The Importance of Literary Elements in Thucydides' Speeches

By: Jacob Glover

Introduction

Thucydides' description of the Athenian expedition into Sicily includes a number of speeches. Problematically, Thucydides himself concedes that he neither witnessed all of the speeches nor did he have interviewees with perfect memories who recounted them to him. Therefore, as Kenneth Dover suggests, he "has supplemented evidence by invention".[1] Thucydides explains himself:

> And so it seemed good to me for the speakers to say whatever was necessary for that present moment, and I maintained, that which was the closest to the entire intention of the actually spoken words.[2]

The point is that Thucydides does not make any claim to the exactitude of the words spoken in his speeches, the "actually spoken words," but he does think he captures the "entire intention" or overall or entire intention of the speech.[3] This means that the speeches within Thucydides' *History* are almost entirely his own creation aside from the intent of the speech. In other words, the speeches are the most literary aspect of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. From the perspective of someone looking for precise historical information this could be problematic because it could mean that Thucydides has introduced his own subjective literary project into the recapitulation of the speech. And, in fact, when investigating these speeches it is clear that they contain literary elements and authorial moves which suggest not only sharp craftsmanship but precise intention with regard to the tone of the speech outside of the entire intention. We need to then ask ourselves: How are these literary elements present in Thucydides' speeches relevant to the entire intention of the speech? And, moreover, do these literary motifs betray a departure from Thucydides' supposed impartiality which could detract from his historical authority? In this paper, I will argue that the literary elements in the speeches of Nicias during the Sicilian Expedition are not evidence of creative whims, but, rather, they create a narratological context throughout the speeches which enhances the reader's awareness of the historical situation present in each speech.

---

[1] Kenneth J. Dover, "Thucydides as 'History' and as 'Literature,'" in *History and Theory*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Feb., 193): 59.

[2] Thucydides, *Historiae*, ed. Henry Stuart Jones and Johannes Enoch Powell (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), I.22: "ὡς δ᾽ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ᾽ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται."

[3] E. Badian has written an extended discussion about the different ways of translating τῆς ξυμπάσης. I am following him in using "entire intention." See E. Badian, "Thucydides on rendering Speeches, in *Athenaeum*, 80 (1992): 189.

My first task is to demonstrate the presence of these literary motifs and elements. I will begin with an extended analysis of the several speeches by Nicias. The point of this analysis is to show, firstly, that there are literary motifs at all. I also intend to contend with some popular misunderstandings of Nicias' speeches. These misunderstandings stem from a failure to notice the literary elements which make the speeches consistent with their speaker rather than point to Thucydides' personal characterization of the speaker as many scholars suggest. I also want to say that I am using the terms "literary motif" and "literary element" interchangeably to mean: repeated image or pattern which allow the speeches to move logically from one to the other. These literary elements are images repeated in more than one speech by the same character, i.e. they are character specific.

Nicias' Speeches

The first three speeches I want to examine are Nicias' three appeals to the Athenian Assembly. These three speeches contain an interesting development in argumentative strategy, i.e. as Nicias' arguments rely more on empirical data, he is more definite about his proposed solutions. Also, these speeches contain the first inklings of Nicias' relationship to luck, which is a motif repeated throughout Thucydides' account of the Sicilian Expedition. Nicias' first speech during the Sicilian Expedition is an entreaty *not* to go on the expedition at all. This speech is one of two by Nicias in a debate against Alcibiades. In this first speech, I'll just point out that Nicias bases his argument on a list of possible events which may happen if the Athenians sail against Sicily, but he never makes any specific warnings against going.[4] In this speech we also find the first example of a repeated Niciasian image, namely: the individual's relation to the state. Nicias says:

> And indeed, I would gain honor out of this thing, and I am scared less than others about my bodily safety, although I think that he who is a good citizen who is concerned with his body and his possessions; for he would be wanting the affairs of the city to go well. But nevertheless, never before did I, on account of my own honor, speak out against my opinion, nor will I now, but I will say whatever I *know* to be best.[5]

Nicias, here, demonstrates that even though he could gain honor from this expedition he would rather council the city to reconsider and possibly not go than simply to charge off unprepared. It is important to remember that Thucydides describes Nicias as ἀκούσιος or unwilling, so the fact that Nicias is even open to a debate demonstrates his open mind.[6]

---

[4] Thucydides, VI.10-11

[5] *Ibid*, VI.9: "καίτοι ἔγωγε καὶ τιμῶμαι ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου καὶ ἧσσον ἑτέρων περὶ τῷ ἐμαυτοῦ σώματι ὀρρωδῶ, νομίζων ὁμοίως ἀγαθὸν πολίτην εἶναι ὃς ἂν καὶ τοῦ σώματός τι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας προνοῆται: μάλιστα γὰρ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως δι' ἑαυτὸν βούλοιτο ὀρθοῦσθαι. ὅμως δὲ οὔτε ἐν τῷ πρότερον χρόνῳ διὰ τὸ προτιμᾶσθαι εἶπον παρὰ γνώμην οὔτε νῦν, ἀλλὰ ᾗ ἂν γιγνώσκω βέλτιστα, ἐρῶ."

[6] *Ibid,* VI.8.

Also along these same lines Nicias, in effect, relinquishes his well-being to Athens, and, therefore, completely prioritizes the city to his own personal safety.

Nicias' following speech is much more quantitative. He thinks that if he exaggerates the required forces for the expedition, then the Athenians will change their minds.[7] In this speech, he has changed his tone of argument from one of theory or potentialities to one of number and quantity, but strangely, he still resists giving the Athenians explicit advice. He never says that the expedition is a bad idea; he simply hopes that based on his evidence the Athenians will understand that the expedition is unreasonable. Contrary to the first speech, however, the numbers for the expedition which Nicias advises act as suggestions as well. While Nicias is listing off the extensive list of required forces he is simultaneously suggesting that, *if* the Athenians decide to invade Sicily, then these are the troops they will need, so in a way Nicias' exaggeration is also an implicit suggestion. We can see from the first speech to this second speech Nicias has already moved from theoretical to empirical and from no suggestions at all to implicit suggestions.

This second speech also contains Nicias' first mention of a favorite dichotomy between luck and good-planning. He says:

> And I fearing [this situation], and it is necessary for us to plan many things well, and even then to be very lucky (a difficult thing being humans), I plan to sail relying as little on luck as I can, rather I'll set sail with secure and reasonable preparations.[8]

It is important to notice in this passage that Nicias is ready to take on the role allotted him a general, but he refuses to allow chance to determine his fate. Though he has given over his well-being to Athens, he wants it to be a well-prepared Athens. Thus, this second speech continues Nicias' image of the individual man and his relation to the city.

We find the next step in Nicias' argumentative development in his letter to the Athenians. In this letter, Nicias outlines in clear detail the extremely unfortunate and difficult plight of the Athenian army. It includes a lot of specific details but nothing extraneous. He needs the Athenians to know just how bad it is. In this case, there is no need for flowery rhetorical devices or justifications. This letter is built on solid and stolid facts. Nicias writes: "And on the one hand before, Athenians, about what has already happened you have learned from my other letters, but now, on the other hand, it is most timely that you learn what situation we are in and deliberate."[9] This opening fits perfectly within Nicias' narratological context because it is not an appeal to anything specific or a

---

[7] *Ibid*, VI.19.

[8] *Ibid*., VI.23: "ὅπερ ἐγὼ φοβούμενος, καὶ εἰδὼς πολλὰ μὲν ἡμᾶς δέον εὖ βουλεύσασθαι, ἔτι δὲ πλείω εὐτυχῆσαι (χαλεπὸν δὲ ἀνθρώπους ὄντας), ὅτι ἐλάχιστα τῇ τύχῃ παραδοὺς ἐμαυτὸν βούλομαι ἐκπλεῖν, παρασκευῇ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰκότων ἀσφαλὴς ἐκπλεῦσαι"

[9] *Ibid*., VII.11: "τὰ μὲν πρότερον πραχθέντα, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐν ἄλλαις πολλαῖς ἐπιστολαῖς ἴστε: νῦν δὲ καιρὸς οὐχ ἧσσον μαθόντας ὑμᾶς ἐν ᾧ ἐσμὲν βουλεύσασθαι."

direct request. This opening simply requests that the Athenian Assembly internalize some information and make an informed decision. This is reminiscent of Nicias' initial address to the Assembly and maintains his dependency on them without assuming any more authority or intelligence than the city. In other words, for Nicias, his life and the fate of the expedition are *still* in Athens' hands. This is the letter of a citizen loyal to the institutions of his city who recognizes his place and accepts it however unwilling he may be at heart.

Interestingly, in the letter to the Athenians Nicias does add some requests at the end. He proposes:

> But either it is necessary to recall us or to send another no smaller army of foot soldiers and sailors and no small amount of money, and send someone to relieve me, as I am unable on account of the disease in my kidneys.[10]

These specific requests signal the final stage in Nicias' argumentation. He is now fully in the realm of empirical data, but he also now makes specific requests based on that data. After listing off all of the details of the situation the army is in, Nicias makes suggestions for a possible solution. The mention of his sickness coupled with the adjective ἀδύνατός (unable or incapable) suggests that Nicias is relieving himself not on account of his will but because he feels he is no longer fit enough to be a successful general.

> H.D. Westlake, however, reads this letter slightly differently than me. He suggests: the wording has been chosen by the historian, and it is scarcely credible that even Nicias can in the original report have allowed his incapacity to stand out so glaringly. He has surrendered the initiative to the enemy, he is unable to check insubordination among his troops, and he tells the unpleasant truth to preserve his own safety. Though mention of his illness may rouse some sympathy, his defence is so lame as almost to amount to self-condemnation.[11]

To Westlake this letter is pathetic and an utter admittance of defeat. He even suggests that Thucydides has changed the wording of the letter because it is too pathetic to have come from Nicias himself. This claim in itself is probably mostly rhetorical in its gravity because there is neither any reason for Westlake to assume that he has insight into the original letter, nor can he justify a *better* characterization of Nicias than that of Thucydides. Westlake's reading of this letter comes from a paper expounding on Thucydides' opinion of Nicias. His eventual thesis demands that Thucydides cast Nicias in neither a good or bad light, but in this moment it *helps* Westlake's argument if Thucydides makes Nicias look bad. However, there is neither a reason to read this letter

---

[10] *Ibid.*, VII.15: "ἀλλ᾽ ἢ τούτους μεταπέμπειν δέον ἢ ἄλλην στρατιὰν μὴ ἐλάσσω ἐπιπέμπειν καὶ πεζὴν καὶ ναυτικὴν καὶ χρήματα μὴ ὀλίγα, ἐμοὶ δὲ διάδοχόν τινα, ὡς ἀδύνατός εἰμι διὰ νόσον νεφρῖτιν παραμένειν."

[11] H.D. Westlake, "Nicias in Thucydides," in *The Classical* Quarterly, vol. 35, no. 1-2 (Jan-April, 1941): 62.

as particularly negative, nor does Westlake give any concrete textual reason for doing so. By taking Nicias' letter into the narratological context established by the repeated motifs in these speeches we can see that the *pathos* which Westlake identifies is really a slow decline in argumentation from the first speech. If anything, this letter demonstrates Nicias' complete loss of faith in the Athenian Assembly. He no longer believes them capable of interpreting theoretical or implied arguments, thus he resorts to the most raw empirical data and suggestions available to him.

The next set of speeches we will look at are those which Nicias gives to his men. These speeches are supposed to be inspirational and encouraging. There is no need for argumentation in these speeches like there was in the last set, but the image of the individual's relation to the city still comes across. Also, I've chosen speeches which deal specifically with Nicias' discussion of luck and moments of his religiosity.

Before the Syracusan naval victory, Nicias gives a speech which commentators often cite as evidence for Nicias' downward slide into superstition. Nicias says:

> But as many of you present are Athenian, and of that many being already experienced in war, and of those of you are who are allies, always fighting with us, remember of those moments in war which are *outside calculation*, and hope that luck stands with our ranks. [12]

John T. Kirby thinks that in this speech Nicias has no encouragement for his men other than to be hopeful.[13] But I want to quickly juxtapose this often quoted passage with Nicias' final suggestion in this *same speech*. He tells his men: "And demonstrate that even while greatly weakened our skill is mightier than any of their good-luck or strength."[14] Nicias does seem to contradict himself here, by suggesting in the beginning of his speech to hope for good fortune in the unpredictability of battle and then ending his speech by telling his men to rely on their ἐπιστήμη or skill or knowledge. And, in fact, Lowell Edmunds notes that "Nicias oddly combines an exhortation to hopefulness on the ground that *tyche* may contribute to success, an exhortation contrary to both Athenian and Spartan principles -- with the familiar Athenian principle of the superiority of Athenian *episteme*."[15] But in Nicias' opening lines he qualifies his appeal to luck by saying that sometimes there are parts of war which are παραλόγων or *outside of calculation* or *beyond logic*. For Nicias it is only in a moment when *logos* or logic is inaccessible that

[12] Thucydides, VII.61: "ἀλλ᾽ ὅσοι τε Ἀθηναίων πάρεστε, πολλῶν ἤδη πολέμων ἔμπειροι ὄντες, καὶ ὅσοι τῶν ξυμμάχων, ξυστρατευόμενοι αἰεί, μνήσθητε τῶν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις παραλόγων, καὶ τὸ τῆς τύχης κἂν μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν ἐλπίσαντες στῆναι."

[13] John T. Kirby, "Narrative Structure and Technique in Thucydides VI-VII," in *Classical* Antiquit, vol. 2, no. 2 (Oct., 1983): 193.

[14] Thucydides, VII.63: "καὶ δείξατε ὅτι καὶ μετ᾽ ἀσθενείας καὶ ξυμφορῶν ἡ ὑμετέρα ἐπιστήμη κρείσσων ἐστὶν ἑτέρας εὐτυχούσης ῥώμης."

[15] Lowell Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 135.

we ought to reach for luck or hope. In other words, these are desperate moments which demand superstition because by definition, they resist rationality.

Nevertheless, he thinks the Athenians can use their skill or ἐπιστήμη to defeat even their luckiest foes. Lowell suggests that this appeal to ἐπιστήμη is "meaningless, since the Athenians have been forced to fight a land battle on ships in the old-fashioned style, in which *episteme* and *techne* have no scope."[16] This is a weak accusation considering that a bulk of Nicias' speech is a detailed description of newly adopted fighting strategies, which, regardless of their effectiveness, demonstrate a practical application of ἐπιστήμη by the Athenians so as to avoid further defeat. Nicias has grounds for his appeal to ἐπιστήμη because it is a possible avenue toward success. Moreover, to accuse Nicias at this point of suddenly reversing his feelings on luck does not fit in the narratological context generated throughout his speeches. If we read the speeches with the view that Thucydides wishes to characterize Nicias in a specific way (which both Edmunds and Kirby do) then the speech could demonstrate a certain lack of consistency on Nicias' part. But this seems a forced reading which focuses on the beginning of the speech and neglects to read the speech as a whole and in relation to the others around it.

Kirby further argues that "the pathetic nature of this address is made even worse by the fact that after it was over [Nicias], 'thinking as men are apt to think in great crises, that when all has been done they still have something left to do, and when all has been said that they have not yet said enough,' gave yet another exhortation separately to the *Τριήρχοι*."[17] Kirby's quotation here is from a passage slightly later in this scene during which a desperate Nicias does entreat his *Τριήρχοι* (or patrons) with weak words. However, the scene from which Kirby is quoting is an entirely separate speech-scene which is in and of itself less pathetic than scholars would like it to be. Kirby does not mention that this moment of weakness is never directly attributed to Nicias. Thucydides describes this entire speech scene in *oratio obliqua*. And while describing the scene Thucydides frequently reduces Nicias' agency by comparing him to men in general. It is as if the mistake is not Nicias' own, but the mistake of human nature. Consider the quotation Kirby uses above: "thinking as those do who are suffering grave moments."[18] Here Thucydides tells us that Nicias' mind-frame is not specific to him, but a natural disposition of humans to stressful moments. Thucydides makes this same comparison a little later in this scene with the line: "and then saying those things as men already do in such a critical moment."[19] Here, as before, Thucydides seems to remove blame from Nicias by attributing his desperation to humans in general, not Nicias alone. Kirby's

---

[16] *Ibid.*, 135.

[17] Kirby, 193.

[18] Thucydides, VII.69: "νομίσας ὅπερ πάσχουσιν ἐν τοῖς μεγάλοις ἀγῶσι."

[19] *Ibid.*: "ἄλλα τε λέγων ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἤδη τοῦ καιροῦ ὄντες ἄνθρωποι."

suggestion that this indirect speech makes the previous scene *more pathetic* is exaggerated and tendentious.

Nicias' final speech in *The History* is the most complex to unpack. It contains two parts: the first is an explicit appeal to luck and the gods, and the second part is an appeal to national and personal safety. Nicias' opening remarks about luck and the gods are hard to compare to his other speeches and suggestions. Nicias' words here seem to be those of a man who is coming to terms with παραλόγων moments in life. That is, Nicias recognizes that at this point there is no *reason* for their plight. He has tried deliberation, argumentation, and a variety of other appeals to reason, but nothing has succeeded. There is no amount of planning or good preparation that could remove them from this mess. In these moments, as Nicias has already expressed in the last speech we examined, it is reasonable to look to luck for your salvation. When there is no recourse to rationality or when the situation resists calculation, then you can appeal to luck. The scholars who describe the first half of this speech as if Nicias has lost hope forget Nicias' earlier remarks in which he defines the moments when hope based luck is appropriate. Moreover, Nicias' speech ends with an exhortation appealing to the men's desire for their own safety and the safety of Athens in general. He gives them specific material causes on which to ground their bravery. Nicias says:

> And knowing the whole (truth), my manly soldiers, it is necessary that you be brave men, because there is no safe-place nearby, where being cowards you may be safe, and if now you flee the enemies, the others of you may chance upon seeing again what which you desire, and the Athenians will rise up again the great power of their state: for men are the city, and not the walls or the empty ships.[20]

These words set against his earlier appeal to hope and divine fairness, seem to ring more true within the narratological context present in Nicias' speeches. I do not suggest we simply ignore the earlier appeal to the gods and luck. Rather, I would like to point out that whether or not Nicias is dabbling in superstition or mythology, he still has a firm footing in the world of bravery and national power. This speech concludes with Nicias' most frequent motif, i.e. the individual and the state. Nicias, here, emphasizes to his men that not only is their personal safety dependent on their bravery in battle, but also the safety and longevity of Athens herself. In fact, if we look at the Greek words ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις we can see that this is a play on the word ἄνδρες which can mean both "men" and "brave". Therefore, this phrase means that not only is the city made of men but of bravery as well. I think this final aphorism fully encapsulates the narratological context which Thucydides tries to instill in each of his speeches, namely that cities need men in order to

---

[20] *Ibid.,* VII.77: "τό τε ξύμπαν γνῶτε, ὦ ἄνδρες στρατιῶται, ἀναγκαῖόν τε ὂν ὑμῖν ἀνδράσιν ἀγαθοῖς γίγνεσθαι ὡς μὴ ὄντος χωρίου ἐγγὺς ὅποι ἂν μαλακισθέντες σωθείητε καί, ἢν νῦν διαφύγητε τοὺς πολεμίους, οἵ τε ἄλλοι τευξόμενοι ὧν ἐπιθυμεῖτέ που ἐπιδεῖν καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν μεγάλην δύναμιν τῆς πόλεως καίπερ πεπτωκυῖαν ἐπανορθώσοντες: ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις, καὶ οὐ τείχη οὐδὲ νῆες ἀνδρῶν κεναί."

survive. Specifically, cities need men like Nicias who are willing to do something involuntarily for the sake of the city even at great expense to himself.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars argue about Thucydides' characterization of Nicias in his speeches, but, problematically, few notice Thucydides' attention to literary detail within these speeches. Kirby suggests: "In the case of the figure of Nicias, Thucydides' acuity enables him to discern a motif in his thoughts, words, and deeds that leads us to a much deeper understanding of his involvement in the war. He need not indulge in free composition to achieve this; in fact, it is probably a greater feat of insight not to do so."[21] And, according to Westlake, in Thucydides' *History* "Nicias belongs to the large company of those whose merits and defects are weighed with perfect judgment and strict impartiality."[22] But both of these claims come from a question of Thucydides' objectivity or his lack of "free composition". In other words, they both are attempts to answer the question Dover poses: "Can there be, and should there be, a *Literary Commentary on Thucydides*?"[23] These scholars, therefore, are all still concerned with whether or not Thucydides should be considered in the literary or historical genre. But Thucydides himself holds one principle, clarity, above all else, regardless of which genre that puts him in. In his introduction to the *History*, he writes:

> And, perhaps [my work here] will seem rather unattractive without any mythological elements, but, it is more than enough that for as many desiring to see clearly things already happened and those events which will, on account of humans being what they are, transpire once more in a similar way in the future, judge my words as useful. It was composed not for the immediate throngs to hear, but, rather, to last forever.[24]

In this passage we see that Thucydides values his clarity and usefulness much more than the approachability or readability of his text. He distinguishes himself from authors of mythologies, evidently considering himself an author of something different and with more value. Interestingly, Nicias reiterates a similar sentiment in his letter to the Athenians. He writes:

---

[21] Kirby, 194-95.

[22] Westlake, 65.

[23] Dover, 56.

[24] Thucydides, I.2: "καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἕξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται."

Of sweeter things, I could have written to you, but indeed not more useful, if it is necessary to be clear on the situation, before deliberating. And at the same time considering your natures, desiring to hear the sweet things, but later chiding, if what happens is not the same as these (sweet things), I decided it safer to show the truth.[25]

In both of these paragraphs we find an emphasis on clarity and truth rather than readability or approachability. This passage, in a way, relates Thucydides' place as the author of the whole *History* to Nicias' war-time plight. Nicias, like Thucydides, is attempting to educate people with pure facts, but they desire a more digestible version than the truth alone can produce. Perhaps Thucydides would compare himself to the tragic Nicias who could never make himself understood or believed, yet who all the while remained truthful. The similarity in tone here may also mean that Thucydides is encouraging us to read his *History* as if it was written in the same way Nicias gives his speeches, i.e. he summarizes the situation as accurately as he can and then leaves the listener to decide on the course of action or to interpret the motives. In that case, Thucydides repeating this sentiment in Nicias' letter suggests that he is thinking of his audience as a general might think of the assembly, full of dissension, but ultimately the decider of his fate.

This all goes to show that Thucydides wrote his *History* including the speeches committed to his goal of clarity above all else. It was not his prerogative to invent anything other than those things which might allow a more clear understanding of the events. The literary elements and motifs discussed above, therefore, are simply by-products of that process toward clarity. The literary quality of the speeches is to be lauded first for its commitment to establishing an accurate historicity, and second for its pleasantness. Moreover, these motifs ought not be used as evidence to detract from Thucydides' authority. Rather these motifs demonstrate, as Kirby aptly puts it, Thucydides' "ability to receive and coordinate the data that have come to him, and to detect causal relationships that lie there." Thucydides' motifs and image patterns establish a context and cohesion which hold the character of Nicias together and make his speeches probable, thus lending credence to the history in general. And so when faced with the determining the genre of Thucydides, we should not limit him to one or another but simply say that his literary artfulness serves to enhance the conveyance of historical content.

---

[25] *Ibid.,* VII.11: "'τούτων ἐγὼ ἡδίω μὲν ἂν εἶχον ὑμῖν ἕτερα ἐπιστέλλειν, οὐ μέντοι χρησιμώτερά γε, εἰ δεῖ σαφῶς εἰδότας τὰ ἐνθάδε βουλεύσασθαι. καὶ ἅμα τὰς φύσεις ἐπιστάμενος ὑμῶν, βουλομένων μὲν τὰ ἥδιστα ἀκούειν, αἰτιωμένων δὲ ὕστερον, ἤν τι ὑμῖν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν μὴ ὁμοῖον ἐκβῇ, ἀσφαλέστερον ἡγησάμην τὸ ἀληθὲς δηλῶσαι.'"