*Journal of Hellenic Studies* 131 (2011) 45–66 doi:10.1017/S0075426911000048

# *MYTHOS* AND *LOGOS*

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**Abstract:** While the simplistic thesis of Greek progress from *mythos* to *logos* in the form stated by Wilhelm Nestle is rightly rejected, some aspects of the emerging new consensus are open to challenge. '*Mythos*' corresponds in important ways to modern 'myth' and Greek *logos*, with which it is contrasted, stands at the beginning of an unbroken tradition of Western rationalism. The semantic history of the terms is freshly analyzed, with particular attention to the contribution of pre-Socratic philosophers, Herodotos and Sophists, but looking forward also to Hellenistic and Imperial writers. The 'invention of mythology' is dated to the middle of the fifth century, not the end. Plato's complicated stand on the issue is interpreted as a reaction to Sophistic views.

The defeat of myth by reason, of *mythos* by *logos*, was once considered a central part of the 'Greek miracle'. Critics for some time now have debunked this simplistic notion of triumphant progress, on good grounds; but as often happens in such cases, there is a risk of going too far in the other direction. One part of the new consensus, for instance (insofar as one exists), is the denial of any essential relationship between the ancient idea of *mythos* and modern notions of myth.[1] Other aspects too seem open to challenge. Though one or two recent writers have sought to move the pendulum back to the centre,[2] the whole territory needs a fresh survey to see how much, if anything, of the old story might be worth saving. The abiding importance of the topic is clear, not only for understanding Greek culture but for historicizing rationality.

I begin with the old story and its difficulties, which are well illustrated by the case of Herodotos. Section II begins the re-evaluation, surveying the *mythos*/*logos* dichotomy of the ancient vulgate from the fourth century BC on; this vulgate is broadly consistent, in innumerable texts, and justifies the appropriation of the terms by modern proponents of the traditional schema. This vulgate has been underappreciated in these discussions; the point is it was not created *ex nihilo*, but developed from classical roots. Section III then traces the history of the term *mythos* and its sociology in the Classical period, it is hoped more accurately and profitably than hitherto. Section IV focuses on the crucial contributions of the Sophists and their nemesis Plato, with further thoughts on Herodotos. We shall find that the 'invention' of mythology must be placed two generations earlier than often thought, in the middle of the fifth century, not at its end. Section V offers conclusions and reflections on the history of this debate.[3]

* robert.fowler@bristol.ac.uk. This paper has taken several forms over the last decade, having first been delivered as a keynote address at the Classical Association of Canada meeting at the University of Waterloo in May 2001. I am grateful for discussion with the audience on that occasion, as later at Bristol, Harvard, Thessaloniki and Tokyo. For useful criticism I thank also Richard Buxton, Robert Parker and *JHS*'s readers.

[1] Three quotations from a recent volume, U. Dill and C. Walde (eds), *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen* (Festschrift F. Graf) (Berlin and New York 2009), seem representative: 'It is commonly understood that the Greek term *mythos* means something entirely different from modern definitions of "myth"' (P.T. Struck, 25; 'entirely' is the issue); 'We must underline once more that "myth" and "religion" are not concepts native to the Greek language' (V. Pirenne-Delforge, 38; I agree about 'religion' but am less concerned than others about the supposed difficulty); 'In ancient Greece, myth never was recognized as a particular narrative category or form of thought' (C. Calame, 658; I agree about 'form of thought' if it means 'mentality'). Struck's paper, 'The invention of mythic truth in antiquity', outlines strategies of thoughtful ancients to deal with – the category of myth.

[2] B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton 2002); D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar. Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2007).

[3] In spite of the disagreement about first stages, I owe most, among all treatments of this subject, to M. Detienne, *L'invention de la mythologie* (Paris 1981) =

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426911000048 Published online by Cambridge University Press

## I. *Mythos* and *logos*: Herodotos and the received version

The traditional story – itself a kind of myth – sees Herodotos as a waystation on the Greek journey to rationalism, in which the age of myth gave way to the age of reason or *logos.* According to this story, the opening pages of the *Histories* are a lesson in the shortcomings of mythology: various tales, belonging to the category we now call myth, are advanced as an explanation of how the Greeks and barbarians first came to blows, only to be summarily dismissed: 'I shall not say whether these events took place in one way or another; rather, I shall indicate the man whom I personally know to have been the first to wrong the Greeks, and carry on with my account [*logos*], telling of great and small cities alike'.[4] Herodotos then relates the story of Kroisos, king of Lydia, thus delimiting the upper end of his history's chronological frame in the mid-sixth century, a time still accessible to living memory when the historian was a young man.[5] True, Herodotos does not label the stories he declines to adjudicate 'myths' (though he does call his own account a *logos*) and his language is, strictly speaking, agnostic: he doesn't say whether these stories are true or false, only that he prefers to talk about what he can know. Nonetheless, a methodological principle is being enunciated here, and it is significant that, programatically at the outset of his history, Herodotos designates such stories as unknowable: it is reasonable to suppose that he is saying something about the whole class of stories to which these ones belong. A critical space is opening up between ancient and modern: the old tales cannot deliver what is required because they are not verifiable. The historian wants to be in a position to test the truth of things, according to explicit criteria which are themselves subject to argument and testing.

Herodotos elsewhere uses a striking phrase, the 'human age', when speaking of events of the mid-sixth century: 'Polykrates is the first Greek we know of who conceived the plan of ruling the sea – except for Minos of Knossos or anybody before him who commanded the sea; but of the so-called human age, Polykrates was the first'.[6] Before the human age, the age of gods or offspring of gods: an age of myth. Here again we have the emphasis on knowledge, which links back to the opening programme. So does the word 'human'. The quotation of 1.5 continues: '...great and small cities alike; for those which were great in ancient times, have mostly become small, whereas those which are great in my day used to be small. *Knowing* then that *human*

*The Creation of Mythology*, tr. M. Cook (Chicago and London 1986); later thoughts in *Les grecs et nous* (Paris 2005) = *The Greeks and Us,* tr. J. Lloyd (Cambridge 2007). See also *L'Écriture d' Orphée* (Paris 1989) = *The Writing of Orpheus. Greek Myth in Cultural Context*, tr. J. Lloyd (Baltimore and London 2003) chapters 1–4, 14. Though acknowledging the roots of 'mythology' in the mythographers, Herodotos and especially Thucydides, Detienne emphatically makes Plato its inventor, in part because he is the first (in surviving sources) to use the noun, but also because of the comprehensiveness of the Platonic concept. Other influential studies are W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (Stuttgart 1940); B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (Hamburg 1946, 1975[4]) = *The Discovery of the Mind*, tr. T. Rosenmeyer (Oxford 1953); J.-P. Vernant, *Les origines de la pensée grecque* (Paris 1962, 1981[4]) = *The Origins of Greek Thought* (London 1982); J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* (Paris 1965, 1985[2]) = *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (London 1983); J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1974) = *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, tr. J. Lloyd (Hassocks 1979, New York 1990[2]); P. Veyne, *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?* (Paris 1983) = *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, tr. P. Wissing (Chicago and London 1988); R. Buxton (ed.), *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford 1999); H.-G. Nesselrath, 'Mythos – Logos – Mytho-Logos: Zum Mythos-Begriff der Griechen und ihrem Umgang mit ihm', in P. Rusterholz and R. Moser (eds), *Form und Funktion des Mythos in archaischen und modernen Gesellschaften* (Berner Universitätsschriften 41) (Bern 1999) 1–26.

[4] 1.5.3: Ἐγὼ δὲ περὶ μὲν τούτων οὐκ ἔρχομαι ἐρέων ὡς οὕτως ἢ ἄλλως κως ταῦτα ἐγένετο, τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς πρῶτον ὑπάρξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας, τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου ὁμοίως μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών (Rosen's Teubner text).

[5] On Herodotos' temporal horizon and its implications for the construction of the *Histories*, see P. Vannicelli, *Erodoto e la storia dell' alto e medio arcaismo* (Rome 1993).

[6] 3.122.2: Πολυκράτης γάρ ἐστι πρῶτος τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν Ἑλλήνων, ὃς θαλασσοκρατέειν ἐπενοήθη, πάρεξ Μίνω τε τοῦ Κνωσσίου καὶ εἰ δή τις ἄλλος πρότερος τούτου ἦρξε τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς δὲ ἀνθρωπηίης λεγομένης γενεῆς Πολυκράτης πρῶτος...

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426911000048 Published online by Cambridge University Press

prosperity never abides, I shall tell of both alike'.[7] The cycle of human history is a central theme of his book; the great and equally programmatic story of Solon is coming up shortly in the tale. There is a human nature, and a human time on earth.

Before that time, the discourse simply belongs to a different category. Herodotos does not so much criticize myth in his opening pages directly as decline even to enter into discussion. The point is unknowability rather than falsehood, as already noted, but a story that would claim to be true must find it a handicap, to say the least, to be branded 'unknowable'. The point recurs in Herodotos' discussion of the flooding of the Nile, another passage rich in methodological implications. Famously, he remarks, 'The man who spoke of Ocean has transferred his theory into the realm of the invisible, and offers no chance of refutation. I at any rate know of no river Ocean. Homer or one of his predecessors, I think, invented this name and introduced it into poetry'.[8] The word I have translated 'theory' is μῦθος, *mythos*: here is the very word, coupled with the explicit concept of falsifiability. The rejected *mythos*, probably advanced by Hekataios of Miletos,[9] is no better than fantasy, and derives from the fictional, imaginary world of poetry. Herodotos 'knows' of no stream of Ocean surrounding the world and feeding its visible rivers. The one other time he uses the word 'myth' in the *Histories* seems equally revealing. The Greeks (among them Pherekydes of Athens, *EGM fr.* 17) tell a story about Herakles dispatching Bousiris, who sacrificed strangers to Zeus: a particularly silly tale (*euēthēs mythos*), snorts Herodotos, born of simple ignorance of Egyptian character and customs.[10] Again the emphasis on knowledge and first-hand experience.

On the showing of these passages, thus read, Herodotos does seem to live up to his billing. A construct emerges in which poetry, imaginative myth, gods and unknowable prehistory are on one side of a cognitive and chronological line; on the other side are prose, reasoning (*logos*), humans, empirical investigation and the verifiable facts of recent history. Such a reading is honestly enough come by, it must be agreed: it has seemed natural to many good readers. I shall continue to argue that there is some truth in it. Yet there are obvious difficulties. If Herodotos in 1.5 calls his account a *logos*, that is because it is the word he always uses, for his account and others'. The alleged contradistinction with *mythos* here is a bold importation: he does not use the word μῦθος; it happens that the stories he dismisses are stories *we* call myths, but elsewhere in the *Histories* (for example, 2.118–20) it is clear that he regards the Trojan War as historical. We should perhaps place stress exclusively on the idea of knowability: should the evidence become available that would allow us to know about these more distant events, Herodotos would admit them to the discussion. He is not dismissing the whole class of story, only its utility in the present circumstances. And is there even a class being delineated; and if so, by what right would one call it myth? If the Trojan War was in fact historical, it makes it very hard to see what class is in view; at any rate, its specific difference cannot be in point of historicity, nor therefore in its status as myth. Even the age of gods should not be dubbed an age of myth, if one means by that that the gods are an imaginary construct: Herodotos thought they existed, and when he refers to the 'human age' – literally, the 'human generation' (*geneē*) – perhaps he means no more than a time when procreation took place by human agency alone.[11] So perhaps there is no class at all, only a few stories which happen to be told in a particular context and which are found wanting. 'Myth'

[7] ...ὁμοίως μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών· τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ σμικρὰ αὐτῶν γέγονε, τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμεῦ ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρά. τὴν ἀνθρωπηίην ὦν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμᾶ ἐν τὠυτῷ μένουσαν ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως.

[8] 2.23: ὁ δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ λέξας ἐς ἀφανὲς τὸν μῦθον ἀνενείκας οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον· οὐ γάρ τινα ἔγωγε οἶδα ποταμὸν Ὠκεανὸν ἐόντα, Ὅμηρον δὲ ἤ τινα τῶν πρότερον γενομένων ποιητέων δοκέω τοὔνομα εὑρόντα ἐς ποίησιν ἐσενείκασθαι.

[9] See further below.

[10] 2.45.2: δοκέουσι... φύσιος καὶ τῶν νόμων πάμπαν ἀπείρως ἔχειν οἱ Ἕλληνες.

[11] Yet this already suggests a qualitative and a temporal difference. See below.

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is, after all, our term: though Herodotos uses μῦθος twice in suggestive circumstances, he uses it *only* twice, in spite of having many opportunities to do so. Perhaps the term bears other, less loaded meanings; in the absence of a philological investigation, for all we know *mythos* might differ no more from *logos* than 'tale' does from 'story'.

The problems multiply when we ask what this reading is thought to tell us about Herodotos' position in Greek intellectual history. The same traditional narrative places him in the middle of a continuum formed at one end by the mythographers and at the other end by the severely rational Thucydides, the master historian: prize witness, Thuc. 1.21–22, the great manifesto, in which Thucydides rebukes poets and 'logographers' for their addiction to crowd-pleasing stories (*to mythōdes*); he makes Herodotos' point that these old stories afford no opportunity for refutation, but has (on the commonest reading) precisely Herodotos the entertainer in mind here.[12] So history, while thanking Herodotos for his modest help *en route* to *logos*, soon left him behind among the fabulists. Again, this reading of Herodotos *vis-à-vis* Thucydides is understandable. Few historians have possessed Thucydides' analytical intelligence and many readers have thought his rhetoric justified. But it is hard to make him representative of a new rationalistic age, when one considers the irrational behaviour he himself reports and which is still with us. It is hard too to claim that he put his stamp on the general run of subsequent historiography when you look at its actual practice. Thucydides' achievement was an individual one. Anyway, the received reading is rather unfair to Herodotos. Thucydides thought himself superior to Herodotos, but this remark of his gives no warrant for thinking that he dismissed him as primitive or myth-ridden, and certainly gives no warrant for us so to dismiss him. At the very least one must ask what it means to accuse someone of mythical thinking for whom the 'myths' were history; it must be a very superficial understanding of human intellectual endeavour that diagnoses a fundamentally different psychology on the basis of material which we, for reasons of our own, think Herodotos should have been sceptical about. We too have our myths, for which a future age may no less unreasonably chide us. The first aim of study must be to clarify the terms and criteria used by different ages to assess the phenomena.

Moving beyond historiography, the grand narrative encompasses other branches of knowledge in which the Greeks made a unique contribution: physics, astronomy and other natural sciences, mathematics, medicine, moral and political philosophy. But however one assesses their achievements, a simple linear progression from a wholly barbarous age of primitive, mythical thinking to a wholly civilized and rational one is more self-serving morality tale than history. The thesis staggers under the weight of its own ideology. The rationalism and progress in view here are clearly those of the Enlightenment, whose project, like Western rationalism generally, came in for sustained criticism in the course of the 20th century, with notable precursors in the 19th. The crude idea of 'primitive thought', obvious though it seemed in the early days of anthropology (best known from the brilliant work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl), has lost its credibility, and with it the notion of a 'mythical age' (demonstrably an Enlightenment invention).[13] Some historians would regard fascism as a sinister but not illogical consequence of the Enlightenment's deluded search for perfection through reason, and it is notable that the book most strongly associated with the *mythos* → *logos* narrative, Wilhelm Nestle's *Vom Mythos zum Logos*, published in Stuttgart in 1940, equated the Greek genius with Aryan genius.[14] Fortunately, most versions of this story are

[12] M. Węcowski, 'Friends or foes? Herodotos in Thucydides' preface', in J. Pigo (ed.), *The Children of Herodotos. Greek and Roman Historiography and Related Genres* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2008) 34–57.

[13] Williams (n.2) 151 quotes David Hume 'Of the populousness of ancient nations': 'The first page of Thucydides is, in my opinion, the commencement of real history. All preceding narrations are so intermixed with fable, that philosophers ought to abandon them, in a great measure, to the embellishment of poets and orators'. See further G.W. Most, 'From logos to mythos', in Buxton (n.3).

[14] On page 6 of his book. See Most (n.13) 30. Most notes that Nestle himself does not seem to have been a Nazi and thought his book would be a force for good in his time; but one sees how easily ideas are perverted,

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benign,[15] but it remains a very strong thesis and a textbook example of a grand narrative[16] – perhaps good to think with, but impossible to sustain at the level of detail or in real life. The story for each topic – historiography, philosophy, science, etc. – will look different, often radically so: science, for instance, could not but continue to rely on a great deal of myth-informed guesswork and imagination until well into the modern age – and surely still does. The story will also look different for different kinds of people and for different social situations. What the terms 'rationalism' and 'myth' themselves mean will hardly find ready agreement amongst all participants in the discussion. Even technically defined in dictionaries of philosophy, 'rationalism' takes many forms in the Western tradition; applying the term to historical periods brings further complications – and the term 'Western' reminds us that other parts of the human race might have a different perspective.[17] Finally, the propriety of using the term 'myth' at all has been questioned as imposing a modern category of thought on the ancient material. If this is so, as Richard Buxton remarks, 'we might seem to have reached a point where not only does the "Greek achievement" have about it more of the mirage than the miracle, but where we are actually left *without a vocabulary* for describing the events which were once thought to constitute that achievement'.[18] Needless to say, the scholar who would banish the term has an alternative way of describing the phenomena, so this conclusion is not as desperate as it seems;[19] but we have come a very long way from what seemed obvious to generations of our predecessors, and would seem well advised to abandon this talk of *mythos* and *logos* altogether.

## II. Beginning the rehabilitation. The ancient vulgate

And yet, and yet. The traditional narrative is not made up out of whole cloth. As a myth itself, it conforms to Plato's much-quoted definition at *Rep.* 2.337a: there are two kinds of *logoi*, one false and one true; myths are the false kind, generally speaking, 'though there is some truth in them'.[20] Other passages in Plato make it clear that contemporary discourse recognized *some* kind of distinction between *mythos* and *logos* along the lines of falsehood vs. truth, imagination vs. reality, fictional narrative vs. logical analysis – an understanding of 'myth' which corresponds to ours in obvious ways. *Mythoi* and *logoi* are casually contrasted, as if everyone knew their meaning, at *Gorg.* 505c10 and *Phd.* 61b4; in the latter passage, Aesop's fables are the myths in view (*cf.* Aesch. *fr.* 139 Radt). In the same place, as in many others in Plato, there is a strong association between myth and poetry: myths are what poets tell; and this class of stories in Greek

particularly teleological ones. Nestle wrote an article 'Der Führergedanke in der platonischen und aristotelischen Staatslehre' (*Gymnasium* 48 (1937) 73–89) in which he is studiously silent about the qualities of his own Führer, but warns against the dangers of absolute power. That he wrote two articles in the Nazi organ *Aus Unterricht und Forschung. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift auf nationalsozialistischer Grundlage* is worrying, particularly the second: 'Thukydides als politischer Erzieher' (1934) 157ff.; 'Die Juden in der griechisch-römischen Welt' (1935) 165ff. I regret I have not seen these.

[15] Bruno Snell and Jean-Pierre Vernant (n.3), scholars who advocated the *mythos* → *logos* thesis in different ways, risked their lives in the fight against the Nazis.

[16] On this term, see, for example, N. Morley, *Writing Ancient History* (London 1999) 97–131, 143–50.

[17] The works of G.E.R. Lloyd demonstrate the care one must take in assessing these topics from a monocultural point of view. Apart from monographs such as *The Ambitions of Curiosity: Understanding the World in Ancient Greece and China* (Cambridge 2002) and *Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections: Philosophical Perspectives on Greek and Chinese Science and Culture* (Oxford 2004), see his contribution to Buxton's volume (n.3) 'Mythology: reflections from a Chinese perspective', 145–65.

[18] Buxton (n.3) 11 (his emphasis). I owe much to Buxton's lucid introduction (which makes several of the points in this paragraph).

[19] C. Calame, in *Mythe et histoire dans l'Antiquité grecque* (Lausanne 1996) = *Myth and History in Ancient Greece*, tr. D. Berman (Princeton 2003); see also 'The rhetoric of *muthos* and *logos*: forms of figurative discourse', in Buxton (n.3) 119–43 and 'Greek myth and Greek religion', in R. Woodard (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (Cambridge 2008) 259–85, with further references. Calame would speak instead of narrative/discursive symbolic representations.

[20] a5: ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ.

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society is nearly coterminous with 'the Greek myths', in our terms. The association seems uncontentious and commonplace to Plato's interlocutors. At *Prot.* 320c, the eponymous sophist offers a choice of *mythos* and *logos*; the former turns out to be an imaginative tale, the latter logical arguments. At *Gorg.* 523a, Sokrates' myth of the afterlife is introduced as a 'fine *logos*' which he expects his interlocutor will regard as a *mythos*, 'but to me it is a *logos* because it is true'. In the *Timaios*, the Egyptian priest says of the Greek story of Phaethon that, though it has the form of a *mythos*, it is true when properly understood (22c7). *Logoi* are contrasted with *mythoi* in point of veracity at *Rep.* 522a, *Crat.* 408c, *Tim.* 26c and 26e4 (the last passage stressing also the notion of fiction, *plastheis mythos* as opposed to *alēthinos logos*). Of course, there are other well-known passages (to which I return below in section IV) in which the boundaries are blurred, and these are exceedingly tricky to interpret; nonetheless, the passages cited here amount to a peg in the ground that will not budge, an anchor for interpretation. The simple contrast of *mythos* and *logos* is not cancelled or neutralized by the other passages: on the contrary, it provides their context. They are to be interpreted in the light of the premiss that, in a basic way, the contrast exists.

Plato's subtle approach to the topic gave way to Aristotle's more straightforward usage, which is comparable to that found in most writers after him, and, I would argue, is based on trends already in evidence before. Mythical accounts, in this vulgate, are false because misinformed or invented, but not for all that without their uses when analytically treated, that is to say treated by *logos*, to which they are subordinate. At *MA* 699a 27–32, for instance, the story of Atlas is a myth which *logos* can turn to advantage.[21] Strategies such as those of Euhemeros or Palaiphatos to decode the stories (subjecting *mythos* to *logos* in other words) permitted the identification of primeval truth subsequently (or originally) obscured by mythologizing, rather like Aristotle in Johansen's analysis.[22] By the end of Aristotle's life the term 'mythography' existed to denote that branch of prose literature which recorded, precisely, the Greek myths.[23] Historians thereafter routinely use myth-words to denote the period down to either the Trojan War or the Return of the Herakleidai (the difference is immaterial). No one outright denies the actual existence of figures such as Theseus, but after Thucydides' *mythōdes* historians have to take a stand on these stories, as a question mark hangs over them.[24] Typically they accept the basic historicity, but remove the mythical accretions (for which the poets bear the blame) to render them usable for various purposes. Polybios, for instance, denounces the mythical, but accepts the basic traditions implied

[21] T.K. Johansen, 'Myth and *logos* in Aristotle', in Buxton (n.3) 279–91 (this passage at 285). See also T. Vassilacou-Fassea, 'L'usage du mythe chez Aristote', *Kernos* 15 (2002) 67–74.

[22] For an overview of the Greek tradition of rationalization, see J. Stern, *Palaephatus ΠΕΡΙ ΑΠΙΣΤΩΝ: On Unbelievable Tales* (Wauconda IL 1996) 7–16; further on Palaiphatos, J. Stern, 'Rationalizing myth: methods and motives in Palaephatus', in Buxton (n.3) 215–22; on Euhemeros in particular, M. Winiarczyk, *Euhemeros von Messene. Leben, Werk und Nachwirkung* (Munich and Leipzig 2002). On the strategy of allegorical interpretation, beginning according to tradition with Theagenes of Rhegion's reading of Homer in the late sixth century, see, for example, D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford 1992); R. Lamberton and J.J. Keaney (eds), *Homer's Ancient Readers* (Princeton 1992); R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1996); G.R. Boys-Stones (ed.), *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford 2003); J. Stern, 'Heraclitus the Paradoxographer, Περὶ ἀπίστων', *TAPhA* 133 (2003) 51–97, especially 57–60; D. Russell and D. Konstan, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems* (Atlanta 2005); R. Copeland and P.T. Struck (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge 2010).

[23] R. Fowler, '*P.Oxy.* 4458: Poseidonios', *ZPE* 132 (2000) 133–42. For what follows, *cf.* J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge 1997) 117–28; S. Saïd, 'Myth and historiography', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Malden MA 2007) 76–88 at 78.

[24] Not only historians: Isokrates does not share his teacher Plato's paranoia about mythology, and develops his own strategy for rescuing these tales of uncertain truthfulness, one involving symbolic truth; in particular he stresses the authority of tradition, visibly linked on all sides to institutions and monuments in the present. The passages are assembled and discussed by Calame, 'The rhetoric of *mythos* and *logos*' (n.19), but, so far from cancelling the distinction between *mythos* and *logos*, they seem to me at every turn to presume it. Otherwise, why the palaver? *Cf.* T.L. Papillo, 'Isocrates and the use of myth', *Hermathena* 161 (1996) 9–22.

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by various myths.[25] His subject did not oblige him to talk directly about myth very often; Diodoros, on the other hand, chose to include the mythical period in his universal history. In his first five books he uses myth-words hundreds of times for tales of gods and heroes. In the proem to book 4, he tells us how some historians have avoided this early period because of the difficulty of investigating it: the enormously influential Ephoros began his history after the return of the Herakleidai, and Kallisthenes and Theopompos were similar. Diodoros himself finds much edification in the old stories, in whose fundamental truth (when correctly interpreted) he rarely betrays doubt. Yet his stress on moral and symbolic worth shifts the emphasis from simple truth to symbolic truth, a point more explicit, and linked to questions of veracity, in Livy's divagations on the same topic in his proem. Dionysios of Halikarnassos repeats the topos about the difficulty of investigation (*AR* 1.8.1) and also about the benefit that may nonetheless be derived from the study of myth (2.20.1); but his language in the second of these passages implies that, in themselves, myths are fictions. He contrasts 'mythical' and 'true' on several occasions (for example, *AR* 1.39.1, 1.79.1, 2.61.1) and uses 'myth' dozens of times to refer to tales of gods and heroes; once he applies it to tales of the afterlife (*Pomp.* 6.8), once to a story resembling Aesop's fables (*AR* 6.83.2), once to a folktale about an old farmer's stratagem for begetting handsome children (*De imit. verb.* 31.1). He regards the Assyrian dynasty as 'reaching back to the mythical period' (*mythikoi chronoi*, *AR* 1.2.2) and says myths are typical of early historiography because of its preoccupation with local history and foundations (*Thuc.* 5–7).

Strabo's usage is along similar lines (several hundred examples), but he more often than others contrasts 'myth' with 'history'.[26] He is especially clear at 11.5.3: history and myth are usually distinct, he says;[27] old, fictional tales about marvellous beings are called myths, whereas history aims at truth, 'whether about the old or the new'. This qualification is important, as it does away with the argument (above) that Herodotos and others, in stressing the uncertainty of these tales, really say nothing about their truth: uncertainty implies untruth, in practical terms.

The author of the *Parallela minora* in the Plutarchan corpus begins by remarking bluntly that 'Most people think the tales of olden times are fictions and myths because of the improbability of the action.'[28] In 'olden times' he includes both myths, as we would call them, and ancient history: his *spatium mythicum* (or rather, the one he seeks to deny) has a different boundary, a discrepancy which some critics have used to question the usefulness of the term 'myth', but the combination of 'old', 'fiction' and *mythoi* is what matters even if the boundaries do sometimes differ (as is to be expected if knowability is the problem: who can say where the mists of time begin, precisely?). In practice, the boundary doesn't vary much; the genuine Plutarch frequently uses 'myth' to mean 'story about the heroic period', but never, so far as I can see, of any story postdating the return of the Herakleidai, except where it means 'falsehood' (for example, *Adv. Col.* 1125a; *Art.* 1.4). A good Academician, he often contrasts *mythos* and *logos* (for example, *De Is. et Osir.* 374e; *De def. orac.* 420f; *De sera. num. vind.* 563b; *De gen. Soc.* 592f; *De gloria Ath.* 348a). At *fr.* 157.110 and *De Is. et Osir.* 365c, *logos* is the allegory of *mythos*; and in beginning his *Life of Theseus*, aware that he is passing beyond the boundary of history into the realm of 'poets and mythographers',[29]

[25] P. Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris 1964) 391–97; F.W. Walbank, 'Polybios' Sicht der Vergangenheit', *Gymnasium* 97 (1990) 15–30.

[26] 1.1.10, 1.1.19, 1.2.10, 1.2.17, 1.2.35, 1.2.36, 1.2.40, 1.3.23, 3.2.12, 5.1.9, 9.1.17, 9.3.11, 10.3.20, 11.6.3, 13.1.48.

[27] The case of the Amazons is a rule-proving exception: in this case the same fantastic tale was told of old, and is still told.

[28] τὰς ἀρχαίας ἱστορίας διὰ τὰ παράδοξα τῆς πράξεως οἱ πλεῖστοι νομίζουσι πλάσματα καὶ μύθους τυγχάνειν.

[29] *Cf.* Dion. Hal. *AR* 1.13.2 after quoting Soph. *fr.* and passim 598 Radt, Antiochos *EGM fr.* 2 and Pher. *fr.* 156. C. Pelling ('"Making myth look like history": Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus*', in *Plutarch and History. Eighteen Studies* (London and Swansea 2002) 171–95) argues that Plutarch and others, such as the Atthidographers, efface the boundary, moving freely across it; but the point is that they must adopt strategies that allow them to make this move, of which they are perfectly aware (as Pelling must concede, p. 188).

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he expresses the hope that he may purify the *mythōdes* by the application of *logos* and that his work thereby take on the appearance of *historia*; where the incredible remains, he hopes for reasonable readers who take delight in this kind of *archaiologia*, tales of olden times.

The boundary between history and myth moves according to the state of evidence, but a boundary it remains. The point is very clear in the *Timaios*: precisely because the Greeks are ignorant, says the Egyptian, their stories about ancient times are untrue myths (22c–23b). This constantly recurring problematic means that mythology and *archaiologia* are closely associated and often interchangeable terms, but it is wrong to think that they are synonyms. *Mythos* denotes a quality. The boundary in the distant past dividing myth from truth can be indistinct or disputed, but our writers clearly think they know the difference between one and the other. It would seem that among historians this rhetoric begins with Ephoros, to judge not only from Diodoros, but also Strabo, who tells us that Ephoros made it clear at the outset of his history that he would give his readers truth not myth (9.3.11=*FGrHist* 70 F 31b): historiography, that is, and not mythography, which gained its name as a genre in Ephoros' lifetime.[30]

Though we can detect some differences in the stances these writers adopt towards myth, their general understanding is broadly the same. Looking back at Herodotos from this later perspective, it is clear that he stands at the beginning of a process. His collocation of 'old', 'unverifiable', *mythos*, 'poetry' and 'fiction' points forward to the later koine. His reflections on method, and decision to restrict his inquiry (*historiē*) to 'the age of men', shows that a qualitative distinction is taking shape between what belongs to the province of history and what does not. On the other hand, the construct is not fully articulated, nor consistently applied with respect to all old material. The word *mythos* is hardly used at all, and it is not clearly used to mean 'myth'. *Logos* is not found at all in the sense required, or contrasted with *mythos*.

The fifth century was clearly pivotal and needs a closer look. The key development has not been sufficiently appreciated or described in sufficient detail: how the Archaic sense of *myth-* words, denoting authoritative pronouncements, came to denote precisely the opposite. We shall find that we can trace the transformation gradually but clearly from Archaic to post-Classical texts in a variety of genres. Secondly, we must take a closer look at the origin of the *mythos*/*logos* dichotomy: I shall argue that not Plato but Protagoras made this a central plank in his intellectual platform, and that Plato's stance is only comprehensible as a reaction to, not an invention of, the basic opposition. The Sophistic era provided exactly the right cultural environment for this revolution.

## III. *Mythos* to *logos*: the sociolinguistic record

The Archaic uses of *myth-* words have been well mapped by others.[31] In itself, *legein* is a general verb denoting speech; its noun is *logos*. Nonetheless, as Bruce Lincoln has shown, Archaic epic often raises questions about the status of speech, as opposed to deeds; speaking is never done without a context and is anything but neutral. αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι / αἰμυλίους τε λόγους

[30] This stance would not prevent Ephoros from using and rationally criticizing myth at various points in his history; G. Parmeggiani ('Mito e *spatium historicum* nelle *Storie* di Eforo di Cuma (Note a Eph. *FGrHist* 70 T 8)', *Rivista storica dell' Antichità* 29 (1999) 107–25) makes too much of such passages and must offer a forced reading of the testimonium. More successful is K. Clarke, *Making Time for the Past. Local History and the Polis* (Oxford 2008) index *s.v. spatium mythicum*, *spatium historicum*. Universal historians could hardly dispense with all the great, still meaningful traditions, and doubtless everyone wanted to believe them or some part of them; but the problematic nature of the whole category of *mythoi* could not be wished away.

[31] Particularly R. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca NY 1989); B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth. Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago and London 1999) chapters 1–2; Nesselrath (n.3) 1–6 (who notes the case-proving exception of μῦθοι κλόπιοι, used of Odysseus' lies at *Od.* 13.295: this well suits that character's moral ambiguity). I.J.F. de Jong in her review (*Mnem.* 4.45 (1992) 392–97) offers some important qualifications of Martin's arguments, but the tendency with respect to *mythos* remains clear.

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('seductive words') are epic formulae,[32] and the *leg*/*log*- stem occurs several times in conjunction with the word *pseudea*, 'lies'.[33] Lincoln finds too that *logos* is gendered: one of Pandora's primary characteristics, given her by Hermes on Zeus' personal orders, is these 'seductive words'. His general conclusion is that 'the most ancient texts use the term *logos* to mark a speech of women, the weak, the young, and the shrewd, a speech that tends to be soft, delightful, charming, and alluring, but one that can also deceive and mislead'.[34] *Myth*-words, by contrast, are manly. The warrior's ideal is to be a doer of deeds and a speaker of *mythoi* (*Il.* 9.443). It denotes the speech of the powerful, who are almost always men; *krateros*, 'powerful', accompanies the noun in a standard formula which, like other formula deploying verb and/or noun, introduces a weighty or peremptory speech. It is a performative, public word. If *logos* is more apt to be used of lies, *myth*-words are good for backing up the truth: ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι ('to speak the truth') occurs as a formula five times at hexameter-end.[35] There is a context in which *mythoi* are associated with misleading or corrupt speech, but it is, significantly, a public one of litigants and judges who make 'crooked' statements and judgements (*Op.* 194, 263): the lying *logos* is deceptive, disingenuous and slyly delivered, hard to detect, the more to be guarded against; but the crooked *mythos* – shocking concept – says as much about the powerful and corrupt villain who shamelessly delivers it as it does about the content: all the more outrageous for being delivered in a forum where one expects rather honesty and truth, if justice is to function at all.

*Mythos* is significant speech; it is speech with accoutrements. It is pronouncement, not just utterance. It is an act. In linguistic terms, *mythos* is a marked term, *logos* unmarked. The range of the latter is much broader than the former; *logos* in fact encompasses *mythos* as one kind of speech. This situation means that one can find passages where *legein* or *logos* are used alongside *myth*-words casually to refer to the same material, without implying that one can be substituted for the other in all contexts, or that there is no difference between the terms. The marked/unmarked, genus/species distinction is evident in the word *mythologia* itself (*mythologeuō*, *mythologeō*, *mythologēma*, etc.): one can speak *mythoi* as one can speak other things, but there is no verb *logomytheisthai*. *Mythologeuein* first appears in the *Odyssey*, twice in quick succession just as Odysseus finishes his momentous tale to the Phaeacians (*Od.* 12.450, 453); the ponderous verb is significantly placed to underscore the solemnity of the moment.[36]

*Mythos* denotes the whole package, the *logos* plus the speaker and the context; when *mythos* is in play, something is at stake. When at the outset of the *Theogony* Hesiod represents the Muses as speaking a *mythos* to him, it is metapoetic: their status guarantees his; his poem becomes a *mythos*.[37] Much the same is the opening of Hekataios' book: Ἑκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοί τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσιν ('Thus speaks Hekataios of Miletos: I write what follows as it seems true to me; for the stories of the Greeks, as it seems to me, are many and foolish').

[32] Hom. *Od.* 1.56; Hes. *Th.* 890; *Op.* 78, 789; *Hymn. Hom. Herm.* 317; Theognis 704.

[33] Hom. *Od.* 19.203~Hes. *Th.* 27; Hes. *Th.* 229; *Op.* 78, 789; *Hymn. Hom.* 1.5–6.

[34] Lincoln (n.31) 10.

[35] Hom. *Il.* 6.382; *Od.* 14.125, 17.15, 18.342; *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 121; *cf.* Hom. *Od.* 11.507 ἀληθείην μυθήσομαι; Hes. *Op.* 10 ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην; *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 44 ἐτήτυμα μυθήσασθαι; Hom. *Od.* 23.62 μῦθος ἐτήτυμος. At Hes. *Th.* 28, ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι is a variant reading for ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι in the famous speech of the Muses (designated a μῦθος) in which they say they can both tell lies (ψεύδεα λέγειν) which resemble the truth, and proclaim the truth. On the other hand, ἔτυμος ('true') occurs in usage rather with λέγειν/λόγος (Stesich. *PMGF* 192; Theognis 308; Xenophan. *fr.* 8.4 W$^2$; Pind. *Pyth.* 1.68; and by implication in Hom. *Od.* 19.203~Hes. *Th.* 27). As the unmarked word, λέγειν can be used readily of either truth or lies.

[36] Lincoln (n.31) 23. μυθολόγη[ also occurs in Sappho (*fr.* 18.4); there is unfortunately no context.

[37] Lincoln (n.31) 23–25.

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This passage too has suggested to some writers that there is little or no difference between *mythoi* and *logoi*. But Hekataios' choice of the verb is significant. This passage is all about authority – not the Muses' now, but the historian's. He dubs his whole work a *mythos* in the good old epic sense. This is a pronouncement and a performance. The *logoi* of the Greeks, on the other hand, are merely *logoi*, apt to be wrong – indeed, they are wrong. Hekataios could have started his book Ἑκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε λέγει, but that would have been colourless, and would not have made the same point. Had he called the Greeks' stories *mythoi*, the point would have been different too. The status of *mythoi* as such was not yet called into question at the end of the sixth century. Until it was, such a statement – that the *mythoi* of the Greeks are many and ridiculous – would have to criticize not only (or not even primarily) the multiplicity and foolishness of what people say, but the ways they say it and who says it: one could understand the 'foolishness' part of such a statement (the speakers are fools), but the 'multiplicity' part is obscure (of course they are many). Applied to *logoi*, however, which denotes the content not the context, multiplicity is a sensible criticism: truth cannot be multiplex. *Logos* here has overtones of 'account'.

More than one writer has commented on the paradox that in this passage *mythos* denotes truth but *logos* denotes falsehood. According to traditional usage, there is no difficulty, as we have seen; *myth*-words support truth and *logoi* can be deceptive. But the tremendous stress on authority suggests how and why this changed, and changed precisely 180°. If *mythos* as big talk depends on the big man who delivers it, the construct will fly apart as soon as people routinely question such men's authority. In a traditional society, speaker and words go together. But if structures of authority change, the traditional reason for believing the *mythos* falls away. The process may accelerate if words are circulating on their own in writing, without the big man on hand to back them up, but this is not a necessary event: should the authority be secure, like that of the Persian king sending written edicts throughout his empire, fear or respect will make the *mythoi* just as powerful. It is weakness in the authority in the first place that makes such absence a tempting opportunity for rebellion. But one big man taking the place of another is one thing; what happened in the open Greek cities was a challenge to the whole institution of big men, so that we arrive eventually at a situation, most nakedly obvious in the most democratic of cities, Athens, in which all talk of the big men is suspect just because it is the talk of big men. The going-in assumption is that their *mythoi* are so much rodomontade.

Hekataios asserts his authority, but his stance invited challenge. He got it in spades from Herodotos, who picks up the very word *mytheitai*:[38] this preposterous rubbish about the Nile, what you call your *mythos*, I call bluster. 'Theory' was my suggested translation above; not just 'account' now but an account with pretensions. Herodotos pricks the balloon. Recent work has stressed how involved he was in contemporary intellectual debates, and how these debates were characterized by elaborate posturing, claim and counterclaim, and manoeuvring for authority.[39] It is easy to see how a word like *mythos* would be targetted in such an environment, carrying the baggage that it did. One can imagine Herodotos delivering the word *mythos* in performance with more than a hint of scorn. Now this does not mean that, overnight, *mythos* became 'myth', or that one and the same writer could not decry others' *mythoi* while parading his own. Your *mythoi* can be lies while mine are true. But where *mythos* had so much cultural authority, it is seriously disturbing to see it treated with

[38] K. Nickau, 'Mythos und Logos bei Herodot', in W. Ax (ed.), *Memoria rerum veterum. Festschrift für Carl Joachim Classen zum 60. Geburtstag* (Palingenesia 32) (Stuttgart 1990) 83–100. The 'foolish tale' he dismisses in the other place he uses the word μῦθος (2.45.1) is probably also from Hekataios. I thank Suzanne Saïd for this reference.

[39] Marincola (n.23); R. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context. Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion* (Cambridge 2000); various contributions in the recent spate of Companions: E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong and H. Wees (eds), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden 2002); C. Dewald and J. Marincola (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge 2006); A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis (eds), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden 2006); and other references in Węcowski (n.12) 35, n.4.

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disrespect. Hesiod was scandalized at the thought of crooked *mythoi*: but his anguish springs from faith in the *mythoi*, not from doubt. As discourses calling themselves *mythoi* more and more routinely came in for questioning, sooner or later a *mythos* itself became a questionable thing.

In this context a fragment of Anakreon is important. Referring to the revolt against Polykrates of Samos about 525, he remarks that *mythiētai* ('*mythoi*-men') control the sacred city (*PMG* 353 = *fr.* 21 Gentili). Whatever the precise meaning ('talkers' is Campbell's Loeb translation; Bowra proposed 'chatterers'),[40] the political connotation is clear, as it is in the curious gloss of Hesychios, μύθαρχοι· οἱ προεστῶτες τῶν στάσεων ('*mytharchs*: leaders of rebellions'). *Mythoi* appear to be the programme of action, the collectivity of public pronouncements. They are not separable from the people who deliver them. They arise in a context of unrest and rebellion, and are open to challenge themselves. The term reveals that the nature of the game is understood and explicit. *Mythoi* are put into the public arena to fight it out with each other; the stronger *mythos* will silence the weaker. In such circumstances the good name of *mythos* will be severely tested. Like modern-day communications from governments, *mythoi* will be assumed in the first instance to be motivated by *parti pris*, and greeted with suspicion. Anakreon, presumably a partisan of his patron Polykrates, seems to be using the word with scorn: the scholion which quotes the fragment tells us the rebels were fishermen.

On the evidence, we should not however say that either Anakreon or Herodotos has reached the stage of generalization about *mythos.* If we go from 'talk (*mythos*) by big men is *eo ipso* true' to 'big men, whose talk is *mythos*, often talk rubbish (beware!)' to '*mythos* is fiction', they are both in the middle, Herodotos saying of Hekataios 'this big man with his *mythos* is talking rubbish', Anakreon saying of the fishermen 'these "big" men are talking rubbish', which leaves open such possibilities as 'that other big man with his *mythos* is talking truth' or 'my *mythos* is true'.

Such a diagnosis of in-between-ness works well for other texts of the period, particularly Pindar. In three passages, *myth*-words are all associated with deception:

> καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι
>
> The talk of men – *mythoi*, embroidered beyond the true account (*logos*)[41] with subtle lies, deceive (*Ol.* 1.28–29)
>
> σοφία δὲ κλέπτει παράγοισα μύθοις
>
> Art deceives, leading astray with *mythoi* (*Nem.* 7.23)
>
> ἐχθρὰ δ' ἄρα πάρφασις ἦν καὶ πάλαι, αἰμύλων μύθων ὁμόφοιτος, δολοφραδής, κακοποιὸν ὄνειδος
>
> Odious deception there was long ago too, fellow-traveller of wily words, treacherous-scheming, maleficent slander (*Nem.* 8.32–33)

[40] C.M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry from Alcman to Simonides* (Oxford 1936) 290. For a recent discussion of this fragment see F. Marzari, 'Μυθιῆται: i ribelli di Anacreonte', *SIFC* 4 (2006) 201–09. Very recently the word has turned up in a papyrus fragment of a (?)comic poet, perhaps Krates, and perhaps with reference to the partisans of Samos: *POxy* 4951 i 9 φίλοις παρὰ μυ[θι‹ή›]ταις. See H.-C. Günther ad loc., referring also E. Lobel, *CQ* 21 (1927) 50, who however overlooked Phoenix *fr.* 7.1 Powell, where the word appears to mean simply 'rhetor'.

[41] For *logos* as 'account', see below. The contrast of *mythos* and *logos* here must be considered fortuitous, not a theorized dichotomy, but the passage shows the potential latent in the traditional semantic fields. Pindar's own myth criticism has its logical side: D. Loscalzo, 'Pindaro tra μῦθος e λόγος', in M. Cannatà Fera and G.B. D'Alessio (eds), *I lirici greci. Forme della communicazione e storia del testo* (Messina 2001) 165–85.

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In the first two of these passages, the liars are fellow poets (in the second, explicitly Homer), whose authority Pindar contests. At *Ol.* 13.10, he coins a unique adjective for Hybris, *thrasymythos*; this is not a good quality. The stress is on *thrasys*, 'bold', but *mythos* has point too: *thrasylogos* would be feeble, and would not convey the same note of outrageous pretence. None of this prevents Pindar using *myth*-words in the traditional sense (*Pyth.* 4.298, 9.76); in the second of these places, great *aretai* ('virtues') are said to be *polymythoi*, much talked of and clearly worthy of respect.

Amongst pre-Socratic philosophers the traditional notion of *mythos* is strong. Parmenides, for instance, at *Vors.* 28 B8.1 declares there is only one *mythos hodoio*, 'account of the Way', for correct *dizēsis* ('investigation')[42] assisted by discriminating *logos.* The rhetoric here is insistent, as it as at B 2.1: 'hear my *mythos*!'. But its very prominence and function in context (we seem to be near the beginning of the poem) betray awareness that others have *mythoi*, by definition false, which this *mythos* disputes ('hear *my mythos*, not his!'); these passages may therefore count as testimony of our in-between status. Empedokles is similarly insistent, and insecure, when he says at *Vors.* 31 B62.3 that his *mythos* is neither ineffectual nor ignorant, or when he states at B23.11 that his *mythos* comes from a god. At B114.1, addressed to his 'friends', Empedokles couples *mythos* with *alētheiē*, 'truth' – and goes on immediately to acknowledge that people will find what he says hard to believe.[43]

Xenophanes, in a passage always cited in these discussions, enjoins his fellow symposiasts to hymn the gods with *mythoi* of good omen (*euphēmoi*) and pure *logoi* (*fr.* 1.14 W$^2$); he will have nothing of battles of Titans, Giants or Centaurs, 'fictions (*plasmata*) of our forebears'. *Mythoi* are clearly weighty pronouncements of some kind, which is the main point in our context; one would like to say more, given the tantalizing juxtaposition of *mythos* and *logos*, but in truth one can say little. The passage certainly does not support a claim that *mythoi* and *logoi* are synonyms; *mythoi* here could (for instance) mean the narratives of the hymns, i.e. the myths, *logoi* the other parts; or *mythoi* could be the attitude and bearing with which the *logoi* are performed and the terms in which they are couched. The precise meaning of each word was, one presumes, obvious to the audience and is not recoverable to us.[44] Consequently, Xenophanes' criticism of objectionable stories on moral grounds is difficult to relate to his use of the word *mythoi*, even if stories of Titans etc. are what we call myths and even if Plato was later to link immorality, fiction and *mythos* closely together. *If* Xenophanes has what we call 'myths' in view, then only some myths (the impious ones) are fictional; other myths are good-omened, and myth itself is not at stake. This would be an instance of in-betweenness. If, on the other hand, some other distinction between *mythos* and *logos* operates here, then both terms could engender objectionable fiction. It remains significant in the larger history of Greek religiosity that Xenophanes criticizes such stories,[45] but we cannot yet link this with confidence to the term *mythos.*

Yet if *mythos* is still ambivalent and its relationship to *logos* not yet defined, one great thinker made *logos* the centre of his philosophy, and this had decisive consequences in our context. For Herakleitos *logos* meant both the rational order of the world and one's account of it. Though the surviving fragments contain no example of the word meaning straightforwardly 'the faculty of

[42] The earlier term for ἱστορίη; in Parmenides *cf.* B2.8, 6.10, 8.6. See R. Fowler, 'Herodotus and his prose predecessors', in Dewald and Marincola (n.39) 29–45 at n.14.

[43] B62.3 οὐ γὰρ μῦθος ἀπόσκοπος οὐδ' ἀδαήμων; B23.11 θεοῦ πάρα μῦθον ἀκούσας; B114.1–2 ὦ φίλοι οἶδα μὲν οὕνεκ' ἀληθείη πάρα μύθοις οὓς ἐξερέω. Inwood reasonably places the latter fragment near the beginning of the poem: B. Inwood, *The Poems of Empedokles* (2nd edition) (Toronto 2001) 82. *Cf.* also B17.14–15, B24.2.

[44] See J.H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon* (Toronto 1992) 48 for a variety of opinions.

[45] And poets, like Herakleitos (*Vors.* 22 B 40, 42, 56, 57, 104). For Xenophanes and myth, see briefly K. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge 2000) 48–53.

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reason',[46] it nonetheless refers at once to the processes of language and of comprehension and to a correct and coherent account of reality: one's reasons, and thus one's reason, at least *in nuce*. That we are dealing here with the beginnings of Western rationalism is not in doubt.[47] Herakleitos' theories threw *logos* into the highest possible relief. Decades of discussion about the power of *logos* ensued; Parmenides and Empedokles above all had versions of a unitary *logos*, even if these were incompatible with each other. The views of the arch-Sophist Protagoras, however, that there are always two *logoi*, that 'man is the measure of all things', and that no certain communion with reality is possible, represented a radical departure from this tradition. Without it his stance was inconceivable.

## IV. Enter the Sophists; back to Herodotos

The 'in-between' character of Herodotos' stance requires further unpicking, but to do that it is necessary first to assess the contribution of the Sophists.[48] *Logos*, the power of speech and argument, was for them almost a fetish. The ability to compose opposing *logoi* on any proposition, though indispensable to progress in human arts and science and crucial for the fair administration of justice, nevertheless had explosive implications for morality which on the commonest reading of the evidence the Sophists did not fail to exploit.[49] Gorgias offered a challenging theory, or rather aporia, on the relationship of *logos* to reality (*Vors.* 82 B3) and famously praised its power in his speech exonerating Helen (B11): if she succumbed to the witchcraft of *logos*, she could hardly be blamed. Gorgias' whole art revolved around *logoi* (Plato *Gorg.* 450b = *Vors.* 82 A27). Model speeches exemplified the tricks of style and argument one might use to win one's point.

The centrality of *logos* in Sophism is well known, but in the present context two points need to be made. (1) Sophism studies the power of *logos* in and of itself. It is *logos* that persuades and deceives, not the speaker; the speaker learns how to use *logos*. This view of *logos* arises naturally from the traditional neutrality of the word as denoting 'speech' pure and simple. *Mythos* is *logos* plus other things and so is not suited to bear this emphasis. (2) The social and political context of Sophistic rhetoric is the increasing importance of public debate in democratic Greek cities. Here too it is not the *mythos* an individual pronounces but a *logos* he expounds which is to be judged right or wrong on its own merits. Though the straightforward meaning of *logos* as 'account' is already implied in the Homeric verb καταλέγειν ('to recount accurately'; for example, *Il.* 10.413, 24.407; *Od.* 16.235), the fifth century saw *logos* emerge as both a sociological phenomenon and a methodological problem. I refer again to Herakleitos' *logos*. *Logos*, *logoi* and *logioi* are a central preoccupation for Herodotos. Like him, the Sophists were professional account-givers.

[46] See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy I* (Cambridge 1967) 419–34 for a close discussion of the history of the word λόγος and of Herakleitos' *logos*. Guthrie is doubtful that the meaning 'faculty of reason' is found before the fourth century, but acknowledges that his meanings (3) and (4) are closely related to it; see the passages cited by Diels-Kranz in the index to *Vors.*, III 261 ('menschliche Vernunft').

[47] E. Hussey, 'Heraclitus', in A.A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge 1999) 89–112. See also Morgan (n.45) 54–56 on Herakleitos' *logos*. Morgan well notes that the shared, public, unitary nature of *logos* is contrasted by Herakleitos with the private, Muse-inspired, multiplex and contradictory stories of supposedly wise poets. In this respect he resembles Hekataios.

[48] P. Woodruff, 'Rhetoric and relativism: Protagoras and Gorgias', in Long (n.47) 290–310; R.W. Wallace, 'Plato's Sophists, intellectual history after 450, and Sokrates', in L.J. Samons II (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Perikles* (Cambridge 2007) 215–37. Though there are important differences between thinkers labelled 'Sophists', they may be considered for our purposes as a coherent intellectual movement.

[49] A. Ford ('Sophists without rhetoric: the arts of speech in fifth-century Athens', in Yun Lee Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden 2001) 85–109) rightly stresses the range of Sophistic work and their place in aristocratic education, and decries excessive credence in the traditional picture (deriving from Plato and Aristophanes) of Sophists as nothing but immoral rhetors; however, one may find his reading of the evidence supporting the usual picture excessively sceptical.

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So the Sophists, in an increasingly disputatious Greek world, exalted the power of *logos* as reasonable speech; but by openly admitting that the reasoning could be specious, even flaunting the fact, they aroused controversy, and raised new philosophical problems of epistemology and ontology. Did they also contrast *logos* with *mythos*?

The word *mythos* occurs rarely in their surviving fragments. Suggestive but ultimately unhelpful is Gorgias *Vors.* B23, referring to the deceit wrought upon audiences by the *mythoi* of tragedy; apparently the meaning is 'stories'. It is, however, irrelevant to his point whether these stories are fictive; the deception consists not in passing off a fictional tale as true, but in making the audience feel various emotions as if real (cf. *Helen* 8–9), within a representation of what might or might not have been considered historical events. Both in this fragment and in the *Helen* Gorgias defends the deceptive power of *logos*; but the contrasting pair is *logos* and poetry, not *logos* and *mythos* (indeed, in B23 *mythos* and *logos* achieve similar effects). The meaning 'stories', however, if correctly read, is the earliest instance in prose of this standard usage; it is Aristotle's word for 'plot', and comes to mean 'fictional narratives' in the later historical vulgate as we have seen.[50] In an elegy, Kritias (*Vors.* 88 B6.9 = *fr.* 6 West) chides people who drink to excess and unloose their tongues in unseemly (*aischroi*) *mythoi*: this is an uncomplimentary usage, to be sure, but clearly traditional in its general meaning (and also in being more than just *logoi*). Curiously, in his most famous fragment, the speech from the *Sisyphos* about the invention of gods (*Vors.* 88 B25 = *TrGF* 43 F 19), he almost seems to avoid the word *mythos*: the story in question is exactly the kind of thing Plato might have called a myth, and which Protagoras calls a myth in his eponymous dialogue. Instead, Kritias uses *logos*/*logoi* several times to describe this fiction. But line 26, ψευδεῖ καλύψας τὴν ἀλήθειαν λόγωι ('wrapping truth in a lying *logos*') gives a clue: like *mythos* in 88 B6, this is a thoroughly traditional usage: it is innocent-seeming *logos* that is the more apt to be the liar. Kritias' diction is straightforwardly conservative.

The clearest evidence for the *logos*/*mythos* contrast in Sophistic literature must be Plato's *Protagoras*, already mentioned above. He offers the choice between *mythos* and *logos*; the former is the sort of tale one tells to the young, the latter is logical argument. The audience leaves the choice to him, and he opts for *mythos* on the grounds that it is more pleasant (*chariesteron*). 'Once upon a time', he begins; his tale is set in a time when there were no men, only gods. At 324d6 Protagoras explicitly changes from *mythos* to *logos*; there follows a series of logical demonstrations (though one can argue he is already there at 323a, where he advances a *tekmērion* (a 'logical proof') in support of the myth's import, and the following remarks on why *aretē* must be taught are designated a *logos* at 324c4). Opinions may differ on how faithfully Plato represents the hated Sophists' views, but in the present case a precise parallel in the Theognidean corpus (769–72) to the opening of the speech provides external evidence that it comes from the Sophist's own work.[51] That being so, we must consider that the *logos*/*mythos* contrast was a prominent part of their intellectual toolkit, like *physis*/*nomos.*

This is the most famous of all the Sophists, delivering a programmatic speech, in which we learn that either *mythos* or *logos* can convey one's message. They are presented as mutually exclusive but complementary opposites, operating in different realms: imagination and fiction as opposed to reasoned argument. In view of Herakleitos, it is not anachronistic to assess in Protagoras' speech (1) the contention that there is more than one way to gain access to reality and (2) the adoption of an agnostic stance towards this discovery (that is, withholding firm commitment as to which, if either, gives access to metaphysical truth). This is a sophisticated

[50] In the traditional uses of the word, a μῦθος like λόγος can be a narration of events (for example, *Od.* 11.368 of Odysseus' tales; Alkinoos likens his skill in narration to that of a bard). Similarly in tragedy, the word means 'account of events' at, for example, Aesch. *Pers.* 713; *PV* 641; Soph. *Ant.* 1190; Eur. *Ion* 336; it is interestingly used of the false story of Orestes' death in Aischylos (*Cho.* 741) and Sophokles (*El.* 50).

[51] R. Fowler, 'Herodotos and his contemporaries', *JHS* 116 (1996) 62–87 at 86–87.

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position, which posed serious problems for Plato in trying to find a way through to metaphysical truth while taking on board the complexities identified and exploited by the Sophists. For his part, Protagoras might have arrived where he did by asking not only what *logos* was (in the wake of Herakleitos) but also what it was not; the answer was that it was not *mythos.* His aim was to dislodge poetry from its throne of *sophia.* Given this overriding purpose; given, moreover, that *mythos* is *logos* with accoutrements, and that *mythos* could mean 'the stock in trade of poets', 'stories', and 'authoritative pronouncement'; and given finally the fundamental and pervasive importance of (what we call) the Greek myths, one can see how the Protagorean construct came into being.

If we turn now to Herodotos, two points of contact with Protagoras immediately emerge. The first has to do with the time of the gods, in which Protagoras sets his tale; this recalls Herodotos' 'so-called human age' (see above). Williams vigorously objects to translations such as 'the human age' and in a sense he is right;[52] but even 'human generation', in the sense that gods are no longer involved in procreation, marks a significant change of epochs. 'So-called' indicates that the matter was under discussion not just by Herodotos. When Williams writes (159) 'Such formulations make Herodotos's work sound like an exercise in palaeontology – as though another type of hominid, *Homo semi-divinus*, had walked the earth at one time, and it was a question of dating the era when it did so', one replies 'that is just what he was doing'; the end of *homo semi-divinus* was traditional from Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, and Herodotos was both dating this epoch and articulating the difficulties about semi-divinity. It is not just piety that prevented Herodotos from probing too deeply into fully divine affairs; he understood that they are categorically beyond the reach of *historiē* – an acknowledgement that, on the one hand, opened the door for less pious inquirers to leave the gods out or deny their existence and, on the other, created certain challenges for Herodotos himself in identifying the role of gods in human history, if not as begetters of children, yet as guarantors of justice, as he believed them to be.[53] Matters became even more complicated when he grasped the significance of the Egyptian experience, which put the boundary between the ages very much further back than traditional Greek notions allowed; his need to find an explanation for the Greek misunderstanding of its date (2.43–44, 53, 146) significantly implies that, in this passage at least, he assumes the same chronological boundary everywhere.[54]

[52] Williams (n.2) 155.

[53] *Cf.* R. Fowler, 'Gods in early Greek historiography', in J. Bremmer and A. Erskine (eds), *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (Edinburgh 2010) 318–34.

[54] This point is I believe not addressed by V. Hunter, *Past and Process in Herodotus and Thucydides* (Princeton 1982), 86–87, where after an excellent discussion she fights shy of saying that Herodotos distinguishes *spatium historicum* from *spatium mythicum* – a distinction then flatly denied on p. 104, where see the many authorities she cites *au contraire.* See further, E. Vandiver, *Heroes in Herodotos. The Interaction of Myth and History* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 56) (Frankfurt 1991) for a critique of Hunter; she well writes, 'His chronological calculations, far from indicating that he made no distinction between the heroes and modern men, rather are themselves an indication of the importance of the Heroic Age for establishing the borders and boundaries of modern society, chronological as well as cultural' (236). *Cf.* also R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford 2005) 375: 'everybody knew that there had been a time of myths'. Continuity between the ages (a point on which deniers of the difference place much stress) does not negate the ages. It remains the case, however, that Herodotos' fundamental point is about knowability, a point well stressed and explored by Feeney (n.2) chapter 3. In general, see C. Darbo-Peschanski, *Le discours du particulier. Essai sur l'enquête hérodotéenne* (Paris 1987) 25–38; T. Harrison, *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotos* (Oxford 2000) 197–207 (rebutted by Feeney); I. Moyer, 'Herodotos and an Egyptian mirage: the genealogies of the Theban priests', *JHS* 122 (2002) 70–90; J. Cobet, 'The organization of time in the *Histories*', in Bakker et al. (n.39) 387–412 at 405–11; K. Raaflaub, 'Philosophy, science, politics: Herodotus and the intellectual trends of his time', in Bakker et al. (n.39) 149–86 at 159; Williams (n.2) 149–71. Williams brilliantly and convincingly describes Thucydides' discovery of historical time, but does not recognize that Thucydides succeeded in articulating what Herodotos was trying to put his finger on (see below).

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The second point of contact is, of course, *logos*/*logoi*. Herodotos' contribution to his own special branch of public discourse, historiography, was to recognize and confront the issues arising from the multiplicity of accounts, which to be taken seriously must be *logoi* not *mythoi*.[55] Dismissing alternative accounts of Kyros' birth and childhood at 1.95 he declares he will tell us τὸν ἐόντα λόγον ('the story that "(really) is"'); he could not possibly have said τὸν ἐόντα μῦθον. He often uses the phrase *kata logon* to mean either 'according to someone's account', the nominal counterpart of 'the Persians (or whoever) say (*legousi*)' (which account is then scrutinized); or he uses it with an impersonal noun to mean 'according to the measure/standard/pattern of X', which is becoming more abstract.[56] Once, however, he uses the expression *kata logon* to mean 'according to reason': the Andrians replied to Themistokles that 'it stood to reason' that the Athenians were prosperous if they stood well with reputable gods (8.111.2).[57] In this passage, *logos* does not just mean telling a story or giving an account, though one has just been given; the appeal is rather to the intrinsic quality of the *logos*, its *logos*-ness so to speak, that quality by which a *logos* achieves its best effect as a *logos*; in a word, reasonableness. A similar force is conveyed by the expression λόγος αἱρέει ('as reason demands': 2.33.2, 3.45.3, 6.124.2).[58] Related to this usage are the *logioi andres*, people cited in a problematical way by Herodotos as one of his sources.[59] These are not just people who tell stories; they are learned authorities, who possess not just any old *logos* to tell you, but a *logos* worth hearing.[60]

But more important than the history of the word is the history of the referent. Beginning in the late sixth century the traditional tales became the object of rational scrutiny and instantly threw up problems of various kinds. This was not a capricious or accidental turn of events; Greek culture was becoming ever more sophisticated and therefore self-critical: and Greek culture was dominated by Greek mythology.[61] That the myths constituted a discrete body of tales with special and recognized valence is abundantly clear from contemporary practice, whether literary, artistic or religious. What Feeney calls the 'dialectic between events of a stratified mythic past and a contemporary present'[62] is in fact characteristic of Greek civilization as of no other. The myths

[55] Fowler (n.51) 80–86.

[56] For example, 2.68.2 'the youngster's size corresponds to that of the egg', ὁ νεοσσὸς κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ ᾠοῦ γίνεται.

[57] ὑπεκρίναντο πρὸς ταῦτα λέγοντες ὡς κατὰ λόγον ἦσαν ἄρα αἱ Ἀθῆναι μεγάλαι τε καὶ εὐδαίμονες καὶ θεῶν χρηστῶν ἥκοιεν εὖ. κατὰ λόγον in the same sense is attributed to Empedokles *Vors.* 31 A20 and to Gorgias at *Vors.* 82 B3 (77); for him *logos* is both speech and argument (B11 (9), B11a (6)).

[58] At the same time, the expression can mean 'as (my personal) *logos* takes me', i.e. 'however I wish' (1.132.3, 4.127.3, 7.41.1; *cf.* γνώμη αἱρέει 2.43.3).

[59] The true referent of λόγιοι ἄνδρες does not need to be discussed here; see N. Luraghi, 'Local knowledge in Herodotos' *Histories*', in N. Luraghi (ed.), *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotos* (Oxford 2001) 138–60; N. Luraghi, 'Meta-*historiē*: method and genre in the *Histories*', in Dewald and Marincola (n.39) 76–91.

[60] At 4.46.1 the quality of being λόγιος is linked to wisdom; at 2.3.1 the Heliopolitai are the λογιώτατοι of the Egyptians, i.e. the most learned (*cf.* 2.77.1). Pindar at *Pyth.* 1.94 (470 BC) seems to indicate that the λόγιοι are prose narrators as opposed to poets; cf. *Nem.* 6.30 (the date is *ca.* 475; see D.E. Gerber, *HSCP* 99 (1999) 34–36), where Gerber and others defend the mss' ἀοιδοὶ καὶ λόγιοι against Pauw's ἀοιδαὶ καὶ λόγοι (of which the implication is the same for the present purpose); at *Nem.* 6.45, however, we might think that the poets too are included in the *logioi*. See E. Cingano on *Pyth.* 1.94 in B. Gentili et al. (eds), *Pindaro: Le Pitiche* (Verona 1995) 361; Gerber (above) 30; A. Corcella, 'The new genre and its boundaries: poets and logographers', in Rengakos and Tsakmakis (n.39) 33–56 at 37. The word also occurs with uncertain force at Ion *fr.* 26.2 West, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the Pindaric/Herodotean meaning is operative, that is, he means people learned in tradition. 'Learned' is the meaning also in Demokritos *Vors.* 68 B30, 299, 300.17; *cf.* Ar. *Pol.* 1329b8 of mythographical tradition; the early use is echoed at Plut. *Thes.* 3 and Diod. 2.4.3 = Ktesias *FGrHist* 688 F 1b, 2.38.3 = Megasthenes 715 F 4. In the Diodoran passage μυθολογοῦσιν οἱ λογιώτατοι nicely encapsulates the history under investigation here, whereby the authoritative λόγοι were once also authoritative μῦθοι, but for the author of these words (doubtless Diodoros) they are just μῦθοι. If Ktesias used such an expression, it might count as an example of 'in-betweenness'; or it could already postdate, as it would have done for Megasthenes, the invention of mythology.

[61] As Plato remarks at *Crit.* 110.a, μυθολογία γὰρ ἀναζήτησίς τε τῶν παλαιῶν μετὰ σχολῆς ἅμ' ἐπὶ τὰς πόλεις ἔρχεσθον, ὅταν ἴδητόν τισιν ἤδη τοῦ βίου τἀναγκαῖα κατεσκευασμένα, πριν δὲ οὔ. Mythology happens first with reflection.

[62] Feeney (n.2) 71.

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were thus an inevitable target of investigation. Morgan well speaks of the Sophistic treatment of myth as effectively its 'textualization'. 'Parallel to [their] lack of concern with the truth', she writes, 'and a view of myth as a literary phenomenon is the breaking-up of the tradition into a series of isolated tableaux. Just as the written tradition may be mined for *gnomai*, so the mythological storehouse may be raided for attractive situations. The textualization of myth renders it a form of convention, and it is employed by the sophists as such'.[63] Contributing directly to this textualization, though not produced for such iconoclastic purposes, was the massive and easily overlooked work of the mythographers, whose substantial writings – Pherekydes of Athens tops the list with ten books – functioned as compendious works of reference, written for circulation as written texts, and not employed, as myth in every other context was, as part of some religious or social occasion.[64] The very existence of such a corpus demonstrates the use of myth as cultural capital, long before the Second Sophistic and even before the First.

The text of Herodotos' *Histories* reached its final form in the late 430s, when the textualization of myth was long a fact. That his great successor and rival Thucydides possessed a sense of the mythical as opposed to the historical can no longer be denied in the wake of Williams' superb analysis of his words and procedures, which I take as read here.[65] Given that Thucydides was well versed in Sophistic writings, his *mythōdes* might be taken as further evidence for their deployment of that concept. May we impute the same sense to Herodotos? Let us be clear about the point here: it is not only about the textualization of myth (which we have in the mythographers) but about building that textualization into one's own text; about awareness of the difference in myth; about adopting strategies to cope with perceived difficulties, or to exploit perceived opportunities offered by the new status of myth. The answer, I suggest, is that this awareness is explicit in Thucydides (*to mythōdes*) and implicit in Herodotos. It is implied by the cumulative force of various indicators: the great proem and its dismissal of unknowable stories; the contribution to historical methodology, which is the testing of sources, and the link from that to epistemology (what can be known, and how); the prominent and special, nearly technical force of *logoi* in his work, which must reflect contemporary intellectual trends; the manoeuvre adopted in order to discuss heroic legends such as that of Helen – I mean the elimination of supernatural involvement; the theory about when the Greek gods first arrived in Greece and the astonishing comment (2.53) that Homer and Hesiod invented the divine names, which amounts to saying that the whole of divine mythology needs to be, or at least can be, looked at in a new light. Like the comment that Ocean is an invention of Homer or some other poet (2.23), this association of poets with fantastic stories which are not the subject of history clearly anticipates the later standard rhetoric. In fact, what we see here is not only the first articulation of what makes a myth, but the beginning of the sense that the traditional stories about the gods collectively constitute the prime example. If these were already known as *mythoi* then one may even speculate that Herodotos' insistence on *logoi* is meant in part deliberately to exclude *mythoi* with which contemporary intellectuals already contrasted them. The two uses of the word *mythos* in his text are signposts of the many points he could have used it, but did not.

But is it not a problem that Herodotos accepts the historicity of the Trojan War, which we would regard as legendary? Not at all. One can say with Williams of Thucydides' similar belief that 'the principle is stronger than the example';[66] but we may dispute also that it is a pertinent example. The historicity of the Trojan War was attested by far too much evidence, or what counted as such, in the Greek world to be doubted. Some people still believe it, in fact. The

[63] Morgan (n.45) 130.

[64] R. Fowler, 'How to tell a myth: genealogy, mythology, mythography', *Kernos* 19 (2006) 3–46; R. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography I: Text and Introduction* (Oxford 2000). Most recently, Calame, in Woodard (n.19) 259–60, overlooks early mythography, which would appear seriously to undermine his thesis; the treatment at *Mythe et histoire* (n.19) 41–42 = *Myth and History* 24–25 is cursory.

[65] Williams (n.2). In some points he is anticipated by Detienne, *L'invention de la mythologie* (n.3) 105–22 = 52–62 of the English translation.

[66] Williams (n.2) 167.

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heroes were too deeply embedded in memory and practice to be eradicated, and never were eradicated at any point in antiquity. What could be doubted, however, was the supernatural abilities attributed to the heroes, their divine parentage and the whole way in which the gods supposedly interacted with humans on earth. Herodotos will have none of that. To treat the heroic stories, he must remove the offensive bits; there is no better way to describe what he is doing than to say he is historicizing – for this is more than rationalization; this is to render the material suitable to be admitted to history, strongly conceived. That means, precisely, demythologizing – which implies mythology. Conversely, the truly sacred stories, ἱροὶ λόγοι and τὰ θεῖα τῶν ἀπηγημάτων (2.3), lie beyond the reach of history and are acknowledged as such; these are Herodotos' myths.[67] In Thucydides' treatment of the Trojan War, this sense of historicization is very strong, being coupled with an explicit programmatic statement about his own project. Herodotos does not see the difference with quite the same clarity; he lacks or does not use the term *mythōdes*; he can be inconsistent in his chronological calculations and (more honestly, as one may say) uncertain about this instance or that (such as Minos); but he is engaged in essentially the same process as Thucydides.[68] Indeed, if it makes sense at all to call him the 'father of history', one wonders what it is that history is being contrasted with. Both Herodotos and Thucydides place the line between the two *spatia* not on this side of the heroes, between them and ordinary humans, but on the other side, between heroes (conceived as humans) and gods; for Herodotos there is a *spatium divinum* and a *spatium humanum*, which for Thucydides have become *mythicum* and *historicum*. Later writers, according to predilection and genre, could if they chose put the heroes back on the other side of the line. So ambivalent they always remained.

## V. After the Sophists

Before turning finally to Plato we may survey briefly other texts from the latter half of the fifth century. Except in tragedy, where the word predictably has its epic sense and range of meaning,[69] *myth*-words are not often attested. Demokritos offers a few instances. He remarks (68 B297) that mortals tell false tales about life after death (*pseudea mythoplasteontes*): here, the association of *mythos* with tales of the afterlife points the way to Plato, and *mythos* is a kind of tale one can

[67] *Cf.* Fowler (n.53); R. Fowler, 'Thoughts on myth and religion in early Greek historiography', *Minerva* 22 (2009) 21–39.

[68] *Cf.* E. Irwin, 'The politics of precedence: first "historians" on first "thalassocrats"', in R. Osborne (ed.), *Debating the Athenian Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge 2007) 188–223. Much of what Williams says about Thucydides can be applied to Herodotos: about the necessary sameness of human life in all times (163–64; L. Bertelli ('"C'era una volta un mito...": Alle origini della storiografia greca', in *De tuo tibi. Omaggio degli allievi a Italo Lana* (Bologna 1996) 49–85 at 80–82) finds this belief already implicit in Hekataios' personal genealogy which connects heroic and present ages); about events not making sense in the past unless the *sort* of event they are also makes sense (166); about the awareness that our present is somebody else's future (167: *cf.* Hdt. 1.5; W. Rösler, 'Die "Selbsthistorisierung" des Autors: zur Herodots Stellung zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit', *Phil.* 135 (1991) 215–20); and the remark on p. 168, 'Once the structure of historical time is in place, the gods will eventually bow out'. H.-G. Nesselrath, 'Herodot und der griechische Mythos', *Poetica* 28 (1996) 275–96 well stresses how thoroughgoing and uncompromising Herodotos is in his criticism of myths; 'in dieser Hinsicht', he concludes, 'könnte er sogar der radikalste aller griechischer Historiker sein' (296). I do not agree with the view that Herodotos in the end doubts the possibility of historical truth as some scholars suggest; I agree with E. Baragwanath's assessment in *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford 2008).

[69] Including utterances whose content are 'stories' (above, n.50) or an 'argument / attempt to persuade' (for example, Aesch. *Eum.* 82, *cf.* 582; *PV* 647; Soph. *Ant.* 226; *fr.* 314.371; Eur. *Hyps. fr.* 16.12). In Euripides, however, one may perhaps detect traces of more recent meanings; the word is used somewhat self-consciously of traditional mythology at *Ion* 265, 994, *IA* 72 and especially *IA* 799 with a dig at poets(!); at *fr.* 484 it is used of cosmology. At *Med.* 1080–82 we find λεπτότεροι μῦθοι ('subtle disputations, arguments') (cf. *fr.* 924); here we have the notion of competing μῦθοι (cf. *Hcld.* 180); at *El.* 743 the chorus expresses scepticism about a traditional myth but says that such φοβεροὶ μῦθοι are good for piety, a sentiment like Kritias', or Kephalos' at Pl. *Resp.* 330d–e (where the word μῦθοι is used). At *IT* 901 the chorus declares the account it has just heard is even more amazing than μῦθοι.

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hardly be certain about; but lest one think that, for Demokritos, *mythoi* must always entail *pseudea* (as opposed to sometimes, which is clearly the case), there is B225 (*cf.* 44) where we are admonished to *alēthomytheein* not *polylogeein*, to speak the truth and not prate away about all manner of rubbish. At A126a he uses the word *mythos* of an authoritative pronouncement. So Demokritos is an example of our 'in-between' status. Other texts suggest that in popular usage at this time the meaning '(fictional or imaginative) stories' of *any* kind predominates – often, but not exclusively, the 'Greek myths'. At Aristophanes *Vesp.* 566, speakers tell juries *mythoi* or an amusing tale from Aesop (cf. *Pax* 131; *Plut.* 177); at *Vesp.* 1179 Philokleon offers stories about Lamia or Kardopion, and Bdelykleon, interrupting, demands 'everyday stories about real people' instead of such *mythoi.* With this expression one may compare *fr.* 35 Kassel-Austin, *anthrōpikos mythos*, 'human *mythos*', of a story or plot-line; the implication is that *mythoi* are typically supernatural tales. The semi-choruses at *Lys.* 781–820 tell each other *mythoi* about wholly or partly legendary characters.[70] Diogenes of Apollonia (*Vors.* 64 A8 = T6 Laks), if the paraphrase of the quoting source is accurate, praises Homer as speaking not 'mythically' (*mythikōs*) but 'truly' on the divine; in his opinion Homer understood Zeus to be 'Aer'. This is allegory of a familiar kind, but the significance in the present context is that the poetic surface of a tale about gods is designated both 'mythical' and 'false'. We may remind ourselves again of Thucydides 1.21.1: poets, he says, exaggerate the old tales, logographers ornament them to delight their audiences; with the passage of time these events have 'won through' to *to mythōdes.* Strictly speaking *to mythōdes* in his sentence applies to the ancient events, not the logographers and poets, but they are to blame not only for failing to demythologize events but for actively enhancing their mythical elements.

Taken together these texts remind us that the term *mythoi* was not co-extensive with 'the Greek myths' in this period; but it is important to note that this remained the case throughout antiquity, long after the qualitative difference in these stories was clearly accepted. We cited above some instances from Plato and others where 'myth' denoted fables or fictions. The Greek myths were all *mythoi*, but *mythoi* could encompass stories sharing the key characteristic of fictiveness. It is significant that examples of *mythoi* that are not 'myths' are a tiny minority of the total; 'myths' are again and again the prime instance, and define the category. This definition took shape in the fifth century, and *mythoi* were associated, as we have seen from Diogenes, Thucydides and the Sophists, with poets.

Plato provides further evidence for the antecedent invention of mythology. For a careful reading of the many passages where he speaks of *logos* and *mythos* shows that the distinction is not original with him. Rather, he has inherited the Sophistic distinction, recast it in the light of his own philosophy and set about exploring its problems. The passage already cited, *Rep.* 2.337a, illustrates this well enough. Plato often uses such language when introducing an unfamiliar distinction; but what is unfamiliar here is not the distinction between *mythos* and *logos*, as the other passages cited above make clear, but the remark that myth has some truth in it: the strongest of all words for Plato. That is the genuine Platonic problematic: what kind of truth can one attain in the sub-lunar world? We hear next about the immorality and therefore the falsehood of traditional myth as told by poets and about what Plato proposes to substitute. As the dialogue progresses it becomes clear too that this statement (that there are two kinds of *logoi*, one of which is *mythos*) is more important than first meets the eye: the point is not just an innocuous one that all discourse is *logos*, including *mythos*, but more fundamentally that *mythos* has a very complicated relationship with *logos* in the philosopher's pursuit of truth. The same point is subtly foreshadowed at 376d, where Sokrates remarks 'Come then, let us educate the men through our discussion (*logos*), as though we were telling myths and had time on our hands'.[71] The enterprise

[70] See Sommerstein and Henderson in their commentaries ad loc.

[71] Ἴθι οὖν, ὥσπερ ἐν μύθωι μυθολογοῦντές τε καὶ σχολὴν ἄγοντες λόγωι παιδεύωμεν τοὺς ἄνδρας. For an overview of Plato's use of the stem *mytholog-*, see H.-G. Nesselrath, *Platon Kritias* (Göttingen 2006) 150–51.

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has just been labelled a *logos* and a *skepsis*, an 'account' and a 'rigorous examination'; so the phrase 'in our *logos*' can bear a stronger meaning of 'in our reasoned discussion', which is nonetheless a *mythos* of the sort normally used to educate children, but here used paradoxically to educate men.[72] In due course it emerges that the 'noble lie' about kinds of people is also a myth (415a2–3 and c7), but a good one, and of course Plato famously uses other stories to bolster the truth of his dialectic. Often the subject of myth is the afterlife or the eternal world, as at *Phaedo* 110b1, b4 and 114d7. In the last of these passages it is asserted that one cannot be sure if the story is true, but the truth will be something like it; the point recurs at *Phdr.* 265b3 and *Tim.* 29d2, 72d4–8. At *Gorgias* 523a, Sokrates says his tale of life after death is a *logos* because it is true, while acknowledging that to others it will seem like a *mythos*; this is the normal expectation about such stories (and gives us warrant to call the story with which Plato concludes the *Republic* the 'myth of Er', though Plato does not use the word there).[73] Sokrates' remark is a case of *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*: he cannot really vouch for the truth of his story, only that the truth should be something like it (as in the *Phaedo*): i.e., it really is a *mythos* in spite of his disclaimer – as well as a *logos.* The *mythos*/*logos* mix is in fact unavoidable. At *Kratylos* 408c a strong contrast is drawn between the true *logos* in heaven and the situation here on earth, where we have myths and falsehood; Plato's epistemology and ontology do not permit any other view. But of course there is also *logos* here on earth, though it imperfectly reflects the *logos* of heaven. The task of the philosopher is to follow *logos* as far as possible, and with it to discipline and direct the irrational elements of our condition, including *mythos.* Under those circumstances such elements can actually be put to good use.

Note that Plato is saying that we cannot even be sure which is which. Not only can the Forms of the two not be perfectly apprehended so long as we are on the wrong side of heaven, but the two commingle in the same entities in this world. Just as the immortal, purely rational soul is tainted by the irrational body, so *logos* is tainted by *mythos.* We have no certain criteria for distinguishing them, only probable ones. This is a situation that is almost impossible to cope with without divine revelation; some would say it is impossible. Trying to isolate *logos* from the inside, as it were, produces an infinite regress as we try to distinguish *logos* from *mythos* using a faculty which is itself a mix of *logos* and *mythos* in unknown proportions.

I believe this is the reason why Plato, with brutal and somewhat self-damaging intellectual honesty, calls the status of his own discourse into doubt, and at some places poses us a direct challenge in this respect – is it *logos* or *mythos*? – which ultimately cannot be solved; if it could be, it would imply certainty about the difference. I have already quoted the passages which seem to designate the *Republic* as both *logos* and *mythos.* Notoriously, in the *Timaios* the whole of the *Republic* is called a *mythos*; indeed, it is designated an imaginative construct such as was unlikely ever to come into existence, even though while reading the *Republic* we were encouraged to think otherwise.[74] Conversely, the story of Atlantis is presented emphatically as a true *logos*, albeit a strange (*atopos*) one.[75] Stranger still, this tale in its turn is designated a 'probable *mythos*' at 29d! It is more often called a *logos*, but the idea of probability comes up repeatedly,[76] which must undercut this to some extent: it is (probably!) more *logos* than *mythos*, but that is all we can truthfully say, if we put uncompromising emphasis on 'truthfully'.[77] The saving grace for Plato is that

[72] The paradox is the sharper because the word for 'educate' is παιδεύω. Myth is associated with children also at *Soph.* 242c8; *Polit.* 268d8, 268e5; *Hipp. Mai.* 286a2. The *mythos*/*logos* mix recurs at 501e4 ἡ πολιτεία ἣν μυθολογοῦμεν λόγωι.

[73] Cf. *Gorg.* 493a, d; *Rep.* 330d7; *Phd.* 61e.

[74] C.J. Rowe, 'The status of the "myth" in Plato's *Timaeus*', in C. Natali and S. Maso (eds), *Plato Physicus. Cosmologia e antropologia nel Timeo* (Amsterdam 2003) 21–31 at 22.

[75] Does Plato pun on this word (*atopos*, literally 'no place' i.e. non-existent)?

[76] 29 times according to Morgan (n.45) 272.

[77] Rowe (n.74) argues that in 29d the emphasis lies on 'probable' rather than *mythos*, and offers interesting speculations (his word) on the way 'probability' is meant to work in the context; it does seem unlikely, however (so to speak), that Plato would use the word

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we are given the tools to realize the superiority of *logos*, and possess an instinct for the direction in which we must turn our mental gaze; we can make some progress. Without such a possibility despair would be the only option.

Now all of this constitutes a possible, but not a very probable position for someone to take who has first invented the *mythos*/*logos* dichotomy. It looks like deliberate nuancing of something already established. Even if 'mythology' as a lexeme was Plato's invention, mythology existed as a recognizable object well before him. Given the antiquity of the verb *mythologeuein* it would hardly be surprising if the noun turned up in a papyrus text of a pre-Platonic author.[78] Plato is also the first to use the word *philosophia*, but he did not invent that either.

Plato has indeed performed extraordinary manoeuvres, even contortions, to accommodate myth, as he defines it; that is because it is a completely new definition. For ordinary, traditional myth, like Xenophanes, he has no room; he simply rejects it *tout court*, and at *Rep.* 378d–e and *Phdr.* 229c–30a he will not even allow the myths to be rendered safe, so to speak, through allegorization or rationalization. Such tactics merely miss the point. But he has plenty of room for myth Platonically understood. His own myths – and there are many[79] – move interpretation and application into a wholly new sphere, with philosophical implications far beyond the reach of the older methods. Even his way of working the material into his dialogues betrays the utmost care and the depth of underlying thought. The Atlantis story is precisely what most people would call a myth, being an unverifiable account of the remote past; but Plato makes up an elaborate, rather Herodotean story to guarantee its bona fides. All of this delicate posturing and negotiation is the mark of sustained engagement with the inherited terms, and a reinvention of the problematic.

## VI. Saving the myth

Have we, then, saved the myth with which we began? 'Partly', is the short answer. It is easy to see where the traditional view goes too far: it is not the case that the whole of Greek society moved majestically from barbarous *mythos* to splendid *logos*; it is as wrong to think of Archaic Greeks as irrational primitives (one of them is Homer, after all), as it is to think of modern humanity as free of *mythos*. The Greeks had no notion of a mythical mentality, or of an age when mythical thought dominated; these are creations of the Enlightenment. So much is clear. But the

(several times, in fact: 29d, 59c, 68d) casually, in light of his obsession with it (excluding the word παραμυθέομαι and derivatives, I find 140 instances of *myth*-words in his corpus). I think Plato deliberately sharpens the dilemma in this dialogue and thus agree with Morgan that he has dramatized the fundamental point about doing philosophy. M. Burnyeat's important contribution ('Eikōs muthos', in C. Partenie (ed.), *Plato's Myths* (Cambridge 2009) 167–86) further clarifies the meaning of *eikōs*, but I do not see why his arguments entail the inference that Plato attempts to overcome the dichotomy of *mythos* and *logos* (179). That is impossible. Rather, Plato is trying to do the best he can under the circumstances. One can also wonder if, as a quasi-*historia* about the distant human past as opposed to myth (the Egyptian records which guarantee the truth about antiquity and the picture of Solon the traveller are clear echoes of Herodotos), there isn't an implicit commentary here on the nature of historical investigation which, having as its object the investigation of things in this world, could within its own (earthly) frame of reference have the status of *logos* (not, that is, attempting to say anything about the real world, but only giving a *logos* of the images thereof) and indeed usually calls itself *logos* in the mundane sense of the term (so Herodotos constantly, as we have noted; in the *Timaios*, λέγεται at 22c7, e5 could be an allusion to an historiographical stylistic tic), but whose claims to 'truth' could only be derided by the philosopher. But this too is speculation. *Cf.* further T. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge 2004) chapters 2–3.

[78] μυθο]λόγωι has been suggested as a supplement in the Derveni papyrus iv 6, but ἱερο]λόγωι seems likelier to be right: D. Sider, 'Heraclitus in the Derveni papyrus', in A. Laks and G. Most (eds), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford 1997) 135; R. Janko, 'The Derveni papyrus (Diagoras of Melos, *Apopyrgizontes logoi*?). A new translation', *CP* 96 (2001) 1–32 at 3. Note that 'hierologos' need be no more complimentary than 'mythologos', as col. xx of the same papyrus shows; Lucian *Astrol.* 10 associates ἱερολογίη with γοητείη (and both with Orpheus). The object of the criticism, if it is such, would be Herakleitos' unreconstructed use of the Erinyes; as a sage he ought to know better. Whichever supplement is correct, its abstract counterpart (ἱερολογία / μυθολογία) is implied. *Cf.* also Herodotos' ἱροὶ λόγοι (see above).

[79] See Partenie (n.77) 1–27 for an overview.

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*mythos*/*logos* contrast, as one between imagination and reason, fictive and factual, is established in the fifth century, along with mythology, and linked to critical inquiry in both history and philosophy in ways that correspond clearly to common understandings of 'myth' and 'reason' in the Western tradition. What we call the Greek myths were a powerful cultural institution which came into focus as a problem and/or a target of criticism in both historiography and philosophy as a result of the work of Herodotos and contemporary philosophers. The *mythos*/*logos* dichotomy itself is a central Sophistic notion. The traditional and 'in-between' uses of the word *mythos* continued to be available in a variety of contexts, but the new, ideological use is an invention of the mid-century, when the intellectual climate was such as to require it. The myths of mythographers became the mythology of historians and philosophers in a process that seems, in retrospect, necessary and inevitable.

What value we may choose to place on these developments is of course another matter. It is perhaps a matter for future intellectual historians to ask why, in the late 20th century, critics thought it reasonable to deny what seemed so clear to earlier generations about Greek *mythos*. Like Gilbert Murray on paganism they might diagnose a failure of nerve; a crisis of European conscience and consciousness.[80] In fact the power of the *mythos*/*logos* dichotomy has been only slightly disturbed by 20th-century critiques of the Enlightenment. Its original creation or articulation can be analysed, as all such processes can be, as a change in discourse, in which prevailing power structures played their role. The new discourse enables things the old one could not, which does not necessarily imply that the earlier discourse was impoverished, primitive or confused.[81] But the trans-periodic, lasting power of this particular dichotomy, like that of body and soul, is unusually strong. The invention of mythology is in fact a kind of 'big bang', beyond which it is impossible to pass, in the sense that it is very difficult if not impossible for modern heirs of this tradition to comprehend fully a state of mind that is innocent of the *mythos*/*logos* distinction. The impenetrability of that barrier may be one reason the strong *mythos* → *logos* thesis was invented in the first place. It is always salutary to have one's false myths exposed, including the myth of progress, perhaps the most dangerous of all. Yet the stakes are high for anyone who would claim that rationality is entirely constructed. Just as the historical perversions of progress would not lead a rational person to abandon attempts to improve the world, so the travails of contemporary consciousness should not lead one to abandon the myth of rationality. Progress, to speak with Sokrates, may never consist in more than the elimination of error; the best we may hope for, with the better instincts of Plato, is a tentative advance in the right presumed direction; the truth of myths may be no more or less true or false than any other truth; but for all that the nightmare myth of primary irrationality is surely one which few would willingly embrace.

[80] *Four Stages of Greek Religion* (New York and London 1912) 103–54.

[81] *Cf.* Williams (n.2) 170–71, not mentioning Foucault.

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