

SOME ASPECTS OF INTERTEXTUALITY BETWEEN PLUTARCH'S *LIFE OF PERICLES* AND THUCYDIDES

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Plutarch lived about five centuries after Pericles. Such a great lapse in time meant his knowledge of the distinguished Athenian statesman was based on data collected mostly from literary (written¹) sources and information that, through oral tradition, had survived in the memory of the various ensuing generations.

As would be expected, Plutarch generally opted for authors who were chronologically closer to the statesman. They either participated directly in the events or experienced personally the successes and difficulties of Athens, especially after the statesman's death, having closely witnessed the decisions made during Pericles' government.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that the *History of the Peloponnesian War* is Plutarch's main² source for his *Life of Pericles*: as Thucydides was an important historian of the fifth century BC, consulting his work was obviously indispensable to address the major characters or events of this period so as to ensure credibility. Furthermore, the historical and the biographical account go hand in hand, since it is the people with their lives who make history, but, at the same time, it is the various events that influence personalities and their actions.

In this specific case, although they are dedicated to different accounts, historian and biographer do, however, have a common goal: to contribute in some way to the development of future generations. Thucydides intends to examine the causes of the greatest war ever waged among the Greeks and how it unfolded. He aims to clarify the motives behind such a conflict and to facilitate an understanding of the similarities between this war and others that may take

¹ We can divide these sources into three groups: historiographical (Thucydides, Duris of Samos, Ephorus, Ion of Chios, Stesimbrotos, Critolaus, Aeschines, Heraclides Ponticus or Idomeneu of Lampsacus); comic playwrights (e.g., Cratinus, Eupolis, Aristophanes, Plato Comicus), as well as works dedicated to oratory or philosophical matters (by Plato, Aristotle, or Theophrastus).

² Thucydides is only quoted specifically in *Per.* 9. 1, 15. 3, 16. 1, 28. 2, 28. 8, 33. 1. However, as we shall see, the influence of this author appears throughout the biography, and a close study shows that there are several passages in which Plutarch's text is an almost literal transcript of the historian's one (cf. *Per.* 18 and 34).

place in the future, since human deeds have much in common and history is, in a sense, cyclical; Plutarch (*Per.* 2), to some extent, intends to assist in the education of better men through the presentation of his paradigms, since human beings tend to imitate those they admire, and to criticize and avoid the less positive traits of individuals.

Thus, as a historian, Thucydides pays special attention to the facts he seeks to understand and explain; Plutarch, as a biographer, pays special attention to the major actors involved, examining the elements that define their personality, as well as interpreting and justifying their options. Indeed, the biographer believes that how individuals act tends to reveal their qualities and faults.

It should not be forgotten, however, that Plutarch generally takes on an attitude of great impartiality with regard to the sources he uses. He does not blindly accept all the information he collects. He often disagrees with what is said and evaluates the ability for thoroughness and objectivity of the several authors he resorts to. For example, when there is a lack of consensus on a certain matter, the biographer presents several points of view and, at times, indicates the one he finds to be most credible.

Hence, it is necessary to observe the use the author of *Parallel Lives* made of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

The fact that Thucydides is a historian and Plutarch a biographer is one of the main causes behind the rather particular use the latter makes of this historical source. Thucydides is concerned with analyzing, within a defined historical context, Pericles' power over the people and the strategy he advocates for victory. Plutarch, in turn, as a biographer, omits or summarizes various historical facts (notably military details), because it is not his intention to theorize on these matters.

However, he focuses on the accounts of moments in Pericles' life that best illustrate the traits he has chosen to highlight, such as *πρότης* 'self-control', *δικαιοσύνη* 'sense of justice' or caution in war, and which the statesman will also have in common with his peer, Fabius Maximus. For this reason, he provides more personal information on Pericles than Thucydides³.

³ The only characteristics that Thucydides particularly appreciates in Pericles are his oratory skill and the ability to sway the masses: for example, he is able to encourage people when they lack confidence in their abilities or, on the contrary, to control their impulses which, with his clairvoyance, he feels will be harmful to the good of the *polis*. We almost get the impression that the people are like pawns in the hands of Pericles: except for his last years in power (already during the Peloponnesian War), the statesman easily turns them around. Recalling the episode in which Plutarch describes the city's embellishment works: when the people, instigated by Pericles' political opponents, complain about the expenses related to the works, he proposes to finance them and states that in this case, only his name will prevail in the future as the mentor of the remodeling work. Thus, the entire *demos* gave him *carte blanche* for expenses. To some extent, this shows that, recognizing the magnificence of the works, the people did not want to run the risk of not being associated to those works in future generations. Pericles, as we can

Bearing this goal in mind, we can easily understand that Plutarch refers to Thucydides' text mostly with the intention of proving, by describing Pericles' actions, the personality traits he wishes to highlight. He wants to show his readers the man behind the acts – with all his virtues, weaknesses and concerns. Consequently, Plutarch immediately takes advantage of the few personal references the historian makes (cf. Thuc. 2. 65).

It is Pericles' speeches, quoted by the historian, in which the statesman presents his positions and analyzes the possibilities of victory, that best characterize his politics. Before going further, it is important to make some considerations about these speeches. Thucydides quotes three directly and one indirectly: the first, in Thuc. 1. 140 – 1. 144 (in which Pericles defends a warlike option and presents his strategy); the second, in Thuc. 2. 13 (indirectly, on what he would do if during the invasion Archidamus spared his lands, going on to talk of the financial means available to the Athenians for war); the third, the famous Funeral Oration⁴ (a speech that Pericles gave at the time of the funeral ceremonies in honor of the fighters who fell on the battlefield and in which he praises their ancestors, Athenian democracy and war heroes), in Thuc. 2. 35 – 2. 46; finally, the fourth, in Thuc. 2. 60 – 2. 64 (last speech following the wrath of the Athenians because of their plight aggravated by the plague).

However, in *Per.* 8, Plutarch says that the statesman, although he was an excellent speaker, left nothing in writing except for decrees, and only a few expressions he used were still remembered. These expressions are quoted by Plutarch based on Plato, Theopompus and comedy writers, but to whom Thucydides does not make any reference. This, together with some incongruities in the speeches presented by the historian, leads scholars to admit that they cannot be representative of Pericles' oratory skill. Despite their quality in terms of persuasion and efficacy, they are most probably by Thucydides himself⁵.

Nonetheless, although he refutes the authenticity of the speeches, Plutarch takes advantage of much of the information they contain. But, unlike Thucydides, who intertwines speech (especially in moments when important decisions are to be made) and narrative in his work, the biographer does not employ this type of conjugation (although there is direct speech in some parts). This is, in some measure, more a matter of personal taste or derived from precepts of the genre rather than due to the authors having written their works in very different periods. If Thucydides, in the fifth century BC, was deeply influenced by the

see, was all too aware of the weaknesses (in this case, pride) of his "flock," so he knew how to convince them. Thucydides also praises the perspicacity of Pericles, which he considers an indispensable quality for the planning and decision-making related to these large enterprises.

⁴ Plutarch does not refer to this Oration, but to another, also delivered by Pericles on the occasion of the War against Samos.

⁵ For more information on this, vide Stadter 2012: 109-123.

Sophistic movement (which would later on lead to the development of rhetoric), Plutarch, in the first century AD, is also influenced by Hellenistic oratory and even by the Second Sophistic. It is, therefore, perhaps Thucydides' taste that leads him to use speeches, seen as powerful means of analysis of the intricacies of a subject or of the personality of those who proclaim them. The historian mainly explores the first function, that is, the constraints that are invoked in speeches as a justification for a certain political option, rather than the aspects that unveil traits of the speaker's character (very characteristic of dramatic authors, also profoundly marked by the Sophistic model, such as Euripides, for example).

Contemporaneity is also a crucial factor in the characteristics of the account. In fact, because he lived at the same time as Pericles (although he was still very young), Thucydides was better able to read the events politically, since he could have determined *in loco* the positions of the various parties and he also lived the consequences of various acts of government. To exemplify this idea, there is clearly a laudatory tone in his narrative in relation to the figure of Pericles, unlike Plutarch, whose account is more exempt. In other words, Thucydides reveals in his text a great admiration for the statesman (which is especially noticeable in the second book, particularly in Chapter 65, in which he briefly compliments him). This attitude is not surprising if we remember that he favored Pericles' party: they had, presumably, similar political views (e.g., Thuc. 2. 35 – 2. 46).

Besides the evident admiration, this partiality can be seen also in the omission of criticism. The qualities Thucydides clearly praises are Pericles' ability to use political discourse, and his leadership abilities (which he compares negatively with the inconstancy of the people – 2. 65. 8 – 2. 65. 9). But there is one quality the people would most praise after his death and which placed him far above his successors – incorruptibility⁶.

Pericles' political options are also praised, in particular, with regard to the reasons why Athens lost the war (Thuc. 2. 65. 7). According to the historian, if Athens had followed Pericles' strategy even after his death, this would probably have led to victory (indirect praise).

In addition to the praise, Thucydides omits several of the criticisms made to Pericles, such as the actions of his opponents who had the intention to harm him (cf. footnote 14). As a first proof of these omissions, we can mention the silence on attacks against Pericles' friends and close acquaintances (Phidias, Anaxagoras and Aspasia), intended to affect him, which Plutarch writes about in *Per.* 31 and of which comedy and Plato give abundant account.

⁶ Plutarch tells us (*Per.* 15. 3) that although he remained for many years in power, Pericles did not increase a drachma of the fortune his father had left him.

Equally significant is the omission of the quelling of the Samian War in 440-439 BC, which Plutarch recounts in *Per.* 28. 2 – 28. 3, following another historiographical tradition against Pericles, that of Duris of Samos (FGrHist 76 F 67) and of Stesimbrotos. Thucydides also omitted references to the people's uprising during the first invasion of Attica, as he seems to accept it is a natural reaction from those who see their property destroyed. Plutarch, however, says that the revolt was incited by the opponents of Pericles, notably by Cleon (*Per.* 33. 8). In relation to this event, it is curious to note that Thucydides' lack of exemption is twofold. Although he is silent about the political opposition surrounding Pericles, he nonetheless describes in highly flattering terms the strategic measure the statesman resorted to appease the popular revolt: suspension of the assembly meetings (Thuc. 2. 22. 1). For the historian, not holding the assembly meetings was intended to avoid the mistakes to which ὀργή 'wrath' would certainly have led and which the people would later regret. Plutarch (*Per.* 33. 6), however, says Pericles opted for this measure to avoid being forced to act against his will. It seems, then, that the biographer believes that the statesman acted in a somewhat dictatorial and demagogical manner.

Lastly, it is important to mention the negligible manner in which Thucydides reports the deposition of Pericles, saying only that he was a victim of the people's wrath (Thuc. 2. 65. 3). Furthermore, when referring to the plague (Thuc. 2. 47 – 2. 54), the historian dwells on the details of the disease and its psychological and social consequences, without alluding to its political implications in the short term. The author of *Lives*, on the other hand, mentions the disease very briefly and highlights the people's discontent against Pericles, holding him accountable for having detained so many people inside the city, as a consequence of the strategy he adopted.

We can also see in other situations how Thucydides exculpates Pericles: in Thuc. 1. 24 -1. 66, for example, where he describes in detail the events that led to the estrangement between Athens and Sparta, there is no mention of the strategist. The two causes involving Athens in military action against Corcyra and Potidaea and leading to war, certainly required serious decisions on which Pericles would have made his views known in the assembly. However, Plutarch declares that Pericles persuaded the Athenians to ally with Corcyra and to send an army (*Per.* 29. 1). He could most certainly be based on another source, but Thucydides also corroborates this idea in his account of the dispute with the Peloponnesians: Pericles defended resistance to the demands of Sparta and the inevitability of the war (Thuc. 1. 127, 1. 140. 4, 1. 144. 3).

A certain brevity with which Thucydides portrays the son of Xanthippus is due to the fact that Pericles' career predates the war, and the historian had only followed it for two and a half years. As the *History of the Peloponnesian War* is dedicated to this event, the author chooses not to go into much detail about what happened before. Thucydides' purpose is not so much to present a general idea of

Pericles' role in the first phase of the war, but rather to select – so as to instruct the reader – the main issues of that period and to show Pericles' wisdom and capacity for reflection in dealing with them.

Plutarch, on the other hand, presents various opinions on Pericles' political actions, many of which show that, like any common mortal, Xanthippus' son did not suit all tastes. In *Per.* 9. 1, Plutarch mentions the criticism of Pericles' popular measures (especially from Plato), such as the distribution of subsidies for theater and cleruchies or *misthophoria*, which Thucydides, for his part, sees with good eyes. In *Per.* 12. 1, the biographer mentions the severe criticism from opponents of the works of embellishment of Athens on which the funds of the Delian League were spent. It is important to point out that, at this stage, Plutarch himself praises the measure⁷ as well as Pericles' perspicacity. The Chaeronean's account suggests that the statesman intended his works to be "*aere perennius*" (Hor. *Carm.* 3. 30). And this is indeed what happened: if today, after more than twenty centuries, we are able to glimpse the original magnificence of the monuments (in spite of the various natural and human vicissitudes that they have suffered), how splendid would they have been in Plutarch's time?

Plutarch also mentions other allegations in which Pericles is targeted. He was accused of having become involved in the dispute between Samos and Miletus, under the influence of Aspasia, and was thus responsible for having started the Samian War (*Per.* 25. 1). He was also censured for not yielding to Sparta's demands because of his arrogance, his desire to be victorious (*φιλονικία*) and to demonstrate his power (*Per.* 31. 1). In relation to this later accusation, Plutarch is resolute: Pericles' decision is derived only from his nobility of spirit – *ἐκ φρονήματος μεγάλου* – and his conviction – *μετά γνώμης*.

Plutarch (*Per.* 10. 7) also admits that Pericles was not totally irreproachable, but he disagrees with Idomeneus (*FGrHist* 338 F 8), according to whom the statesman would have killed his ally Ephialtes by treachery. Nevertheless, admitting to the statesman's flaws does not mean Plutarch, like the classical historian, does not admire Pericles. In fact, both writers praise his exceptional political-military insight, his unrivaled ability to lead, to guide his fellow citizens. If the author from Chaeronea presents different opinions, it is because he wants the readers to have the necessary elements to evaluate themselves which one is the fairest, even at the risk of the reader not agreeing with his interpretation. On other occasions, such as, for example, with reference to Duris of Samos (*FGrHist* 76 F 67), he does so to show that this latter historian is partial and unfair (*Per.* 28. 2 – 28. 3).

⁷ Cf. P. Stadter "Introduzione a Pericle", in Santoni 1991: 100. Stadter sees in this praise a type of encouragement to Plutarch's contemporaries – especially the Romans – who sought to achieve immortal fame by financing monumental public buildings, such as theaters and baths.

The same applies to the comic writers. There is, moreover, a passage in which Plutarch opposes them to Thucydides, making one of the few direct quotations (that is, accompanied by reference to the source) of the historian's work (*Per.* 16. 1):

“Καίτοι τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ σαφῶς μὲν ὁ **Θουκυδίδης** διηγείται, κακοήθως δὲ παρεμφαίνουσιν οἱ **κωμικοὶ**, Πεισιστρατίδας μὲν νέους τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν ἑταίρους καλοῦντες, ὡς ἀσυμμέτρου πρὸς δημοκρατίαν καὶ βαρυτέρας περὶ αὐτὸν οὔσης ὑπεροχῆς.”

Of his power there can be no doubt, since Thucydides gives so clear an exposition of it, and the comic poets unwittingly reveal it even in their malicious gibes, calling him and his associates “new Peisistratidae”, and urging him to take solemn oath not to make himself a tyrant, on the plea, forsooth, that his preeminence was incommensurate with a democracy and too oppressive⁸.

In *Per.* 16. 1, Thucydides' correct interpretation of Pericles' power⁹ is praised, as opposed to the distortion the comic writers make of it (they force him to swear he will not be a tyrant). For them¹⁰, the supremacy of Pericles, who was in fact ruling under the guise of respecting the will of the people, is detrimental to democracy. Thucydides, however, seems to see this power in a positive light. In his opinion, since the people are inconstant, if it were not for Pericles's strong will, chaos would have reigned.

As mentioned before, Plutarch makes few direct quotations. In this *Life*, in relation to Thucydides, he does it four times: *Per.* 9. 1/*Thuc.* 2. 65; *Per.* 15. 3/*Thuc.* 2. 65; *Per.* 28. 8/*Thuc.* 1. 117. 1 – 1. 117. 3 and *Per.* 33. 1/*Thuc.* 1. 127. So few that we can ask this question: in which situations has this been warranted?

When Plutarch (*Per.* 15. 3) examines the causes of Pericles' power and the respect and consideration which the population generally nurtures for him, he says the following: Αἰτία δ'οὐχ ἡ τοῦ λόγου ψιλῶς δύναμις, ἀλλ', ὡς Θουκυδίδης φησὶν, ἡ περὶ τὸν βίον δόξα καὶ πίστις τοῦ ἀνδρός, ἀδωροτάτου περιφανῶς γενομένου καὶ χρημάτων κρείττονος (...) (*The reason for his success was not his power as a speaker merely, but, as Thucydides says, the reputation of his life*

⁸ The translations presented of the passages of *Life of Pericles* are by Perrin 1916.

⁹ *Thuc.* 2. 65. 9: Ἐγίνετό τε λόγω μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργω δ'ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρός ἀρχή (...)” (*In short, what was nominally a democracy became in his hands government by the first citizen*). This excerpt of Thucydides serves as a source for the final chapter (*Per.* 39), in which Plutarch provides an overview of the main characteristics of Pericles and it is also quoted in *Per.* 9.1: Ἐπεὶ δὲ Θουκυδίδης μὲν ἀριστοκρατικὴν τινα τὴν τοῦ Περικλέους ὑπογράφει πολιτείαν, λόγῳ μὲν οὖσαν δημοκρατίαν, ἔργῳ δ'ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρός ἀρχὴν (...)” (*Thucydides describes the administration of Pericles as rather aristocratic, — ‘in name a democracy, but in fact a government by the greatest citizen.*)

¹⁰ Ferreira & Rodrigues 2010: 34, 43.

and the confidence reposed in him as one who was manifestly proven to be utterly disinterested and superior to bribes (...).

This is the passage that originated this quotation (Thuc. 2. 65. 8)¹¹: “Αἴτιον δ’ ἦν ὅτι ἐκεῖνος μὲν δυνατὸς ὦν τῷ τε ἀξιώματι καὶ τῇ γνώμῃ χρημάτων τε διαφανῶς ἀδωρότατος γενόμενος (...).” (*The causes of this are not far to seek. Pericles indeed, by his rank, ability, and known integrity (...)*)¹².

Plutarch intends to justify Pericles’ strong leadership by presenting the traits in which it is rooted: on the one hand, the strength of the language (emphasized by Plato and, of course, also by Thucydides who often portrays him in the use of the word); on the other hand, his reputation in life and also (in this context, the main one) his incorruptibility. In addition to these qualities, there is what Thucydides calls γνώμη ‘intelligence’ and public ἀξίωμα ‘consideration’ and Plutarch πίστις ‘trust’: thus, it becomes clear that the people did not merely appreciate or respect Pericles’ integrity, but they also had total confidence in the politician (although we know they would at time be hesitant).

The comparison of these excerpts shows the author’s great freedom in the process of quotation: what counts is the transmission of ideas. When the quotation is direct, that is, when Plutarch indicates the source, there seems to be concern to follow more closely the author’s text (cf. underlined words).

After having dealt with the Samian War in previous chapters (*Per.* 24 sq.), in *Per.* 28. 8, Plutarch tells us about the feelings of Pericles after defeating the enemy, based on Thuc. 1. 117. 1 – 1. 117. 3¹³.

The reference to the danger that Athens’ dominance ran occurs in the *Life of Pericles* after the comparison between the statesman (who took nine months to defeat the enemy) and Agamemnon (who took nine years). In Plutarch, the phrase serves as a summary of the critical circumstances previously presented. In Thucydides, the difficulty of victory is only suggested by the account of the facts, much more detailed than in the biographer’s text.

Plutarch refers once again to the *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Thuc. 1. 127. 1) in *Per.* 33. 1, when he mentions the first attempt of the Lacedaemonians to keep Pericles from power, alleging it was necessary to clear Cylon’s crime, in which Pericles’ family on his mother’s side was involved. This quotation, although direct, presents as usual some changes mainly in terms of vocabulary order, as well as in terms of the minutiae: in previous paragraphs, Thucydides dwells on

¹¹ Also in 2. 60. 5, during his speech to calm the population’s wrath against him because of the situation, aggravated by the epidemic, Pericles says that this position of the people is not fair, since he, among other things, *does not give in to money* (χρημάτων κρείσσων).

¹² The translations of the passages from Thucydides’ work are by Crawley 1910.

¹³ The difficulty in defeating the Samians is also mentioned in Thuc. 8. 76. 4

the details of this case, whereas the biographer makes only a passing reference. In Plutarch, this episode follows the presentation of the aforementioned cases against Pericles' friends¹⁴ (in particular Phidias, Anaxagoras and Aspasia), that is, in the context of opposition to the statesman. Thucydides presents this accusation when he indicates the last demands made by the Spartans to avoid war. However, the aim of the enemy is always the same with both authors: to ward off Pericles because he prevents the Athenians from giving in.

It seems that these direct quotations are always related to the praise of Pericles' ability for leadership, and his ability to conduct the people and military affairs, for which he became known. The latter example may not seem to fit into this theme. However, it is for this reason that Plutarch mentions that, regarding this accusation, the people supported Pericles, because they understood that if he was being indicted by the Spartans, it was because they feared him (and one does not fear if there is no danger...).

The coincidental information, though not exactly citations, relates mainly to details of political-military crises with the allies of the Delian League and Lacedaemonian enemies, and some also contain moral judgment on Pericles. Let us look at examples of the first case.

We can compare the information in *Per.* 19. 2 – 19. 3 with its source, Thuc. 1. 108. 5, where the historian describes in detail the expedition to Corinth commanded by Tolmides. Plutarch, however, only says that when Pericles made an expedition with the same destination, he proceeded differently, with more determination and better results.

Per. 21 and Thuc. 1. 112. 5, in turn, are two excerpts on the Sacred War¹⁵, but they appear in different contexts. Plutarch refers to this war as an example of the pleasure that Pericles felt in repelling the Lacedaemonians, whereas Thucydides does so in the context of the description of the Empire formation¹⁶. *Per.* 22. 1 and Thuc. 1. 114 refer to the rebellions of Euboea and Megara¹⁷ and to the immediate intervention of Pericles. The expedition against Euboea¹⁸ is mentioned in *Per.* 23. 3 and Thuc. 1. 114. 3. In Thucydides, the reference is made in the context

¹⁴ On this matter, vd. Prandi 1977: 10-26.

¹⁵ This is the Second Sacred War (ca. 448 BC).

¹⁶ Note also that Plutarch's description is in this case more detailed than that of Thucydides, who refers neither to the name of the Athenian commander (Pericles) nor to the episode of the plaque which they put on the wolf. Thucydides does not usually enter into such details. As we have seen before, he often omits the opinions that Pericles might have given on positions and resolutions of the Assembly.

¹⁷ The two insurrections referred to here date from the summer of 446 BC., between the battle of Coronea and the Thirty Years' Peace, celebrated in the winter of the same year (*Per.* 24. 1).

¹⁸ This is the second incursion of Pericles against Euboea. The first took place shortly after the death of Tolmides in combat, when the Euboeans rebelled against Athens. The insurrection was not immediately overthrown, because a new battleground emerged, as Megara also caused

of the description of the formation of the Athenian Empire, and it takes place precisely at the moment when Plistoanax returns with the troops, for only then does Athens advance against Euboea. In Plutarch, it also appears following the narration of the same event, but is described in more detail, mentioning the number of ships, the expulsion of the Histiaeans and the Calcideans, as well as the inflexible treatment of the Histiaeans who killed the entire crew of an Athenian ship. Plutarch's description might have been intended to suggest that it was a strategy of persuasion by fear of those who dared to confront Athenian power.

Finally, we must bear in mind *Per.* 25. 1 and *Thuc.* 1. 115. 2 – 1. 117, both on the war between Samos and Miletus, whose main consequence was the establishment of democracy. This war occurs after the celebration of the Thirty Years' Peace with the Lacedaemonians and Plutarch even says that it was possibly influenced by Aspasia.

Let us now see the coincidental information that refers to Pericles' intellectual characteristics¹⁹. In *Per.* 31. 3, Plutarch recounts one of the many campaigns against Pericles by his political enemies, who took advantage of the friendship between Phidias and the son of Xanthippus to affect the credibility of the ruler. To this end, they accused the sculptor of having taken gold during the creation of the sculptures. But they were not successful in their attempt: Pericles, remarkable strategist, refused to let his enemies' moves get the better of him. As a master chess player, he meticulously calculated all moves, whether his own or his enemies', so as to avoid a checkmate at all costs. Therefore, anticipating they might later be accused of having kept the gold, Pericles ordered Phidias to use it on the Athena *Parthenos* chryselephantine²⁰ statue so it could be easily removed and checked. As soon as the enemies accused Phidias, the farsighted statesman answered, simply telling them to confirm the weight of the monument's gold.

In *Thuc.* 2. 13. 5, the existence of gold on the statue is approached from another point of view:

Ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἱερῶν προσετίθει χρήματα οὐκ ὀλίγα, οἷς χρῆσασθαι αὐτούς, καὶ ἦν πάνυ ἐξείργωνται πάντων, καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς θεοῦ τοῖς περικειμένοις χρυσοῖσι ἀπέφαινε δ' ἔχον τὸ ἄγαλμα ἑσσαράκοντα τάλαντα σταθμὸν χρυσοῦ ἀπέφθου καὶ περιαιρετὸν εἶναι ἅπαν.”

problems and an invasion of Attica led by the Peloponnesians was imminent. It was only after the resolution of these problems that Pericles could devote himself to the question of Euboea.

¹⁹ This does not mean that those relating to military aspects do not indicate Pericles' intellectual characteristics, such as his ability to successfully command armies.

²⁰ This statue, about ten meters high, consisted of a structure of wood abundantly covered with gold (for clothing) and ivory (on the face, arms and feet).

To this he added the treasures of the other temples. These were by no means inconsiderable, and might fairly be used. Nay, if they were ever absolutely driven to it, they might take even the gold ornaments of Athena herself; for the statue contained forty talents of pure gold and it was all removable. This might be used for self-preservation, and must every penny of it be restored.

Plutarch quotes this episode in a different context from the one appearing in his source. In Thucydides, prior to the first invasion of Attica, Pericles recalls the war strategy and seeks to instill confidence in the population by referring to the financial means available, namely the amount of gold found in temples. The existence of such wealth shows, indirectly, that the *polis* was being well governed, which once again reveals the laudatory tone of Thucydides in relation to Pericles. As for the gold applied on the statue of the goddess, the historian only refers to the quantity, the location and the possibility of it being removed in case of need. In Plutarch, there is still a laudatory tone, since the author also emphasizes Pericles' clairvoyance and perspicacity. Indeed, in the context in which the biographer makes the quotation, the gold on the statue is mentioned as a way to clean the names of Phidias and Pericles, accused of having taken it.

Thus, in spite of the differences of context, in both authors, the gold appears as a means of salvation: in Thucydides, it is a means to face the difficulties war can bring on the collective level; in Plutarch, it exonerates Pericles from the accusation of corruption and giving in to money (as mentioned previously, this is one of the accusations which is intended to denigrate his image, by attacking his friends). The following excerpts we are going to analyze next emphasize once again Pericles's ability to foresee his enemies' traps.

“Διὸ καὶ πρὶν ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν Ἀττικὴν τὸν Ἀρχίδαμου ἔχοντα τοὺς Πελοποννησίους προεῖπε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, ἂν ἄρα τᾶλλα ὁ Ἀρχίδαμος ἀπέχηται τῶν ἐκείνου διὰ τὴν ξενίαν τὴν οὖσαν αὐτοῖς ἢ διαβολῆς τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐνδιδοῦς ἀφορμᾶς, ὅτι τῇ πόλει καὶ τὴν χώραν καὶ τὰς ἐπαύλεις ἐπιδίδωσιν.” (*Per.* 33. 3)

Therefore, also, before Archidamus invaded Attica with the Peloponnesians, Pericles made public proclamation to the Athenians, that in case Archidamus, while ravaging everything else, should spare his estates, either out of regard for the friendly tie that existed between them, or with an eye to affording his enemies grounds for slander, he would make over to the city his lands and the homesteads thereon.

“(…) Περικλῆς (...) ὁ Ξανθίππου, στρατηγὸς ὢν Ἀθηναίων δέκατος αὐτός, ὡς ἔγνω τὴν ἐσβολὴν ἐσομένην, ὑποτοπήσας, ὅτι Ἀρχίδαμος αὐτῷ ξένος ὢν ἐτύγχανε, μὴ πολλάκις ἢ αὐτός ἰδίᾳ βουλόμενος χαρίζεσθαι τοὺς ἀγροὺς αὐτοῦ παραλίπη καὶ μὴ δηώσῃ, ἢ καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων κελευσάντων ἐπὶ διαβολῇ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γένηται τοῦτο, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἄγῃ ἐλαύνει προεῖπον ἔνεκα

ἐκείνου, προηγόρευε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὅτι Ἀρχίδαμος μὲν οἱ ξένος εἶη, οὐ μέντοι ἐπὶ κακῶ γε τῆς πόλεως γένοιτο, τοὺς δὲ ἀγροὺς τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ οἰκίας ἦν ἄρα μὴ δηλώσωσιν οἱ πολέμιοι ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀφήσιν αὐτὰ δημόσια εἶναι, καὶ μηδεμίαν οἱ ὑποψίαν κατὰ ταῦτα γίγνεσθαι.” (Thuc. 2. 13. 1)

Pericles, finding that the invasion was to take place, conceived the idea that Archidamus, who happened to be his friend, might possibly pass by his estate without ravaging it. This he might do, either from a personal wish to oblige him, or acting under instructions from Lacedaemon for the purpose of creating a prejudice against him, as had been before attempted in the demand for the expulsion of the accursed family. He accordingly took the precaution of announcing to the Athenians in the assembly that, although Archidamus was his friend, yet this friendship should not extend to the detriment of the state, and that in case the enemy should make his houses and lands an exception to the rest and not pillage them, he at once gave them up to be public property, so that they should not bring him into suspicion.

Nonetheless, as Pericles himself observes, the fact that his properties were spared could simply be a consequence of the ties of hospitality²¹ between them. But a good strategist must consider all possibilities to find the best solution to the problem. This is what Pericles did, showing all his perspicacity, by offering his lands to the *polis*, when he suspected that the Lacedaemonians would once again try to overthrow him from power.

We can conclude that Plutarch makes a rather personal and free use of this historiographical source. He only selects the matters or events that interest him (as we have already seen, those that mainly illustrate the virtues of Pericles); he combines this information with elements from other sources, to complement it or even to criticize some authors. At other times, the information is simplified, since in some passages, he is not interested in the details (particularly those regarding war episodes); or he proceeds to change them if he feels he has more accurate information.

In fact, this strategy serves the moral, pedagogical and artistic aims that guide Plutarch's biographical writing.

²¹ As it is known, hospitality was very important for the Greeks. We have examples of this going as far back as in the Homeric Poems: *Il.* 6. 119 – 129 (Glaucus and Diomedes, in recognizing the existence of ties of hospitality among their families, refused to fight); *Od.* 7 (reception of Ulysses in the palace of Alcinous and Arete), among others.

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