

# The Peloponnesian War

## Thucydides

The Complete Hobbes Translation

WITH NOTES AND  
A NEW INTRODUCTION BY

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but only landed soldiers at the promontory of Leucimna and wasted their territory.

80. In the meantime the people of Corcyra, fearing extremely lest those galleys should come against the city, not only conferred with those in sanctuary and with the rest about how the city might be preserved but also induced some of them to go aboard. For notwithstanding the sedition they manned thirty galleys in expectation that the fleet of the enemy should have entered. But the Peloponnesians, having been wasting of their fields till it was about noon, went their ways again. Within night the Corcyraeans had notice by fires of three-score Athenian galleys coming toward them from Leucas, which the Athenians, upon intelligence of the sedition and of the fleet to go to Corcyra under Alcidas, had sent to aid them under the conduct of Eurymedon the son of Thucles.

81. The Peloponnesians therefore, as soon as night came, sailed speedily home, keeping still the shore and causing their galleys to be carried over at the isthmus of Leucas that they might not come in sight as they went about. But the people of Corcyra, hearing of the Attic galleys coming in and the going off of the Peloponnesians, brought into the city those Messenians which before were without and appointing the galleys which they had furnished to come about into the Hillaique haven, whilst accordingly they went about, slew all the contrary faction they could lay hands on, and also afterwards threw overboard out of the same galleys \* all those they had before persuaded to embark, and so went thence. And coming to the temple of Juno, they persuaded fifty of those that had taken sanctuary to refer themselves to a legal trial, all which they condemned to die. But the most of the sanctuary men, that is, all those that were not induced to stand to trial by law, when they saw what was done, killed one another there right in the temple; some hanged themselves on trees; everyone as he had

\* The Greek is not quite so picturesque. It says only "Taking out of the galleys the men they had persuaded to go on board them, they liquidated them." The Greek word literally means "used them up"; it is one of the unpleasantly neutral words in Thucydides for such executions and corresponds to the modern use of "liquidate" in a similar connection.

means made himself away. And for seven days together that Eurymedon stayed there with his sixty galleys, the Corcyraeans did nothing but kill such of their city as they took to be their enemies, laying to their charge a practice to have everted the popular government. Amongst whom some were slain upon private hatred and some by their debtors for the money which they had lent them. All forms of death were then seen; and (as in such cases it usually falls out) whatsoever had happened at any time happened also then, and more. For the father slew his son; men were dragged out of the temples and then slain hard by; and some immured in the temple of Bacchus died within it. So cruel was this sedition and seemed so the more because it was of these the first.

82. For afterwards all Greece, as a man may say, was in commotion; and quarrels arose everywhere between the patrons of the commons, that sought to bring in the Athenians, and the few, that desired to bring in the Lacedaemonians. Now in time of peace they could have had no pretence nor would have been so forward to call them in; but being war and confederates to be had for either party, both to hurt their enemies and strengthen themselves, such as desired alteration easily got them to come in. And many and heinous things happened in the cities through this sedition, which though they have been before and shall be ever as long as human nature is the same, yet they are more calm and of different kinds according to the several conjunctures. For in peace and prosperity as well cities as private men are better minded because they be not plunged into necessity of doing anything against their will. But war, taking away the affluence of daily necessaries, is a most violent master and conformeth most men's passions to the present occasion. The cities therefore being now in sedition and those that fell into it later having heard what had been done in the former, they far exceeded the same in newness of conceit, both for the art of assailing and for the strangeness of their revenges. The received value of names imposed for signification of things was changed into arbitrary. For inconsiderate boldness was counted true-hearted manliness; provident deliberation, a handsome fear; modesty, the cloak of cowardice; to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything. A furious suddenness was reputed a

point of valour. To re-advise for the better security was held for a fair pretext of tergiversation. He that was fierce was always trusty, and he that contraried such a one was suspected. He that did insidiate, if it took, was a wise man; but he that could smell out a trap laid, a more dangerous man than he. But he that had been so provident as not to need to do the one or the other was said to be a dissolver of society and one that stood in fear of his adversary. In brief, he that could outstrip another in the doing of an evil act or that could persuade another thereto that never meant it was commended. To be kin to another was not to be so near as to be of his society because these were ready to undertake anything and not to dispute it. For these societies were not made upon prescribed laws of profit but for rapine, contrary to the laws established. And as for mutual trust amongst them, it was confirmed not so much by divine law as by the communication of guilt. And what was well advised of their adversaries, they received with an eye to their actions to see whether they were too strong for them or not, and not ingenuously. To be revenged was in more request than never to have received injury. And for oaths (when any were) of reconciliation, being administered in the present for necessity, were of force to such as had otherwise no power; but upon opportunity, he that first durst thought his revenge sweeter by the trust than if he had taken the open way. For they did not only put to account the safeness of that course but, having circumvented their adversary by fraud, assumed to themselves withal a mastery in point of wit. And dishonest men for the most part are sooner called able than simple men honest, and men are ashamed of this title but take a pride in the other.

The cause of all this is desire of rule out of avarice and ambition, and the zeal of contention from those two proceeding. For such as were of authority in the cities, both of the one and the other faction, preferring under decent titles, one, *the political equality of the multitude*, the other, *the moderate aristocracy*, though in words they seemed to be servants of the public, they made it in effect but the prize of their contention; and striving by whatsoever means to overcome both ventured on most horrible outrages and prosecuted their revenges still far-

ther without any regard of justice or the public good, but limiting them, each faction, by their own appetite, and stood ready, whether by unjust sentence or with their own hands, when they should get power, to satisfy their present spite. So that neither side made account to have anything the sooner done for religion [of an oath], but he was most commended that could pass a business against the hair with a fair oration. The neutrals of the city were destroyed by both factions, partly because they would not side with them and partly for envy that they should so escape.

83. Thus was wickedness on foot in every kind throughout all Greece by the occasion of their sedition. Sincerity (whereof there is much in a generous nature) was laughed down; and it was far the best course to stand diffidently against each other with their thoughts in battle array, which no speech was so powerful nor oath terrible enough to disband. And being all of them the more they considered the more desperate of assurance, they rather contrived how to avoid a mischief than were able to rely on any man's faith. And for the most part, such as had the least wit had the best success; for both their own defect and the subtlety of their adversaries putting them into a great fear to be overcome in words, or at least in pre-insidiation, by their enemies' great craft, they therefore went roundly to work with them with deeds. Whereas the other, not caring though they were perceived and thinking they needed not to take by force what they might do by plot, were thereby unprovided and so the more easily slain.

84. In Corcyra then were these evils for the most part committed first; and so were all other, which either such men as have been governed with pride rather than modesty by those on whom they take revenge were like to commit in taking it; or which such men as stand upon their delivery from long poverty out of covetousness, chiefly to have their neighbours' goods would contrary to justice give their voices to; or which men, not for covetousness but assailing each other on equal terms, carried away with the unruliness of their anger would cruelly and inexorably execute. And the common course of life being at that time confounded in the city, the nature of man, which is wont even against law to do evil, gotten now above

the law, showed itself with delight to be too weak for passion, too strong for justice, and enemy to all superiority. Else they would never have preferred revenge before innocence nor lucre (whensoever the envy of it was without power to do them hurt) before justice. And for the laws common to all men in such cases (which, as long as they be in force, give hope to all that suffer injury), men desire not to leave them standing against the need a man in danger may have of them but by their revenges on others to be beforehand in subverting them.