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ἄρα Introducing Direct Speech in Herodotus

For the speeches which Herodotus presents in *oratio recta*, the introductory verb of speaking appears in conjunction with ἄρα only three times: at Hdt. 1.141.2, 4.134.1, and 9.9.2.¹⁾ In general this use of ἄρα has been thought to indicate a lively feeling of interest (Denniston 1966; Cooper 2002), although other possibilities, such as a change of perspective or even skepticism by the narrator, have been entertained.²⁾ Such interpretations fail to articulate why ἄρα appears only in these three passages and what, if any, commonalities these passages share. An examination of these speeches demonstrates that ἄρα is intended to have an appreciable impact on the introduced speech and that this use of ἄρα grants a particular tone to the speeches themselves, rather than vaguely signaling interest, perspective, or confidence.

At first glance, these three passages appear quite different. In 1.141.2, the only of the passages in which the introductory verb appears in *oratio obliqua*, Cyrus chastises the Ionians and Aeolians for demanding the continuation of their liberties by telling the fable of the flute-playing fisherman who admonishes fish to cease thrashing about in his net, since they did not dance to his music before. In 4.134.1 Darius, after seeing the Scythian army disperse to chase a hare, remarks that they must hold him in deep contempt and that the Persians must plan for their immediate withdrawal. Finally in 9.9.2 Chileos of Tegea reprimands the Spartan Ephors for neglecting their alliance with Athens and trusting their defense to the Isthmian Wall alone.

Each of these speeches is introduced by a similar formula, in which ἄρα is bracketed by an introductory verb of speaking and an indication of the speech's

¹⁾ Hdt. 1.141.2 (Hude 1991): ὥς δὲ ψευσθῆναι τῆς ἐλπίδος, λαβεῖν ἀμφίβληστρον καὶ περιβαλεῖν τε πλῆθος πολλὸν τῶν ἰχθύων καὶ ἐξειρύσαι, ἰδόντα δὲ παλλομένους εἰπεῖν ἄρα αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς ἰχθύς· Παύεσθέ μοι ὀρχεόμενοι, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμέο αὐλέοντος ἠθέλετε ἐκβαίνειν ὀρχεόμενοι; 4.134.1: εἴρετο ὁ Δαρεῖος τῶν ἀντιπολέμων τὸν θόρυβον· πυθόμενος δὲ σφεας τὸν λαγὸν διώκοντας, εἶπε ἄρα πρὸς τοὺς περ ἐώθεε καὶ τὰ ἄλλα λέγειν· Οὗτοι ὦνδρες ἡμέων πολλὸν καταφρονέουσιν; 9.9.2: ἀκούσας δὲ [ταῦτα] ὁ Χίλεις ἔλεγε ἄρα σφί τάδε· οὕτως ἔχει, ἄνδρες ἔφοροι.

²⁾ Denniston (1966, 34) lists Hdt. 4.134.1 and 9.9.2 as instances of ἄρα indicating lively interest, but is silent on Hdt. 1.141.2. Cooper (2002, 2869-70) likewise includes all three instances under the category of ἄρα expressing "a lively sense of interest". As often with particles of this type, it is usually ignored in translations; but cf. Godley 1996, who ignores the particle at Hdt. 1.141.2 and 9.9.2, but at 4.134.1 translates ἄρα as "(it would seem)".

audience: εἰπεῖν ἄρα αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς, 1.141.2; εἶπε ἄρα πρὸς τοὺς, 4.134.1; ἔλεγε ἄρα σφι, 9.9.2.³⁾ The consistent positioning of ἄρα between the introductory verb and signal of the audience highlights the presence of ἄρα in these passages, creating a compact and recognizable verbal formula that introduces the *oratio recta*. Furthermore, the uniformity of this construction—especially in light of the different introductory verbs—strongly suggests that the speeches share a common aspect that prompted the narrator, through calculation or reflex, to flag these speeches with an introductory ἄρα.

Previous interpretations of this introductory ἄρα are either overly vague or difficult to reconcile with the context and content of the speeches. This is especially true with the suggestion of Denniston (1966) and Cooper (2002) that ἄρα indicates “a lively feeling of interest”, and therefore new and surprising information. Although the scattering of the Scythians at 4.134.1 might seem surprising, Darius’ reaction makes it clear that he is motivated to speak precisely because the Scythians’ disregard is not unexpected, but instead confirms Gobryas’ interpretation of the Scythians’ surprising gifts of a bird, mouse, frog, and five arrows (4.131-3). Darius’ speech demonstrates more resignation in the face of confirming evidence than wonder or interest. Surprise and ‘vivid interest’ are entirely absent in the speeches by Cyrus’s fisherman and Chileos of Tegea, both of whom reproach their audiences with authority and even condescension. Godley’s understanding of introductory ἄρα in 4.134.1 as expressing skepticism by the narrator is equally unsatisfactory. This construction does not appear elsewhere in the *Histories* when Herodotus expresses reservations about the veracity of a speech, and the rarity of the construction, the plausibility of the speeches themselves, and the strong link between the ἄρα and the verb of speaking complicate Godley’s interpretation. Van Ophuijsen rejects the notion that introductory ἄρα in 4.134.1 conveys a sense that the speech-act and the content of the speech itself were expected—i.e. that Darius replied, “as we expect him to”—and points to “a more fundamental use of ἄρα to mark what follows as part and parcel of a different perspective”, with the other instances of introductory ἄρα having “slightly different final interpretations” (Sicking & van Ophuijsen 1993, 125). Van Ophuijsen sees ἄρα in 1.141.2 as “marking the link between parable and actual situation, and so the point which the listener should now come to *realize*”. In 9.9.2, however, Van Ophuijsen appears to affirm that introductory ἄρα indicates expected speech or endorsement by Herodotus, offering suggested translations of “he said, as one can imagine”, “his reply, understandably, was”, and “then he must have said” (Sicking & Ophuij-

³⁾ For discussion of the possible differences between εἰπεῖν and λέγειν, see Dik 1995, 135-207. The presence of αὐτὸν in 1.141.2 does not disrupt this formula; its presence is easily accounted for by this passage being the sole example in *oratio obliqua*.

sen 1993, 126)—explanations Van Ophuijsen rejected as superficial only paragraphs before.

The rarity of this construction, however, invites us to consider what common features the three passages share. And indeed they are similar enough that a cohesive interpretation of ἄρα introducing direct speech suggests itself. All three passages involve authoritative pronouncements rejecting a course of action as futile. In rejecting an action based on evidence before them, the speakers—Cyrus' fisherman to his prey, Darius to his advisors, and Chileos to the Spartans—demonstrate a forcefulness based on obvious evidence and desire that the audience recognize the inevitable.⁴⁾ The message of each speech is also understood by their respective audiences, who act immediately on the injunction: the Ionians and Aeolians begin fortifying their cities and meet at Panionium to discuss their strategy (1.141.4); Gobryas devises a plan for retreat that is then executed at nightfall (4.134.2-135.1); and the Spartan Ephors immediately dispatch a force to aid Athens (9.10.1). All three speeches, therefore, are commanding, prompted by vivid evidence, and have an immediate effect on their audience, suggesting that the force of ἄρα in each passage is similar to Van Ophuijsen's understanding of ἄρα in Hdt. 1.141.2. Although advocating a uniform translation for particles leads us onto treacherous ground, in light of the similar context and content of the three passages, the introductory ἄρα construction in Herodotus can perhaps best be understood as 'he said *matter-of-factly*'.

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⁴⁾ A potential parallel to this use of ἄρα can be found in Homeric apostrophes, where ἄρα vividly creates a sense of presence prompted by evidence before the narrator; cf. Hom. *Il.* 20.344-8; see Bakker 1993 for a discussion of this use of ἄρα in Homer; cf. Ruijgh 1971, who connects ἄρα with ἄρ-ιστος and determines that, when ἄρα does not appear for expletive reasons, the particle "semble marquer en principe des faits qui surprennent ou qui suscitent un vif intérêt" (Ruijgh 1971, 438)—i.e. essentially the position advocated by Denniston and Cooper.

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