

Thucydides the Rhetor: Reading Thucydides in an Ancient Classroom

Modern students of Thucydides may find it odd to think of the historian as a teacher of rhetoric. Yet in the ancient world, Thucydides played a seminal role in rhetorical schools. He was among the favorite authors of ancient teachers of rhetoric and frequently appears on ancient reading lists (e.g., Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.73). Thucydides also provided themes for school exercises and even such seminal texts as Hermogenes' theoretical treatises on rhetoric. Modern classicists might go an entire career without ever reading (or for that matter, needing to read) Hermogenes' rhetorical treatises and stasis theory. They almost certainly would never turn to Hermogenes and his kind to help them understand Thucydides. But in ancient schools, where many ancient readers would have first encountered Thucydides, Hermogenes and stasis theory were indispensable. Later authors embraced Thucydides as one of the founding fathers of the stasis system of rhetoric (Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 38).

The value, then, of reading Thucydides in schools was not just to learn about ancient history, but to teach stasis theory and analyze it in action. It is therefore somewhat problematic that the cornucopia of modern scholarship on the reception of Thucydides (for example, the mimesis of Thucydides by ancient historians) has shown little attention to how Thucydides was read in rhetorical schools (e.g., Lee and Morley, 2014). Ancient rhetorical schools shaped how later readers approached and read the historian. Obviously, this is a vast topic that merits lengthy discussion. This paper will discuss a small part of the larger issue, the rhetorical scholia to Thucydides, since they can shine some light on how ancient rhetors might have read Thucydides with their students and used him to teach stasis theory. The scholia can, in a sense, allow us to sit in on an ancient classroom and see what parts of Thucydides rhetors emphasized with their students. For example, the scholia seem to indicate that many of Thucydides' readers only

partially read the historian, focusing heavily on the speeches and the first four books. When we take into account this phenomenon with the survival of Thucydides in other media such as papyrus (described by Pellé, 2010), interesting patterns emerge that demonstrate the rhetorical schools' lasting impact on how ancients were reading Thucydides.

Bibliography

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