

Not without a Linguistic Commentary:
**Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Scholia
on Thucydides' Obscure Syntax**

The rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus (active in Rome between 30 and 8 BC) makes use of a great variety of theories that were developed in different language disciplines. He borrows numerous ideas from earlier and contemporary scholars, including philosophers, philologists, grammarians, metricians, musical theorists, literary critics and rhetoricians, and he integrates these ideas into an effective programme of rhetorical theory. In his *Second Letter to Ammaeus*, Dionysius analyses the style of Thucydides, which he criticises for its poetic diction, variety of figures, brevity of thought, and obscure syntax. He describes various aspects of Thucydidean style as 'unnatural', and he points out that it does not preserve the 'logical order' (*akolouthia*) and 'grammatical congruence' (*katallēlotês*), technical terms that anticipate the syntactical theories of the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus.

Usener (1889) first noticed the similarities between Dionysius' observations and the scholia on Thucydides (ed. Hude). It is still not clear, however, how we should interpret the connection between the rhetorician's *Second Letter to Ammaeus* and the Thucydides scholia. Some scholars (Usener, Radermacher) have suggested that Dionysius made use of an edition of Thucydides that contained critical signs and scholia. This view seems to be supported by Dionysius' remark that we cannot understand certain passages in Thucydides 'without linguistic explanation' (*khôris exêgêseôs grammatikês*) (DH, *Thuc.* 51). Luschnat (1954) has argued that both the scholia on Thucydides and Dionysius' *Second Letter to Ammaeus* can ultimately be traced back to an Alexandrian commentary on Thucydides that was composed in Hellenistic Alexandria, perhaps by Aristarchus. Some of the scholia, however, seem to react to Dionysius' discussion, which complicates the exact relation between the two texts.

The connection between the Thucydides scholia and Dionysius' grammatical notes provides us with a unique opportunity to observe the different ways in which technical grammar was employed in scholarship on the one hand, and in rhetorical instruction on the other. Where the scholia comment on difficult syntactical constructions in order to explain them to the reader, Dionysius objects to Thucydides' unusual expressions and refers to them as solecisms. In this way, the rhetorician wants to prevent his students from imitating Thucydides' style, which he considers inappropriate for both historians and orators.

In this paper I will further investigate the relationship between the Thucydides scholia and Dionysius' *Second Letter to Ammaeus*. This examination will not only illuminate the precise connection between the two texts, but it will also contribute to our understanding of the interdisciplinary character of ancient linguistic disciplines, by demonstrating the interaction between scholarship, technical grammar and rhetorical theory.