

XVI.—*Prophasis and Aitia*

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These two words do not, as a rule, offer any special difficulty to students of Greek, except when they try to decide what precisely their meaning is when they are used by Thucydides and Polybius in discussing the causes of a war.¹ Only then, perhaps, do they realize the shortcomings of their Greek lexicon and begin to wonder whether the Greek use of these words is logical and clear. Attempts have been made to clear up the apparent difficulty in editions of Thucydides and elsewhere, and I shall not take time to consider the merits and shortcomings of earlier discussions,² except to point out that they often fail to recognize the full range of meaning which the first of these two words displays in Greek writers; we must be prepared to admit that, if we try to confine ourselves to translations like "excuse" "motive" or "cause" we are doomed to permanent misunderstanding.³

Aitia, since it offers no difficulty at all, may be disposed of in very few words. It has the active meaning of "accusation" "complaint" "grievance" and the corresponding passive meaning "guilt" "blame" "responsibility"; and by logical development it also means "that which is responsible" — the "cause," as in the opening sentence of Herodotus, δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἄλλήλοισι.⁴ There is often some doubt whether a Greek writer is thinking in terms of "cause" or "accusation" or "guilt," an ambiguity which we find disconcert-

¹ Especially Thuc. 1.23 and Polyb. 3.6–15. These passages will be discussed later in this article.

² This task has been largely rendered unnecessary for me thanks to the recent article of Gordon M. Kirkwood, "Thucydides' words for 'Cause,'" *AJP* 73 (1952) 37–61. Though I shall have occasion to disagree with Kirkwood in detail, his article has been most useful and helpful. Cf. also K. Deichgräber, "ΠΡΟΦΑΣΙΣ. Eine terminologische Studie," *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin*, 3.4 (1933) 1–17.

³ In this respect the new Liddell and Scott is sadly at fault. Gomme's note on Thuc. 1.23.6 in his *Commentary on Thucydides* is far more illuminating.

⁴ "Reason," not "grievance," must be the meaning, as Herodotus goes on Περσέων μὲν νυν οἱ λόγοι Φοίνικας αἰτίους φασὶ γενέσθαι τῆς διαφορῆς. He clearly has in mind the opening of the *Iliad*, and its attempt to establish the cause or origin of a quarrel — the anger of Apollo, not the "grievance" of Achilles.

ing since modern English has differentiated "cause" and "case" and speaks of "cause for complaint" where Greek might use simply *aitia*.⁵ But the adjective *aitios* is always passive in meaning, denoting the person or thing held responsible. Hence the neuter *τὸ αἷτιον* is quite naturally used in the sense of "cause" and is in fact less ambiguous than *aitia*.⁶

Prophasis, whether derived from *προφαίνω* or *πρόφημι*,⁷ means in the most general terms something that you show or say, an explanation that you offer for behaviour, giving the reason or the purpose. Herodotus paraphrases it by *πρόσχημα τοῦ λόγου*,⁸ so that the *προ*-element means "in front," plain for everyone to see and also a shield for your real actions or intentions. Your explanation may be true or false, reasonable or unreasonable, convincing or worthless, creditable or discreditable.⁹ It is frequently proper, however, to use the translation "excuse" or "pretext" because we most commonly offer explanations for our behaviour if it appears reprehensible or if we wish to conceal our true intentions or motives.¹⁰

Even when a man is clearly or definitely in the wrong, he will usually offer some kind of *prophasis*, and an explanation, however lame and unsatisfactory, is often expected by the injured party as a symbol of ordinary good manners. Suppose, for example, a pedestrian is knocked down by a car, he asks the driver why he

⁵ Cf. what Pontius Pilate says in John 18:38 *ἐγὼ οὐδεμίαν αἷτιαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ* (in Luke 23:4 we have *οὐδὲν εὐρίσκω αἷτιον*). In both passages the King James version renders "I find no fault," but the Vulgate has *nihil causae* — "no case" as a modern judge might say.

⁶ Kirkwood (see note 2 above) 58, recognized that *αἷτιον* in Thucydides was less ambiguous as a word for "cause," but failed to point out the reason. Cf. also Plato *Rep.* 4.443b.

⁷ Either derivation is defensible linguistically. Hellenistic writers, like Polybius, who were so fond of *ἀπόφασις*, *ἐπίφασις*, and *ἐμφασις* which they clearly regarded as derived from *φαίνω*, must have regarded *πρόφασις* as parallel with them. And Aristoph. *Nub.* 55 makes a *prophasis* something that one can "show" rather than "say." In favour of the derivation from *φημί* is the Latin use of *professio* as an almost exact translation of the word (cf. Tac. *Agr.* 3). And *ἀπόφασις* in earlier writers is not "demonstration" (as in Polybius) but "denial" and derived from *φημί* as clearly as the old Greek word *πάρφασις*.

⁸ 6.133.1, cf. 7.157.1, and Thuc. 1.96.1; 3.82.4; 5.30.2.

⁹ *ἀληθής*, *ψευδής*, Thuc. 1.23.6; 6.6.1; Dem. 18.225. *καλή*, *φαύλη*, Dem. 21.98; *Proem.* 32.2. *δικαία*, *ἄδικος*, Dem. 11.1; 18.284; 20.97; 21.98; 48.39. *εὐλογος*, Thuc. 3.82.4; 6.79.2. *ἐπικεκής*, Thuc. 3.9.2. *ἀκριβής*, Thuc. 4.47.2. *εὐπερεής*, Thuc. 6.8.4. *ἄτοπος*, Dem. 48.36.

¹⁰ Cf. the proverb quoted by Aristot. *Rhet.* 1.1373A: *προφάσεως δέεται μόνον ἡ πονηρία*.

did not stop, and the driver will reply "I did not see you" or "My brakes didn't work," as though to show that he did not intend any harm. Neither plea is a proper defence of his action; nor will it save him from being fined in a police court, particularly if the true explanation of his careless driving happens to be drunkenness. This last would hardly be a *δικαία καὶ εὐπρεπὴς πρόφασις*, but it is a *prophasis* all the same. Demosthenes in his speech against Meidias mentions a certain Charicles who, while taking part in a solemn procession, suddenly attacked one of his personal enemies and struck him with a whip; he was drunk admittedly, and apparently expected his offence to be treated more leniently since he could offer drunkenness as a *prophasis*. Demosthenes, however, approves the verdict of the people, who decided that his assault was a deliberate act of *hybris* — that his drunkenness was a pretext designed to hide his real intention, not an excuse which explained his action.¹¹ In English usage the two notions (excuse and pretext) are quite distinct in meaning; but *prophasis* covers them both, the explanation offered by way of apology and the pretence designed to conceal the reality.

Pindar calls *prophasis* "the daughter of After-thought"¹² and it is a brilliant description — the apology that we have to produce after our offence, the pretence that we devise after deciding on our action. But not every kind of *prophasis* is an after-thought. For example, one man may dislike another for purely private reasons, which public opinion will not respect; he will be unable to take action against him openly until he has a *prophasis*; if the other man is rude and insulting to him in public, he then has a *δικαία πρόφασις* for doing him harm, he can explain and justify taking action against

¹¹ Dem. 21.180. The argument of Demosthenes may help us to understand Agamemnon's oath in *Iliad* 19.258–262, when he swears he has not laid a hand on Briseis

οὐτ' εἰνῆς πρόφασιν κεχρημένος οὔτε τευ ἄλλου,

"whether my *prophasis* was sexual desire or anything else." If Agamemnon had slept with Briseis, he would of course have pleaded sexual desire as an excuse; but Achilles might have argued that it was a mere pretext — that Agamemnon's real purpose was to spite Achilles. It is surely a mistake, therefore, to argue, like Deichgräber (see note 2) pp. 1–3 and Kirkwood (see note 2) p. 48, that *prophasis* here means "true reason." The word is used in only one other passage in Homer, in *Iliad* 19.302, where the women weep for their own private woes" but taking the death of Patroclus as a *prophasis*." Leaf in his commentary thinks that "true reason" may be the meaning in both passages, but he appears not to recognize the distinction between "excuse" and "pretext."

¹² *Pyth.* 5.28.

him; but this *prophasis* is not the real reason for quarrelling, the original ground for enmity. In this way we can distinguish some *ἐνπροφάσιτος αἰτία* — “a complaint that can well be used as a *prophasis*” — from the fundamental cause of a quarrel.¹³

Herodotus gives several examples of this kind of *prophasis* in describing quarrels between both individuals and states. Croesus finds fault with Cambyzes because he has been killing numerous people without any proper grounds, and warns him that such behaviour will bring on a revolt; whereupon Cambyzes seizes on this ill-timed well-meant advice as a *prophasis* for punishing him. “You dare to give me advice after all the bad advice you gave my father Cyrus; but you shall not escape, since I have long been wanting a *prophasis* to use against you.”¹⁴ The Argives, who have made up their mind not to fight against Xerxes, insist that the Spartans give them a share in the command *ἵνα ἐπὶ προφάσιος ἡσυχίην ἄγωσι* (7.150.3). So also the Athenians, constantly at enmity with Aegina, when they learn that the Aeginetans have given earth and water to Darius, seize upon this *prophasis* to denounce their behaviour at Sparta (6.49.2). Likewise Miltiades has a *prophasis* for his expedition to Paros — the trireme which they sent to fight on the Persian side; but this is only a formal excuse, since he has an old personal quarrel with the Parians (6.133.1).¹⁵

This *prophasis* of Miltiades is described by Herodotus as a *πρόσχημα τοῦ λόγου*, and we find both expressions used to describe Darius’ formal pretext or reason for the expedition of Mardonius and the Marathon expedition.¹⁶ Darius’ intention of conquering the cities on the mainland of Greece is clearly regarded by Herodotus as part of his general imperialist policy, so that his readers will not require any particular explanation of it; but his formal reason is the part played by the Athenians in the sack of Sardis, which causes him to tell his servant to remind him to “remember the Athenians.” He intends to use this *prophasis* to conquer the states in Greece who did not give him earth and water. It is his formal justifica-

¹³ Cf. Thuc. 6.105.2.

¹⁴ 3.36.3. Cf. the similar usage in Plato *Ep.* 3.318c, 7.349d.

¹⁵ Other examples are in 6.13.2 and 8.3.2. Cf. also 6.137.2, where the Athenians drive out the Pelasgians without offering any *prophasis*. Cleon in Thuc. 3.40.6 remarks that the aggressor who has no *prophasis* is the most dangerous enemy of all; because he knows that his victim need have no scruples about retaliation, he will try to destroy him utterly.

¹⁶ 6.44.1 and 94.1.

tion for the expedition; but it is also a statement of his purpose; he says he will humble Athens and Eretria, but really intends to conquer all Greece; he is, therefore, misrepresenting not only the reason, but also the purpose of his expedition. It is the same as with Charicles, and the excuse and the pretext for his assault described by Demosthenes, except that Darius' *prophasis* is more dignified.

Prophasis does not always imply deceit in Herodotus. When Croesus is afraid that, after the Lydians have revolted, Cyrus will make slaves of them *ἢν μὴ ἀξιώχρεον πρόφασιν προτείνη*, he is not actually thinking of deceiving him (1.156.1). The precise meaning of the word here is difficult to establish, because it is not quite clear for whom Croesus wants to offer a *prophasis* — is it an excuse to explain the rebellion of the Lydians, a pretext for leniency on the part of Cyrus, or a mere explanation or objection¹⁷ of his own so as to restrain Cyrus? Herodotus does use the word several times in the general sense of explanation or statement, without any implied contrast with true cause or true facts.¹⁸ It is worth remembering that *aitia*, in the sense of complaint, can be practically identical in meaning with *prophasis*. Hence the impossibility of establishing any constant relationship between the two words; they are often contrasted, but sometimes almost synonymous. An explanation is not necessarily false, just as an accusation is not necessarily true; but when explanation is contrasted with reason, the explanation is at least partly misleading and certainly inadequate.

Herodotus has a very remarkable use of *prophasis* in describing the downfall of people who are "destined to come to a bad end." He introduces the detailed story by saying *ἐπείτε δὲ ἔδεέ οἱ κακῶς γεέσθαι, ἐγένετο ἀπὸ προφάσιος τοιῆσδε* (4.79.1, cf. 2.161.3). It is as though the jealous gods, who have decided (for sufficient reasons) to destroy a man, have to find some formal justification like mere mortals.¹⁹ And indeed it is true that Greek tradition very rarely represents the gods striking down a man without making his death

¹⁷ There are times when the translator will want to use the term "objection" as when Plutarch (*Moralia* 77b) speaks of the serious student of philosophy *διακόπτων τὰς προφάσεις ὥσπερ ὄχλον ἐμποδῶν ὄντα* (in contrast to the man who is put off by obstacles).

¹⁸ 7.229.2 and 230.1. The reason Solon gives for his journey (*κατὰ θεωρίης πρόφασιν*, 1.29.1) is not the whole truth.

¹⁹ Plato, *Rep.* 8.567A, describes how the tyrant tries to make the death of discontented citizens appear natural *ὅπως ἂν τούτους μετὰ προφάσεως ἀπολλήῃ ἐνδοῦς τοῖς πολεμίοις*. Cf. also *Rep.* 5.460A-B.

look natural; they do not allow themselves miracles to convince the unbeliever. The thunderbolt of Zeus is practically the only exception to this rule, since the arrows of Apollo generally take the form of sickness. We learn in the opening lines of the *Iliad* that it was the will of Zeus that the souls of many brave Achaeans be sent down to Hades; yet we are also told that it was the wrath of Achilles which made this possible—it was, as it were, the *prophasis* which Zeus employed, or in more conventional language, the means whereby he accomplished his purpose.²⁰ “Occasion” is perhaps the word that a translator may be inclined to use for *prophasis* in such circumstances as these; the incident which provides a *prophasis* is itself called a *prophasis*. It is exactly the same as with *aitia*, which can mean the charge itself or the grounds for the charge.

If war or violent death rarely happens without a *prophasis*, we cannot be surprised that the same is true of disease. Thucydides makes it clear that one of the terrible features of the plague at Athens was that it attacked healthy people without any *prophasis*.²¹ Many critics are content to explain what he means by referring to the medical writers, who frequently use the word to describe what may be called the “immediate cause” or “exciting cause” of a disease, as contrasted with its “underlying cause.”²² But we can-

²⁰ Plutarch's comment on these lines of Homer is worth quoting (*Moralia* 23D-E). He says that when Homer gives the name “Zeus” to the *aitia* of the events of the *Iliad* he really means “Destiny.” He will not allow that the poet represents Zeus as “devising evil for men,” but says that Homer is pointing to the inevitable necessity that if men make mistakes they will cause their own destruction. Accordingly, like Plato (*Rep.* 2.380A), he objects strongly to the lines of Aeschylus:

θεὸς μὲν αἰτίαν φύει βροτοῖς
ὅταν κακῶσαι δῶμα παμπήδην θέλῃ

(*Moralia* 17B, Aesch. Fr. 156, Nauck).

²¹ Thuc. 2.49.2.

²² For the usage of the medical writers see Deichgräber (see note 2 above), who shows that *prophasis* means for them the “external” or “contributory” cause of a disease, sometimes contrasted with its underlying cause (*aition*) as in *De Aer.* (CMG 1, p. 158.17). Some modern critics, however, have argued that Thucydides borrowed the word *prophasis* from the Ionian scientific and medical writers in the technical sense of “scientific cause” (cf. E. Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides*, ed. 2 [Bonn 1929] 250, W. Jaeger, *Paideia* [Eng. trans.] 1.389–90). This cannot be right in view of what Thucydides himself says about the “scientific causes” of the plague, which he calls *aitiai* (2.48.3): λεγέτω μὲν οὖν περὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς ἕκαστος γιγνώσκει καὶ ἱατρὸς καὶ ἰδιώτης, ἀφ’ ὅτου εἰκὸς ᾗν γενέσθαι αὐτό, καὶ τὰς αἰτίας ἄστυνας νομίζει τοσαύτης μεταβολῆς ἱκανὰς εἶναι δύναμιν ἐς τὸ μεταστῆσαι σχεῖν · ἐγὼ δὲ οἶδον τε ἐρίγνετο λέξω.

not accept this semi-technical use of the word without trying to decide how it came to be used in this way. There are two possibilities. The *prophasis* can be simply the "explanation," adequate or not, as the case may be, which a patient feels disposed to give of his ailment. For example, when someone goes to the doctor with a stomach ache or a sore throat, he "explains" how it happened (he ate too much lobster or caught cold sitting in a draughty room), but he does not expect the doctor to be satisfied with his explanation; in fact, the doctor may examine him for a stomach ulcer or an infection of the throat and then announce what is the "scientific cause" (not the *prophasis*) of his pain. The *prophasis* is of great importance to the patient, because if he can see no "excuse" for his pain and misery, he is inclined to suspect very serious trouble, some constitutional weakness which predisposes him to indigestion or catching cold.

Alternatively the *prophasis* may be looked upon from the point of view of the disease — the "excuse" or "occasion" which it needs for attacking a person, as pneumonia or tuberculosis may take advantage of a man's weakened condition if he has overworked himself; a doctor may say that overwork "brought on" the attack, but he will not give it as the "scientific cause." It would be equally incorrect to say that lack of preparedness at Pearl Harbour was the "cause" of war with Japan. The parallel is pertinent because the patient and the sickness are enemies; sickness, like war, is a struggle between two parties, and if you do not know the excuses and pretexts which your enemy or the disease will use, you are at a disadvantage.

This leaves us, therefore, with a quite simple account of the word as used by Herodotus: an explanation, whether true or not; an explanation offered in one's defence, an excuse; an explanation of what one is going to do, a statement (frequently false) of intention or of motive, a pretext; and finally the occasion which offers the excuse or pretext. The difference between excuse and pretext might be put in this way. An excuse is defensive, most commonly given only in reply to criticism;²³ a pretext is offensive and it precedes the action and hopes to anticipate criticism.

²³ Sometimes the translator will want to use the term "defence," as in Plut. *Moralia* 73E-F. Be kindly in criticizing your friends' conduct, Plutarch advises; you should not cut them short when they try to defend themselves; on the contrary: *καὶ προφάσεις ἐσχήμονας ἀμωσγέπως συνεκπορίζειν καὶ τῆς χείρονος αἰτίας ἀφισταμένους*

Before examining how Thucydides uses this word in describing the beginnings of wars and quarrels, it is worth while to take a glance at some later Greek writing to see how the usage of the word has developed in the hands of orators and philosophers. Demosthenes is a particularly suitable author to consult, as he uses the word with great freedom, but always in connection with some kind of quarrel or dispute, whether in the law courts or in international politics.

The so-called medical use of the word appears in the *Second Olynthiac*. Demosthenes says that when a political organization is based on good will and community of interests it can survive setbacks and misfortunes; but when, like Philip, a political leader owes his strength purely to lack of scruples and to greed, then he can be thrown down by the first *prophasis* or a slight stumble.²⁴ A slight stumble will be sufficient excuse (or occasion) to disable him; no further *prophasis* will be needed, but the real cause of his downfall of course lies in his constitution.

The usages familiar from Herodotus appear many times in Demosthenes. The synonyms which he uses are interesting — *σκήψεις καὶ προφάσεις* (19.100; cf. 21.41; 54.17); *προφάσεις καὶ λόγοι* (22.19); *ὑπόνοιαι πλασταὶ καὶ προφάσεις ἄδικοι* (48.39). It is interesting to see how *aitia* is sometimes used as a synonym *αἰτίας οὐκ οὔσας πλασάμενος καὶ προφάσεις ἀδίκους* (11.1), *προφάσεις πλάττων καὶ ψευδεῖς αἰτίας συντιθείς* (25.28), but sometimes contrasted with *prophasis* as the real cause.²⁵ A *prophasis* is often indicated by a single word *διὰ φιλονικίαν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ δι' ἔχθραν καὶ δι' ἄλλας προφάσεις* (57.6), *ἔξειν πρόφασιν τοὺς ὄρκους* (19.159), *ξένια δὴ πρόφασιν* (19.167). Here the word denotes sometimes the excuse, sometimes the occasion.

αὐτοὺς ἐνδιδόναι μετριωτέραν (and he compares how Hector, in *Iliad* 6.326, instead of calling Paris a coward for avoiding battle, prefers to charge him with "storing up anger in his soul"). *Prophasis* as "defence" is here clearly contrasted with *aitia* as "accusation"; we should discard the more serious accusation and allow them a presentable defence of their actions, even suggesting it to them (as the polite pedestrian, nearly killed by a careless motorist, might say "I suppose you didn't see me" instead of charging him with attempted murder). Cf. *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 29 (*Rhet. Graec.* 1² ed. Spengel and Hammer) *τὰς ἀπολογίας καὶ τὰς προφάσεις*, and Plut. *Pericles* 12.

²⁴ 2.9 *ὅταν δ' ἐκ πλεονεξίας καὶ πονηρίας τις ὥσπερ οὗτος ἰσχύσῃ, ἡ πρώτη πρόφασιν καὶ μικρὸν πταῖσμα ἅπαντ' ἀνεχαίτισε καὶ διέλυσεν*. The usage is imitated by the author of 11.7. Cf. also Plato *Rep.* 8.556ε.

²⁵ Cf. 22.38, 58.39. The quotations have not been restricted to speeches which are certainly authentic. For the purposes of the present argument another fourth century orator or a conscientious imitator is just as good a witness as Demosthenes himself.

There is a passage in the *De Corona* where the true *prophasis* is contrasted with the false. Philip, says Demosthenes, concealed the "true explanation" (τὴν ἀληθῆ πρόφασιν) of his acts (his designs against Greece, especially Thebes and Athens) and claimed falsely to be carrying out the decisions of the Amphictyons; and it was Aeschines who provided him with such ἀφορμαὶ καὶ προφάσεις.²⁶ The use of ἀφορμή as a synonym is enlightening; it shows how well the meaning of occasion or opportunity is established. This is clearly the aggressive aspect of *prophasis*, as contrasted with the defensive where συγγνώμη can be its synonym.²⁷

Sooner or later a translator will be tempted to use "motive" for *prophasis*. Demosthenes objects to the psephism of Aristocrates on the ground that it does not respect a man's *prophasis*, "which determines whether an individual action is good or bad"; whether in striking someone he is the aggressor or acts in self-defence; whether in reviling someone he speaks truth or lies; whether he kills a man deliberately or against his will. "And we shall find," says Demosthenes, "everywhere in the laws the *prophasis* establishing the quality of the act. But you do not recognize this; you lay it down simply 'If a man kills Charidemus, let him be arrested,' even though he kill unwillingly, with justification, in self-defence, in circumstances where the laws permit it — no matter how."²⁸ "Motive" fits some of the distinctions which Demosthenes makes, but not all of them; we have to think of the defence he may make himself (if he pleads he is speaking the truth when charged with slander), of the occasion and the excuse it gives him, as well as of his intention. This is an admirable passage to illustrate the full range of meaning of *prophasis*.

It is easy to see, therefore, that the meaning of the word has not become narrower or more specialized in the course of the fourth century; and, as with all words that offer a considerable range of meaning, it cannot be rashly identified with another word that is, on occasion, used as a synonym for it. The reader of Demosthenes will notice that it is not used in speaking of oneself or one's client. Demosthenes never says that he or his client has a perfect *prophasis* for prosecuting or the best possible *prophasis* in defence, or that the Athenians have an excellent *prophasis* for war with Philip.

²⁶ 18.156 (cf. 158).

²⁷ Cf. 45.67.

²⁸ 23.49–50.

Take, for example, the opening of the *First Philippic* where he says that he might fairly be pardoned for speaking first — ἡγοῦμαι καὶ πρῶτος ἀναστὰς εἰκότως ἂν συγγνώμης τυγχάνειν. It would be quite impossible to substitute *prophasis* for συγγνώμη here, though in offering reasons why others have not spoken he can list the various *prophaseis*.²⁹ It can be used only in finding fault with the Athenians or negatively when they are warned to avoid a *prophasis* or to avoid offering others a *prophasis* for doing something undesirable.³⁰ He says in the *First Olynthiac* οὐδὲ γὰρ λόγος οὐδὲ σκῆψις ἔθ' ἡμῖν τοῦ μὴ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖν ἐθέλειν ὑπολείπεται (1.6). He might have added οὐδὲ τις δικαία πρόφασις but in the previous sections where he is insisting that they have the perfect opportunity for action (ὁ μὲν παρὼν καιρὸς μόνον οὐχὶ λέγει φωνῇ ἀφίελς), it would have been impossible to urge them to seize the *prophasis* which the situation offered.

No one, in fact, is proud of having a *prophasis* or of offering it to someone else, no more than we are proud of having "a magnificent excuse for neglecting our duty"; in fact, when we claim such an excuse, we do not intend to make use of it, but to berate the person who presented us with it. Hence the verb *προφασίζεσθαι* is never used in a good sense; it means to make excuses instead of doing the right thing or to give the false explanation instead of the true one.

A special use that should be mentioned is the *prophasis* of friendship or alliance. If one wishes to deny that a man has any right to call another his friend, it is possible to say that he has no reasonable *prophasis* for calling him so. So Demosthenes denies that Aeschines has any fair or just *prophasis* to be Philip's friend — he can only be his hireling (18.284). Here too, as generally, *prophasis* would not be the word to describe the basis of a sound and enduring friendship. On the other hand friendship may itself be the *prophasis* for an act; it may be the pretext and one may pretend to make concessions in friendship's name, as when Demosthenes says to Leptines μὴ τοίνυν ἃ μὲν ἦν ἀμάρτυρα, ταῦτ' ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ δήμου προφάσει διὰ σοῦ δεδόσθω, ὦν δ' αὐτὸς ὁ δῆμος μαρτυρίας ἔστησεν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἀναγράψας καὶ πάντες συνίσασιν, ταῦτ' ἀφελέσθαι παραινεί (20.149). A clearer example is in Thucydides. Leontini sent an embassy to

²⁹ 13.18, 19.118.

³⁰ 13.2, 6.32. An apparent exception is 20.97: καὶ πρόφασις δικαία κατὰ τῶν παρακρουσαμένων ἢ μετὰ ταῦτ' ἀδικησάντων ἢ ὅλως ἀναξίων, δι' ἣν ὃν ἂν ὑμῖν δοκῇ κωλύσει' ἔχειν τὴν δωρεάν. The answer here seems to be that Demosthenes is speaking of a purely hypothetical case — if the proposal of Leptines becomes law. But see also Plato *Ep.* 7.352A and Aristoph. *Nub.* 55.

Athens asking help against Syracuse "on the strength of their old alliance and because they were Ionians" (not *προφάσει ξυμμαχίας*, because it is an honourable and sincere claim that they are making); the Athenians in reply sent ships to Sicily *τῆς μὲν οἰκειότητος προφάσει*, "but what they wanted was to prevent grain from the West being imported into the Peloponnese and they were making a preliminary experiment to see if it would be possible for them to gain control of affairs in Sicily" (3.86.4). Indeed Thucydides makes it clear that in all the expeditions sent by the Athenians to Sicily the pretext of helping an ally or a friend was really the cloak for more ambitious schemes.

The Thucydidean usage of *prophasis* is for the most part quite easy to follow after one has observed how Demosthenes uses the word. He sometimes uses it in a neutral sense, meaning simply "explanation." Pausanias asks the suppliant at Taenarum to give his *prophasis* for seeking refuge in the temple (1.133.1), and when Nicias in his letter reports that mercenary troops are deserting he says *ἐπ' αὐτομολίας προφάσει ἀπέρχονται* (7.13.2). Pausanias asks and is given the real reason for the suppliant's presence, which consists largely of a complaint,³¹ and there is no pretence about the troops' desertion (what Nicias means is that they are leaving without offering any other reason or pretext). The ordinary defensive meaning of "excuse" occurs several times, as when before the naval battle of Naupactus the Peloponnesian commanders say *οὐκ ἐνδῶσομεν πρόφασιν οὐδενὶ κακῷ γενέσθαι* (2.87.9)³² and the Mytilenians realize that they cannot expect much sympathy unless they show a *πρόφασιν ἐπιεικῆς* for their revolt (3.9.2). Cowardice in battle and disloyalty to an ally are generally to be blamed and so need an excuse (and so most certainly does desertion in the field). Thucydides also uses the word to denote the expressed intention, as opposed to the real intention, as when Hermocrates warns his listeners that the Athenians are coming *πρόφασιν μὲν Ἐγεσταιῶν ξυμμαχία καὶ Λεοντίνων κατοικίσει, τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς Σικελίας ἐπιθυμία, μάλιστα δὲ τῆς ἡμετέρας πόλεως*;³³

³¹ καὶ Πausanίου ὡς αὐτὸν ἐλθόντος καὶ ἐρωτῶντος τὴν πρόφασιν τῆς ἱκετείας ἥσθοντο πάντα σαφῶς, αἰτιωμένου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὰ τε περὶ αὐτοῦ γραφέντα καὶ τὰλλ' ἀποφαίνοντος καθ' ἕκαστον (1.133.1).

³² The verb *ἐνδιδόναι* can be used equally with *πρόφασιν* or *καιρός* (cf. Dem. 4.18). For this military use of *prophasis* cf. Plato, *Rep.* 5.469c.

³³ 6.33.2. Cf. 6.76.2 *ἡκουσι γὰρ ἐς τὴν Σικελίαν προφάσει μὲν ἢ πυνθάνεσθε, διανοία δὲ ἦν πάντες ὑπονοοῦμεν*. Here the *prophasis* is simply the expressed purpose (cf. Aristoph. *Eq.* 466); but in 33.2 it is divided into parts — the alliance (which is the

when Nicias complains that the Athenians are aiming at the conquest of all Sicily *προφάσει βραχεία καὶ εὐπρεπεί* (with only the simple honourable intention expressed, of helping the people of Segesta), he calls their *prophasis* slight because it does not adequately represent their large purpose.³⁴ The fourth use of the word that was noted in Herodotus is also to be found in Thucydides — to denote the occasion which supplies the excuse or pretext; but the distinction from the more ordinary use of the word is not always clear and Thucydides does not clarify his meaning by using synonyms, as Demosthenes did in speaking of *προφάσεις καὶ ἀφορμαί*. When he says *ἐπὶ προφάσει* (as Herodotus says *ἐπὶ προφάσιος*), he probably means “relying on an excuse or pretext” rather than “taking advantage of an occasion.”³⁵ The distinction may seem a slight one, but it is important because it involves the difference (so fundamental for Thucydides) between *logos* and *ergon*. An excuse is something that one says; an occasion is provided by the circumstances.

The distinction can be seen clearly by comparing two instances of the word which are only a few chapters apart. Thucydides finishes his account of the Pentecontaetia by saying *μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἤδη γίγνεται οὐ πολλοῖς ἔτεσιν ὕστερον τὰ προειρημένα, τὰ τε Κερκυραϊκὰ καὶ τὰ Ποτειδαιτικὰ καὶ ὅσα πρόφασιν τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου κατέστη* (1.118.1). Here, since the events themselves are called a *prophasis*, we must take the meaning to be “occasion” — the incidents *provided* the excuse or pretext for fighting; but Thucydides wrote *πρόφασιν κατέστη* not *πρόφασιν παρέσχεν*. Then, after the account of the Congress at Sparta where the Peloponnesians decide on war, we read *ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ἐπρεσβεύοντο τῷ χρόνῳ πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐγκλήματα ποιούμενοι, ὅπως σφίσιν ὅτι μεγίστη πρόφασιν εἴη τοῦ πολέμου, ἣν μὴ τι ἐσακούωσιν* (1.126.1).

excuse) and the restoration of Leontini (which is the supposed purpose). Hermocrates uses the word again, for “excuse,” in 6.34.6.

³⁴ 6.8.4. The adjectives here (*βραχεία καὶ εὐπρεπεί*) deserve attention. Like Hermocrates in 6.33.2 Nicias is dividing the *prophasis* into two parts — the expressed purpose is inadequate, but the excuse is honourable in appearance.

³⁵ Cf. Hdt. 7.150.3 (see p. 208 above). In Thuc. 4.80.2 and 5.42.1 *ἐπὶ προφάσει* seems to contain the idea of excuse, but Pericles' words in 1.141.1 are more problematical. He tells the Athenians that they must make up their minds either to give in to the Spartans before they are hurt or, if they decide to go to war, they must be firm: *καὶ ἐπὶ μεγάλη καὶ ἐπὶ βραχεία ὁμοίως προφάσει μὴ εἴζοντες*. Here the *prophasis* might be the demand to which they must not submit (the occasion) or their expressed reason for going to war (which would be refusal to submit to a demand); the *prophasis*, in any case, is “great” or “slight” according as the demand is large or small.

Here the meaning of the word is the defensive one of "excuse." The Peloponnesians are protecting themselves against the charge that they are the aggressors. Their excuse will take the form of a complaint,³⁶ and they will want this to be substantial, so that their excuse will not appear trivial.

The use of *μεγίστη πρόφασις* here prepares the way for the *ἐπὶ μεγάλῃ καὶ ἐπὶ βραχείᾳ ὁμοίως προφάσει* in Pericles' speech (1.141.1). Then Thucydides closes the book by writing *αἰτίαι δὲ αὐταὶ καὶ διαφοραὶ ἐγένοντο ἀμφοτέροις πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου, ἀρξάμεναι εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Ἐπιδάμνῃ καὶ Κερκύρᾳ· ἐπεμείγνυντο δὲ ὅμως ἐν αὐταῖς καὶ παρ' ἀλλήλους ἐφοίτων ἀκηρύκτως μὲν, ἀνυπόπτως δὲ οὐ· σπονδῶν γὰρ σύγχυσις τὰ γιγνόμενα ἦν καὶ πρόφασις τοῦ πολεμεῖν* (1.146). Here the events are the *prophasis* and the word clearly means "occasion." This *prophasis* is the situation which results from the *αἰτίαι καὶ διαφοραί*, a situation in which war is nearly, if not quite, inevitable. So also staying out all night in a blizzard might lead to a situation in which pneumonia was almost inevitable and the *hybris* of some of the tyrants in Herodotus makes the vengeance of the gods seem not only just but natural.

This still does not mean, however, that Thucydides regarded these quarrels as the true cause of the war. We might consider that the real cause of pneumonia was not the blizzard but a constitutional weakness, and that the cause of a tyrant's downfall lay not in his acts but in his character; and we might reasonably expect Thucydides to distinguish the immediate occasion which precipitated the war from its underlying causes. He recognized the distinction in speaking of the plague, when he refused to discuss the *aitia* and remarked that it sometimes attacked a man without a *prophasis*.³⁷ It would not be surprising if he used the same terms in making clear his view on the causes of the war.

Furthermore, these are the terms which Polybius uses in his famous discussion on causes of wars in general and the Second Punic War in particular. He complains of the foolish habit of confusing the causes with the "opening incident" — the *ἀρχή*.³⁸ He

³⁶ When their complaint is not recognized by the Athenians, they proceed to make demands; and this, according to Pericles, produces an intolerable situation (1.140.2).

³⁷ 2.48.3–49.2 (see notes 21 and 22 above).

³⁸ 3.6.1–3. He defines two of his terms clearly enough: *ἐγὼ δὲ παντὸς ἀρχὰς μὲν εἶναι φημι τὰς πρώτας ἐπιβολὰς καὶ πράξεις τῶν ἤδη κεκριμένων, αἰτίας δὲ τὰς προκαθηγούμενας τῶν κρίσεων καὶ διαλήψεων· λέγω δ' ἐπινοίας καὶ διαθέσεις καὶ τοὺς περὶ ταῦτα*

has no quarrel with Thucydides and no doubt thinks he is borrowing the term ἀρχή from him, since Thucydides writes in 1.23.4 ἤρξαντο δὲ αὐτοῦ Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Πελοποννήσιοι λύσαντες τὰς τριακοντούτεϊς σπονδὰς . . . διότι δ' ἔλυσαν τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα κτλ. Polybius does not tell us what were the αἰτίαι of the Peloponnesian War as opposed to the *prophaseis*, but he illustrates his meaning by reference to the expedition of Alexander the Great and the war of the Romans with Antiochus.³⁹ The αἰτίαι of Alexander's war with the Persians, he says, were the March of the Ten Thousand and the expedition of Agesilaus, as result of which Philip saw the weakness of the Persian empire and the rich prizes to be won by conquering it; and the *prophasis* of the war was his eagerness to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece. Evidently Polybius considers that causes should sometimes be *ex alto repetitae*, but why does he pick on Xenophon and Agesilaus in particular? It must be because he regards the end of the Peloponnesian War as marking an epoch and he picks out the first significant event after that date. It makes one think that, if he were asked for the causes of the Peloponnesian War he would turn to Thucydides 1.89 and say — first, the withdrawal of Leotychides from Asia, secondly, the rebuilding of the Athenian walls, and continue with a summary of the history of the Pentecontaetia. For the *prophasis* he gives the “professed purpose.” It is the same with the Roman war against Antiochus; a simpler “cause” is given (the anger of the Aetolians), and the liberation of Greece is the *prophasis*. The *prophasis* here is not the “occasion” as it sometimes is in Thucydides.

When Polybius discusses the causes of the Second Punic War he goes back to events immediately following the end of the First War — the strong feeling of Hamilcar, the Roman annexation of Sardinia, the success of the Carthaginian venture in Spain;⁴⁰ but he uses the term *prophasis* only for the wild charges that Hannibal makes against the Romans and Saguntines during the argument over Saguntum,⁴¹ preferring the term ἀφορμή to denote occasion or

συλλογισμούς καὶ δι' ὧν ἐπὶ τὸ κρῖναί τι καὶ προθέσθαι παραγινόμεθα. (3.6.7). But he does not define *prophasis*.

³⁹ 3.6.9–14.

⁴⁰ 3.9.6–10.6.

⁴¹ 3.15.9 καθόλου δ' ἦν πλήρης ἀλογίας καὶ θυμοῦ βιαίου. διὸ καὶ ταῖς μὲν ἀληθιναῖς αἰτίαις οὐκ ἐχρήτο, κατέφενγε δ' εἰς προφάσεις ἀλόγους.

valid excuse.⁴² Despite his air of dogmatism Polybius is not trying to establish a technical diplomatic usage for *prophasis*, and he does not help us at all to understand the terminology of Thucydides.

It is perhaps typical of the pragmatic manner of Polybius that he should want to assign precise causes for a war, in the "scientific" style,⁴³ as for an earthquake. Thucydides in writing about the war, as about the plague, is really more concerned to tell how it happened and what it was like; he is less dogmatic about causes and much more detailed in describing *prophaseis*.

A notable exception to this rule is in the Funeral Oration of Pericles. Pericles proposes to discuss what makes Athens a great nation and he scorns to describe to the people the stages of their growth and the particular deeds that established the empire; he expects these historical details to be familiar to his audience (as they would be to a reader who had read Book 1), and he says: ἀπὸ δὲ οἷας τε ἐπιτηδεύσεως ἤλθομεν ἐπ' αὐτὰ καὶ μεθ' οἷας πολιτείας καὶ τρόπων ἐξ οἷων μεγάλα ἐγένετο, ταῦτα δηλώσας πρῶτον εἰμι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν τῶνδε ἔπαινον (2.36.4). Polybius certainly has these words in mind when he declares his intention of explaining what kind of constitution the Romans had which enabled them to found their empire and ἀπὸ ποίας προθέσεως ἡ δυνάμειος ὀρμηθέντες ἐνεχείρησαν τοῖς τοιούτοις καὶ τηλικούτοις ἔργοις (1.3.7).

It would have been quite impossible for Pericles to call the Athenian tradition the *prophasis* of Athenian greatness. It is, therefore, surprising to many readers that in his most dogmatic assertion about the causes of the Peloponnesian War Thucydides should write as follows: διότι δ' ἔλυσαν (sc. τὰς σπονδὰς) τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα πρῶτον καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, τοῦ μή τινα ζητῆσαί ποτε ἐξ ὅτου τοσοῦτος πόλεμος τοῖς Ἑλλήσι κατέστη. τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸν πόλεμον · αἱ δ' ἐς τὸ φανερόν λεγόμεναι αἰτίαι αἰδ' ἦσαν ἐκατέρων, ἀφ' ὧν ἔλυσαντες τὰς σπονδὰς ἐς τὸν πόλεμον κατέστησαν (1.23.5-6).

Critics have been tempted to interpret this passage as though Thucydides wrote ἀληθεστάτην αἰτίαν instead of πρόφασιν, thinking

⁴² 3.14.10 ταύτης δὲ τῆς πόλεως (sc. Saguntum) ἐπειράτω κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπέχεσθαι, βουλόμενος μηδεμίαν ἀφορμὴν ὁμολογουμένην δοῦναι τοῦ πολέμου Ῥωμαίοις, ἕως τὰλλα πάντα βεβαίως ὑφ' αὐτὸν ποιήσαιο.

⁴³ Polybius is fond of reminding us that he is concerned with the how and the when and the why (e.g. 3.1.3-4; 1.2.1).

that he must offer them the "true underlying cause" of the war and that this is it. Jaeger lays great emphasis on the idea of *compulsion* and thinks Thucydides means "the immanent necessity of the events," a view which appears to be shared by David Grene.⁴⁴ Such a view, however, is made possible only by a misunderstanding of the Greek text⁴⁵ — by maintaining that *prophasis* means "scientific cause" (Jaeger) or "underlying cause" (Grene). If Thucydides had meant that, he could have written *αἰτίους ἡγοῦμαι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἀναγκάσαντας*. He would then be *blaming* the Athenians, just as Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* blames Chaerephon for delaying him: *τούτων αἴτιος Χαιρέφων ὄδε, ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἀναγκάσας ἡμᾶς διατρέψαι*.⁴⁶ He does not *blame* the Athenians here, because he is not concerned with praise or blame, like some later Greek historians, but with explaining the Spartan point of view. He wants to give their *prophasis* for going to war, their motive, excuse, or occasion, and, as he tells us again later, this was really *fear* — the fear of a worse alternative to war; when the Spartans finally decided to declare war, they did so, according to Thucydides, "not so much because they were persuaded by the arguments of their allies as because they feared the Athenians and the possible further extension of their power" (1.88). There is compulsion upon them only in so far as they are compelled to choose between two disagreeable alternatives, like Gyges in the story as Herodotus tells it, who is "compelled" to kill Candaules, when presented with the choice of killing his king or perishing himself;⁴⁷ he does not blame the wife of Candaules for putting this compulsion on him; the blame really rests on Candaules himself, who was so foolish as to admit Gyges into his bed-chamber and thus became the cause of his own destruction.

Whatever precisely one may think Thucydides means by *pro-*

⁴⁴ W. Jaeger, *Paideia* (Eng. trans.) 1.389–394; D. Grene, *Man in His Pride* (Chicago 1950) 56–61.

⁴⁵ As Gomme points out in his comment on Thuc. 1.23.6. See also his review of Grene's book, *CR* 66 (1952) 74.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Gorg.* 447A, cf. *Rep.* 6.509c. Cf. also the language of Thuc. 4.65.4, when the Athenians fined Eurymedon and exiled Sophocles, thinking it impossible that they could have withdrawn from Sicily unless they had been bribed: *αἰτία δ' ἦν ἡ παρὰ λόγον τῶν πλεόνων εὐπραγία αὐτοῖς ὑποτιθείσα ἰσχὺν τῆς ἐλπίδος*.

⁴⁷ Hdt. 1.11.3–4. One might also compare the language in which Thucydides describes the revolt of Mytilene. They had intended to revolt before the war (3.2.1); now, before their plans are complete, the Athenians, frightened of losing their fleet to the other side (3.3.1), anticipate their move by demanding that they surrender their ships and dismantle their walls; and this *compels* the Mytilenians to fight (3.3–4.2).

phasis in this famous sentence, there is no doubt that he is telling us what he considers the most important factor in the minds of the Spartans (though they may not have spoken much about it). He contrasts it with the *aitiai* that were in men's mouths on both sides; these are not the "causes" of Polybius, but the charges made by one side against the other, as is shown by the use of *ἐκατέρων* and the coupling of the word with *διαφοραί*. These complaints and quarrels, as the subsequent narrative will show, lead in time to a breach of the treaty and a *prophasis* of war; this is how Thucydides sums it up at the end of Book 1, in language that is clearly intended to recall the words of this chapter.⁴⁸

Thucydides evidently means that although the recriminations over Corcyra and Potidaea did indeed lead to a *prophasis* of war, another *prophasis* which had nothing to do with these disputes must not be forgotten — the fear of Athenian imperialism. Demosthenes has made us familiar with the notion of an *ἀληθὴς πρόφασις*, the true reason (or purpose) of an action that a man would give if compelled to tell the truth, as contrasted with the formal excuse or pretext that he offers or the occasion that gives him his excuse. The parallel with the passage from the *De Corona* is almost perfect: Philip concealed his true *prophasis* and pretended that he was carrying out the decisions of the Amphictyons, making use of *prophaseis* which Aeschines provided for him.⁴⁹

Since it was the Peloponnesians who opened hostilities, it is they, not the Athenians, who are on the defensive in the inquiry that Thucydides is conducting. They were provided with *prophaseis* by the episodes of Corcyra and Potidaea, just as Aeschines provided Philip with "pretexts and occasions." But the true explanation, fear (like the true explanation of Philip's acts, which was greed and lust for conquest), they preferred to keep to themselves, as it did them little credit. No *prophasis* is offered for the Athenians, as they are not technically the aggressors and have no need to defend themselves.

In this passage, then, as elsewhere, we have the contrast between positive grievances or accusations (*aitiai*) and explanations in defence of one's action (*prophaseis*). The same antithesis can be seen in the speech which the Mytilenians make at Olympia.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 1.146. The Greek is quoted on p. 217 above.

⁴⁹ Dem. 18.156 (see p. 213 above).

⁵⁰ 3.9-14.

They begin by admitting that there is a natural prejudice against any seceding state which renounces an alliance in war time, if the seceding state and the ally are equally matched in power and if there is no reasonable *prophasis* for secession; "but such is not the situation between us and the Athenians." In the following three chapters, therefore, they describe the situation. First, they say what the Athenians have done — they have enslaved their allies one by one, so that it became impossible to feel any confidence in them as leaders of a confederacy, leaving the more powerful states to the end and letting Lesbos enjoy a nominal sort of autonomy. Then they describe and justify their own behaviour and their relationship with Athens, which hardly deserves the name of "friendship," since it was fear, not good-will, that kept them together.

The rhetorical division of the speech is clear; first their complaint against the Athenians, then their defence of themselves. Athens was waiting for an opportunity to make them tributary subjects, while they were waiting for an opportunity to withdraw from this so-called alliance. "You cannot blame us," they say, "for seceding while they hesitated, instead of waiting to make sure whether they would attack us; if the initiative rested with them, we surely had the right to anticipate them by defensive action — these are our *prophaseis* and *aitiai*": *τοιαύτας ἔχοντες προφάσεις καὶ αἰτίας, ὧ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ ξυμμαχοί, ἀπέστημεν, σαφεῖς μὲν τοῖς ἀκούουσι γινῶναι ὡς εἰκότως ἐδράσαμεν, ἱκανὰς δὲ ἡμᾶς ἐκφοβῆσαι καὶ πρὸς ἀσφάλειάν τινα τρέψαι* (3.13.1).

The *prophaseis* are their "excuses," the reasons which justify their secession; and they are "plain enough to convince our hearers that we acted fairly"; and the *aitiai* (the Athenian actions of which they complain) are "sufficient to frighten us and make us look for safety." The Mytilenians in this sentence put their "excuses" first; but the "accusations" have preceded them in chapters 10 and 11, as indeed they must; just as with the Peloponnesian War itself, the *αἰτίαι καὶ διαφοραὶ* precede because they provide the *πρόφασιν τοῦ ἀποστήναι*.

Thus we may say that when Thucydides directly contrasts *prophasis* with *aitia* he contrasts "defence" or "justification" with "accusation" or "grievance." And he was not the first Greek author to do this; we find exactly the same contrast in the Old Oligarch, when he describes the behaviour of a democratic government that

does not wish to stand by an agreement: ἄσσα δ' ἂν ὁ δῆμος σὺνθῆται, ἔξεστιν αὐτῷ ἐνὶ ἀνατιθέντι τὴν αἰτίαν τῷ λέγοντι καὶ τῷ ἐπιψηφίσαντι ἀρνεῖσθαι τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅτι Οὐ παρὴν οὐδὲ ἀρέσκει ἔμοιγε, ἃ συγκείμενα πυνθάνονται ἐν πληρεὶ τῷ δήμῳ, καὶ εἰ μὴ δόξαι εἶναι ταῦτα, προφάσεις μυρίας ἐξήρρηκε τοῦ μὴ ποιεῖν ὅσα ἂν μὴ βούλωνται.⁵¹

⁵¹ [Xen.] *Ath. Resp.* 2.17. The language of Thuc. 3.82.4 (from the discussion of *stasis*) is more difficult: τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνητὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἄργον · τὸ δ' ἐμπλήκτως ὁξὺ ἀνδρὸς μοίρα προσετέθη, ἀσφαλεία δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὐλογος. The reading ἀσφαλεία must certainly be preferred to the nominative ἀσφάλεια, but the precise meaning of this closing remark has puzzled commentators. One solution (cf. Deichgräber [note 2 above] p. 12) is to take safety as the object of planning — “planning with a view to safety was regarded as a specious excuse for declining action.” This is admitted to be a repetition or variation of what he has just said; we should expect Thucydides to add some new thought, instead of merely repeating himself; and in difficult passages of this sort it is always best to seek enlightenment in what follows, where we find that “planning” or “plotting” is accepted as a respectable precaution — ἐπιβουλεύσας δὲ τις τυχὼν ξυνητὸς καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος. Evidently, then, though the caution of delay was derided, the precaution of plotting or anticipating a plot was admired. I would propose to take the dative ἀσφαλεία as governed by προσετέθη (like ἀνδρὸς μοίρα), to put a comma after ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι, and to take ἀποτροπῆς in the meaning of “defending oneself” (not “declining action”) and as a defining genitive with πρόφασις: “An impulsive bold act was attributed to manly courage, but plotting an attack was attributed to ‘precaution’ — the excuse of ‘defending oneself’ was considered reasonable.”

Postscript. This article was already in proof when my attention was drawn to the discussion of *prophasis* by J. Lohmann, “Das Verhältnis des abendländischen Menschen zur Sprache,” *Lexis* 3 (1952) 5–49 (esp. 18–28, 33–34). He has anticipated me in some criticisms of current views; but I cannot agree with him that the later Greek usage of the word is so greatly different from the earlier and I am not convinced by his attempt to explain the so-called “objective” meaning of *prophasis* as *prophainomenon* (“Vorscheinung”), in the sense that the *prophasis* of war or disease is the phenomenon which precedes it.