

**The Dangerous Qualities of Hope in Thucydides - Handout**  
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1) First sentence of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.1.1: [Thucydides the Athenian wrote the history of the war fought by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another,] beginning at the start of the war and **expecting** it to be great and more worthy of treatment than all that had preceded (ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων).

2) Hesiod *Works and Days* 96-7: [Pandora opens the jar, and many evils fly out,] but **Hope** alone remained there, in its unbreakable home within the mouth of the jar (μούνη δ' αὐτόθι Ἐλπίς ἐν ἀρρήκτοισι δόμοισιν/ ἔνδον ἔμεινε πίθου ὑπὸ χεῖλεσιν).

3) Generalising statement about hope, Thuc. 4.108.4: Men are wont to entrust what they desire to unreflecting **hope**, and to push aside with sovereign reason what they do not want (εἰωθότες οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὐ μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἐλπίδι ἀπερισκέπτῳ διδόναι, ὃ δὲ μὴ προσίενται λογισμῶ ἀτοκράτορι διωθεῖσθαι).

4) Corinthians on Athenians, Thuc. 1.70.3 and 7: daring beyond their resources, running dangers beyond their judgment, and **of good hopes**, even in dreadful circumstances (αὐθις δὲ οἱ μὲν καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν τολμηταὶ καὶ παρὰ γνώμην κινδυνευταὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες•) But if it happens that they miss out on something they have tried, they **hope** again and fill out the loss. For with them alone are **hoping** and having the same thing when they have put their minds to it, on account of the swiftness with which they take in hand what they have decided (ἦν δ' ἄρα του καὶ πείρα σφαλῶσιν, ἀντελπίσαντες ἄλλα ἐπλήρωσαν τὴν χρείαν• μόνοι γὰρ ἔχουσι τε ὁμοίως καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν ἃ ἂν ἐπινοήσωσι διὰ τὸ ταχεῖαν τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ποιεῖσθαι ὧν ἂν γνῶσιν).

5a) Cleon's speech, Thuc. 3.39.3: The Mytileneans became bold about the future and conceived **hopes** greater than their resources but less than their desires (γενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον θρασεῖς καὶ ἐλπίσαντες μακρότερα μὲν τῆς δυνάμεως, ἐλάσσω δὲ τῆς βουλήσεως).

5b) Diodotus' speech, Thuc. 3.45.1 and 5: But men are inspired by **hope** to run risks, and nobody has ever yet entered into a dreadful situation while convinced that he would not succeed (ὁμῶς δὲ τῇ ἐλπίδι ἐπαιρόμενοι κινδυνεύουσι, καὶ οὐδεὶς πῶ καταγνοὺς ἑαυτοῦ μὴ περιέσεσθαι τῷ ἐπιβουλεύματι ἦλθεν ἐς τὸ δεινόν). **Hope** and desire are everywhere: desire leads, **hope** follows; desire makes a plan and **hope** makes the path of luck seem easy; these two emotions are extremely harmful (ἦ τε ἐλπίς καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ ἐπὶ παντί, ὃ μὲν ἠγούμενος, ἦ δ' ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὃ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλήν ἐκφροντίζων ἦ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα πλεῖστα βλάπτουσι).

6) Melians and Athenians, Thuc. 5.102-3: for us, yielding without a fight is **hopeless**, but by acting, there might still be **hope** of standing upright (καὶ ἡμῖν τὸ μὲν εἶξαι εὐθὺς ἀνέλπιστον, μετὰ δὲ τοῦ δρωμένου ἔτι καὶ στήναι ἐλπίς ὀρθῶς). **Hope** is a solace in dangerous situations, and for those who have further wherewithal. For if she harms, she still does not ruin. But for those who put it all on one throw, since she is by nature prodigal, only when disaster occurs

does she make her true nature known, and when she is known she leaves her victim no resources with which to guard against her in the future ... [only fools] when the visible grounds of **hope** leave them in distress, take themselves to invisible ones – divination, oracles, and such things – which ruin men through **hopes** (Ἐλπίς δὲ κινδύνῳ παραμύθιον οὕσα τοὺς μὲν ἀπὸ περιουσίας χρωμένους αὐτῇ, κἂν βλάβῃ, οὐ καθεῖλεν• τοῖς δὲ ἐς ἅπαν τὸ ὑπάρχον ἀναρριπτοῦσι δάπανος γὰρ φύσει ἅμα τε γινώσκειται σφαλέντων καὶ ἐν ὄτῳ ἔτι φυλάξεταί τις αὐτὴν γνωρισθεῖσαν οὐκ ἐλλείπει ... ἐπειδὴν πιεζομένους αὐτοὺς ἐπιλίπωσιν αἱ φανεραὶ ἐλπίδες, ἐπὶ τὰς ἀφανεῖς καθίστανται, μαντικὴν τε καὶ χρησμοὺς καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα μετ' ἐλπίδων λυμαίνεται).

7a) Embarkation of Sicilian Expedition, Thuc. 6.30: [the men left] with **hope** and lamentations, (μετ' ἐλπίδος τε ἅμα ἰόντες καὶ ὀλοφυρμῶν); they hope to conquer but worry that they may never return.

7b) Sicilian expedition was, Thuc. 6.31: the longest voyage from home to date and undertaken with the highest **hopes** for the future, as compared to their present resources (μέγιστος ἤδη διάπλους ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκείας καὶ ἐπὶ μεγίστη ἐλπίδι τῶν μελλόντων πρὸς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ἐπεχειρήθη).

8a) various Athenian hopes in Sicily, Thuc 6.68: great **hope** of victory (μεγάλην τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς νίκης ἔχειν); allies have no **hope** of safety unless they conquer, 6.69 (περὶ τῆς αὐτίκα ἀνελπίστου σωτηρίας); victory makes them **hope** for other allies, 6.71.2 (ὡς ἤλπιζον μετὰ τὴν μάχην μᾶλλον σφῶν ὑπακούσεσθαι).

8b) Hopes of the Spartan Gylippus, sent to help the Syracusans, Thuc. 6.104: at first arrival, gives up **hope** of Sicily, but perhaps Italy? (τῆς μὲν Σικελίας οὐκέτι ἐλπίδα οὐδεμίαν εἶχεν ὁ Γύλιππος, τὴν δὲ Ἰταλίαν βουλόμενος περιποιῆσαι).

8c) Nicias loses hope, Thuc. 7.4: Gylippus arrives in Sicily, which Nicias interprets as making his chances on land **hopeless** (ὀρῶν τὰ ἐκ τῆς γῆς σφίσιν ἤδη, ἐπειδὴ Γύλιππος ἦκεν, ἀνελπιστότερα ὄντα); 7.8 Nicias sends messages home about being in a critical situation, ἐν δεινοῖς.

8d) Gylippus decides to engage in a sea battle, Thuc. 7.21.2: **hoping** to accomplish something worthwhile by the risk (ἐλπίζειν γὰρ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τι ἔργον ἄξιον τοῦ κινδύνου ἐς τὸν πόλεμον κατεργάσεσθαι). Syracusans full of **hope**, 7.25 (ἐν ἐλπίσιν) and encourage the **hopes** of their Sicilian compatriots (ἐν ἐλπίσιν εἰσὶ). Syracusan naval victory gives them the confident **hope** that are now much superior to the Athenians on the sea, 7.41 (καὶ τὴν ἐλπίδα ἤδη ἐχυρὰν εἶχον ταῖς μὲν ναυσὶ καὶ πολλὰ κρείσσους εἶναι). Gylippus **hopes** even to storm the Athenian walls, 7.46 (ὡς ἐν ἐλπίδι ὦν καὶ τὰ τεῖχη τῶν Ἀθηναίων αἰρήσειν βίᾳ).

8e) Athenians find situation **hopeless**, 7.47, (τά τε ἄλλα ὅτι ἀνέλπιστα αὐτοῖς ἐφαίνετο); Nicias thinks there is still **hope**, 7.48, (ἐλπίδος τι ἔτι παρεῖχε πονηρότερα τῶν σφετέρων ἔσεσθαι, ἣν καρτερῶσι προσκαθήμενοι).

8f) Nicias, Thuc. 7.61: encourages troops not to feel an **expectation** of fear that is like their sufferings (τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ φόβου ὁμοίαν ταῖς ξυμφοραῖς. Rather, they should **hope** for

fortune to take their side (τὸ τῆς τύχης κἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἐλπίσαντες στήναι). Gylippus notes that those been deceived in their estimation of their abilities, against all **expectation**, therefore give way entirely, 7.66 (παρ' ἐλπίδα τοῦ ἀρχήματος σφαλλόμενοι καὶ παρὰ ἰσχὺν τῆς δυνάμεως ἐνδιδόασιν). Syracusans have had their **hopes** doubled, by defeating the strongest, and, for the most part, the greatest **hope** inspires in men the greatest zeal for their endeavors, 7.67 τὸ κρατίστους εἶναι εἰ τοὺς κρατίστους ἐνικήσαμεν, διπλασία ἐκάστου ἢ ἐλπίς• τὰ δὲ πολλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἐπιχειρήσεις ἢ μεγίστη ἐλπίς μεγίστην καὶ τὴν προθυμίαν παρέχεται).

8g) Athenians realize that they have little **hope** of escape by land, 7.71 (καὶ τότε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἀνέλπιστον ἦν τὸ κατὰ γῆν σωθήσεσθαι). They march out, having lost all their ships, and instead of their high **hopes**, endangering themselves and Athens, 7.75 (τάς τε ναῦς ἀπολωλεκότες πάσας ἀπεχώρουν καὶ ἀντὶ μεγάλης ἐλπίδος καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἡ πόλις κινδυνεύοντες). Nicias encourages **hope**, since men have been redeemed from even worse evils, 7.77 (ὧ Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ ζύμμαχοι, ἐλπίδα χρῆ ἔχειν (ἤδη τινὲς καὶ ἐκ δεινότερων ἢ τοιῶνδε ἐσώθησαν)). He himself is still boldly **hopeful** about the future, 7.77 (ἢ μὲν ἐλπίς ὅμως θρασεῖα τοῦ μέλλοντος). It is, in fact, reasonable to **hope** for kinder things from the gods, 7.77 (καὶ ἡμᾶς εἰκὸς νῦν τὰ τε ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλπίζειν ἠπιώτερα ἔξειν (οἴκτου γὰρ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀξιώτεροι ἤδη ἐσμὲν ἢ φθόνου)).