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Source: *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Apr., 1957), pp. 1-12

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of [The Classical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/637567>

Accessed: 06/09/2010 12:49

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THUCYDIDES, HERODOTOS, AND THE CAUSES OF WAR¹

ALL wars have causes; some have pretexts. When Polybios (6. 6. 1-7. 3) distinguishes between the cause, the pretext, and the beginning of war, his language sounds curiously modern. When he summarizes the causes of the Second Punic War the modern reader is not so satisfied. The war was due, in his opinion, to the indignation of Hamilcar Barca, who had to accept peace when he could have continued fighting in Sicily; to the anger of the Carthaginians, when they were forced to surrender Sardinia; and to the good fortune which attended their armies in Spain. A more recent account differs from Polybios not only on matters of detail. 'It is true that it was Hannibal's attack on Saguntum, undertaken in full knowledge of the almost inevitable consequences, that precipitated the war, but the historian must decide that, so far as attack and defence have a meaning in the clash between states, the balance of aggression must incline against Rome.' (B. L. Hallward, *C.A.H.* viii. 31.) It would be misleading to say that Polybios and Hallward have given different answers to the same question; they have asked different questions. For Polybios to explain the outbreak of the Second Punic War was to say why the Carthaginians went to war; Hallward felt it his task to explain why the Carthaginians and why the Romans went to war. When Thucydides tried to explain the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, did he ask the same questions as are asked today?

That is the problem which I want to solve. A preliminary task is to determine the meaning of *πρόφασις*, a word which Thucydides uses more than once in referring to the causes of the war; it has been made easier by the work of Dr. L. Pearson² and Dr. G. M. Kirkwood.³ They have illustrated the many and related senses of *πρόφασις* in Thucydides and other Greek writers; they have shown that Thucydides' use of the word is fully in accordance with its occurrence in other Greek literature. In general it means 'an explanation that you offer for behaviour, giving the reason or the purpose' (Pearson, p. 206). Behaviour is most commonly explained when it has been reprehended; *πρόφάσεις* often seek to justify behaviour in explaining it. Hence they often diverge from the genuine reason for the behaviour. *Πρόφάσεις* may be excuses for past failure, they may be pretexts for future crime; they run the whole gamut of disingenuous explanations.

Kirkwood (pp. 41-45) has refuted adequately the view that Thucydides, when discussing the causes of the Peloponnesian War, uses the word *πρόφασις* in a special sense drawn from the Hippocratic writings. In the Hippocratic corpus the word is interchangeable with *αίτιή* and *αίτιον*; it can mean a cause of any kind, not merely a 'real' or 'basic' cause. The Hippocratic writers do indeed use it in a special sense, that of the 'exciting cause' of a disease as distinct from its 'basic' cause; and the word bears this special sense in the one passage of Thucydides where medical influence may reasonably be suspected,

¹ I should like to thank the editors of the *Classical Quarterly* for drawing my attention to the papers by Pearson and Kirkwood; also Messrs. C. J. Williams and M. J. F. Wynn for listening to a preliminary and confused

exposition of my thesis.

² 'Prophasis and Aitia', *T.A.P.A.* lxxxiii (1952), 205-23.

³ 'Thucydides' Words for "Cause"', *A.J.P.* lxxxiii (1952), 37-61.

that is, at 2. 49. 2 in the description of the plague. Thus Kirkwood. Let it, however, be noticed that even in this passage Thucydides' usage finds parallels in non-medical writers. Aeschines (2. 145), distinguishing *φήμη* from *συκοφαντία*, says: *φήμη μὲν ἔστιν, ὅταν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πολιτῶν αὐτόματον ἐκ μηδεμιᾶς προφάσεως λέγῃ τινα ὡς γεγενημένην πράξιν*—'It is PHEME, when the majority of the citizens spontaneously and for no reason speaks of a certain event as having occurred.' The *πρόφασις* here is not the 'basic cause', for the 'basic cause' of the PHEME is the event which it reports; the *πρόφασις* is rather what might in medicine be called the 'exciting cause'. So the phrase of Aeschines *ἐκ μηδεμιᾶς προφάσεως* is strictly comparable to *ἀπ' οὐδεμιᾶς προφάσεως* in Thuc. 2. 49. 2 and (for example) to *ἄνευ φανερῆς προφάσεως* in [Hippoc.] *ἀφορισμοί* 2. 41. Aeschines may indeed borrow *πρόφασις* in the sense of 'exciting cause' from the medical writers; but, if so, that sense was familiar to the non-medical public or else it was very close indeed to non-medical usage.¹

Although Pearson and Kirkwood are clearly right in most of what they say about *πρόφασις*, they have (I think) misinterpreted the word in Thuc. 1. 23. 6. They have rightly emphasized the instances where *πρόφασις* means an explanation which is not genuine and they admit that it sometimes means a genuine explanation; but in order to understand the passage one must bear in mind the frequency of the latter sense. Some of its occurrences require examination.

Homer uses the word twice. Both times it is an adverbial accusative; his use of *χάριν* (*Il.* 15. 744) and *ἐπίκλησιν* (*Il.* 16. 177) is comparable and this idiomatic character of the two passages suggests that the word has already undergone a long evolution. In one of the two passages (*Il.* 19. 302) the word clearly means 'the mere occasion', almost 'the pretext', not 'the real reason'. Apparently because of this Pearson (p. 207, n. 11) holds that the word means 'pretext' in the other passage. There (*Il.* 19. 261-2) Agamemnon swears:

*μη μὲν ἐγὼ κούρη Βρισηίδι χεῖρ' ἐπενεῖκαι,
οὔτ' εὐνής πρόφασιν κεκρημένος οὔτε τευ ἄλλου.*

Pearson renders the second line: 'whether my *prophasis* was sexual desire or anything else', and he comments: 'If Agamemnon had slept with Briseis, he would of course have pleaded sexual desire as an excuse; but Achilles might have argued that it was a mere pretext—that Agamemnon's real purpose was to spite Achilles' (Pearson's italics). Now sexual desire is one of the most powerful of human appetites. The predicament where its gratification is made a mere pretext for following some temporarily more powerful motive, such as spite, is correspondingly rare; so the wise reader will be reluctant to suppose this situation in Homer or in any other author, unless the context demands such an interpretation. What Agamemnon said was: 'I have not laid my hand upon Briseis, neither from desire of her bed, by way of motive, nor from desire of anything else.' So even in Homer *πρόφασις* could mean a genuine as well as a disingenuous explanation.

The dual character of *πρόφασις* appears likewise in Pindar. When *πρόφασις* is described as 'the daughter of Afterthought' (*P.* 5. 28), it is clearly not a genuine explanation of conduct; but Pindar (*P.* 4. 32-33) says of the Argonauts:

*ἀλλὰ γὰρ νόστου πρόφασις γλυκεροῦ
κώλυεν μείναι*

¹ Pearson, p. 212, observes that 'the so-called medical use' occurs at *Dem.* 2. 9; cf. [*Dem.*] 11. 7; *Plat. Rep.* 8. 556 e.

'The plan of sweet return brooked no delay'—the desire to go home was their genuine motive for not staying in Africa. A *πρόφασις* is often simply the reason for specific conduct. It may be the reason for murder (Ant. 5. 59–60) or the reason for refraining from crime (Hyper. fr. 210), the reason for a quarrel (Lys. 9. 13) or for reading out part of a speech (Isoc. 15. 69). Other instances of this or a similar sense are Ant. 5. 21–22; [Alcid.] *Odys.* 17; Lys. 9. 7; Isoc. [1.] 23; 15. 244; *ep.* 1. 9; [Dem.] 13. 18.

In these passages *πρόφασις* is an explanation of voluntary conduct. Sometimes the word has the parallel sense of 'a scientific explanation', 'an explanation of natural phenomena'; it is then an explanation which has nothing to do with human volition. It is not surprising that this sense seems to be confined to scientific treatises, such as the Hippocratic corpus and Plato's *Timaios* (e.g. 66 b, 76 e). Doubtless *πρόφασις* was used first of explanations of human actions and only later of those of natural events. If the word should be derived from the root of *φαίνω*, it might be used equally early for explanations of either kind; if, however, it is connected with the root of *φημί*, it must first have been used of explanations of human conduct. Either derivation is possible,¹ but perhaps that from the root of *φημί* is preferable, since the *a* of *πρόφασις* is short; from **προ-φαν-σις* one would expect **προφᾶσις*.

An explanation of human conduct must deal, even if only in the last resort, with human intentions, purposes, passions, desires, feelings, decisions . . . ; perhaps the most general word is 'motive'. In many of the passages given above, where *πρόφασις* is a genuine explanation of conduct, the word may be translated 'motive', yet this is not always so. A man accused of murder defends himself by saying that no body was found in or near the harbour where the victim spent his last night: *οὔτε τῷ ἀπάγοντι νύκτωρ μακρὰν ὁδὸν ἢ πρόφασις ἂν εἰκότως ἐγίνετο* (Ant. 5. 26)—'and if I had tried to lead him far away by night, I should not have found an acceptable reason'. Here the *πρόφασις* is a consideration suggested by one man to another in the hope that it may provide a motive on which the second man will act (cf. Hdt. 1. 156. 1; 4. 165. 3—discussed below). From the first man's point of view it is a mere pretext, but from that of the second it is a real motive; so *πρόφασις* may be thought to retain here something of its sense of 'genuine explanation'. Again *πρόφασις* may be the explanation of an historical event. Thus Herodotos (2. 161. 3) says of Apries: *ἐπεὶ δὲ οἱ ἔδεε κακῶς γενέσθαι, ἐγένετο ἀπὸ προφάσιος τὴν ἐγὼ μεζόνως μὲν ἐν τοῖσι Λιβυκοῖσι λόγοισι ἀπηγγέσμαι, μετρίως δ' ἐν τῷ παρεόντι*—'When it was his fate to fall, this happened from a cause which I will explain at length in my account of Libya and briefly in my present account'. The fall of Apries can be explained, in the last resort, in terms of human motives, but its explanation is not a human motive, since it involves several people and an interplay of motives. *Πρόφασις* has the same sense of 'the explanation of an historical event' in Hdt. 4. 79. 1; Plat. *Critias* 120 d. The English word 'cause' has the same sense when it is used of causes in history, although we do not accept the same explanations of historical events as Herodotos did; when we speak of 'motives', our attention is concentrated on the individuals, whose motives they were, and on a single motive or a simple group of motives; but when we speak of 'causes', although these causes may be ultimately analysable in terms of motives, we may have in mind a more complex situation arising from interplay of motives, their frustration or their partial realization.

¹ Cf. Pearson, p. 206, n. 7.

Thus there are many passages where a *πρόφασις* is a genuine explanation. Sometimes it is natural phenomena, more often human actions, that are to be explained. A *πρόφασις* is often a motive, but occasionally it is something more complex arising from motives, an historical cause. Nevertheless the passages where *πρόφασις* refers to a disingenuous explanation are far more numerous. Perhaps indeed some development of meaning can be traced: *προφάσεις* never seem to be genuine in hellenistic and later writers. The usage of Demosthenes may be instructive. Pearson (p. 213) points out that Demosthenes never says that he or his client has a *πρόφασις* for prosecuting or defence. He was too much aware of the pejorative flavour of a word which could mean 'mere excuses' or 'pretexts'. At an earlier period the speaker of Lysias 14 could say (§ 1) that the Athenians demanded no *πρόφασις* from those attacking Alcibiades, since the latter's crimes were so enormous; the language suggests that some speakers did state their *προφάσεις* for prosecuting (cf. Lyc. *Leoc.* 6—see below); the opening of Dem. 22 seems to state a *πρόφασις* for prosecution and, if so, it is significant that the word *πρόφασις* is not used. Again, Isocrates (15. 244) means real reasons when he speaks of the many *προφάσεις* which deter people from studying rhetoric; Demosthenes (21. 141), in a comparable passage, says that people fail to prosecute Meidias because of many *προφάσεις* but, when he has mentioned some of these, he calls them *αἴτια*, as if he modified his judgement on their genuineness. Once Demosthenes speaks of an *ἀληθῆς πρόφασις* and the passage (18. 156) is instructive. He is producing a letter which states Philip's pretexts (*προφάσεις*) for intervening in the war of Amphissa; commenting on this he says that Philip 'concealed the true pretext of his policy, namely that it was directed against Greece and the Thebans and you' (*τὴν μὲν ἀληθῆ πρόφασιν τῶν πραγμάτων, τὸ ταῦτ' ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ τοὺς Θηβαίους καὶ ὑμᾶς πρᾶττεν, ἀπεκρύπτετο*). The phrase has a suggestion of oxymoron and Demosthenes uses the conceit again at 18. 225; perhaps there is a similar though less definite suggestion in the *ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις* of Thuc. 1. 23. 6; 6. 6. 1. The word seems to have developed in meaning by losing gradually its associations with genuine reasons; Demosthenes promotes this evolution and Polybios stands at its term.

At all periods a *πρόφασις* may be 'an excuse', whether valid or not. When the Athenians deprived the Spartans of hegemony in the war against Persia, their *πρόφασις* was the outrageous behaviour of Pausanias (Hdt. 8. 3. 2); Herodotos does not suggest that the excuse was invalid. When Clytaemnestra upbraids Agamemnon for planning the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and hints at the possibility that she herself may murder him, she says that she needed only a *βραχεία πρόφασις* in order that she may give him such a welcome home as he deserves (Eur. *I.A.* 1180); she means that a slight further provocation from him would have given her such an excuse as would justify homicide. *Πρόφασις* often has the sense of 'valid excuse' when one party asserts that its opponents have no valid excuse for their actions; for example Aristoph. *Vesp.* 468; Dem. 30. 13; cf. Hdt. 6. 137. 2.

It is of importance that valid excuses in Greek literature are often of a peculiar type. If A wishes to justify an injury he has done to B, he often asserts that previously he had suffered injury at the hands of B. The prominence of such a concept of vengeance in Greek life is familiar;¹ the prior injury, when treated as justifying revenge, can be called *πρόφασις*. When Darius planned to

¹ Cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram on the tragic theme of retaliation in *J.H.S.* lxxiv (1954), 17-18.

conquer Greece, his *πρόφασις* was the injury previously inflicted on him by the Athenians at Marathon (Hdt. 6. 94. 1). According to Demosthenes (54. 17), the law offers actions for slander and other injuries, in order that people may not regard their sufferings as *προφάσεις* for violent acts of private revenge. The 'theory or principle of retribution', if it may be so called, is assumed when a prosecutor justifies his hatred of the man accused by describing injuries which the latter tried to inflict on him previously, even though these are irrelevant to the case (e.g. Dem. 22. 1-3). The 'theory' suffers a casuistic twist when a prosecutor says that, although he has no private quarrel with the accused, the latter's general behaviour gives all citizens a *πρόφασις* against him (e.g. Lyc. *Leoc.* 6; cf. Lys. 14. 1).

Other instances where the *πρόφασις* seems to be a prior injury are Lys. 9. 15; Isae. 1. 9; Isoc. 20. 7. Some passages are of special interest as illustrating the casuistry of retribution. First among these is Theog. 1. 323-8:

μήποτ' ἐπὶ σμικρῇ προφάσει φίλον ἄνδρ' ἀπολέσσαι
 πειθόμενος χालεπῇ, Κύρνε, διαιβολίῃ.
 εἴ τις ἀμαρτωλῆσι φίλων ἐπὶ παντὶ χολῶτο,
 οὔποτ' ἂν ἀλλήλοις ἄρθμοι οὐδὲ φίλοι
 εἴεν. ἀμαρτωλαὶ γὰρ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔπονται
 θνητοῖς, Κύρνε· θεοὶ δ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσι φέρειν.

Two comments may be made here. First, the *πρόφασις* upon which one may, but should not, destroy a friend is a *ἀμαρτωλή* committed by the friend, in other words it is a prior injury. But, secondly, the poet is aware that, although the *πρόφασις* is the justification for attacking the friend, it is not the whole cause of the attack; for the attack is due at least in part to 'slander' (*διαιβολίῃ*). Likewise, when Cambyses wanted to kill Croesos, he found a *πρόφασις* in the reprimand which Croesos gave him (Hdt. 3. 36. 3); for a reprimand is an injury of a sort. Here the *πρόφασις* is a mere pretext and yet it is similar in character to the *πρόφασις* in Theog. 1. 323, where it is rather more than a mere pretext; in both passages it is a prior injury and in both the writer recognizes that it is not the whole motive.

It is the extreme of casuistry when A, wishing to harm B, tempts B to commit an offence against him, so that he may justly retaliate. Normally men are not in a position to do this. The gods tempted Sabacon to commit impiety, so that they would have a *πρόφασις* for contriving or allowing his downfall (Hdt. 2. 139. 2). Herodotos seems quite satisfied with this application of the 'theory of retribution'; perhaps he took it for granted that gods and men sometimes justify their actions by such devious cunning.

The 'theory of retribution' is concerned with requiring evil for evil. It is a natural, though perhaps unexpected, extension when *πρόφασις* is used of a prior service to be rewarded. The speaker of Isoc. 19 claimed the estate of Thrasylochos under the latter's will, whereas his opponent, the half-sister of Thrasylochos, claimed it in virtue of the relationship. The speaker (§ 16) asserts that he did not receive the estate *διὰ μικρὰς προφάσεις*: he had done Thrasylochos many services, whereas his opponent had constantly quarrelled with her half-brother. Other instances of *πρόφασις* in connexion with return of services are Thuc. 3. 86. 4; Dem. 18. 284; 20. 149 (cf. Pearson, pp. 214-15).

Some passages where Herodotos uses the word *πρόφασις* require more attention. When about to describe the expedition sent by Aryandes against Barca

and Cyrene, he says that he will state its *πρόφασις* (4. 145. 1). So the reader expects to learn the cause of the expedition. Herodotos describes indeed its antecedents at length, but he says very little about the real motives of Aryandes. After a digression on the origin and history of Cyrene, Herodotos (4. 164-7) explains how Arcesilaos III was murdered in Barca and so his mother Pheretima appealed to Aryandes, the satrap of Egypt; Aryandes sent an army to help her. Thus the expedition is explained by two stock motifs: first that of vengeance, which makes Pheretima appeal to Aryandes, and secondly that of the duty of helping a suppliant, which explains the conduct of Aryandes; there can be no doubt that Herodotos had these motifs in mind when he offered to state the *πρόφασις* of the expedition. There can also be little doubt that the appeal of Pheretima did not provide the real motive of Aryandes. Herodotos himself (4. 167. 3) adds as an afterthought that the antecedents he has described were a mere pretext (*πρόσχημα τοῦ λόγου*) and its real object was to conquer Africa. Perhaps the real object was in fact to conquer Cyrene and Barca; for Arcesilaos III had made formal submission to Cambyses, but those who overthrew him may have sought to assert their independence of Persia.

The result is a paradox. When Herodotos promises to state the *πρόφασις* of the expedition, he seems to mean that he will state its real cause; yet what he gives in fulfilment of the promise is a mere pretext—it is what Aryandes would have said in his own justification, if he had been a Greek and if he had been asked to give an account of his actions in terms acceptable to Greek thought. Then does *πρόφασις* at Hdt. 4. 145. 1 mean 'real cause' or 'mere pretext'? or has Herodotos failed to distinguish the two?

When Pheretima appealed to Aryandes, she told him that the reason why the people of Barca had slain Arcesilaos was his policy of medism (Hdt. 4. 165. 3). Herodotos says that she made this statement as a *πρόφασις*. Does this mean 'real motive' or 'mere pretext'? From Pheretima's point of view it was a mere pretext; her real object was to avenge Arcesilaos. But she intended it to be a real motive influencing Aryandes. A comparable situation appears in Hdt. 1. 155-6. The Lydians had been conquered by Cyrus and had rebelled; so Cyrus considered enslaving them. But Croesos urged that Pactyes alone should be held responsible for the revolt and that Cyrus should provide against such troubles in future by disarming the Lydians and making them adopt peaceful and luxurious habits. Croesos said this, 'realizing that, unless he offered a worthy *πρόφασις*, he would not persuade him (Cyrus) to reconsider his decision' (*ἐπιστάμενος ὅτι ἦν μὴ ἀξιώχρεον πρόφασιν προτείνη, οὐκ ἀναπίσει μιν μεταβουλεύσασθαι* 1. 156. 1). The *πρόφασις* is what Croesos said to Cyrus. It is not the real motive of Croesos, for his real object was simply to save his people from enslavement. But he intended it to determine the action of Cyrus, as indeed it did; that is, it was to be a real motive for Cyrus (cf. Ant. 5. 26—discussed above).

In both these incidents the situation is as follows. X makes a statement to Y; if considered from the point of view of X, the statement is not a real motive, for his real motive is something different. But if considered from the point of view of Y, the statement is a real motive (or it is meant as one). Such a statement is called a *πρόφασις*. Then why could Herodotos use the word with this curious ambiguity?

The answer (I suggest) is to be found in a characteristic feature of Herodotos' way of thinking about history. For him, to explain a deed of violence is

to record what the doer would state to justify his action. It is obvious how this principle applies to the cases just considered, although in that of Croesos and Cyros the deed is one of abstention from violence rather than violence; the *πρόφασις* is what Cyros or Aryandes would say, if required to justify their actions. It is more important to recognize how the principle pervades Herodotos' treatment of the causes of war and of other actions. The justification normally represents the deed of violence as an act of retribution for a prior injury. A few examples will suffice.

When the Spartans sent an expedition against Polycrates, they explained it as seeking vengeance for acts of piracy committed by the Samians a generation before (Hdt. 3. 47. 1). The Samians, on the other hand, asserted that the expedition was sent in gratitude for Samian help against the Messenians. Herodotos seems to think that the expedition is to be explained by one or other of these statements, although he has already described the circumstances leading immediately to the dispatch of the expedition and a modern reader would seek its explanation in these. To explain why the Corinthians joined the expedition, Herodotos (3. 48. 1) says that they had suffered injury from the Samians a generation before. He says nothing about any objects the Corinthians hoped to achieve by the expedition or about any more recent incidents such as might have provoked the Corinthians. Again, in order to explain why the Aeginetans and the Athenians went to war late in the sixth century, he records a quarrel that had arisen between the two states nearly two centuries before (5. 82. 1). He could have sought the cause of the later war in events which he has related—in the defeat of the Thebans by the Athenians and the consequent Theban appeal to Aegina. Yet he seems to feel that he has given no satisfactory explanation of the war until he has stated the ancient grievances of the combatants.

He treats the affairs of individuals in a similar way. He suggests various explanations of the unpleasant death of Cleomenes (6. 75. 3; 84. 1; 84. 3). Most of the explanations treat the death as retribution for crime. Herodotos himself regards the death as compensation (*τίσις*) due to Demaretos; the Argives saw in it punishment for violation of sanctuary; to the Athenians it was punishment for sacrilege committed at Eleusis; to most Greeks it was punishment for the impiety of bringing influence to bear on the Pythia. The Spartans, seeking to rebut the charges which these explanations implied against their king, offered a rationalistic explanation: Cleomenes had gone mad from the effects of strong drink. Yet if Herodotos' facts are correct, a modern reader would offer an explanation which has nothing to do with retribution: the enemies of Cleomenes drove him to suicide.

Herodotos seeks explanations by the concept of retribution even in biology. The winged serpent of Arabia, when slain by her offspring, pays compensation (*τίσις*) to the murdered father (3. 109. 2). More examples may be found on consulting Mr. J. E. Powell's lexicon, s.vv. *ἀποτίννυμαι*, *ἀποτίνω*, *τιμωρέω*, *τιμωρία*, *τίν(ν)νυμαι*, *τίσις*. Herodotos' explanation of the war between Greeks and Persians has special interest. At the beginning of the work as it is now (and problems of composition do not affect the present argument), he says that he will state the cause of the war. Then he gives the account offered by the learned men among the Persians: they say that the Phoenicians were to blame for the quarrel . . . and there follows a curious list of incidents and counter-incidents, from Io to Helen. Herodotos seems to reject this explanation of the war simply because he is sceptical of the value of mythology as historical evidence. It does

not deal with ἡ ἀνθρωπηὴ λεγομένη γενεή (3. 122. 2); he is much more sceptical about myths than Thucydides, who tries to extract from them a kernel of fact. But if he doubts the facts alleged by the Persians to explain the war, it does not follow that he questions the validity of their method of explaining its origin by a series of incidents and counter-incidents. On the contrary, he attempts an explanation of this type, starting with the man who first began injustices against the Greeks (1. 5. 3). He does not succeed in tracing the new chain of causes to its conclusion; instead he makes a new start (5. 28). He explains how the appeal of some Naxian exiles tempted Aristagoras to seek control of Naxos. The failure of Aristagoras brought about the Ionian Revolt; in the course of this the Ionians and the Athenians sacked Sardes, thus giving Darius a serious grievance against them. To avenge himself he sent the expedition of Datis and Artaphrenes; its failure at Marathon put the exacting of vengeance from Greece on the agenda of Persian policy. In the course of the narrative the modern reader learns something about Persian imperialism and the intrigues of the Persian court, and he would seek in these factors the causes of the expedition of Xerxes. But for Herodotos the explanation was to be sought in the chain of grievances produced by the series of incidents since Aristagoras began his intrigues against Naxos.

A modern historian may seek the causes of a war in the objects which the belligerents seek to attain or in their passions, perhaps for vengeance or imperial expansion. Herodotos seeks the cause of a war in a grievance or a chain of grievances. His proneness towards this type of explanation can be accounted for. When a Greek state went to war, it sometimes recited a list of grievances as justification. A neat illustration is the Spartan complaints against Elis about 400.¹ According to Andocides (3. 13), all men would admit that people go to war either because they have suffered injustice themselves or because they are helping those who have been treated unjustly. The 'theory of retribution' explains why in the winter of 432-431 the Spartans trumped up a list of grievances against the Athenians, ὅπως σφίσιν ὅτι μεγίστη πρόφασις εἴη τοῦ πολεμεῖν.² But what did Thucydides think about the causes of war?

Thuc. 1. 23. 5: διότι δ' ἔλυσαν, τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα πρῶτον καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, τοῦ μή τινα ζητῆσαί ποτε ἐξ ὅτου τοσοῦτος πόλεμος τοῖς Ἕλλησι κατέστη.

6: τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν.

It is commonly held that Thucydides here (23. 6) states what was in his opinion the true cause of the war. Both Pearson (pp. 219-21) and Kirkwood (pp. 47, 51) question this interpretation and suggest instead that Thucydides here states the Spartan motive for going to war. Kirkwood gives three reasons for his view: first the words αἰτίαι and πρόφασις must have 'the same point of reference'; secondly, 'both πρόφασις and αἰτία have regularly in Thucydides a subjective reference, that is, they are concerned with the emotions of, or the influences on, the persons participating in the events, and do not mean the historian's objective analysis of the situation'; thirdly, 'since the basic notion of expressed reason underlies all cases of πρόφασις so far examined, it is natural to presume that the same connotation is present in this case too' (Kirkwood's

¹ Xen. *Hell.* 3. 2. 21-22.

² Thuc. 1. 126. 1.

italics). Pearson claims that, if Thucydides had wanted to give the underlying cause of the war, he could not have used the word *πρόφασις* but he would have used the adjective *αἴτιος* and written *αἰτίους ἡγοῦμαι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἀναγκάσαντας*. 'He would then be *blaming* the Athenians. . . . He does not *blame* the Athenians here, because he is not concerned with praise or blame, like some later Greek historians, but with explaining the Spartan point of view. . . . Since it was the Peloponnesians who opened hostilities, it is they, not the Athenians, who are on the defensive in the inquiry that Thucydides is conducting' (Pearson's italics).

In order to explain the outbreak of a war, one might reasonably take the attitude of both parties into account. Indeed the subject of *ἔλυσαν* is *Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Πελοποννήσιοι* (1. 23. 4). Thus the *αἰτίαι* and the *πρόφασις* have a common point of reference, which comprises the Athenians as well as the Peloponnesians; and, as if to confirm this interpretation, Thucydides speaks elsewhere (1. 66) of the *αἰτίαι* as *αἰτίαι ἐς ἀλλήλους*. Thucydides realized that it was a mere quibble to say that the Peloponnesians were technically the aggressors. So it would be surprising if, in stating what he regarded as 'most true' about the outbreak of the war, he concerned himself with the attitude of one side alone. There is nothing explicit to suggest this in the crucial sentence, which mentions the behaviour of the Athenians as well as the fears of the Lacedaemonians. It was seen above that *προφάσεις* may be (genuine) explanations of various types, including causes in history. Statements of such causes have 'subjective reference' in that they may be analysed ultimately in terms of motives, but they need not refer directly to the motives of one agent and no other. It has likewise been seen that, although the basic notion of *πρόφασις* may be 'expressed reason', some of its senses are very distant from this.

Thus the older view should be accepted: at 1. 23. 6 Thucydides states the true cause of the war, as he conceives it. Commenting on the passage, Professor A. W. Gomme writes (*Commentary on Thucydides*, i. 152): 'the main cause of the war was Athenian imperialism and Spartan fear of her rival'. This comment represents the usual interpretation of the sentence; but perhaps it does not represent Thucydides' view correctly. In the first place, *ἀναγκάσαι* here means 'to compel'; it is rendered thus, for example, in Henry Dale's translation. According to the usual interpretation, Thucydides meant that the Spartans felt they must attack Athens because her power was increasing seriously; but the statement, 'the Athenians compelled the Spartans to fight', is a queer way of saying this. A second and more serious objection is to be drawn from the use of the aorist *ἀναγκάσαι*. If Thucydides had merely meant that the gradual growth of Athenian power and the corresponding growth of Lacedaemonian fear were the true cause of the war, one might expect him to have written *ἀναγκάζειν*. For the imperfect of direct speech is represented by the present infinitive in indirect speech, as every schoolboy knows; the learned may consult Goodwin, *Moods and Tenses*, pp. 38–40. But Thucydides has used the aorist *ἀναγκάσαι*; therefore he had in mind, not only the gradual processes of Athenian imperialism and Spartan alarm, but also some specific act or acts of the Athenians, whereby they brought pressure to bear on the Spartans. So the following translation of Thuc. 1. 23. 6 may be offered: 'The truest cause, though least spoken of, was, in my opinion, that the Athenians, who were growing powerful and arousing alarm among the Lacedaemonians, compelled them to make war.'

More fully: the cause of the war was that the Athenians forced the Lacedaemonians to fight. The Athenians did this by frightening them (*φόβον παρέχοντας*); and they were in a position to frighten the Lacedaemonians because their power was growing (*μεγάλους γιγνομένους*). This last factor, the growth of Athenian power, is thus relevant to Thucydides' conception of the cause of the war; but to say that it, or it with the fears of the Spartans, was in his opinion the cause of the war is to overlook the nuances of his statement.

If this account of Thucydides' view is correct, two comments may be made. First, his view is right. In the years 433–432 the Athenians were spoiling for a fight. They tried to provoke the Peloponnesian League to war by sending help to Corcyra, by Phormion's attack on the Ampraciotes,¹ by making exorbitant demands on the Potidaeans, by the Megara-decree, and perhaps by some action in Aegina.² By these incidents they sought to precipitate war. But, secondly, Thucydides does not point out that this was the significance of these incidents. Most of our information about them comes from him, yet he does not state their importance as means whereby the Athenians provoked war; he relates them in other contexts. He makes his bald statement that the Athenians compelled the Spartans to fight and perhaps alludes to it later (i. 88—but see below); yet he does not attempt to justify it systematically, although he had that information about the incidents of 433–432 which would allow such a justification, and it was presumably this information which led him to form his theory of the truest cause.

Thucydides has also another account of the causes of the war. At i. 23. 5 he says that he has written down *τὰς αἰτίας καὶ τὰς διαφοράς* which led the Athenians and the Peloponnesians to break the Thirty Years Peace. There can be no doubt that this statement refers to his account of the quarrels over Corcyra and Potidaea. The significance which Thucydides attributes to each of these quarrels has perhaps not been accurately appreciated. After the battle of Sybota he says (i. 56. 2) that the Corinthians were anxious to avenge themselves on the Athenians and so the latter, suspecting their hostility, tried to anticipate them by bringing pressure to bear on Potidaea. Thus the quarrel over Corcyra led to the quarrel over Potidaea and the mechanism connecting the two is provided by the 'principle of retribution'. The quarrel over Potidaea led in turn to the Corinthian complaints at Sparta and the meeting of the first congress there. It should be observed that among the Corinthian grievances voiced at the first congress Thucydides mentions only that over Potidaea, not both that over Potidaea and that over Corcyra. Thus at i. 66 he sums up the mutual grudges of the Athenians and the Peloponnesians before the meeting of the first congress and mentions only the Potidaea-quarrel; again in the speeches of the Corinthians (i. 71. 4) and of Archidamos (i. 85. 2) at the congress the Potidaea-trouble is discussed but nothing is said specifically about the problem of Corcyra. It appears that Thucydides treated the quarrels about Corcyra and Potidaea as forming a chain of grievances of the Herodotean type.

It follows that Thucydides has offered two theories as to the causes of the Peloponnesian War. The one tried to explain the outbreak of the war by a chain of grievances; the other, the theory of the 'truest cause', sought an

¹ Thuc. 2. 68; *A(thenian) T(ribute) L(ists)*, *αὐτόνομος*, which can be used tendentiously, requires examination.

iii. 320, n. 84.

² *A.T.L.* iii. 320. But the meaning of

explanation in terms of power-politics. These two theories postulate causes which are different in type. Thucydides' account of the 'truest cause' is easily understood by modern readers but perhaps not entirely satisfactory; for even if he is right in saying that the Athenians compelled the Spartans to fight, he has not answered the further question, why did the Athenians want war? So one might be inclined to say that he has not fully worked out the consequences of his theory. This provides a reason for regarding the theory of the 'truest cause' as later than the explanation of the war by a chain of grievances. A further reason for regarding the latter as the earlier theory is that it was doubtless more acceptable to such people as Herodotos wrote for, although to the modern reader it only becomes fully intelligible after some study of Greek habits of thought.

There can be no doubt that the earlier theory was in accordance with habitual thinking about the causes of war. Perhaps the habit even led Thucydides to some distortion of the facts. For the records of tribute-payment suggest that the Athenians had already begun to bring pressure to bear on Potidaea some years before the battle of Sybota.¹ In habitual notions about the causes of war the concept of *πρόφασις*, in the sense of 'a valid excuse for seeking retribution', played an important part; and it may be noted that in two passages in book 1 (118. 1; 146) Thucydides seems to use the word in this sense; for he refers there to the quarrels over Corcyra and Potidaea.

The relation of three passages in book 1 to the statement of the 'truest cause' demands attention. The first is 1. 88, where Thucydides says that the Spartans voted that the peace had been broken not so much because of the arguments of their allies as because of their fear of the growth of Athenian power. This remark is often regarded as an echo of the statement of the 'truest cause' and Thucydides may indeed have intended it as such. But at 1. 88 he says much less than at 1. 23. 6; it is one thing to say that the Spartans were alarmed at the growth of Athenian power; it is another to say that the Athenians took advantage of this alarm in order to provoke the Spartans to fight. So when Thucydides wrote 1. 88, he may not yet have formed his view of the 'truest cause', though some of its elements were already present in his thought. Similar considerations apply to the second passage, the digression on the Pentecontaetia (1. 89-118). It summarizes the growth of Athenian power; so it justifies only a part, and not the most important part, of the theory of the 'truest cause'. The third passage is the Athenian speech in the first congress at Sparta (1. 73-78). Its hectoring and provocative tone² helps the reader to realize that it was indeed the Athenians who forced the Spartans to make war; one cannot believe that a nation does not really want to fight, when it adds: 'But, by jingo! if we do . . .'. If Thucydides had attempted a systematic justification of his statement of the 'truest cause', he might well have included this speech. On the other hand, he may have composed the speech before he reached his view of the 'truest cause'; for he might recognize the truculence of the Athenians long before he sought the cause of the war in their truculent behaviour.

This is not the place to reopen the debate on the composition of book 1. The distinction between an earlier and a later level in Thucydides' ideas about the causes of war need not point to any considerable interval of time. Probably he

¹ *A.T.L.* iii. 64-65.

² Cf. Gomme, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-4. It is assumed that the four speeches at the first

congress were composed at the same time; cf. M. Pohlenz, *Göttinger Nachrichten*, 1919, pp. 95 ff.

reached his view of the 'truest cause' because of his growing interest in power-politics; so, although unitarianism is fashionable, one might be inclined to agree with Wilhelm Schmid¹ that passages, such as the Archaeology and the Pentecontaetia, where interest in power-politics predominates, were written later than the account of the affairs of Corcyra and Potidaea and of the first congress (i. 24-88),² and that the brief statement of the 'truest cause' was later still. But it is more important to recognize a stage in the intellectual development of Thucydides; by turning his attention from grievances to power-politics he made one of his major contributions to Greek historical thought.

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NOTES ON SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*³

I. 100-9:

ἀκτῖς ἀελίου, τὸ κάλ-
λιστον ἑπταπύλω φανέν
Θήβῃ τῶν πρότερον φάος,
ἐφάνθησ ποτ', ὦ χρυσέας
ἀμέρας βλέφαρον, Διρκαί-
105 ὦν ὑπὲρ ῥεέθρων μολοῦσα,
τὸν λεύκασπιν Ἀπιόθεν
φῶτα βάντα πανσαγία
φυγάδα πρόδρομον ὄξυτέρῳ
κινήσασα χαλινῶ.

106 Ahrens: Ἄργοθεν codd.

108 ΣL, R: ὄξυτόρῳ λπ.

Jebb renders the last clause as follows: 'The warrior of the white shield, who came from Argos in his panoply, hath been stirred by thee to headlong flight, in swifter career.' 'In swifter career' is a discreet rendering of ὄξυτέρῳ . . . χαλινῶ. 'ὄξυτέρῳ', Jebb says, 'does not mean (1) "in flight swifter than their former approach" nor (2) "the reins are shaken ever faster on the horses' necks".' 'The Argives', he writes, 'began their retreat in the darkness (cf. 16): when the sun rises, the flashing steel of their bridles shows them in headlong flight'. Cf. P. Mazon, *R.E.G.* xxv (1951), 13. This view is shared by all modern scholars, except that Dain and Mazon put commas after φῶτα and πρόδρομον and translate accordingly; which I do not think is an improvement.

χαλινός means 'bit', or 'bit and bridle together'. It is remarkable that the day of victory should be said to move off the Argives with sharper (or swifter) bit, or even with sharper (or swifter) bridle. Bits and bridles are not generally used to make horses go faster, but to make them go slower, or to halt them alto-

¹ Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. d. gr. Lit.* i. 5, pp. 127-31.

² Some account of the first congress must have followed the affairs of Corcyra and Potidaea; but the four speeches in their present form may come from a later revision, for there is much to be said for the view of Pohlenz (loc. cit.) that they were composed

later than the Corinthian speech at the second congress (i. 120-4).

³ Read to the Oxford Philological Society in November 1955. I am very grateful to Professor D. L. Page for reading and criticizing the manuscript. I must also thank Sir John Beazley and Mr. A. H. Coxon for advice on points of detail.