

Thucydides, the peloponnesian war, the melian dialogue (book 5, chapter 17)

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Essay, Political Science 8 October Thucydides, the Peloponnesian War, the Melian Dialogue This paper discusses a dialogue that happened between two parties, the Athenians and Melians. The Peloponnesian war of 431-404 BC was fought by Athens against the Peloponnesian Empire led by the Sparta. This war lasted for 27 years. The war was caused by the Spartans who were not happy that they no longer possessed military prestige. Athens pressured its allies and neutral cities and finally the Sparta were unhappy about the increased power Athens had (Thucydides 1). The Melian dialogue was a debate by Thucydides, a historian who served in Athens during the war. The Melians was a colony of many islands, but Athens wouldn't submit to them. They remained neutral and didn't s tussle with the people. Athenians used violence to evict the Melians from their territory and this made the Melians change their attitude and became hostile.

In the Melian dialogue, Athenians demanded the Melians to give up on their city and compensate them for the destruction caused in the city. In response, the Melians claimed that they would remain neutral and not become enemies so instead they offered friendship. The Athenians argued that they would look weak and the people would undermine their strength, if they accepted the Melians to be neutral and independent (Crawley 2). The Melians countered that it would be a shame and an act of cowardice if they surrendered without a fight. Thucydides stated that, if such an action is taken to keep your empire and your people will not be free and will subdued to slavery, then the people who are free will be considered cowards and weak if they fail to face everything. The Athenians responded and stated that the debate wasn't about honor, but of self-preservation.

The Melians stated that the Athenians were strong and they could easily win. In response, the Athenians stated that the strong were hopeful and the weak Melians were hopeless and outnumbered. The Melians responded that they had great help from their gods, but Thucydides stated that trust in god would give prosperity for those who stood for the right and not wrong. The Athenians response to the Melians was that gods and man value strength over integrity and the strong can make it but the weak suffer (Crawley 3-4). The Melians argued that the Spartans would come and aid them in their defense. The Athenians responded to this by stating that the Spartans had little to their advantage and more to lose by aiding the Melians. The Athenians concluded that there was nothing wrong in getting a strong enemy, but this statement didn't change the minds of the Melians to dismiss their envoy.

In conclusion, the Melian Dialogue was a dialogue between the Athenians and Melians. The Melians tried to offer friendship to the Athenians, but they were received with hostility and this made their attitude change. This brought about the Thucydides dialogue. Generally, this paper shows how the Athenians wanted to protect their territory from strangers, despite attempts by the Melians to offer friendship.

Works Cited

Crawley, Richard. Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, The Melian Dialogue (Book5, chapter 17). n. d. Web. 8 October 2014. Thucydides, William Smith. History of the Peloponnesian War. London: Jones & Co., 1831. Print.