THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS
OF POLITICAL TRUST:
THUCYDIDES'S PERICLES AND THE
LIMITS OF ENLIGHTENED STATECRAFT

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Pericles is often regarded as the greatest statesman in Thucydides's account of the Peloponnesian War, or at least the statesman whom Thucydides himself most admires. These opinions come, in part, from Thucydides's censure of the Athenians for departing from Pericles's strategy after his death. He especially blames Athens for launching its expedition to Sicily, which violated Pericles's policy of refraining from a two-front war. Yet Thucydides indicates that even this daring undertaking might have succeeded had domestic strife not upset Athens's ability to adhere to prudent policy decisions. Thucydides's suggestion,

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then, is that the Athenians' failure to win Syracuse and succeed against Sparta was not *simply* a result of their deviation from Pericles's policies. In fact, as one examines the changes that took place in Athens from the time of Pericles through to the Sicilian expedition, it is evident that Pericles's policies significantly contributed to the political and moral deterioration that fed the domestic turbulence which, in turn, hindered Athens from successfully prosecuting its war abroad. Perhaps the most compelling evidence for this is the recall of Alcibiades, a mistake that, as Thucydides suggests, cost the Athenians the conquest of Syracuse. Since Alcibiades's recall was due to domestic turmoil and a failure of political trust that only developed after Pericles's reign, it is necessary to understand the transformation of Athens after the death of Pericles, and how his policies contributed to that transformation.[1]

This paper argues that, according to Thucydides, three of Pericles's chief initiatives—his emphasis on sea power and the "navalization" of Athens, his consolidation of the populace behind Athens's walls, and his program of enlightened rhetoric—contributed to the deterioration of domestic stability in Athens. Although Pericles believed that his justification for going to war and his strategy for fighting it were rational, he misjudged the character of Athenian "progressiveness," and his attempt to alter the basis of Athenian morality led to a confusion that weakened public trust and respect for the law. While other scholars have noted the problematic nature of Pericles's policies, we argue that there are further issues to consider in this assessment.[2] This paper strives, therefore, to supplement existing accounts of Thucydides's understanding of Pericles, and aims especially to show how Thucydides uses Pericles to identify the risks and costs of attempting to replace traditional sources of civic

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1. See Harvey Yunis, "How Do the People Decide? Thucydides on Periclean Rhetoric and Civic Instruction," *American Journal of Philology* 112 (1991): 181.

2. Scholars who identify the problematic aspects of Pericles's policies include: Christopher Bruell, "Thucydides and Perikles," *St. John's Review* 32 (1981): 24–29; Susan Collins and Devin Stauffer, eds., *Empire and the Ends of Politics* (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 1999); Steven Forde, "Thucydides on the Causes of Athenian Imperialism," *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): 433–48; Edith Foster, *Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sara S. Monoson and Michael Loriaux, "The Illusion of Power and the Disruption of Moral Norms: Thucydides' Critique of Periclean Policy," *American Political Science Review* 92 (1998): 285–97.

identity and public trust with a rationalistic appeal to self-interest. In this way, Thucydides's presentation of Pericles offers valuable insight into the nature of political trust, its moral foundations, and the possibilities and limits of so-called enlightened statesmanship. We believe, therefore, that Thucydides's voice should be added to current discussions of political trust and the role of emotion in politics, especially since he offers powerful reasons to believe that trust is rooted principally in pre-political moral phenomena, not, as certain theorists argue, in institutions or public deliberation.[3]

Sea Power, 'Navalization,' and Pericles's Policy of Imperial Restraint

Pericles's first speech to the Athenians contains the core of his plan for waging war against Sparta, a plan which most scholars agree is built around the following elements: (1) Athens must abstain from expanding the empire, and (2) it should avoid involvement in dangerous enterprises; (3) Athens must keep control over her allies; and (4) Athens must focus her resources on sea power and avoid pitched battles on land.[4] Although

3. Gerald Mara, "Thucydides and Plato on Democracy and Trust," *Journal of Politics* 63 (2001): 820–45, offers valuable observations on returning to ancient Greek thought to enrich the ongoing discussion of political trust. If the current debate on political trust is waged between communitarians (e.g., Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart* [New York: Harper & Row, 1985] and Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* [New York: Free Press, 1995]) and contractarians (e.g., Russell Hardin, "Do We Want Trust in Government?" in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999]), Thucydides is most like the communitarian approach because of his emphasis on tradition and pre-political moral norms in forming identity and trust. This is not to suggest that Thucydides disregards the effect of institutions on popular morality (his treatment of Sparta would belie this conclusion); rather, though Thucydides leans toward a communitarian view, he does not fall neatly into either category.

4. See A. J. Holladay, "Athenian Strategy in the Archidamian War," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 27 (1978): 399; B. X. de Wet, "The So-Called Defensive Policy of Pericles," *Acta Classica* 12 (1969): 103–119; and Josiah Ober, "Thucydides, Pericles, and the Strategy of Defense," in *The Craft of the Ancient Historian: Essays in Honor of Chester G. Starr* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 171; see also Donald Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War* (London: Penguin, 1984), 51–52; Victor D. Hanson, "Is America Periclean?" *New Criterion* (October 2011): 38–48; George Cawkwell, "Thucydides' Judgment of Periclean Strategy," *Yale Classical Studies* 24 (1975): 53–70.

his strategy is simple in conception, Pericles offers it with a confidence informed by several prudential observations. Indeed, Thucydides himself vindicates Pericles's prediction that, so long as Athens avoids new conquests, the war is hers to lose (cf. 1.144.1 with 2.65.7). Pericles's insight, therefore, coupled with his unrivaled ability to control the Athenians, testify amply to his gift for statesmanship (2.65.8). Consequently, we expect his military strategy to be on par with his evident abilities. But when considered closely, Pericles's plans for Athens raise questions about the soundness of his overall strategy, especially since he fails to deliver an unambiguous long-term military objective.

According to Pericles, Athens's principal advantages lay in her wealth and naval power (1.141.5, 1.142.1), a claim that squares with Thucydides's own judgment (2.65.12–13). But Pericles's presentation of Athens's resources must be contextualized in order to explain why he draws so much confidence from his assessment. Contrary to certain scholars who, despite correctly stressing Pericles's rhetoric of money and power, argue that what Pericles truly counts on is Athens's wealth and war materials, we believe that it is what money and sea power together *signify* that inspires Pericles's resolve.[5] That is, Pericles understands Athens's wealth and naval power as representing something more fundamental than mere quantities of material: wealth and ships mark *a turn away* from traditional modes of acquisition, namely agriculture and its attendant way of life. Modern trireme warfare, by contrast, demands that men and resources be freed up in unprecedented ways. As Pericles notes, seamanship is no occasional occupation or hobby but is "so exacting as to leave leisure for nothing else" (1.142.9).[6] In Pericles's mind, therefore, as long as Sparta keeps to its conservative ways—as long as the Spartans remain mere "farmers" (1.111.2–5)—and the Athenians secure their empire, Athens really has nothing to fear. The very rigors of transitioning from a traditional life to something resembling the Athenian commitment to sea power will simply prove too prohibitive for the Spartans.

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5. Compare, by contrast, Foster, *Thucydides*, 165; Lisa Kallet-Marx, "Money Talks: Rhetor, Demos, and the Resources of the Athenian Empire," in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts presented to David Lewis*, ed. R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 238.

6. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from Robert Strassler, ed., *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

Important for our purposes are the demands that Pericles's strategy makes on the Athenian populace for its optimal implementation. Pericles wanted the Athenians to sever their ties to the land—their agricultural roots—and embrace their new naval identity as an "island city" (1.143.5). Pericles believes that to fully exercise imperial restraint, Athens must rethink its relation to property and their prosecution of war. From the older perspective, warfare was tied to the land, to the defense of one's home, crops, and possessions.[7] Pericles's strategy, however, by embracing the city, its defensive walls, and the sea, moved Athens away from the land and from the older, "marathonian" tradition of hoplite warfare. But this transition leads to the following difficulty: by encouraging the Athenians to distance themselves from their traditional, rural life, Pericles challenges the source of Athenian identity and the ground of its social and political cohesion. This challenge left Pericles with the need to find a new basis for Athenian civic culture and political obligation; and to the extent that he provided a solution, it is given in his Funeral Oration, where he encourages the Athenians to fall in love with Athens.[8] But as we will see below, the vision that Pericles offers to encourage devotion to Athens is problematic, not least because it is fundamentally at odds with his policy of restraint. There is a tension, therefore, between Pericles's "restrained" war strategy on the one hand and his "enlightened" rhetoric of civic obligation on the other.

It is crucial to note that none of these problems with Pericles's strategy, save the latter, are severely detrimental to Athens's war effort. As Thucydides suggests, despite the absence of a clear strategic goal, despite the massive toll of the plague, and even despite the costly adventure in Sicily, Athens still could have won the war. By Thucydides's own estimate, the outstanding cause of Athens's loss is domestic turbulence or factional infighting (2.65). But because faction is *not* a major problem in Athens during Pericles's reign—indeed, this is precisely why Thucydides praises Pericles—we are compelled to consider why faction accelerated in the post-Periclean era. As we will argue, it was the moral and emotional impact of Pericles's policies that contributed most clearly to political instability in Athens.

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7. Ober, "Thucydides," 173–74.

8. In Thucydides's Greek, Pericles's exhortation is ambiguous; he exhorts the Athenians to fall in love with the city *or* with its power (2.43.1).

Athens Behind Its Walls

Pericles believes that Athens, to maximize the advantages of its wealth and navy, must reconceive itself, both in terms of the city's physical space and in terms of its civic identity. Pericles argues that the Athenians ought to abandon the Attic countryside and fortify themselves behind their walls. As a practical measure, he believes that this will optimize their security. But Pericles also thinks that for Athens to truly secure the empire, the city must relax, if not abandon, certain norms to make room for economic and moral flexibility. He does not, however, conceive of this change as an otherwise regrettable compromise with necessity. Rather, as is made clear in his Funeral Oration, Pericles thinks that his plan to sever the city from tradition is a matter of political progress. Pericles's policy of evacuation, the proposed abandonment of the countryside, is, therefore, as much symbolic of his larger vision as it is part of his tactical plans. Pericles wants to isolate and fortify the Athenians to protect them; but at a deeper level, he wants to liberate Athens from its agricultural roots and traditions, in order to enhance the city's versatility, power, and ultimately its greatness.

But before turning to the Funeral Oration, we must consider the practical implications of the evacuation policy, for it is here that Thucydides indicates both the radical nature of Pericles's vision for Athens, and the principal source of resistance to its implementation. More specifically, Thucydides provides us with a clear indication of Pericles's diminished view of Athenian customs, but also of the lasting power custom has on Athenian character. In this way, he shows us that Pericles overestimated the malleability of Athenian traditions, but at the same time that Pericles's effort to transform custom challenged the sources of civic unity, trust, and identity in Athens.

Pericles twice advises the Athenians to abandon their land and homes and withdraw to the safety of the city (1.143.5, 2.13.2). His first mention of the evacuation policy is given prudentially, as part of his broader advice as the Athenians plan for war:

> Dismissing all thought of our land and houses, we must vigilantly guard the sea and the city. . . . We must cry not over the loss of houses and land but of men's lives. . . . And if I had thought that I

could persuade you, I would have bid you go out and lay them waste with your own hands. (1.143.5)

In the second mention of the evacuation policy (2.13), Pericles's advice is finally put into action despite the reluctance that he anticipates in the first speech. Indeed, that Pericles must push repeatedly for the evacuation plan shows that it must have met with a cool reception. Yet, however daunted Pericles might have been initially, he nonetheless persists, and that his advice finally prevails testifies to his influence over the city.

Pericles understands that the source of resistance to evacuation comes from the Athenians' attachment to their homes and to their longstanding way of life. But Pericles's insistence on the evacuation, not merely as a hypothetical condition (as in his first speech) but as a concrete possibility, shows that he believes that this attachment is surmountable. There is, of course, precedent for this phenomenon. A similar evacuation was undertaken by Themistocles during the second Persian war. But in Pericles's case, it is not precedent alone that seems to convince him that he can implement his policy. Rather, Pericles believes that what was originally experienced under Themistocles as a traumatic necessity (1.74.2, 1.93.2, 2.16.1) can be employed as a catalyst for progress. On his view, the traditional attachments are an impediment to Athens's ability to thrive: the constraints of tradition hinder the free play of prudence, and the sooner the city sheds these constraints, the sooner it can more fully embrace its *natural* versatility (2.39.4). Pericles implicitly conceives of Athenian custom in terms similar to the distinction between nature and convention; and when viewed as such, the city's traditions become *mere* convention, something artificial and, presumably, less authoritative and commanding.[9] By tacitly deferring to nature as the ultimate thing or force, Pericles concedes that he does not believe that there will be divinely sanctioned consequences for uprooting the old ways. Nor does he seem to think that the Athenians themselves will suffer adversely for leaving behind traditions that, to Pericles, seem naïve if not detrimental.

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9. Cf. 2.64.3 in light of Pericles's general neglect of the gods. As with many of the Sophists who shared this view, the distinction between nature (*physis*) and convention (*nomos*) is often taken to entail antinomianism. See Patrick Coby, "Enlightened Self-Interest in the Peloponnesian War: Thucydidean Speakers on the Right of the Stronger and Inter-State Peace," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24 (1991): 67–68.

To highlight the boldness of Pericles's design, Thucydides juxtaposes the story of Theseus against the evacuation. Many scholars have noted this contrast, but we seek to highlight its importance.[10] As Thucydides explains, the Athenians found it hard to leave the countryside because of the force of old habits. And the brief mention of Theseus in this context is meant to show that even Theseus—a king whose "intelligence matched his power" (2.15.2)—could not overcome the influence of tradition to fully unify the Attic villages under one authority.

> Even after the centralization of Theseus, old habits still prevailed; and from the early times down to the present war most Athenians still lived in the country with their families and households, and were consequently not at all inclined to move now. (2.16.1)

Theseus did have some success, however; Athens was set up as an administrative center. And as Thucydides is careful to note, Theseus's success is marked by the celebration of the Synoecia—the feast of the union—which Athens "still keeps in honor of the goddess" (2.15.2). Thucydides's suggestion, therefore, is that Theseus succeeded only because he managed to make his policy a matter of civic religion. To the extent that Athens conceives of itself as a unified city, it is principally due to festivals and sacred tradition. This is because tradition and piety play a decisive role in the structure of Athenian life and character; as Thucydides further notes, the Athenians still observe pre-Theseatic traditions (2.15.4). In sum, Theseus's success went only as far as he could merge his vision with these preexisting traditions. The influence of tradition pulls hard on the Athenians, which is precisely why Thucydides is compelled to offer this somber reflection on Pericles's evacuation:

> Deep was their trouble and discontent at abandoning their houses and the hereditary temples of the ancient state, and at having to change their habits of life and to bid farewell to what each regarded as his native city. (2.16.2)

With all of this being said, the modern reader may not appreciate the force of Thucydides's description here; therefore, we need to digress

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10. See Foster, *Thucydides*, 174–82 including notes.

briefly on the importance of religion to Athenian life.[11] To take just one example, the Athenians believed that their first ancestor, Erectheus, was born from the soil of Attica itself; this belief, and its attendant respect for tradition, was central to Athenian piety. For an Athenian, one's principal loyalty was not to the city per se but to one's household and ancestral lands, to one's extended family, to one's political club, political district, and tribe.[12] All of these commitments were underpinned by customs, including swearing the "ephebic" oath. As Mikalson notes:

> It was the "ephebic" oath which solemnized a young man's entrance into full citizenship in the state. . . . [H]e swore to maintain or enlarge and better the fatherland as a whole, to hold in honor the ancestral sanctuaries, to obey the officials and laws of the state.[13]

For the ancient Athenian, therefore, religion "impregnated each and every civic activity."[14] This religion had its roots in the household and radiated out into the many concentric circles of trust and loyalty that held the community together. Indeed, it would not be misleading to suggest that the most vital expressions of piety for the Athenian were on the sub-political level.[15] This is why Thucydides suggests that when the Athenians were forced to leave their local communities, each felt as if he had to bid farewell to what he regarded as his own "native city" (2.16.2). It was the home, family, local temples, shrines, clubs and associations that held the most attachment; these were where the Athenian had placed his trust.

For Thucydides, the importance of Athenian religion is further highlighted by the history of Athens itself. As he notes in the Archeology, the first cause of Attica's stability, contrary to what one might expect, was

11. Consider how Donald Kagan, in *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 10, downplays the religious dimension of Athenian life in order to strengthen the "relevance" of Pericles for current political thought.

12. Jon D. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 61, 83, 102–3; compare W. Robert Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 26–29.

13. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion*, 85. See also L. B. Zaidman and Pauline S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, trans. Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 86.

14. Zaidman and Pantel, *Religion*, 92.

15. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion*, 83; N. D. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Classic Study of the Religious and Civil Institutions of Ancient Greece and Rome*, trans. A. Momigliano S. C. Humphreys (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 26–31.

its poor soil. The more fertile regions of Greece attracted invasion from without and fostered greed from within. Attica, by contrast, because of its poverty "enjoyed freedom from faction" (1.2.5) and, therefore, was afforded a settled way of life; the Athenians were the "first to lay aside their weapons, and to adopt an easier and more luxurious mode of life" (1.6.3), thus setting themselves apart from the rest of the Greeks.

Thucydides's "poor soil" argument suggests the following: the hard conditions of early life in Attica helped to forge bonds of trust among the first inhabitants; and over time, this trust—initially born from necessity—was then underpinned by tradition and custom, which replaced the bond of necessity once Attica became wealthier, and the dire conditions of the poor soil were no longer pressing.[16] In the case of Attica, therefore, long-term political success was due to enduring stability rooted in the soil and what the soil came to represent.[17] By abandoning the countryside for the sea, Pericles alters Athens's economy and military, turning Athens away from its history and the traditional basis of its communal life.[18]

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16. Consider Foster, *Thucydides*, 14, 23, 40.

17. The myth of Erectheus and the belief in Athenian autochthony are prime examples of how the soil itself became imbued with sacred meaning.

18. Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) considers the relationship between tradition and what he labels "practical rationality." In particular, he highlights the tension between Homeric traditions and Periclean Athens, while also arguing that Pericles's view of Athens draws, surprisingly, on Homeric traditions (47–48). MacIntyre aims to illustrate the manner in which the Greek understanding of virtue had shifted from inherent excellence to virtue as effectiveness, aimed in particular at extrinsic goods (33–46). The difficulty with tradition, on MacIntyre's view, is the incompatibility of these competing notions. Alternatives to conducting one's actions implies that tradition does not simply guide decisions, a situation the Athenians found themselves in at the outset of the Peloponnesian War. Beginning with Pericles, there is a line that begins to appear between rational and nonrational arguments, but it was Pericles who was able to hold together both of these strands of his Athens, maintaining the "shared background of beliefs" that MacIntyre argues is required for any tradition to maintain itself. This background is the boundary within which public debates can take place. After Pericles, the tension between these divergent notions could no longer be maintained. Pericles, though, holds the conflicting tradition together for a time (53–57). While these tensions become manifest especially in Thucydides's description of the outbreak and early stages of the war, we argue that Pericles's response to the war is paramount. It is the misfortunes of the war that spur a return to tradition (and its oracular pronouncements), but Pericles rejects this return by ignoring and accelerating it. As we suggest, his lukewarm deference to the law, his unwillingness to accept the demos' sense of

Pericles's Funeral Oration and the New Basis for Civic Obligation

Although Pericles's Funeral Oration has been treated extensively by scholars, we seek to further articulate the intention behind his speech. Many read the Funeral Oration as Thucydides's own statement on Athenian greatness and his idealization of Pericles's leadership.[19] But a recent trend in the scholarship has questioned, if not undermined, this once dominant approach. Excellent studies by Bruell, Forde, Orwin, and Monoson and Loriaux, and more recently Balot, Foster, and Taylor, all show how Thucydides is critical of Pericles and Periclean Athens, thus precluding any simple identification of Thucydides's own views with those of his Pericles.[20] With this said, we believe Pericles's aim requires further eluci-

punishment when misfortune befalls them, and his siding with "effectiveness" (i.e., the apparent necessities of the war) fails to notice the moral ramifications for Athens of this rejection. Indeed, the people do not follow Pericles in placing "effectiveness" over the older virtue of "intrinsic excellence." And that Pericles became untrustworthy to the demos is made clear by Thucydides when the contrast becomes even starker—the post-Periclean demos chose the excellence of Nicias (his trustworthiness, or law-bred virtue) over the effectiveness of Alcibiades, even in the face of a dangerous expedition. As we argue, Pericles's stature with the demos (for a time) is the result of his appeals to virtue in both of MacIntyre's uses of the term—that while the Athenians (falsely) believe Pericles possesses the traditional virtues they admire, in particular those such as piety that foster trust and reverence, his policies for victory in the war prove corrosive to Athenian morality. And we must also observe that MacIntyre presents Pericles as inheriting and responding to an Athens fundamentally guided by Homeric morality. Yet Thucydides's presentation of the change from ancient Athens to the Athens of the Peloponnesian War provides an alternative view. In fact, the equation of traditional Athenian morality with Homeric morality may itself be problematic. The morality inherited by Periclean Athens is a mixture of Homeric tradition and local religion (local "political culture," we might say), along with an agrarian way of life and its accompanying tie to the fatherland that Thucydides details in his *Archaeology*.

19. Examples include: Francis Cornford, *Thucydides Mythhistoricus* (London: Edward Arnold, 1907), 50; Cynthia Farrar, *The Origins of Democratic Thinking: The Invention of Politics in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 163; Kagan "Pericles," 10.

20. Christopher Bruell, "Thucydides' View of Athenian Imperialism," *American Political Science Review* 68 (1974): 11–17 and "Thucydides and Perikles"; Forde, "Thucydides"; Clifford Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Monoson and Loriaux, "Illusion of Power"; Ryan Balot, "Pericles' Anatomy of Democratic Courage," *American Journal of Philology* 122 (2001): 505–25; Foster, *Thucydides*; Martha C. Taylor, *Thucydides, Pericles, and the Idea of Athens in the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Suspicion regarding any easygoing assimilation of Thucydides with his Pericles can be traced

dation to identify the most problematic elements of the speech. We argue that Pericles's Funeral Oration attempts to replace the traditional basis of civic obligation with a new, progressive conception of patriotism. While others argue that Pericles is laying out Athenian ideals of reciprocity or attempting to persuade his citizens to embrace a novel form of democratic courage, we argue that Pericles is redefining the Athenians' emotional relationship to their city.[21] Since this point itself has been made by others,[22] we offer a new explication of Pericles's radical ambition and, more importantly, we aim to show how the moral confusions endemic to Pericles's progressive project contribute significantly to the deterioration of communal bonds and political trust in Athens.

Pericles's dismissal of traditional Athenian customs, although implicit in his evacuation policy, is most evident in the Funeral Oration. In fact, the speech itself begins with a critique of the very law that requires the annual public funeral service for the war dead. As Orwin notes, the most striking feature of the oration is Pericles's depreciation of the ancestral.[23] Not only does Pericles cast doubt on the value of eulogizing the dead, the bulk of his speech, which is better construed as an encomium to modern Athens, downplays the achievements of the past and celebrates the current generation—the imperial generation—as the culmination of prior exertion. As Pericles suggests, whereas the older Athenians needed poets to adorn their success, now Athens's greatness speaks for itself: the city's power is so impressive that it would make even the praises of a Homer superfluous (2.41).

It is important to note that Pericles's denigration of the past is not merely rhetorical but reflects his genuine evaluation of tradition, especially as it is seen in light of all that Athenian progress has made possible. For Pericles, showing deference to tradition belongs to the old Athens, the pre-naval "marathonian" city. In his mind, the current generation ought to appreciate that what the city now affords them does not depend on ancestral ways but on the versatility and power that keeps them in

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back at least as far as Mortimer Chambers. "Thucydides and Pericles," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 62 (1957): 80.

21. Monoson and Loriaux, "Illusion of Power" and Balot, "Pericles' Anatomy," respectively.

22. Collins and Stauffer, *Empire*; Orwin, *Humanity*; Forde, "Thucydides."

23. Orwin, *Humanity*, 16.

control of the sea. Pericles wants his citizens to see the ancestral as something not to be beholden to but as a constraint they are to be liberated from. Consequently, he seeks to replace the old forms of piety and civic obligation with a new conception of public service, one informed by a newly available "enlightened" perspective.

The core element of Pericles's new perspective is that the noble, or the admirable, need not be aligned with traditional conceptions of justice or piety. As Pericles's eulogy proceeds, it becomes clear that what is impressive about his Athens is not its moral uprightness but its power, especially its capacity to afford freedom, pleasure, and even individual perfection and immortality (2.37–39, 2.42.3, 2.43.2). And while Pericles insists that these goods are only made possible by freely given service to the city, he is also clear that the city's imperial project has not always been just. As he notes, "we have forced every sea and land to be the highway of our daring, and everywhere, whether for evil or for good, have left imperishable monuments behind us" (2.41.4).[24] The city thus duly rewards public service; but it has taken its power to do so at the expense of moral propriety. Stated differently, Pericles believes that Athens's capacity for conquest is enough to justifiably compel virtuous devotion, even despite the moral ambiguity of the city's imperial project.

One effect of Pericles's presentation of public service is that it attempts to make this service the only rational focus of personal or private ambition; and in this way, Pericles attempts to collapse any meaningful distinction between public and private. There are, however, problems with his approach, three of which are especially noteworthy. First, Pericles's rhetoric on service to the common good is incoherent insofar as he wants to make public sacrifice admirable *and* rational. On the one hand, he insists on the nobility of dying for the city—the soldiers who gave their lives have made an exemplary sacrifice (2.42); on the

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24. Pericles mentions *tolma* (daring) at 1.144.4, 2.39.4, 2.40.3, 2.41.4, 2.43.1, 2.62.5, and 2.53. That Pericles uses *tolma* to reflect Athenian virtue is some indication of his departure from traditional morality, which would have emphasized courage (*andreia*), since *tolma* is morally ambiguous and is often used to indicate recklessness and impiety; see L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 11–15; Lowell Edmunds, "Thucydides' Ethics as Revealed in His Description of Stasis (3.82–83)," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79 (1975): 75. See also Forde, "Thucydides" which identifies *tolma* as one of the main forces behind Athenian imperialism and notes its ambiguous, if not immoral, status.

other hand, however, Pericles stresses the rewards these soldiers have earned for themselves, both while they were alive and after their deaths. Pericles claims that these men are rewarded with a kind of immortality (2.43.2–3); thus, in death, they somehow *gain* from their service what all men desire. Pericles, then, while insisting on admirable sacrifices for the city, undercuts their nobility by making the sacrifice seem less bad—that is, by making the rewards of public service so appealing that such service cannot but seem like prudent calculation of one's private advantage.

Second, Pericles's attempt to collapse public and private interest, as described above, is not entirely compelling—the flaw in his argument is revealed by his suggestion that death in battle is "unfelt" (2.43.6) points to the flaw in his argument, since it implies that one's sacrifice is in fact insignificant. Pericles's suggestion reflects the weakness of his insinuation that Athens could somehow assume a god-like status and grant its citizens happiness, perfection, and immortality. Thus, Pericles's argument for a rational civic devotion struggles to align public and private, a struggle that issues from his rejection of the ancestral tradition. As noted earlier, the older conception of piety privileged the family, household, and local attachments over the city. Pericles, by contrast, seeks to subordinate all loyalties to civic devotion. But in order for this new alignment of loyalty to be rationally compelling, Pericles is forced to say that the citizen is most fully satisfied by, or even completed by, public service. This is why Pericles wants the Athenians to think of their city as an object of erotic longing; he wants to turn the most personal form of devotion into the basis of civic obligation, as if Athens itself could reciprocate one's erotic hopes (2.43.1). The irony here is that by turning the city into an object of longing, Pericles replaces the ancestral gods with a "divinized" city; to be a plausible or compelling focus of eros, the city, it seems, must assume god-like properties, including the power to grant immortality. But as Forde notes, it is not clear that the city can be the object of erotic longings, even if, or precisely because, it cannot possibly fulfill them.[25] Thus, the third problem with Pericles's new patriotism is that it appeals to emotional longings that were traditionally and perhaps most appropriately expressed in a private capacity. That Thucydides thinks this is problematic is indicated by his presentation

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25. Forde, "Thucydides," 439–43.

of eros in describing the hysteria surrounding the Sicilian expedition, which we will turn to briefly in the next section.

A further problem related to Pericles's collapse of the private and public realms is that it leaves the city as the highest moral authority. If the city is superior to the ancestral tradition, then it need not observe any limit upheld by that tradition. And as Pericles suggests, it is the power of Athens that is impressive, not the city's justice or righteousness—this is how the Athens of the present has moved beyond the Athens of the past. Not only, then, does Pericles claim that Athens ought not adhere to the old limits, but he is moving the conception of what is noble or admirable away from moral norms as such.

But Thucydides shows us that Pericles's effort in this regard is not a clean break. While insisting on Athens's current superiority, Pericles nonetheless appeals to traditional conceptions of virtue to vindicate Athens's constitution and its way of life (2.37, 2.40). Thus Pericles, while criticizing the ancestral norms, unwittingly preserves them, albeit in an inevitably muddled form. Despite his effort to move Athens away from its past self-conception, therefore, he in fact fosters an incomplete and confused form of enlightenment, versions of which are evinced by other Athenian speakers, most notably the Athenian envoys at Sparta and those at Melos (1.76.2–3, 5.105.2–3). In Pericles's case, as in these others, we see a confident contempt for traditional norms, coupled with an unselfconscious reliance on those same norms, particularly those related to justice and nobility. The effect of this confusion is a weakened attachment to traditional morality precisely because the speaker is convinced that he is no longer beholden to it.

With Pericles, we observe a particularly deleterious effect of this confusion in his own inability to fully appreciate the basis of the Athenians' trust in him. While it is true that Pericles is highly adept at handling the populace, he does not seem to grasp that the Athenians favor him, not because of their erotic devotion to Athens or because of his prudent schemes, but because Pericles *appears virtuous*. Pericles does indeed refer to his patriotism and constancy (2.60–61), but he does not seem to realize the extent to which he earns political capital by deferring to the old marathonian virtues of courage, moderation, honesty, and justice (consider 2.13, 2.65.8). It is these ostensible virtues, not Pericles's pro-

gressive, enlightened views, that are the true basis of the long-standing public trust he enjoys. But by pushing Athens farther away from the old morality, and by confusing it with his progressive notions, Pericles diminishes its status and influence, thus weakening the extent to which the old moral norms can be an effective basis for political trust. This latter notion is especially evident in Pericles's fourth speech, where he admits that holding Athens's empire will require an untraditional moral flexibility (2.63.2–3). The effect of this suggestion is to make it seem like being decent is foolish, or it is naïve to insist that Athens hold to moral virtue in its foreign policy. But the more that the Athenians openly believe that prudence requires separating self-interest from morality, the more they are unwilling to trust their political representatives, an effect made especially clear in the context of Diodotus's speech. The post-Periclean generation of statesmen are compelled to speak openly about self-interest, lest they be dismissed as fools by the demos; but at the same time, the demos is highly suspicious of those that approach them (3.42). The problem, as Thucydides presents it, is that after Pericles, Athenian statesmen could not find a firm footing with the populace; the reason for this is clear: by trying to move the popular conception of nobility away from traditional norms, and by openly separating prudential self-concern from older notions of piety and justice, Pericles perpetuates a confusion in opinion that undermines the potential for any bond to form between statesmen and the people. And the fatal effect for the city is that it can no longer be governed effectively. Thucydides shows, for example, that, along with Alcibiades, the people selected Nicias to lead them. Their vote pairs the most openly ambitious statesman with the most openly pious and public-spirited, the two competing motivations of the demos being conquest for personal gain along with fear that such an expedition would be unsafe and even impious (6.24.1–4). And this combination leads to disastrous results precisely because, without someone to harmonize their motives, the demos's oscillation between these concerns undermines the stability required for the successful implementation of policy.[26]

26. Thucydides's critique of Pericles's effort to establish an enlightened form of civic obligation should not, however, be taken as evidence that Thucydides himself believes that prudent action must always conform to moral norms. Monoson and Loriaux, while correctly noting that Thucydides seriously "doubts humanity's capacity to

The Plague, Pericles's Response, and the
Latent Piety of the Athenians

As several commentators have noted, the juxtaposition of the Funeral Oration against the plague sequence is one of the clearest examples of Thucydides's art of writing. Thucydides intends for his reader to consider how the suffering caused by the plague undermines Pericles's portrait of Athenian strength and glory—the savage nature of the disease challenging in particular Pericles's claim that one can become insensitive to death. While this contrast is prominent, Thucydides's aim here goes further: he shows that the pressure of the plague forces a religious response from the Athenians; and despite a considerable disregard of customary rites, the overwhelming urge among the populace is for some sort of supernatural or religious explanation for their suffering. That is, when confronted by severe misfortune, the Athenians make sense of their plight in a moral or spiritual way; whatever the status of their enlightenment, it has not wholly overcome the challenge of the problem of evil, which is demonstrated by the contrast between the common

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chart a prudent course of action while disregarding norms of moral conduct," seem to go too far in suggesting that "prudent action relies on the guidance and restraint provided by moral norms" ("Illusion of Power," 290). C. D. C. Reeve argues that Pericles governed in a moderate manner by satisfying the interests of the few and the many within Athens ("Thucydides on Human Nature," *Political Theory* 27 (1999): 445). Reeve's account is based on the observation that Pericles himself was not "overcome by ambition or pleonexia" despite Pericles's exhortations to both daring and the desire for glory (2.39.4, 2.40.3, 2.41.4, 2.43.1). In Reeve's praise of Pericles, citing 2.65.1–10 as evidence that Pericles governed moderately, he misses three important sentences (2.65.2–4) where Thucydides directs our attention to the suffering that Pericles's domestic policies caused the demos. Further, Thucydides's claim that Pericles governed in a "measured" (*metrios*) way is qualified—he governed in a measured way "during peace" (65.5). Reeve's argument that Pericles was successful precisely because of his moderation would need to consider the omitted remarks where Thucydides is critical of certain effects of Pericles's statesmanship. These conclusions obviate what Thucydides takes to be a perhaps intractable problem: that the needs of the city, especially its self-preservation, do not sit in fundamental alignment with the necessity of governing the city's domestic integrity. The conditions for political trust depend upon the presence of clear normative restraints; and, as shown by the fallout from Pericles's reign, traditional moral norms are eschewed at great cost. But the self-preservation of a city may require actions that deviate from morality, as in the case of Themistocles's evacuation of Athens. The success of Brasidas, due in part to his deceptions, provides a further illustration of the disjunction between moral virtue and prudence, as does the successes of Alcibiades precisely because of his moral flexibility.

response and Thucydides's own detachment. But Pericles, in his attempt to stem the effects of the plague, and the growing momentum of the peace movement, does not acknowledge religion or the gods. In his final speech, he only succeeds in calming his audience by restating the promise of imperial power, as opposed to addressing the deeper wounds caused by the city's collective loss. Pericles's fourth speech thus continues in the same vein as the others; he continues to treat the Athenians as an enlightened populace, disregarding and even perhaps repudiating the traditional supports for virtue, while simultaneously relying on their prevailing morality as a source of strength and endurance.

Noting the similarity between the plague sequence and the revolution in Corcyra, several commentators rightly identify these two passages as essential to Thucydides's depiction of the vulnerability of moral norms to the pressure of fear and necessity. The suggestion is that Thucydides believes that moral norms collapse with their system of enforcement, that when the law is impotent, society becomes lawless and amoral.[27] As regards the plague, however, this conclusion needs to go further to capture Thucydides's argument. Thucydides shows that the breakdown of law and order in Athens during the plague is not simply a result of the removal of the threat of punishment; rather, the widespread turning away from moral and legal order is itself a result of the sense of *being* punished:

> Fear of the gods or law of man there was none to restrain them. As for the first, they judged it to be just the same whether they worshipped them or not, as they saw all alike perishing; and for the last, no one expected to live to be brought to trial for his offenses, but each felt that a far severer sentence had *already passed upon them all* and hung over their heads. (2.53.4, emphasis added)

For the Athenians, the randomness of the disease, especially the lack of coincidence between suffering and merit, causes them not to simply eschew moral norms, but to believe that the gods have either abandoned them or passed judgment, or both. The Athenians do not turn to an amoral hedonism because they think moral authority is without force; rather, they turn to immediate gratification as a consolation for being

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27. Consider Monoson and Loriaux, "Illusion of Power."

god-forsaken. The laws are ignored because their current suffering is experienced as a punishment more severe than anything else gods or men could impose; they continue to understand their plight in moral terms; they do not abandon morality because of suffering, but make sense of their suffering in light of their morality.[28]

That the Athenians attempt to explain the plague in such a manner, and not as a misfortune, is further evinced by their turn to oracles. Thucydides suggests that very "naturally" (or "reasonably"—*eikos*) the Athenians looked to past oracles as a source of illumination and were convinced by those that seemed to suggest that war with Sparta would result in pestilence for Athens (2.54). The Athenians seek a religious explanation of their suffering, and many are persuaded that the plague is a punishment, possibly a result of hubris or reckless overreach, not unlike Apollo's punishment of the Achaeans at Troy (*Iliad* 1). This reaction to the plague thus offers some indication that the Athenians' moral orientation is far more Homeric than Periclean. Thucydides's broader suggestion is that the Athenians—arguably, a fortiori, any population— are unable to cope with a calamity like the plague in a noncosmic or nonreligious way. When confronted by such a massive death toll, and such apparently random suffering, the common response is to seek an explanation of some kind; from this perspective, it is unthinkable that such a disaster could be the result of mere chance; or to put this differently, Thucydides's cool remove from his own suffering of the disease could never be replicated on a mass scale (2.48.3 with 2.51.4).

Not surprisingly, the Athenians' belief that they are being punished contributes to a growing interest in coming to terms with Sparta. Pericles calls an assembly to acknowledge the depressed mood of the city. His fourth speech, however, does not provide the moral exculpation of the empire that the Athenians might desire; instead of addressing the gods or the religious response to the plague, Pericles emphasizes the allure of power and glory and stresses the imprudence and unmanliness of peace.

The fourth speech is arguably Pericles's most complicated due to the delicacy of the challenge he is attempting to meet. He creates the sense

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28. See Peter J. Ahrensdorf, "The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy," *American Political Science Review* 94 (2000): 579–93.

that the devastation wreaked by the plague and the invading Spartans has not ruined the community, and that Athens is still worth fighting for. But Pericles has to go further than this and convince the Athenians that their civic duty entails an obligation to the empire. The main difficulty he faces, however, is that to strengthen the commitment to both city *and* empire, Pericles has to appeal to motives that are potentially at odds: to grapple with the two horns of his dilemma, Pericles appeals to a moral sense of duty, on the one hand, and power, prudence, and glory, on the other. The result is a rhetorical case that is in tension with itself: the appeal to duty and patriotism is crowded out by Pericles's new depiction of naval power, and is then undermined by his suggestion that decency is foolish and has no place in the administration of Athens's empire.

The fourth speech starts by addressing the anger of those Athenians who blame Pericles for the suffering caused by the war. Facing his critics head-on allows him to challenge his audience to turn away from their personal losses, and to take up the collective needs of the city. Pericles argues that the city ought to take priority in the self-concern of each citizen, since the city itself is the necessary condition for each citizen's well-being. As he suggests: if the city as a whole is thriving, even those who are badly off will survive; but in a failing city, even the successful must suffer (2.61.2). From this, Pericles concludes that the Athenians ought to rise to their city's defense instead of wallowing in their private despair and anger.

Although Pericles's brief case for civic obligation may seem logically compelling, the force of his appeal actually has less to do with rational self-interest than with moral persuasion. This becomes evident when Pericles presents himself as the model for the kind of devotion he is calling for. "And yet I, the object of your anger, consider myself a man inferior to no one in judging what is necessary and explaining it; furthermore, a lover of my country and above money" (2.60).[29] Pericles stresses his own seemingly unimpeachable motives to rebut the anger of the Athenians and to blame them, in turn, for being weak and changeable in the face of misfortune (2.61). To the extent that the Athenians are moved by Pericles, it is because they see him as a man who is willing to suf-

29. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

fer for the common good; arguably, they are much more impressed by his example and his moral censure than they are by his argumentation (2.65.8). This part of his speech demonstrates how Pericles's reputation for virtue gives him the authority and political trust to be a moral leader and outspoken critic. But by making his case for civic obligation in the language of rational self-interest, Pericles obscures his moral appeal and thus distorts the character of what is actually compelling in his speech.

If Pericles's remarks here can be taken to reflect his own self-under-standing, the above-mentioned complications might indicate confusion in how Pericles thinks about his own political activity. On the one hand, Pericles wants to believe that serving the city is rational: the city, as the condition for the well-being of all, deserves the concern of all. But this argument would appear to demand only a limited obligation; one's concern for the city need only extend as far as the city serves one's interests: if one's survival is threatened by the city's laws or its imminent collapse, there is no injunction to die for a losing cause. Pericles, though, goes further; by pointing to his own resolve he implies that love of country—patriotism—ought to trump self-interest. On the other hand, Pericles believes that one ought to bear misfortune and suffering for the sake of the whole, that love of country entails a kind of duty and is admirable or virtuous. But again, the patriotism that Pericles both demands and exemplifies cannot be fully justified on the basis of his initial argument. It seems, therefore, that Pericles is saying that service to the community is rational and yet somehow not rational; that one ought to serve out of self-concern, and yet be selfless in one's service to or love of country. Pericles does go on to promise a share of glory to those who contribute to Athens' cause (2.42, 2.63.1, 2.64.6); but this only seems to confirm that he thinks public service must be rewarded, that it is not simply choice-worthy or even sufficient to appeal to survival.

Now, Pericles may be deliberately reflecting in his rhetoric the con-fusions of his audience; and it is certainly true that political rhetoric, to be successful, need not be logically coherent (2.65.8). But if the speech can be taken as a reflection of Pericles himself, the tensions we have uncovered are revealing. Pericles seems to think that one should care for the city not only because it is necessary, but also because it is noble—patriotic—to do so; yet when it comes to Athens's war effort, Pericles

focuses less on patriotism and more on glory and necessity. Pericles does not seem to notice the conflict between these appeals, perhaps because he thinks his own motives rest on a rational foundation. He believes that he can enjoin public service without traditional exhortations or appeals to the gods, but he still refers to the habits of past Athenians that helped them bear up against the "hand of heaven" (2.64.2). It is not implausible to suggest, therefore, that Thucydides's presentation of Pericles's fourth speech shows him to be both confused and somewhat naïve: confused because Pericles does not seem clear about the place of self-concern in his own motives for public service; naïve because he thinks he can rely on the Athenians to act as they always have while eschewing the gods and the normative supports for their old habits.

If Pericles starts his speech by implying that traditional patriotism can rest on rational self-interest, the second and third parts of his speech challenge his initial appeal to decency and love of country. After admonishing his audience to put their private suffering aside, he then offers a new image of Athenian sea power to alleviate any distress caused by the perils of the war. Pericles says he has refrained from being honest about Athens's navy because it appears boastful to do so; but now, he seems to think that the truth will not be offensive:

> You believe you rule only over the allies, but I declare that of two realms available for use, land and sea, you are completely in control of one in its entirety. . . . [A]nd there is no one . . . to prevent you from sailing with the naval force you have at your disposal. (2.62; trans. Lattimore)

Pericles's portrait of Athens's irresistible command of the seas fires the imagination and fuels the desire for global conquest. The effect, therefore, cuts against his policy of imperial moderation, which perhaps explains his previous silence. But Pericles goes further; he now suggests that despite Athens's strength, the empire is also a potential liability. And he offers a second "honest" disclosure, namely, that it is impossible to divest the city of empire without great risk:

> You cannot abdicate from it, even if someone fearful under the immediate circumstances makes this upright display in his political indifference; for you now hold it like a tyranny that seems unjust to acquire but dangerous to let go. (2.63)

Here Pericles admits that the acquisition and administration of the empire looks suspicious from a moral standpoint. The main point of his suggestion, however, amounts to the following: that whatever the moral status of the empire, it demands firm and unflinching leadership; and that those who recoil from this reality are not only unmanly but are a liability to the city (2.63.3). Pericles thus implies that, while the peace movement in Athens may have some title to being morally legitimate, it is imprudent to let such concerns interfere with imperial policy. The manly thing is to embrace political reality, the better to serve Athens's interests.

In this way, Pericles accomplishes a kind of moral inversion that repudiates traditional norms. Despite insisting throughout his speech that his audience continue to serve Athens, Pericles undermines traditional patriotism by making the amoral "realist" seem like the one who is most fit to help the city, thus divorcing morality from prudence.

The cumulative effect of Pericles's rhetoric in the fourth speech, which ignores the gods and challenges traditional morality, does not address the spiritual needs of the Athenians and weakens the basis for trust between ruler and ruled—the very trust that the Athenians extend to Pericles because of his reputation for virtue and integrity. Subsequent events help illustrate this problematic outcome: as noted above, while the Athenians come to distrust leaders who do not speak in terms of rational self-interest or political necessity (3.42), they are also distrustful of those who do, as is evinced by their pairing Nicias with Alcibiades to handle the Sicilian expedition (6.8, 19, 24). Moreover, the Athenians continue to believe that the gods play a vital role in determining their fate, as is shown in their various efforts to purify the island sanctuary of Delos, and in their reaction to the mutilation of the herms.[30] Pericles undoubtedly succeeds in offering Athens a seductive portrait of itself, but he is unable to reconcile popular morality with Athens's imperial project. The Athenians were always a religious people; but by basing his leadership and policies on the assumption that Athens is an enlightened city, Pericles exacerbates tensions which, especially in his absence, precipitate domestic instability.

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30. Thucydides clearly states at 5.32.1 that the Athenian concern with Delos is due to piety and that this piety is related to their view of how the war is proceeding for them.

Conclusion: The Flawed Assumptions behind Pericles's Policies

As we hope the foregoing has made clear, Pericles's statesmanship, while possessing certain advantages and strengths compared to other Thucydidean leaders, suffers from fundamental difficulties and, therefore, raises issues for being *the* model of statesmanship for Thucydides. Pericles's shortcomings appear connected to his view not only of Athens but of politics as such, especially the nature of custom and its susceptibility to the influence of reason. Of particular importance is Pericles's underestimation of the strength of citizen morality along with his overestimation of the malleability of political life, believing that it may be structured according to an "enlightened," rational view.

In not recognizing the Athenians' persistent attachment to tradition, Pericles attempts to turn the city of Athens itself into the basis of a new, rational morality, making "worship" of the city the source of personal glory. But this new civic devotion is divorced from the fidelity one pays to the gods; devotion to the city, as a new morality, lacks what most characterizes traditional Athenian morality—a sense of restraint and subservience to something higher than one's own private aims. The imperial city as an object of devotion cannot coherently place limits on the individual. There is nothing to stop continual Athenian expansion because empire for Pericles must be conceived without the fetters of morality. Imperial administration can only succeed when it is supported by economic and moral versatility; by necessity, it cannot be moderated by concern with the principles of justice or piety.

Culminating with Pericles's final speech is his frank discussion of the immoral character of the Athenian empire. Pericles's formulation of prudence, that it must be willing to engage in injustice, could lead many Athenians to believe that it is simpleminded to act in any manner that is not ultimately self-serving. This reduction of human motivation results in a pervasive cynicism which compromises the Athenians' ability to govern themselves effectively. Because they think that it is naïve to trust in the higher motives of others, they are unwilling to listen to politicians who privilege anything above self-interest; but at the same time, the people cannot help but withhold their trust from such openly ambitious men. Suspicion does not lead to widespread immorality, how-

ever, but to oscillations between self-serving harshness, on the one hand, and guilt coupled with religious hysteria, on the other. The people still want to find a footing for their trust but are now compelled to turn to men like Nicias, who, while unimpeachable from a certain perspective, lack the resources to lead effectively compared with the likes of Alcibiades and Demosthenes.

The flaws in Pericles's policies and their problematic effects compel one to consider why Thucydides appears to praise Pericles so highly while offering a subtle and often tacitly drawn critique. We suggest that Thucydides wants his readers first to favor Pericles as a model of rational statesmanship. One is led by Pericles's example toward the possibility of directing political life according to considerations of what is rationally desirable; that all aspects of political and human life might be effectively controlled without the interference of moral ties; and, most importantly, that one need not consult political morality for guidance but can rely on oneself to guard against the changing tides of fortune.[31] But with Pericles's failure and sudden death, the sympathetic reader is challenged to reconsider the assumptions that make Pericles's efforts seem attractive. This is especially true given Pericles's considerable gifts and the remarkable authority he enjoys in Athens. Much as Thucydides uses the plague to show how volatile Athens, the "school of Greece," can become under the pressure of suffering, so too does Pericles's example

31. See John H. Finley, *Thucydides* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942); Warner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, vol. 1, *Archaic Greece and the Mind of Athens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945); Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963); Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Arlene Saxonhouse, "Nature and Convention in Thucydides' History," *Polity* 10 (1978): 461–87; Coby, "Enlightened Self-Interest" for iterations of the view that Thucydides is writing principally for a reader who sympathizes with the rationalism of the sophistic enlightenment and, in particular, with its main tenet, the distinction between nature (*physis*) and convention (*nomos*). For a contrary view, see Nanno Marinatos, *Thucydides and Religion*, Beiträge Zur Klassischen Philologie 129 (Königstein/Ts: Hain, 1981), which argues that Thucydides is conventional in his religious views. Cf. Robert C. Bartlett, *The Idea of Enlightenment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) and Timothy Burns, "What War Discloses" in *Recovering Reason: Essays in Honor of Thomas L. Pangle*, ed. T. Burns (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010) and "The Virtue of Thucydides' Brasidas," *Journal of Politics* 73 (2011): 508–23, which offer reasons for seeing Thucydides as a rationalist who, because he is sensitive to certain limitations of reason, brings to light deficiencies of the moral and religious alternatives through the views of his characters.

compel a similar a fortiori argument: that if Pericles himself cannot stabilize Athens and harmonize the city's interests with a viable political morality, then one must reevaluate the hopes one might have for using reason to reform or abandon the traditional basis of political life.

Pericles's attempt to enlighten the Athenians is marred by inconsistencies and contradictions. For instance, his exhortation to worship the glorious rule of self-sufficient Athens as a means of overcoming one's own mortality stands in contrast to his admission that all things by nature decay (2.64.3). Not only each individual human life, but glory itself, the memory of glorious deeds, will ultimately fade away. The aim that each Athenian strives for cannot, in the final analysis, be satisfied. And as we have seen, even the attempt to detach the Athenian citizen from their traditional views does not offer the clean break with the past that Pericles hopes for. Despite his exhortation to abandon Homer and the previous generations, the Athenians are continually disturbed by Pericles's eclipse of the past. Instead, piety returns in a vehement and reactionary form during the preparation of the Athenian armada, precisely when the possible "immortality" of limitless empire appears before them. Pericles's attempt is not successful and his own inconsistencies perhaps even reveal that he himself does not understand the source of morality, and how it limits the possibility of reason wholly governing politics, domestic or foreign.

While scholars recognize the importance of political trust, its establishment and preservation remain debated. But where Thucydides most notably differs from, and is, therefore, instructive to this current debate, is in his characterization of political trust. Thucydides's critique of Pericles is essential because it reveals the tension between the bonds of trust in a community, bonds formed through a shared morality, and the needs of foreign policy. Noticing the extreme costs of promoting enlightened self-interest as *the* political aim, Thucydides leaves us to weigh the various aims of any political community and the requirements of statesmanship to direct politics prudentially toward its preservation and flourishing.

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'I AM DOING A GREAT WORK, SO THAT I CANNOT COME DOWN': CIVIL LIBERTY AND THE NEHEMIAD OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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James M. Patterson

Introduction: A Wall of Cooperation between Church and State[1]

For nearly 150 years, the "wall of separation" has served as the central image for explaining the relationship between church and the American state. As a concept, it has an excellent pedigree with its origins from the words of a Founder, Thomas Jefferson, in his 1802 correspon-

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dence with the Danbury Baptists, and its adoption in judicial decision-making first in *Reynolds v. U.S.* (1878) and more famously in Justice Hugo Black's majority decision in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947). Yet, before Jefferson wrote his now famous letter, an alternative image served to describe American church and state relations and, indeed, challenged Jefferson's—or rather Jefferson wanted to challenge it.[2]

This image is the other wall in American politics, the wall of Jerusalem that Nehemiah rebuilt as told in the eponymous biblical book. For American clergy invoking Nehemiah, the wall did not separate church and state but rather raised the wall of the state around the sacred center—the temple—to defend it. In return, the sacred temple provided the spiritual resources to keep the wall strong and well manned. In American scholarship on church and state issues from the early republic, this wall is the often-overlooked "nehemiad" in favor of other narrative and rhetorical appeals.[3] Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, Puritan leaders, both religious and secular, looked to Nehemiah as the statesman par excellence, whose combined piety and patriotism united the returning Jews to rebuild their city, defended against the conspiracies of heathen governors, and secured at last the holy city for the orthodox believers returning from exile.[4] Jonathan Mitchel looked to Nehemiah when calling on secular authorities to lead the way on religious orthodoxy.[5] Cot-

2. Robert M. Healey, "Thomas Jefferson's 'Wall': Absolute or Serpentine?" *Journal of Church and State* 30 (1988): 441–62; Derek H. Davis, "Thomas Jefferson and the 'Wall of Separation' Metaphor," *Journal of Church and State* 45 (2003): 5–14; Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation between Church and State* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Donald L. Drakeman, *Church, State, and Original Intent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

3. An incomplete list would include: James H. Hutson, ed., *Religion and the New Republic* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James H. Hutson, *Forgotten Themes of the Founding: The Recovery of Religious Themes in the Early American Republic* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003); James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

4. James M. Patterson, "The American Nehemiad, or the Tale of Two Walls," *Journal of Church and State* 57 (2015): 450–68.

5. Jonathan Mitchel, "Nehemiah on the Wall in Troublesom [sic] Times," 1667; repr. in *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Michael Warner (New York: Library of America, 1999), 119–50.