

Reading Herodotus and Solon in tandem: an argument from numeracy

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1). Herodotus 1.29-1.30.1

—κατεστραμμένων δὴ τούτων [καὶ προσεπικτωμένου Κροίσου Λυδοῖσι], ἀπικνέονται ἐς Σάρδις ἀκμαζούσας πλούτῳ ἄλλοι τε οἱ πάντες ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος σοφισταί, οἱ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανον ἐόντες, ὡς ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ἀπικνέοιτο, καὶ δὴ καὶ Σόλων ἀνὴρ Ἀθηναῖος, ὃς Ἀθηναίοισι νόμους κελεύσασι ποιήσας ἀπεδήμησε ἕτεα δέκα, κατὰ θεωρίας πρόφρασιν ἐκπλώσας, ἵνα δὴ μὴ τινα τῶν νόμων ἀναγκασθῆ ἴσθαι τῶν ἔθετο. [2] Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οὐκ οἴοι τε ἦσαν αὐτὸ ποιῆσαι Ἀθηναῖοι· ὀρκίοισι γὰρ μεγάλοισι κατεῖχοντο δέκα ἕτεα χρήσεσθαι νόμοισι τοὺς ἄν σφι Σόλων θῆται. (30.) Αὐτῶν δὴ ὧν τούτων καὶ τῆς θεωρίας ἐκδημήσας ὁ Σόλων εἵνεκεν ἐς Αἴγυπτον ἀπῆκετο παρὰ Ἄμασιν καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐς Σάρδις παρὰ Κροῖσον.¹

When all these nations [west of the Halys] had been added to the Lydian empire, and Sardis was at the height of her wealth and prosperity, all the great Greek teachers [*sophistai*] of that epoch, one after another, paid visits to the capital. Much the most distinguished of them was Solon the Athenian, the man who at the request of his countrymen had made a code of laws for Athens. He was on his travels at the time, intending to be away ten years, in order to avoid the necessity of repealing any of the laws he had made. That, at any rate, was the real reason of the absence, though he gave it out that what he wanted was just to see the world. [2] The Athenians could not alter any of Solon's laws without him, because they had solemnly sworn to give them a ten years' trial. (30.) For this reason, then—and also no doubt for the pleasure of foreign travel—Solon left home and, after a visit to the court of Amasis in Egypt, went to Sardis to see Croesus (Trans. de Sélincourt).

2). Solon 13.43-46 (West)

σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος· ὁ μὲν κατὰ πόντον ἀλᾶται
ἐν νηυσὶν χρήζων οἴκαδε κέρδος ἄγειν
ἰχθυόεντ' ἀνέμοισι φορ<εό>μενος ἀργαλείοισιν,
φειδωλὴν ψυχῆς σὺδεμίαν θέμενος·

...different things urge men on. One wanders on the fishy sea wishing to bring home gain in his ships; he is carried by terrible winds and does not care about sparing his life (Trans. Montiglio 113).

3). Isocrates, *Antidosis* 312-313

(312) Ἀγανακτῶ γὰρ ὁρῶν τὴν συκοφαντίαν ἄμεινον τῆς φιλοσοφίας φερομένην, καὶ τὴν μὲν κατηγοροῦσαν, τὴν δὲ κρινομένην. Ὅ τίς ἂν τῶν παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν γενήσεσθαι προσεδόκησεν, ἄλλως τε καὶ παρ' ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐπὶ σοφία μείζον τῶν ἄλλων φρονοῦσιν; (313) Οὐκ οὖν ἐπὶ γε τῶν προγόνων οὕτως εἶχεν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν καλουμένους σοφιστὰς ἐθαύμαζον καὶ τοὺς συνόντας αὐτοῖς ἐζήλουν, τοὺς δὲ συκοφάντας πλείστων κακῶν αἰτίους ἐνόμιζον εἶναι. Μέγιστον δὲ τεκμήριον· Σόλωνά μὲν γὰρ, τὸν πρῶτον τῶν πολιτῶν λαβόντα τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ταύτην, προστάτην ἠξίωσαν τῆς πόλεως εἶναι κτλ.

(312) It offends me to see chicanery more highly regarded than philosophy, as the accuser who puts philosophy in the dock. Who of the men of old time would have expected this, among you of all people who pride yourself on your wisdom (*sophia*)? (313) It was not so in our forefathers' time. They admired

¹ N.B. All Greek passages of the *Histories* are cited from Ph.-E. Legrand's Budé edition (Paris, 1932-1954).

those who were called sophists (*sophistas*) and envied their associates... The best evidence of this is that they chose Solon, the first Athenian citizen who bore that title, to rule the state (Trans. Guthrie 29).

4). Herodotus 1.32.1-4

ἽΩ Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες ἐπειρωτᾶς ἀνθρωπιῶν πρηγμάτων πέρι. [2] Ἐν γὰρ τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ πολλὰ μὲν ἔστι ἰδεῖν τὰ μὴ τις ἐθέλει, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παθεῖν. Ἐς γὰρ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτεα οὖρον τῆς ζόης ἀνθρώπῳ προτιθήμι. [3] Οὗτοι ἐόντες ἐνιαυτοὶ ἑβδομήκοντα παρέχονται ἡμέρας διηκοσίας καὶ πεντακισχιλίας καὶ δισμυρίας, ἐμβολίμου μηνὸς μὴ γινομένου· εἰ δὲ δὴ ἐθελήσῃ τοῦτερον τῶν ἐτέων μηνὶ μακρότερον γίνεσθαι, ἵνα δὴ αἱ ὥραι συμβαίνωσι παραγινόμεναι ἐς τὸ δέον, μῆνες μὲν παρὰ τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτεα οἱ ἐμβόλιμοι γίνονται τριήκοντα πέντε, ἡμέραι δὲ ἐκ τῶν μηνῶν τούτων χίλια πεντήκοντα. [4] Τουτέων τῶν ἀπασέων ἡμερέων τῶν ἐς τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτεα, ἑουσέων πεντήκοντα καὶ διηκοσιέων καὶ ἐξακισχιλιέων καὶ δισμυριέων, ἡ ἕτερη αὐτέων τῆ ἕτερῃ ἡμέρῃ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲν ὅμοιον προσάγει πρῆγμα. Οὕτω ὦν, ὦ Κροῖσε, πᾶν ἐστὶ ἀνθρωπος συμφορῆ.

“Croesus,” replied Solon, “I know God is envious of human prosperity and likes to trouble us; and you question me about the lot of man. [2] Listen then: as the years lengthen out, there is much both to see and to suffer which one would wish otherwise. [3] Take seventy years as the span of man’s life: those seventy years contain 25,200 days, without counting intercalary months. Add a month every other year, to make the seasons come round with proper regularity, and you will have thirty-five additional months, which will make 1050 additional days. [4] Thus the total of days for your seventy years is 26,250, and not a single one of them is like the next in what it brings. You can see from that, Croesus, that man is entirely a creature of chance” (Trans. de Sélincourt).

5). Herodotus 2.142.1-3

Ἐς μὲν τοσόνδε τοῦ λόγου Αἰγύπτιοί τε καὶ οἱ ἱεεὺς ἔλεγον, ἀποδεικνύοντες ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου βασιλέως ἐς τοῦ Ἡφαίστου τὸν ἱεῖα τοῦτον τὸν τελευταῖον βασιλεύσαντα μίαν τε καὶ τεσσεράκοντα καὶ τρηκοσίας ἀνθρώπων γενεὰς γενομένας καὶ ἐν ταύτῃσι ἀρχιερέας καὶ βασιλέας ἑκατέρους τοσοῦτους γενομένους. [2] Καίτοι τρηκόσια μὲν ἀνδρῶν γενεαὶ δυνάται μύρια ἔτεα· γενεαὶ γὰρ τρεῖς ἀνδρῶν ἑκατὸν ἔτεά ἐστι· μῆς δὲ καὶ τεσσεράκοντα ἔτι τῶν ἐπιλοίπων γενέων, αἱ ἐπῆσαν τῆσι τρηκοσίῃσι, ἐστὶ τεσσεράκοντα καὶ τρηκόσια καὶ χίλια ἔτεα. [3] Οὕτως ἐν μυρίοις τε ἔτεσι καὶ χιλίοις καὶ πρὸς τρηκοσίοις τε καὶ τεσσεράκοντα ἔλεγον θεὸν ἀνθρωποειδέα οὐδένα γενέσθαι. Οὐ μὲν οὐδὲ πρότερον οὐδὲ ὕστερον ἐν τοῖσι ὑπολοίποισι Αἰγύπτου βασιλεῦσι γενομένοισι ἔλεγον οὐδὲν τοιοῦτο

Up to this point I have relied on the accounts given me by the Egyptians and their priests. They declare (*apodeiknunte*s) that three hundred and forty-one generations separate the first king of Egypt from the last I have mentioned—the priest of Hephaestus—and that there was a king and a high priest corresponding to each generation. [2] Now to reckon three generations as a hundred years, three hundred generations make ten thousand years, and the remaining forty-one generations make 1340 years more; [3] thus one gets a total of 11,340 years, during the whole of which time, they say, no god ever assumed mortal form; nothing of the sort occurred either under the former or under the later kings. (Trans. de Sélincourt).

6). Herodotus 2.143-2.144.1

(143.) Πρότερον δὲ Ἐκαταῖῳ τῷ λογοποιῷ ἐν Θήβῃσι γενεηλογήσαντί [τε] ἑωυτὸν καὶ ἀναδήσαντι τὴν πατριὴν ἐς ἑκκαιδέκατον θεὸν ἐποίησαν οἱ ἱεεὺς τοῦ Διὸς οἷόν τι καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐ γενεηλογήσαντι ἑμεωυτόν. [2] Ἐσαγαγόντες ἐς τὸ μέγαρον ἔσω ἐὸν μέγα ἐξηρίθμεον **δεικνύοντες** κολοσσοὺς ξυλίνοὺς τοσοῦτους ὅσους περ εἶπον· ἀρχιερεὺς γὰρ ἕκαστος αὐτόθι ἰστᾶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἑωυτοῦ ζόης εἰκόνα ἑωυτοῦ· [3] ἀριθμούντες ὦν καὶ **δεικνύοντες** οἱ ἱεεὺς ἐμοὶ **ἀπεδείκνυσαν** παῖδα πατρὸς ἑωυτῶν ἕκαστον ἐόντα, ἐκ τοῦ ἀγχιστα ἀποθανόντος τῆς εἰκόνης διεξιόντες διὰ πασέων, ἐς ὃ **ἀπέδεξαν** ἀπάσας αὐτάς. [4] Ἐκαταῖῳ δὲ

γενεηλογήσαντι ἑωυτὸν καὶ ἀναδήσαντι ἐς ἑκκαίδεκατον θεὸν ἀντεγενεηλόγησαν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀριθμήσι, οὐ δεκόμενοι παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ θεοῦ γενέσθαι ἄνθρωπον. Ἀντεγενεηλόγησαν δὲ ὧδε, φάμενοι ἕκαστον τῶν κολοσσῶν πύρωμιν ἐκ πύρωμιος γεγονέναι, ἐς ὃ τοὺς πέντε καὶ τεσσαράκοντα καὶ τριηκοσίους **ἀπέδεξαν** κολοσσούς πύρωμιν ἐκ πύρωμιος γενόμενον, καὶ οὔτε ἐς θεὸν οὔτε ἐς ἥρωα ἀνέδησαν αὐτούς. Πύρωμις δὲ ἐστὶ κατ' Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν καλὸς κάγαθός. (144.) Ἦδη ὧν τῶν αἰ εἰκόνες ἦσαν, τοιοῦτους **ἀπεδείκνυσάν** σφεας πάντας ἐόντας, θεῶν δὲ πολλὸν ἀπαλλαγμένους.

(143.) When the historian Hecataeus was in Thebes, the priests of Zeus, after listening to him trace his family back to a god in the sixteenth generation, did to him precisely what they did to me—though, unlike Hecataeus, I kept clear of personal genealogies. [2] They took me into the great hall of the temple, and showed me (*deiknunte*) the wooden statues there, which they counted; and the number was just what I have said, for each high priest has a statue of himself erected there before he dies. [3] As they showed them to me (*deiknunte*), and counted them up, beginning with the statue of the high priest who had last died, and going on from him right through the whole number, they assured me (*apedeiknusan*) that each had been the son of the one who preceded him. [4] When Hecataeus traced his genealogy and connected himself with a god sixteen generations back, the priests refused to believe him, and he denied that any man had ever had a divine ancestor. They countered his claim by tracing the descent of their own high priests, pointing out (*apedexan*) that each of the statues represented a ‘piromis’ (a word which means something like ‘gentleman’) who was the son of another ‘piromis’, and made no attempt to connect them with either a god or a hero. (144.) Such, then, were the beings represented by the statues (*apedeiknusan*); they were far from being gods—they were men (Trans. de Sélincourt).

7). Herodotus 2.133

Μετὰ δὲ τῆς θυγατρὸς τὸ πάθος δεύτερα τούτῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ τάδε γενέσθαι· ἐλθεῖν οἱ μαντήιον ἐκ Βουτοῦς πόλιος ὡς μέλλοι ἐξ ἕτεα μόνον βιοῦς τῷ ἐβδόμῳ τελευτήσῃν. [2] Τὸν δὲ δεινὸν ποιησάμενον πέμψαι ἐς τὸ μαντήιον τῷ θεῷ ὀνειδισμα ἀντιμεμφόμενον ὅτι ὁ μὲν αὐτοῦ πατήρ καὶ **≤ὄ≥** πάτρως, ἀποκληίσαντες τὰ ἱρὰ καὶ θεῶν οὐ μεμνημένοι ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους φθείροντες, ἐβίωσαν χρόνον ἐπὶ πολλόν, αὐτὸς δ' εὐσεβῆς ἐὼν μέλλοι ταχέως οὕτω τελευτήσῃν. [3] Ἐκ δὲ τοῦ χρηστηρίου αὐτῷ δεύτερα ἐλθεῖν λέγοντα τούτων εἵνεκα καὶ συνταχύνειν αὐτὸν τὸν βίον· οὐ γὰρ ποιῆσαι μιν τὸ χρεὸν ἦν ποιέειν· δεῖν γὰρ Αἴγυπτον κακοῦσθαι ἐπ' ἕτεα πενήκοντά τε καὶ ἑκατόν, καὶ τοὺς μὲν δύο τοὺς πρὸ ἐκείνου γενομένους βασιλέας μαθεῖν τοῦτο, κεῖνον δὲ οὐ. [4] Ταῦτα ἀκούσαντα τὸν Μυκερῖνον, ὡς κατακεκριμένων ἤδη οἱ τούτων, λύχνα ποιησάμενον πολλά, ὅκως γίνοιτο νύξ, ἀνάψαντα αὐτὰ πίνειν τε καὶ εὐπαθέειν, οὔτε ἡμέρης οὔτε νυκτὸς ἀνιέντα, ἐς τε τὰ ἔλαια καὶ τὰ ἄλσεα πλανώμενον καὶ ἵνα πυνθάνοιτο εἶναι ἐνηβητήρια ἐπιτηδεότατα. [5] Ταῦτα δὲ ἐμχανᾶτο θέλων τὸ μαντήιον ψευδόμενον **ἀποδέξαι**, ἵνα οἱ δωδέκα ἕτεα ἀντὶ ἐξ ἐτέων γένηται, αἱ νύκτες ἡμέραι ποιεύμεναι.

After the death of his daughter a second calamity fell upon Mycerinus: he received an oracle from Buto to the effect that was destined to live only for six more years and to die within the seventh. [2] He sent back an angry message to the shrine, and reproached the god with the injustice of allowing a man so pious as himself to die so soon, when his father and uncle, who had closed the temples, forgotten the gods, and afflicted their fellow men, had lived to a good old age. [3] In answer to this there was another message from the oracle, which declared that his life was being shortened precisely because he had not done what he ought to have done: for it was fated that Egypt should suffer for a hundred and fifty years—a thing which his two predecessors, unlike himself had understood very well. [4] Mycerinus, convinced by this that his doom was sealed, had innumerable lamps made, but the light of which he set himself every evening to drink and be merry, and never ceased day or night from the pursuit of pleasure, travelling from place to place amongst the pools and woodlands, wherever he heard of a particularly delightful spot. [5] His object in this was by turning night into day to extend the remaining six years of his life to twelve, and so to convict (*apodeixai*) the oracle of falsehood (Trans. de Sélincourt).

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