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I

INTRODUCTION

MORTAL MISFORTUNES, *ΘΕΟΣ ΑΝΑΙΤΙΟΣ*, AND *ΤΟ ΘΕΙΟΝ ΦΘΟΝΕΡΟΝ*: THE SOCRATIC SEEDS OF LATER DEBATE ON HERODOTUS' THEOLOGY*

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Abstract: This introduction offers a brief overview of the Socratic and Platonic background to later perceptions of Herodotus' views about the nature of god, and specifically the notion that god is *phthoneros* ('jealous', 'envious', 'grudging'). Following this theme through later centuries, it then argues that the writings of Plato subtly influenced the theological discourse of subsequent classical, Hellenistic, and Christian historiography, and coloured reactions to Herodotus at all periods, from the fourth century BC to 15th-century Byzantium. This diachronic approach reveals a long-standing tension between the presentation of the gods in Herodotean historiography, on the one hand, and Platonic and Christian theology, on the other.

Keywords: Herodotus, Socrates, Plato, Plutarch, divine *phthonos,* religion, Byzantine historiography, Neoplatonism.

ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι
ζώειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.
δοιοὶ γάρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων·
ᾧ μέν κ' ἀμμίξας δώῃ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος,
ἄλλοτε μέν τε κακῷ ὅ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῷ·
ᾧ δέ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δώῃ, λωβητὸν ἔθηκε,
καί ἑ κακὴ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα δῖαν ἐλαύνει,
φοιτᾷ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμένος οὔτε βροτοῖσιν.

Iliad 24.525–33

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The following article outlines the Socratic background to Plutarch's claim that Herodotus commits impiety (βλασφημία) and abuses the gods, an accusation which profoundly influenced subsequent debates on Herodotus' religious views, and provoked a range of apologetic responses which continue to influence the interpretation of Herodotus today. As we shall see, Plutarch's rebuke has roots in fifth- and fourth-century debates about the nature of god,[1] specifically whether god can feel the emotion of *phthonos* (common translations include 'envy', 'jealousy', and 'resentment') and whether god can be ταραχώδης ('disruptive', 'troubling', or 'meddlesome').[2]

During the fifth century BC—and probably within the lifetime of Herodotus—it appears that the Socratic circle

[1] I use the terms 'god', 'the gods', 'the divinity', 'the divine' etc. in free alternation in many contexts, following the practice of Greek authors from Homer to Plato (and far beyond): cf. François (1957). For the sake of clarity, when talking about authors who self-identified as 'Christians', I use the singular, capitalised form 'God', although this modern typographic convention introduces an artificial distinction between the often identical terms used in classical and Christian Greek literature.

[2] I conduct the following discussion in terms of the '*phthonos*' of the gods rather than choosing any of the possible translations ('envy' etc.,) because the afterlife of the Herodotean phrase itself is as important as the afterlife of the numerous subtly different ideas which the phrase communicated. As we shall see, divine *phthonos* is sometimes associated with god's insistence that humans should suffer misfortune and at other times with god's hatred of those who 'think big' (and its semantic range is much wider than these two examples); that Plato in the *Timaeus* may have had only one of these theological ideas in his sights is interesting but often irrelevant to our understanding of later debates on the topic, since most subsequent commentators followed Plato's pronouncement that 'divine φθόνος' was theologically incorrect, and consequently rejected it wholesale even where it referred to ideas of which they, in fact, approved. If we are to understand how commentators responded to this theological idea, we must be as attentive to its verbal clothing (and the rhetoric surrounding it) as we are to the underlying concept or 'script' in play in different contexts. For a fruitful analysis of the various 'scripts' of human *phthonos* in classical Greek literature see Sanders (2014).

introduced a number of revolutionary ideas which challenged established conceptions of god, and specifically the theology of much archaic and classical literature. Their criticisms struck at the heart of some of the most popular and enduring themes of the Greek literary tradition, and would subtly alter the mode of theological expression among later followers of Plato's thought, Christian and pagan alike.

The idea that the gods bestow both good and ill on every human being is found in archaic and classical Greek authors from Homer onwards. The idea, powerfully expressed in Achilles' speech on the jars of Zeus (*Iliad* 24.525–33, quoted above), was intimately connected with the notion that suffering is an intrinsic part of human life, and often holds the gods to be the ultimate cause of human ills.[3] By the fifth century, and probably earlier, this was often associated with the idea that the gods have a 'disruptive' (*tarakhôdês*) and 'grudging' (*phthoneros*) disposition—that is, that they are unwilling to share with mortals the unmixed blessings which gods enjoy, and so intervene to disrupt human prosperity and happiness.[4] According to the testimonies of Plato and Xenophon, Socrates directly challenged this idea and the associated notion of divine

[3] For these themes more widely in Greek literature see Krause (1976).

[4] 'Disruptiveness' is an aspect often associated with divine (and human) *phthonos* in classical sources. Cf. Pind. *Isth.* 7.39: ὁ δ' ἀθανάτων μὴ θρασσέτω φθόνος, Hdt. 1.32: ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες (cf. Herodotus' description of the effects seemingly brought about by divine *nemesis*, which follows Croesus' encounter with Solon, at 1.44.1: ὁ δὲ Κροῖσος τῷ θανάτῳ τοῦ παιδὸς συντεταραγμένος), Hdt. 7.46.3–4: αἵ τε γὰρ συμφοραὶ προσπίπτουσαι καὶ αἱ νοῦσοι συνταράσσουσαι καὶ βραχὺν ἐόντα μακρὸν δοκέειν εἶναι ποιεῦσι τὸν βίον. οὕτω … ὁ δὲ θεὸς γλυκὺν γεύσας τὸν αἰῶνα φθονερὸς ἐν αὐτῷ εὑρίσκεται ἐών, Arist. *Rhet.* 1386b17–20: λύπη μὲν γὰρ ταραχώδης καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἐστὶν. The classical association is echoed in Plutarch's simultaneous rejection of divine φθόνος and the notion that god is ταρακτικόν (*Non poss.* 1102d–e, on which see Marincola, below, Chapter 2), and in Eusebius' frequent association of ταράττω (and cognates) with the workings of supernatural daimonic φθόνος (see below, n. 41).

phthonos. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates insists that god is responsible only for the good things which humans enjoy, and not responsible for the bad; any ills which humans suffer therefore cannot be blamed on the gods (380a5–c3: *μὴ πάντων αἴτιον τὸν θεὸν ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν*); in Plato's *Timaeus*—in which later Christians saw so much of their own religion and which Plutarch prized above all other Platonic texts—Timaeus denies that god can feel *phthonos*, beginning from the premise that god is good and reasoning that no good being can ever feel *phthonos*.[5] In Plato's *Phaedrus* Socrates himself voices a similar claim (247a7: *φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἵσταται*). As I have argued elsewhere, a comparable aversion to divine *phthonos* is implicit in chapters 1.4 and 4.3 of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates argues from the exceptional blessings which god has bestowed on humans that 'love of humanity' (*philanthrôpia*) is a central aspect of god's nature.[6] Equally, that Xenophon's Socrates associates *phthonos* with fools (*ἠλίθιος*, *Mem.* 3.9.8) makes it clear that the 'wise and creature-loving demiurge' described at *Mem.* 1.4.7 cannot possibly be *phthoneros* in his dealings with mortals.

These explicit and implicit attacks on the concept of divine *phthonos* (and the associated belief that god is sometimes the cause of arbitrary human suffering and misery) resound across subsequent centuries of Platonic thought. They are repeated or echoed by Aristotle (*Met.* 983a: *ἀλλ' οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερὸν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί*), the *Corpus Hermeticum* (4.3), Celsus (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.21), Plotinus (*Enneads* 2.9.17), Proclus (*Comm. in Tim.* 2.362.17–365.5), and, of course, Plutarch, who cites the relevant Platonic passages several times in his writing (e.g. *Mor.* 1102D and 1086F) and seizes on Plato's words as yet another rebuke to hurl at

[5] *Tim.* 29e: *Λέγωμεν δὴ δι' ἥντινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε ὁ συνιστὰς συνέστησεν. ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος· τούτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ.*

[6] Ellis (2016).

Herodotus (*DHM* 857F–858A; further Ch. 2).[7] Similar conclusions were reached by early Christian authorities like Irenaeus and Theophilus of Antioch: in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* the Devil argues to Eve that God prohibited the couple from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge out of *phthonos*, wishing to deprive humans of its benefits (141–52). Irenaeus and Theophilus were aware of such interpretations of Genesis 2–3 and both explicitly denied that god's prohibition was the result of *φθόνος* or *invidia* (see, respectively, *Adv. haer.* 3.23.6 and *Autol.* 2.25).[8] The denial of divine *phthonos*, like other elements of Platonic theology, ultimately worked its way into the Christian orthodoxy forged by the Church Fathers.[9]

The apparent theological conflict between the Herodotean notion of divine *phthonos* and the Socratic and later Christian belief in a 'good' and (at times) 'loving' god who cares providentially and generously for mankind has dogged Herodotus' pious readers and imitators for millennia.[10] The problem was particularly acute because Herodotus places divine *phthonos* at the centre of his dramatisation of the major events of the *Histories*. Today the concept is largely ignored, either on the grounds that it is merely one of several incompatible *gnômai* ('proverbs') which Herodotus deploys reflexively and without any particular

[7] Roig Lanzillotta (2012) 144–7 discusses several of the principle Platonic and Christian texts.

[8] See discussion in Roig Lanzillotta (2007).

[9] For further denial of divine *phthonos* in the Church Fathers, echoing or citing Platonic authors, see: Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 41 and *De incarnatione verbi* 3 (both citing Plato's *ἀγαθῷ γὰρ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἂν γένοιτο φθόνος*); Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 5.4.24.1 (*οὐ φθόνῳ—οὐ γὰρ θέμις ἐμπαθῆ νοεῖν τὸν θεόν—ἀλλ' ὅπως* …) and 7.2.7.2 (*ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἅπτεται τοῦ κυρίου ἀπαθοῦς ἀνάρχως γενομένου φθόνος*), Chrysostom, *De virginitate* 8 (*Πλάτων μὲν γάρ φησιν ὅτι ἀγαθὸς ἦν ὁ τόδε τὸ πᾶν συστησάμενος, καὶ ὅτι ἀγαθῷ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς ἐγγίνεται φθόνος*). On denials of divine *phthonos* in Chrysostom see Nikolaou (1969) 44–51.

[10] Until very recently most readers have assumed that Herodotus' 'warners'—including Solon, Amasis, Artabanus—express the author's own theological and historical theories.

emphasis,[11] or on the grounds that it is, in fact, simply a synonym for divine justice and so requires no independent analysis (an approach innovated by early-modern humanists struggling to defend Herodotus from Plutarch's Platonic criticisms).[12]

Consideration of the *Histories*' structure, however, reveals why attentive readers have consistently placed the divine *phthonos* at the centre of Herodotus' philosophy of history and, to quote Edward Gibbon, considered it 'a first principle in the Theology of Herodotus himself'.[13] A speech warning a successful ruler about the *phthoneros* nature of god precedes the tragic misfortunes of Croesus, Polycrates, and Xerxes, and the decline of their kingdoms: Lydia, Samos, and Persia. These momentous calamities, in turn, are the primary illustrations of the transient nature of human prosperity mentioned by Herodotus in the proem (1.5.4). In the case of Xerxes, whose campaign is the main subject of the *Histories*, divine *phthonos* is mentioned in two speeches: one immediately before Xerxes resolves to invade Greece (7.10ε) and one just after he has reviewed his invasion force and before the army makes the symbolic crossing from Asia into Europe (7.46). Aside from their placement at structurally significant points, the speeches are given to the most authoritative characters of the work—Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus, who hail from three different countries (Athens/Greece, Egypt, and Persia)—and are written in

[11] See Versnel (2011) throughout his discussion of Herodotean theology (esp. 181–8), Gould (1989) 79–80, Lang (1984) 62. I discuss this view (and its origins in 19th- and 20th-century scholarship) in Ellis (2015).

[12] See, e.g., Darbo-Peschanski (1987) 54–74, Lloyd-Jones (1983) 69–70, Rohde (1901) 328–30, Meuss (1888) 19, Baehr (1830–5) IV.410–11, Schweighäuser (1816) *ad* 3.40, and Valckenaer's comments *ad* Hdt. 3.40 in Wesseling (1763). I discuss the development of this interpretation of divine *phthonos* in various stages over the last five centuries in Ellis (forthcoming, b).

[13] Gibbon, marginalia *ad* Hdt. 7.12, cited from Craddock (1972) 374.

Herodotus' most elevated register.[14] These warnings are among the most artful literary scenes of the *Histories*, and they accord the concept of divine *phthonos* a unique place in the work. Whether or not this gives us an unmediated insight into Herodotus' personal theological beliefs, there can be no doubt that the *Histories*, more than any other work of Greek literature,[15] structures its historical and literary vision around this concept.[16]

It appears that from the fourth century onwards, educated, philosophically inclined writers took pains to avoid describing god as *phthoneros* in their own literary works. This caused several complications, not least because themes closely associated with divine *phthonos* in Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus—the mixed nature of human fortune and the supernatural disruption of human success and happiness—remained important in the genres of historiography and biography. From Xenophon onwards, authors preferred to couch these and similar ideas (for instance god's hatred of arrogance) within an alternative theological framework or vocabulary, and talked no longer of god's *phthonos*. But if we are to appreciate the theological nuances behind these later developments we must look a little closer at what Herodotus and his predecessors meant by divine *phthonos*, and the relationship that these ideas themselves had to the major schools of theological thought to which Herodotus' later readers subscribed.

A prominent idea associated with divine *phthonos* in the fifth century, as noted above, was that no individual,

[14] I hope to treat Herodotus' literary handling of divine *phthonos* elsewhere; for a discussion of the linguistic register of the warners' speeches see Ellis (forthcoming, a).

[15] *Pace* Hinterberger (2010b) 105, who suggests that (metaphysical) *phthonos* never receives such emphasis in classical literature as it does 10th-century Byzantine historiography.

[16] An analysis of Herodotus' philosophy of history and theology must, of course, go much further than divine *phthonos* (nor is the motif of the mutability of fortune in every case linked with these words), but, given the general neglect of the theme today, its importance bears stressing.

empire, dynasty, or city could enjoy perpetual good fortune without suffering some reversal (the classic reference being Hdt. 3.40; similar ideas seem to underlie Pind. *Pyth.* 8. 71–2; *Pyth.* 10.20–2; *Isth.* 7.39–45): the gods are prone to visit everyone with some misfortune at some point in their lives. The notion that god will inevitably break the power of temporal rulers was, of course, anything but alien to readers of the Christian gospels;[17] moreover, it has been self-evident to most historians that the power of rulers and empires wax and wane rather than remaining constant and unchanging. Platonic thinkers like Plutarch had to develop different theological and causational mechanisms to cope with these ideas, as we shall see. Yet many later authors state such ideas in words which echo Herodotus' proem (Hdt. 1.5.4) and the words of warners such as Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus (see further Chs. 2, 3, and 4).

Extant classical literature also associates divine *phthonos* with the idea that god looks askance at those who 'think big', whether by failing to realise the limitations of their mortal status, by becoming arrogant and entertaining grandiose pans, or simply by allowing themselves to be the object of excessive praise by others (classic examples are Hdt. 7.10ε, Pind. *Olymp.* 13.24–5, Aesch. *Ag.* 946–7). Again, few Socratic or Christian thinkers would have quarrelled with such principles. They can be paralleled, in one form or another,[18] in the narratives of devoted followers of Socratic theology like Xenophon;[19] equally, god's humbling of the 'arrogant' or 'high-hearted' is a commonplace in the Old

[17] See, e.g., Luke 1:52–3: *καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς, πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.*

[18] The idea is often found with an extra link inserted (which is not, however, always present in archaic and classical sources): that arrogance or pride causes impious and unjust behaviour, which is then justly 'punished' by the gods.

[19] See, e.g., Cyrus' deathbed reflections at *Cyr.* 8.7.3, where he confesses his fear of 'thinking above [what befits] a man' (*οὐδεπώποτε ἐπὶ ταῖς εὐτυχίαις ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐφρόνησα*). See Ellis (2016) for Xenophon's adaption of Herodotus' story of Croesus and Cyrus to fit a Socratic theological framework.

and New Testaments, and Pauline theology.[20] To judge from the rich trail of verbal and conceptual allusions that link speeches in Herodotus (by Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus) to historical writings from Xenophon to Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Herodotus' *Histories* was one of the most popular texts for historians exploring such themes. Crucially, however, the topic had to be handled with caution: Socratic, Platonic, and Christian authors could certainly say that god abominates all who 'think big' or become 'puffed up', but such ideas could not be linked (as they are in Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus) with divine *phthonos*. If some supernatural power were to feel *phthonos* that power must, at least, not be the supreme 'god': it must be *tukhê* ('fortune'), or *moira* ('fate'), or perhaps some lesser divinity like a *daimôn*.[21]

Plutarch, as both a Neoplatonic theologian and literary critic and, at the same time, a historian and biographer who reworked narratives told by Herodotus, provides one of the most fascinating case-studies in the afterlife of both Herodotean historical causation and divine *phthonos*, as emerges from Chapter 2 in this volume. Although Plutarch often wishes to convey ideas strikingly similar to those discussed by Herodotus' warners, he is careful to avoid violating the Platonic dogma discussed above,[22] as

[20] See, e.g., the LXX text of Proverbs 16:5 (ἀκάθαρτος παρὰ θεῷ πᾶς ὑψηλοκάρδιος); James 4:6 (ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν); and *Rom.* 11.17–21 (esp. 20) in Paul's Greek (μὴ ὑψηλοφρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ), Erasmus' Latin (*ne efferaris animo, sed timeas*) and Luther's German ('Sey nicht stoltz sondern fürchte dich') if not Jerome's Vulgate (*noli altum sapere, sed time*). Cf. Psalms 74:4–6; Isaiah 5:15; Proverbs 8:13. For the afterlife of Jerome's hyper-literal translation of *Rom.* 11.20 (*inter alia* as the motto of the Stephanus printing press from 1526–78), see references below, Ch. 5, p. 215 n. 103; p. 222 n. 125.

[21] Polybius, for example, talks of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* (39.8.2), as do later authors (further below). For a brief discussion of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* as a motif in Hellenistic historiography see Aalders (1979), and for an excellent overview of *tukhê* in Polybius (and its scholarly reception) Hau (2011).

[22] The essay *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, however, contains a puzzling exception. At *Mor.* 1106F Theon cites Artabanus' statements on divine *phthonos* (Hdt. 7.46) with apparent approval, as if it

Marincola shows, and in his *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* the conversants admiringly cite the relevant passages from the *Timaeus* (*Mor.* 1102D–E, citing *Tim.* 29e) and *Phaedrus* (*Mor.* 1086F, citing *Phaedr.* 247a7). Indeed, Plutarch's commitment to the Platonic belief that God is good and cannot cause evil (or be the cause of bad things) seems to have had a decisive impact on the development of his theological thought. Dillon has argued that it was Plutarch's concern to explain the existence of evil in a world created by this perfectly good god that led him to develop a quasi-dualist system, in which the good and eternal god (sometimes figured as the creator) is opposed to (although also superior to) another eternal divinity responsible for the existence of disorder and evil. In this Plutarch bucked the trend of contemporary Platonism (as he acknowledged),[23] demonstrating the extent to which he took the goodness of god—and god's non-involvement in the creation of evil or disruption of what is good—to be a central and inviolable tenet of Platonism (and understandably so, in view of passages like *Republic* 379c and *Timaeus* 29e–30a). Here, then, we see a genuine opposition between Plutarch's and Herodotus' mode of theological expressions, for Herodotus gives no signs of a division in the metaphysical realm between a wholly good divinity and a negative divinity

were an affirmation that life is better than death (in contrast to Epicurean beliefs). This is odd for two reasons: first it is a gross misreading of Artabanus' speech, whose climactic claim is that life is so miserable that every human frequently wishes for death in place of life. Plutarch's reading only works as an interpretation of the phrase he cites in isolation from its original context. Since he seems to be citing from memory (Plutarch replaces Artabanus' words *εὑρίσκεται ἐών* with *ὢν φαίνεται*), this seems the most likely explanation for the misreading. Second, Theon seems, to some degree, to approve of the Herodotean *bon mot* which describes god as *phthoneros*, despite the fact that both the Platonic passages denying divine *phthonos* were cited earlier in this same dialogue (1086F, 1102D–E). The explanation is, perhaps, that the praise is purely relative: that Herodotus is *σοφώτερος* than Epicurus does not indicate that Herodotus' statement is theologically sound—it serves rather to indicate the extent of Epicurus' folly: he is *even more* foolish that Herodotus.

[23] See Dillon (2002) 235 and *Proc. An.* 1012D–E.

responsible for the disruption and misery of human life. Indeed, Herodotus speaks in a way that most naturally presents the 'gods', 'the divine', and 'god' (terms which Herodotus uses interchangeably in such contexts) as directly responsible for arbitrarily inflicting misery on humanity (see, most strikingly, Hdt. 7.46, with its strong echoes of Achilles' speech to Priam at *Il.* 24.519–51).

Plutarch's theological criticisms of Herodotus are, then, intimately connected with Plato's criticisms of Homer and 'the poets'. Indeed, at the end of his *On the Malice of Herodotus* Plutarch even likens Herodotus to a bard (*aoidos*), a term which in Plutarch's mind may have had Platonic theological overtones.[24] Plutarch follows Plato in criticising Achilles' speech on the 'jars of Zeus' (*On Isis and Osiris* 369B–D, echoing Pl. *Rep.* 379d),[25] and his rebuke of Herodotus' *βλασφημία* takes a quintessentially Platonic view of divine *phthonos*. But Plutarch was more drawn to aspects of the Greek literary tradition, both Herodotean history and Homeric epic, than his theological and polemical writings would suggest. Plutarch alludes extensively (and once refers explicitly) to the Homeric encounter of Priam and Achilles in the *Iliad* in his presentation of the encounter of Aemilius and Perseus (*Aem.* 27.1), observing that the human lot is 'mixed' (i.e., not *κακῶν ἄκρατος*, *Aem.* 34.8) and that no one can escape misfortune.[26]

[24] Plut. *DHM* 874B–C. That god should be *phthoneros* was, in fact, viewed as a quintessentially 'poetic' lie, as is clear from Aristotle *Met.* 983a (*ἀλλ' οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερὸν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί*). The connection is made as early as Euripides: Heracles asks in disgust whether anyone would worship a goddess who destroyed the guiltless (*anaitioi*) benefactors of Greece merely on account of sexual envy (*λέκτρων φθονοῦσα*, *Her.* 1307–10), an idea shortly afterwards linked with the lies of the 'poets' (*aoidoi*, 1345–6). I am grateful to Bryant Kirkland for sharing with me an unpublished essay exploring, *inter alia*, Plutarch's *aoidos* comparison, and for a stimulating discussion of this Plutarchan passage.

[25] As observed by Dillon (2002) 229–30; cf. Marincola's discussion in Ch. 2 of this volume, below, pp. 48–51.

[26] See discussion in Cairns (2014) 120–36, esp. 126–8. The reference to Homer (*Aem.* 34.8), however, is followed by a statement whose

Plutarch, in fact, manages to have his cake and eat it, since he adopts many of the same dramatic and theological motifs that Plato had denounced, presenting them in an only slightly modified form. Plutarch's Alcibiades, for example, when talking to the *ekklêsia*, ascribes his personal misfortunes to 'a mean fortune and a *phthoneros daimôn*' (*Alc.* 33: *τινι τύχῃ πονηρᾷ καὶ φθονερῷ δαίμονι*). Since much of Plutarch's philosophical writing survives it is possible in Plutarch's case—where it is not in Herodotus'—to know that Plutarch (or some of the most authoritative speakers in his philosophical dialogues) distinguished, as we have noted, between a wholly good primary god and an indefinite 'dyad' responsible for some of the less desirable aspects of creation (though the relationship of the demiurge and of the Olympian gods to this opposition is difficult to pinpoint precisely).[27] We might, then, assume that Plutarch thought it permissible to ascribe *phthonos* to a *daimôn* but not to the wholly good god (*theos*).[28] This distinction, enabled by a charitable comparison of Plutarch's historical writings with his philosophical, is all that saves Plutarch from precisely the criticism he levels at Herodotus (making a character

content (if not phraseology) most closely resembles, in extant classical literature, the advice of Amasis to Polycrates in Herodotus: *ὅπως μηδενὶ κακῶν ἄκρατος εἴη καὶ καθαρός, ἀλλὰ καθ' Ὅμηρον ἄριστα δοκῶσι πράττειν, οἷς αἱ τύχαι ῥοπὴν ἐπ' ἀμφότερα τῶν πραγμάτων ἔχουσιν*. Cf. Hdt. 3.40.2–3: *καί κως βούλομαι καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ τῶν ἂν κήδωμαι τὸ μέν τι εὐτυχέειν τῶν πρηγμάτων, τὸ δὲ προσπταίειν, καὶ οὕτω διαφέρειν τὸν αἰῶνα ἐναλλὰξ πρήσσων ἢ εὐτυχέειν τὰ πάντα· οὐδένα γάρ κω λόγῳ οἶδα ἀκούσας ὅστις ἐς τέλος οὐ κακῶς ἐτελεύτησε πρόρριζος, εὐτυχέων τὰ πάντα.*

[27] On the uncertain identity of various gods within this system see Dillon (2002) and esp. 223–9 on another dualistic element in Plutarch's thought: the distinction between the demiurgic god and the first, eternal, intelligible god.

[28] For the tendency to consider the good, positive deity a *theos* and the negative, disruptive divinity a *daimôn*, see Zoroaster's speech in *On Isis and Osiris* (Plut. *Mor.* 369D) and Dillon (2002) 230. Swain (1989) 272–4, 301 however, sees important differences between the theological vocabulary of the *Lives* and that of Plutarch's religious and philosophical writings (noting, *inter alia* that the distinction between *δαίμων* and *θεός* is frequently 'blurred' in the *Lives*).

commit the blasphemy of describing god—τὸ θεῖον in Herodotus (1.32.1)—as *phthoneros*).[29]

As Marincola notes in Chapter 2 of this volume, Plutarch also criticises the superstitious man (δεισιδαίμων) for his fear of 'the gods', particularly for considering them 'changeable' (εὐμεταβόλους) and 'savage' or 'cruel' (ὠμούς, *Superstit.*, 170D–E).[30] Yet in the *Aemilius* the narrator describes the Romans shuddering at the 'cruelty of fortune' (*Aem.* 35: τὴν ὠμότητα τῆς τύχης) when they consider the death of Aemilius' two sons at the crowning point in his career—his military triumph—so that 'lamentations and tears mingled with victory songs and triumphs' (καταμιγνύουσα θρήνους καὶ δάκρυα παιᾶσιν ἐπινικίοις καὶ θριάμβοις). By dwelling on the savagery with which the supernatural forces treat sympathetic characters, Plutarch imbues the story with a dramatic frisson and an explicitly Homeric allusion to the mixed nature of fortune, and yet avoids penning a direct criticism of 'the gods' (θεοί) by displacing the negative attribute of 'cruelty' onto 'chance' or 'fortune' (τύχη);[31] this practice had become standard among Hellenistic historians (e.g. Pol. 39.8.2), perhaps also due to Platonic influence,[32]

[29] Plutarch's *apparent* hypocrisy seems particularly marked because, when referring to the divine in general terms, Herodotus uses ὁ δαίμων, τὸ δαιμόνιον, ὁ θεός, τὸ θεῖον, and οἱ θεοί interchangeably; cf. Harrison (2000) 158, Ellis (2013) 144. Plutarch generally does not do so in his philosophical works, but occasionally does in his *Lives* (see previous note): on Plutarch's daimonology see Soury (1942), Russell (1973) 75–8, and Brenk (1977).

[30] Further Marincola, below, Ch. 2, pp. 51–3.

[31] This is very similar to Plutarch's rather confused approach in *De audiendis poetis* 23E–24C, as analysed by Brenk (1977) 155, in the discussion of *pronoia, heimarmenê*, and *tukhê*: Plutarch blames 'fate' not 'Zeus' for the unjust fates of virtuous men (but immediately afterwards fudges the issue by insisting that the virtuous do not suffer unjustly), and then insists that the poverty that often afflicts the virtuous is to be attributed to *tukhê* and not to divine *pronoia*.

[32] Contrast Rakoczy (1996) 269, who resists the idea that the philosophical ideas of Plato and Aristotle had the power to alter centuries of poetic tradition. The fact remains, however, that φθόνος θεῶν disappears from the literary record after the early 5th century

and would be continued in Byzantine historiography (e.g. Proc. *Wars* 6.8.1, where *tukhê* appears loth to allow humans to enjoy good fortune without also mixing in 'something bad').[33] Yet the dualistic theology developed in Plutarch's philosophical dialogues is only partially satisfactory as an answer the problem constituted by the malignancy of certain elements of the divine world in his *Lives*. Aemilius himself says that he always feared *τύχη* 'as the most faithless and changeable of all divine beings' (*τῶν δὲ θείων ὡς ἀπιστότατον καὶ ποικιλώτατον πρᾶγμα τὴν* Τύχην *ἀεὶ φοβηθείς*, *Aem.* 36.3). If we wish to reconcile this with Plutarch's own theological views, we must assume that *tukhê* is divine (*θεῖος*) but is to be distinguished from the ultimate good god (*θεός*) who is neither 'changeable' nor 'cruel', but yet allows *tukhê* to operate freely in accordance with its savage nature. This raises the unanswered question of how the providence of a good god relates to the variously cruel or envious metaphysical powers (particularly *tukhê, daimones*, and the *daimôn*) which often seem to dominate historical causation in Plutarch's *Lives*.[34]

(leaving aside the numerous protestations by philosophers that divine *phthonos* is false).

[33] The context verbally echoes Herodotus in other ways (see esp. the phrases *ἐρῶν ἔρχομαι* and *λόγου ἀξίας*). On Procopius' use of the '*phthonos* of *tykhê*' see further Zali in Chapter 3 of this volume, with discussion of other classicising terms like *φθονερῶν δαιμόνων*; Cameron (1966) 477 identifies the 'envy of fortune' as an archaic 'affectation' on Procopius' part, but crucially Procopius selects the post-classical variant on this theme (whether out of Christian or Platonic piety); the link Cameron observes to Aeschylus, Pindar, and Herodotus is, therefore, indirect and mediated. On whether Procopius' classical allusions should be viewed as affectations, see the thoughtful discussion in Kaldellis (2004) 5–14.

[34] For an extensive discussion of Plutarch's treatment of the relationship between *pronoia* and *tukhê* in his historical writings, see Brenk (1977) 155–83 (esp. 153–5, 163–6), who observes the wildly incompatible views found in Plutarch's philosophical treatises (which, with few exceptions, largely dismiss *tukhê* and associate its glorification with Epicurean denials of *pronoia*) and the *Lives* where *tukhê* is frequently given a central role. Brenk concludes that 'Plutarch is schizophrenic when it comes to *tyche*' (163–4).

These and other difficulties suggest that, in balancing the competing claims of Platonic piety and the Greek literary tradition,[35] Plutarch's historical and biographical works often adopt more from the latter (both drama and historiography) than his theological beliefs would seem to comfortably admit, leading him (on occasion) to sail rather too close to the wind.[36] To say this is not to doubt Plutarch's conviction to Platonism, or the depth of his thought; rather, it reflects a genuine tension between his theological or philosophical and his dramatic or literary interests.[37]

Plutarch was not alone in exerting himself to reconcile the story patterns and theological motifs of the classical historiographical tradition (often shared with epic, tragedy, and epinician) with the very different conceptions of god which he derived from his philosophical predecessors. This can, in fact, be seen as one of the central literary struggles in post-Platonic Greek historiography and literature, where authors often wrote for audiences whose theological views lay at the centre of their cultural and intellectual identity. This would seem to be equally true of 'pagan' Platonists like

[35] Brenk (1977) 163 suggests that Plutarch's inconsistency arises from conflict between his 'philosophical speculation' and 'the hard realities of history as he came to examine it ever more closely'.

[36] It might seem unfortunate to continue the three-century-old tradition of writing about Herodotus while simultaneously observing Plutarch's hypocrisy, but the case of Plutarch makes for a genuinely instructive comparison with Herodotus, particularly thanks to the happy survival of many of his theological works, and the way in which this changes our reading of his historical writing. Inevitably, Plutarch's fondness for pointed rebukes of others for their deficient piety forces us to consider how far and in what respect these views differ from Plutarch's own.

[37] Brenk (1977) 9–15 provides a useful discussion of popular approaches to reconciling inconsistencies between the *De superstitione* and later works: (i) Plutarch did not understand the arguments he assembled from other sources; or (ii); his more polemical treatises may have been written as rhetorical exercises (that is, one of two set pieces); or (iii) inconsistencies represent the development in Plutarch's own thought (traditionally viewed as a move from the scepticism of the Academy to a Neoplatonic mysticism more compatible with the Delphic priesthood he held in later life).

Porphyry and of Jewish authors with wholly moralised conceptions of God resembling Platonic thought (cf. Jos. *Ant.* 1.23–4), and of Christian Platonists like Eusebius. Contrary to what we might expect (led by the polarising 'Christian'/'Pagan' dichotomy ubiquitous since the early days of Christian apologetics), the historiographers of the Judeo-Christian tradition were not the first to face the formidable task of combining a theology predicted on the notion of a good and just god with the two intractable forces that complicated their endeavours: the messy reality of the events themselves, and the conventions of the Greek literary tradition (in addition to the dramatic and literary power that the spectacle of unjust suffering provides). This struggle is distinctively Socratic and Platonic, and early Christian writers like Eusebius inherited it (along with so much else) from their Platonic predecessors.

Eusebius' refashioning of divine *phthonos* is an instructive case in point. As a Christian and Origenist,[38] Eusebius could no more talk of the *phthonos* of god than Plutarch, yet the motif of supernatural 'envy' plays a prominent role in his *History of the Church* and *Life of Constantine*.[39] When the church is in a state of peace and concord, the narrative is propelled forward by the disruptive intervention of 'good-hating *phthonos* and an evil-loving *daimôn*' (μισόκαλος φθόνος καὶ φιλοπόνηρος δαίμων).[40] In Eusebius, as in Plutarch,

[38] For an excellent introduction to the theological aspects of Eusebius' historical thought, Chesnut (1986) chs. 1–5.

[39] Chesnut (1986) 30–1, 106 somewhat misleadingly suggests that the displacement of *phthonos* from God to the *daimôn* (or, as Chesnut puts it, οἱ δαίμονες) was Eusebius' own innovation to reconcile his classical historiographical models with his Christian theology. This is, however, part of a wider tendency to ignore the importance of Platonic thought in shaping the theology of later Greek historiography; for a man of Eusebius' prodigious learning (particularly in the realm of Middle Platonism) it seems unlikely that the Christian historian was unaware of the way this trope had been mediated through later classical historians.

[40] The two entities are generally mentioned together in the *Ecclesiastical History* (8.1.6, 10.4.14.1, 10.8.2.2; cf. *Life of Constantine* 2.73) but in the *Life of Constantine* we find references to either (μισόκαλος) φθόνος alone (1.49.2, 3.1.1 (where it is τοῖς τῆς ἐκκλησίας βασκαίνων καλοῖς),

Aristotle, Herodotus, and Pindar, the emotion of *phthonos* is associated with a tendency to disrupt the happiness of others. The *Life of Constantine* in particular follows in a long tradition of associating the word *ταράττω* and its cognates with *phthonos*.[41] Divine (or rather daimonic) *φθόνος* would subsequently flourish in Byzantine Christian literature, implicitly associated with the devil, and would be integrated with Christian theology in various creative ways, even in that most Christian of genres, hagiography.[42]

To follow the particular theme of this chapter—the afterlife of divine *phthonos*, which makes its historiographical debut in Herodotus' *Histories*—into later centuries, the studies assembled here offer other valuable findings. Zali notes numerous close engagements with Herodotus which wax lyrical on the mutability of fortune, but observes that the characteristically Herodotean motif of divine *phthonos* is entirely absent, even where Herodotus' warner scenes are

3.59.1, 4.41.1), and on one occasion in the *HE* we also find *μισόκαλος* applied to the *daimôn* (5.21.2: *τῷ μισοκάλῳ δαίμονι βασκάνῳ ὄντι*), suggesting that we are not dealing with two distinct and specific metaphysical powers.

[41] Eusebius *VC* 3.1.1 (Ὁ *μὲν δὴ μισόκαλος φθόνος ὧδέ πη τοῖς τῆς ἐκκλησίας βασκαίνων καλοῖς χειμῶνας αὐτῇ καὶ ταράχους ἐμφυλίους … εἰργάζετο*); 4.41.1 (*Μισόκαλος δὲ κἀν τούτῳ φθόνος οἱονεὶ σκότιον νέφος … τὰς κατ'* Αἴγυπτον *αὖθις ἐκκλησίας ταῖς αὐτοῦ ταράττων ἐρεσχελίαις*), cf. *VC* 2.73, 3.59.1. For classical and Hellenistic precedents, see above, p. 19 and n. 4.

[42] Hinterberger (2010b) discusses the evocation of the supernatural forces of *phthonos*, *baskanos,* and *nemesis* (in various combinations, often associated with *tukhê*) in the tenth-century *History* of Leo the Deacon and the *Vita Basilii*. Through a sensitive examination of both the classical and Christian resonances of the terms, he explores how contemporary audiences might have interpreted these ideas. Several theological mechanisms emerge: *phthonos* is, of course, distinct from God (characterised by *pronoia*) yet the devil/*phthonos* still operates as part of God's providential plan either because *phthonos* serves God's will by preventing the successful from becoming arrogant at their unmitigated successes (as Leo the Deacon would have it), or because God fairly compensates those who suffer (in the story of Job as told in Niketas Paphlagon's praise of Gregory Nazianzus). For the increasing tendency to associate *phthonos* with the devil see Hinterberger (2013) 61–5.

clearly evoked. As she observes, in Procopius' case this seems to be related to his statement that god is 'entirely good' (a view which would sit comfortably within Platonic and Christian meditation on the nature of the divine).[43] Like other late antique or early Byzantine historians, Procopius does not describe god as *phthoneros* but follows Plutarch and Polybius in talking instead of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* or of *phthoneroi daimônes*.[44]

In a passage which closely evokes Herodotus in a number of ways, Psellus (as a character in his own work) muses on the nature of the divine in terms that seem to emphatically correct the Herodotean 'blasphemy' Plutarch had criticised. This may suggest that his reading of Herodotus was mediated through Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus*, a distinct possibility given Psellus' interest in Platonic thought (particularly that of Proclus and Plutarch) which has persuaded some that he was first and foremost a Platonist.[45] Where Herodotus' Artabanus states that god was 'grudging' (*phthoneros*) in giving a taste of the sweet life (Hdt. 7.46), Psellus states that 'the divine does not grudge (*baskainô*) in his giving' (*οὐ βασκαίνει τὸ θεῖον ἐν οἷς δίδωσιν*, 7.41). This fits the pattern established in Psellus' speech to

[43] Further Zali, below, Ch. 3, pp. 89–93; see particularly Procop. *Wars* 5.3.7–9: *ἀνθρώπῳ γὰρ οὐδὲ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς οἶμαι καταληπτά, μή τί γε δὴ τὰ εἰς θεοῦ φύσιν ἥκοντα. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἀκινδύνως σεσιωπήσθω μόνῳ τῷ μὴ ἀπιστεῖσθαι τὰ τετιμημένα. ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲν ἄλλο περὶ θεοῦ ὁτιοῦν εἴποιμι ἢ ὅτι <u>ἀγαθός τε παντάπασιν εἴη</u> καὶ ξύμπαντα ἐν τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῇ αὑτοῦ ἔχει.*

[44] Further Zali, below, Ch. 3, pp. 93 n. 17, 95–6; cf. Lib. *Orat.* 18.2 (*ἐπεὶ δὲ μεῖζον μὲν ἴσχυσεν ὁ φθονερὸς δαίμων τῶν εὐλόγων ἐλπίδων …*).

[45] For Plutarch's influence on Psellus see Meeusen (2012) 101–5; on the extremely complex question of Psellus' religious and theological affiliations see Kaldellis (1999). The fact that Christian theology is so influenced by Platonic thought—even after Justinian's condemnation of Origen's creative attempts to blend the two theological systems—and the fact that Orthodox society demanded conformity combine to produce extremely muddy waters. With Psellus, as with Procopius, one can plausibly see a Platonist writing cautiously within a fiercely Christian society, or a Christian with an unusually developed interest in Platonism.

Isaac of echoing but subverting Herodotean tropes; although modelled on the Herodotean 'wise advisor' speech, and confronting the same themes of the mutability of fortune, Psellus insists that it *is* possible to enjoy a good fortune that suffers no reversal *if one can avoid arrogance*, turning on its head the view known to Homer and Herodotus that no mortal can avoid a reversal of extremely good fortune.[46] Choniates, too, is careful to attribute any negative or destructive powers not to the supreme god but rather to lesser divine beings or forces: he talks, in highly poetic classicising vocabulary, of the *ὄμμα βάσκανον* (10), *ἀλάστορες φθονεροὶ* (576), and *Ἐριννύων καὶ Τελχίνων φθονερῶν* (310), phrases not used in Herodotus, but part of the wider stock of archaic and classical religious thought (particularly evocative of Aeschylus).

De Bakker, though his focus is elsewhere, notes that the stress on *μέγα φρονεῖν* in Laonikos recalls Artabanus' speech in Herodotus (7.10ε), but that Laonikos, again, edits out the accompanying Herodotean reference to divine *phthonos*. This tallies with other indications that the circle around the controversial Neoplatonic thinker Gemistos Plethon (Laonikos' teacher) was troubled by Herodotus' mention of divine *phthonos*, particularly in view of their great admiration for the ancient historian.[47] In an early 14th-century copy of Herodotus' *Histories* that circulated among Plethon and his students (and bears an inscription by Laonikos himself) we find a remarkable intervention: a hand, seemingly that of Plethon's student Kabakes, rewrites the first sentence of

[46] Contrast the views of Solon and Amasis in the *Histories* (1.32–3, 3.40–4); in the story of Croesus (cf. esp. 1.34) as elsewhere (e.g. 7.10ε) it is clear that 'thinking big' or arrogance *can* cause a reversal of fortune, but that does nothing to undermine the express statements by Solon and Amasis that *no human* can enjoy uninterrupted run of good fortune, a view linked with divine *phthonos*, and expressly contradicted in Psellus' narrative. Psellus' theological treatment of human fortune here is, in fact, much closer to the writings of the Socratic Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia*; see further Ellis (2016).

[47] See Akışık (2013), Kaldellis (2014).

Solon's speech at 1.32.1 so as to remove all reference to divine *phthonos*.[48]

Finally, among Herodotus' Protestant admirers, Plutarch's criticisms of Herodotus' inclusion of divine *phthonos* continued to raise eyebrows: as briefly noted in Chapter 5 of this volume, the theme is ignored by most scholars (often specifically edited out of quotations or translations), although several awkward attempts are made, with limited success, to rehabilitate the concept and present it as compatible with contemporary Christianity or ancient pagan piety.[49]

Having followed just one of the many threads of Herodotean religious thought from his own day to the early modern period, one can see clearly that the complex and often tortuous afterlife of historical and theological texts must be studied diachronically; it is hoped that the essays assembled here will be able to shed light on the reception of other aspects of Herodotus' theological thought (for instance, his statement about wise divine *pronoia* and divine *nemesis*, the view that god is *tarakhôdês*, and the rich Herodotean narratives of ambiguous, deceptive, and bullying prophecies and dreams). In this way we may be able to gain a clearer perspective on the religious aspects of Herodotus' *Histories* themselves, and better appreciate the influence of his monumental writing on the development of European historiography and on later imaginings of archaic and classical Greek culture.

[48] I discuss this striking incident further in Ellis (forthcoming, b); Details of the manuscript (Plut. Gr. 70.06, Laurentian Library, Florence) and its links to Laonikos and Plethon can be found in Akışık (2013) 8–10. See Alberti (1959), (1960); Pagani (2009) identifies another erasure in this manuscript (on the Persian conception of Zeus at 1.131.2) as the work of Plethon, but does not discuss this passage (nor, hence, this hand). I am grateful to Aslıhan Akışık for a productive correspondence on the identification of this censorious hand, and hope to explore this issue further.

[49] See further Ellis (forthcoming, b).

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