CHAPTER 3

The Pull of Tradition
Egoism and Persian Revolution

The assassination of the False Smerdis in Book 3 and the ensuing constitutional uncertainty offer Herodotus an inflection point to pause and consider the institution of monarchy in Persia, its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter reexamines the speeches given by the conspirators in advance of the coup and its aftermath. In these episodes, Darius undermines a key *nomos* held by the Persians, their abhorrence of falsehood.[1] As Chapter 2 contended, the disruption of *nomos* is characteristic of Persian rulers. Although Darius does so as a private citizen, he invites comparison with them given his subsequent rise to the throne. Darius' disregard for *nomos* opens a separate philosophical debate, however, on human motivation and self-interest. In a speech to the Persian conspirators, the future Great King defends "egoism," the philosophy that all action is performed in the interest of maximizing the individual's self-interest. This view is set alongside orations by the Persians Otanes and Prexaspes, exponents of cooperative action and altruism, respectively. As we shall see, fifth-century intellectual culture engaged in a spirited interrogation of the individual in relation to self-interest, often in terms of the social contract. The clash between motivation on behalf of the one versus the many will illustrate the complex negotiation in Persia of ruler and ruled, self and society.

Fomenting Revolution in Persia: Darius and Egoism

The plot against the Magi begins with the Persian Otanes, who discovers that the Great King is an imposter through his daughter, one of the wives of the False Smerdis. The Persian deliberations before the attack upon him and his brother set up the political contrasts that will crystallize in the

[1] For deception in Herodotus, see Lateiner (1990).

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Constitutional Debate.[2] These include an emphasis on the active role of the plurality in opposition to concern for the individual.

Throughout the revolt, Otanes consistently demonstrates an affinity for pluralizing rather than individual action, which prefigures his support for democracy. Otanes' first initiative is to communicate his knowledge of the fraud to his two closest confidants, with each of these three προσεταιρίσασθαι (*prosetairisasthai*), "taking into partnership" (3.70.2) one other trusted individual. They include Darius as a seventh to their group (3.70.3: προσεταιρίσασθαι) upon his arrival at Susa. This same verb, "to take into partnership," is used of another moment of internal strife and imminent constitutional change, in this case, to democracy, when Cleisthenes embraces the Athenian demos as his coconspirators (5.66.2: προσεταιρίζεται).[3] That it is found here as well chimes with Otanes' future support of the many in the Constitutional Debate. He displays a similar drive to pluralize the proceedings by expanding their network of accomplices, as he reveals in his response to Darius' strategy of attacking the Magi right away: "we must increase our numbers and then attack" (3.71.3: δεῖ γὰρ πλεῦνας γενομένους οὕτως ἐπιχειρέειν).[4] Darius, meanwhile, chastises Otanes and urges immediate action on the grounds that "it seemed right to you to refer this to the many" (3.71.5: ἐπείτε δὲ ὑμῖν ἀναφέρειν ἐς πλεῦνας ἐδόκεε). This phrase, "referring to the many," will be used later in the context of an assembly and again conjures up participatory procedure.[5] Otanes' evocation of the assembly seeps into the language of the other members of their group: Gobryas finally "sets his vote" (3.73.3: νῦν ὧν τίθεμαι ψῆφον) on the proposition made by Darius, phrasing that readily evokes a democratic election. It is fitting that when Otanes concludes his speech in defense of democracy later in the Constitutional Debate, he does so by pronouncing that "in the multitude there is everything" (3.80.6: ἐν γὰρ τῷ πολλῷ ἔνι τὰ πάντα).[6] In his behavior leading up to the insurrection, Otanes subverts Persia's traditional top-down mechanism of political action and creates the possibility for communal achievement.

[2] For parallels in the speeches here and in the Constitutional Debate, see Pelling (2002), 131.
[3] Bringmann (1976), 269–70, argues for the close patterning that the Athenian democratic experiment has on Otanes' position in the Constitutional Debate.
[4] For the democratic inklings that this raises, see Baragwanath (2008), 106 n. 67, with Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella at 3.71.3.
[5] 7.149.2, though in the context of the Spartans.
[6] Pelling (2002), 134 and n. 29, underlines the expression's vagueness but does not outright reject that it may have the air of a democratic expression.

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After an exchange of pledges of faith, the seven deliberate their course of action. In the discussion, Darius' addresses notably revolve around the priorities and concerns of the individual and his self-interest. First, he insists that he believed that he alone (3.71.2: αὐτὸς μοῦνος; μοῦνον ἐμέ)[7] knew that the Great King was an imposter and then he demands that the conspirators make the attack straightaway and refuse any delay, μὴ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι (3.71.1: *me hyperballesthai*). He vehemently counters the opposition that comes from Otanes, who urges reflection, by declaring that they will die if they follow this plan.[8] Darius supports the prediction with an argument from individual advantage, claiming that someone would disclose knowledge of the conspiracy to the Magus, "privately contriving profit for himself" (3.71.4: ἰδίῃ περιβαλλόμενος ἑωυτῷ κέρδεα). The anxiety that someone would take the opportunity to betray the group for individual, private gain reveals something of the motivations that Darius attributes to others, even as it correlates to his own self-seeking: if the conspirators side with Otanes and postpone the attack, he promises to reveal the plot to the False Smerdis himself. That is, even if the wider Persian community is somehow threatened by the imposter, as the conspirators believe, Darius makes clear that his own individual good supersedes all else, as his threat to inform on them exposes. All the while, the spotlight remains on Darius and his agenda, as the repetition of "I myself" drives home (3.71.2: ἐγώ . . . αὐτός; 3.71.5: αὐτὸς ἐγώ). Darius' intimidation spurs Otanes to ask him for an actual strategy for getting access to the Great King, given the presence of the guards at the palace. Following this, Darius gives a speech that has regularly been viewed as evoking a Greek sophistic intellectual context.[9] Its themes constitute an elaborate justification of pursuing individual advantage as *the* decisive factor in using true or false speech.[10] None of the guards, he assures his audience, will stop them, either through awe or fear. If one does, Darius has the perfect

[7] Bringmann (1976), 277, interprets this as just another gambit at wresting leadership, in this case, from Otanes.

[8] See the similar staging of debate and delay (Artabanus) as opposed to action and gain (Xerxes) at 7.47–50.

[9] For this passage, see Dihle (1962), 217, (wrongly attributed to Otanes) which he connects to Pl. *Grg.* 527c and *Resp.* 338c; Bringmann (1976), 277–8; Balcer (1987), 46–7; Evans (1991), 57–8; Pelling (2002), 130–1 and 130 n. 25; Raaflaub (2002), 160, links it to Gorgias' *Helen* 10–11. Alternatively, Rosen (1988), 41, argues that "Darius, of course, is not a philosopher," although this is modified at 47–9.

[10] With Bringmann (1976), 278: "in ihnen steckt schlechthin die Handlungsmaxime des Dareios. Anders gewendet: sie sind der Maßstab, nach dem die Erzählung vom Aufstieg des Dareios gestaltet ist." ("In them lies Darius' maxim for action, such as it is. To put it another way, they are the yardstick by which the narrative of the ascent of Darius is laid out.")

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story ready: he is carrying a message to the Great King from his father, out of whose presence he has only just come.

> Ὀτάνη, ἦ πολλά ἐστι τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οὐκ οἷά τε δηλῶσαι, ἔργῳ δέ· ἄλλα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οἷά τε, ἔργον δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λαμπρὸν γίνεται . . . ἔνθα γάρ τι δεῖ ψεῦδος λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω. τοῦ γὰρ αὐτοῦ γλιχόμεθα οἵ τε ψευδόμενοι καὶ οἱ τῇ ἀληθείῃ διαχρεώμενοι. οἱ μέν γε ψεύδονται τότε ἐπεάν τι μέλλωσι τοῖσι ψεύδεσι πείσαντες κερδήσεσθαι, οἱ δ' ἀληθίζονται ἵνα τι τῇ ἀληθείῃ ἐπισπάσωνται κέρδος καί τις μᾶλλόν σφι ἐπιτράπηται. οὕτω οὐ ταὐτὰ ἀσκέοντες τὠυτοῦ περιεχόμεθα. εἰ δὲ μηδὲν κερδήσεσθαι μέλλοιεν, ὁμοίως ἂν ὅ τε ἀληθιζόμενος ψευδὴς εἴη καὶ ὁ ψευδόμενος ἀληθής. ὃς ἂν μέν νυν τῶν πυλουρῶν ἑκὼν παρίῃ, αὐτῷ οἱ ἄμεινον ἐς χρόνον ἔσται· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀντιβαίνειν πειρᾶται, διαδεικνύσθω ἐνθαῦτα ἐὼν πολέμιος, καὶ ἔπειτα ὠσάμενοι ἔσω ἔργου ἐχώμεθα. (3.72.2–5)
>
> Otanes, truly there are many things that are unable to be made manifest in word, but in action; there are other things that are able to be made manifest in words, but no illustrious act comes from them . . . where a lie must be said, let it be said. For we aim after the same thing, those who lie and those who use the truth. Some lie when they intend to profit by persuading others with their lies, others tell the truth so that they may derive some gain via the truth, and so that one relies rather more on it. So although we do not practice the same thing, we aim at the same thing. If there were no gain to be had, equally would the truth-teller be a liar and the liar truthful. Now whoever of the gatekeepers willingly lets us pass by, it will be better for him in the future. But for he who attempts to resist us, let him be declared an enemy right then and there, and after pushing our way inside, let us lay hold of the act.

The aim of convincing the Persian conspirators that falsehood is defensible returns to the ethnography of Persia and exposes Darius as an agitator of its norms, in an extension of the argument in the previous chapter. In the Persian *nomoi*, Herodotus characterized the people as uniquely bound to the *logos* that is true: for fifteen years, Persian youths' education focused on three fundamentals: horsemanship, archery, and "truth-telling," ἀληθίζεσθαι (*alethizesthai*).[11] This is combined with an extreme disdain for falsehood, "what it is not permitted for them to do, it is not even permitted for them to say. For lying has been deemed most shameful among them" (1.138.1: ἅσσα δέ σφι ποιέειν οὐκ ἔξεστι, ταῦτα οὐδὲ λέγειν ἔξεστι. αἴσχιστον δὲ αὐτοῖσι τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται).[12] As this

[11] 1.136.2. Provocatively, Benardete (1969), 80, argues that Cambyses was particularly obligated to truth, "in a perverse way true and false speech determined everything he did."

[12] Cf. DK 68 B 190. Baragwanath (2008), 84–5, argues that the *nomos* destabilizes Darius' profit motive.

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demonstrates, Persia's ethical norms mandate against not just unlawful deeds but also false language.[13] For this reason, lies are "most shameful," a superlative that underlines the power of misusing language as much as action. As has often been observed by previous scholars, the *nomos* is a curious one: it raises an expectation that is seldom met in the context of the Persians in the *Histories*. More to the point, it is forcefully contradicted by the future Great King Darius' speech. Even before this, the Persian monarch has played fast and loose with the truth; before his death, Cambyses instructed his nobles to put down the rule of the Magian and take back the empire "by deceit, if it has been taken from us by deceit" (3.65.6).[14]

Darius' address begins with an overwrought and balanced antithesis of word and deed, μέν and δέ, expressive of extreme contrast that is stylistically evocative of sophistic rhetoric.[15] This cleavage is significant, as in the above *nomos*, the narrator explicitly noted that for the Persians whatever it is not permitted for them to do, it is not even permitted for them to put into words (ποιέειν . . . λέγειν). That is, among the Persians, illicit deeds and illicit speech have correspondingly negative implications. Darius' opening salvo and its highlighting of the distinct capacity for deeds to lead to "some things" becoming manifest and words to "others" is an asymmetry that moves against the traditional ethnographic stance of Persia – as will his endorsement of false speech. It deflates the expectations of his internal Persian audience that force is what is called for in the initial portion of their plot and sets up speech as an alternative.[16]

[13] It is important to note that the narrator holds this as accurate knowledge, cf. 1.140.1: ταῦτα μὲν ἀτρεκέως ἔχω περὶ αὐτῶν εἰδὼς εἰπεῖν. ("I can speak on these things accurately, knowing about them.") I disagree with How-Wells 3.72, who find that "this sophistry is an attempt at consistency" with 1.138.

[14] On truth telling and Persia, see Benardete (1969), 69–98; Thompson (1996), esp. 70–2; Briant (2002), 124–7, who interprets it as a Mazdaic/Zoroastrian opposition; Baragwanath (2008), 84. Meanwhile, Evans (1991), 57, contrasts Darius' defense of lying with his stress on the truth in the Bisitun inscription. Lateiner (1989), 275 n. 31, judiciously offers that even if the inscription was unknown to Herodotus, Darius' speech has a "delicious irony."

[15] On sophistic style, see Poulakos (1983); Connor (1986); Consigny (1992). Commenting on Darius' instrumental account of human action, Provencal (2015), 59, argues that this is used by Herodotus to vilify Darius: "Rather than attributing the sophistic morality of Darius to Herodotus as a sophist, however, we should attribute it to his portrait of Darius as a future sophist king . . .. The episode is an excellent example of how Herodotus is engaged in a dialogical relationship with the sophists in his representation of the Persians."

[16] For an alternate reading of it as expressive of a rhetoric of caution, see Rosen (1988), 41. Zali (2015), 6, rightly suggests that Darius, "emphasizes the need for combined words and actions in the context of the Persian conspiracy against the false Smerdis," although he does so by highlighting the cleavage between them. For the *logos-ergon* antithesis, see Zali (2015), 6 n. 24. Cf. DK 68 B 145.

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The declaration that "where a lie must be told, let it be told" combines an impersonal verb (δεῖ) and third-person imperative (λεγέσθω) to create a detached, objective sense of obligation. In addition to being, apparently, a descriptive account of the world, the phrasing is normative. Truth and falsehood cloak the motive of personal "gain" (κερδήσεσθαι; κέρδος). In the *Histories*, gain is often associated with monetary wealth.[17] But there are attempts to define its referent in other ways, as when Croesus tells Adrastus that his profit will be in bearing the misfortune of accidental homicide lightly (1.35.4) or when Artabanus proposes that good counsel is the greatest of gains (7.10.δ2). Here, the term hearkens backward to Darius' warning that someone of the group would accrue gain for himself by betraying their cause. Since such true speech would be in the conspirator's interest, this is consistent with his stance on egoism. The exclusion of any middle ground gives the profit motive a universalizing force. A hypothetical conditional cements the case:[18] if there were no potential for gain, people would tell truths and falsehoods indiscriminately (ὁμοίως). This affirms that those who claim to tell the truth out of a desire for altruism or justice are nonetheless still acting in the service of their own profit margins. The close of the speech circles back to the importance of action and its separate role from that of *logos*, in the assurance that after taking care of the guards, the group will turn to the deed (ἔργου ἐχώμεθα) of dispatching the False Smerdis.

Maximizing self-interest in speech through truth and falsehood does not commit Darius to the position that these are the same, in a kind of alethic relativism. As he says, speakers of truth and lies are not practicing the same things (οὐ ταὐτά); it is their deployment that is fluid, tied only to individual self-interest.[19] An objective sense of truth and falsehood remains in place. It is also worth noting what is missing in this argument: while Darius does make use of the language of obligation, he cannily avoids any reference to the morality that this is founded upon, and the rectitude of lying or its opposite do not enter into the discussion, in contrast with the Persian ethnography. Darius might have justified his position as a speaker in an unknown tragedy of Sophocles in saying that "lying isn't noble (καλὸν μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ψευδῆ λέγειν), but to the extent that the truth leads to terrible destruction, it is forgivable to speak what is not noble"

[17] 1.187.5, 4.152.3–4, 6.86.2, 6.100.2, 8.5.3, 9.38.1.
[18] On hypothetical reasoning in the Presocratics, see Lloyd (1964); Rescher (1991); Gera (2000), with an eye to Herodotus.
[19] Bringmann (1976), 278, draws a similar conclusion.

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(F 352 Radt) – but he does not. Inasmuch as Darius makes no reference to questions of right or wrong, strictly speaking he is an amoralist. For this reason, the contention that has been made that Darius is evincing moral relativism should be discarded; this is a descriptive account of the way of the world, but praise and blame are absent from it.[20] If egoism dependably explains the motivation of human agents, this repudiates Persia's customary adherence to truth and scorn for lying. Certainly, it explains the prior willingness of Cyrus and Cambyses to engage in treachery to advance their imperial aims.[21]

Darius' love of profit is sketched long before the coup. In a discussion of Nitocris, the queen of Babylon, we are told that she inscribed her tomb with an invitation to future kings of Babylon to open and take money from it, if ever in need of riches. Although the conquest of Babylon first takes place in the reign of Cyrus, it is Darius who breaches funerary decorum by breaking into the chamber, intending to plunder its wealth. The remarkable queen, however, has a surprise for him, as inscribed on the interior of her crypt is the judgment that, "if you were not insatiate of wealth and a lover of gain (αἰσχροκερδής) you would not have opened the grave of the dead" (1.187.5). This is reiterated by Darius' sobriquet, the "retailer" (3.89.3: κάπηλος), after his establishment as Great King.[22] Elsewhere, Darius reveals himself to be motivated by profit and willing to break the social mores of other peoples. He makes another proleptic appearance after the particularly disturbing breaches of religious observance made by Cambyses. In Darius' testing of the tenacity of customs surrounding burial practices among the Greeks and the Callatian Indians, he bribes them with money to subvert their norms. Very in-character, he wants to break the strength of *nomos* by recourse to the profit motive. This intertwining of the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses with Darius through flashforwards creates a strong sense of continuity among the Persian rulers. Darius' insistence on his own profit represents the persistence of the tradition of Persian monarchy, not a break with it.

Still, it is not clear that Darius is able to persuade the group to enact his plan through his argument. After he speaks, Gobryas endorses his strategy

[20] Here I differ from Provencal (2015), 59, "Herodotus has Darius justify his action with the sophistic view that true morality arises from self-interest." For Darius as flirting with ethical relativism, see Raaflaub (2002), 160. Callicles will argue that self-interest is behavior specific to the "strong," or the ruler, but Darius makes no limiting provision.

[21] Cyrus does so at 1.205.1; Cambyses at, e.g., 3.21.2. The truthfulness of his subjects is a target of Cambyses' paranoia, 3.27.3, 3.35.

[22] With Baragwanath (2008), 62–3.

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of immediate attack but rallies the Persians on the grounds of the nobility of the action of saving the empire, their willingness to die for the cause, and the indignity of having a Mede and a mutilated Magian as king. Gobyras bids the group to remember what their king had "enjoined" (ἐπέσκηψε) upon them (3.73.2), in a reference to Cambyses' final demand that had enjoined (ἐπισκήπτω) the Persians to avenge the treachery of the False Smerdis (3.65.6). At the time of this command, the conspirator clarifies, he had believed the king to be deceiving (διαβολῇ) them, while now he realizes the truth of Cambyses' words and knows that they must act upon them. In outlining these motivations, Gobryas returns to the traditional Persian obedience to the ruler and to an observance of his ethnographic imperative for truthful speech. In fact, he passes over Darius' support of egoism and the pursuit of individual profit. It is after Gobryas' speech that the group agrees to strike.[23]

The episode began with Otanes' stress on the collective in the deliberations of the conspirators. A second counsel scene bookends it, which has often been analyzed in relation to what preceded. In it, the Magians attempt to bring the Persian Prexaspes into their intrigue.[24]

> τούτων δή μιν εἵνεκεν καλέσαντες φίλον προσεκτῶντο πίστι τε καταλαβόντες καὶ ὁρκίοισι, ἢ μὲν ἔξειν παρ' ἑωυτῷ μηδ' ἐξοίσειν μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀπὸ σφέων ἀπάτην ἐς Πέρσας γεγονυῖαν, ὑπισχνεύμενοι τὰ πάντα οἱ μυρία δώσειν. (3.74.2)
>
> For the sake of this they had called him and exchanged pledges and oaths and won him over as a friend, that truly he would keep to himself and not advertise to any man their deception of the Persians, and they promised that they would give all things to him in vast quantities.

At first, Prexaspes agrees to the deception. But when he is asked "as the most trustworthy of men among the Persians" (3.74.4) to uphold the legitimacy of the pretender to the masses, Prexaspes finally "revealed the truth" (3.75.2: ἐξέφαινε τὴν ἀληθείην) to the people. He gave a genealogy of the royal line ending with Cyrus and reminded the people of all the goods that he had given them and *then* informs them that they are ruled by the Magian. Before taking his own life, he commands the Persians to take back their empire and avenge themselves.

[23] Cf. Th. 3.43.1–2, where the mere suspicion of the profit motive disqualifies a speaker in the eyes of an Athenian audience; allegedly even the best orator must be a good liar.

[24] For Prexaspes as a correction of Darius, see Benardete (1969), 85; Rosen (1988), 42. Baragwanath (2008), 84, notes the failure of Darius' explanation in accounting for Prexaspes' action.

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In some respects, the passage is a doublet of the conspirators' counsel scene. As the Persians did, the Magians take oaths with Prexaspes in order to guard against his departing (ἐξοίσειν) and revealing their deception. Next, Prexaspes abruptly breaks his pledge, which is just the act feared by Darius. Prexaspes' oath to the Magians is drawn attention to in the moment of his revelation, as he "willingly forgot" or "willingly disregarded" ἑκὼν ἐπελήθετο (3.75.1) what he had sworn. He does so based on a factor he states he cannot ignore, necessity (3.75.2: ἀναγκαίην), which echoes Darius' own statement of necessity earlier in speaking falsely.[25] In this sense, the narrative brings the audience to consider the variations within a shared pattern.

Clearly, in breaking faith with the Magians, Prexaspes overlooks his immediate self-interest.[26] It has been argued persuasively that this action undercuts Darius' egoism, since Prexaspes' truthful words result in his demise.[27] Like Otanes, Prexaspes is preoccupied with the community rather than the individual. In his self-sacrifice, he emerges as an individual committed to the benefit of Persia rather than himself, as his speech recounts the good done by Cyrus to the Persians as a whole.[28] If this reading is correct, then he might be thought to reassert traditional morality in Persia on truthful speech in his rejection of deception. In the debate on self-interest, Prexaspes would be opposed to Darius and speak against the latter's position.

In the denouement of the rebellion, the conspirators learn of Prexaspes' final act en route to their attack. Derailed by the news, they again debate what course of action to take and are divided between a proposal of Otanes' to delay and of Darius' to attack immediately (3.76.2: μηδὲ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι). After a portent from the heavens, they back Darius' approach. The divine approval of the future Great King's plan continues, as when they move past the guards they are yielded to as those with a "divine escort" (3.77.1: θείῃ πομπῇ). Yet Herodotus explicitly states that none of the guards asks them anything, leaving Darius' defense of falsehood unmotivated by the events themselves. This lack of relevance to the narrative action makes clearer the role of the speech in characterizing

[25] He forgets to say that the Persians are ruled by the true Smerdis, but he also forgets his oath, which specifically stated that he not reveal the deception, 3.74.2.

[26] Contrast Th. 1.5.1, where the powerful work for their gain and for the maintenance of the weak; cf. Th. 1.8.3.

[27] Benardete (1969), 85, "The truthful man and the liar do not always aim at the same thing by different means; the necessity of the truth itself proves ultimately to be stronger than the fear of death." Cf. Baragwanath (2008), 84.

[28] Although Bringmann (1976), 277, compares him unfavorably with the more heroic role of Otanes. For altruism and its limits in the Athenian context, seminal is Christ (2012).

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Darius before his acquisition of the throne. With its contact with the non-individualist ethics of Otanes and Prexaspes, the passage approaches the controversy over advocating falsehood for gain in fifth-century philosophical discourse. The following section surveys this problem in intellectual culture before returning to the wider scope of the profit motive in the *Histories*.

Intellectual Culture and the Profit Motive

In the sixth century, Theognis wrote of falsehood that even if it gave a trifling delight in its beginning, in the end it was a "shameful and base profit" (αἰσχρὸν δὴ κέρδος καὶ κακόν), one with no element of nobility (1. 607–10 Young).[29] Among Herodotus' contemporaries, there were similarly strident critics of false speech for gain on the grounds of its departure from justice. The chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* warns that one must gain profit with justice (889). In Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, a character avers that "to those who are base, profit is more important than justice" (*TrGF* F 760a Kannicht: κακοῖς τὸ κέρδος τῆς δίκης ὑπέρτερον).[30] The opposition of profit and justice is also found in the prologue of the *Children of Heracles*, as Iolaus utters the apophthegm that "one man is just by nature to his neighbours while the other kind has a will devoted to gain (ὁ δ' ἐς τὸ κέρδος λῆμ' ἔχων ἀνειμένον) and is useless (ἄχρηστος) to his city (2–4)."[31] "Uselessness" is part of a pointed commentary on his alienation from society. In Thucydides' *History*, it is notable that either he or a near-contemporaneous interpolator describes the unraveling of social and political norms in the stasis at Corcyra as being driven by those who "preferred gain to not doing injustice" (3.84.2: προυτίθεσαν τοῦ τε μὴ ἀδικεῖν τὸ κερδαίνειν), a consequence of the power of envy (τὸ φθονεῖν).[32] The link between injustice and falsehood for gain is elsewhere implicit and morally culpable: Oedipus accuses the seer Teiresias of perverting his mantic art by lying for his own profit (388–9); and in the *Antigone*, Creon repeatedly makes the same charge (1035–7, 1055, 1061).[33]

[29] See also 1.122 and 1.390. Cf. Hes. *Op.* 352.

[30] Critias F 17 Snell = Eur. F 659 Nauck, opposes base gain with nobility.

[31] For a variation, see Eur. *Med.* 86–7: ὡς πᾶς τις αὑτὸν τοῦ πέλας μᾶλλον φιλεῖ | [οἱ μὲν δικαίως, οἱ δὲ καὶ κέρδους χάριν], where an interpolator expanded the sentiment to ally self-regard to gain.

[32] The twisted logic of gain among the Athenians can be readily found, e.g., Th. 5.92–3.

[33] At Soph. *OT* 594–5, Creon anticipates and counters the suspicion that he is operating for gain. In *Ant.* 1056, Teiresias retorts that it is the tyrant who is accustomed to gain his wealth basely (αἰσχροκέρδειαν).

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Contemporary thinkers pursued a line of reasoning according to which human action should be directed by individual advantage. The best exemplar of this strand of thinking is found in Antiphon.[34] In the fragmentary *On Truth*, the philosopher holds that the appropriate barometer of human action is advantage, which is the correct goal of a life lived according to nature.[35]

> δικα[ιο]σύνη πάντα <τὰ> τῆς πό[λεω]ς νόμιμα ἐν ᾗ ἂν πολι[τεύ]ηταί τις μὴ [παρ]αβαίνειν· χρῶτ' ἂν οὖν ἄνθρωπος μάλιστα ἑαυτῷ ξυμφ[ε]ρόντως δικαιοσύνῃ εἰ μετὰ μὲν μαρτύρων τ[ο]ὺς νόμους μεγά[λο]υς ἄγοι· μονούμενος δὲ μαρτύρων, τὰ τῆς φύσεως· (DK 87 B 44 F A col. I 6–23)
>
> Justice is not to transgress the *nomima* of whatever polis one happens to be a citizen. Consequently, a man would use justice in a way especially advantageous to himself if among witnesses he were to consider the *nomoi* great, but by himself and without witnesses, to consider the things relating to *physis* that way.

Antiphon sets the individual at odds with his society. The polis dictates certain behaviors from its citizens, and Antiphon is not calling for political anarchy – in the presence of others, these directives should be followed.[36] Instead, he hollows out traditional morality by arguing for their rejection in private in the pursuit of individual gain. Those who follow the dictates of convention are, in fact, at the risk of harm: "But now it is obvious that justice deriving from law is not adequate to help those who readily accept such things."[37] Euripides' infamous Ixion seems to follow these dictates in his scandalous remark that one should "win the reputation of a just man but undertake the deeds of one doing everything where he can make a gain" (*TrGF* F 426a Kannicht: τοῦ μὲν δικαίου τὴν δόκησιν ἄρνυσο, τὰ δ'

[34] See Havelock (1957), 265–9, for a still-useful discussion of Antiphon's utilitarianism; Provencal (2015), 236, briefly notes its similarity to ideas found in Antiphon and Plato's Thrasymachus. The debate on the amoralism of Antiphon rages on. For advocates, see Guthrie (1969), 112; Kerferd (1981), 116–17; Furley (1981); Nill (1985), 53; for those opposed, see Moulton (1972); Reesor (1987), 204, 210–14. Earlier bibliography on Antiphon's *On Truth* can be found at Moulton (1972), 329 n. 1.

[35] For which, see the excellent commentary of Pendrick (2002), loc. cit.; Ostwald (1990), 299–301, 303.

[36] Nill (1985), 73.

[37] DK 87 B 44 F A col. VI 3–9: νῦν] δὲ φαίνε[ται] τοῖς προσιεμ[ένοις] τὰ τοιαῦτα τὸ ἐ[κ] νόμου δίκαι[ον] οὐχ ἱκανὸν ἐπικουρεῖν. Moulton (1972), 338, "The passage is probably eudaimonistic in the traditional Greek sense, i.e. it recognizes that pleasures are more commonly advantageous than pains for men; but it does not claim that the unlimited pursuit of pleasures is mankind's natural destiny."

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ἔργα τοῦ πᾶν δρῶντος ἔνθα κερδανεῖ).[38] A subsequent fragment of the *Ixion* may counter this proposition by making an appeal to the wider community, holding that the one who wants to have more (*TrGF* 425 Kannicht: πλέον ἔχειν) than the citizens is "incapable of blending" (ἄμικτος) with friends and the city. The incompatibility of self-interest as an overriding motivation with participation in the polis draws attention to the negative consequences of egoism for the civic fabric.

In Antiphon, the contrast is also a political one, placing front and center the compromises in autonomy mandated by the social contract in Athens. In an example given of a prosecutor who has been wronged by a defendant, the prosecution must persuade the jury that they have been victimized or exact their own justice by means of deception (ἀπ[άτ]ῃ),[39] while the defendant has precisely the same means available, a fact that unfairly puts them on the same initial footing. In another denigration of the legal system, Antiphon writes that the witness who provides a testimony of the truth paradoxically appears both just and unjust. He is considered just for his support of the one he is testifying for but acts unjustly by incriminating an individual who has done him no personal harm and may well take vengeance on him later. Again, the individual's self-interest is the barometer of action, and the conclusion to be drawn is that acting against one's own interests is injustice to the self (B 44).

Evidently, opposition arose in response to this. In the late fifth-century *Anonymous Iamblichi*, the philosopher explores the conditions through which virtue can be practiced and expressly rejects such motivation:

> ἔτι τοίνυν οὐκ ἐπὶ πλεονεξίαν ὁρμᾶν δεῖ, οὐδὲ τὸ κράτος τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ πλεονεξίᾳ ἡγεῖσθαι ἀρετὴν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ τῶν νόμων ὑπακούειν δειλίαν· πονηροτάτη γὰρ αὕτη ἡ διάνοιά ἐστι, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς πάντα τἀναντία τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς γίνεται, κακία τε καὶ βλάβη. (DK 89 B 6)
>
> And besides, one should not start out for advantage, nor should power based on advantage be considered virtue and obedience to the laws cowardice. For this way of thinking is most wicked, as a result of which comes about everything that is the opposite of what is good, both malice and harm.

[38] According to Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 19e, Euripides was seriously critiqued for the impiety of Ixion's character.

[39] This restoration is accepted by Laks-Most's text of Antiphon at D 38 col. 6; by Caizzi and Bastianini (1989) papyrus 1364 F B col. 6. However, DK B 44 A col. 6 restore ἀπ<αιτ>ῇ. The term need not be pejorative, Wheeler (1988), 31–2, 105–6.

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In a refutation of egoism, the philosopher argues that as a moral failing it damages the individual and offers an instrumental account of why it must be rejected.[40]

Still, the philosophy of self-interest had its sponsors. Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* has its eponymous hero contend that all action arises from the pursuit of gain, *kerdos* (κέρδος), or the avoidance of punishment (DK 82 B 11a.19). Given the conceit that Palamedes is arguing on behalf of his life, this should not be understood as carrying an obviously negative moral connotation. Closely aligned to Darius' words to the conspirators is a fragment from an unknown play of Sophocles in which the speaker affirms that "gain is pleasing, even if it comes from falsehoods" (τὸ κέρδος ἡδύ, κἂν ἀπὸ ψευδῶν ἴῃ).[41] In fact, this conjunction of falsehood and the pursuit of self-interest found in the *Histories* is later probed on the tragic stage. Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, performed in 409 BCE, dramatized the contest of self-interest and traditional morality. In a dialogue early in the play, Odysseus attempts to persuade Neoptolemus to take Philoctetes' bow by deception rather than force.[42] Odysseus urges Neoptolemus to abandon his nature and give himself over to him for a short time – he is ominously instructed to yield to "shamelessness" (83: ἀναιδές) – but only in order to be revealed as just and pious later on. Neoptolemus resists even a momentary lapse in morality by declaring "what words I feel distaste in hearing, | son of Laertes, these I also hate to act upon" (86–7: ἐγὼ μὲν οὓς ἂν τῶν λόγων ἀλγῶ κλύων, | Λαερτίου παῖ, τούσδε καὶ πράσσειν στυγῶ).[43] Like the Persians, Neoptolemus aligns speech and action, uniting moral culpability in hearing and in deed.

Odysseus responds with praise for *logos* over deeds, declaring the tongue the more powerful tool (96–9).[44] In doing so, he aims to reestablish the division between speech and action but by elevating the prior, recalling Darius' contrast. Yet Neoptolemus continues to question Odysseus' plan for deceiving Philoctetes on the basis of its requiring him to lie:

[40] With Pelling (2002), 130 n. 25. For an excellent discussion of this passage, see Horky (2020), 282–4. See Democritus, DK 68 B 252, for a similar critique of the advantage calculus when opposed to the civic good.

[41] Soph. F 833 Radt.

[42] For a complementary discussion of deception, philosophy, and the tragedy, see Billings (2021), 131–51.

[43] In an echo of Achilles at *Il.* 9.12–13.

[44] Cf. Soph. *Phil.* 131, where Odysseus suggests that Neoptolemus δέχου τὰ συμφέροντα τῶν ἀεὶ λόγων ("take the advantage of his every word"). For the force of *logos* in the tragedy, see Podlecki (1966).

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Νε. τί οὖν μ᾽ ἄνωγας ἄλλο πλὴν ψευδῆ λέγειν;
Οδ. λέγω σ᾽ ἐγὼ δόλῳ Φιλοκτήτην λαβεῖν. . .
Νε. οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγῇ δῆτα τὸ ψευδῆ λέγειν;
Οδ. οὔκ, εἰ τὸ σωθῆναί γε τὸ ψεῦδος φέρει.
Νε. πῶς οὖν βλέπων τις ταῦτα τολμήσει λακεῖν;
Οδ. ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει.
Νε. κέρδος δ᾽ ἐμοὶ τί τοῦτον ἐς Τροίαν μολεῖν;

(100–12)

Neoptolemus: So what do you bid me to do except speak lies?
Odysseus: I am telling you to take Philoctetes by a trap. . .
Neoptolemus: Don't you consider lying shameful?
Odysseus: No, not if the falsehood brings salvation.
Neoptolemus: How could someone have the face to dare to utter them?
Odysseus: Whenever you do something for gain, it is not fitting to delay.
Neoptolemus: What gain is it for me that he goes to Troy?

In its use against enemies, Odysseus' reference to the use of a "trap" (δόλος) – a term associated with trickery that may have its roots in baiting fish – would carry a neutral connotation.[45] However, in his willingness to treat the Greek Philoctetes as an enemy by using stratagems against him that were elsewhere reserved for their actual antagonists, the Trojans, Odysseys becomes a much more ambivalent leader.[46]

The passage corresponds closely to what we find in the *Histories*. Like Darius, Odysseus encourages his fellow conspirator to allow for false speech in the pursuit of advantage (κέρδος) against a moral intuition that it is shameful (αἰσχρόν).[47] And as with the Persian revolutionary, he connects the lie to an impersonal sense of duty with πρέπει ("it is fitting"), which limits individual culpability. He too mandates against any delay (ὀκνεῖν), as Darius persistently did. Yet unlike the Great King, Odysseus is explicit in his statement that the trap is in the service of the Greeks on the plains of Troy. The morality of lying is rationalized due to its goal of "salvation," a term that widens the screen to include the fortunes of the Greeks as a whole. Odysseus' desire for victory is fully consonant with the wider Greek cause and he has at times been identified with the state

[45] Billings (2021), 139. For the term, see Wheeler (1988), 30, 103.
[46] With Billings (2021), 135–6; however, I am not persuaded by his statement at 137, "there is nothing necessarily *sophistic* (or even profoundly philosophical) about Odysseus' reasoning."
[47] For this passage, see Hesk (2000), 195–8. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 9.312–13; Thgn. 1.607–10 Young: ἀρχῇ ἔπι ψεύδους μικρὰ χάρις: εἰς δὲ τελευτὴν | αἰσχρὸν δὴ κέρδος καὶ κακὸν ἀμφότερα | γίνεται. οὐδέ τι καλόν, ὅτῳ ψεῦδος προσαμαρτῇ | ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἐξέλθῃ πρῶτον ἀπὸ στόματος. ("There is little favour from lies in the beginning; in the end | it becomes a gain both shameful and base. | Nor is there something noble, | to whomever tells a lie | and utters it first from his mouth.").

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itself.[48] In this sense, he might be thought to advocate for a kind of "Noble Lie," akin to Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*. There, falsehood is essential to the maintenance of the society's political and social hierarchies and tolerated for its promotion of virtue in the individual.[49] By contrast, as Mary Whitlock Blundell observes of the *Philoctetes*, "Odysseus' language suggests, however, that his overriding aim is in fact the fulfilment of his own goals, which just happen to coincide with the public good."[50] After all, later in the play, he will revise his motivation by revealing that his nature is directed by a desire to be victorious (1052: νικᾶν γε μέντοι πανταχοῦ χρῄζων ἔφυν).[51] And Odysseus' errant speech is targeted by Philoctetes, in his complaint that "for him all can be said, all dared" (633–4).[52] The primacy of the profit drive is reiterated in Sophocles' *Creusa*, where a speaker refers to even wealthy mortals as being among those who cling to gain, since "other things rank second to mortals after money" (F 354 Radt: κἄστι πρὸς τὰ χρήματα | θνητοῖσι τἄλλα δεύτερ').[53]

For his part, though Neoptolemus initially bucks the strategy, by the end of the exchange he begins to accept Odysseus' plan, as his response to Odysseus concentrating on his own gain (κέρδος δ' ἐμοὶ) makes clear. He yields and agrees to the deception, persuaded that he will be called wise and noble (119). Neoptolemus' solipsistic heroism may make him an easier mark for Odysseus, as when Troy is mentioned, it is because the young hero worries that *he* will not be the one responsible for its sack.[54] There is a dramatic momentum behind their rugged individualism; it will throw into relief just how circumscribed self-interest is in the face of the social bond that Neoptolemus and Philoctetes will share.[55] Fittingly for its performance context in the reestablished democracy, social entanglement that looks beyond the self is central to the ideology of the Athenian state and its maintenance of empire. Further, Athenian democratic political culture relied upon truthful speech to direct the city's course in the assembly.

[48] Norwood (1920), 162–3; Nussbaum (1976); Gill (1980), 140; Hesk (2000), 190–1.
[49] E.g., Schofield (2007) and Pl. *Resp*. 382a-c.
[50] Blundell (1987), 313. For the clash between private profit and the public good, see Th. 2.65.7. Odysseus is often considered a character imbued with sophistic traits, see Rose (1976); Craik (1980); Goldhill (1997), 141–5; Altmeyer (2001).
[51] The impersonal δεῖ is present in what precedes at Soph. *Phil*. 1049–51, where Odysseus underscores his own moral malleability.
[52] Hesk (2000), 194–5, argues for the necessity of Odysseus' deception. For another favorable reading of Odysseus, see Daneš (2019).
[53] This may be a response to F 356 Radt.
[54] Podlecki (1966), 236–8, on Odysseus' pragmatism and his rewriting of the *kleos* of Neoptolemus.
[55] On the "paternal" struggle over Neoptolemus by Odysseus and Philoctetes, Roisman (1997).

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Sophocles' treatment of the sophistic debate returns to the clash in values found in the *Histories*, where a transgressive drive for individual gain brings success.[56] Part of the challenge that the *Philoctetes* brings to bear on this is the confusion of the distinctions between friend and enemy, as Philoctetes becomes increasingly difficult to place in the latter category. In the *Histories*, Darius defended falsehood in the context of an attack on an unambiguous enemy, the False Smerdis, but did so in general terms after voicing a willingness to betray the Persians.[57]

In crafting Odysseus' persuasive oratory around egoism, Sophocles is in dialogue with the *Philoctetes* of Euripides, which had been performed in 431 BCE.[58] In the tragedy, a Trojan embassy that arrived on Lemnos promised Philoctetes that they would give him money and make him a ruler if he were willing to join the Trojans. A disguised Odysseus opposes the betrayal of the Greeks in the knowledge that Troy could not be captured without the hero and his bow on their side. One fragment captures the rhetorical basis on which the Trojans made their case to Philoctetes, with gain as a prime motivator.

> You see that even among the gods it is noble to gain (κερδαίνειν καλόν), | and the god with the most gold in their temple | is admired. What then stops you from taking | gain (κέρδος), since it is possible, and assimilating yourself to the gods (κἀξομοιοῦσθαι θεοῖς)? (*TrGF* F 794 Kannicht)

Again, *kerdos* is expected to spur morally dubious action, in this case, Philoctetes' disloyalty to the Greek cause.[59] It does so by an analogy with the admirable wealth of the gods and the profit of humans. In addition to the Trojan message of self-enrichment, the comparison of the life of the divine with that of mere mortals points to the distorted nature of the sentiment.

Odysseus' response to the Trojan is telling, as he seems to counter the notion of self-interest by setting it in a wider political context. Odysseus says he speaks because he considers it shameful to remain silent "on behalf of the whole Greek army" (*TrGF* F 796 Kannicht: ὑπέρ ... παντὸς Ἑλλήνων στρατοῦ). Even if only in the service of persuasive speech,

[56] For a recent discussion of the interaction between Sophocles' Oedipus and Herodotus' Periander, see Finglass (2018), and on the difficulty in charting the tragedian and Herodotus' influence over one another, 75.

[57] But for the notion that justice obtains even with the enemy, see adesp. F 5: ἐχθρὸς μὲν ἀνήρ, ἀλλὰ τὴν Δίκην σέβω. ("The man is an enemy, but I honour Justice.").

[58] For which, see Scodel (2009), 50–5.

[59] Olson (1991), 275, "The Trojans' offer is sophistic in the worst sense of the word."

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Odysseus counters Philoctetes' self-interest with the interests of the Greeks as a whole.[60]

Sophocles returns to the moral ambiguity of false speech explicitly elsewhere. In the *Electra*, Apollo decrees that Orestes will only be able to exact vengeance with "snares" (37: δόλοισι). At the beginning of the tragedy and in advance of a false report of Orestes' death that is delivered to his mother, Orestes reflects on the stratagem: "what does it grieve me, if dying in words I am saved by deeds and win glory? I suppose that no speech with gain is base" (59–61: λόγῳ θανὼν | ἔργοισι σωθῶ κἀξενέγκωμαι κλέος | δοκῶ μέν, οὐδὲν ῥῆμα σὺν κέρδει κακόν).[61] For Orestes, as in several of the other examples above, the cleavage of speech from deeds renders it trifling. After all, he has been sent by the god Apollo and refers to his own mission as operating with "justice" (70: δίκῃ). As above, in the case of Sophocles' Odysseus, social context is relevant. Unlike Odysseus, Orestes deceives his true enemies – but also his loyal sister. Still, here too there is evidence that his heroism is being interrogated, since Orestes universalizes in his avowal that speech is ultimately always directed by gain.[62] This is clearly how later readers such as Athenaeus conceived it; he included it in those things said basely by the poets and prose writers.[63]

Egoism and Political Participation

As the above passages demonstrate, fifth-century intellectual culture contemplates questions relating to self-interest and its clash with moral norms such as the injunction against falsehood. This tradition goes some way to contextualizing Herodotus' exploration of these themes in the speeches of Darius, Otanes, and Prexaspes. On the surface, Darius emerges as an agitator of Persian tradition by departing from the ethnographic imperative against falsehood. Yet the *Histories* has already undermined this apparent practice by portraying the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses as rife with deception, with victory as its own justification. In his pursuit of individual gain then, Darius represents their successor. Otanes and Prexaspes serve as foils to this position: Otanes, in his stress on participation and

[60] That he impersonates being a follower of his enemy, Palamedes, undermines the sincerity of this speech.

[61] Cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1051, where a similar scenario is played out by Helen's report of her husband's death. Menelaus' response is: κακὸς μὲν ὄρνις· εἰ δὲ κερδανῶ, λέγε. ("It's ill-omened; but if I am to gain from it, say it.")

[62] Soph. *El.* 61. Cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1050–2.

[63] Ath. 3.94. Hesk (2000), 199, views his deceit as "unequivocally dark and callous."

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collaboration; Prexaspes, in his rejection of individual gain and reliance upon the truth. Taken together, these three raise issues surrounding the compatibility of the monarch's egoism with civic participation.

It is the Constitutional Debate that crystallizes the opposition of the one and the many.[64] It reprises the contest between Otanes and Darius prior to the overthrow of the False Smerdis. For Otanes, the flaws in monarchy are systemic rather than unique to a single individual; on his account, the institution creates a negative feedback loop with the populace that leads to instability. Instead of the unjust and depraved individual ruler, Otanes endorses the multitude, in whom "everything is" (3.80.6). When Darius comes to speak in support of monarchy, he does so by looking to a hypothetical set of best democracies, oligarchies, and monarchies and settles on the rule of the best man as superior to the others. Reference to an ideal ruler allows Darius to offer up an image of the Persians as faultlessly governed by an individual with perfect judgment, something that the many and the few cannot hope to enjoy collectively. This rhetorical strategy bypasses the troubling aspects of recent history. It is the more distant past that serves Darius' purpose: he reminds the people of their acquisition of freedom from the Medes by Cyrus. Since they were "freed by one man" (3.82.5: ἐλευθερωθέντας διὰ ἕνα ἄνδρα), he holds, they should be ruled by one man. Of course, the Persians have lately been freed by a group of seven, but such pedantic consistency will not weigh Darius down.[65] With relative ease, Darius is able to recommit the Persians to monarchy in the Constitutional Debate. Even the method of the installation of the king disregards the more democratic options suggested by Otanes, by lot or by popular vote (3.83.2). If Otanes opens a vista onto an alternate Persia, it is just as swiftly closed off.

Individual gain through deception is a winning strategy for Darius following the Debate.[66] The seven conspirators choose to accept as king whoever's horse neighs first at sunrise in a designated area. To avoid leaving his success up to chance, Darius enlists his horse-keeper, a *sophos* named Oibares, in contriving a scheme (3.85.1–2: σοφίην; σόφισμα) to make the

[64] Rosen (1988), 41, states that through the conspiracy's success Herodotus affirms "that justice and freedom may depend on lies and murder," although Herodotus' commitment to the conspiracy's justness is not explicit.

[65] Pelling (2002), 130 n. 25 points out the way in which Darius' earlier support for lying complicates reading this speech as a sincere defense of one-man rule. Bringmann (1976), 276, finds Darius' arguments make the weaker argument the stronger and connects this to Herodotus' consistent characterization of the future King.

[66] With Evans (1991), 58; Pelling (2002), 131.

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horse neigh. In his order, the future ruler returns to his emphasis on the importance of avoiding delay (μὴ ἀναβάλλεσθαι). Oibares is successful in his machinations and when Darius' horse neighs first, he becomes the next Great King.[67] Later, this horse and its rider will be memorialized in an equestrian statue with an inscription explaining their prominence in his acquisition of Persia by the ruse. This willingness to gain victory through deceit complements Darius' support of falsehood for gain in the pre-coup deliberations and goes a step further by memorializing it.[68]

Darius' pursuit of rugged self-interest has, however, negative implications for his role as ruler and for his subjects. The notion that individual advantage is its own justification and that falsehood and truth-telling aim at this leads to a breakdown in communication and to the inability to identify trustworthy and untrustworthy Persians. This is exemplified immediately after the overthrow of the False Smerdis. In what is Darius' first act as ruler, Herodotus relates that one of the seven conspirators, Intaphrenes, was put to death (3.118.1). After the installation of Darius on the throne, we are told that they had agreed to a *nomos* according to which any of the other six might meet with the king without advance notice, provided that the king was not with one of his wives. On one occasion in which Intaphrenes enters the palace to converse with the Great King, he is informed that he is with his wife and barred from entry. Intaphrenes believes that the attendants "spoke lies" to him (3.118.2: ψεύδεα λέγειν) and maims them horrifically as a punishment. When Darius receives his slaves and hears of this outrage, he immediately suspects the other five of having done this in league with Intaphrenes to overthrow his rule and orders them to come one by one to make a trial of their opinions on the vicious act. When satisfied that Intaphrenes has acted alone, Herodotus relates that the ruler seized not only Intaphrenes but all of his male relations, again on the grounds that a conspiracy to overthrow him is in the works. This paranoia has no basis in reality, of course, but like Intaphrenes, Darius distrusts the sincerity of those around him. In both cases, needless destruction is the consequence. The episode showcases just what the inability to distinguish truth and falsehood, friend and enemy, leads to.

Viewed in the context of sophistic discussion on self-interest, the interweaving of the episodes on Darius, Otanes, and Prexaspes do not

[67] The deception is again met with an intervention of the divine, as lightning and thunder appear in an otherwise blue sky, in a clear sign of favor (3.86.2: ὥσπερ ἐκ θεοῦ τευ).

[68] Benardete (1969), 84, notes that this gives rise to a double account of the ruse, itself a marker of the change in the Persian commitment to truth-telling as a result of the conspiracy.

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point to the triumph of truth over falsehood or altruism over egoism. More ambiguously, they articulate a live debate on what the individual owes to the state and to the self. The power of the profit motive and its effects on civic engagement is readily evident in, for example, Athens' transition to democracy. After the Athenians are freed from the rule of the sons of Peisistratus, they quickly rise in martial prowess in relation to their neighbors. The cause of this rise in their fortunes is, according to the narrator, their new enfranchisement and ability to work on their own behalf: "so it's clear that when held down they were deliberately cowardly, as those working for a despot, while after they were freed each individual was eager to achieve something for himself" (5.78: δηλοῖ ὧν ταῦτα ὅτι κατεχόμενοι μὲν ἐθελοκάκεον ὡς δεσπότῃ ἐργαζόμενοι, ἐλευθερωθέντων δὲ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἑωυτῷ προεθυμέετό <τι> κατεργάζεσθαι). Herodotus might have formulated this in terms of an eagerness to work on behalf of the people or the institution of democracy, but instead it is the individual who is elevated through this institutional change.

An even more salient parallel to Darius is Themistocles, who continuously enriches himself, as his interests happen to overlap with those of Athens.[69] Emily Baragwanath has observed that initially the narrative presents Themistocles as a unifier and a driver of collective interest but that this gives way to a far more ambivalent presentation.[70] Before Artemisium, he accepts a bribe of thirty talents from the Euboeans with a promise to keep the Hellenic navy in place and fight in front of Euboea. To acquit himself of his obligation, Themistocles uses part of the sum to bribe the Spartan commander, Eurybiades, and another part to pay off the Corinthian commander, Adeimantus, allowing both to believe that they were funds from the Athenian state. Herodotus relates that by these means the Euboeans were gratified, the commanders fully persuaded, and "Themistocles himself made a profit" (8.5.3: αὐτός τε ὁ Θεμιστοκλέης ἐκέρδηνε).[71] After the Greek victory at Salamis, his deception continues. Beginning with Andros, Themistocles attempts to extort money for his own gain. Due to the poverty of the island, they refuse his request and are then besieged by the Greek fleet, in a campaign that initially fails but

[69] For bibliography on Themistocles in Herodotus, see Blösel (2001), 180 n. 7, 181 n. 8. I follow Fornara (1971), 66, who rejects the older tradition that read Themistocles' personality as fragmented and incoherent, for which, Masaracchia (1977).

[70] Baragwanath (2008), 291–8, 316, 318.

[71] Cf. his rhetoric at 8.60.γ. For this passage, see Blösel (2001), 182–3. At 186, he persuasively argues for the background of the Delian League as influencing Herodotus' account. He is following Fornara (1971), 86–7; Redfield (1985), 115; and Konstan (1987), 72.

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eventually results in the establishment of an Athenian cleruchy on Andros, as the Greek audience would have well known.[72] This only enlarged Themistocles' appetite: "he did not cease from his desire for gain, and kept sending threatening words to the other islands, asking for money through the same messengers" (8.112.1: οὐ γὰρ ἐπαύετο πλεονεκτέων, ἐσπέμπων ἐς τὰς ἄλλας νήσους ἀπειλητηρίους λόγους αἴτεε χρήματα διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀγγέλων). Threat of naval investment allowed Themistocles to enrich himself without the awareness of the Athenians, who he nonetheless represented for the islanders.[73] Themistocles' profit motive is fundamentally ambiguous.[74] Themistocles epitomises the dilemma of the profit drive. It is worth emphasizing precisely who he deceives – fellow Greeks who are not unequivocally the enemy. While unscrupulous, at times his agenda overlaps with that of Athens. Even when it does not, his self-interest generates benefits for the state. Like Darius, his rapacity is linked to imperial power and expansionism.

Unlike Athens, in Persia self-interest is the prerogative of the ruler. In this respect, Xerxes proves a worthy heir to his father's legacy. In the course of his march from Sardis, Xerxes stops at Abydos to survey his army and navy and turns to consult with his uncle and advisor, Artabanus, on the strength of their forces. Artabanus reacts with cautious words, indicating the dangers of adverse weather and finding food sufficient for their numbers. He urges fear in deliberation and boldness in action. Xerxes replies by extolling the value of swift action and its result – gain: "to those who wish to do something, on the whole gains usually are found, but to those who reckon up everything and delay, not much happens" (7.50.2: οἵσι τοίνυν βουλομένοισι ποιέειν ὡς τὸ ἐπίπαν φιλέει γίνεσθαι τὰ κέρδεα, τοῖσι δὲ ἐπιλεγομένοισί τε πάντα καὶ ὀκνέουσι οὐ μάλα ἐθέλει). In an echo of Darius, deliberation is coded to delay and speed to

[72] At 8.111.2, Themistocles brings the Andrians two divinities, Persuasion and Necessity; for Blösel (2001), 190, "Πειθώ and Ἀναγκαίη serve not only to give a name to the Herodotean Themistocles' pre-eminent qualities, but also and especially to point to demagogy and sheer violence as the decisive instruments of Athenian rule." Blösel interprets Themistocles' πλεονεξία as uniquely Athenian, by analogy with Thucydides 1.77.3–4 (though it should be noted that the Athenians are by no means the sole exponents of πλεονεξία in the *History*). The Andrian response at 8.111.2, in which the Athenians are μεγάλαι τε καὶ εὐδαίμονες καὶ θεῶν χρηστῶν ἥκοιεν εὖ ("great and prosperous, since they are so well off in useful gods"), is not an anachronism; it evokes both the language of Themistocles in his harangue at Salamis, 8.83.1 and also the Solon-Croeusus exchange at 1.30–2. I prefer the reading of Konstan (1987), 72, which sees not a narrative divide between the shrewdness and greed of Themistocles, as Blösel, but a unity.

[73] As noted by Munson (1988), 100; Blösel (2001), 196.

[74] The slippage between the terms "Athenians," "Greeks," and "Themistocles" is important. This behavior is in marked contradistinction to the assessment of the Greeks at 8.26.3.

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profit.[75] There is an uncomfortable truth to this deduction. In any case, before Xerxes' march on Greece, the Great King is performing what has become a well-rehearsed script.[76]

Reading the *Histories* in the *Cyropaedia*: Xenophon and the Persian Profit Motive

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, another work that defies generic categorization, follows the life of Cyrus the Great and the rise of Persia's empire. As has long been recognized, this hybrid narrative history, philosophical dialogue, biography, and proto-novel is in dialogue with Herodotus' narration of the life of Cyrus in Book 1 of the *Histories*. Early in the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon engages creatively with Herodotus' portrayal of the Persians as committed to pedagogical truth-telling while having monarchs who regularly indulge in falsehood.[77] In doing so, he returns to the status of gain and its effect on the civic body.

During a journey to the border of Persia after Cyrus has been made general of the Median army, he discusses the art of military tactics and generalship with his father, Cambyses. Their exchange turns to the appropriate way to take advantage of an enemy, at which point Cambyses reveals that this entails becoming a "plotter, dissembler, treacherous, deceitful, a thief, robber, and greedy in every way" (1.6.27).[78] Even so, Cambyses assures his son that he would remain the "most just man and the most observant of the law" (1.6.28: δικαιότατός τε καὶ νομιμώτατος). Cyrus, unnerved by the paradox, asks why he and the rest of the Persian youths have not been instructed in how to undertake these actions. Cambyses explains that these juveniles have been trained in deception but that this has so far only been practiced on animals in the hunt. Even if Persian boys deal truly with men, they are still expected to use snares, tricks, and all other means of unfair advantage against animals. The distinctions between

[75] For the immediacy of gain, but the swiftness of retribution, see 6.86.γ1 on Glaucus' misplaced question to the oracle of Delphi.

[76] It is also familiar from Soph. *Phil.* 111: ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει. No Persian monarch comes to understand the danger of haste better than Cambyses. Just as he realized that the name of the upstart who declared himself ruler was Smerdis, Cambyses lamented the unnecessary assassination of his brother by exclaiming that he had acted "more hastily than wisely" (ταχύτερα ἢ σοφώτερα) in fear of losing his rule, 3.65.3.

[77] It also evokes a proposition argued in the *Dissoi Logoi* that it is just to lie and deceive, DK 90 B 3.2, as a higher justice obtains in the event of protecting one's intimates from themselves. For example, should a parent refuse to take medicine necessary for their health, or attempt to commit suicide, the text suggests that deception is justified. For the noble lie see Hesk (2000), 143–201.

[78] Cf. *Mem.* 3.1.6.

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the appropriate action toward man and animal, he clarifies, will later map onto those of friends and enemies. When Cyrus again protests that his education has not prepared him to treat men – even enemies – this way, Cambyses replies with a developmental account of the Persian education system:

> "Well, son," he said, "there is a story among our ancestors that there was once a man who taught the youths, he taught them justice, just as you are suggesting, how not to lie and to lie (μὴ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ψεύδεσθαι), how not to deceive and to deceive, how not to slander and to slander, how not to take advantage and to take advantage. He drew distinctions between what one should do to friends and to enemies. Additionally, he would teach that it was just to deceive friends for a good aim and to steal from friends for a good aim." (1.6.31)

For these Persian youths in the past, an education in justice was a holistic one that prepared them to encounter their enemies and to counteract the potential errors of their friends. To train them in the dark side of justice, the anonymous teacher had them practice upon one another, leading them to become proficient in deception and taking advantage. The unintended result of this is that, however, "they were perhaps becoming proficient too in being lovers of gain" (1.6.32: ἴσως δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸ φιλοκερδεῖν οὐκ ἀφυεῖς ὄντες),[79] so that the division of actions directed toward friends and enemies was no longer maintained. This erosion of the civic fabric led to a new law (ῥήτρα) according to which the education of the Persians was now to consist of learning to tell the truth (ἀληθεύειν), not to deceive, and not to take advantage over others (1.6.33).[80] This mirrors the education of the enslaved in Persia, who are taught only this partial account of justice. Unlike them, when Persian youths reach maturity, as Cyrus has, they are able to learn the "customary practices" (1.6.34: νόμιμα) appropriate for dealing with the enemy. These precautions are designed to produce "tamer" (1.6.33: πρᾳότεροι) citizens to avoid their becoming "savage" (1.6.34: ἄγριοι) with one another, in a return to the animal analogy above, where the distinction of humans and beasts gave ground for instruction in taking advantage of the enemy.[81] As Jon Hesk has argued, Xenophon supports military deceit but refuses to have Cyrus educated in how to deceive friends because of the potential "behavioural fall-out amongst

[79] The lover of gain also elicited a strong reaction in Plato, who rejects him at *Resp*. 582e.
[80] For the significance of the *rhetra* as a Spartan term for law, see Gera (1993), 70; Hesk (2000), 132.
[81] With Hesk (2000), 130, 133–4.

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citizens which would prove catastrophic for the community."[82] Cambyses' failure to tackle the justice of deceiving friends arises, on this account, from the populace's inability to maintain friend-enemy distinctions. The cause of this is not probed by Hesk, but Cambyses identifies it as "love of gain" (φιλοκερδεῖν). In the face of individual profit, in Persia friends and enemies cease to have meaning. The conclusion of the *Cyropaedia* reprises the theme in its analysis of the failings of Persia in Xenophon's own time: unlike their ancestors under Cyrus, these Persians are characterized by their "love of base gain" (8.8.18: αἰσχροκέρδεια).

In the *Histories*, Darius' speech leaves the issues surrounding Persian tradition, falsehood, and the profit motive highly charged but ambiguous. The audience is made aware of the complexity of moral action through Darius' rise to the Persian throne, but there is no explicit resolution to it. In his intervention in the education of Cyrus, Xenophon locates the origins of the tradition of truth-telling in the ancient history of Persia. His Socratic-style teacher's attempts to communicate the multifaceted nature of justice fail, leading to its simplification as "truth-telling," at least until one reaches maturity. Yet this naturalizes Herodotus' depiction of Persian deceit and lying as harking back to a more nuanced understanding of justice. As in Cambyses' speech in the *Cyropaedia*, in the *Histories* it is the profit motive that proves a catalyst of historical action. It leads to Darius' inability to distinguish friend and enemy, even as it evokes Otanes' complaint on the failure of the monarch to treat his subjects with any decency. Among Xenophon's ancient Persians too, profit corroded relations between citizens. More damningly, in the *Cyropaedia*, it has the potential to undercut Cyrus' successes: when Cyrus' father Cambyses returns to the stage in Book 8, he does so with a warning to his son against ruling the Persians as he does other nations – to his advantage (8.5.24: ἐπὶ πλεονεξίᾳ). Ruling Persian subjects this way, he warns, will only lead to ruin.

Conclusion

In advance of the revolt against the False Smerdis, the *Histories* orchestrates a philosophical debate on the profit motive and the rationalization of falsehood. The future Great King, Darius, offers an elaborate defense of *kerdos* and the necessity of lying to achieve the aims of the group of

[82] Hesk (2000), 134. Cf. Xen. *Mem*. 4.2.14–18 and Pl. *Resp*. 382c, where lying to enemies and to friends (in select cases) is acceptable.

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conspirators. Lying, however, transgresses the Persians' abhorrence of falsehood as recorded in their ethnography. Darius' speech is sandwiched between Otanes' support of participatory action and Prexaspes' rejection of falsehood and self-interest, which suggest that Darius' words are not fully consonant with his fellow citizens' behaviors. In the end, falsehood is not required during the revolution, which suggests that the airing of the profit motive serves more to characterize Darius as heir to the problematic moral patrimony of Cyrus and Cambyses than to explain the downfall of the False Smerdis and his brother. In this instance, Darius' private interests overlap with those of Persia, much as Odysseus' do with Greece in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, and Themistocles' with Athens during the Greco-Persian Wars and their aftermath. Egoism, however, is not treated one-dimensionally as constructive. The distorting potential for the civic fabric in Darius' formulation is dramatized in the breakdown of communication that follows his establishment as king. If everyone aims for his own advantage and truth is but a means to an end, the position of the ruler and the ruled is unstable, as is the line dividing friend and enemy.

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