TYCHÊ IN POLYBIOS: NARRATIVE ANSWERS TO A PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION[1]

Polybios has a reputation for being an eminently rational historian. For this reason, the prominence in his *Histories* of *tychê* as a force apparently actively involved in historical events has often been a cause for concern and puzzlement to scholars. In the extant part of Polybios' *Histories*, *tychê* appears no fewer than 129 times. In many of these instances it appears to be a force with some power over events in the human world, and, moreover, the concept of this force seems closely intertwined with Polybios' ideas of historical causality and the usefulness of historiography. In order to understand the *Histories* it is therefore necessary to understand Polybios' use of *tychê*. This understanding, however, is hampered by two problems. The first problem is the discrepancy between what Polybios explicitly says about how a historian can legitimately use *tychê* as an explanation, and the way in which he actually employs the term, and, connected with this, between his explicit statement in several passages that Rome's world dominion has been brought about by *tychê* and his equally explicit rejection of this explanation in other passages. The second problem is the apparent instability of the meaning of *tychê* in the *Histories*: sometimes it seems to be a predestining force akin to fate, at other times it is said to act completely at random, and occasionally it seems to be a just power working for vengeance.

In this paper I shall begin by discussing the first of these two problems and offer a solution based on narrative rather than philosophical considerations. I shall then discuss the second problem and try to get to grips with what *tychê* meant for Polybios, again looking to narrative rather than philosophical theories. Finally I shall draw some conclusions about Polybios' historiographical project and the impact of his *Histories* on the ancient and modern reader.

The nature of *tychê* in Polybios' *Histories* has been much discussed, and before I add my contribution, a brief overview of the most important milestones in the vast literature is in order. In the late 19th century, discussions centred on the possible philosophical affiliations of Polybios, to which his use

of *tychê* was thought to be a key. Hirzel (1882) argued that *tychê* in the *Histories* is identical with the Stoic *pronoia*. Von Scala (1890) developed this theory further and suggested that *tychê* develops over the course of the *Histories* from the Peripatetic random *tychê* into a rational force closer to the Stoic *pronoia*. This theory was for a while generally followed,[2] but has since been universally rejected[3] because it depends on splitting up tightly composed passages into what is supposed to be Polybios' original text and his later additions. In modern scholarship, Eckstein ((1995) 238–71) has returned to the idea of Polybios' development, but rather than philosophical, he sees it as psychological: Polybios developed over the course of his life (and his writing) from an optimist, who believed in the power of human reasoning to change the world, into a pessimist who accepted irrationality, both in human beings and in the world, the latter represented by *tychê*. However, Eckstein's admission that Polybios' portrayal of *tychê* is not consistent and his development not linear to some extent undermines his argument. Even more recently, Brouwer (2011) has returned to the idea that Polybios was influenced by the Stoic view of *tychê* and has explained the discrepancy in his use of the term as reflecting the Stoic distinction between the Sage, who knows that *tychê* does not exist and that the world is ruled by reason, and the inferior person, who takes refuge in *tychê* in order to explain the otherwise inexplicable. It will be clear from my analysis below that I think this is far too philosophically consistent an explanation for what goes on in Polybios' text.

The prevalent modern view was first formulated very briefly by De Sanctis (1916) and developed in a bit more detail by Shorey (1921). The latter argues that the inconsistencies of Polybios' concept of fortune are 1) no more inconsistent than that of most writers or thinkers, ancient and modern, and 2) often rhetorical rather than conceptual. That is, Polybios was a rationalist in so far as he was striving to find a rational explanation for events, but he also had a deep-seated traditional morality which was partly based on a concept of the changeability of fortune; and in any case, personified expressions of *tychê* were so common in Hellenistic language usage that it would not have occurred to him to avoid them.[4]

The two greatest Polybios scholars of our time, F. W. Walbank and P. Pédech, both agree that Hellenistic rhetorical usage explains some of the occurrences of *tychê* in the *Histories*, but argue that other instances show that

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[2] For a typical example see Cuntz (1902) 43–6. Laqueur (1913) 249–60 argues for the opposite development, i.e. from rationalist to believer in capricious *tychê*.

[3] De Sanctis (1916), Shorey (1921), Roveri (1982), von Fritz (1954) 391–2, Walbank (1957) 16–26, Pédech (1984) 331–54, Ferrary (1988) 265–76.

[4] Von Fritz (1954) 388–97 also has some interesting thoughts on Polybios' use of *tychê*, some of which I shall refer to below, but does not offer an overarching theory.

tychê does exist in Polybios' narrative as a force in its own right. Walbank (1957: 16–26 and 1972: 58–65) identifies three different manifestations of *tychê* in Polybios: 1) the completely random *tychê* (which in reality sometimes simply covers events which happened unpredictably, but had perfectly human causes), which Polybios uses to explain events outside the realm of human rational causality; 2) *tychê* as a justly punishing force; and 3) *tychê* as fate or providence (i.e. the one that Hirzel and von Scala identified with the Stoic *pronoia*). Walbank argues that these are, in fact, all aspects of the same power and that Polybios himself did not distinguish between them, but that the way he used them was often dictated by his political bias: anti-Roman activities are placed in the realm of the irrational and must be caused by random *tychê* while orderly, predestining *tychê* has helped bring the Romans to their world-dominating position. In his last article on the topic, Walbank (2007) reiterates this view and adds that it was typical of the Greeks at Polybios' time. Pédech ((1964) 331–354 and (1966)), following a brief article by Fowler (1903),[5] only identifies two sides of *tychê* as an actual force in Polybios: the predetermining, teleological *tychê* and the random *tychê* used to explain the rationally inexplicable. He argues that the difference between the two aspects is really only one of degree, not quality: the random coincidence can be recognised as part of the plan of fate if only one can see the big picture. He concludes that Polybios' use of *tychê* never takes away human responsibility from his characters, but rather adds a dramatic element, representing history as 'a battle between human beings and fortune' ((1964) 354).

Taking these arguments further, Roveri (1982), in a very thorough article which discusses every single occurrence of *tychê* in the *Histories*, argues that Polybian *tychê* fills the part which was played by the gods in earlier Greek thought; i.e. that Polybios uses *tychê* to explain the inexplicable in history, which for him means anything that does not fit into his rational chains of causality. In reality, this often means that events which did happen for a rational reason, but were unforeseeable to Polybios' protagonists and to himself, are described as happening by *tychê*.[6] He argues that this use of *tychê* is necessary because of the importance Polybios places on didacticism: nothing can be allowed to happen for no reason, so, if no other reason can be found, *tychê* is introduced. As a force, it sometimes acts randomly, sometimes as a punisher because Polybios has unknowingly mixed the traditional, 'Solo-

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[5] Fowler (1903) focuses mainly on the predetermining *tychê* and argues that it is identical with the *physis* of Book 6.

[6] Ferrary (1988) 263–76 essentially agrees with this view.

nian', *tychê* with the modern, Stoic one. He also recognises that Polybios does occasionally use the concept in a purely rhetorical way.[7]

As will be seen below, I agree in part with each of the last four arguments, but I want to stress the degree to which Polybios' use of the very common word *tychê* was guided by his narrative strategies, rather than by any philosophical, political, or religious concerns.

1. The First Problem: *Tychê* as Historical Explanation?

Most scholars of Polybian *tychê* begin their studies with this passage relating to the uprising of Macedonia against Rome under Andriskos, or Pseudo–Philip, in 149–148 BC (it is too long to quote in its entirety, but this is its core argument):

> (…) ὧν μὲν νὴ Δί' ἀδύνατον ἢ δυσχερὲς τὰς αἰτίας καταλαβεῖν ἄνθρωπον ὄντα, περὶ τούτων ἴσως ἄν τις ἀπορῶν ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ποιοῖτο καὶ τὴν τύχην, οἷον ὄμβρων καὶ νιφετῶν ἐξαισίων ἐπιφορὰ συνεχής (…) διόπερ εἰκότως περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἀκολουθοῦντες ταῖς τῶν πολλῶν δόξαις διὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν, ἱκετεύοντες καὶ θύοντες ἐξιλασκόμενοι τὸ θεῖον, πέμπομεν ἐρησόμενοι τοὺς θεοὺς τί ποτ' ἂν ἢ λέγουσιν ἢ πράττουσιν ἡμῖν ἄμεινον εἴη καὶ γένοιτο παῦλα τῶν ἐνεστώτων κακῶν. ὧν δὲ δυνατόν ἐστι τὴν αἰτίαν εὑρεῖν, ἐξ ἧς καὶ δι' ἣν ἐγένετο τὸ συμβαῖνον, οὐχί μοι δοκεῖ τῶν τοιούτων δεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ θεῖον ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἀναφοράν.

> Regarding things the causes of which are, by God, impossible or extremely difficult for a human being to grasp, one might perhaps as a last resort ascribe the cause to the god and to *tychê*. I mean such things as continuous outbreaks of unusually heavy rain and snow, or, on the other hand, of droughts and frosts, and the destruction of crops as a result of this, or such as persistent outbreaks of plague, or other occurrences like these, of which it is not easy to find a cause. (…) Therefore it is reason-

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[7] More recently, Pailler (2003) has argued for a tripartite division of Polybios' *tychê* into 1) *Fortuna*, i.e. random fortune, 2) *Providentia*, i.e. predetermining fortune, and 3) *Felicitas*, i.e. a personal good fortune which attaches to some important human beings. To my knowledge, he is the only scholar to identify this last function of *tychê* in Polybios, and I have to confess that I cannot find any evidence of it in the text. More intriguing is his argument that Polybios was inspired by Aristotle's *Poetics* in his use of *tychê* and that he was representing himself as a universal historian as imitating the predestining *tychê* (based on Pol. 1.4.1 and 1.4.4). I remain unconvinced that Polybios was consciously basing his work on the *Poetics*, but will readily believe that his phraseology is an indication of the wide dissemination of Aristotelian ideas in the second century.

able in the case of such events, when we are at a loss, to follow the opinion of the majority; and supplicating and sacrificing in order to appease the divine we send to ask the gods whatever we must say or do in order to make the situation better and escape from our present evils. But regarding the things for which it is possible to find the causes—both the original and the contributory reason why the event happened—I believe that we should not attribute such things to the divine.

(Pol. 36.17.2–4)[8]

First of all it is worth highlighting that Polybios in this analytical passage, where one would expect clarity to be of paramount importance, uses ὁ θεός, τὸ θεῖον, οἱ θεοί, and ἡ τύχη completely interchangeably. This shows the degree to which the powers of the divine and *tychê* are merged in the *Histories*.[9] Secondly, and more importantly for our present purposes, we should note that this passage is generally taken at face value to mean that Polybios rejects *tychê* as a historical explanation to be used by the serious historian.[10] A discrepancy thus occurs with certain key points in the *Histories* where Polybios expresses himself as if important historical events have been orchestrated by *tychê*. One of the most famous examples is 1.4.1:[11]

τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἡμετέρας πραγματείας ἴδιον καὶ τὸ θαυμάσιον τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς καιρῶν τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὅτι, καθάπερ ἡ τύχη σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης πράγματα πρὸς ἓν ἔκλινε μέρος καὶ πάντα νεύειν ἠνάγκασε πρὸς ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν σκοπόν, οὕτως καὶ <δεῖ> διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας ὑπὸ μίαν σύνοψιν ἀγαγεῖν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι τὸν χειρισμὸν τῆς τύχης, ᾧ κέχρηται πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὅλων πραγμάτων συντέλειαν.

The special feature of my work and the amazing fact of our times is that, just as *tychê* has made almost the whole world lean towards one part and has forced everything to incline towards one and the same end, thus it is also necessary through my history to create an overview for my readers of the manipulation of affairs which *tychê* has used to accomplish the consummation of her whole plan.

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[8] All translations are my own and aim at closeness to the Greek rather than literary merit.

[9] This has also been noted by Walbank (1972) 61–2 and Pédech (1966).

[10] See e.g. Fowler (1903), von Fritz (1954), Pédech (1964) 336–7 and (1966), Walbank (1957) 17–18 and (2007).

[11] Other examples are 1.4, 15.9.3–5, and 38.18.7–9. All of these will be discussed below.

This seems clear-cut: it is *tychê* that has re-focused the world so that it now centres on Rome, and it has done this according to a conscious and preconceived plan. It seems that we need to re-examine 36.17.

The essence of the methodology argument in 36.17 is that only certain events should be attributed to *tychê* and other such superhuman powers, namely the type of climatic phenomena which we would still today explain as 'forces of nature'; everything else has a cause (αἰτία) and this cause is usually human. However, this clear-cut, rational methodology is seriously undercut by what follows. When Polybios proceeds to attribute the uprising of Macedonia under Andriskos to δαιμονοβλάβεια, divinely sent madness, it becomes clear that his elaborate discussion of the right and wrong place to use such superhuman explanations was not, after all, a programmatic statement about how the historian should go about analysing causality, but a narrative technique to make the actions of the Macedonians stand out as completely beyond the understanding of rational, thinking human beings. This is not because Polybios is incurably biased for Rome against any other state, but because he is acutely conscious of the limited choices open to weaker states facing stronger opponents. He repeatedly praises governments which face up to this and find compromises in order to maintain as much independence as possible under these difficult circumstances,[12] and he despises the Macedonians for being blinded to this reality by nationalism. As a means of showing his readers just how irrational such behaviour was, he has set up an elaborately prepared hyperbolical comparison with equally incomprehensible weather phenomena. The passage is not meant to function as a programme for his analyses of causality in the rest of the *Histories* (if it was, he would presumably have placed it much earlier in the work), but to shine a torch on Macedonian irrationality.[13]

Let us now turn to the question of the instances where Polybios does use *tychê* to explain historical causality. A much discussed passage is 1.4.1, which has been quoted above. This forms part of the preface to the *Histories*, and in this passage Polybios apparently attributes to the workings of *tychê* the *symplokê*, the bringing together of world events to form an organic whole brought about by the conquering of the known world by Rome. The same thought is expressed shortly afterwards in 1.4.4–5. Even if we disregard the

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[12] See Eckstein (1995) ch. 7.

[13] Von Fritz (1954) 392–3 argues that there is no logical contradiction because the *results* of human wisdom or folly must be ascribed to human wisdom or folly, whereas the wisdom or folly itself can be said to come from a superhuman cause. This is impeccable logic, but surely Polybios was able to think of some reasons the Macedonians might have had to rise up against Rome. Attributing their decision to *daimonoblabeia* and comparing it with climatic phenomena is hyperbolical rhetoric.

categorical rejection of *tychê* as a historical explanation found in 36.17, another problem with these two passages remains: they contradict a number of statements in the *Histories* to the effect that Rome did *not* acquire her empire by *tychê*, but by her own will and skill. The most famous of these passages is 1.63.9:

ἐξ ὧν δῆλον τὸ προτεθὲν ἡμῖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, ὡς οὐ τύχῃ ῾Ρωμαῖοι, καθάπερ ἔνιοι δοκοῦσι τῶν ῾Ελλήνων, οὐδ' αὐτομάτως, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν εἰκότως, ἐν τοιούτοις καὶ τηλικούτοις πράγμασιν ἐνασκήσαντες, οὐ μόνον ἐπεβάλοντο τῇ τῶν ὅλων ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ δυναστείᾳ τολμηρῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ καθίκοντο τῆς προθέσεως.

From these facts it is clear what I stated at the beginning, namely that it was not because of *tychê*, as some of the Greeks think, nor by chance, but altogether reasonably that the Romans, having trained in such great enterprises, not only boldly devoted themselves to world-dominion, but also succeeded in their plan.

Several similar passages can be found in the first six books of the *Histories* (Pol. 1.1.5, 1.3.10, 6.2.3). The combined message of these statements is clear: the Romans wanted their empire and they worked hard for it; it was not handed to them by *tychê*.

This discrepancy has occasioned much scholarly discussion.[14] The most convincing explanations, to my mind, have been provided by Shorey (1921) and Roveri (1982). They both argue that 1.4, which names *tychê* as the power behind the *symplokê*, is distinguished by being part of the preface of the *Histories* and is as such an extremely rhetorical passage designed to catch the reader's interest. Its use of *tychê* is not meant to be taken literally, but only to fire the reader's curiosity, much like a storyteller would introduce an important turning point in a tale by the phrase '—but fate had not decreed that…' without necessarily subscribing to a religious belief in fate.[15] Even though neither Shorey nor Roveri goes quite that far, this solution in fact hints at a dichotomy between two different narratorial registers in the *Histories:* the *rhetorical storyteller* mode on the one hand and the *rationalist historian* mode on the other. I would argue that this theory adequately describes the situation in the rest of the *Histories*. Throughout the work, a number of analytical and polemical passages are explicit about attributing events to human causes

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[14] For various explanations see Walbank (1957) 21–5 and (1972) 67–8, Pédech (1964) 331–54, Roveri (1982), Ferrary (1988) 265–76, who, however, all agree in rejecting the older theory of a development in Polybios' thought.

[15] *Contra* Walbank (1957) 25–6 and Pédech (1964) 331–54.

rather than to fortune, side by side with a few highly rhetorical passages which refer to *tychê* as a predestining force which influences history.

Let us look at some examples: 10.2.5–7 and 2.38.4–9 are two analytical, polemical passages where Polybios projects an image of himself as a rational intellectual above the foolishness of the uneducated. 10.2.5–7 argues that Scipio Africanus the Elder was not 'favoured by *tychê*' (εὐτυχής) and did not achieve his victories 'contrary to rational expectation and by chance' (παραλόγως καὶ ταὐτομάτῳ). Polybios goes on to say that, on the contrary, Scipio did everything 'rationally' (κατὰ λόγον), he was 'extremely rational' (εὐλόγιστος) and 'intelligent' (φρένας ἔχων)—all expressions designed to rule out any supernatural causes behind Scipio's successes. The claim in the same passage that such men are 'most divine' (θειοτάτους) and 'most beloved by the gods' (προσφιλεστάτους τοῖς θεοῖς) is a provocative paradox constructed to catch the reader's attention and make him reconsider his ideas of the divine and divine favour. It is not, however, a denial of the existence of a divine power. It redefines both the unfathomable divine and the capricious *tychê* (incorporated in εὐτυχής) and turns them into one force, which imbues certain human beings with intelligence and rational thought, talents which it is then up to them to put to good use.[16] 2.38.4–9 discusses the reasons for the success of the Achaean League. Here, the narrator states that it would be simple-minded (φαῦλον) to say that the League owes its success to *tychê*. Rather, it is due to the freedom of speech and principles of democracy practiced by the League, principles which gradually win over everyone, even those incorporated against their will.

In both of these passages, then, the Polybian narrator ascribes historical events or developments not to *tychê* or other superhuman forces, but to human factors such as intelligence, planning, and political institutions. It is no coincidence that both passages are analytical and polemical. Other analytical and polemical passages which argue for rational historical explanations over superhuman ones are 3.47.8, which argues that Hannibal managed to cross the Alps because of his own careful planning, not by means of divine assistance, and 10.9.2–3, which argues that Scipio the Elder's success at New Carthage was due to his own careful calculations rather than to assistance from either the divine or *tychê*. Equivalent, but inverted, are 1.37.4, 2.7.1–3 and 15.21, all of which attribute the misfortunes of a people not to fortune— implying that this is a common misconception—but to their own stupidity or lack of ability to learn from the mistakes of others.

Now compare 15.9.3–5 (the build-up to the Battle of Zama) and 38.18.7– 9 (the folly of the Achaean leaders on the eve of the Achaean War). Both

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[16] Pédech (1966) 65–66 reaches a similar conclusion about this passage, but only speaks of the divine, not *tychê*.

passages refer to *tychê* as a force which directs historical events, but both are also highly rhetorical and dramatic. 15.9.3–5 opens with a rhetorical question introduced by 'Who would not…' (τίς οὐκ ἄν), one of Polybios' favourite rhetorical tools. It continues with a dramatic listing of everything that marked out the Battle of Zama as momentous, introducing every entry on the list by an anaphoric negation (οὔτε, οὔθ', οὐδέ, οὐ γάρ). The role of *tychê* is that of a producer of metaphorical games offering as the prize of combat the hegemony over the entire known world (οὐδὲ μὴν ἆθλα μείζω τὴν τύχην ἐκτεθεικυῖαν τοῖς ἀγωνιζομένοις τῶν τότε προκειμένων). 38.18.7–9 is a rhetorical blame passage which pours scorn on the Achaean leaders at the outbreak of the Achaean War. Here, we see the rhetoric in the hendiadys of 'stupidity and lack of judgment' (τῆς ἀνοίας καὶ τῆς ἀκρισίας), the hyperbolical comparison of the leaders' folly with that of barbarians, and the provocative claim that they were saved from self-destruction only by their defeat by Rome. The role of *tychê* here and the metaphors employed to express it are more elaborate than in 15.9.3–5: she is personified and said to be 'resourceful and clever' (πανοῦργος καὶ τεχνική), she 'sets herself firmly' against the folly of the Achaean leaders, and when she lets Greece be defeated, she is acting like a 'good wrestler' who is forced to resort to desperate measures in order to avert defeat.[17]

Surely the presence of these metaphors—*tychê* as games producer, *tychê* as wrestler—is important, as is the qualifying 'as if' (καθαπερανεί) in 38.18.7–9. Polybios is not here propounding a belief in *tychê* as a predestining power which directs the affairs of human beings. Rather, he is using all the rhetorical tools in his box in order to compose an exciting and affecting narrative in 15.9.3–5 and an indignant invective in 38.18.7–9. It would be wrong to hold up the picture of *tychê* produced by these passages alongside the one produced by his analytical, polemical passages and call this a logical discrepancy.

This solution begs the question whether Polybios intended his readers to regard this *tychê*, which directs human affairs like an umpire or a theatre producer, as purely a rhetorical metaphor or as an actual existing superhuman power.[18] Shorey and Roveri come close to arguing for a rhetorical use disconnected from all belief. However, a passage in Book 8 on the value of universal history as opposed to monographs points to a different interpretation (8.2.3–4):

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[17] This parallels the Macedonian case in 36.17 and again serves to emphasise the self-destructive insanity of ignoring the limited possibilities for states with limited power.

[18] The theatrical metaphor is used by Pailler (2003) as a point of departure for some interesting thoughts on the possible connection between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Polybios.

πῶς γὰρ ἐνδέχεται ψιλῶς αὐτὰς καθ' αὑτὰς ἀναγνόντα τὰς Σικελικὰς ἢ τὰς
Ἰβηρικὰς πράξεις, γνῶναι καὶ μαθεῖν ἢ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν γεγονότων ἢ τὸ
συνέχον, τίνι τρόπῳ καὶ τίνι γένει πολιτείας τὸ παραδοξότατον καθ' ἡμᾶς
ἔργον ἡ τύχη συνετέλεσεν, τοῦτο δ' ἔστι τὸ πάντα τὰ γνωριζόμενα μέρη τῆς
οἰκουμένης ὑπὸ μίαν ἀρχὴν καὶ δυναστείαν ἀγαγεῖν, ὃ πρότερον οὐχ
εὑρίσκεται γεγονός.

For how is it possible, simply by reading about Sicilian or Iberian affairs
by themselves, to get to know and to learn either the size of the events or
their extent, in what way and by what kind of constitution *tychê* accom-
plished the improbable event of our time—I mean bringing the entire
known world under one rule and dominion, which is not found to have
happened before?

Although this is a polemical passage, its argument is about the relative merit
of different types of historiography, not about historical causation; Polybios
therefore uses *tychê* as a historical agent in the same rhetorical way as in
those two other prefatorial passages, in order to give weight and importance
to his overall theme and thus convince his readers that such a theme can
only be dealt with by universal history. Echoing 1.1.5 and 6.2.3, Polybios de-
fines the purpose of his work as answering the question 'in what way and by
which constitution' (τίνι τρόπῳ καὶ τίνι γένει πολιτείας) Rome has become
the dominating power of the world. However, in contrast with the similar
passages, the subject of the sentence is not Rome itself, but *tychê*. If *tychê* can
act through Rome's constitution, this is a case of double determination in
the tradition of Homeric epic, Athenian tragedy and, indeed, earlier histori-
ography:

just as Herodotos composed a narrative in which Kroisos was at the same
time destined to suffer and brought about his own suffering,[19] Polybios has
created a narrative in which Rome acquires world dominion at the same

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[19] Kroisos' downfall is predestined by the fact that he is the fifth descendant of Gyges,
and as such must be punished for his ancestor's crime (1.90–1), but Herodotos also states
that Kroisos was punished by a *nemesis* from the gods because he believed himself to be
the happiest man in the world (1.34.1). A similar double determination can probably be
seen at work in the fate of each of the Persian kings as well as that of Polykrates. See par-
ticularly Harrison (2000) *passim*, but also Gould (1989) 63–85, Lateiner (1989) 196–205,
and Fornara (1990). *Contra*, e.g., Shimron (1989). The parallel between Polybian and
Herodotean combined human and superhuman causation is also noted by Green (1990)
273, who, however, argues that Polybios only endorses the superhuman aspect in order to
relieve the Greeks of the responsibility for having been defeated by Rome. This is refuted
by Pol. 38.1–3.

time because *tychê* wills it so and because Rome herself wants it and works towards it.[20] In Herodotos it is becoming increasingly respectable to accept this as the historian's irrational religious belief,[21] and so we should in Polybios also. We may find it hard to accept that an 'enlightened' Hellenistic intellectual like Polybios should hold such 'archaic' beliefs, but perhaps that just shows that they were not so archaic after all.[22] At any rate, Polybios' willingness openly to express such a view shows that he did not expect his readers to sneer at it.

To summarise: Polybios' attitude to *tychê* is different when he is analysing and arguing polemically about historical causality and when he is striving for rhetorical or emotional effect. We can call these two different attitudes different narratorial registers or modes: *the systematic, scientific historian,* who in analytical and frequently polemical passages deliberately minimises the influence of superhuman powers, including *tychê,* in order to maximise human skill, will, and rational planning; and the *rhetorician and storyteller,* who uses *tychê* freely, often as a predestining force directly involved in human affairs, in order to arouse emotion, lend importance to his theme, and keep his audience engaged. This, I would argue, solves the first problem, the discrepancy between Polybios' explicit statements in certain passages that *tychê* should not be used as a historical explanation and his use of it as exactly that in other passages.

Polybios' ability and readiness to switch between narrative strategies does not, however, preclude a belief in *tychê* as an existing force; in fact, some passages such as 8.2.3–4 make it almost certain that he held such a belief. I shall return to this issue below while trying to solve the second problem: the apparently different meanings of the word *tychê* in the *Histories*.

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[20] Von Fritz (1954) 393 reaches a similar conclusion, but does not call it double determination and distinguishes between the Roman constitution, virtues, training, and efforts, which were the Romans' own achievements, and the fact that the Romans acquired a superiority in these areas, which was due to *tychê*. I think this solution is too modern in its logic; Polybios would not have distinguished so rigidly.

[21] This has been especially convincingly argued by Fornara (1999) and Harrison (2000).

[22] As has been noted by Walbank (1972) 59: 'if one compares the religious attitudes of Polybios with those of Herodotos, one finds the same incoherence and inconsistency in both. This perhaps suggests that the incoherence is characteristic of popular Greek religious thought in general, and not merely an aspect of its collapse in the Hellenistic age.' Cf. Parker (1996) 280: 'One may wonder, indeed, whether the problem is not when classical religion gives way to Hellenistic but whether it does: whether, that is, the convention of dividing histories of Greek religion into two chronological sections rather than three or four or ten has any substantive justification.'

2. The Second Problem: the Nature of *Tychê* in the *Histories*

In the *Histories*, *tychê* is sometimes simply the natural word to use for 'good/bad circumstance'; at other times Polybios uses it periphrastically instead of an expression with τυγχάνω. Most often, however, it seems to be some kind of superhuman force at work in the world and influencing history. It has long been common to say that this force is at some places in the work a predestining 'fate' as we have seen above, at others a just avenger, and in yet other passages random 'fortune'. As a sub-class of this last category it occasionally seems to mean merely 'luck' or 'coincidence' considered from the subjective point of view of a focaliser of a passage without implying any superhuman involvement.[23] The four functions—fate, just avenger, random fortune, chance—are logically mutually exclusive: how can *tychê* at the same time be inconsistent and just? How can it be simultaneously random and predestining? And how does subjective luck fit into any of these categories? Again, theories of a development in Polybios' thought are unconvincing because several functions can be at play within the same passage.[24]

I have been working on solving this puzzle for a while, and my first instinct was to try to establish an overview of when *tychê* means what in the text. Table 1 offers my first interpretation (to be modified drastically below) of each instance of *tychê* in the *Histories* according to its motive as predestining, random, or just. A few remarks about the table are in order: for the sake of clarity every reference was entered only once although the exact sense of *tychê* in some of them could be interpreted in more than one way. In 1.59.4, for example, the storms which have forced the Romans to yield the sea to the Carthaginians are called 'blows of *tychê*' (τοῖς ἐκ τῆς τύχης συμπτώμασιν) with no indication of whether this *tychê* is random or predestining. I chose to interpret it as random *tychê* and placed the reference in that category. Conversely, 1.63.9, which states that the Romans did not acquire their empire by means of *tychê* and has been quoted above, was placed in the predestining category according to the conventional reading of that passage although *tychê* here might as well mean 'random fortune'. References to a *tychê* that can be understood as either predestining or random are marked **in bold;** references to a *tychê* that might be either random or justly avenging are marked in *italics*. The reason why only five passages appear in the 'just aven-

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[23] These categories have been established by Walbank (1957) 16–26, (1972), and (2007) and are followed by the majority of scholars. For a slightly different definition of the different meanings of *tychê* see Pédech (1964) 331–54; for a very different definition see Pailler (2003).

[24] See e.g. 15.20.4–6. Here, the force behind the just punishment is explicitly named *tychê*, but at the same time Polybios expects the reader to have blamed *tychê* at one time or another for its inconsistency.

ger' category is that all passages where the justice of *tychê* is qualified by expressions such as 'just as if' (ὥσπερ ἐπίτηδες or καθάπερ(ανει)) or expressed purely through a metaphor have been left out. This decision was made on the reasoning that 'just as if' qualifications make an expression counterfactual and thereby (as von Fritz (1954) 395–6 observed long ago) actually preclude any real avenging motive on the part of *tychê*. ('He gave her a ring just as if he was serious about their relationship' is counterfactual in that it throws up the possibility that the protagonist might have been serious about said relationship, but at the same time clearly shows that he is not.) The metaphorical passages, which mostly represent *tychê* as an umpire who hands victory to the most deserving combatant (1.58.1, 3.118.1, 29.27.12), seemed to me to be just one step removed from the 'just as if' statements, the link being provided by 1.58.1, which is a simile rather than a metaphor and says that *tychê* acted 'just like a good umpire (ὥσπερ ἀγαθὸς βραβευτής)', thus alerting the reader to a figure of speech that should not be taken literally. 'Just as if' passages and metaphorical expressions have therefore been placed in the 'random' category.

Table 1

Periphrastically for τυγχά-νω	1.7.4, 1.47.7, 5.76.3, 11.4.4, 11.4.7, 15.28.5, 31.26.7, 38.12.2, fr. 54 line 14
Good fortune / misfortune / circumstances	4.54.4, 15.32.1, 21.38.2, 29.4.10, 31.26.3, 38.2.4
Predestining 'fate'	1.4.1, 1.4.5, **1.63.9**, **3.20.4**, 4.2.4, **8.2.3–4**, **21.16.8**
Random 'fortune'	1.1.2, 1.35.2, 1.37.4, **1.58.1**, **1.59.4**, 1.86.7, **2.2.10**, **2.4.3**, 2.7.2, 2.7.3, **2.20.7**, 2.32.5, **2.35.5**, **2.37.6**, **2.38.5**, 2.49.7 (twice), 2.50.12, **2.66.4**, 2.70.2, **3.5.7**, **3.63.3**, **3.118.6**, **4.81.12**, **5.34.2**, **5.42.8**, 6.2.6, 6.43.3, **6.43.5**, **7.8.2**, 8.20.10, **9.8.13**, 9.21.1, 9.29.11, 10.3.7, 10.7.4, **10.9.2**, 10.33.4 (twice), 10.37.4, **10.40.6**, 10.40.9, **11.2.10**, **11.5.8**, 11.19.6, ***11.24a.3***, 15.1.8, *15.6.6*, 15.6.8, 15.8.3, **15.9.4**, **15.10.5**, 15.15.5, 15.17.4, **15.19.5**, *15.20.5*, 15.21.3, **15.23.1**, 15.34.2, 15.35.7, **16.28.2**, 16.29.8, 16.32.5, **18.28.5**, 18.33.7, **18.46.15**, 20.7.2, 21.14.4, 23.10.2, 23.10.12, 23.10.16, 23.12.3, 23.12.6, **25.3.9**, *27.16.4*, 28.9.7, 29.19.2, 29.20.2, 29.21.2, 29.21.5, 29.22.2, *29.27.12*, **30.6.7**, 30.10.1, **31.29.3**, **31.30.3 (twice)**, 32.4.3, **32.8.4**, 35.2.14, **36.17.1–2 (twice)**, **38.2.1**, 38.2.7, 38.3.2, 38.7.11, 38.8.8, **38.18.8**, *38.20.1*, 38.21.3, 39.8.2, **fr. 47 line 2**, fr. 83.1, **fr. 212.1**
Just avenger	4.81.5, 15.17.6, *15.20.4*, *15.20.8*, *36.13.2*
Subjective 'luck'	3.99.9

The difficulties in distinguishing between what we would consider mutually exclusive meanings or forces of *tychê* (marked by bold and italics in the table) provide a first indication that something is wrong with the categorisation. I initially assumed that the key to solving the problem lay in the uneven distribution of passages, and I began re-reading all the passages where *tychê* appears to be either justly avenging or predestining—the smaller categories in the table—in order to figure out how they could be re-interpreted into demonstrating random *tychê,* the largest category. The more I pondered the motives of Polybian *tychê*, however, the more it became clear that I was asking the wrong question. What seems to be uppermost in the mind of the narrator of the *Histories* whenever he employs the word *tychê* is, in fact, not its motive—although that is occasionally expressed by means of metaphors or 'just as if's, making it clear that the reader should not take the statement at face value (see above)—but its results, or rather the perception of these results by the human actors in the narrative. More specifically, *tychê* is used to mark out events which happen outside of human control (or at least the control of the focaliser of a given passage) and are unexpected, strikingly coincidental, or momentous.

To provide some examples, let us look first at the passages usually thought to show predestining *tychê* discussed above: in both 1.4.1, which has Roman dominion brought about by *tychê*, and in 1.63.9, which argues that Roman dominion did not come about by *tychê*, the main point seems to be not whether *tychê* is a predestining or random power, but that it is *outside of human control.* In 1.63.9 it seems to be shorthand for 'divine favour, destiny, luck, and other forces outside of human control' and is kept deliberately vague because it is used to roll the various arguments of many different groups of 'Greeks' into one in order to facilitate the counter-argument. This umbrella-function is, indeed, the true function of most of the passages in the *Histories* which set up a contrast between *tychê* and human will and skill (see above p. 190).[25] In these passages the narrator uses *tychê* not to say anything about the predestining, just, or random nature of superhuman powers, but as a cover-all for everything outside human control, which can then be contrasted with human ability and rationality. *Tykhe* can be used for this exactly because it is such a nebulous term. In 1.4.1 it lends rhetorical grandeur to the passage by showing an almost gods-eye view of historical events leaning in towards a central point. Nothing is said about its nature or motives; it is used to mark out the event as momentous.

Similarly, in 8.2.3–4, where *tychê* works together with the Roman constitution to bring about world domination in an instance of double determina-

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[25] Pol. 6.43.3, 6.43.5, 7.8.1, 9.8.13, 10.3.7, 10.7.4, 10.9.2, 15.21.3, 16.28.2, 18.28.5, 18.46.15, 23.12.3, 23.12.6 (twice), 29.22.2, 31.30.3 (twice), 32.8.4, 36.17.1, 36.17.2, 38.18.8.

tion (see above p. 192), the narratorial emphasis is not on the possible motivation of *tychê*, but on the momentousness of the outcome of events. Momentousness is certainly the issue behind the use of *tychê* in passages such as 9.1.4, where *tychê* is said to have laid out Africa and Europe as prizes for the contestants in the Battle of Zama, and 38.2.1, where *tychê* is said to have brought about Xerxes' invasion of Greece. In the case of 8.2.3–4 there is perhaps, in addition, a feeling of unexpectedness. Such a combination of unexpectedness and momentousness seems to be the focus of passages such as 2.37.6, which states that no 'unforeseen event of *tychê* (παράλογον τῆς τύχης)' has occurred in Asia and Egypt in Polybios' time. A combination of momentousness and striking coincidence seems to underlie Polybios' use of *tychê* in passages such as 4.2.4, where *tychê* is said to have 'renewed the entire known world (τὴν τύχην ὡσανεὶ κεκαινοποηκέναι πάντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην)' because the leaders of Macedonia, Egypt, and the Seleucid Kingdom have all died around the same time.

The same is true when we turn to examine passages that were in Table 1 ascribed to random *tychê*. A good example is this ranting lecture on when people are and are not to blame for their own misfortunes (2.7.2–3):

> τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀνθρώπους ὄντας παραλόγως περιπεσεῖν τινι τῶν δεινῶν οὐ τῶν παθόντων, τῆς τύχης δὲ καὶ τῶν πραξάντων ἐστὶν ἔγκλημα, τὸ δ' ἀκρίτως καὶ προφανῶς περιβαλεῖν αὐτοὺς ταῖς μεγίσταις συμφοραῖς ὁμολογούμενόν ἐστι τῶν πασχόντων ἁμάρτημα. διὸ καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἐκ τύχης πταίουσιν ἔλεος ἕπεται μετὰ συγγνώμης κἀπικουρία, τοῖς δὲ διὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀβουλίαν ὄνειδος κἀπιτίμησις συνεξακολουθεῖ παρὰ τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσιν.

> To suffer some disaster unexpectedly is, in as much as we are human beings, not the fault of the sufferers, but of *tychê* and those who have done it to them, but to throw oneself thoughtlessly and with open eyes into the greatest misfortunes is decidedly the fault of the sufferers themselves. For that reason pity is accorded to those who come into trouble because of *tychê*, along with forgiveness and assistance, while those who do so because of their own foolishness receive blame and criticism from right-thinking men.

Here *tychê* is said to be to blame for misfortunes which strike people unexpectedly, but the focus of the passage is not really on the nature of *tychê*, but on the contrast between sufferings that are the victims' own fault and those brought upon them from outside. For these latter sufferings, the one to blame is '*tychê* and those who have done it to them', i.e. some sufferings are brought on a person by other people, some by events outside of human con-

trol. This expression clearly shows that *tychê* is, once again, being used as an umbrella-term to cover everything outside of human control.

A more specialised use of *tychê* can be seen in passages where the focus is on the unexpectedness of the events and, often, on a striking coincidence of some kind. One example is a passage that is often adduced to show *tychê* in the guise of just avenger (4.81.5):

> τοὺς μὲν οὖν ἐφόρους δειπνοῦντας καταλαβὼν πάντας αὐτοῦ κατέσφαξε, τῆς τύχης τὴν ἁρμόζουσαν αὐτοῖς ἐπιθείσης δίκην. καὶ γὰρ ὑφ' οὖ καὶ ὑπὲρ οὖ ταῦτ' ἔπαθον, δικαίως αὐτοὺς ἄν τις φήσειε πεπονθέναι.

> And so catching the ephors while they were eating dinner he slaughtered them all there, *tychê* inflicting on them a fitting punishment. For considering the man by whose hands and for whose sake they suffered this, one could say that they had suffered justly.

The narrator says that *tychê* struck corrupt Spartan ephors with 'deserved punishment' (ἁρμόζουσαν δίκην) without implying that a conscious plan of justice lay behind this. In fact, as the preceding narrative details the motives and plan of the assassin, the main point of the use of *tychê* in the narrative of the murder does not seem to be that the death of the ephors was brought about by a supernatural power with its own motivation, but rather that it happened *unexpectedly* and *by a striking coincidence happened to be deserved.*

Another example is 15.23.1 where the narrator has just been describing how much the Rhodians hate Philip V (15.23.1–4):

> καὶ γὰρ ἡ τύχη πρός γε τοῦτο τὸ μέρος αὐτῷ συνήργησε προφανῶς. ὅτε γὰρ ὁ πρεσβευτὴς ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ τὸν ἀπολογισμὸν ἐποιεῖτο πρὸς τοὺς Ῥοδίους, ἐμφανίζων τὴν τοῦ Φιλίππου μεγαλοψυχίαν, καὶ διότι τρόπον τινὰ κρατῶν ἤδη τῆς πόλεως δίδωσι τῷ δήμῳ τὴν χάριν ταύτην, ποιεῖ δὲ τοῦτο βουλόμενος ἐλέγξαι μὲν τὰς τῶν ἀντιπραττόντων αὐτῷ διαβολάς, φανερὰν δὲ τῇ πόλει καταστῆσαι τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν. καὶ παρῆν τις ἐκ κατάπλου πρὸς τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἀναγγέλλων τὸν ἐξανδραποδισμὸν τῶν Κιανῶν καὶ τὴν ὠμότητα τοῦ Φιλίππου τὴν ἐν τούτοις γεγενημένην, ὥστε τοὺς Ῥοδίους, ἔτι μεταξὺ τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ τὰ προειρημένα λέγοντος, ἐπεὶ προελθὼν ὁ πρύτανις διεσάφει τὰ προσηγγελμένα, μὴ δύνασθαι πιστεῦσαι διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἀθεσίας.

> *Tyche* clearly contributed to this matter [i.e. the Rhodians' hatred] for him [i.e. Philip]. For when the ambassador was delivering his speech to the Rhodians, in which he emphasised the great generosity of Philip and

said that he, who was already in a manner of speaking master of their city, was granting this favour to the people, and that he was doing this because he wanted to prove wrong the slander of his enemies and to show his nature quite clearly to the city—at that very moment a man came into the prytaneion, straight from having landed by ship, and announced the enslavement of the people of Kios and the cruelty shown to them by Philip, with the result that the Rhodians, when the prytanis came forward and revealed the news while the ambassador was still in the middle of his speech, could not believe it, so great was the extent of the treachery.

The narrator's reason for stating that *tychê* has furthered the hatred of the Rhodians against Philip seems not to be a belief that this happened because of the intervention of a superhuman power, but rather the fact of the *striking coincidence* that an eyewitness who could testify to Philip's cruelty towards defeated cities should show up just as Philip's ambassador was extolling his mildness.[26] The coincidence seems to fulfill a higher sense of justice in that it shows Philip's lies for what they are, and such coincidences which in an unforeseen and unpredictable way bring about justice are very often ascribed to *tychê* by the Polybian narrator (e.g. 36.13.1–2). In every case, however, the sense of coincidence seems to be stronger than the sense of justice, and *tychê* is used also when the coincidence brings about not justice, but a pretext for action long desired (29.19.2), disaster (3.118.6, 23.10.16), symmetry (16.29.8), or simply change (4.2.4). It is likely that some of these instances, such as 8.2.3–4 above, show double determination—*tychê* working through or in conjunction with human agents—rather than a purely rhetorical use of the word, but even so, the narrator never specifies the motivation of *tychê*, except metaphorically (see above pp. 194–5).

Table 2 shows a tentative distribution of passages according to the internally perceived result of *tychê*:

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[26] Cf. Walbank (1967) *ad loc.*

Table 2

(Includes all instances of *tychê* where it does not mean good fortune/misfortune
or is used periphrastically for τυγχάνω.)

o.o. = indirect discourse; o.r. = direct speech

Passage	Perception of the event which warrants the use *tychê*							
	1. Outside of human control (or the control of the focaliser)	2. Risky (fortunes of war)	3. Unexpected	4. Momentous	5. Striking coincidence (of timing, justice, or fittingness)			
					5a. Sudden change from height of good fortune to depth of misfortune or vice versa	5b. Turning a situation on its head	5c. Strikes the overconfident	5d. Some other type of striking coincidence
1.1.2	X				X			
1.4.1 *bis*			X	X				
1.4.5			X	X				
1.35.2		X						
1.37.4	X							
1.58.1				X				
1.59.4 (o.o.)	X							
1.63.9	X							
1.86.7		X			X			
2.2.10 (o.o.)	X							
2.4.3			X		X	X		X
2.7.2–3 *bis*	X		X					
2.20.7								X
2.32.5		X						
2.35.5			X	X	X			
2.37.6				X				
2.38.5	X							
2.49.7 *bis* (o.o.)	X	X						
2.50.12 (o.o.)	X							
2.66.4				X				X
2.70.2			X					
3.5.7	X							
3.20.4 (*ironic*)	X			X				
3.63.3 (o.o.)	X	X						
3.99.9	X		X					
3.118.6	X		X	X				X
4.2.4	X			X				X
4.81.5			X					X
4.81.12	X							

5.34.2 (o.o.)	X							X
5.42.8 (o.o.)	X			X				
6.2.6			X		X			
6.43.3	X							
6.43.5	X		X	X	X			
7.8.1	X							
8.2.3–4			X	X				
8.20.10	X		X					
9.8.13	X	X						
9.29.11 (o.r.)	X							
10.3.7	X							
10.7.4	X							
10.9.2	X							
10.33.4	X	X						
10.37.4	X	X						
10.40.6	X	X						
10.40.9	X							
11.5.8 (o.r.)	X		X					
11.2.10	X	X			X			
11.5.8 (o.r.)	X		X					
11.19.5–6	X	X						
11.24a.3	X	X			X	X		
15.1.8	X	X						
15.6.6 (o.r.)	X	X						
15.8.3 (o.o.)	X	X						
15.9.4		X		X				
15.10.5 (o.r.)	X	X		X				
15.15.4–5	X	X						
15.17.4 (o.o.)		X			X		X	
15.17.6 (o.o.)		X			X		X	
15.19.5 (o.o.)	X	X	X					
15.20.4–5	X		X		X		X	
15.20.8	X		X	X	X		X	
15.21.3	X				X			
15.23.1	X		X					X
15.34.2	X		X					
15.35.7	X							X
16.28.2	X				X			
16.29.8	X							X
16.32.5	X	X	X					
18.28.5	X	X						
18.33.7				X				
18.46.15	X	X						
20.7.2				X				
21.14.4 (o.o.)	X	X			X			
21.16.8 (o.o.)		X		X				
23.10.2					X		X	X
23.10.12					X		X	X
23.10.16					X		X	X
23.12.3	X	X			X			
23.12.6	X							

25.3.9	X	X			X			
29.19.2								X
29.21.2	N/A: this gives the title of the work Περὶ τύχης by Demetrios of Phaleron.							
29.21.5	X		X		X			X
29.22.2	X		X		X			
29.27.12			X	X	X			
30.6.7	X	X						
31.29.3	X							
31.30.3	X							
32.4.3	X				X			
32.8.4	X							
35.2.14	X	X			X			
36.13.2			X		X	X		X
36.17.1–2 twice	X							
38.2.1				X				
38.2.7	X							
38.3.2	X				X			
38.7.11 (o.o.)	X						X	
38.8.8	X							
38.18.8	X		X		X	X		
38.20.1 (o.r.)							X	X
38.21.3	X	X			X			
39.8.2					X			
Fr. 47	X							
Fr. 83.1	Impossible to say							
Fr. 212	Impossible to say							

Category 1 is the largest category in the table; it encompasses instances of *tychê* where the narrator's main reason for using the expression seems to be to stress that what happened was outside of human control or at least outside of the control of his focaliser(s). In many instances a tick/cross in this category is supplemented by a tick/cross in one or more other categories for the same passage because, as in the passages discussed above, the point made is often a combination of lack of human control and unexpectedness, momentousness, or striking coincidence, which are in the table as categories 3, 4, and 5 respectively. Categories 5a–5d are sub-categories of category 5, the striking coincidence: it seems always to be the idea of something striking happening unexpected that seems to be at the top of the narrator's mind, regardless of whether it is striking because of a dramatic change in someone's fortunes, because of a complete reversal of a situation, or because of some kind of poetic justice.

　　Let us turn now to category 2, which is a type of passage so far kept out of the discussion. This category contains passages where it is the high risk involved in taking part in an event (typically a war or battle) that warrants the use of *tychê* to describe it, and it is found especially in a certain type of

tychê passage which is common in Polybios. These passages are concerned with the human tendency to become overconfident and forget about the uncertainty of life, the part of life outside of one's own control, the part represented by *tychê*. Common expressions are 'to try *tychê*' (τῆς τύχης πειρᾶν, e.g. 2.32.5) in the sense of risking battle or war and 'to trust in *tychê*' (τῇ τύχῃ (δια)πίστειν, e.g. 1.35.2, 15.15.4), in the sense of foolishly expecting good (military) fortune to last. The *tychê* of these passages is always regarded by the narrator, and often by the characters, as fickle, sometimes as random, and occasionally as deliberately spiteful or vengeful. However, I would argue that the focus of the passages is only secondarily on the nature or motivation of *tychê* and primarily on the behaviour of the human characters of the *Histories*.

An example is the famous passage where Scipio the Younger and Polybios, as a character in his own work, together watch Carthage burn. Here Scipio expresses fears that the same fate may one day overtake Rome, and Polybios the narrator comments (38.21.2–3):

> ταύτης δὲ δύναμιν πραγματικωτέραν καὶ νουνεχεστέραν οὐ ῥᾴδιον εἰπεῖν· τὸ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς μεγίστοις κατορθώμασι καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἐχθρῶν συμφοραῖς ἔννοιαν λαμβάνειν τῶν οἰκείων πραγμάτων καὶ τῆς ἐναντίας περιστάσεως καὶ καθόλου πρόχειρον ἔχειν ἐν ταῖς ἐπιτυχίαις τὴν τῆς τύχης ἐπισφάλειαν ἀνδρός ἐστι μεγάλου καὶ τελείου καὶ συλλήβδην ἀξίου μνήμης.

> It is difficult to mention a more statesmanlike and perceptive ability than this: in the moment of greatest victory and of catastrophe for the enemy to have thought for one's own fate and the opposite situation and, to put it briefly, to keep in mind in success the instability of *tychê*—that characterises a great man and one worthy of remembrance.

Tykhe is here used to express the idea of the uncertainty of human life, the mindfulness of which should make people stay humble even in their greatest success. She is said to be unstable by nature, or to encompass instability within her (τὴν τῆς τύχης ἐπισφάλειαν), but no speculation is offered about her motivation, and the focus is firmly on human behaviour in the face of such perceived instability.

And this, I think, is the key to solving the puzzle of *tychê* in Polybios. When we ask whether *tychê* to Polybios' mind was random, justly avenging, or predestining, we are asking the wrong question. What is important in all 129 instances of *tychê* in the *Histories* is, in fact, not its motive or nature (although that is very occasionally speculated about) and not even its results, but the perception of these results by the human actors in the narrative. These re-

sults are outside of human—or the focaliser's—control, they show up human life as unstable and unpredictable, they are unexpected, and very often striking in some way. Sometimes they happen to bring about an unforeseen turn of events pleasing to a human sense of justice, at other times world events seem to have been directed towards the same end over such an extended period of time that they seem to have been guided by a predestining 'fate', but these are not necessary corollaries. If quizzed about his thoughts on the motives of this superhuman power, Polybios might well have replied that they are unfathomable for mere mortals. And this, like his belief in double determination, brings him in line with traditional Greek religious thought, as represented by Herodotos.[27]

3. Conclusion

What can we conclude from all of this? We began with a discussion of Polybios' use of *tychê* as an explanation for historical events. It was shown that he employs (at least) two different narratorial registers, which use *tychê* differently: in the *analytical, 'scientific' historian* mode he uses *tychê* as a mystical force opposed to human skill and intelligence, downplays its significance, and ridicules those who use it as an explanation. Alternating with this, in his *rhetorical storyteller* mode he has no hesitations in attributing momentous events to *tychê*.

In the second half of the paper we looked closer at Polybios' use of *tychê* and the traditional scholarly distribution of its spheres of power in the *Histories* as predestining, random, and just. I argued that Polybios would have been surprised by such a categorisation because he used *tychê* in order to say something about the human experience of the world rather than about the motivation or nature of superhuman powers. Pédech (1964: 331–54), Roveri (1982), and (from a different angle) Brouwer (2011) have argued that Polybios attributed to *tychê* whatever events he could not explain rationally. I would argue that Polybios would have been, and thought himself to be, able to explain most events rationally if he investigated their causes, and that he rather used *tychê* to mark out events that he wanted his readers to regard in a certain way: as unexpected, as momentous, as strikingly coincidental, or as juxtaposed to what a given character or state achieved or could achieve by his own efforts.

I am not arguing that Polybios did not believe in *tychê* and only used the concept as a rhetorical tool. By contrast, his own life experience must have

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[27] Incomprehensible superhuman forces in Herodotos: e.g. Hdt. 1.157–9, 2.129–33, 9.93–4. See also Fornara (1990).

impressed upon him the large role played in human life by powers outside of human, or individual control,[28] and some passages show him subscribing to a belief in double determination. But rather than the motivation or nature of such superhuman forces, it was the human experience of them that was usually uppermost in his mind.

Paradoxically, it is the use of *tychê* that gives Polybios' *Histories* its humanity: by insisting on the existence of this dangerous element of uncertainty the narrator ensures that even his most perfect heroes can meet a grim fate and still be worthy of the reader's admiration. Thus Hannibal, Hasdrubal, and Philopoimen are all great men undiminished by their final succumbing to *tychê dysphylaktos kai paralogos*. It is also Polybios' use of *tychê* that most clearly gives the reader a sense of what living through the narrated events must have felt like; it sidesteps the hindsight which otherwise characterises much of the *Histories* by re-injecting into the narrative a sense of unpredictability.[29] Thus the pervasive presence of *tychê* in the discourse brings the point of view of the readers in line with that of the characters caught in the midst of bewildering events. It is a way of conveying to a reader distant in time the surprise, the shock, and the awe experienced by people who took part in or witnessed the events of the *Histories* without knowing how it would all turn out in the end.

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[28] In this I agree with Eckstein (1995) 254–71 although, as explained above, I do not agree with his theory of a development in Polybios' use of *tychê*.

[29] For some thoughts on hindsight in Polybius' *Histories* see my forthcoming article in a volume on hindsight in historiography edited by Anton Powell and Kai Brodersen.

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