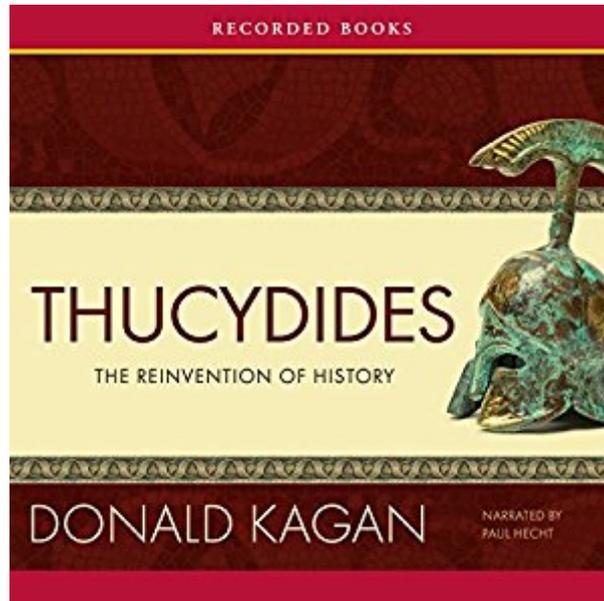


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Thucydides: The Reinvention Of History



Synopsis

A reconsideration of the first modern historian and his methods from a renowned scholarThe grandeur and power of Thucydides' The Peloponnesian War have enthralled readers, historians, and statesmen alike for two and a half millennia, and the work and its author have had an enduring influence on those who think about international relations and war, especially in our own time. In Thucydides, Donald Kagan, one of our foremost classics scholars, illuminates the great historian and his work both by examining him in the context of his time and by considering him as a revisionist historian. Thucydides took a spectacular leap into modernity by refusing to seek explanations for human behavior in the will of the gods, or even in the will of individuals, looking instead at the behavior of men in society. In this context, Kagan explains how The Peloponnesian War differs significantly from other accounts offered by Thucydides' contemporaries and stands as the first modern work of political history, dramatically influencing the manner in which history has been conceptualized ever since. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Any discussion of Thucydides almost always begins with a juxtaposition of the Athenian with the Halicarnassian, Herodotus. Herodotus, who wrote before Thucydides, filled his history of the Persian Wars with colorful discussions of exotic cultures, far away kings, distant geography, and, most notoriously, mythology. Thucydides, on the other hand, wrote with a clear and rational hand; his history of the Peloponnesian War is prized for its sharp analysis, an analysis that was unknown up until Thucydides and extremely rare thereafter. Herodotus, we now know, wrote to entertain the

listener or reader; Thucydides wrote to get to the truth. Indeed, the Athenian prefaced his History with a direct shot against Herodotus: "To hear this history rehearsed, for that there be inserted in it no fables, shall be perhaps not delightful." In his own words, then, Thucydides wrote to depict objective. Later writers would share his attitude: Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote that Thucydides "reports the facts without judging them," while Nietzsche noted that the Athenian was "the grand summation, the last manifestation of that strong, stern, hard matter-of-factness instinctive to the older Hellenes." Donald Kagan, the world's foremost scholar of the Peloponnesian Wars, in his career-long interest of Thucydides and the Wars, has discovered that the belief in Thucydides' complete objectivity is mistaken. We must realize, says Kagan, that Thucydides was a contemporary of the topic about which he wrote; moreover, his history of the period differs from the interpretations of his contemporaries.

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