Kelley addresses the conventional notion that Herodotus was the pioneer of “history” as we know it, while giving a nod to other, more primitive concepts of recording the past. His descriptions of these other forms of what he calls “history before History” give rise to the question of what can really be called “history,” and how we can define it. From his information, we can call into question the extent to which Herodotus is the “father of history,” and what can be considered a historical record. One point he makes is that, the “history” of civilizations in ancient times was either tied to mythology and creation myths, or at least couched in allegory and mythic symbolism. Most of what people in ancient Greece or Egypt passed down to younger generations was stories of the gods, how the world came to be, and what, according to their cultural canon, the natural order of the world was. And of course, all of this was manifested in oral traditions of storytelling, and for the most part, physically recorded anywhere, although some civilizations, like the Egyptians, portrayed stories of their mythology, as well as past rulers, in the form of paintings and other artwork. From Kelley’s perspective, it can be inferred that, anything from the past that is recorded in some form or another, and/or passed down to future generations can be defined as “history,” once it has been separated from myth. But also that the lines between history, legend, and myth can be greatly blurred. Things that were recorded about Egyptian rulers, for instance, were inextricably ties to their mythology, since the Pharos were considered gods themselves.

Kelley gives us what is essentially a history *of* history, including various forms of it that existed before Herodotus. In this sense, it is somewhat ironic that formal, conventional history can tell us about people, events, and civilizations that existed before “history” itself! After all, without history as a tool for looking into the past, we would have no knowledge of anything pre-historic, and the point, therefore, would be moot.