Moral History from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus
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Published by Edinburgh University Press

Hau, Lisa Irene.
Moral History from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus.
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PART I: HELLENISTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY
1. Polybius

Polybius is our starting point because he is obviously, explicitly and unashamedly a moral-didactic historian. He repeatedly stresses that the purpose of studying the past is to learn lessons that will be of use in the present. This is recognised by most Polybius scholars, but there is a widespread tendency to think of these lessons as purely practical rather than moral: Pédech, in his monumental *La Méthode Historique de Polybe*, devotes chapters to Polybius’ notions of psychology and his rhetorical method of comparison, but only touches on his moral didacticism in passing; Walbank says that Polybius saw history as ‘a way to attain practical ends by learning lessons’; Sacks in his monograph on Polybius’ views on historiography argues that his practical didacticism so far outweighs his moral didacticism that the latter ‘ought to be considered random digressions without historiographical import’; and even two otherwise excellent – and very different – more recent monographs on Polybius, by McGing and Maier, largely ignore the moralising aspect.1 In this way the moralist Polybius has been played down in favour of the image of the practical, pragmatic and often rather cynical Polybius, who wrote a ‘handbook for statesmen’ with digressions on such amoral topics as fire-signalling and how to calculate the needed length of scaling ladders.

This image, with which the present study wants to take serious issue, is often coupled with the equally dubious idea that Polybius wrote his work partly to justify his ‘collaboration’ with Rome and only used moral outrage to cloak his partisanship.2 There is no denying that Polybius shows political bias: he is obviously sympathetic to Achaea and scornful of the Aetolians,

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1 Pédech (1964); Walbank *passim*, e.g. (1965, 1972: 58 and *passim*, 1977); Sacks (1980: 136); McGing (2010); Maier (2012). Also Petzold (1969), despite recognising the moral tenor of some of Polybius’ didactic digressions, focuses on the practical didacticism.

and also often sides with Rome against its opponents. However, his bias is commonly exaggerated: Polybius is not simply a blind approver of everything Roman. Furthermore, as already argued in the Introduction, moral views and political views do not exist in separate spheres, but feed off each other. Polybius supported the Achaean League because he had been born into its leading circles, but also because he believed that the League’s laws were the most morally just of any political organisation he knew (2.38). When he wrote his work, he did not distinguish between his moral and political views, as surely most of us do not in our day-to-day lives. He aimed to instruct his readers in the right way to think and act in the world, and this included practical, political and moral instruction. The significant exception to the trend of disregarding Polybius’ moralising is Eckstein, who has devoted a lively and well-argued monograph to arguing against the view of Polybius as a hypocritical moralist. Eckstein demonstrates conclusively that Polybius was not a ‘Machiavellian’ historian who judged historical people only on the basis of their success or his own political bias, but the polemical focus of Eckstein’s book means that he does not provide a rounded picture of moral messages in the Histories. The present study aims to arrive at such a full picture, and then to compare this picture with the moral didacticism of other surviving texts of Greek historiography.

This chapter will therefore examine Polybius’ moralising techniques and messages with one eye fixed on his text and the other on the texts of the historiographical tradition with which we shall be comparing his Histories. Polybius holds pride of place in this study because his moralising lessons and techniques cover almost the full range displayed across the genre. For this reason, his Histories works well both as an introduction to the subject and our approach and as a benchmark against which to compare his predecessors and successors in the genre. The chapter begins with an examination of Polybius’ prefaces and programmatic statements in order to determine the role that he ascribes to moral didacticism in his narratorial voice; then we shall turn to Polybius’ narrative and examine his moralising techniques, using and expanding the terminology established in the Introduction. This will be followed by an overview of Polybius’ moral lessons and some preliminary thoughts on the typicality and distinctiveness of these in comparison with other Hellenistic and Classical historiographers.

4 In a good, more recent paper on the rhetorical nature of the Histories Thornton (2013) consistently talks about Polybius wanting to teach ‘political’ lessons to his readers, in the process labelling ‘political’ several messages which I would call ‘moral’.
Characteristically of Polybius’ elaborate and at times long-winded style, the work begins with a lengthy paraleipsis (i.e. a statement that one will not talk about something, which at the same time talks about it):

Εἰ μὲν τοῖς πρὸ ἡμῶν ἀναγράφουσι τὰς πράξεις παραλελεῖφθαι συνέβαινε τὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς τῆς ἱστορίας ἔπαινον, ἴσως ἀναγκαῖον ἦν τὸ προτρέπεσθαι πάντας πρὸς τὴν αἴρεσιν καὶ παραδοχὴν τῶν τοιούτων ὑπομνημάτων διὰ τὸ μηδεμίαν ἐτοιμοτέραν εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διόρθωσιν τῆς τῶν προγεγενημένων πράξεων ἐπιστήμης. ἐπεὶ δ᾽ οὐ τινὲς οὐδ’ ἐπι ποσόν, ἀλλὰ πάντες ὡς ἔπος εἰπτάν ἄρρητοί καὶ τέλει κέχρηνται τούτῳ, φάσκοντες ἀληθινωτάτην μὲν εἶναι παιδείαν καὶ γυμνασίαν πρὸς τὰς πολιτικὰς πράξεις τὴν ἱστορίας μάθησιν, ἐναργεστάτην δὲ καὶ μόνην διδάσκαλον τοῦ δύνασθαι τὰς τῆς τύχης μεταβολὰς γενναίως ὑποφέρειν τὴν τῶν ἀλλοτρίων περιπετειῶν ὑπόμνησιν, δήλον ὡς οὐδενὶ μὲν ἂν δόξην καθήκειν περὶ τῶν καλὸς καὶ πολλοὶς εἰρημένον ταυτολογεύειν, ἥκιστα δ’ ἠμῖν. αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ παράδοξον τῶν πράξεως, ἵκανον τοῖς πρὸς τὴν ἐντευξιν τῆς πραγματείας.

If it was the case that praise of the practice of history had been passed over by those who before me have written about events, it would perhaps be necessary to urge everyone to study and approve of such records because there is no readier correction for human beings than knowledge of the actions of the past. But when not just some writers to a certain extent, but so to speak every single one of them, have made use of this argument, insisting that the truest education and training for civic engagement is learning derived from history, and that the most vivid and indeed only teacher of how to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with dignity is being reminded of the suddenly changed circumstances of others, then clearly no one, least of all I, would think it appropriate to repeat what has been said well and by many. The unexpected nature of the events which I have chosen to write about will be sufficient to encourage and exhort everyone, young and old alike, to engage with their study. (Polyb. 1.1.1–4)

This is a self-conscious narrator’s elaborate way of saying that he intends to follow in the footsteps of his generic predecessors: what is traditionally

6 I adopt Parmeggiani’s (2014) reading of πάντες ὡς ἔπος εἰπτάν ἄρρητοί καὶ τέλει as a unit, meaning ‘all of them from beginning to end so to speak’, i.e. ‘so to speak every single one of them’. I do not, however, agree with his interpretation of what Polybius says about his predecessor’s practice of praising historiography as being critical or exasperated: note that Polybius says they have said it ‘well’ (καλῶς: 1.1.3), and that he says it would be necessary for him to say it if they had not already done so (1.1.1). The phrase is a rhetorical paraleipsis. Polybius is setting up his own project not in contrast with that of his predecessors, but in continuation of it: the ‘unexpected nature’ (τὸ παράδοξον: 1.1.3) of his topic will captivate his readers’ interest, thus making his moral lessons go down more easily.

7 All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
the purpose of historiography is the purpose of his *Histories* too. That purpose is didacticism by exemplar, or *paradeigmata*, a word often used by Polybius, although not in this passage. Instead Polybius here calls the study of history the ‘education’ (*παιδείαν*) and ‘training’ (*γυμνασίαν*) for civic engagement (*τὰς πολιτικὰς πράξεις*) and then more specifically identifies the knowledge of the *peripeteiai*, or sudden reversals of fortunes, of historical characters as the ‘teacher’ in the art of bearing such vicissitudes with dignity (*γενναίως*). The idea of history as teacher dominates the passage. The teaching seems to have two subjects: some unspecified content that will be useful for civic life, and the *peripeteiai* of historical characters, which has the moralistic purpose of teaching readers to act with dignity even when struck by such unforeseen reversals. It is worth emphasising that Polybius takes this (moral-)didactic purpose entirely for granted; for him, this is what historiography does. This is important, because it shows that moral didacticism was the norm of the genre in the second century BC. We shall return to this in later chapters.

The preface is followed by two introductory books offering a relatively brief narrative of the First Punic War, intended as background knowledge (*προκατασκευή*) for the more detailed treatment of the Second Punic War in books 3–15. At the end of the background narrative, Polybius offers a ‘second preface’. Here he sets out his purpose in continuing the work beyond his originally intended end-date of 167 BC:

If, therefore, it was possible to judge adequately from the very successes and failures of people and states whether they should be criticised or, on the contrary, praised, then I should stop and should end my narrative and my project here at the last-mentioned events as was my original intention . . . But as the judgements formed about both the victors and the defeated solely on the basis of their actions during the conflicts themselves are incomplete – because, for many people, what seems to be the greatest victories, when they
are not handled properly, have turned into the greatest disasters, and, for a few, the most stunning catastrophes, when they are borne with dignity, have often turned into some kind of advantage – I must add to the aforementioned events what was the attitude of the conquerors and how they ruled the world, as well as the reactions and attitudes of the rest. (Polyb. 3.4.1–6)

Thus, the second preface, to an even greater degree than the first, is about not just didacticism, but moral didacticism. The purpose of historiography is to help the readers form an opinion of historical characters and to deal out ‘praise and blame’ to them – not just for the sake of the people praised or criticised – who are, indeed, most often long dead – but for the sake of the readers. In that way, the historiographer offers the historical characters as moral examples, paradeig mata, which, with his help, his readers can use as guidance for how to behave in the world. It is characteristic of Polybius’ moral judgements that they have a practical dimension: judgements on victors and the defeated are incomplete because the way victory and defeat are handled can turn even the former into a disaster (συμφοράς) and the latter into an advantage (του̂ συμφέροντος). From this passage it is impossible to see whether the ‘disaster’ and ‘advantage’ are meant in literal, practical terms or in a figurative, moral sense, and we shall see below that the two most often go hand in hand in Polybius’ Histories. The intertwining of the moral and the practical becomes more pronounced in the rest of the second preface. Here the usefulness of the Histories (τὸ ὀφέλιμον: 3.4.8) is said to consist in providing the information needed for contemporary readers to decide whether Roman rule is to be shunned or accepted (ἐχθροτήν ἢ τοὐναντίον αἰρετήν: 3.4.7), and for future readers in order to decide whether it is praiseworthy and worth emulating or blame-worthy (ἐπαινετήν καὶ ζηλωτήν ἢ ψεκτήν: 3.4.7). The implication is that the Histories will allow both contemporary and future readers to pass moral judgement on Rome, but that contemporary readers might be able to translate that judgement into practical action.

8 Many passages in Polybius assume that posthumous fame in the pages of history will be pleasing to the people who attain it although they are long dead: 2.7, 2.58–9, 3.22–32, 4.20–1, 7.13.2–14.6, 8.35–6, 10.2–5, 15.21.

9 It has been argued (Walbank 1972: 157–83) that the judgement on Rome’s use of power and the subjects’ response to it is just an excuse for Polybius to add material he had collected while watching historical events from the sidelines in Rome. I would argue that the fragmentary state of his last ten books makes it impossible for us to judge to what extent Polybius did or did not deliver on his promise of helping the reader to make this judgement, and I see no reason to doubt that the purpose he presents in his second preface is sincere. Even if it is not, it shows that such a purpose was a valid and probably not uncommon one for a work of history.

10 The narrative of Rome’s rise to power offered in the Histories suggests – as far as we can judge considering the depressingly fragmented state of the crucial last ten books – that Roman rule is in fact at the time of writing an irreversible fact, so that ‘shunning’ it can only
Polybius’ *Histories* has more pauses in the narrative of events than any other preserved Classical or Hellenistic work of history. In these narrative pauses, the narrator communicates directly with the narratee, providing a much fuller commentary on the events than is offered by any other historiographical narrator of the period. A relatively large number of these passages deal with the practice and purpose of writing history, and they provide us with a unique insight into the plan behind the work.\(^{11}\) What is strikingly obvious from these purpose passages is the repeated insistence on the usefulness of the *Histories* to its readers.\(^{12}\) It has been common for Polybian scholars to stress the practical nature of this usefulness,\(^{13}\) and it is true that some of the programmatic passages spring from didactic digressions with a practical bent.\(^{14}\) However, other passages focus on the intellectual benefit derived from studying history,\(^{15}\) and a significant proportion focus exclusively on the moral benefit of reading the *Histories*, such as 1.35, which extols the wisdom one can acquire from the vicarious experience of reading about the misfortunes of others. Significantly, most programmatic passages in Polybius give the impression that the practical and the moral benefit are inseparable. An example is 1.65.6–9, where Polybius gives as his reasons for recounting the Mercenary War that (1) it is the perfect example of a ‘truceless war’ (intellectual benefit), (2) it shows the dangers of employing mercenaries and demonstrates what precautions lead to disaster while ‘accepting’ it can be fruitful if one strives to keep as much autonomy as possible. Eckstein (1995: 194–236) offers an excellent analysis of Polybius’ message about this balancing act for political leaders of Greek states. Ferrary (1988: 139–43) and Baronowski (2011: 159–62) take a less nuanced view of Polybius’ judgement on Roman rule (that it was overall benevolent and hence to be chosen/accepted) and hence of this passage. Ferrary has a good discussion of the moral implications of *ἀπερίπτω* (1988: 34–1).\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) E.g. 1.1, 1.2.8, 1.4.11, 1.13.11–13, 1.14, 1.35, 1.57.3, 1.65.7–9, 2.14.1, 2.35, 2.38.1, 2.56–8, 2.61, 3.1.5, 3.4, 3.31, 3.32.6, 3.47–8, 3.57–9, 3.118.10–12, 4.40.1–2, 5.75.1–6, 6.2.5–6, 9.2.5, 10.21.8, 11.14, all of book 12, 16.12, 16.20, 16.28. Polybius’ programmatic passages have been discussed by Sacks (1980) with a focus on historiographical theory and practical didacticism.

\(^{12}\) Polyb. 1.2.8, 1.4.11, 1.13.6, 1.57.3, 1.65.7–9, 2.14.1, 2.35, 2.38.1, 2.36.11–12, 3.1.5, 3.31, 3.118.10–12, 6.2.8, 11.19a, 12.25b, 39.8.7. Polybius’ insistence on the usefulness of learning (see also 3.4.1–12 and 11.20.6) has been connected with Stoic influence, especially by von Scala (1890: 201–3), but the distinction between the pleasure and utility in literature goes back much further than Stoicism and is seen in, among others, Gorgias, Plato and Aristotle. See Walbank (1990) with references to previous scholarship.

\(^{13}\) See note 1, this chapter.

\(^{14}\) Such as 2.35, which justifies the detailed treatment of the history of the Celts by its usefulness for teaching readers not to fear barbarians too much, and 3.31, which justifies the lengthy discussion of the responsibility for the Second Punic War by its usefulness as material for political speeches in the reader’s present.

\(^{15}\) Such as 1.4.11, which extols the unique ability of universal history to give readers a complete understanding of the world, and 2.14.1, which justifies an ethnographic digression with its necessity for understanding the march of Hannibal.
should be taken (practical benefit), (3) it demonstrates the great difference in character between barbarians and civilised men (moral benefit), and (4) it provides the causal background to the Second Punic War (explanatory reason). Similarly, when 10.21 discusses the importance of including biographical sketches in historiography because such characterisations encourage readers to emulate famous men, it is clear that the emulation is meant to encompass both practical actions and moral characteristics. Polybius did not draw a distinction between the different types of benefit he was offering, and he would most probably have been surprised and shocked to find that his modern readers have attempted to divorce his practical lessons from any sense of morality.

What is abundantly clear from the programmatic passages is the intended usefulness of the Histories, and not just or even primarily as a repository of facts and knowledge, but as a learning tool for the improvement (διόρθωσις: 1.1.1 and frequently) of human life. If we ignore this aspect of his work, we seriously misread it. It is equally clear that this improvement is supposed to be both practical and moral, with no real distinction between the two.

A CHARACTERISATION OF POLYBIUS’ MORALISING

This section examines and describes Polybius’ moral-didactic techniques for the purpose of comparison with those of other Hellenistic and Classical historiographers in later chapters. The description also aims to give a reader unfamiliar with Polybius or unused to looking at his work from this angle an impression of his moralising. For this reason passages are frequently quoted (and translated). We shall begin with a quick overview of the distribution of moralising in the Histories and then continue with an analysis of the moralising techniques using the terminology established in the Introduction.

Distribution

The Histories was once a magnificent forty-volume work; it now survives only in a fragmentary state. Books 1–5 are completely extant, as is a good chunk of book 6 and substantial parts of 7–18. Then it becomes more patchy. There is less moralising in the first two books of the Histories than in the following complete and partially preserved ones. This is no doubt due to the summary nature of their narrative, which suits their function as background material for the main narrative. In the extremely fragmentary books 19–40 moralising is a dominant feature, to the extent that some stretches of fragments are purely moralising with very little narrative of events in between. This is due to the nature of two of the six
Constantinian epitomes in which the ‘fragments’ are preserved: one is about ‘virtues and vices’ (De Virtutibus et Vitiis) and the other contains ‘sayings’ (De Sententiis), which also often have a moral bearing. Although these moralising passages will have been less dominating in the original work, where they functioned merely as a running commentary on the narrative of events, the fact that they were there at all is revealing of Polybius’ method and intention. There is no reason to believe that his moralising practice in the now fragmentary books differed from his practice in the non-prefatory and more substantially preserved books 3–18.

**Moralising in Narrative Pauses**

Much of Polybius’ moralising is explicit and takes place in pauses in his narrative of events. As we saw in the Introduction, moralising in such pauses can be divided into moralising digressions, which use the narrative as a starting point for making more general moralising observations, and guiding moralising, which introduces, concludes or accompanies narrative episodes in order to tell the reader how to interpret them in moral terms. Polybius uses both frequently.

Polybius’ moralising digressions can be long (e.g. 4.20–1, 3.22–32, all of book 6) or quite short (e.g. 4.81.12–14, 8.12.6–8). Their narrative functions fall into three categories: explanatory, offering extra information and discussion to explain the narrative, including introducing a character new to the story, explaining motives, and providing background stories for events; evaluative, that is, passing judgement, entirely or partly moral, either on a character or on actions or events; and philosophical, treating the story of events as a springboard for musing about bigger questions. In all of these he often includes a polemical element and argues against his predecessors on points of detail or interpretation. Polybius does not use associative digressions, as far as can be seen from his extant text. Most often the digression’s connection with the surrounding narrative is clear at the beginning, then the middle part strays far away from the immediate story situation before returning to the situation at hand again at the end. A return to the narrative of events is often signalled by means of the particle πλήν, or the combination πλὴν τότε. Some evaluative digressions are extended obituaries, that is, moral discussions of a historical individual’s...

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16 Equally, there is a preponderance of passages concerning embassies to the Senate and various Greek cities because a third epitome was a collection of passages on embassies. For the Constantinian excerpts see Moore (1965: 126–70) and Walbank (1979: 1–62).

17 When the text is fragmented and the moralising digression survives in isolation, which is often the case in books 7ff., it is often not possible to determine its original connection with its context with certainty.
character and/or actions, placed at the point of his death in the narrative (e.g. Philopoemen, 23.12; Hannibal, 23.13; and Scipio Africanus the Elder, 23.14). These tend to stay more tightly on topic than other moral-didactic digressions as they focus on their protagonist throughout and rarely spend time on extended comparisons or generalisations.18

A typical example of a moralising digression in Polybius’ Histories is 1.81.5–11, provoked by the brutal way in which the mercenaries of the Mercenary War treated their captives:19

Therefore, considering these events one would not hesitate to say that it is not only the bodies of human beings and some of the ulcers and tumours that have come about in them which can become aggravated and ultimately beyond healing, but also, and much more, their souls. For, in the case of ulcers, if one applies treatment to such diseases, they are sometimes irritated by this very thing and spread more quickly; but if, on the other hand, one leaves them alone, on the basis of their own nature they continue their destruction unremittingly without cessation until they do away with their victim. Likewise in the case of men’s souls, such black spots and putrefactions grow on them that in the end no animal is more impious and more cruel than man. If one applies some forgiveness and kindness to such persons, they believe what has happened to be a plot and a deception and become more suspicious and hostile towards those who are exercising kindness; but if one retaliates, in their passionate rivalry there is no unspeakable atrocity they will not commit, considering such daring to be in the category of what is honourable. In the end, they turn into beasts and discard human nature. This condition must be believed to originate in most part from bad

19 Underlined phrases are discussed in the text following extracts.
habits and bad upbringing from childhood, but there are many contributory causes, and the most important of them is the constant abusiveness and greed of their leaders. That was what happened at that time to the community of mercenaries, and to an even larger degree to their commanders. (Polyb. 1.81.5–11)

The function of this moralising digression is explanatory: it attempts to explain the inhuman behaviour of the rebellious mercenaries. Typically for Polybian moral-didactic digressions it is connected to its surrounding narrative by thin bridges at the beginning (εἰς ταῦτα βλέπων) and end (τότε), but in between it generalises about larger moral themes. In this case the moral content is psychological: Polybius is generalising about human nature and behaviour. In this particular passage it is interesting to note the extended medical comparison between tumours in the body and diseases of the mind or soul; such medical similes are one of Polybius’ favourite ways of explaining the human psyche. It is also worth noting the causal relationship Polybius describes: the mercenaries have been made inhumanly brutal by three factors: bad habits (ἔθη μοχθηρά), bad education from childhood (τροφὴν ἐκ παίδων κακήν), and the abuse and unjust treatment they have suffered at the hands of their greedy Carthaginian superiors (τῶν προεστῶτον ὑβρεῖς καὶ πλεονεξίας). While the two first causes are interesting in the light of modern psychological and pedagogical thinking, the third cause, and the one that Polybius identifies as the most important one of the three (μέγιστα δὲ τῶν συνεργῶν), foreshadows a moral theme with great political and military consequences that will be important throughout the Histories, namely the correlation between the way a leader – be he a ruler of a city or country or a military commander – treats his subjects/soldiers and the way they come to behave. This will be discussed further below. At no point is the digression prescriptively didactic, but it is not hard to make the jump: if brutal treatment renders soldiers brutal, anyone in command should strive to treat his men humanely. Moreover, this cause-and-effect link is likely also to be true in other relationships in life, which a reader might want to recall when thinking about how to treat his slaves or educate his children.

Like this digression, most moral-didactic digressions in the Histories are descriptively didactic. However, in about a fourth of the digressions prescriptive advice is given to the reader, often at the end. Often, this advice is combined with a justification of why the narrator has taken the liberty to digress, or to digress at such length. The cases for inclusion are often practically didactic: 2.7 is included in order to teach people never to admit

20 See e.g. 13.2.2, where greed is compared to dropsy. Such medical comparisons are common in both Plato and the Stoics; see Walbank (1957: ad loc.).
a garrison stronger than themselves into their city; 4.20–1 should teach the Arcadians not to ignore the civilising factor of music. Equally often, the digressions are intellectually didactic, most often in the sense that they aim to provide readers with a just view of a difficult issue: 4.20–1 also aims to give readers a true picture of Arcadia that does not blame the region for the crimes of one city; the famous digression on the Roman–Carthaginian treaties, 3.22–32, is allegedly there to make sure everyone knows the truth about the causes of the war in order to provide background knowledge for political actions in the present (3.31); and the digressions on the characters of the two Scipios (the Elder at 10.2–5 and the Younger at 31.25–30) are justified by the desire to make the reader credit these men with their own successes rather than ascribing those to fortune. However, coming at the end of complex moral discussions – or heated moral rants – these purpose statements often seem reductionist: 2.7 is surely there not only to teach a practical lesson about rejecting offers of barbarian garrisons, but also to teach the reader about the importance of taking moral responsibility for one’s actions and not blaming fortune for one’s own mistakes; and 3.22–3.32 does not just provide some idea of the characters of the Carthaginians and Romans that a reader can draw on for knowledge of how to deal with these two peoples in his own present, but offers a full and complex discussion of the legal and moral responsibility for the Second Punic War. Likewise, the digressions on the characters of the two Scipios are meant to have a practical and moral influence on the reader’s life as models for emulation.

Common to all the moral-didactic digressions of Polybius, regardless of their topic, are colourful, emotional language, heated rhetorical questions and expressions of *aporia*, expressions of wonder or exhortations to wonder, similes, generalisations, and analogies, often with medical conditions or animals. In other words, they are designed to persuade and use all the rhetorical tools available to a well-educated Hellenistic Greek.

The shorter form of moralising in narrative pauses, **guiding moralising**, also occurs with great frequency in the *Histories*, in the form of introductory, concluding and concomitant remarks steering a reader’s interpretation of specific episodes. Sometimes this guiding moralising contains proleptic remarks about how a character’s future fate is a consequence of his moral or immoral behaviour. The shortest version is a sentence or two; such brief conclusions often follow upon the death of a character

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21 E.g. brutality compared with tumours at 1.81 quoted above, greed compared with dropsy at 13.22, Philip V and Antiochus III compared with predatory fish at 15.20.
22 E.g. 1.84.10 (concomitant), 2.9.6, 3.19.9–11 (concluding/proleptic), 3.116.9, 4.34.2 (concomitant), 4.67.2–4, 4.80.4, 4.81.5, 5.39.6, 5.56.13, 5.76.11 (all concluding), 6.58.1 (introductory), 11.39.15–16 (concluding), 14.5.15 (concluding), 15.21.1 (introductory), 15.33.10 (concomitant), 27.2.10 (concluding), 27.16.1 (introductory).
and function as miniature obituaries commenting on the deservedness of the death or on the qualities of the dead character. Some slightly longer passages of guiding moralising are simply more explanatory, but some use generalising remarks about human behaviour to make their points about specific instances of the historical narrative, such as this introduction to an episode of Aetolian political infighting:

μήποτε γὰρ οὐδὲν διαφέρει τὰ κατ’ ιδίαν ἀδικήματα τῶν κοινῶν, ἀλλὰ πλήθει μόνον καὶ μεγέθει τῶν συμβαινόντων. καὶ γὰρ κατ’ ιδίαν τὸ τῶν ῥαδιουργῶν καὶ κλεπτῶν φύλον τούτῳ μάλιστα τῷ τρόπῳ σφάλλεται, τῷ μὴ ποιεῖν ἄλληλοις τὰ δίκαια, καὶ εἰς αὑτοὺς ἀθεσίας. ὃ καὶ τότε συνέβη γενέσθαι περὶ τοὺς Αἰτωλούς.

For public crimes differ from private ones only in the extent and quantity of their results. For also in the private sphere the most common cause of the downfall of the whole tribe of criminals and thieves is the fact that they do not treat each other with justice, and, in short, their faithlessness towards each other. This was what happened also to the Aetolians at that point.

(Polyb. 4.29.4)

Most of these passages of guiding moralising are descriptive and do nothing more than tell the reader what to think about the events narrated. Some, however, become prescriptive and draw out an explicit moral lesson for the reader. Some briefly recap events narrated earlier and then introduce their continuation. Despite their differences, all of these passages are still essentially guides to the narrative, which ensure that the reader does not go astray in the understanding of the text, but comes away from his reading with the correct moral evaluation of every character and event and, consequently, with a strong sense of how to live his own life according to a moral compass. This forceful and frequent guidance is one of the main ways in which Polybius tries to fulfil his promise of writing a work useful for the moral improvement of his readers.

23 Typical examples are 3.116.9, 5.39.6 and 5.56.13. For a good discussion see Pomeroy (1989).
24 E.g. 1.64.5–6 (concluding), 2.57.8 (concluding), 3.105.8–10 (concomitant), 4.17.1–2 (concomitant), 4.35.4 (concomitant), 8.12.6–8 (concluding), 15.25.1 (introductory?), 15.33.6 (concomitant), 16.23.3–4 (concomitant), 16.30.2–3 (introductory), 18.53.1–4 (introductory), 18.54.8–12 (concluding), 20.11.9–10 (concluding/proleptic), 27.8.9–10 (concomitant), 28.14.1–2 (introductory), 29.22.2 (concomitant), 30.12 (introductory?).
25 Other generalising examples are 1.17.11–12 (concomitant), 1.62.4–6 (introductory), 1.67.4–6 (concomitant), 4.87.3–4 (concomitant), 5.26.12–13 (concomitant), 13.5.4–6 (introductory), 15.17.1–2 (introductory), 18.33.4–7 (introductory).
26 E.g. 1.35.1–3 (concluding), 2.4.3–5 (concluding, quoted on p. 51), 4.35.14–15 (proleptic), 8.21.10–11 (concluding).
27 E.g. 16.13 picking up the narrative of Nabis, tyrant of Sparta.
Moralising in the Narrative of Events

Beside the explicit moralising in digressions and guiding passages, Polybius employs a number of more subtle types of moralising integrated into his narrative of events.

Evaluative phrasing is ubiquitous in the Histories, but is more pervasive in some passages than in others. A typical example is the narrative of the beginning of the revolt of Achaeus against Seleucus III:

As soon as the young Seleucus had succeeded to the kingship, he learned that Attalus had already brought all the land on this side of the Taurus under his rule, and so he was eager to assert his own claim. He crossed the Taurus with a large army, but was treacherously murdered by Apaturius the Galatian and Nicanor. Achaeus immediately avenged his murder because of their kinship, and when he had killed Nicanor, Apaturius and their accomplices, he commanded the army and ruled the country intelligently and high-mindedly. Indeed, when he had the chance and the impulse of the mob was making it easy for him to assume the diadem, he chose not to do this, but to guard the kingdom for Antiochus, the younger of the sons. With speed and efficiency he marched upon the land this side of Taurus and regained it. But when his campaign had been unexpectedly successful, as he had shut up Attalus in Pergamum itself and had become master of the rest of the country, he became elated by his good fortune and ran aground head over heels. Having assumed the diadem and proclaimed himself king, he was the most oppressive and terrifying of the kings and rulers this side of the Taurus. This was the man in whom the Byzantines especially trusted at that point when they undertook the war against the Rhodians and Prusias.

(Polyb. 4.48.7–13)
This is a straight narrative of events with no explicit moralising attached. Nevertheless, at the end of the passage, the reader knows very well that Achaeus is a good man corrupted by success, that his initial refusal of the royal title is the right way to behave, and that it was wrong of him to change his mind later. This impression is created by Polybius’ use of morally evaluative phrasing. Firstly, the adverbs φρονίμως and μεγαλοψύχως tell the reader that Achaeus’ conduct before his great successes is admirable, both on intellectual (φρονίμως) and on moral (μεγαλοψύχως) grounds. Then, when his success is growing and his troops urge him to assume the diadem, the designation of those troops as τῶν ὄχλων ensures that the reader cannot sympathise with them. Moreover, the action of egging on Achaeus to rebel is ascribed not to the mob of soldiers, but to their emotional impulse, τῆς τῶν ὄχλων ὁρμῆς, placing their efforts in the category of the irrational and dangerous. There is thus no doubt that Achaeus’ refusal is the only right response. When he goes on to conduct the campaign ἐνεργῶς, the reader can only be impressed: ἐνεργῶς is not a moral word, but belongs to the category of words expressing military efficiency, something always admired by Polybius; and the fact that Achaeus pursues the war of his king ‘with speed and efficiency’ just after having refused the opportunity to replace this king marks him out as a stout and loyal soldier. Finally, when Achaeus changes his mind and adopts the royal title anyway, the decision is explained by his being ‘elated by his good fortune’ (ἐπαρθεὶς τοῖς εὐτυχήμασι), putting him in the same irrational and dangerous category as the soldier-mob, and with a striking ship-metaphor he is said to have run ‘aground head over heels’ (παρὰ πόδας ἐξώκειλε). The moralising is entirely implicit, but the reader is left in no doubt about how to evaluate the episode.

Closely connected with evaluative phrasing and often employed in tandem with it is internal evaluation of the actions of a historical character through the eyes of his contemporaries. This usually takes the form of a brief concluding statement, often in the shape of a participial phrase such as ‘being thought to have handled matters in a generous and kingly manner’ (δόξας μεγαλοψύχως καὶ βασιλικῶς τοῖς πράγμασις κεχρῆσθαι: 8.23.5) or ‘seeming to have given wise and timely advice’ (φανέντος δὲ φρονίμως αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς καιροῖς οἰκείως συμβουλεύειν: 15.19.8). We are not told to whom the protagonists of the two passages seemed kingly and wise respectively, but the evaluation is not contradicted, and so the reader is left to deduce that the thoughts of the unspecified contemporaries were, in fact, sound. In other cases the narrator is explicit about whose evalua-

28 Walbank (1957: ad loc.) is surely right that the derogatory phrase here refers to Achaeus’ soldiers, not the common people.
tion he is passing on, whether it is that of the ‘moderate men’ or ‘the many’ (33.18.10–11), and the intended reader, who belongs to the same social class as Polybius, is certainly not supposed to agree with ‘the many’. Often such internal evaluations particularly blur the moral and the practical as the approval of the internal audience in turn bolsters the position of the leader who behaved so well.

A complex use of this technique can be seen at 36.9, where Polybius reports four different contemporary views about the justice or injustice of the Roman destruction of Carthage and leaves the reader free to think through the details of each view and then make up his own mind about which one to agree with. Such open-ended moral didacticism is unique in (the extant part of) the Histories, and it is most probably partly due to Polybius’ personal circumstances: Carthage had been destroyed by his friend and benefactor Scipio the Younger, and had he agreed with it, he would no doubt have said so and have turned the action into a moral paradeigma as he did with so many of Scipio’s other actions. As it stands, the lack of narratorial conclusion is most easily explained by Polybius disapproving of the destruction of the city, but being too loyal a friend to state that in so many words. At the same time, by giving the reader four different views, all based on sound arguments, Polybius is demonstrating how complicated it can be to evaluate morally the actions of historical and contemporary people: it all depends on what criteria you use and what you think is fair. By not taking sides, Polybius is both leaving it up to the reader to decide whom he agrees with, and inviting him to think about and evaluate his own criteria for moral evaluation. This passage gives a glimpse of the delicate tightrope Polybius must have walked as the friend and adviser of the increasingly powerful Scipio, but it also shows how important the moral-didactic dimension of the Histories was to him and how conscious he was of the different techniques available to fulfil it.

An extended version of internal evaluation is speeches delivered by characters in the work. Polybius employs this type of moralising less than the Classical historiographers, as we shall see in Part II, but even for him speeches are an important vehicle for demonstrating how moral principles can apply to specific situations. Speeches in the Histories are invariably political. They take place in Assemblies of Greek cities or city-leagues (such as the Achaean League), at peace conferences and before the Roman

29 The lack of narratorial conclusion has led to fierce scholarly debate over Polybius’ own standpoint. The debate is still live, as demonstrated by the fact that the two anonymous readers of this chapter for Edinburgh University Press both offered their own, mutually contradictory, interpretations of the passage. One of these interpretations is partly adopted here. See Hau (2006: 84–7) for a summary of the debate and a more detailed discussion of the passage.
Moral History from Herodotus to Diodorus

Senate.\(^{30}\) Only four speeches in the extant text are given completely in direct discourse (5.104, 9.28–31, 9.32–9, 11.4–6); many more are offered in a combination of direct and indirect discourse.\(^{31}\) The task of figuring out whether or not to agree with a speech is rarely difficult in the \textit{Histories}. Most often the speech or the speaker is endorsed by the narrator either before the speech begins (5.103.9, 30.31.2) or at its end (11.10.1); or we are told that the audience at the Assembly or Senate thought well of it or him, which should lead the reader to do so too (18.3.1, 21.31.6, 30.31.18). Some speakers are portrayed so positively throughout the \textit{Histories} that explicit narratorial endorsement of their speech is unnecessary. For instance, when Philopoemen, who is praised in no fewer than four evaluative digressions,\(^ {32}\) speaks about the dishonour of offering and taking bribes at 20.12, the reader needs no narratorial steer in order to understand that his words are meant to carry moral authority.\(^ {33}\) Furthermore, this and some other speeches echo moral attitudes explicitly expressed by the narrator elsewhere (on bribes see 4.35.14–15 and 18.35), which makes it natural to read them as reinforcing the moral didacticism, even when there is no explicit endorsement of the speech by narrator or listeners. This is the case, for example, of the speech by Scipio the Elder to Carthaginian ambassadors after the Battle of Zama where he explains that he will treat them mildly, not for their sake, but for the sake of his own and Rome’s honour (corresponding to guiding moralising at 27.8.9–10), and also of the fragment of a speech by Aemilius Paullus on the importance of staying humble even in great success at 29.20 (corresponding to guiding moralising at 8.21.10–11 and 29.22.2, and a moralising digression at 29.21; the two latter passages were probably closely connected with the speech in the unfragmented original text).

The most effective type of moralising integrated into the narrative of the \textit{Histories}, however, is \textit{correlation between action and result}. This type of moralising is displayed when the Achaean League is uniquely successful in uniting the Peloponnesse because they act on the basis of \textit{ἰσηγορία},

\(^{30}\) The preponderance of ambassadors’ speeches is due to the fact that many of the fragments of the last books of the \textit{Histories} have been handed down in an epitome on embassies; the amount of space they take up compared with the rest of Polybius’ narrative would look less disproportionate if we had more of those books.

\(^{31}\) For discussions of Polybius’ speeches see Pédech (1964: 254–302), Wooten (1974), Champion (1997), Thornton (2013). Discussions tend to focus on the issue of sources and authenticity and usually take their point of departure from Polybius’ statement about the duty of the historiographer to report speeches truthfully (Polyb. 36.1.7).

\(^{32}\) At 10.21–4, 11.10, 21.32c and 23.12.

\(^{33}\) Likewise the speeches of Scipio the Elder and Aemilius Paullus, mentioned in this same paragraph, and the speech of Flamininus about the principle of treating the defeated enemy with mildness at 18.37. An interesting case is the speech of Polybius as a character in his own work at 28.7, which should presumably also be understood as authoritative.
παρρησία, ἰσότης and φιλανθρωπία (2.38.6 and 9) rather than for their own gain (2.37.9), and when Philip V is the ‘darling of Greece’ (κοινός τις οἶον ἔρωμενος ἐγένετο τῶν Ἑλλήνων: 7.11.8) as long as he behaves with moderation and integrity, but as his behaviour changes for the worse, he loses the loyalty of the Greeks and is ultimately defeated by Rome (4.77, 7.11.10–12, 7.13). In other words, those who behave according to the moral code propounded by the narrator are successful whereas those who behave immorally come to grief. This type of moralising runs as a thread through the Histories. Thus, just as Scipio Africanus the Elder easily wins over the Spanish allies of the Carthaginians by treating them with respect (10.17–19, 10.35–6, 10.38), a host of kings and commanders treat various people well (their own troops/subjects or their defeated opponents) and are rewarded with honours and loyalty (e.g. Hiero, 1.8–9; Antigonus Gonatas, 2.70; Hannibal, 3.13.8). The principle is made clear in a couple of moralising digressions: 7.11 on how Philip’s fortunes changed when he changed his behaviour for the worse, and 10.36 on how the Carthaginians have alienated their Iberian allies by only treating them well until they had them under their control, and then changing their conduct.34

The force of this moral didacticism comes especially from the fact that the principle underlies much of the narrative of the Histories even when it is not explicitly expressed, and it has much wider implications than a ruler or commander’s treatment of his inferiors. Sometimes it is easy for Polybius to show that those he considers the morally better people also come off better in the course of history: the moral Romans are victorious over the lawless Illyrians (2.2–12), the despicable courtier Apelles is finally foiled in his schemes and executed (4.76–5.28), Philip V is victorious as long as he follows a moral code (4.77, 4.82, 7.11), and Greece not only deserved to be conquered by Rome, but was actually saved by it from a morass of immorality (38.18). Likewise, on the macro-level, the main theme of the work is the causes of Rome’s rise to world domination, and Polybius shows that such power came to Rome primarily because it deserved it: Rome’s admirable constitution, the courage, self-discipline and high-mindedness of Rome’s leaders, and the simple fact that everyone else was much less morally deserving all make Rome’s achievement practically explicable as well as morally just. Sometimes, however, it is harder to demonstrate that the world works in such a satisfying fashion: in order to make his father, Lycortas, get his own back from the Achaean politicians who defeated him in politics and got his son deported, Polybius has to tell a story about how the statues of the hated politicians were put into storage and the statues of Lycortas carried out into the light by the people at the end of the Achaean

34 I have discussed this latter passage and the principle it embodies in detail in Hau (2006).
War, long after the death of Lycortas himself (36.13). And, more pronounced, when the supremely moral Philopoemen is executed by poison in captivity, the narrator goes out of his way in his obituary to argue that his downfall was due not to any defect in virtue, but to unforeseeable fortune, *tyche* (23.12).

In these situations this principle that ‘the good win and the bad lose’ is close to the surface of the *Histories*; at other times it disappears. There is no sense of a moral victor or the immoral defeated in the narratives of either the First or the Second Punic War, and the narrative of the last ten books seems to show Rome increasing its strength by a string of political decisions which are collectively labelled immoral (31.10.7) and are sometimes individually presented as such (30.18.7, 31.21.6–8). Nevertheless, the overall impression a reader gets of the world of the *Histories* is that, by and large, moral behaviour leads to political and military success. This moralising technique is, in contrast with the other techniques outlined above, based on the contents of the story rather than on the form of the discourse. Thus it can be said to be both a moralising technique and a moral lesson, and for that reason we shall reserve more detailed discussion until the analysis of Polybius’ moral messages below.

**Moral-Didactic Techniques Working Together**

A typology of moral-didactic techniques is useful for investigating and explaining exactly how Polybius fulfils the moral-didactic purpose of his work. At the same time, however, it runs the risk of presenting moral didacticism in Polybius as piecemeal and fragmented. That would be far from the truth. In any section of the *Histories* the different techniques work together to create a coherent historical narrative with a strong moral bent and clear moral lessons. An example is the narrative of Philip V’s siege of Abydus (16.29–34).

The episode begins with a non-moralising digression on the geographical position of Abydus and Sestus (16.29). Then the beginning of the siege is narrated in one sentence (16.30.1) before the next sentence tells the reader

35 End of First Punic War: 1.62–4, where the Carthaginians are defeated in practice, but not in spirit (1.62.1) and their general is praised (1.62.4–6). End of Second Punic War: 15.16–19; Hannibal is praised at 15.16.5–6, and his defeat explained as due to ‘random chance’ (ταύτοματον) which made him face an opponent ‘stronger’ (κρείττονος) than himself.

36 Polybius’ attitude to Roman foreign policy in the years 167–145 BC, while he was on the one hand living in the city against his will (only really true until 149) and on the other became ever closer friends with Scipio the Younger and his friends and family, has been much discussed. The most important contributions are Walbank (1965, 1972: 157–83, 1974, 1977), Musti (1978), Ferrary (1988: 276–318), Eckstein (1995: 194–236), Champion (2004), McGing (2010: 129–68) and Baronowski (2011).
what to look out for in the narrative to follow: not the siege engines or siege works, but the dignity (τὴν γενναιότητα) and remarkable courage (τὴν ύπερβολὴν τῆς εὐψυχίας) of the besieged (16.30.2–4). This is introductory moralising. The next two chapters tell the story of the siege, marking the increasingly desperate resistance of the Abydenes with occasional evaluative terms in order to remind the reader where his sympathies are supposed to lie (‘stoutly’, ἐρρωμένως: 16.30.4; ‘bravely’, εὐψύχως: 16.30.5).

The Abydenian decision, when Philip refuses to come to terms, to entrust some of their elders with killing the women and children and burning the ships and valuables, while they themselves fight to the death, could easily have been presented as a monstrous resolution. Here, however, it is cast in a heroic light with the decision being made ‘unanimously’ (ὁμοθυμαδόν: 16.31.4) and sanctified with sacrifices (16.31.6–7). It is rounded off with a conclusion (16.31.8) that stresses the foresight and authority of the Abydene citizens, their willingness to fight to the death and the destruction wrought by the Macedonians, and the unjust violence of their attackers.37

Then the action is paused for a moralising digression (16.32), which praises the courage of the Abydenes, compares it favourably with the desperate courage shown by other peoples in similar situations (16.32.1–4), and criticises fortune (τῇ τύχῃ) for letting those other peoples be victorious, but allowing not only the Abydenes to be defeated, but also their women and children to fall into the hands of Philip despite the men’s efforts to prevent this (16.32.5–6).38 After the digression the narrative is taken up again, now with more evaluative vocabulary as the Abydenes fight so desperately that Philip is forced to withdraw his troops at nightfall (16.33.1), but are then betrayed by two of the elders in charge of the women and children, who ‘sacrificed what was honourable and admirable about the citizens’ resolution for the sake of their own ambition’ (κατέβαλον τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ θαυμάσιον τῆς τῶν πολιτῶν προαιρέσεως διὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐλπίδας: 16.33.4) and handed over their charges to Philip. The focus then moves first to King Attalus of Pergamum and then to the Romans, who both send ambassadors to tell Philip to desist from the siege (16.34.1–7). After this interlude to show how Philip’s actions are condemned by the outside world – or at least by the part of the outside world which has been set up by Polybius

37 ‘Having ratified this [i.e. the decision to kill the women and children] they stopped counter-mining against the enemy and came to such a decision that whenever the cross-wall fell, they would fight till the end on its ruins against their attackers and die there’ (ταῦτα δ’ ἐπικυρώσαντες τοῦ μὲν ἀντιμεταλλεύειν τοῖς πολεμίοις ἀπέστησαν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοιαύτην γνώμην κατέστησαν ὡστ’ ἐπειδὴν πέση τὸ διατείχισμα, τότ’ ἐπὶ τοῦ πτώματος διαμάχεσθαι καὶ διαποθνήσειν πρὸς τοὺς βιαζόμενους: Polyb. 16.31.8).

38 I have discussed Polybius’ view of tyche elsewhere (Hau 2011) and would here maintain that the reader is not supposed to take the criticism literally, but simply to see the expression as an outcry against the occasional injustice of historical events.
as moral authorities – the taking of the city is skipped over in a participial phrase (ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος κυριεύσας τῆς πόλεως). The narrative then focuses on the suicides taking place all over the fallen city, which move Philip to grant the citizens three days to end their own lives, and concludes with a passage that again stresses the courage and resolve of the Abydenes. In this way the different moralising techniques work together to highlight the courage and uprightness of the Abydenes (and, by contrast, the villainy of Philip) and turn it into an exemplum for the reader to admire and, if necessary, emulate.

The moralising techniques are tools for Polybius to use in his moral-didactic mission. He uses them skilfully, sometimes individually, sometimes in forceful combinations. There are very few pages of the Histories that do not contain some form of moralising. We might say that moral didacticism is the framework that gives shape to the historical narrative as well as the lens through which the events are presented.

**MORAL LESSONS OF POLYBIUS**

Having analysed the means by which Polybius attempted to educate his readers morally, we now turn to the content of his moral lessons. For the sake of clarity we shall consider these under five headings: combining the morally right with the practically advantageous; the ability to handle the vicissitudes of fortune; the good commander; the good king; and the good man. Under the last three headings are discussed messages concerning the virtues and vices most associated with the three categories of historical characters. Such a division is to a certain extent artificial, as the lessons often overlap and reinforce each other in practice, and I shall attempt to make the main points of contact between them clear as the discussion progresses.

**Combining the Morally Right with the Practically Advantageous**

A characteristic feature of much of Polybius’ moral didacticism is the way in which the morally right tends to go hand in hand with the practically advantageous. The use of the concepts of ‘the good’ (τὸ καλὸν/τὸ δίκαιον)

39 οἱ δ’ Ἀβυδηνοί, προδιειληφότες ύπὲρ αὐτῶν κατὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς στάσιν, καὶ νομίζοντες οἷον εἰ προδόται γίνεσθαι τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ἠγωνισμένων καὶ τεθνεώτων, οὐδαμῶς ὑπέμενον τὸ ζῆν . . . οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πάντες ὥρμων ἀμελλήτως κατὰ συγγενείας ἐπὶ τὸν θάνατον (‘The Abydenes, having decided beforehand for their own sake to carry out their original decree and believing themselves to be like traitors to those who had fought and died for their country, were in no way trying to remain alive . . . All the rest were hurrying to bring about their own deaths without delay, family by family’: 16.34.11–12).
and ‘the advantageous’ (τὸ συμφέρον/τὸ ὠφέλιμον) in some passages of the Histories has been used to connect Polybius with Stoicism, but what is striking about the Histories is exactly that the two are so rarely contrasted and are much more often seen to work together. This stress on the practical advantages of morally correct behaviour is part of what has earned him a reputation as a cynical pragmatist, but this view only sees half the picture. For Polybius, practical advantage should not be sought at the expense of morality, but naturally results from moral behaviour, thus providing another reason for pursuing such behaviour. This does not make him a cynical pragmatist, but a material moralist.

An extended example of a didactic *paradeigma* in the Histories which intertwines practical and moral arguments is 5.9–12, the passage where Polybius most extensively discusses the ‘laws of war’.

The moralising is provoked by Philip V’s sacking of the Aetolian city of Thermus. Polybius first narrates the Macedonian troops’ severe ravaging of the surrounding countryside and looting of extremely wealthy city houses, culminating in their burning of all the valuables they cannot carry with them (5.8). This narrative is remarkable for its entirely neutral vocabulary and complete lack of narratorial criticism. But when Polybius then goes on to describe the looting of the temples and destruction of sacred objects, he introduces this narrative with the statement:

Καὶ ἕως μὲν τούτου πάντα κατὰ τοὺς τοῦ πολέμου νόμους καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ἐπράττετο· τὰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα πῶς χρὴ λέγειν οὐκ οἶδα. (Polyb. 5.9.1)

And until now everything had been done justly and honourably according to the laws of war; but as for what happened afterwards, I do not know how to relate it.

There follows a narrative of the Macedonian destruction of temples and votive offerings, carried out because Philip and his associates were beside themselves with rage (παράστασις) over the Aetolian sacking of Dium and believed that they were only taking just revenge (ἀς δικαίως ταῦτα πράττοντας καὶ καθηκόντως: 5.9.6). This is rounded off with a moralising

40 Connection with Stoicism: Hirzel (1882), von Scala (1890: 201–3), Walbank (1957 ad 3.4.10). As Walbank recognises, the contrast is much older than the Stoics; it is a *topos* in Thucydides’ speeches and extant Athenian oratory. In Polybius, τὸ καλὸν and τὸ συμφέρον are contrasted in speeches at 8.11.7 and 24.12.2 and in the fragments 21.32c (which may well also be from a speech) and 15.24.6. Passages in Polybius where the good and the advantageous are parallel or said to work in unison: 3.4.10, 3.107.8, 7.3.4 (speech), 9.32.11 (speech), 31.30.1.

41 For Polybius’ rules of war see also 23.15. Von Scala’s opinion (1890: 321–4) that Polybius was inspired by the Peripatetic Demetrius of Phalerum in these views may well be right.
conclusion which becomes at the same time the introduction to a lengthy evaluative digression:

ἐμοὶ δὲ τἀναντία δοκεῖ τούτων. εἰ δ᾽ ὀρθὸς ὁ λόγος, σκοπεῖν ἐν μέσῳ πάρεστι, χρωμένους οὐχ ἑτέροις τισίν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἔξ αὐτῆς τῆς οἰκίας ταύτης παραδείγμασιν.

I am of the opposite opinion from them. And it is possible to examine objectively whether my argument is right by using no other examples than those from this very house. (Polyb. 5.9.6–7)

The message, although so far unexpressed, must be that it is acceptable to ravage the enemy’s land and cities, but unacceptable to destroy temples.

A comparison with Antigonus Doson, Philip II and Alexander the Great follows (5.9.8–10.8). In a – moral – mental skip from impiety to brutality, Polybius first employs the two former individuals as examples of conquerors who treated the defeated with mildness and magnanimity (ἐπιεικείας καὶ φιλανθρωπίας: 5.10.1; τῇ δ’ εὐγνωμοσύνῃ καὶ μετριότητι: 5.10.2; τῆς αὐτοῦ προόπτητος καὶ καλοκαγαθίας: 5.10.3; τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ: 5.10.4). Antigonus is said to have been honoured for his restrained behaviour not just in Sparta, but throughout Greece even after his death (5.9.10) – not exactly a practical result perhaps, but a pleasing reward for moral behaviour, and one which often accrues to those Polybian victors who avoid abusing the defeated (more about this below). In the case of Philip II, his magnanimity after the Battle of Chaeronea is explicitly said to have led to a practical advantage: by this behaviour he won over the Athenians more effectively than he could have done by force and thus ‘by a small expense through his political shrewdness achieved his greatest success’ (μικρᾷ δαπάνῃ διὰ τὴν ἀγχίνοιαν τὴν μεγίστην πρᾶξιν κατειργάσατο: 5.10.4). The topic of destruction of sacred buildings is reintroduced by the mention of Alexander the Great, who is praised for leaving the temples of Thebes and Persia untouched and only destroying non-sacred buildings (5.10.6–8). We are not told what practical results he achieved by this; the example is left to reflect badly on Philip V on purely moral grounds.

Polybius then makes the comparison explicit (5.10.9–11) and states that Philip V should have emulated his predecessors in their magnanimity. However,

τοιγαροῦν τἀναντία τοῖς προερημένοις ἀνδράσιν ἐπιτηδεύων τῆς ἐναντίας ἐτυχε παρὰ πάσι δόξης.

Therefore, as he practised the opposite behaviour to the aforementioned kings, he met with the opposite reputation from everybody. (Polyb. 5.10.11)
As with Antigonus Doson, the reputation is thought of as a natural result of a man’s actions, and it is considered sufficiently important to be mentioned as a desirable or non-desirable result depending on the type of reputation. This is true throughout the Histories, and Polybius always assumes that a reputation is an accurate reflection of a man’s actions and nature. Thus, here, he is clearly not suggesting that it would be acceptable to burn down temples as long as one could do it in secret; rather, in his world, being thought to be something or having a reputation for being something is the same as being it.

In 5.11.3, the discussion moves from the particular to the universal, and Polybius gives his ‘law of war’:

τὸ μὲν γὰρ παραιρεῖσθαι τὸν πολεμίων καὶ καταφθείνειν φρούρια, λιμένας, πόλεις, ἀνδρας, καρποὺς, τάλλα τὰ τούτοις παραπλήσα, δι’ ὅν τοὺς μὲν ὑπεναντίους ἀσθενεστέρους ἀν τις τις ποὺσαι, τὰ δὲ σφέτερα πράγματα καὶ τὰς εὐπολίας δυναμικωτέρας, ταῦτα μὲν ἀναγκάζουσιν τοὺς πολέμου νόμοι καὶ τὰ τοῦτο ῥά μεν’ τὸ δὲ μῆτε τοῖς ἱδίοις πράγμαισιν ἐπικουρίαν μέλλωνται μηδ’ ἤττηνοι παρασκευάζετε μήτε τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐλάττωσιν πρὸς γε τὸν ἑκατοτόμον πολέμον ἐκ περιτοι καὶ ναι ὡς μὲν τούτοις ἀνδριάντας καὶ πάσαν δὴ τὴν τοιαύτην κατασκευὴν λυμαίνεσθαι, πῶς οὐκ ἂν ἐπὶ καίει τῆς εἰναι τρόπου καὶ θημοῖ λατύνοντος ἔργον; οὐ γὰρ ἐπ’ ἀπωλείᾳ ἀφανισμῷ τοῖς ἀγνοήσασι πολεμεῖν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἄνδρας, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ διορθώσει καὶ μεταθέσει τῶν ἡμαρτημένων, οὐδὲ συναναρεῖσθαι τὰ μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντα τοῖς ἡμετέριοις, ἀλλὰ συνεξαιρεῖσθαι καὶ συνεξαιρεῖσθαι τοῖς ἀνατίοις τοὺς συναναρεῖσθαι ἀδικεῖτι. τυράννου μὲν γὰρ ἔργον ἔστι τὸ κεκαίνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῖς μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντας ἀδικεῖτι. τυράννου μὲν γὰρ ἔργον ἔστι τὸ κακῶς ποιοῦντα τῷ φόβῳ δεσπόζει ἀκουσίων, μισοῦμεν καὶ μισοῦντας τοὺς ἔρωταιμος βασιλέως δὲ τὸ πάντας ἐν εὐεργεσίαι καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν ἀγαπώμενον, ἐκόντων ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ προστατεῖν.

To take away from the enemy and to destroy his forts, harbours, cities, men, ships, crops, and all other similar things through the removal of which one might make the enemy weaker and strengthen one’s own situation and campaign plans, these actions are forced upon us by the laws and justice of war. But to vandalise uselessly temples as well as statues and all such items without thereby aiding one’s own affairs in the slightest and without weakening the enemy in the relevant war – how can one not say that this is the action of a raving mad character? Good men should wage war on the ignorant not to destroy them utterly, but to change their behaviour and correct their errors, and they should not destroy the innocent along with the guilty, but rather save those who seem to have done wrong along with the innocent. For a tyrant does evil and rules his subjects through fear, hated by and

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42 See e.g. 15.22.2–3, 22.14.1–4 and 31.23–30.
43 See Eckstein (1995: 149–50). I frequently walk past a hairdresser’s window that proudly proclaims ‘A Reputation For Excellence Since 1956’. In the twenty-first century too, we are sometimes supposed to understand that a reputation for excellence is the same as true excellence.
hating his subjects, but a king does good to everyone, is loved because of his benefactions and kindness, and rules as a leader over the willing. (Polyb. 5.11.3–6)

We are now explicitly told that destroying the land and practically useful buildings of the enemy is not only allowed but, in fact, necessary according to the ‘laws of war’ and also quite acceptable (ἀναγκάζουσιν οἱ τοῦ πολέμου νόμοι καὶ τὰ τούτου δίκαια). If the victor destroys sacred buildings and objects, however, this is the sign of a sick mind. This neatly illustrates the close connection between the practically advantageous and the morally right in the Histories: it is fine to push one’s own advantage by destroying the land, buildings and men of the enemy, but one should not destroy anything just for the sake of destroying it. Presumably there is also a religious reason for avoiding the destruction of sacred property, but that is not spelled out (and we shall return to Polybius’ lessons on piety below). It is worth noting that Polybius’ ‘rules of war’ pose a very different distinction from the rules of the Geneva Convention, which stresses the difference between military personnel and equipment, which are legitimate targets, and the civilian population and their homes, which are not. Polybius, living in an age where many soldiers were still citizen soldiers and an army had to live off the land, considers civilian homes and fields acceptable targets, and only religious buildings out of bounds.

Even more interesting, however, is the way in which Polybius slides from talking in concrete terms about allowed and off-limit targets to (in 5.11.5–6) expressing much more general sentiments, which seem only tangentially related to his first point. The prescriptively moralising statement that good men should wage war not to destroy their enemies, but to ‘correct their errors’ seems slightly out of kilter with the apparently religiously motivated rules of war just laid out. How much less is an enemy destroyed if one razes every building to the ground except his temples? Even more confusingly, the second part of the prescription, that rather than destroying the innocent along with the guilty, the guilty should be spared so as not to harm the innocent, seems much closer to the Geneva Convention than to the Hellenistic laws of war Polybius has just propounded. It seems that, as in the paradigmatic section about Antigonus Doson, Philip II and Alexander the Great, Polybius slides easily and unconsciously between a discussion of the destruction of buildings and crops to a discussion of general brutality on the part of the victor.

The slippage becomes obvious in the final sentence of the quoted passage, which states the time-honoured maxim that a tyrant rules through wicked deeds and fear and is hated whereas a king rules through benefactions and kindness and is loved. We have now evidently moved from the immediate
actions of a victor when overrunning a country to the long-term behaviour of a conqueror who intends to keep and rule his conquest. Considering the age of Roman conquest in which Polybius wrote, it is not surprising that the two situations were closely connected in his mind, but it reveals the close connection between the practical and the moral good in the Histories: although the initial, concrete lecturing on the laws of war, which was directly provoked by an incident in the narrative, condemns the destruction of religious buildings on the basis that this does not bring any concrete advantage, and thus seems to prioritise practical benefit over morality in a hierarchy of virtues, this hierarchy changes as the digression moves further and further away from the narrative of the incident that sparked it. No practical advantage is mentioned as attaching to the maxim that one should not aim to destroy one’s enemies, and the practical advantage of the good king (being loved by his subjects, who will then not revolt) is just a pleasant by-product of his morally good behaviour, which is an end in itself.

In the last paragraph of the digression (5.11.7–12.4), Polybius returns to Philip V and imagines counterfactually what would have been the reaction of the Aetolians if Philip had refrained from destroying their temples:

Surely, to conquer one’s enemies by honourable and lawful behaviour is more, not less, useful than victories won by use of arms. For in the one case, the survivors yield from necessity, in the other from choice; and in the one case the correction of behaviour is achieved alongside great disadvantages, in the other the behaviour of the wrongdoers is changed to the better without harm. (Polyb. 5.12.2–3)

Conquering without the use of arms is easier and cheaper, but also more honourable. The practical and the moral purpose are so closely

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44 On the role of such counterfactuals in Polybius see Maier (2013).
intertwined that it is impossible to see where one ends and the other begins. Such combining of the moral and the practical is a distinctive feature of Polybius’ writing. Many of the characters who earn the highest praise in the Histories are men who, in the eyes of Polybius, acted morally and thereby won advantages for themselves (e.g. Scipio the Elder acting as the moderate victor at New Carthage at 10.17–19, and Scipio the Younger training for political life at 31.25–30), and some of the most famous passages of the work are lengthy didactic digressions which combine the two aspects: 3.22–32 on the legal and moral responsibility for the Second Punic War, and all of book 6 on the moral and practical excellence of the Roman constitution.

In moral-didactic terms, that means that the reader of the Histories is taught that it usually pays to be good. It also means that moral advice and practical advice are often intermingled in prescriptive passages, particularly those that deal with how to be a good military commander (see below).

The Ability to Handle the Vicissitudes of Fortune

In the preface to the Histories, quoted above, Polybius states that the study of history is both ‘the truest education and training for civic engagement’ and ‘the most vivid and indeed only teacher of how to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with dignity’. This is an announcement of a twofold didactic purpose: partly to offer practical and moral advice specifically for the politician, partly to provide moral examples to follow and avoid for the private person who finds himself a victim of shifting fortunes. In scholarship on Polybius it is the first purpose that has received by far the most attention. However, it is surely of no little interest that the – at first glance rather more limited and entirely moral – lesson of how to bear the ups and downs of life with dignity occupies as important a place in Polybius’ purpose statement as the broader lesson, both practical and moral, of how to engage in political life.

The theme is also prominent in the second preface, where the narrator, as we have seen above (p. 26), explains that he cannot end his work in 167 BC as originally envisioned because the reader would be unable to ‘form a considered opinion’ (ποιήσασθαι τὴν διάληψιν) about people and states on the basis of their successes (τῶν κατόρθωμάτων) and failures (τῶν ἐλαττώμάτων) alone. Such an opinion can only be formed on the basis of the manner in which the two parties handled their respective success and misfortune. It is clear from the use of the nouns κατόρθωμα and ἐλάττωμα that Polybius here thinks of success and failure primarily in military terms, as victory and defeat. More specifically, the last ten books
of the *Histories* are supposed to offer the reader a sound basis for ‘forming a considered opinion’ about how Rome handled the good fortune that was world dominance, and how the conquered states handled their corresponding misfortune.

The fact that the theme of human ability to cope with good and bad fortune is central to both of Polybius’ prefaces shows that it was at the heart of what he wanted to do with his *Histories*. No other ancient historiographer puts this theme front and centre to the same degree. Throughout the *Histories* the theme permeates the work at every level. It also figures in programmatic statements outside of the prefaces (1.35), and it lies at the heart of Polybius’ fascination with the Roman constitution, which shows its worth in that it prevents the state from growing overconfident in good fortune (Polyb. 6.18.5–6). It is a frequent topic in speeches delivered by characters (e.g. the speeches of Scipio and Hannibal to each other after the Battle of Zama, 15.6.4–8.14), and it is the most common topic for explicit moralising in the work as a whole.45 Perhaps surprisingly when seen from the point of view of modern readers, the focus is more often on the ability to bear success than to bear misfortune. In the world of the *Histories* the temptation to overstep the boundaries when successful is quite simply the one thing that most often leads human beings astray from the path of morality.46 The mistake is so common that success, especially political or military success, becomes a sort of test, which most men fail by becoming arrogant and abusive, and only a few pass by staying humble and humane.

The first explicit moralising on a character’s handling of changeable fortunes is 1.35. This is the conclusion to the story of how the Roman consul M. Atilius Regulus first defeats the Carthaginians in battle and arrogantly offers them such harsh conditions that they decide to fight on, whereupon he himself is defeated in battle and taken captive by the Carthaginians:

Ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ πολλά τις ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐπισημαινόμενος εὗροι πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίου συντελεσθέντα. καὶ γὰρ τὸ διαπιστεῖν τῇ τύχῃ, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τὰς εὐπραγίας, ἐναργέστατον ἐφάνη πάσιν τότε διὰ τῶν Μάρκου συμπτωμάτων· ὁ γὰρ μικρῷ πρότερον οὐ διδοὺς ἔλεον οὐδὲ συγγνώμην τοῖς πταίουσιν παρὰ πόδας αὐτὸς ἤγετο δεησόμενος περὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σωτηρίας.

45 Passages moralising explicitly on how to handle good and bad fortune: 1.35.1–3, 2.2–4, 3.31.2–4, 4.48.5–13, 5.46.6–7, 6.2.5–6, 6.10, 6.18.5–6, 6.44, 8.20.8–12, 8.21.10–11, 9.42.5–8, 10.17.6–19, 10.40, 11.2, 15.6.3–8.14, 15.17.4, 18.33.4–7, 18.37, 25.3.9–10, 27.8.8–9, 29.20, 30.6–9, 36.4.9–5.5.

46 The importance of bearing good fortune with moderation is propounded so often in the *Histories* that Walbank (1957: 19) terms it ‘the same trite homily’ repeated with ‘monotonous regularity’.
If one distinguishes correctly, it is possible to find in this situation much to contribute to the correction of human life. Because of what happened to Marcus, everyone at the time saw clearly that fortune should be distrusted, especially in times of success. For he who only a little before had not offered pity or mercy to the defeated was almost immediately himself led away to beg for his own life from these same people. (Polyb. 1.35.1–3)

This prescriptively moralising conclusion makes the narrative of Regulus a didactic *paradigma* and an interpretative template for the many similar stories that follow. The passage links back to the implicitly moralising narrative of Regulus’ earlier treatment of the ambassadors from the defeated Carthaginians (1.31). Here, Regulus was said to make ‘harsh demands’ (τὸ βάρος τῶν ἐπιταγμάτων: 1.31.6; τῇ βαρύτητι τοῦ Μάρκου: 1.31.7) because he believed that he had already won the final victory (ὅς ἥδη κεκρατηκὼς τῶν ὅλων: 1.31.6). In this he was clearly mistaken, and his mistake leads to his own undoing, demonstrating that, in typical Polybian fashion, it would have been more advantageous to have behaved with moderation and humility. Despite the fact that Regulus’ situation was quite different from that of the men he had previously humiliated – they were ambassadors negotiating on behalf of their threatened city; Regulus is a captive, but his city is not under direct threat – the narrator makes it sound as if he has swapped places with the men he previously humiliated: ‘he who only a little before . . . was almost immediately himself led away to beg for his own life from these same people’. The result is an emphasis on the striking, paradoxical or ironic in the change in Regulus’ circumstances, which gives it an air of a dramatic *peripeteia*.

Regulus thus fails the test of good fortune. So does the rebel Achaeus, whose adoption of the royal title was used as an example of moralising by means of evaluative vocabulary above (pp. 35–6). His capture and execution by Antiochus III later earn a moralising conclusion admonishing the reader to trust no one easily (μηδενὶ πιστεῦειν ραδίως) and not to be boastful in success (μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν ἐν ταῖς εὐπραγίαις) because, ‘being human’, we need always to be prepared for everything (πᾶν δὲ προσδοκᾶν ἀνθρώπους ὄντας: 8.21.11). Similarly, the Aetolians are turned into a negative *paradigma* in 2.2–4. Here they lay siege to the city of Medium, and when the city is on the verge of giving in just before the annual election of the Aetolian *strategos*, the retiring *strategos* claims his right before the Aetolian Assembly to a part of the spoils when the city falls. The Assembly decides that both the retiring and the new *strategos* will have their part,

47 It seems that the laudatory Regulus legend of the Roman tradition, seen most famously in Hor. *Carm.* 3.5 and Cic. *Off.* 3.99, had not yet taken root at the time of Polybius; see Leach (2014).
and that both names will be inscribed on the victory dedication. Shortly afterwards the Medionians receive help from the Illyrians, who overwhelm the Aetolian lines and liberate the city. The Medionians celebrate and dedicate the captured arms to the gods with a mocking inscription mentioning both the retired and the new Aetolian strategos. The narrator concludes:

τῆς τύχης ὥσπερ ἐπιτηδείς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις ἐπὶ τῶν ἐκείνως συμβαίνοντων ἔνδεικνυμένης τὴν αὐτῆς δύναμιν. ἀ γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν αὐτοὶ προσεδόκων ἄλλοι ἔκτιμον ἄλλοι τοῖς ἐκείνως παρέδωκεν ἐν πάνω βραχεῖ χρόνοι κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων. Αἰτωλοὶ δὲ τῇ παραδόξῳ χρησάμενοι συμφορά πάντας ἐδίδαξαν μηδέποτε βουλεύεσθαι περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ὥς ἢ ἂν γεγονότος, μηδὲ προκατελπίζειν βεβαιουμένους ὑπὲρ ὃν ἄκμην ἐν ἐκείνοις ἔστιν ἅπαν γενέσθαι, νέμειν δὲ μερίδα τῷ παραδόξῳ πανταχῇ μὲν ἀνθρώπως ὄντας, μάλιστα δ᾽ ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς.

Fortune, as if on purpose, demonstrating its power to other human beings by what had happened to these men. For the things which they themselves had been expecting imminently to suffer at the hands of their enemies she granted them to do themselves to those enemies a very short time later. And the Aetolians, in suffering this unexpected disaster, taught everyone never to deliberate about the future as if it has already happened and never to expect firmly things which may yet possibly turn out otherwise, but to allot a portion to the unexpected in all matters since we are human, and especially in war. (Polyb. 2.4.3–5)

Again we see the sudden change in circumstances attributed to fortune (tyche), and again we have a reminder that we are only human and thus cannot know the future. As in the Regulus passage, there is also a deliberate mirroring of previous success with present misfortune (the inscription on the shields mocking the decree of the Aetolians), and it is hinted that an abusive or overconfident victor is brought low exactly because of his abusiveness or overconfidence. These features are all typical of Polybius’ moralising on the topic of the changeability of fortune and human ability to cope with it. It is important to point out, however, that Polybius – in contrast with Diodorus, as we shall see in the next chapter – never explicitly says that such actions or attitudes are punished by tyche or the divine; the closest he gets is saying that it ‘looked as if’ tyche had punished the overconfident (2.4.3, 1.86.7, 20.7.2). Nonetheless it is a fact, and a very didactic one, that characters in the Histories who do not know how to handle good fortune with moderation usually come to sticky ends.

While most characters in the Histories fall into the trap of becoming overconfident in good fortune, there are a heroic few who avoid the pitfall.

48 Contra Roveri (1982: 322), who uses 2.4.3–5 as an example of tyche acting as punisher. For a discussion of the concept of tyche in Polybius see Hau (2011).

49 See e.g. 1.35.1–3, 2.2–4, 4.48.5–13 with 8.20, 5.46.6–7 with 5.48, 25.3.9–10.
The first conspicuous example (in the extant text) is Scipio Africanus the Elder. After his victories over the Carthaginians in Iberia the former allies of the Carthaginians come over to his side in droves, and they address him as ‘king’. Scipio is here in a situation similar to that of Achaeus, but he handles the situation rather better, and tells the Iberians that ‘he wanted to be called kingly by everyone and to truly live up to that, but that he did not want to be king or to be called king by anyone’. The narrator then launches into an evaluative digression in praise of this action, stating that it proves Scipio’s ‘greatness of soul’ (μεγαλοψυχία) that he did not accept what tyche offered him (10.40.6). It is even more impressive, the narrator says, that Scipio rejected the temptation later in life when he was the conqueror of the entire world and was hailed as king everywhere, and this truly shows to what degree ‘Scipio surpassed other men in greatness of soul’.

The two other characters who conspicuously avoid the trap are Aemilius Paullus and his adopted son, grandson of Scipio the Elder, Scipio Africanus the Younger. Both of these express the Polybian message in a speech delivered to fellow-Romans using a defeated enemy as an example of the change-ability of fortune: Scipio the Younger points to the surrendered Carthaginian statesman Hasdrubal and declares that this demonstrates the power of tyche and teaches that human beings should not become overconfident (μηδέποτε λέγειν μηδέ πράττειν μηδέν υπερήφανον ἄνθρωπον ὄντα: 38.20); Aemilius Paullus expresses the doctrine in more detail when presenting the captured Perseus to the Senate (in an example of a speech that gains its didactic authority from corresponding to narratorial moralising elsewhere in the work, 29.20). Both of these examples spring from the type of situation that most often sparks Polybian moralising on the right way to handle good fortune, namely scenes of the victorious general. In these situations the question of how to behave in great success becomes a question of how to treat the defeated and/or captives, and the challenge – which most victors fail – is to show mildness and magnanimity because of a realisation that we are all human beings and subjects of unstable fortune. A corollary of such an awareness of one’s humanity, with its limited control and its solidarity with other human beings, is that the victor treats the defeated mildly, not because they deserve it, but because this is the way to preserve his own honour and enhance his own glory (see especially 15.17.4). This then becomes a way of breaking the circle of revenge dictated by traditional Greek morality.

50 βούλεσθαι καὶ λέγεσθαι παρὰ πάσι καὶ ταῖς ἀληθείαις ὑπάρχειν, βασιλεύσει γε μήν οὔτ᾽ εἶναι θέλειν οὔτε λέγεσθαι παρ᾽ οὐδὲν: 10.40.5.
51 τοσοῦτον ὑπερέθετο μεγαλοψυχίᾳ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους: 10.40.9.
52 Examples are: 9.42–5–8, 10.17–19, 15.4.6–12, 15.17.4, 22.16.
53 Such ‘victor-after-the-victory scenes’ have been discussed in detail as a type-scene in Greek historiography more generally in Hau (2008).
An interesting variation on the *paradeigma* of the good, moderate victor is the crying general. The most famous example is Scipio the Younger at the burning of Carthage. In a short fragment found in the Constantinian excerpts Scipio and Polybius, as a character in his own work, are watching the flames together, and Scipio exclaims ‘Polybius, this is a glorious moment, but somehow I fear and foresee that some day someone else will give this same order with regard to my country.’\(^{54}\) The quotation is followed by an enthusiastic endorsement by the narrator, who labels the ability to keep in mind, at the moment of victory, the instability of human fortune and the possibility that it may be turned around in the future ‘a characteristic of a great man and one worthy of remembrance’ (μεγάλου καὶ τελείου καὶ συλλήβδουν άξιου μνήμης: 38.21.3). From the later historian Appian\(^{55}\) we have testimony about what the rest of the scene looked like. In a passage which professes to be a summary of Polybius, Scipio cries for his enemy (δακρύσαι καὶ φανερὸς γενέσθαι κλαίων ὑπὲρ πολεμίου) and quotes the *Iliad* 6.448-9, which predicts the fall of Troy, as an allegory for the future fall of Rome. It is probably safe to assume that the narratorial endorsement in the original *Histories* encompassed both the Homeric quotation and the tears beside the first exclamation.\(^{56}\) Earlier in the *Histories*, Antiochus III bursts into tears when looking at the captured rebel Achaeus (8.20.9–10), who has been threatening his rule for years. The narrator comments: ‘This happened to him, I think, because he saw how unexpected and impossible to guard against events caused by τυχε can be.’\(^{57}\) Thirdly, in Diodorus 27.6.1, which almost certainly used Polybius as a source, Scipio the Elder cries at the sight of the captured Syphax.\(^{58}\)

It seems that tears at the sight of a defeated enemy are an appropriate response in Polybius. The tears must be provoked by pity for the vanquished, but the pity seems closely bound up with an intellectual and emotional realisation that fortunes are changeable and that the same fate may at some time in the future strike the victor himself (or his country). This is a different sort of pity from the one encouraged by Christianity, which does not rely on any sense that a similar fate may strike the pitier, and is strongly connected with compassion; but it is closely related to the Aristotelian description of pity as an emotion felt for someone

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\(^{54}\) ο Πολυβις, ἕρη χαλὸν μὲν, ἄλλα οὐκ οἶδ' ὡπώς ἐγὼ δεῖδα καὶ προορῶμαι μὴ ποτὲ τις ἄλος τὸ τοῦ το παραγγελμα δῶσαι περὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας πατρίδος: 38.21.1.

\(^{55}\) App. *Pun.* 132, included in the Loeb edition of Polybius as 38.22.

\(^{56}\) For a cogent argument about which one of the three versions of this passage to accept as Polybius’ original see Walbank (1979: ad loc.).

\(^{57}\) τὸ τὸ δ’ ἐπαθὼν ὀρὸν, ὡς ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, τὸ δυσφύλακτον καὶ παράλογον τὸν ἐκ τῆς τύχης συμβαίνοντον: 8.20.10.

\(^{58}\) The tears of Scipio are briefly discussed by Brink and Walbank (1954: 104), who argue that this response marks him out in the *Histories* as a ‘sensitive Hellenist’. 
similar to oneself suffering something that might conceivably happen to oneself.59

We may wonder whether the crying victor is perhaps a way for the historiographer to make otherwise criticisable behaviour towards the defeated (such as burning their city) or the captured (such as executing them, perhaps after parading them in a triumph) into something that can be praised and used as a positive moral paradeigma, but Polybius may not have thought about it in such cynical terms. He may have considered the execution of enemy leaders such as Perseus and Syphax, and perhaps even the burning of Carthage (although see above, p. 37), a military necessity to ensure the safety of the victor’s own city, much as the burning of farmland and the killing of the inhabitants were considered acceptable in the ‘rules of war’ passage discussed above. In that case, the difference between a humble and an overconfident victor becomes the perpetrating or avoidance of extra, unnecessary harm to the captives, and the state of mind in which the burning of the city was executed. That is, if Scipio the Elder had tortured and humiliated Syphax, or if Scipio the Younger had laughed and joked while burning Carthage, they would have been made into negative paradeigmata.60 As it is, the tears and the expressed awareness of the changeability of fortune make them positive ones.

Considering the emphasis in the Histories on the changeability of fortune and the right way to handle success, we might expect an equally codified system for how to cope with misfortune. In fact, moralising on the ability or inability to handle misfortune and defeat is significantly less frequent. The most explicit paradeigma is Philip V after his defeat at Cynoscephalae. In an evaluative digression the narrator expresses his surprise that someone who did not know how to behave in success could handle defeat so well (18.33.1–4). Three specific actions of Philip are praised: that he has done everything he could to win the battle, that he makes an effort to gather the survivors, and that he burns the royal correspondence in order not to implicate anyone else in his downfall. What is admired is Philip’s ability to show forethought even in this extreme situation by exercising some degree of damage control instead of fleeing in panic. In other words, Philip is praised for keeping his head in misfortune and for not taking others with him in his fall.

Such cool-headed, rational behaviour in defeat is generally admired in the Histories. Various peoples are praised for not panicking and for stand-

59 Arist. Rh. 2.8 1385b. For a lucid discussion of this view of pity see Pelling (2012).
60 In practice, considering Polybius’ friendship with the younger Scipio and his Roman readership, this might have been difficult. If Polybius had wanted to criticise either Scipio’s behaviour as victor, he would have had to do it subtly, in a similar way to his questioning of the justice of destroying Carthage in 36.9 (see above, p. 37).
ing by their principles even in defeat. Thus, after their defeat by Regulus, the Carthaginians refuse his unreasonable conditions γενναίως (1.31.8); after Cannae the Roman Senate prevents the populace from panicking and considers their options ἀνδρωδῶς (3.118.7); and after a defeat in the Social War the Achaeans keep standing by their allies and bear the disaster γενναίως (4.15.5): each situation functions as a paradeigma contributing to the purpose Polybius declared for his work in his preface. Similarly, but more dramatically, individuals are usually praised for their ability to accept when they are beaten and for their courage in facing the consequences, be they forced negotiations (Hamilcar Barca, 1.62.3–6), compliance with harsh demands (Hannibal, 15.19.8; Mago the Bruttian, 36.4.9–5.5) or even death (Cleomenes, 5.38–9; Hasdrubal, 11.2). A fragment from De Virtutibus et Vitiis is a lengthy evaluative digression contrasting good and bad behaviour in extreme political misfortune (30.6–9). It discusses the actions of the Greek statesmen who had opposed Rome and were faced with the consequences after the Battle of Pydna. Some committed suicide and are elaborately praised by the narrator (30.7.1–4). Others, who had never been openly on the side of Perseus, faced charges and resourcefully defended themselves in court. They are also praised, if a little less enthusiastically (30.7.5–8). A third category, however, panicked, accused others in order to save themselves, and fled from one corner of the Greek world to the other, thereby bringing other people into danger by asking for protection, until they were finally apprehended and executed. This category is turned into a detailed and scornful negative paradeigma (30.8–9). They are criticised not for being on the wrong side or for failing in their political endeavours (as argued by Walbank 1965), but for not having the courage to take responsibility for their own actions and face the consequences.61

The overall message is that human beings cannot control the world, that we may all be brought to the extremes of good and bad fortune in our lives, but that we can control our own reactions to such events and that we must bear either with equal dignity (the γενναίως of the preface). In success this means staying humble and humane; in disaster it means keeping a clear

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61 This passage is lucidly discussed by Eckstein (1995: 40–3), whose excellent book offers a discussion of many aspects of Polybius’ moralising and connects it with biographical details of Polybius’ life. He concludes that Polybius’ moral stance is that of the traditional Greek elite, and that his main message is an exhortation to his fellow-aristocrats, Greek and Roman, to combine this ethos with the courage to take significant action and live with its consequences. It will become clear from the analysis offered below that I largely agree with Eckstein on the traditional nature of Polybius’ views, although I believe that there are two significant exceptions to it. Likewise I agree that courage to take action and live with its consequences was one of Polybius’ moral messages, but taking this as his only message is too narrow a view of a long and complex text. The passage is also well discussed by Petzold (1969: 59–60).
head and carrying on if possible, or facing the consequences unflinchingly if there is no other way out.

Courage, Reason and the Good Commander

Apart from the ability to handle success, the two virtues most often praised in the Histories are courage and reason. Let us begin with the more traditional virtue, namely courage.

The courage to face defeat which has been discussed above fits into a larger Polybian didactic message about taking responsibility for one’s actions. Into this category fall several passages which blame a people for its own disaster, such as the digression castigating the Epirote for allowing a garrison stronger than their own city and made up of barbarians (2.7.5–12), and the famous digression on why the Greek catastrophe of 145 BC was worse than the Carthaginian one of 146 BC (answer: because they could not blame it on fortune, but only on their own folly, 38.1–3). Passages such as these show that Eckstein is right to take the courage to face the consequences of one’s actions as one of the major moral lessons a reader is supposed to draw from the Histories.62

More traditional, physical courage of the type shown on the battlefield is equally prominent in the didactic programme of the Histories. The nouns τόλμα, ἀνδρεῖα, εὐψυχία and γενναιότης as well as their adjective and adverb cognates, proliferate in battle descriptions and are clearly meant to be worthy of imitation (see e.g. 3.116–117). The repeated instances of such characteristics making the difference between victory and defeat,63 or between a city’s being lost or saved,64 amount to implicit moralising by the correlation between behaviour and result. The fierce but futile resistance against Philip V by the citizens of Abydus discussed above (pp. 40–2 is the exception that proves the rule: in the moralising digression that precedes the treachery of the elders and thereby the fall of the city and the mass suicide of the citizens, the narrator states that:

διὸ καὶ μάλιστ’ ἂν τις ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀβυδηνῶν περιπετείας μέμψαιτο τῇ τύχῃ, διότι τὰς μὲν τῶν προειρημένων συμφορὰς οἷον ἐλέησασα παραυτίκα διωρθώσατο, περιθεῖσα τὴν νίκην ἅμα καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν τοῖς ἀπηλπισμένοις, περὶ δ’ Ἀβυδηνῶν τὴν ἐναντίαν εἶχε διάληψιν.

Therefore one might well blame fortune for the dramatic change in the Abydenes’ situation because she, as if in pity, immediately set right the fates of the aforementioned peoples and brought about victory and salvation for

63 See e.g. 1.53.13, 2.33.7 with 2.32.9–10, 5.4.6–13.
64 See e.g. 1.36.7, 2.9.1–6, 4.57.2–58, 5.76.11.
those who had lost all hope, but for the Abydenes she held the opposite judgement. (Polyb. 16.32.5)

Polybius clearly thinks that the Abydenes should have been saved by their bravery, and the fact that they were not is so inexplicable that it can only be put down to the work of fortune.65 Usually in the Histories, courage is one of the main qualities needed for success, not only in individual battles, but also in the long term. Thus, one of the main benefits of the Roman constitution is that it instils courage into its citizens (6.52–5), and it is this constitution that has won Rome world supremacy (6.2.8–10).

On an individual level, courage is displayed conspicuously by the major heroes of the Histories (Philopoemen. 2.67–9; Scipio the Younger, 31.29’ 35.4), and is a stock characteristic of any good man, listed along with other qualities such as – typically – good birth, generosity, moderation and intelligence.66 At the opposite end of the spectrum, cowardice is one of the vices typically listed for any bad character in the Histories, along with other undesirable qualities such as laziness, greed and effeminacy (e.g. Agathocles, 15.34; Prusias, 36.15). Some major villains, however, are brave, but morally corrupt: Antiochus III displays bravery at 11.39.15–16, but turns into a villain at 15.20; Philip V is described as courageous at 4.77–8 and turns bad at 7.11. The Celtic barbarians are inherently brave,67 but are ultimately ineffective because their bravery is not tempered with reason (2.35.2–3). A good man in the Histories needs a combination of courage and reason, steered by a moral compass.

Likewise, a good military commander in the Histories needs to be brave, but to hold his courage in check with reason. Reason is particularly emphasised in two of the work’s longest digressions, one offering general thoughts about the qualities that make a good commander (9.12–20; the context is lost) and one focusing particularly on the qualities of Scipio Africanus the Elder (10.2–5). The digression on the generic good commander is obviously didactic, but less obviously moralising. The digression begins with the statement that success is possible in every military endeavour if one acts with reason (σὺν νῷ: 9.12.1) and that fewer things are achieved in war ‘in the open and with force’ (προδήλως καὶ μετὰ βίας) than ‘with trickery and good timing’ (μετὰ δόλου καὶ σὺν καιρῷ: 9.12.2). It continues to state that most mistakes are due to a commander’s ignorance (ἄγνοιας) and

65 A possibly parallel case is 16.22a, a fragment extolling the courage of the inhabitants of Gaza, according to the epitomiser in connection with the narrative of Antiochus III’s sacking of the city. It is, however, impossible to see whether the narrator in the original text had anything to say about the futility of the bravery displayed here.

66 See e.g. 21.9, 22.22, 31.11–14.

67 See e.g. 1.78.1–9, 2.30.7, 22.21.
carelessness/inactivity (ῥαθυμίας), with no mention of courage or cowardice (9.12.4). Then the advice gets more specific: a commander must be secretive (9.13.1–5), must know how to calculate the length and time of marches (9.13.6), how to choose the right time for the execution of his plans (9.13.7) and how to select suitable signals and countersignals as well as accomplices (9.13.9). He needs first- and second-hand knowledge of the terrain (9.14.1–4) and theoretical knowledge of astronomy and geometry (9.14.5–15 and 20). There are plenty of things that cannot be foreseen – the examples given are all instances of extreme weather – so the commander has a duty to foresee at least the ones that can be (9.16.4). Examples are then given of military stratagems which have failed through a lack of foresight or the incompetence of the commander (9.17–19). The failures are labelled with moral terms (αἰσχρῶς: 9.18.3; μετ’ αἰσχύνης: 9.18.9), which demonstrates once again the extent to which the moral and the practical converge in Polybius’ didacticism.

At the end of the digression, a reader is left with the impression that the good commander in Polybius’ Histories is a creature entirely of the mind, with no room for emotion or morality. This impression is strengthened by a digression in the following book which serves to introduce Scipio Africanus the Elder into the narrative. This digression begins on a polemical note with the statement that people are bound to get the wrong impression about this great man because existing accounts of his life are very wide of the mark (10.2.1–3). The problem, it turns out, is that people generally ascribe Scipio’s successes partly to divine influence or good fortune, whereas they were really due to his own intelligence (10.2.4–13). Polybius goes on to argue this case by narrating two incidents from Scipio’s youth. The second incident is the notorious case where Scipio makes a rational calculation (λογιζόμενος: 10.4.3) of his brother’s best chances of gaining the aedileship and then lies to his mother and pretends to have received a divine dream, which she proceeds to help him fulfil (10.4.1–5.8). The first incident, however, is interesting for what it shows about the interplay between courage and reason in the ideal Polybian commander: here, Scipio, on his very first military campaign as a 17-year old, sees his father in danger on the battlefield and charges his attackers alone ‘with reckless daring’ (παραβόλως καὶ τολμηρῶς: 10.3.5). He saves his father and thereby gains a reputation for bravery, but then in subsequent years, when the fate of Rome depends on him, only rarely (πάντως: 10.3.7) exposes himself to danger. ‘This’, concludes the narrator, ‘is the characteristic of a com-

68 This has grated on the sensibilities of many modern scholars; see e.g. Pédech (1964: 222–3) and Walbank (1967: ad loc.).

69 σπανίως is a conjecture for the πάντως of the manuscript, which would give the opposite meaning and make the sentence nonsensical. See Walbank (1967: ad loc.).
mander not trusting in fortune, but possessing intelligence’ (ὡπερ ἵδιόν ἔστιν οὐ τῇ τύχῃ πιστεύοντος, ἀλλὰ νοῦν ἔχοντος ἡγεμόνος: 10.3.7).

On the basis of especially these two digressions, Pédech has argued that Polybius valued pure, rational pragmatism over moral considerations and traditional Greek values. Pédech argues that the heroes of the Histories, especially Hannibal, Scipio Africanus and Philopoemen, come off as very similar because they all show the qualities that Polybius admired, namely primarily cold, rational calculation. As the work progresses into events Polybius himself had experienced, these heroes become fewer and further between because the historical characters he had actually met could not so easily be fitted into this preconceived mould.70 There is some truth in this, but it is not the whole truth, as Eckstein has clearly shown.71 Firstly, Polybius nowhere says that the commander must never participate in the fighting, only that he should choose his battles carefully. This is even true in the digression where he compares the Roman general Marcellus, who got himself killed in battle ‘more like a fool than like a general’ (ἀκακώτερον ἢ στρατηγικώτερον: 10.32.7), and Hannibal, who managed to stay alive through many years of dangerous campaigning (10.32.7–33.8): the message is that a general should participate only in major engagements where ‘everything is at risk’ (οἷς συμπάσχει τὰ ὅλα: 10.32.9). Secondly, Polybius often expresses great admiration for commanders who fight in the front line even when that leads to their death. Eckstein gives as prime example the narrative of how Philopoemen, after routing the mercenaries of the Spartan tyrant Machanidas, leaves the battlefield in order to hunt down the tyrant and face him in single combat (11.17–18). The story is told with much evaluating phrasing, and the reader is clearly meant to admire the victorious, heroic Philopoemen. However, such behaviour by a military commander, especially of a newly instituted and still fragile force, can hardly be called calculated or well-reasoned. As contributory evidence Eckstein adds the death in battle of Hamilcar Barca (2.1.7–8), the last battle of the Rhodian admiral Theophiliscus (16.5) and the wounding in battle of Antiochus III (10.49), all narrated with admiration and approval by the Polybian narrator.

As Eckstein observes, it is possible to reconcile these heroic narratives with the digressions that focus on a commander’s rational intelligence: Polybius’ message is clearly that a military commander needs to possess a combination of courage and intelligence, and that he needs the latter in order to decide when the time is right to display the former. In fact, Polybius’ Hannibal and Scipio Africanus are both excellent examples of

commanders who successfully combine these two traits.\textsuperscript{72} The exception that proves the rule is Aratus the Elder, whose unique combination (τὴν ἰδιότητα τῆς φύσεως: 4.7.11) of acute mental abilities and daring in strategies with cowardice in the face of battle presents enough of a problem for Polybius to devote a special digression to its discussion (4.7.11–8).

It is surely significant, however, that calculating reason is stressed as the prime quality of a good commander in theoretical, polemical digressions of high rhetoric, whereas courage and a commander’s presence on the battlefield remain important in the narrative of events and short praise passages. It seems that Polybius was prepared to argue the case for pure reason in strong tones where he felt it was polemically important, that is, as part of a debate about the nature of Scipio’s successes (unfortunately we do not have the context of the digression on the good commander, so we do not know what sparked it), but that he was equally happy to present the heroic actions of commanders in the battle line as positive paradeigmata when not contesting a specific point.\textsuperscript{73} It may be going too far to say that Polybius advocated one type of behaviour with his head and another with his heart, but it is a fact that the moral lessons of his \textit{Histories} had room for both.

A few further qualities round off the good commander. These are perhaps best seen through their opposites, in a digression on the importance for a commander of knowing the moral weaknesses of his opponent (3.81). The potential weaknesses are: carelessness (ῥαθυμίαν) and lack of initiative (ἀργίαν), drunkenness (τὴν πρὸς τὸν οἶνον ἐπιθυμίαν), addiction to sex (τὰς τῶν ἀφροδισίων ὁρμὰς) and – singled out as the most dangerous vices for a commander – cowardice and stupidity (δειλία καὶ βλακεία). Then, as most useful for the enemy and most risky for the commander’s own side, there is added the group of rashness (προπέτεια), over-boldness (θρασύτης) and unthinking passion (θυμὸς ἄλογος) along with vanity and delusion (κενοδοξία καὶ τῦφος). In the narrative of events, most of these play a part: carelessness and lack of initiative are the main flaws of Hanno (νωθρῶς: 1.74.2 and 13), rashness that of the much-maligned Minucius (τόλμαν: 3.104.8–9) and unthinking passion that of Flaminius (θυμοῦ πλήρης: 3.82.2), who occasioned the digression. No one in the extant text gets killed as a direct result of his vanity, but several generals are castigated for being all show and no substance (e.g. Aristocrates of Rhodes, 33.4).\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} Hannibal, 3.17, 3.69.12–14, 3.78.5–79; Scipio Africanus, 10.2–5 (as discussed above) and 10.13–14.

\textsuperscript{73} This is parallel to his use of \textit{tyche}, which is treated as a force of no account in comparison with human reason in polemical passages, as a predestining force in rhetorical passages and as a figure of speech in the narrative of events. See Hau (2011).

\textsuperscript{74} Other good generals are: Fabius, 3.89.2–3 (intelligently cautious); Aemilius Paullus, 3.106.11 (courageous and intelligent) and 3.116.9–11 (dutiful and brave); Diophanes of
Drunkenness and an addiction to sexual pleasures are never (in the extant text) shown to affect a battle, but are typical characteristics of the bad ruler, as we shall see below. On the positive side, Hannibal is repeatedly praised for taking good care of his soldiers with the result that they remain unfailingly loyal to him even under extreme circumstances, but otherwise the relationship between the commander and his men is not one that receives a lot of attention, a fact which distinguishes Polybius significantly from the other soldier-historian of this study, Xenophon.

The Good King: Benefactions, Non-Violence and Moderate Living

Just like military commanders, kings play a large part in Polybius’ Histories and are often turned into moral paradeigmata. Hellenistic kings were, of course, also military commanders, and for this reason they are regularly praised for having or criticised for lacking both courage and intelligence. They did, however, need many more qualities besides, and Polybius is pleasingly consistent in which ones to recommend to his readers.

This can be seen from a comparison of three evaluative digressions praising good kings: Hiero II of Syracuse (7.8.1–8), Eumenes II of Pergamum (32.8) and Massinissa of Numidia (36.16). To begin with Hiero: he won power entirely by his own talents (7.8.1) and without harming any of his citizens (7.8.2) and maintained it in the same way (7.8.3), which the narrator labels ‘the most unexpected thing of all’ (ὅ πάντων παραδοξότατον: 7.8.3). Indeed there were no plots against him throughout his fifty-four-year-long rule (7.8.4). This is posited as the reason why Hiero could rule without killing or exiling citizens (γὰρ: 7.8.4), but in the didactic world of the Histories it is fair to assume that causation also works the other way: he treated his citizens well, and they rewarded him with loyalty. The tyrant is then praised for having done great benefactions to the Greeks in an attempt to win a great reputation (εὐεργετικώτατος καὶ φιλοδοξότατος γενόμενος εἰς τοὺς Έλληνας: 7.8.6) and thereby won great fame for himself and goodwill towards his city (μεγάλην μὲν αὐτῷ δόξαν, οὐ μικρὰν δὲ Συρακοσίοις

Megapoli (71.9 (physical strength and bravery); Opimius, 33.10–11 (intelligence). Other bad generals are: Tiberius, 3.70.7 (ambitious and overconfident); Flaminius, 3.86, 3.81.12–82.8, 3.83.6–84.15 (overconfident and incompetent); Antiochus III at Raphia; 5.85.11–13 (young and inexperienced).

75 See e.g. 3.14.2–4, 3.60.1–7, 11.19.4.

76 As discussed in the Introduction to this study, that does not mean that only kings could learn from their examples. It is entirely possible to adapt the positive characteristics of Polybian kings to fit the private circumstances of any reader, and the main lesson – that good kings win praise and fame in the pages of history while bad ones are blackened forever – is a salutary one.
Finally, although he lived amidst luxury, he managed to stay moderate (σώφρονος: 7.8.8) and thereby kept mentally and physically fit into old age.\(^\text{77}\)

Eumenes and Massinissa do not quite map on to this template because they were both born to power, but their achievements are nevertheless similar, both to those of Hiero and to those of each other. In all cases, the king’s greatest achievement is said to be increasing the wealth of his country, for Eumenes by adding territory (32.8.3–4), in the case of Massinissa by turning desert into farmland (36.16.7–9). The second of Eumenes’ great deeds is his benefactions towards the Greeks, which he, like Hiero, performed φιλοδοξότατος (32.8.5). The fact that Eumenes and Hiero carried out their benefactions with an eye to their resulting fame is portrayed as a positive, not a negative. As with Antigonus Doson and Philip V (see above, pp. 44–5), the reputation is assumed to reflect reality, and there is nothing wrong with gaining a practical advantage from performing morally good deeds; in fact, if the world works as it should, the good deeds should automatically result in such an advantage. The third is the fact that Eumenes kept his three brothers loyal throughout his reign, a parallel to Massinissa and his family enjoying mutual εὔνοια (36.16.6), and perhaps to the loyalty Hiero enjoyed from his subjects. To an even greater degree than Hiero, Massinissa is praised for preserving his bodily strength into old age (36.16.1–5) while Eumenes’ loss of physical strength is made up for by stressing his continued brilliance of mind (32.8.1). On the basis of these praise passages a pattern emerges: the good Polybian ruler has great physical and mental ability and keeps them into old age by moderate living. He uses no violence against his subjects, and does not need to because of their loyalty. Likewise, his conduct means that his family stays loyal, and so his reign is free of plots and scandals. He benefits his own country, but also the Greek city-states, and acquires goodwill and fame throughout the Greek world.

One characteristic is missing from this list, but occurs often in praise of other kings: social skills. Likeability and charm play a large part in the characterisations of Cleomenes (πρὸς τὰς ὁμιλίας ἐπιδέξιος: 5.39.6) and the young Philip V before he turns to the dark side (χάρις διαφέρουσα: 4.77.1–4), and Ptolemaeus Philopator is criticised for being unapproachable (δυσέντευκτον: 5.34.4).\(^\text{78}\)

The list of virtues is confirmed when we look at some examples of bad kings. Prusias of Bithynia has one of the fullest obituaries of the Histories

\(^{77}\) Hiero is also praised explicitly at 1.8.3–5.

\(^{78}\) Other good rulers are: Antigonus Doson, 2.70; Gelon of Syracuse, 7.8.9; Antiochus III; 11.39.14–16 (where being a good general makes him a good king); Perseus in the early years; 25.3.5–8; Cotys of Thrace, 27.12.
Polybius

The narrator begins by admitting that he possessed ‘some intelligence’ (ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ βελτίων: 36.15.1), but then lists only negative traits: he was ugly (36.15.1), looking like only ‘half a man’ (36.15.2), cowardly in warfare (36.15.2), unable to suffer hardship and effeminate in body and soul (32.15.3). He also lacked self-discipline and was prone to give in to his bodily desires (36.15.4). Finally, he was uneducated and ignorant and had no idea what morality is (τοῦ καλοῦ τί ποτ’ ἔστιν οὐδ’ ἐννοιαν ἔχε: 36.15.5). For these reasons (τοιγαροῦν) his subjects grasped at any opportunity to overthrow and take vengeance on him (36.15.7). In other words, Prusias had an unimposing physique in contrast with the impressive bodily strength of Massinissa and, to a lesser degree, Hiero; he was cowardly rather than brave and lacked the ability to withstand hardship, both fatal flaws in a military commander; and, in contrast with the three good kings just discussed, he gave in to the luxury surrounding him and did not live moderately. The result was predictable: instead of the loyalty of family and subjects, the latter were ready to jump at any chance of revolt.

An additional vice of the bad king is harshness towards his subjects. This is a standard trait of the stereotypical tyrant, which makes it so much more remarkable that Hiero avoided it. Other rulers suffer from it (Nabis, 4.81.13; Hermeias, 5.41.4; Hieronymus, 7.7.2; Philip V, 7.13.8, 7.14.3; Cleomenes, 9.23.3), but Polybius does not explore in detail what it means, and it is never the focus of a moralising digression. We shall return to this peculiar absence below. He does, however, make sure that the correlation between behaviour and result is completely consistent for his rulers: those who treat their subjects well have love, loyalty and support; those who treat them harshly are rebelled against. This dynamic is posited as one of the basic mechanisms by which constitutions change (and have changed since pre-civilised times) at 6.7.

The principle also holds true for the relationship between an imperial power and its subject-allies. Thus, in 1.72, the Libyan rebellion against Carthage is explained by the harsh way in which the Carthaginians had ruled Libya. The theory is expounded in a digression explaining how the Romans won Iberia from the Carthaginians, due in large part to the ready defection of the natives to the Roman cause. The conclusion to the digression reads:

79 Other bad rulers are: Ptolemaeus Philopator, 5.34; Hieronymus of Syracuse, 7.4–5; Philip V, 7.11, 10.26, 15.22–4; Nabis of Sparta, 13.6, 16.13; Agathocles of Egypt, 15.25.20–2, 15.34–5; Tlepolemus of Egypt, 16.21; Moagetes of Cibyra, 21.34.1–2; Antiochus IV, 16.1; Charops of Epirus, 30.12, 32.5; Hasdrubal (Carthaginian general during Third Punic War). 38.7–8; Achaean leaders, 38.12–14.
καίτοι γε προφανοῦς ὄντος καὶ ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἡ ὑδή τεθεωρημένου διότι κτῶνται μὲν ἄνθρωποι τὰς εὐκαιρίας εὖ ποιοῦντες καὶ προτεινόμενοι τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐλπίδα τοῖς πέλας, ἐπειδὰν δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμουμένων τυχόντες κακῶς ποιῶσι καὶ δεσποτικῶς ἄρχουσι τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων, εἰκότως ὅμως ταῖς τῶν προεστώτων μεταβολαῖς συμμεταπίπτουσι καὶ τῶν ὑποταττομένων αἱ προαιρέσεις. ὃ καὶ τότε συνέβη τοῖς Καρχηδονίοις.

And yet it is obvious and has often been observed that people obtain prosperity by doing good and holding out good expectations to their neighbours; but when, having achieved what they desired, they do evil and rule tyrannically over their subjects, then, as one would expect, the attitudes of the subjects change along with the changes in their rulers. This was what happened to the Carthaginians at that time. (Polyb. 10.36.6–7)

As so often in the Histories, the morally right behaviour is also the one that leads to the greatest advantage: it is right to treat the subjects with mildness and fairness, and this is also the way to keep them loyal. As in this case, the principle generally works to the Romans’ advantage in the Histories, but there is a clear warning by example to Roman readers to keep up this fair treatment of their subjects. An interesting passage which may well show that Polybius thought this warning might be needed is 24.10.3–6. Here, the Achaean Callicrates advises the Romans to increase the power of those Greek politicians who support their decrees and bring low those who do not (in the process making Polybius’ father, Lycortas, and childhood hero Philopoemen suspect to the Romans), and when they follow his advice, they end up with ‘many flatterers, but few true friends’. The reader is left to wonder whether the next step in the relationship might be the Romans treating their Greek subject-allies with arrogant disdain and having a revolt on their hands.

The Good Man: Courage, Moderation and Lack of Greed

A few characters in the Histories are more than just good commanders or good kings, they are thoroughly good men. In order to explore what this means, we need first to decide who they are.

The most developed characters in the surviving parts of the Histories are Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal Barca, Philip V of Macedon, Scipio Africanus the Elder, Philopoemen and Scipio Africanus the Younger. Of these, Hamilcar is portrayed as a good commander, but we do not get many glimpses of the rest of his personality. Hannibal is a paragon of good generalship and is defended by Polybius against the charge of cruelty (9.23–4 and

80 Polybius’ views on how to exercise imperial power have been discussed in more detail by Hau (2006) and Baronowski (2011).
26), but falls short of the ideal because of his greed (9.25). Philip changes from good to bad in the course of the story (7.11). Scipio the Elder seems to have been treated very fully in the original, unfragmented History; however, it is difficult to gain a full picture of his character now because the extant parts of the History that describe or illustrate it are focused on using him as a paradeigma of two things: the power of human intelligence contrasted with the mumbo-jumbo of supernatural explanations (10.2 and 5, discussed above, p. 58) and the nobility and practical advantages of staying humble in good fortune (10.17–19 and 40, discussed above, p. 52). This leaves us with two candidates, both of whom Polybius knew personally: Philopoemen, strategos of the Achaean League in Polybius’ childhood, and Scipio the Younger, Polybius’ friend and benefactor for a large part of his adult life.

The part of the History dealing with the deeds of Philopoemen is unfortunately very fragmented. Usefully, however, the character sketch that introduces him into the story is preserved (10.22.4–5). The character sketch (which references an encomium already published by Polybius) lists four good qualities: endurance and courage (κακοπαθείας καὶ τόλμας: 10.22.4), both recognisable as key qualities of the good commander, a moderate lifestyle (περὶ τὸν βίον ἐπιμελής, opposed to πολυτελέστερον ζῇ: 10.22.5) and unostentatiousness (λιτὸς κατὰ τὴν περικοπήν: 10.22.5). It leads into a detailed account of how he turned the neglected Achaean cavalry into a crack fighting force (10.23–4).

Scipio Africanus the Younger receives a rather longer introduction (31.23–30). Interestingly, this does not describe his character, but demonstrates it to the reader by means of a detailed scene with dialogue between the young Scipio and Polybius-as-a-character (31.23–4), followed by a blow-by-blow narrative of how Scipio, with Polybius’ guidance, trains himself to become a good man and wins a reputation for it.81 The three qualities that are practised and acquired are σωφροσύνη, μεγαλοψυχία and ἀνδρεία: temperance, generosity and courage. Courage has been explored above and shown to be of major importance for the characters who constitute positive paradeigmata in the History. Temperance, or moderation, has also been shown above to be a key virtue of Polybian commanders and kings, and was seen to be prominent in the character sketch of Philopoemen.

81 These chapters have sometimes been represented as a coldly calculated plan of action in order to gain Scipio political influence (e.g. Walbank 1979: ad loc.), and it is certainly true that this is part of the purpose of Scipio’s behaviour. However, such an interpretation only sees half the picture: Polybius is very clear that Scipio did not just gain a reputation for temperance, generosity and courage, but actually became temperate, generous and brave. This corresponds to Polybius’ use of reputation generally as a reliable barometer for a man’s character. See Eckstein (1995: 149–50).
It is also worth noting that it is the change from a moderate to an extravagant lifestyle that eventually turns democracy into ochlocracy in Polybius’ cycle of constitutions, the anakyklosis (ἀλαζονεία καὶ πολυτέλεια: 6.57.6). Generosity, however, has so far been left unexplored, and it is necessary to look a little further into it.

Actual generosity is demonstrated most conspicuously in the Histories by Scipio the Younger in the passage mentioned above. Otherwise, it is mainly a trait displayed by military commanders who thereby win the loyalty of their troops (Hannibal, 3.13.5–8; C. Cornelius Scipio, 3.76.13) or a king who thus wins the goodwill of his people (Ortiagon the Galatian, 22.21), and it does not seem very high in the didactic hierarchy of virtues worth emulating. The μεγαλοψυχία that is praised enthusiastically in several passages of the Histories and figures as a key quality of the Polybian good man is not active generosity, but a more passive lack of greed and an ability to withstand the temptation of getting rich. This temptation typically comes from access to the wealth of a subject state or conquered territory or from the offer of a bribe. Such lack of greed is the subject of an explanatory digression discussing Roman integrity in money matters (18.35). The Romans, the narrator states, used to be unbribable, but these days that is only true of some of them, most notably Aemilius Paullus, who died poor despite having become master of all the wealth of the Macedonian kings, and Scipio the Younger, who did not take any of the Carthaginian wealth for himself. The unavaricious character of Aemilius Paullus is praised extravagantly again in his obituary, where it is said to be the ‘greatest evidence of his excellence’ (ὁ μέγιστον ἕπιτοι τις ἄν υπάρχειν τεκμήριον ἀρετῆς: 31.22.2). Similarly, an Egyptian governor of Cyprus, Polycrates, is praised for keeping his hands off the island’s wealth (18.55.5–7). In the area of bribes, both Philopoemen’s rejection of a Spartan offer of gifts (20.12) and the rejection of a gift from King Eumenes by the Achaean League are portrayed very positively (22.7–8). On the negative side, the narrator castigates the Romans (in general, no names are mentioned) for plundering the wealth of Syracuse when they take the city during the Second Punic War, and suggests that, had they left it where they found it, they would have ‘made their own country famous not for paintings and reliefs, but for dignity and lack of greed’ (σεμνότητι καὶ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ)’ (9.19.12).

If lack of greed is a prominent virtue in the Histories, greed itself is an even more prominent vice. It is termed variously πλεονεξία, φιλαργυρία and τὸ πλεῖον ἐπιθυμία, and it is a stock characteristic of the bad man. It is displayed by demagogues (Molpagoras of Chios, 15.21.1–2; Scopas of Aetolia, 18.55.1–2; Deinon and Polyaratus of Rhodes, 27.7.1–13) and tyrants (wife of Nabis, 18.17). Polybius feels so strongly about the evil
of this character trait that he refuses to join in the general praise of the
courage of Alexander the Aetolian, who, although the wealthiest man of
his time, refuses to pay his kidnappers and is then fortuitously set free
by the intervention of Rome. Instead, Polybius declares that ‘in this case
chance supported his greed so that his idiocy met with universal praise and
approval’ (τότε ταυτόματον συνήρησεν πρός τὴν φιλαργυρίαν, ὥστε παρὰ
πᾶσιν ἑπαίνοι καὶ συγκαταθέσεως τυχεῖν τὴν ἀλογιστίαν: 21.26.16). This is
presented as an exception (τότε); elsewhere in the work, in accordance with
the didactic programme of showing how immoral behaviour leads to neg-
avative results, greed regularly has disastrous outcomes for the greedy: it is a
major reason for Perseus’ failure (see 28.9, 29.8, and the long digression of
29.9) and leads to the death of the tyrant Orophernes of Cappadocia (9.11),
and for armies too focused on plunder, defeat is certain (e.g. Aetolians,
4.57.2–58.12).

The reason why Polybius so detests greed is perhaps that it so often
leads people to commit unjust acts. In the Histories, greed leads to wars of
aggression (e.g. 2.45.1–4, 4.3, 4.6.7–12), betrayal of trust (e.g. 8.16.4–12)
and fighting among friends (9.11). In the anakyklosis, it is the flaw that
leads to the fall of first oligarchy (6.8.3–6), then democracy (6.9.4–9). Greed
is clearly a very common flaw in human beings in Polybius’ world, and thus
it is one of the things that need to be countered by the good constitution. In
this respect the Cretan constitution fails spectacularly (6. 46.11–47.6), but
the Roman constitution succeeds (6.56.1–5), making it also in this regard
superior to all others.

The good man in the Histories, then, is brave and intelligent, lives a
moderate life, and displays no signs of greed. He is also a good commander,
who knows how to combine courage with intelligence, and he never falls
into the trap of becoming arrogant in the delusion that good fortune will
last. This is the ideal that a reader of Polybius must aspire to.

Peculiar Absences: Piety and Cruelty

Before we draw this chapter to a close, it is worth pausing to note two
interesting absences, or near-absences, from Polybius’ templates for good
and bad behaviour respectively: piety and cruelty. These two character
traits play a large part in most of the other Greek works of historiography,
as we shall see in later chapters, but not in Polybius’ Histories. Let us begin
with piety.

Polybius is notorious for his pragmatic approach to religion. On the
basis of passages such as the one stressing Scipio the Elder’s own respon-
sibility for his successes and the one praising him for lying to his mother
about having had a divinely inspired dream (10.2 and 10.5, both discussed
Above), it is common to claim that Polybius did not value traditional piety. On one level this is clearly true: when in an intellectual, polemical mode Polybius regularly argues against traditional religious belief in favour of a rational approach to the world. However, it is also important to note that he does admit of some situations — mainly weather-related — where it is reasonable (εἰκότως, an intellectual word) to try to appease the gods with prayers and sacrifices (36.17.2–3, including himself in the first-person verb πέμπομεν), and that he seems to have ended his work with a pious prayer for his prosperity to last (39.8.1–2).

In tune with his polemical expressions of rationality, Polybius offers no moral exempla of such traditional paradigms of piety as the sacrificing general or the king consulting an oracle. But piety does figure somewhere on his list of moral virtues: we saw above that destruction of sacred buildings is always portrayed as wrong, and the noun ἁσεβεία (‘impiety’) and its cognates are used no fewer than fifty-five times in the Histories. These words do not, however, always cover such obviously impious actions as temple-destruction. They can be used to cover a range of immoral actions from the religiously charged breaking of an oath-sworn alliance (8.8, 15.22) over the betrayal of one’s city (5.76.11) to general tyrannical behaviour (7.7, 38.12–13) and military atrocities (2.1.3). In these latter contexts, ἁσεβεία is often paired with ‘lawlessness’, παρανομία, which seems to indicate that Polybius used the term as often in a normative sense as in a religious one. This demonstrates where his didactic interest lies: in the political and military world of inter-human relationships, not in the relationship between human beings and the metaphysical. For that reason, piety plays a very small part in his moral didacticism.

On this note, we turn to the other peculiar absence from Polybius’ negative paradeigmata: cruelty. It is clear from the portrayal of good kings and commanders in the Histories that Polybius does not condone cruel treatment either by a ruler of his subjects or by the victorious of the defeated or the captured. From the obituaries of Hiero, Eumenes and Massinissa we are also, no doubt, meant to understand that these good kings did not engage in cruelty in the manner of the stereotypical tyrant. Indeed, this is the tenor of the statement in the Hiero passage praising the tyrant for having gained and maintained power without murdering or exiling any of his fellow-citizens. However, it is interesting that this is not spelled out in any of these or other passages praising good kings, and that no adjective

82 Walbank (1967: ad loc.); Pédech (1966) has the most nuanced discussion. Other key passages for this argument are 6.56 and 16.12.9, where Polybius seems to say that religion is only useful for keeping the common people in check.
83 See also 4.18.10–12, 4.62, 4.67, 7.13–14, 11.7, 31.9, 32.15. Killing in a temple is also condemned (4.35.1–5).
for ‘cruel’, ‘brutal’ or ‘violent’ is used. Cruelty, in fact, seems to be a moral topic of relatively little interest to Polybius.

In the Histories, the adjective ὠμός, the standard word for ‘cruel’ in Diodorus (and used copiously by him, as we shall see in the next chapter), and its cognates are used twenty-seven times. Interestingly, eleven of these are representations of the words of others: three occur in speeches in direct or indirect discourse, four in summaries of the statements of other historiographers, and a further four in polemical refutations of Hannibal’s alleged cruelty, where the word seems to have been taken over from the tradition. Two more seem to be paraphrases of Polybius by the Constantinian excerptor. Three are used to describe uncivilised peoples, and two are used of the barbarians fighting in the Mercenary War and the war itself, meaning ‘savage’ rather than ‘cruel’. Only seven of the remaining nine are used to describe individuals or specific acts of individuals: the despicable Hermeias (5.41.1 and 3), the wife of the Spartan tyrant Nabis (18.17.4), the hated Charops of Epirus (32.5), and three instances of Philip V attacking places nominally among his allies. The final two instances describe specific wars.

A pattern emerges from this overview. Firstly, ὠμός was not a favourite word of Polybius’. Its repeated presence in passages where he engages polemically with other historians gives us a clue to why: it seems to have been a favourite expression of the kind of historians Polybius worked hard to distinguish himself from, such as Phylarchus (2.56–8) and the Roman historians who accused Hannibal of cruelty (9.23–6). These historians most probably described the cruel acts of their arch-villains in some detail, and Polybius’ arguments to the effect that the acts of alleged cruelty can, in fact, be either justified or at least explained by circumstances are part of how he profiles himself as a more pragmatic and down-to-earth historian.

Secondly, Polybius prefers to use ὠμός in its sense of ‘savage’ or ‘barbaric’ rather than more generically ‘cruel’. In this sense he uses it of the barbarian mercenaries of the Carthaginians and the war they fought with their former masters, and of three particularly uncivilised peoples.

Thirdly, Polybius does occasionally use the word of individuals and their actions, but not lightly. Hermeias, Nabis and his wife, and Charops are particularly despicable characters who commit crimes beyond those of the average historical villain. Importantly, when the word is used about


85 Philip the V attacks allies: 15.20.4 (with Antiochus III), 15.22.3, 15.23.3.

86 Civil war in Sparta, 4. 35.1–5; the Coele-Syrian War, 14.12.4.
Philip V, it is not used to describe his character, although Polybius devotes no fewer than three digressions to this at different points in the work (7.11, 10.26, 23.10). Instead it is used to describe those attacks which he committed in breach of sworn treaties against peoples who were supposed to be his allies. That is the kind of behaviour Polybius calls ‘savage’, not Hannibal’s killings of civilians (9.23–6) or the revenge exacted on the Mantineans for their oath-breaking by the Macedonians and Achaeans (2.56–8).

This tells us something important about Polybius as a moralist. We saw above that he offers clear guidelines for what kind of buildings an invading army should and should not destroy, but also that these guidelines are governed by the idea that the invader has the right to destroy everything that will help him win the war, including civilian buildings and bodies, and should only desist from unnecessary vandalism. A similarly unsentimental idea seems to lie behind Polybius’ guidelines for the use of violence more generally: as long as the brutality has a particular military purpose (as with Hannibal’s atrocities), or the suffering is deserved (because of past crimes, particularly oath-breaking), it can be excused. Thus, some horrific acts of deliberate violence are condoned as ‘natural’ in warfare, as we have seen above, and Scipio the Elder’s burning of the Carthaginian camps near Utica is described in gruesome detail (14.5.10–15) only for the narrator to conclude that ‘of all the many brilliant achievements of Scipio this seems to me to have been the most glorious and daring of his deeds’. Likewise, the torturing to death of a tyrant (2.59–60) or of an ‘impious and lawless’ man is only right (δίκην καθήκουσαν: 18.54). There is an unresolved tension here between the repeated and explicit didactic emphasis on the importance of staying humble in success and treating the defeated humanely, and the occasional narratorial expression of satisfaction with a graphically executed revenge. Wars can become too savage, however, as happened with the Mercenary War (1.88.8) and the Coele-Syrian War (14.12.4), and revenge can go too far, as happened when the Egyptian mob literally tore apart Agathocles and his family, labelled as ‘terrible savagery’ by the Polybian narrator (δεινῆ ἡ ὠμότης: 15.33.10).

When Polybius uses evaluative vocabulary to describe acts that could be called cruel, such as murders, tortures, exilings and deportations, he prefers the adjectives ‘impious’ (ἀσεβής, fifty-five instances), ‘lawless’ (παράνομος, sixty instances) and ‘unjust’ (ἄδικος/οὐ δίκαιος, 122 instances) and their cognates. This semantic group foregrounds not, like ὠμός and its cognates, the unnatural savagery of the action or its emotional impact,
but the breaking of norms. Thus, when the narrator offers a rhetorical definition of a tyrant, he says that ‘the very word denotes the height of impiety and every injustice and lawlessness towards human beings’ (ἀυτὸ γὰρ τὸ ὄνομα περιέχει τὴν ἀσεβεστάτην ἔμφασιν καὶ πάσας περιείληφε τὰς ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἁμαρτίας καὶ παρανομίας: 2.59.6).

Another favourite word for such transgressions is ἀσέλγεια, which emphasises the perpetrator’s lack of self-control (e.g. 7.2, 8.12, 29.13). This choice of focus and vocabulary sets Polybius off from other, more sensationalising, Hellenistic moralising historiographers such as Diodorus, Timaeus and Phylarchus, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

CONCLUSION

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that moral didacticism is an integral part of Polybius’ Histories. If we were to cut out the explicitly moralising passages, about a fourth of what remains of the work would be discarded. Such an exercise would involve not just leaving to one side a large number of passionate digressions on moral issues, but also cutting out bits of introductory, conclusive and concomitant moralising from the narrative of events. Even after such a serious bit of surgery, much of the narrative of events would still carry a moral message by means of its evaluative vocabulary and the way that morally good behaviour tends to lead to practically good results. Moral didacticism suffuses the Histories at every level.

Polybius wanted to write a historical work with a moral purpose, that is, a work that presented history in a moral light. Throughout the work he is careful to tell the reader what to think about every character, every event, and why this is the right response. Some episodes are included or developed in detail purely because of their moral-didactic impact. This is the case of the lengthy and detailed narrative of Scipio the Elder after his conquest of New Carthage (10.16–20), which has been repeatedly referred to above. In (the modern understanding of) strictly historical terms, the important thing is that Scipio the Elder conquered New Carthage, switched its loyalty to Rome and thereby brought an end to Carthaginian ambitions in Iberia. However, Polybius spends five chapters after the narrative of the conquest giving detailed information about Scipio's distribution of booty, treatment of the captives and other locals, and self-control in the face of sexual temptation. These details are only important from a didactic standpoint, and not a purely practical one. The same is obviously true of the eight chapters on Scipio the Younger's training (31.23–30). Other, less famous, episodes

88 See also 23.10 on the crimes of Philip V.
fall into the same category, such as the detailed narrative of how Achaeus attempted to escape from Antiochus III with the help of two accomplices, who ultimately betrayed him out of greed, proving both the instability of human life and the fact that villainous acts such as usurpation generally end in disaster (8.16.4–20.7).

Moral didacticism was one of Polybius' reasons for writing the Histories. If we refuse to take his moralising seriously, we misread the work. What he wrote was, of course, a history of war and politics, but he did it from a moral angle. The fact that Polybius was interested in similar subjects to those that interested many historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century has made many modern readers ignore or denigrate the part of the Histories that does not fit with their interests, namely its strong moral tone. What Polybius wrote was moral history, a narrative of historical events that presents them in a moral light and aims to draw moral lessons from them. In the next chapter we turn to a late Hellenistic historiographer who was much inspired by Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, to see to what extent he followed this creed.