

DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

CRITICAL ESSAYS

VOLUME I

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
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ρικὸν ὀνοματικῶς λέγεται· καὶ τὰ μὲν παθητικὰ
 ῥήματα δραστήρια, τὰ δὲ δραστήρια παθητικά·
 πληθυντικῶν τε καὶ ἐνικῶν ἐναλλάττων τὰς φύσεις
 καὶ ἀντικατηγορῶν τὰτα ἀλλήλων· θηλυκά τε
ἄρρενικοῖς καὶ ἄρρενικά θηλυκοῖς καὶ οὐδέτερα
 τούτων τισὶ συνάπτων, ἐξ ὧν ἡ κατὰ φύσιν
 ἀκολουθία πλανᾶται· τὰς δὲ τῶν ὀνοματικῶν ἢ
 μετοχικῶν πτώσεις ποτὲ μὲν πρὸς τὸ σημαίνον
 ἀπὸ τοῦ σημαίνοντος ἀποστρέφων, ποτὲ δὲ πρὸς
 τὸ σημαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ σημαυνομένου· ἐν δὲ τοῖς
 συνδετικοῖς καὶ τοῖς προθετικοῖς μορίοις καὶ ἔτι
 μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς διαθροῦσι τὰς τῶν ὀνομάτων
 δυνάμεις ποιητοῦ τρόπον ἐνεξουσιάζων. πλείστα
 δ' ἂν τις <εὖροι> παρ' αὐτῷ σχήματα προσώπων
 τε ἀποστροφῶν καὶ χρόνων ἐναλλαγαῖς καὶ τρο-
 πικῶν ¹ σημειώσεων μεταφοραῖς ἐξηλλαγμένα τῶν
 συνήθων καὶ σολοικισμῶν λαμβάνοντα φαντασίας·
 ὅποσα τε γίγνεται πράγματα ἀντὶ σωμάτων ἢ
 σώματα ἀντὶ πραγμάτων· καὶ ἐφ' ὧν ἐνθυμημάτων
 <τε καὶ νοημάτων> αἱ μεταξὺ παρεμπτώσεις
 πολλαὶ γινόμεναι διὰ πολλοῦ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν
 κομίζονται· τὰ τε σκολὰ καὶ πολὺπλοκα καὶ
 δυσεξέλικτα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ συγγενῇ τούτοις.
 εὖροι δ' ἂν τις οὐκ ὀλίγα καὶ τῶν θεατρικῶν
σχημάτων κείμενα παρ' αὐτῷ, τὰς παρισώσεις
λέγω <καὶ παρομοιώσεις> καὶ παρονομασίας καὶ
ἀντιθέσεις, ἐν αἷς ἐπλεόνασε Γοργίας ὁ Λεοντίνος
 καὶ οἱ περὶ Πῶλον καὶ Λικύμνιον καὶ πολλοὶ
 ἄλλοι τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν ἀκμασάντων. ἐκδηλότατα
 δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ χαρακτηριστώτατά ἐστι τό τε
 πειρᾶσθαι δι' ἐλαχίστων ὀνομάτων πλείστα σημαί-

¹ τροπικῶν Krüger: τοπικῶν codd.

interchanging common with proper nouns, and active
 with passive verbs. He alters the natural uses of
 singular and plural, and substitutes the one for the
 other. He combines masculines with feminines,
 feminines with masculines, sometimes neuters with
 both, thereby violating the natural agreement of
 gender. He sometimes changes the case of nouns or
 participles from subject to object, and sometimes
 from object to subject. In the use of conjunctions
 and prepositions, and especially in his use of particles
 which serve to bring out the force of individual words,
 he allows himself full poetic licence. One can find in
 his work a great many constructions which, through
 changes of person and variation of tense,¹ and through
 the use of obscure, figurative expressions, acquire the
 appearance of solecisms. Again, he often substitutes
 things for persons and persons for things. In his
 arguments <and his sentences> there are often
 parentheses which delay the conclusion for a long
 time; and his style is generally tortuous, involved,
 difficult to unravel, and has other similar properties.
 The ostentatious figures of speech are also to be
 found in his work in no small number—I mean those
 parallelisms in length and sound, word-play and anti-
 thesis, which were excessively used by Gorgias of
 Leontini, by Polus and Lycymnius ² and their fol-
 lowers, and by many of his other contemporaries.
 But the most obvious of his characteristics is the effort
 to express as much as possible in the fewest possible

¹ For an exhaustive modern treatment of this feature of
 Thucydides's style, see J. Ros, *Die μεταβολή als Stilprinzip des*
Thukydides.

² See note 1, p. 137.

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νευ πράγματα καὶ πολλὰ συντιθέναι νοήματα εἰς ἓν, καὶ ἔτι [προσδεχόμενον τι τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἀκούσεσθαι] καταλείπειν.¹ ὑφ' ὧν ἀσαφὲς γίνεται τὸ βραχύ. ἵνα δὲ συνελὼν εἴπω, τέτταρα μὲν ἔστιν ὥσπερ ὄργανα τῆς Θουκυδίδου λέξεως· τὸ ποιητικὸν τῶν ὀνομάτων, τὸ πολυεῖδες τῶν σχημάτων, τὸ τραχύ τῆς ἀρμονίας, τὸ τάχος τῶν σημασιῶν· χρώματα δὲ αὐτῆς τό τε στριφνὸν καὶ τὸ πυκνόν, καὶ τὸ πικρὸν καὶ τὸ αὐστηρόν, καὶ τὸ ἐμβριθὲς καὶ τὸ δεινὸν καὶ (τὸ) φοβερόν, ὑπὲρ ἅπαντα δὲ ταῦτα τὸ παθητικόν. τοιοῦτος μὲν δὴ τις ἔστιν ὁ Θουκυδίδης κατὰ τὸν τῆς λέξεως χαρακτήρα, ὃ παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους διήνεγκεν. ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἥ τε προαίρεσις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ δύναμις συνεκδράμῃ, τέλεια γίνεται κατορθώματα καὶ δαιμόνια· ὅταν δὲ ἐλλείπῃ τὸ τῆς δυνάμεως, οὐ παραμείναντος μέχρι πάντων τοῦ τόνου, διὰ τὸ τάχος τῆς ἀπαγγελίας ἀσαφὲς τε ἡ λέξις γίνεται καὶ ἄλλας τινας ἐπιφέρει κήρας οὐκ εὐπρεπεῖς. τὸ γὰρ ἐν ᾧ δεῖ τρόπῳ τὰ ξένα καὶ πεποιημένα λέγεσθαι καὶ μέχρι πόσου προελθόντα πεπαῦσθαι, καλὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα θεωρήματα ἐν πᾶσιν ὄντα τοῖς ἔργοις, οὐ διὰ πάσης τῆς ἱστορίας φυλάττει.

- 25 Προειρημένων δὲ τούτων κεφαλαιωδῶς ἐπὶ τὰς ἀποδείξεις αὐτῶν ὥρα τρέπεσθαι. ποιήσομαι δὲ οὐ χωρὶς ὑπὲρ ἐκάστης ἰδέας τὸν λόγον, ὑποτάττων αὐταῖς τὴν Θουκυδίδου λέξιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ περιοχάς τινας καὶ τόπους, μέρη λαμβάνων τῆς τε διηγήσεως καὶ τῶν ῥητορειῶν καὶ παρατιθεὶς τοῖς τε πραγματικοῖς καὶ τοῖς λεκτικοῖς κατορθώμασιν ἢ ἁμαρτήμασι τὰς αἰτίας, δι' ἃς τοιαυτὰ ἔστι· δεηθεὶς σοῦ

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words, and to combine many ideas into one, and to leave the listener still expecting to hear something more. These help to make his brevity obscure. I may summarise the instruments, so to speak, of Thucydides's style as follows: there are four—artificiality of vocabulary, variety of figures, harshness of word-order, rapidity of signification. The special features of his style include compactness and solidity, pungency and severity, vehemence, the ability to disturb and terrify and above all emotional power. Such are the characteristics of style by which Thucydides is distinguished from all the rest. When his purpose coincides with his special talent, he is completely and marvellously successful; but when his power is not being employed to its full capacity and his energy flags before his goal is reached, the speed with which the ideas are presented renders the passage obscure, and brings in its train certain other unattractive faults. These include a failure to observe throughout the whole of his history in what way strange and artificial language should be used, and how far he should go before stopping, although these are worthy, indeed necessary subjects for all literary artists to study.

After those brief introductory remarks, it is time to 25 turn to detailed proof. I shall not deal with each aspect of his style separately, subjoining an illustrative passage from Thucydides, but shall treat the subject under general headings and topics, taking sections of narrative and rhetorical passages, and setting out the reasons for his success or failure in style or subject-matter. I once again beg you, and

¹ καταλείπειν Reiske: καταλιπεῖν codd.

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ἰδεῖν, ἑτέροις πειραθῆναι συνέβη, τῆς δὲ φιλανθρωπίας, ἣν τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐκεῖνος περιβαλλόμενος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐπλάττετο, ὑμεῖς καλῶς ποιούντες τοὺς καρποὺς ἐκομίσασθε.” καὶ ἐν οἷς τοὺς προδιδόντας τῷ Φιλίππῳ τὰ πράγματα πάντων αἰτίους ἀποφαίνει τῶν συμβεβηκότων τοῖς Ἕλλησι κακῶν, κατὰ λέξιν οὕτως γράφει.¹ “καίτοι νῆ τὸν Ἡρακλέα καὶ πάντας θεοὺς, εἴ γ’ ἐπ’ ἀληθείας δέοι σκοπεῖσθαι ἢ τὸ καταψεύδεσθαι καὶ δι’ ἔχθραν τι λέγειν ἀνελόντας ἐκ μέσου, τίνες ὡς ἀληθῶς ἦσαν οἷς ἂν εἰκότως καὶ δικαίως τὴν τῶν γεγεννημένων αἰτίαν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀναθεῖεν ἅπαντες, τοὺς ὁμοίους τούτῳ παρ’ ἐκάστη τῶν πόλεων εὖροιτ’ ἂν, οὐχὶ τοὺς ἐμοί· οἱ ὅτ’ ἦν ἄσθενή τὰ Φιλίππου πράγματα καὶ κομιδῇ μικρά, πολλάκις προλεγόντων ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλούντων καὶ διδασκόντων τὰ βέλτιστα, τῆς ἰδίας ἕνεκ’ αἰσχροκερδεῖας τὰ κοινῇ συμφέροντα προῖεντο, τοὺς ὑπάρχοντας ἐκάστοις πολίτας ἐξαπατῶντες καὶ διαφθείροντες, ἕως δούλους ἐποίησαν.”

55 Μυρία παραδείγματα φέρειν δυνάμην ἂν ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Δημοσθένους λόγων τῶν τε δημηγορικῶν καὶ τῶν δικανικῶν, ἃ παρὰ τὸν Θουκυδίδου κατεσκευάσται χαρακτῆρα τὸν ἐν τῇ κοινῇ καὶ συνήθει διαλέκτῳ τὴν ἐξάλλαγὴν ἔχοντα. ἄλλ’ ἵνα μὴ μακρότερος τοῦ δέοντος ὁ λόγος γένοιτό μοι, τούτοις ἄρκεσθεὶς ἱκανοῖς οὐσι βεβαιῶσαι τὸ προκείμενον οὐκ ἂν ὀκνήσαιμι τοῖς ἀσκοῦσι τοὺς πολιτικοὺς λόγους ὑποτίθεσθαι τοῖς γε δὴ τὰς

¹ γράφει Sadée: γράφων codd.

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in the case of those whom he has once got completely into his hands; while of the generosity which he has feigned towards you while securing the rest of his objectives, you have been fortunate to enjoy the fruits.”

And in the passage where he is accusing those who betrayed the cause of Greece to Philip of responsibility for all her misfortunes, he writes the following words:¹

“But, by Heracles and all the gods, if one had examined the question sincerely, discarding all falsehood and malice, who the men really are, on whom the blame for what has happened may by common consent fairly and justly be thrown, you would find that they are the politicians in the several states who are like Aeschines here, not those like me—men who, when Philip’s power was weak and quite insignificant, and we were constantly warning you, advising you and instructing you in the best policies, sacrificed the state’s interests to gratify their shameful greed, deceiving and corrupting their respective countrymen until they made them slaves.”

I could furnish countless examples from the political and forensic speeches of Demosthenes which are composed in a style like that with which Thucydides succeeds in being different while using ordinary and familiar language. But in order that my treatise should not become unnecessarily long, I shall content myself with these examples, which are sufficient to prove my thesis. I should not hesitate to suggest to students of political oratory—those, at least, who still try to keep their critical faculties unprejudiced—that

¹ De Corona, 294.

κρίσεις ἀδιαστρόφους ἔτι φυλάσσουσι, Δημοσθένεια συμβούλῳ χρησαμένους, ὃν ἀπάντων ῥητόρων κράτιστον γεγενῆσθαι πειθόμεθα, ταύτας μιμῆσθαι τὰς κατασκευάς, ἐν αἷς ἡ τε βραχύτης καὶ ἡ δεινότης καὶ ἡ ἰσχύς καὶ ὁ τόνος καὶ ἡ μεγαλοπρέπεια καὶ αἱ συγγενεῖς ταύταις ἀρεταὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις εἰσὶ φανεραί· τὰς δὲ αἰνιγματώδεις καὶ δυσκαταμαθήτους καὶ γραμματικῶν ἐξηγήσεων δεόμενας καὶ πολὺ τὸ βεβασανισμένον καὶ τὸ σολοικοφανές ἐν τοῖς σχηματισμοῖς ἐχούσας μήτε θαυμάζειν μήτε μιμῆσθαι. ἵνα δὲ συνελὼν εἴπω, ἀμφοτέρω μὲν ἐπ' ἴσης ζηλωτὰ εἶναι, τὰ τε μὴ σαφῶς εἰρημένα ὑπὸ τοῦ συγγραφέως καὶ τὰ προσειληφότα σὺν ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀρεταῖς τὴν σαφήνειαν, οὐκ ἔχει λόγον· ἀνάγκη δὲ ὁμολογεῖν κρείττονα τῶν ἀτελεστέρων εἶναι τὰ τελειότερα καὶ τῶν ἀφανεστέρων τὰ γ' ἐμφανέστερα. τί οὖν μαθόντες ἅπασαν τὴν διάλεκτον τοῦ συγγραφέως ἐπαινοῦμεν καὶ βιαζόμεθα λέγειν, ὅτι τοῖς καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὖσιν ἀνθρώποις αὐτὰ ὁ Θουκυδίδης ἔγραψε συνήθη πᾶσι καὶ γνώριμα ὄντα, ἡμῶν δὲ λόγος αὐτῷ τῶν ὑστερον ἔσομένων οὐκ ἦν, οἱ δ' ἐκβάλλομεν ἐκ τῶν δικαστηρίων καὶ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἅπασαν τὴν Θουκυδίδου λέξιν ὡς ἄχρηστον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁμολογοῦμεν τὸ διηγηματικὸν μέρος αὐτῆς πλὴν ὀλίγων πάνυ θαυμαστῶς ἔχειν καὶ εἰς πάσας εἶναι τὰς χρείας εὐθετον, τὸ δὲ δημηγορικὸν οὐχ ἅπαν εἰς μίμησιν ἐπιτήδειον εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὅσον ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ μέρος γνωσθῆναι μὲν ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις εὐπορον, κατασκευασθῆναι δ' οὐχ ἅπασιν δυνατόν;

they should take Demosthenes as their guide, as I am persuaded that he was the finest of the orators.¹ They should imitate those specimens of his composition in which his brevity, rhetorical power, force, intensity, impressiveness and other related virtues are plain for all men to see; while those which are allusive and difficult to follow, and require a commentary, and those which are full of tortured and apparently ungrammatical constructions deserve neither to be admired nor imitated. To sum up, it does not make sense for us to admire equally the passages in Thucydides which lack clarity and those which possess clarity in addition to his other virtues; for it must be admitted that perfection is better than imperfection, and clarity is better than obscurity. What reasoning, therefore, has led some of us to praise Thucydides's style as a whole, and to insist on asserting that he wrote his history for his contemporaries, and that the language in which it was written was familiar and comprehensible to all of them, but that he took no thought for us, his future readers; while others of us banish all his work from our law-courts and assemblies as being worthless, instead of agreeing that the narrative portions of it, except for very few passages, deserve to be admired and used for every sort of purpose, while the speeches, though they are not all suitable for imitation, contain a good proportion of passages which all men can easily understand, though they cannot all compose in the same style?

¹ See note 2, p. 373. From the inclusion of "brevity" in the following list it is evident that Dionysius is thinking of his narrative as well as speeches; which makes sense of his recommendation that Demosthenes should be the model for historians as well as for orators.