

Herodotus and Athens

MARTIN OSTWALD

“Because of the greatness of our city there is an influx of all things from the entire world, with the result that the enjoyment of goods produced at home is no more familiar to us than the produce of other men” (Thuc. 2. 38. 2). Pericles’ words, as recorded in the Funeral Oration Thucydides attributes to him, are often taken as characterizing the age over which he presided. There are good reasons in abundance for doing so. But they can be faulted for an egregious omission: The influx of the material goods and the prosperity they signal also brought to Athens an influx of foreign artists and intellectuals. The Funeral Oration makes only passing reference, if any, to them in Pericles’ boasts that Athens is hospitable to foreigners (2. 39. 1) and that the entire city is “an education for Greece” (τῆς Ἑλλάδος παιδείουσι 2. 41. 1). Like Pericles, we tend to be so blinded by Athenian achievements in tragedy, comedy, and historiography in the fifth century that we lose sight of the large number of foreigners who contributed to Athenian culture at this time. Pericles was himself closely associated with at least two of them, Aspasia and Anaxagoras. In his lifetime, too, Protagoras, the first of the foreign sophists, came to Athens from his native Abdera, and Hippodamus was invited from Miletus to design a new plan for the bustling and expanding Piraeus. Prominent foreign artists were active in Athens about this time: Polygnotus of Thasos, Agatharchus of Samos, Zeuxis of Heraclea, Agoracritus of Paros, and others; tragedies were performed of Aristarchus of Tegea, Archaeus of Eretria, and Ion of Chios; most of the dithyrambic poetry the Athenians heard was composed by foreigners (Melanippides of Melos, Phrynis of Mytilene, Timotheus of Miletus, etc.), and among prose writers we find Stesimbrotus of Thasos and Hellanicus of Lesbos.

Foremost among the prose writers attracted to Athens in the fifth century was one of the foremost writers of Greek prose of any period, Herodotus of Halicarnassus. What attracted him to Athens can only be conjectured: It may have been merely part of his passion for travel, it may have been the intellectual climate of the Periclean Age, or it may have been a desire to visit the focus of resistance against the Persians in the previous generation. In view of the prominence given to Athens in his narrative, it is surprising how little about his relation to Athens has been preserved in

the ancient traditions about his life. The most detailed account, that in the *Suda* (s.v. Ἡρόδοτος), mentions his birth in Halicarnassus—presumably in the mid-480s—, his exile in Samos, his return to his home to help overthrow the tyrant Lygdamis, and his participation in the Athenian settlement of Thurii, where he is said to have spent the rest of his life. It says nothing about his travels and nothing about his stay in Athens. For the latter we depend on a few scraps of information which tell us that in 445/4 B.C. “he was honoured by the Athenian Council for having read his books to them” (Eus. *Chron.*, Olymp. 83.4); we are told, further, that “on the motion of Anytus, he received from Athens a gift of ten talents” (Diyllus, *FGrH* 73 F 3); and elsewhere we learn that Thucydides was reduced to tears by one of his lectures (Marcellin. 54).¹ That Thucydides attended lectures by Herodotus in Athens is chronologically improbable: He will have been no more than ten to fifteen years old in the 440s, and after his stay in Athens Herodotus settled in Thurii. But when we combine this story with the dated tradition that Herodotus was honoured for his reading, it remains credible that Herodotus visited Athens and delivered lectures in the mid-440s; the fact that he was publicly honoured is corroborated by the tradition, whose general accuracy is guaranteed by the name of Anytus associated with it, that he received a gift from the state. However, the sum of ten talents is somewhat high to deserve credence, considering that a similar gift by the Athenians to Pindar is said to have amounted to only one talent and two thirds (10,000 drachmas).² Perhaps we may assume, without support from any ancient source, that in addition to his readings Herodotus had performed other meritorious services for the city.

We are even in a position to form a reasonably accurate idea of the kind of readings he gave in Athens. The “books” from which he read at that time cannot have been his work in the shape in which it has come down to us. At least negatively we can be fairly sure that they cannot have included the narrative of the Persian Wars now to be found in Books 6–9, because these books contain references to events which did not take place until the late 430s: The expulsion of the Aeginetans from their homes, referred to at 6. 91. 1, did not occur until 431 B.C.; incidents of the Peloponnesian War, which broke out in 432/1 B.C., are mentioned at 7. 137. 1 and 9. 73. 3; and the Theban attack on Plataea, which started that war, was known to him when he wrote 7. 233. 2.

But there are also positive pointers and they suggest that he lectured on his travels and on the people and places he had encountered. I am thinking of four instances in which he adduces Athenian parallels to explain foreign

¹ On Herodotus and Athens, see F. Jacoby, “Herodotos,” *RE Suppl.* II (1913) 226–42; H. Kleinknecht, “Herodot und Athen,” *Hermes* 75 (1940) 241–62; H. Strasburger, “Herodot und das perikleische Athen,” *Historia* 9 (1955) 1–25; C. W. Fornara, *Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay* (Oxford 1971) 37–58.

² *Isoc.* 15. 166; cf. [Aesch.] *Ep.* 4. 3.

phenomena: In discussing the outer circuit wall of Ecbatana, he compares its size with the circumference of the walls of Athens (1. 98. 5); when he refers to the Persian cubic measure *artabē* (1. 192. 3), he gives its equivalent in Attic *medimnoi* and *choinikes*; to give an idea of the distance of Heliopolis from the sea, he relates it to the distance of the altar of the Twelve Gods in Athens from Pisa and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (2. 7. 1); and when he speaks of the shape of the Tauric peninsula (the Crimea) he compares it with the peninsula on the point of which Sunium is located (4. 99. 5). These analogies, it seems to me, make sense only to an audience as intimately familiar with Athens and Attica as only the Athenians are likely to have been; they therefore permit the inference that they formed part of Herodotus' Athenian lectures. Some corroboration of this is the comparison of the Tauric peninsula with features of the region between Brindisi and Taranto in Southern Italy, which immediately follows the analogy with the Sunium peninsula. The guess is not unreasonable that this addition was made in a later revision of this part of his work, in order to adapt his example to the experiences of an audience he was addressing in Magna Graecia. Although this does not constitute irrefutable proof of anything, it makes it extremely likely that he introduced local comparisons to make his presentation of foreign peoples and places more graphic to whatever audience he was addressing. If this argument is sound, we may conclude that he lectured in Athens on sites he had visited in Persia, Egypt, and Scythia—all places which, as we know from other evidence, he had visited before he came to Athens.

Was Herodotus already interested in "history" in the sense in which we, following in his footsteps, understand the term, when he lectured in Athens? Certainly, the fact that traces of only geographical and ethnographical lectures have survived does not mean that he had nothing to say on the history of the places he had visited. On the contrary, it is unthinkable that his accounts of Persia, Egypt, and Scythia should not have included what he had seen and heard about important events which these places had experienced in the past and which we find embedded in his narrative. But it is questionable whether the conception of the work as a whole, integrating as it does the Persian Wars with the events in different parts of the world that led up to it, which constitutes Herodotus' claim to the title of "father of history,"³ was already present in his mind when he visited Athens. In the absence of any evidence, it is at least plausible that this conception was stimulated by his stay in the city, which had roused itself from the rubble in which the Persians had left it to become an imperial and cultural centre second to none in the Greek world.

³ On this point, see especially Jacoby (above, note 1) 467–86. The arguments of D. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot* (Berlin and New York 1971; English tr. by J. G. Howie [Leeds 1989]), contrived to deny that claim, are unconvincing, despite their occasional insights; see the review by J. Cobet in *Gnomon* 46 (1974) 737–46.

Herodotus is even more reticent about himself and his life than is Thucydides, and this reticence extends also to the names of his informants. The crucial role played by the Athenians in the battles of Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, and Mycale makes it a priori likely that a large number of his informants were Athenians, who would supply him with tales of the glorious exploits of their ancestors in these engagements, but also with accounts of earlier events in Athenian history, such as the Cylonian revolt (5. 71), the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons, its overthrow, and the establishment of the Cleisthenean democracy (1. 59–64, 5. 55–97). The Athenians are more frequently mentioned as a source of information than any other Greek people and are exceeded only by the Egyptians.⁴ To identify individual informants is impossible even in those cases where individual experiences are related, such as Dicaeus' vision on the Thriasian plain (8. 65) or the exploits of Sophanes of Deceleia (6. 92. 2, 9. 73–74). However, there is so much detailed and often intimate information on a number of noble families that the inference is inevitable that Herodotus had free access to members of the upper classes and enjoyed their confidence. The complexity of the relationship of Peisistratus to the Philaïdae, the family of which Miltiades and Cimon were members, is such that one is tempted to assume that Herodotus learned of it from a family member, who also showed him the tomb of Miltiades' father Cimon (6. 34–41, 103. 2–4, 136. 3). He is so well informed about the history of the Alcmeonids (6. 125–31) and so anxious to clear them of responsibility for the traitorous shield-signal given to the Persians at the time of Marathon (6. 121–24) that close personal connections between him and one or more of their number have been inferred. A similarly cordial relation to the Kerykes, one of the families in charge of the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis and its mystery cult, can be inferred from the details he knows of their ancestor Callias under the tyrants (6. 121–22). He knows what the Gephyraei believe about their own provenance and what other Athenians believe about it (5. 57. 1), indicating acquaintance with living Gephyraei as well as with their opponents. Further, the numerous anecdotes told to denigrate the moral qualities of Themistocles (8. 4. 2, 57–58, 112. 1, 124. 1–2) are likely to come from descendants of Athenians prominent at the time of Salamis who opposed the policies of the man who made Athens a naval power. Yet hostile and complimentary strands are so tightly interwoven with one another that we must assume that Herodotus integrated the family traditions he had learned with more general popular traditions current about the past.⁵

⁴ See the list in Jacoby (above, note 1) 398–99.

⁵ See the excellent discussions of R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989), esp. 171–73 on the Philaïdae; 247–51 and 264–81 on the Alcmeonids; 109 and 252 with n. 34 on the Gephyraei; and 206 n. 37 and 224 on Themistocles.

Modern scholars have often interpreted Herodotus' work as an encomium on Athens, on democracy, on the Alcmeonids, and on their most illustrious scion, Pericles.⁶ Of Herodotus' respect and admiration for all of these there can be no doubt, but his admiration was neither blind nor confined to Athens, and above all it did not make Herodotus an apologist for Athens *tout court*.⁷ Herodotus recognized that the deployment of sea power was the single most decisive factor in the victory of the Greeks over the Persians, to whom they were inferior in manpower and in materiel. It is for realizing this fact, for acquiescing in the abandonment of their city to be ravaged by the Persians (8. 40–41) and for relinquishing the command of the allied navy to the Spartans lest divisiveness undermine Greek survival (8. 3) that Athens is praised as the "saviour of Greece" (7. 139). But note the preface to this praise: "At this point, I am constrained by hard facts to state publicly a judgment which will be invidious to the majority of mankind; none the less, I shall not hold back what seems to me to be true" (7. 139. 1). This statement shows that he is writing not a panegyric nor a defence of Athenian policy at the time of writing, but a fact about the past which contemporaries did not like to hear. Moreover, Herodotus' admiration for Athens did not make him blind to the fact that the Spartan contribution to the victory was no less decisive than the Athenian. Even though their stand at Thermopylae was doomed to failure, the fact that it was made under the command of their king Leonidas gave an example to the rest of the Greeks which evoked Herodotus' unbounded admiration (7. 204 and 220). Further, it is at Plataea, not at Salamis, that the Greeks won what Herodotus calls "the noblest victory of any that we know," a victory credited to the leadership of the Spartan Pausanias (9. 64. 1).

Similarly, Herodotus' praise of the Athenian democracy is no simple encomium on a particular form of government or on a particular state. In fact, he never praises democracy as "democracy," but applauds it where he does under names which suggest his admiration of a particular aspect of it. In the Constitutional Debate which he places in Persia after the overthrow of a usurper, he praises popular rule as "government by the people which has the fairest name of all, political equality (*ισονομία*)" (3. 80. 6); and he extols its Athenian variety as "right of free speech (*ισηγورία*)," which the Athenians acquired after they had expelled the tyrants. But that does not mean that he is blind to its shortcomings. Some of these are summed up in Megabyzus' statement in the Constitutional Debate that "there is nothing more devoid of insight or more prone to arrogance (*hybris*) than a useless mob" (3. 81. 1); another in Herodotus' comment on Aristagoras' success in Athens after his failure at Sparta to enlist support for the Ionian Revolt, that "it seems easier to hoodwink many than one, since he was unable to

⁶ E.g., F. D. Harvey, "The Political Sympathies of Herodotus," *Historia* 15 (1966) 254–55.

⁷ Strasburger and Fomara (above, note 1).

hoodwink one man, the Lacedaemonian Cleomenes, but managed to do so in the case of thirty thousand Athenians" (5. 97. 2); and yet another in how the clever Athenians were duped to accept Peisistratus as tyrant (1. 60. 3-4). However, Herodotus does not praise ἰσηγορίη for its own sake but as having given Athens the freedom (ἐλευθερίη) which she had not enjoyed under the tyranny and through which a great city became even greater (5. 78; cf. 66. 1). The winning of this freedom for themselves enabled them later "to choose that Greece should survive free" and thus "to arouse the entire rest of the Greek world which did not medize and to repel the King of Persia with the help of the gods" (7. 139. 5).

There is no need here to demonstrate that for Herodotus the issue in the Persian Wars was the affirmation of freedom against the threat of slavery. But it must be pointed out that, whatever Herodotus' own attitude toward democracy may have been, he praised ἰσηγορίη only for having given Athens that liberty which enabled her to lead the Greeks in the fight for their freedom, even if initially the Spartans regarded the newly won Athenian freedom as a challenge to their own supremacy in Greece (5. 91. 1). Nevertheless, the Athenians had no monopoly on freedom. The most rousing treatment of this theme is put into a Spartan context, when the exiled Spartan king Demaratus explains to an incredulous Xerxes at the crossing of the Hellespont that the Spartans, "though free are not free in every respect: law (*nomos*) is master over them, and they fear it far more than your subjects fear you" (7. 104. 4). What this means is strikingly illustrated by the behaviour of the Spartans Sperthias and Boulis who had volunteered to be sent as hostages to Persia (7. 134-36, esp. 135. 3). After explaining at the Persian court that the Spartans will never surrender to Persia, because they have tasted a freedom alien to the Persian slave mentality, they refuse to do obeisance to the Persian king on the ground that their customs (*nomoi*) enjoin them from bowing down before a human being. Evidently, love of freedom is Herodotus' primary concern; whether it was exemplified in ἰσηγορίη or in obedience to the law was of secondary importance to him.

There can be no doubt that Herodotus was aware of the prominent role the Alcmeonids had played and were still playing in the history of Athens. The fact that the birth of the most prominent Alcmeonid of his own time, Pericles, was prefigured by his mother's dream of giving birth to a lion is neither ominous nor complimentary, but simply indicates that Pericles was a man to be reckoned with (6. 125-31). Herodotus' defence of the family against the charge of treason at the time of Marathon (6. 121-24) is often taken as a sign of partiality for them. But since there is little other evidence for such partiality, Herodotus may simply have found it difficult to believe that a family which had rendered such outstanding service to the state in the past could have been responsible for the shield-signal which, he knows for sure, was given to the Persians. It is commonly thought that this defence is evidence for an Alcmeonid source for Herodotus. That is plausible and

perhaps even probable, but it does not rest on firm foundations: Herodotus may well have learned of the charge from sources hostile to the Alcmeonids and may have rejected it on the basis of his own judgment of what this prominent family would or would not be capable of doing.

Our difficulty in this regard is due to Herodotus' failure to mention even a single Athenian informant by name. But we know from other sources the name of one prominent Athenian with whom he must have established a close personal relationship, and that is the tragedian Sophocles. The external evidence for this relationship consists in the opening of an epigram quoted by Plutarch (*Mor.* 785b): "Sophocles at the age of fifty-five composed a song for Herodotus" (ᾠδὴν Ἡροδότῳ τεύξεν Σοφοκλῆς ἑτέων ὄν / πέντ' ἐπὶ πεντήκοντα, Page, *Epigrammata Graeca* 466-67), which was evidently written as a dedication to accompany the song. Since Sophocles was born in 497/6 B.C., the date of this occasion will be ca. 442/1 B.C., about the time when the evidence of Eusebius' *Chronicle* attests Herodotus' presence in Athens. This is also the time in which Sophocles wrote his *Antigone*. It has long been seen that the passage in that play in which Antigone explains her preference for her brother by arguing that, once one's parents are dead, he alone is irreplaceable, whereas a husband or child is not (904-24), depends on Herodotus' story about the wife of Intaphernes (3. 119. 3-6), who, when given the choice by Darius to have one member of her family exempted from execution, opted for her brother: "O King, I could get another husband, God willing, and other children, if I were to lose these; but since my father and mother are no longer living, there is no way in which I could get another brother." The parallels between Antigone's arguments and those of the wife of Intaphernes are so close that they have been taken to corroborate the personal contact between tragedian and historian which is suggested by the fragmentary epigram.⁸ A close relationship between tragedian and historian is further suggested by two other Sophoclean passages. Clytaemnestra's ominous dream in the *Electra* (417-27), in which Agamemnon's ancient scepter sprouted into a tree which overshadowed the whole of Mycena, presages the return of Orestes in a way similar to that in which the dream Herodotus (1. 108. 1-2) attributes to the Median king Astyages forewarns of the birth of Cyrus. Here a vine covering the whole of Asia sprang forth from the genitals of his daughter Mandane. Again, Oedipus' comparison of his sons to Egyptian males in the *Oedipus at Colonus* (337-41), who sit at home weaving while their wives go out to provide the necessities of life may well be indebted to Herodotus' account (2. 35. 2-4) of Egyptian men weaving at home, while their women buy and sell in the market-place. True, both these plays were probably written some time after⁹ Herodotus' death

⁸ Jacoby (above, note 1) 232-37.

⁹ C. W. Fornara, "Evidence for the Date of Herodotus' Publication," *JHS* 91 (1971) 25-34, argued for as late a date as 414 B.C.; this view was attacked by J. Cobet, "Wann wurde

(performed ca. 420 and 401 B.C., respectively); but it is worth remembering that tales from Persia and Egypt were part of Herodotus' lectures in Athens. These two incidents may well have become engraved in Sophocles' mind at the time of Herodotus' visit to be recalled in these later plays. Moreover, on a superficial level, a similarity between the two authors can be seen in the importance of dreams, oracles, prophecies, and warnings that influence the lives of legendary heroes in Sophocles and those of historical figures of an ascertainable past in Herodotus; it is further manifested in the prominence given by both authors to concepts such as *hybris* (offensive pride), *tisis* (vengeance), *dikē* (justice), *phthonos* (jealousy, envy), and *atē* (moral indifference leading to ruin) as motivations for human conduct.¹⁰

To go beyond these similarities to assert that Herodotus' view of the historical process owes something to Sophocles is a plausible conjecture incapable of proof. But it is a point worth pursuing, for, it seems to me, both authors share a perception of human life that is not shared by any other two authors in the whole of Greek literature. To demonstrate this similarity in detail would take me beyond the scope of my present task. But I must indicate a little more clearly what I have in mind.

The tragic aspect of Herodotus' work has been described so beautifully by David Asheri in his recent edition of the first book of Herodotus¹¹ that his observations are worth quoting. Asheri remarks how the mechanism of historical development operates in Herodotus, as it does in tragedy, through an unconscious cooperation of gods and men. "In Herodotus," he writes, "history repeats itself in this sense: Behind the multifariousness and variability of particular events, which never repeat themselves, there exist archetypal models which remain and recur and which can be detected by way of analogy: 'I know,' says Artabanus to Xerxes (7. 18. 2-3), 'how bad it is to desire many things; for I remember how Cyrus fared in his expedition against the Massagetae, I also remember Cambyses' expedition against the Ethiopians, and I participated in Darius' campaign against the Scythians. Knowing all that, I have reached the conclusion that you, Xerxes, can be the happiest man in the eyes of all humanity, if you do not move <against the Greeks>.' Artabanus, that is, Herodotus, shows that behind specific Persian expeditions—different in detail, conducted by different kings against different peoples—there looms a recurrent 'model' of expansionism failed. If a particular event catches our interest as a curiosity, it gains historical significance as a symptomatic and paradigmatic phenomenon. That does not mean that Herodotus falsifies particulars so as to adapt them to the model;

Herodots Darstellung der Perserkriege publiziert?" *Hermes* 105 (1977) 2-27. Fornara responded with more convincing arguments in "Herodotus' Knowledge of the Archidamian War," *Hermes* 109 (1981) 149-56.

¹⁰ Schmid-Stählin I.2 (1933) 569-72.

¹¹ D. Asheri (ed. and comm.), *Erodoto. Le storie* I (Milan 1988) xliv-xlv.

but a paradigmatic history necessarily implies a selection of human actions. In this respect, Herodotus is more of a philosopher than a historian, if philosophy, in the Ionian sense of the word, is primarily the search for being in becoming. Moreover, he is more of a poet than a historian, even though he wrote prose, because he is interested more in what might happen than in what really happened, less in 'what Alcibiades did and suffered' than in the paradigm."

I believe that it is possible to go beyond this to point out that Herodotus shares this paradigm more closely with Sophocles than either with Aeschylus or Euripides. Chronological considerations apart, which make such an influence unlikely, Euripides' tragic vision tends to consist in frail, vulnerable humans buffeted about by hostile powers in a world not of their own making. There is little of that in Herodotus. Nor does Herodotus share with Aeschylus the view of a moral universe in which superhuman forces control a human destiny which leaves to human agents little more than a choice that makes them links in a chain of events already predetermined in the mysterious ways of heredity. Just as Sophoclean drama is shaped by great individuals—an Oedipus, an Ajax, an Antigone—who, in acting reasonably according to their lights, fall victim to forces over which they have no control, so Herodotus sees the mainspring of historical developments in individuals placed in situations in which their decisions lead not only them but also the people whose destiny is tied up with theirs to an end which they did not foresee.

Sophoclean characters find themselves in conditions in which, however reasonably they act, their actions will inevitably have consequences which recoil against them and against those close to them in kinship, friendship, or citizenship: Oedipus, in performing his royal duty in trying to rid Thebes of a plague, discovers the identity which fate had hidden from him and falls, a blind exile, from his high station; Creon, in trying to restore balance to a state wrecked by fraternal war, stumbles against the religious obligations incumbent upon members of the family; Deianeira, in attempting to regain the love of her husband, destroys him. However good their intentions, however logical their aims, Sophoclean characters discover the limits of their humanity as set by inscrutable and inexorable forces. An Oedipus or a Creon may be warned of what is to come by a Teiresias, but no warning can avert what is in store for them.

A remarkably similar view of the human condition is taken by Herodotus both in working out the theme of his work as a whole and in innumerable details in his narrative which serve as building blocks for his structure.¹² History is enacted by persons whom character, family, and social and political mores and traditions have placed into situations with which they cope as reasonably as they can according to their lights, but

¹² J. Cobet, *Herodots Exkurse und die Frage der Einheit seines Werkes*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 17 (Wiesbaden 1971).

cannot control the outcome of their actions. A decision once made is subject to the inexorable laws of an external necessity, a force which, though divine, can be communicated to men by gods, especially by Apollo and his oracle, but is apparently not determined by them. In Herodotus, the fate of a great individual is usually identical with the fate of his people; his doom is their doom. This is the thread that holds together the large issue central to the work, the wars between Greeks and barbarians from the first major encroachment of non-Greeks upon Greek territories to the re-establishment of a natural boundary—the Hellespont—between them.

Beginning and end of his narrative are tied together by a statement of the external features of his paradigm: The theme that states which were formerly great have become small and those now great were small in the past is placed near the opening of Book 1 (5. 4) and echoed toward the end in Book 9 (27. 4). As in Sophoclean tragedy, history is enacted by great individuals: Rejecting mythical accounts, he starts out by naming Croesus as "the individual whom I know to have been the first to perpetrate acts of injustice against the Greeks" (1. 5. 3-6. 1), and the fate of Croesus is the fate of Lydia, just as the fate of Media and subsequent rise of Persia is the fate of Cyrus, and just as the fate of Persia becomes identical with the fate of Xerxes. Although a tragic setting is not sustained with equal intensity throughout the work, it is hinted at in the discovery on the part of all the major figures involved in the conflict between east and west that certain limits are set to human existence and that good fortune is never constant. Croesus, though warned by Solon that wealth and power do not constitute happiness, learns his lesson the hard way when he attacks Persia; Cyrus is taught by his attack on the Massagetae that he was misguided in "his belief in his more-than-human birth and good fortune in war" (1. 204. 2), despite Croesus' attempt to make his captor profit from his experience; Cambyses' mad lust for expansion is checked by the Ethiopians, Darius' by the Scythians, and Xerxes' by the Greeks.

The inevitability of the pattern inherent in the paradigm is driven home by innumerable vignettes whose structures exhibit a distinctly Sophoclean irony. There is, in the first place, the story of Candaules, whose excessive infatuation with his wife boded a bad end (1. 8. 2: *χρῆν γὰρ Κανδαύλη γενέσθαι κακῶς*), which came to pass through the duress his actions eventually imposed on Gyges; we find it in the story of Arion and the dolphin, which shows that those who believe that they can enrich themselves with impunity through murder on the high sea cannot get away with their crime; we find it in the story of Polycrates who, though willingly accepting the advice to give up his most treasured possession, retrieved it in spite of himself and met a horrible end. And we find it in a most striking way when a dream makes Xerxes realize that he cannot back out of his decision to march against Greece, however much he desires to do so. In the detailed narration of events as well as on the larger canvas of his history, Herodotus shows human agents placed in situations in which they are

constrained to act in ways which are bound to lead to failure, because they do not recognize until it is too late the limits which their humanity has set for them.

The similarities between the tragic view Herodotus takes of historical events in their large movement as well as in subsidiary details and Sophocles' treatment of the human condition is so striking that we are entitled to wonder whether they resulted from discussions between these two men. We have no way of telling either whether Herodotus had developed it sufficiently by the time he arrived in Athens in the 440s to transmit it to Sophocles or whether his friendship with Sophocles made him see the information he had gathered on his travels in a new way, which became the organizing principle of the work as a whole when, a decade or so later, he prepared the work as a whole for publication in Thurii. If we could be certain that the subject of his lectures in Athens was nothing but his travels, we could feel more confident than we can feel on the basis of the meager evidence we have that Sophocles' tragic vision had a greater impact on him than his stories had on Sophocles. In any event, it is unlikely that two such similar conceptions of human life should have developed in complete isolation one from the other. A further argument which would favour Sophocles' influence on Herodotus is that he was working in a tradition of tragedy which had been well established in Athens at least since the days of Aeschylus. We know of no similar tradition to which Herodotus could have been exposed before his arrival in Athens. That he did leave a mark on Athens is amply attested by Aristophanes' *Acharnians*.¹³

The tragic view does not divide men into saints and sinners, but presents them objectively as frail creatures placed into situations in which their decision will subject them to transcendent laws that will reveal the limits of their humanity and lead to failure or even ruin. For Herodotus, cities, states, and peoples operate under the same kind of constraint, and this, as we have seen, is one of the reasons why his admiration for Athens or for Sparta cannot be unconditional. He tells us at the opening and toward the end of his work that he will deal with cities both great and small, since "cities which were formerly great have for the most part become small, and those which were great in my own time were formerly small," and this leads him to the knowledge that "human happiness never remains constant" (1. 5. 4). It is inconceivable that a man holding these views was unaware of or indifferent to the events going on in his own contemporary world, dominated as it was by the imperial policy of a city which the sequel of the Persian Wars had catapulted from comparative insignificance at the time she first enters Herodotus' narrative to a greatness that set her on a collision course with Sparta.¹⁴ Whether Herodotus approved or disapproved of

¹³ Cf. *Ar. Ach.* 523-29 and *Hdt.* 1. 1-4. Further parallels are cited by Jacoby (above, note 1) 232.

¹⁴ Fornara (above, note 1) 59-91.

Athens' imperial policy we do not know. But he is likely to have recognized it as an inevitable consequence of the role Athens had played in the Persian Wars, and his knowledge of human affairs made him foresee the conflagration to which it was leading.

Herodotus' migration from Athens to Thurii, where he seems to have spent the rest of his life, used to be seen as prompted by his support of Periclean policy. More recently it has been suggested that he was motivated by disenchantment with Pericles for hiding imperial designs under the pretext of the panhellenic policy advocated in the guise of the Congress Decree, and that he sought fulfillment of his panhellenic ideal in the new colony.¹⁵ However, it is more likely that he left Athens and did not return to his native Halicarnassus because he knew that both places would be embroiled in the conflict that was sure to come. Thurii was far removed from the scene where the action would take place and it would give him the intellectual and social ambience in which he could live out his days as a keen observer of human life.

Swarthmore College and University of Pennsylvania

¹⁵ Strasburger (above, note 1) 23-25.