

ΦΙΛΟΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΙ OR ΞΕΝΟΦΟΒΗΤΙΚΟΙ?
GREEK AUTHORS ON PERSIA(NS). AN EXPLORATION

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In the following paper, the attitude of three classical Greek authors, sc. Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon, towards Persia and the Persians will be discussed. The focus is not merely on what divides these authors, but ultimately on what connects them as well.

Preliminary remarks

Before entering upon the topic, some remarks should be made. The first is that, as the second part of the subtitle tries to explain, this enterprise is no more than a (sketchy) exploration of the vast amount of material available¹. It is, moreover, an exploration confined to a limited amount of authors (sc. Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon) and a restricted number of works (sc. the *Histories* of Herodotus, the *Persica* of Ctesias, and the *Anabasis*, the *Hellenica*, and – to a lesser extent – the *Cyropaedia*, all three by Xenophon)². This selection has been determined by several factors. First, the fact that Ctesias referred (mostly negatively, according to Photius) to Herodotus and that Xenophon's views did not correspond with Ctesias' (again according to Photius). Photius, the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople in the mid 9th century AD and, *i.a.*, the author of the *Bibliotheca*, a book with his abstracts of 279 works from various periods and different genres, including books on history, therewith established a kind of 'connection' between the three authors. Second, the fact that the year of birth of the oldest of these three authors (sc. Herodotus) was separated from the year of death of the youngest (sc. Xenophon) by little more than a century. There is, therefore, a clear and relatively limited timeframe we may look at. Third, both Herodotus and Ctesias wrote one relevant book regarding this subject. As regards Xenophon yet another of his works might have been included, sc. the *Agésilaios*, but for reasons of character (the emphasis of this work is, more or less, personal rather than general), I left it

¹ An excellent review of the material available is to be found in Lenfant 2011.

² N.B. Unless indicated otherwise all three digit years in this paper are BC!

(largely) out, admittedly a subjective action. Fourth, it is in this respect noteworthy that ‘the Persians’ as a subject in the study of Herodotus’ work is nearly neglected (cf. Rollinger 2003). As regards Ctesias, the same may be stated *a fortiori*, as the study into his work is only really re-emerging in the last decade or so (see, e.g., Lenfant 1996, 2004; Stronk 2004-05, 2007, 2010, 2011a; Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, Wiesehöfer/Rollinger/Lanfranchi 2011). Previous research into Ctesias has been mainly directed at outward appearances of his work, on obvious mistakes in it, and on its fabulous aspects, notably in his *Indica*³. Only into Xenophon’s works some research in this field has been made. Finally, Ctesias does feature quite prominently in the pioneering study of Persian history in Greek historiography by Rosemary Stevenson, but she focuses on fourth century authors, sc., apart from Ctesias, Deinon and Heracleides, though she leaves out Xenophon and the Athenian orators as those authors did not focus on Persia. I found it worthwhile to pay attention to the attitude of some of their predecessors, including both Ctesias and Xenophon, notably because they wrote their works in a period that appears decisive for Greek thought (and perhaps attitude) in many respects.

I have deliberately chosen to use the term ‘authors’ instead of ‘historians’. For the latter term, certainly in the period we are discussing, a *caveat* regarding its meaning should be in place. The first, more or less, to use the word ἱστορίη (*historiē*) was Herodotus. He used the word in its original meaning, sc. ‘inquiry’, ‘research’. The word ‘historian’ as we use it, essentially as someone describing ‘*ta genomena*’, “wie es eigentlich gewesen”⁴, was only coined by Aristotle in his *Poetics*: ἱστορικὸς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς οὐ τῶ ἢ ἔμμετρα λέγειν ἢ ἄμμετρα διαφέρουσιν· ... ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῶ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο (“The difference between a historian and a poet is not that one writes in metre and the other without metre; ... but it differs in this, that one writes what happened, the other what might happen”: Arist. *Poet.* 9.2 (=1451a38-b4)). It was, moreover, a term that did not stick immediately⁵. The authors we discuss tried, successfully or not, to explain the past and present to their readers (or, for that matter, listeners) as well as they could, each in his own manner, largely unaware of such theoretical divides.

In our modern approach, we are used to distinguish during such a process of

³ Recently an English edition of this work appeared, sc. Nichols 2011. Nichols makes clear that even Ctesias’ *Indica* contains much useful and relatively reliable information, apart from the obviously marvellous stories that are present as well.

⁴ The phrase coined by Franz Leopold [von] Ranke 1885, 57.

⁵ Many remained to prefer the word used by, *i.a.*, Thucydides, sc. συγγραφεύς. We meet the term ‘*historia*’ or ‘*historein*’ as a technical term for the first time in the early third century BC: Dittenberger 1903, 13 is a letter of Lysimachus to the citizens of Samos. In line 12, Lysimachus writes that he was convinced “from the histories and other evidence and documents”. After that, we know for sure that Phylarchus, late third century BC, and Polybius, second century BC, used the word in the technical sense in the title of their work: the amount of evidence for other writers is just too fragmentary and scanty to be certain.

explanation of the past between ‘true’ and ‘untrue’, between *logos* and *muthos*, between history and myth. We tend, however, to forget that, traditionally, these two sides of the past are both used to explain the present, and that myth in this context plays its own important part in the collective memory of any group (cf., e.g., Munn 2000, 15-16 and Hall 2002). As time proceeds, boundaries between *muthos* and *logos*, between myth and history, will inevitably arise (though some also may fade away) and, in a following stage, shift, e.g. due to increased knowledge. However, for Greeks the distinction was much more difficult than it should be for us and remained fluid down into the Hellenistic period (cf. also Henrichs 1999, 224-225, 226, 227), and beyond. As Munn puts it: “That which is *alêthês*, “true” in Greek, is, etymologically, that which is “unforgettable”. That which has proved itself memorable, therefore, is *alêthês*. Such a subjective construction of truth gave first place to the test of time ... Critical scholarship about the past, among Greeks both before and after Thucydides, was less concerned with systematic criteria for separating the verifiable past from legend than it was with determining which legends deserved credence, ..., and which ones had been distorted” (Munn 2000, 15-16). And, somewhat further: “An event that had not passed through the filters of communal telling and retelling could not be measured by the standards of consensus. A reliable account of recent events depended upon the established wisdom and veracity of the source or informant” (Munn 2000, 16). Regarding Ctesias, I have tried elsewhere to clarify his position in Greek literary tradition in this respect (see, e.g., Stronk 2007, 2010, 2011a).

A final remark in advance is in place for the two key words in the title: φιλοβάρβαρος (*filobarbaros*) and ξενοφοβήτικος (*xenofobêtikos*). The last word is conjured by myself: to my knowledge, there is in ancient Greek not a single word to denote fear for (the) stranger(s)⁶. The absence of such a word does not imply that a sense of xenophobia was absent among the Greeks. According to Hall a “vituperative xenophobia, and philosophy’s theoretical justifications of the pre-eminence of Greek culture” became evident around the turn of the fourth century BC (cf. Hall 1991, x, though softened to some extent by Harrison 2000, *passim*; v. however also Harrison 2002, *passim*). As a matter of fact, the theory of Hellenic superiority over ‘barbarians’ (emphatically including Persians) had already developed in a number of areas, such as tragedy, comedy, and Athenian law, from the middle of the fifth century onwards (Hall 1991, *passim*, refined by Harrison 2000; also Isaac 2004, 257-303 and figs. 2-4). This transition would, therefore, have occurred precisely in the period we focus on in this paper.

The first word, φιλοβάρβαρος, goes back to remarks made regarding Herodotus by Plutarch and regarding Ctesias by Lucian. In the *De Herodoti Malignitate* (854E-874C), Plutarch accuses Herodotus in paragraphs 857A-874C literally that

⁶ See *LSJ* and *TLG* (web edition, consulted June 15, 2011). In modern Greek there is, as Ms Melina Tamiolaki pointed out to me during a conversation in Liverpool in 2009, sc. ξενοφοβικός.

he (=Herodotus) was a pro-barbarian (φιλοβάρβαρος), favouring foreign (notably Persian, but also Egyptian and Phoenician) accounts over Greek ones, and discrediting Greek traditions. As regards Ctesias' position we may notice Lucian's remark: τοῦ δὴ συγγραφέως ἔργον ἔν, ὡς ἐπράχθη, εἰπεῖν· τοῦτο δ' οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο ἄχρι ἂν ἡ φοβῆται Ἀρταξέρξην ἰατρὸς αὐτοῦ ὄν, ἢ ἐλπίζῃ κἀνδὺν πορφυροῦν καὶ στρεπτὸν χρυσοῦν καὶ ἵππον τῶν Νισαίων λήψεσθαι μισθὸν τῶν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ἐπαίνων ("a historian's only task is to tell what happened [NB: Aristotle's view is here mirrored exactly!]; he will not be able to do so as long as he is afraid of Artaxerxes, whose physician he is, or hopes to get a purple robe, a golden collar, and a Nisaeon horse as his wage for the eulogies in the writings"). However, Ctesias' position may be a little bit more complex than might appear on the basis of Lucian's dig at Ctesias, as he (= Ctesias) was accused by Plutarch to have been, among others, a laconophile: ἀλλὰ δαιμονίως ὁ Κτησίας, ὡς ἔοικε, φιλότιμος ὢν καὶ οὐχ ἧττον φιλολάκων καὶ φιλοκλέαρχος ... πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ μεμνήσεται Κλεάρχου καὶ τῆς Λακεδαιμόνος ("But clearly is Ctesias very ambitious and none the less partial to Sparta and to Clearchus ... [and] he will bring forward many fine things regarding Clearchus and Sparta" (Plu. *Art.* 13.4)). As it is, Lucian's dig might emphasise an underexposed aspect of Ctesias' *Persica*, sc. a more Persian perspective in his description of events (see below). Regarding Xenophon I could not find such clear statements in Lucian's works – or any other work from the ancient world.

It is my aim to explore in this small contribution to Greek historiography of Persia whether one of these two extremes, an openly favourable or unfavourable disposition towards foreigners, here notably Persians, or Persia in its entirety, is obvious in the works and authors I mentioned in the first paragraph. The subject of Herodotus was, as he himself explains in his proem, to prevent that the: ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θαυμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἑλληνισι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι ("great and wondrous acts, performed both by Greeks and non-Greeks, become without renown and above all by which cause they went at war against each other"). Possibly also Ctesias wrote a proem (I firmly believe he did⁸), but since the *Persica* only sur-

⁷ Luc. *Hist. Conscr.* 39. It should be remembered that, as far as we know, Ctesias only started to write his transmitted works after his return into the Greek world, sc. after 398/7. Lucian wrote his work *How to Write History* in the years AD 162-165, when Rome fought the Parthian War against King Vologases (Vologaeses) IV. In those circumstances (the Parthians viewed themselves as the direct descendants and successors of the Achaemenids) he had, in spite of the principles he stated to maintain, every political reason to taunt and/or to dismiss authors and/or works that might be explained as based upon or coloured by 'enemy information'. See also my remarks in Stronk, in: Ian Worthington (in preparation).

⁸ Cf. Stronk 2010, 153, 200-201; possibly the way Ctesias' name and origin is presented in Lucian's *Verae Historiae* 1.3 "with its comical alliteration" (Georgiadou/Larmour 1998, 54) was not just meant to ridicule him, but also a pun upon Ctesias' proem: if so, Ctesias apparently did not write his proem in the third person, like Herodotus (and Thucydides) did, but in the first person. Xenophon's proems are a particular case (v. *infra*).

vived fragmentarily, we can merely guess at its content. However, the remarks by Diodorus Siculus (2.32.4) and Photius (*Bibl.* [72]36a1-6) do suggest a distinct direction (cf. Stronk 2010, 2).

Regarding Xenophon's work we may safely state that a formal introduction of himself as an author is completely absent. The first time Xenophon is mentioned in the *Anabasis* is almost casually in 1.8.15, a fuller introduction to his person (but not as an author!) is provided in 3.1.4-14. After 3.1.14 Xenophon frequently features in the *Anabasis* and becomes, together with the 'Cyreans' in their entirety, the leading character in the work. The start of the *Hellenica* is a direct continuation of Thucydides' *Histories*⁹. In the *Hellenica*, however, Xenophon is virtually invisible in the sense that he is nowhere mentioned by name. His attendance at occurrences becomes only feasible by the details he provides. The introductory paragraphs of the *Anabasis* (only(?)) introduce the reader succinctly but overwhelmingly into the matter at hand: as regards the *Hellenica* the same may be stated for the beginning of book 3. Though the *Cyropaedia* has, in comparison with the *Anabasis*, a more or less proper or formal introduction (X. *Cyr.* 1-5), it only relates the reasons to devote a work to Cyrus, but remains silent as regards the author. In spite of the way it has been used throughout the centuries, I very much doubt, however (*i.a.* based upon Xenophon's superficiality on several topics), whether we may consider the *Anabasis* (and part of the *Hellenica* as well: cf., e.g., Dillery 1995: 12-16) to have been intended by Xenophon as a 'history', let alone, as a kind of 'Landeskunde' like Herodotus has done and Ctesias appears to have done in a manner. Especially regarding the *Anabasis* we cannot be sure what Xenophon's purpose has been when he made the work public. It may have been anything between an apology, a pamphlet, or even a kind of manual for the army commander, the *condottiere*. To be noted, in this respect, is that (unlike the works of, e.g., Herodotus, Ctesias, or Thucydides) the work 'went on the market' without a proper indication of the author's name. A political aim, as Dillery suggests (or perhaps a 'philosophical' one: Xenophon is, after all, counted by Diogenes Laertius among the eminent philosophers), may, therefore, as well have been among Xenophon's prime motives to write these works (following the common opinion he indeed was the author of the *Anabasis* and, for that matter, the *Hellenica* and other works). However, I believe we have to accept that, in the end, Xenophon will as yet remain an elusive author. Nevertheless, irrespective of Xenophon's aims or motives, part of his work (and certainly the *Anabasis*) was already used as a history-book within a generation or so after his death.

Our exploration shall consist of three stages. The first is to determine how and, if possible where, these authors acquired their information. The second is to follow

⁹ In fact, it has been argued that the first two books of the *Hellenica* were Thucydides' own raw material (in possession of Xenophon) and that Xenophon's own contribution only starts in book 3, to which books 1 and 2 served as a kind of proem: for a review of several theories regarding this continuation, see Gomme 1981, 437-444.

their description(s) of Persians, be it individually or as an entity. In the third stage, finally, we have to decide whether these authors showed signs either of ‘philobarbarism’ or of xenophobia: it is, obviously, also the stage where subjectivity inevitably lurks for the explorer. I firmly believe that, no matter how stringently we try to guard our principles, some subjectivity shall always influence our assessments, appreciations, and, therefore, our conclusions. However, by presenting the material we use to reach our conclusions, the reader will be able to check the process and, ultimately, may form his or her own opinion.

Acquiring information

As regards the way Herodotus acquired his information no major problems appear to be at hand. At least since the days of Cicero, Herodotus is known as the ‘Father of History’ (cf. Cic. *Leg.* 1.5). Too few people realize that the report of his ‘investigations’, that won him his reputation, was only the tip of his achievement. The actual achievement were those investigations themselves. During these investigations, Herodotus reconstructed part of the past of the countries around the eastern Mediterranean basin through his method of ὄψις, *opsis* (“visual information”, “observation”: cf. Hdt. 2.99, 2.147), and ἀκοή, *akoê* (“verbal information”, “hearsay”: cf. apart from the previously under *opsis* mentioned ones also Hdt. 2.123.1, 7.152.3), as he describes it himself. Precisely there, however, also lies the hidden danger.

Herodotus spoke or understood, as far as we are able to reconstruct, neither Egyptian nor any of the languages familiar in the Near East and Mesopotamia apart from Greek (cf., e.g., Gould 1989, 24). Therefore, he was for the information he gathered largely dependent of local informers, who were able to communicate with him in Greek (and, more likely than not), familiar with the ways Greeks viewed and described the world as well. As Drews notes: “Now it is quite probable that some of the Easterners who had taken the trouble to learn the Greek language had also found it profitable to learn some Greek myths which pertained to their country” (Drews 1973, 17). Moreover, Herodotus not just described the Greco-Persian wars in the *Histories* (they are the main subject of books 6-9), but also the development of the Persian empire and its constituent territories (like Lydia, Egypt, Thrace etc.), though he did so from an apparent Greek point of view. Several of these countries he had probably or possibly visited himself, some certainly not, and of some it is doubted whether he has been there himself or only recorded what he had been told by informers, people he generally does not specify. The description of Babylon (Hdt. 1.178-187) has led to one of those controversies regarding the reliability of his report¹⁰. Taken together, the view of the Eastern world as presented by Herodotus was in fact, in several ways, directly and indirectly, significantly coloured by concepts deeply imbued with a Hellenic ori-

¹⁰ Rollinger seriously doubts whether Herodotus actually ever visited Babylon (cf. Rollinger 1993, 182-187).

gin: it was a history written from the outside, looking in. Nevertheless, the *Histories* have been treated as the central ‘story’ of the Achaemenid empire during many years, but this position cannot be maintained any more “after critical re-evaluation of its (often unintentionally) biased and limited views” (Henkelman 2010, 27).

Different from Herodotus, Ctesias expressly stated that his information was based upon βασιλικαὶ ἀναγραφαί, *basilikai anagrafai* (D.S. 2.22.5) or βασιλικαὶ διφθεραί, *basilikai diftherai* (D.S. 2.32.4), both to be, roughly, translated as “royal archives”¹¹: his is obviously aimed to be a history written from the inside, looking out. As a physician at the Achaemenid court of Artaxerxes II, Ctesias would have been extremely well placed to investigate such archives – even more so because he apparently spoke Persian¹². In practice, as he himself freely admits two times, his work was ultimately based upon transmission by hearsay as well. D.S. 2.22.5, regarding the history of Babylonia, reads as follows: ... τοιαῦτ’ ἐν ταῖς βασιλικαῖς ἀναγραφαῖς ἱστορεῖσθαι φασιν οἱ βάρβαροι (“the barbarians say that such is the account ... that is given in the royal records”). Who precisely those barbarians are, remains in the dark. They probably were Ctesias’ informers, be it of Persian or (for that part of the story more likely¹³) Babylonian origin. Moreover, Ctesias himself admits, according to Photius, that he heard certain facts regarding Persian history proper directly from Parysatis (cf. Phot. *Bibl.* [72] 42b11-13). I think that we, therefore, may safely conclude that a major part of Ctesias’ work was based upon ἀκοή, “verbal information”, as well, just like Herodotus’. However, especially his account regarding the battle of Cunaxa and its aftermath (cf. *FGrH* No. 688; Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2010, FF. 16-29) testifies

¹¹ For the reality of those archives see Stronk 2010, 15-25 (= chapter 1, section 1.1.3 A).

¹² There is, however, no indication whatsoever that he also mastered Akkadian or Elamite or was able to read texts in either of these languages or, for that matter, Old Persian or Imperial Aramaic. As regards Ctesias speaking Persian: if he did so, he was no exception. We are told, e.g., that it took the Athenian Themistocles one year to learn to speak Persian sufficiently fluently to be able to communicate with the Persian King (probably Artaxerxes though also the name of Xerxes is mentioned: Plu. *Them.* 27.1 touches upon this problem) without an interpreter: Plu. *Them.* 29.5.

¹³ Forsdyke argues that Ctesias was not likely to acquire authentic Assyrian information at Susa, or any other residence of the Persian king, since prehistoric peoples usually did not preserve native traditions of aliens with whom their own relations had been hostile. Their memories of such predecessors hardly went back beyond the moments of contact (Forsdyke 1956, 75). If, however, Forsdyke adds, Ctesias had opportunities to orally consult the temple-scribes at Babylon, his story of the Assyrian Empire might very well have had some historical content: in that case they were the people intended with “the barbarians say...”. According to Ctes. *Pers.* F 27 § 69, he did actually spend some time in Babylon, after the Battle of Cunaxa, but it is likely he has been there more often, during the king’s regular stays there (see below). Nevertheless, it is surprising that Ctesias never mentions a Babylonian *empire* (he does, however, mention the Babylonians), though his sources (if, indeed, they were temple-scribes at Babylon) should have been aware of such an institution.

that, apart from that verbal information, he may well have claimed, and likely not unjustly¹⁴, a fair amount of ὄψις, “visual information” as well, probably again just like Herodotus. However, it should be stressed once more: he writes starting from a Persian based origin.

What essentially distinguishes both works, as far as we can tell, is that Herodotus focuses on “*the record of astonishing and heroic achievements*”, a conflict of and between alien cultures, as also his proem indicates (see above), while Ctesias’ aim appears to have been *to illustrate Persian history (and/or society) to the Greeks*. It might be far-fetched, but notably Lucian’s criticism on Ctesias could be a confirmation that to do so, Ctesias may at least have given the impression that, even though being a Greek, he made more or less extensive use of especially Persian sources – or in fact used his Persian sources more directly than Herodotus had done. As we only have a very fragmentary record of the *Persica*, we are unable to determine whether this view is correct. There is in the preserved fragments one fragment that directly corroborates the suggestion, sc. F 43 (FGrH No. 688; Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2010). It is a fragment taken from Stephen of Byzantium and reads as follows: Δερβίκκαι· ἔθνος πλησίον τῶν Ὑρκανῶν. ... Κτησίας δὲ Δερβίσσους αὐτούς φησιν ... (“*Derbikkai*: people close to the Hyrcanians [sc. directly S and SE of the Caspian Sea, JPS] ... but Ctesias calls them *Derbissoi* ...”).

In Indo-European there is, *i.a.*, a divide between the satem- and the centum group (based upon the words for the number ‘100’ in each group). Greek belongs to the centum group, Persian to the satem group. Relying upon Persian sources, as he claims he did, Ctesias indeed would have known the people mentioned in the fragment as *Derbissoi* rather than by their Greek name *Derbikkai*. Though I, therefore, certainly believe Ctesias was much more imbued with Persian notions than either Herodotus or Xenophon and showed it in the *Persica*, the very nature of the work’s remains unfortunately makes it impossible to demonstrate this position beyond doubt. The fact that he appears to have hinted at passages of Greek literature or even directly borrowed from Greek literary works is, because of the same reasons, no decisive argument to counter this position.

As regards Xenophon the evidence for ὄψις seems to be overwhelming. He originally partook in Cyrus the Younger’s expedition as a gentlemanly kind of hanger-on of Proxenus but became one of the leaders, supposedly eventually the main

¹⁴ A different view is advocated by Bichler (2007, 229-245). He believes that the *Persica* is a kind of pastiche of Herodotus’ *Histories*. Bichler wonders whether the *Persica* “nicht eher um eine bewusste Provokation bzw. eine wohlüberlegte satirische Verformung zum Amusement eines verständigen Publikums handeln?” (Bichler 2007, 232). His target would, as already stated, have mainly been the *Histories*: the résumé of Photius’ *epitome* may provide an indication therefore: σχεδὸν ἐν ἅπασιν ἀντικείμενα Ἡροδότῳ ἱστορῶν (“nearly in everything relating the opposite of Herodotus”: Phot. *Bibl.* [72] 35b40-41). Bichler concludes regarding Ctesias’ work “dass hier ein Spaßvogel am Werke war, der einem kundigen Publikum einen regelrechten Herodot-Verriss aufzischen wollte” (Bichler 2007, 232).

leader, of the Greek army after the capture of five generals by Tissaphernes. After the Thracian adventure of the remaining part of the Cyreans with Seuthes, Xenophon and the Cyreans joined Thibron in Asia Minor to fight Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus (cf., e.g., Stronk 1995, 283-300.). In Asia Minor he befriended the Spartan king Agesilaos and evidently witnessed a large amount of the events described in the *Hellenica* in person. However, he did not merely rely upon his own observations while describing the events. Both *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* testify that Xenophon frequently used other sources as well, be it written accounts (i.a. Ctesias') or oral information. In both instances, I think, one is allowed to speak of (a certain amount of) ἀκοή being present in his accounts as well. As regards the *Cyropaedia* we encounter quite a different situation. In the words of Walter Miller in the introduction to the *Cyropaedia* in the Loeb Classical Library: "It is historical, but no history; it has much Socratic dialogue, but it is no philosophy; it has discussions of many questions of education, ethics, politics, tactics, etc., but it is not an essay. It is biographical, but it is not biography; it contains also, ..., one of the most charming love stories in literature. We may best call it an historical romance – the western pioneer in that field of literature" (vii). Nevertheless: "There is much, on the other hand, that has been overlooked by the critics, though it is of prime importance for the history and the conditions of the orient in Xenophon's own times. ... Xenophon knew his Herodotus and Ctesias, of course, and probably other earlier historians whom we cannot identify; ... But of far more value to us is the wealth of material gathered by him on his memorable march through Asia and the flood of light that in the *Cyropaedia* he throws on contemporary peoples and manners and customs in the orient" (x). Especially the wealth of information regarding Persian court-life amassed in the *Cyropaedia* is enormous (cf. Tuplin 2010).

It is justified to state that Herodotus lived later than all the events he described. He should, though, have been able to present a more or less accurate autoptic account of at least some of the *areas* he describes. As regards the events of the Persian Wars as such he should, moreover, have been able to talk to people who had witnessed or even participated in the events he describes. However, too frequently his geographical descriptions are rather vague or worse, even outright wrong: one of these cases regards Babylon. On the other hand, his description of Thrace is extremely valuable (cf., e.g., Stronk 1995, 39-45). Contrary to that, *geographically* his account of the Scythian campaign of Darius makes no sense at all, even though it may prove to be valuable in other respects (cf. Stronk 2011b, 123 and note 12). Because he lived later than the main occurrences he narrated, it was obviously necessary to partly employ secondary sources. However, the, let us call it, romantic touch Herodotus (probably) applied to several stories is completely out of place. Suffice it to mention three of those stories as an example. The first is the alleged meeting between the Athenian lawgiver Solon and King Croesus of Lydia, a meeting remembered by Croesus as he sat on the pyre by the orders of Cyrus the Great (according to Herodotus 1.29-33, 85-92, possibly recording a Lydian version of the story). It suffices here to record that such a meeting between

Croesus and Solon is unlikely to have ever taken place (cf. Evans 1978, 35-38), and is, *e.g.*, not at all recorded or even hinted at in Bacchylides' earlier account of Croesus' demise (B. *Epinikia* 31(iii), 23-62). The fact that Diodorus of Sicily incorporates the story in his *Bibliotheca Historica* (9.2.3-4, 9.34) can be no argument against this conclusion, as the nature of Diodorus' source is not revealed (though it may well have been Herodotus¹⁵). The second is the story that the Egyptian pyramids, notably those of Cheops and Chefren, would have been merely constructed thanks to forced labour (Hdt. 2.124-127, though Herodotus (luckily but rightly) avoids to use the term δούλοι, a term most commonly translated as "slaves", though it also has a more specific meaning, sc. "subjects of an absolute ruler"). It is an image that is willingly cherished by some until the present day, though it is likewise an image that is not truthful¹⁶. The third is the alleged discussion on the right constitution for Persia by the seven conspirators against the magus, reproduced in Hdt. 3.80-85. This seems, in spite of Herodotus' assertion of the contrary, very much a Greek discussion, following Greek notions and concepts, and likely to be alien to Persian nobles¹⁷. Moreover, it was written in a period in which democracy was by no means an accepted ideology throughout the Hellenic world – if it ever was, except (more or less¹⁸) in Attica (where Herodotus is reported to have read his work in public in 445/4)¹⁹. Altogether, it makes Herodotus a less robust witness for Persia, its history, and the history of the areas it dominated than we would like to have. In fact, Persian history in Herodotus is primarily a *logos* of Persian kings and queens, from Cyrus the Great to Artaxerxes I (cf. Bichler 2000, 366-377). It is, moreover, a *logos* in which people like Queen Atossa receive a more prominent position than seems justified on the basis of the sources that are available (cf. Henkelman 2010, 31-33).

For different reasons, the remark that his story is a *logos* of Persian kings and queens could, unfortunately, more or less be made regarding Ctesias. Partly he lived after the events he described, partly (*e.g.* the rule of Artaxerxes II) he was a contemporary, and as we may assume even an eye-witness, of the events he described. However, the major problem in his case is that the *Persica* survived

¹⁵ See for a discussion on Diodorus' sources for his history of Persia: Stronk, *Semiramis' Legacy* (in preparation).

¹⁶ Cf., *e.g.*, Lehner 1997, 224. He asserts that skilled builders and craftsmen were in permanent employment of the pharaoh, and that the mass of the workforce was made up of crews of peasant conscripts. Likely their service constituted (part of) their taxes.

¹⁷ However, Gruen 2011, 23-25 is more cautious: "The debate may or may not be fictitious."

¹⁸ For a negative judgement of democracy by an Athenian, see, *e.g.*, [Xenophon] *Ath. Pol.*, *passim*.

¹⁹ And allegedly was paid handsomely to do so, according to Diyllus [*terminus post quem* 297 BC, JPS], *FGrH* No. 73, F 3 = Plutarch, *De Malignitate Herodoti* 862B. As evidence for the reading itself (and some form of tribute) may be adduced Eusebius, *Chronographia* Olympiad 83.4 (in the translation into Latin as well as partial revision by [St.] Jerome): *Herodotus cum Athenis libros suos in concilio legisset, honoratus est* ("Herodotus was honoured for reading his books in the assembly at Athens").

only fragmentarily and that the majority of the excerpters were uncritical, and sometimes inaccurate, occasionally using their source without judgement. Moreover, they occasionally freely invented asides and added material either of themselves or other authors (like Deinon or Cleitarchus) under the name of their (alleged) source, sc. Ctesias (cf. for an extensive review of these sources Stronk 2010, 60-150). Another problem is that one of the main objectives of Photius' excerpt (one of our main sources for the content of Ctesias' *Persica*) of Ctesias' books 7-13 was to show the differences between Herodotus (and in the later books also Xenophon, but Xenophon wrote his works after Ctesias had published the *Persica*) and Ctesias (cf. Phot. *Bibl.*, [72] 35b). Therefore, Photius' *epitome* rather focuses on differences between the two authors, but apparently keeping Herodotus' story as his reference. Also regarding those parts of the *Persica* for which there is no parallel in the *Histories*, he maintains an almost obsessive Herodotean point of view. In one case this practice goes rather far: in F 16 § 62 (*FGrH* No. 688; Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2010), Photius appears to epitomize books 19 and 20 of the *Persica*. Photius writes: ... ἐξ οὗ καὶ ἔλεγχος Ἑλλανίκοι καὶ Ἡροδότου ὡς ψεύδονται (“... he refutes Hellenicus and Herodotus, as if they were lying”). This may or may not truly have been Ctesias' attitude; however: neither Hellenicus nor Herodotus lived to describe the events described in Ctesias' books 19 and 20. Either Photius' remark is here very much out of place²⁰, a possibility; or Photius (too greatly) enlarges the differences between Herodotus and Ctesias, another distinct possibility. It might cast some doubts on the reliability or quality of the excerpt of the *Persica* by Photius, our main source for this work.

We have, however, no solid evidence in this matter and have to work from the evidence as it is. As regards the issue at stake, also Diodorus Siculus (D.S. 2.15.2) recognizes that Herodotus and Ctesias frequently are at variance. That observation, though, does relate to a period of which neither Herodotus nor Ctesias had direct personal knowledge. One of the causes of these differences may have been as Lenfant has suggested, sc. that traditions had changed over the years to fit a new political reality and that both authors had described the prevalent opinion of their days²¹, another that they focused differently. However, these are only two out of many possible explanations. Apart from the observation by Lenfant: the possibility that the historicity, or rather accuracy, of Ctesias' account increases the more he approaches his own times, is not to be excluded. At the same time this might well be the weakness of his work, as Stevenson underlines: “Ctesias, whose account, ..., centres on events of which he had personal experience and his own role. ... to the detriment of the description of those incidents which did not involve him and where he seems to have no interest or no information” (Stevenson 1997, 160).

²⁰ It seems unlikely that this would be some reference to Hdt. 3.16. I cannot think of a single passage in Herodotus that this remark might allude to.

²¹ Narratives tend to serve certain needs of later generations: in the process the narratives are likely to be coloured or distorted (cf. Lenfant 1996).

Taken together, our picture of Ctesias' reliability as a source, unfortunately, cannot be much more positive than that of Herodotus', though, as argued, owing to different causes. Both, however, have been accused, both in antiquity and in more recent years, of duplicity, maliciousness, and outright fraud – to mention only some of the allegations brought forward. Nevertheless, equally impossible as it is to accept their works at face value, if only because of the contradictions, it remains to prove they are completely fraudulent. And what about Xenophon? He was an eye-witness of most of the occurrences he described in the works under scrutiny (except for the *Cyropaedia*, though this work belongs, in spite of its historical importance, to a different genre) and must have had a large amount of first-hand knowledge. The amount of ὄψις, of autopsy, in two of the three accounts we focus on is staggering, and therefore the historical value of his observations in these works. Nevertheless, even he occasionally had to rely upon information by other people, on ἀκοή. Probably that is especially true for the *Cyropaedia*, though he may, e.g., have observed some of the Persian court practices in action during his stay in the army of Cyrus the Younger.

One of the sources Xenophon used, e.g. during the composition of the *Anabasis*, was Ctesias' *Persica*. Nevertheless, Photius declares that the description of occurrences by Ctesias and by Xenophon frequently differs. Unfortunately, he does not give any specification where precisely the two differ and how, and in which work. The *Anabasis* seems the most likely candidate, but also the *Hellenica* and perhaps even the *Cyropaedia* are feasible to have served as Photius' material to compare Ctesias' *Persica* with (cf. Stronk 2010, 107-146 and chapter 3). However, as regards the historical value of Xenophon's works no clear verdict emerges from antiquity. We might perhaps consider this as a positive signal, viz. that Xenophon's works were probably regarded as a reliable account of events. A clear statement to the contrary from the modern period is presented by Jacoby, comparing Ctesias and Xenophon. His verdict regarding the historical value of Ctesias is that it is, in his opinion, "gleich Null", even "im Vergleich zu historisch so wenig hochstehenden Büchern, wie Xenophons Anabasis und Hellenika" (Jacoby 1922, 2047). I believe, however, that Jacoby is likely to have mistaken the purpose of Xenophon's works – or at least of these works: they were, as I already indicated above, no 'histories' proper (the *Cyropaedia* least of all three), in spite of the fact that *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* have frequently been used as such. However, even assuming the idea that *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* were not primarily intended as proper histories, this in itself does not at all preclude that we cannot put 'historian's questions' to these texts and that these texts cannot have a tremendous historical value. At the same time Jacoby may well have misunderstood Ctesias' *Persica* (see, e.g., Stronk 2010, chapter 1; Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 9-88). Stevenson phrases her views on Ctesias' *Persica* as follows: "Ctesias emerges [sc. from the preserved fragments, JPS] as potentially quite an accurate source, partly to fairly detailed information and able to write a reasonable description of what he sees and hears without undue bias. Contrary to general opinion he even appears willing to admit his own shortcomings and is not always

eager to lie about or exaggerate his own role. His tendency to describe at length events of no major consequence and to include a large amount of apparently trivial detail is a result of his close involvement in the events about which he writes and his possession of large amounts of information, in the recording of which he is perhaps insufficiently discriminating” (Stevenson 1997, 81). Though I believe Ctesias’ ‘garrulity’ may also have been caused by the nature of his sources (cf. Stronk 2010, 30), I think her views may well prove to be largely right – and Jacoby’s, at least on this issue, wrong.

The picture of Persia and/or (the) Persians

We have now come to the key part of this exploration, sc. to determine how Persia and/or (the) Persians were described by the respective authors we focus on. The main feature that catches the eye here are the geographical oddities of Herodotus’ description of the Achaemenid Empire, like the absence of any reference to Persepolis and the subordinate position of Pasargadae (only presented as a tribe name: Hdt. 1.125) and Ecbatana (also known as Agbatana, modern Hamadan). Such elements, however, do (to name but one aspect) change the image of the Persian king as a travelling agent. In Herodotus’ account the king emerges as a ruler mainly staying at Susa, unless he is forced, like in the case of the Ionian revolt and Athens’ support of it, to go to war. The king emerges in Herodotus’ account as the central power, dominating the political process. Though they do occur, intrigues by the king’s wives and eunuchs play a relatively minor part in the story (the Smerdis-conspiracy being a notable exception).

In itself the political system at large seems generally fairly well described (though he mentions satrapies, the word ‘satrap’ does not occur, nor is local administration described), but Herodotus’ emphasis lies more on the western part of the Empire than on its eastern part. Bactria, e.g., is hardly mentioned, nor are the Achaemenids’ efforts in India (Herodotus does mention the conquest by Darius (4.44), tells something on their customs (3.97-102, 104), and Indians serving in the Persian army (7.65, 86; 8.113; 9.31)). Likewise the growth and status of *Skudra* (i.e. Macedonia and [part of] Thrace) is not elaborated, in spite of its proximity and importance to the Greek world. However, for the comprehension of the Greeks, the description of the state reforms by Darius (and the revenues it generated) may have been fairly important to make them realise the sheer size of the Achaemenid empire (Hdt. 3.89-97).

Within this outline, sketchy as it is, people around the king ultimately play a secondary role, important as they may be for the development of the account itself. Many people serve the king unquestionably and are richly rewarded, but those that do not, fall out of favour, or overtly ask for (or expect) kingly favours, are brutally punished (cf., e.g., the case of Pythius the Lydian: Hdt. 7.27-29, 38-39). Most of the king’s advisers belong to a kind of an elite consisting of relatives of the most important families (those of Darius’ co-conspirators? and how about the elite in the days of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses?). In such a context a royal character flaw is crucial for the development of events, as is proven in Herodotus’

account regarding Cambyses (notably the story regarding the Apis bull; as it is, Herodotus' account is not at all corroborated by contemporary documents from Egypt, on the contrary) and, naturally, Xerxes. Nevertheless, there is no Persian described who stands out as an exceptionally good, or for that matter: bad, person *by nature*.

Surprising as it may appear at first sight (with Photius' remarks in mind), Ctesias' account does not as extremely differ from Herodotus' as has frequently been suggested, at least regarding the course of events at court. Noticeable is that the names of people involved greatly differ: here Herodotus may well have been closer to the truth. Very likely this is the case with the men opposing the conspiracy of the magus (Ctes. *Pers.* F 13 § 16; Hdt. 3.68-79), as goes from Darius' inscriptions at Behistun (Bisitun): Herodotus has five names right out of six participants (plus Darius), while Ctesias has only one (plus Darius). Of course, again the usual *caveat* is in place, sc. that we only have *fragments* of the *Persica*. In the *Persica*, F 36 (FGrH No. 688; Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2010), Persepolis appears to figure as a royal residence, like Babylon does in several fragments; Susa is hinted at as a royal residence in F 16 § 66 (FGrH No. 688; Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2010), as is Ecbatana elsewhere (F 13 § 26). Any further indication as regards the king travelling around or remaining in one place is absent. Here too, the king finally appears as the decisive factor in the government of the state, even more so as the story proceeds in time. However, different from Herodotus' account, Ctesias' story appears to emphasize that though kings ruled the world, these very kings themselves were governed by divine intervention (whether or not in consequence of kingly *hubris* or *hamartia*) and, last but not least, by the eunuchs of the palace (certainly until and including the reign of Xerxes) and/or the women at the court (starting from the reign of Artaxerxes I with his mother Amestris, with its height in the confrontations between Stateira and Parysatis, wife resp. mother of Artaxerxes II). Nevertheless, Ctesias too singles almost no Persian out (with the exclusion of Sphendadates, the magus) as the proverbial good (or bad) guy (or girl), though Parysatis too sometimes appears to come close.

In Ctesias' account the loyal servants to the king are richly rewarded as well, as, e.g., appears after the battle of Cunaxa. That same aftermath shows that also the distribution of punishments, either by the king or his entourage (sc. his wife or his mother), could be swift and utterly ruthless. Several of these punishments are described in every gruesome detail. Whether such details go directly back to the physician from Cnidus or to the (knowledge or imagination) of the transmitters cannot be established with certainty. Remarkable is the fact that the numbers given for the size of armies in the *Persica* are much more limited than in the *Histories*. Nevertheless, also in the *Persica* extreme (or absurd) numbers occur, e.g. regarding the army of the legendary Queen Semiramis during the Indian expedition as reported by Diodorus of Sicily (D.S. 2.16.1- 19.10 = Ctes. *Pers.* F 1b).

In one important respect the work of Ctesias appears to have differed from that by Herodotus. Where the latter pays relatively much attention to the description

of monuments, landscapes, the history of countries embedded in the story etc., the former does, as far as we know, much less so. The only elaborate descriptions of cities we have, are those on the construction of the city of Nineveh by the legendary King Ninus (though on the banks of the wrong river, sc. the Euphrates instead of the Tigris!) and that of Babylon by the equally elusive Semiramis. Both descriptions were preserved in the *Bibliotheca* of Diodorus of Sicily. That Diodorus used Ctesias' *Persica* as a source seems certain (he refers several times directly to Ctesias), but to what extent he mixed it with other sources is shrouded in mist (cf. Stronk 2010, 60-70 and Stronk, *Semiramis' Legacy*). The descriptions of landscapes etc. Ctesias does provide, are largely devoted to extraordinary occurrences. As for the governmental system: Ctesias deals with it indirectly, by mentioning the people (and the regions they governed) revolting from the king. He shows that he knows how the machinery of the Achaemenid Empire worked. More details are lacking in the fragments as we have them, though Ctesias may well have been aware of them, being the author of a *Περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν φόρων* (*On Taxes in Asia*: cf. Ath. 2.67A; 10.442B). Also Stevenson suggests that Ctesias has had copious information and, therefore, a fair understanding of extent and working of the administration of the Achaemenid Empire (Stevenson 1997, 156).

The scale of the theatre Xenophon covers in the *Anabasis* and the *Hellenica* is much more limited than that of either Herodotus or Ctesias. Different from them, he has what almost emerges as a personal enemy, sc. Tissaphernes, the king of kings' satrap of Ionia. Tissaphernes is described by Xenophon in these works as an oath-breaker (*X. An.* 2.5.15-42; *HG* 3.4.6; also in Xenophon's *Agésilaios* Tissaphernes is described negatively, *i.a.* as a poor tactician). This reproach (if it was rightly made) is, one might almost say, lethal in the Greek but certainly Persian moral and ethical conceptions (as the Greeks had described them!). As Hirsch points out (Hirsch 1985: 18-19), Tissaphernes "operated within a religious and ethical system which expressly forbade lies, deceit, and the breaking of oaths" (cf. also Herodotus' remark that the essence of Persian education was "to ride, to shoot, and to tell the truth": *Hdt.* 1.136). Nevertheless, as Bassett points out (Bassett 2002), Tissaphernes may well have been in his right and no oath-breaker at all, at least as regards the arrest of the Greek generals after the Battle of Cunaxa.

I think that Xenophon's judgement on Tissaphernes was not merely connected with his own personal experiences, but rather with Tissaphernes' handling of 'the freedom of the Greeks', a recurrent theme in Greek politics. If only purely from a propagandistic point of view this topic was of immense importance within the Greek world, but also emotionally it remained an open sinew, as, *e.g.*, various passages in Plutarch's *Lives* (*e.g.* the *Life of Artaxerxes*) testify to. To free Greek cities from whatever oppressor, be it Greek or barbarian, also was a recurrent theme in Greek politics (cf., *e.g.*, Brasidas' speech, recorded in Thucydides (*Th.* 4.85-86)). In this case, the topic of 'freedom of the Greeks' was especially focused on the position of the Greek cities within the Persian Empire.

Tissaphernes' actions after his return from Cunaxa had done little to further the cause of those cities, as in the case of Cyme (cf. X. *HG* 3.2.12; D.S. 14.35.6-7, 36.1).

Other Persians, including adversaries, are described much more benevolently by Xenophon. Pharnabazus (the Persian king's satrap of Phrygia), e.g., describes himself during the famous interview with the Spartan king Agesilaus (X. *HG* 4.1.32-4) as a friend of the Spartans (4.1.32) as well as their loyal ally: καὶ διπλοῦν ὡσπερ Τισσαφέρνους οὐδὲν πόποτέ μου οὔτε ποιήσαντος οὔτ' εἰπόντος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔχοιτ' ἂν κατηγορῆσαι ("And you cannot accuse me, as you accused Tissaphernes, of any double-dealing toward you at any time, either in deed or word"). The word Pharnabazus used to state that he was a friend of the Spartans was φίλος (*filos*: X. *HG* 4.1.32). Though the relations remain at the level of φιλία (*filia*, ordinary friendship) and never go as far as ξενία (*xenia*, guest-friendship) though Agesilaus hinted at ξενία in his speech: X. *HG* 4.1.34), it becomes obvious that Pharnabazus is considered (or at least described by Xenophon) as a man who is well thought of, at least by the Spartans.

A similar conclusion may be drawn regarding the figure of Cyrus the Younger. In the *Anabasis* Xenophon describes him admiringly as a man full of ἀρετή (*aretê*, "vigour", "virtue", "valour" – but with a financial connotation: cf. Stronk 1995, 83). He is described as a man who was given loyal support (cf., e.g., X. *An.* 1.5.8), even attracted people from the king's surroundings (X. *An.* 1.9.29), but also as a man who could act mercilessly and ruthlessly, like in the cases of Magaphernes and another Persian (X. *An.* 1.2.20) and Orontas (X. *An.* 1.6.1-11). Nevertheless, the eulogy on Cyrus the Younger (X. *An.* 1.9.1-31) is impressive and appears free from afterthoughts. Also in the *Cyropaedia*, though essentially devoted to Cyrus the Great, Cyrus the Younger is described positively. In his descriptions of these leading figures within Achaemenid society, Xenophon shows himself as one who is familiar with the empire's dimensions and political structure. Partly this is reflected in the words he ascribes to Cyrus the Younger when the latter is asked whether he, once king, will have sufficient means to reward his allies (X. *An.* 1.7.5-8). In the *Cyropaedia* (8.6.22), Xenophon mentions three royal court- and/or palace sites as the main residences of the Persian king during an annually recurring tour. These sites are Babylon, where the king resided during the 7 winter months; Susa, where he spent 3 spring months; and Ecbatana (as Xenophon calls it), where he was during 2 summer months. Susa and Ecbatana also occur in *Anabasis* 2.4.25 and 3.5.15. Nevertheless, due to its different character, the *Cyropaedia* will further be left out of this part. It may suffice to point at the fact that in this work Cyrus the Great was credited with having received the proper education (by the way an education that greatly valued notably Spartan values!). Partly this may have caused that the *Cyropaedia* sometimes reads like a "lengthy, extensive, and more than occasionally tiresome encomium to Cyrus the Great" (Gruen 2011, 53; see however also his pp. 59-65). For a full review of Xenophon and his position regarding Persian (Achaemenid) courts, see Tuplin 2010. For Xenophon's views of Persia in general, see Tuplin 1994, 129-133.

The image regarding Xenophon's geographical descriptions is somewhat mixed. Some observations may serve as example. Dascylium (Pharnabazus' residence) was described by Xenophon in the *Hellenica* (HG 4.1.15-6). It was lying in a plain, and round about it were many large villages, stored with provisions in abundance, and splendid wild animals, some in parks, others in open space. There were birds in abundance as well. A river, full of all kinds of fish, flowed by the palace. However, though the description seems quite complete, one very conspicuous landmark of Dascylium was not mentioned by Xenophon, *i.e.* the presence of the lake nearby. Striking is also the lack of knowledge in the *Anabasis* in his references to the remains of Nineveh (at or near Mespila, describing it as a city of the Medes without even the slightest suggestion of an older [Assyrian] origin: X. *An.* 3.4.10-1). On the other hand, during trips covering many hundreds of kilometres in Bithynia, Phrygia, Mysia, and European Turkey, following the steps of the 'Ten Thousand' in Thrace, I found Xenophon's descriptions of the landscape after almost 2400 years generally still pretty accurate and to the point (cf. Stronk 1995).

Conclusion

It may be obvious that this exploration has been anything but exhaustive. Nevertheless, the differences between Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon are significant – as might be expected in view of Photius' remarks. However, it is much more interesting for once to look at the similarities. In this respect one element is clear. Whenever describing another country, *in casu* the Achaemenid empire, all three authors discussed, Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon, basically did not merely describe that realm and its peculiarities, but also focused on issues that differed from Greek customs and views. At times, they appear to describe Persia, Persians, or other peoples almost like an old-fashioned anthropologist describes an alien tribe: "Look at those strange (and/or cruel) customs, glad *we* are Greek". Certainly Herodotus draws attention to some differences between Greeks and Persians. However, "the advantage, if such there was, did not always go to the Hellene" (Gruen 2011, 25). In general though, with the obvious *caveat* we have to maintain with regard to Ctesias, it looks like the latter wrote a Persian history adapted for Greeks, while Herodotus and Xenophon wrote their accounts much more or even exclusively from a Greek point of view. In this respect the dig at Ctesias by Lucian, mentioned before, might make sense (as we tried to demonstrate). As for Xenophon, I find, irrespective of their goals, especially his *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* much more factual (though he tends to be carried away as regards Tissaphernes) than the works of either Herodotus or Ctesias, in spite of critical remarks that remain possible. The *Cyropaedia*, much more fictitious than either the *Anabasis* or *Hellenica*, takes in this respect a special position as well. One aspect, however, one can clearly notice in all three authors (perhaps surprisingly so also in Ctesias, though maybe less overtly present), *sc.* an emerging (and, over the period discussed, increasing) self-consciousness and an awareness of Greek potential. At the same time one observes that this attitude translates into the sense of a Greek identity that emanates increasingly clearer.

The increased sense of Greekness and self-confidence is reflected in Agesilaus' call to enter: τὸ μὴ περὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς Ἀσίας τὸν ἀγῶνα καθιστάναι ("on a struggle not to save Greece, but to subdue Asia": X. *Ages.* 1.8; this motive is also hinted at in X. *HG* 3.5.1). Such an attempt was, some years later, also advocated by Isocrates, both in the *Panegyricus* and the *Philippus*. That such an enterprise was feasible, Xenophon already had discussed in the *Anabasis*, where he makes a useful strategic observation: καὶ συνιδεῖν δ' ἦν τῷ προσέχοντι τὸν νοῦν τῇ βασιλείῳ ἀρχῇ πλήθει μὲν χώρας καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἰσχυρὰ οὖσα, τοῖς δὲ μήκεσι τῶν ὁδῶν καὶ τῷ διεσπᾶσθαι τὰς δυνάμεις ἀσθενής, εἴ τις διὰ ταχέων τὸν πόλεμον ποιοῖτο ("further, for the close observer it was obvious that while the strength of the king's empire was in its size and number of inhabitants, its weakness were the distances and the fact that its forces were scattered, *if one would be able to attack it swiftly*": X. *An.* 1.5.9; my italics, JPS). It appears that also Cyrus the Younger was aware of this weakness: it might explain the haste he displayed during the Cyreans' march inland, as related by Xenophon (X. *An.* 1.5.9).

The development of the Persian-Greek relations can be seen comparing a scene described by Herodotus and one described by Xenophon. Herodotus related that:

ὥς δὲ κελευόμενοι οὗτοι ἐποίεον ταῦτα, ἐνθαῦτα τὸν Πausανίην ἰδόντα κλίνας τε χρυσέας καὶ ἀργυρέας εἰς ἐστρωμένας καὶ τραπέζας τε χρυσέας καὶ ἀργυρέας καὶ παρασκευὴν μεγαλοπρεπέα τοῦ δεῖπνου, ἐκπλαγέντα τὰ προκείμενα ἀγαθὰ κελεῦσαι ἐπὶ γέλωτι τοὺς ἑωυτοῦ διηκόνους παρασκευάσαι Λακωνικὸν δεῖπνον. ὥς δὲ τῆς θοίνης ποιηθείσης ἦν πολλὸν τὸ μέσον, τὸν Πausανίην γελάσαντα μεταπέμψασθαι τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοὺς στρατηγούς, συνελθόντων δὲ τούτων εἰπεῖν τὸν Πausανίην, δεικνύντα ἐς ἑκατέρην τοῦ δεῖπνου παρασκευήν, «Ἄνδρες Ἕλληνας, τῶνδε εἵνεκα ἐγὼ ὑμέας συνήγαγον, βουλόμενος ὑμῖν τοῦδε τοῦ Μήδων ἡγεμόνος τὴν ἀφροσύνην δέξαι, ὃς τοιήνδε δίαίταν ἔχων ἦλθε ἐς ἡμέας οὕτω ὀϊζυρὴν ἔχοντας ἀπαιρησόμενος». ταῦτα μὲν Πausανίην λέγεται εἰπεῖν πρὸς τοὺς στρατηγούς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ("they [sc. the bakers and cooks of the Persian general Mardonius] did as he had asked. And when Pausanias saw both the well cushioned gold and silver couches and the gold and silver tables and the magnificent service for the meal, he was amazed at the splendour that was before him and asked, to have a laugh, his own men to prepare a meal Laconian style. When that meal was ready, it was much unlike the other. And Pausanias, laughing, sent for the generals of the Greeks. When they had assembled, Pausanias said, while he pointed at the way each meal had been prepared: 'Men of Greece, I made you assemble here because I wanted to show you the foolishness of the leader of the Persians {litt. Medes}. With such a way of life as you see, he came here to take ours,

pitiful as it is, away from us.’ According to the story Pausanias said these things to the generals of the Greeks”: Hdt. 9.82).

Though the Greeks were at least slightly in awe because of the material wealth of the Persians, a sense of Greek moral superiority seems, nevertheless, already clearly tangible²².

In the *Hellenica*, the picture that is painted (X. *HG* 4.1.30) is slightly more subtle. Agesilaus and a delegation of Lacedaemonians were lying on the ground in a grassy spot, awaiting the arrival of Pharnabazus. Pharnabazus came, dressed very richly. When he saw the Lacedaemonians lying in the grass, he joined them and lay down on the ground without further ado, not using the rugs his attendants were spreading to sit upon comfortably, because (as Xenophon phrases it!) ἡσχύνθη ἐντροφῆσαι (“he was ashamed to indulge in luxury”). Whether there was actual αἰσχύνη (“shame”) might, however, be a matter of contention (cf. Tuplin 2010, 201 and n. 33), even though Xenophon does bring out the picture quite dramatically.

Though Persia continued to influence politics in Greece at least until 386 (the Peace of Antalcidas or King’s Peace), pre-eminently thanks to its wealth (cf. Stronk, 1990-91; Dillery 1995), Xenophon makes it look like here that, given the right circumstances, even eminent Persians were prepared to adapt themselves directly to Greek customs. Greek morale appeared to prevail. However, Tuplin rightly reminds us of the fact that τρυφή (“softness”, “luxuriousness”, “fastidiousness”) does not necessarily include your servants carrying chairs about; he reminds us, moreover, of a passage in the *Cyropaedia* (X. *Cyr.* 5.5.7), where Cyrus the Great and Cyaxares set themselves on the ground to sort out their differences (Tuplin 2010, 201 and n. 33). Nevertheless, the sense that Greek morale will (finally) prevail ultimately connects the works of Herodotus and Xenophon – be it directly or indirectly²³. In this respect they seemingly deviate (with the obvious *caveat*, naturally) from Ctesias’ work. Though there Greek values are adhered to as well, as far as we are able to tell, the connections are much more subtle. All works discussed are, however, in the end essentially descriptions of ‘self’ and ‘others’, in which there is no need for any of the authors to be φιλοβάββαρος or ξενοφοβήτικος: the authors ultimately are Greek and proud to be so, even if their perspectives may seem to differ.

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²² The irony is, of course, as most Greeks who heard or read Herodotus’ account knew perfectly well, that this very same Pausanias ended his life as a ‘Medizer’, indulging in “grandiose Persian banquets”: cf. Gruen 2011, 28.

²³ I think Eric Gruen is on this point perhaps a bit too cautious: cf. Gruen 2011, 30-37, 39.

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