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THE RHETORIC OF PLUTARCH'S *PERICLES*

A. W. Gomme has written that the *Pericles* is «the most complex and interesting» of the fifth-century *Lives* — «perhaps the most interesting of all.»[1] What made it interesting to Gomme was the opposition between the views of Thucydides and Plato concerning Pericles, which Plutarch did not have the means to resolve. «His only solution,» Gomme concluded, «is that there must have been a radical change in Perikles' method of conducting public affairs, amounting practically to a change in his character: he was first a demagogue, then a true leader of the people. Hence the structure of the main part of the *Life*, which centres around this μεταβολή.»[2] Gomme's view has been an influential one, yet I believe it seriously distorts both Plutarch's own opinion of Pericles and the means by which he presented his understanding of him in his biography.

This paper will argue that Plutarch's biography of Pericles is substantially determined in structure and presentation by the goal he set himself and the means of persuasion or rhetoric which he chose to effect it. It will consider first the general similarities between the goals of epideictic oratory and of this biography, then examine in turn the form, mode of argument, structure, and techniques employed by Plutarch in the *Pericles* to persuade his reader. In each case, I believe that rhetorical considerations have played a prominent if not overwhelming part in determining Plutarch's presentation.

While the nature of his sources undoubtedly constrained the form and content of his *Lives*, rhetorical theory and practice represent a significant yet neglected element in Plutarch's biographical technique. Plutarch was an experienced essayist and public speaker long before he undertook the series of *Parallel Lives*. Although he seems never to have desired the role of rhetor or sophist, training in rhetorical practice was a pervading feature of his age. His works show a thorough knowledge of rhetorical teaching, though he tends to avoid technical vocabulary.[3] Among the lost works of Plutarch listed in the Lamprias catalogue we find three

[1] *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* I, Oxford 1945, p. 65.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

[3] See R. JEUCKENS, *Plutarch von Chaeronea und die Rhetorik*, Strassburg 1907, esp. p. 100-181; and K. ZIEGLER, in *RE* XXI 1 (1951), col. 928-938 = IDEM, *Plutarchos von Chaironeia*, Stuttgart 1949, p. 291-301.

books *On Rhetoric* (# 47). His extant works show that he was able to exploit the techniques of rhetoric to convey his moral or philosophical positions. These techniques are found not only in such «juvenalia» as the speeches *On the fortune of Alexander* or *On the fame of the Athenians*, but in other apparently more mature works, and are especially evident in the polemical writings, for instance the *Malignity of Herodotus* or *Against the Stoics*. Plutarch's complaint against the rhetoricians echoed that of Plato in the *Gorgias* centuries before: a philosopher could not accept their emphasis on form over content. However, if the truth and moral value of discourse could be preserved, he accepted, as did Plato in the *Phaedrus*, and even encouraged the use of rhetoric to win conviction. Plutarch, though a philosopher, found no difficulty in recommending to a politician striving to serve his city in the noblest manner to use rhetoric as a συνεργὸς πειθοῦς (*Praec. reip. ger.* 801C ff.). It is natural that he himself used rhetoric similarly in the *Parallel Lives*.

Epideictic, or the discourse of praise or blame, was recognized as one of the three species of rhetoric by Aristotle and all later theorists, such as Quintilian and Menander Rhetor.[4] It was used on such occasions as funeral speeches, laudations of cities or famous men, or attacks on political or personal enemies. Insofar as biography could be considered a written encomium (or occasionally, vituperation) of famous men, it then would be considered a branch of epideictic.[5] In fact, praise represents a major element of the *Pericles-Fabius* pair, as Plutarch himself reveals in his preface to the set (*Per.* 1-2). The most suitable activity of the mind, Plutarch writes, is to contemplate actions by which it will be directed toward and strengthened in virtue. The only appropriate actions to contemplate are those which are themselves the product of virtue. His purpose in these two lives, therefore, will be to present the deeds of his subjects in such a way as to evoke from the

[4] Cf. G. KENNEDY, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, Princeton 1963, p. 152-154; T.C. BURGESS, *Epideictic Literature*, in *Studies in Classical Philology* III, Chicago 1902, p. 89-261; V. BUCHHEIT, *Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles*, Munich 1960. Ancient sources include Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I 3.1-6; Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* III 7; pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Art of Rhetoric*; and Menander's two treatises on epideictic. Pseudo-Dionysius and Menander are now available with translation, commentary, and an excellent introduction on epideictic practice and theory (p. xi-xxxiv) in D.A. RUSSELL and N.G. WILSON, *Menander Rhetor*, Oxford 1981.

[5] On the close relationship of encomium, biography, and history when treating statesmen, cf. A. MOMIGLIANO, *The Development of Greek Biography*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1971, p. 82-83; and for Plutarch in particular, D.A. RUSSELL, *Plutarch*, London 1973, p. 104-105.

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reader a decision (*proairesis*) to imitate the virtue which they have shown. Here Plutarch's goal of awarding praise to a man so as to elicit admiration and emulation is very similar to that of the encomium, though with the addition of a protreptic purpose more characteristic of deliberative oratory.[6]

Nevertheless, Plutarch is prevented from accepting a purely encomiastic mode of biography by his respect for truth, understood both as the historical record of the past and as the moral values which he wishes to impart. His purpose is not the triumph of a moment, but an invitation to virtue. For this reason his view of the proper qualities to praise differed from the normal rhetorical *topoi*. He writes in his essay *On self-praise* (*Mor.* 543A-D) that we should not praise someone simply because he is a good speaker, wealthy, or powerful, but because he is a good person, hurts no one, or helps the city. That is, we should praise not the gifts of fortune, but the use that one makes of them. Pericles' words on his deathbed, Plutarch argues there, provide a model for the true orator. As his friends gathered around, the dying statesman asserted that his greatest glory lay not in his many victories, but in the fact that he had never risked Athenian lives (cf. *Per.* 39.8). In the same way, the orator should praise not the skill in speaking of a statesman but his life and character, not the experience and good luck of a general, but his self-restraint and integrity. Moreover, unlike the encomiast, Plutarch accepted that his hero had failings, as all men do.[7] The *Life of Pericles* is in fact our richest source for Pericles' faults as a statesman, or at least for the accusations which were made against him. Nevertheless, *these faults do not dominate the general picture. As Plutarch explained* in the preface to *Cimon-Lucullus*:

> Just as painters of gracious and beautiful subjects are expected neither to omit nor to be excessively precise in drawing some small unattractive feature, ...so also (since it is difficult if not impossible to set forth a

[6] For the close connection of epideictic and deliberative oratory, between praise of a person or action and advice to imitate, see Aristotle, *Rhet.* I 9, 1367b36-1368a9. The same kind of exhortation is found in funeral speeches (e.g. Pericles' Funeral Oration) in combination with the encomiastic *topos* (see ps. Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 280), as well as in other encomia (cf. the exhortation to imitation in Isocrates' *Evagoras* 74-75, and Socrates' advice at the end of his encomium of Eros, Plato, *Symposium* 212B 1-7). Deliberative is combined with epideictic as well in such speeches as Isocrates' *Panegyricus*: cf. E. BUCHNER, *Der Panegyrikos des Isokrates: Eine historisch-philologische Untersuchung*, Wiesbaden 1958, p. 7-8.

[7] Cf. e.g., *Per.* 10.7: πάντη μὲν ἴσως οὐκ ἀνεπιλήπτῳ.

> human life which is absolutely blameless and pure)...the errors and vices arising from emotion or political necessity should be considered rather as failings of virtue than as evidence of vice. They should not be described too enthusiastically and completely in the narrative, but rather with a certain shame for human nature, that it cannot provide a character totally and unambiguously directed toward virtue (*Cim.* 2.3).

Plutarch's vision as philosopher and moral counselor precludes the fulsome praise expected in *encomia*. Nevertheless, the professed goal of this pair of lives and the principle of favoring virtue over failings requires that both the tone and the content of the *Pericles* be laudatory, with necessary human weakness restricted to a minor element of the whole picture. Pericles will be an object of admiration and imitation to his readers.

The particular form of the *Pericles* (and of its companion *Fabius*) is determined by the virtues which Plutarch finds in the statesman's life. They are summarized at the end of the preface: «self-restraint (*praotes*) and honesty (*dikaiosyne*), and the ability to endure the foolishness of the mass of citizens and of their colleagues in office» (*Per.* 2.5). *Praotes*, the major virtue of both men, is the mean with regard to feeling, the virtue of those who control their passions.[8] The second clause of the quotation specifies in what regard Pericles demonstrated his *praotes:* enduring the unreasonable opposition with which others tried to block his policies. The very nature of Pericles' virtue, therefore, will require that Plutarch give special attention to his political opponents. Negative accounts and accusations which would have been suppressed in a standard encomium, and even in another biography, will have to be emphasized as evidence for the attacks which Pericles suffered. However, they are characterized as foolishness (*agnomosynas*): Plutarch has decided that these attacks, for the most part, at least, are not valid.

The rhetorical situation is further complicated by the fact that Plutarch composed his lives in pairs. The *Pericles* has its own rhetorical purpose, and therefore invention and arrangement, including for example its own epilogue (c. 39), but is also part of a book, the *Pericles-Fabius*, with a preface (*Per.* 1-2) and final *synkrisis*. For the most part I will concentrate on the *Pericles*, but the larger picture cannot be forgotten.[9]

[8] Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* IV 5, 1125b26-1126a3; H. MARTIN, *The Concept of Praotes in Plutarch's Lives, GRBS* 3 (1960), p. 65-73; and P.A. STADTER, *Plutarch's Comparison of Pericles and Fabius Maximus, GRBS* 16 (1975), p. 77-85, esp. 81-84.

[9] For the relation of the two lives, see P.A. STADTER, *loc.cit.* (n. 8).

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As Gomme noted, the tradition concerning Pericles' achievements was ambiguous. Thucydides had celebrated his intelligence, foresight, and honesty, and later orators honored his leadership at Athens' moment of greatest power and wealth. However, the comic poets who were his contemporaries had attacked his high-handed ways and tyrannical power, mocking his relationship with Aspasia and his onion-shaped head. In the next generation, Plato attacked his demagogy and in the *Gorgias* blamed him and the other great men of the fifth century for ruining the Athenians. Plato's condemnation remained influential throughout antiquity.[10] As the centuries went by, the negative tradition repeated a host of minor objections to Pericles as man and as leader, but the major criticisms were three: 1) Pericles was a tyrant who dominated the city, in the tradition of Peisistratus; 2) Pericles was a demagogue who ruined the Athenian people by catering to their desires without thinking of their true welfare; 3) Pericles had started the Peloponnesian war to escape from political attacks on his friends.

The rhetorical problem Plutarch faced in composing this life, therefore, was how to present a view of Pericles which would excite admiration and emulation in the face of these charges, minimizing but not ignoring the objections he found in the historical and interpretive record. Since he was not writing an encomium, he could not follow the simple practice later codified by Menander Rhetor for speeches in honor of the emperor: admit nothing at all of doubtful or ambiguous nature.[11] His situation was in some ways closer to that of a lawyer defending a client, admitting some weaknesses, but directing the attention of the listener to the positive aspects or interpretations of his client's behavior. For this reason, the theory of judicial argumentation played its part in shaping Plutarch's approach. An important segment of Hellenistic rhetorical theory had focused on exactly this stage of composition, especially in judicial cases: the establishment of the fundamental situation or *stasis* in a particular case, which would permit the orator to decide the line of argument to be used. Hermagoras' *stasis* theory sought to aid a speaker in focusing on the most persuasive argument for a particular case.[12] Stasis theory was chiefly useful in judicial oratory, but Quintilian noted

[10] In the mid-second century A.D. Aristides took it as a starting point for his epideictic tour-de-force, the speech *On the Four* (sc. great men attacked by Plato).

[11] Menander Rhetor 368.3-8 Spengel.

[12] For an overview of *stasis* theory, see G. KENNEDY, *Quintilian*, New York 1969, p. 61 ff.; and J. MARTIN, *Antike Rhetorik*, Munich 1974, p. 28-52.

that it could be applied to epideictic oratory as well (III 7.28). The various theories of stasis developed by rhetoricians became quite complex, but the basic approach is simple. By asking fundamental questions — did the action take place? (stasis of fact); what action actually took place? (stasis of definition); was it a right action? (stasis of quality) — the orator could see the case from different viewpoints. Depending on the answers, he might argue from various positions: my client didn't kill the man (fact); he did kill him, but it was an accident, not murder (definition); he murdered him, but since the man was a tyrant, it was right to do so (quality). Various writers distinguished other possible *staseis* by stressing different questions or secondary issues, but the method was similar. An inventive orator pursuing the ramifications of such questions, and combining them as need be, would have no trouble in discovering the arguments which would best suit his purpose. Quintilian notes that for epideictic speeches, which award praise or blame, the natural *stasis* is that of quality: what sort of man (god, city, animal) is the subject?

Plutarch's introduction states the general proposition that Pericles is admirable. The particular focus of both the favorable and unfavorable views of Pericles is narrower: how did he use political power? Plutarch phrases the difficulty explicitly at *Per.* 9.1:

> Thucydides (II 65) ascribes a certain aristocratic method of governing to Pericles, «in theory democracy, but in practice rule of the first man,» but many others say that it was he who first seduced the people through cleruchies, theoric funds, and distributions of payments, by his policies giving them bad habits and making them wastrels instead of self-disciplined and self-supporting...

The question at stake here is not whether Pericles had power, but how he used it — the stasis of quality applied to Pericles' attitude and actions. Did he use his political power aristocratically, that is, with the best end in view,[13] or as a demagogue?

The question is more important for the meaning of the life than its tardy and somewhat indirect statement in chapter nine might suggest, for it represents Plutarch's fundamental decision on how to approach the rhetorical problem of the *Pericles*. Plutarch had already chosen this direction for his argument when he decided to couple Pericles with

[13] Plutarch regularly thinks of the Aristotelian definition when speaking of an «aristocratic» leader or constitution: cf. *Politics* III 7, 1279a32-1279b10.

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[15] See e.g. F. LEO, *Die griech*
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Fabius on the basis of similar qualities, since the particular virtues which he ascribes to the pair, that is the *praotes* (self-control) and *dikaiosyne* (honesty) which they exercise in dealing with fellow magistrates and the citizen populace, have as their field of action the management of political power. In the course of the *Pericles*, Plutarch builds a persuasive case demonstrating that his subject revealed these virtues (and others as well) in his acquisition and use of power.[14]

The *Pericles-Fabius* pair is framed by the introduction (*Per.* 1-2) and the *synkrisis*. The introduction, as we have seen, sets the tone of the *Lives* and suggests to the reader the proper attitude toward the two men: he should expect to learn from them something about virtue which will improve his own life. The *synkrisis* focuses attention on the different manifestations of the same virtues in the two men and reiterates their particular achievements. Within this frame, the *Pericles* has its own structure, falling for our purposes (there are other types of analysis) into six sections: 1) Family, birth, physical features and intellectual influences (3-6); 2) acquisition and retention of political power (7-14); 3) use of power (15-28); 4) the great crisis: the Peloponnesian war (29-35); 5) family life, recall, and death (36-38); 6) epilogue (39). Although the first part seems to deal with standard topics, in some ways it is the most important, since it lays the foundation of Plutarch's interpretation. Its elements are standard to biography as to encomia: ancestors and parents, birth (with any omens), physical qualities, mental qualities and education.[15] But Plutarch uses these topics to shape our idea of Pericles as statesman even before we consider his political career.

Pericles' father, Xanthippus, the victorious admiral at Mycale, and his great-uncle, Cleisthenes, «who expelled the Peisistratids, honorably dissolved the tyranny, gave laws, and established a constitution excellently tempered toward concord and security,» establish models for Pericles' own behaviour as general and statesman. Agariste's dream of giving birth to a lion, the symbol of courage and strength, signals his potential for greatness. The little that Plutarch knew of his physique was not helpful: his onion head was mocked by the comedians. But the passages which he cites from the comic writers on this point allow Plutarch to introduce the notion of political opposition which runs through the life.

[14] The situation of the *Fabius* differs in several aspects from the *Pericles*, since the Roman did not hold the kind of power that Pericles did, did not come to it in the same way, and was not criticized after his death.

[15] See e.g. F. LEO, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie*, Leipzig 1901, p. 180-182; Quintilian III 7.10-12; and Menander Rhetor 369.18-372.13.

The paragraphs on intellectual development which follow do not speak of Pericles' early training and education (Plutarch's usual practice), but of influences during his mature years, and stress their effect on his political behavior. Damon teaches him music, and is his coach in politics; Anaxagoras introduces him to the preeminence of mind, *nous*, and forms his character to highmindedness, sobriety, and self-control. But again there is the presence of political opposition: Damon is ostracized as *philotyrannos* — the tyrant of course was Pericles — and Pericles himself, in a vivid anecdote, is reviled by an angry citizen from the agora even to his door. Pericles, however, thanks to Anaxagoras' teaching, is calm and patient, and sends him home with an escort. The story of the one-horned ram and the confrontation of Anaxagoras and the seer Lampon again presages the political conflict which will come, and at the same time indicates Pericles' balanced attitude toward the gods: free from superstition, yet respectful.

This first section on birth and intellectual influences thus poses implicitly the underlying question of the life: was Pericles an aristocratic leader, like Cleisthenes or Xanthippus, or a perversion of that ideal, an undisciplined tyrant or self-seeking demagogue? At the same time it provides a first version of an answer: because of his philosophical training he was a high-minded and self-controlled statesman. Though both question and answer are presented indirectly, they both introduce and set the terms of Plutarch's rhetorical argument in this life. After this opening, we can no longer see Pericles as a simple demagogue.

The second section, which runs from chapters seven to fourteen, falls into two parts: 7-8, 9-14. The first introduces Pericles the politician, although in fact we know something of this aspect already through the previous chapters. Pericles was orginally wary of the *demos*, we are told, and afraid of being seen as a tyrant — a rather improbable notion at the beginning of his public career, but appropriate for Plutarch's argument. In time, however, although hardly *demotikos* by nature, he allied himself with the people, taking the only means to security and power. At this point Plutarch might logically proceed to the rivalry with Cimon described in chapters nine and ten. Instead, he first inserts two paragraphs on Pericles' political conduct, both of which emphasize his aristocratic statesmanship. As leader of the *demos*, his way of life (*diaita*) is serious, focused on his duties to the city in the agora or bouleuterion, and he holds back from excessive contact both with his old friends and with the *demos* (7.5-8). Moreover, his oratory, far from being demagogic, is an

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instrument perfectly suited to the greatness of his ideas. Anaxagoras and Plato witness to the philosophical underpinnings of his discourse, and the comedians to its power. Nor is he arrogant in its use: each time he ascends the *bema*, he prays that his words may fit the present need.

Like a skilled orator, therefore, Plutarch has rhetorically prepared his reader for the explicit statement at the beginning of chapter nine of the problem of Pericles' political behavior. Everything said so far has implied a positive response, and indicated that Pericles is an admirable statesman. This done, Plutarch is ready to turn to «the facts themselves,» to see whether Pericles was a demagogue or governed for the best. In fact he looks at only a few events, carefully selected, in describing his rivalry with Cimon (9-10) and with Thucydides the son of Melesias (11-14). In each case Pericles does not begin the combat, but reacts to the initiatives of his opponents in the struggle for power. When Cimon gains influence by demagoguery, freely distributing his private wealth (Plutarch says Pericles is *katademagogoumenos*!), Pericles institutes payments for public service, by which he wins political power.[16] Thus armed, he weakened the Areopagus (which, since he was not a member, was a threat to his power), and ostracized his rival (9.2-5). Note that even this early in his career Plutarch considered Pericles to have extraordinary power in the assembly (τοσοῦτον ἦν τὸ κράτος ἐν τῷ δήμῳ). After Cimon's death, Thucydides reorganized the *kaloi kagathoi* into a bloc, and first opened the deep division between *oligoi* and *demos* (11.1-3). Pericles in response began a policy of pleasing the demos with feasts and entertainments, paid naval service, cleruchies, and public buildings. Pericles' struggle to gain power is justified by his actions. When Cimon's supporters show their loyalty at Tanagra, Pericles is not tyrannically obstinate but himself writes the decree recalling Cimon (10.4). In addition we learn — rather to our surprise — that even earlier he had been generous to Cimon when the latter was on trial (10.6). In this context Pericles' virtue is flexibility and sensitivity in the use of power. On the other hand, in speaking of the rivalry with Thucydides, Plutarch stresses the value to Athens of the steps Pericles took to win the favor of the *demos*: the festivals were οὐκ ἀμούσοι ἡδοναί (11.4), the cleruchies relieved the poverty and restlessness of the urban poor while controlling the allies (11.6), and the building program is the lone witness

[16] Here Plutarch chooses not to mention the effect of Cimon's great victories, especially at the Eurymedon, although they are given full play in the *Cimon*.

to the ancient power and wealth of Greece (12.1). Pericles' final victory over Thucydides is closely tied to the generosity and *megalophrosyne* of his offer to pay for the buildings himself (14.1). The whole section, far from being a disinterested examination of events, is an artfully presented argument proving Pericles' statesmanship and nobility even in the period when he was struggling to gain and hold power in the city, and therefore more easygoing and ready to appease the *demos* (cf. 15.1).

Having narrated and simultaneously justified Pericles' actions in winning over the *demos*, Plutarch can turn confidently to his positive portrait of the statesman. The third section (15-24) presents a synoptic view of Pericles' use of political power, seen under several headings: oratory as a didactic tool, integrity in handling money, ambition for the city (*megalophrosyne*), and caution in generalship and foreign policy.[17] An elaborate nineteen-line period introduces the section, celebrating Pericles' domination of Athens and his freedom to act according to the best «aristocratic and kingly» policy, to be a true and philosophic doctor — using a Platonic image — to the needs of the city. Pericles' oratory speaks the truth for the good of the citizens, and is not an isolated technique, but firmly founded on the integrity of the speaker. Pericles' integrity was exceptional — here Plutarch uses a standard *topos* of the rhetoric of praise[18] — because it was exercised when he had every opportunity to enrich himself, and this opportunity lasted so long. These facts in turn illuminate the way in which Pericles used his power. Although preeminent, he would not use his power for himself, filling his pockets with money from the city, the allies, or foreign powers (the only example Plutarch actually gives is his refusal to be bought off by the Samians and the satrap Pissouthnes, 25.2-3). The jibes of the comic poets against his tyrannical power thus become a part of the argument for his virtue: yes, he had the power, but he did not use it tyrannically — the stasis of quality. Finally, Pericles' superiority to money is demonstrated inductively by two examples: the first describes his management of his estate, in which he made no effort to turn the maximum profit; the second recognizes the difference between the proper use of wealth for a statesman and for a philosopher, and praises Pericles' use of

[17] Although Plutarch does not say so explicitly, these headings seem to respond to the four points in Plato's indictment in the *Gorgias*, that Pericles made the Athenians garrulous, greedy, lazy, and cowardly.

[18] Quintilian, e.g., recommends something as especially praiseworthy, *si quid ... supra spem aut exspectationem [fecisse dicetur]* (III 7.16).

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[19] Cf. e.g. Aristotle, *Rhet.* I 9, 136
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money to help those in need, including Anaxagoras. Not content with the virtues of aristocratic policy and fiscal integrity, Plutarch adds as well greatness of vision. The proof is again inductive: Pericles' *megalophrosyne* is demonstrated by his decree proposing the Congress at Athens. Although it came to naught, the decree indicates the spirit with which Pericles used his power.

The remainder of this section (18-28) treats Pericles' generalship, with special emphasis on his caution (*asphaleia*), seen as the corollary in war of the self-control that he had learned from Anaxagoras. This portion is elaborately introduced by a comparison — another technique common in epideictic oratory[19] — to the foolhardiness of Tolmides (18). A selection of his campaigns follows, arranged not in chronological order, but as they elicited goodwill, admiration, or respect from citizens and strangers (19-20.2). As important as his campaigns was his refusal to overcommit the empire (20.3-4), saving its strength for its rivalry with Sparta (in the Sacred War and the crisis of 446, 21-22), and for controlling rebellious allies (Euboea and Samos, 23-28). His firmness as a general is complemented by his refusal to risk the lives of his fellow-citizens: when Sparta invades, he buys the king off with a well-timed bribe (22.2);[20] at Samos he prefers a long but safe siege to a dangerous frontal assault (27.1). Throughout he is shown using his power in the city not for self-glorification but to strengthen and protect the state. Plutarch's argument inviting us to admire Pericles' character has now reached its height: as Pericles ends his oration over the Samian dead, he is hailed joyfully as a victor.[21] He boasted that he was superior to Agamemnon, who took ten years to conquer Troy: given the uncertainty and risk involved, Plutarch soberly concludes, «the evaluation was not unjust» (28.8).

The crisis of Pericles' political life, and the central element in Plutarch's interpretation of his character, was his leadership of Athens in the Peloponnesian War. Plutarch cannot share the view of many modern historians that it was right and necessary for the war to take place, and

[19] Cf. e.g. Aristotle, *Rhet.* I 9, 1368a19-20; ps.-Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 7.2-4 Rabe («The best starting-point for encomia is that from comparisons»); and Menander Rhetor 372. 21-25; 376.31-377.9. The *Fabius* uses the same type of internal comparison; chiefly with Minucius and Varro.

[20] Note also the implicit comparison with Pericles' own honesty.

[21] Even here, however, Plutarch was aware of another side, for he certainly shared some of the sentiment of Elpinike, who compared Pericles' victory over Greeks unfavorably to Cimon's victories over the barbarians (28.6).

for Pericles to resist the last Spartan demands. From his distant perspective, it was always a mistake for Greeks to fight against Greeks, and to have urged such a war can only appear a failure of leadership.[22] Thus the discussion of the various *aitiai* of the war somewhat tarnishes the image Plutarch has built so far. Yet chapter thirty, which supplements Thucydides' narrative with the account of the various stages in the diplomatic tension with Megara, does much to justify Pericles' position. In particular, Plutarch tells us that the initial decree of Pericles on the sacred *orgas* had been well-intentioned and friendly, but that a peaceful resolution of the quarrel became impossible after the Megarians were thought to have killed the Athenian herald (30.2-3). However, Plutarch remains puzzled which interpretation of Pericles' intransigence to accept: Thucydides', that surrender would have been a sign of weakness; the harsher judgment of some critics, that it showed that he was willful and quarrelsome; or the worse reason of all, that Pericles fanned the war into flames to get the people under his control once more and to stop the attacks on his friends.

Nevertheless, once the war begins, Plutarch presents Pericles' actions as wholly admirable. He was the Athenian most dangerous to the enemy (33.1-2), his foresight foiled Archidamus' plan to alienate the *demos* from him (33.3), and most important, his refusal to commit the Athenians to battle saved the city. Modifying an image of Plato, Plutarch portrays Pericles as the wise and steady helmsman refusing in a storm to listen to the weeping and prayers of the ignorant and seasick passengers (33.6, cf. Plato, *Rep.* 488A-E). A true statesman, considering only the good of his city, he endured the attacks of demagogues patiently, while providing an outlet for Athenian energy through an expedition around the Peloponnese, a cleruchy to Aegina, and an invasion of Megara. Even when the plague struck he remained calm. When finally Pericles was fined and dismissed by an angry *demos*, Plutarch sees this as evidence of the folly of his opponents, not of any weakness of his.

The penultimate section (36-38) focuses on Pericles' personal life, exploring his calmness and strength under stress. Although at home he was opposed by his son and mocked for his philosophical interests, during the plague he endured nobly the deaths of his two sons and of others of his friends and family. His return to power demonstrated the

[22] Plutarch does not actually state this opinion in the *Pericles* (unless we count the words of Elpinike, 28.6), but cf. e.g. *Comp. Phil.-Flam.* 1.1-2.

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[25] «Pericles in praising the fall
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value of his leadership to the city, but his major act in this period was to ask for the favor of citizenship for his bastard son, now that his legitimate heirs were dead. Death perhaps weakened his opposition to superstition, if an anecdote of Theophrastus must be accepted, but nevertheless on his deathbed Pericles was able to see his activities in true perspective: his greatest achievement, he said, was not his nine trophies, but that no citizen had ever put on mourning because of him. His self-restraint had never permitted unnecessary risk in battle to the lives of his fellow Athenians, or allowed civil strife to lead to the death of his opponents.

The life here is almost complete, having run from birth to death, and successfully demonstrated that Pericles is worthy of imitation. There is only lacking the standard summary of the reaction to his death (39.3-4). His naturally aristocratic nature, strengthened by philosophic training, has manifested itself in the virtues of self-restraint, vision, and honesty. Yet before that final paragraph, Plutarch adds an epilogue, equivalent to the peroration of a judicial speech, to complete the life and sweep his reader to conviction (39).[23] Seizing upon the comic epithet, the Olympian (already mentioned at 8.3), Plutarch sees in the name a real insight into the central quality of his hero. The method is rhetorical: the τόπος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος known to Aristotle (*Rhet.* II 23, 1400b16).[24] Interpreting the title, Plutarch compares Pericles' equanimity and rule of the city for the best with the philosopher's understanding of the gods, «who govern and reign over the universe, by their very nature the cause of good, never of evil,» free of all disturbance and trouble. The comparison with the gods recalls Pericles' own words over the Athenian dead quoted at 8.9,[25] and is just short of claiming Pericles' apotheosis. In the closing paragraph, Plutarch notes the immediate loss felt by all after Pericles' death, which finally confirms his judgment on Pericles' exercise of power. All Athens bore witness that no one had ever been more measured in dignity and more awesome in self-restraint. What had been

[23] Cf., for example, the rules for the epilogue of an imperial encomium in Menander Rhetor 377.9-30 Sp.

[24] This *topos* is not uncommon in the *Lives*, e.g., the discussion of the epithet «the Just» in *Aristides* 6. The same *topos* is employed by Aelius Aristides in his defense of Pericles in *On the Four* 123-124 Lenz-Behr.

[25] «Pericles in praising the fallen at Samos said that they were immortal, just like the gods. For we do not see them, but we infer that they are immortal by the honors which they receive and by the good things which they bestow. This is true as well of those who die for their country.»

thought a monarchy and a tyranny was revealed the bulwark and salvation of the city.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that in the *Life of Pericles* the arrangement of topics and events responds to the rhetorical exigencies of Plutarch's effort to persuade the reader. For the same reason, Plutarch employed standard rhetorical techniques to reinforce his presentation. The most fundamental such technique, perhaps, is the style of narrative. Aristotle notes that partial narrative (οὐκ ἐφεξῆς ἀλλὰ κατὰ μέρος) is the most appropriate to epideictic: there is no need to tell all, especially if it is already well known.[26] The narrative of the *Pericles* is quite consciously selective. Because of the paucity and incompleteness of sources, even in antiquity, for events of the fifth century, Plutarch's narrative is necessarily lacunose. But it is selective also in the mode of narration and presentation of events: disjointed episodes are included to illustrate particular situations, but there is no chronological narrative in the ordinary sense until Chapter 22, the revolt of Megara and the Peloponnesian invasion.[27] Cimon's ostracism was preceded by a courting of the *demos* and attacks on the Areopagus (9.2-5), but Plutarch does not attempt in this life to narrate these events, or relate them to Cimon's naval triumphs, his disgrace at Ithome, or other internal political tensions. Pericles fought at Tanagra (10.1-2), but we are not told what his policy was, or how it happened that the Athenians were fighting. The peace which Cimon negotiated with Sparta is passed over in a phrase (10.4), and nothing is said of Pericles' thoughts with respect to Cimon's last expedition. There is in fact no narrative of the rivalry with Thucydides, except the statements that the oligarchic faction was more strongly organized, and opposed the building program. Major events known from the historians are passed over, most notably the Egyptian campaign. The Congress Decree (17) and the campaigns of chapters nineteen and twenty are not set in any chronological context. Extreme selectivity is apparent even in his most detailed narrative, the first years of the Peloponnesian War: the narrative is not told for itself, but to illustrate Pericles' role in the outbreak of the war and his management of the *demos* once it had begun. Larger strategic perspectives are left aside — for example, the careful financial accounting in

[26] Aristotle, *Rhet.* III 16, 1416b16-17.

[27] See in general on the lack of chronological organization in the *Pericles* before chapter 22, W. STEIDLE, *Sueton und die antike Biographie* (*Zetemata*, 1), Munich 1951, p. 153-166.

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[28] A.W. GOMME, *op. cit.* (n. 1),
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Thucydides II 13 or the historian's discussions of naval versus land power — to concentrate on a few basic points. Thucydides was fascinated by Pericles' *gnome*: Plutarch sought evidence for moral virtues, for *praotes* and *dikaiosyne*.

The use of *kata meros* narrative and the particular *stasis* of the *Pericles* help to explain the difficulty scholars have had in analyzing the structure of the *Life*. Although there are traces of chronological sequence — birth, entry into politics, rivalry first with Cimon, then Thucydides, Samian War, Peloponnesian War, death — the rhetorical structure is more important. Gomme's division between the demagogic Pericles in 9-14 and the aristocratic in 15-39 misses the pro-Periclean bias of 9-14. Steidle's division between internal politics (7-17) and foreign policy (18-39) is more accurate, but does not bring out either the unity of 15-21 or the way both elements are combined in the account of the Peloponnesian War.[28]

Aristotle noted that amplification, *auxesis* was especially appropriate to epideictic oratory (*Rhet.* III 17, 1417b31-32). Once the simple fact had been stated, it was desirable for an orator to elaborate it so that the audience could appreciate its importance and be convinced of the speaker's evaluation. The *Pericles* contains many such passages: the account of Anaxagoras' thought and its effect on Pericles (4.5-5.1), the description of Pericles' oratory, ornamented with quotations from Plato and Aristophanes (8.1-4), the exaltation of Pericles' aristocratic rule (15.1-3), and the dramatic depiction of his holding fast against the mob who wanted to fight the Spartans (33.4-8). The most impressive undoubtedly is the section on the Acropolis buildings (12-13), which starts from what might have been a minor item, similar to the list of cleruchies, but takes on a life and force of its own. Here we see amplification indeed functioning as proof: what began as an item in a list of demagogic measures becomes a testimony to Pericles' vision and aristocratic concern for the city.[29] The first overwhelming sentence, seventeen lines long (12.1-2), reminds us of the grandeur of the buildings and depicts the irate opposition. Pericles' masterful reply in the follow-

[28] A.W. GOMME, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 65-67; W. STEIDLE, *op.cit.* (n. 25), p. 161. However, Plutarch's gathering of Pericles' campaigns into one sequence may have been influenced by the standard division in encomiastic theory between deeds in peace and deeds in war. Cf. e.g., Menander Rhetor 372.25-27. Menander, however, recommends that military actions be placed first.

[29] Note the importance of the building program in Plutarch's final comments on Pericles at the end of the *synkrisis*, 3.7.

ing period culminates in the stunning list of trades and classes of workmen which would be employed on the buildings. Next the speed of construction and the beauty of the buildings are described with awed admiration. Finally the works themselves are listed one by one, from the Parthenon to the Propylaia and Parthenos statue. Plutarch does not attempt a standard *ekphrasis* of any of these works, but rather lets their acknowledged excellence speak for itself.

Rhetoric, as Plutarch advised his friend Menemachus in the *Advice on Politics*, is not the creator of persuasion, but only an assistant to character, which must be the fundamental agent (*Mor.* 801CD). *Ethos*, the character of the speaker and of the client or person spoken of, was important also to the rhetorician. Plutarch's biographies portray *ethos*, but they also employ it as a means of persuasion. Plutarch first of all reveals his own character, establishing himself as a man of virtue, humane, understanding yet willing to make judgments on people, a teacher yet still learning. In the *Pericles* this *ethos* is found most obviously in the introduction (1-2), but it is felt throughout the work. Often he asks us to share his values, as when he cites Zeno on appearing virtuous (5.3), talks of omens from the gods (6.4-5), or notes that true virtue is revealed in daily life (7.6). Elsewhere he wants us to share his indignation at Idomeneus, the comic poets, or Stesimbrotus (10.7; 13.16). But always the biographer's presence is felt, establishing a familiarity with his readers which certainly must be one of the reasons for his success.

This *Life* is meant to portray the *ethos* of Pericles, but it also uses his *ethos* to convince us of the truth of the portrait. Thus the importance of the early chapters on the influence of Anaxagoras, which serve to establish a preliminary notion of Pericles' character. This notion, once accepted, then helps us interpret his other actions. Plutarch can argue that it was simply a temporary expedient when Pericles sought popular support, since «he was not democratic by nature» (7.4), or that he could not have killed Ephialtes, for «he had nothing raw or brutal in him» (10.7). Later the image of self-restraint which has been built up is transferred to his activity as general, and helps the reader to understand and accept Plutarch's admiration when he refuses to fight.

The more explicit appeal to the emotions recommended by rhetorical theorists, *pathos*, may be found as well, in its proper place in the epilogue.[30] Here the expression of wonder (Θαυμαστὸς οὖν ὁ ἀνὴρ...,

[30] Cf. Quintilian VI 2.20, and the comments of G. KENNEDY, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*. Princeton 1963, p. 93-94.

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39.1) and divine calm overwhelm the reader, already reeling from the pathetic narrative of the deaths of Pericles' children and his appeal for citizenship for his bastard son (36.7-9; 37.5).

I noted initially that a central difficulty for Plutarch in writing the *Pericles* was caused by the hostile opinions of contemporaries and of later writers, especially Plato. Plutarch offset much of this criticism by the very virtue he ascribed to Pericles: *praotes*, or remaining calm in the face of emotion and unreason. Thus he was able to categorize many of the contemporary attacks as examples of emotional excess, which only made Pericles appear more virtuous the stronger they were. See for example his comments on the occasion of the Spartan invasion of 431:

> [Pericles] pursued his own thinking, scorning those who were shouting and complaining. Yet many of his friends begged and urged him, many of his enemies threatened and accused, and comic choruses sang songs and made jokes to shame him, insulting his generalship as cowardly and giving the initiative to the enemy (33.6-7).

But it is useful as well to examine how he refuted other attacks, beginning with the most influential, Plato's.

Plato's opinion, expressed most forcefully in the *Gorgias*, was well-known: «Pericles made the Athenians lazy, cowardly, talkative, and greedy, when he first established pay for public service» (*Gorg.* 515E). Plutarch, however, chooses to begin from the *Phaedrus*, quoting, without naming the source, Plato's somewhat ironic words on Anaxagoras' influence on Pericles, and crediting to that influence the austere nobility he sees in Pericles (5.1, cf. *Phaedr.* 270A). In chapter eight he returns to the same passage for Plato's statement on the exalted (*hypselonous*) oratory of Pericles, making Plato an admirer of the philosophical element in Pericles' discourse. In chapter nine, when he finally makes explicit the accusations of the *Gorgias*, he suppresses Plato's name and authority. However, in chapter fifteen he once more uses the *Phaedrus* passage — and Plato's name — to identify Pericles' rhetoric as true *psychogogia*, based on a knowledge of the intimate workings of the soul. Moreover, Plutarch uses the Platonic images of the philosopher-statesman as doctor (15.1; 34.5; 35) and helmsman (33.6) to describe Pericles, implicitly assimilating Pericles to the Platonic ideal of a statesman. Plutarch thus refutes the Platonic judgment by emphasizing the positive assessment in the *Phaedrus* and by asserting that Pericles in fact accomplished what Plato asked of his philosopher-king: to guide the people

with firm knowledge, using rhetoric to lead less gifted men to right opinion and right action.

It is noteworthy that Plutarch, despite his positive view of Pericles, records more hostile and disparaging statements about him than does any other author. Plutarch did not disdain facts. He was willing to admit that Pericles could have faults (cf. 10.7), and he liked to report contemporary testimony. He was also confident that he could refute false or misleading statements. Sometimes he simply reinterprets an attack to become a compliment, by showing, e.g., the value of Pericles' «demagogic» measures against Thucydides (11-13), the justice of his boast that he was better than Agamemnon (28.7-8), or the propriety of his refusal to fight (33.4-8). His treatment of the allegations concerning Aspasia, on the other hand, show a classic misdirection and false dichotomy: after beginning with Aspasia's persuasion of Pericles to start the Samian War, he asks why this woman had so much influence on the leading men and philosophers of the day (24.2).[31] The problem of Pericles' relationship is soon narrowed to two choices: some say that he sought her political wisdom, others that he was truly in love. In either case a potentially scandalous relationship is drawn back within acceptable limits of behavior.

Some statements clearly hostile to Pericles Plutarch treats as objective facts: that he had a deformed head, or a private hostility toward Megara. Many he reports but chooses not to respond to, trusting to the larger context to put the matter in perspective: thus he does not defend the ostracism of Cimon, but stresses Pericles' willingness to make peace with Cimon after Tanagra. He does not justify the loss of Megara in 446, the inadequate force sent with Lacedaemonius, or the harshness of the citizenship law. On other occasions he will argue from necessity: at the beginning of his career, for example, Pericles had the choice either to risk ostracism as a potential tyrant or to win support. But the conservatives already supported Cimon, therefore it was necessary for him to go to the *demos*. Again, it was necessary for him to oppose Thucydides if he wished to survive politically. The argument from probability is used in the form of an enthymeme at 10.7 to disprove Idomeneus. Idomeneus accused Pericles of murdering Ephialtes, but Ephialtes had been his friend and co-worker. Pericles spared even his rival Cimon, therefore it

[31] Note that he also places Aspasia's relation to Pericles in the context of two other extraordinary women who influenced political leaders, Thargelia and Aspasia the concubine of Cyrus (24.3, 11-12).

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is impossible that he killed a friend. The reasoning is then confirmed by a reference to Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians*.

Plutarch is at his most effective in refuting a statement by attacking its author. Ion of Chios said that Pericles was servile and arrogant: but Ion «always expected virtue, like a tragic performance, to have some satyric element» (5.3). The comedians gossiped of his affairs with married women: «but who can wonder that these men who were given to debauchery would offer their slanders against their betters in sacrifice to the envy of the crowd, as if to an evil spirit, when even Stesimbrotus of Thasos dared to report against Pericles an extreme and disgusting wrong toward his daughter-in-law?» (13.16). The rhetorical question here shows high indignation, as earlier in his response to Idomeneus. Plutarch is especially disgusted by Duris' account of the brutal punishment given the Samian trierarchs (28.2-3). For refutation he appeals to other authorities — Thucydides, Aristotle, and Ephorus — but he also attacks Duris personally, as a writer who «never is able to keep his narrative truthful, even when no personal feeling is involved, and here seems to have magnified his country's sufferings to slander the Athenians.»

An examination of the *Pericles* does not reveal that Plutarch is a rhetorician instead of a biographer. His respect for the individual historical details gathered in his reading and his philosophical outlook, which emphasized moral values and moral truth over pure desire to convince, kept him from writing an encomium of Pericles, noting no flaws, and using all the *topoi* of praise catalogued by the rhetoricians and practiced by contemporary orators. Nevertheless, Plutarch intended to persuade as well as to inform. He wished his reader to admire Pericles as a man of virtue despite individual facts and influential opinions to the contrary, and he used the devices of rhetoric to persuade his readers. Careful selection of narrative, arrangement by rhetorical effectiveness rather than simple chronology, rhetorical amplification, appeal to the emotions, and ridicule of opposing views all support the biographical goal of presenting the *ethos* of his subject.[32]

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[32] This paper has profited from the comments of Prof. D.A. Russell, who kindly read an early draft, and of those present when a version was given at the University of Liverpool (April 1983) and before the International Plutarch Society (December 1985).