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PLATAEA ON THE PYRE: ANAXAGORAS A 44 AND THUCYDIDES 2.77*

The army along with Xerxes passed through Boeotia. It burned the cities of the Thespians, which they had abandoned in favour of the Peloponnese, and Plataea as well … The army burned Thespiae and Plataea after learning from the Thebans that they had not medized.[1] (Hdt. 8.50.2)

Xerxes passed through Boeotia and destroyed the land of the Thespians and burned down Plataea, though it was empty. The inhabitants of these cities had escaped with their whole population to the Peloponnese. (Diod. Sic. 11.14.5)

The above quotations from Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus affirm that during Xerxes' land invasion in 480 B.C.E. Plataea was burned to the ground. They agree that the city was empty of its inhabitants and that they had taken refuge in the Peloponnese. Herodotus adds that the city was scorched owing to Theban information on their failure to medize or come to terms with Persia. This consensus on the destruction of Plataea by fire during the Graeco-Persian Wars finds a parallel in Thucydides' *History*, in a narrative in which Plataean history very nearly repeats itself.

Half a century after the Graeco-Persian Wars, the Peloponnesians and their Theban ally launch an attack on Plataea.[2] As a preamble to the devastation of the land, the Plataeans and the Spartans each appeal to the divine to bolster their claims for hindering or supporting the invasion. A series of siege and counter-siege measures result in a stalemate, and the Peloponnesians move to circumvallate the city. Yet, prior to this, Thucydides records that they made one last attempt on the city by trying to set it ablaze. Its destruction is avoided only by the opportune intervention of a thunderstorm, in a passage regularly interpreted as suggesting divine motivation (2.77).[3] Yet, this is hardly a

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[1] Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I cite the following commentators by name: J. Classen and C. Steup, *Thukydides*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1919[5]); U. Fantasia (ed.), *Tucidide*: La Guerra del Peloponneso. *Libro II* (Pisa, 2003); A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1956); S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides. Volume 1: Books I–III* (Oxford, 1991); J.S. Rusten (ed.), *The Peloponnesian War Book II* (Cambridge, 1989).

[2] N.G.L. Hammond, 'Plataea's relations with Thebes, Sparta, and Athens', *JHS* 112 (1992), 143–50 gives a succinct history of the interactions of Plataea with its immediate neighbour, Thebes, and its recourse to Athens. For the invasion of Plataea from a strategic standpoint, E.F. Bloedow, 'Archidamus the "intelligent" Spartan', *Klio* 65 (1983), 27–49, at 42–3 outlines the differing interpretations. On the innovative nature of the siege, see P.B. Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 103–9.

[3] E.g. J.R. Grant, 'Toward knowing Thucydides', *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 81–94, at 86. Recently affirmed by S. Hornblower, *Thucydidean Themes* (Oxford, 2010), 166, 'it would surely have been taken to show that Zeus was on the side of the Plataians … Thucydides, whatever he himself thought of such reasoning, will have known that most of his readers would sympathize with it'. See too

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straightforward reading, in particular as Thucydides is seldom thought to structure causation in terms of the divine in this way, even with the source citation 'it is said' present.[4] Recently, there have been nuanced readings of this enigmatic climax. For example, Edith Foster has argued that we should interpret the Plataean narrative in line with Presocratic philosophical intellectual culture. Her analysis highlights the elemental focus of the narration—its inclusion of earth, fire, wind and water. This is a powerful interpretation and there is much to agree with. Yet, it closes somewhat aporetically with: 'a reason why the discovery of such associations should determine our attitude toward this passage … would need to be found'.[5]

Seldom observed is the fact that this passage (2.77) has intertextual links with a fragment of the Clazomenian philosopher Anaxagoras (DK 59 A 44).[6] There have been no attempts to investigate how philosophical intellectual culture might inflect our understanding of the divine causal schema. In this article I will argue (§I) that the text at 2.77 evokes a fifth-century naturalizing discourse of Anaxagoras, who is redeploying a Homeric simile as an argument for his own physics. I will then demonstrate (§II) that Thucydides' integration of the proof works against a reading of the storm during the siege of Plataea as divinely motivated. In fact, the second book integrates weather phenomena into the text and structures the reader's response to identify these as mechanistically motivated, though, as we shall see, this does not supplant the divine.

R. Bruzzone, 'Weather, luck and the divine in Thucydides', in K. Ulanowski (ed.), *The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome* (Leiden, 2016), 180–93, at 180: 'Thucydides' narrative implies that divine forces associated with the one-time victory over barbarians indeed exist and object to transgression.'

[4] This is regularly interpreted as a sign of narratorial disquiet; see e.g. Gomme on 77.6: 'he [Thucydides] did not at once believe all that he was told, including a story that Plataia was saved in much the same way as Croesus had been.' H.D. Westlake, 'ΛΕΓΕΤΑΙ in Thucydides', *Mnemosyne* 30 (1977), 345–62, at 354: 'His use of a *legetai* phrase seems here to convey not uncertainty about the facts but rather a sense of uneasiness because the thunderstorm might be thought to be the outcome of divine intervention, as was doubtless claimed by at least some of his informants.' Rusten ad loc. states that it 'implies that T. does not himself vouch for the story'. By contrast, Hornblower ad loc. finds the interpretation of λέγεται as a distancing effect unnecessary.

[5] E. Foster, 'The rhetoric of materials: Thucydides and Lucretius', *AJPh* 130 (2009), 367–99, at 378. At 376 n. 24, Foster finds it evocative of the philosophy of Empedocles, and does not observe the reference to Anaxagoras.

[6] Thucydides does not elsewhere stay so close to a Presocratic fragment, but 2.28 also appears to follow Anaxagoras' explanation on the lunar eclipse, for which see DK 59 A 42, Plut. *Vit. Per*. 35.2 and Cic. *Rep*. 1.25. For discussion of the relationship, A. Moleti, 'Tucidide Anassagoreo', *AION* 34 (2012), 31–61, at 50–3. Of value as a reception of Thucydides' relationship to his intellectual milieu is the statement from Marcellinus 22 admitting Thucydides to the circle of Anaxagoras. It is evident that there was an earlier biographical tradition linking the two from the following comment on the otherwise unknown Antyllus, who held that Thucydides became slightly godless, ἄθεος, from their association. This should not be taken as evidence that the biographical tradition has historical value. W. Nestle, 'Thukydides und die Sophistik', [*Neue*] *Jahrb.* 33 (1914), 649–85, at 651 rejects the influence of Anaxagoras and his philosophy of mind on Thucydides' *History*, but admits that 'Dagegen hat er sich allerdings die physikalischen Ergebnisse der vorsokratischen Philosophie, das Naturwissenschaftliche im engeren Sinn zu eigen gemacht: das beweist die völlige Unbefangenheit, womit er den Naturvorgängen gegenübersteht.' Alternatively, S. West, 'ὅρκου παῖς ἐστιν ἀνώνυμος: the aftermath of the Plataean perjury', *CQ* 53 (2003), 438–47, at 446 finds the notion of influence from Anaxagoras in general in the *History* 'simplistic', noting in particular Thucydides' encomium to Nicias at 7.86.5 as at odds with Anaxagorean philosophy.

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I. THUCYDIDES' ANAXAGORAS, ANAXAGORAS' HOMER

The episode marches toward the eventual circumvallation and siege of Plataea by first detailing the Spartan arrival into Plataean territory and the Plataeans' invocation of Pausanias' sacrifice to Zeus Eleutherios after the Graeco-Persian Wars (2.71.2). They call upon the gods of oaths, of their country and the Spartans' ancestors to prevent the attack (2.71.4). After the breakdown of the negotiations, the Spartan king, Archidamus, responds in kind by involving the gods and heroes of Plataea to affirm that the Plataeans have broken their oaths first (2.74.2–75.1).[7] The episode ends in a Spartan attempt to set fire to the city of Plataea:

After this, since their machines were of no benefit and there was also a counter-fortification against the ramp, the Peloponnesians, thinking that it was impracticable to take the city from their present unfavourable situation, began to prepare for the circumvallation. But first it seemed good to try fire, if it were possible to burn the city up when a wind arose, since it was not very large (πρότερον δὲ πυρὶ ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς πειρᾶσαι εἰ δύναιντο πνεύματος γενομένου ἐπιφλέξαι τὴν πόλιν οὖσαν οὐ μεγάλην). For they had tried everything else (πᾶσαν γὰρ δὴ ἰδέαν ἐπενόουν), if in some way it could be brought over to them without the expense of a siege. They carried bundles of wood and tossed them from the ramp first into the space between the wall and the mound and then, when that quickly became full because of the number of hands at work, they heaped up more besides to direct it toward the rest of the city as much as they were able from their elevation (ταχὺ δὲ πλήρους γενομένου διὰ πολυχειρίαν ἐπιπαρένησαν καὶ τῆς ἄλλης πόλεως ὅσον ἐδύναντο ἀπὸ τοῦ μετεώρου πλεῖστον ἐπισχεῖν), and after casting in fire with sulphur and pitch they lit the wood. And there arose a blaze as great as had yet been seen at that time, of those that are man-made; **for often in the mountains when the forest is rubbed against itself by the winds of its own accord it sends up fire and, from it, flame** (καὶ ἐγένετο φλὸξ τοσαύτη ὅσην οὐδείς πω ἔς γε ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον χειροποίητον εἶδεν· **ἤδη γὰρ ἐν ὄρεσιν ὕλη τριφθεῖσα ὑπ' ἀνέμων πρὸς αὑτὴν ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου πῦρ καὶ φλόγα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἀνῆκεν**).[8] And this was great and came close to destroying the Plataeans after they had escaped the other attempts: for a large area of the city was not approachable, and if the right wind had arisen against the city (πνεῦμά τε εἰ ἐπεγένετο αὐτῇ ἐπίφορον), which their enemies expected, they would not have survived. Now this also is said to have occurred, that a great rain from heaven and thunder arose to extinguish the blaze and so in this way the danger ceased (νῦν δὲ καὶ τόδε λέγεται ξυμβῆναι, ὕδωρ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ πολὺ καὶ βροντὰς γενομένας σβέσαι τὴν φλόγα καὶ οὕτω παυσθῆναι τὸν κίνδυνον, 2.77).

Commentators have noted a parallel to the description of the fire in a long, agonistic section of *De rerum natura*.[9] There, Lucretius makes it clear that the sentiment derives from the Presocratic philosopher Anaxagoras.[10] Evidently, it served as proof for Anaxagoras' philosophy that 'everything is in everything' (Lucr. 1.897–900):

> at 'saepe in magnis fit montibus' inquis ut 'altis
> arboribus uicina cacumina summa terantur
> inter se ualidis facere id cogentibus austris
> donec flammai fulserunt flore coorto.'

[7] For these oaths and the question of perjury, see n. 41 below.

[8] Following Classen and Steup ad loc. as well as Gomme ad loc., with ἀπ' αὐτοῦ referring to ἀπὸ τοῦ πυρός.

[9] E.g. R. Shilleto, *Thucydidis II* (Cambridge, 1880), on 2.77.4; W.E. Leonard and S.B. Smith, *De rerum natura libri sex* (Madison, 1942), on 1.897–920.

[10] By contrast, Thucydides does not make the reference explicit. Anaxagoras' popularity is evident already in the early fourth century, e.g. Pl. *Ap*. 26d–e = DK 59 A 35, Pl. *Phd*. 96c–d, 97b8–98c2. For work on Thucydides and Anaxagoras, E. Golfin, 'Thucydides and Anaxagoras or a philosophical beginning to historical thought?', *DHA* 33 (2007), 35–56; Moleti (n. 6), 31–61; Σ.Α. Σταμούλη, *Η φιλολογική και φιλοσοφική διάσταση στην* Ιστορία *του Θουκυδίδη* (Athens, 2014), 93–5.

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> But you [Anaxagoras] say that 'often in vast mountains
> the highest neighbouring summits of tall trees are rubbed
> against one another when the strong south wind compels it,
> until the flower of flame has arisen and they blaze.'

Though we do not have the *ipsissima uerba* of Anaxagoras, the similarities in language and theme in these passages support the inference that a selection of Anaxagoras' book on philosophy lies behind each of them.[11] The strongest testament to their interrelation is the attribution of wildfire to the 'friction' of trees rubbing against one another. This is impossible; elsewhere such forest fires were interpreted as arising from lightning.[12]

Lucretius is a valuable interlocutor for our purposes. The intertext is situated in an extended discussion of the pluralism of Anaxagoras and his theory of the so-called ὁμοιομέρειαι.[13] In it, Lucretius challenges Anaxagoras' theory of change and the absurdity of suggesting that all particles reside physically within all objects.[14] Anaxagoras' wildfire exemplifies the thesis that fire resides in wood, and *eo ipso* everything resides in everything. Lucretius rebuts this with the indictment (1.871–2, 1.875–8):

> If flame lies hidden in wood, as well as in smoke and ashes | then wood must necessarily be composed of things produced from materials unlike itself … There remains some feeble means of concealment | and it is this that Anaxagoras lays hold of for himself, as he supposes that all things | lie hidden in everything, intermingled, but that | that is alone visible which preponderates in the blend | and is located more in view and in front.

The sentiment is readily found in the fragments of Anaxagoras, as in DK 59 B 12, at the close of his summary of the power and function of *nous*, the system's governing principle: 'there is a portion of all in all' and 'each thing is and was most manifestly those things of which there are the most in it' ('ἐν παντὶ παντὸς μοῖρα ἔνεστι' καὶ 'ὅτων πλεῖστα ἔνι, ταῦτα ἐνδηλότατα ἓν ἕκαστον ἔστι καὶ ἦν').[15] It is a nimble solution to the Eleatic debate on what-is as either eternal or generated.[16] Lucretius preserves the dictum through the *exemplum* offered, that earth (wood) has present within it fire, as evident from its ability to give rise to flame. Nor is Anaxagoras' choice of proof accidental.[17]

[11] For a recent overview of Anaxagoras' status as a source in Lucretius, see F. Montarese, *Lucretius and his Sources* (Berlin, 2013), 235–43. R.D. Brown, 'Lucretian ridicule of Anaxagoras', *CQ* 33 (1983), 146–60 and J. Tatum, 'The Presocratics in Book One of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*', *TAPhA* 114 (1984), 177–89 remain fundamental.

[12] E.g. Diod. Sic. 1.13.3. Lucr. 5.1091–100 finds lightning or branches rubbing together responsible for giving fire to humans. R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 1982), 377: 'I have tried persistently to save Thucydides' reputation, but have not yet found any forester or timber merchant who is prepared to believe that a forest fire could possibly arise in this way.' There are four additional instances in Greek and Latin literature that I have identified as giving the same explanation; notably, these are all scientific or philosophical works: Vitr. *De arch*. 2.1.1; Manilius 1.856–8; Anon. *Aetna* 364–6; Ael. *NA* 16.39.23–6. Elsewhere, mountain fires were associated with the advance of society through the discovery of ore, e.g. Posidonius, *FGrHist* 87 F 47, F 48.

[13] Lucretius is less critical of Anaxagoras than, for example, Heraclitus: Brown (n. 11), 150; Tatum (n. 11), 183.

[14] Manilius 1.856–8 gives evidence for the presence of fire within all objects in a manner evocative of Lucretius' Anaxagoras. See P.B. Paisley and D.R. Oldroyd, 'Science in the Silver Age: *Aetna*, a classical theory of volcanic activity', *Centaurus* 23 (1979), 1–20.

[15] Simplicius, *In Phys*. 27.2 = DK 59 B 12. For a discussion of Lucretius' misreading of Anaxagoras here, see G. Vlastos, 'The physical theory of Anaxagoras', *PhR* 59 (1950), 31–57, at 48–51.

[16] E.g. Gorgias' *On Nature* at DK 82 B 3.68–9.

[17] Moleti (n. 6), 49 rightly observes that Thucydides cites Anaxagoras in this passage, but argues

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The image evidently reworks a simile familiar from Homer.[18] Achilles is said to attack the Trojans, 'as a god-kindled fire rages in the deep glens of a parched mountain, the deep forest catches fire, it whirls in all directions, with the wind driving forward the flame, as a god ever pressing hard with his spear' (Hom. *Il*. 20.490–3 ὡς δ' ἀναμαιμάει βαθέ' ἄγκεα θεσπιδαὲς πῦρ | οὔρεος ἀζαλέοιο, βαθεῖα δὲ καίεται ὕλη | πάντῃ τε κλονέων ἄνεμος φλόγα εἰλυφάζει | ὣς ὅ γε πάντῃ θοῦνε σὺν ἔγχεϊ δαίμονι ἶσος).[19] Elsewhere, Zeus spurs Hector to set fire to the ships of the Argives so that he 'raged as Ares who wields the spear or as a destructive fire rages in the mountains, in the thickets of the deep forest' (15.605–6 μαίνετο δ' ὡς ὅτ' Ἄρης ἐγχέσπαλος ἢ ὁλοὸν πῦρ | οὔρεσι μαίνηται, βαθέης ἐν τάρφεσιν ὕλης).[20] Wildfires in epic open up a figurative space for the violence of the warrior, whose action on the battlefield mirrors its rapid movement and utter destruction. In the first simile Achilles is analogous to a wildfire driven on a mountain, a region underscoring his distance from human cultivation and his free path in an area to do maximal damage. That he is compared to a fire propelled by the wind further drives home the relentless slaughter on the plain before Troy.[21] In Book 15, where Hector is as a blazing wildfire on a mountain, the simile works in the same way, while prefiguring the actual fire Hector will bring to the Greek ships. A raging fire also evokes the final destruction of Troy. Quintus of Smyrna captures this in his reworking of the Homeric motif in a description of the firing of Troy (13.487–92):

> τὸ δ' ἐν πυρὶ καίετο πολλῷ,
> ἠύτ' ὄρος λασίῃσιν ἄδην καταειμένον ὕλῃς
> ἐσσυμένως καίηται ὑπαὶ πυρὸς ὀρνυμένοιο
> ἐξ ἀνέμων, δολιχαὶ δὲ περιβρομέουσι κολῶναι,
> τῷ δ' ἄρα λευγαλέως ἐνιτείρεται ἄγρια πάντα
> Ἡφαίστοιο βίηφι περιστρεφθέντα καθ' ὕλην·

Quintus' simile encourages an equivalence between the fire during the sack of Troy and the act of nature.[22] The natural world is as violent as the battlefield, and we are given no

against the notion that Lucretius and Thucydides took the passage from Anaxagoras, and instead finds it more probable that Lucretius took the *exemplum* from Thucydides on the basis that 1) the passages are practically identical and 2) it would be a strange coincidence if each author picked the same passage of Anaxagoras to quote from. This is hardly persuasive. Evidently, 1.871–4 prepares for the reference: *in lignis si flamma latet fumusque cinisque | ex alienigenis consistant ligna necessest | ex alienigenis, quae lignis exoriuntur*. Similar priming is found at 1.891–2: *postremo in lignis cinerem fumumque uideri | cum praefracta forent, ignisque latere minutos*.

[18] For the relationship between Anaxagoras and Homer, see M.M. Shaw, 'Parataxis in Anaxagoras: seeds and worlds in fragment B4a', *Epoché* 21 (2017), 273–88. Lucretian scholars have rightly looked to Homer for the metaphor of *flammai ... flore* (1.900): cf. C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1947), ad loc., citing Plut. *De fac.* 943B with its variant reading of *Il*. 9.212, and also noting Aesch. *PV* 7.

[19] The bronze arms of the army at *Il*. 2.455–8 gleam like a forest fire on the mountain; the sound of the clash of the armies in battle at *Il*. 14.396–7 is like a forest fire on the mountain; cf. Amm. Marc. 21.16.11.

[20] R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume IV: Books 13–16* (Cambridge, 1992), on 15.605–9: 'the forest fire … is a traditional image (14.394–9n.). The simile's continuation means that Ares rages "in the mountains" and the fire is personified; the fusion of war god and fire is apt amid the roar of the narrative'.

[21] Wind often marks out heightened action on the epic battlefield: A. Purves, 'Wind and time in Homeric epic', *TAPhA* 140 (2010), 323–50, at 328.

[22] On Quintus' similes during the sack of Troy, see the perceptive comments of T. Scheijnen, 'Ways to die for warriors: death similes in Homer and Quintus of Smyrna', *Hermes* 145 (2017), 2–23, at 19–22. E. Kneebone, 'Fish in battle? Quintus of Smyrna and the *Halieutica* of Oppian',

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relief from it. In each instance the metapoetic force of the wildfire is its ability to indicate the most severe combat on the battlefield.

Striking is the presence of the divine in each instance as motivating or aligned with the wildfire within the simile. Fire is θεσπιδαής, 'kindled by a god';[23] Hector is compared to a wildfire personified as Ares; finally in the *Posthomerica* fire is described as the force of Hephaestus.[24] Widespread natural destruction creates a space for divine agency while signalling the advancement of the epic plot on the battlefront.

The Anaxagorean proof picks up the Homeric image of the mountain fire spurred by the winds, tearing through the forest but with radical modification even in its decontextualized state. The simile is put to work for Anaxagorean physics, and A 44 supplants the divine with a mechanistic approach to wildfires that arises through the wind's action on the tops of the trees, activating the fire residing within the wood. The cause of the fire is not heat via friction but the alteration of the inner chemistry of wood through the intervening wind on the trees. Lucretius' biological language is quite effective in *flammai flore*, with its intermingling of the vegetal and the elemental in the metaphor of the 'flower of flame'. Thucydides' verb ἀνῆκε similarly is used of the growth of vegetation and plays on the image of fire as an organic force.[25] By arguing that fire is derived from the action of wind on wood in a purely physical causal process that is self-motivated, Anaxagoras innovates significantly. This absence of divine agency evokes the causes behind the negative popular reaction to Anaxagoras in the biographical tradition (Plut. *Vit. Nic*. 23.3 = DK 59 A 18):

> For the people did not endure the *physikoi* or those then called 'star-gazers', who attributed the divine to irrational causes, powers lacking providence, and necessary changes.

Anaxagoras' wildfire lacks the divine providence evident in epic on any reading of his theory of matter. In contrast to Homer, Anaxagoras unmasks the disaster as one of purely natural cause and effect.[26] Nor is this the only fragment in which divine agency is supplanted: the philosopher also held that 'we call "Iris" the reflection in clouds opposite the sun'.[27] The messenger goddess who announces rain, represented by the rainbow, is thus reduced to the naturalism of refracted light. Similarly, a scholiast to the *Prometheus Bound* affirms Anaxagoras' tendency to remove the divine from causation, by contrast with Homer: 'According to Anaxagoras, the winds come from

in M. Baumbach and S. Bär (edd.), *Quintus of Smyrna: Transforming Homer in Second Sophistic Epic* (Berlin, 2007), 285–306, at 297–300 discusses the importance of fire imagery in the *Posthomerica*, drawing attention to this passage. For Quintus of Smyrna's independence in taking over Homeric models, see S. Bär, 'Reading Homer, writing Troy: intertextuality and narrativity of the gods and the divine in Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*', in J.J. Clauss, M. Cuypers and A. Kahane (edd.), *The Gods of Greek Hexameter Poetry: From the Archaic Age to Late Antiquity and Beyond* (Stuttgart, 2016), 215–30.

[23] Unique to epic; always used as an attribute of fire at the line end, e.g. *Il*. 12.177, 12.441, 15.597, 20.490, 21.342, 21.381, 23.216 and *Od*. 4.418.

[24] Fire is to be associated with Hephaestus: e.g. Hes. *Theog*. 864–5; Pind. *Pyth*. 3.36–40.

[25] See W.A. Lamberton, *Thucydides Books II and III* (New York, 1905), 2.77.18: 'ἀνιέναι is used of sprouting vegetation, gushing springs, rising breezes', with examples.

[26] Compare the emphasis on reason vs the irrational in Thucydides, for which see H.-P. Stahl, *Thucydides: Man's Place in History* (Swansea, 2003); also S.I. Oost, 'Thucydides and the irrational: sundry passages', *CPh* 70 (1975), 186–96; V. Pothou, '*Paralogos polemos*: irrationality and war in Thucydides', in G. Rechenauer and V. Pothou (edd.), *Thucydides – A Violent Teacher?* (Göttingen, 2011), 261–77.

[27] DK 59 B 19; cf. Xen. DK 21 B 32. Anaxagoras apparently studied Homeric epic and revealed its program of virtue and justice, DK 59 A 1.29–31.

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the earth and, according to Homer, "from the clouds of father Zeus"' (DK 59 A 86a). Infamously, he had argued that the sun was burning metal.[28] That Anaxagoras' treatment of agency departed from the traditional reliance on the divine is clear as early as the *Apology*, where Plato's Meletus accuses Socrates of not believing in the traditional gods, to which he responds by parodying Anaxagoras' treatment of celestial bodies: 'Do I not think that the sun and the moon are gods, just as other people do?' 'No, by Zeus, men of the jury, he does not, because he says that the sun is a stone and that the moon is earth.'[29]

II. PLATAEA UNDER SIEGE

Let us return to why Thucydides integrates a fragment of Anaxagoras into the *History*.[30] It is clear from the ancient biographical tradition that the historian was interpreted as allied to the sophistic intellectual culture of his age. Marcellinus' *Vita* admits Thucydides to the circles of Gorgias (36, 51), Prodicus (36), Antiphon (22) and Anaxagoras (22).[31] Despite the uncertain merit of the biography, the *History* frequently uses antilogy, antithesis and neuter abstract substantives, and all have analogues in the philosophical milieu.[32] None the less, the intertext with a known Presocratic philosopher has animated little scholarly discussion. An exception is William M. Calder III, who identified the close linguistic correspondence with Lucretius, and thus with Anaxagoras, and argued that it is an interpolation in Thucydides.[33] The suppressed premise of his argument is that Thucydides would not have included Anaxagorean language and thought in the *History*.[34] Calder proposes that it was made by the commentator Antyllus, about whom we know precious little except that he maintained that Thucydides was influenced by Anaxagoras.[35] Against this interpretation, the

[28] DK 59 A 72, A 73.

[29] Pl. *Ap*. 26d. For the tradition on the negative Athenian reception of Anaxagoras, see e.g. Diod. Sic. 12.39; Plut. *Vit. Per*. 32. On Anaxagoras explaining the 'mechanisms of the gods', see Xen. *Mem*. 4.7.6.

[30] It was not included in the fragments of DK; P. Curd, *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae: Fragments and Testimonia: A Text and Translation with Notes and Essays* (Toronto, 2007) incorporates it as a footnote following Lucretius' citation, briefly observing (at 98 n. 23): '[t]his passage is quite similar to a comment in Thucydides about the fire set by the Peloponnesians at Plataea'. D.W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics* (Cambridge, 2010) includes it in the fragments to Anaxagoras at F 12b.

[31] For Thucydides and fifth-century intellectual culture, see Dion. Hal. *Thuc*. 24, 46; Ps.-Dion. Hal. *Ars rhet*. 11.2; [Plut.] *X orat*. 832E; Philostr. *Ep*. 73; Hermog. *Id*. 2.11, 2.12 Rabe; Schol. in Ael. Arist. *Or*. 124.14 Dindorf; Schol. in Thuc. 4.135.2. The connection of Thucydides to Anaxagoras is rejected on erroneous chronological grounds at the Schol. in Thuc. 8.109.1.

[32] For Thucydides' relationship to his philosophical intellectual milieu, recent good work includes R. Thomas, 'Thucydides' intellectual milieu and the plague', in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 87–108; D. Shanske, *Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History* (New York, 2007); S. Hornblower, 'Intellectual affinities', in J.S. Rusten (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Thucydides* (Oxford, 2009), 29–88.

[33] W.M. Calder III, 'A fragment of Anaxagoras in Thucydides?', *CQ* 34 (1984), 485–6, at 485, 'I should seclude ἤδη … ἀνῆκεν. χειροποίητον makes the gloss redundant. Its sentiment too is suspect … The narrative flows untroubled after excision.'

[34] With K. Maurer, *Interpolation in Thucydides* (Leiden, 1995), 8 n. 15.

[35] Marcellinus 22.6–8. Commentators largely accept its authenticity, often with reservations on its acuity: Gomme ad loc. does not entertain the notion that it is interpolated, but offers that it is 'a somewhat childish instance of "the largest ever"; the largest bonfire'; Rusten ad loc. agrees that it

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passage is found in every manuscript tradition. Additionally, interpolations in Thucydides in the form of additions to the text are quite rare. When they are made, they demonstrably attempt to clarify the syntactic structure Thucydides is using in the Greek.[36] For these reasons, few have followed Calder. Taking the authenticity of 2.77.4 as virtually certain, it represents a unique opportunity to track the historian's incorporation of contemporary philosophy into historiography.

The divine figures prominently in the speeches of both the Plataeans and the Spartans. When the Peloponnesians and their allies arrive in 429 B.C.E. they are met with an immediate embassy from the city, who appeal to the gods and to the oaths sworn—hereditary and local—after the Battle of Plataea that guarantee their freedom and autonomy (2.71.4).[37] The Spartan king Archidamus responds by affirming their right to autonomy, but bids them to return to their prior cause of freeing the Greeks, or at least remain neutral.[38] He advises the Plataeans to evacuate their *polis*. The Spartans will be the guardians of their lands, if only Plataea will demonstrate the boundaries of the land, the number of the trees, and the number of anything else that can be counted (2.72.3).[39] This rather peculiar piece of diplomacy resonates with Peloponnesian policy during the Graeco-Persian Wars. Then too they favoured the voluntary displacement of populations threatened by outside influence.[40] Of course, this was also the period in which Plataea evacuated to the Peloponnese as we saw in the above passages of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. The Plataeans travel to Athens for its consent to the proposal, who in turn remind them of their own ancestral oaths to the Athenians (2.73.3). The contest of oaths continues after the Plataeans reject the Peloponnesian overtures. It is here that Archidamus calls upon the local gods and heroes to witness that it is Plataea who has

is 'indeed not an impressive observation', and rejects the notion that it is an interpolation; Hornblower ad loc. is an exception, and states that it may be a gloss; and Fantasia ad loc. finds the notion that it is an interpolation improbable. Foster (n. 5), 375 n. 21 argues that it is Thucydidean rather than an interpolation on the basis that 'the sentence exhibits Thucydidean prose habits'.

[36] Maurer (n. 34), 7–8 finds that long additions to the text are not convincing in Thucydides. Nor does he identify it as an incorporation of a 'parallel' passage written in the margins.

[37] On the autonomy of Plataea outside of Thucydides, see Diod. Sic. 12.41.2. At Ps.-Dem. 59.98–9 the Lacedaemonians are said to take revenge against Plataea during the attempted Theban invasion and here for Plataea's action immediately after the Graeco-Persian Wars in bringing a suit against the Lacedaemonians, forcing the erasure of Pausanias' name from the tripod and fining them 1,000 talents.

[38] P.A. Stadter, 'Thucydides as a "reader" of Herodotus', in E. Foster and D. Lateiner (edd.), *Thucydides and Herodotus* (Oxford, 2012), 39–63, at 49 maintains that Archidamus' speech is 'a model of sophistry'. For treatments of the exchange, see F.M. Wasserman, 'The speeches of king Archidamus in Thucydides', *CJ* 48 (1953), 193–200, at 198; H.D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (London, 1968), 132–4; Bloedow (n. 2), 43–5; E. Badian, *From Plataea to Potidaea: Studies in the History and Historiography of the Pentacontaetia* (Baltimore, 1993), 109–14. R.D. Luginbill, *Thucydides on War and National Character* (Boulder, 1999), 109–10; P. Debnar, *Speaking the Same Language: Speech and Audience in Thucydides' Spartan Debate* (Ann Arbor, 2001), 96–101.

[39] M.C. Taylor, *Thucydides, Pericles, and the Idea of Athens in the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, 2010), 93–6, for a reading of the proposal in which Archidamus asks the Plataeans to act like the Athenians, with additional bibliography at 95. Stahl (n. 26), 81 rightly notes that the choice for Plataea is not entirely free, as their women and children are in Athens; C. Zatta, 'Conflict, people, and city-space: some *exempla* from Thucydides' *History*', *ClAnt* 30 (2011), 318–50, at 327–8 interprets the offer in light of the unique position the land of Plataea occupies in the cultural imaginary and the Spartan aim to control Plataea to interfere with Athens more easily.

[40] It is their suggestion for the Ionian islands under Persian threat at Hdt. 9.106.3.

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broken the oath (2.74.2).[41] From this point onward, the campaign quietly transitions into full-scale war against Plataea with the aim of punishment and retribution (2.74.2 κολάζεσθαι … τῆς δὲ τιμωρίας), with an appeal to the gods to achieve it.[42]

The siege fails to take the city, leaving the Peloponnesians exhausted by the countermeasures of the Plataeans. As a result, the Peloponnesians 'began preparing for the circumvallation' (2.77.1), but they first attempt to wait for a wind to set the city on fire.[43] If the initial suggestion of Archidamus' that Plataea abandon her *polis* for another land recalls their evacuation during the Graeco-Persian Wars, the firing of the city at the end of this section also conjures up the image of the Persian forces arriving at Plataea and setting the city ablaze on the advice of the Thebans.[44] The allies pile bundles of wood high and encircle the city as far as they can from their elevation, ἀπὸ τοῦ μετεώρου, on the ramp (2.77.3). The result is a superlative statement that 'there arose a blaze as great as had yet been seen at that time, of those that are man-made; for often in the mountains when the forest is rubbed against itself by the winds of its own accord it sends up fire and, from it, flame.'

The intertext borders on simile. It is an ambiguous mirror of the action in front of Plataea of twin mounds of earth, wood, fire and flame.[45] Like Homer, Thucydides uses wind-driven wildfire on the mountain to briefly depart from the battlefield and move into the natural world.[46] And much as in epic, it points to intensified military action. Yet, A 44 is integrated not for the identity of the destruction, as we saw the Homeric similes operate, but for the failure of the war to approximate the force of nature: flames in wildfires surpass those seen in Plataea.

The opposition is marked by the qualification that the fire was the greatest seen that was χειροποίητον, 'man-made'. This is often translated as 'intentional' and

[41] Badian (n. 38), 110–11; M.F. Williams, *Ethics in Thucydides*: *The Ancient Simplicity* (Lanham, MD, 1998), 141, who interprets Archidamus' appeal to the oath as sophistic; D.M. Carter, 'Could a Greek oath guarantee a claim right? Oaths, contracts, and the structure of obligation in classical Athens', in A. Sommerstein and J. Fletcher (edd.), *Horkos*: *The Oath in Greek Society* (Exeter, 2007), 60–72, at 71 argues that the oath sworn by Sparta imposes a claim right on the city; see D. Lateiner, 'Oaths: theory and practice in the *Histories* of Herodotus and Thucydides', in E. Foster and D. Lateiner (edd.), *Thucydides and Herodotus* (Oxford, 2012), 154–84, at 173–4 for the entire series of oaths and counter-oaths; and West (n. 6), 438–47 on the Plataeans' putting Thebans to death at Thuc. 2.5.6, and at 446: '[t]he unresolvable suspicion of perjury gives to the city's sufferings a theological significance'. For the appeal to the region's gods and heroes, see Thuc. 4.87.2. Recall that at 7.18.2 the Peloponnesians recognize that Thebes committed the first injustice in attacking in peacetime and admitted their complicity in this act.

[42] Badian (n. 38), 112–13 assumes Thucydides treats Archidamus' appeal to the gods as rhetorical because of the historian's 'contempt for established Greek religion'. As Debnar (n. 38), 100 notes, he is the only figure to give a speech to the gods in the *History*.

[43] 2.77.2. The small size of the city contributes to the παρ᾽ ἐλπίδα effect of their resistance: Stahl (n. 26), 82–3.

[44] The perversion of the Graeco-Persian Wars relationship is marked not only by the speeches but also by the presence of Plataea's 'wooden wall' (2.75.4) built opposite the mound Sparta creates to attack the city. For the Plataeans as surrogate Athenians, J. Morrison, *Reading Thucydides* (Columbus, 2006), 54.

[45] Classen and Steup on 2.77 argue that it requires an ending such as 'und eine solche Flamme ist wohl schon noch größer gewesen', but this is not present.

[46] There is a similar homology in the *auxesis* at 1.23.3, which foregrounds natural phenomena. For this passage, see W. Furley, 'Thucydides and religion', in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 415–38, at 423; R. Munson, 'Natural upheavals in Thucydides (and Herodotus)', in C.A. Clark, E. Foster and J.P. Hallett (edd.), *Kinesis: The Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion* (Ann Arbor, 2015), 41–59.

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set in contrast with ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου, 'spontaneously' or 'by chance'.[47] For example, the scholiast directs: χειροποίητον: ἔστι γὰρ καὶ αὐτόματος.[48] Yet, elsewhere χειροποίητος always means 'human', 'artificial' or 'man-made'.[49] Compare its use in Philo's *On Dreams* in speaking of an 'onset of conflagration or a thunderbolt or famine, plague, earthquake or as many other things as are terrors human and divine' (125–6 ἢ ὅσα ἄλλα κακὰ χειροποίητα καὶ θεήλατα). 'Man-made' as a definition is preferable too for its return to Thucydides' previous note that the brushwood was piled up quickly because of the many hands at work, διὰ πολυχειρίαν (2.77.3).

The distinction that the intertext implies becomes much clearer when the recognition is made that ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου will not mean 'spontaneously', in terms of a chance unpremeditated impulse, but rather 'intrinsically motivated'.[50] This is a philosophical system in which cause and effect are carefully calibrated, and agency is determined by physical processes and not chance. Moreover, the philosophy of the co-presence of all matter within all matter makes internal motivation a remarkably apt descriptor of Anaxagoras' causal mechanism. Elsewhere, the philosopher is reported to have held that, after the world order came to be and the animals emerged from the earth, the world 'inclined somehow on its own toward its southern part'.[51] Preferable here too is a translation such as 'of its own accord' or 'on its own', which highlights the internal operation of Anaxagorean change instead of chance.[52] The opposition is then between χειροποίητος, 'man-made' and τὸ αὐτόματον, 'internally motivated'. These qualifiers underscore an opposition not of design vs chance but of human and natural theatres of destruction in a manner that would be alien to Anaxagoras.[53] And unlike epic poetry's similes there is a failure of equivalence, and nature overpowers the human. The relative weakness of human ingenuity in comparison with nature's force points forward to the fragility of the Spartan strategy in the absence of wind, and to Thucydides' conception of man-made war as subject to the rhythms of nature.

According to Anaxagoras' theory, the ratio of fire is readily derivable from wood acted upon by a violent wind. Yet, this is hardly the point in its current placement, nor is there clear evidence of dependence on Anaxagorean physics elsewhere in the

[47] V. Gray, 'Thucydides' source citations', *CQ* 61 (2011), 75–90, at 78: it 'encourages us to read the episode in terms of the contrast between *technê* ("design") and *tychê* ("chance")'. Chance plays a crucial role elsewhere in the *History*: L. Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides* (Cambridge, MA, 1975) and D. Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 77, who comments at 1.120.5 on the triumph of chance over rational calculation: 'Within this rather loose and unreliable framework man in Th. is responsible for his own actions. Nothing is assigned (as in Herodotus, for instance) to gods.'

[48] Cf. Schol. in Thuc. 6.36.1 ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου: ἐξ ἀλόγου συμπτώματος.

[49] The fire may be considered 'artificial' because pitch and sulphur are added, as in Procop. *Pers.* 1.7.14 of an 'artificial hill'.

[50] D. Sedley, *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2007), 18 argues that Anaxagoras' use of seeds appears like spontaneous generation but is not: 'Indeed, Theophrastus speaks approvingly of Anaxagoras' doctrine of ubiquitous seeds for precisely this merit—its reduction of the need to postulate spontaneous generation.' Cf. Theophr. *Caus. pl.* 1.5.2–3. At Arist. *Metaph.* 984b12–20, Anaxagoras' theory of *nous* is opposed to chance and to τὸ αὐτόματον.

[51] Transl. A. Laks and G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), D 32 = DK 59 A 67.

[52] *DGE* I.1 'que actúa por sí mismo, por propia voluntad o impulso'. The substantive is used at Hdt. 2.66.4 of a cat's death: 'it dies from natural causes' (ἀποθάνῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου), i.e. from internal causes. Cf. too Hdt. 2.14.2, 8.37.2, 8.138.2, for translation as 'of x's own motion'.

[53] The opposition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations holds too at Thuc. 6.91.7: οἷς τε γὰρ ἡ χώρα κατεσκεύασται, τὰ πολλὰ πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὰ μὲν ληφθέντα, τὰ δ' αὐτόματα ἥξει. Cf. 6.36.2, on which C.F. Smith, *Commentary on Thucydides Book 6* (Boston, 1913), ad loc. notes: 'ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου: of themselves, *sua sponte*'.

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History. The proof that 'everything is within everything' through wildfire may have historiographical allure for the historian regardless. It is precisely the *absence* of the wind that is required to spark the wildfire that will deny the Spartans and the Thebans their repetition of the Graeco-Persian Wars' conflagration of Plataea. The narrator's counterfactual confirms this, by stating that, if a wind had arisen as the Peloponnesians expected, Plataea would have been lost.[54] The disanalogy of the inset Anaxagorean fragment with the narrative is not simply the flame's intensity but also the failure of the wind to advance the conflagration and to bring about a fuller parallel destruction. In this sense, the appeal to Anaxagoras' wildfire over Homer's is in part due to Anaxagoras' physicalist understanding of cause and effect, which Thucydides employs to increase the urgency of his counterfactual.

The absence of divine motivation is distinctive to Anaxagoras' physics, and 2.77.4 affirms the capricious power of the fire on the mountain. As a philosophy explicitly interested in causation, and as a conscious revision of the epic connotation of wildfire as a divine event, it sounds a jarring note in light of Archidamus' earlier appeal to divine punishment. If the natural world is governed by strict laws and principles of order, it is contingent from the human perspective. So too, Thucydides' counterfactual πνεῦμα ἐπίφορον suggests that, if the wind had so inclined, Plataea would have been lost.[55] The absence of providential elements and the contingency of the wind recurs in the context of stasis at Corcyra. There, the oligarchs set fire to houses and apartments to stop the demos from taking their revenge upon them, burning both their own and the opposition's property to block their access. The narrative continues: 'the entire city ran the risk of destruction if a wind had inclined to enflame it' (3.74.2 ἡ πόλις ἐκινδύνευσε πᾶσα διαφθαρῆναι, εἰ ἄνεμος ἐπεγένετο τῇ φλογὶ ἐπίφορος ἐς αὐτήν). Thucydides' reuse of the counterfactual re-echoes the contingency of escape from destruction. There is no clear divine sign to be interpreted in either episode.

In light of this preparation, it is a surprise that the close of the passage comes with a *deus ex machina*: 'Now this also is said to have occurred, that a great rain from heaven and thunder arose to extinguish the blaze and so in this way the danger ceased' (2.77.6).[56] Thucydides does qualify the narrative with the distancing 'it is said'.[57] None the less, the conclusion seems to depart from the more austere rationalism with which the historian has often been associated. As the episode began with entreaties to the divine from both the Plataeans and the Spartans, it is hard to argue that divine intervention is *not* alluded to by these anonymous sources. The rain is said to come 'from heaven', ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, and the thunder is entirely unnecessary for extinguishing the fire.[58]

[54] 2.77.5. For closure by barely escaping danger, H.-P. Stahl, 'The dot on the "i": Thucydidean epilogues', in A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki (edd.), *Thucydides between History and Literature* (Göttingen, 2013), 309–28, at 321. T. Rood, *Thucydides*: *Narrative and Explanation* (Oxford, 1998), 279–82 on the rhetoric of 'what might have been'.

[55] This need not mean that no wind was present; it is likely the Peloponnesians waited for it, as the genitive absolute is probably not conditional, but better understood as temporal: εἰ δύναιντο πνεύματος γενομένου. Wind is often interpreted as a random phenomenon in the *History*: S. Flory, 'Thucydides' hypotheses about the Peloponnesian War', *TAPhA* 118 (1988), 43–56, at 54.

[56] Gray (n. 47), 79 finds it attributed to chance through the verb ξυμβῆναι, though this interpretation is less likely given the emplotment in terms of divine motivation.

[57] See n. 4 above.

[58] E.g. the comedic play on the popular conception of rain and thunder at Ar. *Nub*. 367–8, 373–4. The phrase is often used of divine signs: Polyaenus, *Strat*. 7.12, Darius invokes Apollo, and the god hears and sends 'rain from heaven', ὕδωρ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ; Arr. *Anab*. 1.17.5–6, Alexander considers building a temple to Olympian Zeus and a sudden thunderstorm breaks out, which he interprets as

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If we turn to previous and near-contemporary treatments of this causal paradigm, it is possible to contextualize the inclusion of the thunderstorm. It has long been observed that the scene has a parallel in the Croesus–Cyrus *logos* as reported by Herodotus.[59] Following the Persian ruler's decision to spare Croesus from death by fire, the historian relates (Hdt. 1.87.1–2):

> Then it is said (λέγεται) by the Lydians that when Croesus learned of Cyrus' change of mind and saw that, although all the men were trying to extinguish the fire, they could not stop it … he called upon the god [Apollo] while crying, and from a clear and calm sky suddenly the clouds gathered, a storm broke out, it rained copiously and the fire was extinguished.

As Thucydides after him, Herodotus qualifies the narrative with the source citation 'it is said'. According to the Lydians, Croesus called upon Apollo in the passage to save him if he had done anything pleasing to the god and if he met with a result that suggested his dedications in the temples of Greece were viewed favourably. The salvation of Croesus is further emphasized by the clarification that immediately prior to the downpour the sky was clear.[60]

An even closer counterpart to the storm at Plataea can be identified in Euripides' fragmentary *Alcmene*.[61] In the tragedy, the eponymous character takes refuge from her husband, Amphitryon, at an altar. In his absence, she is tricked by Zeus and becomes pregnant. From fourth-century South Italian vases we can reconstruct what followed: Amphitryon believed that his wife had been unfaithful and attempts to punish her. Alcmene flees to an altar to escape his wrath.[62] There, her husband stacks up firewood against the altar and sets it alight. This finally prompts Zeus into action, and he sends a violent and sudden thunderstorm to extinguish the fire as a divine sign of his favour for Alcmene. The storm saves her from Amphitryon's wrath at her unwitting infidelity and probably resulted in the epiphany of the divine.[63] The force of the storm was clearly

a divine sign. Cf. Aristid. *Hieroi Logoi* 4.329. Hornblower ad loc. suggests that the thunder is a vindication of the claim that Thebes has perjured itself in invading Plataea in a time of peace: 'thunder was not worth mentioning unless it was seen by some as an indication of the attitude of Zeus. It would surely have been taken to show that Zeus was on the side of the Plataians, which would suggest, not only that the Plataians had not offended him, but that the Thebans had.' In an Athenian decree from 418/417, *IG* I^3 84, there is preserved: καὶ τẽς τάφρο καὶ τõ ὕδατος κρατẽν τõ ἐγ Διὸς τὸν μισθοσάμενον. This demonstrates that rainwater is commonly viewed as 'water from Zeus', adding force to the interpretation that 'water from heaven' would imply 'water from Zeus' to Thucydides' contemporaries.

[59] Grant (n. 3), 86 is typical: 'To this completed account Thucydides adds a Croesus-like storm which put an end to the danger, introduced, to be sure, by λέγεται, but by its inclusion revealing Thucydides' taste for melodrama, and showing that the austere scientist was not always in the driver's seat.' Cf. Bacchyl. 3.53–6.

[60] M. Dillon, *Omens and Oracles: Divination in Ancient Greece* (New York, 2017), 183: 'Lightning and thunder from a clear sky were irrefutably signs of heaven's favour.'

[61] West (n. 6), 441 notes the parallel summarily but concludes pessimistically at 442 that it is 'a pity that the latter's date is quite uncertain'. Even if it is uncertain that the Plataeans knew it, doubtless Thucydides' audience did.

[62] So too the Plataeans surrender as suppliants at the end of the siege, 3.58.3 and 3.59.2.

[63] *LIMC* i.556 s.v. 'Alkmene'; see also A.B. Cook, *Zeus*, vol. 3.1 (Cambridge, 1940), 'Pyre-extinguishing rain', 506–24. For the tragedy's connection with the *Lysistrata*, C.A. Faraone, 'Salvation and female heroics in the parodos of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*', *JHS* 67 (1997), 38–59, at 40–1. C. Hahnemann, 'Mount Oita revisited: Sophokles' *Trachiniai* in light of the evidence of Aischylos' *Herakleidai*', *ZPE* 126 (1999), 67–73, at 71–2 for the argument that Aeschylus' *Herakleidai* included the narrative of his apotheosis with a reference to being 'showered', κἀξηιονήθην, by the intervention of Zeus.

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unusual. In Plautus' *Rudens*, a character exclaims: 'By the immortal gods, Neptune sent us | quite the storm last night! | The wind de-roofed our house. But what am I saying? | It was not wind but in truth the *Alcmene* of Euripides, | it hurled down all the roof tiles from the house with such force; | it made it all brighter and it gave us windows' (83–8).

The *History* too conjures up the image of heaping up a pyre at Plataea. The Peloponnesians carry bundles of wood to the ramp's gap and 'heap over along' (ἐπιπαρένησαν) the bundles around the rest of the city as best they can. This last verb is a hapax legomenon in Greek, but its root is νέω, which is regularly used of heaping up a pyre. We can compare its use in the plague narrative, where Thucydides relates how burial rituals became disordered from the mass deaths: 'as for the pyres others built, some set their corpse on the funerary pyre, beating those heaping it up to it (φθάσαντες τοὺς νήσαντας), others cast on the corpse they had brought from above and left, when another body was already burning on it' (2.52.4). If the narrative does point to the heaping of a pyre and its burning in the context of the defeat of one's enemies, Thucydides is not alone in using this imagery; it is also present in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, when the men's leader attempts to ring the acropolis with wood and burn the women who are revolting. He proposes: 'let's burn them all with our own hands after we heap up a single pyre' (269–70 μίαν πυρὰν νήσαντες ἐμπρήσωμεν αὐτόχειρες | πάσας).[64]

The firing of Plataea as an impious pyre and the prior appeal of Archidamus' to divine punishment sets the storm in a particular network of interpretation in which the divine would have been an obvious agent. Thunder in particular was associated with divine disfavour for an army campaign. It often was interpreted as a sign of the impending destruction of an army by Zeus.[65] Its negative connotations before a campaign are lampooned to comedic effect in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, where the *coryphaeus* affirms that (579–83):[66]

> If there is an army expedition setting out with no sense (μηδενὶ ξὺν νῷ) | then we thunder or bring rain. | And when you were choosing as your general | that Paphlagonian tanner, the one hated by the gods, | we knitted our brows and took it horribly—thunder erupted | from the lightning.

In this tradition of interpretation, the recurrence of the firing of Plataea is narrowly averted by the intervention of the divine. The salvation of Plataea would apparently confirm that it is the Spartans who broke the oaths they invoked in anticipation of their attack on the city. In this sense, Thucydides does integrate divinely and non-divinely motivated events ambiguously. Even with the source citation, the narrative would show a 'willingness to suggest that divine will might be involved in the cause of physical processes'.[67] This point thus has significant implications for our understanding of the historian's method.

[64] Cf. Ar. *Lys*. 324, ὑπό τ' ἀνέμων ἀργαλέων Henderson, and the action of the women in dousing the men holding the torch much as the Hyades douse the pyre in the Italian vase tradition; also *Lys.* 350–1. The entire passage on the firing of the Acropolis may parody the *Alcmene* of Euripides, for which note the cautious conclusion of Faraone (n. 63), 41.

[65] For a compilation of omens arising from thunder and lightning in warfare, see W.K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War, Part III: Religion* (Berkeley, 1979), 119–22. See too W. Furley, *Andokides and the Herms: A Study of Crisis in Fifth-Century Athenian Religion* (London, 1996), 96; Dillon (n. 60), 182–4 with references.

[66] Cf. Ar. *Ach*. 170–1 for the raindrop as a 'sign of Zeus' (διοσημία) and Eupolis, fr. 99 K.–A., which preserves criticism of an unknown demagogue in the *Demes* who outrageously threatened the generals at Mantineia with punishment for waiting to begin battle because of the god's thunder (τοῦ θεοῦ βροντῶντος).

[67] Foster (n. 5), 387. The above analysis agrees with the recent work of L. Kallet, 'Thucydides, Apollo, the plague, and the war', *AJPh* 134 (2013), 355–82, in which she argues that Thucydides includes divine intervention in the *History* as a potential interpretation of the plague. Unlike the

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The juxtaposition of the source citation with Thucydides' counterfactual gives rise to a tension that highlights competing divine and mechanistic explanatory paradigms. The narrator explicitly states that the city was partly unapproachable from the fire and that the inhabitants would not have escaped (2.77.5 οὐκ ἂν διέφυγον) if the right wind had arisen. Thucydides emphasizes the absence of the wind, as in the stasis at Corcyra, while the anonymous informants point to the thunderstorm as the element that rules out the danger to the city. If not necessarily irreconcilable, they do give differing causal emphasis, as the wind has just been associated with mechanistic causation and the thunderstorm would be readily interpreted as divine. Further, the divine closure prompts the clarification, 'and in this way the danger was put to an end' (καὶ οὕτω παυσθῆναι τὸν κίνδυνον). The adverb indicates the potential for the danger to have been avoided at Plataea in another way. The result is not an integration of two causal schemes but their uneasy coexistence.

Elsewhere, the historian only refers to thunderstorms in the Sicilian expedition, and in both instances intervenes in the narrative to reject an interpretation of a divine message in favour of a mechanistic cause. During an attack early in the expedition, a thunder-and-lightning storm falls on the combatants. Thucydides affirms its negative interpretation by the less experienced Athenian soldiers—they were stricken with fear, while 'it seemed to those more experienced that these things occurred at that time of year' (ὥρᾳ ἔτους)—that is, in early winter (6.70.1). Meteorological phenomena are interpreted as signs to decode the gods' will by the inexperienced Athenians. Cooler heads prevail and the Athenians hold the line, driving the Syracusans to retreat. The reverse occurs, poignantly, just before the destruction of the Athenian expedition: after their defeat in the Great Harbour the retreating Athenian army is compelled by the Syracusans, now on the offensive, to force a pass in which their opponents have the higher ground and are thus more strategically placed. The Athenians are unable to capture the height and become disheartened by the failure, which is simultaneously met with a thunderstorm: 'Some thunder and rain, the sort that often occur when the season is fall, from which the Athenians became still more dispirited and thought that everything was happening for their destruction' (7.79.3). The narrator corrects the superstition of the army by explaining the phenomenon as taking place in its regular course owing to the time of year, as the rainy season is in late autumn. Yet, now all of the Athenians make the incorrect inference that seasonal rain is intentional, an envoy of their destruction.[68] Here too there are two causal schemata—divine and mechanistic—that are explicitly opposed to one another. This treatment of thunderstorms confirms the regularity of attributing divine agency to meteorological phenomena, but also demonstrates the narratorial effort to naturalize their interpretation.

Weather phenomena are an important locus for divergent causal paths. This remains the case in the episode immediately following the circumvallation of Plataea, in the context of the naval activity of the Athenian general Phormio near Naupactus. One object behind the juxtaposition is its continuation of the wind-motif in the context of the

plague, in 2.77.4 Thucydides discloses a rival 'mechanistic' interpretation of the failure of the fire to destroy Plataea.

[68] See C.A. Powell, 'Religion and the Sicilian expedition', *Historia* 28 (1979), 15–31, at 31 on this passage: 'The failure of the expeditionary force to escape in 413 from the Great Harbour was due to divination. And the low morale of Athenian troops, which contributed to the final catastrophe, was largely a result of religious fears.' For the parallel loss of morale and the rise of superstition, see B. Jordan, 'Religion in Thucydides', *TAPhA* 116 (1986), 119–47, at 146. Cf. Thuc. 5.103.2.

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opposing forces in the war. At the same time, it also discloses another divergent causal explanation—here concerning Phormio's successes. Phormio is stationed with just twenty ships when a fleet of forty-seven enemy transport vessels appear en route to Acarnania. In order to keep them from reaching their destination, Phormio resolves to attack, despite their superior numbers. The battle of Patras takes the Peloponnesian fleet by surprise and they are forced into fighting on the open sea.[69] Slowly encircling the numerically superior enemy, Phormio waits for a wind to disturb the enemy ships (2.84.3):

> For he expected that they would not remain in their formation, just as infantry on land, but that the ships would fall against one another and that, if a wind were to blow from the Gulf, it would disturb the boats; so he sailed around waiting for the wind which was accustomed to rise up at dawn.

Phormio's strategy in the Corinthian Gulf depends upon his knowledge of the weather conditions and his understanding of their impact on the enemy. When the wind sweeps down, the Peloponnesian fleet becomes, predictably, disordered, and Phormio begins his attack and quickly disables the enemy navy.[70] By contrast, the Lacedaemonians were 'inexperienced men who furnished ships rather less obedient to the steersmen' (2.84.3 ἄνθρωποι ἄπειροι τοῖς κυβερνήταις ἀπειθεστέρας τὰς ναῦς παρεῖχον). The advisers sent out after the disaster markedly fail to interpret the defeat correctly and at first attribute it to their own men's lethargy and lack of training rather than to the experience of the Athenians (2.85.2).[71] Indeed, in the ensuing pre-battle speech of the Spartans they emphasize the element of chance, τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης, in a misguided analysis of the predictable nature of the wind on the sea.[72]

Phormio demonstrates the extent to which meteorological events, as recurrent phenomena, are subject to human manipulation and intelligible through experience. The regularity of the wind in the Gulf puts the episode firmly in the sphere of the rationalizing discourse for which Anaxagoras was later famed in his influencing of Pericles (Plut. *Vit. Per.* 6.1):

> It appears that he [Pericles] became superior to religious superstition, which produces amazement about the things in the heavens for those who are ignorant of the causes of such things (τοῖς αὐτῶν τε τούτων τὰς αἰτίας ἀγνοοῦσι) and are crazy about divine intervention

[69] For this passage as pitting the intention (γνώμη) of the Peloponnesians against probabilities anticipated by Phormio, see J. de Romilly, *Histoire et raison chez Thucydides* (Paris, 1956), 125–8, 172.

[70] This is generally interpreted as playing a solely strategic role through Phormio's knowledge of regional weather conditions (e.g. Hornblower on 2.83.3 and 2.84.2). For the manipulation of the wind in a sea-battle, cf. Plut. *Vit. Them.* 14.2–4.

[71] In speech it is attributed to chance and inexperience, 2.87.2. See G. Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity: The Limits of Political Realism* (Berkeley, 1998), 45–6. On the historical question of the wind as a strategically manipulated element by Phormio, see J. Morton, *The Role of the Physical Environment in Ancient Greek Seafaring* (Boston, 2001), 91–7 and 91 n. 37.

[72] With Rood (n. 54), 130: 'It is a mistake, in a naval context, to attach so much importance to numbers—and to be angered by a subversion of traditional land values.' For analysis of the passage, see Stahl (n. 26), 87; V. Hunter, 'Thucydides, Gorgias, and mass psychology', *Hermes* 114 (1986), 412–29, at 416–18. The Spartans' first attempts at sea are characterized as unsuccessful: E. Millender, 'Sparta and the crisis of the Peloponnesian League in Thucydides' *History*', in S. Forsdyke, E. Foster and R. Balot (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (Oxford, 2017), 81–98, at 87–90. Another serious but abortive attempt is made by the Spartans to take the port of Piraeus by surprise at 2.93. It is clear that it would have devastated Athens, but the Peloponnesians in the end decide against sailing to the port because of their fear of danger, and it is said (λέγεται) that *some wind* prevented it (2.93.4). The narratorial assessment of their failure borders on derision in a counterfactual stating that, if they had not been so willing to delay, they could have easily taken the Piraeus, 'and no wind could have prevented it' (2.94.1).

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and disturbed by their inexperience of these things (καὶ ταραττομένοις δι' ἀπειρίαν αὐτῶν), which a philosophical account of nature removes—instead of fearful and enflamed superstition it produces steadfast reverence with good hope.

This reception of Anaxagoras highlights his reputation in fifth-century Athens as the philosopher responsible for the rationalism with which Pericles was often associated. The assessment focusses on the correct analysis of causation as the source of the statesman's sangfroid. It is particularly inexperience and ignorance that give rise to superstition and a commitment to the role of the divine in human history. An understanding of those patterns through natural philosophy's guidance replaces this inexperience with a doctrine of mechanist cause and effect. Nor does this lead to any thoroughgoing abandonment of the state religion; as Stadter notes, 'The anecdote does not actually show Pericles rising above superstition, or the superiority of Anaxagoras' science … but does indicate that Pericles balanced religious interpretation with scientific investigation'.[73]

In Thucydides' exposure of the success of the Athenians through their experience and understanding of meteorological phenomena and in the failure of Sparta to recognize their defeat as arising from their own lack of experience, the narrative reveals a progressive commitment to the rationalization of meteorological phenomena.[74] Significantly, this assessment is tempered by the battle's ambiguous coda. After the Athenian naval victory, Thucydides makes a rare reference to thanks given to the divine for their victory, reporting that the Athenians dedicated one of the twelve captured ships to Poseidon at Rhion (2.84.4 ναῦν ἀναθέντες τῷ Ποσειδῶνι) in recognition of the god of the sea and, presumably, of its winds. Such dedications are frequent in the material record but are not regularly noted in the *History*.[75] Its placement here may indicate Thucydides' willingness to record the political regularity—and the casualness—of attributing victory to divine favour. Thucydides' theatre of war, with its ambiguous attribution of causation, reinforces the tension of divine and mechanistic causality. Though the text has explicitly attributed the victory of the Athenians to the experience of Phormio and to the training of the Athenians, still, the historian includes a reference to the Athenians' dedication to Poseidon as a cause of the victory against the numerical odds.

CONCLUSIONS

Appeals to Graeco-Persian War oaths and to divine revenge for their infringement structure the onset of the siege of Plataea. The question of the justice and injustice of these claims invites comparison with the narrative that follows.[76] The episode climaxes in the Peloponnesian attempt to fire the city, and its extinguishment avoids a repeat of the city's destruction by fire at the behest of Thebes in the Graeco-Persian Wars. This

[73] P.A. Stadter, *A Commentary on Plutarch's* Pericles (Chapel Hill, 1989), 6.2. Cf. Pl. *Phdr*. 270a.

[74] For the narrator's rationalization of weather phenomena, see also 2.28, 3.88.3, 3.89.4–5, 7.79.3 and V. Pothou, 'Transformation of landscapes in Thucydides', in A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki (edd.), *Thucydides between History and Literature* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 167–80, at 174–7.

[75] The dedication of a ship is only elsewhere noted of the Peloponnesians after the naval battle immediately following at 2.92. For the Athenian dedication, cf. Diod. Sic. 12.48, who confuses the strait with the temple at Rhion. On spoils dedicated after naval battles, see Pritchett (n. 65), 281–5. The temple of Poseidon at Rhion is guaranteed by Strabo 8.2.3.

[76] For Stadter (n. 38), 50, the 'issue of competing claims of justice' is an important theme of this exchange.

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reprieve for the city gives rise to two opposing causal narratives: first, that the fire died through the absence of a wind to spread it; second, that the fire was put out by a thunderstorm, signalling divine favour for Plataea.

The inclusion of a fragment of Anaxagoras shifts the centre of narration momentarily away from the war, much as epic's simile of the forest fire. This ordered system of cause and effect reflects the action on the battlefield as a parallel conflagration taking place in an analogous space. The wind that inexorably sets fire to the mountain would also have motivated the destruction of Plataea. Far from the divine mechanism of epic and tragic causation, Thucydides' Anaxagoras instead places causation on a human plane by providing a mechanistic theory of change. The marginal power of the Peloponnesian flame, despite its ingenuity, reflects the power of this sphere of nature and, a fortiori, the necessity of the wind at Plataea to be present for the flame to destroy the city.

The regularity and the predictability of meteorological phenomena clash with divine motivation in the passage immediately following, in Phormio's success against the inexperienced forces of the Peloponnesian navy. In this episode, the subsequent thanksgiving to Poseidon sits rather uneasily next to the text's pointed reference to the experience of the general, yet the narrator makes no effort to homogenize the duelling positions. The inclusion of mutually exclusive divine and human causations is a 'dialogic' narrative choice.[77] Opposed voices constitute a polyvocal chorus of historical action. Thucydides is seldom considered a partner in the 'profusion of discourses' which his predecessor in historiography, Herodotus, is credited with.[78] If this more dialogic Thucydides is accepted, then the historian's treatment of the Plataean siege made no effort to avoid the memory of the Graeco-Persian Wars nor the method of their written memorial.[79]

Agnes Scott College K. SCARLETT KINGSLEY
kkingsley@agnesscott.edu

[77] For the dialogism of Herodotus, see E.J. Bakker, 'The making of history: Herodotus' *Historiēs apodexis*', in E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong and H. van Wees (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 2002), 3–32, at 18; C. Dewald, 'I didn't give my own genealogy', in E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong and H. van Wees (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 2002), 267–90, at 276; D. Boedeker, 'Pedestrian fatalities: the prosaics of death in Herodotus', in P. Derow and R. Parker (edd.), *Herodotus and his World: Essays from a Conference in Memory of George Forrest* (Oxford, 2003), 17–36; V. Zali, *The Shape of Herodotean Rhetoric: A Study of the Speeches in Herodotus'* Histories *with Special Attention to Books 5–9* (Leiden, 2015), 305–10.

[78] Boedeker (n. 77), 31, cited by E. Baragwanath, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford, 2008), 20 n. 57.

[79] On dialogism and Thucydides, see C. Dewald, *Thucydides' War Narrative: A Structural Study* (Berkeley, 2005), 15–22 and especially 20: 'the narrative structure of Thucydides' *History* is fashioned out of Thucydides' determination to convey to us, his readers, that what is narrated is not one story, or a story from one standpoint, but an account that seriously tries to take account of multiple consciousnesses of many different actors who in real time reacted to each other, with many different aims and opinions and ways of proceeding.' More wary is E. Greenwood, 'Fictions of dialogue in Thucydides', in S. Goldhill (ed.), *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008), 15–28, at 27: 'Although I find it hard to accept the concept of Thucydides' narrative being committed to "responsible dialogism", I am still willing to agree that dialogism may be a byproduct of Thucydides' narrative'; G. Mara, 'Political philosophy in an unstable world: comparing Thucydides and Plato on the possibilities of politics', in R. Balot, S. Forsdyke and E. Foster (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook to Thucydides* (Oxford, 2017), 531–48, at 534: 'Thucydides' own *logos* takes other *logoi* seriously, while nonetheless subjecting them to a critical examination that is more provocative than decisive.'

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