HANNIBAL AT NEW CARTHAGE: POLYBIUS 3. 15 AND THE POWER OF IRRATIONALITY

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θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων,
ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.
—Euripides *Medea* 1079–80

As is well known, Polybius, the ancient historian of the rise of Rome, divided the origins of major wars into three distinct elements: αἰτίαι (the "causes," properly speaking); προφάσεις (mere "pretexts," or propaganda); and ἀρχαί (the "beginnings," in the sense of the first overtly hostile actions). This conceptual scheme is set forth in detail at 3. 6–7, where Polybius discusses the origins of the Hannibalic War. Here Polybius is careful to define αἰτία explicitly. But it is a concept of some subtlety, even obscurity (3. 6. 7): "by 'causes,' I mean the things that shape in advance our judgments and decisions (τῶν κρίσεων καὶ διαλήψεων), that is to say, our notions of things (ἐπινοίας), our states of mind (διαθέσεις), the accompanying calculations (τοὺς . . . συλλογισμούς), and everything through which we reach decisions and projects (τὸ κρῖναί τι καὶ προθέσθαι)." The exact meaning of this passage has been much debated.[1] From that debate, however, we can conclude that in Polybius' view, an αἰτία can be either a human psychological state or an event in the real world insofar as it leads to a human psychological state. Thus, according to Polybius, the anger of the Aetolians (a psychological state) was the cause of the Syrian War (3. 7. 1), whereas the Greek campaigns against Persia in the 390s (events in the real world) were αἰτίαι of Alexander's Asian expedition precisely because they led Alexander's father, Philip II, to calculate that such an expedition would succeed (3. 6. 10–12).

Of course, in the case of immensely complicated phenomena such as wars, causes are themselves often complicated, and αἰτίαι of both sorts are, in Polybius' understanding, sometimes present simultaneously. But the degree to which Polybius stresses events in the real world as αἰτίαι varies from case to case, whereas his emphasis on the importance of

1. See K.-E. Petzold, *Studien zur Methode des Polybios und zu ihrer historischen Auswertung* (Munich, 1969), p. 11 and n. 1, and F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), pp. 158–59, against P. Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris, 1964), pp. 80–88, and id., *Polybe: "Histoires," Livre I* (Paris, 1969), p. xxiv.

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human psychological states is always strong. Overall, then, Polybius focuses not on the impersonal force of events but on human decision-making: αἰτίαι are αἰτίαι because they lead to decisions.[2] And this focus on human decision-making makes sense; for the *Histories* are in good part intended as a handbook of statesmanship—a guide to good and bad decision-making—written for contemporary statesmen by one of their own kind.[3] Indeed, Polybius underlines this didactic purpose precisely in the section of Book 3, dealing with the origins of the Second Punic War, that we are discussing (cf. 3. 7. 4–7).

As we can see just from the examples given above, in Polybius' view the mental states that underlie war are of two basic types, emotional and rational. It is true, of course, that Polybius often attributes a mixture of rationality and emotion to his subjects: he is not simplistic. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that emotion is central to some decisions, rational calculation to others. Thus the Aetolians, in the period leading to the Syrian War, did make some rational plans and preparations (implied in 3. 6. 5); but basically, according to Polybius, they acted from ὀργή (3. 7. 1; cf. 3. 3. 3, 3. 7. 2). Moreover, and in particular, Polybius believes that to make emotions (not least, anger) the wellspring of policy is to court disaster—witness the case of the Aetolians—no matter how much calculation overlays the basic emotion.

The main purpose of this paper is simple: to show that Polybius depicts Hannibal, in his crucial interview with the Romans at New Carthage, as a model of the "bad" Polybian statesman, driven by emotion and—in his violent feelings against Rome—fully sharing the disposition of his father, Hamilcar, and the disposition of the Carthaginians in general. This depiction inevitably implies a negative Polybian judgment on Carthaginian policy leading to the Second Punic War: a policy based on emotion invited disaster, and disaster was the final result. I will concentrate on the language Polybius uses to describe Hannibal—and Hamilcar and the Carthaginian people before him—as they take the road to war with Rome. But to clarify Polybius' judgment here, it will be useful first to examine this depiction of how a successful war is conceived.

When presenting his threefold schema of the origins of wars, Polybius, as we have seen, uses Alexander's expedition against Persia as an ex-

2. Clearly, Pédech exaggerated in claiming that in Polybius "les causes sont toujours des opérations intellectuelles" (*Polybe*, p. xxiv), by which he meant exclusively "le pouvoir raisonnant des hommes" (cf. *Méthode*, p. 600): both Petzold and Walbank (above, n. 1) demonstrate that events in the real world can be Polybian αἰτίαι. Moreover, even where Polybius does emphasize psychological states as αἰτίαι, they are often characterized more by emotion than by reasoning (see below). Such states can be considered "intellectual" only in the sense that anything passing through a person's mind, whether rational or emotional, creates "opérations intellectuelles" of some sort; but this is hardly Pédech's meaning. Nevertheless, Pédech is surely more right than wrong in stressing that the crucial event in any Polybian causal chain is a human decision. Thus for Polybius (unlike, e.g., Thucydides, in the famous passage at 1. 23. 6), wars do not result from the working out of mere impersonal historical forces (though occasionally Tyche may play some role, as in 15. 20); rather, they are the result of conscious human choices.

3. On the purposes of Polybius' πραγματικὴ ἱστορία, see K. S. Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History*, University of California Publications in Classical Studies, vol. 24 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), pp. 178–86.

ample. Polybius says (3. 6. 3–4) that it is a mistake to take the crossing of Alexander's army to Asia as the "cause" of this war: that was only the first open act of violence, or ἀρχή. The real cause of the war was Philip II's evolving intention to attack Persia (3. 6. 5, 12). Moreover, Polybius emphasizes that this intention was based entirely on Philip's rational calculations regarding the actual balance of Greek and Persian military power. Having contemplated (3. 6. 12 κατανοήσας) the successes of Xenophon and Agesilaus decades before, Philip reasonably concluded (συλλογισάμενος) that the Persian army was no match for the Greeks, and that the great empire could therefore be taken.

In this passage, I believe, Polybius does not use the words denoting rational consideration and calculation as value-neutral terms. On the contrary, they express Polybius' approval of Philip's method of reaching an important policy decision. Indeed, the account of Philip's ability to see through surface appearances to an underlying and contrasting military reality closely parallels another famous story Polybius tells about one of his heroes: how Scipio Africanus, facing seemingly overwhelming odds, correctly calculated the chances for success of a Roman march on New Carthage in 209.[4]

The point Polybius makes in 3. 6. 12 is at work even more strikingly in an extraordinary passage in Book 8. Theopompus, a contemporary of Philip II, had recognized Philip's effectiveness as a statesman; but he had also severely criticized the king's private life. In his *Philippica,* Theopompus depicted Philip's court (which he had personally visited in the 340s) as a den of wild and drunken debauchees, of whom the leading drunk and lecher was none other than the king himself.[5] It is clear enough that Theopompus' moralizing concern with the evils of lust and alcohol sometimes verged on the obsessive; nevertheless, the weight of the evidence tells strongly in favor of his depiction of the wild style of life around Philip.[6] But Polybius will have none of it, proclaiming instead that Theopompus' picture of Philip and his court must be false and malicious (8. 10–11).

Why does Polybius attack Theopompus and reject his account of Philip II's personality? Walbank has suggested that the reasons have to do with Philip's good reputation in Polybius' Arcadia, together with Polybius' resentment of Theopompus for his failure to give a central place in his history of Greece to the founding of Polybius' hometown, Megalopolis.[7] This seems to me excessively subtle. Polybius says the following (8. 10. 5–12), and it is quite clear: the men who raised Macedon

4. Note esp. 10. 6. 12: Scipio's plan, very bold on the surface, is said to spring in reality from ἐκλογισμοὶ οἱ ἀκριβέστατοι.

5. For discussion of this passage (quoted at 8. 9. 6–13), see F. W. Walbank, "Polemic in Polybius," *JRS* 52 (1962): 1–2, with id., *A Historical Commentary on Polybius,* vol. 2 (Oxford, 1967), p. 80.

6. On Theopompus' moralizing, see G. Shrimpton, "Theopompus' Treatment of Philip in the *Philippica,*" *Phoenix* 31 (1977): 123–44, esp. 136–44. On the realities of Philip's court, see, e.g., E. Badian, "The Death of Philip II," *Phoenix* 17 (1963): 244–50; J. R. Fears, "Pausanias, the Assassin of Philip II," *Athenaeum* 53 (1975): 111–35; G. W. Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London, 1978), p. 52.

7. "Polemic in Polybius," p. 2.

from a backwater to the greatest kingdom in the world must have been courageous and industrious, men of virtue (ἀρετή), not vice; they must have been "kingly" men, possessing not merely robustness, but also greatness of character and self-restraint (μεγαλοψυχία, σωφροσύνη). Philip, in other words, could not have been a drunk or a lecher—on these a priori grounds.[8] Indeed, Polybius has already asserted, long before this passage, that a grave weakness for sex and drink is usually incompatible with military and political success (3. 81. 5–6), whereas Philip II was obviously very successful. Theoretically, Philip could have been portrayed as an exception to the rule Polybius states in 3. 81. 5–6, which is carefully phrased and not ironclad. But clearly the historian did not think Philip had been an exception: he believed (or preferred to believe) that Philip had been successful because rationality and other virtues ruled his life.[9] It is for this reason that Polybius rejected Theopompus' disturbing picture of the king.

One can go further. Not only is Polybius' Philip consistently presented as the cool calculator, never dominated by passion (as many other Polybian politicians are); he is even praised precisely for his ability to control his emotions and irrational impulses. So we find Philip's self-control after Chaeronea contrasted very favorably with Philip V's lack of self-control at Thermum two centuries later (5. 10. 1–12. 4). It is particularly relevant to our purposes that the emotion Philip controlled here—with Polybius' firm approbation—was wrath, θυμός (5. 10. 3). Nor is Polybius' approbation merely philosophical, for he is arguing here that Philip's policy of mercy after Chaeronea defused Athenian hostility toward him and so achieved, at small expense, a practical political result of major importance (5. 10. 2–5). It was a result, in fact, that exactly matched Philip's calculations, an advantage won for himself through his shrewdness (5. 10. 4 ἀγχινοία). Moreover, this political advantage had particular value for his new, long-range project, the great Persian war (cf. 3. 6. 13). By contrast, Polybius says that Philip V suffered only evil consequences as a result of giving in to *his* angry passion (5. 11. 1 θυμός).

Thus, I suggest, Polybius' rejection of Theopompus is part of a fully formed view of life and politics according to which success is gained through rational decision and action, and emotion (especially violent emotion) is to be resisted: most people may be influenced by emotion, but successful people strive to control it and certainly do not allow emotion to dictate their decisions. Polybius' consequent image of the rational and calculating Philip II—a man in control of his passions—may well strike us as a distortion of the real king. But the inappropriate application of a deeply felt ideology only helps us to delineate that ideology more clearly.

8. On Polybius' habitual use of arguments from the a priori probable (κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον), see Walbank, "Polemic in Polybius," pp. 5–6; see also B. L. Twyman, "Polybius and the Annalists on the Outbreak and Early Years of the Second Punic War," *Athenaeum* 65 (1987): 71–72.

9. Indeed, no actual exceptions to the "drinking and lechery" rule occur in the extant text.

In the great Asian expedition, therefore, Polybius saw the result of rational calculation evolving in the mind of a calm and farseeing statesman. The second major example in Polybius' general schema of the origins of wars concerns the special topic of Book 3, the Hannibalic War itself. Polybius argues that it is a mistake to call Hannibal's attack on Saguntum and his crossing of the Ebro the causes of the war: these were only its ἀρχαί (3. 6. 2–3). What must be thought the first cause of the war (νομιστέον πρῶτον μὲν αἴτιον) is Hamilcar Barca's anger against Rome over the defeat of Carthage in 241, which led him from the beginning to desire renewed conflict (3. 9. 6–9). The second and greatest cause of the war (δευτέραν, μεγίστην δὲ . . . αἰτίαν) was Rome's seizure of Sardinia in 238, for it added the anger of the Carthaginian people to Hamilcar's own and allowed him to carry out his policy with full public support (3. 10. 1–5). The third cause of the war (τρίτην αἰτίαν) was the successful Carthaginian expansion in Spain, under the direction of Hamilcar and his successors, for this increased Carthaginian confidence (3. 10. 5–6).[10]

In Polybius' conception, then, the origins of the Hannibalic War plainly resemble the origins of Alexander's Asian expedition in this one respect: both wars are desired by a father but carried out by a son. Unlike Philip the king, of course, Hamilcar, as the citizen of a republic, could not simply order his community to fulfill his desires; hence Polybius emphasizes the events that won general Carthaginian support for Hamilcar's policies. Nevertheless, just as Philip stands behind Alexander, so (in Polybius' conception) Hamilcar stands behind Hannibal. This is why Polybius, after laying out the causes of the war in 3. 9–10, summarizes them by saying (3. 10. 7): "that Hamilcar contributed much to the origins of the second war, although he died ten years before it began, is much in evidence." To support this thesis Polybius then adduces one further bit of proof, Hannibal's famous oath to Hamilcar (3. 11. 1–12. 4). And that anecdote is in turn followed by a final summarizing formula (3. 12. 7): "these, then, were the causes of the war."[11]

Despite this parallel between the two wars, however, there is a notable difference. For at the heart of the Hannibalic War, according to Polybius, there lay not cool reasoning but hot emotions: the emotions of Hamilcar, of the Carthaginians, of Hannibal. Polybius twice ascribes Hamilcar's desire to renew war with Rome to θυμός (3. 9. 6, 3. 10. 5). Similarly, he emphasizes that the Carthaginian people came to support Hamilcar's policy because of their own anger (ὀργή) at Rome (3. 10. 5, 3. 13. 1). He presents Hamilcar's son-in-law, Hasdrubal, in command in Spain in the mid-220s, as a harsh enemy of Rome (3. 12. 3; cf. 2. 13. 6). And Hannibal completes the pattern (3. 12. 3–4): "Hamilcar made both his son-in-law and his blood son such enemies of Rome that none could have been

10. This causal sequence illustrates the double nature of αἰτίαι discussed at the beginning of this paper: they can be either psychological states (so the first cause here, Hamilcar's anger) or events that lead to certain psychological states (as in the second and third causes).

11. Note that in emphasizing Hamilcar's role Polybius was explicitly contradicting Q. Fabius Pictor, who emphasized only Hasdrubal and Hannibal (3. 8).

more bitter"; and though Hasdrubal died before he could set the war in motion, "circumstances put it into Hannibal's power to give all too manifest proof of his inherited hatred toward the Romans (τὴν πατρῴαν ἔχθραν)."

Θυμός, ὀργή, ἔχθρα: clearly, Polybius uses these terms very prominently in discussing the origins of the Second Punic War. The usage makes Pédech uneasy, for he holds that both Hamilcar and Hannibal are typical "grands héros de Polybe . . . , hommes froids, positifs et calculateurs," men ranking with Philip II and Scipio Africanus.[12] And Pédech's uneasiness is well founded. We have already seen that Polybius praises Philip II for controlling his θυμός, as opposed to letting it drive a major policy. It is therefore hardly surprising that Polybius similarly praises his hero Scipio Africanus for controlling *his* θυμός (15. 4. 11; cf. also 15. 17. 2–5). Prima facie, the behavior of Polybius' rational heroes should not be impelled by angry passion. The problem here for Pédech only looms larger when we examine other passages in the *Histories* where ὀργή, θυμός, and ἔχθρα appear, and the personages Polybius associates with these terms.[13]

First ὀργή (and ὀργίζομαι). For Polybius, ὀργή does have the virtue of occasionally producing wholehearted and effective action; and in certain polemical passages, he presents this as a worthwhile virtue indeed.[14] Moreover, Polybius is willing to concede that ὀργή is sometimes completely justified.[15] Nevertheless, he believes it is clearly dangerous to make ὀργή the source of policy, for anger can gravely distort judgment (see the general statements at 6. 9. 11 and 12. 14. 5).

The Aetolian case is the most obvious, occurring as it does precisely in the opening chapters of Book 3: ὀργή is mentioned three times as the wellspring of Aetolian policy leading to the disastrous Syrian War (3. 3. 3, 3. 7. 1–2). But several other important examples can be cited. Polybius attributes the deep civil strife at Megalopolis after the Cleomenic War partly to the effects of ὀργή, which is calmed by the salutary intervention of the wise Aratus of Sicyon, another of Polybius' special heroes (5. 93. 2). The ὀργή of Philip V not only undermines his actions repeatedly but also leads to outright atrocities.[16] Behavior based on ὀργή is, in fact, characteristic of the mob, of women, of barbarians, of disreputable mercenaries—and should not be characteristic of "kingly" men.[17] It is true that in Polybius the policy of the Roman senate is itself

12. On Hamilcar, Hannibal, and Scipio, see Pédech, *Méthode,* pp. 216–20; on Philip II, ibid., pp. 214, 242 (the quotation in the text is taken from pp. 216–17).

13. This task is made infinitely easier by A. Mauersberger, *Polybios-Lexikon,* vols. 1. 2–4 (Berlin, 1961–75).

14. See, e.g., 16. 28. 1–3, on the inertia of Attalus I and the Rhodians, in contrast to the effective action of their opponent, Philip V, which was partly inspired by his ὀργή (16. 28. 8); and 6. 52. 7, on the ὀργή that inspires citizen forces to defend hearth and home.

15. Note esp. the ὀργή occasionally felt by Polybius' own people, the Achaeans: 2. 58. 8 and 17, 22. 11. 8; but cf. also the general statement at 2. 56. 13.

16. See 4. 16. 3, 5. 12. 1, 11. 7. 2, 16. 1. 2, 16. 1. 4, 22. 13. 2. Near the end of his life Philip himself was (according to Polybius) well aware of the destructiveness of ὀργή: see 23. 11. 2.

17. The mob: 6. 56. 11, 15. 25. 25, 15. 27. 1; cf. 15. 20. 50. Women: 15. 30. 1. Barbarians: 3. 40. 8, 3. 78. 5 (Celts); cf. 4. 29. 7 (the Illyrian Scerdilaidas). Mercenaries: 1. 67. 5, 1. 67. 7, 1. 68. 4. To act from ὀργή is not to act βασιλικῶς καὶ μεγαλοψύχως: cf. 5. 12. 1.

occasionally motivated by ὀργή—to the cost of those against whom the anger is directed, not to the material cost of Rome.[18] Yet perhaps we should understand that there is still a moral cost for Rome;[19] and in any case Polybius consistently praises those statesmen (including himself) who worked to calm Roman anger (cf. 21. 31. 6, 30. 31. 2, 38. 4. 7). Moreover, we should probably see Rome as the great exception to the dangers posed by ὀργή as a source of policy, because of Rome's unique power. Clearly, Polybius believed that most states, in most situations, could not afford the luxury of ὀργή. They had to be far more careful, as the defection of Utica and Hippacritae from Carthage during the Mercenary War suggests: their decision was the result of anger and hatred (1. 82. 9 ὀργή . . . καὶ μῖσος), and it led first to atrocity (1. 82. 10) and eventually to a disastrous defeat by Carthage, and a hopeless position (1. 88. 2–4).

Next, θυμός and ἔχθρα, the characteristics of Hamilcar and Hannibal, the two figures (in Polybius' view) most responsible for the Second Punic War.[20] Aside from Hamilcar in connection with the new war, who else in Polybius is motivated by θυμός? The list includes undisciplined barbarians (especially Celts), bad generals, the uncontrolled mob, Philip V in his destructive phases, bad modern statesmen (especially those compared with Philip II), the contemptible Prusias II of Bithynia, the evil Aetolian politician Dorimachus, and primitive monarchs (as opposed to "real kings").[21] In a few instances, competent men do act momentarily from θυμός (T. Quinctius Flamininus at 18. 37. 12; the great Aratus of Sicyon—in an incident that leads to a humiliating military defeat—at 4. 7. 8); but Polybius never praises a policy based on θυμός. As for ἔχθρα, this word is rarely used in the extant text to describe an individual's state of mind and motivation: only two worthless Egyptian politicians (15. 25. 8, 15. 25. 34), two personal political opponents of Polybius himself (28. 7. 12; cf. 28. 7. 9)—and Hannibal, twice (3. 12. 4, 3. 15. 6). Perhaps this odd grouping is partly the result of accident, attributable to an incompletely preserved text. Nevertheless, Hannibal in his ἔχθρα, like Hamilcar in his θυμός, seems to be in very bad company.

Pédech tries in two ways to avoid the negative implications of Polybius' language. First, since he believes that Polybius' Hamilcar always acts κατὰ λόγον, Pédech asserts that we should view Hamilcar's anger not as the irrational outburst of an exasperated patriot but as "un ressentiment froid et objectif."[22] I see nothing in the text to support this. Second,

18. See esp. 21. 25. 10, 21. 31. 3, 7, and 8 (against Aetolia in 190); 30. 4. 2, 30. 23. 2, 30. 31. 3 and 17 (against Rhodes in the 160s). Cf. also 33. 7. 3 (against Prusias II of Bithynia in the 150s) and 38. 4. 7 (against the Greeks in the 140s).

19. On Roman moral decline, see n. 40 below; and, as we saw in n. 17 ad fin., Polybius seems to believe that ὀργή is in general not worthy of "kingly" men.

20. According to Polybius, the Carthaginians' ὀργή is needed to further the Barcids' plans (cf. 3. 10. 1–5); but the Barcids are themselves the prime movers.

21. Barbarians: 2. 21. 2, 2. 30. 4, 2. 32. 2, 2. 35. 3, 33. 10. 5. Bad generals: 3. 81. 9, 3. 82. 2 and 10. The mob: 6. 44. 9, 6. 56. 11, 6. 57. 8, 15. 33. 10, 36. 7. 5. Philip V: 5. 10. 3, 5. 11. 1 and 4, 7. 13. 3, 16. 1. 2, 16. 28. 8, 22. 13. 7. Bad modern statesmen: 22. 16. 3. Prusias II: 32. 15. 8. Dorimachus: 4. 67. 1. Primitive monarchs: 6. 6. 2, 6. 7. 3.

22. *Méthode*, p. 217.

Pédech points out that Hamilcar worked diligently to acquire additional resources in Spain so that Carthage would have a better chance in the new war with Rome: hence with Hamilcar we see "une passion disciplinée."[23] Polybius does indicate, of course, that once Hamilcar (and his successors) set out for a new war, they worked to increase Punic power and, hence, chances for a Punic victory; and he praises their skill in this respect (2. 1. 7–8, 2. 13. 1, 2. 36. 2–3; cf. 3. 10. 5–6). But such tactical skill is not enough. In a passage that has received remarkably little notice, Polybius offers the reader a more basic, strategic judgment (11. 19. 6–7): had Hannibal waited to attack Rome until after he had extended his power to ἄλλα μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης, all his plans would have succeeded; but as it was, he attacked Rome prematurely, with too few resources, and so lost. And the fact remains that Barcid policy—as Polybius conceives it—is founded not on a careful calculation of the chances for success, but on anger. The point is driven home when we consider that Polybius first explicitly calls the Second Punic War a war of revenge (2. 36. 6 ἀμύνασθαι σπεύδοντες),[24] and then later roundly condemns revenge and anger as forces behind political action (22. 16. 2)—holding up Philip II (once more) as a positive exemplar. Indeed, according to Polybius, Philip II used the theme of revenge merely as a cynical pretext for his calculated project against Persia (3. 6. 13 προφάσει χρώμενος): how different from the Barcids and Carthage! It is not surprising that for the "passion disciplinée" he attributes to Hamilcar, Pédech can cite only Plato, not Polybius.[25]

We must conclude that in his schema of the causes of the Second Punic War, Polybius chose words that he associated with destructive passion to describe the motives and behavior of the Barcids, and of the Carthaginians in general. And Polybius' disapproval emerges even more forcefully in his portrait of Hannibal during the crucial interview with Roman ambassadors at New Carthage in the autumn of 220.

The ambassadors, of course, were sent by the senate to complain of Hannibal's increasing pressure against Rome's friend Saguntum. This pressure apparently took the form of support for Saguntum's neighbors in an ongoing war against the town, together with aid and comfort given to certain exiled Saguntine political factions.[26] Polybius has already indicated that from the moment Hannibal assumed command in Spain, he intended war with Rome (2. 36. 4). Now Polybius describes Hannibal's bitter response to the Roman demand that he keep away from Saguntine affairs (3. 15. 7–8): he rejected the Roman complaints, issued vague threats, and sent a dispatch to Carthage saying that the Saguntines were injuring the subjects of Carthage. Hannibal behaved in this fashion,

23. Ibid., p. 212.

24. For this sense of ἀμύνασθαι here, see F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1957), p. 215.

25. *Méthode*, p. 212 and n. 41.

26. On the details of the growing crisis over Saguntum, see A. M. Eckstein, "Rome, Saguntum and the Ebro Treaty," *Emerita* 52 (1984): 51–68.

Polybius says (3. 15. 6), "because he was young, filled with passion for war, successful in his previous campaigns, and long since spurred on by his hatred (ἔχθρα) of the Romans." Furthermore, Polybius says (3. 15. 9), "being completely filled with unreasoning and violent anger (ἀλογία καὶ θυμὸς βίαιος), he did not allege the true causes [of his hostility], but took refuge in nonsensical pretexts (προφάσεις ἄλογοι), as men do who disregard duty because of their long-implanted passions (ὁρμαί)." How much better it would have been, Polybius continues, if Hannibal had simply demanded Sardinia back from the Romans, along with the extra tribute exacted in 238, threatening war in the event of refusal (3. 15. 10). But Hannibal at this point was a man out of control; and so "by passing silently over the true cause and by inventing the fictitious one about Saguntum, he gave the impression of opening the war not only irrationally but—still more—unjustly" (3. 15. 11 οὐ μόνον ἀλόγως, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἀδίκως).

Obviously, Polybius' depiction of Hannibal in this crucial passage is extremely negative. Indeed, the extent of Polybius' disapproval is shown by his use of ἀλογία and related forms three times within the few short lines of 3. 15. 9–11. These words are always associated in Polybius with destructive behavior and with personages Polybius unreservedly condemns: barbarians, Aetolians, traitors, bad generals, bad politicians, bad historians.[27] Conversely, the great Polybian heroes—Philip II, Aratus of Sicyon, Scipio Africanus, Scipio Aemilianus, Hiero II of Syracuse, Philopoemen—are never associated with ἀλογία or its cognates.

There is a second passage in the *Histories* where Hannibal is associated with ἀλογία. During the Carthaginian senate's debate over Rome's peace terms after Zama, Hannibal drags from the rostrum a man favoring continuation of the war (15. 19. 2); he later asks pardon for his behavior (15. 19. 3), which was an ἀλογία caused by his unfamiliarity with senatorial debate combined with his deeply felt fears for his homeland (15. 19. 4).[28] But Polybius' technique in this passage only underscores his condemnation of Hannibal at New Carthage. In 15. 19, Polybius distances himself from the scene by describing it merely as a story that has been told (15. 19. 2 λέγεται); he avoids any value judgments and presents the story in a simple and straightforward manner; the appearance of the term ἀλογία, in a secondary sense ("impetuous offense"), is incidental and without emphasis. The parallel between 3. 15 and 15. 19 is thus hardly a parallel at all. Polybius' highly charged condemnation of Hannibal's ἀλογία at New Carthage, therefore, is not

27. Barbarians: 2. 8. 12 (an Illyrian); 2. 19. 4, 2. 21. 2, 2. 30. 4 (Celts); 11. 32. 6 (Ilergetes); 12. 4b. 2–4c. 1 (barbarians in general). Aetolians: 3. 7. 3, 4. 15. 9, 5. 107. 7 (in general); 18. 53. 7, 21. 26. 16 (individuals). Traitors: 18. 15. 16. Bad generals: 1. 52. 9 (P. Claudius Pulcher); 5. 48. 3 (Xenoetas); 5. 110. 10 (Philip V in 214); cf. 3. 81. 9 (bad commanders in general). Bad politicians: 3. 19. 9 (Demetrius of Pharus); 4. 34. 7 (Machatas); 10. 26. 4, 11. 7. 3, 15. 24. 6 (Philip V in his destructive mood); 28. 9. 4, 29. 9. 12 (Greek leaders of 172–68); 38. 20. 1 (Hasdrubal, the Punic leader of 149–46). Bad historians: 1. 15. 6 (Philinus on the outbreak of the First Punic War); 3. 9. 2 (Q. Fabius Pictor on the origins of the Second Punic War); 3. 47. 7, 3. 48. 1 (the "Hannibal Historians"); 16. 17. 2 (Zeno the Rhodian).

28. Cf. Pédech, *Méthode*, p. 217.

only important to the general condemnation of Hannibal's behavior in 3. 15; it is also a unique—and hence all the more conspicuous—stroke in Polybius' portrait of the man.

Oddly, there have been few substantial attempts to explain Polybius' highly negative depiction of Hannibal at New Carthage. J. de Foucault suggests that it is all merely an echo of Roman propaganda.[29] That was originally Walbank's position, too;[30] but in a recent article he suggests that the depiction is the result of Polybius' "embarrassment and regret" over Hannibal's failure in 220 to conform to his schema regarding the ἀιτίαι of the war.[31] And Pédech downplays the entire episode, pointing out that the portrait of Hannibal in the *Histories* is on the whole far more favorable than unfavorable.[32] None of this, it seems to me, is adequate.

The idea that Polybius' description of Hannibal in 3. 15 derives from Roman propaganda would explain nothing, of course—even if it were true. Polybius was a highly sophisticated intellectual, not a mindless copier;[33] if Hannibal appears as he does in 3. 15 it is because Polybius consciously chose, at that point, to present him in that light. So whatever the origin of the portrait, we must return to Polybius: the depiction is his. And one basic fact should in any case warn us against assuming that the picture of Hannibal at New Carthage derives from Roman propaganda: Polybius' discussion of the origins of the Hannibalic War was written in conscious reaction against the current Roman version of those events.[34]

Even more important, Polybius' portrait of Hannibal at New Carthage does not stand alone; it has its parallels, in thought and even in language, elsewhere in the *Histories* where Polybius depicts other men as they, too, tend toward confrontation with Rome. One such passage is 2. 21. 2–3, where the young, fierce, and passionate Gallic generation of the 230s decides for war θυμοῦ . . . ἀλογίστου πλήρεις. But for our purposes, the crucial passage is 5. 102. 1.

Polybius, as we saw, gave four basic motives for Hannibal's behavior at New Carthage (3. 15. 6): he was young, he was filled with ardor for war, he had been successful in his previous campaigns, and he had a long-standing hatred of Rome. At 5. 102. 1, Polybius is explaining why Demetrius of Pharus found it so easy in 217 B.C. to persuade Philip V to adopt a policy of confrontation with Rome. He remarks: "It was, I think, to be expected in a king who was young, who had been successful in his previous campaigns, who seemed extremely daring, and who besides this came from a family that had always coveted universal

29. *Polybe: "Histoires," Livre III* (Paris, 1971), p. 48 (on 3. 15. 6).
30. *Commentary*, 1:313 (on 3. 15. 9).
31. "Polybius and the *Aitiai* of the Second Punic War," *LCM* 8 (1983): 63.
32. *Méthode*, pp. 217–18.
33. See esp. the remarks of E. Badian, review of *Filino-Polibio, Sileno-Diodoro* by V. La Bua, *RFIC* 96 (1968): 209–10.
34. See n. 11 above, on 3. 8.

domination." Once more we see four characteristics. They are, of course, much the same four features that characterized the Hannibal of 3. 15: impetuous youth, warlike ardor (here called extreme τόλμη), and self-confidence (or over-confidence) caused by an unbroken string of successes (Hannibal is ἐπιτυχὴς δ' ἐν ταῖς ἐπιβολαῖς, Philip V is κατὰ τὰς πράξεις ἐπιτυχῆς);[35] and at the end, in place of Hannibal's inherited hatred of Rome, Polybius has substituted Philip's inherited ambition for world empire. And since in 5. 102. 1 Polybius was describing one of the central figures in the Greek history of his age, we can be sure that this portrait does not derive in the slightest from Fabius Pictor, or from any Roman. Rather, the close parallel in thought and language between 3. 15 and 5. 102 suggests that the portrait of Hannibal at New Carthage must originate deep within Polybius himself; the behavior of Hannibal at New Carthage appears to be part of a pattern that Polybius perceived in the past, or imposed on it: passionate and warlike young men, unacquainted with failure and strongly influenced by family traditions, made impetuous and unwise decisions to confront the Roman Republic. As Polybius knew from hindsight, the result was disaster for their countries.[36]

These findings, by pointing to a deep structure in Polybius' thinking, suggest that Walbank's more recent explanation of Polybius' negative attitude toward Hannibal does not go far enough.[37] It is true that 3. 15 partly concerns Hannibal's failure to explain to the Romans the true causes of his anger (and hence, of the war). But Polybius in 3. 15 expresses more than what Walbank calls "embarrassment and regret," and Polybius is concerned here with more than Hannibal's failure to expound a particular schema of the causes of the war. The passage condemns Hannibal's behavior in the most forceful language (3. 15. 9 καθόλου δ' ἦν πλήρης ἀλογίας καὶ θυμοῦ βιαίου κτλ.): compare his description of the wild Gauls as they go to war with Rome (2. 21. 2 νέοι, θυμοῦ . . . ἀλογίστου πλήρεις), or his description of the unreasoning mob (6. 56. 11 πλῆρες ἐπιθυμιῶν παρανόμων, ὀργῆς ἀλόγου, θυμοῦ βιαίου). As with ἔχθρα (so prominent at 3. 15. 6), Hannibal once again seems to be in very bad company. Moreover, Polybius condemns not only Hannibal's explanation of Barcid policy but also the policy itself and its origins in anger, hatred, passion, youth, overconfidence. Thus in 3. 15. 9 Polybius implies that illogical pretexts are typical of men who neglect their duty because of long-implanted passions. The illogical

35. Note that the passionate young Gauls of the 230s were similarly ἄπειροι δὲ κἀόρατοι παντὸς κακοῦ καὶ πάσης περιστάσεως (2. 21. 2); indeed, Polybius implies a general rule of human behavior in all three passages (2. 21. 2 ὃ φύσιν ἔχει γίνεσθαι . . . ; 3. 15. 9 ἅπερ εἰώθασι . . . ; 5. 102. 1 ὡς ἂν, οἶμαι . . .).

36. Though 5. 102. 1 expresses the same themes as 3. 15, the former passage does not contain as much explicitly pejorative language as the latter; but the very presence in 5. 101–2 of the evil adviser Demetrius of Pharus produces much the same effect. For Polybius' view of Demetrius, see esp. 3. 19. 1 and 7. 14. 5–6.

37. "Polybius and the *Aitiai*," p. 63.

pretexts are only the symptoms of an underlying disorder; that disorder, Hannibal's fundamental irrationality, is Polybius' main concern.

Polybius knows where Hannibal's loss of self-control will lead. Once again, a parallel with Philip V is instructive. Philip's decision to embark on an anti-Roman policy is an integral part of his "change for the worse" after 217 (7. 11. 1 μεταβολὴ ἐπὶ χεῖρον)—a terrible change, characterized primarily by a loss of self-control (cf. 7. 13. 3, 15. 20, 16. 1. 2, 16. 10. 1). But for Polybius irrationality, loss of self-control, and bad policy-making are all intimately related. That he should condemn Philip's new anti-Roman policy is therefore hardly surprising. One simple fact conveys his disapproval: the wise, experienced, and rational Aratus of Sicyon—a great Polybian hero—opposed Philip's decision (7. 13. 1).

As for Pédech's view, it is not enough to say that Polybius' portrait of Hannibal is on the whole favorable.[38] Polybius certainly does praise Hannibal often; but he praises him precisely for his rational handling of military operations, including his shrewd ability to exploit any irrational behavior of his opponents (see, e.g., 3. 80–85, where Hannibal, συλλογισάμενος, annihilates C. Flaminius, θυμοῦ πλήρης). In 3. 15, by contrast, Hannibal himself is depicted as acting irrationally, and at a crucial time—the time that (according to Polybius) brings on war.

We have been considering, of course, what is generally called "the wrath of the Barcids" and its diplomatic impact. Much scholarly ingenuity has been devoted to seeking the oral or written sources for the story of "the wrath," as if finding the sources would explain why Polybius chose to use it.[39] But we really need to ask why Polybius found the story of "the wrath" (whatever its origins) so powerful and persuasive an explanation of past events that he gave it a central place at the beginning of Book 3, which is also the beginning of the main body of the work. At least part of the answer must lie with Polybius' own experiences, his study of the past, and his thinking about both; these predisposed him to give irrational behavior great weight as an explanation for events. He strongly disapproved of such behavior (or what he conceived such behavior to be) and wrote his *Histories* in part to warn statesmen against it. Nevertheless, he also seems to have concluded that irrationality was an enormously powerful force in politics. Indeed, his respect for this force, and his horror at its power, seem only to have grown over time. Thus the last ten books of the *Histories* (30–39) give evidence of an increasing general despair: for while the Greeks and Carthaginians are presented as lunatics and fools, Polybius now sees the Romans themselves, previously virtuous and self-restrained, as degenerate and increasingly corrupt.[40]

38. *Méthode,* pp. 217–18.

39. On the source (or sources), see the debate between R. M. Errington, "Rome and Spain before the Second Punic War," *Latomus* 29 (1970): 26–32, and G. V. Sumner, "Rome, Spain and the Outbreak of the Second Punic War: Some Clarifications," *Latomus* 31 (1972): 469–80.

40. On Polybius' growing despair, see. E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome,* vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984), pp. 347–48. On the Carthaginians and the Greeks, see 36. 17,

Both in Polybius' version of the underlying origins of the Hannibalic War, then, and in his depiction of the specific diplomacy that set the stage for the conflict, we see not Carthaginian calculation, but Carthaginian emotion: anger, hatred, passion. It is therefore not surprising that Hannibal fails to execute his father's wishes, whereas Alexander succeeded brilliantly in executing the wishes of Philip. Carthage does not fail because Hannibal is a mediocre general. Pédech is correct to say that Polybius paints Hannibal as a true technician of war—at least on the tactical level.[41] But the war itself is basically flawed in its conception (cf. 11. 19. 6–7); it is founded not on rational calculation of the true balance of power but on Punic anger and resentment. The result, despite Hannibal's achievements as a general, is therefore disaster for Carthage.

The discussion above should not, for several reasons, be taken to imply that Polybius was an intellectual collaborator with Rome, a Greek quisling who counselled submission.[42] First, Polybius was certainly not averse to criticizing Rome, or specific Roman policies.[43] Moreover, as 11. 19. 6–7 shows, he did not believe that wars with Rome were doomed to failure—provided they could be intelligently conceived and handled, and be supported by sufficient resources. (Resources, however, offered a difficulty, and it was an enormous difficulty indeed.) Nor should we forget that at least through the first half of his *Histories* Polybius consistently advises his mostly Greek audience on how exactly they could become better, more rational generals.[44]

But Polybius owed his intellectual and political heritage to a Hellenistic world in which the hegemony of great states—Greek states—was already pervasive, even if that hegemony was often expressed less bluntly than in fifth-century Athens.[45] We must also remember that Polybius grew up not as the citizen of a great power, but in Achaea, a state that had always had limited resources and so had a long tradition of accommodation with great powers, first Antigonid Macedon, later Rome.[46] Polybius' origins and background thus ensured he would believe that the rational options open to most statesmen (all but the leaders of the greatest states) were in fact limited. The wise statesman understood this situation intellectually, accepted it emotionally, and prudently maneuvered within the

38. 1–20 passim; on Roman degeneracy, corruption, and loss of self-control, see 18. 35. 1–2, 31. 25. 2–8, 35. 4. 3–6 (perhaps also 39. 2).

41. *Méthode,* pp. 217–19.

42. For Polybius' attitude toward Rome presented as antithetical to "loyalty to Greece," see esp. B. Shimron, "Polybius on Rome: A Re-Examination of the Evidence," *SCI* 5 (1979–80): 94–117; and cf. F. W. Walbank, "Polybius between Greece and Rome," in *Polybe,* Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 20 (Geneva, 1974), pp. 13–18; A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 29 (discussing the question of Polybius' "intellectual and moral capitulation to Rome"); D. Musti, *Polibio e l'imperialismo romano* (Naples, 1978), pp. 46–48, 145–47.

43. See, e.g., 3. 28. 2–4, on the seizure of Sardinia from Carthage in 238, or 31. 25. 2–8, on Roman degeneracy.

44. See esp. 9. 12–20; but many other examples could be cited, including Polybius' careful analyses of Hannibal's campaigns in Italy. For Polybius' audience, see Walbank, *Polybius,* pp. 3–6.

45. See the useful comments of M.-L. Heidemann, *Die Freiheitsparole in der griechisch-römischen Auseinandersetzung (200–188 v. Chr.)* (Bonn, 1966), pp. 13, 20, 47–48.

46. On Polybius' background as a politician from a relatively weak state, see above all H. H. Schmitt, "Polybios und die Gleichgewicht der Mächte," in *Polybe,* p. 80.

existing constraints to gain the best possible advantages for his people. As Kurt von Fritz put it, statesmanship for Polybius meant above all proficiency in a game of power politics, a delicate game in which what had to count for most statesmen was not brute force but diplomatic skill and the thoughtful handling of human beings.[47]

Polybius did staunchly believe that states should strive to be independent and should, for instance, stand up to Rome whenever possible. Hence his fierce condemnation of men whom he saw as too servile toward great powers (e.g., the Athenian politicians denounced at 5. 106. 6–7), including those who were too servile toward Rome (e.g., Callicrates at 24. 8. 10; Prusias II of Bithynia at 30. 18; and Charops, Mnasippus, Chremas, and Lyciscus at 32. 4. 3–5. 2). Similarly, Polybius explicitly advises his readers that being firm with the Romans works and is the diplomatic method to be pursued (24. 10. 11; cf. 24. 8. 1–4). Nevertheless, Polybius' statesman is also cautious, reasonable, and aware of his limited options; least of all is he reckless. Insofar as the *Histories* are intended as a handbook for statesmen, their unifying theme (as so often in ancient political writing) is the responsible use of power. And for Polybius, responsible use of power tends to mean hard-boiled political realism, a devotion to "the politics of the possible." Polybius condemns unnecessary servility. But as a devotee of practical politics he naturally evinces a certain willingness to submit to hegemony, as long as the relationship is even marginally satisfactory for the less powerful state, and especially if the alternative is both destructive and useless.[48]

But hegemony is the issue: it need not be specifically Rome's. Rome naturally looms very large in the *Histories,* which traces the rise of Roman power. Still, we must not take too narrow a view of Polybius' thought, which is extraordinarily rich in its explicit consideration of general principles of human behavior (especially, of course, political behavior). Thus, Polybius condemns Demosthenes for leading Athens into military disaster at Chaeronea: a more conciliatory policy toward Philip II and Macedon would have been wiser, and not dishonorable (18. 14). Conversely, his defense of Aratus of Sicyon for accepting a Macedonian hegemony over Achaea and the Peloponnese a century later is unmistakable: at the time, there was no other choice (2. 50. 11, with 2. 51. 4).

Not everyone agreed with these judgments.[49] Nevertheless, they help us to understand even more clearly the context of Polybius' depiction of Hannibal at New Carthage. Hannibal, in 3. 15, fails the test of caution and political responsibility. He fails because he has too much of his father's θυμός and too much of the Carthaginians' ὀργή; he fails because

47. *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity: A Critical Analysis of Polybius' Political Ideas* (New York, 1954), p. 11; cf. p. 25.

48. Even here, however, Polybius clearly believes that peace, though good, is not the ultimate good, if slavery is the price: see 4. 31. 4–8; and cf. Walbank, *Commentary,* 1:478.

49. For severe criticism of Aratus' actions in 224 by the contemporary historian Phylarchus, see Plut. *Arat.* 38. 3–8, *Cleom.* 15–16.

he is the victim of his own violent ἔχθρα, which leads him to disregard duty and to act ἀλόγως. Polybius thought that young men were particularly susceptible to this sort of behavior.[50] And so, in the manner of unrestrained νέοι, Hannibal sets the stage—in the face of enormous Roman power—for a disastrous war of revenge.

Polybius' Hannibal acts irrationally at New Carthage: he makes major policy decisions while carried away by hot emotion, when he should have been using reason and calm calculation. This is the basis of Polybius' condemnation. Of course, Polybius also knows that Hannibal is going to lose: his judgment of Hannibal is obviously informed in good part by hindsight. One can therefore understand why he leaves modern scholars a little uncomfortable. But Polybius felt it his duty to his audience to stress the value of rational decision-making. And none of us has the life-and-death responsibilities of the men for whom he was writing.[51]

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50. In addition to the examples already cited (2. 21. 2, on the Gauls of the 230s; 3. 15. 6, on Hannibal; 5. 102. 1, on Philip V in 217), note 4. 3. 5 (on the destructive Aetolian Dorimachus), 4. 34. 6 (on the Spartans who committed the massacre at the Brazen House in 220), and 8. 24. 10 (on the Tarentines who foolishly turned their city over to Hannibal in 213); and cf. esp. Hieronymus of Syracuse, an irresponsible and unstable teenager who destroyed his state's relations with Rome (μειράκιον: 7. 2. 3, 7. 4. 6 and 8; cf. παῖς at 7. 7. 3). Among the νέοι, only Scipio Africanus reins in his passions (15. 4. 11; cf. 10. 40. 6); and in the latter passage, he can do so despite being young and successful (νέος ὢν καὶ τῆς τύχης αὐτῷ συνεκδραμούσης ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον).

51. This paper has been much improved by the criticisms of the Editor and of the anonymous referees.