

# 'A City Is Not Adorned by What Comes from Outside, but by the Virtue of Its Inhabitants': Polybius on the Pragmatics of Spoliation

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## 1 Moralism and Pragmatism

We are in the Second Punic War. In the beginning of book 9 of his *Histories*, Polybius describes the start of the Roman reconquest of Southern Italy from the Carthaginians. After a three-year siege, in 211 BCE the Romans, led by Marcus Claudius Marcellus, succeed in capturing Syracuse. Not only do the Romans treat the city's inhabitants harshly, they also turn to a pillaging of the city on a grand scale, after which the immense booty is transported to Rome.<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 9.10, which was probably written some fifty years after the event, Polybius passes a clear judgment on this act of looting: the Romans made a grave mistake, and he makes a convincing case as to why it should be seen as a mistake. Polybius' condemnation of the sack of Syracuse is based on both a moralistic and a pragmatic standard.<sup>2</sup> This close and often inextricable association of ethical and utilitarian concerns is very typical of Polybius' general attitude towards history. As Eckstein characterizes Polybius' dual pragmatic-moralistic agenda:

Indeed, the purely intellectual-technical purposes of *The Histories* are closely entwined with the moralizing purpose right from the opening statement of the work. Polybius says that he is seeking to inculcate the

1 For this historical event (and its repercussions) see also the essays by Pieper and Van de Velde in this volume.

2 Polybius himself also seems to hint at the relevance both of ethics and of utilitarianism in his introduction of the issue in 9.10.3: 'Whether they were right (*orthōs*) in doing so, and consulted their true interests (*sumpherontōs*) or the reverse, is a matter admitting of much discussion' (transl. Shuckburgh). One might take *orthōs* 'rightly' as relating to the *ethical* aspect, while *sumpherontōs* 'in an advantageous way' refers to the *pragmatic* aspect of the debate. But it is also possible to interpret *sumpherontōs* as a clarification of the word *orthōs* 'in a right and advantageous way', 'in a right, that is, in an advantageous way'. In that case, *καί* is to be taken as *epexegetic καί* (*καί explicativum*). See also Walbank's commentary, *ad loc.*

*paideia* necessary for an active political life (1.1.2). By this he means not only the important intellectual knowledge to be gained from the study of past events, but also a sort of moral fortitude as well (*ibid.*), for: “History is the truest and indeed the only method of learning how to endure the vicissitudes of fortune bravely and nobly [γενναίως].”<sup>3</sup>

Equally characteristic of Polybius’ general outlook is the fact that, on balance, the pragmatic angle is dominant: even though the sack of Syracuse is far from being an example of moral excellence, it is the pragmatic argument that carries the most weight. Although I agree with Gruen who notes that Polybius’ ‘criticism has a fundamentally pragmatic basis’ and that ‘advantage and propriety are thus conjoined rather than contrasted’, I would not go so far as to say that ‘[m]orality is not the issue.’<sup>4</sup> Morality *is* an issue in 9.10, even though Polybius does not play it out in his argumentation to the same extent as utility. The moral aspect functions as an undertone – sometimes surfacing, sometimes receding into the background, but still effectively contributing to the reader’s final negative judgment of the event.

Polybius makes it clear, from the start of his argument, that he disapproves of the deed as being inconsistent with ideal moral behavior, and, more importantly, inconsistent with the Romans’ own moral standards. The chapter opens with the gnomic statement: Οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ἔξω κοσμεῖται πόλις, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῆς τῶν οἰκούντων ἀρετῆς (‘A city is not adorned by what is brought from without, but by the virtue of its own inhabitants’, 9.10.1), an unequivocal opening chord that is continued as a *basso continuo* sounding in the background throughout the whole chapter. The moralistic tone is resumed twice: once at 9.10.5, in the middle of his argument, where Polybius hints at the moral decay caused by the fact that the originally so austere Romans have adopted the aesthetic tendencies of the Greeks, and at the end of the chapter, in 9.10.12–13, where the idea that the

3 Eckstein 2015: 249. Cf. also Marincola 2001: 116. That Polybius identifies the good to a large extent with the useful, may be ascribed to Stoic influences (Walbank 1957: 657; Gruen 1992: 94–98). Cicero mentions that Polybius came into contact with the Stoic philosopher Panaetius (Cic. *Rep.* 1.34; cf. also Vell. 1.13.3). Polybius’ tendency to equate the good with the useful can be observed in passages such as 6.6.9: ἐξ οὗ πάλιν εὐλογον ὑπογίνεσθαι τινα θεωρίαν παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς αἰσχροῦ καὶ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς τούτων πρὸς ἄλληλα διαφορᾶς, καὶ τὸ μὲν ζήλου καὶ μιμήσεως τυγχάνειν διὰ τὸ συμφέρον, τὸ δὲ φυγῆς (‘From this, once more, it is reasonable to suppose that there would arise in the minds of the multitude a theory of the disgraceful and the honourable, and of the difference between them; and that one should be sought and imitated for its advantages, the other shunned’, transl. Shuckburgh). The strength of Stoic influence on Polybius should perhaps not be exaggerated (Eckstein 1995: 17).

4 Gruen 1992: 97.

virtue of its inhabitants – not imported works of art – contribute to the reputation of a country is restated.

εἰ δ' ἀπλουστάτοις χρώμενοι βίοις καὶ πορρωτάτῳ τῆς ἐν τούτοις περιττότητος καὶ πολυτελείας ἀφροσύνης ὅμως ἐπεκράτουν τούτων αἰεὶ παρ' οἷς ὑπῆρχε πλείστα καὶ κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα, πῶς οὐ νομιστέον εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀμάρτημα; τὸ γὰρ ἀπολιπόντας τὰ τῶν νικῶντων ἔθνη τὸν τῶν ἡττωμένων ζῆλον ἀναλαμβάνειν, προσεπιδραττομένους ἅμα καὶ τὸν ἐξακολουθοῦντα τοῖς τοιοῦτοις φθόνον, ὃ πάντων ἐστὶ φοβερώτατον ταῖς ὑπεροχαῖς, ὁμολογούμενον ἂν εἴποι τις εἶναι τῶν πραττόντων παράπτωμα.<sup>5</sup> (Plb. 9.10.5–6)

But the fact was that, while leading lives of the greatest simplicity themselves, as far as possible removed from the luxury and extravagance which these things imply, they yet conquered the men who had always possessed them in the greatest abundance and of the finest quality. Could there have been a greater mistake (*hamartēma*) than theirs? Surely it would be an incontestable error (*paraptōma*) for a people to abandon the habits of the conquerors and adopt those of the conquered; and at the same time involve itself in that jealousy which is the most dangerous concomitant of excessive prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Note that Polybius refers to the pillaging as a *hamartēma* (translated by Shuckburg as 'mistake') and as a *paraptōma* ('error'). As I will argue below, the use of these particular terms is significant: both terms do not necessarily refer to a morally or legally condemnable act but to an imprudent or impulsive mistake that may ultimately be detrimental to its agent.

The Romans' moral decay, from hardworking and virtuous to corrupt and decadent is of course a well-known topos, especially in later Latin literature. Polybius seems to observe the first signs of this later moral decay in the pillaging of Syracuse, ironically under the influence of Greek culture.<sup>7</sup> Polybius'

5 The Greeks text here and elsewhere is that of Büttner-Wobst's Teubner edition.

6 The translation of Polybius is Shuckburgh's.

7 See also Walbank's commentary *ad loc*; Beard 2007: 178–181; Champion 2004: 146; Eckstein 1995: 229–230, 245–246; Gruen 1992: 94–98; Östenberg 2009: 27; McGing 2010: 41, 159–160; Loehr 2017: 63. According to Polybius, a more definitive breakdown of Roman moral standards under the influence of 'Greek laxity' occurred after the war with Perseus, which came to an end with the Battle of Pydna in 168 BCE (Plb. 31.25.2–7). The motive of Roman moral decay is also present in Livy's reference to the events at Syracuse (25.40.1–3) and in 34.4.3–4, where he refers to Cato the Elder linking Rome's taste for luxury with the spoils from Syracuse. A similar view is present in Plutarch's description (*Marc.* 21) of Marcellus' triumphal procession in which the booty taken at Syracuse was shown to the Roman people. Whether

condemnation of the Romans' desire for luxury probably reflects contemporary discussions in mid-2nd century BCE.<sup>8</sup> However, Polybius does not condemn the act simply as being incongruous with Roman ethics. His yardstick ultimately remains pragmatic in nature. Adopting the values of the conquered, according to Polybius, may turn out to be harmful to the expansion of the Roman empire since the new values differ diametrically from the austerity on which the Roman empire was founded: 'if you change a winning formula, you cannot expect a continuation of the success it brought to you', as McGing puts it.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the chapter, the moral theme introduced by the opening chord is resumed, repeating the view that the reputation of a country is not enhanced by works of art coming from outside, but by the virtues (σεμνότητι καὶ μεγαλοψυχία, 'dignity and greatness of soul') of its inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

τὰ δ' ἐκτὸς ὑπάρχοντα τῆς προειρημένης δυνάμεως ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἐξ ἀρχῆς τόποις ἅμα τῷ φθόνῳ καταλιπόντας ἐνδοξότεραν ποιεῖν τὴν σφετέραν πατρίδα, μὴ γραφαῖς καὶ τύποις, ἀλλὰ σεμνότητι καὶ μεγαλοψυχία κοσμοῦντας αὐτήν. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τὰῦτα μὲν εἰρήσθω μοι χάριν τῶν μεταλαμβανόντων ἀεὶ τὰς δυναστείας, ἵνα μὴ σκυλεύοντες τὰς πόλεις κόσμον ὑπολαμβάνωσιν εἶναι ταῖς ἑαυτῶν πατρίσι τὰς ἀλλοτρίας συμφοράς. (Plb. 9.10.12–13)

But they [i.e. the Romans] might have left in their original sites things that had nothing to do with such power; and thus at the same time have avoided exciting jealousy, and raised the reputation of their country: adorning it, not with pictures and statues, but with dignity of character and greatness of soul. I have spoken thus much as a warning to those who take upon themselves to rule over others, that they may not imagine that, when they pillage cities, the misfortunes of others are an honour to their own country. (Transl. Shuckburg, adapted)

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the display of Syracusan loot really constituted a significant break with the past is matter of dispute. Gruen 1992: 98 has pointed out that already in the fourth century Greek art was imported to Rome. See also Germany 2016: 98–100.

8 Gruen 1992: 98; Champion 2004: 60–62, 178–184 and elsewhere.

9 McGing 2010: 161.

10 That a government, just like a person in everyday life, should behave with *megalopsuchia* 'nobility of spirit' both in misfortune and success is stressed by Polybius in 6.2.6. *Megalopsuchia* is a central notion in Polybius' aristocratic moral outlook. For Polybius' use of the term, see Eckstein (1995: 65, 67, 118, 150 and elsewhere).

Polybius here also makes explicit that his advice is not only directed toward the Romans but, more generally, to all imperialists ('for the sake of those who take upon themselves to rule over others').<sup>11</sup>

As we have seen, even though Polybius' condemnation of the action in moral terms is unmistakable, in the end his argument does not revolve around its moral aspect but around its pragmatic implications. Apparently, Polybius did not trust the reader to be persuaded by moral arguments alone, and built the main body of his argument on a firm pragmatic foundation: the pillaging of Syracuse is ultimately against the Romans' own interests.

## 2 *Hamartēma*

The core of his criticism of the sack of Syracuse is that robbing the art of the vanquished sets in motion a destructive chain of emotions that ultimately backfires on the victors. However, his pragmatic perspective on the matter also manifests itself in a subtle way in his choice of the word ἀμάρτημα (*hamartēma*) to refer to what the Romans did in Syracuse.

Polybius uses the word *hamartēma* in 9.10.5 (cited above). As we have seen earlier, Polybius argues here that the act of pillaging is pointless, since the Romans were also able to subdue the luxurious Greeks while leading simple lives themselves. On these grounds, Polybius regards the pillaging as a *hamartēma*. The word *hamartēma* is obviously related to the word *hamartia*. Yet there is a significant difference in meaning between the two words.<sup>12</sup> Both words occur in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which makes this work an interesting starting point for our discussion, the more so because it has been suggested that Polybius was influenced by the *Poetics*.<sup>13</sup> Aristotle's famous use of the word *hamartia* in particular has led to an enormous amount of scholarly literature, which I cannot even begin to do justice here. Scholars agree that *hamartia* in the *Poetics* refers to a tragic error, committed by a person who is neither good nor bad; *hamartia* is a flaw that is committed not consciously, but out of

11 Shuckburgh translates 'as a warning to', but the Greek is more neutral: 'for the sake of' (χάριν). On the issue of Polybius' intended readership, see Walbank 1972: 2–3; Luce 1997: 126–127; Marincola 2001: 116; Davidson 2009: 125.

12 Dover 1974: 152–154 wrongly treats *hamartia* and *hamartēma* as synonyms ('error'), setting them off as a pair against *adikia/adikēma* 'crime, wrongdoing' and *asebeia/asebēma* 'sin, impiety'.

13 The extent of the influence exerted by Aristotle's *Poetics* on Polybius is a matter of debate. Williams 2007 sees strong links between the two works; Marincola 2013 is more cautious.

ignorance. For the tragic character, this flaw then leads to a change from happiness to misfortune, which is a crucial element of a tragic plot.<sup>14</sup>

ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῆ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνη μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἀμαρτίαν τινά, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχία. (Arist. *Po.* 1453a8–10)

Such a person is someone not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but **through some kind of error (*hamartia*)**; and one belonging to the class of those who enjoy great renown and prosperity.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, the word *hamartēma* features in Aristotle's definition of *comedy*:

τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἰσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθύς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης. (Arist. *Po.* 1449a34)

For the laughable comprises **any fault (*hamartēma*)** or mark of shame which involves no pain or destruction.

The comic *hamartēma* is a blunder, a stupid mistake, which works laughably and does not cause suffering or misery to those who make the mistake.<sup>16</sup>

From Aristotle's strongly contrasting uses of the two terms it should be clear that they cannot be treated as synonyms. A crucial difference implicit to Aristotle's use of the two terms appears to be a difference in gravity of the consequences of the two types of error. Beyond that, however, Aristotle does not seem to help us any further. To arrive at a better understanding of how Polybius uses the two words, it is obviously more fruitful to turn to Polybius' own work.

Polybius uses the word *hamartēma* twenty-two times and *hamartia* twenty-five times. The crucial difference between *hamartia* and *hamartēma* can be gathered from the following examples.

14 For the discussion on *hamartia* in the *Poetics*, a helpful starting point is Halliwell 1998: 215–230, with literature. Still fundamental are Bremer 1969 and Saïd 1978.

15 The translations from the *Poetics* are Halliwell's 1995 Loeb edition.

16 For *hamartēma* in comedy, see also Janko 1984: 208–210.

τὸ δ' ἀκρίτως καὶ προφανῶς περιβαλεῖν αὐτοὺς ταῖς μεγίσταις συμφοραῖς ὁμολογούμενόν ἐστι τῶν πασχόντων ἀμάρτημα. διὸ καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἐκ τύχης πταίουσιν ἔλεος ἔπεται μετὰ συγγνώμης καὶ ἐπικουρία, τοῖς δὲ διὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀβουλίαν ὄνειδος καὶ ἐπιτίμησις συνεχῶς ἀκολουθεῖ παρὰ τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσιν. (Plb. 2.7.2–3)

[B]ut that they [i.e. humans in general] should from mere levity (*akritōs*), and with their eyes open, thrust themselves upon the most serious disasters is without dispute **the fault** (*hamartēma*) of the victims themselves. [...] reproach and rebuke from all men of sense [follows] those who have only their own folly (*aboulia*) to thank for it.

A *hamartēma* is described here as a mistake made *akritōs* ‘without judgment’, and due to *aboulia* ‘lack of due consideration’. *Hamartēma* is, in other words, an error of judgment.

[Army commanders often make mistakes in choosing the right time for action.]

καὶ μὴν διότι παρὰ τὰς τῶν ἡγουμένων ἀγνοίας ἢ ῥαθυμίας ἐπιτελεῖται τὰ πλείιστα τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων, οὐδεὶς ἂν τοῦτ' ἀπορήσειε. (Plb. 9.12.4)

Nor can there be any doubt that the greater part of **such failures** (*hamartēmatōn*) are due to the folly (*agnoia*) or carelessness (*rhāitumia*) of the leaders.

Polybius discusses the art of leading an army, and he observes that commanders tend to make most mistakes in choosing the right moment to act. In this example, too, the *hamartēma* is caused by cognitive deficiencies: ignorance (*agnoia*) and negligence (*rhāitumia*). *Hamartēma*, again, is a mistake stemming from ignorance and poor judgment. (It is significant, in this connection, that scribal errors are also referred to as *hamartēmata*.<sup>17</sup>) This is markedly different from *hamartia*, which more prominently shows a moral dimension. Polybius uses the term *hamartia* to designate a deliberate act that goes against moral rules or laws. An example is the following:

[Polybius criticizes the historian Phylargus for exaggerating the good deeds of the Mantinaeans, while he ignores the bad deeds (τὰς παρὰ νόμους τῶν πράξεων) of the Megalopolitans] [...] ὥσπερ τὸ τὰς ἀμαρτίας

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Plb. 12.4a.6, 12.21.9, 34.3.11.

ἐξαριθμείσθαι τῶν πραξάντων οἰκειότερον ὑπάρχον τῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ τὰ καλὰ καὶ δίκαια τῶν ἔργων ἐπισημαίνεσθαι. (Plb. 2.61.3)

[...] as though it were the province of history to deal with **crimes** (*tas hamartias*) rather than with instances of just and noble conduct.

Polybius criticizes the historian Phylargus, one of his polemic targets, for paying more attention to good deeds than to bad ones. Shuckburgh rightly translates *hamartia* with ‘crime’. Polybius treats *hamartia* in this passage as a synonym of τὰς παρανόμους τῶν πράξεων ‘unlawful acts’, and as the opposite of τὰ καλὰ καὶ δίκαια τῶν ἔργων ‘instances of good and noble conduct’.

In one passage, both terms co-occur referring to different levels of flawed behavior.

Λοιπὸν δὲ τὸ πραγματικὸν αὐτῷ μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας ἐκ πάντων σύγκειται τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων, ὧν τὰ πλεῖστα διεληλύθαμεν· τὴν δ’ αἰτίαν τῆς ἀμαρτίας νῦν ἐροῦμεν. (Plb. 12.27a.12)

Moreover, when he [*i.e. Timaeus*] comes to deal with facts in his history, we find a combination of **all the faults** I have mentioned. The reason [*i.e. of this flaw*] we will now proceed to state.

The plural *hamartēmata* here refers to the various professional deficiencies of the historian Timaeus enumerated by Polybius in the preceding chapters: his partiality leading to inaccurate statements and unbalanced accounts of events and persons, his unfair arrogance towards other historians, and his lack of education. Then, in 12.27a.12, Polybius shifts into a higher gear, embarking upon an exposition of what is really wrong with Timaeus and his work: his treatment of historical facts (‘the pragmatic part of his history’), in which all his previously enumerated flaws come together. That Timaeus in his treatment of historical facts *combines* the earlier mentioned *hamartēmata* is regarded by Polybius as a *hamartia*, thus implying that *hamartia* is a higher order of erroneous behavior than *hamartēmata*.

In this connection, it is significant that *hamartia* is used only once in the plural (of a total of twenty-five instances in Polybius), while *hamartēma* occurs in the plural twelve times (of a total of twenty-two instances).<sup>18</sup> A *hamartia* is a crucial moral error of such gravity that a person is not likely to commit a

<sup>18</sup> The single exceptional instance of the plural *hamartiai* in Polybius is unremarkable. In 1.14.5, Polybius stresses that a historian should not shrink from condemning ‘the moral



series of *hamartiai*. On the other hand, a person will readily make multiple *hamartēmata*, as they imply less significant types of mistakes or blunders.<sup>19</sup>

### 3 An Explosive Emotional Chain Reaction

By referring to the looting of Syracuse as a *hamartēma*, Polybius makes it clear that he regards it as an error of judgment, an impulsive mistake, rather than as a violation of moral or legal rules. But why is the looting of Syracuse regarded as an irrational mistake? What are the negative effects of this error? In the course of his argument, Polybius switches from the specific case of Syracuse to the looting of objects by conquerors in general, thereby stressing the relevance of his warning to current and future commanders and politicians, or ‘to those who take upon themselves to rule over others’, as he himself writes in 9.10.13.

According to Polybius, the harmful effect of exhibiting looted objects lies in a complex chain reaction of emotions that is set in motion by the desire to acquire precious objects. The chain of emotions that is triggered both in the minds of the conquerors and of the conquered ultimately poses a threat to the conquerors themselves.

Surely it would be an incontestable error for a people to abandon the habits of the conquerors and adopt the **propensity** (*zēlon*) of the conquered; and at the same time involve itself in that **jealousy** (*phthonos*) which is the most **terrifying** (*phoberōtaton*) concomitant of excessive prosperity. For the **looker-on** never **congratulates** (*makarizei*) those who take what belongs to others, without a feeling of **jealousy** (*phthonein*) mingling with his **pity** (*eleos*) for the losers. But suppose such prosperity to go on increasing, and a people to accumulate into its own hands all the possessions of the rest of the world, and moreover to invite in a way the plundered to share in the **spectacle** they present, in that case surely

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faults of his own people’. Also in this case, *hamartia* refers to one moral fault per person, not to a series of errors committed by one person.

19 It should be noted that the semantic distinction between the two terms is not always as clear-cut: in 16.20.6 and 28.10.2, *hamartia*’s sense seems to come very close to that of *hamartēma*, referring to a geographical inaccuracy in the work of Zeno and a military discomfiture of Hippias, a friend of king Perseus. The use of the *hamartia* where one would have expected *hamartēma*, may be due to the existence of a fixed idiomatic phrase αἱ τῶν πέλαις ἀμαρτίαι ‘the faults of the neighbors’, used in contexts conveying the morale that ‘one should not condemn the faults of your neighbors’. That it may be a fixed phrase with a proverbial ring is suggested by the fact that it is also used by Aristotle (*Rh.* 1348b10) in a similar context.

the mischief is doubled. For it is no longer a case of the spectators pitying (*eleein*) their neighbours, but *themselves*, as they recall the ruin of their own country. Such a sight produces an outburst, not of jealousy (*phthonos*) merely, but of rage (*orgē*) against the victors. For the reminder of their own disasters (*peripeteiōn*) serves to enhance their hatred (*misos*) of the authors of it. (Plb. 9.10.6–10, transl. Shuckburg, adapted)

Polybius' chain reaction is ignited at the very moment the victors conceive the desire to appropriate the artifacts of the vanquished. This leads to envy of the victors, and to a feeling of pity for the vanquished. The envy of the victors then leads to fear among the victors. When the victors succeed in conquering the whole world, the mix becomes even more explosive: the vanquished who see the spoils will feel pity for *themselves*, which then leads to envy, anger and hatred directed at the victors.<sup>20</sup> The chain reaction starts with a desire to appropriate the art of those who are conquered, and it inevitably issues in highly destructive emotions such as rage and hate. The final outcome of this complex social-psychological process is an explosive state of affairs in which subjected people are ready to revolt against the Romans.<sup>21</sup>

An elucidating parallel of this process can be found in Polybius' famous account of the *anakyklosis*, where he describes, in general terms, the psychological mechanism through which the ruler's moral degeneration and increased lust for luxury give rise to the subjects' envy, hate and anger, ultimately resulting in radical political change. In 6.7.6–8, Polybius describes how kings become tyrants, once their power becomes hereditary: they give rein to their appetites for luxury and sexual pleasure, which then give rise to their subjects' jealousy

20 Although Polybius formulates it in a general way ('a people to accumulate into its own hands all the possessions of the rest of the world'), he makes it clear on several occasions (e.g. 1.1.5, 29.21) that the Romans could be regarded as the masters of the world after their defeat of the Macedonians in 168 BCE.

21 On several occasions in his *Histories*, Polybius describes such complex clusters of (sometimes seemingly contradictory) emotions, but chapter 9.10 certainly takes the cake. For emotions in Polybius, see Loehr 2017, who also discusses chapter 9.10 (pp. 63–64 and elsewhere), and Giannopoulou 2021a, 2021b. From 9.10 and other passages, it is clear that Polybius was not averse to elaborate descriptions of emotions and *peripeteiai*, as is sometimes assumed on the basis of his attack on Phylargus' 'tragic history' (Marincola 2001: 127–128; 2003; 2013; Loehr 2017: 7–9 and elsewhere; Biggs 2018, Giannopoulou 2021b). On the emotions of the Ancient Greeks, see e.g. Konstan 2006, and the three *Unveiling Emotions* volumes (co-)edited by Chaniotis (2012, 2014, 2021). Aristotle's treatment of the emotions in *Rhetoric* 2 is, of course, also a crucial source of our knowledge of the Greeks' conceptions of the emotions.

(*phthonos*), hate (*misos*), and anger (*orgē*) – emotions that consequently lead to conspiracies against the ruler and the dissolution of government.

What is particularly interesting is the pivotal role of envy, *phthonos*, in this process. As we know, in Greek popular morality *phthonos* is not so much the problem of the subject (as it is in Christian ethics), but rather of the object of the emotion, that is, of the one to whom the envy is directed. The central idea is that provoking envy in others will eventually lead to a reversal of fortune.<sup>22</sup> Polybius as a rationalist does not explain this causal chain – from good fortune sparking *phthonos*, to downfall – in magico-religious terms but in more down-to-earth psychological terms: envy arouses anger and hatred in the conquered people, which will eventually backfire on the Romans.<sup>23</sup> For Polybius, showing moderation in good fortune is key in dealing with the mutability of fortune. This moral attitude is formulated most clearly by Aemilius Paullus in chapter 29.20.1–4, serving here as a mouthpiece for Polybius' moral agenda. After his victory over Perseus in 168, Aemilius Paullus addresses his council:

Then Aemilius Paulus speaking once more in Latin bade the members of his council, 'With such a sight before their eyes,' – pointing to Perseus, – 'not to be too boastful in the hour of success, nor to take any extreme or inhuman measures against any one, nor in fact ever to feel confidence in the permanence of their present good fortune. Rather it was precisely at the time of greatest success, either private or public, that a man should be most alive to the possibility of a reverse. Even so it was difficult for a man to exhibit moderation in good fortune. But the distinction between fools and wise was that the former only learnt by their own misfortunes, the latter by those of others.' (Plb. 29.20.1–4)

22 The importance of warding off the spectator's envy in the context of a triumphal procession is also known from the Roman ritual of the Vestal Virgins appending a phallic charm (*fascinus*) under the victorious general's chariot as a remedy for envy (*medicus invidiae*, Plin. *Nat.* 28.4.7). See also Ogden 2002: 224–225.

23 The central role of envy in human reversal of fortune is explicitly addressed in Polybius' concluding chapter 39.8: θεωρουντες την τύχην ως ἔστιν ἀγαθὴ φθονήσαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος ἰσχύει καθ' ὃ τις ἂν δοκῆ μάλιστα μακαρίζεσθαι καὶ κατορθοῦν ἐν τῷ βίῳ ('for I see only too well that Fortune is envious of mortals, and is most apt to show her power in those points in which a man fancies that he is most blest and most successful in life'. *Phthonos* and plotting are explicitly linked by Polybius in 18.41.4. For *phthonos* in Polybius, see Eckstein 1995: 245–246; Loehr 2017: 62–65. The destructive character of envy is discussed by Sanders 2014: 16–23 and elsewhere. For the magical aspect ('the evil eye') of *phthonos*/envy, see e.g. Ogden 2002: 25–26, 55, 211, 222–226, 278, 299; Sanders 2014: 30. For the theme of danger accompanying good fortune in Polybius, see also Luce 1997: 127 and Marincola 2001: 144.

That the Romans, in Polybius' view, did not show this degree of self-control after their success at Syracuse is obvious.

The negative consequences of looting are particularly manifest when the looted objects are exhibited in public. Polybius very generally speaks about 'the spectator' (*ho theōmenos*) of the objects. The exact context is not explicitly described but we may think of the display of pillaged objects during a triumphal procession,<sup>24</sup> but also of the exhibition of the objects at a permanent location, as for example in the shrines dedicated by Marcellus near the Porta Capena, which must still have been in use in the first century BCE, since they are mentioned by Livy (25.40.1–3):

While these things were being done in Spain, it is true that Marcellus, after the capture of Syracuse, had settled matters in general in Sicily with such conscientiousness and honesty that he added not only to his own fame, but also to the dignity of the Roman people. But as regards the adornments of the city, the statues and paintings which Syracuse possessed in abundance, he carried them away to Rome. They were spoils of the enemy, to be sure, and acquired by right of war. Yet from that came the very beginning of enthusiasm for Greek works of art and consequently of this general licence to despoil all kinds of buildings, sacred and profane, a licence which finally turned against Roman gods, and first of all against the very temple which was magnificently adorned by Marcellus. For temples dedicated by Marcus Marcellus near the Porta Capena used to be visited by foreigners on account of their remarkable adornments of that kind; but of these a very small part is still to be seen. (Transl. Moore, Loeb series)

Livy's assessment of the sack of Syracuse resembles Polybius' in some respects. Livy, too, observes that, even though the spoils from Syracuse were acquired by the Romans 'by right of war', they had a corrupting effect on Roman morality. Like Polybius, he identifies the sack of Syracuse as the origin of the Romans' admiration of Greek art, which led to the Romans' 'licence to despoil all kinds of buildings', which even turned against the Roman gods and their temples:

<sup>24</sup> Marcellus' triumphal procession – an *ovatio*, not a full triumph – is described by Livy 26.21.7–9 (who gives an inventory of the booty: a representation of the city of Syracuse, catapults and ballistae, other war equipment, silver and bronze ware, furnishing, fabrics, statues, and elephants) and Plutarch (*Marc.* 21). See Beard 2007: 147–150, 179 (who argues that also two globes of Archimedes, who was killed by a Roman soldier during the siege, were probably displayed in the procession), Östenberg 2009: 42–44, 80–82, 208–211, and the chapters by Pieper, Van de Velde, and Van Gils and Henzel in this volume.

by Livy's time, many of the spolia in the shrines dedicated by Marcellus after 211 had apparently been robbed for a second time – this time from their Roman shrines.<sup>25</sup>

Returning to Polybius: what is also significant is Polybius' use of the word *peripeteia*, which by the time of Polybius may have lost its Aristotelian flavour.<sup>26</sup> The word is used by Polybius in the general sense of a *sudden change of circumstances* or a *sudden change of fate*.<sup>27</sup> This sudden change may have a positive outcome (a fortunate turn of events, a stroke of luck), but more often it is an unfortunate turn of events ('tragic' in the sense of 'disastrous') for those who experience it. In the latter case, an additional notion is often present – that the *peripeteia* leads to knowledge. At several key moments in the *Histories*, Polybius stresses the importance of learning from one's own or from another's *peripeteia*. In fact, Polybius introduces this *Leitmotiv* in the very first chapter of his work: 'the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others (τὴν τῶν ἀλλοτρίων περιπετειῶν ὑπόμνησιν)' (1.2).<sup>28</sup>

The appearance of the word *peripeteia* is a good example of the way in which chapter 9.10 resonates with a number of general themes that are important to Polybius. The primary aim of history is to educate the reader, both morally and practically. If you are successful, show moderation in your behavior, bearing in mind that fortune is capricious. Do not incur the envy of the vanquished, as it may turn against you in the end. Learn from your own and other's reversals of fortune. Polybius places the Syracusan episode in the grand scheme of things in order to inculcate the reader with a general lesson on human morality.

By way of conclusion, it is interesting to consider Polybius' argument in terms of the four-stage model of appropriation as presented in Versluys' chapter in this volume. Polybius argues against every stage of the process of appropriation: Romans should have left the objects at their original place (against *material appropriation*), the objects – whatever their original location and use in Syracuse – should not have been reused to serve as mere objects of art for

25 Livy's description of the spoils of Syracuse is discussed by Lushkov 2018. See also the chapters by Pieper and Van de Velde in this volume.

26 Cf. Marincola 2007; Biggs 2018.

27 Cf. Mauersberger's lexicon *ad loc.*: '(plötzlicher) Umschlag / (plötzliche) Veränderung der Umstände bzw. des Geschicks'.

28 Other examples are 1.35.7 (*peripeteiai* may lead to the improvement of mankind), 3.4.4–6 (terrible *peripeteiai*, if born with a noble spirit, may lead to advantages) and 6.10.14 (Romans have developed their constitution by learning from their *peripeteiai*). The educating function of reversals of fortune is also associated with the term *sumptōma*, which appears to be used as a synonym (by way of *variatio*?) of *peripeteia*. Note that *sumptōma* also features in our passage (9.10.9).

the adornment of the city of Rome (against *objectification* and *incorporation*). Polybius makes it very clear that a stage of full *transformation* of the imported objects will never be attained: there will always be an explosive tension between the Romans' exploitation of the foreign objects as physical evidence of their military success and the non-Roman spectators' feelings of envy for the Roman victors and pity for the vanquished.

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