostages from Aegina, they again raise up an antagonist in the shape of Demaratus; and when he finally intrigues for the overthrow of their power with the Arcadians and helots, they accuse him of treachery and procure his ruin. Thus their policy is not constructive but destructive, anti-royal rather than anti-imperialist.

Exactly the same attacks are made on Pausanias. He is accused of medism—a ridiculous charge that led to an acquittal, and his humiliation at the hands of the allies is willingly accepted in Sparta. He, too, is driven by constant opposition into a plot to overthrow not Sparta but the incubus on the Spartan constitution, and is driven to exile and death. Leonidas is abandoned at Thermopylae, and throughout the Persian wars Sparta takes an indecisive line, not because of treachery to the Greek cause, but because of the party

¹ Herod. i. 59; Diog. Laert. i. 68: *Χείλων πρῶτος εἰσηγήσατο ἐφόρους τοῖς βασιλεῦσι παραξενύναναι*.

² Cheilon, as we can tell from the data given by Herodotus, was a contemporary of Epimenides the Cretan, who, according to the *Ἀθ. Πολ.*, purified Athens about 594. Now Epimenides did something also in Sparta, for we find in the Spartan agora a building attributed to him (Paus. iii. 12. 11). As a professional authority on doctrinal matters his action is bound to have been of a religious nature, and it may well be that he was concerned in originating the cult of the Cretan Pasiphae at Thalamæ, which has such an unexplained importance in Spartan ceremonial (Paus. iv. 26. 1; Cic. *de Div.* i. 43, 96). This cult is closely connected with the ephors,

who made use of a dream-oracle in the temple, and is definitely anti-royal, since the goddess of Thalamæ was to be consulted on the deposition of the kings. It seems highly probable that Cheilon and Epimenides effected this reform in common, knowing that it would be an impressive counterblast to the prevailing royal influence at Delphi.

³ Herodotus does not mention the part played by the ephors either at Eleusis or Aegina, but it is usually concluded from the well-known hatred of the ephors both for Cleomenes and Leotychidas, that they acted in concert with Demaratus, also the bitter foe of the other kings. It has been held that the *ἀρχή* held by Demaratus after his deposition (Herod. vi. 67) was the ephorate.

struggles between kings and ephors. For the ephors were not always supreme. Cleomenes frequently got his own way, and in 494 was acquitted on trial. Pausanias also was acquitted on trial, and in 478, in spite of the withdrawal of Leotychidas from the war in the preceding year, he induced the assembly to put him at the head of a fleet, and led the Greek forces to victory in Cyprus and Byzantium.

Thus we may legitimately assume the existence of two parties in Sparta from 520 to 478, a royal progressive imperial party, anxious for conquest, for hegemony, and even tampering with ideas of emancipation, along with an anti-royal party, headed by the ephors, ready to be inconsistent as long as it got its way, and violently opposed to any ideas of emancipation or relaxation of the strict democratic Lycurgan regime.

Even after the fall of Pausanias the imperialist party in Sparta continued to have power. Diodorus¹ recounts how the reception of the news of the repudiation of Spartan hegemony led to anger and demands for war with Athens, and from that moment an anti-Athenian party came into existence. The ephors who hailed the humiliation of Pausanias with delight were forced in their own defence to preach the doctrine of dual hegemony. They were willing to sacrifice empire to their political exigencies, and to accept an equality of Athens by sea and Sparta by land. Thus in 477, when the war-party was crying for armed intervention to prevent the fortification of Athens, the ephors permitted themselves to be hoodwinked by Themistocles; but later, finding in that statesman an ally or correspondent of Pausanias, they joined in the hue and cry that drove him into Persia. A little later we find Spartan aid promised to Thasos in 465,² and an Attic invasion projected for the following year. But a curious *volte-face* has taken place, for it is the ephors who must have made the promise in Sparta's name, and consequently the ephors who are now identified with the war-party.

This sudden change of front is in no way surprising when we remember that the ephors had no constructive but only an anti-royal policy, proved by their unscrupulous struggle with Cleomenes and Pausanias. The warlike Agiadae were no longer predominant. In 468 Archidamus the Eurypontid succeeded Leotychidas, and both as the elder and the far more capable monarch became the representative of Spartan royalty for the next forty years. Archidamus was consistently for peace. He refused³ to lead the expedition in 457 and 445, and he preached peace in 431. Consequently the ephors were bound to become imperialists, and they effected the change with great celerity. In 462 it was Archidamus, Cimon's friend, who summoned him to Sparta's help at Ithome. The party which drove him out with contumely in the following year and threw down the gauntlet to Athens can only have been that of the ephors. It was the ephors who punished Pleistoanax in 445 for not destroying

¹ XI. 50.

² Thuc. I. 101.

³ The expedition to Tanagra was led by Nicomedes in place of Pleistoanax; the expedition to Eleusis by Pleistoanax himself. The absence

of Archidamus in both cases can only have been due to his own refusal, especially in 457, when it was clearly his duty during the minority of his colleague (Thuc. I. 107).

Athens, and Sthenelaidas, the ephor, who insisted on war in 431. But Archidamus, who spoke against war in 431, who refused to hold command in 457 and 445, must have been the cause of the rejection of the Lesbian proposals a little before the war and the Persian proposals in 456.

We have dealt at some length with the events of the Pentecontaetia, because it is essential to this question to be perfectly clear on the point that there were two parties in Sparta, a war-party and a peace-party, whose power varied according as Archidamus or one of the ephors was the most persuasive and influential politician of the year.

The ephors were supreme in 465, Archidamus in 462, the ephors in 461, the ephors in 457, Archidamus in 456, the ephors in 446, Archidamus in 440, Archidamus a little before the war,¹ but the ephors in 432-1.

With this fact ever before our eyes we can turn to the objections brought against the theory of Thucydides.

1. Why should Sparta be driven to war in 431 from fear of Attic expansion, when Athens was really far weaker than she had been from 460 to 450?

It is true that Athens was weaker in 431 than she had been in 460, but this argument is not an adequate statement of the facts. For, in the first place, the Athenian expansion of the sixties had actually driven Sparta to war. Few would deny that the war which broke out in 461 was due to Spartan fear of Attic expansion, and that war went on until more by Athenian disasters than by Spartan valour it came to a successful end in 445. Sparta, in the shape of the ephors, did not desire the annihilation of Athens, but her strict adherence to the *status quo* of 477, to the dual hegemony, and to a purely maritime empire. Attic expansion in the sixties had made her fear that the balance of power was threatened. The peace of 445 fulfilled, or nearly fulfilled, Spartan desires, and forced a re-acceptance of the *status quo*.

But if Athens was weaker in 431 than she had been in 460, she was far stronger than she had been in 445. Since the peace she had repaired her treasury and fleet, had put down all disaffection in her league, and was on the point of stretching out her arms to Sicily. The *status quo* was threatened again in 431 very much as it had been in 461, and the expansion of 445 to 435 was analogous to that of 477 to 461.

At this point it may be advisable to consider the question of Potidaea, since it has been held that its important position in the pages of Thucydides is hardly justified, and that his inclusion of it as an important factor in the outbreak of the war is unsatisfactory.²

When Thucydides speaks of *αἰτίαι* and *διαφοραί*, he calls Potidaea and Epidamnus *αἰτίαι*, and considers the smaller grievances, the Megarian decree,

¹ Not only was the Lesbian proposal of revolt rejected, but Sparta intervened or tried to intervene with Sicyon between Corinth and Corcyra.

This must have been due to fear of war and desire to prevent it.

² Grundy, p. 372.

the treatment of Aegina, etc., as *διαφοράι*. Potidaea was subsequent to Corcyra, and therefore not so immediately important from the point of view of the imperial relations of Athens and Sparta, but it is fitly included among the proximate causes of the war, since the treatment of Potidaea must have influenced the votes of many of the smaller Greek states. It was a violent interference with the natural Greek right of autonomy, and whether in its execution it displayed Athenian weakness or strength, in its conception it showed clearly the autocratic and individualistic character of Athenian rule. It may not have impelled Sparta to war as much as the Corcyrean affair did, but it operated far more powerfully on the minor states of the Peloponnesian league, and caused the further exasperation of Corinth.

2. Attico-Corinthian rivalry was greater than Attico-Spartan.

So far from this being true, an anti-Athenian party had existed, as we have seen, in Sparta since 480, and had been since 468 identified with the ephors. It had already brought about war with Athens once, and only Archidamus and the frail bulwark of the Thirty Years' Peace were restraining it. Once let Athens break the letter of the agreement, and the war-party would be supreme. To this is due the importance of the academic question in the Corinthian and Corcyrean debate, as to whether a defensive alliance with Corcyra would break the truce or not, unimportant surely except for its effect on Sparta.

As for Attico-Corinthian rivalry, its bitterness dates from after, not before, the Corcyrean alliance. Herodotus gives quite a false picture of the relations of Athens and Corinth at the time of the Persian wars, and himself elsewhere admits that they were friendly.¹ There had been war in 459, because Athens threatened the north-west trade, but the arrangements of 445 had been satisfactory, and so far from showing rancour, Corinth had stood up for Athens as recently as 440. Corinthian jealousy of Athens dates from the renewal of Attic projects in the west—*i.e.*, from 434—and was neither of long-standing or in the least hereditary. Thus it was not the case that Attic jealousy of Corinthian commerce forced Pericles' hand in the matter; on the contrary, we shall have to admit that that jealousy only arose out of Pericles' action.

3. Corinth had more to gain from the war than Sparta, who could gain nothing from it.

No one can deny that after the alliance of Athens and Corcyra war was a matter of supreme importance to Corinth, but to say that Sparta had nothing to gain from it is to judge from after events. The Spartans, as Thucydides shows, had every hope of success in the war. They did not realize their own powerlessness, and they thought a few years' invasion would reduce Athens to

¹ Herod v. 92 (about 506 B.C.); vi. 89 (shortly before Marathon). The Corinthian speech in the first book of Thucydides shows (chs. 40 and 41)

that hitherto Corinth and Athens had been on good terms. The enmity referred to is still in the future.

terms. Moreover, the object of the war from their point of view was not so much to gain anything definite as to check Attic expansion. The Attic-Corcyrean alliance meant :

- A. Practically an Athenian corner in ships.
- B. A death-blow to Corinthian trade.
- C. The ultimate extension of Attic influence over Italy and Sicily.

A. was comparatively unimportant by itself, but B. was of supreme importance to Sparta, for if Corinthian trade was ruined, the only financial resource of the Peloponnesian league would be removed. With Athens predominant over Corinth, or even only possessed of her western trade, the funds and the fleet of the Peloponnesian League would be reduced to nil, and Sparta half crippled before the war began. C. If Athens were to be allowed to control the west as she controlled the east, the Peloponnese would be isolated. A part of her corn-supply, all her ship-building wood, and many sources of commerce would be in Attic hands, and, most important of all, the Attic monopoly of trade would make her so wealthy, so influential, and so strong, that Sparta would be defeated before a blow was struck. These were the imperial and political reasons that made the Corcyrean question of such vital importance to Sparta from the very first.

4. Sparta showed great reluctance to fight at all and little energy in the first years of the war.

We have already seen the most important reason for this reluctance in the condition of Spartan parties. Archidamus and the peace party were a strong brake on the wheel of the imperialist policy, and only the cumulative effects of Corcyra, Potidaea, and Megara were able to overcome their resistance. Moreover, Sparta was bound to wait a little to see developments. The alliance with Corcyra was not a formal breach of the peace, and Sparta was scrupulous in such matters. Only after the affairs of Potidaea and Megara were Athenian intentions perfectly clear. The operations were all in the north-west, because that was the important, and in fact the essential, spot. If Athens could be driven out of the north-west, all would be well. The Corinthians believed in direct attack, and after some hesitation the Spartans followed them, but not with enthusiasm, because Sparta had only one strategy for war, and believed in no other. Invasion with the ravaging of crops was the one Spartan military method, and the unexpected indifference of Athens to this form of warfare paralyzed the Spartan War Office from the first. It took them some years to devise some other plan of attack. As to the frequent efforts to bring the war to an end and to offer terms, it must always be remembered that Sparta was fighting for the restitution of the *status quo*, and if she could get that, she would much sooner stop the war, which was expensive both in money and men. Her imperialists, like Lysander, were still in the schoolroom.

5. The next argument is the especial discovery of Dr. Grundy, that Corinth persuaded the smaller states to vote for war because their corn-supply was threatened.

The reply to this argument is that it goes too far. Dr. Grundy has over-estimated the population of the Peloponnese. It is impossible in a short space to deal at all fully with Dr. Grundy's figures, but one may perhaps be permitted to question very strongly the principles put forward in his note on p. 213 of his book. He suggests there that if the whole cultivable area of Greece were cultivated at the present day, imported corn would be unnecessary. A larger area was cultivable in ancient times, and a great amount of imported corn was necessary. Therefore, he concludes, the ancient population was much larger than the modern. But does this follow?

In the first place, although doubtless the *cultivable* area is smaller now than in antiquity, it is very dubious if the *cultivated* area is smaller. Although the towns of modern Greece are smaller than those of ancient Hellas, there are probably far more villages at the present day, and therefore a greater part of the country is within reach. The blessings of peace, which mean not only that you do not lose your crops through war, but that you can cultivate lands much farther away from your settlement, must have affected the cultivated area, and if, as Dr. Grundy argues rather unfortunately in another place (p. 91), it paid the ancient Greek better to grow something else and to get his corn from abroad, we have still further reason for reducing the land under corn in antiquity. Moreover, rotation of crops and the introduction of Indian corn have revolutionized the possibilities of agriculture, and it is therefore impossible to base any figures of population on the very dubious comparison between the area cultivated in ancient and modern times. On any reasonable estimate of the population—*e.g.*, of Laconia—there can be no doubt that the ancient population was smaller than the modern. The decisive figure is the 35,000 helots sent to Plataea. They were sent not to fight but to be out of the way of mischief while Sparta was empty. They represent, then, the greater part of the able-bodied helot population. In that case there cannot have been more than 200,000 helots, who with 80,000 perioeci, and certainly not more than 30,000 Spartiates, fail to equal the 350,000 modern inhabitants of the same area.

With a smaller population, we have no reason to consider the problem of food-supply acute in the Peloponnese. The quotation from Herodotus¹ in regard to the corn-ships of 480 refers to Aegina and the Peloponnese—*i.e.* to the neighbouring part of Peloponnese, the barren Acte from Corinth to Troezen. Most of Argolis is, in fact, an indifferent country for crops. But neither Aegina nor Argolis was concerned in the matter of an Athenian blockade. Achaea, Elis, Arcadia, Laconia, and Messenia have ample cultivable land, and even if on Dr. Grundy's theory it had been found more profitable as

¹ VII. 147.

a rule to substitute vines and olives for corn, yet a corn-crop only takes a year to grow, and if the danger of blockade were imminent, corn could speedily be grown all over Peloponnese. But Dr. Grundy overestimates the possibilities of blockade. The history of the war itself is sufficient to show that an Athenian blockade of Peloponnese was impossible. The theory that the Peloponnesians gravely proposed to import corn overland from a point north of Corcyra, through modern Albania and Aetolia to Oeniadae, and thence by sea to Cyllene is hardly credible. Not only would it be impossible physically and financially to import corn on mule-back through a wild stretch of barren country, but the Athenian privateers from Naupactus and Cephallenia would have stopped it at the end of its long journey. Doubtless a possible rise in corn may have contributed to the annoyance of the smaller Peloponnesian states, but it was the hard political facts of Megara and Potidaea and not an economic theory that united them. It was autonomy, not food, for which Greece was fighting.

There is a tendency to-day among historians to give far too much weight to commercial or economic motives in dealing with ancient states. Such motives are rarely mentioned by ancient writers, and naturally so, because even if subsidiary, they were never *ἀληθέσταται προφάσεις*, simply because they were not understood by the mass of the people. Even in Athens, the political influence of the Piraeus traders cannot have been as great as Mr. Cornford would have us believe, and the idea that Sparta could be persuaded to fight for the commerce of Corinth or the corn-supply of Arcadia is preposterous.

6. The answer to this argument, and the final explanation of the cause of the war by the critics of Thucydides, is that Corinth threatened to secede to Argos if Sparta would not fight, and so Sparta was driven into action.

History does not bear out the view that Sparta's hand could be forced in this way. Neither the Corinthian war nor the Mantinean campaign suggests that Argos and Corinth could ever have made a united stand against Sparta. Argos was a far more dangerous ally to Corinth than Sparta could ever be, and for good or evil the fate of the two latter was bound up together. It is the imperial danger, not the economic, that the Corinthian advocates harp upon. The Corinthian speech is that of impassioned pleaders because their interests were bound up with the war, but there is no trace in the speech of Sthenelaidas that the threat of secession has made the slightest impression, or was, in fact, anything more than a rhetorical flourish.

Our conclusion, then, on the whole matter is that the criticism of Thucydides has failed, and that his *ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις* still holds. The position of affairs after 440 was an enriched and growing Athens on the one side, watched on the other by a jealous Sparta with a war-party always on the *qui vive*.

To this powder-magazine comes the spark of the Corintho-Corcyrean difference. What was Pericles to do? He had not yet begun to save for war, because he did not anticipate it so soon, though he knew, as all Greece

did, that it was inevitable in the end. If he let Corcyra go, he was losing 200 ships (Corcyra would never have fought Corinth without Attic help), and he would have lost his bridge to the west. If he accepted, he made war certain, as soon as Sparta realized the position; but he would have his bridge to the west, and he thought Athens was impregnable. She was to be on the defensive throughout, and Sparta was at last to admit that she could do nothing. Then the Peloponnesian League would break up, as it had done in 473 and 464, and as it actually did in 421. Athens would be left mistress of the Greek world.

This explains Pericles' acceptance of the alliance. Sparta's hesitation for a year or two is easily understood. The truce was not yet technically broken, and she did not yet know what use Athens was going to make of her position. Potidaea and Megara showed that. The treatment of Potidaea was essential to guard against a weak spot in Athens' armour; the treatment of Megara was a warning to the world that while Sparta was helpless, Athens could deal with Spartan allies as she liked. And so, with the Athenian cards on the table, Archidamus had to give way, and πολλῶ πλείους voted for war in the Spartan assembly because they saw that the Corcyrean alliance was building for Athens a bridge to the treasures of the west. The *status quo* was altered, and Potidaea and Megara showed them how Athens intended to use her supremacy. Sparta had fought in 461 because Athens was growing too powerful. She found that the snake was scotched, not killed, and that the Corcyrean alliance would mean beginning the work of destruction all over again. The imperial importance of this alliance was recognized in Sparta from the first. The peace party vainly tried to patch up a compromise before the war by intervening at Corinth, and at the last moment Archidamus tried to stem the tide of popular passion; but no one who reads the account of the debate in Sparta can fail to see that the overwhelming feeling of the audience was in favour of war not against the commercial foe of Corinth, who might secede from the League, but against the imperial menace of Athens, which was threatening to isolate the Peloponnese. 'Our aim in Sicily,' said Alcibiades later,¹ 'is τῇ Πελοποννήσῳ . . . ἐπιχειρήσειν, κομίσαντες ξύμπασαν μὲν τὴν ἐκείθεν προσγενομένην δύναμιν τῶν Ἑλλήνων, πολλοὺς δὲ βαρβάρους μισθωσάμενοι καὶ Ἰβηρας καὶ ἄλλους τῶν ἐκεῖ ὁμολογουμένως νῦν βαρβάρων μαχιμωτάτους, τριήρεις τε πρὸς ταῖς ἡμετέραις πολλὰς ναυπηγησάμενοι, ἐχούσης τῆς Ἰταλίας ξύλα ἄφθονα, αἷς τὴν Πελοπόννησον περίξ πολιορκούντες καὶ τῷ πέζῳ ἅμα ἐκ γῆς ἐφορμαῖς τῶν πόλεων τὰς μὲν βίᾳ λαβόντες, τὰς δ' ἐντειχισάμενοι, ῥαδίως ἡλπίζομεν καταπολεμήσειν καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τοῦ ξύμπαντος Ἑλληνικοῦ ἄρξειν.' The plans are those of a later date, but there was more than one Alcibiades living in 431 to whom such ideas had already occurred, and the Peloponnesians who had the fate of Potidaea, Megara, and Aegina before their eyes, may well have been excused if they even exaggerated the dangers of the Athenian empire.