

Handout: Multiple Motives in Herodotus and Thucydides

Abstract:

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2021/abstracts/2446MotivesHerodThuc.pdf>

Attribution theory:

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Because the farmer left the gate open (Enabling factor)

Because she is a particularly stupid chicken (Causal History of Reason)

Because she thought there would be something to eat over there (Belief)

Because she wanted to see what it was like over there (Desire)

Because she is a thrill-seeker and likes dodging cars (Valuing)

Because the farmer came into the barn carrying an axe (Complex Causal History?)

1. Herodotus 1.8 {Candaules} ἠράσθη τῆς ἑωυτοῦ γυναικός, ἐρασθεῖς δὲ ἐνόμιζέ οἱ εἶναι γυναῖκα πολλὸν πασέων καλλίστην. ὥστε δὲ ταῦτα νομίζων... τὸ εἶδος τῆς γυναικὸς ὑπερεπαίνεε.. χρόνου δὲ οὐ πολλοῦ διελθόντος, χρῆν γὰρ Κανδαύλῃ γενέσθαι κακῶς, Candaules conceived sexual obsession for his own wife, and having become sexually obsessed he thought he possessed a woman who was by far the most beautiful of all. And believing this..he extravagantly praised his wife's beauty..And when not much time had passed, since it was fated that things go badly for Candaules...

2. Herodotus 1.4: δευτέρῃ δὲ λέγουσι γενεῇ μετὰ ταῦτα Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Πριάμου ἀκηκοῦτα ταῦτα ἐθελῆσαι οἱ ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος δι' ἀρπαγῆς γενέσθαι γυναῖκα, ἐπιστάμενον πάντως ὅτι οὐ δώσει δίκας· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐκείνους διδόναι.

Desire and Belief (false) or Enabling Factor

They say that in the second generation after this Alexander, the son of Priam, having heard about these [sc. earlier abductions] wanted a wife to be obtained for him from Greece by abduction, knowing full well that he would not be punished—for those had not been.

3. Herodotus Ἐστρατεύετο δὲ ὁ Κροῖσος ἐπὶ τὴν Καππαδοκίην τῶνδε εἵνεκα, καὶ γῆς ἡμέρῳ προσκτήσασθαι πρὸς τὴν ἑωυτοῦ μοῖραν βουλόμενος, καὶ μάλιστα τῷ χρηστηρίῳ πίσυνος ἔων καὶ τεῖσασθαι θέλων ὑπὲρ Ἀστυάγεος Κῦρον.

Croesus campaigned against Cappadocia for the following reason: because of desire for territory wanting to add it to his own portion, and particularly trusting the oracle, and wanted to take vengeance on Cyrus on behalf of Astyages.

4. Thucydides 4.108.7: οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὰ μὲν καὶ φθόνῳ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν οὐχ ὑπρέτησαν αὐτῷ, τὰ δὲ καὶ βουλόμενοι μᾶλλον τοὺς τε ἄνδρας τοὺς ἐκ τῆς νήσου κομίσασθαι καὶ τὸν πόλεμον καταλῦσαι.

The Lacedaemonians, on the one hand did not support him because of envy on the part of the foremost men, but also wanting more both to recover the men from the island and to end the war.

5. Thucydides 2.67.4: ἀφικομένων δὲ αὐτῶν δείσαντες οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὸν Ἀριστεά μὴ αὔθις σφᾶς ἔτι πλείω κακουργῆ διαφυγῶν, ὅτι καὶ πρὸ τούτων τὰ τῆς Ποτειδαίας καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ Θράκης πάντα ἐφαίνετο πράξας, ἀκρίτους καὶ βουλομένους ἔστιν ἃ εἰπεῖν ἀθημερὸν ἀπέκτειναν πάντας καὶ ἐς φάραγγα ἐσέβαλον, δικαιοῦντες τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀμύνεσθαι οἷσπερ καὶ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ὑπῆρξαν, τοὺς ἐμπόρους οὓς ἔλαβον Ἀθηναίων καὶ τῶν ζυμμάχων ἐν ὀλκάσι περὶ Πελοπόννησον πλέοντας ἀποκτείναντες καὶ ἐς φάραγγας ἐσβαλόντες. πάντα γὰρ δὴ κατ' ἀρχὰς τοῦ πολέμου Λακεδαιμόνιοι ὅσους λάβοιεν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ὡς πολεμίους διέφθειρον, τοὺς μετὰ Ἀθηναίων ζυμπολεμοῦντας καὶ τοὺς μὴδὲ μεθ' ἑτέρων.

When they arrived, the Athenians, afraid that Aristeus would do them more harm in the future if he got away, because even before this he was evidently the one who had accomplished everything pertaining to Potidaea and the places in Thrace, killed them the same day without a trial although they wanted to say something and threw them into a chasm,; judging that they were defending themselves by the same means the Lacedaemonians had introduced, having killed and thrown into ravines the merchants of the Athenians and allies whom they captured sailing on cargo ships around the Peloponnese. For at the beginning of the war, the Lacedaemonians killed as enemies all whom they captured at sea, those who they were fighting with the Athenians or not even on either side.

Works Cited

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