

PA 4461
 .F5 Finley, John H., Jr. Three Essays on Thucydides (Harvard Univ. Press) 1967

Though T's style and thought reflect the Athens that he knew before 424, the History as we have it dates from some two decades later. His exile explains the seeming contradiction. (xiii/9)

Euripides and Thucydides

Finley undertakes to show that E and T both follow the customary rules of 5th cent. oratory (6/1) and that we are justified in considering T's speeches as representative of the oratory commonly known even as early as the outbreak of the war (6/8). He gives parallels between E and T to show that E is familiar with many of the basic ideas characteristic of T's History (50/4) This does not rob T of his originality but confirms his truth when he said that he conceived the plan of his work at the outbreak of the war. For although he doubtless spent much of his exile pondering and developing it, yet the climate in which that plan was born was essentially the innovating, analytical, realistic climate revealed in E's early plays. (50/5-7)

These parallels tend to show that the speeches of T are not anachronistic but that, on the contrary, they expound ideas which the historian knew to have been familiar at the time when the speeches were delivered. (51/9) He thought of his speeches, not primarily as setting for his own ideas, but as conveying the actual policies of the speakers (52/1)

All the arguments hitherto adduced tend to confirm what T reports was done and said in Greece during the years of which he writes. (50/2) In details of T's style has been found the chief argument against seeing in his speeches the true image of an earlier Athens. It must be confessed that the exiled historian would have had every reason and opportunity to achieve an abstractness peculiar to himself, and he may besides have felt the influence of stylistic fashions which became widespread only after he left Athens (53/3) But Finley urges in defense that T's speeches are extremely compressed. Any of them can be read in less than half an hour, whereas, to judge by extant Attic orations, speeches were commonly much longer. Thus they are to be looked on as giving the essence, not the substance, of arguments. (53/6)