

History Undone.

The Appropriation of Thucydides

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Many of the 'great' classic texts of the west, such as the Iliad and the Bible, have already disappeared beneath a cocoon of interpretative traditions that have arisen around those texts. It is my intention in this essay to present one example of this type of hermeneutical rupture, to make the argument that in the process of creating a Western Rationalist Tradition of 'History', the historical texts of Thucydides have themselves now become effectively absent from the hermeneutical equation. As a result, there is at present a disjunction, a short circuit between 'History' and the Thucydidean texts of 'History.' The intent of this essay is to prompt a collision between the historical Thucydides as he is present in his writings, and the interpretative assumptions about Thucydides that have grown up in the critical literature. These assumptions, which constitute a breach in the hermeneutical circle, have given rise to the scholarly traditionalization or codification of Thucydides in scholarship, with the result that in lieu of actually 'listening to' the historical texts of Thucydides, we are in fact 'reading' only the rationalist Discourse presented by the normative academic paradigm. The methodology of this essay is three-fold: first, to challenge the academic orthodoxy in their interpretation of texts from the ancient period; second, to observe how modern interpreters 'treat' and 'mistreat' figures and ideas and periods that are past; and third, to reintroduce the modern reader to the 'true' figures and ideas and periods enclosed in certain specific classic texts and authors, in this instance those of Thucydides.

In the middle of the last century and in the person of J.B. Bury, modern historiography explicitly ratified for posterity the view that Thucydides composed History in an existential void. Because the rationalist historian ratifies experiences of the world against the standard of ratio, the Story he composes is as though born out of season and into "a lifeless world", and he himself judges his world "as if the series of years [he] lives through would not slowly wash over him." To continue to appropriate Ferge's (2001, 55) phenomenological turn of phrase, if Bury is correct, Thucydides found himself "in a lifeless world born of reason, in which the experience of time plays no part." In a series of lectures given under the auspices of the Classics Department of Harvard University, Bury (1958, 75) argued that although Thucydides had learned "to consider and criticize facts" in sifting through his source material, it was nevertheless his studied opinion that the fifth century Athenian historian was engaged in the critical process of crafting History "unprejudiced by authority and tradition." To be sure, Bury's conclusion is problematic, even when situated against the backdrop of classical philology's traditionally provincial approach to language, history, and History; for its assumption is pure Vico (1993, 82): "Tous les commencemens des histoires barbares sont fabuleux."

Perhaps more problematic, however, is that this type of a priori assumption should continue to receive relatively uncritical endorsement in historiographical circles. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the axiomatic nature of all History, which is to say that "elle a pris le parti d'un certain mode de connaître,"¹¹ the popularity of the purely rationalist re-constitution of the historical past attests only to the stubbornness of the rationalist presuppositional framework ensconced in the field of historiographical studies, and not necessarily to the historical 'truth of the matter.' For

what does Bury mean, precisely, when he makes the claim that Thucydides was "unprejudiced by authority and tradition"? Clearly, he means that Thucydides did not 'buy into' the mythopoetic Weltbild of his peers or predecessors, and that in this respect his writings are completely different from –and for historiographical purposes, far more significant than—the writings of a Homer or a Hesiod or even a Herodotus, which are replete with elements of a mythopoetic nature. Given this type of first proposition, Bury then argues quite logically that the historian Thucydides not only and in fact successfully separated himself from his culture's irrational (poetic? mythic?) paradigm, but that in so doing, he also laid the foundation for a new, rationalist tradition of reading and interpreting the world of past-time.

From this second premise one correctly anticipates that Bury (*Ibid.*, 75-76) will [trans]-pose the historical Thucydides into the category of the modern rationalist thinker, contending that, "[Thucydides] came to be at home in the "modern" way of thinking, which analyzed politics and ethics, and applied logic to everything in the world." Effenterre (1993, 22-23) argues similarly in his 'short history' of Thucydides: "Nous sommes de plain-pied avec son univers intellectuel... (...) Il a ainsi construit une image de la guerre qui...s'impose au lecteur avec une parfaite cohérence, dans une totale rationalité." Ste. Croix (1992, 31-32), however, even though he generally adheres to the same position concerning Thucydides, criticizes a rationalizing argumentⁱⁱⁱ relative to the Athenian historian, where the author "makes some useful points against the exaggerated [rationalist] claims of Cochrane, Weidauer, and others [...], but is himself guilty of indefensible exaggeration of the views he attacks--as when...he actually accuses his opponents of trying to persuade us that Thucydides saw the great Plague of Athens as "a thing subject to rational human control!"

Bury's argument, which adequately characterizes the modern approach to the reconstruction of the historical past, serves in fact as a model of rationalism with all its strengths and weaknesses. The focus of this paper, of course, is only on one particular weakness in the rationalist paradigm of History. Namely: that Thucydides did not write a rationalist History, and that even a perfunctory reading of his writings plainly reveals that neither the authorities nor the traditions nor any of the other historical source materials used by Thucydides were entirely 'rational' either in content, in form, or in nature. Nor were these used and handled by Thucydides in a fashion that was to come to typify later rationalist treatment of historical documentation. It remains therefore to be established in precisely what way Thucydides' treatment of his source materials was specifically rational, or even suggestive of a less mythopoetic reading of the past; for such readings of received texts are not anodyne. They become inseparably fused with the meaning of those texts for the generations who follow.ⁱⁱⁱ As Lamberton (*Ibid.*, 298; cf. Aron, 1964, 50) also aptly points out in his analysis of Bloom, 'readings' commonly if not inevitably give rise to "strong misreadings," which are subsequently handed down in "our cultural heritage." This seems to be simply another axiomatic given of History, because: "[on peut] penser que certains faits sont plus importants que d'autres, mais cette importance elle-même dépend entièrement des critères choisis par chaque historien et n'a pas de grandeur absolue."^{iv}

To argue that Thucydides "came to be at home in the 'modern' way of thinking...and applied logic to everything in the world", is certainly an unfortunate choice of words on Bury's part. The language indisputably reveals a deliberate intent to interpret the existential past wholly according to the arbitrarily narrow and rationally intractable standard of the logically possible (and thus rationally acceptable) event. Yet in reality, the composition of Logical History is nothing more than "a systematic [...] philosophical exercise in the...rationalization of existential experiences of the world."^v Even more significantly, the logically acceptable Paradigm of events re-created by the hermeneutical authors of Logical History inevitably stands in contrast to historically

documented past happenings, which may not be very logical at all. Nor does this logical approach to pastime, and especially to Greek pastime, show much understanding of the Greek world in general, and of what Veyne (1983, 113) later calls the "Raison hellénique" in particular. In fact, in all likelihood Rational or Logical History is not history at all.

Vernant (1974, 214) writes: "Il semble qu'on ne reconnaisse [au mythe] ni une place, ni une figure, ni une fonction qui lui soient propres. Ou bien on définit le mythe négativement, par une série de manques ou d'absences : il est non-sens, non-raison, non-vérité, non-réalité. Ou bien, si on lui accorde un mode d'être positif, c'est pour le réduire à... autre chose que lui-même..." So for modern readers existentially accustomed to primarily natural experiences of the world, Schweitzer's (1984, 53) question of how to read ancient texts is still quite pertinent: "Wie kann sich die historische Darstellung mit Übernatürliche Ereignissen abfinden?" Schweitzer and Bultmann both played critical roles in the development of the rationalist tradition in scholarship; but each resolved quite differently the problem of how to incorporate 'mythical' or 'legendary' elements, i.e., paradigmatic anomalies, into the Rational History paradigm. Bultmann adopted the position that there has been an obvious evolution from the period of primitive apperception to the modern period of scientific apperception, and therefore marks a separation between an historical happening and the apperceptual framework of the historian who records that happening. This allows Bultmann, on the basis of his own rational understanding and experience of the world, to distinguish the obviously historical from the obviously mythical, i.e., historically false. Schweitzer, on the other hand, directly addresses the issue of the nature of experience, or possible types of experience, in the phenomenal world. For according to Schweitzer, the conflict exists not so much in differing apperceptual paradigms, but rather, between that type of Ereignis existentially possible given the (modern) confines of the physical world, and the Ereignisse that must be, based on the nature of the modern physical environment, obviously physically impossible at any point in space and time. De Certeau (1975, 29; cf. 48) expresses the ambiguous nature of history in terms of its connotation: "[l']histoire [est] l'explication qui se dit, et la réalité de ce qui s'est passé ou se passe." This, he says, is the current meaning of history. Effenterre (1993, 18) is a bit more brutal in his thinking, and so frankly says (specifically in respect to Herodotus), that the present experience of the world is the measure of all reality: "On admettra difficilement qu'un Grec d'Orient qui avait touché de près à la politique comme Hérodote ait pu avoir à l'égard de ce qu'on lui racontait la crédulité naïve qu'on prête parfois à l'auteur, ni que l'age n'ait pas contribué à lui ouvrir les yeux."^{vi}

The hermeneutical ambivalence between myth and history is comprehensible, however, if, as Veyne (1983, 12) argues, modernity's tendency to groom rationally the world-experience of the past, both near and remote, is in fact normative. In which case it must be remembered that modernity is not specifically a modern phenomenon, but is an attitude relative to every age. De Certeau (1975, 31), as well, reminds us of what he considers an axiomatic element of historical analysis, which is to say, that "une lecture du passé, toute contrôlée qu'elle soit par l'analyse des documents, est conduite par une lecture du présent." Veyne (1983, 26) goes one step beyond de Certeau when he argues that "le passé est semblable au présent ou...le merveilleux n'existe pas," and concludes that the principle of reading history is really quite straightforward: "[Nous tenons] pour des rêveries...la totalité des productions du passé et ne tenons-nous pour vrai, très provisoirement, que le 'dernier état de la science.'" For Veyne this principle simply coincides with the nature of culture.

The reconstitution of history into History follows necessarily from a determination concerning how one may guarantee the authenticity, and thus the accuracy, of historical facts qua "donnée brute."^{vii} Traditionally, this notion has been at the center of historical hermeneutics, which has

sought to reconstruct pastime from, "les faits actuels, les textes et les temples, les médailles et les inscriptions, les ruines et les tombeaux, les manuscrits, en bref, tout ce que l'on subsume sous les deux termes anglais de records et remains."^{viii} Such is not the case, however, in the domain of philosophical hermeneutics. And in fact, Gadamer maintains that while essential to historical hermeneutics, the process of textual authentication is in reality extraneous to the purposes of philosophical hermeneutics.^{ix} Grounded in the evidence-inference antithesis, Aron (1964, 51) makes the distinction in his essay "Évidence et inférence," between 'one-time' history, which is to say history grounded in the study of actual facts, texts, ruins, etc., and a second conception of history, where "les données ne seraient plus les documents et monuments (actuels) mais les faits (passés), par hypothèse reconstitués grâce ... la démarche initiale de l'analyse historique," which conception "ne va pas non plus sans difficultés."

Unlike historical hermeneutics, then, whose objective has traditionally been the accurate re-assembly of the historical world of pastime through the re-construction of its "records and remains," philosophical hermeneutics aspires to establish a method of reconstructing the movement of Time itself, or temporal 'flux', which Gadamer (1986, 135) calls "verfließende Zeit." This philosophical, or more precisely, this phenomenological process of re-knitting Time itself goes beyond the simple consideration of the phenomenon of Being-in-motion, and, following the impetus of Descartes and Kant, actually constitutes the basis of a psychology of Verstehen. It is, finally, this psychology of Verstehen that shall provide the grounded methodology that will ultimately guide the hermeneut in his decision as to what form to give to his re-constitution of the past.^x The record of the Greek encounter with the world, or Greek History, is composed of documents that do not reflect experiences of the world the modern rational reader believes to be phenomenally possible, or, in the most literal sense of the word, historical. In fact, the texture of the Greek encounter with their world, which may be extrapolated and hermeneutically re-constructed from their philosophies and chronicles and mythoi, is profoundly non-rationalist, or mytho-historical, in nature.

One possible solution to this hermeneutical quandary is to suppose that what a poet, such as Homer, might say under the aegis of poetic inspiration, differs in fact from the supposed historical 'reality' of the situation. This is simply another variation of the refraction theory of history. Nilsson (1956, 162) attempts, rather unconvincingly, to do this when he says: "We have every reason to suppose that [the divine apparatus of the poet's presentation] is adopted by the poet for the purpose of describing the relationships of the gods among themselves to men, a description which is part of his poetic scheme, but that it does not accord with the Homeric man's real beliefs and expectations in regard to his gods." It goes without saying, of course, that Nilsson's conclusion is ubiquitous—it appears both in the conclusion and in the premise of the argument.^{xi} Similarly, Aron (1964, 79) thinks it natural that "L'historien d'un domaine particulier souscrit plus ou moins consciemment ... une théorie de ce domaine"; but he also qualifies his statement by adding that the "théorie...relève du philosophe plutôt que de l'historien." Thus Bury's assumptions concerning the possible forms of historical experience, assumptions clearly coinciding with the dominant rationalist tradition of the modern academic arena, derive more from a priori philosophical conviction than from *a posteriori* historical deduction. In a rather different framing of the problem, de Certeau (1975, 47) seems to think that, as opposed to the antithesis between philosophical History and History, *a priori* assumptions lead to two different types of history: "Un premier type d'histoire s'interroge sur ce qui est pensable et sur les conditions de la compréhension ; l'autre prétend rejoindre le vécu, exhumé grâce à une connaissance du passé." To maintain, as does Aron (1964, 51), that History is "ni faits bruts ni interprétation, [mais] des faits rendus intelligibles par les notions employées, par la composition

progressive de l'ensemble historico-social," is certainly a defensible position. Yet to impose on the texts of past-time a philosophical distinction between 'real' or possible historical happening, and 'unreal' or mythical historical happening, is not only profoundly arbitrary, but, at least methodologically, absolutely indefensible. Descartes' attempt in his *Metaphysical Meditations* to prove logically the existence of God does not go very far in producing with de facto necessity the real existence of the Most Perfect Being. Similarly, the logical demonstration that a particular type of event or being (*e.g.*, wonders, miracles, gods, divine interventions, et al.) could not possibly, logically speaking, have been phenomenal realities in past-time, certainly stands in contrast to the witness of documents that attest precisely to the reality of such events and such beings. Along with many others, however, Bury (1958, 81) makes precisely this type of distinction between the possible and the impossible, when he contends that Thucydides "[seeks only] to construct a record which shall be permanently valuable because it is true. He warns his readers that they will find nothing mythical in his work." Bury clearly affirms his acceptance of the rationalist philosophical a priori when he sets up a methodologically untenable dichotomy between the historically false (mythical) and the historically true (history). The modern view, of course, is simply to 'read' such logically 'impossible' happenings either as fictional creations, psycho-social Anschaaungen, or as linguistic or psycho-literary phenomena (*i.e.*, myth, poetry, primitive artistic invention, etc.).^{xii}

In the same tradition of Rational History, Cornford (1965, 133) claims that Thucydides "rationalizes [myths], thinking that he has reduced them to history when he has removed unattested and improbable accretions, such as the transformation of Tereus into a hoopoe." He (*Ibid.*, 137) also says more explicitly that in composing his History, "Thucydides brushes away these extravagant and unattested accretions, and does not seek [to embroider] the tale with illustrative anecdotes." Yet in a seemingly inadvertent contresens, he qualifies (*Ibid.*, 133) his central argument by saying that "history cannot be made by this process [of separating fact/history from fiction/myth] (which is still in use); all that we get is, not the original facts, but a mutilated legend." Cornford seems to be bringing this charge of historical mutilation against those who have adopted Bultmann's method of historical Ent-mythologisierung. Only in place of Bultmann's purely historical Kern as the object of the historical pursuit, Cornford proposes only a literary critic's somewhat impoverished notion of an "informing element of fiction," which shall then pass both for history (past-time) and History (the com-position of events into a narrative form).

This in-between 'place' that seems to lie between myth and history is exactly the target of the hermeneutical endeavor; but the safe passage must lie somewhere between Nilsson's (1956, 61), "nothing is more dangerous than to try to extract history from the myths: to lay bare the historical element is only possible when we have access to some external means of verification, independently of the story," and Veyne's (1983, 19), "nous-mêmes, qui disposons d'encore moins de documents [qu'eux] et en sommes réduits aux affirmations de ces historiens" (19). Aron (1964, 120), although speaking contextually of Thucydides' speeches and whether or not they were ever pronounced, or whether they were pronounced as Thucydides records them, would also maintain on a more general level that the essential point of the question into the authenticity of the speeches, at least as far as we are concerned, is not whether or not they 'did' or 'were' in fact, but is rather, that "ces discours auraient pu ou auraient dû être en réalité ce qu'ils sont dans ce livre." He thus affirms (*Ibid.*, 128), after the fashion of the agnostic philosophers, what seems in fact to be the 'bottom line' of the question of History/history: "Il est entendu que ces discours n'ont pas été prononcés tels quels et nous ne saurons jamais dans quelle mesure les discours réellement prononcés ressemblaient ... ceux que nous a livrés Thucydide," despite the fact that

"[l]'historien ne se donnerait pas le droit de forger des discours qui n'on pas été prononcés." It is methodologically impossible to go beyond the texts of History and "into the netherworld of past-time itself,"^{xiii} which, according to Aron (*Ibid.*, 50), "est une réalité qui, en tant que telle, n'est plus et ne sera jamais plus." So what type of confirmation is it possible to obtain from or for the texts of antiquity? How precisely is one to determine where the truth lies in matters of history and History?

Nilsson's scientifically motivated need for external verification in order to determine what exactly is historical in the ancient mythoi, goes against the grain of an unalterable property of history already perceived by Origin,^{xiv} that historical events are by their nature [empirically] non-demonstrable. Kierkegaard (1973, IV: 233, 38) also recognizes this property of history when he makes an argument between de facto existence and the supra-historical 'existence' of 'the god.' Veyne, on the other hand, quite helpfully states for the record the obvious dilemma of historical interpretation in general, which is to say, that for lack of any other records, the modern reader of the past is eo ipso reduced to the affirmations (or denials) of the ancient historians. Because, therefore, the mythoi of antiquity can have no possible verification other than the sheer quantity of their number and their intercultural pervasiveness and congruence, it would seem that, far from being empirical in nature, the hermeneutical endeavor must follow synthetically derived methodological principles.

Aron (1964, 52) contends that History "est déterminée...par la volonté scientifique non d'imaginer ce qui aurait pu être mais de retrouver ce qui a été. Elle a en commun avec [les sciences naturelles] une intention de rigueur, de preuve, d'approximation au réel." Yet instead of being Ermittlers^{xv} of the happenings recorded in the documents of past-time, rationalist historians have set themselves the task of going beyond and behind what they presume to be the refracting records of past-time in order to surmise, in keeping with what they themselves think possibly could have happened, what probably really happened in the past. Yet it is difficult if not impossible to sustain the argument that texts of remote history are refractions rather than reflections of past-time. Edmunds (1990, 91) perceives the weakness in this concept of historical refraction, but glosses its significance by simply asserting that it is normal for the modern reader of antiquity: "The notion of the historical content of a myth presupposes a distinction between myth and history which is fundamental for us but anachronistic for the Greeks." The tendency progressively to rationalize the past finds its origins in two phenomena. The first, of course, is not incongruous with Vico's (1993, 66) affirmation that, "La nature indéfinie de l'esprit humain est cause que l'homme plongé dans l'ignorance fait de lui-même la règle de l'univers." After the statement of this rather general état des faits, however, it would seem that the more important phenomenon is simply the evident principle of existential change. If the experience of the world of the present generations generally coincided with the experience of the world of the past generations, the present generations would have no need to rationalize or de-myth the texts of the past. Hence Vico (*Ibid.*, 66-67): "Il y a une autre faculté propre de l'esprit humain, qui fait que lorsque les hommes ne peuvent se former une idée des choses, parce qu'elles sont éloignées et inconnues, ils se les figurent d'après celles qu'ils connaissent, et qui leur sont présentes."

The most common approach to solving this dilemma, of course, is simply to accept the idea that world-experience cannot change, which is to say that the experience of man-in-the-world has been uniform through all the ages of man. In which event one reads the past in light of the present; because if the present experience of the world corresponds in fact to the only possible experience of the world, then deviation from that type of experience must of necessity be non-historical. There is a second possible solution to the dilemma, however, which is to accept the idea that world-experience can indeed change, and that the texts of the past in fact attest to a

change come about in the man-world equation. By definition, this implies that it is methodologically inappropriate, as well as unjustifiable, to read the past in light of the present. This is in fact Vico's position. Whatever other logical weaknesses this concept of historical refraction might present, it typifies nonetheless the rationalist approach to history. Murray (1947,1), for example, prefaces his different studies of Greek civilization by clearly saying that, "[l]ike all ideals this ideal Hellenism is very different from the reality on which it is based; and the present lecture is meant to make a comparison between the ideal and the reality in a number of separate domains." Veyne allows for only two options in determining what the real historical content of myth can be: either the mythos is an idle tale for children or it is "altered" History.^{xvi} Likewise Effenterre, framing the problem in a Ricoeurian type of discourse, argues that mythic time is actually a corrective of sorts.^{xvii}

The refraction theory of the relationship between myth and history assumes that (1) the modern phenomenal experience of the world is standard, and has always been, for all men at all points of time in history. By way of deduction from this first premise, this theory then assumes (2) that the 'mythic' elements in texts of the past, because they obviously do not and cannot correspond to a possible experience of the world at any time in its history (at least from the logical perspective of the modern reader), were therefore not intended to reveal pastime per se, but rather some quality or aspect of pastime. 'Mythos,' then, (3) is the result of a process of idealization, which is to say, whatever reality or happening took place in pastime, it subsequently underwent a mythical idealization. The conclusion thus follows that the task of the hermeneut is to separate the idealizing, usually literary, devices and elements of the texts of antiquity from whatever historical reality lies clothed under^{xviii} that idealization.^{xix}

In contrast to the problem-ridden premises of the theory of historical refraction, Albright established the validity of the concept of historical 'reflection' in his 1944 article "The Oracles of Balaam." Although he left a rather large hermeneutical gap between his "there is no reason why they may not be authentic," and "[or why they] may not at least reflect the atmosphere of his age." This article also generally codified a critical comparative method for ensuring the most accurate possible re-construction of an historical age from the study of its documents. Based on his comparative study of various Semitic documents from Balaam's period, Albright (1947, 233) concludes concerning the authenticity of the OT passage: "We may [...] infer that the Oracles preserved in Num. 23-24 were attributed to [Balaam] from a date as early as the twelfth century, and that there is no reason why they may not be authentic, or may not at least reflect the atmosphere of his age."

In Thucydides, the speech given by the Sicilian, Athenagoras, concerning the possibility of an Athenian invasion of Syracuse, corresponds at least in certain respects to the type of argument traditionally advanced by the rationalist historian. So if his speech is any indication, Athenagoras presents an ideal profile for the rationalist response to the world. In Book VI of the History Thucydides relates that when the first rumors began reaching the city of Syracuse to the effect that the Athenians had launched an expeditionary army against Sicily, and that the Athenian force was in fact already at their doorstep, the Syracusans called together an assembly to discuss whether or not the rumors were credible, and what attitude the city was to adopt concerning the matter. Diverse speeches were heard in the assembly, "some crediting the reports about the expedition of the Athenians, others contradicting them" (6 32 3); but Thucydides says that for the most part the rumors were generally held to be unreliable. Despite the general consensus, however, Hermocrates, the first recorded speaker at this assembly, admonished those present to give credence to the rumors that Athenian forces were marching against Syracuse, and urged them to prepare themselves for invasion. The justification he gave for this reasoning was quite

elementary: in the event the rumors should prove unreliable, it would do the Syracusans no harm to bring themselves into a better state of readiness. If, however, the rumors should be ignored by the leaders of the city, and then should prove in fact to be accurate, much harm would be done.

The second man to speak in the assembly was (for the purposes of the metaphor, the rationalist) Athenagoras, who argued against Hermocrates' more prudent interpretation of the rumors. In his record of the proceedings, Thucydides tells us that Athenagoras reasoned that, logically speaking, if the rumors had been true and thus believable, they would have arisen spontaneously [apo tautomatou], but that in fact the reports were not apo tautomatou. Therefore, continues Athenagoras, the rumors are not true; rather, they have been spread by the same men who have always and forever sought to stir up trouble in the city (seemingly pointing the finger at Hermocrates with his remarks). Athenagoras then concludes his address to the assembly by saying: "But you... will examine [these things] and form your estimate of what is probable [with respect to those reports], not from what these men report, but from what shrewd men of much experience, such as I deem the Athenians to be, would be likely to do (draseian -aorist optative of drao) (6 36 3-4)."

A harbinger of the rationalist historian, Athenagoras puts forth to the Syracusans a 'likely' composition of events. In his as it were Rational History, he juxta-poses the (in fact existentially grounded) reports of supposedly untrustworthy men over and against what he (logically) surmises to be more likely true, which is to say possible/probable, according to how he, a Syracusan, would or could interpret the intent and interests of the Athenians. By hindsight, it was fortunate for their city that the generals of the Syracusan forces chose to ignore Athenagoras' rationalist ratiocinations. Instead, they followed Hermocrates' more prudent interpretation of the rumors, and began preparing themselves and their city for the impending battle (6 41).

"[G]etting the facts right was all-important"^{xxx} for Thucydides; and regardless of where a modern rationalist would situate a particular happening on the scale of the logically possible (i.e., likely) or logically credible, it was Thucydides' purpose to produce an accurate Composition (History) of the causes and effects--the facts--relevant to the war.

I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said [in the speeches made by the different men]. But as to the facts [erga] of the occurrences of the war, I have thought it my duty to give them... only after investigating with the greatest possible accuracy each detail, in the case both of the events in which I myself participated and of those regarding which I got my information from others. (1 22 2-3)

Effenterre (1993, 25), in fact, reluctantly acknowledges that Thucydides goes to great pains to include all the causes that he can discover: "Sa volonté de découvrir les causes vraies l'obligeait à ne négliger aucun des domaines possibles de l'enquête historique et il le montre même dès le début de son oeuvre, pour la reconstitution pourtant beaucoup plus malaisée qu'il fait de la primitive histoire de la Grèce." In Thucydides' mind, a meaning-full Composition required universal knowledge in the Aristotelian sense, which is to say that it must contain a full disclosure of causes and effects, whether that means giving a right interpretation of oracles, or a right historical genealogy, or a right separation of real causes from diplomatic pretexts in determining why Athens entered into war with the Peloponnesians. So although he was indeed interested in composing a complete History of events concerning the war, Thucydides was far from attempting "la mise en forme rigoureuse d'une certaine vision du monde."^{xxi} Nor was he seeking to construct a text where "tout...est rationnel,"^{xxii} as some would contend.

To cite one instance of interpreting oracles, it seemed to Thucydides that the oracle pertaining to the Pelargicum was fulfilled not by what came before, as most seemed to believe, but rather by

what came afterwards (1 1 17). He thus actually sets an historical precedent for a method of 'laying out' oracles. Because at least as far as he, the historian is concerned, it is more accurate to interpret oracles by hindsight, which is to say, by how they are fulfilled by the happenings of history, than by foresight. Thucydides also unquestioningly accepts Homer as a credible historical authority,^{xxiii} citing him, for example, as a reliable source of information for the genealogy of Deucalion (1 3). In this context the reference in 5 1 2 is worth particular note. Thucydides generally presents the genealogy of the different peoples and cities that enter into the historical itinerary of his Com-position. Following this pattern then, before actually treating the Athenian invasion of Sicily and their defeat at Syracuse, Thucydides traces the history of the settlement of Sicily. However, he is unable to provide the genealogy for either the Cyclopes (cf. *Odyssey*, Bk. 9, lns. 106ff.) or the Laestrygonians (cf. *Odyssey*, Bk. 10, lns. 80-130), who were historically the first inhabitants of the island, because he is himself ignorant of their origins or what happened to them. Concerning the record or authenticity of such historical details, Thucydides defers to Homer.^{xxiv}

In the *Protagoras* Plato tells us that Socrates solicited from Protagoras a demonstration showing that virtue is a teachable quantity (320b). Protagoras' response to that request was: "I shall not refuse, Socrates; but because I am an old man speaking to young people, which shall I do for you: 'draw a picture' by means of a story [mythos], or shall I go through it by means of logic?" [translation mine] (320c). A comparable methodological choice also faces Thucydides in the com-position of the *History*. It was not his purpose either to create poetry or to 'replicate' reality,^{xxv} but rather to compose and transmit an accurately composed Account of the war between Athens and the Peloponnesians. Thucydides therefore found himself compelled to make certain calculated choices in language and style.

Thucydides maintained, for example, that the appropriate narrative style for his purposes would be unmetrical and unrhymed, even though such a presentation would obviously not have the same linguistic panache as one made by poets who present their material in the form of "song, adorning and amplifying their theme" (1 21 1). Nor, he argues, are the narrations of prose- or speech writers [logographoi] to be preferred to his own unadorned style of recounting events, because such writers compose "with a view rather of pleasing the ear than of telling the truth" (1 21 1). According to Thucydides, the heart and soul of the mythos as a literary form consists in the pleasure of the hearing and the telling. Yet the art with which one tells the story, i.e., its literary cast, has no bearing on whether or not the content of the story is historically reliable. It would seem, then, that neither method, either the discursive method or the story method, is in se pedagogically preferential.^{xxvi} According to both Thucydides and Plato, the choice between myth or discourse in narrative depiction depends on the goal one is trying to attain.

Thucydides systematically draws attention to the need for the stylistic and linguistic cast of a narration to be appropriate to the purposes of the writer and his subject. He reveals his concern for style, for instance, by highlighting the argument of the Thebans at Plataea, when they were contending that the trials of the Lacedaemonians should be "of deeds, not of words, and that, if the deeds are good, a brief recital of them suffices, but if they are wrong, speeches decked out with phrases are but veils to hide the truth" (3 67 7; cf. 2 41 4 and 3 104 3-8). Throughout his *History* Thucydides separates himself from normative literary traditions of the Greeks in order to establish a new writing genre. And in keeping with this new genre, i.e., *History* qua literary form, expected stylistic accommodations were necessary.

For example, it was Thucydides' intention in his *History* to unravel from available source material the various dynamics or causes at work in provoking the war between Athens and the

Peloponnesians. Yet Thucydides nowhere indicates that he shall avoid or discredit the mythoi he uses to demonstrate those causes, nor that those mythoi are in any way untrustworthy sources of historical information. He says only that the language of mythodes is stylistically inappropriate to the historical narrative.^{xxvii} And although he does indeed separate the probably trustworthy from the potentially un-trustworthy in sifting through his source material, the text of the History gives no indication that he makes an otherwise rationalist association of the trustworthy or credible with the now-time notion of the phenomenally possible, nor that he aligns untrustworthy or in-credible elements in some type of 'mythic' category. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. For among the various causes he held to be in some degree responsible for bringing about the war,^{xxviii} Thucydides also investigated the divine cause; and although this cause certainly never assumes Homeric proportions in the History, Thucydides makes no effort whatsoever to diminish or to cover up the fact that the gods clearly played a significant, albeit oblique, role in motivating certain attitudes and politico-military responses during the Peloponnesian War.

This type of influence is perhaps nowhere more notable than among the Athenians and Corinthians. For on one occasion, he says,

[t]he Epidamnians, recognizing that no aid was to be had from Corcyra, were at a loss how to settle their present difficulty; so they sent to Delphi and asked the god whether they should deliver up their city to the Corinthians as founders and try to procure some aid from them. The god answered that they should deliver it up to them and make them leaders. So the Epidamnians went to Corinth and delivered up the city as a Corinthian colony, in accordance with the oracle, showing that their founder was from Corinth and stating the response of the oracle. (1 25 1-3)

Likewise, during an assembly with the Lacedaemonians, the Corinthian envoys argue that their allies should go to war against the Athenians. For according to the Corinthian envoys, the Lacedaemonians were bound to war by the god because Athens had violated sacred libations: "[Y]ou will not be the ones to break the treaty, [argues the Corinthian envoy], inasmuch as the god, in bidding you go to war, considers it to have been transgressed already, but you will be going to the defense of a treaty that has been violated" (1 123 2). In yet another circumstance, Thucydides maintains that the plague that was ravaging the city of Athens, and the oracles concerning that plague, actually played a crucial role in the causal workings of the war. Because when the plague hit, the Athenians suddenly recalled that they had once received an oracle to the effect that, "[a] Dorian war shall come and pestilence with it" (2 54 1-3). In a particularly significant example of the power of the oracle in Greece, the Lacedaemonians received oracular confirmation [referring to the oracle mentioned in 1 118 3] that they should go to war, "when, in answer to their inquiry whether they should go to war, the god responded that if they 'warred with all their might victory would be theirs,' adding that he himself would assist them" (2 54 4-5).

Thucydides established a two-fold methodology for his History, which called both for an accurate compte rendu of the full causal context surrounding the events of the war, as well as a narrative cast appropriate to the com-positioning of those events into History. The text of his History gives no indication that Thucydides ever took into consideration whether or not a given event was rational or logical (cf. Bury, 1975, 75-76), nor whether the audience of a world-become-rational (Aiken, 1991, 1) would believe the event to be phenomenally possible (e.g., gods working through natural phenomena, etc.). Rather, he sought to establish a correct method whereby he might credibly ascertain the relevant aitiai at work in the war. Thucydides' objective was not only to dis-cover the 'truest explanation' (5 1 6 1; cf. 5 1 33 2) as to the quality and quantity of motivations--human and other--causally at work behind the scenes in the

Peloponnesian War, but it was also to position correctly the event/effects of the war with respect to their real causes.

There is some debate among historians concerning the effectiveness of the cause & effect method of analysis employed by Thucydides. Ste. Croix (1972, 53), for example, who poses the problem in a somewhat rhetorical fashion, proposes agreement with mainstream tradition, concluding that, “[v]irtually all recent writers have taken it for granted from the very start that the contrast is between an 'immediate cause' (or causes) and a 'more remote' or 'underlying cause', or (to put essentially the same idea a little differently) between a 'superficial cause' and a 'profound cause.’” Yet Ste. Croix (Ibid.) also clearly rejects the idea that Thucydides 'layered' his cause/effect analyses, going so far, in fact, as to argue that, "Thucydides does not try to distinguish...**anywhere**...in his work [emphasis Ste. Croix], between immediate or superficial and underlying or profound causes." This reading of Thucydides, of course, fails to take into consideration the full text of the History, because Thucydides does indeed make distinctions between various levels of causes, and their degrees of importance, in the dynamic relations among and between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians. Indeed, at least one irrefutable level of Thucydides' interpretive framework is his deliberate recourse to a specific type of language and style. Why else would he think it so important to choose a distinctive language and literary form to transmit his History, if in fact even the poorest Greek reader would easily get 'beyond' any linguistic appearance and to the historically important Kerygma of that History?

Thucydides provides a plausible response to this question in a speech by Pericles, which takes the form of a curious distinction between the *aletheia*, or truth/discovery/dis-closure of men's deeds, and the *hyponoian*, or the significance, of their deeds. This distinction shall also be made much later by Ibn Khaldûn (1989, 5), the 14th Century author of the Introduction to History, or the *Muqaddimah*: “surface history, is no more than information about political events, dynasties, and occurrences of the remote past, [and t]he inner meaning of history, [which] involves speculation and an attempt to get at the true, subtle explanation of the causes and origins of existing things, and deep knowledge of the how and why of events.”

In 2 41 4, in the midst of his celebrated funeral oration, Pericles assures the Athenians that their city has provided overwhelming demonstrations of its power, and especially in view of the dead they were there to honor. Such tangible proofs, he contends, are sufficient in and of themselves to ensure the glory of the city. And any enhancement of the events that have taken place, whether through an epic poetisation of those events, or discursive fioritures, or other types of mimetic representation of the events, is absolutely unnecessary. Now while it is obviously not Pericles' immediate purpose in the funeral oration to develop a theoretical criticism of poets or the poetic arts, to evoke the discursive arts at this particular time must somehow be significant to the occasion of a funeral speech. And, in fact, the upshot of his (or perhaps Thucydides' interposed) argument seems to be that any conjecture [*hyponoian*] with respect to the deeds of the Athenian fallen, or perhaps any discursive attempts to adorn those deeds with any kind of superficial literary cast, must inevitably be obscured by the real undisclosed fact [*aletheia*] itself. Pericles is suggesting that the significance of this event somehow goes beyond the need even of the historical discourse!

According to his argument, because the proofs of Athenian power are so manifest, Pericles maintains that the city shall never be in need, "either of a Homer to spin [the might of Athens] into a tale, or of someone who shall [set about] right away to enhance [the deeds of the Athenians] through poetic verse. For with respect to these deeds, their simple disclosure [*aletheia*]^{xxix} shall stop every attempt at theorization" (Thucydides 1977, 2 41 4). This passage is

problematic both for language and argument;^{xxx} and Rusten's (1989, 160) syntactical synopsis reflects only two parts of the participle structure, ignoring the third. His analysis contains the added foible of offering no real help in extracting significance from Thucydides' rather unusual use of language in the passage. Because, whereas *hyponoia* in 5 87 1 1 clearly means conjectures or surmises, and in 7 49 4 2 clearly suspicion, in 2 41 4 5 the term seems clearly to mean neither of these things. In contrast to Rusten's two-fold grammatical outline, the syntax of the passage clearly articulates a three-fold distinction in the mind of Pericles: because of the various demonstrations of the might of their city, the Athenians had absolutely no need either of 1) a Homer to spin [the might of Athens] into a rousing tale, (οὔτε Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου), or of 2) any poet through verse straightaway to delight [us about the deeds of the Athenians] (οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεισι μὲν τὸ ἀντίκτα τέρψει), 3) Because [d'] the simple reality [ἡ ἀλήθεια] of these deeds shall prevent any questionable speculation [τὴν ὑπόνοιαν].(τῶν δ' ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἢ ἀλήθεια βλάψει).

Hence, the argument interned in the rather convoluted language and form of this passage would seem to be that the Athenians did not need storytellers or poets anymore than they needed a historical re-presentation? *mise en scène*? History? [ἡ ἀλήθεια] of those events, all of which serves only to distort the meaning of their efforts and sacrifices. If this is in fact a plausible reading of the passage, then Pericles' argument takes on special force. In part because the *hyponoia* of the deeds of the Athenians would seem to be a reference that not only includes the embellishing cast (*e.g.*, meter, rhyme, language) epic and lyric poets use in the formulation of their verses, but probably also to the manner in which poets juxta- or com-pose deeds, the subject of their verses, into poetic mythoi. In this event, the *hyponoia* [of the deeds] becomes the narrative Gestalt used to shape into a concerted Story deeds in se disjointed. Thucydides repeatedly makes clear that he has deliberately avoided precisely this type of literary *hyponoia* in the composition of his History. But also because the *hyponoia* of their deeds stands in contrast to a potential *aletheia* or [...] re-presentation of those deeds in the form of epic verse or speech or theater. It is precisely this type of hypo-noetic or inculturated significance that Thucydides is seeking to bring to light when he juxta-poses events into History.

In the general argument against a rationalist reading of Thucydides this illustration is all the more significant. Because his records and his Account of the war are in fact replete with elements the modern rationalist reader would define as quintessentially mythic. In his composition of the war into History, Thucydides did not weed out as untrustworthy any of these 'mythic' elements, but instead, deliberately avoided only the embellished language and style, and art, of myth. If Thucydides were indeed a rationalist in the modern sense of the term, he would have imposed a rational filter already on his source material, thereby effectively restricting the 'acceptable' causal influences of the war to include only 'normal' human factors. This would have allowed him to translate everything into terms that Effenterre (1993, 24) calls, "parfaitement intelligible et logique." But Thucydides did not frame his History in perfectly intelligible and logical terms. Had this been the case, however, then like the Athenians, Thucydides would also have made Pericles uniquely responsible for the war; for, in effect, from the perspective of the Athenians the choice of Pericles for scapegoat was both logical and predictable (see 2 59 3-1, 2 60 2). Yet unlike the Athenians, Thucydides knew that the role Pericles had played in bringing about the war was in fact only one small piece in the com-posed historical Puzzle.

Pace Murray's (1947, 8) frivolous contention that "superstition was evidently looked down upon, and in general the supernatural was not allowed to interfere with serious literature," the text of the History provides no evidence suggesting that Thucydides was in any way skeptical toward or distrustful of his source material, nor that he consistently dismissed as historically unacceptable

(superstitious?) anything suggestive of the supra-natural. In fact Veyne (1983, 84), a quintessentially rationalist philosopher of history, makes the rather unexpected admission: "On n'a jamais, sur le vrai, le faux, le mythe, la superstition, une vue complète, une évidence, un index sui. Thucydide croyait aux oracles [II, 17], Aristote, à la divination par les songes, Pausanias obéissait à ses rêves [I, 28, 7]."

Concerning Thucydides' personal attitudes, it is possible to glean from the text that although he did not himself think it either ridiculous or groundless to seek aid from the god, nor consequently to obey whatever commands issued forth from the oracle, neither did he seem very convinced that going to the gods was necessarily helpful, or that consulting gods would provide a meaningful solution to any problems confronting the Greeks. It would be reasonable in fact to qualify Thucydides' attitude toward the divine as rather diffident. For example, when relating details of the plague that was assailing Athens, Thucydides writes: "For neither were physicians able to cope with the disease, ...nor did any other human art avail. And the supplications made at sanctuaries, or appeals to oracles and the like, were all futile, and at last men desisted from them, overcome by the calamity (2 47 4)." Thucydides does not seem here to be making either an agnostic or an atheistic statement about the role of the gods in the plague; rather, he is simply observing historically the manifest detachment of the gods from the human situation.

The consensus of the Greek texts in the laps of time between the 8th Century of Homer and the 5th Century of Thucydides, points to a shift in the manner in which, specifically, the gods of the Greeks interacted with the world. Far from the active warrior-deities of Homer, their writings indicate that the later Greeks apparently experienced the divine only through an oracular cloak of ambiguity. This 'shift' gave rise to a new problem, however, which was not that the oracle did not give an answer when solicited, but rather, that it was impossible to know with any certainty how to understand the answer once it was given. Thucydides adapted his method to fit the Greek truism—oracles are by nature ambiguous. They can be interpreted in a myriad of ways, and can be given an infinite quantity of seemingly valid applications, no one of which can be certifiably known to be the application intended by the deity.^{xxxii}

Yet Thucydides' rather historically formal attitude toward the gods was not alone in determining the type of style he would adopt in his narration. Because of the nature of the material with which he was working, Thucydides could not compose the essential pieces of his records into History using the same linguistic tradition as the poets. Nor was his goal the same as that of the *logographoi*--to compose an *agonisma*. Instead, his purpose was to present a chronologically aligned^{xxxiii} synoptic source text of the Peloponnesian War, an unfolding History of events, derived from numerous and oftentimes divergent accounts, of the relations between Athens and the Peloponnesians. In advance of his critics, however, Thucydides is careful to point out that his method of synoptic compiling has definite aesthetic shortcomings: "[I]t may well be that the absence of the fabulous [mythodes] from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear... And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time" (1 22 4).

The studied 'absence of the fabulous' to which Thucydides refers in this passage ought not to be misconstrued as a censoring of the content of his sources into the rationalist categories of the historical and the so-called mythical. It is simply a reference to the unembellished linguistic style Thucydides felt compelled to use in compiling a comprehensive and accurate synoptic document. Thus, for the purposes of historical narration Thucydides rejects the embellished or hyperbolic style in matters of number and size. He does this, for example, when weighing the faithfulness of the Homeric account of the size of the Greek expeditionary forces (Cf. *Iliad* 2 493ff.). In an

analogous focus on the accuracy of historical measurements, the Arab historian Khaldûn (1989, 11) takes the position that, "Historians, Qur'an commentators and leading transmitters have committed frequent errors in the stories and events they reported... This is especially the case with figures, either of sums of money or of soldiers." Linguistic embellishment touches upon all the various literary devices at the poet's disposal, and most commonly takes the form of hyperbole. Yet, adopting a position the modern historian might find rather unexpected, Thucydides seems to be of the opinion that Homer was guilty more of understatement than of overstatement:

The reasonable course...is not to be incredulous or to regard the appearance of cities rather than their power, but to believe that expedition to have been greater than any that preceded it, though falling below those of the present time, if here again one may put any trust in the poetry of Homer; for though it is natural to suppose that he as a poet adorned and magnified the expedition, still even on his showing it was evidently comparatively small. (1 10 3-4)

Unlike Thucydides, however, and even quite on the other extreme, Cornford (1965, 134-135) focuses uniquely on the single aspect of poetic hyperbole and seems to neglect entirely figurative litotes when he writes: "...poets tend to magnify their theme for purposes of panegyric, flattering to their audience; they will, for instance, represent Agamemnon's expedition as much larger than it probably was." Likewise, Khaldûn (1989, 13; cf. 15) also seems to dismiss the role of understatement in historical reporting, focusing uniquely on what amounts to a storyteller's otherwise normal proclivity for hyperbole, which he attributes to "the common desire for sensationalism." Veyne (1983, 27, 70), of course, consistently sees in the origins of myth a socially grounded need to aggrandize. Thucydides was neither a poet nor a speechwriter, but a narrator of History. Consequently, he chose a type of language for his narration that corresponded not only to his subject matter, with its inherent chronological ordering, but also to the type of critical juxta-posing demanded by the incongruities and disparities in his source materials.

Thucydides makes it clear that in the process of sifting through and compiling the various reports concerning the Peloponnesian War, it was necessary to edit his information in order to create what he considered accurate History.

Now the state of affairs in early times I have found to have been such as I have described, although it is difficult in such matters to credit any and every piece of testimony. For men accept from one another hearsay reports of former events, neglecting to test them [abasanistos-uncritically, unquestioningly] just the same, even though these events belong to the history of their own country. (1 20 1)

It is interesting to note, however, that although the earlier sources obviously could not be directly confirmed by eye-witness accounts, Thucydides never considered their testimony to be unreliable or inaccurate paradigmatically, i.e., in respect to their general Weltbild, but only (and then only potentially!) in details and specific particulars.^{xxxiii}

[A]s to the events of the period just preceding this, and those of a still earlier date, it was impossible to get clear information on account of lapse of time; but from evidence which, on pushing my inquiries to the furthest point, I find that I can trust, I think that they were not really great either as regards the wars then waged or in other particulars. (1 2)

Likewise, Thucydides took into consideration the natural tendencies of human nature when evaluating his material:

There are many other matters, too, belonging to the present and not forgotten through lapse of

time, regarding which the other Hellenes as well hold mistaken opinions..., so averse to taking pains are most men in the search for the truth, and so prone are they to turn to what lies ready at hand. (1 20 3)

As for the clarity of the historian's critical hindsight, Thucydides states that,

[the historian] should regard the facts as having been made out with sufficient accuracy, on the basis of the clearest indications, considering that they have to do with early times. And so, even though men are always inclined, while they are engaged in a war, to judge the present one the greatest, but when it is over to regard ancient events with greater wonder, yet this war will prove, for men who judge from the actual facts, to have been more important than any that went before. (1 21 1-2)

The Thucydidean method for the composition of events into History cannot be automatically and uncritically associated with the methods and criteria of modern rationalist hermeneutics. Because Thucydides never categorized his source material according to whether or not it contained 'rationally acceptable' elements. Indeed, among the types of source material freely admitted into his pool of historically reliable reports, Thucydides accepted materials of poetic origin, and especially Homer, material from apparently divine sources, and material derived from general tradition. For example, Thucydides accepts Homer's account of the origins of Hellas, the naming of their towns, and the rise of common enterprise in Hellas (1 2-3). Intriguingly enough, without any apparent display of incredulity Thucydides also assents to, among other things (cf. 1 5 2, 1 9 3-4, 4 24 4, and 10 3-5), the Homeric pronouncement that Odysseus sailed through Charybdis (4 24 4). Thucydides does not neglect, of course, the more trenchant methodological question of poetic embellishment, which includes determining how to read and interpret Homeric accounts that seem to be more historical litotes than poetic hyperbole (1 10 3-4).

Likewise, Thucydides willingly accepts, or at least does not dispute, that an oracle would correctly foretell the death of Hesiod (3 96 1). In fact, he even develops at length upon the problem of oracles and the role they played in the outworking of the war. In his writings Thucydides willingly accepts that oracles are utterances of the god. From this hypothesis, he argues that the problem with oracles does not consist in whether one can know if a given oracle is true or false, but rather, in how one interprets and applies an oracle to specific situations. For example, Thucydides determines the duration of the war according to a fixed seasonal chronology, but then he gives confirmation for the accuracy of his calculations by referring to an oracle that was given concerning how long the war was 'supposed' to last: "He will also find, in the case of those who have made any assertion in reliance upon oracles, that this fact alone proved true for always, as I remember, from the beginning of the war until its close, it was said by many that it was fated to last [deoi genesthai] thrice nine years. (5 26 3-4)."^{xxxiv} Finally, in explaining how Pelops originally came into power, Thucydides defers to tradition: "It is said, furthermore, by those of the Peloponnesians who have received the clearest traditional accounts from men of former times... [those having received by memory from those [who came] before [and] being most clear about the Peloponnesians]..." (1 9 2).

In evaluating historical material Thucydides freely questioned his sources concerning accuracy, principally, in military matters. This seemed especially the case with sources transmitted in the form of poetry.^{xxxv} An example of mistrust not involving poetic sources, however, is the interesting passage where Thucydides refuses to record the number of fallen Ambraciots because their quantity seemed to him un-believable [apiston] compared to the size of the city (3 113 6). Thucydides's desire is to compile a reliable historical document, whether he derive his information from poetic texts, tradition, or eyewitness accounts. There are also certain

indications in the History that Thucydides was critical of soothsayers, oracle-mongers,^{xxxvi} and those "somewhat too much given to divination and the like" (7 50 4), but the text never once suggests that Thucydides ever adopted a rationalist stance toward extra-natural phenomena, e.g., gods, daimonia,^{xxxvii} or divine interventions. Nor does he exclude such phenomena from his critical inquiry into past events, although the apparently 'mythic' *Welterfahrung* of the early Greeks was clearly not, or at least no longer, compatible with the type of phenomenal world actually experienced by Thucydides' 5th Century Greece. So from a simple consideration of what he accepted as reliable source material for his History, it would seem impossible to meaningfully argue, as Bury (1958, 75-76) attempts to do, that Thucydides was "at home in the "modern" way of thinking...and [that he] applied logic to everything in the world."

Veyne only alludes, unfortunately, to the otherwise extremely pertinent concept of the 'critical' spirit of the historians of antiquity. But he stops short of making clear statements; and thus avoiding the difficulty of the concept, he also seems to miss a very significant point. Having already suggested that the ancient historians were skeptical in their own way (1983, 14), and that the historical "vulgate" was subject to a progressive 'correction,' by means of which the ancients ensured that what was 'false' or 'erroneous' in the earlier editions of the "vulgate" was eventually remedied for later audiences (Ibid., 19-21), Veyne (Ibid., 24) allows the obviously rationalist conclusion to stand in an *ex silentio* argument. Namely, that the false or erroneous that the ancient historians progressively corrected or weeded out, was in reality whatever mythical elements continued to persist in the received History. Yet in his illustrations, particularly from Herodotus, as in the present illustration drawn from Thucydides, it seems clear that whatever correcting took place in the "vulgate" was generally directed toward particular details, e.g., did the Argiens really betray the Greeks in 480 B.C.E.?—and does not necessarily correspond, as Veyne's silence would lead us to believe, to a systematic attempt on the part of the ancients to detach a radically archaic Worldview from their own current *Lebenswelt*. In a seeming counterstance to his central thesis, Veyne (Ibid., 21) himself apparently lends weight to this criticism when he says that although historians will be criticized by their successors, that criticism will not bear upon "une interprétation d'ensemble."

Despite the obvious methodological weakness of Veyne's general argument, which repeatedly appeals to a much later historian (Pausanias) as a plausible interpreter for what the earlier Greek historians lived and thought,^{xxxviii} his analyses of these texts are nonetheless of great interest. These texts, in fact, indicate that there are in fact signs already in the Greek writers themselves of the beginnings of a separation perhaps being made, but at least being sensed, between the received Worldview, i.e., the world portrayed in the texts of Homer and Hesiod (8th century), and the non-Homeric historical milieu (*Lebenswelt*) of a later Thucydides (5th century) or an even later Pausanias (2nd century C.E.). The question that becomes pertinent in this context is whether the change has occurred in the Worldview itself—yet Bultmann's appeal to science as the necessary catalyst for a change or evolution in Worldview would then be unwarranted, because there is as of yet no influence from "wissenschaftliches Denken"—^{xxxix} or whether that change derives in fact from some transformation that has taken place at a more fundamental level. It is clear from our study that Thucydides cannot be included in the category of those historians who took a "distanced and "critical" stance toward traditional stories."^{xl}

Thucydides begins his chronicle of the war in the Peloponnesus by describing how the Epidamnians, when the Corinthians first began showing signs of hostilities, sent to Delphi to inquire of the god how they should respond to the Corinthians (1 25). The Corcyraeans, as well, when they learned the Corinthians were making open preparations for war against Corcyra, sent envoys to Corinth to sue for a peaceful settlement, announcing to the Corinthians that they were

even prepared to submit the matter to the oracle at Delphi (1 28 1-2). At this point in the narrative, Thucydides briefly digresses from his stated theme in order to sketch the origins and development of the Athenian empire (1 97 2). More than just a narrative parenthesis to relate details of local interest, however, this digression is particularly noteworthy, because by it Thucydides fits yet another causal piece into the historical Puzzle we know today as the Peloponnesian War.

In his narration of the peripeties of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides refers to various revolts that took place, including the ten-year Ithomian rebellion against the Lacedaemonians during which, on at least one occasion, the Lacedaemonians solicited aid from the Athenians. The Lacedaemonian endeavor to form a coalition force with the Athenians did not produce the expected effect, however, and according to Thucydides, "it was as a result of this expedition that disunity first became apparent between the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians" (1 102 3). This budding political disunity between Athens and her neighbors shall obviously be an extremely important factor in the nascent war. But Thucydides does not limit his analysis of causes and events to factors of only immediate political significance.

Thucydides also thought it significant to his digression to include the item that during the Ithomian rebellion, which initially brought to light the friction between Athens and Sparta, the Lacedaemonians were recipients of a Pythian oracle, "which bade them let go the suppliant [the Messenians] of Ithomean Zeus" (1 103 2). In this account Thucydides neither dismisses the phenomenal possibility of an oracle from a god (e.g., attributing it to an arcane Weltbild), nor does he dismiss the oracle as a fictive creation of a poetic imagination. Neither does he make any comment concerning the possible interpretations one might give to the oracle, or address the issue of whether or not the Lacedaemonians might not have manifested (what, to the rationalist mind at least, would seem to be a clear case of) military incompetence in submitting to that oracle. He says simply, albeit laconically, that the Lacedaemonians heeded the oracle, and that it was as a result of an oracle that the Messenian suppliants, "along with children and wives, departed" (1 103 3).

In his lengthening list of war causes, Thucydides also records an oracle the Lacedaemonians received, which enjoined them to go to war against Athens in defense of a treaty the Athenians had violated (1 123 3). Thucydides contends that the Lacedaemonians set about preparing themselves for war in response to this oracle. One way in which they prepared themselves for war was to forestall any premature invasion on the part of the Athenians. In order to do this, the Lacedaemonians sent envoys to Athens to admonish the Athenians to drive out the 'curse of the goddess' (1 126 3), hoping by this maneuver that Pericles, who was implicated in the curse on the side of his mother, would either be banned, which they suspected was improbable, or at least discredited in the eyes of his fellow-citizens (1 127 1-2).

The Lacedaemonian ruse, however, was not just a failed maneuver; it actually turned out to work against them. Because the Athenians responded to the Lacedaemonians' admonition by demanding that the Lacedaemonians, for their part, should drive out the curse of Taenarus. The Athenian response to the demands of the Lacedaemonians, while ultimately successful in motivating the Lacedaemonians to recall Pausanias (1 131) and try him for treason (1 135), also cost the Athenians the loss of Themistocles. The first Lacedaemonian attempt to discredit Pericles, however, was completely unsuccessful because it was apparently ignored by the Athenians. Pericles was not banned, and he lost no credibility in the Athenian assembly. In fact, the Athenians had such confidence in Pericles that they voted to follow his arguments concerning the treaty (1 145).

In his search to uncover all the causes of the war, Thucydides goes beyond the obvious reason for the Lacedaemonians to send envoys to Athens, which is, of course, the divine injunction to send an admonition to the Athenians. It was necessary for Thucydides to speak of this first admonition, however, in order to expose yet a second reason the Lacedaemonians had for sending envoys to Athens. For Thucydides reveals that there was also, in addition to prodding from the oracle, not some small degree of guile and political adroitness in the Lacedaemonians' admonition to the Athenians: "It was this 'curse' that the Lacedaemonians now bade the Athenians drive out, principally, as they pretended, to avenge the honour of the gods, but in fact because they knew that Pericles son of Xanthippus was implicated in the curse on his mother's side..." (1 127 1). The implications of this 'war of admonitions' were actually quite far-reaching. For Thucydides notes that in response to the Lacedaemonian envoys, the Athenians admonished the Lacedaemonians not only to drive out the curse of Athena of the Bronze House, which the Spartans had incurred by causing the death of Pausanias within the confines of the temple (1 128), but also to drive out the curse of Taenarus, which "the god also declared to be a curse" (1 135 1).

When Thucydides remarks at the beginning of Book II that, "[t]here was nothing paltry in the designs of either side; but both put their whole strength into the war..." (2 8 1), it can certainly be supposed that he is making an at least partial allusion to the oracle in which the god promised the Lacedaemonians that, "'if they warred with all their might victory would be theirs,' adding that he himself [the god] would assist them."^{xi} Later in Book II Thucydides will refer to yet another curse, "which forbade [the use of the Pelargicum] for residence, [which] was also prohibited by a verse-end of a Pythian oracle to the following effect: 'The Pelargicum unoccupied is better'" (2 17 1). According to Thucydides' reading of this oracle, and in light of the circumstances that subsequently took place in Athens, "the oracle... came true, but in a sense quite the opposite of what was expected. For it was not on account of the unlawful occupation of the place that the city was visited by the calamities, but it was on account of the war that there was the necessity of its occupation, and the oracle, although it did not mention the war, yet foresaw that the place would never be occupied for any good. (2 17 1-2)."

In another illustration of his rational criteria for History, it seems clear that Thucydides also gave at least some of the credit for the salvation of the Mytilenaeans to the 'Olympian Zeus,' because the Mytilenaeans entered into the temple of Zeus in order to present themselves as suppliants to the Lacedaemonians and their allies (2 1 14-2 1 15 1). Similarly, Thucydides did not seem to think it at all aberrant, militarily speaking, that the Plataeans prisoners should exhort the Lacedaemonians, "for the sake of the gods who of old sanctioned [their] alliance," (2 1 58 1), not to be put to death. In yet another curious instance of an oblique influence of the divine in Greek military history, Thucydides relates an incident where the Lacedaemonian king, Agis, refused to cross a border with his army because the sacrifices were not favorable. Agis took the ill-boding sacrifices so seriously, in fact, that he actually returned home with his expeditionary force.^{xiii} In a less militarily charged allusion to the divine in his History, Thucydides makes reference to an island region occupied by the Liparaeans, whose inhabitants "believe that Hephaestus has his forge in Hiera, because this island is seen to send up a great flame of fire at night and smoke by day" (2 1 88 3). Thucydides seems to include this reference in the History without any apparent skepticism or condescension, although one gets the sense from the text that he personally distances himself from the belief of the people of that region.

According to Spinoza (1951, 25), "Everything takes place by the power of God. Nature herself is the power of God under another name, and our ignorance of [that] power...is co-extensive with our ignorance of Nature." Spinoza's statement, despite its clearly biblical realm of original

application, also happens to be a very accurate description of precisely the type of dilemma one readily finds in the histories and traditions of Greek antiquity. Greek records are replete with gods intervening in the human dimension, with equivocal revelations clothed in the garments of obscuring signs and portents, and with a host of other manipulatory intrusions into the natural order by deity. Far from the commonly held conception that Greek texts reveal a people who were either singularly advanced in their literary development, or more or less primitive animists in their religious notions, the Greek insight into the all-pervasive divine underpinnings of their world was both penetrating and reasonably comprehensive. The Greeks were in an historically conditioned quandary as to the full significance of the timing and relevance of 'seemingly' natural occurrences, because in their experience of the world, and especially in the light of the traditions handed down from the 'former times' (*i.e.*, the Pre-Homeric and Homeric periods), gods were commonly wont to use or provoke occurrences of nature, such as earthquakes, floods, and eclipses, as manifestations of their interest, and of their pleasure or displeasure. So although Thucydides himself seems personally reserved in this matter, his intimate convictions do not sway him either to eliminate equivocal happenings from his History, nor to underestimate or understate their importance in the deeds of the war. Quite on the contrary, Thucydides actually composes a History in which the ambiguity between the natural and the supra-natural, which necessarily queers any in situ recognition of the 'real (causal) significance' [*hyponoian*] of whatever events happen to be taking place, is an inescapable factor of any, but especially military, decision-making by the Greeks. This ambiguity, of course, generally had the disastrous consequences one has come to expect in the Greek texts.

Thucydides is not skeptical about the inherent ambiguity of 'occurrences of nature.' He is, however, extremely skeptical about the limited nature of human knowledge, and repeatedly argues that there is simply no way to know for certain whether a given interpretation concerning the divine origin or meaning of an 'occurrence of nature' is correct. Because an interpretation of an act of nature is at best dubious, Thucydides simply, and reasonably, advises the most natural interpretation of those events (1 23 3-6). This same uncertainty necessarily plagues the Greek oracles and those who interpret them, which perhaps explains why Thucydides adopts the stance of interpreting oracles by hindsight. The oracle is not the problem. The problem is in how one is to interpret and to apply the oracle. In the question of oracles, therefore, Thucydides takes a position similar to that of the Athenians when they admonish the Melians. For he says, "Do not make yourselves like the common crowd who, when it is possible still to be saved by human means, as soon as distress comes and all visible grounds of hope fail them, betake themselves to those [grounds of hope] that are invisible--to divination, oracles, and the like, which, with the hopes they inspire, bring men to ruin. (5 103; cf. 2 17 1-3, 2 47 4, and 2 53 4)."

In Book 1 128 1-2, Thucydides recounts a tradition concerning the causes of an earthquake in Sparta, a tradition in which the supra-natural cause acts as compliment to the natural cause, both of which he seemed to combine together and present as the 'full' explanation for the earthquake. The text gives no indication that Thucydides disputed either of the causes: "...the Lacedaemonians had on one occasion caused some suppliant Helots to leave their refuge in the temple of Poseidon at Taenarus, then had led them off and put them to death; and [they] believe that it was because of this sacrilege that the great earthquake befell them at Sparta. (Cf. 1 101 2)." From the number of references found in the History, it would seem earthquakes were an especially common occurrence during the course of hostilities in the Peloponnesus.^{xliii} There were, however, other types of natural phenomena that also played a relatively significant role in various aspects of the war. In one instance, during a battle between the Athenians and the Syracusans, "[t]here chanced to occur at the same time some claps of thunder and flashes of

lightning and much rain, so that this too contributed to the fear of those who were fighting for the first time and were but little conversant with war, whereas to those who were more experienced the storm seemed of course to be due merely to the season of the year... (6 70 1; cf. 7 79 3).”

Another noteworthy illustration of the Greeks' confusion in how to read what may (?) have been only a natural occurrence is the lunar eclipse that actually caused the Athenian general, Nicias, to delay the advance of the Athenian army in the invasion of Syracuse. This is an excellent example of the degree to which the belief that the gods spoke through natural phenomena could influence critical military decisions. “[A]fter all was ready and when they were about to make their departure, the moon, which happened then to be at the full, was eclipsed.^{xliv} And most of the Athenians, taking the incident to heart, urged the generals to wait. Nicias also...refused even to discuss further the question of their removal until they should have waited thrice nine days, as the soothsayers prescribed (6 1 50 4).

This paper has addressed the question: In what respect is Thucydides a rationalist historian? and has discovered that in the modern sense of the term Thucydides was not a rationalist historian at all. He did not compose History in a vacuum, but was fully implicated existentially in the world of his time. The historian one comes to know through the History, even though he was far from "prenant ses distances à l'égard d'un passé trop lointain pour qu'on puisse l'atteindre autrement que sous la forme mythique,"^{xlv} certainly had his own personal thoughts and opinions.

Thucydides was convinced, for example, that there was a better, or best, way to interpret oracles. He also thought there were some Greeks, such as the Athenian general Nicias, who perhaps (?) exaggerated the significance of events that could never be known with certainty to be anything other than simple natural occurrences. Likewise, he did not see the usefulness of consulting oracles, not because he did not think there were any gods behind those oracles, nor because he doubted the veracity of the information contained in the oracle, but only because oracles were by nature so very ambiguous that any interpretation of them was, at best, a guess. And guesses about divine intent in the Greek experience of the world rarely seemed to have a happy outcome. It is only in this sense, then, in his reserved attitude toward any assumptions of ‘knowledge’ pertaining to an equivocal supra-natural dimension, that Thucydides may perhaps be considered a rationalist historian.

In establishing a method for sifting through material and compiling the document that was ultimately to become his History of the Peloponnesian Wars, Thucydides naturally and reasonably chose those accounts that seemed the most accurate; but his editorial revisions never included a philosophical *mise en cause* of the Greek cosmos, which would have been existentially unwarranted. So, obviously, Thucydides would never pose the question that derives from a modern experience of an entirely natural world: whether or not it was possible that the Trojan War could really have taken place as Homer described. If he could find no obvious or demonstrable reason to dispute accounts contained in older documents, viz., if other more reliable accounts did not contradict those documents in quantitative and measurable matters of war, then Thucydides unreservedly incorporated those documents into his History.

If one can consider Thucydides a rationalist historian, it is because he broke tradition by making a distinction between the type of language a poet uses to create mythodes, and the unembellished language imposed on him by his synoptic method. Thucydides was a creator of rationalist history in the sense that he focused on the "nature de l'objet, c'est-à-dire de l'action humaine."^{xlvi} The History is framed in terms of human actions; and following the dictates of political analysis, Thucydides considers his information in a profoundly rational manner. He was also a rationalist, in a Greek sort of way, because he argues that, when it is impossible to make a definitive

assessment as to the truth-full significance of an event (such as in the case of 'occurrences of nature' or oracles), the best conceivable course of action is to interpret natural happenings in the most natural manner possible, or in the case of the oracles, to leave them to be interpreted by 'hindsight.' So if Thucydides was truly a rationalist historian, he was, at least, not the type of rationalist who separates the 'historical' from the 'non-historical' based on unfounded logical or philosophical considerations.

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NOTES

ⁱ Paul Veyne, 1971, 13.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Parry, "The Language of Thucydides' Description of the Plague," in *Bulletin of the [London University] Institute of Classical Studies* 16 (1969) 106-108.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lamberton, 1989, xi.

^{iv} Veyne, *op. cit.*, 25.

^v Aiken, 1997, 411; cf. 1991, 1.

^{vi} Cf. Hartog's (1992, 15) analysis of Voltaire's definition of the myth/reality/history problem.

^{vii} De Certeau, 1975, 132.

^{viii} Aron, 1964, 50.

^{ix} Gadamer, 1986, 134. Cf. Gadamer (1986), "Klassische und philosophische Hermeneutik" (1968), esp. 97ff., and "Hermeneutik und Historismus" (1965). Heidegger (1980, 80) uses this same type of poetic language when speaking of the hermeneutical target.

^x See Gadamer's discussions in "Klassische und philosophische Hermeneutik" (1986, 98-100, 104), "Zur Problematik des Selbstverständnisses" (1986, 123-126, 132), and in "Hermeneutik und Historismus" (1986, 387-388, 393).

^{xi} Cf. Veyne, 1983, 19.

^{xii} Cf. Bergson, 1982, 110-113, and esp. 207. See also Vernant's (1991, 261ff.) discussion of history and psychology, or historical psychology.

^{xiii} Aiken, 1991, 243.

^{xiv} *Against Celsius*, I, 42 in *Patrologia Graeca*, XI, 738, quoted by Veyne, 1983, 70, 152.

^{xv} Stauffer (1967, Bd. II, 16-17) attributes this language to Leopold von Ranke.

^{xvi} Veyne, 1983, 14.

^{xvii} Effenterre, 1993, 8.

^{xviii} Cf. Vico, 1993, 72.

^{xix} Cf. Murray, 1947, 9.

^{xx} Ste. Croix, 1972, 6.

^{xxi} Aron, 1964, 79.

^{xxii} Effenterre, 1993, 26.

^{xxiii} Cf. *History*, 1 9 3-4, 1 10 3, 2 1 104 4, and 5 1 2.

^{xxiv} According to Veyne (1983, 84), Pausanias also seemed to defer to Homer in certain instances.

^{xxv} Cf. *Republic* 600e, 601b; *Gorgias*, 502b-c.

^{xxvi} See Plato's *Protagoras*, 320c, where Protagoras concludes in certain circumstances that a myth is more agreeable [*xaristeron*] than an explicative discourse (cf. 324d, 328c, 361d).

^{xxvii} Cf. *History*, 1 21 1 and 1 22 3.

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, 1 58 2, 1 66 1, 1 88, and 1 118 1.

^{xxix} Because of the unusual implications in the immediate context, the use of *aletheia* in this passage is charged with particular linguistic significance. Perhaps a closer rendering of the Greek might be in the direction of Heidegger's *Unverborgenheit*. See Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, "Der Spruch des Anaximander (1946)" (Frankfurt am Main:

Klostermann, 1980), 332-333; cf. Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, "Einleitung zu "Was ist Metaphysik (1949)" (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967).

^{xxx}See Gomme, 1966, 127-128; Classen, 1879, 66-68; and Croiset, 1886, 378-379.

^{xxx}ⁱCf. *History*, 2 17 1-3, 2 47 4, 2 53 4, and especially 5 26 3-4 and 5 103.

^{xxx}ⁱⁱThe important events of the war were recorded in the order of their occurrence, summer by summer, winter by winter (2 1 1; cf. 5 26 1).

^{xxx}ⁱⁱⁱCf. Herodotus VII, 152, 3.

^{xxx}^{iv}See also 2 102 5-6 for the tradition that Apollo directed Alcmaeon by oracle to inhabit the Echinades islands, and 3 104 1, where the Athenians purified Delos in compliance with an oracle [*kata kresmon*].

^{xxx}^vSee 1 9 and 1 10.

^{xxx}^{vi}Cf. 2 21 3, 6 69 2, 7 50 4, and 8 1 1.

^{xxx}^{vii}Cf. 2 64 2.

^{xxx}^{viii}Cf. Nilsson 1956, 4 for the methodological flaw.

^{xxx}^{ix}Quoted in Aiken, 1991, 239.

^{xl}Brillante, 1990, 96.

^{xli}*Histories*, 12 54 4. Cf. 1 118 3 for the original oracle.

^{xlii}*Ibid.*, 15 55 2. There was obviously no problem with the sacrifices the second time, however (5 116). Cf. 5 105.

^{xliii}Cf. *History* 1 128 1-2, 2 8 3, 3 87, 3 89, 5 45 4, 5 50 5, 8 6 5, 8 41 2.

^{xliv}The note in the Loeb edition gives the date as 27 August, 413 B. C.

^{xlv}Vernant, 1974, 200.

^{xlvi}Aron, 1964, 120.