

SOME THOUGHTS ON HERODOTUS

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PROFESSOR MARG, in the introduction to his collection of articles on Herodotus, expresses a thought which must have occurred to many students of this author: "Wir sagten, Herodot gehört zu den schwersten Autoren, trotz oder gerade wegen seiner scheinbaren Leichtigkeit. Herodot ist voll von Gegensätzen:"¹ One such *Gegensatz* which has long puzzled me is the contrast between Herodotus the keen, shrewd, painstaking researcher and critic, and Herodotus careless and casual to the point of blamable negligence.² Herodotean carelessness, on occasion, and casual exercise, or non-exercise, of his critical powers hardly need illustration; what I want to suggest is that the latter is not just a question of Herodotus' "immature" critical powers,³ but also, and not least, of the nature of his interests.

Thucydides, in his Foreword to the Reader (1.22) expresses concern over the unavoidably deficient *ἀκρίβεια* of his speeches, but promises the highest possible degree of *ἀκρίβεια* in his report of *τὰ ἔργα τῶν παρχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ*, the two together giving a fair indication of his interests as represented in his History: politics and war. There is nothing comparable in Herodotus' Proem, but this does not mean he was oblivious to the desirability of accuracy. Powell's *Index*⁴ lists three occurrences of *ἀτρέκεια*, forty-two of *ἀτρεκέως*, and nine of *ἀτρεκής*, -ές; thirty-seven of the fifty-four bear on Herodotus' concern for

¹Walter Marg, ed., *Herodot. Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung* (Darmstadt 1962) 2. This work will be cited as Marg, and the following will be cited by author's name: R. Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History* (Washington 1973); H. Erbse, "Der erste Satz im Werke Herodots," *Festschrift Bruno Snell* (Munich 1956) 209–222; K. von Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung* 1 (Berlin 1967); H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966); F. Jacoby, *RE Suppl.* 2, s.v. "Herodotus;" T. Krischer, "Herodots Prooimion," *Hermes* 93 (1965) 159–167; P. Legrand, *Hérodote: Introduction*² (Paris 1955); A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus. Book II. Introduction* (Leiden 1975); M. Pohlenz, *Herodot, der erste Geschichtsschreiber des Abendlandes* (Leipzig 1937); O. Regenbogen, "Herodot und Sein Werk," in Marg, 84 ff. (first in *Die Antike* 6 [1930] 202–248); W. Schmid in Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch.d.griech.Lit.* 1.2 (Munich 1934); E. Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides* (Bonn 1919).

²Cf. A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* (Berkeley 1954), 102: "Nor should we treat Herodotos like a child and say that we must not apply twentieth-century standards to his work . . . and where he fails . . . of course we must criticize, as Thucydides criticized him. What else can we do but judge by our own standards? . . . Certainly for Herodotos there is no need of kindness; in the end he comes triumphant from the test."

³Cf. Jacoby 478 "Seine Kritik steckt noch in den Kinderschuhen."

⁴J. E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge 1938).

accuracy, and their distribution may cast some light on his interests, which, in its turn, may contribute to a better understanding of the Proem and his subject, and of the historian himself.⁵ Nine have to do with Geography, six with Religion, six Military (but two of these concern the performance of the various Ionians at Lade and the various barbarians and Greeks at Salamis, a Homeric interest, and two the numbers of Xerxes' host), six Ethnography-Anthropology, Commerce two, and one apiece for Medicine and Politics; the six unclassified refer to how much the Mytilenaeans were to get for the surrender of Pactyes, how Scyllias got to Artemisium, Menelaus' behaviour in Egypt, Greek knowledge of Egypt from the reign of Psammetichus onward, and the fate of Mardonius' corpse (*bis*).

The occurrence of ἀτρέκεια κ.τ.λ. is obviously a very insufficient indicator of Herodotus' interests as represented in his *Histories*, but even so the results may be not without significance. Broadly speaking, military matters and politics are poorly represented in a work whose main subject is supposed to be the Persian Wars, whereas Geography, Religion, Ethnography-Anthropology might surprise by their prominence.

A closer look at the passages concerned strengthens this impression. While the one connected with Politics (7.152.1) is a part of a long and praiseworthy discussion of Argos' behaviour in the Persian Wars, it is the only one, and the six on military matters are not connected with any notable discussion. In the other groupings, however, we have several notable discussions, characterized by critical acumen, and fulness of treatment. Herodotus' attempt to prove that the Colchians were Egyptian (2.103–105) is praised by Lloyd (160–162): "Elaborate inductive arguments showing a mastery of scientific method Given that premise and the philological error, Herodotus' reasoning is sound—indeed impressive. Many a modern scholarly argument has been based on considerably more shaky foundations." In 1.57 and 1.171–172, re the *Ursprung und Herkunft* of the Pelasgians and of the Carians and Caunians, the evidence of language is adduced; the second passage is praised by von Fritz (421 f.): "Dies ist wohl, ungeachtet der zur Lösung des Kontinenteproblems unternommenen Forschungsreisen des Herodot, die sorgfältigste, man ist versucht zu sagen, fortgeschrittenste kritische Betrachtung zu einem geographisch-ethnographischen Problem, die bei Herodot zu finden ist." 1.57 is praised by F. Schachermeyr: "Herodot 'die methodisch einzig richtige' Frage gestellt habe."⁶

In the field of religion Herodotus' intense interest is well illustrated by 2.49, 54, 145, the first concerning Melampus' introduction of the name and cult of Dionysus into Greece, the second about the foundation of the oracle at Dodona, and the third concerning the ages of Pan, Dionysus, and

⁵Cf. Immerwahr 17, "One major difficulty confronting the modern reader of Herodotus is the lack of an exact title of the work" (*sic*).

⁶RE 19.254 (cited by von Fritz 2.206).

Heracles; there is considerable discussion and Herodotus is not shy about stating his own views, is assertive, and makes some shrewd points. In the case of Dodona he gives detail of his investigation: he interrogated the priests of Thebes, closely, visited Dodona and interviewed the *promanties*, whose names he gives, and the other Dodonaeans, and ascertained that oracular procedures at Dodona and Thebes were similar. Lloyd (169) has this to say about Herodotus' "account of the early history of Greek religion and its relation to Egyptian cults:" "In the history of extant Greek literature Herodotus is the first to devote his attention in a scientific fashion to the problems of the development of religious phenomena and amply merits the title given him by Burckardt of "Gründer der vergleichenden Religions-und Dogmengeschichte."⁷

The discussions in other passages where *ἀτρέκεια* κ.τ.λ. occur are not so extensive as these, but Herodotus gives his opinion incisively, often backed by sound critical points. Such are his discussion of the banausic convention, where the comparative method is employed (2.167), the Arimaspians and the procurement of gold, where the uniformity of species is invoked (3.116), the western extremities of Europe, where his arguments include the lack of eye-witnesses (3.115), the region north of the Danube, where the Sigynnae say they are Median colonists—Herodotus cannot imagine how, *γένοιτο δ' ἂν πᾶν ἐν τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ* (5.9.1). The full account of the *νόμοι* of the Persians (1.131–140) is typical of the many ethnographic passages throughout his work⁸—cool and concise scientific reporting. The numerical preeminence of Geography is in keeping with Herodotus' interest in it. 4.16, re the northern regions of Scythia, is particularly interesting: *ἀλλ' ὅσον μὲν ἡμεῖς ἀτρεκέως ἐπὶ μακρότατον οἰοί τε ἐγενόμεθα ἀκοῇ ἐξικέσθαι πᾶν εἰρήσεται*, and cf. the like expressions at 1.171.2, where the origin of the Carians is being discussed, and 4.192.3, the fauna of Libya. The three are reminiscent of Thucydides 1.1.3, but Herodotus is investigating geography, ethnography, and natural history, Thucydides the existence of wars or anything else on a large scale in early Greece.⁹

Passages of critical discussion and/or concentrated research, where the words *ἀτρέκεια* κ.τ.λ. do not occur, but *ἀτρέκεια* is sought, roughly confirm the above results. Under Ethnography we may mention Herodotus' discussion of the origin of the Scyths (4.5–15). "H. gives three different versions, the Scythian, and the Pontic Greek, which are mythological, and

⁷Lloyd is convinced of Herodotus' originality: "That it is the product of Herodotus' own mind is as certain as anything can be in such an enquiry, not only because we know nothing of such speculation in Hecataeus but because the discussion is quite unique and bears little relation to any other known theory of the origin of Greek or any other religion."

⁸Cf. the partial listing by Immerwahr, 318.

⁹Another Thucydidean echo and contrast at 2.23: *ὁ δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ λέξας ἐς ἀφανὲς τὸν μῦθον ἀνενείκας οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον*; cf. Thuc. 1.21.1, re early Greek history.

a third (c.11 seq.) which he adopts as resting on the authority of both nations (c.12.3), and which he partially confirms by quoting Aristaeas (c.13) etc." (H.W. *ad loc.*). In chapter 12 Herodotus gives incisive and cogent proof of Cimmerian occupation of the country before the arrival of the Scythians: archaeological evidence and evidence from geographical nomenclature in later times, and, of their flight to Asia, their occupation of the later site of Sinope. We also cite his listing of the various contingents forming Xerxes' invasion force (7.61–99), sixty-one in all; but what Herodotus has to say about the different contingents is not limited to what we would expect from a historian whose main interest was military history—he is the same Herodotus who described the Persian campaigns in Scythia and Libya, and listed the Greek navy at Salamis (8.43–48) and the Peloponnesians at the Isthmus (8.72–73). The origins of the sixty-one peoples represented are a principal concern, calling for much nomenclatural and ethnographic detail, much attention is lavished on their costumes, etc. The "ethnographic remarks" in Thucydides' catalogues (H.W. *ad* 8.43—Thuc. 7.57–58) are not parallel in nature, but strictly relevant to the particular point Thucydides is making.

2.5–14, concerning the physical origin and dimensions of Egypt, is praised by Lloyd (137): ". . . this brilliant series of proofs—and it is substantially if not entirely Herodotus' own (vide nn. *ad loc.*).” This passage and those concerning the nature and source of the Nile are clear evidence of Herodotus' critical powers being roused by his interest, which also accounts for the contentious, polemical tone, the sarcastic criticism of Ionian views, the readiness to argue for his own opinions. The physical descriptions of Scythia, Libya, Thessaly, etc., are indicative of the same interest, as is his fleeing dismissal of Ionian terrestrial symmetry and his own view as to how the map of the continents should be drawn (4.36–45).

Under religion, desire for accuracy (*καὶ θέλων δὲ τούτων περὶ σαφές τι εἰδέναι*) in his investigation of the relationship of the Greek to the Egyptian Heracles (2.43–44) is certainly indicative of interest, and this interest gives rise to critical-argumentative discussion, extensive research, and combative tone (45).¹⁰ The full, careful, and enchanting account of the offerings brought by the Hyperborean maidens to Artemis in Delos could only have been written by a man deeply interested in religion (4.32–35).

A notable instance of interest in religion rousing the researcher in Herodotus is his full and emphatic treatment of the results of the Athenians' and Spartans' killing of Darius' heralds—*τοῦτό μοι ἐν τοῖσι θεϊότατον φαίνεται γενέσθαι . . . δῆλον ὦν μοι ὅτι θεῖον ἐγένετο τὸ πρῆγμα* (7.133–137). The very considerable piece of research about Helen

¹⁰Cf. the similar interest and investigation regarding the Heavenly Aphrodite, just indicated at 1.105.

(2.112–120) might be said to be religious in inspiration, starting from Herodotus' conjecture that the temple of Aphrodite Xeine in the *temenos* of Proteus was Helen's and culminating in the edifying conclusion of 2.120.5. In chapters 116–117 the evidence of Homer is critically examined, and, in passing, the Homeric authorship of the *Cypria* disallowed. Not unlike some modern scholars Herodotus overargues his case: Alexander's presence in Sidon does not prove that he was in Egypt.¹¹ In chapter 120 Herodotus accepts the radical revision of Homer resulting from the previous discussion, and argues for it in a lengthy and forcefully expressed rationalizing criticism of the traditional tale.

Two other noteworthy pieces of criticism which do not fall in any of the above groupings, or under War and Politics, are Herodotus' treatment of the introduction of the alphabet to Greece (5.58 ff.), and his demolition of the attribution of Mycerinus' pyramid to Rhodopis (2.134).

Herodotus' absolutely striking interest in Commerce, Industry, Technology, the works of human ingenuity, by its subject matter elicits his descriptive rather than his critical powers, but for a just understanding of Herodotus and his work must not be passed over in silence. How and Wells (Introd. 17) give a useful short note on his interest in commerce: ". . . it is plausible to suggest that Herodotus travelled as a merchant . . . ;"¹² but the catholicity of his interest in all manifestations of human ingenuity makes such conjectures, however tempting, precarious; perhaps, rather than "travelled as a merchant," travelled with merchants. Herodotean enthusiasm and do-it-yourself detail in his account of many technical processes recalls the Homer of the *Odyssey*. Such are the construction and management of cargo vessels on the Euphrates (1.194), as neat and self-contained a procedure as the sacrificial beast in Scythia cooking itself (4.61), mummification (2.86–89), the method of constructing a pyramid (2.125), the scalping technique of the Scythians, the tanning and quality of human hide (4.64), the rigging of the ghostly riders around the tombs of the Scythian kings (4.71–72), the construction of the Scythian cannabis-fueled sauna (4.73–74), Zacynthian pitch (4.195), Iranian oil (6.119), the mode of construction of the Hellespontine bridge and the Athos canal (7.36 and 22–23). The iron crater-stand, soldered or welded by Glaucus of Chios, is *θέης ἄξιον διὰ πάντων τῶν ἐν Δελφοῖσι ἀναθημάτων, Γλαύκου τοῦ Χίου ποίημα, ὃς μούνος δὴ πάντων ἀνθρώπων σιδήρον κόλλησιν ἐξέυρε* (1.25)—technological prowess outweighs other considerations in his rating of Delphian exhibits. At 2.150 Herodotus expresses concern (*ἐπιμελές γὰρ δὴ μοι ἦν*) as to how they disposed of the *χοῦς*, "the earth dug out," from the

¹¹For another scholarly touch, cf. Herodotus' claims of originality at 2.104.1, and 2.18.1.

¹²Their references could be greatly multiplied; e.g., I find *τρίψιν* of 4.183.3 most suggestive: "nice goods," and the unspoiled (*ἀκήρατον*) market of Tartessus (4.152.3).

excavation of Lake Moeris, and at 2.175 the greatest wonder (τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἦκιστα αὐτῶν ἀλλὰ μάλιστα θαυμάζω ἐστὶ τόδε) at a feat of transportation connected with Amasis' building programme; occasionally in Book 1, frequently in Book 2, he furnishes much detail about the great structures of the East. He manages to work in descriptions of the Royal Road (5.52–54) and the Persian Post (8.98). Human ingenuity with modern overtones interests Herodotus at 3.6 and 3.9: recovery of Egyptian "empties" to provide water in the desert, and skin pipe-lines for the same purpose, and, at 2.108, Egypt was canalized to improve the quality of drinking water of inland cities—the well-water rather flat. Herodotean enthusiasm and openness to the new is illustrated at 3.106: "wild trees in India bear καρπὸν εἶρια superior in beauty and ἀρετῇ to that of sheep"—"this is the first Western mention of cotton," (H.W. *ad loc.*).

When we come to Politics and War, we hardly ever find the same sort of critical discussions we have been noting, with the same involvement on the part of the author, the same arguing for his own views. 7.139 is a notable exception: Herodotus argues effectively for his opinion that Athens, after the Gods, was the saviour of Greece. But while this judgement does him credit, it is apparently more reporting of the current Athenian view than original criticism (cf. Thuc. 1.73). In a somewhat similar passage he is much less successful in arguing for Alcmaeonid innocence of collaboration with the enemy at Marathon (6.121–124)—"illogical and unconvincing" (H.W. *ad loc.*), and also in arguing for his view of why Leonidas stayed at Thermopylae (7.219–222).¹³ At 7.214 he dismisses with incisive and cogent criticism a report that not Ephialtes but two others betrayed the mountain-path to Xerxes. His refutation of the story that Xerxes crossed by ship from Eion to Asia is less business-like, gratefully Herodotean, but decisive (8.118–120). At 8.94 he *succinctly* dismisses Athenian slander of Adeimantus and the Corinthians at Salamis, and at 8.3 he gives a perhaps too tough-minded judgement of why Athens surrendered the naval command to Sparta, at 7.173.4 the real reason that the Greeks withdrew from Tempe, and at 8.63 that Eurybiades held the fleet at Salamis.

Herodotus does, then, in treating of war and politics, on occasion support his own views with critical discussion or concisely stated reasons, but is usually content to report τὰ λεγόμενα, which he insists is his purpose (7.152, cf. 2.123, 125, 4.173, 187, 195), normally a single version but not infrequently two or three variant accounts, between which he either expresses a preference or leaves the choice to the reader (see, e.g., Schmid 630 n. 5). Perhaps the most elaborate of these concerns the question whether or not Dorieus helped Croton against Sybaris. After reporting the Crotoniate and Sybarite versions, with their supporting arguments, Herodotus concludes: καὶ πάρεστι, ὁκοτέρουσί τις πείθεται αὐτῶν,

¹³Cf. *Phoenix* 15 (1961) 14 ff.

τούτοις προσχωρεῖν (5.44–45). Herodotus gives the majority and minority reports of why Oroetes decided to kill Polycrates, and concludes: *πάρεστι δὲ πείθεσθαι ὁκοτέρῃ τις βούλεται αὐτῶν*—“take your pick” (3.120–122), this from a historian interested in causation. But, in discussing the ages of the gods, while he follows his report of Greek and Egyptian views with a similar formula: *τούτων ὧν ἀμφοτέρων πάρεστι χρᾶσθαι τοῖσι τις πείθεται λεγομένοις μᾶλλον*, he goes on to argue vigorously for his own opinion (2.145–146). This nonchalant manner of dealing with problems arising in the field of politics and war, along with the scarcity of those extended critical discussions we have noted in other fields, looks like a lack of interest, no strong urge to establish the facts.¹⁴

Other instances which point in the same direction may be cited. His dating of the introduction of the Spartan *Κόσμος, Εὐνομία* (1.65), is in Gomme’s phrase “perhaps the most remarkable instance of a carefree chronology in his history” (*Commentary* 1.128).¹⁵ Continuing, Herodotus notes that certain unidentified informants say Lycurgus received the present Spartan constitution from the Pythia, but the Spartans themselves say from Crete, and leaves it at that; Lycurgus instituted Ephors and Elders but Herodotus gives no indication of their functions or powers. But it is, after all, “the present constitution” that Lycurgus established, and Herodotus may well have “taken it for granted” (as Gomme says of Thucydides [*Commentary* 1.1 ff.]), but in his full-scale digression on the powers and prerogatives of the Spartan kings (6.56–59), introduced, presumably, to explain to the reader how the policy of one Spartan king could be obstructed by the other, we might have expected to learn more of their constitutional position in the state, in particular their rôle in the “decision-making process,” their relationship to Ephors, Gerontes, and Ecclesia, if constitutional “detail” had been of any particular interest to Herodotus. The one political power he does assign them, “to declare war against any land they pleased,” is very wrong. This lack of interest in constitutional “detail,” or lordly unconcern, is illustrated in small by his having Zopyrus taken by the guards *ἐπὶ τὰ κοινὰ τῶν Βαβυλωνίων* (3.156)—“Hérodote s’exprime comme si, à Babylone, avait existé le régime démocratique” (Legrand).

His treatment of the Cleisthenic reform is like his treatment of the Lycurgan, and might be explained, or excused, in the same way, but the motive he ascribes to Cleisthenes for changing the names and number of the Athenian tribes, contempt of the Ionians (5.69), shows, if not mere

¹⁴Legrand suggests that the reason for such treatment was that Herodotus was intellectually lazy (147 f.), but this is hard to accept as an adequate explanation. Is it perhaps more likely because his interests were different from Legrand’s and other academic historians’ of our times? Cf. below, 291 ff., for further discussion.

¹⁵Cf. the reigns of Alyattes and Cleomenes: 1.25.1, 5.48.

frivolity, a blindness to constitutional or political matters, which he could have corrected, presumably, if moved by interest to try (the motive he gives is his own—*δοκέειν ἐμοί*); we might have expected better of him—in his account of Demonax of Mantinea's dealing with Cyrene's troubles the first of two measures he records is his institution of three tribes for Cyrene and their composition—a fresh start for Cyrene (4.161). Nothing is said of the powers of the *Probouloi* assembled at the Isthmus (7.172), the rôle of *τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἰώνων* (5.109.3) is left obscure.

His account of the relationship between Polycrates and Amasis, ending with Amasis' renouncing their alliance (3.39–43), it may be thought pedantic and heavy-handed to criticize, but it was either bad of Herodotus, *qua* historian, interested in causation, to fail to realize the true situation, Polycrates' abandoning Egypt for Persia, or irresponsible vis-à-vis his readers. To explain the Spartan intervention against Polycrates, Herodotus reports without comment the Samian and Spartan versions (3.47). If Herodotus had been more politically aware, interested, should it not have occurred to him, the historian of East-West strife, that there might have been some connection between this first warlike appearance of Lacedaemonians in Asian waters since the Trojan Wars (3.56.2) and Polycrates' Medizing? He had noted Spartan solicitude for and championing of the Asian Greeks at 1.152, and at 6.49–50 shows Cleomenes (who may have been king at the time of the Samian affair) accepting Sparta's responsibility to lead Greek resistance against Persia. And the same query may be made about his treatment of Spartan intervention against the Medizing tyrant Hippias (5.63–65).

Lack of interest in "party-political" matters, or a state's internal politics, is shown by his making no attempt to identify "the enemies" who haled Cleomenes before the Ephors on his return from Argos (6.82), by accepting without question his improbable sudden madness and suicide (6.75), and in his extensive discussion of the cause of Cleomenes' sad end suggesting no political but mainly religious reasons, the sort of thing that interests Herodotus and accounts for this long digression (6.75–84). There is no attempt to identify Miltiades' "enemies" who prosecuted him on his return from the Chersonese (6.104), though there is on his return from Paros (6.136), where, however, the religious factor is given a large and mysterious place in the account of Miltiades' sad end (6.134–135), and most revealing is the almost total blank about Athenian politics between Marathon and Xerxes' expedition—a casual reference to "the recent appearance" of Themistocles on Athens' political stage and the lucky naval building programme he was responsible for—"this war with Aegina saved Hellas" (7.143–144). Legrand notes the omissions in Herodotus' account, and suggests that the reason was that he was not in a position to furnish the information (7, p. 138 f.), and later (8, p. 40) he thinks the reason

Herodotus ignores Themistocles' early career was because of the society he frequented, viz. the Alcmaeonidae. Is it not rather a question of Herodotus' interests?

A similarly casual approach in military matters may be briefly illustrated. Herodotus reports three conflicting accounts of the start of the battle of Salamis and leaves it at that (8.84). His statement that by coincidence (συνέπιπτε δὲ ὥστε) the land actions at Thermopylae and the naval engagements at Artemisium occurred on the same days leaves it questionable whether he fully appreciated the strategic interdependence of the two positions (8.15, and H.W. *ad loc.*; cf. 7.220, Leonidas' reason for staying at Thermopylae). For Marathon we have his strange account of the Athenian command, his view that Athenian tactics were accidental, the 8-stade gallop of the hoplites, and no mention of the Persian horse (6.110–112). The weird and wonderful account of the proposed switching of Spartan and Athenian wings on the morn of Plataea (9.46–47) does not arouse Herodotus' critical powers, but in an immediately preceding passage he exercises them authoritatively (οἶδα : “. . . implies personal inquiry on the part of H.,” H.W. *ad loc.*) in correcting Mardonius' use of an oracle (9.43). In his battle accounts Herodotus devotes much of his attention to “Homeric” ἀριστεΐαι, how individual combatants distinguished themselves, which is natural enough, when his announced purpose is to preserve the fame of great and wondrous deeds. On Herodotus' numbers for Xerxes' forces we preserve a decent silence except to note his considered view that the Persian navy arrived at Phalerum with no fewer ships than it had on arrival at the Sepiad strand (8.66)—breath-takingly casual. We just mention Jacoby's “unhealable contradiction” between 8.115.1 and 8.126, his account of Xerxes' withdrawal from Greece.

In spite of the foregoing it would obviously be absurd, if we consider his work, to conclude that Herodotus was not interested in war and politics, and to speak of his “ignorance of war and politics,” without qualification, is far too sweeping, but from the material we have reviewed in the preceding pages it does seem that his interest in war and politics was different, and manifested itself differently, from that displayed in some other subjects he treats of. Most strikingly, in war and politics it is the large picture, the broad issues, that interest and satisfy Herodotus.

Sparta attained εὐνομία, and, enjoying good land and abundant men, sprang up and flourished (1.66.1). Enough for Herodotus—no need to fuss about date or origin of reform, and constitutional detail. Athens, freed of her tyrants, “was in full prosperity” (Legrand); ἰσηγορία (= ἐλευθερία) all that is required to explain (5.78)—no need of detail re Cleisthenic reform. We have the same interest in large political issues demonstrated in the constitutional debate prior to the accession of Darius (3.80–82; contrast his offhand and feeble argument for the historicity of the debate [6.43.3]),

the Persian settlement of Ionia and Herodotus' prescription for the settling of Greek inter-state differences (6.42 and 7.9β; cf. 6.98), the desirability of political unification (5.3, 1.170), the rule of law as opposed to personal caprice (7.101–104), the preciousness of freedom (7.135), the establishment of political absolutism (1.99).

Xerxes' speeches give the large significance, including the essential cause, of the Persian Wars (7.8 and 11), and Miltiades' the large significance of Marathon (6.109), Artabanus' the hazards attending large-scale and deep invasion of enemy territory (7.49), and Hecataeus' the essential strategy for Ionia against Persia, from which Themistocles may have learned (5.36, cf. 6.7.1 and Thuc. 1.93). Herodotus' evaluation of Athens' contribution to Xerxes' defeat shows he did understand the broad strategy of the war (7.139). Instead of detailed and contentious discussion of strategy and tactics Herodotus firmly identifies large factors in Greek victories: at Salamis heavier Greek ships in narrow waters where the superior sailing ability of the Persian ships was negated and their superior numbers a disadvantage, and Greek discipline (8.60, 86); at Plataea superior arms and armour and training (9.62–63); at Thermopylae the narrowness of the pass would prevent the Persians from exploiting their superior numbers and cavalry, and in the battle superior arms, training, and discipline of the Greeks accounted for the Persian difficulties (7.177 and 211).¹⁶

And so, a striving for ἀντρέχεια, and the *Problemmacherei*, the critical discussion, it engenders, are not features of Herodotus' treatment of war and politics.¹⁷ Some reasons for this different sort of interest and treatment may be suggested concisely. Herodotus' religious-metaphysical views: the divine governance of human affairs is not just traditional-decorative, but really meant; when he says (7.139) that next to the Gods the Athenians were the saviours of Hellas, presumably he *meant* it, not just an automatic piety, and likewise with his many similar utterances.¹⁸ Man's rôle is inevitably diminished, and in this perspective it is foolish to get too concerned over the minutiae of war and politics. There is also the mutability and transience of human affairs (1.5 and *passim*). This set of beliefs will also have been an important factor in Herodotus' absolutely remarkable largeness of spirit, even-handed justice, lack of pettiness, impartiality. He gives, indeed, the

¹⁶Similarly, Herodotus' critical powers appear to advantage when he makes a clear distinction between historical and mythical times (1.5.3, 3.122.2), the large perspective, and in his dating of Homer and Hesiod (2.53), and the healthy scepticism that so infuriated Plutarch; cf. his suspicion of τὸ σμεῖνόν (1.95.1, 3.16.7), his suspension of judgement re the alleged intrigues of Pausanias (5.32).

¹⁷If this is so, it has some bearing on the question of Herodotus' sources, viz., it makes it unlikely that for his account of Greek politics and the Persian Wars he would have felt the need to seek out and interrogate, even if feasible, the special informants of high station fancied by Jacoby, Legrand, *et al.* Cf. *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 265 ff.

¹⁸Cf. Regenbogen's strenuous and forceful exposition.

sense of a certain detachment, a certain being above it all, and this habit of mind may contribute to a certain casualness about establishing the facts in matters of the above-mentioned sort.¹⁹

Herodotus did not fully experience the life of a citizen in a free city-state, that "seminary of citizenship" (W.S. Ferguson in a classroom lecture), and this must have had some effect on his handling of war and politics.

Artistic considerations: the citing of variants, critical discussion, would lessen the impact of the great passages (cf. von Fritz 1.439) and this is particularly true of the culminating books, 7–9 (and Marathon), his epic account of the Greek fight for freedom against great odds, and, on a lowlier plane, would spoil a good story, a very important consideration for Herodotus.

There were no prose sources to rouse the controversialist in Herodotus,²⁰ or to stimulate the critic to a striving for *ἀπρέκεια*. If Herodotus had been using written sources for the Wars, it seems almost certain, to judge from his behaviour where he demonstrably was, that we would have had some polemics.

And now, having seen something of the nature of Herodotus' interests, we may consider Herodotus' introductory sentence, or Proem, where he signs his work and, it is natural to suppose, following Greek custom in poetry and prose, gives his readers some idea of its contents as well as his purpose in writing it.²¹

Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησσεὺς ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὥς μῆτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μῆτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμάστα, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι.

With the principal clause, naturally, *ἐστὶ* is to be supplied, and it governs the two coordinate purpose clauses: "What follows is the setting forth of the inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that neither what men have done may fade away, be forgotten, with time, nor great and wondrous deeds, some performed by Hellenes, others by Barbarians, may lack renown, both the others (deeds), and the cause of their going to war with each other."²²

¹⁹The many inconsistencies in Herodotus are to be explained as resulting from this same genial largeness of spirit.

²⁰Cf. Legrand 146 f. on Herodotus as controversialist.

²¹See Krischer. When Herodotus wrote this introductory sentence, and the following chapters (1–5), we must think of him with his completed work before him (Schmid 586 f.), or very clearly conceived (cf. R. Lattimore, "The Composition of the History of Herodotus," *CP* 53 [1958] 9–21, for an extreme version of the latter view).

²²With *μῆτε . . . μῆτε*, in accordance with normal Herodotean usage, we have two distinct subjects, not the narrowing down and defining of one as, e.g., Schwartz 20, n. 1, Pohlenz 2–9, Erbse 212 f., and Krischer. The respective predicates lead to the same conclusion (cf.

This reading gives a fair, if sketchy, representation of the scope and nature of Herodotus' work,²³ if we understand and include with "what men have done" their physical environment,²⁴ and with the cause of Greek-Barbarian strife the strife itself, already clearly indicated by the phraseology of *ἔργα μεγάλα . . . ἀποδεχθέντα*, and *ἄκλεᾶ*;²⁵ it also corresponds with the author's interests as seen (partially) in the preceding pages, *τὰ γενόμενα κ.τ.λ.*, the whole panorama of human activity and achievement, and the Persian Wars, with a broad hint of epic treatment (*ἄκλεᾶ γένηται*), and their cause, the cause of the quarrel following the announcement of the subject, like the *Iliad*, and like the *Iliad*, effecting a transition to what immediately follows. All straightforward enough.²⁶

Many difficulties of interpretation, however, have been seen in this sentence by many learned men and many solutions offered; we cannot attempt a detailed tracing of this long and complicated effort at explication with its many variations and combinations,²⁷ but will have to touch on a few salient points. Stein thought that *ἔργα* referred exclusively to monu-

Krischer, 164 f., and Pohlenz, 2 f., who however do not consider the possibility that Herodotus is announcing two subjects). Logically, of course, there is some overlap between *τὰ γενόμενα κ.τ.λ.* and *ἔργα μεγάλα κ.τ.λ.*, or rather, the first comprehends the second, but qualitatively they are quite distinct: great and wondrous deeds and the wars associated with them (see below, n. 25) constitute a special category of human activity.

²³Pohlenz (4) observes that proems of this period gave no sharp outline of the subject of a work.

²⁴Cf. A. Lesky, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (Bern 1957/8) 349; W. Schadewaldt, "Das Religiös-Humane als Grundlage der geschichtlichen Objektivität bei Herodot," in Marg, 189.

²⁵Of the 75 occurrences of *ἔργον* (*ἔργα*) meaning "deed, act, achievement" listed in Powell (of his 78, 2.101 is misclassified, 6.19.2 an oracle, and the Proem is here omitted), 52 are deeds of military (including naval) character and/or heroic courage, and even more significant for our present purpose, *ἔργον* (*ἔργα*) with *ἀποδέξασθαι* etc. (*ἀπόδεξις*) refers almost exclusively to military deeds: of the 14 occurrences of *ἔργον* (*ἔργα*) with *ἀποδέξασθαι* etc. (to which 9.27.5 may be added) only 1 is non-military (2.10.3—the great *ἔργα* performed by certain rivers other than the Nile), of the 3 with *ἀπόδεξις* 2 (but cf. below, 295). Herodotus' readers, presumably, would understand immediately that *ἔργα κ.τ.λ.* coupled with *δι' ἣν αἰτίην κ.τ.λ.* meant primarily the Persian Wars and their cause. 44 of the above 52 are military, 31 of them in the last three books. "Surtout, les exploits de valeureux guerriers retiennent l'attention de l'écrivain" (Legrand 56), and we should extend this to all brave men: cf. his interesting reflection on Telines' *ἔργον τοσοῦτον* (7.153.4), and his super-vivid account of Hegesistratus' *ἔργον . . . μέζον λόγον . . . ἀνδριότατον ἔργον πάντων τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν* (9.37).

For *ἄκλεᾶ* see Pohlenz 2 f.

²⁶My understanding of the Proem, essentially, is the same as that of Wyttenbach (whose commentary I have not been able to see), and Baehr (Fr. Creuzer and J. C. F. Baehr, *Herodoti Musae* [Leipzig 1830–1835]).

²⁷For some bibliography on the question see Schmid 586, note 1; H. R. Immerwahr, "Historical Causation in Herodotus," *TAPA* 87 (1956) 247, n. 11; *idem*, "Ergon: History as a Monument," *AJP* 81 (1960) 263 f. and notes.

ments or buildings, and that *τά τε ἄλλα* did not go with what looks like its natural antecedent *ἔργα*, but depended on the verbal idea in *ἀπόδεξις*.²⁸ Jacoby followed Stein as regards *ἔργα*, but as regards *τά τε ἄλλα* revolted at the syntactical contortion required—"grammatisch unmöglich"—and preferred to see it as "a free addition to the purpose clause," referring to *τὰ γυνόμενα* (334 f.), which itself is exceedingly strange, and, it would seem likely, stems from the fact that buildings are not usually causes of wars, a consideration which may also account for, at least in part, Stein's remarkable syntax. Regenbogen, Legrand, Erbse, Pohlenz, Cobet, *et al.*, on the other hand, while disagreeing that *ἔργα* were exclusively monuments, followed Stein's forced and unnatural reading of the sentence, which does seem impossible.²⁹

The idea that *ἔργα* in this passage refers exclusively to monuments has thus been pretty well discarded, but the monuments have usually been retained, under the blanket-term "achievements:" now, it seems, the prevailing view is that *ἔργα* refers to both deeds and monuments. The evidence presented above of Herodotean usage (note 25) makes this very unlikely. To that evidence, being more specific, we add, with emphasis, the following: *ἀποδέξασθαι* etc. does not occur with *ἔργον* = "architectural works" (12) or *ἔργον* = "handiwork" (9); *ἀπόδεξις*, indeed, occurs twice with "architectural works," but Legrand at 2.101, note 1, observes: "Associé à *ἀποδείκνυσθαι*, ou à *ἀπόδεξις*, le mot *ἔργον*, quand il est accompagné d'une épithète laudative (ou de son équivalent, comme le *π* de VIII 89) signifie, chez Hérodote, *exploit*. Ici, où il est employé sans épithète, le contexte montre qu'il s'agit, comme au ch. 148, non pas d'actions, mais d'*ouvrages*." (Cf. 1.207.7.) Though exceptions to rules are always possible, the consistency of this Herodotean usage does, in itself, make it very unlikely that *ἔργα*, in the *Proem*, means monuments etc.

If, as maintained, *τά τε ἄλλα* refers to its natural antecedent *ἔργα*, there is no room in *ἔργα* for buildings etc. in addition to deeds. Another objection to *ἔργα*'s meaning monuments, either exclusively or on an equal footing with deeds, is that Herodotus, viewing his work as a whole, and indicating very concisely its subject-matter, would hardly have accorded monuments so prominent a place.

Ed. Schwartz (20, note 1) succinctly noted two objections (one already mentioned above, notes 22, 25) to supposing *ἔργα* refers to buildings:

²⁸H. Stein, *Herodotus*⁷ (Berlin 1962).

²⁹Regenbogen 106; Legrand *ad loc.*; Erbse 218; Pohlenz 4, n. 2; J. Cobet, *Herodote Exkurse und die Frage der Einheit seines Werkes* (Wiesbaden 1971) 30, n. 205.

Erbse (219) after persuading himself that *τά τε ἄλλα* depends on *ιστορήσας* (from *ιστορίης*) concludes: "The proposed connection is not so remote, if only one doesn't worry unduly about the formal difficulties, but thinks of the clear improvement in sense." This is, at least, refreshingly candid: he virtually admits twisting the evidence to support his preconception of the meaning of the sentence.

"Denn dazu passt ἀκλεᾶ so wenig, wie die Verteilung auf Hellenen und Barbaren; Herodot beschreibt hellenische Bauwerke nur ausnahmsweise, da sie in der Regel weder ihm noch seinem Publikum als Kuriositäten erscheinen. ἔργα heisst Taten." An even more important reason for the lack of balance between Greek and Barbarian buildings in the pages of Herodotus than the familiarity of the former to his readers is that by Herodotus' main criterion, size, the two are incomparable: "for if all the walls and other works in Greece were put together, they would be found to have cost less labour and money than this labyrinth" (2.148.2, Powell's translation), and the Labyrinth in its turn is surpassed by Lake Moeris (2.149.1). On the other hand, the balance in great and mighty deeds performed by Greeks and Barbarians is observed for Thermopylae (7.224), Salamis (8.87 ff.), Plataea (9.71, and cf. 62–63), and even Mycale (9.102). Schwartz's second objection, that ἀκλεᾶ is an unsuitable adjective for buildings, may be briefly enlarged on: Herodotus' other uses of κλέος (ἀκλεῶς [1], κλέος [4]) are consistent with Homer's κλέα ἀνδρῶν (cf. in particular 7.220.4 and 9.78.2, and Pohlenz 3).

Finally, I object to what, with some variations, seems to be the general view that in this introductory sentence we have a series of three subjects stated in ascending importance with by far the greatest weight falling on the third, τὰ τε ἄλλα κ.τ.λ. Lesky's formulation may be taken as representative: ". . . the last member of this somewhat ill-organized *tricolon* seems intended to define the theme of the work rather more closely. The author intends to deal with human history, more especially with great achievements of Hellenes and barbarians; finally—this being the main theme—he will relate the hostilities between them, meaning the course of the Persian wars."³⁰ Immerwahr (18 f.), apparently following Erbse, who, as noted above (note 22), interprets the sentence as a progressive narrowing-down, or defining, to one subject, takes a more extreme view: "Thereby the definition of the subject is gradually restricted to a quarrel (or to quarrels) between Greeks and barbarians . . . , " but he recognizes that this interpretation of the opening sentence hardly fits the work Herodotus has left us: "There is a further difficulty: if we apply the idea of a hostility between East and West to the whole work (as Pohlenz has attempted to do), we find that there are a good many events which do not fit the formula." Precisely; so why not

³⁰A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, tr. J. Willis and C. de Heer (London 1966) 317. Cf. Regenbogen (105 ff.), whose emphasis on the importance of the "ätiologische Moment" does not do justice to the breadth of Herodotus' interests, does not aptly describe the work he has left us.

τὰ τε ἄλλα . . . καί: Herodotean usage, far from requiring that we add "in particular," "especially," points in the opposite direction—no emphasis. Of Powell's 24 instances, exclusive of the Proem (his 24, including Proem, is a slip), there are 2 καὶ μάλιστ'α's, 11 καὶ δὲ καί's, 1 καὶ δὲ—in all of these emphasis is clearly required; of the 10 remaining it is either quite clear that no emphasis is implied, or very unlikely that any is.

recognize that the structure of the sentence after the principal clause, as suggested above (293), is more naturally understood as bipartite, two coordinate purpose clauses of roughly equal weight introduced by *μήτε . . . μήτε*, and that the meaning so won is confirmed by the work Herodotus has left us, and corresponds to his interests. He is, as he says he is, offering his readers a two-fold subject, what men have done, and great and wondrous deeds, primarily the Persian Wars and their cause.³¹ This reading of the Proem, as said, does reflect the work we have, with its multifarious subject matter, and the author's interests—there is nothing apologetic about *προσθήκας γὰρ δὴ μοι ὁ λόγος ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐδίξητο* (4.30.1). Herodotus wrote about what interested him, anticipating J. R. Green and other pioneers of a broader view of history,³² nor was he going to sacrifice his interests for a unity of subject which he had not promised. Perfect unity, monographic or organic, was not his overruling concern; a loose unity, which would accommodate his interests, was all that a writer of his gifts needed to create a greatly satisfactory work.

The Proem so interpreted also seems to be in accordance with Herodotus' likely development. Along with other certain influences, such as the body of Greek poetry and his Halicarnassian background, including Panyassis and memories of the Great War, he was certainly steeped in Homer and exposed to the Ionian periegetic literature while growing to manhood. These last two, as generally recognized, are reflected in the Proem and the following five prefatory chapters: the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν* and cause of the strife are picked up and enlarged on in chapters 1–5.3 to *λόγου*, the *ὁμοίως σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄσπεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπέξιν* of 1.5.3 refers back to *τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ*

³¹No one should doubt that the strife between Greeks and Barbarians, introduced at the beginning, and the climax of the work, is Herodotus' "main subject," but this does not mean we should reduce everything else to a strictly subordinate position, either relics of his earlier interests before he became a historian, "just excursions" (Jacoby 471; cf. von Fritz 1.442 ff.) "shoved together" (Jacoby 485) as convenient, roughly the "Analyst" position, or just introductory, roughly the "Unitarian," which calls for a great deal of forced, and unconvincing, argument to show their organic connection with Herodotus' allegedly unitary subject. Both Analysts and Unitarians give the War undue prominence, resulting from their assumption that Herodotus had a single subject, slight *τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*. See Drews 36 ff., 63 ff., 84 ff., for some helpful discussion and bibliography, and be it noted that, to his credit, Drews insists on the importance of *τὰ γενόμενα κ.τ.λ.*; but though he reveals occasional doubts about some of the claims of the Unitarians, and makes an occasional approach to what I regard as the truth about Herodotus' subject, he remains a staunch Unitarian—the War is Herodotus' subject.

For Analysts vs. Unitarians cf. also J. Cobet (above, n. 29) 188 f., and H. Verdin, "Hérodote historien? Quelques interprétations récentes," *ANICl* 44 (1975) 670 ff.

³²"It is the reproach of historians that they have too often turned history into a mere record of the butchery of men by their fellow-men." (Preface to the first edition of J. R. Green's, *A Short History of the English People* [London 1881]). Cf. Fritz Stern, *The Varieties of History* (New York 1956) 19: "J. R. Green . . . broke with this narrow concept of history" (i.e., exclusively political), and "drums and trumpets histories" (26).

ἀνθρώπων, giving the sequence αββα. All these influences, with the enlargement his genius contributed, and part of his genius was to find, or to be found by, his subject, are enough to explain the work we have without supposing previous histories of the Persian Wars.³³

Krischer (166 f.) argues that in the Proem Herodotus is signifying his rivalry with both Homer and Hecataeus: "In 2a [i.e., τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων κ.τ.λ.] erscheint Herodot mehr als Forscher, in 2b [i.e., ἔργα μεγάλα κ.τ.λ.] mehr als Erzähler." While admittedly unprovable, this is attractive, and works in very nicely with the general direction and results of the present investigation,³⁴ and also emphasizes what I have taken for granted, Herodotus' genius as narrator, story-teller.

There is no need to posit a developing Herodotus after the manner of the *Entwicklungstheorien*, to suppose that his early interests were displaced by and replaced with others, that he was metamorphosed in mid-career: Historian, no longer Ethnographer or Geographer; his subject matter, indeed, changes, but not, apparently, his interests. Presumably, the formative influences noted above had pretty well shaped him by the time he undertook his own work (i.e., his *ἱστορίη*), and continued together to influence him till his full development as a historian, of his own distinctive sort.³⁵

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³³See Drews for another view, strenuously and ingeniously argued.

³⁴Cf. Drews 185 n. 154 on Herodotus' use of *ἱστορίη*, *ἱστορέω*: of 5 occurrences of the noun, 4 are in Books 1 and 2, 1 in Book 7 (the Army-Navy List), the 17 occurrences of the verb all in Books 1-4. It is hard to accept Drews' statement that this "is certainly coincidental."

³⁵Cf. Regenbogen 73: "Wir können keine Entwicklungsstufe Herodots fassen, wo er reiner Geograph und Ethnograph gewesen wäre. Durch sein Interesse für Vergangenheiten und ihre Erforschung ist Herodot ursprünglich und von vornherein Historiker, wenn man sich vor den Obertönen des modernen Begriffs auch hüten muss."