

II.—Historical Action in Herodotus

HENRY R. IMMERWAHR

YALE UNIVERSITY

I

The ancient historian is primarily concerned with human action as the main factor in the course of history, and the dramatic presentation of events depends on the author's view of the elements of the human situation that determine the nature and the significance of action in the historical process. This paper is an attempt to clarify Herodotus' conception of the condition of man so far as it determines his view of the role of human action in history.

There is perhaps no more striking difference between Herodotus and Thucydides than the dramatic presentation of events in general: in Thucydides we follow them with an immediate interest, in Herodotus the reader contemplates them from a distance. This point may be illustrated by the use made by the two authors of an identical motif: the destruction of the children of a city while at school. The meaning, in each author, is the same: it is the destruction of the city's future. But the interest, in each case, is quite different. In 6.27.2, Herodotus tells of the collapse of a schoolhouse on the island of Chios. It was an accident; the roof fell in while the children were learning to write so that out of 120 children only one survived. But it was not an isolated accident: at about the same time the Chians had sent a chorus of 100 youths to Delphi; the plague seized them, and only two returned. These two accidents are cited by Herodotus as omens of greater disasters yet to come: a little later the whole island became involved in the disastrous battle of Lade, the turning point of the Ionian Revolt, and immediately afterwards there arrived Histiaeus, the former tyrant of Miletus, who easily conquered the city. The school incident is not important in itself, but only as one manifestation of Accident and Misfortune, a meaning which is brought out by its relation to other events, all of which point to the same general truth. In Karl Reinhardt's phrase, the school accident is a "meaningful gesture,"¹ a

¹ K. Reinhardt, "Herodots Persergeschichten," *Geistige Überlieferung* 1 (Berlin 1940) 172 ff.; reprinted in the same author's *Von Werken und Formen* (Godesberg 1948) 163-224.

gesture, in this case, not of a person, but of fate; it is revealing. It is for this reason that we see the children "learning to write," i.e., in their accustomed activity, and are not told of the exact circumstances of the occasion.

Thucydides in 7.29, on the other hand, tells of the destruction of a school and its pupils as the climax to his description of the destruction of the town of Mycalessus in Boeotia by a band of Thracian mercenaries. These barbarians were on their way home from Athens to Thrace; they had orders to harass the enemy where they could; and so they chanced upon the open and unsuspecting town of Mycalessus, destroying and killing indiscriminately, since there was no fear of opposition. The description is kept to a summary of the activities of the Thracians, illustrating the cowardly nature of barbarians in general, but its climax is an actual event, containing an explicit time reference: "in the midst of no small confusion and every form of destruction they came upon a school of children, the largest in town, and in which the children had just assembled, killing them all." Here the Horrors of War are also a general truth, but the story does not point to it, it contains it; it needs no reference to other events to be intelligible, and Thucydides explains it in its own terms: "this misfortune was the worst that happened to the whole city, and befell it with more unexpected terror than any other."² The presentation of the accident is more immediately dramatic.

The same difference of presentation is apparent in the main actions and events described in the two works. The occupation of Pylos, for example, or the battles before Syracuse, in Thucydides, are felt to be immediately decisive; human action itself expresses the meaning of the war. In Herodotus, on the other hand, pure military action is insignificant. The great battles of the Persian Wars are remembered as static pictures which each time are significant as part of a moral or religious complex. The Athenians attacking on the run at Marathon exemplify Athenian virtue (6.112); the Spartans on the hill at Thermopylae exemplify Spartan virtue (7.224-25); the ship contests at Salamis reveal Greek competition and Persian weakness (8.87-93); Pausanias praying to the gods at Plataea (9.61.3), and rumor flying through the ranks at Mycale (9.100) illustrate the participation of the gods and heroes in repelling the invader.

² I follow Jowett in referring this sentence to the school incident only.

I am not giving here an analysis of the action of these battles, but it is easy to see how the most significant elements can be taken from the immediate context of the action and connected with other meaningful incidents to point to a significant truth. And further, the fact that, figuratively speaking, the critical decision in each battle is taken outside the battlefield shows plainly that the battle is not a crisis in the Thucydidean sense. The turning point at Marathon is Callimachus' acceptance of the advice of Miltiades (6.109-10); at Thermopylae it is the betrayal of Ephialtes, and the decision of Leonidas to stand (7.214 and 220); at Plataea and to some extent also at Mycale victory is due largely to the intervention of the divine. All this prevents emphasis on the decisive nature of action by itself: every reader of Herodotus has felt that the fighting at Salamis is an anticlimax. But if, by our definition, the ancient historian is primarily concerned with human action, the question must be put to the work of Herodotus, whether in writing about history he is not forsaking human history for something else. It has been claimed, for example, that Herodotus is using history to demonstrate the ways of providence, that he has written *acta dei per barbaros et Graecos*.³ A similar case could be made for the view that Herodotus' work is a demonstration of moral virtue; and paradoxically, the case has been made that he wrote merely to delight.⁴ These interpretations somehow assume that Herodotus has not fully grasped the fact that history is first of all the history of human action, and that its purpose should not be to prove a point outside of history itself.

I have used examples from the Graeco-Persian Wars. The apparent failure, on the part of Herodotus, to concentrate on the central nature of these events could however be partly due to the fact that after all the Greeks are not the main subject of his work. The main actors throughout are the bearers of Asiatic civilization, beginning with Croesus of Lydia and culminating in Xerxes and his invasion of Greece.⁵ The most decisive event in the work is therefore Xerxes' action of Crossing the Hellespont, and I have chosen it as

³ Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. d. griech. Lit.* 1.2 (Munich 1934) 625.

⁴ Thuc. 1.21 and 22, if Herodotus is included there. E. Howald, *Vom Geist antiker Geschichtsschreibung* (Munich 1944) 11-45, and others.

⁵ This is not the place to discuss what is the subject of the *Histories*, a matter on which there is considerable disagreement, especially on the question whether there is one general subject for the whole work. For general bibliography, see P. MacKendrick in *CW* 47 (1954) 148, note 6.

the most representative example of human action in general. Herodotus himself, as can be shown, has treated it as such; for Xerxes is his main actor, and at the Hellespont the die is cast which determines his fate so far as the Histories are concerned. The Crossing of the Hellespont in Herodotus has the same function as the Crossing of the Hellespont by Alexander the Great⁶ or Caesar's Crossing of the Rubicon⁷ have in later historiography. It is a picture symbolizing decisive action in which a man or a nation assumes the burden of history. Herodotus' treatment of such an event might be a clue to his conception of the role of action in the historical process, and indirectly therefore a clue to his conception of the role of man in history.

II

As always in a particular episode in Herodotus, it is impossible to consider the Crossing as an isolated event; it is equally misleading to consider it merely from the tactical point of view as the beginning of the invasion of Greece. This is true, but one must also look at it in relation to the whole march of Xerxes from Asia to the confines of Greece: there its position is more central. And within the scope of the whole work the Hellespont has two other functions: it ties together the deeds of Darius and the deeds of Xerxes; and it is the goal both of Xerxes' flight and of the Greek pursuit with which the work closes. I should like to look at the Hellespont in three circles of widening significance: first the Crossing, secondly the March of Xerxes, and finally the structural significance of the Hellespont in the whole work.

The Crossing itself (7.54-56) shows us two static pictures: the Persians, assembled at the bridges, are waiting for the sun to rise. When it appears, Xerxes makes libations from a golden phiale and prays to the sun to confirm the success of his expedition which is to lead him to the ends of the world. This is the first picture; the other is the description of the crossing. The train of the army passes on one bridge, the army itself on the other. The order of the crossing is given exactly: Xerxes crosses in the middle of his army, in the official order of march which had been mentioned before

⁶ Arrian, *Anab.* 1.11.6 ff. See Strasburger in *Gnomon* 23 (1951) 83-88.

⁷ Caesar himself, in the *Civil War*, does not mention it, but it is a fixed topic in historical writing concerned with Caesar, especially, of course, in Lucan. The references are in *RE* s.v. "Rubico," col. 1162. See also C. W. Mendell, "Lucan's Rivers," in *YCS* 8 (1942) 3 ff.

(7.40); he is surrounded by his special troops which are identified once more with reference to the previous passage, and before him is led the empty chariot of Zeus. The repetition of the order of march emphasizes the ceremonial nature of the crossing, which corresponds to the ceremonial nature of the sacrifice.⁸

There are three remarks, however, which destroy the grandeur of this picture, one remark being added to the end of each section of the crossing, and the third to the whole story. First, concerning the libation scene: Xerxes threw the phiale and some other objects into the sea: was his purpose, asks Herodotus, to dedicate them to the sun, or did he want to pacify the Hellespont for having insulted it on a previous occasion? This remark destroys the sacredness of the action and raises doubts about Xerxes' relation to the gods (7.54.3). Secondly, a variant tradition is mentioned according to which Xerxes crossed last of all his troops (7.53.3); in its particular context this remark destroys the visual cogency of the second scene. Finally the whole crossing is put into a most peculiar light by an anecdote in which a Hellespontine is made to remark: "Zeus, why do you take on the shape of a Persian man, and the name of Xerxes instead of that of Zeus, to destroy Greece, bringing with you all of humanity, while you could have done it without all this?" (7.56.2).

This remark is called a naive one by the commentators, and it is thought that we have here the type of irony so common in tragedy, in which the chorus, itself identified with the error of the hero, makes a remark which the audience only can understand.⁹ But in this interpretation it must be assumed that the Hellespontine mistakes Xerxes for Zeus; instead he knows him for the Persian king. Two curious features of the saying are that it is addressed to Zeus, and yet it is not a prayer, and that Xerxes does not know of it. I would suggest that the man at the Hellespont knows fully what he is saying: this man Xerxes looks like Zeus, but he is not Zeus; for Zeus would not need this host of "all men." Herodotus has many instances of the witty anecdote in which the speaker himself is aware of the intended meaning: the anecdote is a witticism, and there is nothing so devastating to grandeur as wit. At the same time, the witticism goes right to the heart of the matter. The identification

⁸ In general, see How and Well's commentary.

⁹ Stein's commentary *ad loc.* W. Aly, *Volksmärchen, Sage und Novelle bei Herodot und seinen Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen 1921) 175. J. L. Myres, *Herodotus the Father of History* (Oxford 1953) 107 and 219.

of Xerxes with a god is already to be found in the *Persians* of Aeschylus, a work with which Herodotus was familiar; and it is played upon in several ways in his work.¹⁰ The anecdote raises questions: is Xerxes great or does he merely look great? Why does he not sit in the chariot of Zeus? We are removed from Xerxes, and his grandeur is found to be hollow, or at least ambiguous; we can contemplate the action, but we cannot take it quite seriously any more.

All this is intelligible only because it is placed within the larger framework of the March of Xerxes. The campaign of Xerxes, although it is the culmination of the whole work, follows the pattern of the other campaigns in the work; it is a greatly elaborated Campaign Logos.¹¹ Such a logos first gives the plans of the aggressor, then his preparations, and finally his arrival at the scene of the action; the parts are treated however as freely as the occasion may warrant. This section, the March of the Aggressor (7.26–131), is here given in measured stages, and in a highly elaborate form: Xerxes goes from Critalla in Cappadocia to Sardis where he spends the winter; from Sardis he goes to Abydus; at Abydus he crosses the Hellespont and goes to Doriscus in Thrace; from Doriscus to Acanthus near Mt. Athos; from Acanthus to Thermae, whence on a sightseeing tour to Thessaly; Thessaly is the border of Greece, and there he stops. The central section here is the march from Abydus to Doriscus which is initiated by the crossing of the Hellespont (7.54–107). This very simple scheme is elaborated by a mass of significant detail: omens, disasters, and deeds of Xerxes, which have no obvious organization, but set up a certain rhythm counteracting our growing realization of Xerxes' power in the progress of his march.¹²

¹⁰ Compare, e.g., 7.157.1 with 7.203.2. Aeschylus, *Pers.* 80; for the relationship between Aeschylus and Herodotus, see below, note 25.

¹¹ I use the word logos as a structural unit in the sense of Max Pohlenz, *Herodot der erste Geschichtschreiber des Abendlandes* (Leipzig 1937) 54–73, despite the fact that I do not think that Herodotus himself used the word with any precision.

¹² This outline roughly agrees with that of J. L. Myres (above, note 9) 107, 127 and 219, but there are difficulties: (a) The building of the Hellespontine bridges appears during the march (7.33–36) rather than with the other preparations; below, note 13. (b) The chronology given by Herodotus in 8.51 might appear to presuppose the Crossing of the Hellespont as the beginning of the March: ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς διαβάσεως τοῦ Ἑλλησπόντου, ἔνθεν πορεύεσθαι ἤρξαντο οἱ βάρβαροι, ἔνα αὐτοῦ διατρίψαντες μῆνα . . . ἐν τρισὶ ἐτέροισι μῆσι ἐγένοντο ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ. It is not true, however, that the Persians began their march at the Hellespont, and J. E. Powell, *Herodotus Book VIII* (Cambridge 1939) 100 f., has pointed out that ἔνθεν is here temporal. (c) A case can be made for be-

Of these meaningful details, the Hellespont is one. The bridging of the Hellespont is first mentioned near the beginning of the planning section (7.5–19), where Xerxes is persuaded to go on the campaign by some Greek oracles, selected and explained by the Athenian soothsayer Onomacritus (7.6.4). In his speech before the Persian Council, Xerxes has apparently accepted the plan to bridge the Hellespont as suggested to him in the words of the soothsayer (7.8β.1).^{12a} If we ask why Xerxes conceived this scheme, one answer is the oracle: a military reason is nowhere mentioned. The actual building of the bridges should be mentioned in the preparations section (7.20–26), but, surprisingly, there is no direct mention of the Hellespont here; instead the emphasis is on the digging of the canal at Mt. Athos. Then follows the first lap of Xerxes' march, from Critalla to Sardis; only when, in the following year, he is ready to leave for Abydus do we hear that the bridges are now ready, and are told how they had been built. This perhaps follows a chronological pattern: there were at least four years of preparations (7.20); the first three of these were used for the Athos canal; in the last year Xerxes went to Sardis and presumably the bridges were built at the same time.¹³ Yet the alternation: Athos — march

ginning the actual march at Sardis; see especially 7.33.1 and 7.37.1. This problem is further complicated by the chronological notice in 7.20.1 that Xerxes' campaign took place *πέμπτῳ . . . ἔτει ἀνομένῳ* from the beginning of the preparations. J. E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge 1938) s.v. *ἀνομαι* (apparently following Stein), translates *ἀνομένῳ* as "proceeding." However, according to *LSJ*, *ἀνομαι* is merely a parallel form of *ἀνύω* "to complete," and this seems preferable to Powell's translation. *ἔτος*, in books 7–9, can denote a campaign year beginning in spring; see Pohlenz (above, note 11) 198–99. The end of a campaign year is fall or winter; since Xerxes left Sardis in the spring (7.37.1), i.e. at the beginning, not the end, of a year, the notation in 7.20.1 should at any rate not refer to the march from Sardis. On the assumption of a campaign year it must refer to an event in summer or fall; hence either to the march from Critalla or to the campaign in Greece proper. There is nothing in the notation, therefore, to prevent us from beginning the march at Critalla. It is true, however, that there were still preparations during the first lap of the journey: Pythius' sons, one may think, joined the army at Sardis, and the Hellespontine bridges were built presumably during that fall and winter (7.33–36). The main reason, however, for beginning the march at Critalla is the story that Xerxes had promised prizes to the best prepared of his armies (7.8δ.1) and this promise is referred to at the beginning and end of what I would consider the preparations section (7.19.2 and 7.26.2).

^{12a} The oracle of Bacis quoted in 8.20.2 may give an idea of the nature of a text such as the one expounded by Onomacritus.

¹³ It is at least possible to explain the displacement of 7.33–36 from the preparations section to the march section by assuming that the Hellespontine bridges were built after Xerxes had left Critalla and before the spring of the following year when he left Sardis. This would mean that they were built not only after the canal at Mt. Athos,

— Hellespont — march has a rhythm of its own: the significant act precedes the physical movement of Xerxes. The piercing of the Athos peninsula was an act of pride to seek fame from posterity (7.24); it was not necessary, says Herodotus, from a military point of view. The bridging of the Hellespont was an act of despotism (7.33–36). A storm broke the first cables for the bridges; for this the straits were punished in the manner of a slave, and the Hellespont was chided as a treacherous and salty river to whom no one would sacrifice (7.35.2). The two actions have meaning primarily as complementary pictures of Xerxes the King.

Unexpected is also the placing of the Crossing itself (7.54–56). It should be the decisive step, the center of the march, but it is merely the introduction to the section which takes us from Abydus to Doriscus.¹⁴ This establishes a series of balanced pictures at the beginning and end of the section: to Xerxes' viewing of his forces at Abydus (7.44) corresponds the review of his forces at Doriscus (7.59.2–3); to his conversation with Artabanus at the Hellespont corresponds the conversation with Demaratus at Doriscus: now that the march is against Greece (7.101) a Greek adviser replaces Artabanus. Finally the Hellespont is recalled just before Xerxes leaves Doriscus, for his last act there was to appoint a governor of the Hellespontine region (7.105). Furthermore, one might expect Xerxes to be most confident at the Hellespont, and more concerned when, at Doriscus, he is now thinking of the enemy. But, perversely, at the Hellespont Xerxes is doubtful; in Doriscus he is blindly confident again, and that is his pose as he marches into Greece.

Therefore, the position of the Crossing in the total picture of Xerxes' preparations and march into Greece adds many facets of

the completion of which took three years (7.22.1), but also after the building of the Strymon bridge (7.24) which would fall in the fourth year. I can see no way of deciding whether Herodotus had any conception of the time consumed in the two attempts to build the Hellespontine bridges.

¹⁴ The first two sections are introduced by sentences which mention the final point reached in each section; see 7.26.1 (Sardis) and 7.37.1 (Abydus). The two sections that follow the arrival at Doriscus are introduced by the statement that Xerxes is now going against Greece (7.105 = 108.1). It is significant, I think, that for the march from Abydus to Doriscus (7.44–105) there are no such indications except for the statement (7.58.1) that after the Crossing Xerxes "marched forward." There is only a minor break in the narrative after the Crossing in which two omens are related, one of which had taken place at Sardis and is here told in retrospect (7.57). The absence of any "heading" leaves the burden of proof for the existence of "the March from Abydus to Doriscus" as a unified conception to the general observation of internal balance.

meaning to this scene. When we see Xerxes praying we must know that this man had shortly before felt himself to be master of the Hellespont and had said that no one gave sacrifice to that salty river; we must know also that his grandiose plan, so carefully prepared, originated in a Greek oracle. Statement and counterstatement follow each other in the measured progress of Xerxes' march.

Further contrasting meanings are added when we turn to a consideration of the Hellespont elsewhere in the work. In the exposition of the growth of Asiatic power which Herodotus begins with Croesus of Lydia, and pursues further through the campaigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes, there must be a point where the foundations are laid for the main action, the invasion of Greece by Xerxes. This point is reached at the beginning of the reign of Darius, in a scene in which Darius accedes to the entreaties of his wife Atossa to attack Greece (3.134).¹⁵ Darius' acceptance is there linked with a plan to conquer Scythia. Darius' statement: "I shall build a bridge between this continent and the other" (3.134.4), which refers to the bridge over the Bosphorus, presages Xerxes' announced bridging of the Hellespont (7.8β.1). The first significant mention of the Hellespont is at the end of this same Scythian expedition; for upon returning to Asia Darius named Megabazus commander of a campaign in the Hellespontine region (4.143 f.), and the logos of this European Campaign (to which the much longer Libyan Campaign is subordinated)¹⁶ is the connecting link between the Scythian Campaign and the Ionian Revolt (4.143-44; 5.1-27); this European Campaign begins and ends near the Hellespont, and this importance of the Hellespont is underlined by starting the logos with an anecdote about the location of Byzantium, in which Megabazus acquires "immortal fame among the Hellespontines" (7.144.1-2). Then follows immediately the Ionian Revolt, which consists of two sections: one in which the Greeks have the initiative (5.28-116), and the second in which the Persians retaliate (5.116-6.32). The second of these sections is also framed by action at the Hellespont (5.117 ff.; 6.33). The last event at the Hellespont here is the Persian recapture of the Thracian Cherson-

¹⁵ The scene is central even if it should be a later addition; see F. Jacoby in *RE* Suppl. 2, col. 243.

¹⁶ The Libyan Campaign is contemporary, not with the Scythian Campaign, but with the Campaign of Megabazus (4.145.1), by which it is framed. The European Campaigns of Megabazus and Otanes are thereby shown to be more important in the work than is the Libyan Campaign. The importance, of course, lies in the connection with the Persian Wars.

nese, which caused Miltiades' flight from the Hellespont to Athens (6.33–34 and ff.). Between the Ionian Revolt and Xerxes' Campaign against Greece fall the two major events of Mardonius' Mt. Athos expedition and the expedition of Datis and Artaphernes. Herodotus notes that Mardonius crossed the Hellespont by boat (6.43.4) and that Datis and Artaphernes did not cross the Hellespont at all (6.95.2). More important than these short notices are the two Miltiades stories which frame the two expeditions. The first, which I have mentioned, takes its cue from Miltiades' flight from the Chersonnese (6.40–41); the second story (6.137–40) deals with Miltiades' capture of Lemnos, and one of the main points of that account is the fact that Miltiades came from the Chersonnese to capture the island, and this statement closes the story (6.140).

The Hellespont is the connecting link between Darius' Scythian campaign and Xerxes' Greek campaign, because these two events are in Herodotus' opinion parallel in significance, for both involve the overstepping of the boundary between Asia and Europe. There are two bridges in the Scythian campaign, the Bosphorus bridge by which the continents are joined, and the Danube bridge, guarded by the untrustworthy Ionians; in Xerxes' campaign, the Hellespontine bridges do duty for both.¹⁷ It has been pointed out that the march of Darius and the march of Xerxes strictly follow the same pattern. There is the same warner, Artabanus, in both, and the same punishment of a man through his sons; there is the same contemplation of the sea; and these elements are given in the same order.¹⁸ This parallelism in significant action concerns only the Asiatic portion of the marches; at the boundaries of Europe it stops. There can be no question: Herodotus intended the march of Darius to be the model for the more elaborate one of Xerxes. This in turn detracts from Xerxes' action, for in crossing the Hellespont he is merely imitating his father. If we ask once more why Xerxes crossed the Hellespont, the second answer will be that his father had joined the continents before him. This father-son relationship is important in the work: in one way Xerxes is to Darius what Cambyses is to Cyrus, or what Mardonius is to Gobryas.¹⁹

¹⁷ Herodotus makes little of the Strymon bridge (7.24; 107; 113–15) during the march.

¹⁸ J. E. Powell, *The History of Herodotus* (Cambridge 1939) 57 ff.

¹⁹ Compare, for the alternation of great and petty generations, H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, "Philological Monographs" No. 13 (New York 1951) 643. The weakness of Xerxes' character is well brought out by K. Reinhardt (above, note 1), who however considers it an Oriental trait.

Thus the reader approaches the Crossing of the Hellespont with the precise notion that it is a repetition of an act of *hybris* first committed by Xerxes' father, but during the march of Xerxes this picture is supplemented by the realization of certain contradictions in the character of the king, whose weakness and doubts cannot be reconciled with his strength and confidence; and this contradictory attitude of Xerxes is altogether different from his father's nature. Xerxes' ambivalence is, to be sure, a sign of youth (7.13.2), but it must not be isolated from the situation in which it occurs. For Xerxes has the task to push beyond the zenith of power reached by his father, a task which Herodotus would consider beyond the strength of any human being. The man and his situation form an inescapable connection: therefore, the ambiguity of strength and weakness transmits itself to the two pictures of the Crossing. The ability to look at the same event, or the same person, from two different points of view without attempting to reconcile the resulting paradox is characteristically Herodotean.

A different ambiguity exists in the treatment of the Hellespont at the end of the work. Immediately after the defeat, Xerxes' first thought is for the safety of the bridges (8.97.1); the following sections of Xerxes' retreat and the flight of Mardonius' troops are likewise directed toward the Hellespont. And so is naturally the pursuit of the Greeks; Mycale was fought to gain "the islands and the Hellespont" (9.101.3). When the Greeks finally arrive at the Hellespont, they find the bridges destroyed by a storm (9.114.1, cf. 8.117.1); so they capture Sestos, on the European side of the bridges, and nail Artayctes, the governor of Sestos, to a plank at the sea as a warning; then they take up some of the cables to dedicate them to the gods (9.121), and this is the last event mentioned in the *Histories*. The capture of Sestos is thus framed by two references to the Hellespont, and its inclusion in the work is justified by Herodotus partly with reference to the cables. For the Persian Oeobazus had repaired to Sestos with the broken pieces of the cables (9.115) and it is to be understood that the cables were part of the booty when the city was taken. In closing his history, Herodotus emphasizes Sestos as the European head of the Hellespontine bridges. It is a fitting end to the work, for the original boundary between Asia and Europe is now reestablished, and the connection between the continents is broken. Xerxes will not return to Europe.²⁰

²⁰ The question of whether the work of Herodotus is finished cannot be treated here in full; in general see P. MacKendrick in *CW* 47 (1954) 150, note 11; in particular,

All would be clear with this end if it were not for Artayctes whom the Greeks punished in such outrageous fashion. This man had committed a religious crime against the sanctuary of the Greek hero Protesilaus, who was the first of his people to set foot on Asian soil during the Trojan War. The treatment of Artayctes may be considered a just punishment, or merely personal vengeance which might call forth further troubles. The Greeks may not respect the boundary of the Hellespont in the future, since there are the Asiatic Ionians to be freed, and since Mycale had been fought already in Asia. Will there be a repetition of the Trojan War? Artayctes raises many questions; hence his story is mentioned twice in the work: first at the occasion of the building of the bridges (7.33), and again at the end of the work. The ambiguity here concerns the justice of the cause of the Greeks as compared to that of the Persians.

III

These ambiguities raise certain difficulties of interpretation. An author who constantly emphasizes the contradictory nature of events cannot arrive at dramatic presentation in the Thucydidean sense. So it should after all be a metaphysical consistency that Herodotus is after, a proof of the true structure of the universe rather than a consistent picture of the deeds of man. It is one of the aims of this paper to show that on the contrary the ambiguities concern also this metaphysical picture, that Herodotus is indeed concerned with the deeds of men and not with theology. There is current an interpretation of Herodotus which does try to find a con-

Pohlenz (above, note 11) 163-77, who assumes that Herodotus wanted to close his work with the capture of Byzantium by Pausanias in 478. This is, however, disproved by 8.3.2 where the events leading to the formation of the Delian League are said to have happened "later," a phrase which Herodotus uses often in references to events after the Persian Wars (see F. Jacoby, *RE* Suppl. 2, s.v. "Herodotos," col. 378). The capture of Byzantium and the hybris of Pausanias fell in the same campaign year; and since Herodotus has given all military events of the preceding two campaign years he would have been forced to give a picture of Pausanias totally different from that given after Plataea (9.78-79; 82), and to give an inkling at least of the formation of the Delian League. The famous sentence in 9.121, that "nothing else happened in this year," closes the campaign year 479/8 (spring to winter). The work of Herodotus really closes with Mycale; Sestos is added for three reasons: (a) its capture fell in the same campaign year as Mycale, coming as it did in late fall or winter of that year (winter is specified by Thucydides 1.89.2; on *ἐπιχειμάσαντες* 'having entered the winter' see Pohlenz 164, note 3), (b) the cables were captured there, (c) it was the European bridgehead at the Hellespont and Artayctes was nailed up there as a warning. Thucydides 1.89, who summarizes through Mycale, and starts his account of the Pentekontaetia with Sestos, has well understood Herodotus' narrative.

sistent metaphysics in his work by extracting those elements from the narrative which fit most closely the theology of the *Persians* of Aeschylus.²¹ In this picture the Crossing of the Hellespont plays a part. For the Hellespont as a boundary between continents is also a limit of nature which Xerxes oversteps to be punished by finding his limit at Salamis. Herodotus has himself emphasized this theme by giving the Hellespont the same function that rivers have in nearly all the campaigns of Asiatic rulers; the river is a boundary in Ionian geography, but to Herodotus it is also a moral boundary.²² The comparison of the Hellespont with a river is made by Xerxes himself when he calls the Hellespont a treacherous and salty river (7.35.2). This was presumption; but it was also a misconception, for the Hellespont is not a river, but a branch of the sea, and therefore properly salty. Xerxes is not only overbearing, he is also blind. *Atē* comes before the fall. We feel this idea of punishment in the story of the storms: the storm that broke the first set of bridges (7.34), and the other which broke the last set (8.117.1 = 9.114.1). Two other storms destroyed parts of the Persian fleet near Artemisium (7.188.2–195 and 8.12–13); of these the earlier (the storm off Magnesia) was thought by the Athenians to have been caused by Boreas, the North Wind, their relative by marriage to whom they had prayed. This importance of the winds had been prophesied to the Delphians before the arrival of the Persians in Greece (7.178). Now Herodotus does not say that all these winds were divine, but there is a certain compelling force in the repetitive arrangement of the events; and Xerxes was warned by Artabanus to beware of storms at sea — the sea and the land were his greatest enemies (7.49.2). Now it is in Aeschylus that the gods are fighting beside the Greeks;²³ and this is one element in which Herodotus and Aeschylus agree with each other and with popular tradition.

The difference between Aeschylus and Herodotus lies however not so much in their beliefs as in the way these beliefs are expressed. In the *Persians* everything has a clear and unequivocal meaning culminating in the explanation of Xerxes' defeat by the ghost of

²¹ See especially O. Regenbogen, "Herodot und sein Werk," *Die Antike* 6 (1930) 202 ff., especially 239–42; Pohlenz (above, note 11) 116 ff. and 120 ff. *passim*.

²² One need only think of Croesus at the Halys, Cyrus at the Gyndes and Araxes, Darius at the Ister, or of the significance of rivers both in the Scythian Campaign and the Campaign of Xerxes (see 7.21.1) to realize the fundamental importance of the river motif in Herodotus. See also above, note 7.

²³ E.g. Aeschylus, *Pers.* 495–507: the storms at the Strymon.

Darius. The bridging of the Hellespont was Xerxes' own plan, but a *daimôn* had a hand in it (722 ff.), an evil *daimôn*, as the outcome showed, who beclouded Xerxes' senses (725). This *daimôn* served the purpose of Zeus, a purpose which had been prophesied. The prophecy did not include the time and manner of the destruction (and neither, we must conclude, did the original plan of Zeus): these are Xerxes' own doing, the god merely collaborated with him (739 ff.). Xerxes' rashness made him bridge the Hellespont; he, a mortal, hoped to control the gods. This rashness is due to his youth (782), and it made him forgetful of his father's precepts. The same *hybris* made the Persians disregard the Greek sanctuaries; for this they will be punished at Plataea (809 ff.). Blindness is the "fruit" of such *hybris*, and the harvest is disaster which is Zeus' punishment (821 ff.). A man so punished can be admonished to moderation (829 f.), and with this advice to the chorus and to Atossa the ghost retires. This is systematic theology, a clear solution to the earlier fears of the chorus who had felt all mortals subject to a blind misleading divinity which throws them off their appointed course (93 ff.).²⁴ In this revelation, we see a larger fate, a necessity of fall which hits the great at one time; but the precise manner of the tragedy which overtakes Xerxes is his own responsibility: his *hybris* leads to blindness and thus to punishment. The gods are just.

Now there can be no doubt that Herodotus knew the *Persians*. Some six to eight verbal correspondences have been noted, most of them in speeches, i.e. in sections concerned with interpretation.²⁵ But such clear statements about the meaning of Xerxes' defeat as those I have quoted from Aeschylus are not to be found in Herodotus. The closest parallels are an oracle of Bacis referring to Salamis (8.77), which is in direct quotation, and a speech by Themistocles after Salamis in which he is trying to find arguments to justify a postponement of the pursuit of Xerxes — an opinion which he did not himself share (8.109.3). It would be curious to find the deepest interpretation of the work put into the mouth of one who is lying, or in a quotation from an oracle. It is also significant, no doubt, that the ghost of Darius in the *Persians* is interpreting events already past, or events which are still to come: the action of the *Persians* takes place between Salamis and Plataea. Herodotus follows the

²⁴ This interpretation differs radically from that of B. Snell, *Aeschylus und das Handeln im Drama* (*Philologus* Suppl. 20.1 [Leipzig 1928]) 66-77.

²⁵ Pohlenz (above, note 11) 116, note 3.

present, i.e. events as they develop; the ultimate meaning of the flow of history cannot be as clear as the meaning of events which are chosen by the poet for their theological meaning. Aeschylus gives a more vivid picture of the battle of Salamis than does Herodotus, but it is highly selective: only those features are included which show an identity of purpose of the attacking Greeks with the avenging divinity. And so, Aeschylus intentionally removes us from the actuality of the event: he removes us in space, by transferring the action of the play to Persia; in time, by placing it between Salamis and Plataea; and finally by selecting primarily those features of the battle itself which express symbolically the Greek struggle for freedom with the help of the gods. Herodotus, though less vivid, is nevertheless closer to the event, for he sees it as a complex of human motivations and superhuman forces, a complex which is not intelligible to him under a simple theological scheme. The forces that operate beneath the surface of observable historical events appear to him contradictory and can be described only in stories which have an essentially paradoxical meaning.

IV

This metaphysical obscurity, or obfuscation, if I may call it that, is a necessary concomitant to his emphasis on the conditions under which history happens, and under which man suffers and acts. In order to show what is meant by this, I shall turn to a group of three additions to the campaign *logos* of Xerxes' invasion, additions which are the more central for being very loosely motivated in the narrative. These are the Persian Council, the Dreams of Xerxes, and Xerxes' Conversation with Artabanus at the Hellespont.²⁶ Their external unity is in the figure of Xerxes' uncle Artabanus, the wise adviser and warner of the king. They are also held together by the motifs which introduce them into the narrative. The first thing we are told by Herodotus about Xerxes after his accession is his unwillingness to fight the Greeks (7.5.1). A reason for this is not given, but its meaning is clearly the negation of the whole course of Asiatic history up to this point. Throughout the work two types of motivation for aggressive campaigns play a dominant part: the

²⁶ All three are much discussed. See especially Regenbogen (above, note 21); Myres (above, note 9) 105 ff. and 216 ff.; Pohlenz (above, note 11) 120 ff.; F. Egermann, "Das Geschichtswerk des Herodot. Sein Plan," *NJbb* 1 (1938) 191-97 and 239-54; K. Reinhardt (above, note 1).

ruler's irrational desire, and persuasion by an interested party. Usually these are complementary, as for instance in the Atossa scene, of which I have spoken, in which Darius accepts the plea to fight the Greeks because aggression was already his desire. Xerxes, at the beginning of his reign, is faced by two wars: one to subdue a revolt of Egypt, the other to attack the Greeks. He is willing to go against Egypt, and thus to maintain his father's empire; but apparently he does not have his father's desire for expansion. One feels the force of this unexpected attitude if one thinks back to the very beginning of Asiatic rule where conquest is motivated almost entirely by this desire "to go always forward."²⁷ It is no true answer, therefore, to put this attitude down to the extreme youth of the king; this may be the psychological reason, but the meaning of the refusal to fight is to show Xerxes weak, if judged by Persian standards. Xerxes is persuaded by Mardonius and some renegade Greeks to undertake the campaign: the desire is aroused in him by persuasion (7.5-7). There the matter might end, but Herodotus wants to show Xerxes strong also; so once persuaded he holds a council in which he has an opportunity, as Herodotus says, "to find out the opinions (of his advisers) and to tell in public what he desired" (7.8). He has already formed a desire of what to do, but he will also hear advice. Somehow these two scenes of advice are redundant if it is merely a question of arriving at a decision, but they are complementary if the motivations that may lead to a decision are to be fully shown. Xerxes is now a normal king and he feels himself as the culmination of Persian tradition; the arguments of his two speeches in the council are throughout traditional ones and serve in fact as a summary of the work (7.8 and 11). Xerxes wants to be the equal of his forefathers, and in the unity of Persian tradition he sees the leadership of a god (7.8α.1). His motives are the same as those of Darius: vengeance on the Athenians, and desire for total empire. In his second speech, he sees the conflict as an unavoidable one: either the Greeks will come to Asia, or the Persians must forestall them by going to Europe (7.11.3): throughout the work these two possibilities are present as an expression of the old enmity between Greeks and barbarians.²⁸ The purpose of these speeches is

²⁷ Herodotus 1.102.2 of Phraortes, the second king of the Medes.

²⁸ Pohlenz' "Erbfeindschaft." The origin of such a basic hostility between two states is shown in the case of the Athenians and Aeginetans in 5.81.2 ff. Such a hostility existed between Greeks and Asians from the time of the Trojan War (1.4.4), for

to show the nature of the decision which will lead to action, a decision based on tradition and irrational desire. The warning speech of Artabanus, on the other hand, introduces the element of reason. Again on the basis of past history — this time, the history of Persian failures — Artabanus draws the rational conclusion that one must take good counsel; for good counsel is by its own nature superior to fortune, whether it is followed by success or not (7.10δ-ζ).^{28a} Good counsel makes one see that god always strikes down what is too high. Good counsel finally concludes that in rashness there lies error, and from error derive great penalties; while in holding back there are ultimate advantages. Hence the advice is: hold back, that is, do not go on the campaign. This is Herodotean rationalism. In modern terms, the speeches of Artabanus and Xerxes show decision as based on reason and on emotion.

Herodotus has no conception of a "free will" as the agent of human decisions.²⁹ Instead human action is based on choice, *hairesis*, and choice may be rationally or emotionally motivated. One may make a choice freely, or under compulsion, but in either case one is responsible for that choice. The freedom of the will is somehow comprised in this, but it is not sufficiently (from our point of view) isolated to avoid what are *for us* impossible combinations of free will and determinism. Was Xerxes' decision free? We would conclude that it was, for both Xerxes and Artabanus change their minds in the course of these scenes.³⁰ But Artabanus' opinion — his *gnômê* — is freer in that it can give an account of itself, while Xerxes' desire — his *ἔμπερος γῆς* — is blind: once aroused it precedes his arguments, it is not based on them. When generation after generation of Oriental kings act through desire this motivation acquires overtones of a necessity. Necessity — *anankê* — is the other element in history, but this again is not a totally determining force; its effect is obscure and partial. The paradoxical contrast between *hairesis* and *anankê* is the essence of Herodotus' philosophy of action. The contrast is an old one in Greek thought, but the sharpness of the paradox, without any attempt at mediation between the

the Athenians and Persians in particular it existed from the time of Hippias' final departure for Asia (5.96.2).

^{28a} Contrast with this statement the words of Themistocles before Salamis (8.60γ) in which he claims that success is usually attained by good counsel; in general, Herodotus' narrative does not bear out his optimism.

²⁹ For the absence of the notion of free will in the fifth century, see B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Oxford 1953) 182–83.

³⁰ Herodotus 7.12–13; 18.3.

two antithetical poles, is Hérodotos' own.³¹ It proves that Herodotus is not a theologian, and that his main concern is with the phenomena of historical existence rather than with a metaphysical system. It is for this reason that Herodotus uses words like *moira* and *peprômenê* only rarely, preferring instead to refer to "fate" by neutral terms, such as τὸ δέῃ γενέσθαι and the like, terms which do not imply any view about the properties and function of "fate."³² Of the two poles, *hairesis* — the human element in historical events — is isolated in the council scene. There is no necessity, says Artabanus, for Xerxes to enter into such a danger as the campaign would prove to be (7.10δ.1).

It is the purpose of the Dream Scene (7.12–18), which follows at once upon the Council, to show that such a necessity does indeed exist for Xerxes.³³ The dream scene is introduced by a duplication of the motif of Xerxes' ambivalence. The advice, *gnômê*, of Artabanus vexed Xerxes during the night, and just as day had changed to night, so Xerxes now found it was not his business to attack Greece. Then he fell asleep, and according to the Persians he saw a vision: a tall and handsome man stood over him and commanded him to keep the counsel he had had in the daytime; then the vision flew away. Xerxes, however, on the next day kept his new opinion, and informed the Persians of his change of heart. During the following night the dream stood over him again, warning him that if he did not campaign *at once* he would be brought low as quickly as he had risen to power. Xerxes, in order to test the dream, now had Artabanus don his royal garments, sit on his royal throne, and then sleep in his royal bed. The dream, however, recognized Artabanus and told him that neither in the future, nor at the present time, would he avoid punishment for trying to avert that which had to happen. And he proved his power by trying to put out Artabanus' eyes with hot irons. This left Artabanus no choice: the dream's cleverness proved his reality, and the meaning seemed to be that the gods were driving the Greeks to defeat. Hence Artabanus now changed his mind and urged Xerxes to undertake the campaign.

³¹ In general, see H. Fränkel (above, note 19) 658.

³² On the inescapability of necessity, see Fr. Hellmann, *Herodots Kroisos Logos*, "Neue Philologische Untersuchungen" No. 9 (Berlin 1934) 69–70.

³³ J. L. Myres (above, note 9) 126 and 217 in his desire for external balance has split up the dream scenes, but his analysis of 7.8–19 is artificial; e.g. his "fourth dream" is not on the same level as the other three, but should be compared with earlier dreams by Astyages and Cyrus; see Egermann (above, note 26) 249.

The interpretation of these dreams is difficult. It will not do to give the responsibility for this scene in its entirety to Herodotus' Persian informants, to whom he himself credits the story (7.12.1).³⁴ The Oriental motifs in the scene concern primarily the trappings of royalty: the change of garments, the trusty adviser of the king. Other motifs and ideas can be paralleled elsewhere in Greek writers or in Herodotus himself. The "tall and handsome man" who "stood over" Xerxes seems to be a Greek dream figure, and in Herodotus Croesus and Hipparchus see similar (if not identical) figures.³⁵ Greek also is the dream's flying away as in Homer. And in the Greek manner are some of the arguments put forth in the scene by Artabanus: first, that dreams are not real, but a reflection of waking thought (compare Iocasta's views on oracles in the *Oed. Tyr.*); and secondly that the dream will not be fooled by the exchange of garments (Herodotus himself shows up the idea of testing the divine as fruitless in the Croesus and Polycrates stories). The elaboration of the story of the dreams fits Greek patterns perfectly well, and it should not be taken as merely an isolated bit of Oriental folklore, although the kernel of the story was no doubt received by Herodotus in a Persian account.

On the other hand, it is also not very enlightening to compare the dreams to the famous dream of Agamemnon of *Iliad* 2.³⁶ There Zeus has a plan to harm the Greeks; he sends a dream to Agamemnon telling the dream what to say; the dream flies down and delivers his message which arouses Agamemnon by the promise that he will take the city of Troy. The dream is entirely transparent: we know where it comes from, we know what it promises, and we know why this promise is a false one. In Herodotus, we do not know where the dream comes from, it does not promise anything, and therefore we do not know that the dream is lying. For the false interpretation of the dream (that it presages the defeat of the Greeks) is given by Artabanus; the dream says only: you *must* go *now* (7.14). And the explanation that the dream comes from god is also merely Artabanus' interpretation, not Herodotus' stated opinion. What actually is this dream figure? Here I think the dream's warning to

³⁴ Reinhardt (above, note 1). Regenbogen (above, note 21) 239 puts the matter correctly.

³⁵ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 107-8. Herodotus 1.34.1-2 (Croesus), and 5.56.1 (Hipparchus).

³⁶ See, e.g., Pohlenz (above, note 11) 126.

Xerxes is decisive: "as you have become great and powerful in a short time, so you will become small again quickly" (7.14) — namely if you do not fight the Greeks right away. It is a strange statement to make to a king whose greatness is built on the work of his ancestors, and yet to be convincing, the reference to Xerxes' sudden rise to power must be true. The dream is therefore not speaking to Xerxes as the bearer of royalty, but to Xerxes as a person; for it was true that Xerxes had assumed the kingship unexpectedly, and through the machinations of Demaratus and Atossa, since he was not his father's eldest son (7.2-3).

And as a prophecy, the warning is also true: Xerxes went on his campaign and did not become small quickly, but continued to rule after Salamis. The dream has a close personal relation to the man Xerxes; he is acting like his personal *daimôn*, not a Homeric messenger from the gods. The relation of this *daimôn* to the divine world is entirely obscure, although we must assume that it is somehow divine since it is real. This daemonic figure is urging immediate action. In Aeschylus we have a theological scheme by which fate sets a limit and man himself determines the exact point in time of the catastrophe; here the very act which in the Council Scene has just been described as an act of choice is now shown to be a necessity: Xerxes has to go *at once*, says the dream; Artabanus cannot do anything about it *either now or later* (7.17.2). One and the same event can be said to be chosen and necessary. Why it is necessary we are not told; it is not possible to say *here* that Xerxes is being punished for *hybris*. It is true that Artabanus, when Xerxes suggests to him to test the dream by the exchange of garments, wisely intimates that this procedure is improper (7.16γ); he is nevertheless made to comply with Xerxes' wish, and this act of *hybris* (if it is that) remains entirely without effect: we feel that if Artabanus had not engaged in this piece of trickery, the dream could have told him the same thing. The garment exchange is comparable to Croesus' testing of the oracles (1.46.2 ff.), and Polycrates' attempt to change fate by throwing the ring into the sea (3.41 ff.). In each case man is trying to influence "that which has to happen," and in each case (although in different ways) the attempt is futile. It is also not possible to be sure that the dream is an expression of *atê* leading to destruction; for nothing really misleading is said by the dream. It is the reader who at this point supplies the theological interpretation; Herodotus is silent about it, a silence which ought

not be credited merely to his objectivity in relating a Persian story; for the elaboration of this story fits the rest of the work too well for that. The obfuscation of theological issues is a basic feature of the work, and in the case of the dream we are left in the dark except for the simple and strong existence of a necessity: "it has to be." Yet it would not be right to say that Xerxes is here forced to fight against his will; as soon as the necessity is apparent, Artabanus and he agree to fight.

The elements of action are thus found in the interplay of choice and necessity, elements that are often opposed, as are our notions of fate and free will, but which may also coincide as they do in this case. One may be forced to make a certain decision; and necessity in turn appears primarily through the choice of man. The will therefore is free, and at the same time it is unfree. This basic paradox of human action is found throughout the work in one way or another. Gyges already was confronted by the necessity of making a choice between his own death and the murder of his master, as Herodotus puts it (1.11.3-4). In choosing one of the alternatives he was free: Gyges "chose to survive himself." But he had not the choice to do what he wanted, which was to escape from the necessity of making this choice (1.12.1). The wording of the passage suggests that Herodotus is thinking of a choice between life and death as hardly a choice at all but as a forced decision; yet after the deed is done Gyges is held responsible for it by the Delphic oracle. The case of Croesus, as has been pointed out to me,³⁷ is somewhat different: Croesus was under the necessity of being punished for the crime of Gyges; but in the Pythia's answer (1.91) it is clearly stated that for his defeat by the Persians he was himself responsible, so that the situation is similar to that of the *Persians* of Aeschylus: the *Moirai* saw to it that the dynasty would come to an end with Croesus, but the fact that it happened in the fourteenth year of his rule, and through his war against Cyrus, was Croesus' own fault. Such an explanation, however, is not typical of Herodotus: the theological statement is the Pythia's, that is, Delphi's; it is an apology for the ways of the god. For the Persian rulers such a neat explanation will not work. The Persian Empire grew because of many decisions, however these were motivated; for example, Cyrus, before he came to the throne, showed the Persians the importance of a choice between riches and poverty (1.126.3);

³⁷ By Professor A. W. Allen.

and soon after his accession, the Persians as a nation chose to be poor and rulers of men, rather than rich and the slaves of others, as Herodotus tells us in the last chapter of his work (9.122). And yet these single decisions fall into a cumulative pattern forming a tradition which at the time of Xerxes has become a necessity. Likewise, the greatest free act of the *Histories*, namely the decision of the Athenians to resist the invaders, is described by Herodotus in a manner suggesting an act of fate (7.139.5): the Athenians, he says, might well be called the saviors of Greece, for whichever side they turned to, that side was bound to go down on the scales: the picture of the scales, implied in the verb *rhepein*, suggests a divine agent. For the defeat of Xerxes, although brought about by the Athenians, was something which also "had to happen."³⁸

V

In these two scenes, then, the situation and role of Xerxes are clear, but the world of the gods remains a mystery only dimly perceived. What is the situation and role of the wise man, Artabanus? In the *Persians* of Aeschylus Darius functions also as the wise man; he says that man can learn from his experiences and he can be counselled to be moderate — the chorus and Atossa are to set Xerxes' judgment aright (829 ff.). Hence it is thought sometimes that in Herodotus also it is only the failure of the ruler to listen to the wise man which brings about his misfortunes: moderation is the answer to hybris. There are in fact many warners in Herodotus accompanying kings and their advice is always sound, but it is also usually negative.³⁹ So also in the Council Scene: in holding back

³⁸ H. Kleinknecht, "Herodot und Athen," *Hermes* 75 (1940) 241–64, emphasizes primarily the element of choice; but see p. 258. For contemporary parallels for the use of *σῶντες* and its relation to the divine, see F. Dornseiff in *RE* s.v. *Σῶντες*, cols. 1212 and 1213. On the paradox of choice and necessity in the Oresteia, see B. Snell (above, note 24) 143 and *passim*.

³⁹ See H. Bischoff, *Der Warner bei Herodot* (Diss. Marburg 1932). R. Lattimore, "The Wise Adviser in Herodotus," *CP* 34 (1939) 24–36, especially 25–28, lists separately the negative warnings and positive practical advice. It appears from this list that positive advice usually concerns only practical details rather than large decisions; exceptions are Harpagus' advice to Cyrus (1.123), Bias' and Thales' advice to the Ionians (1.170), Cleomenes' advice to the Spartans *re* Meandrius (3.148), Miltiades' advice to Callimachus (6.109), and Chileus' advice to the Spartans to help the Athenians against Mardonius (9.9). Themistocles' advice to build ships and to rely on them against the Persians might perhaps be listed here (7.143 and 144), but his repeated advice to Eurybiades to fight at Salamis (8.58–60) should not, since ultimately it was not followed and had to be supplanted by a trick (8.75). The preponderance of negative advice over positive is therefore quite clear.

(ἐν τῷ ἐπισχεῖν, 7.10ζ) there are ultimate advantages, says Artabanus to Xerxes. These warners of the Persians do not have any plans of their own; the plans originate with the king, or with others whose advice is not due to wisdom, but to selfishness.

The warnings of Artabanus are intimately connected with the famous Solonian address to Croesus (1.32) and the letter of Amasis to Polycrates (3.40); it is the same philosophy that speaks in the three passages. Each of these scenes has its own meaning, but they agree in one respect: the futility of advice. So far as Solon is concerned, he really does not give advice at all, but merely expounds a view of the human situation according to which a man cannot be called fortunate until his life is complete. Implicit in this is a devaluation of Croesus' life and a praise of the more moderate life of Tellus. Croesus, as a rational being, could have learned from this; one must admit that possibility, for Croesus is not simply a plaything of fate.⁴⁰ Otherwise the death of his son Atys could not be called the *nemesis* of the divine (1.34.1). On the other hand, Croesus could not agree with Solon's opinion because that view was a negation of Croesus' existence as a king. The advice given by Amasis to Polycrates was followed; the ring was thrown into the sea, but was returned in the belly of a fish. Thus it was shown that "no man could rescue a fellow man from a situation that was bound to come" (3.43.1), and Amasis withdrew from intercourse with Polycrates. Yet the "fated event," Polycrates' miserable end, is shown later to be due to his own greed and folly. Artabanus' advice to Xerxes, on the other hand, was feasible, for it is no different in nature from e.g. the advice of Bias or Pittacus to Croesus in which it was intimated to the king that he had better not attack the Greek islands; and this advice was followed by Croesus (1.27). If the dream had not intervened, Xerxes would in fact not have undertaken the expedition against Greece.

The situation of the three advisers therefore differs in each case. Fate did not obstruct Croesus' acceptance of the Solonian view; yet what would have been the result of such acceptance? Presumably Croesus' son would not have died, for Herodotus gives us to understand that the anger of the gods caused his son's unfortunate death; perhaps he would not have conceived the desire to attack the Per-

⁴⁰ F. Hellmann (above, note 31) 77 ff. and 121-25 argues (partly against Bischoff) that advice is useless since fate does not allow for free will. The controversy is futile, since in Herodotus we have choice and necessity combined.

sians and thus have ruled longer. But what positive action he would have engaged in under the doctrine of moderation is hard to see. He could not have abdicated to live the life of Tellus the Athenian, for Tellus, no more than Croesus, chose his own life without the cooperation of fortune, and his prosperity and glorious death were not simply the due reward of virtue. In the Polycrates story, the wise king Amasis decided to have nothing further to do with his friend. This negative attitude befitted a king who had a happy life because, as Herodotus says, nothing untoward befell him in forty-four years of reign (3.10.2). In Artabanus we have a synthesis of Solon and Amasis. His advice is based on the Solonian view of life, and it is negative; it concerns moreover a specific campaign. He has all the right arguments, he persuades the king, but in the dream scene his wisdom becomes a mockery: first he declares that the dream is not divine, but he has to change his mind about that when the dream appears to him. Then he declares the exchange of garments to be folly, which is true but unimportant. Finally the divine forces Artabanus to misinterpret the dream: it seems to foretell the defeat of the Greeks. Wisdom is shown to be helpless both when faced with an external necessity and when faced by a historical situation in which a favorable decision would deny the total existence of the ruler.

Two things emerge from this discussion: the wise adviser is powerless to change the great historical decisions and the wise adviser is useless in so far as his advice is negative. If the king took him seriously, he could not act at all. Conversely the historical actor cannot be prudent. Historical action is thereby shown to be presumptuous and blind, in Herodotus' terminology. We expect such an attitude from the Persian ruler, but to some degree it is typical of all historical agents in Herodotus. Perhaps the two noblest actions in the work are Leonidas' stand at Thermopylae and the Athenian attack at Marathon. The first is in a sense negative: Leonidas resolved to die in defeat. Many noble actions in Herodotus show such a negative aspect: e.g. the Ethiopian ruler of Egypt understood an oracle and left Egypt (2.139); out of concern for the common welfare of Greece (8.3) the Athenians *did not* take command of the Greek navy. The Athenian action at Marathon, however, is the outstanding example of success which is also morally praiseworthy. And yet it is not unambiguous: the advice of Miltiades to Callimachus before the battle contains the repeated

statement that through a victory Athens might become the foremost city in Greece (6.109.3 = 109.6), a position which was to be morally dangerous as events later than those described in the work proved, and of which Herodotus was aware.⁴¹ After Marathon, Miltiades appears in a most unfavorable light when Herodotus describes his conduct at Paros (6.132–36). The most illuminating event in this connection is the battle of Salamis; we are so much influenced by Aeschylus' treatment of the battle that it is difficult to realize in what dubious light the virtue of the Greeks appears in it. The praise of Athens in 7.139 (which is further developed in 8.136–9.11) cannot obliterate the fact that Athens had become strong through its protracted struggle with Aegina; that the Greeks before the battle engaged in a "war of words" (8.78) and were forced to fight by the trickery of Themistocles who after the battle communicated with the enemy; that at the beginning of the battle a divine voice was needed to force the Greeks to attack (8.84.2); and finally that the battle itself shows a picture of the strife between Athenians and Aeginetans (8.92) and that strife and envy kept the Greeks from rewarding the true victor (8.123–24). Salamis was won despite the disunity of the Greeks and because of it: for the excellence of the foremost powers was the result of the quarrels with their neighbors. Herodotus distributes praise and blame freely in his *Histories*, but there are few human actions which do not partake of both desirable and undesirable features. Therefore, scholars who take the view that Herodotus is writing moral history are as mistaken as those who maintain that he has no moral interests at all.⁴²

The moral picture is a mixed one and is often paradoxical, just as the metaphysical picture is paradoxical. All Greek victories are morally ambiguous, they combine nobility and baseness; and if this is true of the Greeks, it must be even more true of the Persians. With the moral ambiguity of action goes intellectual limitation. The historical actor cannot be prudent, because prudence is merely a limitation of action.

VI

Choice and necessity, together with intellectual and moral blindness, are the elements of the Herodotean view of historical action.

⁴¹ Cf. the remarks on the struggles between the leading Greek powers after the Persian War, in 6.98.2.

⁴² The problem is much discussed in connection with the problem of Herodotus' alleged pro-Athenian bias. See E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte* 2 (Halle a.S. 1899) 196–229; Pohlenz (above, note 11) 167–73.

The symbol of this view is the character of Xerxes. Xerxes' ambivalence — which is his main character trait — is not just a sign of youth; it derives from the situation in which he and the whole of the Persian Empire find themselves. It is his response to action as a total crisis. The Persian tradition of aggrandizement should lead to a maximum of pride and certainty; paradoxically it brings about uncertainty before the final decision. In the same way, the Greeks are wavering back and forth, as day and night change before the final decision at Salamis.⁴³ The decision which is about to fall is therefore greater than the men who make it; their uncertainty shows that they cannot master it. In Herodotus, it is the total situation of a crisis which is daemonic, not the men who are involved in it; man is merely a part of a complex which contains forces greater than himself. The Gordian knot of such a crisis cannot be cut by man alone: tradition and individual initiative, choice and necessity, virtue and presumption, wisdom and folly all have their part in the final outcome. Such a complex is inescapable; wisdom alone cannot overcome it. Such a situation is tragic, for it shows a fundamental incompatibility between mind and reality, between intent and outcome. The historical situation is only a form of the general human situation which is the situation of tragedy. The incompatibility of man and the world that confronts him is observed in history as conflict and crisis; and this conflict in turn is shown through significant action. There is a difference between the conception of the Crossing of the Hellespont as the yoking of the continents in Aeschylus' *Persians*,⁴⁴ which is a symbolic gesture pointing to a religious truth, and the description of the act of crossing the Hellespont in Herodotus which exemplifies the human situation.

History in Herodotus is thus born out of the experience of the tragic nature of man, and Herodotus has done full justice to the complexity of forces that surround man in action. But action cannot exist without the greatness of the actor through whom the crises of history find their solutions. It is a tribute to the perspicacity of Herodotus to have seen this also. For the emphasis on the greatness of man and his deed is what characterizes the last of the three great scenes, the Conversation between Xerxes and Artabanus at the Hellespont (7.44–52). On the surface this scene might be taken to represent the warning given to the ruler just before he sets out on

⁴³ Compare the ambivalence of Orestes in the *Choephoroe*, on which see B. Snell (above, note 24) 126–38.

⁴⁴ Aeschylus, *Pers.* 69–72, etc.

his campaign; in fact the scene occurs in the place appropriate to such a warning, if we were to regard the crossing as the beginning of the campaign.⁴⁵ However, Artabanus' advice in the Council had already been in the nature of a warning, and the counsel offered here to Xerxes is repetitious and not of very much use to him, since Xerxes' decision is already made. The question: shall we do this? cannot arise any longer, and the scene contributes nothing to the elucidation of Xerxes' decision. Instead, the scene is attached to the motif of the viewing of the ocean, a motif repeated from Darius' viewing of the Pontus⁴⁶ and elaborated into a viewing of Xerxes' armament and of a boat race; for Xerxes does not admire nature here, but solely his own power.

The scene, therefore, is meant to point up the question of the true nature of Xerxes' power and thereby also the question of his greatness. Significantly, right after the viewing of his forces, Xerxes' consciousness of power suddenly turns into its opposite, and he weeps — a repetition of the motif of Xerxes' ambivalence. He fastens upon the ancient lyric sentiment that life is so short: "in 100 years none of those I see here will be alive" (7.46.2). The shortness of life is the proper complaint of youth. Artabanus, who is older and wiser, correctly points out that life is not too short, but too long; misfortunes often make us wish we were dead, a sentiment of equal antiquity.⁴⁷ Xerxes accepts this as a view truer than his own, but rejects it as a statement casting a bad omen upon the matter at hand, and he does not want to hear it at this time. This is reminiscent of the situation of the ruler who rejects advice before a campaign; the difference however lies in two factors: Xerxes accepts the statement on principle, and secondly Xerxes is already committed. His tears do not prevent him from acting, but a philosophy such as that of Artabanus would turn him from his course.

Then Xerxes asks, apparently to no purpose, whether Artabanus is still afraid for the outcome of the expedition, or whether the dream has convinced him that his fears were unfounded. Thus the Council and the Dreams are brought in once more. Artabanus has not changed his mind, for as he had said during the Council, good counsel is superior to fortune even where it is ineffectual. He warns

⁴⁵ In general, see H. Bischoff (above, note 39).

⁴⁶ Herodotus 4.85.1; see also 4.91.1 where Darius compares himself to the river Taurus in beauty and excellence.

⁴⁷ Stein, *ad* 7.46, lines 17 ff.

Xerxes of the land and the sea: there will be no harbors in a storm, there will not be sufficient food for your army (7.49). Neither warning is fully to the point: there were storms to come, as I have mentioned, but they were not decisive, and famine overtook Xerxes' army only during the retreat (8.115.2). Artabanus is wise, but he is merely speculating on possible calamities. "For a man would be the best," he says, "if in taking counsel he were frightened and considered every possible eventuality, while in action he were bold" (7.49.5). Thus the wise man and the historical agent confront each other once more. Xerxes' answer is an eloquent defense of action (7.50): "Your logic, Artabanus, is plausible, but do not fear everything and do not think of every eventuality. For if you were to consider all the possible aspects of a matter for every occasion that presents itself, you would never do anything . . . and if in contradicting everybody else's opinion you do not yourself arrive at certainty, you will fail as much as your opponent; so that your advice and your opponent's advice will come to the same thing. Who, being human, can know anything for certain? I think, nobody. Gain accrues to him who is desirous of action, but the intellectual is hesitant and not usually successful." These maxims Xerxes proves by the past history of Persia: Persia would not be where she is now, if her kings had listened to advice such as Artabanus is now offering. "For great stakes are won by great risks."

This is, I think, the high point of the scene: for the argument of Xerxes, although it is wrong, is nevertheless inevitable. Xerxes in the Council had wanted to fight the Greeks; in the Dream Scene he had been told to fight. At the Hellespont he accepts the inevitable and makes it his own wish: there is an identity between choice and necessity here which fully describes the position of the historical agent. Blindness is a part of this: for Xerxes draws from all this the totally mistaken conclusion that he will be as successful as his predecessors (7.50.4). But his situation is more real than Artabanus' speculations: the scene closes with a last piece of speculative advice, based on the danger in which Darius had found himself at the Danube bridge where his safety had depended on the loyalty of the untrustworthy Ionians. Now Artabanus advises not to take the Ionians along to fight against their ancestors in Greece. But in the last analysis the Ionians at the Danube had been faithful; and the Ionians under Xerxes remain faithful until after Salamis.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Herodotus 8.132; 9.90 ff.; 98.2 ff.; 103-6.

Artabanus has no effective argument against the king's over-confidence.

One feels that in this scene Xerxes acquires a certain greatness which is different from the grandeur of an Oriental potentate, or from Xerxes the symbol of hybris. His greatness lies in the fact that he is the agent of decisive historical action. It is significant that the words of Xerxes here remind one of words spoken in a similar spirit by Pericles at the start of the Peloponnesian War.⁴⁹ If one subtracts the moral and divine universe which surrounds Xerxes' actions, there is still something left which is the greatness of historical action *per se*, a greatness which differs from moral greatness as it differs from the greatness of the divine. Xerxes' historical greatness appears in the courage with which he assumes the task of conquering Greece and in the certainty with which he defends his mission of continuing the expansion of Empire. His plans are based not only on irrational desire, but also on the acceptance of his role and of the historical achievement of his ancestors. The Athenians, in Thucydides, show a similar attitude. The Athenian Empire as Thucydides presents it cannot be defended on moral grounds; like Xerxes' empire it is a tyranny. At the same time, it is a great historical achievement (combining as do all human achievements much that is noble with much that is base) and is accepted as such by Pericles and the Athenians when they allow the Spartans to declare war on them. It is in fact impossible for the Athenians to reject their empire, they cannot escape from the "necessity" of the historical process which inevitably leads to war with Sparta. In accepting this situation, the Athenians willingly become tragic agents. This is the central view of Thucydides beside which he accepts no other; therefore Thucydides can be said to have been the first to isolate historical greatness. For virtue, to him, is only convention if perhaps a desirable convention, and the universe is not interested in man. In Thucydides man is alone, and therefore truly great.

Herodotus belongs to a different age. To him man is not only

⁴⁹ Pohlenz (above, note 11) 133, note 1. See, for the whole paragraph, the important and provocative book by D. Grene, *Man in his Pride* (1950), especially ch. 8. J. Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, trans. by M. D. H. (London 1943), has of course been present to me, especially his fifth chapter: "The Great Men of History." Burckhardt's notion of historical greatness as historical effectiveness in a great cause forms a corrective to Grene's implied idea of greatness which is not kept apart clearly from mere power.

great, but also weak; and he is not merely weak, he is also great. In this respect, Herodotus is of the same age as Sophocles who also shows man primarily in his weakness but nevertheless as truly great.⁵⁰ Herodotus perceives the historical greatness of Xerxes only as part of a larger pattern, which is the total situation of man. The heroic decision to follow fate across the Hellespont is not simply heroism; it is also hybris, shortsightedness and folly; it is also the command of necessity and the desire of a weak man. Midway between the theology of Aeschylus and the humanism of Thucydides, mid-fifth-century speculation attempts to describe the total existence of man in a form not attained either before or after.

⁵⁰ Some remarks on the spiritual relation between Herodotus and Sophocles may be found in Fr. Hellmann, "Herodot," *Das Neue Bild der Antike* (Leipzig 1942) 254. I see that W. Marg, "Herodotus über die Folgen von Salamis," *Hermes* 81 (1953) 206 makes a similar distinction between Aeschylus and Herodotus to that drawn in this paper.